Identities and Representations in Georgia
from the 19th Century to the Present

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Identities and Representations in Georgia from the 19th Century to the Present

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The conference was part of the Georgian-German Year in 2017/2018, an 18-month-long series of cultural and political events celebrating the 200 years of friendship and 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Befitting the occasion, it opened with a keynote address by the Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister, Dato Dondua, and welcoming remarks by Professor Dr. Martin Schulze Wessel for the Historisches Kolleg, Mr. Levan Diasamidze for the Georgian Embassy in Berlin, and Georgia's Honorary Consul in Bavaria, Professor Claus Hipp, who, in truly Georgian style, generously funded the final conference dinner in a local Georgian restaurant. My sincere thanks go to all of them and to the conference participants, who made this event a genuinely enjoyable exchange of ideas, methodologies, stories, and opinions. I hope the contributions in this volume will convey some of this lively and intellectually inspiring atmosphere. Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Tengiz Beridze in Tbilisi, who showed me (and kindly gave permission to reproduce on the cover of this volume) the original photomontage made by his grandfather Vasil Roinashvili in 1912, titled a "Georgian dream come true". Representing Georgia in a lovely Bohemian, albeit slightly ironical, caricature of Georgian identity, it shows Vasil floating on a flying carpet in the air in front of Mount Kazbegi, reading a newspaper under an umbrella and surrounded by typical attributes of a Georgian feast – wine, drinking horns, game birds, and musical instruments.

Clare College, Cambridge, June 2020   *Hubertus Jahn*

Notes on transliteration and spelling

In transliterating from Georgian and Russian into English we have generally used a modified Library of Congress Transliteration System. However, familiar names that are customarily used in English, for example Chavchavadze, Bariatishvili, or Alexander and Nicholas remain in their anglicized form (unless they appear as part of a Georgian or Russian title in the footnotes). In the chapter by Jeremy Smith, the Georgian names were retained in their Russian spelling, as all the sources were in Russian.

List of abbreviations

AD	anno domini
AE	American Ethnologist
AEER	Anthropology of East Europe Review
APJED	Asia Pacific Journal of Educational Development
ASCN	Academic Swiss Caucasus Network
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
BC	before Christ
BSPh	Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie
CAPI	computer-assisted personal interviewing
CAS	Central Asian Survey
CB	Caucasus Barometer
CC	Central Committee
CED	Caucasus Educational District
CP	Communist Party
CPG	Communist Party of Georgia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CUNY	City University of New York
d.	delo (file)
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
DVV	Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (German Adult Education Association)
EAS	Europe-Asia Studies
EB	Eurobarometer
ENRS	European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity
ed.	editor
EF	Europe Foundation
EU	European Union
EUP	European Union Politics
f.	fond
IDFI	Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information
IDP	internally displaced person
IJSL	International Journal of the Sociology of Language
IRI	International Republican Institute
JEMIE	Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe
JGO	Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas

JRAI	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
KKSXC	Korneli kekeliżis saxelobis xelnacert'a c'entri (Korneli Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts, Tbilisi)
Kritika	Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History
l.	list (page)
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
ll.	listy (pages)
M.A.	Magister Artium/Magistra Artium
M.Sc.	Master of Science
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NS	National Socialism
NUPI	Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs)
ob.	oborot (verso)
op.	opis' (inventory)
OSF	Open Society Fellowship
OSI	Open Society Institute
PdD	philosophiae doctor
PSA	Post-Soviet Affairs
REA	Revue des Études Arméniennes
RGANI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (Russian state archive of contemporary history)
RGASPI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (Russian state archive of socio-political history)
RGIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian state historical archive, St. Petersburg)
RNL	Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (Russian national library, St. Petersburg)
RusR	The Russian Review
SEA	Sak'artvelos erovnuli ark'ivi. saistorio c'entraluri ark'ivi (National archives of Georgia. Central historical archive, Tbilisi)
SMS	Short Message Service
SR	Slavic Review
SUNY	State University of New York
transl.	translation
TRSE	Theory & Research in Social Education
TSU	Tbilisi State University
TV	Television
UC	University of California
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Hubertus Jahn

Introduction

Georgia is an exceptional country. Located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and extending from the Greater to the Lesser Caucasus, it has a population of roughly 3.7 million. With 69,700 square kilometres, it is about the size of Bavaria, encompassing an amazing variety of landscapes, flora, fauna, and climatic zones, ranging from glaciers, perennial snowfields, and peaks with an altitude over five thousand metres in the highest alpine regions to semi-arid steppe areas in the east, mixed forest hills in the south, and subtropical lowlands and Mediterranean vegetation in the west. With more than five hundred indigenous types of grapes, Georgia is the first place where wine was produced some eight thousand years ago. The Georgian language is one of the oldest continuously spoken languages on earth. It belongs to the Kartvelian language family, which also includes Svan, Mingrelian, and Laz, and goes back several millennia. It is indigenous to the region and has no connections with any other language family. But Georgia's uniqueness doesn't stop there. Its history is also quite remarkable, colourful, and complex.

Written historical records about what is now Georgia date back to antiquity, but modern archaeology takes us back even further, suggesting indeed that this part of the world was one of the cradles of humanity. The oldest hominin fossils found in the region, the so-called Homo erectus georgicus from Dmanisi, date back around 1.8 million years. Much later, in ancient Greek mythology the Caucasus was portrayed as a fierce place, understood literally as the end of the world, thus the fitting location for Prometheus, or Amirani in Georgian, to be punished and bound to the rock for stealing fire from the Gods. But the region was also the place of the legendary kingdom of Colchis, in Western Georgia, the destination of the Argonauts in their quest for the Golden Fleece.

Because of its strategic location, for millennia Georgia has been at the mercy of competing and invading empires, from the Hittites and Urartians all the way to the Russians. Its geographic location meant that for many centuries it was literally the battleground between various Persian empires and whoever ruled in the Black Sea region, be it Romans, Byzantines, or Ottoman Turks. In addition, the country suffered multiple invasions from further afar. In the seventh century, the Arabs conquered and then ruled over much of Georgia for about four hundred years. In the thirteenth century the Mongols invaded, followed by Tamerlane who devastated the country multiple times in the fourteenth century. Yet during the Middle Ages, just before the Mongols arrived, Georgia briefly had its own "Golden Age"

with a flourishing cultural and economic life under King David the Builder and later Queen Tamar, who established a large empire that included vassal states and dependencies stretching from Trabzon to the Caspian Sea, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus and even parts of Crimea.

Georgia was the second country, after Armenia and before the Roman Empire, to adopt Christianity in the early fourth century. The Georgian Orthodox Church has been a major factor in the country's history ever since. From the sixth century onwards, after the arrival of thirteen holy fathers from Syria, numerous Georgian monasteries were founded, not just within the country, but also abroad. The most famous of the latter was the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos in Greece, but there were also several Georgian monasteries in Jerusalem, one in Bulgaria and one on Mount Sinai. Soon after Christianisation, a Georgian alphabet had been developed, which sparked a flourishing religious literature that included numerous translations from older Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, some of which survived only in these Georgian translations. Religious writings were followed in the tenth century by the first historical chronicles and, in the early thirteenth century, by Georgia's most famous literary monument, the epic poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli. These ecclesiastic and secular texts together with a distinct common language and liturgy were instrumental in helping to preserve Georgian culture, religion, and identity through the centuries, during times of foreign invasions and occupations, and in particular once the Ottomans took Constantinople in 1453 and effectively cut Georgia off from the rest of the Christian world.

As a result of the new balance of power between the Ottomans and the Persians, Georgia was weakened and disintegrated into several kingdoms and principalities that strove to retain some degree of autonomy and independence from their respective overlords. For about three hundred years the country was split between East and West and ruled over by its neighbouring Muslim empires. The Georgian princes and nobles reacted to this situation with varying degrees of loyalty, real or feigned conversion to Islam, resistance or open rebellion. Eventually, in the 18th century, the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti emerged in the east as a consolidated state with its own law code and a standing army. In order to block persistent Persian pressure, its king, Erekle II, sought the support of the only other Christian country in the vicinity, concluding in 1783 a pact with Catherine the Great of Russia which was supposed to secure Russian protection. But in fact this Treaty of Georgievsk eventually helped to pave the way for the annexation of Kartli-Kakheti by the Russian Empire and the abolition of the Georgian monarchy in 1801.

The chapters in this volume cover selected topics beginning from this crucial juncture in Georgian history all the way up to the present time. This timeframe was chosen because in broad terms it reflects a reorientation of Georgia towards the West. Although there had been earlier attempts to connect the country to Western Europe, most notably during the reign of Vakhtang VI in the early 18th century when the eminent scholar and diplomat Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani trav-

elled to Italy and France to persuade Louis XIV at Versailles to help Georgia against the Persians, it was only after the incorporation into the Russian Empire that western forms of modernity began to take hold. A process of Europeanization, which in Russia had started under Peter the Great in the late 17th century, was now introduced with varying degrees of success in the South Caucasus.

Initially, the relations between Georgians and Russians were anything but friendly, after the humiliating abolition of Georgian statehood and the subsequent dissolution of the Georgian Orthodox Church and its merger with the Russian Orthodox Church in 1811. Heavy-handed Russian policies resulted in various peasant rebellions and a botched conspiracy of the Georgian nobility during the first half of the 19th century. The situation improved only after Tsar Nicholas I put the region under a viceroy in 1845, who was directly responsible to him. The person he selected for the new post, Mikhail Vorontsov, was an enlightened and energetic man, who had spent his youth in Britain, excelled in various military campaigns, and above all was sympathetic to local traditions and culture. Under his reign, the capital, Tbilisi, was rebuilt in Classicist style, educational institutions and the first public library were opened, new journals and newspapers created a small but steadily growing public sphere. A theatre was founded, an Italian opera company became a regular fixture, European fashion, banquets, balls and other social events became part of the life of the local elite, which consisted primarily of Russian officers, Georgian nobles, and Armenian merchants. When Vorontsov left his post in 1854, Tbilisi had been transformed into a mini-Saint Petersburg in the Caucasus.

Russian rule led to lasting social and economic changes. By the 1860s, the Georgian nobility had turned into a service gentry loyal to the tsar, while Armenian merchants thrived under Russian protection and became the main political and economic power in the multi-ethnic capital. As a result of Vorontsov's educational initiatives, a growing number of Georgians received a decent elementary schooling. Higher education, however, could only be found elsewhere, as the first university in the region, Tbilisi State University, only opened in 1918. A few young Georgians went to study in European countries, but most enrolled at the Saint Petersburg University, where they learned about the latest trends in European culture and science and ingested contemporary political thoughts and the values of the Russian radical intelligentsia. Giuseppe Mazzini's nationalist dreams, Alexander Herzen's socialist ideas, and Nikolai Chernyshevskii's social utopias were particularly attractive, as were Russian traditions of literary discourse, demonstrating just how assimilated into Russian culture these young Georgian students had become. In the vein of Ivan Turgenev's novel "Fathers and Sons", they saw themselves as a generational group, calling themselves the *tergdaleulebi*, literally those who had tasted (i.e. crossed) the waters of the Terek, the river marking the border between Georgia and Russia. They thus set themselves off from earlier romantic and, in their view, more backward generations of Georgians. In short, these Georgian students became modern, enlightened intellectuals, believing in scientific approaches to the world and rejecting religious obscurantism and authori-

tarian traditions. They adopted the modern aspects of Russian culture and education but rejected the authoritarianism of the tsarist state in which they would eventually make their careers once they returned home.

Living and studying in Russia did not only Europeanize these Georgian students. It also forced them to confront their Georgian identity and led them to perceive their homeland in more critical ways. They started to develop their own ideas about reforming their native country while at the same time preserving and promoting its national culture in face of the ever-present Russian influence. Famous writers like Ilia Chavchavadze and Akaki Tsereteli strived for a certain degree of cultural autonomy within the Empire and promoted the spread of the Georgian language through literary activities and new publications and periodicals. These initiatives came into direct conflict with the Russification policies of the tsarist state in the 1880s. Furthermore, at that time a new generation of Georgian students in Russia became exposed to even more radical ideas. Marxism in particular fascinated these young people. Upon returning home to Georgia, they were especially drawn to social issues, of which there were many by the end of the 19th century. Industrialization, for example, led to the emergence of an urban proletariat, as Georgian and also Azerbaijani peasants moved to the towns to work in factories. As a result, Georgians began to overtake Armenians as the main ethnic group in the cities. But this demographic shift was not reflected in urban politics, where wealthy Armenian merchants still held power in the local administrative bodies. This potential for simultaneous ethnic and social conflict would inevitably be exploited by various political forces, among which a newly formed Social-Democratic Party became the most popular.

The collapse of tsarist rule in revolution and civil war between 1917 and 1922 led to a gaping vacuum of power all over Russia and its multi-ethnic empire. In the South Caucasus, regional nationalists seized the moment and, with varying degrees of success, attempted to set up new states along ethnic lines. Georgia became an independent Democratic Republic on 26 May 1918 and developed into a relatively stable state with a modern and progressive constitution, ruled by a moderate Social-Democratic government, first under German, then under British protection. Soviet Russia, like many other countries, officially recognized Georgia's independence. But in 1921, in blatant violation of international law, the Red Army invaded and on 25 February proclaimed a Georgian Socialist Soviet Republic. The government of the Democratic Republic, together with leading aristocrats and cultural figures, fled to Paris and formed a government in exile.

As part of the USSR, Georgia experienced all of the major upheavals and crimes of Soviet history. Like other Soviet republics, it suffered under the ambitious goals of the five-year plans, in particular the collectivization of agriculture and various projects to industrialize the Caucasus. It endured the arbitrary nationalities policies of the Soviet state, especially with regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which kept ethnic tensions simmering for decades. During the Great Terror of the 1930s, numerous members of the social, political, and cultural elites were purged, shot or sent to the Gulag. During the Second World War, Georgia lost over

300,000 men fighting in the Red Army. But Georgia was not only a victim of So-
viet rule, it also contributed substantially to it. Joseph Stalin, Sergo Ordzhonikid-
ze and Lavrenti Beria were just the most well-known among numerous Georgians
who made careers in the Soviet leadership. Although many Georgians suffered
under them, many were also proud of these sons of their country ruling over the
vast USSR. This may explain why, after Nikita Khrushchev's famous Secret Speech
in 1956 in which he denounced Stalin's personality cult, numerous Georgians felt
their national honour violated and took to the streets. The uprising was crushed
violently by Soviet troops. As a result, Georgian loyalty to the USSR weakened,
while attitudes towards Stalin remained complex.

Beyond the realm of politics, Georgia's place in the USSR was quite exceptional.
It was (and still is) a favourite travel destination for Russian tourists. Georgian
agricultural products, especially wine and fruits, were sought-after items among
Soviet customers. Because of subsidized air fares, travel within the USSR cost close
to nothing. Many Georgians used this opportunity to fly to the big cities of the
USSR to sell their produce and shop for industrial goods and luxury items. Flights
on Aeroflot from Tbilisi to Moscow and Leningrad often resembled agricultural
markets, with sacks full of peaches, citrus fruit and melons stuffed under seats and
in overhead compartments. Since the days of Stalin, who loved Georgian banquets
and had regular shipments of Georgian food and wine sent to the Kremlin, Geor-
gian cuisine became a sign of sophistication and social distinction among Soviet
elites, but then was quickly popularized, with countless Georgian restaurants
becoming (and remaining to this day) regular features of Russian towns and cities.
But it was not only food and wine that was exported to the rest of the Soviet
Union. Numerous Georgians made successful careers in the big cities of the
USSR. Furthermore, since the times of Khrushchev's Thaw, the Caucasus became
synonymous with one of the key concepts of Soviet life, the shadow economy, in
which the Georgian diaspora and Georgians back home became successful entre-
preneurs. People in Georgia somehow seemed much wealthier than their Russian
compatriots. They certainly appeared to know much better than anyone how to
live well and in style, causing considerable envy, but also admiration, up north.

Soviet cultural life benefitted disproportionately from the contributions of
Georgian artists, poets, musicians, entertainers, actors, movie stars and filmmakers.
Some of the latter became world famous, for example Otar Ioseliani and Tengis
Abuladze, one of the key directors of the Perestroika years in the 1980s, or Sergei
Paradjanov, an Armenian from Tbilisi, who predominantly chose topics from
Caucasian cultural history and presented them with fascinating visual lyricism.
Georgia was not only economically more prosperous than the rest of the Soviet
Union, it was also, at least since the 1970s, culturally and politically more liberal.
When Eduard Shevardnadze came to power as Georgian Party Secretary in 1972,
it became much easier to make controversial films or publish less conventional
books there than elsewhere in the Soviet Union. It was in Tbilisi where the first
genuine Soviet rock festival took place in 1980, with famous Leningrad under-
ground bands appearing for the first time openly in public. Counter-culture in

general, with its potential for politically subversive messages, was much more possible in Georgia than in the Russian heartland. This also meant that long dormant issues of ethnic and national rivalry, of border disputes and minority rights came to the fore.

Once Perestroika started in the mid-1980s, nationalities issues in the Caucasus played a crucial role in bringing down the Soviet empire. Most of these resulted from rather arbitrary decisions in the 1920s, when autonomous regions were created that did and could not always reflect the ethnic composition of the population or that blatantly contradicted the aspirations of individual ethnic groups. While kept at bay throughout much of Soviet history, these conflicts erupted once control from Moscow became less stringent. Ethnic tensions exploded first in Georgia's neighbourhood between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1987, resulting in a bloody war and the first of several waves of refugees in the region. In Georgia, frictions with Abkhazians and South Ossetians were exploited by the dissident nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia in 1988 in clashes between young Georgians and representatives of these ethnic groups. At the same time, increasing calls for independence from the Soviet Union could be heard. In Tbilisi a peaceful demonstration was put down brutally by Soviet troops on 9 April 1989. Two years later on that very day Georgia declared its independence from the USSR.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as the first president of independent Georgia. But his nationalist policies, combined with Russian meddling, triggered separatist responses in South Ossetia and Abkhazia that led to two wars in the early 1990s as Georgia also became engulfed in a bitter civil war between pro- and anti-Gamsakhurdia forces. The results of these conflicts were political instability, massive economic and social disruption and the widespread destruction of infrastructure. Although Eduard Shevardnadze returned to power in 1992 and stabilized the situation somewhat, the 1990s were marked by high levels of crime, corruption and poverty. When Shevardnadze was toppled during Mikheil Saakashvili's "Rose Revolution" in December 2003, Georgia decidedly turned to the USA and Western Europe and introduced major reforms in the economy, state administration and education. Yet tensions with Russia also increased, culminating in a short war in 2008 followed by the de facto loss of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and constant border violations by Russian occupying forces ever since. This state of affairs, however, did not deflect Georgia from its western orientation, as opinion polls frequently show. Indeed, the country has since concluded a comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union in 2016 and also established visa-free travel to the Schengen zone.

For thousands of years Georgia has been at the crossroads of empires, cultures and civilizations. When one looks at its history, it seems that much more has happened here than anywhere else. Georgians had constantly to adapt to people speaking other languages, accommodate different religions, get used to new types of government, foreign political cultures, and changing economic systems, while at the same time simply trying to survive and to hold on to their own identity and

traditions. The latter was relatively easy in remote villages and highland regions like Svaneti, Tusheti and Khevsureti, with little or no exposure to the outside world. But a place like Tbilisi has over centuries absorbed multitudes of foreigners, thereby turning into a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-denominational city with its own specific local traditions. Unsurprisingly, such a multi-layered history left rich traces in the arts, architecture, literature, music and popular culture. It is in these kinds of expressive and representational genres that we can find multiple references to the many aesthetic traditions and cultural practices to which the country was exposed, from Persian ornamentalism in poetry and illuminated manuscripts to Byzantine churches and Turkish-style baths; from Russian classicism and romanticism to European art nouveau and avant-garde experiments; from Socialist Realism and Soviet modernism to, lately, western pop and consumer culture, haute couture, and techno music.

Identities are elusive. They fluctuate and change over time, place, and context. They also accumulate. Zaal Andronikashvili has aptly compared Georgia to a cultural "palimpsest", a parchment or slate overwritten time and again with different scripts. Yet if one looks carefully, earlier texts can still be deciphered.[1] History in Georgia is very much alive and characterised by both simultaneity and chronology. Georgia is a place with a very long historic memory that is regularly mustered in daily life and in political and philosophical discourse. Questions are frequently asked about where it belongs. Is it Orient or Occident, or somewhere in-between? Has it shed its Soviet legacy or is it still affected by the traditions of Communism? Is it modern or backward, secular or religious? During the latest pandemic, for example, the Georgian public health system reacted highly efficiently and according to the latest medical science, while the Georgian Orthodox Church displayed an irresponsible level of religious obscurantism by insisting on communion practices which directly threatened the lives of the parishioners and, by implication, the rest of the population. This example, incidentally, also sheds light on another existential question. Where does political power rest in Georgia? By flouting official emergency rules, the Church effectively showed the government's weakness and its lack of true sovereignty. Georgia has a long history of weak statehood, for example during wars and invasions, when survival mechanisms took over which were often based on local patronage networks. With the Church in an untouchable position, and with oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili essentially controlling the government, the officially propagated identity of contemporary Georgia as a secular state and a liberal democratic republic appears to be open for discussion.

Considering the timeframe of this volume, it is not surprising that several contributions focus on the interplay between empire and nation as represented in literature and school textbooks or articulated through national movements, upris-

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[1] Landna(h)me Georgien – Interview with Zaal Andronikashvili. In: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/23563 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020); Zaal Andronikashvili/Emzar Jgerenaia/Franziska Thun-Hohenstein: Landna(h)me Georgien. Studien zur kulturellen Semantik. Berlin 2018, pp. 46–50.

ings, and various types of official scenarios. Georgia's complex relationships with Russia and the Soviet Union, but also with its ethnic minorities, are addressed, as are the mixed attempts of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with the past, in particular the contentious question of how to deal with Stalin and his legacy, in both official and personal memory. National, gender, and colonial identities are explored, as is the role of religion in modern nation-building, atheist subcultures, and the meaning of citizenship in contemporary Georgian society. Since the contributions are truly interdisciplinary, authored by historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, psychologists, and social and political scientists, the approaches and methodologies vary and reflect different disciplinary traditions. This will hopefully do justice to the multifaceted nature of identities and representations in Georgia.

Lasha Bakradze

Past and future of the Stalin museum in Gori

In 1934, the Transcaucasian district party committee of the Communist Party decided to turn the birthplace of Joseph Stalin into a memorial. Already in 1935, famous guests were pouring in: Viacheslav Molotov, Mikhail Kalinin and even the French writer André Gide. The house quickly became a place of pilgrimage. As a consequence the complete town of Gori had to be redesigned. The house in which Stalin was born came to be the new town centre. In 1937, it was covered with a temple-like protective pavilion in the manner of Stalinist classicism (architect: Mikhail Neprintsev) and opened for the worship of the "leader of the Soviet and international proletariat". A straight street ran directly from Gori train station to the house. It was conceived as the town's main boulevard along which the main buildings of the town were built. On the main square in front of the enormous town hall (in relation to the town size) there was a giant Stalin monument set up in 1952 (sculptor: Šota Mik'ataże, architects: Zak'aria and Arč'il K'urdiani), a six meter tall statue that stood on a nine-meter high plinth.[1]

According to legend, the "humble" Stalin did not think it right to embellish his birth town so lavishly at a time when, after the war, more important and greater cities of the Soviet Union lay in ruins. Thus, many ideas drawn up in the general development plan for Gori were never realized. He also opposed the museum that should be dedicated to him. At least this was one of the rumours at the time.

The construction of the big museum's building (architect: Arč'il K'urdiani) behind the birth house started in Stalin's lifetime but it was only finished after his death. With the construction's completion in 1954, the first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Vasil Mzhavanadze, asked the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, for permission to open the Stalin museum the next year, in March 1955.[2] The museum, however, did not open until 1957, only after the famous secret speech of Nikita Khrushchev "On the cult of personality and its consequences" and after the subsequent bloody suppression of mass demonstrations in Tbilisi by the Soviet Army during the

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[1] For a general history about the statue and the city plan, see Sak'artvelos istoriisa da kulturis żeglta ağceriloba. Vol. 5. Tbilisi 1990, pp. 40–45.
[2] Georgian Encyclopaedia: Gori. In: http://georgianencyclopedia.ge/index.php/%E1%83%92%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

anniversary of Stalin's death on March 9, 1956.[3] It is probable that Moscow did not want to have further tensions in Georgia and thus permitted to open the museum for the "loved son of the Georgian people", as he was often called, in the sleepy town of Gori.

The museum not only survived the whole Soviet era including all its Thaws and Perestroikas but also the breakdown of the Soviet Union. It is still there, in central Georgia, in the middle of Gori, near the main highway between East and West Georgia. It enjoys the highest visitor numbers after the National Museum in Tbilisi. In 2016, the museum had a record year: over 92,000 visitors, 39,000 more than the year before. Most of them come from Russia, Iran, Israel, Poland, China and Germany.[4]

In Georgia today, Stalin is actually not a political talking point. This differs distinctly from Russia where nowadays he is widely used for the purposes of Russian imperial propaganda. Only the old Communist guard and Soviet nostalgics in Georgia refer to him as an ideological symbol.[5] For the majority of his sympathizers he has become a hero of folklore and anecdotes: a Georgian who might have been evil and cruel but also smart and witty, who told the Russians how it's done and who ruled a vast empire. Russia has subjugated Georgia but our lad from the streets of Gori has tricked them all and ruled over everyone and everything. Exactly this traumatic inferiority complex of the colonized and the growing pride in Stalin, the great son of the people, as Soviet propaganda had it, provides in my opinion the foundation of the sympathies towards Stalin in today's Georgia.[6]

Georgia's politicians need to deal with the complex legacy of Stalin and its meaning in the current situation. They have been agonizing over the museum in particular already for years. Populist sentiments and tactical political manoeuvres have been paralysing any serious decision-making processes. The topic of Stalin and especially of his most manifest representation, the museum, apparently frightens everyone and nobody really dares to take it on. This vacillation among politicians goes back to the early post-Soviet period. As he was visiting the museum in 1995 during the 50th anniversary of the victory against Nazi Germany, the then President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, announced to open a research institute dedicated to the phenomenon of Stalin. Nothing came of this ambitious promise. The government that replaced Shevardnadze after the so-called Rose Revolution simply tolerated the Stalin museum, just like its predecessor. Only after the Rus-

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[3] Timothy K. Blauvelt/Jeremy Smith: Georgia after Stalin. Nationalism and Soviet power. London/New York 2015.
[4] Information provided by the museum.
[5] In the parliamentary election 2016, the "Stalinists", the "Socialist Workers' Party" and the "United Communist Party" received only 182 votes (0.74 percent) in the Gori region; see Shida Kartli Information Centre: Latest news. In: http://www.qartli.ge/ge/akhali-ambebi/article/3642-stalinelebissocialistebisdakomunistebisshedegebigorshi (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[6] For my opinion about Stalin's popularity in Georgia, see Lasha Bakradze: Georgia and Stalin. Still living with the great son of the nation. In: Thomas de Waal (ed.): The Stalin puzzle: Deciphering post-Soviet public opinion. Washington 2013, pp. 47–54.

sian-Georgian war of 2008 did people begin to see the museum as a real problem that needs to be tackled.

First the idea was floated to redesign the Stalin museum as a museum of Russian occupation.[7] Again, very little actually happened. In another development, two years later, at least the huge Stalin monument was removed from the main square in Gori on 25th June 2010.[8] That triggered a discussion about what to do with the monument, but also which role the Stalin museum should play. It was almost decided to establish a museum for the victims of Stalinism or a Stalinism museum respectively.[9] But once again, nothing happened, with the exception that inside the museum a small exhibition room was created by the museum's administration below the ceremonial staircase leading up to a Stalin statue, which should remember the dictatorship's victims and its dark sides.

When the government of Mikheil Saakashvili was voted out of office in 2012, it did not leave behind any plans for the museum's transformation. The new "Georgian Dream" government that was re-elected in 2016 tried to develop a new concept for the museum for years. The Ministry of Culture, which is in charge of the museum, convened a commission in 2013 of which I was a member right from the start. The commission based its work on a concept that I had already developed in November 2009, during a conference about the reappraisal of Soviet-Georgian history organized by the *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung* and the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband* (DVV International). At that time, I presented my views about the future organization of the museum which were agreed upon by the conference participants.

It might sound outrageous, but I am in favour of keeping the museum as it is, in its original state as the Stalin museum. I am firmly opposed to getting rid of the traces of the past, as if this would resolve the serious problem of critically coming to terms with the past. This kind of manipulation of history and memory we know from Soviet times just too well. It also resurfaced a few years ago in connection with the discussion about Hitler's birth house in Braunau.[10] A museum for victims can be founded wherever there were victims – a perpetrator's museum in contrast would be something new, an attempt of looking the mass murderer in the eyes.

The museum in Gori has been built specifically for Stalin. It is at the very place where he was born. The original exhibition from Soviet times has survived largely intact, including the alterations that were made to the first version of the museum

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[7] Georgische Führung plant in Gori "Museum der russischen Okkupation". In: Sputnik (25. 9. 2008), https://de.sputniknews.com/panorama/20080925117108107 (last accessed 5. 3. 2020).
[8] Stalins Geburtsstadt verbannt Denkmal des Diktators. In: Spiegel Online (25. 6. 2010), http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/georgien-stalins-geburtsstadt-verbannt-denkmal-des-diktators-a-702939.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[9] Transforming museum of Stalin. In: Civil.ge (9. 4. 2012), http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24643 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[10] Peter Maxwill: Enteignung von Hitlers Geburtshaus ist rechtens. In: Spiegel Online (30. 6. 2017), http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/hitler-haus-in-braunau-verfassungsgericht-entscheidet-ueber-enteignung-a-1155099.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

from 1957 for Stalin's 100th birthday anniversary in 1979. In my opinion, all of this has to be preserved. Nothing else would be more apt for displaying the dreariness and misery of Soviet exhibitions, the naivety of Stalinist propaganda and the provincialism of Stalin-worship in Georgia. The idea is to keep everything as it is in the first three rooms. This would be entirely sufficient and adequate for a display of authentic Soviet museum culture.

Obviously the existing exhibition has to be explained, its lies exposed and its blanks filled in. This means that one must provide a parallel exhibition *about* the actual exhibition. This can be done via explanatory texts underneath photographs or next to showcases, in a style and layout that are clearly distinct from the original descriptions but are not aesthetically intrusive. Audio-guides could also be used to add further commentary about the original exhibition. Currently, in the first two rooms, an unsystematic hotchpotch of pictures from the leader's childhood until the Second World War is exhibited. As was common in the Soviet Union, there are no detailed explanations. Instead, a guide (mostly a woman with a stick in her hands) guided the visitors through the exhibition and provided the "correct" interpretation of the displays. A closer look at some of them provides good insights into how propaganda in general and museums in particular operated in the Soviet period.

To start at the beginning, already the official birth day of Ioseb Dzhugashvili is forged on the certificate that is displayed in the museum. The records of the Assumption church in Gori show that he was born on 6 December 1878 (old style; 18 December new style). This birth date is also given in his school leaving certificate, his extensive tsarist police file, and all other surviving pre-revolutionary documents. As late as 1920, Stalin himself listed his birthday as 18 December 1878 in his own handwriting. After becoming General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922, the date changed without explanation to 21 December (9 December old style) 1878. That became the official date when his birthday was celebrated in the Soviet Union. No mention of this miraculous change of dates is made in the museum. It simply had never happened.

Although the personality cult around Stalin had started already at his 50th birthday in 1929, it was only after Lavrenti Beria's speech "On the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia" in 1935 that a specific image of young Koba/Stalin in his native Georgia was shaped and added to the cult. It henceforth became the only acceptable narrative about his youth throughout the Soviet Union.[11] Ongoing studies of the young Stalin were discontinued, already existing ones were either banned or thoroughly edited according to the new narrative. From now on, Stalin was portrayed as the great organizer of the proletariat in the Caucasus. This line is fully reflected in the displays in the museum. According to them, for example, he led the first Mayday demonstration in Tbilisi (although in reality he was not even there). An impressive model in the centre of the exhibition hall shows the legendary illegal print shop dug into the ground under a small

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[11] Amy Knight: Beria. Stalin's first lieutenant. Princeton 1995, p. 57.

house in Avlabari, a district of Tbilisi, which Stalin allegedly ran (although it is highly probable that he was actually never there). And there are many more such examples of invented tradition and myth-making in the museum, closely linked to the Stalin cult, that cannot all be listed here.

Numerous actual historical facts and events related personally to Stalin, however, are conspicuously absent in the exhibition of the museum. Stalin's struggle for power, for example, the Red Terror that was widespread even before Stalin's coming to power, the mass famines associated with the forced collectivization of the peasantry, the forced displacements of millions of people, the purges and the Great Terror, the Hitler-Stalin pact and the partition of Eastern Europe, the executions of Polish officers in Katyń and anything else that would cast a shadow on the positive image of the great leader – none of this is mentioned in the museum.

It is particularly striking that Stalin's relation to his homeland, Georgia, which has often provided reasons for speculation, is not featured critically in the museum at all. This is obviously an issue that would need to be addressed in the explanatory guide to the current exhibition. After all, Stalin himself pushed for the occupation of independent Georgia in 1921 and for the overthrow of its freely and democratically elected government. He led the brutal oppression of the anti-Soviet August Uprising of 1924, he was personally interested in the bloody cleansing of the Communist Party and of the unions in Georgia. He did not want any witnesses from his youth to tell the truth about his earlier life. The brutal actions against the Georgian intelligentsia in the 1920s and 1930s can be traced back to this personal interest; they were not only caused by his Caucasian governor Beria.[12] The latter's role in the creation of the Stalin cult and thus by implication the narrative of the museum would need further critical exploration as well.

After the two big halls, where the parallel exhibition shall be shown, one enters a room where Stalin's death mask is on display. It is presented in semi-darkness in a semicircle-shaped room with temple-like columns. In what is almost reminiscent of a religious procession, one approaches the mask, automatically slowing down while ascending an incline on a red carpet. After this reverential rite of passage one finally comes to stand in front of the mask, similar to a sacred mystery. It seems as if Stalin himself is lying there, transcended into a godlike status, exuding serene harmony and peace. Naturally, this devotional room needs to be explained and contextualized. It is in many ways the apogee of the museum and turns it into a temple of worship. The stuffy and eerie atmosphere of the room is best explained at its exit after the visitors have had the opportunity to be shocked and to experience first-hand the bizarre qualities of the personality cult.

The following two rooms currently display a random selection of presents given to Stalin by various Soviet citizens and world leaders. They need to be put into the context of the culmination of the personality cult after the Second World War and should be accompanied by explanations about the anthropological meaning of gift-giving, the role of gifts as an intricate part of the communication of power

[12] Ibid.

in the Soviet Union and of Stalin's peculiar patronage style.[13] Stalin's death and funeral in 1953 as well as Khrushchev's speech against the personality cult and the ensuing riots in Georgia in March 1956 should conclude the main exhibition.

The museum has currently a number of other spaces that could be reassigned and incorporated into a new concept of the exhibitions. It features a tower, for example, that comprises four small, empty rooms on four levels. They could be used to present exhibitions about the daily life of the different classes that defined Communist understandings of society (peasants, workers, the intelligentsia and the officially non-existing ruling class of the *nomenklatura*). In a way, these four floors, although located physically next and above the museum, could present a history from below and thereby juxtapose the focus on the great leader presented in the main halls.

Stalin's railway car, which is parked directly next to the museum, should stay where it is now. It is a truly authentic historical artefact that can be seen, touched and even smelled. No wonder that it is currently one of the biggest attractions of the museum, as it provides insights into the plain style of interior decorations at the time, the actual living and working conditions of Stalin and his staff, and into technological and sanitary standards of these years. The loo of the leader, for example, needs little further explanation, but it puts into sharp relief the elaborate myths promoted in the exhibition halls of the museum. In many ways, the railway car serves as a reality check after the lofty heights and the virtual reality of the personality cult on display in the main exhibitions.

Not directly related to the museum, but certainly part of the wider question about Stalin and his role in and for Gori, is the massive statue that was removed from the main square of the city in 2010. It is still a contentious question what shall happen to it. After its removal, it was considered to put it on the ground in the park in front of the museum. There are still initiatives by some old Stalinists to re-erect the monument but this time in front of the museum, which does not make sense in terms of size and proportions. I am in favour of laying or hanging the statue into the museum's front hall, to arrange it as an installation and thereby minimize the pomposity of the stairway leading up to the exhibition on the first floor. Stalin's statue lying on the floor or hanging from the ceiling of the museum would not only evoke ideas of iconoclasm, reminiscent of the so-called *Leninopad* in Ukraine, but it would also mentally condition the visitor to think about the transient nature of life, fame and power before entering the halls filled with the paraphernalia of the personality cult.

The museum in Gori must stay as an authentic leftover from Soviet times, but it also has to be changed fundamentally without destroying its singularity. In order to manage this balancing act there needs to be an international cooperation of museologists and exhibition experts for creating a modern, contemporary museum and a valuable educational site. It is time to act now and to preserve the museum

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[13] Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov: On heterochrony. Birthday gifts to Stalin, 1949. In: JRAI 12 (2006) 2, pp. 355–375; id.: Dary vozhdiam. Katalog vystavki. Moscow 2006.

from brisk, wrong-headed and non-repairable interventions and damages. The Stalin museum in Gori clearly has the unique potential to become the most important place for the reappraisal and understanding of recent history in Georgia and the Soviet Union, and to remain a magnet for domestic and foreign visitors and historians alike.

Katrine Bendtsen Gotfredsen

Soviet, national, local?

Representations and perceptions of Joseph Stalin as a political and cultural figure in Gori

Introduction

In the night of 24/25 June 2010, a six-meter-high bronze monument to Joseph Stalin on a nine-meter pedestal was removed from the Georgian provincial town of Gori. The monument had stood in front of the local town hall, dominating the town's central square, "Stalinis Moedani" ("Stalin Square"), since the early 1950s. Removing the monument had been debated for years in local and central government but, even after a short-lived war that left Gori under Russian occupation for 10 days in August 2008, the Stalin monument had remained – until this night of June 2010. The removal happened, without warning, shortly after midnight. The area around the statue was sealed off by the police and the camera normally running live-stream footage of the central square was turned off. Local TV journalists were the only ones to make it to the scene and were initially prevented from filming. A few hours later, as the live-stream resumed coverage, the footage showed an empty pedestal. Stalin was gone.

Joseph Stalin was born in Gori in 1878 and spent his childhood there before leaving to study at the Ecclesiastical Seminary in Tbilisi and eventually joining the Marxist revolutionary movement. He is, however, still present in the town. Besides the monument dominating the town square bearing his name (at least, until June 2010), the town's main avenue is called "Stalinis Gamziri" ("Stalin Avenue"), and the town hosts a State Museum dedicated to his life and person.

In this chapter I investigate the attempt at re-signifying Stalin in Gori drawing on the case of the removal of the Stalin monument and efforts to reframe the town's Stalin museum. More specifically, I discuss how, and why, this re-signification was, at best, a partial success. It is a general stereotype in Georgia (and beyond) that the people of Gori love Stalin and are very proud of having a special link with one of the main political figures of the 20th century. To some locals, in particular the elder generations, Stalin is indeed looked upon with affective admiration and signifies a time of order, strong leadership and a strong state providing for its citizens. At the time of my ethnographic research in the town in 2010 and 2011, this was contrasted with contemporary political developments and Mikheil Saakashvi-

li's post-Rose Revolution government.[1] However, a 2013 survey shows that about 45 % of Georgians in general have a positive attitude towards Stalin. Portraying this as an issue pertaining only to Gori is thus hardly sufficient.[2] Hence, whereas the cases discussed in this chapter stem from Gori, it is important to note that a certain ambivalent admiration for Stalin is by no means confined to that town or to political opponents of the authorities.

On the following pages I do not approach the apparent reluctance of many locals to buy completely into the re-signification of Stalin, or his complete removal from public space, as an expression of radically different political values or aspirations opposite to the authorities. Rather, I venture to show how the figure of Stalin embodies multiple ambivalent connotations – some of which are explicitly political while others draw on ideally "depoliticized" national and cultural registers and personal local histories.

Gori, Stalin and the symbolism of political change[3]

In her book "The political lives of dead bodies", Katherine Verdery argues that dead bodies constitute a privileged site from which to address the complexity of meanings, feelings and moral ideas animating processes of political transformation and perceptions thereof. Dead bodies have the capacity to embody a variety of meanings and disputes over meaning. They can unify as well as divide. Their lives and deeds can be recognized and interpreted through different stories and with different emphases, and they are thus potent symbols through which to rewrite history and plot out paths for the future.[4] Monuments to dead people, she argues, have similar potential. Being carved in stone or bronze, a monument "alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the sacred, like an icon". And, conversely, destroying a monument "dissolves [the symbolized person] into an ordinary time-bound person".[5]

In this sense, the erection and tearing down of monuments is an important aspect of (re-)signifying space and time, that is, "socializing" landscapes and imbuing places with (new) political values.[6] From this perspective, the removal of the

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[1] Katrine Bendtsen Gotfredsen: Void pasts and marginal presents. On nostalgia and obsolete futures in the republic of Georgia. In: SR 73 (2014) 2, pp. 246–264.

[2] Thomas de Waal et al.: The Stalin puzzle. Deciphering post-Soviet public opinion. Washington 2013, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/stalin_puzzle.pdf (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[3] This section is based in parts on Martin Demant Frederiksen/Katrine Bendtsen Gotfredsen: Georgian portraits. Essays on the afterlives of a revolution. Winchester 2017.

[4] Katherine Verdery: The political lives of dead bodies. Reburial and postsocialist change. New York 1999, pp. 27–29.

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Ibid., p. 40; see also Bruce Grant: New Moscow monuments, or, states of innocence. In: AE 28 (2001) 2, pp. 332–362; Mikhail Yampolsky: In the shadow of monuments. Notes on iconoclasm and time. In: Nancy Condee (ed.): Soviet hieroglyphics. Visual culture in late twentieth-century Russia. Bloomington/London 1995, pp. 93–112.

Stalin monument from the central town square in Gori can be viewed as an attempt at giving new meaning to the town – at rewriting the value and importance of one of its, at least up until now, primary signifiers. This new meaning being that Georgia is no longer a place that honours Joseph Stalin and the era and deeds associated with him – an era of political authoritarianism and repression. Removing the monument, then, was a significant statement from the post-Rose Revolution authorities in terms of denouncing the historical era, political regime, and deeds embodied in the figure of Stalin.

The removal of the Stalin monument had been debated in Georgia and Gori for quite some time. Officially, the visual celebrations of Stalin had long been perceived as undemocratic and inappropriate: the post-Rose Revolution authorities were explicitly aiming at building a modern European democracy and aligning Georgia with European and western values. In this context, a monument to the former Soviet dictator in front of a local municipality building was, of course, sending highly problematic signals – within the country as well as internationally. Moreover, the monument was seen as an insult on the suffering of the Georgian nation during Soviet rule, and the Russian occupation of Gori during the 2008 war intensified the calls for tearing it down. On the other hand, Stalin was a symbol of local patriotism in Gori. Hence, since the monument carried a risk of upsetting the local population, Saakashvili's government was reluctant to remove it – likely out of fear that local sentiments and protest would feed into a more wide-scale and ongoing political conflict between the authorities and the fragmented political opposition calling for Saakashvili's resignation. However, after having secured a victory in the local elections of May 2010, by June 2010 time had come.[7]

The symbolic significance of Stalin was amply illustrated in a news briefing following the removal of the monument in which President Saakashvili stated that the people "who led the Soviet invasion of Georgia" were not welcome in his country.[8] Then Minister of Culture and Monument Protection, Nikoloz Rurua, echoed this view, stating that he believed that "Stalin was a political criminal, who led the Russian Bolshevik army into Georgia in 1921, [and] eventually carried out Georgia's occupation".[9]

The arguments for removing the monument, and their intensification after the 2008 war, reflected a particular interpretation and logic concerning the relationship between Stalin and the national past, present and future. In this interpretation, Stalin as a figure embodies equally the Bolshevik "occupation" of Georgia, the creation of the autonomous territories that continue to be out of reach, Soviet

[7] Ghia Nodia: Georgia's long farewell to Stalin, https://www.rferl.org/a/Georgias_Long_Farewell_To_Stalin_/2088243.html (1.7.2019) (last accessed 21.7.2020).
[8] Giorgi Lomsadze: Stalin statue purged in hometown Gori, https://eurasianet.org/stalin-statue-purged-in-hometown-gori (25.6.2010) (last accessed 21.7.2020).
[9] Stalin statue taken down in his Georgian hometown, https://www.bbc.com/news/10412097 (25.6.2010) (last accessed 21.7.2020).

repression, and what was perceived as a continuation of this repression: Russian aggressions towards independent Georgia. The reasoning built heavily on a symbolic fusion of Stalin, the Soviet Union, and present-day Russia in which Stalin embodied the suffering of the Georgian people, and the repressive and undemocratic political mentality of the Soviet era. Toppling the monument signified a different present and a new democratic path to the future.

Politics and local histories

The removal of the monument received remarkably little attention from the people in town compared to the intuitive expectations and years of governmental hesitation preceding it. To the surprise of both national media and the government, the removal of the monument sparked little local protest or unrest – a few elderly communists aside. If locals carried such tremendous affection and respect for Stalin, and if local political values differed so remarkably from those of the authorities, why had there been virtually no public reaction?

Political analyst, Ghia Nodia, ascribed this to the fact that the Georgian public, including the *gorelebi* (residents of Gori), were actually way further in their development into reasonable democratic citizens than the government and President tended to believe.[10] Others held that the lack of local protest should be explained by the fact that the monument was toppled in the middle of the night while people were asleep. Once they realized that it had gone, it was too late to do anything. As I set out to explore what locals thought about the removal it seemed that both arguments held true – a certain ambivalence towards the removal of the monument and the figure of Stalin in general was prevalent.

My conversations with Nino, a woman in her 50s, are illustrative of this ambivalence towards the monument and its removal. When I asked her what she thought about it, she reflected: "At first I was angry! It was always standing here. Is it really necessary to change the statues every time there is political change? I spent my whole life around this statue. For me it was something …. How can the square exist without this statue?"

From Nino's statement, it seems like the monument had signified stability and continuity in a time of recurring political changes. She echoed many of the spontaneous responses I received. The removal of the monument was surprising in the sense that it was just something that had always been standing there, looking over the square as an integral part of the town center. And then, suddenly, one morning it was gone. Yes, after Georgian independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, statues of Lenin and Stalin were torn down all over the country. But not in Gori. The Stalin monument had remained until that night in June 2010. But of course, logically it had to be removed, Nino went on to conclude: "If he was standing

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[10] Nodia: Farewell (see note 7).

there in front of our municipality, it would mean that our government agrees with his deeds … It was not like that of course. No. But it was seen so."

So maybe it was, after all, time for the monument to go? Could it be that the lack of public response to the removal simply indicated that the locals, as their government, embraced the new political aspirations and dissociated themselves from the Soviet era and its repressive regime? Nino's response seemed to indicate that this was the case. She continued: "People come to see Stalin, not as a leader or communist or so on, but as an interesting person. As a father, as a son, as a friend. Maybe it is better if they put the Statue in front of the Stalin museum. Maybe. But I tell you this: It was just history. Nothing more … In reality, if it had been left there, it would still just be history."

Numerous locals would merely shrug when I interviewed them, and insisted that the monument and its removal simply did not matter very much at all. It might have signified stability and continuity – something that one was used to having around. But it was insignificant in terms of political values and aspirations. The lack of protest had nothing to do with the monument being removed at night, they would assert. Maybe, this mattered to a few old communist nostalgics, but in reality it was insignificant in the bigger picture. Keeping oneself and one's family afloat left no time or energy to care about or engage in political issues. And, even less so, to care about a monument being removed from the central square to a location a few hundred meters down Stalin Avenue in front of the Stalin museum, as initially assured by the local authorities.

However, in spite of the verbal insistence that the monument was politically insignificant, the quotes above reveal some complexity in terms of its meaning. First of all, the intuitive anger felt by Nino immediately after the removal of the statue, suggests an element of emotional attachment – if not to Stalin himself, then to a monument that had been an integral and naturalized part of the local landscape and had, as such, been a silent companion to her entire life. Or, as Marina, a woman in her late twenties expressed it: "We woke up in the morning and saw that it was not there anymore. It was a huge statue …. It was impossible not to notice that statue. I felt like the square was empty."

To the majority of people I talked to, embracing new political values and denouncing the political system represented by Stalin was reasonable and necessary. But the monument to Stalin was not just associated with a political figure signifying Soviet repression. To Nino, Stalin and his monument was something for which people would come to Gori, not because of his political ideology and reign, but because of him having been an "interesting person". A *local* person who had also been a father, a son, and a friend.

The reactions to the removal of the monument, then, suggest that completely denouncing Stalin, "the local person", was less straightforward than distancing oneself from his political regime. I will now explore this point further by turning to the Stalin museum and its exhibition, which may serve as additional illustration of why completely denouncing Stalin was accompanied by some ambivalence.

Re-framing the Stalin museum

The Stalin museum in Gori is situated on one end of the town's main central street, Stalin Avenue. The complex consists of the main building, a marble palazzo, Stalin's wooden birth-house protected by a mausoleum-like building with columns, and Stalin's personal railway carriage.

The museum was opened in 1957 and, apart from adding items and objects and making some changes to the layout in 1979, only few changes to the exhibition have taken place since then. Hence, reflecting the particular historical and political context of its creation, the present-day exhibition still displays elements and "truths" corresponding to its original construction for educational and ideological purposes within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. In the context of the post-Rose Revolution Georgian nation-state, however, the displayed historical truths about the successful building of socialism, and the important part played by Stalin in this effort, were no longer officially seen as such. Thus, similar to the Stalin monument, the Stalin museum constituted a problematic entity for the authorities. On the one hand, it was a popular tourist attraction and a piece of local history held in high esteem by many locals. On the other hand, the museum's celebratory tone and potential for acting as a Stalinist shrine was in stark contrast to the official attitude of the government towards Stalin and the Soviet regime. Accordingly, as I started to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in the museum in summer 2010, it was allegedly undergoing alterations to be turned into a "museum of a museum" – the original museum would be turned into the object of exhibition and provided with analysis and meta-narratives stressing its propagandist and deceitful representations.

When interviewing the Museum Director at the time, Robert Maġlakeliże, he stressed that he was dedicated to offering the visitors an unbiased and neutral exhibition showing facts, and leaving it to them to make up their own opinions about Stalin. Hence, he had made sure to add certain items in order to nuance the exhibition and show how certain historical facts were silenced or left out of the original exhibition and Soviet history-making in general. For instance, next to the exhibited photo of the first Government of the Soviets, a photocopied picture now shows Lev Trotskii, who had been erased from the original. Also on display is a copy of a letter from Lenin addressed to the 12th Congress of the Communist Party, in which he argues for the dismissal of Stalin as the General Secretary of the Central Committee on the grounds that he was too rude and lacked tolerance, loyalty and politeness. Other additions include photocopied prints with portrait photographs of the main actors carrying out the repressions of the 1930s, as well as a copy of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact from 1939. Moreover, after the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, a small room in the foyer was added to the exhibition. "The Repression Room", as it was called among the employees, consists of a mix of letters from local political prisoners from the 1930s, a model of a torture chamber, and photos of the bombardments of Gori during the recent war. In that sense, the room symbolically fuses the purges of the 1930s with the suffering caused by the Russian invasion of Gori in 2008.

When discussing his efforts to recast the museum in recent years, Maġlakeliże insisted that the museum was an important trademark for Gori and Georgia and *the* key museum of the Stalin period – but it necessarily had to tell the truth as it was known today. It should show visitors how "pompous and disgusting the Soviet era was". It would have three main purposes: to show the Soviet system under Stalin's leadership, to show the crimes committed during the repressions, and to show the house, personal effects and personal carriage of an historical man.

However, in spite of the efforts of re-framing the Museum and providing an "unbiased exhibition", the Museum is still, to this day, viewed by many visitors – foreigners and Georgians alike – as a tribute to Stalin. A number of the foreign visitors I talked to, commented on the lack of critical distance and assessment of Stalin's deeds, and in newspaper features, guidebooks and travel forums covering Gori, the museum is most often described as a slightly kitschy and disturbing shrine to Stalin, with the guides and employees being determined Stalinists.[11] A main reason for this, as I will elaborate below, is the combination of the original layout of the exhibition, together with the objects and accounts brought to attention by the museum guides as they accompany visitors through the exhibition halls.

Parallel narratives

Entering the main exhibition halls, the brownish colours and the array of documents, photos and posters give an immediate sense of stepping into another time and place. Walking through the halls, the museum guide will direct your attention to some of the numerous photos, documents, and items, and use these to construct a narrative about the life of Stalin – "his history, his personality, and political life".

When walking through the upstairs halls of the Museum, two grand intertwined narratives are driving the exhibition forward, which each in their own way correspond to the political contexts of its creation. One narrative corresponds to the ideology of the late Soviet state and its official history as told in the 1970s. Here we are witnessing the successful defeat of the tsarist empire and the subsequent formation of a strong, modern and victorious Soviet state. The second narrative, in a sense, corresponds to the particular place of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic within the Union. This is the narrative of a powerful Georgian national, and can be seen as an illustration of how, after his death, and in the wake of

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[11] For examples of this trend, see e. g. Georgia's Stalin museum gives Soviet version of dictator's life story, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/04/georgia-stalin-museum-soviet-version-dictators-life-story (4. 8. 2015) (last accessed 21. 7. 2020); as well as online entries about the Stalin museum on: https://www.lonelyplanet.com/georgia/gori/attractions/stalin-museum/a/poi-sig/502622/359316 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020) and https://www.tripadvisor.de/ShowUserReviews-g317094-d1128827-r440303105-Stalin_Museum-Gori_Shida_Kartli_Region.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

Khrushchev's 1956 denouncement of his personality cult, revering Stalin became a symbol of patriotism and even dissidence towards the Soviet state.[12]

Apart from the narrative reflecting Soviet ideology and discourse, then, there is a parallel narrative to be discovered that finds resonance in local identity and Georgian nationality. Here, we are introduced to the life, personality and political successes of Stalin the *national*, or even *local,* as they unfolded alongside the formation of the Union: the local boy making it to the world scene; Stalin's singing in the church choir and his particular talent for the special Georgian polyphonic songs; his writing of romantic poetry, which was acknowledged by Ilia Chavchavadze, perceived to be one of the nation's founding fathers; and, Stalin's childhood dream of becoming an Orthodox priest. In short, the seeds for a national and local, rather than Soviet, reading of Stalin's life were laid out in the original exhibit. In other settings and situations, Orthodox Christianity, the polyphonic hymns, Chavchavadze and Georgian language poetry are all repeatedly and proudly invoked as symbols of the specific features of Georgian national identity.[13]

The nature of the political projects nurturing and feeding on the symbols and myths of the nation have naturally varied greatly through different epochs of the last century, but the reference to nationality has been a continuous factor. Quite possibly reflecting this continuity, the value and importance of the nation seems beyond political questioning in contemporary Georgia.[14] Hence, I would argue, the Stalin displaying these national and local features was much more counter-intuitive to question and critically assess, than the legitimacy of the Soviet state.

The storylines of the guides often supported this parallel national and local narrative by drawing attention to other items than those newly added to re-frame the exhibition. This could be a copy of an official form from the elections in 1931, for example, in which Stalin declares himself to be Georgian by nationality. Or it could be in what the guides term "the religious corner", where they would draw attention to a document that shows Lenin's order from 1919 banning religion and then add, pointing to a document bearing Stalin's signature, that this ban was never agreed upon by Stalin. Rather, in 1939, he began the rehabilitation of religious leaders. Eventually the prayers and the moral support of the Orthodox Church were called upon to support the war effort after 1941. This information was often related by the guides with a touch of pride. Contrary to the established historical

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[12] Sergei Arutinov: Introduction. Russian culture in the 20th century. In: John Rickman/Geoffrey Gorer/Margaret Mead (eds.): Russian culture. New York 2001; Ronald Grigor Suny: The making of the Georgian nation. Bloomington 1994, pp. 302–303.
[13] Mathijs Pelkmans: Defending the border. Identity, religion, and modernity in the republic of Georgia. Ithaca 2006; Peter Nasmyth: Georgia. In the mountains of poetry. New York 2006.
[14] Paul Manning: The city of balconies. Elite politics and the changing semiotics of the post-socialist cityscape. In: Kristof Van Assche/Joseph Salukvadze/Nick Shavishvili (eds.): City culture and city planning in Tbilisi. Where Europe and Asia meet. Lewiston 2009, pp. 71–102; Katrine Bendtsen Gotfredsen: Evasive politics. Paradoxes of history, nation and everyday communication in the republic of Georgia. Copenhagen 2013; Tamta Khalvashi: Peripheral affects. Shame, publics and performance on the margins of the republic of Georgia. Copenhagen 2015.

facts of Stalin's reign as repressive of nationalities and Orthodox Christianity, or of Stalin having denounced his Georgian origins and "become Russian", the document in the "religious corner" was used as an illustration that Stalin was proud of his Georgian nationality and the implied Orthodox roots. One of the most powerful men of the 20th century did, in fact, acknowledge that he was a Georgian from Gori, and that the Orthodox Church supported one of his greatest achievements, the victory in World War II. In short, the parallel narratives in the original exhibition and the fact that the recent additions to the exhibition only explicitly address one of them – the legacy of the Soviet state – makes it possible to interpret Stalin as being both, Soviet and national, ruthless and religious, powerful and poetic.

De-politicization and ambivalence

In the majority of the guided tours I attended, focus was placed on Stalin as a person, his personal history, personal characteristics and powerful position in world politics, rather than the actual political practices that took place during his reign. In that sense, the "lectures" of the guides reflected a similar logic to that of Nino – Stalin was an interesting character due to his personal qualities and origin rather than the political system he had represented. Now and then, there would be an add-on drawing attention to the newly added objects in the exhibition. However, as we saw above, even if the additions to the exhibition were acknowledged by the guides, and the overall political narrative of the exhibition was largely delegitimized, this delegitimization was not necessarily directly associated with Stalin as much as with the Soviet regime and other powerful personae within it. This apparent split between "Stalin the person" and the "Soviet political regime" was largely made possible by the original layout of the documents, charts, photos and objects on display. But it was also motivated by discomfort with mixing national symbols and pride with uncomfortable political topics and discussions.

When asking staff about their attitudes towards Stalin, the "official" answer was usually that Stalin was an important figure of the 20th century and that their task was to guide people through the facts of the exhibition and encourage them to make up their own minds. However, when spending more time with the employees in the museum, it became clear that they had very different, and often ambivalent, attitudes towards Stalin. It was also evident, however, that discussing these sentiments and opinions was a sensitive issue – in particular among the younger staff who were clearly aware that being "pro-Stalin" was not "politically correct". A situation from my fieldwork in the autumn of 2010 will serve as illustration of this point.

On a day like many others, I sat in one of the Museum offices drinking coffee with Tamara, Marina, Tatia and Gvantsa. The girls, all in their twenties, are working as guides, but it is a quiet morning, and none of them have tours yet. As we sit there, Natela, a woman in her fifties who is the head of biographical research, en-

ters the office. She sits next to me and asks me how my work is progressing. What am I doing? What have I found out so far? We talk a bit about my project, and I tell her that I am looking into the different attitudes towards Stalin that one can find in the Museum. "And what is your personal opinion?" she asks. The girls giggle silently and seem a bit uneasy about the situation and Natela's questions. I pause to think, and Natela continues: "I have worked here for many years and there are many sides to this story. But one thing I can tell you: He was a genius! Educated and cultured in many ways – not just politically. He was an extraordinary man in an extraordinary time." While Natela is giving a monologue of Stalin's virtues, the girls exchange glances and winks. Tamara interrupts Natela, and suddenly the girls and Natela argue passionately in loud voices. Natela exclaims that it is a scandal that Stalin's monument was removed from the town square. The girls disagree, saying it belongs at the museum. Marina quickly backs down, and Gvantsa, looking very discomfited by the situation, remains silent. Natela says in a loud voice that Stalin was a great Georgian and that he should not have been ousted from the square. Tamara argues back, saying that it should be possible to find a great Georgian national that all people admire to have standing in the square. "And who would that be?" Natela asks angrily and firmly. "I don't know …" Tamara answers quietly. The atmosphere is tense, and the girls are all looking onto the ground as Natela leaves the office, still talking in a loud voice.

The confrontational attitude of Natela was quite unusual, and it was clear that the girls found it rather unpleasant – not least because I witnessed it and continued to probe into it. It was not that differences of opinion were absent, but rather that there seemed to be a general wish to avoid politically tense discussions, at least in the presence of guests and outsiders. Hence, when I asked the guides to tell me their personal opinions about Stalin, I sensed that I was perceived as being overly direct – in much the same way that the girls clearly thought Natela was out of line in asking me my personal opinion. The majority would avoid the question by saying that Stalin was a complicated person with both good and bad sides and it was not up to them to make final judgments about his character. However, when talking *around* the subject of personal attitudes and judgment, it was slightly different. I would often be talking to someone about what they understood to be the negative aspects of Stalin's character and political reign: the famines of the 1930s, the repressions, the Gulag, or his ruthless and uncompromising character. Then suddenly they would change their angle and compare Stalin to David the Builder and Queen Tamar – both strong rulers of Georgia in the Middle Ages. They had also killed political enemies and built the nation using ruthless methods. But today everyone knew that such were the times, and they were both praised as Orthodox Saints. Similarly, a discussion of the hardships of the Orthodox Church during Soviet times and its revival after independence could often end with a comment that Stalin had been a great believer. Or a talk about relatives that were exiled or imprisoned in the 1930s would end with a puzzled comment that these same people or some of their closest kin had still loved Stalin and had mourned his death deeply. Such conversations displayed an uneasy ambivalence towards

Stalin that contrasted with the values and attitudes of the post-Rose Revolution authorities. They pointed to an inherent tension between Stalin the Soviet and Stalin the national and local, between past and present political and cultural representations.

Soviet, national, local?

In concluding his analysis of the establishment of Stalin's authority as a national father of the Soviet Union, and its continuation after his death, John Schoeberlein poses a critique of the idea held by many, particularly western, observers that if only people knew what had *really* happened during his reign, they would reject Stalinist authority. The above analysis supports Schoeberlein's argument that this is a simplification of the multiplicity of, often ambivalent, feelings that people are capable of having towards (national) father figures.[15]

Despite efforts to the contrary, in the Stalin museum we are still told of a complex figure that holds the potential to be both Soviet and national, ruthless and religious, powerful and poetic. Behind the new historical truths articulated through the additions to the exhibition, alternative readings of Stalin still linger. Through the addition of "compromising" material to the original exhibition, the Museum director, the curators and the guides have drawn attention to inaccuracies and masked truths in the Soviet representation of its own history. However, these compromising facts do not necessarily compromise a parallel narrative available through the exhibited objects: one that views Stalin as a Georgian national displaying Georgian virtues also highly valued in independent Georgia. It is these virtues, amongst other factors, I suggest, that cause certain ambivalences towards Stalin on the part of the staff in the Museum, and which are illustrative of the more general ambivalence expressed among the *gorelebi* – and to some extent Georgians in a wider sense.

The unilateral fusion of Stalin with the Soviet regime, national suppression, and contemporary Russian aggression, which was evident in the government comments to the removal of the Stalin monument, is not cast in stone. Stalin as a figure embodies a multiplicity of significations – and as we saw from the conversations with the staff in the Museum, at times even for one and the same person. To a number of people, he is associated not only with the Soviet era, dictatorship and ruthlessness, but also Georgian national symbols such as Orthodoxy, romantic poetry, and grandeur and victory against all odds. In a political and cultural context pervaded by a close-to indisputable value of the nation and its myths and

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[15] John S. Schoeberlein: Doubtful dead fathers and musical corpses. What to do with the dead Stalin, Lenin, and Tsar Nicholas?. In: John Borneman (ed.): Death of the father. An anthropology of the end in political authority. New York 2004, pp. 201–219; see also John Borneman: Introduction. Theorizing regime ends. In: id. (ed.): Death of the father. An anthropology of the end in political authority. New York 2004, pp. 1–31.

symbols, one of these stories – the "positive side" of history as one of the muse-um guides described it – is now and then more appealing than the other. Hence, what I have tried to show in this chapter is that rather than an automatic fusion between Stalin and the repressive regime of the Soviet era, a practice of "splitting" the two is also prevalent.

On the one hand, none of the people with whom I discussed Stalin was com-pletely unaware of his deeds and the consequences of his political reign. On the other hand, the Stalin that had embodied the Soviet regime was also a Georgian national displaying key features of Georgianness, and in a sense, his greatness on the world scene, was the greatness of a Georgian. Uncomfortable as it was to many, such as Nino and the young guides in the Museum, as a figure he was also deeply connected to national and local symbols and sentiments. In some situations, then, splitting Stalin the politician from Stalin the local and national, allowed for a kind of purification. Not just of Stalin, but perhaps even more so, of the local and na-tional communities he also embodied. In that sense, the expressed ambivalence towards Stalin and the consequent challenge of completely delegitimizing him as a political and cultural figure in Georgia, may very well represent a deep reverence for local and national myths, symbols and identity rather than the opposite.

Malkhaz Toria

Historical debates and the Likhni declaration as a decisive event in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict

Introduction: The history of the end and the beginning

This chapter focusses on some aspects of the emergence of the separatist movement in the Abkhazia region of Georgia in the late 1980s when no one could yet predict the collapse of the Soviet Union and, the eventual creation of two de-facto states within the territory of contemporary Georgia. This is the time when ethnic Georgians from the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali (those people who have now lived for more than two decades in camps as internally displaced persons [IDPs] and are still longing for their lost homeland) could not even imagine that they would be expelled from their towns and villages. Yet something was already in the air. Everyone felt that some kind of changes were coming which would affect all of them.

This premonition of things changing brings to mind Siegfried Kracauer's understanding of history. In his work "History. The last things before the last" he writes about the fluidity of ideas and ideologies, about their "nascent state", when ideas have not yet been institutionalized and cast into rigid belief systems. His focus is on the disputes and struggles for supremacy that take place at this stage and on the many open paths that history eventually did not take.[1]

In this chapter, I am concerned with the end of a grand ideological system and the beginning of something new, the "nascent state" of the so-called post-Soviet period that set off clashes along ethnic lines in many former Soviet republics. However, this new reality was still largely defined by the old imperial system which would soon turn into a legacy that often was more powerful than the actual empire itself. I therefore call this part of the chapter a "history of the end and the beginning" in order to address ruptures and continuities at the same time. Several

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[1] "[M]y interest lies on the nascent state of the great ideological movements, that period when they were not yet institutionalized but still competed with other ideas for supremacy. And it centers not so much on the course followed by the triumphant ideologies in the process as on the issues in dispute at the time of their emergence. I should even say that it revolves primarily around the disputes themselves, with the emphasis on those possibilities which history did not see fit to explore. […] Once a vision becomes an institution, clouds of dust gather about it, blurring its contours and contents. The history of ideas is a history of misunderstandings." Siegfried Kracauer: History. The last things before the last. Princeton 2013, pp. 6–7.

aspects of these ruptures and continuities will be explored in the context of contested Georgian and Abkhazian historical narratives which conceptually framed concrete political events in the wake of the agony of the Soviet empire.

The Likhni declaration

On 18 March 1989, a warm and sunny Saturday, thousands of ethnic Abkhazians gathered in the village of Likhni in the Abkhazia region of Soviet Georgia. In this mass rally, almost all local Soviet and party *nomenklatura* participated, including the first secretary of the Abkhaz regional committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Boris Adleiba, and the head of the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Socialist Republic of Abkhazia, Valerian Kobakhia. Participants of the Likhni demonstration sent a signed appeal (now referred to by official Abkhaz historiography as the declaration of independence of the Abkhaz people) to the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. According to this letter, Abkhaz identity was under threat of vanishing, and the only viable way out could be the changing of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and its transformation into a separate Soviet republic within the Soviet Union. In the appeal, Abkhazians blamed Georgians for deviation from "Leninist national policy" and demanded from the Kremlin to correct the "mistake" made by the Soviets in 1931, when Abkhazia lost its status as a separate Soviet republic and, against the "will of the Abkhaz people", was integrated into the Soviet Republic of Georgia as an autonomous entity.[2]

Generally, the relationship between Georgians and Abkhazians had not been free of tensions during the Soviet period. "In 1957, 1967, and 1977, Abkhaz cultural movements and parts of the intelligentsia (and some high-ranking Communist Party functionaries in 1977) requested that Moscow integrate Abkhazia into the territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The Soviet leadership turned down the Abkhazians' request each time, but compensated them by putting together a packet of concessions and increased regional investment."[3]

However, in March 1989 the situation was different. The Soviet policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the 1980s had created a public space where alternative voices could be heard alongside official ideology. This opened windows of opportunity

[2] On the Likhni demonstration, see Igor Marikhuba: Abkhaziia v Sovetskuiu epokhu. Vol. 1: Abkhazskie pisma (1947–1989). Sbornik dokumentov. Sukhum 1994, pp. 450–462; Aslan Avidzba: Abkhaziia i Gruziia. Zavtra byla voina (ob Abkhazo-Gruzinskikh otnosheniiakh v 1988–1992 gody). Sukhum 2012, pp. 48–69; Vladimir Zakharov et al. (eds.): Konflikty v Abkhazii i Iuzhnoi Osetii. Dokumenty 1989–2006 gg. Moscow 2007, pp. 109–115; Naala Avidzba: Lykhny 1989 goda. 36 tysiach za svobodu Abkhazii, Sputnik Abkhaziia (18. 3. 2016), https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20160318/1017585741.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[3] Christoph Zürcher: Georgia's time of troubles, 1989–1993. In: Bruno Coppieters/Robert Legvold: Statehood and security. Georgia after the Rose Revolution. Cambridge, MA 2005, p. 87.

for nationalistic and secessionist movements within the Soviet Union which finally led to its dissolution in 1991. The collapse of the Soviet empire in turn triggered irredentist demands within some of the successor states, including Georgia.

The reactions of the local Georgian intelligentsia to the Likhni declaration were immediate and furious. They played a significant role not only in escalating the situation in the region but also in intensifying the Georgian national movement throughout the whole Soviet republic of Georgia. Georgians perceived the appeal as a clear manifestation of the Abkhazians' intention to be the only masters of the region and to subjugate "autochthonous Georgians". A first Georgian counter rally was initiated by the members of the "Society of Ilia Chavchavadze"[4] and included the emerging leaders of the new Georgian national movement (Merab Kostava, Zurab Chavchavadze) and their local allies in the Abkhazia region (Vova Vekua, Nugzar Mgaloblishvili, Boris Kakubava and others).

Meanwhile, Abkhaz irredentists published the printed version of the declaration in official newspapers of the regional committee of the Georgian Communist Party, such as "Apsny Kapsh" ("Red Abkhazia") and "Sovetskaia Abkhaziia" ("Soviet Abkhazia"). This promptly led to a deterioration of the situation. On 25 March 1989, a huge rally of the Georgian community in Abkhazia with participation of the national movement leaders from Tbilisi was held in the capital of Abkhazia, Sokhumi. Speakers condemned the separatist leaders and called upon their Abkhaz "brothers" to keep and maintain the historical friendship between Georgians and Abkhazians. What was more important, they blamed "imperial policy" of the Kremlin for escalating the situation and backing the Abkhaz separatists.

In response, the Abkhaz public political forum *Aidgilari* (Unity) sent a couple of letters to Moscow blaming Georgians for escalating the situation.[5] Its members asked the Kremlin to intervene and take control of the situation. The attempt of Tbilisi activists to ease the situation apparently failed. Even worse, in July 1989 violent clashes ensued between the two ethnic groups, killing dozens and injuring hundreds on both sides. Eventually the Soviet government managed to stop further escalation. But in 1992 armed conflict broke out again, leading to all-out war and the ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of the Georgian population. But it should be remembered that 1992 was not the beginning of the conflict. The decisive event that tipped the balance between the two ethnic groups was the Likhni declaration of 1989.

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[4] The journalist, lawyer and public figure, praised as "the father" of the Georgian nation and later canonized as Saint Ilia the Righteous by the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1987, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907), was a decisive actor in shaping the contours of a newly emerging Georgian national-cultural movement in the second half of the 19th century. He designed the trinity of national values "language, fatherland, faith", which eventually became a pillar and guiding principle of modern Georgian national identity. He was one of the key founders of many public, cultural and educational organizations, such as the "Society for the spreading of literacy among Georgians", the "Historical-Ethnographical Society of Georgia" and "The Dramatic Society".

[5] Marikhuba: Abkhaziia (see note 2).

Public debates, contested narratives, and the instrumentalization of the past

When reading the substantial amount of materials dedicated to the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, one can see how according to common sense, as Rogers Brubaker would call it, it is usually described as a conflict between ethnic groups. But, as Brubaker specifies, this "ethnic common sense" is wrong, because it "is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*".[6]

Since 1923, according to Terry Martin, the Soviet state systematically promoted the "distinctive national identity and national self-consciousness of its non-Russian populations. It did this not only through the formation of national territories staffed by national elites using their own national languages but also through the aggressive promotion of symbolic markers of national identity: national folklore, museums, dress, food, costumes, opera, poets, progressive historical events, and classic literary works."[7] Martin coined the term "affirmative action empire" for this kind of nationalities policy, which "represents an attempt to capture the paradoxical nature of the multi-ethnic Soviet state: an extraordinarily invasive, centralized, and violent state formally structured as a federation of sovereign nations".[8]

David Laitin defined three key patterns of the Soviet modes of incorporation of non-Russians into the Soviet state.[9] The so-called "most-favored-lord" model allowed members of the various nationalities to pursue careers at the imperial center under equal conditions. Within this model, it was relatively easy to integrate into the metropolitan culture and the dominant group. Mostly Ukrainians would fit into this pattern. The second, "colonial" model restricted non-Russians, for instance Kazakhs, to pursue careers at the center but permitted them to represent and be the appointed mediators of central rule at the periphery. The third model allowed titular nationals to dominate all governmental structures and positions within the relevant Soviet republic. They were distinguished by a high degree of cultural integrity and autonomy.[10] Georgians can be considered within this last model, despite the famous exceptions of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze and a few others who had made successful careers at the center. Georgians constituted the majority of the party leadership, the technical, economic and administrative cadres, and the key staff in the academic and scientific sectors in the Georgian Soviet Republic.

Abkhazians were initially classified as an eastern or "backward" nationality in the Soviet Union and were only granted national autonomy and the status of a

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  6 Rogers Brubaker: Ethnicity without groups. Cambridge, MA 2004, pp. 165–166 (italics in original).
  7 Terry Martin: The affirmative action empire. Nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939. Cambridge, MA 2001, p. 13.
  8 Ibid., p. 20.
  9 David Laitin: Identity in formation. The Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad. Ithaca 1998.
 10 Laurence Broers: "David and Goliath" and "Georgians in the Kremlin". A post-colonial perspective on conflict in post-Soviet Georgia. In: CAS 28 (2009) 2, pp. 99–118, here: pp. 103–104.

"second-order titular nation" within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia.[11] In the 1980s, this autonomous status was one of the key factors legitimizing the demands of the irredentists. As Svante Cornell notes, autonomous institutions promote and strengthen the identity of local groups. An autonomous region has borders and governing institutions, which can serve as a base for ethnic mobilization. Although the Soviet state never actually permitted real autonomy, autonomous regions did possess mechanisms for establishing governing, educational, and academic institutions and for supporting local political elites as representatives of the autonomous republic's population, who would aspire to accumulate full control over a region and support ethnic mobilization.[12]

Creation of national histories was an integral part of the Soviet nationalities policy. The declared right for separate nations within the Soviet Union to "flourish" provided a legitimization for the local intelligentsia in the union republics to produce their own historiography and historical narratives. These local national projects, however, were not supposed to contradict the broader Soviet ideals of merging all Soviet people and erasing "all historical, traditional, legal and linguistic barriers that might impede the progression towards [the establishment of Communism]".[13]

Both Abkhaz and Georgian historians who witnessed or actively participated in the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s were heavily involved in cultivating ethnocentric and contested historical narratives that had emerged in the first decades of the 20th century.

The Georgian national narrative traditionally portrays Abkhazia as an integral part of Georgian territory, state and culture. Furthermore, Abkhazians are treated as culturally close to Georgians or even of Georgian origin. Their alienation started thanks to tsarist and then Soviet Russian policies that aimed to grab and absorb this historical Georgian region.[14] The Abkhaz narrative, however, records a very different story. The Georgian-Abkhaz relationship is seen as one of permanent struggle, disputes and clashes of Abkhazians with ethnic Georgian rivals. Accordingly, Abkhaz historians claim that Abkhazia was never part of Georgia and that ethnic Georgians came to Abkhazia only in the wake of the colonization

[11] Timothy Blauvelt: "From words to action". Nationality policy in Soviet Abkhazia (1921–1938). In: Stephen Jones: The making of modern Georgia, 1918–2012. The first Georgian republic and its successors. London/New York 2014, pp. 232–262; Georgi Derluguian: The tale of two resorts: Abkhazia and Ajara before and since the Soviet collapse. In: Beverly Crawford/Ronnie D. Lipschutz (eds.): The myth of "ethnic conflict". Politics, economics, and "cultural" violence. Berkeley 1998, pp. 261–292.
[12] Svante Cornell: Autonomy as a source of conflict. Caucasian conflicts in theoretical perspective. Baltimore 2002, pp. 253–256.
[13] J. W. R. Parsons: National integration in Soviet Georgia. In: Soviet Studies 34 (1982) 4, pp. 547–569, here: p. 547.
[14] Simon Janašia: Ap'xazt'a samep'os istoriidan. Šromebi. Vol. 1. Tbilisi 1952; Zurab Papaskiri: Ap'xazeti sak'art'veloa. Tbilisi 1998; id.: Abkhaziia. Istoriia bez falsifikatsii. Tbilisi 2010; id.: Moia Abkhaziia. Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia. Tbilisi 2012; Mariam Lort'k'ipaniże: Ap'xazebi da ap'xazet'i. Tbilisi 1990; Pavle Ingoroqva: Giorgi Merč'ule – K'art'veli mcerali meat'e saukunisa. Tbilisi 1954; Meri Inaże: Żveli kolxet'is istoriis sakit'xebi. Tbilisi 1999.

of the region. They claim that Georgian historians distort their past and are trying to rob the Abkhaz people of their historical memory.[15]

Questions about prehistoric settlements in the region are playing a prominent role in the debates between the two camps. Representatives of both sides claimed (and are still claiming) ethnic ownership of this territory since times immemorial, projecting their respective national histories over many millennia into the past.

This sort of "memory project"[16] and invention of tradition turned into a "group-making" competition in which historiography was not the only tool used in the struggle. It was accompanied by various other activities which fostered a sense of belonging together, an understanding of being part of a distinctive group, what Brubaker called "groupness as an event".[17] In Abkhazia, a classic example of groupness achieved through an event was the aforementioned Likhni demonstration and its aftermath.

However, according to Zurab Papaskiri, one of the key participants in these events and now professor of history at Sokhumi State University in exile, the main driving force behind the struggle between Abkhazians and Georgians were various academic and cultural institutions.[18] As mentioned before, autonomous regions in the Soviet Union were relatively free in cultural and intellectual matters and enjoyed some leeway in local governance as well. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, academic institutions and other autonomous structures provided the main infrastructure for the struggle between the Abkhazian and Georgian national projects. For instance, major centers for the Abkhaz irredentist movement were the "Abkhaz Branch of the Writers Union of Georgia" (chaired by Aleksei Gogua, the leader of *Aidgilari*) and the "Abkhaz Institute of Language, Literature, and History of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia". The director of the latter since 1988 was Vladislav Ardzinba who later became the leader of the separatist movement and served as the first president of the de-facto Abkhaz state after the war of 1992/1993 had come to an end.

From the mid-1980s onwards, the Abkhaz State University became the main intellectual and political battleground in a struggle which eventually would lead

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[15] Teimuraz Achugba: Etnicheskaia istoriia Abkhazov XIX–XX vv. Etnopoliticheskie i migrat-sionnye aspekti. Sukhumi 2010; Semen Ashkhatsava: Puti razvitiia Abkhazskoi istorii. Sukhumi 1925; Zurab Anchabadze: Iz istorii srednevekovoi Abkhazii. Sukhumi 1959; Ocherk etnicheskoi istorii Abkhazskogo naroda. Sukhumi 1976; Shalva Inal-Ipa: Abkhazi. Sukhumi 1965; Simon Basaria: Abkhaziia v geograficheskom, etnograficheskom i ekonomicheskom otnoshenii. Sukhumi 1923; Oleg Bgazhba/Stanislav Lakoba: Istoriia Abkhazii. S drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei. Uchebnik dlia 10–11 klassov obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchebnykh zavedenii. Sukhumi 2006; Oleg Bgazhba/Stanislav Lakoba: Istoriia Abkhazii. S drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei. Sukhumi 2007; Stanilav Lakoba (ed.): Istoriia Abkhazii. Uchebnoe posobie. Sukhumi 1991; id.: Stoletnaia voina Gruzii protiv Abkhazii. Gagra 1993.
[16] Iwona Zarecka: Frames of remembrance. The dynamics of collective memory. Piscataway 2007.
[17] "Treating groupness as variable and contingent rather than fixed and given, phases of extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity […] allows us to treat group-ness as an event, as something that 'happens'". Brubaker: Ethnicity (see note 6), p. 168.
[18] Papaskiri: Abkhaziia (see note 14).

to real armed conflict in the early 1990s.[19] In that period the university fell under the complete control of ethnic Abkhaz activists. Since 1984 its professoriate consisted mainly of ethnocentric Abkhaz scholars who organized various events that helped to stimulate irredentist sentiments.[20] One of these events, which became a landmark in the struggle between the two national projects and which is highly relevant for this chapter, was a discussion in March 1987 about the first history textbook for university students, written by Zurab Anchabadze, Giorgi Dzidzaria, and Arvelod Kuprava. Abkhaz scholars were particularly annoyed about the chapter dedicated to the history of medieval Abkhazia. It was authored by Anchabadze, a famous ethnic Abkhaz historian, who described medieval Abkhazia as an integral part of the medieval Georgian cultural, religious, and political world. According to Zurab Papaskiri, the discussion about the textbook in 1987 resembled more a show trial than a proper academic debate. But still, he and his colleagues, including George Anchabadze, the son of Zurab Anchabadze, who is also a historian, managed to defend themselves from the "attacks of representatives of Abkhaz separatist historiography".[21]

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[19] Initially established as Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute in 1932, it was transformed into Abkhaz State University in 1979. After the Likhni declaration and the events of 1989, the Georgian section of the university with its professors and students seceded and created the Sokhumi branch of Tbilisi State University. That institution now operates in Tbilisi after the end of the war in 1993. In 2007, it was renamed Sokhumi State University.

[20] Zakharov et al. (eds.): Konflikty (see note 2), pp. 115–119; Avidzba: Abkhaziia (see note 2), pp. 70–103.

[21] Papaskiri: Abkhaziia (see note 14), pp. 322–323. I interviewed George Anchabadze about the textbook discussion. He is currently professor at Ilia State University in Tbilisi and a public figure prominent for his initiatives in the area of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict resolution. Moreover, he is well respected in contemporary Abkhazia and frequently visits Sokhumi to deliver lectures. About the textbook struggle in the 1980s he told me: "In 1984 when my father suddenly passed away, he left the manuscript of the first textbook ever in the history of Abkhazia. The authors were Abkhaz historians of the older generation including him, Giorgi Dzidzaria and Arvelod Kuprava. The manuscript was under review and about to be issued at Sokhumi State University with the support of the Ministry of Education of Soviet Georgia. However, suddenly reproaches against this book emerged among both the Georgian and the Abkhaz intelligentsia. During that time, when the Soviet Union was still a stable state, this kind of phenomenon seemed very unusual. At the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, a special editorial board was created, consisting of Abkhaz and Georgian historians, including me. Georgians and Abkhazians had radically different views on this book. Georgians claimed that there is no need to write a separate history of Abkhazia, since Abkhazia is a part of Georgia. Apart from this, they did not like certain passages in the manuscript reflecting processes not necessarily represented within the history of Georgia. Abkhazians argued that there was more than enough space devoted to the relationship of Abkhazians with Georgians and the history of Georgia generally. Eventually, the two groups agreed only on one issue: The publication of the book should be cancelled. I travelled back and forth between Tbilisi and Sokhumi with the manuscript and discussed various issues with historians from both sides. While talking with Georgians I tried to defend the Abkhazians' arguments and I provided arguments to support the Georgians' position when I met Abkhazian historians. Finally, the book was published as planned without any corrections." Malkhaz Toria: Remembering homeland in exile. Recollections of IDPs from the Abkhazia region of Georgia. In: JEMIE 14 (2015) 1, pp. 48–70, here: p. 63.

The Abkhaz scholars of the university had their own academic newspaper, "Abkhazskii universitet" ("Abkhaz University"), which became a useful tool for separatist propaganda. For example, they printed an interview with Georgii Turchaninov, a famous Russian philologist from Leningrad, in which he described how he was prevented from publishing his sensational discoveries about the Abkhaz script because Tbilisi did not want them to be public. He was referring to an incident in the 1960s when he had claimed that the Abkhazians had been the creators of the very first alphabet in the world. Now on the pages of "Abkhazskii universitet" he repeated his point that the Abkhazians gave the skill of writing to humankind at the beginning of the third millennium BC. While today this sounds very much like quack science, it was this kind of historical invention and identity rhetoric that fueled Abkhaz ethnocentrism at the time.[22]

The Georgian community in Abkhazia in the meanwhile was increasingly affected by the intensification of the Georgian national movement. This was particularly noticeable among the Georgian professors and students at Abkhaz State University. The Georgian students established their own journal, "Tskhumi" (Medieval Georgian name of Sukhumi), which came out in Georgian. It covered various sensitive issues in history, politics, and literature. Students and some lecturers also started openly to propagate ideas of national freedom on its pages. Several articles addressed the contested and highly sensitive question of the ethnicity of the ancient population in the Abkhazia region. Particularly irritating for Abkhazians was a special issue of the journal dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the declaration of Georgia's independence in 1918.[23]

Incendiary articles, historical arguments and similar debates provided the atmospheric backdrop to the Likhni rally. After this event, the situation started to deteriorate dramatically. Georgian students and professors demanded from the rector of Abkhaz State University, the ethnic Abkhaz Aleko Gvaramia, who had signed the letter, to denounce it or step down from his position. The local and central governments tried to ease the situation but without any success. Soon the idea emerged to split off the Georgian section of Abkhaz State University and to establish it as a branch of Tbilisi State University. On 14 May 1989, the central government issued a decree to this effect. This highly political act triggered massive protests by Abkhazians who saw it as an attempt of the Georgian nationalists to take control of the region. On 15/16 July 1989, an agitated crowd of Abkhazians attacked the examination commission of the newly opened university branch, which was located in the building of the Georgian high school in Sokhumi. This led to the aforementioned massive interethnic clashes with multiple casualties. The dramatic events, the attacks and counterattacks drastically increased group-

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[22] Giorgii Turchaninov: Pamiatniki pis'ma i iazyki narodov Kavkaza i vostochnoi Evropy. Leningrad 1971; Asida Kvitsiniia. "Opasnoe" otkrytie lingvista Turchaninova. In: Sputnik Abkhaziia (4. 4. 2017), https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20170404/1020766565/opasnoe-otkrytie-lingvista-turchaninova.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[23] Papaskiri: Abkhaziia (see note 14), pp. 324–327.

ness among both conflicting sides, proving that, as Brubaker wrote, "deliberate violence, undertaken as a strategy of provocation, often by a very small number of persons, can sometimes be an exceptionally effective strategy of group-making".[24]

Conclusion

It is still an open question how to frame the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Was or is it something like an endemic feature of traditionally opposed ethnic groups? This vision is actively cultivated in current Abkhaz historical discourse. Or was it mainly the explosion of a mine planted by Russia in order to weaken Georgia and frustrate any attempt to escape from Russian domination? This is the Georgian version according to which Abkhazians were tricked into starting a war with their Georgian brothers. This view suggests an explanatory framework that, according to Laurence Broers, reveals the post-colonial nature of these clashes: "This framework resonates strongly with narratives of these conflicts long-circulating in Georgia, asserting that these are in fact post-colonial wars waged by Russia on Georgia in revenge for Georgia's self-determination as an independent, democratic and determinedly Atlanticist state".[25] Statements about Russia's support of the separatist movement and its role in escalating the violence would not be surprising. Its military presence in this breakaway region of Georgia today speaks for itself.

The picture is more complex, however, and it is not enough to depict the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict as a straightforward black and white affair. As Brubaker pointed out, "'spin' put on conflicts by participants may conceal as much as it reveals". The "representation of conflicts as conflicts between ethnic or national groups may obscure the interests at stake and the dynamics involved. What is represented as ethnic conflict or ethnic war […] may have as much or more to do with thuggery, warlordship, opportunistic looting and black-market profiteering than with ethnicity."[26] Of course, the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was not coming out of the blue. Tensions, not least about the interpretation of the region's history, have occurred in the past. But it is obvious that in 1989 "group crystallization and polarization were the *result* of violence, not the cause".[27] The Likhni rally and its aftermath was the decisive event that led to this development.

In addition to the street violence, we should also consider the "reckless behavior" of politicians and entrepreneurs from both sides, as one of my respondents called it during interviews that I conducted with Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia in 2015. They acted highly irresponsibly at the time, as if there would not be any consequences of their decisions. Other respondents mentioned that initially nobody was taking this conflict seriously, but then devastation and war followed.

[24] Brubaker: Ethnicity (see note 6), p. 171.
[25] Broers: David (see note 10), p. 99.
[26] Brubaker: Ethnicity (see note 6), pp. 18–19.
[27] Ibid., p. 14 (italics from the author).

They also identified another contributing factor to the escalation of the situation, namely the high level of corruption among the local *nomenklatura* on both sides who tried to split various segments of society and the economy along ethnic lines, including even the soccer team of Sokhumi. Today's reality looks rather bleak. The official memory politics in the de facto state of Abkhazia traces the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict back to the Middle Ages and leaves no space for reconciliation. This interpretation can be found both in high school history textbooks and in academic works by Abkhaz scholars. The erasure of the mutually enriching and persistent experience of living together over many centuries in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural region is the main purpose of these works.

Nutsa Batiashvili

The liminal: Colonial identity on the margins of an empire

Introduction: The liminal

"For many centuries this small country […] has endured many wars. Every conflict, war or bloodshed took place to preserve Georgia as a distinguished country in the world and to protect its distinguished 'language, homeland and faith' […]. Our cultural heritage, traditions and national spirit have saved us from evaporating from the surface of the earth. There were in Georgia those years of misery that have left us lagging behind any Western European state. It was exactly in those Soviet years that our traditional progress was halted and all the exits to freedom were locked. Georgia is and will remain one of the most important countries in the Caucasus, on the edge of Europe and Asia. It frequently attracts attention from not only Asian countries, but more frequently from Europe. Because of all these reasons and facts, it is necessary that we bring changes to our country, for our own good. While it may take Georgia many decades to develop to the level of a European country, we may never manage this. In all of this the only thing to be 'blamed' is our culture."

(Tekle, 18 years old, excerpt from a 2011 essay on "tradition and modernity")

I want to take this excerpt from an essay written by an 18-year-old Georgian girl, as a point of departure to explore representations and identities in the colonial and postcolonial Georgia. In particular, I want to use this somewhat infantile and yet complex iteration of the Georgian collective selfhood as a suture that holds together political anxieties of modern Georgian statehood and that of the 19th century colonial elite. My point in doing so is to argue several things: first, to point to the forms of identification that emerge as a result of a colony-empire relationship and as a result of being (in Tekle's words) "on the edge" of distinct geographies; second, to demonstrate the extent to which existing patterns of political self-reflection are entrenched in the experiences of colonial subjectivity.

The quote above provides an ample beginning for the questions I intend to pose here, first and foremost because it is packed with uncertainties and anxieties that are so prevalent to the Georgian sense of nationhood in the 21st century and that are so entangled with the unsettlements that Georgia had gone through since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But most importantly, these words deserve attention not so much as unique reflections of the political attitudes of an 18-year-old, but

as a wider echo of well-established configurations and frameworks of political self-imagination. The linkages here between "wars", "cultural heritage", averted annihilation, "lagging behind Western European countries", sense of the geographic importance, or the culture that can be "blamed" for all kinds of failures, are neither self-evident nor driven by any kind of rational logic. Rather these linkages emerge as reiterations of rhetorical scripts and formulas that are culturally patterned and discursively enforced. One task of this chapter is to explain such chains of cultural reasoning and to make sense of this "play of différance" in a Derridian sense,[1] that we see in Tekle's engagement of "other", her sense of the frontier and her gaze to the "imaginative horizon"[2] of the Western European.

"Identification", writes Stuart Hall in his celebrated work on cultural identity, "is […] a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an overdetermination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play' of différance […]. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects'".[3] In Hall's understanding identities are not finished, fixed essences but rather ongoing processes of historical and cultural production that are formed as "points of temporary attachment".[4]

Hall's version of identity is rather elucidating when thinking about forms of political self-imagination in Georgian national discourse. There is almost in any form of self-representation a constant reiteration of what Georgianness "lacks" or what it possesses too much of, what it needs to attain, "develop" or transform into. In these forms of representation, the mythic past always manifests itself as an ideal instantiation of pure, true Georgianness while the present is a condition of incompleteness, of the "not-yets" or in-betweenness of distinct states, in which a nation is always in the process of becoming and unbecoming, be it Soviet or post-Soviet, modernized or backward, European or Asian, developing or developed. This is why in Tekle's words "the national spirit", something that is a deeply entrenched essence of Georgianness, has saved the nation from annihilation, but it is also something that has gone dormant during some periods. The Soviet Union is understood as one of these historical moments; it had the nation "lagging behind" European countries, and this degeneration, in Tekle's quote, is equated with the "traditional progress" being halted.

There is nothing odd about the logic that invents "traditional progress" and then assimilates it with Europeanization. More paradoxical, however, is the logic by which cultural essence is something that saves the nation "from evaporating

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[1] Jacques Derrida: La "différance". In: BSPh 62 (1968) 3, pp. 73–101.
[2] Vincent Crapanzano: Imaginative horizons. An essay in literary-philosophical anthropology. Chicago 2004.
[3] Stuart Hall: Introduction. Who needs "identity"?. In: id./Paul du Gay (eds.): Questions of cultural identity. London 2000, pp. 15–30.
[4] Ibid., p. 19.

from the surface of the earth" and at the same time is the reason to "be blamed" for its civilizational failures. Anthropologists often make sense of these discursive inconsistencies in terms of uncertainties and ambiguities that become so palpable in times of transition and transformation. There is surely an ambiguity in Tekle's as well as in almost all variants of abstract political reasoning, but only in so far as we fail to understand the nodes that tie these utterances into culturally meaningful semiotic structures.

Tekle's invocation is an instantiation of a specific form of discourse that we see enacted in public discussions, political speeches, open correspondences, and private conversations. A genre that signifies what I refer to as a subjective experience of colonial liminality can be meaningfully related to the evolving registers of discourse in the 19th-century media and literary texts where we see first attempts to define the contours of the national public and to position this public in relation to the colonial periphery, imperial centre and the horizons beyond it.

The notion of liminality here builds mainly on Victor Turner's thinking about stages of "in-betweenness", who in turn reflects on Van Gennep's frame of analysis on rites of passages.[5] Turner takes the model of society as a "structure of positions" and defines a period of margin or "liminality" as "interstructural situation". While his analysis targets ritual processes, I want to use his ideas to examine the condition of liminality in the discursive construction of nationhood and nation-making.

What is key to the period of margin and liminality is that the subject exists in a condition of a paradox while it is becoming something new – member of different age group, acquiring new status, moving up the hierarchy, etc.; it has neither fully escaped the old status, nor fully acquired the new one. As such the subject remains in the state of deferral and subsequently in a perpetual mode of self-comparison. This in a sense is somewhat natural to the human condition, we are constantly sensing some kind of incompleteness and thus movement toward fuller, more complete, rounded versions of ourselves. The sense and the state of liminality are inherently relational. They entail certain kinds of addressivity to others and relation to otherness by which the self is conceived and articulated. Yet, what is most conceptually attractive in this condition of in-betweenness, in terms of identity formation, is that it entails the co-presence of otherness within oneself. Ambiguity is the emanation of this relation of simultaneity between self and other.

I am chasing this conceptual paradigm, because I am interested in the moment of subjective formation that is most acutely present in the rhetorical articulations of national identity. And if one looks into the Georgian discourse on polity and nationhood, not just among young Georgians like Tekle, but from a taxi driver to a statesperson, it is the tension between two states of being – of becoming and

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[5] Victor Turner: Betwixt and between. The liminal period in rites de passage. In: Arthur C. Lehmann/James E. Myers: Magic, witchcraft, and religion. An anthropological study of the supernatural. Palo Alto 1985, pp. 46–55.

unbecoming, of lack and overdetermination – that shapes modern understandings of nationhood.

The question is how can we account for such a configuration of national self-identification? What kinds of cultural contexts and social formations does it embody? And what are the ideal objects or the imagined states in relation to which the liminality, the in-betweenness is experienced? Both the period of Russian imperial rule and the Soviet regime have played a crucial role in forming and crystalizing the mythic paradigms that sustain the national discourse on collective identity, but most importantly have provided institutional structures, regimes of power and of power-knowledge within which Georgians were distinctly placed and which in turn harnessed particular forms of self-representation.

Derailed path of development

There are of course very immediate contexts and contingencies that inform the visions of Georgia's "development", its Soviet past and its European future and these need to be addressed before going into the semantic analysis of the discursive schemas that underlie political representations of Georgianness.

Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration became emblematic of the politics of "development" under Mikheil Saakashvili's administration since the 2003 Rose Revolution, among other things as a part of the national project geared toward the country's political and cultural de-Sovietization. Some saw the pro-European agenda as a newly invented goal that marked the beginning of a new post-Soviet era, more importantly of the effort to detach Georgia from the Russian orbit. In an attempt to define the Rose Revolution as a major move toward the West and away from Russia, President Saakashvili once commented that immediately after President Shevardnadze's resignation Russians "started to panic because of the enthusiasm in the West. They thought that they had missed something and that they had lost Georgia to the Americans."[6]

But Georgians, especially the political and intellectual elite that tried to promote the idea of Georgia's European belonging, did not see it as a newly invented mission, but rather as a return to Georgia's natural path of development. As one of Saakashvili's former team members noted once: "Europe is our natural place […]. European values are historically Georgian values […]. Georgia had always been part of the European family and was developing along with it. Unfortunately, during the Soviet Union Georgia digressed from the course of European development. The signs of European civilization are clearly present in the Georgia of the 1920s. In the 19th century and before, Georgia was very close to European culture and civilization. The Soviet Union had us entirely disassociated from these processes of development and we had been ripped away from our natural condi-

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[6] Zurab Karumidze/James V. Wertsch: Enough!. The Rose Revolution in the republic of Georgia, 2003. New York 2005, p. 28.

tion."[7] It is hardly coincidental, that the framing of the historical processes is so identical in the interview given in 2014 by a political leader (two years after Saakashvili's team had lost the elections) and in a 2011 essay written by an 18-year-old student. Implicit schemas that couch modes of political reasoning are one of those mediums that are defined in terms of the work of culture, and while difference of political opinions and heterogeneity of perspectives is innate to the national landscape, the structures of meanings and the logic of argumentation through which distinct opinions are constructed more often than not are shared across a broad spectrum of publics. In all these instances, Soviet occupation just as any other foreign intervention is understood as a suspension of Georgia's essential path of development. As a result, the current state is viewed as a deferral, a delay from what must and could have been a natural state of being.

At the opening exhibition of the NATO and EU centre, dedicated to the 1921 Soviet occupation of Georgia, the director of the centre, Nino Bolkvadze, remarked: "This is very important to us. As you are aware this is the day that removed Georgia from its national path of development for 70 years [...]. This was the day when the first Georgian republic was defeated, but fortunately, the enemy did not succeed and now we have returned to our historical path of development and this time we are as close to Europe as we have never been before."[8]

How Georgian historical consciousness entrenches a "natural path of development" within the European cultural and political landscape could be the topic of an entirely separate paper.[9] What is remarkable, however, is the sense of deferral that we see encroaching on the understanding of the nation's collective fate, as a result of which its relation to the present, to its ideal state of being is defined in terms of liminality. That Georgia is currently in the state of returning and recoiling was blatantly evident in the posters with quotes of Georgia's European path since the 19th century founding fathers that were put up nationwide on roads, streets, and highways upon the EU's 2017 decision to grant Georgia visa-free entrance to the Schengen area.

Of course, there are those who do not see the end point of Georgia's path of development anywhere near "the West", but rather define this movement as a return to the mythologized, pure and unadulterated forms of national essence. Such isolationist visions are conspicuously present in religious or ethno-nationalist rhetoric. But some have defined this anti-western sentiment in terms of a growing nihilism toward attainability of Georgia's European integration. As the authors of a recent volume about Georgia and Europe claim: "Nihilism toward Europe in

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[7] Giorgi Vašaže: Evrokavširšia č'veni bunebrivi adgili. In: Netgazet'i (19. 6. 2014), http://netgazeti.ge/news/32806/ (last accessed: 21. 7. 2020).

[8] Sabčot'a okupaciis dġisadmi mižġvnili gamop'ena (26. 2. 2018), http://old.infocenter.gov.ge/1744-sabtcotha-okupaciis-dghisadmi-midzghvnili-gamofena-sainformacio-centrshi.html (last accessed: 21. 7. 2020).

[9] Nutsa Batiashvili: The bivocal nation. Memory and identity on the edge of empire. London/New York 2018; Tamta Khalvashi: The horizons of Medea. Economies and cosmologies of dispossession in Georgia. In: JRAI 24 (2018) 4, pp. 1–22.

contemporary Georgia is nourished by our technological backwardness and a fear that we will never be equal to Europe."[10]

Between the frontiers

Although it may be useful to talk about "invented traditions" and conjured myths that guide the politics of modern nation-states, it is no less important to understand how exactly these inventions are linked to historical contexts. Because there is in fact some ground to the vision of 19th-century Georgia's European "path", not in an essentialist sense, of course, but as a gaze toward the West which was very palpably present in the colonial intelligentsia's rhetorical genres. One area where this was happening was the incipient public space of print media and feuilletons or political reviews, which served as one of the most effective venues for dispensing political imaginaries.

These texts are prolific in the ways in which they reveal the extending frontiers of the political thought in which European landscapes are reckoned as imaginative frontiers in Vincent Crapanzano's sense, as "horizons that extend from the insistent reality of the here and now into that operative space or time – the space-time – of the imaginary".[11] Just as for Crapanzano frontier is a conjured realm of elsewhere or elsewhen that allows us to experience the here and now from a different, "at times wrenching and painful" edge, it seems to me much the same way that Georgia's colonial elite was lured into the visions of the European political and cultural landscape as a horizon that, again in Crapanzano's words, postulated the beyond, offered possibilities, triggered "licit or illicit desires" with the incipient sense of a national public. The following excerpt, from an 1883 political review, seems particularly revealing in this sense: "Take any newspaper you want and read the stories about foreign countries: Irish won't abate until they gain full freedom for their island, in Hungary a party is founded that is trying to turn Hungary into a separate country […]. Czechs founded a university where Czech is the language of instruction. Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Montenegrins […] in short, everyone is trying to defend their nationhood and mark their trace in the history of humanity. Ireland for the Irish! Hungary for the Hungarians! They are shouting in Europe and, although not quite as loudly, their voices are accompanied by the murmuring of other peoples: Egypt for the Egyptians! India for the Indians!"[12]

With its pressing dialogism and demanding register this passage does not just tell a story of things happening elsewhere, but is insistent with its subliminally didactic, obliging lure, chasing its reader with a distressing picture of the world,

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[10] Giorgi Sabanadze/Emzar Jgerenaia (eds.): Europe as a teacher. Europe in the 19th-century Georgian press. Tbilisi 2017, p. 25.
[11] Crapanzano: Horizons (see note 2), p. 14.
[12] Ilia Čavčavaże: Polit'ikis mimoxilva. In: Iveria 2 (1883), p. 136.

appealing to a distant beyond in a way that should unsettle its addressees. Although not manifestly and blatantly, this passage is a play of différance, that engages in a critical self-evaluation through comparison to the "other". The mode in which it pronounces things happening elsewhere and the way this elsewhere must have transpired to the peripheral publics of the Russian Empire has to do with the dialectical tension that in Crapanzano's view exists between the irreality of the imaginary horizon and the reality of the here: "Our images, dreams, projections, calculations, and prophecies may give form and substance to the beyond, but, as they do, they destroy it; for, as they construct it, they assure its displacement. And that displacement rattles our assumptions about the reality from which our constructions are made. However foundational, it is not immune to our images of the beyond."[13]

This dialectical tension is critically relevant in the context of colonial publics, because it is through the self-comparison with the beyond, the distant other that colonial subjects are formed. Discourse on civilization is central to this process which in the case of the Russian Empire took its shape and form by comparing to and borrowing from other European empires.[14] As is well known the Caucasian landscape and the image of the Caucasian people occupied a special place in the imperial Russian consciousness. Susan Layton's work on how the literary and poetic imagery of the Caucasian mountaineers fed Russia's own version of Orientalism is particularly elucidating.[15]

The cultural and intellectual elite of 19th-century colonial Georgia found itself very intricately positioned in this civilizational discourse. As an educated nobility who had a distinct taste for high culture and a strong craving for privileged positions, representatives of the Georgian political and intellectual elite were comfortably aligned with the imperial centre.[16] At the same time, linguistically and culturally they had a strong sense of historicity and felt indissolubly tied to their own peripheral, uncivilized and unconsolidated sense of peoplehood. It is in this discourse, in this expression of dual alignment that we see a certain form of subjective in-betweenness and a sense of temporal liminality that give special character to the modes of self-identification. Paul Manning provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which the emergent Georgian intelligentsia defined itself as the medium between the state and the people and how it positioned itself

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[13] Crapanzano: Horizons (see note 2), p. 15.

[14] Daniel R. Brower/Edward J. Lazzerini: Russia's Orient. Imperial borderlands and peoples, 1700–1917. Bloomington 1997; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye: Russian Orientalism. Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration. New Haven 2010; Vera Tolz: Russia's own Orient. The politics of identity and Oriental studies in the late imperial and early Soviet periods. Oxford 2011.

[15] Susan Layton: Russian literature and empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy. Cambridge 1995; id.: Nineteenth-century Russian mythologies of Caucasian savagery. In: Brower/Lazzerini: Orient (see note 14), pp. 80–101.

[16] Ronald G. Suny: Russian rule and Caucasian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Georgian nobility and the Armenian bourgeoisie, 1801–1856. In: Nationalities Papers 7 (1979) 1, pp. 53–78.

"within [an] explicitly Orientalist and diffusionist model of civilizational progress".[17]

What most remarkably transpires from the mid to late 19th century press is the polemical nature of Georgian identity. In the second half of the 19th century, a new generation of intelligentsia emerged and attempted to dislodge the Orientalist paradigm in which the Georgian people and its peripheral status were marked as backward objects of Russia's civilizing mission. Images and ideas from beyond the Empire's western frontiers were imported into Georgia's political thinking as alternatives to what Russia had to offer, as a new horizon and as a model of self-construal. Europe became the other "other" which in its own right stood as the ultimate adjudicator of what true civilization meant.[18]

In 1872, Sergei Meskhi, one of the most pronounced and prolific writers of the 19th century, wrote about the "new orientation" of the new generation of Georgians: "The source for every kind of knowledge, education, betterment of life and success so far is Western Europe. All the peoples, including Russians, are drinking greedily from this source and are yielding from it everything that is the finest, that is comforting to man and furthers the advancement of the people's life. Only he can move forward his life and his country who has painstakingly and truly learned the life and the science of Europe."[19]

Meskhi's entire article serves to displace the old civilizational centre and to usurp the narrative of Russia being the source of progress. It engages in an encouraging and hopeful rhetoric according to which a single man educated and raised in Europe will bring more advantage to Georgia, "this [country] poor in effort but rich in nature […], than five or ten reared in the other country". What is meant by "the other country" is, of course, indisputably obvious, and this juxtaposition just as much disparages Russia as it impugns Georgia's own state of affairs.

Backward or not?

While Georgia's institutional and infrastructural backwardness was hardly contested, the nature of Georgianness itself – whether or not it belonged to the realms of the civilized or the backward – troubled and unsettled the political thinkers of the colonial intelligentsia. What Georgianness was about was a constant matter of negotiation and contestation, and these contests very much shaped the political discourse about peoplehood and nationhood. An 1886 feuilleton article, for example, which was remarkable for its frankness, brushes over centuries of historical

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[17] Paul Manning: Strangers in a strange land. Occidentalist publics and Orientalist geographies in nineteenth-century Georgian imaginaries. Brighton, MA 2012, p. 11.

[18] A good example for this is provided in Ilia Chavchavadze's prominent text "Letters of a Traveler", printed in 1864; see Paul Manning: Describing dialect and defining civilization in an early Georgian nationalist manifesto. Ilia Ch'avch'avadze's "Letters of a Traveler". In: RusR 63 (2004) 1, pp. 26–47.

[19] Sergei Mesxi: Axali mimart'uleba č'veni axal-t'aobisa. In: Droeba 41 (1872), p. 1.

events and makes dazzling generalizations in an attempt to place Georgians among the ranks of the civilized cultures: "Could it be that Georgians with their open-mindedness and purity of morals were superior to Arabs? We will respond to these kinds of questions bluntly: 'yes they were superior' [in Georgian: *diaġ uaġresobdneno*]. Recently, such famous scholars from beyond [the Russian Empire] as for instance Ernest Renan have been claiming that not even has there never been 'Arab science, Arab literature' but that Arabs along with other Muhammadans [archaic term for Muslims; N. B.] will remain in eternal ignorance and darkness of mind."[20]

While the rest of this feuilleton is entirely built around historical accounts, depicting cultural superiority of the Georgians in comparison to their Muslim invaders, it is not incidental that the very first argument for amplifying the civilizational tension between Muslim and Christian cultures is corroborated by the authoritative voice "from beyond" (Georgian: *pir-ik'it* – literally: facing the other direction, the other side). Again, a European man stands as the authentic adjudicator of civilization.[21]

At the same time, the pretext that nourishes the argument of the above feuilleton is that as Christians, Georgians stood out within the Russian hierarchy of imperial peoples. The common faith not only designated them as equal to Russians, but in the juxtaposition between tsarist rule and the unfaithful North Caucasians, Islam came to mark brutality and barbarism against Christian high culture. Christianity entitled Georgians to a sense of privilege and this is why, in this passage, "Muhammadans" were so bluntly and defiantly denigrated.

Still, as Caucasians, Georgians were conceived to be part of the untamed, mountainous landscape populated by ignoble savages and barbaric subjects both in the Russian Orientalist vision of the world and in the Georgian intelligentsia's self-image. This mythologized image of the Caucasians, however, was itself dualistic. As Susan Layton shows, literary engagement with the Caucasians did not solely produce the image of a savage, backward mountaineer. Pushkin's literary images in "The prisoner of the Caucasus", for example, evoked "not one but two discursive tendencies in utterances about Caucasian mountain peoples. […] [T]he image of the ignoble mountaineer faced stiff competition from the noble mountaineers."[22]

This is perhaps another reason why Georgians maintained a position somewhere in-between *inorodtsy* and civilized Russians. This ambiguous position within the imperial system played into the imagination of Georgians, most certainly into the rhetoric and imagery produced by the intelligentsia. Having to some extent internalized the Orientalist paradigm, they played and replayed this sense of duality by projecting the category of backwardness onto their own provincial publics.

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[20] Mose Janašvili: Zogiert'i c'nobani da mosazrebani šesaxeb sak'art'velos ist'oriisa, p'eletoni. In: Iveria 94 (1886), p. 5.
[21] For a full quote and further discussion, see Batiashvili: Nation (see note 9), pp. 83–106.
[22] Layton: Mythologies (see note 15), p. 82.

Nevertheless, certain cultural markers furnished a sense of superiority that the Georgian elite could extend across its distinct publics. Christianity was one of them together with a perpetuating spirit of freedom-fighting. Some of these came to be defined as universal markers of Georgian peoplehood and were assimilated into the elusive self-descriptive "we". Ilia Chavchavadze's writings are perhaps most remarkable in that sense. Two of his texts that are recited and memorized in Georgian schools reveal both the nature of this universalized sense of peoplehood and the very liminality of being situated between degraded and dignified, backward and progressive.[23]

At the crossroads: In-between places and temporalities

How exactly the forms of collective self-representation and modes of political discourse which are relevant for specific historical conditions become culturally patterned and perpetuate drastically different sociocultural contexts, is a challenging problem for any anthropologist. But it is obvious that the mode of self-reflection that was inherent to the political thinking of the 19th-century intellectuals prevailed well beyond the imperial Russian period. There were going to be other circumstances in which it made just as much sense to think of Georgianness or the Georgian state in terms of liminality and in-betweenness as it did in the colonial period.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire the brief period of Georgia's independence gave rise to novel circumstances under which Georgia's international ties and its geopolitical orientation had very real and substantial ramifications for the political life of the nation. The gaze toward the West was no longer constitutive of an "illicit desire" of a peripheral public, but rather was intimately tied to the immediate agenda of the young republic. Here is an example of what one could then see on the pages of the print media: "In recent times our homeland has entered the big international family. But the leaders of our young state could not rise up to the level of international political consciousness. Although physically we have come closer [Georgian: *davuaxlovdit'* – to go closer in space, but also to become someone's kinsman] to cultured Europe, spiritually today we are the same careless Asians as we were yesterday."[24]

Considering this statement, one can observe the hierarchy of meanings that the juxtaposition of Europe versus Asia reflects. Indeed, the self-evaluation by comparison to Europe is just as relevant, if not more critical, in this period than in almost any other. Scanning through the pages of the periodicals, journals and magazines of the time, one can detect a strong sense of instability, movement and in-betweenness, of being on the crossroads between Europe and Asia, of being between distinct temporalities and between distinct social, cultural and political

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[23] For a more detailed discussion of the texts, see Batiashvili: Nation (see note 9), pp. 111–137.
[24] Geront'i K'ik'oże: Erovnuli konc'ent'rac'iis mt'avroba. In: Sak'art'velo 183 (1918), p. 1.

states. The years 1918 to 1921 were experienced as a great moment of transforma-
tion in which being a proper nation, a proper republic, a proper socialist, a proper
proletariat was constantly in the making, constantly contested and compared to
other frontiers and horizons where all these proper and ideal forms allegedly al-
ready existed.

Hierarchy of nationalities

The Soviet Union, with its markedly multi-ethnic polity, created yet another set
of conditions for distinct forms of national discourse to emerge and the expres-
sions of liminality to be cemented in the culture of the political discourse. The
Soviet Union functioned through paradoxes. One of them was to instil a sense
of privilege where inferiority was a condition of existence. This was perhaps an
unintended consequence of the hierarchy of cultural and political meanings pro-
duced as a result of *korenizatsiia* or the policy of nativization. As Erik Scott con-
vincingly argues, the emphasis on the cultural and national diversity of the Soviet
state was not just an "ornamental cover for Russian domination [but] the logic of
domestic internationalism was central to the governing ideology of the Soviet
state".[25]

While *korenizatsiia* in many cases resulted in a more profound fragmentation of
the national borders and cultural boundaries rather than in a unification of territo-
ries, the point of the policy was twofold: it was at once a continuation of imperial
efforts to categorize populations and an enhanced method to subdivide colonial
entities through a competition for power. Institutions in charge of gathering knowl-
edge that would help compartmentalize Soviet subjects and make them compliant
to more efficient techniques of administration were a crucial part of the state ma-
chinery. This kind of approach by the state to its multi-ethnic polity created a
system of relations where "cultural differences were transformed into commodi-
ties to be sold in the imperial market-place".[26]

The Soviet hierarchy of peoples was in a sense much more complex than the
imperial framework of backward versus civilized. One reason for this is the struc-
ture of meanings that governed the Soviet system of inter-ethnic relations, which
was in its own right inexplicably complex and ambiguous. The fact that academic
scholarship is to this day grappling over the assessment of the nature of the Soviet
state – whether or not it functioned as a Russian empire, an empire of nations,[27]
an empire of diasporas[28] or whether there is any legitimacy to defining it as an
empire at all – is apparent evidence of the intricate nature of the regime.

[25] Erik R. Scott: Familiar strangers. The Georgian diaspora and the evolution of Soviet Empire.
New York/Oxford 2016, p. 29.
[26] Ibid., p. 35.
[27] Francine Hirsch: Empire of nations. Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet
Union. Ithaca/London 2005.
[28] Scott: Strangers (see note 25).

If young people, like Tekle, in 21st-century Georgia envision Sovietization as a deflection from the nation's natural path of development, it is partly due to the dominant national narratives that represent the Communist regime as just another instance of foreign invasion, under which Georgians have been subjugated and repressed. In the contemporary discourse, Soviet rule is dominantly defined as the source of all malicious traits that inhibits Georgians' progress today. Yet Georgian experience of Soviet life was just as complex and ambiguous as the regime itself.

Notwithstanding its peripheral position, the extent to which Georgian landscape and nature had been romanticized in the imagination of the various Soviet publics, helped to cultivate the Georgians' sense of their country as a special place in this "friendship of the peoples". A note from John Steinbeck's journal about his travels in the Soviet Union, although humorous in tone, provides a very precise picture of how Georgians situated their homeland within the diverse landscape of the Communist state: "Wherever we had been in Russia, in Moscow, in the Ukraine, in Stalingrad, the magical name of Georgia came up constantly. People who had never been there, and who possibly never could go there, spoke of Georgia with a kind of longing and a great admiration. They spoke of Georgians as supermen, as great drinkers, great dancers, great musicians, great workers and lovers. And they spoke of the country in the Caucasus and around the Black Sea as a kind of second heaven. Indeed, we began to believe that most Russians hope that if they live very good and virtuous lives, they will go not to heaven, but to Georgia, when they die."[29]

The typecasting and stereotyping that we see in Steinbeck's quote was part of the nature of relations in the Soviet Union's multi-ethnic culture, and of course there existed positive as well as negative images of each ethnic group. National stereotypes in a sense became operative frameworks within which Soviet nationalities came to think of their own identities. The Soviet Union thus created a huge network of social bonds and of relations to others within which collective selfhoods could be construed in terms of strangeness. Constant comparison to other ethnic groups and other landscapes was part of the immediate experience of national and/or ethnic identities. Performative privileges that in one respect bolstered the national pride of Georgians, simultaneously nourished their nationalist sentiments and eventually fed into the discontent with the very regime that had entitled them to enjoy a position of advantaged identity.

Conclusion

"If we assess the countries that are on a high stage of development", writes Sopo, an 18-year-old student in her essay on gender balance in Georgia, "the countries that we very much want to be similar to, we will see that gender equality is main-

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[29] John Steinbeck: A Russian journal. London et al. 2001, p. 144.

tained in different spheres of activity. Consequently, it is essential that this problem is also solved in countries that are on the path of development".

Sopo's logic of argumentation by which Georgia's aspiration to European integration is the sole valid reason for solving the gender equality problem, captures once again the two points that I have been arguing throughout this paper. First, political imagination is based on the construction of difference and the "play of différance" as it always posits a desire to attain something that is beyond its immediate reach. It always enacts this self-perpetuating tension between distinct temporalities and states of being. It does so, because "it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to […] its *constitutive outside* […] that identity can be constructed".[30] Second, the relation of simultaneity between self and other, the strenuous connection of the self to its "constitutive outside" creates a subjective sense of liminality, of in-betweenness, of standing on the threshold between places, temporalities, and states of mind.

Throughout this chapter I have tried to show how this form of identification, of relation to otherness has played out in the Georgian political imagination. I have attempted to point to the distinct realities, socio-political contexts and historical conditions that have shaped the "frontier-effect" in Georgian political imagination. The examples above demonstrate that for a peripheral public that exists and has existed on the edges of powerful empires, at the threshold of distinct civilizations, the here and now of the political order is always experienced as on the brink of making and unmaking.

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[30] Hall: Introduction (see note 3), p. 17 (italics in original).

Natia Mestvirishvili/Maia Mestvirishvili/
Tamar Khoshtaria

National identity and perceptions of citizenship in Georgia over the last decade

Introduction

The former Soviet Republic of Georgia is a young democracy with transitioning democratic institutions. This chapter focusses on two potential perils of further democratic development in the country. On the one hand, the high importance attributed to the need to protect traditions among the population reflects strong national identity, though it eventually results in a rather intolerant worldview. On the other hand, citizenship norms are guided predominantly by ideas of solidarity and compassion, and much less by civic responsibility. Moreover, there is a notable gap between perceptions of what being a "good citizen" means in Georgia and people's actual involvement in some of the activities that are believed to characterize a "good citizen".

At the end of this paper we look at the interrelation between national identity and citizenship style shared by most Georgians. According to existing opinions, on a micro-level, national identity is a tool for internalizing a sense of belonging to a nation. The importance of shared religious faith, common beliefs, often-mythologized common history, and the sense of solidarity are among the main factors explaining the devotion of people towards their nation.[1] On a macro-level, national identity often summarizes the qualities of a nation.[2]

Given the focus of this chapter, two models of nations proposed by Anthony D. Smith are of interest: the western/"civic" and the non-western/"ethnic" model. The "civic" model refers to a nation as a community of a specific territory or "homeland", which involves the idea of a legal-political community, as well as a common civic culture and ideology. In this model, members enjoy equal rights and duties while non-members experience deprivation. The "ethnic" model, in contrast, depicts a nation as a community of common descent.[3]

Two models of citizenship, "ethnic" and "civic", are traditionally discerned and coincide with these two models of nations. Empirical findings suggest, though, that

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[1] Anthony D. Smith: National identity. London 1991.
[2] Ernest Gellner/John Breuilly: Nations and nationalism. Ithaca 2008.
[3] Smith: Identity (see note 1).

there may be a third model of citizenship – cultural citizenship – which implies a cultural commitment as well as adaptation to elements of a national culture.[4]

This chapter argues that national identity and citizenship might be related to each other: How we view our in-group members and how much we associate ourselves with our national group can be related to the style we choose for our citizenship representation.

Georgian national identity

Georgian national identity became a subject of contemporary social science research following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Georgia's subsequent declaration of independence in 1991. Historically, the process of developing a Georgian national identity was a turbulent one. Between 1801 and 1918, Georgia was a part of the Russian Empire, and fell subject to the influence of Russian imperial policies. In the late 1800s, the work of two organizations proved instrumental in the formation of a Georgian national identity. The first was a Georgian newspaper, "Iveria", founded in 1877 by Ilia Chavchavadze, a famous public figure, publicist and writer, who propagated his ideas of a national liberation movement. "Iveria" sparked debates among members of the Georgian intelligentsia at the time, which shaped transformative narratives of Georgian identity.[5] Of equal importance were the activities by the *Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians*, in which Ilia Chavchavadze was an active member. Today, Ilia Chavchavadze's famous slogan for Georgia and Georgians alike – "[Georgian] language, fatherland, and [Orthodox] faith" – is still used, often with decisive impact.

The main actors behind both, "Iveria" and the *Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians,* were young, primarily Russian-educated Georgian intellectuals who sought to create a nation in Georgia inspired by the European sense of the term. They introduced progressive ideas of scientific progress, equal rights and nationalism. Their writings suggest an understanding of the nation-state wherein language, culture and history play a much more pronounced role than religion.[6] At that time, Georgian intellectuals did not necessarily consider religion as a marker of national identity; rather, it was believed to be a private matter.

During the Soviet period, attempts to develop a "Soviet" national identity in Georgia enjoyed questionable success at best. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the situation changed dramatically, with an extreme upsurge in nationalism across the country. The slogan "Georgia for Georgians", popular in

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[4] Reijerse Arjan et al.: Beyond the ethnic-civic dichotomy. Cultural citizenship as a new way of excluding immigrants. In: Political Psychology 34 (2013) 4, pp. 611–630.
[5] Gigi Tevzadze: The birth of the Georgian nation. Identity and ideology. Political and societal identities. Nationality and religiosity. In: Identity Studies in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region 1 (2009) 1, pp. 5–21.
[6] Salome Khvadagiani: Religion as a marker of identity for Georgians (1860–1918). In: Analytical Bulletin 8 (2015), pp. 81–104.

the 1990s, reflected many Georgians' sentiments toward those of different ethnic backgrounds including Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Russians. Moreover, 19th-century secular understandings of the Georgian nation oriented towards the future were replaced by a national-religious model rooted in the past,[7] with Orthodox Christianity as an important marker of Georgian national identity.

One of the major achievements of the 2003 Rose Revolution was the attempt to overcome ethnic nationalism and, instead, initiate an extensive state-building process aimed at establishing a modern, dynamic understanding of what it means to be Georgian in the 21st century. National identity models promoted by young Georgian politicians at the time of the Rose Revolution were no longer based on ethnicity; rather, they emphasized citizenship as the primary factor defining national identity.

Starting in 2008, the Georgian Government attempted to adopt a liberal approach by distinguishing between ethnicity and citizenship, stating that all individuals have an equal right to obtain Georgian citizenship regardless of ethnic origin. However, recent survey results indicate that for 66 percent of Georgians, having ancestors of Georgian ethnicity is an important criteria for citizenship of the country, and for 65 percent it is important to be born in Georgia.[8] These results prove that citizenship and ethnicity are still closely linked for many Georgians, and that citizenship is not just a concept that connotes certain rights, group membership, or the idea of inclusion and/or legal privileges, but that it is also a socio-psychological construct implying personal factors such as social perceptions of in-group boundaries and ethnic, cultural and religious attitudes. In the next section, we address relevant theories of "good citizenship" before presenting empirical findings on the issue.

"Good citizenship"

Unsurprisingly, understandings of what being a "good citizen" means change from one country to another and depend heavily on a country's cultural and historical background. The ancient Spartan ideal of a "good citizen" was a "warrior citizen". Athenians expected "good citizens" to be actively involved in social and political life. In traditional Chinese society, "good citizens" were expected to obey and respect superiors while following existing social norms. Thus, it is fair to assert that the strength of traditional culture, the spread of democratic values, as well as the personal preferences and understandings of an individual all contribute to modern definitions and expectations of a "good citizen".[9]

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[7] Zaal Andronikashvili/Giorgi Maisuradze: Secularization and its vicissitudes in Georgia. In: Identity Studies in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region 2 (2010), pp. 5–17.
[8] World Values Survey Association: World Values Survey Dataset Georgia. Wave 5 (2005–2009). WV5 Data Spss v20180912, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV5.jsp (last accessed 21.7.2020).
[9] Kuang Xiao-xue/Kerry J. Kennedy: Asian students' perceptions of "good" citizenship. The role of democratic values and attitudes to traditional culture. In: APJED 3 (2014) 1, pp. 33–42.

According to existing typology, there are three major models of citizenship based on a society's expectation of good citizens: traditional elitist, liberal and communitarian.[10] The traditional elitist model of citizenship considers law abidance as the core principle of a "good citizen", whereas the liberal model ranks the importance of deliberative values as its main criteria. Both models discuss the relationship or attitudinal interplay between individuals and government. The third model, communitarian, focuses on relationships between citizens. Here, citizenship norms are guided by what are called civic virtues: solidarity, tolerance, altruism, compassion and voluntary work.

A similar classification suggests that there are three categories of citizens: law-oriented, participation-oriented and values-oriented.[11] In the first category, a "good citizen" is one who follows rules and laws. In the second, being a "good citizen" is defined not only in legal terms, but also by active engagement in social life. The third stipulates that citizens must build the society they belong to, not just live there. The third category implies that while law abidance and participation are necessary, they are not enough: one should also follow ethical and moral virtues. In this values-oriented model, the concept of a "good citizen" obliges people to participate in political life while demonstrating concern for moral consequences – to be active not only in building a state, but building a decent state.

Social scientists explore different attitudinal and behavioural patterns to understand what constitutes "good citizenship" in a given society: voting, volunteering, charity, and patriotism are among the factors considered. One's education system is also suggested to play a crucial role in promoting citizenship values and norms. Li-Ching Ho's study, for example, investigates how Singaporean students from different educational tracks understand their role as citizens in a democracy. The author proves that the concept of "good citizenship" is also formed and reinforced through educational institutions.[12]

Increasing evidence shows that over the last decades the norms of citizenship are changing – shifting from static to dynamic, passive to active. Over time, people value more participation and engagement rather than strict standards and principles.[13] There is, however, very little knowledge regarding what people understand by "good citizenship" in the South Caucasus – particularly in Georgia. The remaining sections of this paper examine how Georgians today perceive "good citizenship" and what characteristics, in their opinion, define a "good citizen". We

[10] Pamela J. Conover/Donald D. Searing: Expanding the envelope. Citizenship, contextual methodologies, and comparative political psychology. In: James H. Kuklinski (ed.): Thinking about political psychology. Cambridge 2002, pp. 89–114; Lawrence E. Rose/Per Arnt Pettersen: The good citizen. Democratic theory and political realities among Norwegians. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 25.–28. 4. 2002.
[11] David M. Ricci: Good citizenship in America. Cambridge 2004.
[12] Li-Ching Ho et al.: Civic disparities. Exploring students' perceptions of citizenship within Singapore's academic tracks. In: TRSE 39 (2011) 2, pp. 203–237.
[13] Russell J. Dalton: Citizenship norms and the expansion of political participation. In: Political Studies 56 (2008) 1, pp. 76–98.

will also investigate what role, if any, Georgian national identity plays in shaping these perceptions.

Data and methods

Results from CRRC's two major longitudinal surveys have been analysed for this section: "Caucasus Barometer" and "Knowledge of and attitudes towards the European Union in Georgia" (the latter survey was conducted for Europe Foundation).

Annual "Caucasus Barometer" (CB) surveys[14] have been conducted by CRRC offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia since 2004[15] as part of a larger project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Through 2013, "Caucasus Barometer" was the only regular survey conducted across the region, employing a consistent survey instrument and comparable methodology. In 2015 and 2017, only populations of Armenia and Georgia were surveyed. CB survey questions focus on major issues of social and political transformation in South Caucasus countries, including development of democratic values and levels of trust towards major social and political institutions.

"Caucasus Barometer" surveys the adult (18 +) population of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, excluding populations living in conflict regions (Nagorno Karabakh, Nakhichevan, South Ossetia and Abkhazia). The interviews are conducted in Armenian in Armenia; Azerbaijani in Azerbaijan; and Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani in Georgia.[16] Until 2013, paper-based face-to-face interviewing was employed; CRRC introduced CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing) in 2014, and the 2015 and 2017 waves were conducted using this latter method.

Multistage cluster sampling with preliminary stratification is employed for "Caucasus Barometer" surveys. Around 2,200 interviews are completed per country, per wave, with fieldwork taking place in the autumn (October/November). With the exception of territories affected by military conflicts, survey results are representative of the entire population in each country and of the population in capitals, other urban settlements and rural settlements separately.

Furthermore, CRRC-Georgia has conducted biannual surveys, "Knowledge of and attitudes towards the European Union in Georgia" (also known as "EU surveys"), for the Europe Foundation (EF)[17] since 2009. The surveys are representative of the population of Georgia, with a similar sampling approach to that of the

[14] CRRC: In the Caucasus we count. Documentation, http://www.crrccenters.org/20122/Documentation (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[15] The surveys were not nationally representative until 2006. CB was not conducted in 2014 and 2016. Last CB wave in Azerbaijan was conducted in 2013.

[16] In Georgia, the respondents living in multi-ethnic primary sampling units can choose the language of the interview.

[17] Europe Foundation, http://www.epfound.ge (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

"Caucasus Barometer". Results of five waves of the "EU survey" are available (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017).[18]

Both "Caucasus Barometer" and the "EU surveys" are accessible on CRRC's online data analysis platform.[19] Datasets in SPSS and STATA format, as well as survey documentation (questionnaires, fieldwork reports), can be downloaded and analysed by all interested researchers.

Weighted results are presented throughout this section. Since it focuses on national identity issues, only the answers of ethnic Georgians have been analysed. Notably, ethnic Georgians represent between 85 and 92 percent in each wave of surveys.

National versus European identity in Georgia

The famous claim made by Georgia's late Prime Minister, Zurab Zhvania, during his speech at the Council of Europe in 1999 that, "I am Georgian, and therefore I am European", has been consistently voiced in pro-European discussions over the last two decades. Since the 2003 Rose Revolution, the Georgian government has pursued a number of significant initiatives aimed at EU integration. Signing the Association Agreement with the EU, as well as granting Georgian citizens visa-free travel for short-term trips to the Schengen Area countries have been named among the Government's greatest successes. EU integration remains one of the country's most popular long-term foreign policy goals. The question remains, however: Is this political goal shared by ordinary people?

According to the 2015 "EU survey", over half of the population (61 percent) agreed with Zhvania's claim, a share that has remained almost unchanged since 2009. However, as the distribution of answers to a different question from the same survey shows, a far smaller share of Georgians report perceiving themselves as European when the question is worded differently (Table 1). In such cases, only 17 percent claim to be solely European or both Georgian and European, while the large majority (72 percent) identify themselves as Georgians only.

In your opinion, are you …?	
Georgian only	72
European or Georgian and European	17
Caucasian or Georgian and Caucasian	9
Asian or Georgian and Asian	2

Table 1: Georgians' self-identification (percent)[20]

[18] This section is primarily based on the 2015 data, since the 2017 survey was not yet conducted at the time of writing.
[19] Caucasus Barometer. Online Data Analysis, http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[20] EF/CRRC-Georgia's survey on knowledge of and attitudes towards the EU in Georgia, 2015.

Interestingly, younger people aged 18 to 35 are more likely to identify themselves as both Georgians and Europeans than older people (Table 2). Exclusive Georgian identity seems to be much stronger among the latter demographic group. More specifically, as 23 percent of those aged 18 to 35 identify themselves as Europeans or both Georgians and Europeans, this share decreases to 9 percent among those who are 66 and older. Conversely, the portion of those who identify solely as Georgian is highest (83 percent) among those who are 66 and older.

	In your opinion, are you …?			
Age groups:	Georgian only	European or Georgian and European	Caucasian or Georgian and Caucasian	Asian or Georgian and Asian
18–34	71	23	5	1
35–49	64	20	13	3
50–65	74	14	11	1
66 +	83	8	6	1

Table 2: Georgians' self-identification, by age groups (percent)[21]

Recent Eurobarometer (EB) survey findings indicate that slightly over half (58 percent) of the population in EU member states see themselves in the near future as both representatives of their own ethnicity/nationality and as Europeans, demonstrating that they consider the two identities to be compatible (Table 3). CRRC survey findings, however, suggest that Georgians have a long way to go in this regard.

In the near future do you see yourself as …?					
	European only	European and [Nationality]	[Nationality] and European	[Nationality] only	Don't know/ Refused to answer
EU 28[22]	2	6	52	38	2

Table 3: EU population's self-identification (percent)[23]

When comparing EF/CRRC survey results with Eurobarometer findings, it should be noted that slightly different wording was used for questions in Georgia versus EU member states, which is presented above.[24] In both cases, though, the

[21] Ibid.
[22] Weighted average for the 28 EU member states.
[23] Standard Eurobarometer survey 83 (Spring 2015), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb83/eb83_citizen_en.pdf, p. 21 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[24] The EF/CRRC question asked: "In your opinion, are you …?". A show card was used for this question, with 8 answer options: Only [Respondent's ethnicity], [Respondent's ethnicity] and European, Only European, Asian, Caucasian, [Respondent's ethnicity] and Asian, [Respondent's ethnicity] and Caucasian and Other. The EB question asked "In the near future, do you see yourself as …?" and gave four answer options: European only, European and [Nationality], [Nationality] and European and [Nationality] only.

questions measure whether respondents identify themselves more as Europeans or as representatives of their own ethnicity. Comparing the results of these two surveys shows that, unsurprisingly, European identity is much more pervasive in EU countries than in Georgia. Even though differences between EU countries are significant and most people in EU countries do not regard themselves as exclusively European, in 25 out of 28 EU member states, the majority of people report identifying as European as well as representatives of their respective ethnicity.

These findings support the multiple identity theory, which stipulates that national identity cannot be analysed in zero-sum terms. European identity does not imply a substitution of other identities.[25] Even the Treaty of Maastricht did not ask citizens to choose *either* a national identity *or* a European one. As Title I, Article F of the Treaty states, "The Union shall respect the national identities of its Member States, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy".

Interestingly, EF/CRRC survey findings do not support Sean Carey's theory, which states that a strong sense of national identity weakens support for the EU.[26] Rather, the Georgian case demonstrates that it is possible to maintain a robust sense of national identity, while expressing strong support and enthusiasm for European integration. One potential explanation for this finding is that EU membership may be perceived as a critical means to solve the country's most pressing problems like national security, economic stagnation, and territorial integrity – all of which represent top priorities for the population.[27]

Perceptions of "good citizenship" in Georgia

Using results from several waves of CRRC's "Caucasus Barometer" survey in Georgia, this section examines the reported importance of varying characteristics a person should possess in order to be considered a "good citizen". In the 2017 "Caucasus Barometer" survey, Georgians assessed the following qualities: help people who are worse off; protect traditions; vote in elections; do volunteer work meeting the needs of the community without expecting any compensation; and be critical towards the government. A show card with a 10-point scale was used to record respondents' answers during the interviews, with code 1 corresponding to the answer "Not important at all" and code 10 corresponding to the answer "Extremely important".

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[25] Stefania Panebianco: European citizenship and European identity. From the Treaty of Maastricht to public opinion attitudes. In: Jean Monnet Working Paper 03/96 (1996).

[26] Sean Carey: Undivided loyalties. Is national identity an obstacle to European integration?. In: EUP 3 (2002) 4, pp. 387–413.

[27] Martin Müller: Public opinion toward the European Union in Georgia. In: PSA 27 (2011) 1, pp. 64–92.

In the 2017 CB survey, 78 percent of Georgians[28] responded that it is very important for a good citizen to help people who are worse off. This figure has increased slightly from 69 percent in 2012 (Table 4). Another important characteristic for being a good citizen is protecting traditions, according to 76 percent of Georgians. This figure has stayed more or less the same over the last few years, reaching its highest point in 2013 (81 percent). These findings indicate that for most Georgians, the concept of a "good citizen" is equated with being a good person who helps others and follows traditions, and is therefore most closely associated with the communitarian model of citizenship.

In addition to helping others and following traditions, voting in elections was considered a very important quality for good citizens by 72 percent of Georgians in 2017.

Furthermore, Georgian citizens also believe that participating in volunteer work that meets the needs of the community without expecting any compensation is very important for a good citizen. It was assessed as very important by 60 percent of Georgians in 2017. Notably, this number has increased significantly since 2011, when only 27 percent assessed volunteering as very important.

In contrast, being critical towards the government is considered a very important characteristic by a smaller share of the population – only 42 percent of Georgians. For the above categories, respective shares have not changed dramatically since the new parliament/government was elected in 2012.

How important or unimportant is it for a good citizen to …?		Very important	Important	Middle	Not important	Not important at all	Don't know/ Refused to answer
… help people who are worse off	2017	78	15	6	0	0	0
	2015	78	15	6	0	0	0
	2013	70	16	11	1	0	2
	2012	69	16	8	1	0	6
	2011	72	10	7	5	1	5
… protect traditions	2017	76	14	8	1	1	0
	2015	77	13	8	1	1	1
	2013	81	10	5	1	1	2
	2012	79	11	5	0	1	5
	2011	72	15	6	0	1	5
… vote in elections	2017	72	12	10	2	1	1
	2015	69	13	10	3	2	2
	2013	78	11	6	1	2	3
	2012	79	8	6	0	1	6
	2011	66	14	8	2	3	9

[28] Throughout this section, only answers of ethnic Georgians are analysed, who make up 84 percent of the total in the CB 2017 survey.

How important or unimportant is it for a good citizen to …?

		Very important	Important	Middle	Not important	Not important at all	Don't know/ Refused to answer
… do volunteer work	2017	60	23	13	2	1	1
	2015	54	21	17	3	2	3
	2013	47	22	17	3	5	6
	2012	45	19	19	3	2	12
	2011	27	14	22	7	15	16
… be critical towards the government	2017	42	23	25	5	4	2
	2015	41	20	26	5	3	5
	2013	41	22	23	3	3	9
	2012	38	20	21	2	3	16
	2011	30	16	24	6	7	18

Table 4: Assessment of importance of certain qualities for a "good citizen" in Georgia (percent)[29]

Even though the characteristics of good citizenship tested in the survey do not provide exhaustive explanations, it can be argued that Georgians' perceptions of a "good citizen" match the communitarian model wherein citizenship norms are perceived to be guided by solidarity, altruism and compassion.[30] The next section, drawing exclusively from CB 2017 data, explores how the population's assessed importance of qualities for a good citizen corresponds to people's actual reported behaviour in the recent past.

"Good citizenship": Perceptions versus behaviour

Even when certain characteristics are considered extremely important for being a good citizen, people do not necessarily attribute these characteristics to themselves, or, in other words, consider themselves to be good citizens. This section examines people's reported behaviour in the past and links it to their assessment of good citizenship. In essence, it examines the reported characteristics individuals deem important for a good citizen, and explores whether they fulfilled these characteristics through their own actions over the past few months.

Of the five characteristics named above, 2017 "Caucasus Barometer" data is capable of verifying whether the stated importance of voting and volunteering for

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[29] The answers were re-coded from a 10-point scale into a 5-point scale, with codes 1 and 2 combined in the category "Not important at all", codes 3 and 4 – "Not important", codes 5 and 6 – "[In the middle]", codes 7 and 8 – "Important" and codes 9 and 10 – "Very important". CRRC's Caucasus Barometer survey (see note 19).
[30] Rose/Pettersen: Citizen (see note 10).

being a "good citizen" corresponds to people's own behaviour.[31] Convincing proxy measures (discussed below) are also available in the data and can test to what extent people help others, follow traditions and are critical towards the government.

Voting

76 percent of Georgians report having voted in the October 8th parliamentary elections in 2016. The majority of those who say that voting in elections is important for a good citizen report having voted themselves – 82 percent of those who chose codes 9 and 10 of the proposed 10-point scale and 64 percent of those who chose codes 7 and 8.[32] Nonetheless, about a fifth of Georgians who say that voting in elections is very important for a good citizen responded that they did not vote in the 2016 elections.

Volunteering

In contrast to the large majority of voters, only 22 percent of Georgians report having volunteered in the six months prior to survey the fieldwork. Moreover, 26 percent of those who responded that volunteering is very important for a good citizen, reported to have participated in volunteer work in the last six months. Thus, the absolute majority (73 percent) of those who considered volunteering to be very important for a good citizen did not volunteer recently – or, possibly, ever. This may be explained by limited development in Georgia's volunteer realm, as well as a lack of knowledge regarding institutional volunteer opportunities.

Helping others

As stated above, 78 percent of Georgians evaluated helping people who are worse off as very important for a good citizen. The exact nature of this help was not specified during the survey, so its operationalization should be as broad as possible. Reported help, however, certainly does include financial assistance. There is only a partial measure available for testing to what extent Georgians were actually involved in helping those who are worse off: namely, the question whether people made a contribution to a non-religious charity, including donations by SMS and giving money to beggars, during the six months preceding survey fieldwork. Compared to the latter question, "helping people who are worse off" is a somewhat broader concept, thus cross-tabulation of these two questions may give us

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[31] As in the case of the assessment of importance of the characteristics of a "good citizen", we are dealing with reported behaviour here, which may also be influenced by social desirability bias. Importantly though, as the answers to both variables which we compare here are subject to this bias to the same extent, the comparison will thus still be valid.

[32] As mentioned earlier, a show card with a 10-point scale was used to record respondents' answers during the interviews, with code 1 corresponding to the answer "Not important at all" and code 10 to the answer "Extremely important".

only partial understanding of the extent to which Georgians were actually helping those in need.

Overall, slightly more than half of Georgians – 53 percent – reported having made a contribution to a charity during the six months before the survey field-work. In addition, out of those who believed "helping people who are worse off" was very important for being a good citizen, only 58 percent claimed they donated money to a non-religious charity, including donations by SMS and distributing money to beggars.

Thus, assessing the practice of "helping people who are worse off" as very important for being a good citizen does not – and, most probably, cannot – correspond to the actual practices of all those who agree with that indicator. Instead, it is true for only about half of Georgians who say that "helping people who are worse off" is very important for being a "good citizen", while others simply cannot afford to provide similar support.

Protecting traditions

Protecting traditions is the second highest perceived characteristic of a good citizen, with 76 percent of Georgians assessing it as very important. As a proxy for actual behaviour showing whether people tend to behave traditionally or not, the following question on religious service attendance is applied: "Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services nowadays?" This question would be an obvious, though not exclusive, measure of following and protecting traditions.

CB 2017 data results show that of those who consider protecting traditions to be very important for being a good citizen, only 18 percent purported to attend religious services at least once a week or less often. 17 percent stated they attend at least once a month. In addition, one fourth (24 percent) attend religious services only on special holidays, and 40 percent attend less often or never. Thus, only 35 percent of those who claim that protecting traditions is very important for being a good citizen report attending religious services at least once a month.

Being critical towards the government

Compared to the previous characteristics, Georgians assessed the importance of being critical towards the government relatively moderately; however, 42 percent still judge that it is very important for being a good citizen. Although there is no direct measure for peoples' level of criticism towards the government, in CB 2017, a variable where respondents had to choose from the following two statements can serve as an effective proxy: "People should participate in protest actions against the government, as this shows the government that the people are in charge" or "People should not participate in protect actions against the government, as it threatens stability in our country".[33] The results show that 17 percent of those who

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[33] Answers to this question help to measure opinion, not behaviour.

say that it is very important for a good citizen to be critical towards the government also agree with the statement that people should not participate in protest actions against the government.

As the findings presented above demonstrate, perceptions of the importance of certain qualities for being a good citizen do not always correspond to the actual behaviour of Georgians. This may suggest, among other things, that people do not necessarily think of themselves when conceptualizing "good citizens", and that "good citizenship" is perceived more as an ideal than a fact of everyday life.

National identity, citizenship perceptions, and conservatism in Georgia

As demonstrated above, Georgians' perceptions of citizenship have become slightly more pro-western over the years, while the strong sense of national identity remains unchanged. The last question addressed in this section concerns possible links between qualities attributed to good citizens and the strong sense of "Georgianness". "EU survey" data will be used in this section. A comparison of those who identify themselves only as Georgian with those who have "mixed identities" or who identify themselves only as European, exposes differences and similarities in their perceptions of being a good citizen. While all of the listed identities equally believe that supporting people who are worse off and volunteering are important for a good citizen, their beliefs differ in two key aspects. First, for those who perceive themselves only as Georgian, the importance of protecting traditions is higher than for those who perceive themselves as European or both Georgian and European (Table 5). Namely, 74 percent of Georgians who identify themselves only as Georgian believe that protecting traditions is very important for a good citizen. This share decreases to 61 percent among Georgians who identify themselves as European or both Georgian and European. Second, for those who perceive themselves only as Georgian, the importance of being critical towards the government is lower than for those who identify as European or both Georgian and European (Table 6). Only 30 percent of Georgians who identify exclusively as Georgian believe that being critical towards the government is very important for being a good citizen, while this share increases to 40 percent among those who identify themselves as European or both Georgian and European. This data indicates that a strong national identity may play a role in how people view citizens' responsibilities – a trend in line with Ernest Gellner's idea that national identification is an essential part of citizenship. There is evidence that Georgians with a strong national identity have different perceptions of citizenship compared to their co-nationals with mixed or European identities. In particular, a strong sense of "Georgianness" is linked to being more protective of traditions and less critical of the government.

Primary national self-identification:	How important or unimportant is it for a good citizen to protect traditions?				
	Not important at all	Rather not important than important	Rather important than unimportant	Very important	Don't know/ Refused to answer
Asian or Georgian and Asian	0	6	11	79	1
Caucasian or Georgian and Caucasian	0	1	30	68	0
European or Georgian and European	2	10	27	61	4
Georgian only	1	2	21	74	0

Table 5: Assessment of importance of protecting traditions for a "good citizen" in Georgia by national self-identification (percent)[34]

Primary national self-identification:	How important or unimportant is it for a good citizen to be critical towards the government?				
	Not important at all	Rather not important than important	Rather important than unimportant	Very important	Don't know/ Refused to answer
Asian or Georgian and Asian	0	0	47	53	0
Caucasian or Georgian and Caucasian	3	13	45	36	2
European or Georgian and European	2	17	39	40	2
Georgian only	7	19	37	30	7

Table 6: Assessment of importance of being critical towards the government for a "good citizen" in Georgia by national self-identification (percent)[35]

A strong sense of "Georgianness" is not only linked to a high importance of protecting traditions, but also to conservative views and values. According to the same survey, 75 percent of Georgians who identify themselves only as Georgian said that a woman having sex before marriage is never justified, while the share drops to 54 percent for those who identify themselves as European or Georgian and European (Table 7). Similarly, 61 percent of Georgians with a strong national identity said a woman bearing a child without marriage is never justified, which drops to 40 percent in the case of Georgians who identify themselves as European or Georgian and European.

[34] EF/CRRC-Georgia's survey on knowledge of and attitudes towards the EU in Georgia, 2015.
[35] Ibid.

Share of those answering that the following is never justified:	In your opinion, are you …?			
	Georgian only	European or Georgian and European	Asian or Georgian and Asian	Caucasian or Georgian and Caucasian
A woman having sex before marriage	75	54	67	54
A woman giving birth out of wedlock	61	40	43	37

Table 7: Justification of women having sex before marriage and giving birth out of wedlock by national self-identification (percent)[36]

Following Gellner, who claimed that national identity is related to the most important qualities of a nation, our findings indicate that the conservatism depicted above can be considered a core quality of purely Georgian national identity. Values linked to conservatism prove to be rather static, if any changes can be observed over time. These values are undoubtedly related to understandings of what "good citizenship" means, and, as long as conservatism prevails, most likely cannot be expected to become more liberal.

Conclusion

Findings presented in this paper demonstrate that while Georgians' perceptions of certain aspects of citizenship have become slightly more pro-western in the past few years, the strong sense of national identity remains unchanged, with a large majority of the population consistently identifying themselves as Georgians only. Because "Georgianness" is linked to a higher importance attached to traditions and, to a certain degree, conservatism, traditional values and attitudes are dominant in the society at-large. The empirical evidence clearly indicates that Georgians favour the communitarian, value-oriented model of citizenship, with extremely high importance attached to qualities such as helping those who are worse off and protecting traditions. The remarkably strong focus on these qualities offers rather limited possibilities for the development of more liberal expectations. At the same time, present evidence proves that Georgians do not necessarily follow ideals of "good citizenship" in their own daily lives, thus, widening the gap between belief and practice even among the least disputed qualities of a good citizen. Further research is needed to thoroughly investigate the causes of these findings.

[36] Ibid.

Jeremy Smith

Georgian nationalism and Soviet power

Between accommodation and revolt

The statue of Mother Georgia that looks over the city of Tbilisi from the top of a steep rise holds a wine goblet in one hand and a sword in the other. These symbols suggest that friends and travellers can look forward to a sumptuous reception in Georgia where feasting, drinking, singing and dancing play such a part in everyday life. Enemies, however, will be dealt with ruthlessly and decisively.

This dual representation of the Georgian national character in many ways epitomises Georgia's relationship with Russia over the past two centuries. Georgia and Russia are frequently described as enjoying a love-hate relationship, but until relatively recently neither love nor hatred played a significant part in an interaction based mostly on pragmatism and an uneasy respect. The main argument of this chapter is that, whereas Georgia had a stronger sense of national identity than most other subjects of the Russian Empire and the USSR, for most of the near-200 year subjection of Georgia to the rule of St. Petersburg and Moscow Georgian elites and populations found a successful accommodation in which both national and economic interests could be pursued relatively advantageously. The logic of nationalism did, however, impel Georgians to resistance and even armed risings at certain moments. It is further argued here that the events of March 1956, in which young Georgian demonstrators were shot by Red Army forces, proved a turning point in adding a hostile ethnic character to the Georgian-Russian relationship.

Georgia's traditional enemies (when they were not fighting each other) were not the Russian Empire, but the Ottoman and Iranian ones. From Catherine the Great's reign relations between Russia and the Georgian kingdoms were based on commerce and a series of alliances against mutual enemies to the south and east. The annexation of the Eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by the Russian Tsar Paul in 1801 came after decades of entreaties by the Georgian monarchs for Russia to absorb their lands for protection against their southern enemies. Further Georgian lands were absorbed before and during the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812. Although Paul's son Tsar Alexander I abolished the Bagratid monarchy, the Georgian nobility fitted easily into the social structure of the Empire. While losing much of their political and judicial power, the nobles gained in economic power at the expense of the serfs and the Church.

Most of Georgia was incorporated into the Russian Empire just as modern nationalism was becoming a dominant ideology across Europe. While most Georgian nobles were content either to enjoy life on their estates or to pursue careers in the Russian bureaucracy, a small number displayed a nationalist spirit which led them to align with churchmen and peasants in rebellions in 1804, 1812, and 1819. After a noble conspiracy was averted in 1832, the Empire made a number of concessions in Georgia. These were consolidated by the enlightened approach of Mikhail Vorontsov as viceroy of the Caucasus from 1845 to 1854 and Alexander II's emancipation of the peasantry, bringing an end to rebellion. By the mid-1850s the Georgian nobility was transformed, according to Ronald Suny, "into a united corporation devoted to its new sovereign, the Romanov tsar".[1]

This unity was also something for Georgian nationalists to celebrate. In the course of yet another Russo-Turkish war in 1877/1878, Russian troops advanced into the last Georgian lands held by the Ottomans. Through the force of Russian arms, the Georgian lands were now united for the first time since the 16th century. As Tbilisi cafe society celebrated this achievement, however, the embedded correspondent of their main newspaper, "Droeba", reported from the newly "liberated" territories on scenes of emptiness and devastation. The main movements of people were columns of refugees, Ottoman Georgians fleeing the advancing Russians and their Georgian allies and eventually settling deeper inside the Ottoman Empire.[2]

In spite of this disappointment, Georgian nationalism was ready to accommodate with the Russian Empire. But at the beginning of the 20th century it faced another challenge, as Georgia became a hotbed of socialism. What distinguished Georgian socialism from that in the rest of the Empire was its deep appeal among the peasantry. As the whole empire was wracked in revolt against the tsar in 1905, nowhere was it more intense and more successful than in the Georgian rural region of Guria, which remained beyond the reach of the tsarist state for several years. The Georgian Mensheviks, led by Noe Zhordania, managed to combine their Marxism with appeals to nationalism and effectively took over the Georgian national movement.

This marriage of Marxism and nationalism has been problematic for Georgia's post-Soviet leaders. Whereas after 1991 the other newly independent states, most notably the Baltic ones, rushed to adopt whatever symbols, traditions and rhetoric from earlier periods of independence they could, for Georgia this proved difficult. The problem is that, far from being liberal democratic, independent Georgia from 1918 to 1921 was revolutionary socialist. Its Menshevik leaders had only split with Lenin's Bolsheviks in 1903, and continued to cooperate in many areas for some years afterwards. All the same, Menshevik Georgia shone out as an alternative to Bolshevism and gained many western admirers. During its short existence

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[1] Ronald Grigor Suny: The making of the Georgian nation. Bloomington 1994, p. 75.
[2] Paul Manning: Strangers in a strange land. Occidentalist publics and Orientalist geographies in nineteenth-century Georgian imaginaries. Brighton, MA 2012.

it was visited by a host of distinguished foreign socialists, including Karl Kautsky and leading members of the British Labour Party.

But the weak and embattled Menshevik regime relied increasingly on force and nationalism rather than its socialist appeal. It not only persecuted political opponents with as much rigour as the Reds and Whites who were battling each other to the north, but were ready to use violence to preserve Georgia's territorial integrity. The most troublesome opposition to Menshevik rule was in South Ossetia, where Bolshevik sympathies were strong. The Georgian equivalent of the Red Guard was despatched there to put down pro-Bolshevik movements, destroying entire villages as well as killing political activists.[3] But neither international friends nor Georgian nationalism were strong enough to prevent the Red Army taking the country over in a matter of weeks in February 1921. Resistance after that was mostly sporadic. In 1924, Georgians across the country rose up in an attempt to end communist rule. Threatening enough to remind the Bolsheviks of how troublesome Georgia could be, it never stood a serious chance of achieving independence and was easily put down.

While fiercely patriotic and anti-Bolshevik, these Georgian rebels of the first quarter of the 20th century were neither pro-capitalist nor particularly anti-Russian. Lenin had recognised the power of Georgian nationalism and argued for a policy of "special concessions" in Soviet Georgia. This policy recognised that nationalism was more highly developed in Georgia than in other parts of the former Russian Empire, and aimed to avoid antagonising the population through overbearing assaults on national sentiment.[4] In spite of a damaging split among Georgian communists in 1922, his successors did not depart far from this line. Following the pacification of the country and especially its peasantry, who like the rest of Soviet peasantry had their world turned upside down by collectivisation, calm returned to Georgia. A Mingrelian from Georgia, Lavrenti Beria, rose to lead the communist organizations of the South Caucasus and was then promoted to head of Stalin's secret police in Moscow, from where he continued to act as Georgia's patron until 1951. In this period Georgian culture flourished, unlike Abkhaz and South Ossetian, whose scripts were converted to the Georgian alphabet and whose schools were Georgianised. Georgian cultural figures were arrested and shot or sent to the Gulag during the Great Terror to the same extent as elsewhere, but overall Beria's patronage ensured the republic got off relatively lightly. The republic prospered economically, with relatively little interference from Moscow, and it also provided a significant part of the personnel in charge of the whole South Caucasus region and to the leading bodies in Moscow.

In spite of the Terror, Georgia was able, especially under Beria's leadership and patronage, to accommodate to Soviet rule. The dynamic of the Moscow-Tbilisi

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[3] Arsene Saparov: From conflict to autonomy. The making of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region 1918–1922. In: EAS 62 (2010) 1, pp. 99–123.

[4] Jeremy Smith: The Georgian Affair of 1922. Policy failure, personality clash or power struggle?. In: EAS 50 (1998) 3, pp. 519–544.

relationship changed dramatically, however, as a result of the disturbances that
rocked Tbilisi and other Georgian cities in 1956. Between 2nd and 11th March
thousands of young people took part in unsanctioned commemorations of the
anniversary of Stalin's death, culminating in armed interventions by the Red
Army which cost dozens of lives. Most general histories describe the decision that
sparked these events – Khrushchev's denunciation of Joseph Stalin and the cancel-
lation of commemorations of the 3rd anniversary of Stalin's death – with little ref-
erence to any context broader than the Stalin cult: "In Georgia [Stalin] was vener-
ated as a national hero although he had executed many Georgians. A riot took
place in Tbilisi."[5]

Historians who do look beyond the immediate causes tend to do so at a high
level of generalisation: "The famous riots in Tbilisi […] were not simply an out-
burst of hurt Georgian pride, as the popular version has it, because the 'great son'
of their nation had been denigrated. According to witnesses and participants in
the protests, what actually happened was that the initial pro-Stalin demonstra-
tions that occurred […] rapidly developed into nationalist protests. By 9 March
[…] demonstrators were no longer concerned about Stalin, but the question of
Georgian self-determination and civil liberties. Some apparently openly called for
Georgian independence."[6]

For these authors, whose sympathies are clear, the demonstrations were a man-
ifestation of the eternal Georgian longing for independence. In many respects,
Georgian nationalism changed little over the course of the 20th century, and the
1956 events were part of a long sequence (1905, 1924, 1978, 1988) of more or less
insurgent protests against Russian or Soviet rule. Georgian nationalism, with all
its complexities and contradictions, is an essential part of the background to the
events of March 1956. The significance of personality cults – in this case, those of
Stalin and Beria – cannot be understood in isolation from this broader back-
ground.

De-Stalinisation shook up many of the old certainties across the Soviet Union,
but in Georgia de-Stalinisation coincided with the political reorientation of the
republic after twenty years of domination by Beria and his supporters. Khrush-
chev's secret speech led to the era of open dissidence in the Soviet Union, and to
the emergence of the 'thaw generation' which played such a key role in the col-
lapse of Soviet communism and the order that replaced it.[7] In Georgia as else-
where, the Khrushchev thaw had a marked effect on a generation of politicians.
But in this case, it also contributed to the peculiar character of Georgian national-
ism, epitomised by the future Georgian leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia.[8] This period

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[5] Robert Service: A history of modern Russia from Nicholas II to Putin. London 2003, p. 342.
[6] Bohdan Nahaylo/Victor Swoboda: Soviet disunion. A history of the nationalities problem in
the USSR. New York 1990, p. 120.
[7] Wisła Suraska: How the Soviet Union disappeared. An essay on the causes of the dissolution.
Durham 1999, pp. 12–32.
[8] Viktor Kozlov: Mass uprisings in the USSR. Protest and rebellion in the post-Stalin years. New
York/London 2002, pp. 132–133.

had a considerable impact on the constellation of forces that eventually engaged in Georgia's post-independence Civil War.[9] For the mass of Georgians, March 1956 seems to have been a turning point in which anti-Russian attitudes became, for the first time, an integral part of Georgian nationalism. The ultimate consequences of this could be seen in the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war.

The course of events in Tbilisi from 2nd–11th March 1956 are pretty well established. A detailed account by the "Trud" journalist S. Statnikov, later published in "Istochnik" in 1995, is more or less corroborated by the account drawn up by the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of Georgia (CPG) for the Presidium of the CC of the CPSU.[10] Further colourful details, such as the pig adorned with a photograph of Khrushchev that was paraded around the streets of Tbilisi, are provided by eyewitness accounts recorded much later.[11] Levan Avalishvili's comprehensive account, based on archival sources and eyewitness interviews, provides yet more substance and accuracy.[12]

On the surface, it is clear what motivated the demonstrators. The disturbances began as spontaneous commemorations of Stalin's death in the absence of any official events; monuments to Stalin provided the focal points in Tbilisi, Gori and Sukhumi; portraits of Stalin (and to a lesser extent Lenin) figured prominently; poems in praise of Stalin were read out; speeches denounced Khrushchev's secret speech; the slogan "Long Live Stalin" could be heard; and so on. An appeal read out to the crowd at Stalin's statue in Tbilisi on 9th March by Ruben Kipiani summarised the demands of the crowd. At different trials Kipiani later claimed variously that he had been drunk and had the petition thrust on him, reading it out without being aware of its contents, or that he had been told that it was written by the First Secretary of the CC CPG Mzhavanadze.[13] At his first interrogation

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[9] This was a formative period for many other future leading figures in Georgian politics. In 1956 Eduard Shevardnadze was head of the Georgian Komsomol. Georgia's first post-Gamsakhurdia foreign minister, Aleksandre Chikvaidze, who studied in the same class as Mikhail Gorbachev, hints at the impact of the March events on his generation and also provides insights into the official youth politics of the time. Aleksandre Chikvaidze: Na izlome istorii. SSSR – Rossiia – Gruziia. Moscow 2006, pp. 28–29. Further evidence of the 1950s as a formative period for Georgian politicians is provided by the dissident poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko in a 1986 interview: "[T]he first thing [Georgian first secretary Jumber Patiashvili] told me was that when he was a student he managed to smuggle his way into the great hall of Tbilisi University to listen to a poetry recital of mine […]. Do you know what he said to me: 'We grew up in the spirit of your poetry'", cited in Jerry F. Hough: Democratization and revolution in the USSR, 1985–1991. Washington 1997, p. 56.

[10] Dokladnaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii o massovykh volneniiakh naseleniia gg. Tbilisi, Gori, Sukhumi i Batumi 4–9 marta 1956 g. v sviazi s osuzhdeniem kul'ta lichnosti Stalina. In: Aleksandr A. Fursenko (ed.): Arkhivy Kremlia. Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964. Vol. 2: Postanovleniia 1954–1958. Moscow 2006, pp. 283–289.

[11] Account by Mikhail Dzhalabadze in Lev Lur'e/Irina Maliarova: 1956 god. Seredina veka. St. Petersburg 2007, p. 142.

[12] Levan Avalishvili: A history of the March 1956 events in Georgia, based on oral history interviews and archival documents. In: Timothy K. Blauvelt/Jeremy Smith (eds): Georgia after Stalin. Nationalism and Soviet power. London 2015, pp. 32–52.

[13] Kozlov: Uprisings (see note 8), pp. 121–122.

by the KGB on 21st March 1956 he claimed the document was written by a half-Jewish schoolgirl called Eteri.[14] In spite of Kipiani's unreliability as to the provenance of the document, he was consistent as to its contents and the sources indicate that the demands were received favourably by the crowd:

1. Return the closed letter on Stalin to the CC CPSU (in other words, suppress the content of the Secret Speech).
2. Remove Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan for their declarations against Stalin and impeach them.
3. Ask Molotov to form a new government and hold new elections to the Central Committee and government. To include Mzhavanadze and Stalin's son, Vasily Stalin, in the new government.
4. Return Stalin's son Vasily to the Soviet Union.
5. Review the circumstances of Beria's execution and the reasons for sending Vasily Stalin out of the Soviet Union. This review should be conducted by appropriate organs under the leadership of Georgia.
6. Name Akakii Mgeladze Secretary of the CC CPG – a true pupil of Stalin, who appointed him head of Abkhazia.
7. Release Bagirov – a true son of the people of Azerbaijan – from prison.
8. Send these demands immediately for publication in the newspapers "Kommunist" and "Zaria Vostoka", printing them word for word and in translation.[15]

The demands are truly Stalinist in two senses: they envisage a return to the old order, embodied in a government led by close associates of Stalin, while the strength of the personal attachment to Stalin and his cult is attested by the three references to his son Vasily.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, later recollections of eyewitnesses and participants in the March 1956 events (collected in an early volume devoted to 1956) disagree as to the strength of feeling for Stalin personally. According to Eduard Shevardnadze "They didn't think Stalin was God here in Georgia". Rather, what motivated the protests were the slurs against the Georgian nation that Khrushchev had supposedly added to his denunciation of Stalin.[16] This analysis is partly confirmed by the recollections of demonstrator Mikhail Dzhalabadze, who insisted that in denouncing Stalin Khrushchev had insulted the whole of Georgia and the protests were against Khrushchev's nationality policy.[17]

Givi Bepkhuadze denied even this – Stalin did not actually think of himself as a Georgian, and the demonstrations were rather protesting against Khrushchev, who wanted to throw Georgians out of Georgia.[18] Kakhi Kavsadze, whose good friend Rauli was among the fatalities of the events, illustrated rather the confusion of the time, insisting he was not a Stalinist but that he felt compelled to protest

[14] Protokol doprosa zaderzhannogo Kipiani Rubena Baakovicha ot 21 marta 1956 goda. In: Lur'e/Maliarova: 1956 (see note 11), p. 166.
[15] Ibid., p. 168.
[16] Eduard Shevardnadze in Lur'e/Maliarova: 1956 (see note 11), pp. 140–141.
[17] Mikhail Dzhalabadze in ibid., p. 142.
[18] Givi Bepkhuadze in ibid., pp. 145–146.

after being told that the positive portrayals of Stalin over the last thirty years were a lie.[19] Other testimonies, however, refer to affection for Stalin as the sole motive for participation in the March 1956 events.[20] Later interviews underline the mix of motives for attending the demonstrations, from the committed to the casual: "The best speakers provoked my interest. The general motive of their speeches was patriotism, they read poems that encouraged us, the youth, and made us feel powerful and unique […] we went to the demonstrations in the evenings and listened to the wonderful speakers, and we were proud to feel the importance of our gathering." Or: "We went to the demonstrations every day. We lacked entertainment back then, and some of the students went there just to spend time, because all the best poets and writers were giving speeches." Some eyewitnesses distanced themselves from Stalin: "Khrushchev's speech concerned Stalin, but we regarded it as a humiliation of the entire nation. This was the key reason for my participation, because I came from a family in which Stalin had not been much respected, as three members of my family were victims of the 1937 repressions." Respect for Stalin did, however, figure highly in many of the accounts and seems to have served as the most important initial spur for the demonstrations: "We didn't have the idea that we were protesting against the Soviet Union, these demonstrations were not directed against the system. We were just defending the dignity of Stalin."[21]

All of the sources suggest that the demonstrators were overwhelmingly young, most of them students, and were imbued not just with Georgian nationalism but also with political radicalism influenced by that nationalism. Memories recounted at such distance are also likely to be faulty, especially when feelings about such a controversial figure as Stalin are concerned. The evidence does, however, point overwhelmingly towards the centrality of the figure of Stalin in motivating the Georgian demonstrations, and this makes investigation of the Stalin cult in Georgia an important topic for research.

The events did, however, reflect a broader historical context in which traditional nationalism and the personality of Stalin played key roles, but were not the only factors. The conclusions of the CC CPG report delivered to the Presidium of the CC CPSU pinpointed the Stalin cult alongside a litany of the usual suspects – hooligans and anti-Soviet, parasitic and immoral elements, mistakes in propaganda work and so on, as the main causes of the protests. But in more sober analysis, the report also points to weaknesses in economic policy, and mistakes in nationality policy with especial regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[22] Such candidness did not even amount to self-criticism, given that any such faults could be laid at the feet of the Beria-sponsored group which had been in power in Georgia until 1951.

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[19] Kakhi Kavsadze in ibid., pp. 150–151.
[20] Otar Urushadze in ibid., pp. 152–153.
[21] All participant eyewitness quotations cited from Avalishvili: History (see note 12).
[22] Fursenko (ed.): Arkhivy Kremlia. Vol. 2 (see note 10), pp. 290–291.

If the Secret Speech came as a bolt from the blue for most citizens of the Soviet Union, Georgians may have been less surprised by it. From one perspective, the events of 1956 were a continuation of a process initiated in 1951 by Stalin himself. The so-called Mingrelian affair, which Khrushchev described as a personal initiative of Stalin over which he did not consult, resulted in a widespread purge among the republic's leadership which has generally been interpreted as aimed at weakening the grip of Lavrenti Beria on the region.[23] The mention of Beria in Kipiani's list of demands is just one indication that the cult of Beria, while not as significant as that of Stalin, was of at least some consequence. Perhaps more telling is the nervousness of the surviving Presidium members in dealing with the legacy of the man they had executed. Khrushchev's exasperated cry of "Beria shot Georgians as much as he did Russians!" in response to the March 1956 events[24] sums up his appraisal of the place of Beria for Georgian nationalism. The difficulty of dealing with Beria's legacy also took more concrete forms. Even before Beria's execution, in August 1953, the Georgian CC wrote to Khrushchev requesting that measures be taken to expel Beria's relatives from the republic.[25] It took until May of 1954 to fully authorise this action,[26] and in September the following year some of Beria's relatives, exiled to Krasnoyarsk and Kazakhstan, were still proving sufficiently troublesome for the KGB and the Presidium to order their arrest.[27] Coincidentally, the Presidium of the CC CPSU returned to the matter of Beria's malingering influence in the immediate aftermath of the March 1956 events, resolving that a commission should set to work releasing political prisoners wrongly imprisoned by Beria and his associates.[28] While this measure did not refer specifically to Georgia, and may already have been under discussion in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet before the March events, it is another piece of evidence focussing on the Beria legacy as a further cause of tension within the Georgian SSR. While there is no direct evidence of Beria's supporters using the disturbances and their aftermath to pursue a political agenda, the fact is that a substantial group or "clan"

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[23] Oleg V. Khlevniuk: Kremlin-Tbilisi. Purges, control and Georgian nationalism in the first half of the 1950s. In: Blauvelt/Smith (eds.): Georgia (see note 12), pp. 13–31; John Ducoli: The Georgian purges 1951–53. In: Caucasian Review 6 (1958), pp. 54–61; Amy Knight: Beria. Stalin's first lieutenant. Princeton 1993, pp. 159–164; Yoram Gorlizki/Oleg Khlevniuk: Cold peace. Stalin and the Soviet ruling circle, 1945–1953. Oxford 2005, pp. 109–113.

[24] Protokol no. 17. Zasedanie 23 Maia 1956 g. In: Aleksandr A. Fursenko (ed.): Arkhivy Kremlia. Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964. Vol. 1: Chernovye protokol'nye zapisi zasedanii stenogrammy. Moscow 2004, p. 133.

[25] Zapiska A. I. Mirtskhulavy v TsK KPSS o vyselenii s territorii Gruzinskoi SSR rodstvennikov L. P. Berii. In: V. Naumov/Iurii Sigachev (eds.): Lavrentii Beriia. 1953. Rossiia XX vek. Dokumenty. Moscow 1999, p. 382.

[26] Zapiska komissii TsK KPSS o rodstvennikakh osuzhdennykh po delu L. P. Berii s prilozheniem proekta postanovleniia TsK KPSS. In: ibid., pp. 394–395.

[27] Zapiska I. A. Serova v TsK KPSS o nabliudenii za povedeniem vyslannykh rodstvennikov lits, osuzhdennykh po delu L. P. Berii. In: ibid., pp. 395–396.

[28] Soobshchenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR o merakh po bystreishei likvidatsii posledstvii prestupnoi deiatel'nosti Berii i ego soobshchnikov. In: Fursenko (ed.): Arkhivy Kremlia. Vol. 2 (see note 10), pp. 221–222.

of Georgians, among them many Mingrelians, had recently been ousted from power and were handed an opportunity by Khrushchev to make something of a comeback. Beria's name clearly still had some popular resonance and the role of the remnants of his support in 1956 is at least worth further consideration.

Beria and his associates had, after all, controlled Georgia at all levels since the early 1930s, and exorcising his influence on the republic was going to be a difficult task to achieve without causing major disruption. For those who identified Beria as a champion of Georgia, the undermining of his position by Stalin, followed by his arrest and execution after Stalin's death, would easily be interpreted as a blow against Georgia's freedom to manage its own affairs within the strictures of Soviet federalism. It might also have been taken as a move against the Georgian nation, which foreshadowed the insults dealt to Stalin in 1956.

But the Mingrelian affair may have represented more than just a move on Stalin's part to undermine the position of a former favourite who was now falling out of favour. Despite Khrushchev's claim that Stalin never discussed the purges in Georgia with the Politburo, the purges were accompanied by an administrative reorganization which saw the creation of two new *oblasti* (regions) with their own regional party organizations (*obkomi* – regional committees) centred on Tbilisi and Kutaisi. While this move is easily interpreted as further weakening the position of the CC CPG by creating rival power bases, the Politburo resolution on the reorganization makes for instructive reading. Overtly, the aim of the reorganization was to "strengthen the leadership of Party and Soviet organs in economic, agricultural and cultural construction". Mechanisation of agriculture and electrification of the countryside were immediate aims, but emphasis was also put on the creation and strengthening of the various clubs, cultural organizations, and media outlets for mass-political education work. The new organizations were also urged to assist the Ministry of State Security in the struggle with foreign agents and to report up to higher levels of the party and state on "serious mistakes of lower institutions over non-fulfilment of Party and government decisions, anti-State activities, incorrect and illegal use of financial resources and material resources".[29] If taken at face value, this resolution would indicate a raft of serious concerns over the state of Georgia: a youth and working population that was out of touch with the political values of the regime, and open to the ideas of foreign subversion, and a corrupt and/or incompetent party and state apparatus. While there is nothing here as extreme as Khrushchev's Secret Speech claim that Stalin believed Georgian nationalists were preparing a move to secede from the USSR and unite with Turkey, there are signs that the centre was concerned with developments in the republic, behind which one might consider a rise in Georgian nationalism linked with the Beria regime. On the other hand, much of the language of this resolution is formulaic and fairly standard for the times and on this evidence alone it is hard to judge whether Stalin and the Presidium perceived a real, deep rooted problem of nationalism in the republic.

[29] Politburo proceedings of 29. 10. 1951, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1091.

Of the other factors mentioned by the CC CPG report on 1956, and which may already have been playing a role in 1951, the economy is an altogether different question, while material on Abkhazia and South Ossetia is notoriously hard to obtain. The 1951 reorganization took Akakii Mgeladze away from leading the CP in Abkhazia to head the new Kutaisi *obkom*, and it is noticeable that until then the Politburo of the CC CPSU had not discussed appointments in Abkhazia since 1943. The period 1934–1951, it can be argued, was the only period in the past 200 years when Abkhazia was effectively ruled from Tbilisi. The removal of Beria's supporters brought this period to an end, and Khrushchev also moved rapidly in the summer of 1953 to remove and reverse the policies of linguistic and cultural Georgianisation. A commission he formed reported back on the overwhelming desire of Abkhaz parents to have their children educated in Abkhaz and Russian rather than Georgian, and the same commission also made moves to restore the Abkhaz-language presence in universities and newspapers.[30] Given the subordination of Abkhazia and South Ossetia achieved during Beria's ascendancy, the reversal of this power relationship and of linguistic and cultural policies could easily be interpreted as blows aimed deliberately against the Georgian nation. In any case, after the March 1956 events there were a number of complaints from Abkhaz citizens that the Georgianising policies previously associated with Beria were being renewed.[31]

The slogans which featured most heavily in March 1956 centred around Stalin, Lenin, and denunciations of Khrushchev, and in fewer cases around Georgian national demands and claims for independence. From the available accounts, there is little to suggest actively hostile attitudes towards other ethnic groups, in particular Russians.[32] This was in contrast to the Baltic republics in the same period, where slogans such as "Russians go home!" and "Freedom from the Russian occupiers!" featured heavily in public graffiti and on defaced ballot papers. While there is, accordingly, little to suggest that anti-Russian attitudes as such were a motivating factor in the March events, there is at least some evidence that in their aftermath Georgians in certain areas were targeting ethnic Russians for acts of violence, intimidation, and discrimination – the latter in particular are mentioned as having been sanctioned at the lower levels of the CPSU and Soviet authority structures. The CC CPG reports on the March events denied that there were any significant national antagonisms prior to the events, but admitted to a growth of this manifestation of Georgian nationalism afterwards.[33]

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[30] Dokladnaia zapiska komissii TsK KPSS N.S. Khrushchevu o rezul'tatakh proverki raboty uchebnykh zavedenii i gazet v Gruzinskoi SSR, 30.9.1953, unpublished.

[31] RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 60, ll. 121–123, 137–149.

[32] In addition to the accounts already mentioned, see the KGB and army reports in Lur'e/Maliarova: 1956 (see note 11), pp. 156–162.

[33] Report of the CC CP Georgia to N. S. Khrushchev on signs of nationalistic inclinations of the Georgian population in connection with the condemnation of the cult of personality of Stalin at the XX Congress of the CPSU [not later than 23.3.1956], in: Fursenko (ed.): Arkhivy Kremlia. Vol. 2 (see note 10), pp. 296–303.

But even then, the CC CPG seems to have been downplaying the extent of Georgian-Russian tensions when their reports are compared with the letters of complaint that were making their way to the CC CPSU. Towards the end of April 1956 a group of Russian inhabitants of Tskhaltubo sent a desperate appeal to Voroshilov, claiming they were "in fear of [their] lives" as a result of the anti-Russian mood. They had been told to leave immediately or face the consequences, amid rumours that anti-Russian atrocities were being prepared for 1st May. One of the leaders of the anti-Russian campaign was the local procurator, and the authorities were doing nothing to stop the threats or protect the population.[34] In the same week a military officer on the railways complained to Zhukov of the growing nationalism in Tbilisi and that he was treated as "an alien, a Pariah, an undesirable". According to this letter, official capitulation to nationalism was demonstrated by the removal of non-Georgians from their positions.[35] Later in the year, a member of the CPSU for twenty years, Boris Belkov, alerted the central committee to the growing number of assaults on Russians in his town of Rustavi, which had grown so regular that Russians could not go out at night. He linked rising nationalism on the part of the authorities to corruption, a link that was to be made with growing regularity.[36] Anti-Russian sentiment also clearly motivated a small group of young Georgians, who were to engage in random acts of violence against ethnic Russians by the end of the year. Among their number was the future President of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia.[37]

This apparent growth in anti-Russian attitudes raises important questions about centre-periphery relations and the nationalities question in the USSR, as well as more general questions of the way in which nationalists do not just designate "primordial" characteristics to other groups but also assign guilt and blame to entire national groups. In addition to Khrushchev's denigration of Stalin's memory and other longstanding grievances, the shooting of demonstrators gave Georgians a further cause for complaint against the central authorities. The authorities in charge of the CPSU, the administrative structures of the Soviet Union, and the Red Army, were Soviet rather than strictly speaking Russian, and although they were located inside the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, its capital city Moscow was also multi-ethnic. Such considerations did not prevent the regime's opponents in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia identifying their situation as that of a Russian occupation, and it seems that Georgians came to view the central authorities in the same way. The difference is that, at least in March 1956, the protests do not appear to have been motivated in the first place either by anti-Russian feeling or anti-communism at all. Indeed, many of the demonstrators were calling

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[34] Letter from Russian inhabitants of Tskhaltubo to Voroshilov, 27.4.1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 60, ll. 75–76.

[35] Letter from a railway forces officer to Zhukov, 22.4.1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 60, ll. 79–84.

[36] Letter from Boris Gavrilovich Belkov, 28.8.1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 60, ll. 93–94.

[37] Giorgi Kldiashvili: Nationalism after the March 1956 events and the origins of the national-independence movement in Georgia. In: Blauvelt/Smith (eds.): Georgia (see note 12), pp. 77–91.

for a return to the kind of communism which for them was represented by Lenin, Stalin, Beria, and Molotov. Yet the armed suppression of what might otherwise have flourished into a "Tbilisi Spring" precipitated – or brought to the surface – a wave of anti-Russian hostility.

The March 1956 events were a crucial turning point. Georgian nationalism, blended with socialism, had been at the basis of the independent state of 1918–1921 and had continued to provide a headache for the Bolsheviks after Sovietisation. But the resistance to the 1921 Red Army invasion and the risings of 1924 appear to have been anti-Bolshevik rather than anti-Russian in character, while in the years of Beria's ascendancy, Georgian elites accepted Soviet rule and prospered, as much as they had in the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Nationalism was defined more by attitudes to Georgia's own minorities as by relations to Moscow. But this changed immediately the moment the Red Army opened fire in Tbilisi on March 9th 1956.

Georgia's socialist tradition was still evident in 1956, and although the distortions of the Soviet period make socialism a dirty word today, its legacy was also evident in the movement behind the Rose Revolution of 2003 which brought Saakashvili to power. But Georgian socialism was always linked to nationalism and in part based on national traditions of solidarity. Nor did it preclude or even discourage enterprise or initiative. In the late Soviet period official levels of income and wealth for Georgians were at third world levels, but this merely revealed the truth that the majority of economic activity in Georgia was unofficial. Where the grey market outstripped the planned economy, there was plenty of opportunity for enrichment on the part of those who knew how to play the game. It is mostly from these practises that Georgians have been stuck with an ill-deserved reputation for sharp practise and gangsterism. So great was the level of unofficial private enterprise within the socialist state that the construction of Tbilisi's metro in the 1960s was largely funded by local businessmen.

And while Georgia had turned against Russia, it continued to play a special role for Russians and other Soviet citizens. Sometimes described as the Soviet Riviera or the Soviet Union's Italy, Georgia enjoyed a warm climate, beaches, good wines and, of course, there was still the hospitality, the feasting, and the music. For those escaping from the greyness of life in the rest of the Soviet Union, Georgia was some kind of paradise, and Georgians knew how to take advantage of this. Left to themselves, Georgians could make the most of the system and enjoy their life and traditions. When the centre did try to interfere too much, as it did with a proposed new language law in 1978, Georgians took to the streets and saw off the threat.

But socialism and nationalism rarely sit well together, and, in Georgia's case, it has tended to be nationalism that has emerged triumphant. In this way Saakashvili followed in a distinguished line of Georgian leaders in sacrificing some of his democratic potentials in giving way to nationalist inclinations – Noe Zhordania, the leader of Menshevik Georgia; Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a famed dissident and human rights activist in the 1970s and 1980s, who promised as post-Soviet Georgia's

first president to create a Christian Georgia for the Georgians and whose actions in abolishing the autonomy of South Ossetia and Abkhazia lay behind the crisis of 2008; and finally Eduard Shevardnadze, who as Gorbachev's foreign minister was seen as one of the architects of the end of the Cold War. In all four cases, Georgian leaders have had a host of admirers in the West, but domestic pressures, especially a nationalism which became more exclusivist the more embattled it became, have got the better of them.

Another massacre by Red Army troops on the streets of Tbilisi in 1989 ensured that, once the Soviet Union broke up, independent Georgia was bound to seek to forge ties with the West and escape Russia's orbit as far as it could. For all that, there is no overwhelming reason why post-Soviet Georgia might not have followed the path of the Alievs in Azerbaijan – wooing western businesses and governments while at the same time doing enough to keep the Russians sweet – had it not been for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Arguments as to whether the Georgians or the Abkhaz were the earlier inhabitants of what is now Abkhazia were enough to keep cohorts of archaeologists, historians and linguists in employment for the last thirty years of the Soviet Union, and Georgians regard both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as essential parts of their heritage. The continued presence of Russian troops in the regions long after the collapse of the Soviet Union ultimately could not be tolerated by a government or a people steeped in nationalism.

"What does not kill us makes us strong" is a phrase that Temuri Iakobashvili, Georgia's minister with responsibility for the breakaway regions at the time of the 2008 war with Russia, has been fond of quoting. It pretty much sums up the attitude, based on an unshakeable national pride and conviction of the justness of their cause, which inspired Saakashvili to throw his armed forces against those of Putin and Medvedev in 2008. It was the same spirit that fired the knights in Rustaveli's 12th century epic to take on immeasurably superior forces and still win.

But the spirit of rebellion has been less evident in Georgia than the spirit of accommodation. To some extent, strategies of national survival dictate compromise, and there is no inherent contradiction between accepting imperial subordination and promoting national identity. As the Soviet Estonian poet Jaan Kaplinski put it: "Under six centuries of foreign domination, benign or otherwise, we simply sought strategies of survival and tried to remain decent, to maintain our identity."[38] For most of the past two centuries, acceptance of Russian dominion did not even extend to such compromise for Georgia: Orthodox Christian Russia was a far lesser evil than Turkey or Persia, Georgia's other neighbours at the start of the 19th century; the Georgian nobility achieved, after a period of resistance, a smooth integration into the Russian estate system; for the Georgian nationalists of the 1860s and later, the unification of the Georgian lands and ethnic Georgian populations was to be celebrated, no matter that it was being achieved by the force of Russian arms.

[38] Cited in Merike Lepasaar Beecher: Translator's introduction. In: Jaan Kross (ed.): The ropewalker. Between three plagues. Vol. 1. London 2016, p. 16.

Under Soviet rule, certainly while Stalin and Beria were in the ascendancy, Georgian culture flourished within certain strictures, and territorial aspirations were satisfied with the abolition of Abkhazia's separate status in the early 1930s. A leadership change at the start of the 1950s in Georgia, and in Moscow following the death of both Stalin and Beria in 1953, brought less sympathetic leaders to power and altered Georgia's status in relation to its minorities. The events of March 1956 finally changed the dynamic of Georgia's accommodation to Soviet power. Confrontation became more regular – on a day to day basis, this could be seen in the arguments over ethnic precedence in which scholars in the South Caucasus were constantly engaged, or in reactions to the fortunes of the Tbilisi football team. On occasion, in 1978, 1989, and following the Rose Revolution of 2003, confrontation involved Russia and turned ugly. Accommodation, making the most of a crooked system, continued to be a feature of the Georgian nation, especially in the economic sphere, up until the end of the Soviet experiment.

Martin Demant Frederiksen

Meaningless people

Atheism, subjectivity and unrepresented identities in Georgia

Introduction

On a Sunday in June 2014 a small group of men from Tbilisi go on a picnic some miles outside the city.[1] They spend the morning filling up a minibus with everything needed for a traditional Georgian outing: vegetables, fruit, meat for roasting over a fire, beer, wine and a tablecloth. There is nothing that evidently distinguishes these men from any other group of Georgians going on a picnic. The only thing that does is the fact that they are not real humans. This is not something that you can immediately see, but now and then there are small signs that give them away. For example, none of them make the sign of the cross when the minibus passes a church. It becomes completely clear whenever religion enters into the conversation. The Georgian Orthodox Church would label them as "inhuman", others perhaps merely as atheists.

Atheist propaganda, restrictions on religious practices, persecution of religious minorities and the closing of religious institutions was a central part of the Soviet State's attempt to build a new society.[2] However, after the fall of the Soviet Union religion and religious practices have once again become a major aspect of daily life for many citizens from former Soviet republics.[3] This is not merely a question of

[2] Tamara Dragadze: The domestication of religion under Soviet communism. In: Chris Hann (ed.): Socialism. Ideals, ideologies, and local practice. London 1993, pp. 141–152; Sonja Luehrmann: Secularism Soviet style. Teaching atheism and religion in a Volga republic. Bloomington 2011; Catherine Wanner: State secularism and lived religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine. Oxford 2012.
[3] Maria Louw: Everyday Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia. London 2007; Mark Steinberg/Catherine Wanner (eds.): Religion, morality, and community in post-Soviet society. Bloomington 2008; Jarrett Zigon: Multiple moralities and religions in post-Soviet Russia. New York/Oxford 2013.

religious revival happening as a consequence of former suppression, but just as much a consequence of the disillusion and the moral vacuums experienced by numerous people in the wake of the Soviet collapse.[4] In Georgia the Orthodox Church obtained a powerful position as the country gained independence in 1991, not just as the primary religion but also in relation to the very definition of what is entailed in being a "real" or "proper" Georgian.[5] The history of Christianity in Georgia goes back to the apostles Andrew, Matthew and Simon who all preached in the western regions of the country in the 1st century AD, and to Christianity becoming the main religion in the 4th century.[6] As noted by Anders Nielsen, in Georgian Orthodox history-writing the church and the people have a direct relation to Christ himself, and icons in several churches in the country display Georgia as a chosen land that can understand its own historical development as directly proportional with divine acts from above.[7]

As a consequence of the increasing influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church in both social and political life, religious minorities – such as Muslims, Protestants, Baptists and Catholics – have generally had a difficult time in the country during the last two decades.[8] But even though the existence of religious minorities might not necessarily have been appreciated by the Georgian public at large, their existence has at least been recognized – they might believe in something that is questionable or even wrong, but at least they are believers. The situation is very much different for individuals who are not religious at all. Among parts of the population they are either seen as old communists, walking around as unimportant remnants of the past,[9] or as members of satanic subcultures threatening to undermine the cultural, national and moral foundation of the country. Non-believers are not only seen by the church as potentially threatening, but also as distinctly "inhuman".

"Inhuman" (*adamiani ar aris*) is a term used to depict individuals or groups who lack the basic social and moral features that are seen as foundational for being a proper human being. Directly translated it means "is not a human". In practice it

[4] Galina Lindquist: Conjuring hope. Healing and magic in contemporary Russia. London 2005; Mathijs Pelkmans: Defending the border. Religion, identity, and modernity in the republic of Georgia. Ithaca 2006.

[5] Ketevan Gurchiani: How Soviet is the religious revival in Georgia. Tactics in everyday religiosity. In: EAS 69 (2017) 3, pp. 508–531; Paul Manning: Materiality and cosmology. Georgian churches as sacred, sublime, and secular. In: Ethnos 73 (2008) 3, pp. 327–360; Florian Mühlfried: Being a state and states of being in highland Georgia. New York/Oxford 2014.

[6] Frederik Coene: The Caucasus. An introduction. London/New York 2010, p. 80; Ronald Grigor Suny: The making of the Georgian nation. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1994, p. 21.

[7] Anders Nielsen: Ikonerne bekymrer sig ogsaa for Georgien. In: Kontur 14 (2007), pp. 29–40.

[8] Pelkmans: Border (see note 4); William Eastwood: Processions in the street. Georgian Orthodox privilege and religious minorities' response to invisibility. In: AEER 27 (2009) 1, pp. 20–28; Julie A. George: The dangers of reform. State building and national minorities in Georgia. In: CAS 28 (2009) 2, pp. 135–154; Martin Demant Frederiksen: Young men, time, and boredom in the republic of Georgia. Philadelphia 2013; Mühlfried: State (see note 5).

[9] Katrine B. Gotfredsen: Void pasts and marginal presents. On nostalgia and obsolete futures in the republic of Georgia. In: SR 73 (2014) 2, pp. 246–265.

is used in the sense of inhuman and used to describe people who break established social relations either through cheating or by going against established cultural traditions and codes of honour.[10] It does thus not refer to a person being *non*-human, but to a breach in an inner human quality. In that sense it is not as much a marker of identity as it is a specific understanding of the subject. It may be used to characterize criminals or members of a sub-culture, but also with reference to non-believers.

   In the following I describe a group of atheists in Tbilisi and their relation to the Georgian Orthodox Church and nation. I explain the religious and political situation in which contemporary Georgian atheists navigate – particularly the church's perception and understanding of the individual subject, morality and meaningfulness, and how this perception affects both political life and general ideas about what it means to be a Georgian. After this follows an exploration of how the atheists internally tried to define themselves as a group and how they externally tried to define themselves as equal members of the Georgian nation through the establishment of an Atheist Society. Finally, I will seek to relate these descriptions to more general questions about subjectivity and meaningfullness, and the question of what is entailed in being consigned to not being anything.

Orthodoxy, politics, and the Georgian subject

For centuries the Georgian Orthodox Church has formed part of Georgian self-understanding. Its exclusive status, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. Georgia, and not least Tbilisi, has historically been seen as a cosmopolitan place where numerous ethnic and religious groups lived side-by-side.[11] Following independence in 1991 it became, as in other post-Soviet nations, a significant part of politics to define exactly what characterized Georgia as a nation and – at the same time – what did not. The 19th century Georgian thinker and author Ilia Chavchavadze had in his time put forth the dogma "fatherland, language, faith" (*mamuli, ena, sarc'muneoba*) as foundational for the Georgian nation. Within recent years this dogma has seen a return within political elites (across parties) and also within the Orthodox Church.[12] With this dogma, the church as an institu-

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[10] Tamara Dragadze: Rural families in Soviet Georgia. A case study in Racha province. London 1988; Martin Demant Frederiksen: Good hearts or big bellies. Dzmak´atcoba and images of masculinity in the republic of Georgia. In: Vered Amid et al. (eds.): Young men in uncertain times. New York/Oxford 2012, pp. 165–187.

[11] Martin Demant Frederiksen: "A gate, but leading where?". In search of actually existing cosmopolitanism in post-Soviet Tbilisi. In: Caroline Humphrey et al. (eds.): Post-cosmopolitan cities. Explorations of urban coexistence. New York/Oxford 2012, pp. 120–141; Zaza Shatirishvili: National narratives, realms of memory and Tbilisi culture. In: Kristof Van Assche et al. (eds.): City culture and city planning in Tbilisi. Where Europe and Asia meet. Lewiston et al. 2009, pp. 59–70.

[12] Mühlfried: State (see note 5); Ghia Nodia: Components of the Georgian national idea. In: Identity Studies 1 (2009), pp. 84–101.

tion could easily argue for its own central place within the nation, and while the political situation in the country has often been unstable during recent decades, the position of the church within the same period has been relatively stable and its political influence increasing.[13] Florian Mühlfried has argued that there has been an "Orthodoxification" of the Georgian state in the sense that the power of the church (for instance through the dogma of fatherland, language, faith) has risen dramatically.[14] As he notes, "the state is seen as being constituted by the nation and the nation is defined by linguistic and religious features. Inherently, this dogma alleges that whoever speaks Georgian needs to be an Orthodox Christian".[15]

At the same time, political life in Georgia since the Rose Revolution of 2003 has been marked by neoliberal and western-oriented politics, and numerous reforms have been carried out to modernize the country and secure future membership of institutions such as the EU and NATO. As part of these reforms, several initiatives, some of them initiated by the Ombudsman for human rights, have created legal changes aimed at securing freedom of religion and speech. But despite this, intolerance towards minorities remains a problem, not least in relation to comments from the Orthodox Church and individual instances in which Orthodox priests or members of local congregations have physically attacked various minority group members.[16] An article based on interviews with Orthodox priests in the period 2008–2011 showed how a number of them speak directly against Georgian membership of EU and NATO and instead propose that the church should be linked even closer to the state.[17] One consequence of this has been that the Orthodox Church has grown to become one of the strongest institutions in the country in relation to determining social values. While a majority of Georgian politicians after the revolution thus supported the establishment of a democratic system based on a European model, most of the political elite simultaneously recognised the Orthodox Church as playing a special role in society.[18] The existence of modern democratic ideals thus partly exists on the level of rhetorics among leading politicians while reality consists of a national-religious syncretism supported by the church.[19]

[13] Martin Demant Frederiksen/Katrine B. Gotfredsen: Georgian portraits. Essays on the afterlives of revolution. Winchester/Washington 2017.
[14] Mühlfried: State (see note 5), p. 159.
[15] Ibid., p. 154.
[16] Human Rights Watch: World Report 2014. Georgia, www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/georgia (last accessed 21.7.2020); Martin Demant Frederiksen: Waiting for nothing. Nihilism, doubt and difference without difference in postrevolutionary Georgia. In: Manpreet Janeja et al. (eds.): Ethnographies of waiting. Doubt, hope and uncertainty. London 2018, pp. 163–181.
[17] Elene Gavashelishvili: Anti-modern and anti-globalist tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church. In: Identity Studies 4 (2012), pp. 118–138.
[18] Irian Sulkhanishvili: Struggle for power. Religion and politics in Georgia from the 90s to the present. In: Identity Studies 4 (2012), pp. 138–152.
[19] Zaal Andronikashvili/Giorgi Maisuradze: Secularization and its vicissitudes in Georgia. In: Identity Studies 2 (2010), pp. 5–17.

Rusudan Gotsiridze, bishop in the Evangelic Baptist Church in Georgia, has characterized this as a form of "but-politics" where local politicians in their statements have accentuated democratic initiatives within legislation in relation to freedom of religion and speech, but simultaneously favourised the views of the Orthodox Church.[20] Examples of this, she writes, include: "We are building a democratic state where supreme value is placed on the rule of law, *but* we need not forget that one of the bright lights of our lives is the Patriarch". Or: "Of course, there is freedom of expression in Georgia and everybody has the right to protest against homophobia; homosexuality is not criminalized according to our legislation […], *but* they have to respect the moral values of the majority".[21] As with other reforms in the democratic process since the revolution, there is a degree of distance between law and practice,[22] and often great differences between what on the one hand is legal and what on the other hand is morally correct in the eyes of the church. A national survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in February 2014 showed that 94 % of the Georgian population had trust in the Orthodox Church as an institution, while only 68 % trusted parliament, and only 46 % trusted the work of the Ombudsman.[23] In the general public, the words and deeds of the church may thus weigh heavy, even when they verge on illegality.

Galina Lindquist has, from a similar context in Russia, argued that the resistance of the Orthodox Church towards what is different springs from a particular perspective on subjectivity and morality. The Russian Orthodox Church's distinct negativity towards alternative religious and spiritual practices, such as the use of magic, rests upon conflicting ontologies about what constitutes a human subject. While the question of will in the Orthodox Church solely lies with God, the use of magic represented an understanding of the subject in which the person is acting upon her or his *own* will. Individual intentionality in the view of the church is equaled to evil, and practices based on free will are seen as inherently immoral.[24]

Lela Rekhviashvili has highlighted a similar situation in her description of the Georgian Orthodox Church's antagonism against homosexuality. She shows how the Orthodoxification of Georgian society has entailed an increasing condemnation of what is different and of those who, in the eyes of the church, can not be seen as Georgian persons. In 2013, she writes, the NGO *Identoba* initiated a project with the aim of helping homeless families through the winter. But the Orthodox

[20] Rusudan Gotsiridze: The "But" policy of the Georgian state. In: Ewa Chylinski (ed.): Freedom of religion in Georgia and Armenia. Tbilisi 2013.

[21] Ibid., p. 32 (italics in original).

[22] Martin Demant Frederiksen: The would-be state. Reforms, NGOs and absent presents in postrevolutionary Georgia. In: SR 73 (2014) 2, pp. 307–322.

[23] Kornely Kakachia: Is Georgia's Orthodox Church an obstacle to European values?. In: Ponars Eurasia Policy Memos (June 2014), www.ponarseurasia.com/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm_332_Kakachia%20_June%202014.pdf (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[24] Galina Lindquist: Not my will but thine be done. Church versus magic in contemporary Russia. In: Culture and Religion 1 (2000) 2, pp. 247–276.

Church immediately condemned the initiative with reference to the fact that the NGO was an LGBT organization. It would therefore be morally wrong, in this view, if it worked on a project where children were involved. And despite protests from the Ombudsman's office, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Issues closed down the project due to pressure from the church. This reflects, Rekhviashvili points out, both the political influence of the church and its view of humanity, "profiling anyone who is not ethnic Georgian Orthodox as 'outcasts', 'deviants', 'non-Georgians'".[25] How does atheism fit in such a context?

An invisible group

During previous fieldworks in Tbilisi I had met several people who had confided that they were atheists, but while I was on fieldwork in the spring of 2014 all of these were out of town, either working or studying abroad. It was by coincidence that via a Georgian online forum I came in touch with Gela, a declared atheist. He soon suggested that we could meet at a cafe somewhere and talk. He also invited me to be part of a local online group called the Atheist's Club (*ateistis klubi*), enabling me to follow the discussions of the other members of the group, as well as inviting me to join them all on their annual picnic which was to take place in early summer.

Gela was in his late 30s at this point, unmarried, trained as a biologist but now in the process of studying medicine. We met at a cafe – some foreign chain suggested by Gela, as in his opinion it would be easier for us to speak freely there. He begins our meeting by stating how unusual it is for someone to be interested in atheists. "We're a forgotten group", he says. He explains that, according to statistics he saw from 2005, around 0.7 % of the population are atheists, which comes to around 40,000 people. He estimates that about half of these live in Tbilisi, but even so they remain a scattered group, and they have little contact with each other. "In Soviet times there were many more atheists in this country", he explains, "but they were atheists because it was practical for them to be so. When the Soviet period ended it was easy for many of them to become Christians again. So they were not really atheists, they were atheists because of the state, and because everyone else was. Mainstream! Mainstream is very popular in this country, everybody wants to be like everybody else. Just look out the window, people dress in black pants and black shirts – you can see who's a foreigner just by looking at their clothes".

At this point Gela had been part of the Atheist's Club for a few years. The forum originally started back in 2007 with only 10 members. Now, in 2014, the number is around 140. Gela confides that they did a background check on me before I was invited to join – they've had problems before with fake profiles who only became members to harass the group.

[25] Lela Rekhviashvili: Can the homeless accept charity from "gays"?. On the role of the Church in Georgian politics. In: LeftEast (15.11.2013).

"The problem is that we're so unpopular", he says. "80 percent of the population are orthodox, and they don't want to hear anything about atheists ... If people during a dinner party find out that I'm an atheist I'm excluded from the conversation, I dissappear from the heart of the conversation, and I'll have to observe everything from outside." It is particularly the question of tradition that renders it so difficult to be an atheist. Many will think of a person who is born in Georgia and speaks Georgian as alienated from the country by being an atheist. "One of our great thinkers from the 19th century, Ilia Chavchavadze, had this three-word motto: fatherland, language, faith. But if it had just been 'fatherland and language' wouldn't we still be Georgian? We discuss things like this in our group, and we're divided on the question around 50/50. There are people with cosmopolitan opinions who believe that language doesn't matter either, and then there's another half who thinks that it does. For me it's difficult to decide which group I belong to. I stick to a lot of traditions, but I do see that life might be easier for me if I moved to another country and only had contact to Georgia via internet and newspapers, because I'm an atheist."

He goes on to explain that there is generally a lot of internal debate in the club, and that it isn't just divided into two groups. "We have Nietzsche-inspired atheists who are interested in the philosophy of Nietzsche and nothing else – übermensch (laughs), primarily the young ones, I don't know how serious they are. Another and smaller group are socialists and Marxists, who believe in communism and, I think, have some pretty utopian ideas. Then we have a lot of liberalists and humanists, who just want freedom. We have a lot of anti-traditionalists, who are against the intolerance of the church. The cosmopolitans and patriots, who I already mentioned, and the nihilists and fatalists. Within society there are a group that we call non-religious. They are neither atheists nor believers, they just don't care about religion. They live a secular life but say outwardly that they are Christians, but inwardly they are not."

Despite this variety of kinds within the club, he explained, they are often seen by the public at large as individuals who remain stuck in a communist past, or who seek to re-enliven a communist society. But communists were a very small part of the Atheist's Club. Gela held that one reason for this was that most of the communication within the club took place online, implying that this made it difficult for the older parts of the population to participate. Communists, in his view, were mostly elderly. Another reason, one that other members of the club had put forth, was that atheism today simply was something completely different – it had nothing to do with communism. But then, what was it?

This had proved an extremely difficult question, Gela noted. That is, defining themselves as a group. They had twice before arranged a picnic to meet each other in real life, to have deeper and longer discussions about atheism in general and to discuss the possibility of establishing a more "public" group – an Atheist Society. Since only a very limited number of people had taken part in the picnic arranged in previous years (twelve at the first, five at the second), no exact plans had been made yet. Gela was hoping that this year's picnic would be different.

Atheists on a godless spot

The picnic took place a few weeks after Gela and I talked at the cafe. On the day, I met with Gela at a market in one of Tbilisi's suburbs, where we were to buy items for the trip and meet with the others. About 14–15 people had signed up to come. While we wait, Gela tells me that one of the plans they've had in the group is to write some kind of atheist handbook in Georgian. But they haven't been able to agree on which texts to include – everyone has his or her own favorites, and some of these contain opinions that not everyone shares or hold to be relevant. That project has been stranded for now. It momentarily seems as if the picnic will be stranded as well, as none of the others show up. "There's only two of us right now, that's hardly enough", Gela says in a slightly discouraged tone. He considers cancelling. But fortunately two others show up shortly after, Tato and Misha, two younger men. We go into a market hall and buy meat, then we split up so that Tato and Misha can buy vegetables and fruit, and Gela and I can buy wine, plastic cups and plastic plates. After the shopping we meet at the minibus that has been rented for the occasion. It turns out that something went wrong in the coordination of the picnic; some of those who had signed up didn't think it was today, and others had misunderstood what time of day we were to meet. After a series of hectic phonecalls Gela establishes that two other people are waiting for us across town. The owner of the minibus sets the vehicle in motion and we go to pick up the others, buy a few more items, and then drive out of the city.

As we are on our way, Misha and Tato discover that the seats in the minibus are decorated with images of a ship featuring crosses as masts and bearing the name "God". "It's impossible to escape!", Misha laughs and shakes his head. After an hour's drive along increasingly smaller roads we reach our destination, deep inside a forest. "It's hard to find a place for our picnics that's not religious", Gela says, referring to the fact that much of the Georgian landscape is scattered with churches old and new. "With our presence here this, right now, is probably the most godless place in the entire country, even though we're only six people", he notes.

We're in a small clearing. There are obvious signs of others having used the same place for picnics recently. Plastic bags, empty bottles and old paper has been tossed everywhere. Misha complains that people are unwilling to take care of nature, and while some of us begin collecting wood for a fire, others begin removing most of the trash. Gela makes sure that everyone has beer. As the fire gets started, we sit around it on small plastic chairs. Tato lights up a home-made joint and passes it to those who want. He became a member of the club in 2011 and he's currently finishing a degree in international relations. "I count myself as being a nihilist", he explains, "I think everything has been made up". Misha and Gela smile at him. Otar begins putting meat on spears and placing them over the fire. Meanwhile he manages to smoke most of the joint. After this he lies down to take a rest. As the vegetables are washed and cut, Davit complains that there are no women among us to help, even though there are many female members of the

club, many of them feminists. "If you think cooking is women's work it's probably good that the feminists are not here", Tato observes.

Misha, on the other hand is disappointed about the fact that there are so few of us here, and so few members in the group in general. "There's this Georgian facebook-page called 'I love my patriarch'. Do you know how many likes it has? 80.000! Do you know how many likes the atheist page has? 700." Talk continues about the patriarch, Ilia II, and his growing influence upon social and political life. "People in this country are conformists", says Tato, "they just want somebody to tell them what to do and think. Most haven't even read the bible, but as soon as Ilia II says something, they regard it as the truth. They just want a leader, a Stalin-type." "Many of the really young are almost religious in a fanatic way", says Misha. "They look at priests as if they are idols. There are even some priests that they call 'progressive priests', who are particularly popular among youths." "That must be the ones with chairs", says Gela with references to the episode in May 2013 when an otherwise peaceful gay-pride event was violently assaulted by a mob led by Orthodox priests who attacked participants with chairs without the police stopping them.[26]

We eat the roasted meat and pour wine. The practice of toasting is upheld. But the toasts that would normally have a religious tone or content are turned into anti-toasts. Davit proposes a toast to Ilia II, who is 81 years old at this time and probably soon passing away, and he adds the wish that at that point he will be succeeded by a patriarch so outrageous that people will come to realize the problems existing within the Orthodox Church. Otar returns from his nap. After a few minutes he stands up and says, slightly annoyed: "It's the same every single year – we agree that we all really hate Ilia II, then we exchange a few jokes about religion, and then we don't get anywhere. It's a circle. What are we actually going to do?!" The rest of the evening both Gela and Misha attempt to bring more concrete discussions to the table about the future of the Atheist's Club. They discuss the possibility of establishing an Atheist Society, which would be a public one where members had an actual location where they could meet and discuss atheism. "There are two problems in this", says Gela: "First of all, there is no political party that would ever dare support an Atheist Society, which means that we would probably never get recognised as a legal organization. Second of all, even if we start it as an unofficial Society there will definitely be people who will harass us." He explains how around one year ago he attempted to start something up. He had offered to use his own apartment as the postal address for an organization, but there were simply too few of the members of the Atheist's Club who had dared to have their names mentioned on an *official* member-list. In light of the behaviour of Orthodox groups against other alternative organizations that they disliked, he had also himself become nervous about using his own home.

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[26] The chairman of the local human rights committee later announced that no charges would be pressed as they did not want to go against the patriarch. Corey Flintoff: Anti-gay riot in Tbilisi tests balance between Church, state. In: VPR (30. 7. 2013), https://www.vpr.org/post/anti-gay-riot-tbilisi-tests-balance-between-church-state#stream/0 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

The number of members of the club is also discussed. As during our conversation a few weeks earlier, Gela mentions that being an online forum might be a problem due to elder generations not using computers. This means that many new members are very young people who might not even know what atheism actually is, and who are only members for fun and for a short-lived period. Misha doesn't see a problem in the lack of elderly members. "They're primarily communists anyway, there aren't that many of them, and they would just try to turn the group into a political organization." Tato doesn't see young people becoming part of the group as a problem. It might be, he says, that some of them mistakenly link atheism with satanism or heavy metal and only partake in the group for a short while, but there are some who obtain a more reflected view on belief and non-belief as they become members.

In the end, after twelve hours of picnic and meeting, nothing is decided. The bus trip back to Tbilisi takes place in relative silence. Either people are tired, or there's just not anything else to talk about. The only concrete plan made is to meet again next summer, at that point hopefully with more participants.

Subjectivity and inhumanity

It was difficult for the atheists to define themselves internally as a group and to agree upon possible common activities. The external view on atheists within Georgia, however, is more straightforward. The question of how to define what can – and what cannot – be counted as "Georgian" is often a central part of political, religious and social life in the country.[27] As mentioned, one outcome of this has been discussions of religion and religious minorities. Even though religious minorities have been marginalized within such discussions, their presence has still been acknowledged, and even though they are seen from the perspective of the Orthodox Church as having the "wrong" faith, they have still been recognised as being believers. For atheists, things are decidedly different. Several of the atheists I came to meet through the Atheist's Club mentioned *adamiani ar aris* as one of the notions used to depict non-believers: people suffering from a social or moral breach that renders them "inhuman". Some time after the picnic I brought the question of inhumanity up in the debate forum of the Atheist's Club and asked other members to reflect upon the notion of *adamiani ar aris* and its meaning. A series of comments as they appeared in the forum are:

> Aleko: Well, in Georgia anyone with a view on religion that isn't orthodox is considered "inhuman". Also Satanists, atheists and Jehova's Witnesses are taken together to describe blasphemy.
> Gia: I don't know about "inhuman", but believers, like priests, often call atheists (and other non-Christians) non-Georgians. They think that if you're

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[27] Elizabeth Dunn/Martin Demant Frederiksen: Introduction. Ethnographies of absence in contemporary Georgia. In: SR 73 (2014) 2, pp. 241–246; Paul Manning: Once upon a time, there was sex in Georgia. In: SR 73 (2014) 2, pp. 265–287.

Georgian you have to follow the same religion as our forefathers (Georgians before the 4th century are of course not counted, so apparently our history starts with Christianity).

Vakho: *Adamiani ar aris* is mostly used for a really horrible person (murderer, torturer and so). I don't even dare to imagine what they think about us or what they want to do to us in their private conversations …

Nika: *Adamiani* means descendant of Adam. So maybe *adamiani ar aris* means that atheists are not descendants of Adam.

Kakha: There was once this guy who heard me argue against God and he declared that if I didn't believe in God I was not a human being. He couldn't even imagine a person who didn't believe in God. It was an obvious truth to him. I think that not believing in God, or declining generally accepted ways of believing, is so revolutionary for many people here that they think you must be an immoral creature.

Vakhtang: Yes, if you don't have an imaginary friend like God it must mean that you fuck kittens and eat babies.

Vakhtang: In honour of Satan of course.

Nika: *Adamiani* is often used as "person + moral being". So in that sense people use it to describe someone without any morals.

Gela: I don't consider myself as being *adamiani* or a descendant of Adam. I prefer primates as my forefathers.

Gela: Actually *k'ac'i* was the word used for person in our language before Christianity changed it, so I am *k'ac'i* but not *adamiani*. There's a famous story by Ilia Chavchavadze entitled "K'ac'ia adamiani?", about how it is not all *adamiani* that you can call *k'ac'i*. So perhaps *k'ac'i* for him is a person of higher standing.

As the above exchanges show, being called *adamiani ar aris* was not necessarily a problem for members of the Atheist's Club – they didn't believe in Adam anyway, so why should they want to be his descendants? In interviews and conversations several other members of the group noted to me how they found it ironic that priests sometimes referred to them as Satanists – given that they did not believe in God, why would they believe in Satan? But this did not entail that they didn't see themselves as persons or as moral beings. A few of them expanded on this by noting that they actually saw themselves as having higher moral standards than most people, as they were more reflected in their views than people who just blindly followed the decrees of the Patriarch. But even though members of the Atheist's Club jokingly wrote off the notion of *adamiani ar aris* by noting that *adamiani* was a wrong word for "human" in the first place, this external view on atheists was not without consequences.

Anthropological studies have often explored the question of what constitutes a human subject within a particular context.[28] In Georgia, the definition of an atheist

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[28] Joao Biehl et al.: Introduction. Rethinking subjectivity. In: id. (eds.): Subjectivity. Ethnographic investigations. Oakland 2007, pp. 1–33; Michael Jackson: Existential anthropology. Events, exigencies, effects. New York/Oxford 2005.

as *adamiani ar aris* meant that this individual did not exhibit (or carry within) the human qualities held to be basic components of a (Georgian) subject – a view of the subject closely related to how the Orthodox Church considered all kinds of difference as "subversive" or "non-Georgian".[29] This presents an immediate problem for the atheists in that their inhumanity inhibits them from partaking in intersubjective relations. A concrete example of this being Gela's depiction of how he "disappears from the heart of the conversation" and is forced to observe everything from a distance if he declares himself as being atheist in the wrong company. In their meeting with surrounding society the inhumanity of atheism thus becomes a problem with decidedly negative effects on their relations with others. As Kakha describes it in the forum-discussion, he has been met with a general uncomprehending attitude in terms of people being unable to consider him as a real person.

Atheism and meaningful existence

As with questions of will and morality, meaning has been a central theme of discussions between atheists and theists, and both groups have, within different contexts, accused each other of being based on meaninglessness. This, according to Kimberly Blessing, stems from atheists seeing meaning as something subjective, whereas believers, particularly within Christianity, see meaning (as well as the subject) as defined by God.[30] Again, the understanding of the subject is at stake. But how do the Georgian atheists themselves find meaning in something that is regarded by others as meaningless, amoral, inhuman, and subversive? And which national narrative can they at all be part of?

In her study of atheists in France in the late 18th century, Jennifer Hecht has described how human existence in the shift from belief to atheism retains its narrative format. The narrative, however, obtains a new ending that does not take place in heaven but on earth.[31] This type of narrative is for example evident in the writings of Karl Marx in which revolution becomes the meaningful road to an earthly paradise: communism. In present-day Georgia however communism appears as a failed ideology and utopia, an earthly paradise that never came. This could – along with the increased national sentiments erupting after the fall of the Soviet Union – very well be one reason why religion gained such a prominent place in the country; a return from an earthly to a heavenly paradise. But for the vast majority of the members of the Atheist's Club communism was not part of a

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[29] Gurchiani: Revival (see note 5).

[30] Kimberly A. Blessing: Atheism and the meaningfulness of life. In: Stephen Bullivant et al. (eds.): The Oxford handbook of atheism. Oxford 2013, pp. 104–199; John D. Barrow: The book of nothing. London 2001; Ronald Green: Nothing matters. A book about nothing. Winchester/Washington 2011.

[31] Jennifer Michael Hecht: The end of the soul. Scientific modernity, atheism, and anthropology in France. New York 2003.

personal narrative. Atheism did not have anything to do with a utopian future, and communism did not form part of anything that could potentially connect them to their country, on the contrary.

For the French atheists described by Hecht the establishment of atheism was a question of translating traditional holy objects and ideas into a scientific frame,[32] but for the Georgian atheists it was difficult, if not impossible, to find a frame they could fit into. Other religious minorities in the country have tried to place themselves within an accepted national framework, such as the Baptist Church which, through the use of Orthodox symbols, has attempted to place itself within a national frame that would render it an actual member of what is largely an Orthodox society.[33] The group within the Atheist's Club that Gela referred to as patriotic atheists maintained that it was possible to retain Georgian traditions despite of atheism. But there were just as many who believed that an affiliation with the Georgian nation was simply impossible for atheists. For them, the only possibility of becoming part of the national narrative was if the national narrative itself was altered. For instance, atheism could potentially be seen as meaningful by others if the motto "fatherland, language, faith" was only "fatherland, language". But most saw this as an impossibility as the church would resist any rewriting of the national narrative with all means. Tato, the young nihilist, explained that aside from *adamiani ar aris* he had also heard the notion *urjulo* used as a depiction of atheists. *Urjulo* can both be translated as "without faith" and "without kin", pointing to nonbelievers as being without relations to the Georgian nation by way of not having any faith. Being "rooted" in, or having a kin-relation with, the nation is here both a precondition for morality and subjectivity, and it is not only through this that a person finds meaning in life but also through this that the person him or herself becomes meaningful as a subject.

Conclusion

The existence of doubt in social life has often been related to the insecurities felt by religious groups towards their own faith,[34] but doubt may just as well be part of social life in general and thus also a part of atheism.[35] The internal discussions within the Atheist's Club is an example of this. The doubt experienced by the members was not a question of whether they were atheists or not, but whether it

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[32] Ibid., p. 2.
[33] William Eastwood: Reframing national locality. Religious minorities using history to transform local experience in Georgia. In: National Identities 16 (2014), pp. 1–19.
[34] Mathijs Pelkmans: Outline for an ethnography of doubt. In: id. (ed.): Ethnographies of doubt. Faith and uncertainty in contemporary society. London 2013, pp. 1–43.
[35] Maurice Bloch: Types of shared doubt in the flow of a discussion. In: Pelkmans (ed.): Ethnographies (see note 34), pp. 43–59; Maria Louw: The art of dealing with things you do not believe in. Dream omens and their meaning in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. In: Vibeke Steffen et al. (eds.): Between magic and rationality. On the limits of reason in the modern world. Chicago 2014, pp. 189–313.

would ever be possible for them to agree upon what atheism actually was, and on who actually belonged in an Atheist Society. Were young anarchists for example really atheists? Were old communists too political? And could cosmopolitans and patriots at all reach an agreement about the overall meaning? But even though it was a problem that the internal definition of the group was hard to agree upon; it was an even bigger problem that the external definition was so solid. The Orthodox Church saw (and sees) them as belonging to the same category, whether as inhuman or without kin.

In the aftermath of the Rose Revolution, just as in the aftermath of independence, the question of defining national identity was a widespread concern in Georgia on both the level of politics and the level of everyday life. Following the revolution, the political focus on modernizing the country involved attempts to merge the traditional with the modern, and the religious with the secular.[36] As shown by Ketevan Gurchiani in her study of the restriction of religion in public schools following the revolution, the push towards secularizing certain institutions did not entail that young people turned away from religion. On the contrary, students managed to retain a relation to Christianity while still adopting a positive stance towards secularization and modernization discourses by carving out a hybrid space where such discourses could continue to intermingle with religious Orthodox practices and where the students could see themselves as "true Georgians".[37] This proved to be difficult, if not impossible, for the atheists. In being un-represented they were unable to carve out a space for themselves in which others would accept them as "true Georgians". They were people who were seen as living beyond the borders of what could be characterized as meaningful, and thereby they not only lost their national belonging but also their humanity. For some, such as Gela, both these losses entailed a struggle: a struggle to be recognized as a group and a struggle to convince others that being Georgian, and maintaining Georgian traditions, was not necessarily a religious endeavour. The latter struggle was one he faced within society at large, but also with other members of his own group as some, such as Tato, saw the lack of nationality and humanity as a general existential principle that held true not just for atheists but for mankind as such. For him, concepts of nationality and subjectivity were both constructions without any inherent truth. Doubt in their common project – the establishment of an Atheist Society – thus not only arose in relation to making atheism meaningful within Georgian society but also in terms of making the content of that society meaningful for all members. Both aspects meant that, for now, the Atheist's Club remained an unofficial and virtual forum. Not only were they seen as inhuman by others, they also deliberately made themselves invisible in order to avoid confrontations with the Orthodox Church, making it possible for them to discuss their internal disagreements in peace.

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[36] Frederiksen/Gotfredsen: Portraits (see note 13), p. 27.
[37] Ketevan Gurchiani: Georgia in-between. Religion in public schools. In: Nationalities Papers 45 (2017), pp. 100–117.

There have been relatively few studies on atheism in Eastern Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union.[38] Yet, despite their relative invisibility, the Georgian atheists are interesting not only in terms of depicting the meaning and role of religion in Georgia, but also in terms of how identity, subjectivity and meaning are constructed (and deconstructed) in the country. As noted, political rights related to social and religious groups in Georgia are in principle ensured through legislation, but in practice these rights are often overshadowed by Georgian Orthodox understandings of the subject. Perceptions of morality, subjectivity and meaninglessness are central elements in discussions of belief and religion,[39] but as this chapter has attempted to show they equally pertain to the study of atheism and non-believing minorities. A focus on such groups can help to shed light on the necessity of looking behind official political representations of democracy and modernization projects within areas such as freedom of speech and religion, and thereby make visible the practical reality of minorities. In Georgia, an institution such as the Orthodox Church has had a profound influence on definitions of what can be characterized as a national subject, and this has potentially dire consequences for those who fall outside such definitions, even though they might be protected by law on paper.

[38] Irina Borowik/Branko Ančić/Radosław Tyrała: Central and Eastern Europe. In: Stephen Bullivant et al. (eds.): The Oxford handbook of atheism. Oxford 2013, pp. 622–638.
[39] See for instance Ilana Gershon: Converting meanings and the meanings of conversion in Samoan moral economies. In: Matthew Engelke et al. (eds.): The limits of meaning. Case studies in the anthropology of Christianity. New York 2006, pp. 147–165; Joel Robbins: Becoming sinners. Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society. Berkeley 2004; id.: On limits, ruptures, meaning and meaninglessness. In: Engelke et al. (eds.): Limits (see note 39), pp. 211–225. Matt Tomlinson/Matthew Engelke: Meaning, anthropology, Christianity. In: ibid., pp. 1–39.

Timothy K. Blauvelt/Anton Vacharadze

Iakob Gogebashvili and the natural method

Textbooks, modernity and nationalism in the late tsarist periphery

The Caucasus in the second half of the 19th century, like other parts of the periphery of the Russian Empire, was undergoing rapid change.[1] With peace and stability came the standardization of administrative procedures, improvements in transportation and communications, the growth of commerce and the beginnings of industrialization. And as in other regions, the coming of modernity[2] brought with it fundamental changes to the structure of society. With the emancipation of the serfs, easing of movement, and growth in trade, the towns and cities became important hubs, drawing both peasants and the impoverished landed nobility. This urbanization brought both opportunities and challenges: The region became progressively more connected into the administrative framework and commercial markets of the empire, competition over jobs and resources contributed to a reinvigoration of national consciousness among the different ethnic communities at the same time that the exigencies of modernity demanded a standardization of language and cultural conceptions for communication. The tsarist authorities strove to streamline administration throughout the empire and to assimilate the peripheries into the centralized administrative structure. A key aspect of this standardization was the expansion of competence and literacy in the state language. For the nationalities in the periphery, assimilation to the social, cultural and linguistic norms of the center, including proficiency in Russian, offered opportuni-

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[1] This chapter is derived in part from the article Timothy K. Blauvelt/Anton Vacharadze: Pedagogy, modernity and nationalism in the Caucasus in the age of reaction, 1880–1905. In: Caucasus Survey 5 (2017) 2, pp. 121–141.

[2] We use the concept of "modernity" here in the way that it is generally used in studies of nationalism, which also tended to coincide with the way that the actors themselves in the late 19th century Russian intelligentsia and state bureaucracy appear to have understood it as well: as a new means of existence based on changes in technology and world views in contrast with the "traditional"; a bureaucratized state and a society experiencing urbanization, integration of markets and a rise of mass politics and mass media, and a mass educational system, see Ernest Gellner: Nations and nationalism. Ithaca ²2006; Benedict Anderson: Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London 2006. For a critical historiographical discussion of the concept of modernism in Russian studies, see Michael David-Fox: Multiple modernities vs. neo-traditionalism. On recent debates in Russian and Soviet history. In: JGO 54 (2006), p. 535–555.

ties for success and social advancement, and in the Caucasus the government sought to facilitate imperial expansion and control first through co-optation and incorporation. At the same time, and resulting from many of the same societal changes, national identity and nationalism were becoming increasingly central to the discourse within the minorities' intellectual communities. National languages were emerging as crucial markers of ethnic identity in the nascent nationalist movements by the time of the so-called "period of reaction", beginning from the 1870s and intensifying after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, when the tsarist government attempted to roll back the reforms of the 1860s. The question of primary education and language literacy, of the relative position of the language of state and the language of national identity, and of the ways in which these languages should be taught, thus soon became an important aspect of contestation in the imperial periphery.

Official language education policy in the Caucasus gradually changed during the period under study, from one tolerating and even encouraging primary education in local native languages to one emphasizing instruction in Russian. Given the Russification tendencies of this era, this change might be interpreted as a further aspect of assimilation with the goal of achieving the linguistic and administrative uniformity then associated with the modernizing state and with disregard for, or open hostility towards, local ethnic identity. Yet as Theodore R. Weeks argues, "A balanced historical understanding of the complex interplay between nation [i. e. ethnicity] and state in the late Romanov Empire requires more […] than an enumeration of repressions"; the nuances behind administrative decisions must be taken into consideration.[3] Like their counterparts in the administrations of the other European empires and great powers of the period, tsarist bureaucrats viewed the standardization of the educational system and of the state language as critical to the development of the modern industrial state.[4] The tremendous ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Empire's periphery for them presented an obstacle to this task rather than a value in itself; cultural and linguistic uniformity were requirements for administrative uniformity, which in turn was a requirement of the modern nation and of modern civilization. The priority was modernization while maintaining social, economic and political uniformity. As Wayne Dowler

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[3] Theodore R. Weeks: Nation and state in late imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western frontier, 1863–1914. Dekalb 1996, p. 5.
[4] As with other elements of imperial policy, Russian administrators studied closely the educational policies in the colonies of their rivals, in French North and West Africa and in Indochina, and in British West Africa and India. The French created Arabic-French schools in Algeria to train local elites in both Arabic and French, while the British created a system of English education for local elites in India and attempted to create mass education in local languages there. In West Africa both the French and the British educated local elites in their imperial languages, though the French approach aimed at assimilation, while the British one was more adaptive. Somewhat later, after World War I, the French created a literacy approach to Vietnamese using the Latin alphabet that somewhat mirrored the earlier Il'minskii approach in Russia. For a fuller discussion of colonial comparisons, see Wayne Dowler: Classroom and empire. The politics of schooling Russia's Eastern nationalities, 1860–1917. Montreal 2001, pp. 80–83.

argued, the "confident Eurocentrism" of the time "permitted even the most sympathetic of Russians to marginalize the languages and cultures of eastern people with a good conscience", as even the progressives saw the imperial language as a means to bring civilization "and a necessary tool of modernization".[5] In Weeks' formulation, to the extent that the late tsarist government had any coherent nationality policy at all, its goal was "to preserve the unwieldy, utterly non-national empire, and only in the second place to strengthen Russian culture".[6] At the same time, as argued, the tsarist government never purposefully sought to destroy or eliminate ethnic minorities or their languages or cultures. Largely oblivious to the growing force of nationalism, they presumed that the way of life of the national minorities should naturally change and evolve, and that inclusion in the empire should facilitate an inevitable modernization.[7] "That this might at the same time lead to the destruction of traditional customs, languages or sense of identity which people held very dear did not seem to enter into governmental expectations", Marc Raeff observed. This disregard for the cultural concerns of nationalities in the government's drive for administrative uniformity caused mass disaffection among the nationalities that further encouraged the growth of national awareness in the peripheries, to which the government responded by pursuing further uniformity, expressed in Russification: "It introduced uniform institutions and power structures, and thus automatically led to administrative Russification as well", which in turn led to cultural Russification.[8] Yet the absence of any clear policy with regard to education and language planning for national minorities and the way in which policy was shaped in tsarist Russia, as Dowler points out, "provided enough scope for local actors to press initiatives on officials in St. Petersburg, with some expectation of succeeding".[9] In the Caucasus, as in other regions of the Empire, the tsarist administration "reacted more than acted"[10] and allowed its own lack of a coherent policy towards nationality and nationalism to result in a drive for further centralization and Russification, which in turn exacerbated national tensions and fueled nationalist sentiments.

The representatives of the national minorities themselves, including often the intellectuals involved in the emergent national movements, were likewise not of a single mind regarding the issue of language education. Language became a key national marker in the Caucasus, and the promotion of minority language autonomy and literacy became a powerful rallying platform. Yet at the same time ability in the imperial *lingua franca* was a desired commodity, one that gave significant opportunities for success and advancement for all classes among the national minorities, and one that they themselves valued and demanded from the educational

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[5] Ibid., p. 239.
[6] Weeks: Nation (see note 3), p. 9.
[7] Marc Raeff: Patterns of Russian imperial policy towards the nationalities. In: Edward Allworth (ed.): Soviet nationality problems. New York 1971, pp. 22–42, here: p. 38.
[8] Ibid., p. 39.
[9] Dowler: Classroom (see note 4), p. 238.
[10] Weeks: Nation (see note 3), p. 9.

system. Given the limitations of primary education at the time, the relative positions of local languages and Russian became a question of priorities and of balancing the risks of assimilation to the benefits to be gained from increased Russian proficiency. The demand for improvement in Russian instruction in the Caucasus came as much from below as from above, and imperial policies often had complex motives and unintended consequences.

Primary education in the Caucasus in the "Age of Reaction"

The era from the ascension to the throne of Alexander III in 1881 until the Revolution of 1905 under the reign of Nicholas II has been called one of "continuous reaction".[11] Although the tendency towards conservatism began under Alexander II in the late 1860s following disappointment with the major reforms implemented in the beginning of that decade, during the period from 1881 to 1905 the tsarist regime actively reversed earlier changes and returned to the mantra of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality" from the time of Nicholas I, emphasizing centralization, social stability, Russian nationalism, and ambivalence towards the vast Empire's ethnic diversity. The Caucasus was one of that empire's most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions, and one with varying levels of development in the educational sphere. The North Caucasus, following the deportations of mountaineer populations in the 1860s and 1870s and the increasing colonization of the area with ethnically Russian settlers, emerged as the most advanced part of the region in education with the largest number of primary schools. Most of these were Russian language schools that followed the model and the curricula of schools in the central governorships of Russia, while schools for ethnic minorities in the North Caucasus, with smaller populations and languages with less developed written languages (writing systems for many of them were only just being created), were fewer in number. In the governorships of the South Caucasus (called the Transcaucasus in Russian parlances) settlement by ethnic Russians was far sparser and less systematic, and these regions were populated by larger nationalities, especially the Armenians, Georgians and Azerbaijanis (then often referred to as Azerbaijani Tatars or Azerbaijani Turks). The Armenians in the Caucasus were often more favorably oriented than some other nationalities to the Russian language and culture, with urban Armenian populations, especially in Tiflis and Baku, themselves acting as bearers of Russification.[12] Although they too had concerns about the status of the Armenian in schools vis-à-vis instruction in other local languages that Armenian populations often spoke, such as Georgian or Azerbaijani Turkic, the primary issue in the Armenian discourse of this period was the status of Armenian church-parish schools and their autonomy from the

[11] Nicholas Riasanovsky: A history of Russia. Oxford [8]2010, p. 392.
[12] Timothy Blauvelt/Christofer Berglund: Armenians in the making of modern Georgia. In: Konrad Siekierski/Stefan Troebst (eds.): Armenians in post-Socialist Europe. Vienna 2016, pp. 69–85.

Ministry of Education.[13] The Azerbaijani language in this period was still in the stage of codification, and although Azerbaijani pedagogues (and Russian Turkic scholars, such as Aleksei Cherniaevskii) would come to play a vocal role in the controversies over language education as advocates of the "Il'minskii method" of teaching literacy in local native languages in Cyrillic script, the central issues of identity for the Azerbaijani communities concerned religion.[14] The Georgians therefore emerged as the most outspoken nationality on the question of language status and language education, all the more so as the Georgian language was rapidly becoming the central marker of identity for the emerging Georgian national movement.[15]

The local representation of the Ministry of Education was the Caucasus Educational District (*Kavkazskii uchebnyi okrug* – CED), which was established in December 1848.[16] When the administration of the entire Transcaucasus region was reformed in 1867, the CED was placed under the directorship of a Curator (*popechitel'*) answering directly to the Viceroy and only indirectly to the Ministry of Education.[17] The Chancellery of the Curator existed up until July 1917.[18] This indirect subordination of the CED gave it a notable degree of policy independence during the later decades of tsarist rule. As an internal report on measures to improve the quality of education in non-Russian schools in 1905 held, approaches to educational policy were diffuse in different regions: "At present the education of non-Russians depends entirely on personal views, on the personal choices of the leaders in the various parts of our vast Empire, and it alters with changes in personnel."[19] By the late 1870s the Caucasus Educational District became a sort of refuge for liberal reformers among educational administrators, beyond the grasp of the more conservative and often difficult minister, Count Dmitrii Andreevich Tolstoy. Many of these were former protégés of the renowned Russian pedagogue Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinskii.

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[13] Aleksei Karpovich Dzhivelegov: Armiane v Rossii. Moscow 1906, pp. 18–23.

[14] Isabell Kreindler: Nikolai Il'minskii and language planning in nineteenth-century Russia. In: IJSL (1979), pp. 5–26; Wayne Dowler: The politics of language in non-Russian elementary schools in the Eastern Empire, 1865–1914. In: RusR 54 (1995), pp. 516–538.

[15] Rather than religion, as the Georgians were Orthodox Christians like the Russians, and unlike the Grigorian Christian Armenians, the Shiite Muslim Azerbaijanis and the Sunni (and Sufist) Muslim North Caucasian mountaineers, see Oliver Reisner: Die Schule der georgischen Nation. Eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der "Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern" (1850–1917). Wiesbaden 2004; Rusudan Amirejibi-Mullen: Language policy and national identity in Georgia. [PhD thesis Queen Mary University] London 2011.

[16] The CED was briefly disbanded from 1860 to 1867, and during that period education in the region was administered directly by the Main Administration of the Viceroy of the Caucasus (1860–1864) and then by the Chief Inspectorate of Educational Institutions in the Caucasus and the Transcaucasus (1864–1867).

[17] Formally called the Ministry for National Enlightenment (*Ministerstvo narodnogo prosvetaniia*).

[18] "Predislovie k opisi f. 422 "Kantseliariia popechitelia Kavkazskogo uchebnogo okruga", SEA, f. 422, l. 1.

[19] SEA, f. 422, op. 2, d. 3541, l. 1.

Although the *zemstvo* system of local self-government envisioned in the Great Reforms was not extended to the Caucasus, the Public School Statute of July 1864 enabled the start of an organized national elementary education system throughout the empire. Schools were subordinated to several different state agencies, including the Holy Synod, the ministries of internal affairs and of railways in addition to the Ministry of Education, yet in total the state provided only a minimal amount of funding. The bulk of the financing for local schools elsewhere in Russia was provided through the *zemstvos,* so the absence of such institutions in the Caucasus was a significant obstacle to the spread of elementary schools. The burden of supporting schools remained primarily on the local peasantry and on village associations (*sel'skie obshchestva*). The creation of the institution of the Inspectorates of elementary education in the governorships of the region between 1869 and 1872 encouraged the spread of schools. The majority of these were one-room schools with one teacher and a three-year program (this with three sections, or *otdeleniia*), although some had two teachers and two classrooms and a five-year program. Schooling took place only during the winter months when peasant children were free from agricultural duties, usually from October through March or April. The Educational Statute of 1864 gave the Ministry of Education control over the curricula of all schools and the sole authority to approve textbooks.[20] Ministry schools in the "Georgian" governorships of Tiflis and Kutaisi grew from 6 in 1850 to 15 in 1870, and then to 222 in the 1880s and then to 420 by 1900 (328 with one classroom and 92 with two). The number of students in such schools reached 13,284 in 1884 and 34,126 in 1900. The Holy Synod also oversaw three-year church-parish schools in the same districts, 67 (with 2,000 pupils) in 1886 and 254 (with 9,607 pupils) in 1893.[21] Up until the 1870s teaching was conducted primarily in the local languages in both ministerial and church-parish schools, though they lacked a standardized program for subjects. The Statute of 1872 created the legal basis for so-called city schools (*gorodskie uchilishcha*), girls' schools (academies named for the Empress Maria) and city two-class church schools which had longer courses than the village schools (6–7 years), though instruction was usually in Russian with local languages offered only as non-mandatory subjects. Neither the village elementary schools nor the city schools were connected with the existing system of middle and high schools, the *gimnasiia* and *Realschule* located in the major cities. Observers complained that graduates' reading competencies in the native and state languages and their understanding of basic arithmetic were insufficient, and that general subjects such as nature, geography and history were taught only in passing, if at all.

[20] Dowler: Classroom (see note 4), p. 42.
[21] Aleksei Ivanovich Piskunov (ed.): Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR. Vtoraia polovina XIX v. Moscow 1976, p. 448.

Schools and the Georgian intellectuals

Writing in the newspaper "Droeba" in February 1881, the leading Georgian nationalist writer, poet and intellectual Ilia Chavchavadze argued that the village schools were the "school of the people" that provide a "living space in which the thought and feelings of the nation must take their first steps" and that "nourish the body and soul" and "fulfill the spiritual and physical demands" of the people, but that the tasks that these three-year schools could be expected to accomplish were strictly limited, as were the opportunities for any further education for the vast majority of the village population. Chavchavadze emphasized that the Georgian nationalists' emphasis on the native language in schools was not only because of their love for their native language, "we demand and dream about this also because without the native language the development of the child's intellect is entirely impossible". Without this means for the development of consciousness the school can serve only as "oppression, suffocation, suppression and defilement". The local school must first of all provide literacy in the native language, and after that knowledge about "that place, that country, that nation to which the child belongs by birth". The local schools therefore can and should only function to give knowledge of the native language and the native country, and given the resources available this is all that can be expected of them: "All of this the native school should do to the fullest and to do any more than this is very difficult. […] Let nobody think that the burden of the native school is so light that it can be loaded down with any further weight."[22]

Chavchavadze argued that the Russian language is important for non-Russian communities and schools, but only if it can be taught properly given the existing constraints. Although ideally elementary schools should also serve as preparatory classes for higher level educational opportunities, he argued that this could only be the case for three-year schools if the language of instruction in the higher level institutions is the same as that in the elementary schools. But for nationalities such as the Georgians, he pointed out, this was not the case. "Our native school, if it does not want to be that in name only, will never be able in three years of study to fulfill the function of a preparatory class, since in such a short time the child must study to a sufficient degree both the native language as well as the language of the higher educational institutions, i. e. Russian, which will so complicate things that it will not be able to do either." In order for Russian to be properly learned in Georgian village schools, the program should be no less than six years, Chavchavadze concluded, with the first three years devoted to "its direct purpose" of instruction of native language literacy and knowledge of the country and nation, and then the following three years used for acquisition of Russian.

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[22] This view that the Russian three-year school was not appropriate for non-Russian pupils was also shared by the educator-missionary Il'minskii and his followers, see Dowler: Classroom (see note 4), p. 49.

Iakob Gogebashvili much later picked up Chavchavadze's criticism of the three-year school model in his publication "How to improve the native school in the Caucasus".[23] A teacher and inspector of the Tiflis Seminary before his dismissal by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church for hosting forbidden discussions about arts and politics in his apartment, Gogebashvili was a prolific pedagogue and disciple of the Russian educational philosopher Konstantin Ushinskii, and together with Chavchavadze he was a co-founder of the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgians. Gogebashvili began by pointing to the success of schools in Scotland during the late 18th century in improving literacy rates. In the Caucasus, however despite a more eager public, more talented teachers, and a more capable government educational administration ("our Educational District was and is considered to be the most accomplished in the entire empire, and the Scots could only dream of having such leaders!") the attempt to create and develop the local schools since the 1860s and emancipation had delivered only meager results, and low levels of literacy in both Russian and the native languages.[24] The reason for this relative failure, Gogebashvili argued, was because of the diminution of the role of native languages. In Scotland, the educational system was based in "that greatest of pedagogues", as Ushinskii referred to the native tongue, which is also the language of the higher levels of education (Gogebashvili refers to English, while apparently ignoring the comparative marginalization of Scottish Gaelic in the Scottish example). "Our Caucasian village school sharply veered from the pedagogical path and more and more began to ignore the native language of the student as a subject of teaching and as a tool of instruction", he wrote, and precisely this rendered the attempt pointless and fruitless.[25] The situation was made even more catastrophic because of the insistence of the CED leadership on transplanting the three-year village school model used in the inner governorships of Russia, where Russian was the local native language. The limitations of the three-year course undermined the soundness of the official study plan, and "because of the extreme shortness of the course the result was a significant reduction in success in both the native language and in Russian".[26]

The natural method and the de-facto change in official language education policy

Gogebashvili described how official policy had evolved from the late 1880s: because of poor results in Russian learning in the native schools, "without officially changing the plan [the authorities] began to demand instruction in Russian from the very first year, thinking that this would improve the success rate" and the native language was reduced to a non-mandatory subject. According to an offi-

[23] Iakob S. Gogebashvili: Kak uluchshit' kavkazskuiu narodnuiu shkolu. Tiflis 1903.
[24] Ibid., p. 9.
[25] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 1179, l. 10.
[26] Gogebashvili: Kak uluchshit' (see note 23), p. 15.

cial report, by 1903 of the 2,086 schools in the district 1,928, or 92.4 % of them, used Russian as the language of instruction, while only 158 used the native language, and then only for purposes of assisting the teaching of Russian.[27] Underlying this transition was a change in approach to pedagogy: "Until the last decade the translation method was entirely dominant in schools. The translation of a Russian text into the local language and of a local text into Russian comprised the alpha and omega of the teaching of the state language. This was an extreme that could not but paralyze the successes in Russian. During the past decade they have gone to the opposite extreme. Eliminating entirely the translation method, they began to teach according to the so-called natural method, that renounces not only the assistance of the native speech of the pupils in teaching the state language, but even considers this assistance to be harmful. However, this latter method is itself not able to work out a consistent system nor to instill one in the schools."[28]

The vehicle for this unspoken transition to Russian-only instruction in the Caucasus was thus the natural method in the form championed by the head of the Kutaisi Governorship educational directorate under the CED, Filipp Zakharovich Levitskii. In 1888 Levitskii published a Russian language textbook for Georgian schools based on his teaching experience that used the then-standard translation method, but this work was roundly criticized in the official reviews for its poor structure and lack of pedagogical value.[29] Five years later, in 1893, Levitskii changed tact and became a proponent of the natural method, with the publication of a new Russian textbook for all schools of the Transcaucasus, eliminating the need for the specific use of any of the native languages of the region (and thus dramatically increasing the potential audience for the textbook).

The natural method (later called the "direct method")[30] was based on the approaches of European pedagogues such as Lambert Sauveur, Maximilian Berlitz and Felix Franke, and involved teaching the target language through images, demonstration and action rather than through the use of the learner's native language. Following this approach, Levitskii's textbook used model dialogues spoken by the teacher and assisted by illustrations, and contained no passages for transla-

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[27] SEA, f. 422, op. 2, d. 3541, l. 3.

[28] Gogebashvili: Kak uluchshit' (see note 23), p. 26.

[29] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 3349, ll. 55–66, ll. 308–315.

[30] In Russian it was also sometimes referred to, primarily by detractors or non-specialists, as the "mute method" (*nemoi metod*). The natural (or direct) method enjoyed considerable popularity in Europe and North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its success owed more, perhaps, to the individual attention, small classes and intensive study that the Berlitz and other similar language schools offered rather than to its theoretical or methodological soundness. As H. Douglas Brown points out (echoing Gogebashvili), "[t]he Direct Method did not take well in public education, where the constraints of budget, classroom size, time and teacher background made the method difficult to use […] the methodology was not so much to be credited for its success as the general skill and personality of the teacher", and the approach generally fell out of favor in the West by the early 1920s, see H. Douglas Brown: Principles of language learning and teaching. White Plains ⁵2007, pp. 49–50.

tion and no discussion of grammar or grammatical terms. Grammar was instead to be induced by the student through acquired forms and sentences. Seemingly an application of cutting edge Western European pedagogical theory, for the CED authorities the natural method promised to improve the success of acquisition of the state language. Because the method advocated Russian aural practice from the first half year of schooling and literacy only from the second half year, the approach did not diverge greatly from the District's official plan. It also offered a means to standardize the curriculum in the native schools, and perhaps also to assure that the majority of teachers would be Russian speakers, although whether the goal of this was to increase Russification or simply to increase the availability and mobility of teaching personnel (as the natural method requires no knowledge of local languages on the part of the teacher) is difficult to ascertain.

It does seem clear from the official sources that by the early 1890s Levitskii and the natural method had the energetic support of the CED leadership, for foreign language instruction as well as for Russian.[31] Whereas other textbooks (including Gogebashvili's "Russkoe slovo" and Levitskii's earlier text) were subjected to detailed critique and revision,[32] Levitskii's new natural method textbook sailed through the review process with little objection (despite the many faults that Gogebashvili would point out, see below) and was rapidly published in multiple editions, becoming the dominant textbook throughout the Caucasus. In an appeal to the CED in June 1904, Gogebashvili complained that despite the fact that his "Russkoe slovo" received official approval four times, "the Tiflis and especially the Kutaisi directorates banned and are banning teachers from using it and are undoing the official sanction of the District". These directorates were facilitating the distribution of the textbook of Levitskii "despite the fact that [it] has not been recognized by the District as worthy to the same degree of approval that my textbook has received". Gogebashvili's personal requests to the Curator that he makes a statement to the effect that teachers were free to select "Russkoe slovo" instead of Levitskii's text if they so desired were politely but firmly rebuffed.[33]

Critique of the natural method

The natural method faced harsh criticism from supporters of the more traditional translation method, especially from the Transcaucasian Teachers' Seminary in Gori, which became a base in the Caucasus for supporters of the translation-based Il'minskii approach. Aleksei Cherniaevskii, who published groundbreaking textbooks for the Azerbaijani language, argued that pupils must closely link the target

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[31] See SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 7741 for a discussion of the use of the method for teaching French in the district.
[32] See SEA, f. 442, op. 1, d. 3349.
[33] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8432, ll. 16–19, ll. 32–33.

language to their native language in order for acquisition to be successful.[34] The use of the natural method would demean the educational process, as teachers would be compelled to use strange voices and movements in order to attempt to visually demonstrate both real world terms and abstract concepts.[35]

In an internal report in June 1905 on "reform of education in the 'indigenous' (*inorodcheskie*) schools of the Caucasus and on implementing existing measures to calm the 'locals' (*tuzemtsy*)", Transcaucasian Teachers' Seminary director Mikhail Alekseevich Miropiev, himself a committed supporter of the Il'minskii approach, criticized the natural method from the traditional Il'minskii school perspective. Because in essence it aimed to Russify through the exclusive use of the Russian language, excluding the native languages, it was bound to fail because the language alone was unable to convey the essence of Orthodox spirituality, which was the greatest thing that Russian civilization had to offer to the national minorities, especially those, such as the Georgians and Armenians, who had a strongly developed and ever intensifying sense of national identity, and those, such as the Azerbaijani-Tatars, who had firm religious convictions. The exclusive use of the natural method in the Caucasus was only succeeding in creating dissatisfaction among the pupils, and particularly among their parents throughout the region: "The locals (*tuzemtsy*) see in this system of Russian education distrust towards themselves, ignoring and persecution of their native language, and insult to their national feeling – which in the Caucasus, in view of particular historical conditions, is especially heightened – persecution of their nationality and coercive Russification […]. In this difficult time the locals in the Caucasus have already begun to shout 'Down with the natural method! Down with the Russian elementary school! Make Russian a normal academic subject! Strengthen the study of the native language, explain its program, study local languages and history!' Political slogans in certain places get added to this: 'Down with the Russians! Down with autocracy! Autonomy for Georgians and even for nearly all of the Caucasus!' The method of teaching Russian in the Caucasus should be translation-conversational, and should use visuality. But by all means it should not be the natural method, which is recognized as not pedagogical, constricts the intellectual abilities and curiosity of the student, and does not encourage the development of useful knowledge and moral development."[36]

The most thorough challenge to the natural method came from Gogebashvili. In a book reviewing the existing pedagogical literature for teaching Russian as a second language, Gogebashvili criticized the method in general and Levitskii's

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[34] Piskunov (ed.): Ocherki (see note 21), p. 483. For further discussion of the Il'minskii method, and particularly its predominance in the Kazan' district, see Dowler: Politics (see note 14), pp. 516–538.

[35] Cherniaevskii was sacked from his position for "stating his disagreement with official policy". Although elaborating in detail on the conditions of his pension arrangements, unfortunately the file discussing his removal does not go into further details about the nature of this disagreement or the reasons for his dismissal. SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 4716.

[36] SEA, f. 422, op. 2, d. 3541, l. 4.

approach in particular. While agreeing that "visuality" (*nagliadnost'*) could be a useful aspect of language teaching, to use it as the exclusive means and to exclude the assistance of the native language when the latter is available was sheer folly. Using only visual cues would be akin to trying to teach advanced mathematics without the use of arithmetic, and with no particular benefit.[37] Gogebashvili took his critique further in correspondence with the CED in 1904, arguing that the narrowness of the natural method made it impossible to convey abstract concepts. This limitation meant that either the pupils would become frustrated, or that the instructor would somehow need to resort to translation, which ultimately meant that the natural method would take on all of the worst aspects of the translation method, but in an entirely haphazard and unsystematic way.[38]

"While purporting to reject the translation method in theory, in practice the natural method cannot exist without translation, resorting to it often, but secretly, as if contraband, without a plan or a system. Where the teacher does not know well the language of the children and cannot resort to it, even in this contraband fashion, what results is not a school, but a genuine hell, leading to desperation for the children, the teacher, and for the population as well."[39]

Levitskii's text compounded the inherent drawbacks of the natural method because it was incompetently organized and violated the basic tenets of pedagogy as laid out by Ushinskii: that material should progress from simple to complex and from familiar to unfamiliar; that one should begin with examples using simple vocabulary and concepts and forms that resemble those found in the native language, and only then move on to more complex vocabulary and forms that differ from those in the native language. Levitskii's textbook burdened the pupil from the first lessons with vocabulary outside of their frame of reference and with excessive conjugations of unrelated verbs. Yet in the end, Gogebashvili argued that the natural method would be a failure even if there was a well composed textbook: "On the whole, the method with which Mr. Levitskii has become enamored is so narrow and one-sided that even a competent textbook using this approach would be a step backwards and a fiasco; this applies all the more to the sad result of Levitskii's efforts, which reveals the author's lack of talent, taste, sensibility and a clear understanding of language teaching." While Levitskii and other natural method supporters argued that their approach was based on European and American advances, Gogebashvili pointed out that in reality there were very few pedagogues in the West who dabble in the method, and they do so "not in such a narrow, exclusive and laughable form" as that practiced in the Caucasus, and "only as an experiment, not as the basis of state education for an entire region".[40] The method was used in Europe as a means of selling textbooks as efficiently as possible for a mass market without a common language, to help adults – mainly tour-

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[37] Iakob S. Gogebashvili: Razbor uchebnykh rukovodstv po russkomu iazyku. Tiflis 1896, p. 61.
[38] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8443, ll. 15–16.
[39] Gogebashvili: Razbor (see note 37), pp. 20–21.
[40] Ibid., p. 66.

ists – learn a foreign language, and not for school children. "The method was created not because of its merits, but because two German teachers [Sauveur and Berlitz] found a means, profitable for themselves, to teach Americans German without knowing their native language; for them the method was not only the best but the only one possible", Gogebashvili argued, and what was more, "it was mostly charlatanry".[41] The results of insisting upon this method in the Caucasus, especially given the shortness of the school program, could cause only frustration and enmity towards the Russian language among the local population. Positive results in teaching Russian in the Caucasus "will not obtain from the extremely awkward and ridiculous book of Mr. Levitskii, but from tapping the entirety of Western experience".[42]

The modernity of the natural method

Levitskii attempted to address several of these criticisms in a series of letters and articles addressed to the CED. A "visual approach" had been used since antiquity, he argued, and was supported by the ideas of Comenius and Rousseau. Although the natural method did not directly teach grammar, grammatical forms were acquired in practice through observation rather than through memorization of rules. Levitskii questioned whether a young pupil who has not yet mastered his own native language would even be able to understand the comparison of forms and grammatical terms that other methods would need to use to teach grammar directly.[43] Given the complexity of acquiring literacy in the native languages, Levitskii argued, it would be irrational "to combine such difficulties as studying the content of a foreign language and its grammar".[44] Levitskii's attempts to counter the criticism that his method had difficulty in explaining abstract concepts were rather less successful: "As concerns the criticism of some teachers that unfamiliar words in my textbooks are often explained 'with even more unfamiliar words', I should say that if I replace one unfamiliar word with another, then I always explain the meaning of it descriptively or visually."[45] One way to convey such concepts, he argued, was to make use of the happenstance of the environment and current season, to explain things such as thunder, lightning, rain, funerals, signs of the time of year, and also to organize excursions "to enrich pupils minds with observations of surrounding life, develop their language, giving them the names of observed objects, actions and condition".[46] In order to teach abstract things like emotions, the teachers must "seize on things as they happen".[47]

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[41] Ibid., p. 67.
[42] Ibid., p. 69.
[43] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8056, l. 4.
[44] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 7700, l. 27.
[45] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 7700, l. 17.
[46] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 7700, l. 28.
[47] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8056, l. 9.

To the criticism that the natural method was demeaning to the educational process through the demands made on teachers to visualize concepts in the classroom, Levitskii's response sounds rather more "modern": The natural method, he argued, made learning more active, and thereby more understandable and entertaining by using different voices, sounds, activities and movements. The pupils should also be engaged in such activity, and should be encouraged to speak as much as possible. The rote memorization that so often resulted from the translation method was thus eliminated. To claims that active demonstration by the teacher of things such as animal movements and bird sounds will evoke pupils' laughter and "turn the serious classroom into an empty game", Levitskii responded that such frivolity should be viewed positively: "It is long past time to disown the ideal of the old school that taught pupils to cower and fear the teacher, that demanded the silence of the cemetery in the classroom, and placed all of the weight of study on the pupil and considered that the more difficult it is for the pupil the more spiritual strength he will gain. The bitter and difficult experience of the old school crushed the soul of the pupil and his natural curiosity rather than enlivening and arousing it. There is nothing shameful in eliciting laughter. Let games enhance learning. Who would doubt the effect of the game of chess in developing the mind, for example? To enliven the appropriate material and to make it appealing to the children is our task."[48]

Gogebashvili countered this in an appeal to the CED by arguing that the approach of his book "Russkoe slovo" incorporated such methods, combining all of the positive aspects of the natural method such as visuality, aural practice and interactive learning, but "excluding the narrowness of this method, allowing for the use of abstract concepts" that can be explained with the help of the native language. Gogebashvili's own approach, he argued, holds even more to the principle of visuality than did Levitskii's textbook. "The entire difference between my 'Russkoe slovo' and the 'course' of Levitskii is that my text, by including the translation of abstract terms in the very text, helps the teacher, while Levitskii's book gives him no help at all." The use of the native language "allowed me the possibility to make the content of my book richer, more varied, and incomparably more educational; the narrowness of Levitskii's method leads to paucity of content and of instructional character."[49] The most natural and promising method for teaching Russian to children in the Caucasus, Gogebashvili argued, was one based on visuality and aurality in teaching, but in so doing also systematically makes use of the assistance of the native speech of the pupils.[50] His own approach, further, more accurately fit the official academic plan of the CED for non-Russian schools in the region.

The natural method was subjected to criticism from elements of the government outside of the CED following a study trip of educational ministry council

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[48] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8056, ll. 12–13.
[49] SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 8432, l. 16.
[50] Gogebashvili: Kak uluchshit' (see note 23), p. 23.

member Anton S. Budilovich to Kazan', Orenburg and the Western-Siberia districts in 1904/1905. Supporters of the Il'minskii method from the Caucasus, including Mikhail Miropiev of the Transcaucasus Teaching Seminary, were invited to a conference held on the education of non-Russians in St. Petersburg based on the results of this trip in the spring of 1905. There, Education Minister Vladimir Gavrilovich Glazov stated that "in gathering national educational experts from throughout Russia from the disciples and followers of the late enlightener of Eastern non-Russians N. I. Il'minskii, it is hoped that the Supreme Will of His Highness the Emperor for elucidating, simplifying and extending this [Il'minskii] system to other Eastern and South-Eastern non-Russians will be implemented". Tsar Nicholas II himself received the participants as a sign of support.[51]

In the Caucasus, however, the dominance of Levitskii, the natural method and his textbooks showed no signs of abating. Support for the method in the Caucasus seemed only to increase with the appointment in 1901 of Mikhail Romual'dovich Zavadskii, another progressive pedagogue and disciple of Konstantin Ushinskii, like his predecessor Kirill Petrovich Ianovskii, as Curator of the Caucasus Educational District. Already holding sway over the educational directorates in the Kutaisi and Tiflis governorships, from 1900 Levitskii became director of schools for the Elizavetpol' governorship (based in present day Ganja and controlling much of the territory of present day Armenia and part of Azerbaijan). Despite the continuing criticism, Levitskii's textbooks were expanded in third and fourth editions and actively distributed by the CED.[52] With CED support Levitskii organized demonstration lessons for teachers from the Kars region (a part of Turkey ceded to Russia and attached to the Caucasus region between 1887 and 1921), in which the participants were brought for several weeks on end to Elizavetpol', with a stopover in Tiflis for excursions to museums (including the Pedagogical Museum) and a reception with the Curator.

Conclusion

Up until the early 1890s, the CED supported in principle and in practice the teaching of native languages in primary schools in the Caucasus and the teaching of Russian through the native language. With no official declarations of a change in policy, however, the CED gave its de facto support to the natural method and the consequent exclusion of the native language from the teaching of Russian, and eventually to teaching all subjects in Russian and relegating the native language to a non-mandatory subject. Coming as it did at the height of the period of "reaction", it is tempting to view this policy change, as did minority nationalists at the

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[51] SEA, f. 422, op. 2, d. 3541, l. 5. For a discussion of the ongoing debate between supporters of the Il'minskii method and those of the natural method in Kazan' during this period, see Dowler: Politics (see note 14), pp. 164–169.

[52] See SEA, f. 422, op. 1, d. 7700.

time and as it came to be seen in the subsequent nationalist historiography, as one motivated purely by the goals of Russification and administrative and cultural assimilation of minority populations.[53] Yet while a yearning for linguistic and administrative uniformity is clearly visible, it also seems that the motivations of the CED leadership were more complex than simply forcible Russification.

Thus while curtailing native language literacy in education was never a goal or priority in itself, it became a consequence of the desire for administrative uniformity, as the CED leaders perceived it, and a potential solution to a pressing problem: poor results in Russian language instruction among minorities and the great need to improve proficiency in the imperial language. What was more, they viewed the vehicle for this policy, the natural method of language pedagogy, as a cutting edge scientific methodology from Western Europe and North America, and one that could simultaneously solve several problems in the Caucasus: it could improve the success of instruction of the state language (and of other foreign languages, for that matter) in minority schools; it would simplify personnel and staffing difficulties because it required no knowledge of local languages on the part of teachers; and it allowed for a uniformity in curriculum and textbooks across schools in the diverse region. Enthusiasm for this new, modern methodology that offered expedient results based on what seemed to be the latest European scientific knowledge seems to have played a key role in its adoption by the CED leadership. The method promised to combine pedagogical goals with those of imperial enlightenment, modernization and assimilation, all part and parcel of the same project, and similar to that pursued by administrators of other European empires of the period.[54] Based on "expert opinion", the method found a strong base of support within the CED. Criticism of the method and its implications, whether from professional pedagogues supporting the competing methodology of the Il'minskii school or those from the emergent nationalist movement such as Gogebashvili, also argued their case from a scientific and "modern" perspective – perhaps paradoxically, one grounded in the specific tradition of progressive Russian pedagogical thought – but they were far from the locus of power in the CED and ultimately unable to influence policy.

The pedagogical works of these critics, however – the native school approach of the Il'minskii method, which later became the model for Soviet nationalities policy following the Bolshevik revolution; the Azerbaijani textbooks of Cherniaevskii; and especially the textbooks of Gogebashvili, which would be reprinted in dozens

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[53] On the differences among "unplanned, administrative and cultural" Russification, see the introduction to Edward E. Thaden et al. (eds.): Russification in the Baltic provinces and Finland, 1855–1914. Princeton 1981, pp. 3–12, here: pp. 8–9.

[54] The natural method was also used in native schools for Native American children in North America from the 1890s, and in some parts of Canada remained in use until the early 1970s, see Dowler: Classroom (see note 4), p. 161. Perhaps ironically, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia returned to the method with the *Tavtavi* series of textbooks to teach the Georgian language in minority schools in the Azerbaijani and Armenian populated border regions of Georgia in the mid-2000s.

of editions and continued to be used well into the mid-20th century – would ulti-
mately make a far greater contribution to pedagogy in the region. Paradoxically,
the "modernism" of the CED administrators' goals became subsumed to assimila-
tion, in memory as much as in actuality, and modernity appeared in tandem with
great Russian chauvinism. The unintended consequences of the shift in language
education policy gave further impetus to local nationalism during the final years
of the Russian Empire, and would have profound influence on the subsequent
Soviet experiment in the way that the Bolsheviks approached local nationalism,
Russian chauvinism, and the use of native languages in primary education and in
proselytizing the message of Marxism-Leninism in the periphery.

Nikoloz Aleksidze

Old saints and new anxieties

Sainthood and nationhood in modern Georgia

Introduction: Sainthood and political rhetoric in medieval Caucasia

With the Christianization of the South-Caucasian lands in the fourth century, the cult of the saints was introduced and gradually established in Georgian, Armenian and Albanian religious writings. According to late antique narratives, the evolution of the cult of saints went hand in hand with the formation of identity and political discourses among these three nations. Whether in their zeal to define the limits of Georgianness or Armenianness, or in the discourse of royal legitimacy, the cult of saints and saints' relics played a central role. Contrary to this, it was not until Charlemagne's obsession with the relics of the saints, and his zeal to incorporate them in his political and territorial agendas, that the cult of saints was appropriated in the rhetorical arsenal of Western European monarchs. In late antique Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian historical narratives, however, the two, the political and the religious representations of a saint's body, were readily associated. These concepts, coined and elaborated throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, became instrumental in modern discourses and were appropriated by national elites in their nation-making projects from the 19th century onward.

In the fifth century, Armenian historical writing elaborated the idea of a national saint, as opposed to a universal saint. According to Agathangelos, the earliest chronicler of Armenia's evangelization, St. Gregory the Illuminator, consciously imported the relics of saints into Armenia, in order to tie together universal Christianity and the foundations of the Christian Armenian nation. Such territorial and political dimensions of saints' relics and the dialectic between the universal and the national is retained in the "Life of King Vač'agan", incorporated in the "History of the Albanians". Here, King Vač'agan's elaborate processions with the relics of the saints serve the purpose of circumscribing the limits of his realm and indeed of Albanian political and religious identity.[1] Crucially, in the early sixth century, Armenian historian Ełišē, in the context of the war with the Sasanians, elaborated the idea of two kinds of martyrdom. These "new martyrs" of the anti-

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[1] Jean-Pierre Mahé: Vac'agan III le Pieux et le culte des reliques. In: REA 35 (2009), pp. 13–126.

Iranian wars were "martyrs for faith and fatherland".[2] The idea of collective and anonymous martyrdom, developed by Ełišē, remained paradigmatic in subsequent Armenian tradition, and instrumental in the 20th-century revitalization of the idea of Armenian national martyrdom.

The political dimension of sainthood has evolved in a considerably different direction in the Georgian tradition. The "Life of King Vakhtang Gorgasal", written in or before the eighth century, which narrates the deeds of this fifth-century monarch, identifies the political dimension of Georgia's founding saint, St. Nino, who guides Vakhtang and oversees his grand political strategy. In the "Life", Georgia's fourth-century illuminatrix is essentially presented as a political figure, as she appears regularly when the king is about to make a major strategic decision, and guides the monarch in his foreign policy. Crucially, the "Life" also forges an image of a holy king that served as a model for subsequent royal sainthood.

Unlike the Armenian counterpart, the Georgian tradition developed the concept of a "Georgian" or of a "national" saint substantially late. The deliberations over the ethnic belonging of a saint, and the implications of one's ethnicity for his or her sainthood, appeared in the Georgian literary discourse no earlier than the ninth century. The formation of the concept of "Georgian saints" and the attempt to identify one's ethnicity with his or her confession of faith expanded in the context of growing antagonism against the Byzantines who expressed suspicion with regard to Georgian Orthodoxy. In metaphrastic tradition, earlier hagiographic narratives were often rewritten with a candid aim to "nationalize" a particular figure by creating an imagined continuity between the saint's ethnic belonging and the nation's present history.

One of the most blatant examples of a problematic association of ethnicity with Orthodoxy is that of Peter the Iberian, the case that still haunts the Georgian ecclesiastical discourse in its anxiety over the historical continuity of Georgian Orthodoxy. Peter was a well-known fifth-century ascetic and an ardent polemicist against the Chalcedonian cause, whose life was chronicled soon after his death. The early Georgian writing reveals no knowledge of this person, and the first version of Peter's "Life" appears in Georgian only in the early 13th century. Contrary to the original "Life", and virtually all other common knowledge about Peter, the Georgian version presents him as a champion of Chalcedonian faith, by essentially reducing his "Life" to a pro-Chalcedonian forgery. In Peter's Georgian "Life", the life of an ethnic Georgian saint mirrors the history of Georgia: "For the teaching of the Holy Gospel of Christ was taught by the holy and great apostle of Christ, Andrew on this land of Kartli […]. Lately, it was the holy mother Nino, who was sent by Christ God to a certain place of the same land of Kartli. And they [the Georgians] learned to worship and to have faith in the Trinity and they were baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity through the teaching of those holy apostles. Since then the land of Kartli has never averted from the true faith

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[2] Robert W. Thomson: The Maccabees in early Armenian historiography. In: JTS 26 (1975), pp. 329–341.

and we too shall never avert, by the grace of the Holy Trinity and the intercession of the all-holy Queen, the Mother of God, our hope and protectress."[3]

This paragraph summarizes the purpose of this revisionist piece of writing: by the time of the composition of this text, Georgianness essentially became synonymous with Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. This quest for an uninterrupted continuity of Orthodoxy, developed in 11th-century historical narratives, became almost dogmatic in the 20th century and contemporary ecclesiastical discourse, marked by renewed anxieties over the sainthood and ethnicity, once again symbolized by the fate of Peter the Iberian.

These medieval uncertainties echoed in a rather comical incident that took place in 2007, when the Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church convened for the annual gathering. Soon after the Synod concluded the meeting, the decisions were published on the Patriarchal website. Among other decisions, the final point stated: "The Holy Synod restored in the rank of saints the fifth-century churchman and philosopher, Peter the Iberian". This turned out to be a highly controversial decision. A group of Church historians ardently protested, arguing that Peter was a "Monophysite heretic", and that canonizing him was a sin. Consequently, within a week after the publication of the Synodic acts, the Patriarchal press-speaker issued the following statement: "Certain websites including the official website of the Patriarchate, published the acts of the Synod, which contained an accidental mistake, as if the Holy Synod had made a decision to restore Peter the Iberian in the ranks of saints. In reality there was indeed a plea that entered in the Synod, but concerning this question, no positive conclusion has been reached". Leaving aside the credibility of such an error, curiously, the Patriarchate "discovered" the mistake only after the scandal broke out.

This rather embarrassing incident reveals a centuries-old ambivalence that the Georgian Church experiences toward the remembrance of Peter the Iberian and towards the representation of orthodoxy and heterodoxy in its history. Peter was canonized and de-canonized, or rather celebrated and ignored, several times in the last millennium. In this, he is a good example of the strong political weight of a saint's memory that spans a millennium, from the early medieval Armeno-Georgian polemic, to the attempts of Georgian monks to reimagine their Orthodox history and to thus counter Byzantine scepticism, all the way to the 20th-century anxieties over the relationship of the ethnic and the sacred.

A new theology of the nation: P'iladelp'os Kiknaże and Ilia Chavchavadze

The 19th- and 20th-centuries national discourse readily appropriated medieval rhetorical devices in its quest for the definitions of nationhood and sainthood for the

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[3] C'xorebay da mok'alak'obay cmidisa da netarisa mamisa č'uenisa petre k'art'velisay. In: Ilia Abuladze (ed.): Monuments of the Georgian hagiographic literature. Vol. 2. Tbilisi 1967, pp. 215–216.

purpose of formulating a new theology of the nation. This inevitably resulted in a certain rebirth of the interest in the cult of saints. The new questions that required resolution in the novel political circumstances were: How does sainthood interact with the body politic? How to integrate the cult of the saints in contemporary national rhetoric? How does the theology of martyrdom and of sainthood work in the contemporary secular world? In other words, what for should a martyr die for him or her to be canonized?

As in many other areas of the broader region, the 19th-century Georgian national discourse was marked by an increased theologization over the concept of the nation, and deliberations over the exact semantic, philosophical and indeed religious meaning of Fatherland (*mamuli*). In the course of the last two centuries, three figures in particular have theologized extensively over the mystical body of the nation, and articulated their visions of the theology of Fatherland. These were P'iladelp'os Kiknaże in the early 19th century, half a century later Ilia Chavchavadze, and finally, and more recently, Georgia's Katholikos-Patriarch Ilia II. One may also name Georgia's first president Zviad Gamsakhurdia as a particularly ardent theologian of the nation, however Gamsakhurdia's rhetoric has essentially developed under Ilia II.

Monk P'iladelp'os Kiknaże, Georgia's first identifiable nationalist author, served as an ideological mastermind of the 1832 anti-Russian conspiracy, that aimed at overthrowing the newly-established Russian imperial rule in Georgia. After the discovery of the conspiracy, most of his writings were either confiscated or ultimately destroyed, with only a handful of short treatises surviving. His "Concerning the love of the Fatherland" is the first attempt in Georgian thought to outline the concept of the modern Georgian nation and to define the meaning of patriotism in novel circumstances.[4] P'iladelp'os' primary concern was to overcome the tension that the conspirators may have been experiencing in imagining Russia as an antagonist. While for centuries, the image of an enemy was intimately associated with a religious, Zoroastrian, then Muslim, other, hereafter one had to internalize the possibility of the Orthodox Russian Empire as a national foe. P'iladelp'os eloquently argues that unity in faith is far from being a sufficient cause for political alliance. He creates a sacred image of the nation and argues that the death for one's nation is an act of martyrdom, which is precisely identical with Christian martyrdom in its valour. In this discourse, the earthly universality of the Orthodox oecumene is entirely neglected. The terminology that P'iladelp'os utilizes in his description of *mamuli* is increasingly religious. *Mamuli* is a certain Platonic projection of the universal Fatherland in Heaven. Further, he applies the medieval theological method of *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby everything said of Christ's divinity applies to His humanity and vice versa. The same, according to Kiknaże, is true of the two Fatherlands. Therefore, the death for one's Fatherland, even if for entirely secular reasons and even in opposition to the Orthodox Russian Empire, is an act of Christian martyrdom. P'iladelp'os'

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[4] P'iladelp'os Kiknaże: Sik'quaruli mamulisa. Tbilisi 1996.

perception of the nation and his thoroughly theological conceptualization of the body politic prefigured the national movement of the 1860s. Entirely unaware of P'iladep'os's work, Ilia Chavchavadze took the theology of the nation to an entirely new level.

Chavchavadze, the acclaimed father of the Georgian national movement, consciously utilized the cult of the saints in his national agenda. His celebrated essay published on the day of the feast of St. Nino serves as a manifesto whereby the role of the evangelizer of the country is essentially redefined in the new dialectic of the universal and the national: "Christianity, apart from Christ's teaching, meant among us the entire Georgian land. Even today in the South Caucasus, Georgian and Christian are synonymous. Instead of 'becoming Christian', one may often hear that someone 'became Georgian' […]. Georgians have added this new Faith, the new Covenant, to the old, to the fatherland and nationhood […]. The spread and establishment of Christianity is a great labour on its own, but Christianity has tied and strengthened us as if by mortar […]. This doubled, this aggrandized labour has been handed over to us by our Illuminator Saint Nino. This is exactly why this day is to be glorified, when our Church commemorates with glory this virgin and equal to the apostles. […] This apostle has brought us the teaching that has adopted our Fatherland, our nationhood, and has nurtured both down to our days."[5]

Kiknaże's method of reasoning (although, admittedly, Chavchavadze has never read him) is applied to a certain mystical union of the earthly and heavenly dimensions of the nation that occurred through the labour of St. Nino. While before Ilia, Nino was confined to the Church tradition, and as such adopted in the Russian ecclesiastical commemorative practices, Chavchavadze prescribes the celebration of Nino's memory not only as a great saint, but also and most crucially, as the founder of the Georgian nation. It is this mutual validation and sanctification that makes Nino's mission particularly momentous. In Ilia's rhetoric, Christianity is the new Covenant, whereas the Georgian nation is an old and a perennial one, historically reaffirmed and renewed through evangelization. As we shall see below, such repeated reaffirmation became a major conceptual tool in contemporary national narratives.

The rehabilitation of the cult of St. Nino, and its incorporation in the identity discourse of the Georgian people, had yet another purpose, related to the political ambiguity of the cult. By the time Chavchavadze was writing, the cult of St. Nino was firmly incorporated in the Russian Orthodox discourse, and served as a symbol of Georgia's colonial "other". St. Nino, or Nina in Russian rendering, was an increasingly popular saint, often associated with ancient Christianity that the Russian Empire conquered and incorporated in her mystical body. Therefore,

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[5] For the quote and further discussion, see Nikoloz Aleksidze: A nation among other nations. The political theology of the conversion of Georgia. In: Emanuele Piazza (ed.): Qui est qui ligno pugnat?. Missionaries and evangelization in late antique and medieval Europe (4th–13th centuries). Verona 2016, pp. 227–245.

Ilia's task was to nationalize the saints of the Georgian tradition. His attempt to incorporate the saints of the Christian tradition into the national narrative is particularly spelled out in his 1888 article on David the Builder, where Ilia complains that this 11th-century great king was confined to the commemorative practices of the Church, while remaining absent from collective remembering and secular commemorations. Indeed, it was Chavchavadze who in a sense rediscovered this now universally revered figure of Georgia's history. In both cases, as well as elsewhere, Ilia's main agenda was to secularize and nationalize religious symbols and to thus sacralise the Georgian body politic.

As if a visual imagination of Ilia's political project, in 1889 Mikheil Sabinin, Georgian monk, historian and artist, produced an icon that he named the "Glory of the Georgian Church" (Illustration 1). In the centre of the composition an angel is lifting the miraculous "Living Pillar" of Georgia's first church. The uppermost section is occupied by Christ, the Virgin Mary, the prophet Elijah, and the angels. The miraculous raising of the pillar is the central event of the "Conversion of Kartli" and of all narratives of Georgia's conversion, and is the most iconic representation of Georgian Christianity. Under the pillar lies the Jewess Sidonia, embracing Christ's tunic that had been brought by Jews to Mtskheta in the first century. The raising of the pillar is supervised by St. Nino, who holds her iconic vine-woven cross. To the left of the pillar, a multitude of Georgia's ecclesiastical saints have gathered – ascetics, priests and patriarchs – whereas the right side is occupied by all Georgian saints, kings and soldiers, from the earliest times to the 19th century. This representation is the first explicitly political icon, where the object of veneration is not any particular figure, but rather Georgia's mystical body, symbolized, as it were, in its birth pangs through the raising of the Living Pillar by Nino.

Sabinin's icon offers several points of interest: The icon, although thematically national, is executed in a markedly Russian manner. One shall also easily notice the predominance of female saints and general femininity of the icon, a very characteristic trait of the Russian perception of Georgian piety and Christianity, which was almost exclusively marked by its female representatives: Nina, Tamara, Ketevana, etc., whereas the male saints were rather curiously ignored. Thus, on the one hand, Sabinin's icon dialogizes with the Russian perception of Georgian Christianity, and on the other hand, presents an iconic image of the holy Georgian nation. The central event, the raising of the holy pillar, symbolizes the "birth-pangs" of the Georgian nation, as expressed in Ilia Chavchavadze's article. By the time the icon was painted, the Mother of God has been securely integrated in the Georgian national imagery as the protectress of Georgia. Sabinin's icon became particularly popular during the pontificate of Georgia's current patriarch, Ilia II, and is currently prominently displayed in virtually all Georgian Orthodox churches. Consequently, while originally conceived as the "Glory of the Georgian Church", the icon almost immediately became a depiction of the Georgian nation as a sacred body, and has been duly renamed as the "Glory of Georgia".

Illustration 1: Mikheil Sabinin, The Glory of Georgia, 1889[6]

The imagined geography of sainthood: Patriarch Ilia II

Patriarch Ilia is often hailed as the reviver of Christian spirituality, priestly and monastic life in Georgia. From the point of view of the cult of saints, no other

[6] http://martlmadidebloba.ge/dgesastsaulebi20.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

period in Georgia's history matches Ilia II's rule in the sheer number of canonized figures. Dozens of figures of national importance, if of rather dubious Orthodox careers, were canonized, such as Ilia Chavchavadze, Ek'vt'ime T'aqaišvili and others. Other figures remain constantly on the verge of canonization and a subject of controversy between the Church and the nationalists.

In this context, and as a justification of the need for canonizations, one of Patriarch Ilia's favoured theological and political concepts is that of "Heavenly Georgia", which he does not fail to mention in his sermons on particularly important feast days. According to the Patriarch, those Georgians who attain the ranks of the saints essentially perform the same task in heaven as they did while living in earthly Georgia. Here they served Georgia's physical body, and in heaven they become servants of Georgia's mystical body. In 1987, the canonization of Chavchavadze was announced in the following words: "Dwelling in heavenly Georgia, the companion of early Georgia, Ilia's light, his immortal soul, still shines upon us!"[7] In the following thirty years, the concept has been repeated countless times in multiple contexts.

The concept of celestial Georgia became particularly popular in the early days of the national movement and was also regularly applied by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the Georgian national movement and independent Georgia's first president. Until his death, Gamsakhurdia was Ilia's open political rival, cherishing typical mistrust towards Soviet clerics. But Gamsakhurdia was Ilia's rival also in the fight over the authorship of the theology of the nation. Both men had a very similar understanding of sainthood in their rhetoric. Gamsakhurdia attempted to create a parallel, and from the Church's point of view, illicit, host of saints, in which Merab Kostava, his co-dissident, who had died earlier under mysterious circumstances, figured as "blessed". Gamsakhurdia's speech of 26. May 1990 is explicitly religious, reminiscent of the ravings of a medieval Church father, in which the boundaries of the sacred and the secular are intentionally blurred. The leader of the national movement usurps the patriarchal rhetoric: "My friends, may there be no enmity and treachery among us on this day, on this holy ground, where the spirits of our ancestors are still among us, where the blessed Merab [Kostava] watches us from celestial Georgia, from where Saint Ilia the Righteous too watches over us, the same Ilia the Righteous whom we have martyred […]. The nation of Georgia! Two roads are ahead of you. Your national-liberating movement has reached a crossroad. Behold the road of Ilia the Righteous, behold the road of sanctity, of virtue, behold the road of democracy, behold the road of truth and of innocence, and behold the road of robbery and treachery, behold the road of terrorism! Choose, the nation of Georgia! Choose Christ's road and the road of the good, choose the road of Ilia the Righteous, for this road shall take you to the purgatory! And he who takes the road of perdition, the road of Barabbas, shall be cursed in eternity!"[8]

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[7] Ilia II: Cmida ilia mart'ali. In: http://www.orthodoxy.ge/patriarqi/qadagebebi/skhva/iliaoba. htm (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[8] Zviad gamsaxurdias sitqva, carmot'k'muli 1990 clis 26 maiss. In: https://zviadgamsakhurdia. wordpress.com/?s=26+1990 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

A striking quality of the theology of saints, as preached by President Gamsakhurdia and Patriarch Ilia, is a very literal understanding of Georgia's mystical alias and territoriality of the saints. Their "Celestial Georgia" is a metaphysical category, it is not the universal "Fatherland" of all Christians, but an exact reflection of Georgia's physical body. From P'iladelp'os' abstract Fatherland, a specific instance of the heavenly Fatherland, under Patriarch Ilia, "Celestial Georgia" has evolved into a very tangible imagined geographic category. The mysterious death of Gamsakhurdia left Ilia II as the only sovereign in the matters of the theology of the nation, and the subsequent 25 years of his rule have clearly demonstrated the Patriarch's unmatched and unchecked power. Ilia's geo-political understanding of sainthood is evident in canonizations of the last few decades, where saints serve the idea of the country's political cohesion. Saints are assigned to Georgia's individual regions, whereby they serve the function of incorporating the areas into the Georgian mystical body and ideally into its physical body. In this discourse, each "problematic" region is provided with a local saint whose task is essentially to secure the place of the region in the mystical and physical body of the nation. This logic resulted in some truly inexplicable acts of canonization, some of which are discussed below.

In 2002, a thirteenth-century writer, Abuserisże Tbeli, was canonized. This person authored a fairly obscure astrological treatise, two hagiographic narratives, and a short chronicle. Under normal circumstances, he would not qualify as a saint. The only true reason for his canonization, however, is his association with Georgia's marginal region of Adjara and all the accompanying religious and historical problems. For over three centuries, Adjara was part of the Ottoman Empire and had become predominantly Muslim. Patriarch Ilia engaged in active Christian proselytism in the region by organizing mass baptisms, building and rebuilding churches, and recently by founding an Orthodox university in Adjara's remote mountainous region. In addition, several decades earlier, as a certain invented tradition, a festival of Tbeli was instituted, known as *Tbeloba*, which serves the function of ritual reaffirmation of Adjara's belonging to the mystical and physical body of Georgia.

The same is true of another figure of history, Cotne Dadiani, a thirteen-century military hero, who, apart from several dubious historical references, is known for one indeed impressive act of bravery, whereas all the rest concerning this figure is sheer speculation. Nevertheless, due to the marked association of the Dadiani noble family with the Samegrelo region, he serves the exact same purpose as Tbeli. Samegrelo's distinct regional identity and language were the source of anxiety of Georgia's national sentiments for nearly two centuries. Therefore, Samegrelo's belonging to Georgia's physical body requires attestation through a local saint who is part of the pantheon of Georgia's saints, or rather of Patriarch Ilia's celestial Georgia. In the logic of the new theology of the nation, Cotne is a Megrelian hero, therefore he is a national hero and, *mutatis mutandis*, a saint of the Orthodox Church. Similarly, the festivity of *Cotneoba* is celebrated annually in Samegrelo's region of Khobi.

Further, and also in 2002, a certain late medieval bishop Zosimos of Kumurdo was canonized. Here too, virtually nothing is known about this person apart from the fact that he had restored and dedicated the church of Kumurdo in the multi-ethnic and consequently "problematic" Javakheti region. This area, which is predominantly populated by ethnic Armenians, has been an apple of discord between Georgians and Armenians for many centuries. Particularly the church of Kumurdo is claimed by local Armenians as a monument of Armenian heritage. Therefore, Zosimos serves the purpose of Georgianization of the church. If one goes to the Patriarchal website, one can read the following line in the short annotation of this saint's life, full of rhetorical appeals, but entirely devoid of any historical references: "The episcopal see of Kumurdo has always been a defender of the unity of the Georgian Church, and a pillar of religious and national idea in the country."[9] This line effectively acts as a justification for the canonization of this otherwise obscure figure.

Finally, martyrs have appeared recently whose very existence is dubious. But their inclusion in the national discourse was essential for the same reasons described above. The case of 300 Laz martyrs is a good example. The canonization of this host is based on a sole assumption: We know of the existence of religious persecutions in the Ottoman Empire, the Lazs used to be Christian, the territory is inhabited by the Laz, therefore there must have been Laz martyrs, so why not canonize them?! The anonymity of these martyrs is staggering. Their number is unknown, as is their ethnicity. Their very existence is pure assumption. The Lazs, whom the Georgian national narrative considers as Georgians on the other side of the border with Turkey are thus included in the imagined community of Georgianness. Lazs are perceived as lost Georgians who need to be embraced into the mystical union of the Georgian nation, as stated in the introductory sentence: "Lazeti is the bosom of the Colchian culture. It was the main artery of the definition of Georgian statehood and the oldest site of our culture".[10]

While collective martyrdom remains an unacceptable phenomenon in Roman Catholicism, in Eastern Orthodox traditions, where Christian faith and the concept of Orthodoxy were always tied to ethnic and national anxieties, the imagined community of saints is a perfectly legitimate theological category. The contemporary world has seen a new discovery of martyrdom as a symbol of nationhood. Recent attacks of the Islamic State and associated groups on the Christians of the Middle East and subsequent mass killings were almost immediately followed by spontaneous canonizations and appearances of icons of the respective martyrs. The understanding of the nation as an imagined community has been readily adopted in the saints' discourse, which made collective sanctity not only a possibility but also a highly desirable fact.

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[9] Cmida zosime episkoposi kumurdoeli (XVI). In: http://www.orthodoxy.ge/tveni/maisi/01-zosime.htm (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[10] Dudiqvat'sa da papat'ši 300 mxedarni, mġvdelni da qovelni mart'lmadidebelni lazni k'ristes sarcmunoebisat'vis musulmant'agan camebulni (XVII–XVIII). In: http://www.orthodoxy.ge/tveni/aprili/29-lazebi.htm (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

In all these instances, saints act as realms of memory, as the pillars on which the imagined geography of Georgianness stands. The canonization of these figures would have been utterly unimaginable in western Christianity or indeed in most Christian traditions. The Georgian ecclesiastical tradition, however, is firmly committed to this. Despite such mass acts of canonization, the Georgian ecclesiastical discourse lacks any philosophical or theological deliberations of the nature of these canonizations. Luckily, neighbouring Armenia has experienced similar developments which resulted in some explicit discussions about the relationship of the national and the saintly.

"The state of exception"

In order to understand the comparatively recent dialogue between the national and the saintly, it may be useful to have a look at similar developments in Armenia, namely the canonization of the victims of the Armenian Genocide in 2015. To mark the centenary of the Genocide, an icon of the victims was consecrated, which immediately became a subject of controversy in the Armenian communities (Illustration 2). The controversy resided both in the canonicity of the icon, and in the very plausibility of canonizing the victims of the Genocide, by thus taking away the victimized identity and transforming it into a victorious identity of a Christian martyr.

The absence of a continuous tradition of iconography and the loose approach toward the execution of the icon are striking. The icon on the one hand betrays the attempts to present a collective and abstracted image of Armenia, and on the other hand it tries to illustrate the social diversity of the Armenian victims by highlighting the individual features of the men, women and children who are depicted. The icon thus attempts to represent a certain imagined community of sainthood. All symbols of Armenian nationhood, history, the monuments destroyed by the Ottomans, the social variety of the victims of the Genocide, all nuances of Armenianness in the Ottoman Empire are represented in the icon. It therefore acts as a religious representation of Armenian national identity.

Similarly to Sabinin's icon, the Armenian icon reveals two levels of representation: On the one hand, it represents collective images of saints, on the other a singular image of the sacred body of the nation. The object of veneration is also twofold: the individual saints depicted, as all single individuals have become saints, and the mystical body of the nation as represented by the host of the saints and accompanying events. While the similarity of the icons resides in their attempts to visualize the mystical body of the Nation, in both cases we see attempts to adapt medieval religious concepts to novel circumstances. The Armenian case presents a particularly vivid example of appropriation of medieval rhetorical formulae for contemporary national and political purposes. The canonization of the 1.5 million victims was in fact the first act of canonization in Armenia for over five centuries. The Armenian Church has long lost the tradition together with a

Illustration 2: Icon of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, 2015[11]

[11] Reproduced with kind permission of Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian.

sound theology of saints. The canonization therefore, required a return to the original definition of sainthood, which was discovered in Ełiše's fifth-century paradigm. The justification of collective and anonymous sainthood of those who were exterminated was made possible through the application of Ełiše's formula of a "martyr for faith and the fatherland", whereby being killed for merely one's ethnic or religious identity was a sufficient cause for canonization.

The icon, therefore, while canonically problematic, effectively encapsulates two dimensions of victimhood: The Ełišēan formula is united with the legal definitions of Genocide – "the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such".[12] It is this marked and, I would think, conscious theological ambiguity that situates the icon in the liminal space of the religious and the national. Indeed, not everyone was happy about this. Critics appeared both from the secular side and ecclesiastical circles. Whereas the latter were not happy with the canonicity of the icon, the former believed that the beatification of the victims would shift the discourse from victim-centred to, as it were, victorious, which would not be politically expedient. Abel Manoukian's justification is essential to understanding both the Armenian and Georgian tensions between canonicity and the requirements of the modern nation: "In these instances we see the scriptural principle of 'necessity abolishes the law' in operation. Contrary to the defined rules of the Catholic Church, *oikonomia*, the well-known principle embedded in the Church's tradition, is used when the Church administers or responds to the needs of the faithful."[13] Such a temporary suspension of the law is facilitated by the existing paradigm of collective Armenian martyrs of the battle of Avarayr in 451 and by the medieval concept of "Baptism in Blood".

The Georgian theological tradition has never engaged in a discussion over the nature of sanctity, however the guiding principle of canonization of the new saints is implicitly identical. Implicitly, in both narratives, the current state of affairs is presented as what Carl Schmitt would call "a state of exception". Indeed, in Schmitt's celebrated words "the sovereign is who decides on the exception".[14] It is precisely this right to decide on the exception, on the national meaning of sainthood that constituted the cornerstone of animosity between Gamsakhurdia and Ilia II. The Georgian and the Armenian icons, and also the contemporary theology of saints and the nation are cases of this state of exception, of a situation of emergency, where a nation becomes a valid theologoumenon. Due to pressing historical circumstances, an additional layer of representation is adduced to the icons and they can be observed and venerated as singular images of the nation. The same state of exception is the guiding principle of the canonization of non-saintly

[12] Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CrimeOfGenocide.aspx (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

[13] Abel Manoukian: New saints. Canonizing the victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Armenian Church. Geneva 2015.

[14] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Carl Schmitt. In: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schmitt/#SovDic (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

historical figures, where the immediate requirements of national cohesion suspend the canonical theology of the saints.

Saint in the middle

The understanding of what constitutes sainthood in modern Georgia was not confined to actual canonizations. The logic of sainthood developed under Ilia II reached secular discourse and inevitably resulted in a certain tension between the two. So far we looked at why and how one becomes a saint in modern Georgia, but we may also ask ourselves, why one does not. Why some figures of history, who otherwise could be excellent candidates for sanctity, are refused the honour generously bestowed upon other "underqualified" figures? The case discussed below reflects the two contrasting understandings of national continuity in modern secular and ecclesiastical discourses.[15]

Some time in the last years of Soviet rule, a group of Georgian scholars addressed the Georgian Patriarchate to canonize as a saint of the Georgian Church Kyrion of Mtskheta, the seventh-century Katholikos of Iberia. The Church responded to the petition with sheer disinterest, and the case has never returned on the agenda. For anyone who is more or less acquainted with the logic of Georgian sainthood, this refusal will come as a surprise. Here is what one can read on Georgian Wikipedia about Katholikos Kyrion of Mtskheta: "Kyrion I wisely used new political state of affairs in the region, gained ideological independence for the land [Iberia] and started to carry out a well-planned national policy, the main aim of which was to establish the Georgian language as the principal language of Church service in ethnically mixed regions for denationalised Georgians, to Georgianise non-Georgians and to create a more flexible Christian doctrine, in order to convince various Christian denominations to convert to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy."[16]

Judging by the paragraph, one may get the impression that the person in question occupies a unique place both in narrative sources and in Georgian collective memory, comparable to that of Joan of Arc in France, as someone to whom Georgians owe the foundation of nationhood – and this in the early seventh century. However, if one consults actual sources, one discovers that literally every statement in the entry is speculation, lacking any reliable historical substantiation. What we are witnessing is indeed a contemporaneous invention of a tradition, of a *saint de la patrie*. Instead of Wikipedia, one could of course explore more reliable resources. Another website, however, administered by well-established scholars of the field, has a very similar story to tell: "Kyrion's main achievement is considered to have been the first person, in the early seventh century, to set the Georgian Church aside from the Monophysite Church, to change the faith to Chalce-

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[15] Kyrion's case is discussed in detail in my book: The narrative of the Caucasian schism. Memory and forgetting in medieval Caucasia. Leuven 2018.
[16] Kiron I. In: https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/კირონ_I (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

donianism and to allocate to the Church the role of the defender of national interests."[17]

The only primary source of information regarding this figure, are early medieval Armenian narratives and Kyrion's own seventh-century correspondence preserved in the Armenian "Book of letters". Thereafter, Katholikos Kyrion became a nemesis of the Armenian tradition, as he was ultimately responsible for the schism between the Armenian and Georgian Churches, for securing Chalcedonian Orthodoxy, and for allying with Constantinople. Therefore, from the Georgian perspective, Kyrion is someone who fought for and defended the Orthodoxy of the Georgian Church, and as claimed by almost all modern scholars, defended the Georgian language by incorporating the Javakheti region into the Georgian cultural orbit. Recently, a well-established ecclesiastical historian, Edišer Čeliže, published a podcast on the subject of the Caucasian schism, with a eulogy to Kyrion.[18] Čeliže offered a striking analogy: What Kyrion had done for this country is comparable to Moses' role in Hebrew history. Just as Moses had repeatedly asked the Pharaoh to set his people free, in a similar fashion, Kyrion persistently corresponded with the Armenians with the intent to "remove Georgia from the Armenians". The rest of the podcast is an elaborate and rhetorical substantiation of his point: Just like Moses in Egypt, Kyrion was raised and educated in Armenia; similarly to Moses, he reached the apex of his career in this foreign land, only to return to Iberia as the primate of the Georgian Church and deliver it from the Armenian bondage; and finally, not unlike Moses, Kyrion laid a new foundation of Georgian nationhood, firmly grounded in Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. Later, in 2018, in another lecture published fragmentarily on YouTube, Čeliže expressed his frustration that Kyrion was still not canonized, and offered an energetic apology of Kyrion's sanctity.[19] In the same lecture, Čeliže openly challenged the contemporary tendencies of canonizations, by contrasting Kyrion with recently canonized figures.

In an encyclopaedia entry for "Contemporary Georgian Nationalism" one can read how the schism between the Armenian and the Georgian Churches, and implicitly Kyrion's work, is conceptualized in contemporary national discourse: "[Georgian nationalism] finds its origins in the mid-19th century, when Ilia Chavchavadze tried to formulate a vision of 'another Georgia' and use as its basis the European model of liberal nationalism. His motto – language, fatherland, faith – is both an attempt to diverge from the century-old Georgian tradition and also to expand upon it. In the Middle Ages, Georgianness equalled Orthodox Christianity. The Georgian kingdom was Christianized in the fourth century; in the seventh century, as a result of the theological split with the Armenian Monophysite Church, Georgia became a follower of the Greek Orthodox, i. e. dyophysite faith

[17] Kirion (kiron) I, kat'olikosi. In: https://qim.ge/kirion%20I.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[18] Edišer Čeliže: Kirion I, kat'olikosi. In: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brCWV9rQIt0 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020). As a matter of fact, the same historian is the most ardent protester against the canonization of Peter the Iberian.
[19] Id.: Kirion I kat'olikosis kanonizeba. In: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhYITaDPMOY (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).

and until the 19th century, when Russia penetrated the South Caucasus, Georgians were the only Orthodox in the region, surrounded mainly by Muslims. A Georgian by blood, who would change his faith, even if he would keep Georgian as his mother tongue, was not even considered as Georgian. Those who became Muslim, were called 'Tartarised'. If they were baptized in the Armenian Church, they were called Armenians, and those, who became Catholic, were usually called French. On the other hand, the Church was celebrating the services in Georgian and therefore it was the language that became a dominant factor, albeit in junction with religion. In the tenth century Giorgi Merčule formulated what can be considered as a paradigm of medieval Georgia: 'We consider Georgia the entire land where the liturgy is celebrated in Georgian.' In his motto, having placed the language before the faith, Ilia Chavchavadze underlined the secular character of Georgian nationalism. He identified this kind of nationalism with other 19th century 'linguistic' nationalisms and thus made it acceptable to Muslims and Georgians of other religions too. However, he was using as a basis the traditional formulation by Merčule."[20]

The author bases his judgment on Chavchavadze's celebrated triad – "fatherland, language, faith",[21] nowadays the most commonly evoked motto of Georgian identity rhetoric. Chavchavadze uttered this phrase only once and in a specific context, without ever returning to it, instead preferring a more secular definition of nationhood. Nonetheless, this triad became the most commonly quoted set of words in Georgian national discourse. Chavchavadze's subsequent canonization as Saint Ilia the Righteous is a direct result of this schematization and association of these three words with him, without considering the plethora of other utterances directly contradicting them. Thus, the Church, who hopes to act as a sovereign of the national, in a sense usurped Chavchavadze by transposing him into the realm of the mystical body of the nation.

With Chavchavadze's motto at hand, it became almost a project of national importance for 20th-century Georgian historians, who have embraced this version of the national narrative, to discover manifestations and a continuous reaffirmation of Chavchavadze's triad throughout history. This was effectively accomplished when Giorgi Merčule's 10th-century "Life of Gregory of Xanżta" was discovered and published by Nikolai Marr.[22] In Pavle Ingoroqva's study of the text and the period, Gregory, the founder of monastic colonies in Tao-Klarjeti and Western Georgia is presented as a visionary who similarly to Ilia, had imagined Georgian unity, but on a whole new level.[23] Gregory's (or perhaps Merčule's) place in the continuity of the idea of Georgia is epitomized in the single most often quoted sentence of the medieval Georgian corpus: "And Kartli consists of that spacious

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[20] Civil enc'iklopediuri lek'sikoni: T'anamedrove k'art'uli nac'ionalizmi. In: http://www.nplg. gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=5&t=9292 (last accessed 21. 7. 2020).
[21] This is the original order of the motto, later rearranged as "language, fatherland, faith".
[22] Nikolai Marr: Zhitie sv. Grigoriia Khandztiiskogo. Georgii Merchul. Gruzinskii tekst. St. Petersburg 1911.
[23] Pavle Ingoroqva: Giorgi merčule. k'art'veli mcerali meat'e saukunisa. narkvevi żveli sak'art'velos literaturis, kulturis da saxelmcip'oebrivi cxovrebis istoriidan. Tbilisi 1954.

land in which liturgy and all prayers are said in Georgian language, but only the *Kyrie Eleison* is said in Greek".[24] If schematically summarized, this sentence effectively boils down to Chavchavadze's triad, by metaphorically featuring a triadic union of land, language and religion. Needless to say, Giorgi Merčule, the author of the "Life", and of this sentence, is now a saint of the Georgian Church.

The grand sequence of events in which Kyrion was allocated a place was that of Georgia's long history of unification, a fundamental concept of the Georgian national narrative. According to this narrative, the cohesion of the idea of Georgianness was initiated by King Parnavaz in the third century B.C. whose political imagination of Kartli, as of a united political concept, is compatible with Georgia's modern political limits. The concept that was advanced in this discourse is that of *qoveli Kartli* (entire Kartli), a term that had allegedly stood for a primordial Georgian understanding of unity. According to the same national narrative, this understanding of unity surfaced near the end of Late Antiquity, precisely during the rule of Kyrion, and has in time evolved into the modern concept of *Sakartvelo*, four centuries later defined by Giorgi Merčule. Kyrion, in this timeline of Georgia's history, in a sense became the prophet and the creator of modern Georgia.

Kyrion's actions were read as an attempt to remove Iberia from the Persian political orbit and to return it to the Byzantine i. e. "Western" realm – an essential reactivation of the narrative template of a "European Georgia" and of the perpetual myth of return to Europe. According to this narrative template, the current state of affairs is perpetually anomalous. Georgia is temporarily and forcibly left outside of the borders of Europe, whether due to Persian, Ottoman or indeed the Russian Empires, whether tsarist or communist. The isolated events of Georgian history are thus read as reaffirmations of Georgia's European "choice" that was originally made by King Parnavaz or even by mythological Colchis. The same choice was reaffirmed through the adoption of Christianity by King Mirian in the fourth century, and proclaimed in Vakhtang Gorgasali's celebrated testament in the fifth – "not to abandon the love of the Greeks" – and made over and over again with the centuries-long process of the formation of the Georgian nation. Whilst being a forerunner of Georgian ethnic and religious nationalism, Kyrion meanwhile stands as a milestone in the grand Georgian narrative of perpetual and rather tragic western orientation.

The essential task of saints, and the rational of sanctification in these novel circumstances, is precisely to sustain continuity in the perpetual reaffirmation of the "faith-nation" unity. In Eric Hobsbawm's words, as an invented tradition, Kyrion is a response "to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition".[25] Kyrion is placed at the very beginning of the chain of repetitions, and fills in the schematic narrative of the grand Georgian tale of the "idea of Georgia". Although he had never uttered anything comparable to either Merčule's formula or to Chavcha-

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[24] David M. Lang: The lives of the Georgian saints. New York 1976, p. 148.
[25] Eric Hobsbawm/Terence Ranger (eds.): The invention of tradition. Cambridge 1983, pp. 1–2.

vadze's triad, in modern national discourse his very figure was rediscovered as a "fatherland, language, faith" incarnate. Contemporary Georgian scholarly narrative, which tries to make its way into collective remembering, envisages Kyrion's activities as the beginning of a "national" revival, of the rediscovery of Georgia's religious, cultural and political identity. These "beginnings" include the introduction of the Georgian language as the only official tongue in Gugareti (roughly identified with Samtskhe-Javakheti), the allegiance to the one Orthodox Chalcedonian Church, and state-initiated religious tolerance. Kyrion is seen as the first political and religious leader who created discursive boundaries within which Georgianness, as a contemporary national concept, transpires. The nationalization of the liminal zone of Gugareti, with "unacceptable" ambiguity, was a high sign of the beginning of a "national movement", three centuries later resumed by Grigol Xanżteli and finally by Ilia Chavchavadze. In all three instances, we face schematisations: in Chavchavadze's case by reducing his wide spectrum of writings to the aforementioned formula, in Xanżteli's case by reading his life as a conscious national programme, and in the case of Kyrion of Mtskheta by almost completely inventing his life and work in order to present a monolithic continuity of the idea of Georgia.

The question consequently is why does the Church refuse to canonize Kyrion of Mtskheta? Indeed, by every standard adopted by the Georgian Church, one may have expected Kyrion to be long part of the ranks of Georgia's saints. The truth, however, is that not only did the contemporary Church refuse to accept him, but the entire medieval Georgian tradition is consistently ignorant of this figure. The explanation for why Kyrion became a hero of the Georgian national cause but remained outside the Church's commemorative practices can be found in the dramatically different understandings of the continuity of Georgian identity articulated by the national narrative on the one hand and by the Orthodox Church on the other. Kyrion's prominence is unacceptable to the Church, as he will always be associated with divergence, and therefore with innovation, a concept alien to the Church narrative. Giorgi Merčule and Chavchavadze merely confirm the truth of the ready association of Orthodoxy and the Georgian nation, whereas Kyrion is presented as a beginner.

Not only Kyrion, the entire period in question related to his life and to the separation of the Armenian and Georgian Churches is sometimes altogether removed from modern accounts. If one reads the Georgian and English articles for one and the same Wikipedia entry "History of the Georgian Church", one can notice that the two versions tell different stories. While the English version has a subsection with a brief elaboration on the relations with the Armenian Church, the Georgian article fails to mention the Armenian Church. The schism is entirely omitted, creating a glaring chronological lacuna and interrupted narrative. The story is presented as a sacred and authoritative story not allowing discussion, doubt, or discontinuity or, for that matter, a scholarly apparatus.

The same tendency is transparent in the writings of Church historians coming from an ecclesiastical background. The ecclesiastical narrative, exposed in Archbishop Anania Japaridze's "History of the Georgian Church" elaborates on the

schism and even dedicates an entire volume to this period of Georgian Church history, but even here Kyrion is not lauded as one may have expected. Kyrion is not a hero, we need not be proud of him, as there was nothing to be proud of. The Georgians were Chalcedonian and they stayed and will stay such forever and ever. In this discourse, by the virtue of his ethnicity, Peter the Iberian deserves the place in the rank of saints, whereas Kyrion does not. While the secular narrative perceives sainthood as a certain continuous reaffirmation of the late 19th-century understanding of the nation, the Church refuses to accept changes and turns: Here Georgianness and Orthodoxy are intimately associated, as reflected by the ambiguities of the cult of Peter the Iberian. Georgia has been Orthodox and will always remain such. The saints of the Georgian Church merely perpetually confirm the eternal dialectic of the celestial and earthly Georgia.

Conclusion

In contemporary national discourses, the cult of the saints became an essential tool. The "new theology" of the nation is presented essentially as a state of exception, a necessary secular detour from the rule, justified by pressing political and national requirements. The saints serve the purpose of sustaining historical continuity and territorial integrity of physical and mystical bodies of the nation. In the meantime, there transpires a divergence between the two varied understandings of the national, articulated by ecclesiastical narratives and by secular writing. The Church tradition entirely ignores any hint of historical deviation from the apostolic foundations, and seeks immutable associations between ethnicity, nationhood and Orthodoxy. By contrast, the national narrative is more prone towards seeking typologically identical revivals throughout its history. While in many cases such revivals are accepted by the Church traditions as reaffirmations of Orthodoxy, in isolated cases, such as that of Kyrion of Mtskheta, the person's sainthood is debated precisely because of the two contrasting narratives.

The cult of saints continues to play a vital role in contemporary national, ethnic and religious anxieties. New controversies keep emerging over the place of an individual figure in ecclesiastical and national imageries, and almost without exceptions, each act of canonization is infused with political meanings. This, however, is no news for students of Late Antiquity, and Peter Brown's qualification of the rise of the cult of saints is still applicable to 21st-century Georgia: "the lurching forward of an increasing proportion of society toward radically new forms of reverence, shown to new objects in new places, orchestrated by new leaders, and deriving its momentum from the need to play out the common preoccupation of all, the few and the 'vulgar' alike, with new forms of the exercise of power, new bonds of human dependence, new, intimate, hopes for protection and justice in a changing world."[26]

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[26] Peter Brown: The cult of saints in late antiquity. It's rise and function in Latin Christianity. Chicago 1981, pp. 21–22.

Zaal Andronikashvili

Georgian political romanticism in the Caucasus

When considering political romanticism, one immediately thinks of a book that Carl Schmitt, the German legal theorist and Nazi collaborator, published in 1919. Schmitt defined political romanticism as "a concomitant emotive response of the romantic to a political event. This political event evokes a romantic productivity in an occasional fashion".[1] The substance of expressing the romantic self was "in an occasional fashion", that is, it could also originate in the political realm without being political. For Schmitt political romanticism, like romanticism as such, meant political passivity. It was the inability to have a legal or political structure or to aestheticize and poeticize the political. In this respect, the political romanticism of each political activity relating to "the technique of conquest, the claim or the expansion of political power" was essentially opposed to the aesthetic type of the romantic.[2] Schmitt distinguished between productivity and activity, and defined political romanticism as the willingness to be productive without becoming active. The romantic productivity refuses "every activity that intervenes in the real connections of the visible world". A given fact is not considered in its political, historical, legal and moral context but becomes an "object of an aesthetic and emotional interest". The world will not change through activity but through mood and imagination.[3]

Besides replacing political activity with aesthetic productivity, Schmitt also included the negation of reality and presence as defining criteria of political romanticism: the reality that the romantic is talking about is only "another place and another time", the other thing as such. This is where the romantic interest in the past comes from.[4]

In order to introduce the term "political romanticism" into the Georgian context, I want to reach back a bit further. While romanticism in Western Europe was a reaction to the breakdown of religious totality during the Enlightenment that could be recovered in the aesthetic realm, in Georgia the disintegration of the medieval world had different reasons. In 1783, the king of Kartli and Kakheti, Erekle II, signed a treaty with the Russian empress, Catherine II, in Georgievsk. According to this document, Russia declared its military and political protection

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for Kartli and Kakheti while the throne and domestic affairs were secured for the Bagrationi dynasty. However, just before the death of Erekle's son, Giorgi XII, and a few weeks before his own death, the Russian emperor Paul I dismissed the treaty of Georgievsk. Alexander I, the new emperor of Russia, enforced his father's plans and prevented the coronation of Prince David, the grandson of Erekle II and eldest son of Giorgi XII. On September 12, 1801 the East Georgian kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti was dissolved by a decree of Tsar Alexander I and annexed by the Russian empire. The Bagrationi dynasty that had lasted a thousand years ceased to exist.

This political disaster did not only have political but also ideological consequences. For the first time since many centuries the political enemy were not the Islamic states of the Persian or Ottoman empires but Russia, an Orthodox country that, as potential saviour and guarantor against the Muslim world, had been the hope of the foreign policy of the East Georgian kingdom(s) for more than 200 years. Now that a rift between the political and the religious occurred, the nation was ready to be born. The collapse of religious totality that led to Georgian romanticism was therefore in itself political. After a period of resistance and rebellions, political life in Georgia came to a halt for three decades after the failed conspiracy of 1832. Political romanticism in the Georgian context, then, is for me above all a political conflict (in particular with Russia) carried out in the aesthetic sphere, primarily in literature. The protagonists of Georgian political romanticism belonged to the aristocracy, unlike the examples in Schmitt's writings. As they were excluded from political life after the annexation of the East Georgian kingdom, they had to express their political ideas in an aesthetic way even if they had entered military or civil service careers in the tsarist empire. While Schmitt regarded political romanticism as an expression of passivity, the essential reason for passivity in Georgian political romanticism was powerlessness that had to be compensated aesthetically. In this respect, Georgian political romanticism was, unlike Schmitt's, not primarily about expressing the poetical self but about confronting Russia in the aesthetic sphere – a conflict that due to the powerlessness of the divided Georgian kingdoms could not be resolved politically.

Political romanticism in Georgia lasted much longer than Georgian literary romanticism. The ideas of the first generation of Georgian romanticism were later adopted by a generation of intellectuals who were the main representatives of realism in Georgian literature. Commonly referred to as the *Tergdaleulebi*, literally those who had drunk the water of the Tergi (the river Terek), they were a group of young Georgians who, at the end of the 1850s went to Russia to study. On their way there they had to cross the Tergi, the border river to Russia. Unlike the romantic generation before them, they refused Russian military and civil service careers realizing the impossibility of combining such a professional choice with true Georgian patriotism.

The first generation of Georgian romantics, including Alexandre Chavchavadze (1786–1846), Grigol Orbeliani (1804–1883) and Nikoloz Baratashvili (1817–1845) encompassed rather ambivalent personalities – on the one hand patriots and rebels

against the Russian order, on the other successful Russian military officers and civil servants. Alexandre Chavchavadze, the son of the Georgian ambassador to St. Petersburg, Garsevan Chavchavadze, a great advocate for close political ties with Russia, was also the godson of Empress Catherine II and father in law of the Russian romantic Alexander Griboedov (1795–1829), who outlined a colonial scheme for the Caucasus according to the model of the British East India Company. Alexandre Chavchavadze took part in several revolts against Russia but also defeated a rebellion in Kakheti (1812) and rose to the rank of lieutenant general in the Russian army. Grigol Orbeliani, descendant of one of the most powerful Georgian noble houses and grandson of King Erekle II, participated in the conspiracy of 1832 and was temporarily arrested for that reason. The independent Georgia of Queen Tamar or King Erekle II was always his heart's desire. Nonetheless, he became general of the infantry, successfully fought for fifteen years on the Russian side in the North Caucasus, was the tsar's governor in the Caucasus for three short periods as well as governor general of Tbilisi, and was personally awarded by Tsar Alexander II with the highest imperial honour, the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle the First-Called.

This inevitable ambiguity gets overly simplified if the romantics' biographies are too rigorously separated from their poetry. In the 19th century, Georgian literature was also a place for political contemplation. The Caucasus played a central role in this contemplation, on the one hand as a route to Russia and on the other as the home of the North Caucasian tribes. Hence, it was much more than a purely aesthetical object. The Caucasus provided the stage on which the key dilemma of the Georgian aristocracy, to whom the Georgian romantics belonged, was played out – to accept the advantages and disadvantages of Russian conquest and to compensate the trauma of lost autonomy through real or conceived benefits. Arguments for these advantages were partly mediated by the Russian political and literary discourse, partly updated from the older Georgian Caucasus discourse.[5]

In their path-breaking article about romantic topography and the dilemma of empire, Harsha Ram and Zaza Shatirishvili have analysed numerous Russian references in Alexandre Chavchavadze's poem "The Caucasus" ("Kavkazia", between 1824 and 1832).[6] They speak of a "patchwork of quotations from Russian poets" (Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Zhukovskii, Pushkin, Lermontov).[7] This patchwork mostly refers to topoi and pathos formulas of the Caucasus and less to the subject (plot-structure) of the poem. In the poem, the Caucasus is described as a timeless, unchangeable, deserted place of nature: "Only the Caucasus stands immutable among these mountains / destroying one thing, generating another like (the com-

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[5] For further reading on this subject, see Harsha Ram/Zaza Shatirishvili: Romantic topography and the dilemma of empire. The Caucasus in the dialogue of Georgian and Russian poetry. In: RussR 63 (2004), pp. 1–25; Zaal Andronikashvili/Emzar Jgerenaia/Franziska Thun-Hohenstein: Landna(h)me Georgien. Studien zur kulturellen Semantik. Berlin 2018.

[6] Alexandre Chavchavadze: T'xzulebebi. Tbilisi 1996, pp. 82–83.; English translation in Ram/Shatirishvili: Topography (see note 5).

[7] Ibid., pp. 10–11.

manding) God".[8] At the same time, the Caucasus is anthropomorphized. In the initial lines of the poem, the Caucasus is imagined as a "giant" lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea: "Leaning its obstinate head on the Pontic waves / Cleaving the Caspian Sea with its heel / The giant Caucasus lies between two seas."[9] The anthropomorphized mountain correlates with the Titan Prometheus: "This is the mountain where the chained Prometheus / Had been cursed by the gods to have his heart torn apart by a raven."[10] The myth is introduced into nature in order to finally prepare the entry of human history. Chavchavadze thus takes up timelessness as one of the key literary features of the Caucasus since the late 18th century and remodels it to make his argument.[11]

In his poem "The dispute" ("Spor", 1841), a dialogue between the two Caucasian mountains Elbrus and Kazbek, Mikhail Lermontov also represents the Caucasus as a natural space free of history. "Nay, I do not dread the Orient", Kazbek proclaims, insinuating the impossibility of disturbing the tranquillity of this space. Georgia and Teheran have fallen asleep: "death-like" and "motionless, in voiceless stillness", Egypt is a place of "royal graves". Only from the north, "from the Urals to the Danube" march the troops who will conquer Kazbek. Already in the first lines of the poem, the conquest of the mountain is prophesied:

> Man will build his smoky cabins
> On thy hillside steep;
> Up thy valley's deep recesses
> Ringing axe will creep;
> Iron pick will tear a pathway
> To thy stony heart,
> Delving yellow gold and copper
> For the human mart.
> Caravans, e'en now, are wending
> O'er thy stately heights,
> Where the mists and kingly eagles
> Wheeled alone their flights.[12]

The "pathway in the stony heart" is an allusion to the Georgian Military Road. This road through the mountains in the Caucasus – the inaugural event of the imperial Caucasus project – marks from the imperial point of view the entry of time into the Caucasus region and thus the beginning of its history. Alexandre Chavchavadze chose a similar plot-strategy in relation to the Caucasus a decade before Lermontov: The mountain, "raised with seemingly conscious design as a barrier / and recognized as impregnable since the creation of the universe", is now conquered by the "brave Cicišvili", whereupon the rock opens its gates to the

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[8] Ibid., p. 7.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., p. 8.
[11] Andronikashvili/Jgerenaia/Thun-Hohenstein: Landna(h)me (see note 5), pp. 86 ff.
[12] Laurence Kelly: Lermontov. Tragedy in the Caucasus. London/New York 2003, pp. 214–216 (poem translated by Charles Ernest L'Ami and Alexander Welikotny).

roads, which give Georgians the hope "the Enlightenment would enter their land by this road".[13] Ram and Shatirishvili rightly note that Chavchavadze may have responded to the epilogue of Pushkin's "Prisoner of the Caucasus" (1820/1821). There, the Caucasus is conquered by the Russian army, which exterminates the peoples of the Caucasus. Of the three Russian commanders who contributed to the conquest of the Caucasus, Tsitsianov (the usual Russian form of the general of Georgian origin Pavle Cicišvili), Kotliarevskii and Ermolov mentioned in the epilogue of the "Prisoner of the Caucasus", in his poem Chavchavadze names only Tsitsianov. The cruelty of Pushkin's epilogue is blurred. Chavchavadze reinterprets the conquest and domination of the Caucasus as an entirely peaceful process. It is human ability, that conquers nature, and the Caucasus becomes a transit point for education and enlightenment from Russia to Georgia. On the one hand, Chavchavadze takes up one of the most important arguments for Georgia's connection to Russia: Russia brings the enlightenment to Georgia (via Russified Georgians). On the other hand, Chavchavadze draws in the plot of his poem also on Georgian intertextual references, which make his text much more ambivalent then from the first reading.

In the medieval Georgian chronicle "The life of Kartli", it is reported that Alexander of Macedonia crossed the Caucasus and conquered Kartli, where he found moral decay: "He found that the faith of Georgians was the most abominable, compared to the faith of other peoples, because they ignored the blood relationship in marriage and ate every living thing and also the dead."[14] After his conquest of Kartli and the annihilation of pagans, Alexander established order and religion in Kartli and left a governor behind. Chavchavadze projects the story of the chronicle on the contemporary politics, which clarifies the ratio behind his argument: Georgia, threatened and devastated by Islamic states and tribes, finds its way back to order and faith under the new Alexander (Russian Tsar Alexander I), who leaves behind his governor (the infantry general Pavel Tsitsianov, explicitly mentioned in the text). But Chavchavadze's argument is much more subtle. Azon, the governor of Alexander, mentioned in the chronicle, is overthrown by Parnavaz, the legendary founder of the Georgian kingdom and royal dynasty. This can be interpreted as follows: The Russian conquest is only a means to restore order and true religion, but it will soon be replaced by an independent Georgian kingdom. However, this storyline ignores not only the bloody side of the Russian conquest, but also the corruption and arbitrariness of the Russian administration in Georgia, which Chavchavadze himself denounced in "A short historical essay on Georgia and its condition from 1801 to 1831" to the Russian emperor.[15]

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[13] Ram/Shatirishvili: Topography (see note 5), pp. 7ff. (translation by Harsha Ram).
[14] Kartlis Tskhovreba: History of Georgia. Tbilisi 2014, p. 19.
[15] Alexander Chavchavadze: Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk Gruzii i ee polozheniia s 1801 po 1831 gg. In: Kavkazskii sbornik 23 (1902), pp. 1–25; Georgian translation in: Chavchavadze: T'xzulebebi (see note 6), pp. 205–229. More information about this text in: Ram/Shatirishvili: Topography (see note 5), p. 12.

The restoration of the Georgian kingdom was basically a consensus among the Georgian nobility, but opinions diverged on strategies and the most appropriate time. Grigol Orbeliani was a close friend of the family of Alexandre Chavchavadze, he was in love with Chavchavadze's daughter Nino (who married the Russian poet Griboedov) and like Chavchavadze he took part (or at least knew about) the 1832 conspiracy of the Georgian nobility. As a young officer, Orbeliani was sent to Novgorod in 1831 with a military assignment and stayed for a longer time in Moscow and St. Petersburg. He documented this journey in detail in his diaries, which he later revised for publication. They appeared posthumously under the title "My journey from Tbilisi to Petersburg".[16] For our context, this journey is interesting as one of the first Georgian descriptions of the Georgian Military Road but also for its reflections on contemporary Georgian politics. In Stavropol, Orbeliani met the major general of the Russian army Ivane Abkhazi (1785–1831), with whom he had an in-depth conversation about Georgia's fate. He described his interlocutor as a fervent patriot. Like Pavel Tsitsianov's family, Abkhazi's family belonged to the Georgian diaspora in Russia. Abkhazi, a representative of the same generation as Chavchavadze, began his career in the Russian army before the annexation of Kartli and Kakheti as the adjutant of General Kotliarevskii, a protagonist of Pushkin's epilogue to "The prisoner of the Caucasus". Later he served as military administrator of Azerbaijan and Imereti, took part in the Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars, was last head of the North Ossetian expeditionary corps and in this capacity contributed to the integration of North Ossetia into the Russian Empire. The "conversation" between Orbeliani and Abkhazi is presented as a dramatized dialogue. Its form and subtitle give it a special status in the diary.

In the conversation with Orbeliani, Abkhazi's arguments are similar to those of Alexandre Chavchavadze's in his Caucasus poem and his report to Tsar Nicholas I "A short historical essay on Georgia and its condition from 1801 to 1831". Should the Russians despair and leave Georgia, Abkhazi argues, Georgia would fall back into disorder and civil war and would be overrun by its enemies. Orbeliani, on the other hand, pleads for Georgia's immediate independence. Abkhazi counters Orbeliani's rather naive and romantic position with detailed rational and enlightened arguments: Georgia, unlike its enemies, had not modernised, it had no regular army and thus no chance of survival. Despite Orbeliani's hopes, it was not possible at the moment to create a regular army. Georgia lacks financial resources and has no international creditworthiness. The main obstacles, however, are not economical but social. For the Georgian aristocracy, a regular army means first and foremost the renunciation of parts of their assets and unrestricted per-

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[16] Grigol Orbeliani: Mgzavroba č'emi tp'ilisidan peterburgamdis. In: id.: T'xzulebat'a sruli krebuli. Ed. by Akaki Gacerelia/Jumber Čumburiże. Tbilisi 1959, pp. 155–264. Orbeliani's travelogue was analyzed in Akaki Gacerelia: Grigol orbeliani. Ķritiķul-biograp'iuli narķvevi. In: ibid., pp. 24ff. and Jumber Čumburiże: Grigol orbelianis proza. In: ibid., pp. 94–108; Oliver Reisner: Grigol Orbeliani discovering Russia. A travel account by a member of the Georgian upper class from 1831–1832. In: Beate Eschment/Hans Harder (eds.): Looking at the coloniser. Cross-cultural perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and related areas. Würzburg 2004, pp. 47–62.

sonal freedoms. The Georgian nobility is not prepared for this at present, Abkhazi argues, for only if minds and hearts are formed by true education will it be possible to sacrifice personal advantages for the common good. Uneducated and unsophisticated people are not even capable of loving their fatherland. Therefore, for Abkhazi education is the central argument to legitimize Georgia's stay in Russia for a period of "up to hundred years". Then, Georgia would have many educated people, society would change, easily recognize the need for modernization and implement it. Current society, however, is not ready for this and is therefore useless for the fatherland. It has no goal and does not know its path, as if lost in a dark night. This darkness of ignorance is contrasted with the shining light of the enlightenment, which comes from Russia. Both ignorance and enlightenment have additional religious connotations. Ignorance is equated with idolatry, while enlightenment takes on the traits of true religion. With this assessment, Abkhazi makes explicit what has remained rather veiled in Chavchavadze's poem. Abkhazi also takes up the light metaphor at another point. Georgia, divided since Alexander the Great (King of Georgia, 1390–1445), is now united (under Russian rule). However, the parts were not yet firmly connected. The "glue" would only work if the sun "welded" the parts together. "Our sun", says Abkhazi, "is time. Time must enlighten us, teach us to love each other and the fatherland, it must unite all parts of ancient Georgia into one thought and one heart." Orbeliani seems to agree with this, also figuratively concise diagnosis of Georgian society. "How strongly and correctly he described the current situation in Georgia", he wrote in the concluding remark to the conversation.

While Alexandre Chavchavadze is illustrating the continuity between old and new Georgia as an historical-philosophical drama in the Caucasus (with mythological and historical references) and while Grigol Orbeliani is staging it as dialog between a political romantic and a political realist, Nikoloz Baratashvili emphasises continuity between old and new Georgia by depicting the integration into Russia as a decision of Erekle II. Baratashvili too was a member of the Georgian (Kartlian) high nobility. He was the nephew of Grigol Orbeliani, the son of Orbeliani's sister Ephemia, and thus a great-grandson of Erekle II, whose commemoration was part of the family cult. His school teacher was the philosopher Solomon Dodashvili, who was one of the intellectual leaders of the 1832 conspiracy and who, unlike his noble co-conspirators, was exiled to Viatka where he died in prison. Baratashvili was close friends with the Chavchavadze family. He courted Ekaterine, daughter of Alexandre Chavchavadze and later queen of Megrelia, but without success. As his family was already impoverished and as he was the only son who could support his father, Baratashvili could neither start a military career, like many of his relatives, nor study at university. Since 1836, he worked as a civil servant in different positions and died in 1845, aged 27, in Ganja.

Nikoloz Baratashvili was the most distinguished amongst the Georgian romantics. Most of his 36 poems are lyrical or metaphysical. As a political poet he is still underrated. He wrote several covertly political poems "The fate of Kartli" (1839); "The tomb of King Irakli" (1842) and "The war of Georgia's princes, nobles and

peasants against Dagestan and Chechnya in the year 1844, led by the govern-
ment-marshal Prince Dimitri Orbelian, son of Tamaz" (1844).[17] Baratashvili's
poem "The fate of Kartli" is centered around the consultation between Erekle II
and his chancellor Solomon Lionidze. The conversation takes place after the lost
battle for Tbilisi and the ensuing devastation of the capital by the Persian Shah
Agha Mohamed in the year 1795. In exile, the deeply depressed and desperate king
is contemplating the situation of Georgia. Georgia is threatened by external foes,
Persia, the Ottoman Empire and the North Caucasians. The country is on the
brink of civil war and among the many children and grandchildren of Erekle II
there is no heir to the throne who could rule the country. Thus, he confides his
decision to Solomon Lionidze that he will hand over his throne to the Russian
tsar so that he can bring prosperity to Georgia. The shocked counsellor tried to
persuade him otherwise: The religious argument of the king that, unlike its ene-
mies, Russia was Christian, he countered with a national-political objection. It is
of no interest to distinct political nations whether they have the same religion. It is
not guaranteed that Georgians will be happy under the Russians. The king, how-
ever, saw it as his duty that, while being alive, he would bring peace to the country
that was so much haunted by enemy assaults and invasions. Only under Russian
protection Georgia would be in the position to take revenge on the Persians and
only then would it be guaranteed that Georgia continued to stay Christian. Lionid-
ze cannot convince the king and bitterly reflects about the disadvantages of mon-
archy where the people are subjected to the arbitrariness of kings.

   The narrator clearly shares Lionidze's arguments. The poem's plot is interrupted
by a praise of the "eternally blessed" mothers of Georgia, who are represented by
Sophia, Lionidze's wife, depicted in the poem as a fierce defender of Georgian
independence. Georgia's mothers are set against the current Georgian women,
whose "living heart has been changed [killed] by the wind from the North".
"What use of children and homeland? / We must serve only our hearts / What use
is Georgianness for us / What is wrong about belonging to a foreign tribe?" In the
authorial epilogue, a picture of a rebuilt and reinvigorated Georgia is painted.
Nonetheless, the poem closes on a fatalistic note: "But everything was in vain /
Irakli's heart / had decided about Georgia's fate long ago."

   In his critique of the union with Russia, Baratashvili uses the same arguments of
political romanticism like his uncle Grigol Orbeliani in "The journey from Tbilisi
to Petersburg". It is important to note that he paints the annexation by Russia not
as a conquest but as, in his opinion, regrettable and wrong but sovereign decision
of Erekle II. He consequently obscures Russian imperial politics. Likewise, the
moral decline, which resulted from the Russian annexation, might have been
brought upon by the impersonal "Northern wind", but it was eventually self-in-
flicted. Yet the moral decline that Ivane Abkhazi was talking about to Grigol Or-
beliani in "The journey from Tbilisi to Petersburg" was, from his point of view, a
direct consequence of the thirty-year long yoke.

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[17] Nikoloz Baratashvili: T'xzulebani. Ed. by Aḳaḳi Gacerelia/Ivane Lolašvili. Tbilisi 1972.

In the poem "The tomb of King Erekle" that Baratashvili wrote two years after "The fate of Kartli", the criticism of Erekle's policies falls silent and gives way to a panegyric. While in the latter, the critique was presented as advice of Solomon Lionidze in advance of the moment of decision, in "The tomb of King Erekle" the sovereign decision is accepted with respect, even if one can notice a whiff of bitterness. Here, Erekle's key arguments from "The fate of Kartli" are taken up again. While in "The fate of Kartli" the annexation by Russia was presented as a sovereign decision of Erekle, in "The tomb of King Erekle" this decision is placed in a more emphatic and genealogical context. The new Kartli is depicted as the "firstborn son" (and thus heir) of Erekle. The union with Russia was a "testament" of Erekle to "the orphaned Kartli". His sons now reap the "sweet fruits" of his "sovereign idea".

Within this theme, the Russian Empire is completely left aside as political actor and only has a geographical designation as "the North". Political repressions are also omitted: The children of Erekle II who have been deported by force to Russia have, in the poem, emigrated "due to the circumstances of the time". Their heart, "filled with joy and life", will melt the "ice of the North". From the North, they will bring back home the "precious seed" of education that will sprout "under the glowing sky". From the Black Sea and from the Caspian Sea come no more enemies but friends. The poem's end, however, unequivocally reveals that Georgia's past was greater and more glorious than its present. Erekle is "the last spirit of the fortitude of Iveria". Even if Baratashvili exaggerates the genealogical continuity between the new and old Georgia, it is the very concealment of the rupture between the old and new Georgia that makes this rupture much more obvious. The old order is ultimately dead and is symbolised by the tomb of Erekle II. The natural and the political body of the king evolve into two spirits. Erekle is present as the "holy ghost" and as the "pneuma", the last spirit of Georgia. In this hypostasis he will be resurrected some 20 years later in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem "The ghost".

Baratashvili's literary strategy of dismissing the Russian Empire from his reflections about new and old Georgia is continued in the later poem "The war of Georgia's princes, nobles and peasants against Dagestan and Chechnya in the year 1844, led by the government-marshal Prince Dimitri Orbelian, son of Tamaz". Here, Baratashvili tries to imagine a post-monarchical national body that includes not only different peoples of Georgia but also different classes (the nobility and the peasants). The new national body reinstates the primordial union of the Georgian peoples from "The life of Kartli" (the Georgians pledging allegiance at the grave of Kartlos). This body is blessed by the spirit of Erekle II and thus succeeds the old monarchical body. Baratashvili's strategy of creating continuity between the monarchical and national body is not genealogical anymore, as in the "Tomb of King Erekle". The vengeance on the Northern Caucasians who, besides the Persians and Turks, are made responsible for the decline of the Georgian kingdom is a familiar topos at least since the poetry of Davit Guramishvili in the 18th century. The ambivalence of this topos becomes visible at the place where the national

body, succeeding the monarchical body, is constituted. In the first lines of his poem "Be afraid, Caucasus!" Baratashvili takes up the Russian emphasis of the conquest of the Caucasus. The inevitable invoking of the imperial context by paraphrasing the Russian military pathos formula from the epilogue of Pushkin's "Prisoner of the Caucasus" marks the difference between the imperial and the national plots of the Caucasus. While in the Russian plot, the empire is advancing prospectively, the Georgian plot is retrospective. The emotion of vengeance focuses the poem's plot not on the present or future of the political body but on satisfying the "spirits of our fathers in paradise" and thus doesn't have any immediate political relevance. This retro-perspective indicates that the political presence is not self-determined. While in the poem it is defined by the obligation to take revenge, in reality it is determined by the incorporation into the imperial body. Evoking the spirits of the dead ancestors also gives expression to the ghostly aspects of the political body. Baratashvili uses the emotion of vengeance for two purposes: to create the actually non-existent continuity between old and new which in turn dismisses the Russian Empire from the political present. By excluding the Russian Empire from the plot of the Caucasus conquest and by showing the Georgian troops ready to give their lives to the (albeit dead) Georgian king and not to the Russian tsar, Georgian political romanticism reaches its peak.

The Russian Empire is present in Baratashvili's political poems only covertly. Nevertheless, lack of political freedom is present in his oeuvre, both in connection with Georgia and in connection with the Caucasus. Already in "The fate of Kartli", he introduces the subject of captivity, not on plot-level, as in Russian literary discourse, but as a metaphor. In her conversation with Solomon Lionidze, his wife Sophia rates misfortune in freedom higher than happiness in captivity. The nightingale in the cage despises honour (and does not sing), while in freedom she sings the praises of happiness and misfortune alike.

In the later poem "The hyacinth and the wanderer" (1842), Baratashvili takes up this metaphor again as a parable. The poem is structured in the tradition of Georgian poetic dialogues. The wanderer asks the hyacinth where its beautiful colour and soft aroma have disappeared to. The hyacinth replies that it is removed from the heart of its homeland, from the circle of its friends, from the beautiful sky and from its nightingale. She was imprisoned in a dark and sad place and could not hear her lover's song. The wanderer tries to draw her attention to the advantages of her position: She is surrounded by gold and silver, cared for in such a way that neither the sun nor the cold can harm her. The hyacinth replies, however, that the sticky air of the large house cannot replace the beautiful nature. The wanderer insists: In the cold winter the hyacinth would have been dead long ago. The person who cares about it also protects it from winter. But the hyacinth cannot be persuaded: Everything has its time, even death, but it withers prematurely (in its captivity). Nature does not die in winter, but is resurrected in spring. The wanderer then sets out to look for his flower, which might "wither from the merciless hand".

In "The hyacinth and the wanderer", Baratashvili takes up the dialogue between Erekle II and Lionidze (and between Lionidze and his wife Sophia) in a parabolic way. He also obviously argues against Alexandre Chavchavadze and Ivane Abkhazi. His sympathies are clearly on the side of the hyacinth. Baratashvili's poem introduces a pathos formula that will determine the patriotic discourse throughout the 19th century – misfortune in freedom is better than happiness in captivity. Baratashvili makes an important step towards territorializing freedom and captivity: Freedom (in contrast to Russian romantic discourse) is linked to the homeland, while captivity is linked to the abroad. The impossibility of happiness abroad ("What happiness is in a foreign country, / where the soul finds no relatives, / is alienated and orphaned?" says Sophia Lionidze in "The fate of Kartli") already introduces the later emphasis on the homeland and discourse of autochthony of the second generation of Georgian political romanticism.

The contradiction between this covert criticism of peace and prosperity behind Russian bayonets (Russia is never explicitly mentioned as a conqueror in Baratashvili's political poems) and the praise of the policies of Erekle II, which caused this very lack of freedom, brings the problem of the Georgian elite of having to come to terms with the Russian annexation to the point. Their strategy is not to identify themselves with the Russian annexation of Georgia, but to present this annexation as something advantageous for Georgia (enlightenment, revenge on the North Caucasus, gathering forces for future independence), to project these advantages back and portray the annexation by the Russian Empire as a sovereign decision of the penultimate Georgian king which they have to respect. The lack of freedom is suppressed, obscured, but not eliminated completely. It enters heroic romantic poetry only on an unconscious level or in the form of a parable.

The only poem of Georgian romanticism that directly addresses the escape from captivity is Baratashvili's "Merani". "Merani" (written in 1842, the same year as "The hyacinth and the wanderer") is not only regarded as the highpoint of Georgian romanticism, but of Georgian poetry in general. This poem is rarely interpreted in political terms but does feature a context in which personal fate and the family's history are intertwined with the history of Georgia and the Russian war in the Caucasus. It still leaves a lot of space for political interpretation.

In March 1842, Baratashvili received news that his uncle and friend Ilia Orbeliani (1815–1853) was captured by Dagestani rebels. In a letter, he tells his uncle, the brother of Ilia, Grigol Orbeliani, about the capture. Ilia was a personal prisoner of Imam Shamil (1797–1871), a leader of North-Caucasian resistance to imperial Russia, who wanted to exchange him for his son, who was in Russian captivity. Orbeliani resisted the deal and was released eight months later. He eventually became a major general of the Russian army and was fatally wounded in the Crimean War, eight years after the death of Baratashvili.

Baratashvili himself was very concerned about Ilia's fate, but tried to downplay his worries in the letter to Grigol Orbeliani by emphasising the anecdotal part of Ilia's capture. Ilia had proven himself very courageous and was unimpressed by

the cruelty of Shamil, thus becoming the subject of many anecdotes. Sometimes, Baratashvili notes ironically, one can even benefit from such incidents. How deep his impression really was, is illustrated by the poem that Baratashvili attached to the letter which he wanted to send to "Iliko" to console him and to which he added the following comment: "I don't know whether you'll like these lines. As they were read out here, many sincere as well as affected tears were shed, naturally because it was Ilia, and not me, who was speaking in his captivity. To tell the truth, the news of his captivity has put me in such deep grief that I was wandering for three days like in a fog, exposed to the onslaught of thousands of different scary thoughts and desires. And if somebody had asked me what I wished for, I would have known no answer. On the third day, finally, I wrote this poem that seemed to have brought to me some relief."

If one takes this letter seriously, it frames the poem's plot. It deals with the escape from captivity. The starting point, which was neither mentioned nor marked in the poem, is the Caucasus. Merani is a horse which leads the melancholic horseman, followed by the black raven (from captivity) into the unknown. The "unrestrained" ride shall be stopped by neither the heat nor the tempest, nor shall the horse spare his devoted rider. It shall blaze its trail through wind and water, mountains and valleys and thus shorten the "journey" of "the impatient". Mountains and valleys are the only landscape-related references to the Caucasus, though it resembles more the abstract landscape of Guramishvili (whom Baratashvili quite probably didn't know) than the rather landscape-oriented texts of Russian romanticism (to which Baratashvili was well accustomed).

The adjective "relentless" that characterises the rider defined the further course of the poem. *Tavganciruli* is synonymous to the term *tavdadebuli*, both are translated as: a human being who is ready to sacrifice himself for (mostly) a higher purpose. The next stanzas demonstrate what the rider is ready to give up for this higher purpose. He would leave his homeland, his parents, his friends and his lover in order to live a homeless life far away, to die there, neither lamented nor mourned nor buried, thus to go "beyond fate's border" and to stay "free from being enslaved by fate". "Should I die lonely, neglected by fate / Its sharp [sword] shall not frighten me, its mortal enemy".

Making fate emphatic evokes the long tradition of the wails of fate in Georgian literature, from Shota Rustaveli (12th century) to Teimuraz I (1589–1663). For Teimuraz I, fate is invincible, the human being is entirely at its mercy. Rustaveli distinguishes between fate (*fatum*) and god (*providential*). God won't let down the humans who are anointed by fate; so speaks Avtandil, the protagonist of "The knight in the panther's skin". Baratashvili does not follow any of the paths prescribed by tradition. For him fate, which as evil opposes the human, can be fought. Fate is an enemy in the blood feud. If the label *mosisxle*, the enemy in the blood feud confers on fate the dimension of a political enemy, then political enmity is made metaphysical, unable to become more concrete and put on an equal footing with fate. The real history of events is implicitly understood as fate, as a hostile force against the people and the country (like in "The fate of Kartli"). This fatality

can and must be fought, without resorting to religious authority, such as in Rustaveli's piece. This god-forsakenness bestows a tragic quality on the fight (which by extension is also a political fight).

It is significant that neither the path to liberation nor the battle's end is known. For the Georgian poet Davit Guramishvili (1705–1795) the fortunate escape from captivity in Dagestan was religiously marked by the church bells of Russian colonists. The path of being liberated from North Caucasian, Muslim captivity led him to Russia. This path was not open to the rider of "Merani" anymore. His liberation is not expressed topographically. It is clear however that this path into the unknown must be taken (with the utmost effort): "Those sentiments of the one who is about to die shall not be in vain, / the untouched path, cleared by you, my horse, will stay; the difficult road ahead will be easier for the next one / and unafraid he shall face the black fate!" In this poem, the Caucasus becomes a (not explicitly mentioned) spatial operator that represents subjugation. This "depersonalisation" of enmity (unlike in the war poem written two years later) and its assignment to space makes it possible later to exchange North Caucasians with Russians in their role as enemies, a feature that is not realised or rather remains latent in romantic poetry. Baratashvili did not aim at the "utopian strategy of de-territorialisation" but at the attempt of marking out a new, free territory. This free territory had a truly political connotation. Like his relentless rider, he blazed a trail for an understanding of the political that was neither retrospective nor able to reconcile with captivity, but that was oriented towards the creation of a new, national, political body.

Conclusion

Alexandre Chavchavadze and Grigol Orbeliani tried to find a balance between the advantages and disadvantages of the Russian conquest and to compensate the trauma of lost autonomy through real or conceived benefits. Nikoloz Baratashvili's choice was rather different. He tried to imagine a post-monarchic, national body politics (in a direct succession to the monarchic body politics) and to territorialize it. Although this territorialisation in "Merani" is still vague and not concrete, the Caucasus, which has been a transmitter of enlightenment for Chavchavadze and Orbeliani, is transformed to a place of captivity. While coining a pathos formula – "misfortune in freedom is better than happiness in captivity" – Baratashvili made an important step in territorializing freedom and captivity: He linked freedom to the homeland, while captivity is linked to the abroad. This pathos formula was later taken over by the generation of the Tergdaleulebi who placed the "fatherland" (*mamuli*) in the centre of Georgian political philosophy and fiction and made it the cornerstone of Georgian national discourse. For this discourse the Caucasus (as an aesthetic and political object) will remain focal for the territorialisation of the "fatherland" for more than 150 years.

Khatuna Gvaradze

The women's question in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and Georgia's national movement

The women's movement in Georgia had a rather specific character. Its main peculiarity was that women's issues were more fused with national interests than with the emancipatory impetus typical for women's movements elsewhere, and Georgian society viewed the social initiatives, educational projects and charitable activities of women as part of the wider struggle against the policies of the Russian Empire. The Georgian women's movement thus has its own history which was very much connected with the ideas and values that were brought to Georgia by both women and men educated abroad either in western countries or in Russia as well as with the translations of foreign literature about social and political rights of women. Yet at the same time, the women's movement also projected certain images and understandings of the roles that Georgian women should play in society, it addressed traditional gender roles peculiar to Georgia and it allowed its participants to take on specific identities during a time of accelerating change. It is these aspects rather than the organizational structure of the women's movement which this paper will address. Its chronological timeframe is deliberately chosen to end in 1917, because the Bolshevik regime tackled the women's question quite differently from the 19th century "bourgeois" women's movement.[1]

The main primary sources for understanding the Georgian women's movement's role for the national movement and for reconstructing the historical situation of women's conditions and their level of emancipation in 19th and early 20th century Georgia are contemporary journals and newspapers as well as Georgian and translated literature by women and about women. Furthermore, records

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[1] Scholarship about the Georgian pre-revolutionary women's movement is still at an early stage. For a good introduction, see Lela Gap'rindašvili: ʼDedatʼa kitxvaʼ da/tʼu kʼalta sakitxiʼ sakʼartveloši. In: id. (ed.): Genderi, kultura, tʼanamedroveoba. Tbilisi 2005, pp. 28–47; id.: Pioneer women. "Herstories" of feminist movements in Georgia. In: Maia Barkaia/Alisse Waterston (eds.): Gender in Georgia. Feminist perspectives on culture, nation, and history in the South Caucasus. New York/Oxford 2018, pp. 21–32; Lela Xomeriki/Manana Javaxišvili: Kʼalta sazogadoebrivi sakʼmianoba sakʼartveloši. XIX saukunis meore naxevari da XX saukunis dasacqisi. Tbilisi 2005; for collections of individual biographies of women prominent in Georgian culture, see Nino Čʼixlaże: Vaclmosili kʼartveli mandilosnebi. Tbilisi 1976; id.: Kʼartveli mcerali da sazogado moǵvace kʼalebi. Tbilisi 1990; Khatuna Gvaradze: O kharaktere zhenskogo dvizheniia v Gruzii (konets XIX–nachalo XX veka). In: Ekaterina Gerasimova/Nino Lezhava (eds.): Iuzhnyi Kavkaz. Territorii. Istorii. Liudi. Tbilisi 2006, pp. 253–267.

of proceedings of women's organizations and their annual reports reflect the character, the motives and the aims of women's activities, showing the different experiences of various social classes, from educated members of the intelligentsia to illiterate peasant women. Correspondences between members of the women's movement and other representatives of the intelligentsia are also important. Finally, biographies of female public figures and writers, whose private archives are kept in the Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, the Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature and the Georgian National Archives add valuable personal insights and a variety of perspectives and semiotic nuances which are not available elsewhere.

The emergence of a women's liberation movement in Georgia in the 19th century is first and foremost connected with information about foreign, that is the European and the Russian women's movements, which was made accessible to Georgian readers in a variety of ways. As we will see, Georgian men and women who received an education in Europe were sharing and absorbing ideas of the women's movement in their respective countries of study, which they later brought back to Georgia. At the same time, a highly important role was played by translations of foreign feminist works and by literature and theatre plays, promoting ideas of education, freedom and economic independence of women.

Barbare Jorjadze was the first woman-writer who started to write about women's conditions and women's rights in Georgia. She contributed to numerous journals and newspapers and became famous in 1867 with the theatre play "What I was looking for and what I found", a three-act comedy about a matchmaker and a spinster, which was performed to sold-out houses at the Kutaisi Theatre. It was staged many times in many other theatres as well over the following years. Much later, in 1893, Jorjadze was still active and published a letter about the "women's question" in the journal "Kvali" ("The furrow"), which became a seminal text for Georgian feminism. Titled "A few words for young men", this letter addressed such basic gender issues like men not appreciating the work that women do at home and men preventing women from having a decent education that is equal to that of men.[2]

Obviously not that much had changed between the middle of the century and the 1890s. As in other countries, it was women's education that provided the main starting point for a women's movement in Georgia.[3] Like in Russia, this movement started in earnest after the Crimean War and was part of the more liberal reform era under Alexander II.[4] Education in Georgia was a privilege mostly for upper class women. The daughters of wealthy Georgian families were educated mainly in private schools such as Praskovia Akhverdova's *pansion* and Danilevich-Mordinova's *pansion*, which later became the Tbilisi Institute of Noble Maid-

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[2] Barbare Jorjadze: Oriode sitqva qmacvili kacebis saquradġebod. In: Kvali 16 (1893), pp. 1–2.
[3] For a history of women's education in Georgia, see Rusudan Saqvareliże: K'alta pedagogiuri ganat'leba XIX saukunis sak'artveloši. Tbilisi 1958.
[4] Richard Stites: The women's liberation movement in Russia. Feminism, nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930. Princeton 1978.

ens. Among the different subjects that were taught in this institute were Georgian and Armenian languages; but the school's aim was also to educate young women in a spirit of dedication to and "love of Russia". In 1875, according to Anastasiia Tumanishvili, one girl by the name Schengert started a fire in the institute and then ran far away in order to see the school burn from the distance. When she was questioned later about her reasons for this act of destruction, she responded that she could not bear the strict regime of the school any longer. This explanation is in many ways reminiscent of the experience young noblemen had a generation earlier, whose first-hand experience of Russian culture had been the harsh conditions and the stifling atmosphere of the newly established Tiflis Noble School.[5]

In 1854, Madame Evgeniia Favr (a sister of the famous kartvelologist Nikolai Marr) opened a private 6-year *pansion*, where both foreign and Georgian teachers taught. This institution became a kind of incubator for the Georgian women's movement. Among the later famous women who studied there were for example Sophio Amirejibi, Anastasiia Tumanishvili, and Ekaterine Gabashvili. After her time at Madame Favr's, Tumanishvili, later Tumanishvili-Tsereteli, studied modern pedagogical concepts in Switzerland and France. When she returned to Georgia, she published a series of short stories and essays in the newspapers "Droeba" ("Times") and "Iveria" ("Iberia") and became a member of the Society for the Promotion of Literacy among Georgians, which provided a platform for educational initiatives and eventually included numerous women in its membership.[6] In 1884, she founded a primary school for poor children in her village Kheltubani near Gori. In 1890, she founded the journals "Jejili" ("Shoots") and "Kvali", which played an important role in the education movement prior to Sovietization in 1921. Gabashvili began her pedagogical work in 1868 when she opened Sunday schools. In 1882, she became a member of the board of the Society for the Promotion of Literacy among Georgians. From 1897 until 1922, she headed the Women's Vocational School in Tbilisi. Between 1872 and 1905, she founded women's circles and helped to set up regional literacy promotion society branches. Through her work and personal life, she strove to convince her contemporaries of the necessity of gender equality. She wrote short plays, travelled to villages and performed them herself with great success. One of them was "Scenes from a young woman's life" where she described women's marital oppressions with a sense of sarcastic humour.

In addition to the aforementioned private institutions, other types of schools also engaged in women's education. Already in 1846, the St. Nino School opened, founded by the charity St. Nino, which initially accepted girls from all social classes, but from 1869 onwards privileged girls from poor noble families. The aim

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[5] Ronald G. Suny: The Making of the Georgian Nation. Bloomington 1988, p. 70. For Schengert, see Saqvareliże: Ganat'leba (see note 3), p. 42.
[6] For an exhaustive study of this society, see Oliver Reisner: Die Schule der georgischen Nation. Eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der "Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern" (1850–1917). Wiesbaden 2004; female membership is discussed on pp. 127–128.

of this institute was to educate "kind wives and good mothers". Step by step, the school introduced courses in pedagogy and stenography, book-keeping, and even telegraphy. This clearly shows that serious professions apart from being house-wives were rising in demand.[7] A St. Nino School also opened in Kutaisi in 1847 and another one was founded in Telavi in 1865. The first state school for women was the Tbilisi women's 1st rank school, which opened in 1865 and soon became the first women's gymnasium in the South Caucasus.[8] In 1879 the Tbilisi diocesan school for daughters of the clergy was opened. Girls' schools also existed at some monasteries.

In the second half of the 19th century the number of female pupils in Georgia increased drastically. Between 1860 and 1888, the number of girls in state schools alone grew from 344 to 1659.[9] It became obvious that these schools could hardly keep up with the rising demand for women's education. As a consequence, wom-en's organizations tried to fill the gap through their own educational initiatives. An 1889 series of articles in "Iveria" identified the main problem. According to them, there was no serious Georgian women's education, with the emphasis being on "Georgian".[10] But to be useful to their country, women needed to be well educated. An educated woman would be supportive and understanding of her husband's social activities. The children of educated women would be in a better position to become responsible citizens with proper national and liberal views. In practical terms this meant the raising of funds to build and sustain a proper Geor-gian girls' school. This was promulgated in one of the articles which also called upon all women's organizations to collect money.

The idea to fund a girls' school was, however, not entirely new. It was part of a wider trend that led to the establishment of various institutes of learning for girls. The Women's Charity Organization in Tbilisi, for example, had opened nine ele-mentary schools already in the 1860s and 1870s. The Kutaisi Women's Organiza-tion established a girls' school for poor children and orphans. In 1908, the women's society *Ganatleba* ("Education") founded a *pro-gimnasium* which included class-es in needle work and fine arts. This school was the first to take advantage of a new language law and started teaching exclusively in Georgian in 1915. *Ganatleba* was also behind a women's pedagogical seminary, which was founded in 1917 and was meant to train female teachers who were perceived as particularly well quali-fied to serve in village schools and bridge the gap between educated people from the towns and the notoriously backward peasant women.[11]

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[7] SEA, f. 459.
[8] SEA, f. 453. See also documents about women's second (ibid., f. 454), third (ibid., f. 455), fourth (ibid., f. 456), fifth (ibid., f. 457), sixth (ibid., f. 458), and eighth (ibid., f. 460) gymnasium.
[9] Xomeriki/Javaxišvili: Sak'mianoba (see note 1), p. 17.
[10] A. Na-li [Alek'sandre Naneišvili]: Tp'ilisi, 3 marti. In: Iveria 47 (1889), p. 1; K'art'veli k'ali [Elisabed Č'erk'ezišvili]: P'eletoni. k'art'vel k'alt'at'vis ganzraxulis skolis gamo. In: Iveria 48 (1889), p. 1; Tp'ilisi, 3 marti. In: Iveria 49 (1889), p. 1; K'art'veli k'ali [Elisabed Č'erk'ezišvili]: Senišvna. k'alebis aġzrda-ganat' lebis šesaxeb cvenši. In: Iveria 57 (1889), p. 2.
[11] Xomeriki/Javakhišvili: Sak'mianoba (see note 1), pp. 25–26.

Educational activities provided women with a new role beyond the confines of family and marriage. They gave them a sense of purpose and identity, which could eventually be transferred onto a wider social level and be harnessed by the national liberation movement. As a consequence, the women's question more generally began to attract increasing attention in Georgia in the second half of the 19th century. Discussions about women's roles in society first appeared in newspapers and journals, which were themselves new phenomena, closely linked to the "civilizing mission" of the Russian Empire and the activities of the new viceroy, Count Vorontsov. In Georgia as well as in Russia (e. g. Mikhail Mikhailov in a series of articles published between 1859 and 1865) and Europe (e. g. John Stuart Mill,[12] Léon-Pierre Richer,[13] Carl Almqvist[14] etc.) men were also active in encouraging women's desire to receive an education, and they also supported women's emancipation. These were mostly writers and other public figures, who had studied in Western Europe or in Russia and who were inspired by the contemporary liberal movements in Europe (the so-called 60's generation). The most prominent Georgian men supportive of women's liberation, albeit not of the radical feminist kind,[15] were Ilia Chavchavadze, Giorgi Tsereteli, Niko Nikoladze, and Sergei Meskhi.

It is no coincidence that these four men were also the most prominent representatives of the national movement in Georgia. Their support for the women's movement resulted as much from a feeling of national responsibility as it did from their general ethical convictions. As is well known, one of the main goals of the national movement was the spread of literacy and the education of the country, which went hand in hand with the educational objectives of the women's movement. Furthermore, in December 1888, Chavchavadze wrote an editorial in "Iveria" in which he went as far as to support the political rights of women as well, describing initiatives for women's votes in the USA and the UK.[16]

While some men may have been sympathetic to the liberation of women, it was still up to women themselves to change their situation, which was not altogether easy. It is worth noting that the proximity between the national liberation and the women's movements as well as the close personal links between their main representatives was not necessarily a blessing for everyone involved. Nino Tatishvili-Kipiani, for example, in an undated and unpublished historical essay about the

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[12] Mill (1806–1873) can be considered among the earliest male feminists. His book on "The subjection of women" (1861, published 1869) is one of the earliest written on this subject by a male author.
[13] Richer (1824–1911) was a French free-thinker, freemason, journalist and feminist who worked closely with Maria Deraismes during the early years of the feminist movement in Paris. He edited "Le Droit des femmes" ("Women's Rights"), a feminist journal that appeared from 1869 to 1891. He was founder of the *Ligue française pour le droit des femmes* ("French league for women's right"), one of the main feminist organizations in France in the 1880s.
[14] Almqvist (1793–1866) was a romantic poet, early feminist, composer, social critic, and traveller.
[15] Chavchavadze (1837–1907) allegedly was against women engaging in trade, as he considered it a dishonest occupation; see Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature, Archive of Nino Tatishvili-Kipiani, no. 2318.
[16] Tp'ilisi, 12 dekemberi. In: Iveria 262 (1888), pp. 1–2.

achievements of Ekaterine Gabashvili pointed out that in a country that was suppressed by Russian conquerors, Gabashvili had no possibility to develop her full potential.[17] She attributed this sad fact not only to the autocratic system of the Russian state, but, crucially, also to the national liberation movement which had emerged in opposition to it and which was so overwhelming and important that it regularly took precedent over women's issues and "suffocated" Gabashvili's great talents. In a letter from 1928, looking back at the pre-1917 women's movement, Tatishvili-Kipiani again underlined this imbalance and pointed out the considerable contributions that women made to the national liberation movement through the organization of countless cultural activities and charity events.[18] In other words, Georgian women regularly put their own concerns behind those of the national cause. This can also be seen in their pedagogical initiatives which reflected not only the traditional feminist goal to provide education for girls, but which were also understood as a patriotic duty and a contribution to the national liberation struggle.[19]

The education of girls went hand in hand with individual women taking personal initiative to get a degree from institutes of higher learning. Since no such institutions existed in Georgia, this meant that they had to leave the country to attend university. As Giorgi Tsereteli mentioned in the newspaper "Kvali" in 1895, the main encouragement for women's decisions to study abroad had been a popular lecture series about physiology that Professor Ivane Tarkhnishvili had given in Tbilisi.[20] In 1871, Tarkhnishvili had returned to Georgia from Russia, where he had graduated from the Department of Physics and Mathematics at St. Petersburg University. He was a very gifted lecturer who excelled in inspiring his audiences. His lively and engaging lectures about natural sciences appeared for many to open the gates to a new world of science and modernity, a world that one could enter only if one left Georgia and studied abroad. This idea of studying abroad became so popular that it even led to the creation of a piece of serious literature. A novel by Davit Eristavi with the programmatic title "Casvla evropaši" ("Go to Europe") was dedicated specifically to the topic of gaining knowledge and enlightenment beyond the confines of the Russian Empire.[21] Its main character, a certain Natasha, dreams of going to Switzerland, just as many women would eventually do in reality. She is supposed to be married off by her parents, who are distinguished by their utter ignorance and backwardness, claiming that Switzerland is flat, without mountains, and a filthy place. With the help of a friend Natasha escapes in time to catch

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[17] Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature, Archive of Nino Tatishvili-Kipiani, no. 2311.

[18] Ibid., no. 2280.

[19] This idea was spelled out in a 1873 letter by Sergei Meskhi to his future wife, Ekaterine Melik-ishvili, in which he stressed the importance for women to achieve academic degrees in such useful subjects as medicine and technology; see Ioseb Boc'vaże (ed.): Sergei mesxi. cerilebi. Sokhumi 1950, pp. 5–6.

[20] Giorgi Cereteli: Oc'-da-xut'i clis dġesascauloba prop'esoris t'. i. t'arxnišvilis samec'niero moġvaceobisa. In: Kvali 12 (1895), pp. 9–10. For a more nuanced view of the role of Tarkhnishvili's lectures, see Giorgi Abzianiże: Narkvevebi XIX saukunis k'art'uli sazogadoebrivi azrovnebis istoriidan. Tbilisi 1959, p. 458.

[21] Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature, Archive of Davit Eristavi, no. 18832.

a train on which other female friends are already waiting for her to go to Europe. Similar to Nikolai Chernyshevskii's famous utopian novel "What is to be done", which had just recently inspired a whole generation of Russian students to emulate nihilism and shape their personalities accordingly, Eristavi's piece was yet another case of "expansion of literature into life" so typical for the 1860s and 1870s.[22]

The first women who took the risk and went abroad to study, mostly in Zürich, Geneva and Paris, were in 1872 Pelagia Natsvlishvili, in 1873 Ekaterine and Olimpiada Nikoladze (the sisters of Niko Nikoladze), Olga Guramishvili, Bogumila Zemianskaia, Mariam Tsereteli (the sister of Giorgi Tsereteli), Efemia Eliozishvili, and Ekaterine Melikishvili (the sister of the first rector of the future Tbilisi State University, Petre Melikishvili, and the future wife of Sergei Meskhi). She was first exposed to feminist ideas during her time in Geneva. But already before moving abroad, she had shown an interest in women's issues when she had translated and published a work about 18th century American women. After her return to Georgia, she became a member of the literature circle of women writers at the Society for the Promotion of Literacy among Georgians. She was one of the founders of the publishing house *Sxivi*, but also had her own publishing company, *Melikishvili & Co.,* which put out a series of translations of foreign novels (Victor Hugo, Molière) and published the newspaper "Iveria". In 1875 Ekaterine married Sergei Meskhi, the editor of the newspaper "Droeba", to which she contributed regularly.

In 1873, the Georgian students studying in Switzerland created a society called *Uġeli* ("The yoke"), in which women students played a prominent role. The aim of the society was to unite students abroad in order to familiarize themselves better with the achievements of European countries and to share it with their compatriots. As Sergei Meskhi described the goals of *Uġeli*, students decided to summarise the lectures they attended, share them with others and later send them to Georgian newspapers. Some of these lecture notes were also published separately, in the same way that contemporary literature was shared and circulated.[23] After the Russian imperial government issued an order in 1873 that recalled all female students from Zürich for alleged socialist and immoral activities, many of these women did not follow that order but instead moved on to the University of Geneva and continued education there as well as their activities within *Uġeli*. Georgian newspapers were regularly publishing reports about these events, but quite a number of related documents can also be found in private archives.[24] It is evident from these sources that Georgian women students were actively connected with

[22] Boris Gasparov: Introduction. In: Alexander D. Nakhimovsky/Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (eds.): The semiotics of Russian cultural history. Ithaca/London 1985, p. 14.

[23] H. [= Ivane Mesxi]: P'eletoni, c'iurixidam. In: Droeba 16 (1873), pp. 1–2. For Sergei Meskhi's connection with *Uġeli*, see Ot'ar Nikoleišvili: Sergei mesxis erovnuli da sazogadoebriv-politikuri šexedulebani. Kutaisi 2005, pp. 47–59.

[24] See for example the minutes of three meetings which were brought to Georgia by Niko Nikoladze and can be found in the archive of Aleksandre Sumbatashvili (Abzianiże: Narkvevebi (see note 20), p. 462). Other important materials are in the archive of Sergei Meskhi (for example Ekaterine Melikishvili's letters to him) (Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature), in the archive of Niko Nikoladze (National Parliament Library) and in the archive of Giorgi Tsereteli (KKSXC).

other female activists at Swiss and other universities. For example, an anonymous article by a member of *Uġeli* in "Droeba" in 1873 presents a report of the women's congress which happened in Paris in that year.[25] Furthermore, Georgian women students also had close links to Russian revolutionary groups in Geneva, such as the one of Sofia Bardina, and to the circle of Vera Figner.[26] These links were, of course, not publicized in the press.

Uġeli's publications for Georgian audiences back home did not only contain lecture notes, but they also included reports about European lifestyle. Not surprisingly, the young Georgian women abroad did not only study, but they also adapted to their surroundings and experienced a personal transformation process. This was most evident in the way they dressed. Photographs of these students show them without the traditional head gear and with European hairstyles. Some of them resemble Russian *nigilistkas* (female nihilists). For them, the stay abroad was quite literally a liberation from old traditions which also became a fashion statement. Not everyone was happy about this. As late as 1893, referring generally to Europeanized women, Ekaterine Gabashvili, in an article for "Iveria" titled "Educated Georgian woman", argued that Georgian women wearing "refined Parisian fashion", these "tight corsets" and "long yellow gloves" cannot really be recognized anymore.[27] They are like trees crafted onto Georgian soil from abroad. Instead, she argues in similarly organic language, let's unite our efforts and try to build the garden on our ground, based on our roots. This meant that Georgian women should not lose their language, characteristics, distinguished features, and morality. They should focus on their role in the family as mothers, mentors and inspirers of future generations. Clearly, Gabashvili was proposing a kind of populist compromise, which fused European achievements with Georgian traditions of family and motherhood.

Apart from university studies abroad, the international orientation of the emerging Georgian women's movement was also evident in numerous articles in Georgian newspapers, which were not only focusing on the role of Georgian women, but also contained information about women's issues in other parts of the world. "Droeba" in an article in 1866, for example, informed its readers about an American women's petition demanding political rights and also about demands for civil rights in Sweden.[28] Between 1866 and 1870, several reports addressed matters of the female vote and women's political rights in England.[29] Other articles discussed

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[25] Uġeleli: K'alebis kongresi parižši. In: Droeba 35 (1873), p. 3.
[26] Sofiia Illarionovna Bardina (1853–1883) was a populist revolutionary of noble background. Between 1871 and 1873 she studied medicine in Zürich, where she also convened a women's revolutionary circle. She later worked in the printing house of Petr Lavrov's journal "Vpered" ("Forward"). She was arrested in 1875 and sentenced to nine years in prison. During her trial, she delivered a famous speech in which she called herself a "peaceful propagandist". After her prison sentence was converted into Siberian exile, she escaped and fled the country. She committed suicide in Geneva in 1883.
[27] Ekaterine Gabašvilisa: Ganat'lebuli k'art'veli k'ali. In: Iveria 82 (1893), pp. 1–2.
[28] Sxva da sxva ambavi. In: Droeba 5 (1866), p. 4.
[29] Politika. In: Droeba 42 (1866), p. 1; Politika, anglia. In: Droeba 21 (1868), p. 1; Uc'xo k'veqnebi. Inglisi. In: Droeba 20 (1870), p. 2.

women and the moral order in the Ottoman Empire,[30] Australia's voting rights for women,[31] and a women's organization in Bohemia.[32] In more specific news, the story of a Russian merchant's daughter was related, who wanted to earn money for a living on her own.[33] "C'nobis p'urc'eli" ("Herald"), another popular paper, devoted much space to the women's movement in Germany, discussing women's rights[34] or to the proceedings of the Second International Women's Congress.[35] It also featured more exotic topics, such as the living conditions of Arab women.[36]

The focus on international women's movements eventually led to a closer scrutiny of relevant foreign publications. In an 1867 editorial titled "The political right of the woman", "Droeba" suggested that if in earlier times the emancipation of women had a negative connotation, today it has acquired a different meaning, namely the freedom of women. Nowadays women need to be given opportunities to work for their own lives and to develop moral independence through an opening of their minds. The editorial also discussed and compared political rights of women in the USA and England through a review of newspapers, such as the "Saturday Review", the "Spectator" and the "Liverpool Mercury". It reviewed the widely influential book "Preparing women for work" ("Die Erziehung der Frau zur Arbeit") by the German feminist Minna Pinoff, which had just appeared the same year.[37] Two years later, in 1869, "Droeba" published a list of women's organizations and feminist journals in Western Europe and the USA.[38] Clearly, those women who wanted to know what was going on in the rest of the world had ample opportunity to find out more on the pages of these journals.

Although they were themselves part of the Russian Empire, Georgian newspapers presented the Russian women's movement like that of another country. In 1867, "Droeba" reported about Nadezhda Suslova, a former serf of the Sheremetev family, who had graduated from Zürich University and had become the first Russian woman doctor. Three years later, in 1870, an article described the fate of a certain Chichulina, who was the first female student in Russia, graduating from the University of Helsingfors (Helsinki), some eight years before the famous Bestuzhev courses opened in St. Petersburg and allowed women to get a degree in Russia proper.[39] By "othering" the reports from Russia as foreign and implicitly as success stories of progressive achievements, the papers cast the Georgian women's movement in a distinctive national yet also still somewhat backward light.

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[30] Š-ali: P'eletoni. Gakvra-gamokvra. In: Droeba 31 (1873), pp. 1–2.
[31] Sazġvar-gared. avstralia. In: C'nobis p'urc'eli 2205 (1903), p. 1.
[32] K'alt'a saquradġebo sazogadoeba. In: C'nobis p'urc'eli 169 (1897), p. 3.
[33] Axali ambavi. C'nobis p'urc'eli 2111 (1903), pp. 2–3.
[34] Sazġvar-gared. germania. In: C'nobis p'urc'eli 2122 (1903), p. 1.
[35] Iv. Ramišvili: Cerilebi germaniidan. k'alt'a saer t'ašoriso kongressi. In: C'nobis p'urc'eli 2549 (1904), pp. 2–3.
[36] Č. Gabo: K'alis mdgomareoba arabet'ši. In: C'nobis p'urc'eli 504 (1898), p. 4.
[37] Politikuri up'leba dedakac'isa. In: Droeba 19 (1867), pp. 3–4.
[38] K'alebis šesaxebi ambebi. In: Droeba 25 (1869), p. 4.
[39] Sxvadasxva ambavi. doktori k'ali suslovi. In: Droeba 36 (1867), p. 4; K'alebzed. In: Droeba 24 (1870), p. 4.

Just as the other examples from Western Europe and the USA, the Russian cases were presented as something to aspire to, albeit in a specifically Georgian way.

Not only journals and newspapers addressed the women's question abroad. There were also numerous translations into Georgian of foreign books and programmatic writings of the international women's movement which provided role models for Georgian women. These texts were highly influential, were widely discussed and inspired the activities of the nascent Georgian women's movement. In 1897, "For and against women. Fourteen letters by Fanny Lewald-Stahr" ("Für und wider die Frauen. Vierzehn Briefe von Fanny Lewald-Stahr", originally published in Berlin in 1870) were translated and published by a certain Ivandideli. Fanny Lewald was born in Königsberg in 1811 as Fanny Marcus. Her Jewish merchant father later changed the family name to Lewald, which she used as a pen name even after she married Adolf Stahr in 1855. Lewald emancipated herself by becoming a writer of tendentious novels in the mid-1840s. She became one of the most prolific chroniclers of the 1848 Revolution, which she witnessed while travelling through several European countries and described with great insight in her book "Recollections of 1848". For over forty years she supported herself by publishing novels and novellas, travel literature and essays. Lewald was an early advocate of women's education and their right to economic independence through work, but she stopped short of advocating suffrage. In the introduction to "For and against women", Ivandideli underlined the significance of the letters. According to him, they are very important because the author is herself a woman, who experienced the bitter burdens of a woman in her own life. She was rejected by a society in which all rights of women were restricted by "male recklessness".[40]

Other books related to the women's question that were translated into Georgian include a Russian text "The fate of a woman: The story of a peasant daughter", which was translated by Irakli Ramishvili and described the life of a woman in the Russian countryside, including forced marriage, just before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.[41] This work was obviously part of the populist wave in Russia at the time, which led to numerous ethnographic and feuilletonistic descriptions of rural misery and female victimhood and which must have reverberated with the situation in Georgia at the time. Less melodramatic and more programmatic texts were translated as well. August Bebel's path-breaking works about the women's question, for example, came out in Georgian, foremost his classic "Woman under Socialism" ("Die Frau und der Sozialismus") in 1912.[42] Other foreign authors were also discussed, although not always in Georgian. Alexandre Garsevanishvili's work "Female portraits in the works of Ibsen" ("Zhenskie obrazy v tvorchestve Ibsena"), for example, took issue with the plays of Henrik Ibsen and concluded that in these plays the women's question was removed very far from

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[40] Ivane Rostomašvili (ed.): Č'vens k'alebs. k'albaton štaris cerilebi. Tbilisi 1897.
[41] Ivane Ramišvili (ed.): Deda-kac'is xvedri. naambobi glexi kac'is k'alisa. Tbilisi 1888.
[42] R. Raždeniże/G. Mumlaže (ed. and transl.): Avgust bebeli. dedakac'i da soc'ializmi. Batumi 1912.

the ideas of gender equality.[43] Finally, in his work "About women's emancipation" ("Ob emansipatsii zhenshchin"), Garsevanishvili presented a history of the international women's movement from 1784 onwards, including the suffragist movement. As these examples show, translations were popular, but they remained on a somewhat academic level. Lewald's story and Ibsen's plays referred to distant countries, as did most of the journal articles discussed before, while Bebel's text and Garsevanishvili's history were rather theoretical and without direct connection to the practical life situation of Georgian women. Yet the fact that they did exist shows that there was a wide enough readership that was curious to learn more about the women's movement in other countries.

Although newspapers and journals in the second half of the 19th century initially published predominantly articles about the women's question abroad and translations of foreign texts, issues specifically related to Georgian women became increasingly topical once Georgian women themselves began to contribute articles about their own condition. The press thus became the main vehicle of social discussion. Just like the women's question itself, it was the product of increasing urbanisation and modernisation in Georgia at the time. Before the first truly feminist newspaper appeared in 1917 ("Xma k'artveli k'alisa" – "Voice of the Georgian Woman"), women writers collaborated with the periodical newspapers "Droeba", "Iveria", "C'nobis p'urc'eli", "Mnat'obi", and "Kvali". "Droeba" in particular distinguished itself by publishing articles about pressing and controversial women's issues, in addition to various correspondences that closely reflected the women's emancipation processes in the rest of the world. Other newspapers, such as "Iveria" and "Kvali", were more focused on literary discourse and encouraged female novelists and poets to send in their works.

Georgian women's activism in the public arena was above all linked, albeit not openly discussed, to the national liberation struggle against the Russian Empire. This is made most evident by Nino Kipiani, who claimed that women's cultural-educational activity should be based not only on charity, as was customary, but also, and in particular, on a broad public drive against the Russification policies of the tsarist state. Nino was the daughter of the writer and publisher Nikoloz Kipiani. After being excluded for unknown reasons from St. Nino School in Kutaisi, she enrolled at Brussels University law faculty. She actively promoted the idea of complete independence of Georgia. In a letter from July 1903 to Archil Jorjadze she wrote: "Why does our desire not go further? Why do we not have the will to demand full independence from Russia? Why our Georgia, which has the oldest and longest history of all countries, cannot be free? […] Of course, it would be stupid to care about the restoration of the throne of the kings, but why not try to

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[43] A central theme in Ibsen's plays is the portrayal of suffering women, echoing his mother Marichen Altenburg. Ibsen's sympathy with women would eventually find significant expression through their portrayal in dramas such as "A doll's house" and "Rosmersholm". For Garsevanishvili's unpublished works, see Sergi Makalatia: Gori Historical and Ethnographic Museum, Archive of Aleksandre Garsevanishvili.

achieve complete freedom from Russia? If Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and others can live with their own history, why can we not live like this? Do we not have the talent to do so?"[44] With such attitudes, it is not surprising that in 1907, Kipiani was banned from living in the Russian Empire. She went to Belgium into exile with her father, then on to Italy, where she worked at the Belgian Embassy.

At the centre of the drive against the Russification policies from the 1880s onward was the state of the Georgian language, which until the 19th century was always understood of being particularly cared for by women. The age-old *deda ena* (mother tongue) thus fused with contemporary ideas about national liberation. In 1894, in the newspaper "Iveria", the writer, journalist and public activist Artem Akhnazarov, who also was a leading figure in the Society for the Promotion of Literacy among Georgians, published an article under the pseudonym Č'iora, in which he expressed his concerns about the Georgian language being seriously neglected by Georgian women.[45] As an example he mentioned Marjory Wardrop's famous letter to Chavchavadze, published on the front page of "Iveria".[46] Written in excellent Georgian by a foreigner, Georgian women would not have an excuse anymore not to properly use their own language. It was also suggested that after reading this English lady's letter, some Georgian men even decided not to marry Georgian women anymore, unless they spoke and wrote proper Georgian.

In a response to this rather provocative article, the publicist Barbare Sulkhanishvili, also on the pages of "Iveria", described the real conditions that Georgian women were facing in a men's world.[47] She complained that Rustaveli's "The man in the panther skin" was not part of their dowries anymore, as it had always been in the past, because under current conditions only men were able to change the world. Georgian women were not free. Nowadays only the family door was open to them, while other doors were closed. Furthermore, men were the ones who first became "Ivaniukha", that is they adopted the Russian language, while Masho, a Georgian short form of Mariam, only later turned into "Mashenka". In other words, men were Russified earlier than women (insinuating a certain lack of Georgian patriotism). She also pointed out the failures of girls' schools for studying proper Georgian. She herself had studied in two schools, and only one of them had given her good skills in Georgian. She then concluded that Georgian women were simply reflecting the demands of a patriarchal society. Sulkhanishvili's response also addressed another problem typical for the situation of Georgian women. She mentioned that English society considered Marjory, who was then 24 years of age, to be a "very young, immature woman". Georgian women, on the other hand, were being prepared for marriage and adulthood already at the tender age of 13 or 14.

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[44] KKSXC, Archive of Archil Jorjadze, no. 137.
[45] Č'iora: Saxeldaxelo. In: Iveria 193 (1894), p. 3.
[46] Mevele: Miss Marjory Wardrop. In: Iveria 191 (1894), p. 1.
[47] Barbare Sulxanišvilis asuli: B-n č'ioras "saxledaxelos" xeldaxeli pasuxi. In: Iveria 209 (1894), pp. 3–4.

This acerbic exchange on the pages of "Iveria" was followed by an article by the novelist Ekaterine Gabashvili. According to her, the situation for women had changed after the 1860s, when more and more women became public figures and when more women teachers were able to practice and to work as tutors. However, she did agree that the areas of activity for women were still rather restricted. But because education was now easier accessible, every woman could without help of a man have a higher education. Such educated women would never again have to obey a man (implying that they could contribute independently to the national cause).[48]

Another response in "Iveria" came from a certain "young knight" (the pseudonym of the writer Grigol Toidze). He welcomed Sukhanishvili's braveness to go public and tell society about her personal thoughts in a newspaper, which was by far not such a common thing to do. He then went on to accuse Georgian women in general that they didn't want to be active and gain their independence from men in the way that women "in educated countries like the USA or England" would do. In these countries, women had obtained rights not only in social life, but also in politics and, without doubt, they would soon defend their achievements from men and not obey men's unjust rules. Who else if not women themselves could fight for their rights and freedom? In picking up Sulkhanishvili's metaphor, he proclaimed that women themselves needed to look for the keys which would open up the other doors of possibilities for them.[49] Toidze's intervention was quite different in tone from Akhnazarov's initial article. The question of the correct preservation of the Georgian language as a cherished national treasure quickly turned into an almost revolutionary call for women to get involved in society and politics.

The debate concluded with an article by the novelist and playwright Mariam Demuria, who attempted to calm down the situation and proposed to stand together for the common good and a better future of the country. She called upon men and women to use all their power (and donate money) to help renovate the Kutaisi theatre, which was one of her many patriotic projects that promoted the promulgation and popularization of Georgian literature and theatre.[50]

Apart from women's role in the preservation of the Georgian language and, by extension, the national culture in face of Russian oppression, the proper position of women in society and vis-à-vis men became an issue of debate. The main trigger for it was the publication, in "Iveria" in 1888, of a translation of Schopenhauer's thoughts about women ("On Women"; "Über die Weiber"). This misogynist tract led to a flood of letters to the editor by women who voiced strong opinions against the piece. "Iveria" felt obliged to respond to these letters in an article signed Sano, the pseudonym for the publicist Stefane Chrelashvili. He argued that unlike in Europe, differences between men and women have not become a serious

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[48] Ekaterine Gabašvili: K'albaton barbare sulxanišvilisas. In: Iveria 221 (1894), p. 3.
[49] Axalgazrda mxedari: K'art'vels axalgazda k'alebs. In: Iveria 231 (1894), pp. 3–4.
[50] Mariam Demuria: Č'ioras da k'alebis pasuxad. In: Iveria 233 (1894), p. 3.

issue in Georgian society, neither in everyday life nor in the discussions of the intelligentsia. For this reason, the paper had never really touched this matter, but only observed it in countries where women had become active and started to play major roles in society. Georgian women, he claimed, had so far been "dead in the field of public activity". In Russia, this was different, after the question of women's rights had been raised in the 1860s. Russian women had noticed that they were humans first and only then wives, mothers and sisters. They realised that education would make them free to achieve their goals. Consequently, they started to fight. Later, some clever men realised the significance of the Russian women's movement and they started to support them spiritually and financially. The same happened with the state, which eventually gave them permission for education. Even more was achieved by women in Europe and the USA, where women had moved on from the struggle for education and were now fighting for their political rights. The author then complained that only few Georgian women went abroad to study, while others received an education only to marry successfully. He hoped that this would change and that more and more women would understand their new role and would help the women's movement to grow. Since Georgia had historically cherished women and elevated them to exalted positions (clearly a reference to St. Nino and the medieval Queen Tamar), Georgian women were in a much better position than their counterparts abroad. They would not have to fight but simply to use their brains in order to improve their situation.[51] Sano was effectively proposing a national *Sonderweg* for the Georgian women's movement, based on traditional concepts of chivalry and socio-cultural exclusivity.

Sano's call to action was, however, not that original. The tradition of exalting women and of female heroism was alive and well, and it could be harnessed for the benefit of the women's movement. Anna Chavchavadze, for example, became a classical example of an educated and independent woman who turned into a national hero.[52] She served as a voluntary nurse in the Russo-Turkish war 1877/1878 who, despite illness and a twice broken arm, did not stop helping wounded soldiers. Eventually she died from her illness. Her feat was immortalized in a poem by Barbare Jorjadze. "Droeba" commented that it is obvious that the role of women is not only childbirth and educating children, but that they deserve a prominent role in society as well.

Already in 1875, "Droeba" had published an article by Sergei Meskhi deploring the poor conditions of married women and the unfairness and arbitrariness of Georgian husbands.[53] He concluded that one solution to this problem would be the education of society and the economic independence of women. Furthermore, the state and the law should put women in such a position that they would not experience weakness and nothingness. As he wrote, "give women an education and the chance to earn money on their own and then watch and see whether they

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[51] Sano: Mc'ire šenišvna. č'veni k'alebi. In: Iveria 60 (1888), pp. 1–3.
[52] T'. R. Erist'avi: P'eletoni. nac'vlad nekroloġisa. In: Droeba 173 (1878), pp. 1–3.
[53] Sergei Mesxi: Sak'art'velo. č'veneburu c'ol k'mroba. In: Droeba 40 (1875), p. 1.

will be slaves or not". Rather than indulging in historical fantasies about the elevated position and heroism of women, Meskhi reflected a more rational and modern approach to women's liberation.

The role of women in Georgian society was at the heart of the first monograph about the women's question that was written in Georgian and that appeared in 1897: Alexandre Tatunashvili's "Woman and her role".[54] In this book, the author did not deny the great influence of women in the history of humankind, but he underlined that this influence was beneficial only when combined with the proper role that women had to play. Indeed, Tatunashvili's entire work was dedicated exactly to defining this role and, since he was a priest, it was based mainly on the teachings of the New Testament. Although he was familiar with foreign writers, such as John Stuart Mill, and also well aware of women's activities abroad, he concluded, that a woman is not only a human being, but also a female. Whether married or single, she had a role, which differed from the role of a man. She was the wife of her husband and was obliged to share all life burdens with him and to make life easier for both. Of course, she could get an education and look after her own development, but she should not forget her own family. While there were lots of examples of women's political activities and spiritual resistance, these were not "natural" phenomena. Complete gender equality was simply impossible. Male and female co-existence was only possible because they were complement with each other. If a woman were indifferent towards her own family, all her activities would fail in the end. Tatunashvili's work was quite different from most contemporary European writers. Through its emphasis on religion, family and the female qualities of women, it played to traditional gender roles in Georgia and placed what one might call "paternalism light" and Georgian Orthodox traditions at the heart of the national cause. Quite understandably, it did not go down well with the more progressive members of the women's movement.[55]

Tatunashvili's emphasis on the female qualities of women was in line with wider discussions of the time. As elsewhere in Europe, Victorian stereotypes about the physiology of the female body, the strength of women and their brain sizes in relation to their roles in society and their physical functions also made an appearance in Georgia. An 1897 letter to the editor of "Iveria" by an anonymous "woman of the new generation" (as the editor pointedly remarked in a footnote) considered what the ideal woman should be.[56] In her letter, this woman responded to an article in the journal "Moambe" of the same year by a certain Ekvtime Vashakidze about how contemporary science looks at the women's issue.[57] This article was full of biological clichés and anthropometric conjectures, and it basically accused contemporary Georgian women of being lazy and not supportive

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[54] Alek'sandre Tatunašvili: K'ali da misi danišnuleba. Tbilisi 1897.
[55] See review by Mikheil Nasidze: Me gaxlavar: Kritika da bibliograp'ia. In: Iveria 264 (1897), pp. 2–3.
[56] Vin davsaxot' idealad?. In: Iveria 259 (1897), p. 3.
[57] Ibid.; see also E. Vašakiże: Dedat'a kit'xva t'anamedrove mec'nierebis cinaše. In: Moambe 11 (1897), pp. 65–83.

of their families and, by implication, society. Reminiscent of the aforementioned article by Sano, it praised Georgian womanhood of the past, which allegedly had displayed a true national spirit and had been much stronger in supporting the country in times of crisis. The "woman of the new generation" refuted these claims and challenged Vashakidze with regard to his scientific sample. The new generation, she claimed, was very different from the one he described. Georgian women should not look back to an allegedly grandiose past but rather look to the future and use as their role models the modern emancipated women of contemporary Western Europe.

The focus on biology and the female body also included a specific Georgian angle, which was not present elsewhere in Europe and which was related to marriage patterns and traditions peculiar to the country. "Droeba" had drawn attention to the problem of early marriages as early as 1868.[58] In an anonymous letter, signed only as "a prematurely married woman", the author described her unhappy life after she had been forced into marriage at the age of 12. She implored mothers to heed her story and not to force their daughters into marriage at a young age. A few years later, the topic was brought up again by Anna Tskhvedadze, who specifically addressed the tragic physical consequences of early marriage and in particular the difficulties and dangers of motherhood at a very young age.[59] Clearly, these traditions were seen as not fitting anymore in a modern, developed country and they were increasingly understood as a tool for denigrating and exploiting women.

As might be expected, like its Russian counterpart, the Georgian women's movement was also not immune against radicalization and revolutionary ideas as the 19th century drew to a close. More and more works with radical revolutionary ideas appeared and linked the women's question to the broader fight for social justice and against the tsarist autocracy. Women became increasingly active in the populist movement (*khalkhosnebi*) in the 1870s and, later, in the newly emerging political parties around the turn of the century, prompting the longstanding champion of women's rights, Ekaterine Gabashvili, in a letter to Alexandre Javakhishvili to give an account of the state of the movement after the 1905 Revolution.[60] In particular, she bemoaned the fact that rather than focusing on women's issues, more and more women are now fighting for social justice and political change together with men. Her words clearly expressed a major generational shift. Women such as Ninadora Ordzhonikidze-Toroshelidze, who was a Menshevik activist and gave rousing speeches in 1905, for example, were excluded from a women's circle's meeting because of her socialist ideas which allegedly had nothing to do with women's emancipation.

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[58] Udrood gat'xovili k'ali: Ramdenime šenišvna ert'is udroot' gat'xovili k'alisa. In: Droeba 30 (1868), p. 1.
[59] Anna C'xvedaże: Švilis aġmzdeli dedebi – t'it'on auzdelebi. In: Droeba 19 (1875), p. 3.
[60] Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Literature, Archive of Ekaterine Gabashvili, no. 17209. For Georgian populist women, see Irakli Ant'elava: Sazogadoebriv-politikuri możraobisa da sazogadoebrivi azris istoriidan sak'artveloši. Tbilisi 1967, pp. 72–133.

Simon Kandelaki in his 1906 work "The social state of a woman" criticized bourgeois society, where women were more oppressed than the proletariat. He complained that despite many women being active, working and paying taxes, they were not represented on the state level as politicians. For that he blamed above all priests who preached that man was superior to woman, and he suggested that it was irrational to have segregated girls' and boys' schools. He concluded that the poor conditions of women would soon change and that women would reach complete emancipation once socialism substituted capitalism. Although in reality, this event was still going to be more than ten years in the future, Kandelaki had clearly been much inspired by the enthusiasm of the 1905 Revolution. He was also the first to conceptually segregate women's liberation in Georgia from the national movement and to place it in the Marxist context of proletarian internationalism.

As these examples of newspaper discussions and other publications have shown, the Georgian women's movement was both very vibrant and also quite specific. It included issues of a more general nature, as we know them from other European countries, but it also was linked to uniquely Georgian problems, such as the quest for a national culture or the specific traditions of a still somewhat archaic society. In that respect it resembled other social institutions, movements and political parties.[61] Georgian women did not only have to struggle for the education of girls, but they also wanted to contribute to the liberation of their country. They had to emancipate themselves from men, but also step out from the shadow of history or adapt within it. This history had created a peculiar image of women which on the one hand elevated them into sainthood while on the other hand enforced their roles as mothers and centres of the family. This peculiar form of paternalism provided a metaphor for women in their national resistance against the tsarist state which in its core was nothing less than paternalism writ large.

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[61] Stephen Jones: Socialism in Georgian colours. The European road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917. Cambridge, MA 2005.

Hubertus Jahn

Visits of tsars to the Caucasus as representations of empire

Russian rulers have been travelling through their lands since the Middle Ages and for a variety of reasons. After sporadic trips in the 15th century, Muscovite grand princes began to travel more regularly on pilgrimages, processions and extended hunting expeditions from the early 16th century onwards.[1] Unlike military campaigns, which had specific strategic goals and often involved crossing borders, these journeys served a number of purposes. They could claim newly acquired territory as part of the realm, and they provided "demonstrations of the splendour of the ruler, of the power of his entourage"[2]. They also helped to promote the image of the ruler as a spiritual leader through the foundation of churches and the patronage of monasteries. But peregrinating Muscovite rulers hardly ever left the Russian heartland. According to Nancy Kollmann, "[t]heir concern seems to have been to define the center, by demonstrating the ruler and his entourage to the populace, by patronizing church institutions and distributing alms, by making contact with the local elite".[3] It was Peter the Great who eventually introduced a new kind of travel. His Grand Embassy (1697/1698) had clearly an educational purpose. It took the young tsar to Western Europe, where he picked up many of the ideas for his reforms. Although Peter travelled officially incognito, the Grand Embassy also added a foreign policy element to the journeys of Russian tsars, which reflected absolutist notions of royal prestige and international projection of power. This was particularly evident in the many trips undertaken by Catherine the Great, which were supposed to present her as an enlightened monarch to the rest of Europe. Especially her famous Crimean journey in 1787 was meant to show off her newly acquired and allegedly flourishing territories of Novaia Rossiia, and it was only fitting that at the occasion she was accompanied by several foreign ambassadors and also met the Austrian emperor, Joseph II.[4]

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[1] Nancy Shields Kollmann: Pilgrimage, procession and symbolic space in sixteenth-century Russian politics. In: Michael S. Flier/Daniel Rowland (eds.): Medieval Russian culture. Vol. 2. Berkeley 1994, p. 166.
[2] Ibid., p. 180.
[3] Ibid., pp. 175–176.
[4] Nina Bessarabova: Puteshestviia Ekateriny II po Rossii v kontekste vnutrennei i vneshnei politiki. 1763–1767, 1780–1787 gg. [Doctoral dissertation]. Moscow 2003.

Russia's increasing involvement in European politics and the numerous inter-marriages between the Romanovs and Western European royalty led to an increase in diplomatic visits and private family trips abroad over the 19th century. Alexander I famously spent lots of time at the Congress of Vienna and at various other congresses abroad, prompting the poet Alexander Pushkin once to call him a "nomadic despot" (for which he was duly exiled to the Caucasus).[5] Nicholas I travelled extensively within the empire and in 1837 sent his son, the future Alexander II, on an 18-month long exploratory tour of the realm that took the tsarevich all the way to Siberia.[6] Since then, Russian rulers became increasingly visible beyond the confines of the capital, feeding into a popularization of the monarchy via various new media and promoting the myth of a union between the tsar and the people which was propagated from the 1830s onwards and which became even more pronounced with the onset of the railway age in the 1860s and the tsars taking increasingly advantage of this new mode of transport.[7]

The Caucasus was a popular destination for Russian rulers once the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti had been annexed by the empire in 1801. However, traveling in this mountainous region in the early 19th century was still dangerous and logistically difficult. Only after the occupation of Imereti and Abkhazia in 1810 and the conquest of Erevan in 1828 did it become safe enough for tsars to visit. Nicholas I was the first to arrive, in 1837. Alexander II visited altogether four times, with his father in 1837, as heir to the throne on an educational trip in September and October 1850, as tsar in September 1861 and in September 1871. During the last trip, he was accompanied by his son, the future Alexander III, who returned as tsar in September and October 1888, accompanied by his son, the future Nicholas II. This last Romanov tsar came back to the region during the First World War, in November 1914.[8]

Traveling in the Caucasus was quite different from traveling within Russia proper. This was a region with an ancient culture, an exotic natural environment, high mountains and often treacherous roads, a multitude of ethnic groups, a variety of religions, and a long tradition of brigandry and hostage-taking. Although technically conquered and annexed by Russia, this area was still perceived as "foreign", as Alexander Pushkin, an early visitor, once famously remarked.[9] We don't know, what the tsars felt when they arrived. But they did in fact enter a place that

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[5] In the poem "Noël"; see Julia Berest: The emergence of Russian liberalism. Alexander Kunitsyn in context, 1783–1840. New York 2011, p. 57.

[6] Richard Wortman: Scenarios of power. Myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy from Peter the Great to the abdication of Nicholas II. Princeton 2006, pp. 178–181.

[7] Frithjof Benjamin Schenk: Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne. Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter. Stuttgart 2014, pp. 287–326.

[8] The exact dates of these visits were: Nicholas I: 20. 9.–17. 10. 1837; Alexander II: 20. 9.–17. 10. 1837, 12. 9.–28. 10. 1850, 11.–25. 9. 1861, 6.–28. 9. 1871; Alexander III: 6.–28. 9. 1871, 17. 9.–14. 10. 1888; Nicholas II: 17. 9.–14. 10. 1888, 24. 11.–5. 12. 1914.

[9] For a detailed analysis of Pushkin's experience, see Monika Frenkel Greenleaf: Pushkin's "Journey to Arzrum". The poet at the border. In: SR 50 (1991), pp. 940–953. For a general discussion of the importance of the Caucasus in Russian literature, see Susan Layton: Russian literature and empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy. Cambridge 1994.

was culturally very different from Russia. This meant that to some extent protocol and ceremonies had to be adjusted, had to take local traditions into consideration. After all, a tsar's visit to the empire's borderlands was above all a communicative event. It was meant on the one hand to represent the empire and project its might beyond its frontiers. On the other hand it was supposed to communicate the power and magnificence of the ruler to a population that had not been exposed to these kinds of imperial scenarios before. This could only be done successfully if one got the semiotics right, if the message that was sent could be understood. It was thus not just bureaucratic red-tape or laziness, but rather an awareness of the complexities of the situation, when in early 1871, in preparation of Alexander II's visit, Baron Nikolai, the head of the office of the viceroy Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, produced a detailed report about the measures taken during the visit of Nicholas I in 1837. Obviously, the journey of Nicholas had become the model that provided the blueprint for the protocols of later visits.[10]

The visit of Nicholas I started on 20 September 1837, when he arrived by boat from Crimea in Gelendzhik, a small harbour near Krasnodar. He travelled on to Redut Kale, near Poti, then via Kutaisi and Surami to Borzhomi, Akhalkalaki, Gyumri, Etchmiadzin, Erevan and Tiflis (as Tbilisi was then called in Russian). From Tiflis, he returned via Dusheti and Stavropol to Moscow. The protocol of the journey required that welcoming parties at district borders, accompanying convoys and guards should be staffed by local nobles and honorary citizens "in their national dress", as the tsar had specifically requested. Crowds along the road should be kept to a minimum, but since it was impossible to suppress people's desire to see their ruler, they should gather in towns and villages or at least assemble in a respectful distance from the road.[11] Similar, albeit increasingly elaborate procedures regarding welcoming parties, convoys and guards as well as crowd control were made at subsequent visits.

In 1837, special arrangements had to be made regarding the meeting between the tsar and the Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Etchmiadzin. Since such a reception of a Russian tsar had never happened before, the Catholicos was asked to send a ceremonial based on past meetings between a Catholicos and a crowned head of state. This ceremonial was then adopted during the visit of Nicholas.[12] During later visits, meetings with the high clergy of the various reli-

[10] Nikolai's report is O rasporiazheniiakh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2090, ll. 10–22ob., ll. 1–1ob. For a short description of Nicholas' visit, see Adolf Berzhe [= Adolph Bergé]: Imperator Nikolai na Kavkaze v 1837g. In: Russkaia starina 43 (1884), pp. 377–398. A rather detailed contemporary description of the visit by a German botanist, who met Nicholas in person, is in Karl Koch: Reise durch Rußland nach dem kaukasischen Isthmus in den Jahren 1836, 1837 und 1838. Stuttgart/Tübingen 1843, pp. 445–464.
[11] O rasporiazheniiakh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2090, ll. 11–11ob.; Ob organizatsii vstrechi priezzhaiushchego tsaria, po predpisaniiu Gruzinskogo grazhdanskogo gubernatora, SEA, f. 16, op. 1, d. 5415, ll. 66–69, including a list with the names of all the guards and members of the convoy.
[12] O rasporiazheniiakh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2090, ll. 11ob.–12. For a detailed report about the meeting in Etchmiadzin, see Otryvki iz stat'i neizvestnago avtora o priezde Nikolaia I v Erevan, SEA, f. 1438, op. 1, d. 491.

gious denominations, both Christian and Muslim, were part of the standard repertoire and reflective of and indeed celebrating the multi-ethnic nature of this part of the empire. However, a clear hierarchy of religions could also not be missed. Upon arrival in Tiflis, every tsar, starting with Nicholas in 1837, first visited the Exarch of Georgia in the Sioni Cathedral. This grandiose ceremonial entry into the city, signifying royal patronage and the harmonious link between the monarchy and the Orthodox Church like in Muscovite times, was retained even later when tsars arrived by train. Both Alexander III and Nicholas II went straight from the station to the Sioni cathedral.[13]

Because of the peculiar geopolitical location of the Caucasus, visits by tsars always contained an international aspect. When Nicholas II visited in 1914, his arrival sent a clear message to the Ottoman Empire, which had attacked the Russian Empire just a few weeks earlier. But at more peaceful times, a tsar visiting the Caucasus elicited courtesy visits by royalty or high-ranking envoys from the adjacent empires. In 1837, the heir to the Persian throne, Naser al-Din, was sent to Erevan to greet Nicholas. As was the case during later visits, the Russian side was in charge of accommodation and the provisions for the trip, which in 1837 included *inter alia* fifteen rams, sixty chicken, and fifteen litres of soured milk at each of the four places where the prince and his entourage of some 200 people made a stop.[14] The meeting with the tsar was rather peculiar and full of symbolism. Naser was only six years old. Nicholas, a rather tall person, lifted him up and put him on his knees. Then he gave him a precious ring, which he took from one of his fingers, and allegedly told Naser, that he should always remember the moment when he sat on the Russian emperor's knees. There was hardly a more ingenious way to communicate the current power relationship in the region to the outside world.[15]

The conquest of the Caucasus in the 19th century was a huge operation for the Russian army. Lots of troops and some of the most famous regiments were stationed in the region, and they played prominent roles in all the visits of tsars. Parades, drills, salutes, visits of military camps and festive dinners with the officer corps were regular features. If the tsar happened to be the commander in chief of a particular military unit, he was welcomed with even more splendour. Alexander II, for example, before entering Tiflis, stopped at a huge military camp near Mtskheta which included "his" Erivan *leib-grenadier* regiment. He was first met by the staff

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[13] Vnutrenniia izvestiia. In: Russkii invalid ili Voennyia vedomosti 271 (29.10.1837), p.1081; Marshrut puteshestviia Ikh Imperatorskikh Velichestv po kavkazskomu kraiu v 1888 godu, SEA, f.12, op.8, d.368, l.46; Dmitrii Nikolaevich Dubenskii (ed.): Ego Imperatorskoe Velichestvo Gosudar' Imperator Nikolai Aleksandrovich. V deistvuiushchei armii Noiabr'–Dekabr' 1914 g. [Petrograd] 1915, pp.34–37.

[14] O priezde v Gruziiu naslednika persidskogo predstola, SEA, f.16, op.1, d.5309, ll.4–5, 15–15ob. In 1871, the Russians also took over the costs of the courtesy visit; see the numerous bills and invoices in O priezde printsa Begmen-Mirzy v Tiflis dlia privetstvovaniia gosudaria, SEA, f.5, op.1, d.1906. There was also a delegation from the Ottoman Empire with the governor of Erzerum, Mustafa Pasha, in town; see Kavkaz 110 (19.9.1871), p.1.

[15] Otryvki iz stat'i neizvestnago avtora o priezde Nikolaia I v Erevan, SEA, f.1438, op.1, d.491, l.5.

officers. When he left the staff building, by now dressed in the uniform of the regiment, he was welcomed by the soldiers with many rounds of "Hurray" and a ceremonial march, before he inspected the lines of troops. During the occasion, he proclaimed his son to be the deputy commander in chief of the regiment, which, again, was met with rounds of "Hurray".[16] When this son returned as Alexander III in 1888, "his" Erivan *leib-grenadier* regiment provided the guard of honour. They also put on a parade in a camp near Tianeti in the mountains. Preceding the parade was a lunch, during which the regiment's choir and orchestra performed. To servings of *okroshka*, tomato soup, *piroshki*, fish in aspic, grouse cutlets, sirloin steaks with side dishes, and ice cream (for the menu, see Illustration 1), they played a march by Bernshtein, a potpourri from "Tannhäuser", "Frühlingserwachen" by Leonhard Bach, a potpourri from Meyerbeer's "Robert le diable", "Am See" by Schubert, and the finale of Verdi's "Ernani".[17] A festive dinner with 121 guests followed in the evening, during which the tsar gave out a toast to the regiment and was in turn saluted by the guests. The orchestra played the "Erivan march", followed by the anthem "God save the tsar". The evening concluded with the tsar and his family on a balcony watching folkloric dances and music performed by local mountain residents. Like the design of the menu, which showed a mixture of Russian and Caucasian uniforms, the music was rather eclectic, with European and local fare on offer. Only the food was plain Russian, without any exotic dishes from the region.

Menus of other dinners and lunches along the route of Alexander III are similarly reflective of local peculiarities and customs. They often feature the coats of arms of the place and specific local achievements, landmarks, ethnic dress and typical economic activities. The menu of a gala dinner hosted by the tsar for the local elites on 30 September in Tiflis, for example, showed the coats of arms of the Caucasian provinces (with Tiflis as the capital in the middle, surrounded by Dagestan, Baku, Kutaisi, Elizavetpol, and Erivan) crowned by the imperial crest, the Narikala fortress and Metekhi Church as well as mount Kazbegi in the background, and with local people presenting the wealth of the region in form of bread and salt, vine and fruits (Illustration 2).[18]

The menu for a lunch in Kutaisi makes references to Jason and the Argonauts, a Georgian *supra*, that is, the classical Georgian feast, as well as wine, music and rugs (Illustration 3), while the one for a lunch in Baku plays fully on the oriental theme, with a Muslim congregation coming out of a mosque presenting the coat of arms of the city and, not to miss, an obligatory camel parked in the background (Illustration 4).[19]

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[16] Iz Tiflisskago lageria. In: Russkii invalid 234 (1871), p. 3.
[17] Kamer-fur'erskii zhurnal 1888, RGIA, f. 516, op. 1, No. 53/2048, d. 9, ll. 645–650, 691ob.–707ob. For the menu, see RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 12000.
[18] For the arrangements of the dinner, the list of 208 guests, the dress code and table decorations, see Kamer-fur'erskii zhurnal 1888, RGIA, f. 516, op. 1, No. 53/2048, d. 9, ll. 674–688ob. The menu is in RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 11869.
[19] RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 11870, af. 11864.

Illustration 1: Menu (6 October 1888)[20]

[20] RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 12000.

Illustration 2: Menu (30 September 1888)[21]

21 RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 11869.

Illustration 3: Menu (13 October 1888)[22]

[22] RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 11870.

Illustration 4: Menu (9 October 1888)[23]
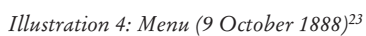
23 RNL, Otdel estampov, Pr. Gr./M 516m, af. 11864

The "civilian" parts of the tsars' trips were always carefully choreographed. They included visits to schools, museums, hospitals, orphanages and similar charitable institutions and, in addition to the aforementioned receptions of religious leaders, meetings with representatives of various social ranks, ethnic groups, and municipal authorities. At all of these meetings, it was customary to greet the tsar with bread and salt. This sign of hospitality had a very long tradition in Russia, going back at least to the "Domostroi", the 16th century book of household rules.[24] Nicholas I made sure that this custom would be performed in a way that displayed his style of rule, reflecting the modesty and simplicity of the tsar as a caring family man. He decreed that bread and salt should under no circumstances be presented on silver plates and golden vessels, but should only be offered on white faience dishes.[25] Other regulations that ensured a smooth progress of visits included noise restrictions. Already in 1837, a decree was issued that church bells should not ring at night along the tsar's route, in order not to disturb his sleep.[26] In 1888, this became even more specific. "Hurrah" was not to be heard between 9 pm and 9 am in order not to annoy the illustrious guests. But in a nod to indigenous traditions and culture and also to the well-known musical interests of Alexander, Caucasian folk music (*narodnaia muzyka*) was permissible in a certain distance when the tsar was passing through the streets and squares.[27]

Visits of tsars in the Caucasus regularly led to local shortages in accommodation and to an increase in prices for goods and services, especially in Tiflis, which, as the administrative, religious and military centre of the region was usually the highpoint of the journey. Already in 1837, princes, khans and other honourable visitors from Dagestan and other Muslim areas were warned that they had to provide their own subsistence in the city and that they should expect everything to be very expensive.[28] In 1888, Tiflis almost came to a standstill. Already weeks before the arrival of Alexander and his family, buildings were repaired and decorated with flags, pennants, and greenery; the prices of builders, tailors and goldsmiths skyrocketed and the city "was overflowing with court lackeys, moving here and there in their phaetons, walking in groups up and down Golovin Prospekt, and crowding into the shops. All well fed and with shaved physiognomies …", as Evgenii Veidenbaum, a local government official, wryly noted in his diary.[29] The building and

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[24] Carolyn Johnston Pouncy (ed.): The "Domostroi". Rules for Russian households in the time of Ivan the Terrible. Ithaca/London 1994, p. 146.

[25] Ukaz Ispolnitel'noi ekspeditsii o prepodnesenii khleba-soli tsariu pri proezde ego cherez Tiflis obiazatel'no na prostom bliude, SEA, f. 84, op. 1, d. 579, ll. 1–1ob. For Nicholas' style of rule, see Wortman: Scenarios (see note 6), pp. 120–124.

[26] O rasporiazheniiakh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2090, l. 12ob.

[27] Marshrut puteshestviia ikh Velichestv, SEA, f. 17, op. 1, d. 2634, ll. 103–105ob. (a number of specific guidelines issued to the people).

[28] O rasporiazheniikh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2090, ll. 14–14ob.

[29] Dnevnik Veidenbauma no. 1, 17. 3. 1888–17. 11. 1888, KKSXC, f. Lichnyi arkhiv Evgeniia Gustavovicha Veidenbauma, d. 59/7, l. 34, l. 46.

decoration boom in the city was matched by roadworks and bridge repairs along the route. Added to this were special safety measures. Already in 1837, it was decreed that at "all dangerous places", such as bridges, ravines, or sharp turns, fires should be lit and people with torches should stand along the road.[30] Similar arrangements had to be made in 1871, when Alexander II was travelling by coach along the Military Highway, crossing the High Caucasus at over 2,300 metres above sea level. Because of the distance between the two places for the night, Vladikavkaz in the north and Mleta in the south, it was inevitable that the convoy with the tsar would have to make the steep descent from Gudauri to Mleta after nightfall. Torches and fires by the roadside, it was argued, might frighten the horses on these narrow and steep serpentines. Instead, six people were assigned for each kilometre along the road with reflective lamps containing three stearin candles. Additionally, three such lamps were placed at each sharp turn. This set-up was rehearsed with all the horses for five nights before the arrival of Alexander.[31]

The social highlights of the visits were always the receptions and dinners hosted by the tsar for the local dignitaries and the balls organized for the august visitor by the nobility. These events more than anything else were meant to symbolize the close ties between the tsar and local high society. They allowed for direct personal contact between the ruler and his subjects, and they were consequently accompanied by a lot of jostling for places near the monarch. In 1837, almost one thousand guests attended the nobility's ball in Tiflis. As a German observer noted, most of the guests wore national costumes; the ladies' dresses were full of gold and precious stones, the men's were often oriental, with mullahs wearing long caftans and pointed fur hats or flowery robes and Svanetian chiefs in their local tribal outfit. It appears that some of the deputies from Muslim regions were still ignorant of "European customs" and quite robustly pushed their way towards Nicholas, "as if they were on a bazaar". Once the tsar had left, the ball continued with local nobles dancing in European style in the main hall, while next door others unpacked their musical instruments, played Georgian music and danced the *lezginka,* their national dance, "with such noise and thunder that one could not hear one's own voice anymore".[32]

In 1888, already weeks before the ball of the nobility, rumours were rife about who would be invited. According to Evgenii Veidenbaum, who managed to get an invitation, a "retired beauty", Countess Chelokhaeva, went as far as to take out a loan on her house in order to afford a proper dress for the ball, which eventually was attended by some 800 people.[33] The building of the noble assembly was decorated elaborately, with exotic plants, lemon trees and laurels, illuminated from

[30] Ob organizatsii vstrechi priezzhaiushchego tsaria, po predpisaniiu Gruzinskogo grazhdanskogo gubernatora, SEA, f. 16, op. 1, d. 5415, ll. 1–1ob. and passim.
[31] O naznachenii osoboi komissii dlia priniatiia mer po sluchaiu priezda na Kavkaz Aleksandra II, SEA, f. 17, op. 1, d. 54, ll. 214–216.
[32] Koch: Reise (see note 10), pp. 456–459.
[33] Dnevnik Veidenbauma no. 1, 17. 3. 1888–17. 11. 1888, KKSXC, f. Lichnyi arkhiv Evgeniia Gustavovicha Veidenbauma, d. 59/7, ll. 47–49.

below, lining the entrance and giving the impression of a tropical forest, while inside the main ballroom with its three massive chandeliers, draperies around doors and windows were made of light pink and light blue atlas cloth in a Venetian flair. Adjacent rooms were in oriental style, with lots of rugs and Caucasian daggers and musical instruments embellishing the walls. Alexander started the ball with the polonaise, then retired to have fruits and tea, and after the waltz returned to the ballroom where he chatted with many guests and enjoyed watching the *lezginka* for a long time.[34] Clearly, these balls and receptions were not just social interactions, they also allowed for a mixing of cultures, styles and aesthetics.

This became even more evident a day later, when Alexander and his family in the evening attended a popular feast in the Mushtaid Garden, the local recreational park. This was a true enactment of the union between tsar and people. The *estrada* stage had been converted into an oriental pavilion, where the tsar and his entourage could sip tea and watch the masses. The main room of the building was covered by nine cupolas. It was reached via a corridor that featured grotto-like niches, decorated with stalactites. A gallery with a blind arcade of thin columns with Arab-style capitals led into the garden, where some five hundred *amk'ari* (members of the local craftsmen's guilds) were having a *supra*. They were sitting on blankets on the ground, drinking wine Georgian-style (that is, bottoms up), dancing the *lezginka* and inviting everyone passing by to join them. Later in the evening, the tsar made his way through the crowds to a gazebo, prepared on the embankment of the Mtkvari, from where he could watch the fireworks on the other side of the river. Their features included the monograms of the tsar and his son, fire fountains, a bouquet of two thousand rockets, and a waterfall of fire dropping into the river. The show also presented a typical Georgian wedding on a barge in the river, illuminated with Bengal lights.[35]

The involvement of ordinary people from different ethnic backgrounds in the visits of the tsars allowed the paternalist traditions of the Russian monarchy to chime with age-old local practices of patronage. In this context, petitioning the tsar became a common feature of every visit as well.[36] This symbolic communicative act was the closest kind of direct interaction that one could have. In 1837, the commander in chief of Imereti had tried to suppress petitioning, because Imeretians in particular were allegedly prone to ask tricky questions and to complain profusely. Yet he was reproached for his initiative by the chief administrator of the Caucasus, Baron Rozen, who noted that the tsar when visiting the region wanted to learn about the needs of the people and to find out about their condi-

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[34] For a very detailed description of the ball and the visit of Alexander more generally, see Prebyvanie Ikh Imperatorskikh Velichestv v Tiflise. In: Tiflisskii listok 216 (1.10.1888), pp.1–3.

[35] Poseshchenie Ikh Velichestvami Tiflisa. Narodnyi prazdnik. In: Novoe obozrenie 1650 (2.10.1888), p.1.

[36] For a general discussion of petitions to the tsar, see Hubertus Jahn: Voices from the lower depths. Russian poor in their own words. In: Beate Althammer/Lutz Raphael/Tamara Stazic-Wendt (eds.): Rescuing the vulnerable. Poverty, welfare and social ties in modern Europe. New York/Oxford 2016, pp.335–355.

Illustration 5: Medal "Kavkaz 1837"[37]

tion. Petitioning was thus permitted, although by the time of Alexander III's visit, it was also strictly regulated. People then were allowed to hand in their petitions only between 8 and 9 in the morning.[38]

While ordinary people had to ask for favours, those who participated in the organization of a visit, be it as soldiers, members of the convoy or the guard, or as members of delegations and deputies of various social ranks, ethnic groups and regions, usually received some handouts, decorations and medals to distinguish and thank them or simply to commemorate the event. This was always a huge operation at the end of a trip. Already during the visit of Nicholas I, long lists were drawn up of people receiving a variety of distinctions. Major decorations, like the St. Andrew or St. Anne Cross, were reserved for leading officers and the higher nobility, while ordinary soldiers who had participated in the parades received one rouble each as well as a pound of meat and a jug of wine.[39] Civilian participants in the visit got commemorative medals. The lists of recipients of the latter included, for example, 46 "brave Tushetians", who, after being told by their local police to don their best national costumes, had been granted permission to come to Tiflis from this extremely remote mountain region. The silver medal they received had a portrait and the name of Nicholas on the front and the text "Kavkaz 1837" on the back (Illustration 5). Almost exactly the same coin was minted in 1871 to commemorate the visit of Alexander II.[40]

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[37] Medal "Kavkaz 1837", http://medalirus.ru/sobitiya1800-1864/medal-kavkaz-1837-god.php (last accessed 21.7.2020).
[38] O rasporiazheniiakh po sluchaiu priezda imperatora v Zakavkazskii krai, SEA, f.5, op.1, d.2090, ll.12–12ob.; Marshrut puteshestviia ikh Velichestv, SEA, f.17, op.1, d.2634, l.105.
[39] Russkii invalid ili Voennyia vedomosti 272 (30.10.1837), p.1086.
[40] For the story of the Tushetians and lists with hundreds of names of recipients of orders and medals see Ob organizatsii vstrechi priezzhaiushchego tsaria, po predpisaniiu Gruzinskogo grazhdanskogo gubernatora, SEA, f.16, op.1, d.5415, ll.85–85ob., ll.120 ff., ll.22 ff. Initially 1500 medals, were planned, but eventually 3300 were minted, of which 2847 were handed out; see Otchet o dvizhenii del i sum i dr. bumagi po I otd. Sobstvennoi Ego Imp. Velichestva Kantseliariia, RGIA, f.1409, op.2, d.6112, ll.41–44; Dmitrii I. Peters: Nagradnye medali Rossiiskoi imperii XIX–XX vekov. Katalog. Moscow 1996, p.129, p.191 (for the 1871 medal).

Illustration 6: Vere cross[41]

Apart from rewards, providing individual souvenirs of an event, all kinds of myths and stories related to tsarist visits entered the realm of official and popular memory after the departure of the august visitors and lived on for decades. For example, the coach of Nicholas I overturned at high speed as he was driving out from Tiflis at a steep turn near the Vere River. Nicholas was able to jump out just in time and remained unhurt. This was quickly interpreted as a sign from God, but also as proof of the tsar's vigour and physical strength. Viceroy Vorontsov had a cross erected at the location some years later commemorating the miracle (Illustration 6), which became part of the official welcome ceremony when Alexander II visited in 1871. Coming from the aforementioned parade in Mtskheta, he stopped his coach at the memorial and crossed himself. At this point, the head of the city together with deputies of the city administration welcomed him with a reference to the miraculous salvation of his father and offered him bread and salt on a golden plate. From the cross, the tsar then proceeded to the Sioni Cathedral, with *amk'ari* in their best outfit lining the street and throwing flowers in front of his coach.[42]

While the Vere cross was obviously a very public reminder of Nicholas' journey and his miraculous salvation through divine intervention, visible to anyone travelling in or out of town on the Georgian Military Highway, the story of his arrival in Gelendzhik was no less dramatic. According to contemporary reports, Nicholas arrived during a storm and had to struggle against high waves when he

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[41] Photograph in the possession of the author.
[42] SEA, f. 1087, op. 2, d. 213 (Opisanie puteshestviia na Kavkaz imperatora Aleksandra II), ll. 6–6ob.

Illustration 7: Ivan Aivazovskii: "Pribytie imperatora Nikolaia I v Gelendzhik"[43]

was ferrying across to the beach. This scene was immortalized in a painting by Russia's most famous marine artist, Ivan Aivazovskii. It became one of the main attractions in the Military History Museum, also known as *Khram Slavy* (Temple of Fame), which officially opened in Tiflis in February 1907 (Illustration 7).[44]

Alexander III's trip to the Caucasus also was associated with a miracle. Although technically not happening in the Caucasus, it was on the return journey from there that the tsar's train derailed and was completely destroyed near Borki in the region of Kharkov'. Alexander and his family escaped the wreck with only minor bruises, while over 20 other people on the train died. This was soon turned into a miracle, proving the divine mercy that the Russian tsar enjoyed. A church was built at the place of the accident. Newspapers and illustrative magazines wrote about all the details of the catastrophe. Colourful popular prints (*lubki*) were produced in large numbers, showing the tsar and his family next to the train wreck, sometimes with angels hovering over them and shielding them with their hands.[45]

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[43] For a copy of the picture, see https://arkhipkahistory.livejournal.com/10125.html (last accessed 21. 7. 2020). The picture's date is not known. It is currently in the possession of the Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts in Tbilisi, which is part of the National Museum of Georgia. For a discussion of its history, see K voprosu o sozdanii khudozhnikom Aivazovskim kartiny o priezde imperatora Nikolaia I v Gelendzhik. In: http://xn--c1aeahljh0d.xn--p1ai/publikacii/186-k-voprosu-o-sozdanii-hudoznikom-ajvazovskim-kartiny-o-priezde-imperatora-nikolaa-i-v-gelendzik.html (last accessed 16. 4. 2020).

[44] For a report about Nicholas' arrival, see the diary of the officer N. V. Simanovskii: Dnevnik ofitsera, prikomandirovannogo k Navaginskomu polku, deistvovavshemu na Kavkaze. Aprel' 1837–sentiabr' 1838. 20 sentiabria, RNL, Otdel rukopisei, f. 777, op. 3, d. 326. About the picture in the Khram Slavy, see Boris S. Esadze (ed.): Al'bom Kartinnoi gallerei Kavkazskago Voenno-Istoricheskago Muzeia. Tbilisi 1899, p. 8.

[45] For a detailed description of the Borki accident and its aftermath, see Schenk: Fahrt (see note 7), pp. 311–326. Lubki and other pictorial material about the crash are in RNL, Otdel estampov, Tium Ir 485, Nos. 108–123 and Al Ir 485, 1, Nos. 83, 86, 101.

Tsars came to the Caucasus for a variety of reasons. They were showing off their might and magnificence, and indeed their divine powers to the surrounding empires and to their new subjects. Moreover, they marked a territory, which they had acquired not that long ago, and they were curious to learn about this place. Visits also displayed the consolidation of their empire in the region, since it had to be safe for a tsar to travel. As in Russia proper, part of the visits was the projection, through various representational means, of the union between tsar and people, the divine protection which the tsar enjoyed, the harmonious relationship between the monarchy and the Orthodox Church, and the prowess of Russian arms. Aspects that markedly differed from trips within Russia proper included a fusion of styles and a mixture of cultural traditions. The widespread use of eastern aesthetics and the inclusion of local folklore show that Russia was indeed creating its own Orient in the Caucasus, thereby presenting itself as equal to major western colonial powers, such as Britain and France.[46] Finally, the visits of the tsars were also always a prominent display of Russia's *mission civilisatrice* in the region, representing the empire as a modernizing agent and including other projects as well, such as urban planning, theatres, libraries, schools, orphanages, hospitals, monuments and museums. No wonder then that visits of such institutions, representing the beneficial and progressive influence of the empire, were always an important part of the itinerary.[47]

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[46] For a broader study of Russian Orientalism, albeit without a focus on the Caucasus, see David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye: Russian Orientalism. Asia in the Russian mind from Peter the Great to the emigration. New Haven 2010.

[47] For specific examples of the civilizing mission in the Caucasus, see Austin Jersild/Neli Melkadze: The dilemmas of enlightenment in the eastern borderlands. The theater and library in Tbilisi. In: Kritika 3 (2002), pp. 27–49; Hubertus F. Jahn: The bronze viceroy. Mikhail Vorontsov's statue and Russian imperial representation in the South Caucasus in the mid-19th century. In: Russian History 41 (2014), pp. 163–180.

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