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ՍԵՊՏԵՄԲԵՐԻ 5-6, 2022

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Ancient Armenia in international wine trade

In the III-II millennia BC the wine-producing regions of the Armenian Highlands were already included in Middle Eastern wine trade. The cities of Southern Mesopotamia were profitable market for the consumption of wines made from high-quality Armenian grapes. The fact that it was possible to trade with Southern Mesopotamia through the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is very important. Southern Mesopotamia as a consumption market for Armenian wines also retained its importance in the future. According to the testimony of Herodotus, wine was taken from Armenia through the Euphrates River to Babylon for sale. Since Babylonia was one of the wealthiest countries of the Achaemenid Empire, its markets sold expensive goods sought by the elite. The analysis of written records of an economic nature has shown that imported grape wine sold in the markets of Babylon was very expensive, and therefore it was quite profitable to bring high-quality wine from Armenia to Babylon for sale. High quality and safe overland trade routes were of great importance for the development of the economy of Armenia, which was part of the Achaemenid Empire. The "Royal" road was especially important, a part of which passed through the southwestern territories of Armenia. Along the entire length of the road there were stations with excellent inns, where travelers could obtain provisions, including wine. The section of the road passing through Armenia had fifteen stations with inns, and the inhabitants of the regions near these inns had the opportunity to take their wine there for sale. The export of high-quality wines

from Armenia continued in the Hellenistic and Late Antique periods. Viticulture and winemaking were important branches of agriculture in Arshakid Armenia. Information has been preserved that in the IV century AD, the wine trade took a significant place in the economic life of the city of Vagharshapat. Thus, the study of a Jewish literary source of the Sasanian period, the "Babylonian Gemara", shows that in the first half of the IV century AD, the city of Vagharshapat was the most important international center of wine trade, and the wine prices set there were decisive, even for the cities of Mesopotamia. Undoubtedly, this circumstance should have greatly contributed to the development of winemaking not only in Vagharshapat itself, but also in the neighboring regions, as the vineyard owners had the opportunity to sell their wine at a high price to foreign merchants in wine market of Vagharshapat. The great role of the city of Vagharshapat in international wine trade was probably due to the fact that high-quality wine was produced there, which was in great demand in external wine market. So, we can conclude that in the IV century AD, Armenian winemaking became so famous that the city of Vagharshapat became the largest center of international wine trade.

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Saint Hripsime and her Companions according to Georgian Narrative Sources

St. Gregory, the Illuminator of the Armenians, St. Trdat, the first Christian King of Armenia, and St. Hripsime, the Roman missionary woman who came in Armenia with a group of virgins played a pivotal role in the process of conversion of Armenia. Though the contribution of these persons is incomparable, the merit of Saint Hripsime still seems special. Her martyrdom can be considered as a turning point in Armenian history. Therefore, it is very important scientific task to represent details of her biography.

The fifth century author with a pseudonym "Agathangelos" narrates about the deed of Saint Hripsime and her companions. The account is designed in full accordance with the hagiographic cliché. The presence of a cliché by itself though does not imply that one is dealing with literary fiction, it should alarm researcher and give to him/her motivation to check the reliability of information through the study of other sources.

For checking can be used the "Conversion of Kartli" - an outstanding monument of Georgian historical literature in the Late Antiquity. The archetypal text of this monument was created in the second half of the fifth century, however, without any doubt its constituent parts were written earlier this date.

¹ "Kartli" is an antient designation of Georgia and Georgians.

The "Conversion of Kartli" includes historical chronicle and two recensions of the Saint Nino's *Vita* - a shortened and lengthy ones. Both recensions of Saint Nino's *Vita* contain information about Hripsimiantz. Even more: Saint Nino - the Illuminatrix of Georgians - is presented as one of Saint Hripsime's companion. Information on Hripsimiantz is scarce, but it is worthy of attention as far as Georgian source concerns all principal topics and provides unknown from other sources details of Hripsimiantz' history. The differences concern number of virgins came in Armenia, the day and the month of the beginning of their journey, the day and the month of their martyrdoms. And what is most important: the "Conversion of Kartli" implies different historical context and different motivation for the virgins' initiative to reach Caucasia.

Despite this the valuable information kept in the "Conversion of Kartli", it had never been used for the representation of Hripsimiantz' history. The reason of ignoring of the "Conversion of Kartli" was the incorrect conclusions made by many scholars, among them founding fathers of Georgian studies, concerning the identification of the epoch of the monument's creation. However, after establishing the early date for the emergence of the "Conversion of Kartli" in result of modern inquiries, the above attitude should be changed. And the Georgian source should be used for representation of the history of Saint Hripsime and her companions.

In the presentation at first I will display the data available in the "Conversion of Kartli" about Hripsimiantz. Then I will juxtapose the evidences fixed in the "Conversion of Kartli" with information kept in Agathangelos concerning the same issue and, finally, after discussing obtained data I will try to represent the story of Hripsimiantz enriched with new details and accents.

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Scandinavians in Byzantine Pontus

In Byzantine, Georgian, Armenian, Slavonic and Arabic written sources Scandinavians are referred to as "Varangians", "Ros", Rus" or "Ruz"/"Russ", respectively. These terms overlap to a certain extent and mainly refer to the Swedish Vikings, or Varangians, who in the middle of the ninth century controlled the most of the Baltic - Black Sea river route - "the route from the Varangians to the Greeks". In addition to this, these terms besides Varangians sometimes included the East Slavic tribes too.

It must be mentioned that the route from the Varangians to the Greeks was the geographical road of the first Russian state and connected Scandinavia, Kievan Rus and the Byzantine Empire. The Swedish Vikings used it as a main path to the riches of Byzantium and the very same connected Western Europe and Levant during the times of the Mediterranean trade decline.

The first records of Scandinavians in the Byzantine written sources are related to the Black Sea area, especially Paphlagonia and Pontus. Specifically, the "Life of Saint George Bishop of Amastris" narrates about the conquest and plunder of Amastris (Amasra) by Rosses. During this military invasion of the 30s of the ninth century, the Vikings had perhaps the first acquaintance with Christianity.

It should be emphasized that the terms and methods used in the written sources to describe the Varangians and Ros are mostly similar and fully correspond both to the antique and medieval perceptions of the "Northern peoples". But unlike the

ancient sources, in medieval written sources these characteristics, along with ethno-geographical ones, have a broader, confessional meaning and primarily correspond to the pagan inhabitants of the barbaric periphery of the oikumene.

It was there, in Byzantine Pontus, that the first contacts between Scandinavians and Iberians took place. Several Armenian historians, such as Stepanos Taronetsi (Asoghik, 11th c.) and Aristakes Lastivertsi (11th c.) confirm this fact. These data of Armenian sources expand and clarify the evidence of Byzantine sources to a large extent.

Aristakes Lastivertci writes about two military campaigns of the Byzantine emperor Basil II the Bulgar Slayer (958-1025) where he specifically tells about the winter stay of the Byzantine military troops of Ros in Pontus. Georgian Annals confirm this information. The Byzantine tagma of 6000 Rosses was also represented in Pontus during the reign of Constantine the VIII (960-1028). And the joint Varangian-Ros military troop was placed in Chaldea and Iberia in the middle of the ninth century under Michael Akoluph.

In the Byzantine Acts and Trapezuntine documentary sources (Acts of Vazelon) occur prenoms and patronyms such as "Varangos" and "Varangopulos" which can be identified as the names of Scandinavian or Slavic origin.

Analysis of the antroponymic material of the Byzantine authors leads us to the conclusion that Scandinavians were represented on high levels in the social structure of the Byzantine Empire. The existence of names of Scandinavian origin in Byzantine and Trapezuntine documentary sources allows us to conclude that Varangians probably lived in both Constantinople and Pontus and became an integral part of polyethnic structure of Byzantine society.

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Kingship and frontiers in Medieval Georgia

The paper examines correlation between the political geography and political concepts in the 12th-century Georgian kingdom.

After the *didi turkoba* or the Great Turkish invasion of the 1080s, like the major part of Asia Minor and Caucasia, Georgia was threatened by nomadization. In the life-and-death struggle against the nomadic Islamic world Georgian kings achieved incredible success - during the reign of Davit the Builder (1089-1125) not only did the process of unification of Georgian historical lands come to an end, but the idea of Caucasia's political unity was accomplished too. Davit's deeds were successfully carried on by his successors, Demetre I (1125-1156), Giorgi III (1156-1189), and Tamar (1189-1207/13), and at the turn of the 12th-13th centuries a major part of Christian Caucasia became united within the Georgian Kingdom.

Documentary and historiographical texts described frontiers of this reinvigorated polity as following: "from Nikopsis (i.e. present Novomikhailovskiy) to the Sea of Derbend and from Ovseti (i.e. Alania) to Speri and Aregats", or "from Nikopsis to Derbend", or in more complicated way "from the Pontic Sea to the sea of Gurgan (i.e. the Caspian Sea), from Speri to Daruband, and all the lands on this side of the Caucasus Mountains, as well as Khazaria and Scythia on the other side".

Expansion of the Georgian monarchy was reflected in the royal titles as well: "the king of the Abkhaz (i.e. western Georgia), Kartvels (i.e. Tao-Klarjeti and Shida Kartli), Rans (i.e.

Hereti), Kakhs (i.e. Kakheti), Somekhs (i.e. Lore-Tashiri), Sharvansha (i.e. Sharwan) and Shahansha (i.e. Ani), of the all East and West".

As S. Vryonis pointed out "the efforts of the Comnenoi and Lascarids to extirpate the nomads never attained the success the Georgian monarchs achieved". As a result, authority and political image of twelfth-century Byzantium was severely shaken in contemporary Georgia. However, Byzantium remained venerated as a cradle of Orthodox civilization and a model of great power, so Georgian monarchs sought to justify their equality to the Byzantine emperors. Byzantine statehood came to be perceived as a model basis for building up Georgian Pan-Caucasian monarchy, and imperial symbols and political ideas were adopted by the royal court.

This successful Reconquista added two important aspects to the traditional royal imagery: 1. New Constantines and 2. Second Solomons.

Liberation and protection of Christian nations and championing in Holy War against the Moslem rulers was an important aspect of the multifaceted concept of *Constantine*-ism. Wars for the Caucasus, and especially battles for Ani formed a core of this imagery. Military and religious achievements were consolidated with international acts, and Muslim rulers recognized Georgians as protectors of Christians. Presenting Georgian monarchs as Constantine the Great demonstrates that the Bagrationis were seen by their contemporaries as rulers of the *oecumene* fighting for all Christianity who freed believers from the infidel Seljuks ('devils') and took them back to the divine kingdom.

The *oecumene* was limited with northern section of the Middle East, stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian. The court chronists underlined the very fact that the Georgian kings

"established the borders (of their realm) in the east and north", and "owned the lands from one sea to the other". This remarkable geographical feature had astonishing parallel in the Old Testament where righteous king Solomon had had "dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8). This fact inspired official ideologists of the time to reshape existed model of Biblical kingship and claim Georgian Bagrationis to be both the descendants of the Biblical King David and Second Solomon, that is, the masters of the universe, the "kings of the entire East and West, North and South".

Thus, ideological constructions were closely interwoven with territorial evolution of the Georgian kingdom in the 12th century. This makes me conclude that the historical geography is the key to understanding political and ideological transformations of the time.

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**The role of South Caucasus Towns in Transit Trade
according to the Persian Historico-geographical Works of
10th-14th Centuries**

Due to its geographical location, the South Caucasus region has always been involved in international transit trade in different periods of history. No wonder that the prominent towns like Dvin, Ani, Jugha have developed as large centers of transit trade. The role of the South Caucasus cities in international transit trade, various trade relations and similar issues has always been the subject of study by researchers and is still relevant today.

Foreign sources are invaluable in relation to the issue under discussion, among which the Persian historico-geographical works occupy a special place.

The role of the South Caucasian towns, such as Dvin, Ani, Kars, Barda, Gandzak, Tiflis, in the trade of the region in the context of political, socio-economic realities specific to each stage of the mentioned period will be represented within the framework of the report through the comparative analysis of the information of Persian historico-geographical works with the data of the other contemporary sources.

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**From the history of Georgia in the Middle Ages:
Qutlu-Arslan's conspiracy against Georgian royal power**

The rebellion of Qutlu-Arslan is one of the most interesting and, at the same time, controversial issues in the history of the Kingdom of Georgia. It can be said that, in its aim, it was uniquely different from other revolts directed against the central government. Practically, this was the first and last protest against the government, whose demand was political reorganization. Although this issue has been the subject of study by a lot of researchers, many questions are still relevant.

When discussing this rebellion, many Georgian historians believe that, in order to understand the nature of the rebellion, we must first clarify the issue of the leader's social standing, whether he was noble or not.

Regarding this issue, several opinions have been expressed in historiography. Academician Ivane Javakhishvili believed that Qutlu was the representative of the merchant class. According to other points of view, Qutlu-Arslan belonged to the aristocracy and his purpose was to limit the power of the king and to create something like the Parliamentary institution in medieval Georgia (N. Berdzenishvili). The general assessment regarding the rebellion of Qutlu can be formulated as follows: during the reign of Tamar, the rebellion of Qutlu-Arslan was sympathized by both nobles and representatives of the third rank.

Foremost, it should be mentioned that we have very brief historical notes for determining Qutlu's class affiliation. He is only mentioned two times in *Kartlis Tskovreba* (life of Kartli).

However, still, what does it give us to understand the character of rebellion? Let us assume that Qutlu was a noble. In favor of this opinion, speaks the fact that, after extinguishing the rebellion, he was not among the punished people, and we also know that he had previously held the position of the *Mechurchletukhutsesi* (Royal Treasurer in medieval Georgia), and are these facts enough to claim that his rebellion had a class nature and was aimed at the weakening of the central government? Or, if we assume that he was a merchant, does this directly mean that the content of the rebellion had a social nature? According to the demands, it does not seem that their program was determined by class belonging and had a socio-economic nature. In our opinion, it is obvious that it was a political conspiracy, and the program of the participants of this rebellion aimed to find a solution to the political crisis by reorganizing the political system. What gives us the basis for forming such a point of view?

The 12th century, taking into account the processes developed in the royal family is a key period. A series of significant events begins during the reign of Demetre I (1125–1156). His younger brother Vakhtang, as well as his son David V, oppose him. In the first case, Vakhtang's rebellion as an action against the government was brutally suppressed. David V (King of Georgia 1155) was the legitimate heir to the throne, he, like his grandfather Davit IV Agmashenebeli (1089–1125), forced his father to resign from the throne. However, just a few months, after he died in suspicious circumstances, Demetre, who at that time was a monk, sat on the throne again. This fact in itself says a lot, especially considering that Demetre seems to have done this to create a legal foundation for his desired successor, Giorgi (Demetre's youngest son), to reign.

However, the conflict did not end between the members of the royal family. David V had a legal heir, Demna, who grew up in the family of Ivan Orbeli. He believed that Demna, as a legal heir, would get the throne after reaching the age of adulthood, and helped Giorgi III (1156–1184) to consolidate his position. Instead of this, Giorgi III, after the defeat of the rebellion of Ivane Orbeli, arrested Demna (1177), who was dead after the injuries she received as a result of his punishment. And after that, Giorgi III named his daughter Tamar as *locum tenens*. We think that the step of Demetre I created the problem of the legitimacy of the owners of the throne. We believe that the speeches against the central government, which did not slow down in the next period either, point to this.

A new wave of protests against the royal authority is connected with the reign of Tamar (1184–1213). In 1184, immediately after her enthronement, part of the nobles confronted her. What follows is the appearance of the Qutlu-Arslan party and finally the rebellion of Tamar's first husband and Georgian nobles in 1191 and 1193. We think that considering these events, to understand the nature of Qutlu-Arslan's rebellion, it is necessary to take into account the above-mentioned circumstances related to the problem of legitimacy.

The rebellion of the Qutlu-Arslan's supporters and their goal to create the so-called *Karavi* (in Georgian, it means Palace; which was, as historians claim, something like a body of parliament), which in turn meant limiting the power of the king, should be understood in light of these prerequisites. We think it was inspired, not empowered by the desire of the third class, to expand their power, or by the wish of political elites to limit the power of the king, but from the desire to make such political decisions that could solve the crisis.

Le système hiérarchique de l'église Arménienne après les campagnes Seljukides

Dans la seconde moitié du XI^e siècle, des changements radicaux se produisaient dans la carte politique, ethnique ainsi que religieuse du Levant. À l'époque des campagnes turco-seldjoukides, parallèlement à la destruction du royaume d'Ani, une partie des forces armées des Bagratides et des maisons princières arméniennes ont été retirées des territoires de Grand Arménie à cause de la politique imprévoyante de l'Empire Byzantin. Une partie des princes héritiers et des princes arméniens a reçu de nouveaux fiefs et a déménagé en Cappadoce et dans la Nord du Syrie. Cette circonstance a plus attiré les conquérants seldjoukides vers les provinces internes de l'Empire Byzantin, et grâce à leurs conquêtes délibérées, les sous-structures liées à l'Empire Byzantin ont été détruites dans une partie importante de l'Asie Mineure orientale et de l'Arménie elle-même. Le sultanat d'Iconium et l'émirat Danichmendite ont été formés entre l'Empire Byzantin et l'Arménie. Le royaume Géorgien est devenu plus fort dans le Nord de l'Arménie, et les émirats Shadadide de Shaki et Elktuzide d'Atropataine ont été établis à l'est. L'émirat Shadadide a été renforcé dans le métropole Dvin, au centre de l'Arménie, et l'émirat Shahi Armen a été établi au sud, autour du lac de Van. À côté d'eux, un certain nombre de maisons princières arméniennes du nord-est de l'Arménie, du Syunik et du Vaspurakan ont poursuivi leur existence semi-indépendante, dirigée par les Kyurikides-Bagratuni.

Les Byzantins ont forcé le Catholicos de tous les Arméniens à quitter la ville d'Ani, leur siège. Installée dans le Nord de Syrie et en Cappadoce, la famille des Catholicos Pahlavunides entame une longue lutte pour renouveler le système hiérarchique dans l'oïkoumène arménien. Les forces armées arméniennes sont apparues en Égypte au XI^e siècle, une nouvelle structure diocésaine relevant de l'Église Arménienne y a été créée et, en même temps, le Catholicossat de tous les Arméniens a tenté de renforcer sa position à Jérusalem. Le Catholicossat Arménien installé en Cilicie a su revitaliser la vie spirituelle et culturelle dans le nord-est de l'Arménie, l'Artsakh et le Syunik, où les tendances chalcédoniennes parrainées par le Royaume Géorgien tentaient de pénétrer. Des structures initiales de l'Église Arménienne ont également émergées dans les Balkans, qui au fil du temps, luttant contre l'Église Byzantine, ont pu établir des liens avec le Catholicossat de tous les Arméniens. Parlant de la situation de l'Église Arménienne à la fin du XI^e siècle, Matteos Urhayetsi écrit : «...le trône de saint Grégoire fut divisé en quatre parts. Le seigneur Vahram siégeait en Égypte, le seigneur Théodore à Honi, le seigneur Basile dans la ville royale d'Ani, et le seigneur Paul à Marache. Chacun de ces patriarches donnait l'imposition des mains et l'onction aux évêques, et bénissait l'huile sainte; et les évêques à leur tour consacraient des prêtres, qui célébraient la messe, conféraient les baptêmes et posaient la couronne nuptiale sur le front des vierges. Cette division était pour l'Église un sujet de deuil, car la même bergerie était partagée entre quatre pasteurs, et les loups étaient devenus les gardiens du troupeau du Christ». Plus tard, l'histoire a soumis ces sièges des Catholicos à quelques révisions.

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The Georgian numismatics of the long 12th century and reasons of its complexity

In the report a reconstruction of the numismatic history of the Georgian kingdom during the long twelfth century (the end of the 11th - the first third of the 13th century) is proposed. Combining the typogenetic analysis of contemporary coins, the study of the topography of their finds, as well as research of the synchronous epigraphics and narrations, a complex picture of the divergence of the coinage of Western and Eastern Georgia after the cessation of the influx of Arab silver from the Caliphate in the 10th century was revealed for the first time. A strict zonality of the coinage and monetary circulation in the Georgian kingdom was discovered, clearly associated with the features of the previous monetary systems - in Western Georgia (former zone of silver coins with purely Georgian inscriptions, later zone of copper coins with the same features), Eastern Georgia (former *Dar al-Islām*, later zone of irregular coins) and Northern Armenia (former Byzantine lands, later zone of regular coins).

For the first time is revealed the development of the typology of Georgian coins, which followed the inclusion of new territories where the local numismatic traditions were preserved. The territory of regular coins' circulation, *Didi Somxet'i* or Northern Armenia during the long 12th century formed a separate monetary zone in the Georgian kingdom, characterized by the circulation of coins specifically issued in it and for it. Coinage of the regular copper coins by Giorgi III in 1174 and by Tamar in 1200 occurred synchronously with the acquisition of Ani (in 1174

and 1199, *resp.*), and was most likely the same was case of Davit IV (in 1124). Such a chronological connection makes to assume that the regular coins were produced in Ani, the political and economic center of North Armenian lands. The coinage for Northern Armenia was characterised not only by the special legends, but also based on other technological tradition, which refers them to a different technological province and testifies against their production in Tiflis.

The parallel mintage of different type of coins for each region, as well as the practically strict existence of coins within their regions, testify the separate economic life in the two taxation zones - in Tiflis and Eastern Georgia and in Northern Armenia. But the border between them did not break the mobility of the population within Georgia. It necessitated to determine the mutual exchange rates of the regular and irregular coins, information about which survived thanks to the Epiphanius' inscription of 1218 in Ani.

A special attention is paid for countermarks used at that time by the Georgian kings on regular and irregular coins, as well as on foreign copper coins. Meaning of all of them is proposed based on narrative, epigraphic and numismatic data.

Describing in general the numismatic history of Georgia in the 12th century, it must be noted that the reason for its complexity was the refusal of the Georgian kings to unify the monetary policy in favor of conservation of local monetary norms in the incorporated territories and for their step-by-step evolution until the Rusudan's reform of 1230. The existence of several monetary zones points to the complex structure of the Kingdom of Georgia, of which its structure cannot simply be reduced to a number of regions - *saeristavi*, but within which a separate large area of special monetary and fiscal practice must be singled out.

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Georgian and Armenian identity perception according to the Georgian Medieval sources

Ethnicity is a perceptible phenomenon that can be revealed by observing subjectivist factors. As for Soviet historiography, debates about ethnicity took place since the 70s of the XX century, although ethnicity was understood essentially in the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the study of ethnicity is a relatively new in post-Soviet space, and it is also relatively new in Georgia.

Georgian sources provide valuable information to observe ethnic phenomenon, where Georgian unity is usually identified itself in relation to "others". Armenians are often represented in these "others". Thus, Georgian sources contain very interesting information how Georgians perceived Armenian identity in Middle Ages too.

The study of ethnicity requires observation of certain ethnic characteristics. Revealing the intensity of the ethnic markers determines the internal tightness of the unity itself and shows which characteristic emphasizes the unity the most. Intensity of ethnic markers is changeable due to the various circumstances. Among ethnic features, it is generally accepted that religion was the core element of identity in the Middle Ages. A common understanding of religious and ethnic identity is not infrequently seen in early Georgian hagiographic writings and other historical sources. After political unification of Georgia (XI c.), the Georgian cultural elite revised the ethnic unity, where only common religious membership did not coincide with

membership of Georgian unity. On the other side Armenians, first of all, are perceived as religious community.

The aim of the paper is to reveal Georgian and Armenian identity perception (seen through Georgians eyes) by observing identity markers in Medieval Georgian sources.

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The Status of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Georgia in the 14th - 16th centuries

In 14th - 16th centuries the role and importance of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Georgia increased along with the creation of the Armenian community in Georgia. The Diocese became an important institution connecting Armenians living in Georgia and St. Etchmiadzin. The history of the Armenian Diocese, being an inseparable part of the spiritual and political life of the Armenian diaspora in Georgia, is remarkable from the point of view of revealing its status and role above all. Because of this a comprehensive study of history of the Armenian Diocese in Georgia becomes highly desirable.

The existing list of Diocese leaders is interrupted in 1284 and resumed only in 1443. However, the comparison of existing historical and archaeological sources allows to raise and discuss a number of key issues related to the history of the Diocese.

The relations between the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, the Armenian Diocese in Georgia and the Georgian kings are of special interest. After the Catholicosal See of Etchmiadzin was moved to Armenia, the borders Armenian Apostolic Diocese in Georgia was regularly divided between the bishoprics of Sanahin and Haghpata. Both bishoprics functioned under St. Etchmiadzin governance. Moreover, in the 16th century, most part of the Armenian Diocese in Georgia was included in the borders of Sanahin. At the same time, starting from the 12th century, we observe the continuous huge influence of the Georgian authorities on the Haghpata Diocese.

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On the Interpretation of Some Little-Studied Taxes and duties in the Economic History of Armenia in the High Middle Ages

Since the Arab and later Mongol rule, the economic life of Armenia has undergone some changes: new mechanisms of economic relations have appeared, the fiscal system has changed, relations with the ruling class and subjects of countries and nations have been transformed. This was clearly expressed especially during the period of Mongol rule: new taxes and tax obligations appeared, which sometimes were not very clear to the subject peoples, and on the other hand, some of these taxes reflected the traditions of nomadic civilizations in terms of understanding the taxation of subjects.

The study of socio-economic relations and economic life of the region (Armenia, Georgia, Iran, etc.) has always attracted the attention of researchers and there are many summarizing and valuable studies. However, rare mentions of these taxes are found in epigraphic monuments and immune records; the complexity of the issue is that the written sources do not always give explanations about the meaning or application of these taxes, and research becomes possible only in a comparative analysis of economic realities of neighboring countries (for example Georgia, Armenia or Iran).

The scope of the report covers the discussion and study of tax terms such as *murur*, *konalga* and *ulakh*, and discusses the meaning, distribution and application of these taxes in the Armenian historical environment. In addition, the phenomenon

of "absorption and understanding" of these taxes among the subject peoples is discussed by translating the tax terms and comprehending their meaning and application.

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The socio-economic situation of Nakhijevan according to the Great Defter of Yerevan Vilayet of 1590

After the war between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran at the end of the XVI century (1579-1590), the Ottoman Government, together with a number of territories, conquered the Caucasus. The victory in the war allowed The Sublime Porte to control the territories previously occupied by Safavid Iran by initiating extended tax registration processes. Traditionally, Constantinople regularly created the tax registers in the country, and according to different sources, the Ottoman authorities organized them throughout the Empire every 40 years periodically.

The Ottoman Government implemented the Great Defter of Yerevan Vilayet of 1590 (Defter-i Mufasssal-i Vilayet-i Revan), the administrative-political part of which was Nakhijevan. The Ottoman tax register of Nakhijevan of 1590 is an exceptional primary source for studying the names of villages, demographic picture, its ethnic composition as well as examination taxes collected from the taxpayers. It should be emphasized that we concentrated our attention on the study of socio-economic situation of Nakhijevan in the paper. The examination of taxes collected from taxpayers plays a crucial role to draw a more objective conclusion about the social-economic state of Nakhijevan administrative-political unit of 1590.

It is important to highlight the tax rates and understand their size in kilograms. This allows detect the potential of the social-economic situation in more precise form. In addition, the tax

names need a more thorough examination, because the Ottoman authorities took into account the traditions and characteristics of the region when registering the taxes. Apart of these, the data referring to the province will be compared with that of the other neighboring regions.

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From Yerevan to New Julfa of Isfahan: Armenian Commercial Networks under the Safavid Empire

New Julfa is located on the southern bank of Zayanderud River, in Isfahan, where many Armenians were forced to immigrate from the Caucasus, especially from the town of Julfa (Jugha) on the banks of Aras River. It occurred by the order of Shah 'Abbas (1587-1629) at the beginning of the seventeenth century when he draw his army to regain the region from the Ottomans.

In Safavid Iran, Armenian merchants, especially those from New Julfa of Isfahan had an important role of raw silk export trades to Europe. The high point of these Armenian cross-cultural ties came in the seventeenth century, when Shah Abbas I gave the Armenian merchants of New Julfa a monopoly over the Persian raw silk export trade. Shah Abbas's granting of trade privileges enabled Armenians to dominate the trade throughout the seventeenth century, and by mid-century they controlled seventy per cent of the raw silk trade.

In the Armenian quarter of New Julfa, there were two districts called "old colony" and "new colony" during the Safavid era. The Old Colony was mainly inhabited by Armenians emigrated from Old Julfa during the campaign of Shah 'Abbas in the early seventeenth century, while in the New Colony Armenians were forced to move from Tabriz and Erevan and to settle there in mid-seventeenth century. The latter was called Yerevanchi and Tabrizi.

As far as the Armenians of New Julfa engaged in silk trade, they passed through Azerbaijan Province to Armenia. They never

failed to visit northern Iran and Caucasus until the end of the seventeenth century.

Aside from Julfan merchants, Armenians of the Armenian Highland also were widely active in international trades. An Armenian merchant named Zakaria b. Aghamir from Agulis, a village in Nakhchevan, left his unique diary on his commercial journeys to Europe and Iran. He travelled not only to Erevan, Tabriz, Isfahan, but also to Erzurum, Tokat, Istanbul and Amsterdam throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century. In this paper I will trace his lifelong journeys based on his diary to shed light on the activities of Non-Julfan Armenian merchants in the Safavid era.

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Cultural interactions of Safavid Iran with European countries

As soon as Shah Abbas I (1588-1629) became the king of the Safavid dynasty of Iran, he intended to transform the capital city. Before that, during the reign of the same dynasty, the capital was Tabriz and then the city of Qazvin and finally in 1597-98 Isfahan became the capital city. A few years later, as a result of the forced deportation of the Armenian people organized by Shah Abbas, new Armenian settlement was formed in Iran, the most prominent center of it was Isfahan.

Jean Chardin, in his "Travel notes", mentions that investments were encouraged to develop the new capital, and shortly after, traders and factories from different nations settled in Isfahan and contributed to the revival of trade. With the arrival of Europeans and the trade connections of Armenian Khojas, the Safavid dynasty and painting of that period underwent significant changes and is considered to be an important period of Iranian Art and civilization.

From the point of view of understanding the Safavid dynasty, lifestyle, and taste and imagination in general, it is important to study the structure and decoration of the palaces of the kings and the mansions of the Khojas built in that period. The frescos painted in palaces and private houses can be a professional

source not only for Art historians, but also for historians, ethnographers and researchers studying Safavid Iran in general.

The artistic problems of the examined era will be studied: the adopted line, color, style, artistic solutions, decorative elements, etc. Such a multi-faceted artistic examination will lead to a deeper observation and evaluation of the cultural changes in Iran starting from the 17th century.

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Armenian merchants in local administration of the Caucasian regions incorporated in the Safavid state of Iran

In the period from 16th to 18th centuries with short intervals the major part of the Transcaucasian regions had been incorporated in the Safavid state of Iran. Although the Shiite Islamic laws on the whole did not allow Non-Muslims (or dhimmis) hold high offices in the state administration, however there were some posts where the representatives of local Armenian elite: the meliks and merchants managed to be confirmed without conversion to Islam. The meliks although being big landowners, received a significant portion of their incomes from trade, a fact reflected also in the royal decrees confirming their rights. The posts supposing close ties with trade were that of the kalāntar, the head of the town community and neighbouring Armenian villages; the heads of the mints (zarrābkhānah), the road-guards' and toll-house (rāhdārkhānah), also the post of the girākyarāq, the official in charge of the purchase for the households of shah and khans of the regions of Transcaucasia.

These officials in the provinces of Yerevan and Naxijevan were strongly connected with the transit trade conducted through the Caucasus and their posts were very useful for their own trade activities as well as that of their companions.

The research on the various sources of the period allows us discover the name and identity of some of those persons, who had filled such posts in the towns of Yerevan, Agulis, Tiflis, etc.

clear up also some details referring to their life and activities. The study of these details also helps us supplement the definitions of the functions of some of those officials and the peculiarities of the trade and economic relations in the region in general.

The highest post ran by the Armenian wealthy merchants in the towns and administrative centres of the Caucasus, was that of the *kalāntar*. This official appointed the heads of the handicraft guilds and the elders of the town blocks, regulated civil matters and problems, allotted the taxes of the artisans, merchants and trade companies. The *meliks* of the Armenian villages and some regions, being big landowners, and at the same time engaged in trade, also were subordinated to the *kalāntar*. Contemporary sources have kept information on the *kalāntars* of Yerevan, Agulis, Tiflis, Jugha, Zagam and Lori, who being outstanding Armenian merchants filled the post bearing the title of "*khvājah*" and "*melik*".

In Safavid state as well as in Ottoman Empire, often Armenian wealthy people engaged in trade and having close ties with merchandise, managed the work of mints. The post of the head of the mint (*zarrābī bāshī*) in Yerevan was also closely connected with transit trade through Caucasus, as the coins circulating in other countries needed to be reminted into local coins. We have Zakaria of Agulis's detailed information about the Armenian *zarrābī bāshīs* of the Yerevan mint in the second half of the 17th century which is supplemented with the data of the Armenian epitaphs. This information and data witness that the mint house had been mainly in the hands of the outstanding representatives of the Armenian merchants' class in the second half of 17th century.

According to Zakarya of Agulis his brother Šmavon was the head of not only the mint in Yerevan in 1658-1670, but also the

rāhdārkhānah and at the same time had been the khan's *girākyarāq*. Thus the latter had been a unique person among Armenian Christian merchants, who had much opportunity and privileges for successful trade operations. However, he had to face the religious pressure to adopt Islam and he died in Isfahan in unknown circumstances, leaving great debts. This could be happened in result of religious persecution exercised by Safavid government, who had become more intolerant in the period.

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King Vakhtang VI - between culture and politics

The topic is about the cultural activities of the King Vakhtang VI in terms of the political situation in the Caucasus in the first quarter of the 17th century.

In particular, we studied the printed products of Vakhtang's printing house - Codicology and texts.

A special attention is paid to the books which were printed after Vakhtang's returning from Persia and their comparison with the books of the early period. The most interesting book was the last edition of this Printing House - Horologion, in 1722. Until recently, this edition was known by the only copy (kept at Kutaisi historical museum). Nowadays, another copy of this book has been found in a private collection. The new copy is more complete version.

To compare of the data contained in the printed books of Vakhtang's Printing House gives us the interesting information about the cultural policy of King Vakhtang VI especially during the last years of his reign.

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Military-political confrontations in the Khanates of the Caucasus in 1768-1774 and Erekle II

In 1768, Fatali Khan of Quba together with Hussein Khan of Shaki took Shemakha. Soon, however, he also tried to subdue Shaki Khanate. For this purpose, Fatali offered King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti and Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh to campaign against Shaki Khanate. But they failed to get their consent. For his part, the Khan of Shaki asked Erekle II for help. The King demanded that Fatali Khan reconcile with Khan of Shaki and threatened to provide military assistance to Hussein Khan.

Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh also asked Erekle II for help in case of Fatali Khan's aggression. Thus, was formed the political union of Erekle II, Hussein Khan and Ibrahim Khan against Fatali Khan. The allies aimed at restoring the rule of Aghasi Khan in Shemakha, even on the condition of vassalage to Fatali Khan. In case of refusal, they intended to return Quba Khanate to its former borders by joining forces.

Russian government tried to limit the activity of Erekle II in the ongoing confrontation between the South Caucasian Khans. Nevertheless, in 1770, Erekle II sent an army to Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh to repel the attack of Fatali Khan. As a result, Fatali Khan's campaign to Karabakh ended in failure.

In November-December 1773, Avar Khan Muhammad-Nutsal IV, along with Hussein Khan and Aghasi Khan, campaigned to Shemakha. King Erekle helped Avar Khan with part of his army. Erekle II sent a detachment of Muslim Borchaly Kazakhs against Fatali Khan, in order to make the participation of his

subordinates less noticeable. But this did not go unnoticed by Russian intelligence.

At the same time, it is incorrect to name Erekle II as an ally of the Dagestani leaders united against Fatali Khan in the subsequent campaign of 1774. The King's participation in the hostilities during this campaign is not confirmed by any source.

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The Safavid documents as sources about history of the Armenian religious-justice and landownership systems in 17th-18th centuries

The religious and justice system occupies an important role in the social relations of that era in Iran. In *Tazkirat-al-muluk*, the positions related to the religious and judicial authorities and their duties are described in detail, among which, as a religious-administrative position, we refer to the explanations of the positions of Divanbegi (Minister of Justice), *şadr-e kâşşa* and *şadr-e ʿamma*.

The manuscripts related to the Safavid religious and judicial system reveal the judicial processes carried out during the Safavid period, which were naturally applicable in all areas under the control of Safavid Iran, including Eastern Armenia.

During the Safavid period, several types of land tenure were in operation, which were divided into four sections: crown (*kâşşa*) and state (*divāni* or *mamālek*) lands, *kâşşa-e šarifa*, *waqf* and *malik* or *arbabī* territories. Two other types of land tenure also existed in the Safavid era, which were called *teyuls* and *soyurgāl*.

From the point of view of the laws applied to *waqf* lands, manuscripts were preserved in the Library-Matenadaran after "Nerses Shnorhali" of the Holy Savior Monastery of New Julfa are important.

Comparing the information with the above-mentioned documents, it turns out that they complement each other and report facts about the religion and justice of the period, as well as the system of landownership. As a result of the study of the

documents, it becomes possible to be acquainted with the religious and justice, as well as the land ownership systems conducted by the authorities of Safavid Iran in the state administration system and towards the Eastern Armenian people, and the main features of their management policy. This process continued until the period of the decline of the Safavid era. Those sources enrich the history of Armenia in the given period with new data.

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The Caucasus in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire (17th-late 18th centuries)

The role of the Caucasus region as a crossroads of inter-civilizational contacts, interaction of ethnic, economic and geopolitical factors at the junction of Europe and Asia is extremely large. The real and potential meaning of control over the Caucasus went far beyond the very fact of physical possession of this territory. Isthmus between the Black and Caspian Seas allowed to control the space much larger than its own size. It is no coincidence that it was eternal "apple of discord" between external forces: either to fall under the power of the mightiest power at the moment, or to split into zones of influence.

The Caucasus and the North Caucasus in particular have always been strategically important direction in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire. It wanted to expand its territory and control the main military and trade routes passing through Caucasian-Transcaucasian region. In addition, control over the Caucasian territories gave unhindered access to the states of Central Asia and strategic trade communications through these territories, in particular the Northern route of the Great Silk Road. The presence of the Turkic-speaking population and the predominance of Islam over other religions in the Caucasus-Transcaucasia region opened the way for the gradual and relatively "peaceful" penetration of the Ottoman Empire into these territories.

In Turkish historiography, the Caucasus region is considered as a natural priority in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire, and currently the Republic of Turkey. Unlike the Russian and Western traditional interpretation, Turkish historiography perceives the Caucasus region as an independent political unit, therefore, the issue of Turkey-Caucasus relations is not always viewed only through the prism of Russian-Turkish relations. Modern Turkish researchers, of course, cannot bypass the Turkish-Iranian and Russian-Turkish rivalry in the Caucasus in their studies, but at the same time, the Caucasus region itself is not perceived by them as the territorial property of Russia. They also pay due attention to the history of certain peoples of the North and Western Caucasus, especially those that were of particular interest to the Porte as strategic allies.

The generally accepted point of view in Turkish historiography is that the beginning of the Caucasian policy of the Porte was the capture of Kaffa (Feodosia) by the Turkish fleet in 1475, which became "the starting point in the political orientation of the Turks to the Caucasus." However, the gradual decrease in the role of Iran as one of the contenders for a leading role in the region brought to the fore the confrontation between Russia and Turkey during the reign of Catherine the Great. It was during this period that the formation of the Ottoman foreign policy in the Caucasian direction began: the Porte established political, economic and military ties with the local population, setting it up against the first colonial attempts by Russia. In the future, the Porte actively used various elements of "soft power", for example, the Murid movement. Ottoman support for Sheikh Mansur's uprising provoked further development of the Muridism movement in the North Caucasus. Thus, the political penetration of Porte into the Caucasus in the 18th century was a kind of "test of the pen" before the Great

Caucasian War, in which the Ottoman Empire played a significant role.

In the paper, based on Russian and Turkish sources, an attempt was made to investigate the reasons that led to the advance of the Ottoman Empire to the Caucasus, as well as the features of the formation and concrete manifestation of the Porte's Caucasian policy in the period under study, sometimes echoing modern realities.

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Psycho-cultural Patterns of Toasting in Caucasus and Debate on the Roots of Feasting Traditions in Caucasus

In the recent debate on the origins of the traditional Georgian and Caucasian feasting some researchers insist that in the historical sources there is no mention of toasting system before 19-th century, so Georgian and Caucasian feast with elaborate toasts is an "invented" tradition and result of Georgianization of Russian Feast. Therefore, authentic Georgian feast before 19-th century is characterized as ritualized, but uncivilized and uncultured practice of material consumption - drunken orgy as in Safavid Persia, which becomes a "cultured" and spiritual domain only through the introduction of thematic toasting borrowed from Russian literature under Russian imperial and Stalinist totalitarian influence. Georgian and generally Caucasian guest-host relations as foundations of the Georgian banquet are seen by the followers of this approach as maintaining highly centralized, monologic and autocratic relations in society; so Caucasian hospitality is seen as undemocratic, due to mutually obligatory responsibilities for guest and host; thus Caucasian guest-host relations and Georgian supra are seen as contradictory to the establishment and effective functioning of civil society in Georgia (Caucasus).

Recent publications by the same authors again underline importance of toasting traditions in Georgia only from 20-th century as stemming from informal status of Georgian Supra as an institute of anti-imperial resistance but are neglecting religious roots. Georgian Sadgegrdzelo (Toast) was characterized

as an institution of domination losing its importance as a result of declining shadow economy in a separate article of World Informality Encyclopedia.

The aim of the article is to review ethnographic studies left beyond the view of aforementioned critics of Georgian Supra and to analyse religious elements of Caucasian alcohol drinking from ethno-sociological and anthropological view.

The paper presents a review of the 17-19th century travelogues by Guivanni da Lucca (1648-1650), Giudice Milanese (1631-1643), Christophoro Castelli (1640-1657), Volkonski and Khvatov (1637-1640), Tolochanov and Ilev (1650-1652), Teimuraz II (1763), Jacques Gamba (1821-1831), Eduard Eichwald (1825), which note authenticity of Caucasian and Georgian feasting traditions, comprised by the system of multiple toasts, elaborate ceremonial drinking (kneeling before and kissing after drink), chanting as part of toasting ceremony, participation of women and frequent toasting for women.

The paper also aims to discuss ideological aspects in recent publications on the roots of Georgian Supra tradition. It is shown that initiators of discussion from the beginning were making accents on ideological criticism of Georgian culture, which later became more differentiated and acquired new directions. During discussion the studies of Georgian ethnographers (Bardavelidze, Gotsiridze, Gambashidze), where ancient roots of Supra tradition were emphasized, were neglected. Compensatory theory of toast was based on only few historical sources and neglected importance of Supra tradition before 19th century and main factor of Supra - religious basis of tradition. Then historical roots of feasting tradition were neglected also for the whole Caucasus. Anthropological analysis of the historical sources reveals psycho-cultural and typological differences of drinking patterns between Georgia and Russia before 19th century. Alcohol drinking traditions in Georgia and Caucasus can be clearly attributed to

the "wine", "wet" drinking culture, where drinking is expected, but drunkenness prohibited. In such Integrated cultures rules, values and sanctions for drinking are well established and fit well in the whole culture, alcoholism is low. Travelogues by Augustin Maierberg (1661-1663), Nicolaus Witsen (1664-1665) and Jacob Reutenfels (1670-1672) confirm, that Russian drinking style can be clearly attributed to "spirits", "dry" drinking culture, where intoxication is the aim of drinking. The difference of alcohol drinking practices between Caucasus and Russia is noted by Russian researchers also.

In the article some elements of Svanetian traditional toast system are reviewed, namely connection between Svanetian toast "saruash" and Zoroastrian "Sarosh" is shown, which indicates the ancient roots of toast.

The strength of religious component of toasting in Caucasus can be confirmed by example of Guivanni da Lucca (1650), which describes his visit to Circassians, where the sons of the host were drinking alcohol kneeling on right leg. Drinking while kneeling on right leg was in tradition also in some regions of mountainous Georgia till the 30s of the 20th century. Modern Adyghe Circassians are ending each toast with a religious invocation "Amen", which signals the allowance to drink. In this way alcohol is sanctified and has a role of religious marker for the Adyghe Circassians.

The elaborate nature of the toasting rituals described in the writings of the travellers confirms mainly spiritual, Christian character of a traditional feast in the Caucasus and Georgia. The analysis of the recent debate on the roots of the Georgian feast reveals the ideological basis of that approach according to which the imperial context of the 19th century is the key to understanding the peculiarities of the traditional Caucasian feast as a cultural phenomenon.

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The issue of communications in the context of the South Caucasian policy of Turkey (the late of 19th and 20th centuries)

In the 19th century, the process of weakening and decline of the Ottoman Empire continued. It was lagging behind European countries in military, political, socio-economic and scientific-technical spheres. In such conditions, the Ottoman military and administrative-state system was weakened and as a result the Empire began to lose territories and her dependence on European countries increased. Part of the Ottoman elite understood that the Empire needs modernization and the renovation plans were adopted, which are well known by the name Tanzimat. However, it soon became obvious that the reforms had failed and the condition of the Empire had worsened. It should be noted that the modernization process which started in the Empire was under the economic and political influence of European countries. Besides, the major powers fought to gain concessions or economic advantages in various areas. Mainly Great Britain, France and Germany gained important advantages in different territories of the Empire. After the middle of the 19th century, communications, particularly the construction of railways, became an important part of the politics of the Ottoman Empire and European countries.

The goal of the research is to show how Turkey's policy has changed towards communications since the second half of the 19th and during the 20th centuries and it was presented in the context of Turkey's South Caucasus policy.

We have divided Turkey's policy related to communications, first of all railways, into three stages, keeping in mind both chronological boundaries and state policy. The first phase includes the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, until the end of the World War I. The second phase includes the period of the republic, from the declaration of independence in 1923 to the beginning of the 1990s, the collapse of the USSR. The third phase begins in the 1990s and practically continues until today, when Turkey made the issue of communications as one of the most important aspects of her foreign policy in the South Caucasus.

The first period is characterized by the fact that European countries began to invest in the construction of railways in the Empire. In the initial period, England and France had a great interest in the construction of railways, and in the 1880s, also Germany. During this period, the railways in the Ottoman Empire were mainly built by European companies and were financed by European countries. The first group of railways in the Ottoman Empire was built by British companies. British influence continued until the 1880s, when German interests in the Ottoman territories increased. During this period, the Ottoman government also sought to build railroads, which would connect the Balkans with the Ottoman Empire. This program is popularly known by the name "Rumeli Railways". The project was introduced by the Ottoman regime, but was mainly implemented by the Austrian businessman Baron Hirsch. The other was the Anatolia-Baghdad railway project, which was to be built by German companies. The main aim of the construction of the railway was to connect Baghdad with Istanbul and European cities. Essentially, this project was important in that, as railways would be built in the Anatolian part of the Empire.

The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire were of great importance for the railway construction policy. As a result of this war, the Kars region was

passed to Russia. Russia began building railways in the South Caucasus and Kars became an important centre. On the other hand, the Russians got the privilege to build railways in the northern part of Anatolia. It should be noted that Russia did not play a significant role in the projects to build railways in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the Ottoman leadership gave more attention to the Balkans and the Middle East, therefore the South Caucasus was not considered an important direction of their policy.

The second period begins with the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey. During this period, the Turkish government adopted a policy towards railways, which was fitting into the context of Mustafa Kemal's etatism policy. Enterprises, including railways, owned by foreign capital, were nationalized. As a result of the Turkish-Armenian war of 1920, Kars was passed to Turkey; therefore, a part of the railway created here by Russia came under Turkish control. However, not long after, the South Caucasus was included in the Soviet Union, so Turkey's relations with the South Caucasian republics were severely limited. A railway connection was established between the Soviet Union and Turkey, but Turkey had no opportunity to operate in the South Caucasus region.

The third period begins with the collapse of the USSR, as a result of which Turkey gets an opportunity to carry out activities in the post-Soviet region. The South Caucasus is becoming one of the priority directions of Turkey's policy. This region is of interest to Turkey in several ways. First, it should ensure the connection between Turkey and the Turkic countries of Central Asia. Second, ensure Turkey's trade and economic activities with Eastern countries, particularly China. Thirdly, Turkey will become a regional power by gaining influence in this region. It should be noted that since the beginning of the 1990s, Turkey put forward the idea of being a bridge country or a hub between

the East and the West, so communication projects, including railways, were greatly emphasized. Turkey initiated a number of projects, among which the Baku-Tiflis-Kars transport hub should be highlighted.

Thus, Turkey's policy regarding communications, particularly railways, has undergone significant changes over the past centuries. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Ottoman leadership did not pursue its own communications policy. This sphere was completely under the influence of the great powers. The Ottoman regime, in fact, did not conduct an active policy towards the South Caucasus region, which was part of the Russian Empire. During this period, the Empire's focus was mainly on the Balkans and Asia Minor.

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the policy on communications changed. Basically, Turkey started to conduct more active and independent policy. On the other hand, Turkey's policy towards the South Caucasus was limited, which was due to the sovietization of the region. There was a railway between Turkey and the USSR, but it did not provide extensive activity for the Turkish side.

Turkey's communications policy changed radically after the collapse of the USSR, when, among other fields, Turkey got a wide range of activities here. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey's aim was to become a bridge between East and West, thereby increasing her place and role in the region and the world, therefore, the South Caucasus gained importance in ideological, political and economic aspects. The problem of communications has gained great importance in the current geopolitical developments, which determines Turkey's active policy towards them.

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Democratic Reforms and Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Georgia

The first Democratic Republic of Georgia, in the act of independence, laid down the construction of a democratic, western-standard state. The situation was quite difficult, because the newly created state inherited the system that practically existed during the Russian Empire, the main principle of which was a strong monarchist structure and paid little attention to the rights of the conquered peoples, while in fact the goal was their assimilation.

Since Georgia chose the style of republican governance, democratic state building, the country needed to implement the entire cycle of reforms. In this regard, there were several important factors that should be paid attention to.

It was necessary to redistribute the power so that the people of specific regions would have the right to decide what was better for them. There were also problems in terms of education. In the Russian Empire, the issue of the language of the conquered peoples was given quite bad attention, and if we take into account the fact that Georgia was a part of Russia, no one obliged or provided opportunities for the representatives of other ethnic groups living here to study the Georgian language. As a result, the First Republic of Georgia got a situation where representatives of the ethnic minority lived compactly in certain

areas of its territory, but they did not know Georgian language, which made their integration into the state difficult.

The issue of ethnic minorities was also important in that their rights were spelled out in the Act of Independence, and to strengthen their situation, separate legislative and practical reforms were needed.

Of course, it is impossible to discuss all the details of the problems on this issue within the framework of one article, but the main essence of the issue is just that.

In order to organize local self-government organizations, self-government bodies, nations, whose members were chosen by the people, were formed. It was a significant step forward in the direction of democratization to give more rights to the people. However, there was still one flaw in this regard. The budgets of local self-government bodies and municipalities were still approved by the central government, that is, they had to be reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The purpose of creating local self-government bodies is, on the one hand, to increase the rights of the local population and give them the right to decide for themselves the issues necessary for their region, and also such a distribution of power creates a more flexible system. In this regard, the review and approval of their budget by the Ministry of Internal Affairs lost these advantages to a certain extent. The only justification for this decision can be that since the independence of the state was newly restored and there were many problems in terms of socio-economic or military defense, the central government wanted to have more control over the regions and in the initial stage to have more control over the reforms carried out by them or the decisions made.

The Act of Independence was the first and most important step to protect ethnic minorities and lay the foundation for a

state of modern, Western standards. At the legislative level, there was a guarantee that representatives of the ethnic minority would have the same rights to live and work in Georgia as ethnic Georgians.

According to the law of September 13, 1918, ethnic minorities were allowed to have their representatives in the highest legislative body of Georgia - the National Council. The number of representatives was one delegate for every 20,000 inhabitants. There was an exception: when the ethnic minority did not live in the country in such numbers, but they still had representatives, namely, Greeks, Germans and Jews. By this law, the representatives of the minorities themselves were given the opportunity to protect their rights. These delegates were chosen either by the national councils of these nations, or a representative who was elected to various institutions of the democratic republic was sent.

In Georgia, which was part of the Russian Empire for more than a century, it was perhaps easier to understand what rights should be given to ethnic minorities in order to avoid their oppression or harassment. For people who for some time actually was an ethnic minority, knew what problems one ethnic group might face while living in another state.

The approach of the Republic of Georgia to national minorities is precisely reflected in the speech of Akaki Chkhenkeli at the meeting of the constituent assembly in 1920:

"One's nation's happiness is another's happiness, and one's misfortune is another's misfortune. The prosperity of the state is the prosperity and enrichment of the minority. Every minority should be aware of this, so that there is no room for any misunderstanding and mistrust... The minority should understand that our republic is their republic and what hurts the state hurts them too.

However, only the mentioned laws could not create a perfect environment for the life of that part of the minorities who did not know the Georgian language, which is one of the best means of integration in an independent country. Therefore, a reform was carried out in the Ministry of Education, according to which the majority of the adolescent generation of ethnic minorities were given the opportunity to receive primary and, in some cases, secondary education for free. Also, 200,000 manats were allocated in the form of scholarships for Georgian and non-Georgian young people in regions. According to the data of 1920, there were 306 schools for ethnic minorities in Georgia: 81 Armenian, 66 Greek, 60 Russian, 48 Ossetian, 31 Tatar and 20 Abkhazian. The analysis of these facts clearly shows that the cultural and educational rights of ethnic minorities were being protected in the country, of course, based on the opportunities provided by the country's economic situation.

As for another important issue in the implementation of democratic standards in the country, it is the guarantee of free elections for citizens. In 1919, the elections of the highest legislative body, the Constituent Assembly, were held, in which all parties were allowed to participate, and the freedom of choice in this regard was not limited. This is perhaps one of the most visible examples of how the situation in terms of human rights changed after the Sovietization, when only a one-party system was established and citizens were literally no longer given the opportunity to choose.

The history of the origin of parliamentarism in Georgia is connected with the era of the existence of the democratic republic. The National Council, created on November 22, 1917, performed the function of the highest legislative body of Georgia after the independence of Georgia. On October 8, 1918, it was called the Parliament of the National Council. Although both the

National Council and the Parliament represented the highest legislative body, they were not elected by the Georgian people based on democratic election principles. The members of this body knew this very well. It was because of this that since the creation of the National Council, there was a political will to elect the highest legislative body in Georgia.

After gaining independence, a special commission was created in the National Council in a short time, which started preparatory work from June 28 to October 24, for the election of the highest legislative body, the Constituent Assembly. The election regulation was drawn up by the mentioned commission.

The elections of the Constituent Assembly literally covered the entire territory of Georgia, which gave the first Georgian supreme legislative body a completely legitimate character. At the same time, the first multi-party parliamentary elections held in Georgia, in our opinion, can be considered one of the most democratic elections in the world at that time.

The analysis of the mentioned facts clearly shows that, despite some shortcomings or economic problems during the reforms, the country was standing on the road to democratization and was gradually implementing the plans in this direction in practice. Although the existing party bodies in the country were not so newly formed and had experience, however, many problems arose in the process of forming the state, which could be a kind of novelty for them. They were not even given three full years to solve the problems on the way to democratization.

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Abkhazia in 1918-1921 (political aspects)

Today, Abkhazia has the status of an autonomous republic, although it is actually occupied by the Russian Federation. Abkhazia is governed by the *de facto* government. Its independence was recognized by Russia and, in exchange for various deals, by Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru and Syria.

Russia has been trying to separate Abkhazia from Georgia since the 19th century. For this, it used all possible methods: it stirred up separatism in Abkhazia, hatred between Abkhazians and Georgians, engaged in anti-Georgian, aggressive policy. The historical past of Georgia is being actively misinterpreted and falsification as it happened in the past. Many tendentious scientific works (S. Lakoba, O. Bghazhba, T. Achugba, D. Dbari etc.) were published in different languages. The *de facto* Abkhazian government opens Abkhazian cultural centers in various countries (e.g. Italy). Association "Europe-Abkhazia" was created. In July 2019, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, made a statement. According to him, Abkhazia and the so-called "Samkhet Ossetia" were historically independent countries and Georgia occupied Abkhazia and carried out the genocide of the Ossetian people in 1918-1920. The falsification of history continues aiming the recognition of Abkhazia, the separatist region, as an independent state and presenting it as the restoration of historical justice. Naturally, all this has a long-term goal - to finally separate Abkhazia from Georgia.

Historians face the need to objectively and thoroughly study the history of Abkhazia; therefore, the purpose of our work is to present the political situation in Abkhazia during the first democratic republic of Georgia (1918-1921). This article will touch the following questions: 1. The policy of the Russian Empire in relation to Abkhazia was the separation of the region from Georgia and the integration of the Abkhazian people into the political and socio-economic space of Russia; 2. Pro-Ottoman and pro-Russian forces carried out anti-Georgian separatist activities in Abkhazia; 3. General Giorgi Mazniashvili did not annex Abkhazia in 1918, as the Abkhazian and Russian historiography proves. 4. In 1918-1921, Abkhazia was part of the Democratic Republic of Georgia as an autonomous entity.

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Documents of the National Archives of Armenia from 1918-1920 on Armenian language schools in Georgia

The documents of the National Archive of Armenia serve as an important source for the scientific study of the history of the Armenian-language educational institutions in Georgia, and especially valuable is Fund No. 441 of the Armenian National Council of Georgia.

In the beginning of the 1918-1919 academic year the Government of the Republic of Georgia decided to nationalize the state secondary schools that were to be divided into Georgian, Armenian and Russian schools according to the language of instruction. By the decision of the Ministry of Education two secondary schools in Tbilisi, № II for men and № III for women were completely devoted to the Armenian pupils and in Gymnasiums № IV and № V there were Armenian departments. There were 2868 Armenian pupils at these schools. In addition to the state Armenian secondary schools, there were non-state educational institutions of the same level in Tbilisi - Nersisyan, Hovnanyan (Ananyan) and Gayanyan. In the Georgian capital in the 1919-1920 academic year there were 18 Armenian primary schools run by the city municipality. Including 11 elementary schools of the lower type: in Avlabar № I, IV, V and Oriordats, in Navtlug, in Kukia № I and VI, in Sololaki, named after Pushkin № II, Tsaturyan, Izmaylovyan.

Through the efforts of local Armenians, a private Armenian grammar school was opened in the city of Telavi. There were three state Armenian primary schools in Kvemo Kartli province.

Two in Shulaver and one in the village of Gushchi of Tsalka district, which was the only educational centre for 13 purely Armenian villages of the district. There were a total of 10 Armenian language schools in Javakheti province during this period. The public school of Velistsikhe (Kakheti province, Sgnakh district) had 115 Armenian pupils. Only two functioning parochial schools remained in the Borchalu region: in Aghbulakh (now Tetri Tskharo) and Durnuk. In August 1918, the Armenian National Council of Georgia decided to transfer the schools belonging to the local Armenian Diocese under its jurisdiction. The board of the school in the village of Kavtiskhevi (Shida Kartli province) agreed to subordinate the school, which was previously funded by the Union of Armenian Priests, to the Armenian National Council of Georgia, as the latter undertook the payment of the school's teachers. Gradually about 50 Armenian Folk schools came under the management of the Armenian National Council of Georgia. In August 1919 the Armenian National Council of Georgia adopted «The Statute of Armenian Folk Schools of Georgia». According to it, education started at the age of 7. In addition, starting from the 1919-1920 academic year the Armenian National Council introduced co-education of boys and girls in its primary schools.

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The political exile of the Transcaucasian Republics in 1920-1930-s: common interests and contradictions

After the Sovietization of the Transcaucasian republics (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan), the non-communist political elite of those countries (mainly the Armenian Dashnaktsakans, the Georgian Mensheviks and the Caucasian Turkic Musavatists) had to take the path of exile. Transcaucasian political organizations and figures were quite active in exile, especially in the 1920-1930s. All of them had separate and common arenas of activity. Common Transcaucasian problems, the prospect of a joint struggle for the restoration of lost independence, the question of choosing common allies and other related issues could unite the Transcaucasian political exile.

In 1921 the exiled leaders of the Transcaucasian republics and North Caucasian mountaineers signed a memorandum to jointly fight against the Soviet power. From 1926 in Paris, Caucasian political exiles (Georgians, mountaineers and Caucasian Turks) began to publish the magazine "Prometheus", the propaganda target of which was the creation of a unified independent Caucasian state based on the following principles: joint struggle against Bolshevik tyranny, united foreign policy, army, financial, monetary and customs system, communication, railway, post-telegraph union. In 1934 the Prometheans signed the Covenant of the Caucasian Confederation with almost the same goal, in which a place was allocated for Armenians. However, ARF Dashnaktsutyun refused to join the Covenant.

The Prometheans served especially anti-Sovietism as a common interest of the Transcaucasian countries. However, this approach besides being ineffective, also caused controversy. Pro-Turkism was offered as an alternative to anti-Sovietism, which was unacceptable for Armenians. In the same way in 1934 a place was also allocated to Armenia in the Pact of the Caucasian Confederation. However, ARF Dashnaktsutyun refused to join the Covenant, because the neighbors still did not want to accept the rights of Armenians regarding the Armenian territories under the control of Turkey.

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**Historical memory as one of the major factors in the
process of ethnic identity development (the case of
deported Meskhetians living in the Region of Samtskhe -
Javakheti)**

This article deals with the group known as "Deported Meskhetians" who were exiled from Georgia to Central Asia in 1944 and returned to Georgia in the 1990th. Nowadays they live in the various villages of West and South Georgia. The article is focused on the historical memory as one of the major factors in the process of ethnic identity creation (case of Deported Meskhetians living in Samtskhe-Javakheti region).

There are various narratives related to the ethnic identity of the Deported Meskhetians in the scientific literature, the Georgian public and even among the Deported Meskhetians themselves. Their origins cause different points of view. Some parts of the Georgian society consider them as the ethnic Georgians, who have changed their faith with the permanent pressure from the Turks and adopted Islam; but others consider them as ethnic Turks inhabiting parts of southern Georgia as a result of invasion.

The issue of Meskhetian repatriation was an official obligation and commitment of the Georgian Government. The above mentioned duty was obliged to the Georgian Government in 1999, when the country became a member of the European Council. There were discussions about returning the 425.000 Deported Meskhetians to their homeland. Georgia was required to adopt a law in two years, commence the repatriation in three

years and complete the program in twelve years. The Georgian government could not fulfill the obligation in the prescribed time. The Georgian government only passed the new law about repatriation on September 12, 2014 (Government of Georgia 2014) In spite of this, the problem is still very sensitive and not solved; therefore, one of the major troubles is connected to the perception of Meskhetians.

The analysis and reconciliation of the obtained data with the relevant theoretical viewpoints confirmed the validity of the main hypotheses formulated in the article. In particular, the obtained field material ("life stories" of the deported Meskhetians) shows that the history of the group, its historical memory is one of the important factors in terms of the process of formation, preservation, protection or change of ethnic identity.

The historical memory of the deported population is largely confined to the deportation act, which serves as a unifier between group members, although it is associated with different categories of emotion, confirming Wang's view that not all members of the group need to be traumatized or suffered. The cause of social trauma, at some point in time, will be widely shared by group members.

It has been proven that the historical narrative adopted and accepted by the deported Meskhetians plays an important role in the process of identity preservation, and the history interpreted by them is decisive in the perception of the ethnicity of themselves or members of a group. Although the history of the deported Meskhetians has been interpreted in many ways by both the scientific community and members of the group, there are still components / events in these historical narratives that act as a unifier for the deported Meskhetians.

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Iran-Caucasus ties from economical perspective

The lifting of international nuclear-related sanctions on Iran in January 2016 was enthusiastically welcomed by the Islamic Republic's neighbours in the South Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have hoped that Iran's rapprochement with the West and the unfreezing of some hundred billion dollars' worth of assets abroad would lead Iran to step up its trade and investment activities in the Caucasus, especially in the energy and transport sectors. However, the anticipated benefits have been slow in coming, as Iran has shown reluctance to fund infrastructural projects in the Caucasus. Re-imposition of the sanctions by D. Trump in 2018 was a decisive blow to such hopes. On the other hand, there have been positive developments in trade and tourism flows and the power transmission sector. On the whole, although Iran is interested in closer economic cooperation with the South Caucasus, it relies on the region's countries to provide the momentum and secure the resources necessary to achieve this goal. However, Iran's position in Caucasus, a region it sees as a part of its historical interests, is coming under tremendous pressure. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War underlined the need for Tehran to rapidly adjust its approach in light of Turkey's and Russia's growing power. Since late September 2021, when Iran-Azerbaijan relations hit a low point, Tehran and Baku have engaged in a process of de-escalation. Much of the focus is on expanding economic cooperation and advancing plans to establish pan-regional transportation links, such as the North-

South railroad corridor connecting India to Russia via Iran and Azerbaijan.

The article mainly seeks to examine Iran's economic relation with Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The first part analyses trade flows from the collapse of Soviet Union up to current post-pandemic period. Second part focuses on movement of people and its dynamics, especially tourism and work migration during aforementioned period. Third part pictures Iranian investment and cultural presence connected to it. Last part sums up Iran's economic position in the region and gives an outlook on the cultural exchange between Iran and Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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Some aspects of traditional culture transformation among the population of the Border Region

Cultural traditions are a phenomenon historically formed in the development process of an ethno-social organism and transmitted from generation to generation, which is the basis of the norms of relations between people in all spheres of life.

In the post-Soviet period, two different trends emerged: on the one hand, at the first stage, against the background of the cataclysms occurred in the 1990s, revival of the elements of traditional culture, on the other hand, a rather intensive process of transforming cultural traditions, under the influence of a new geopolitical reality, globalization, radical changes in the political and social sphere, introduction of modern communication and other types of technologies, etc. In the border region economic, cultural and other impulses coming from the neighboring country are added to this.

The paper discusses current situation among the Azerbaijani population of Kakheti, bordering Azerbaijan. Analysis of the field material showed that transformation is observed in almost all spheres of traditional culture. Over the past hundred years, this population has even changed its name.

In the South Caucasus, until the 1930s, to designate the Muslim population of Turkic origin the term "Tatar" was used; which had the same meaning as Muslim. It, gradually, acquired the meaning of ethnicity (Azerbaijani, Turk, etc.) and has survived on the existential level to this day. However, most Azerbaijanis perceive it as offensive and believe that since the

presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili, due to the discriminatory nature of this term, its use is punishable by law.

In Kabala community (Lagodekhi municipality), the descendants of traditional herders have turned to farming, and now greenhouses (mainly horticulture) and viticulture are main source of income for family farms. The food system has also changed. Georgian influence is especially vividly felt in the rituals of funeral repast, wedding, and Sunyat (initiation, which is considered analogous to Christian baptism). Numerous ritual feasts have become a tradition and were not restricted even under the Covid-19 pandemic. Sometimes as many as 500-700 people attended the wedding. The family would pay the fine for breaking the ban and then the bride danced with the fine receipt in her hand. The events, unfolded in the post-Soviet period, had an impact on the economic life, religion, social and gender relations, upbringing of children, education system, funeral rites, etc.

The material presented in the paper shows the introduction of innovative elements into everyday life under the influence of certain factors and at the same time the ability of traditional culture systems to resist complete abolition of tradition or immediate and radical transformation. At the same time, the analysis of individual traditional culture systems from chronological perspective shows that these changes can be of fundamental importance.

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The Importance of the North-South Transport highway for Iran¹

In 1999, a transport project was announced to connect India with the Baltic countries through Iran. The length of the India-Iran-Caucasus-Russia international transport route was supposed to be about 7,200 km. The representatives of the above-mentioned countries signed an intergovernmental agreement on the creation of the North-South Corridor in 2000 at the St. Petersburg. Later, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Syria, and Oman applied to join the agreement.

However, the route created at first sight for purely economic purposes turned into a political one.

After the 2020 Artsakh war, due to the advance of the Azerbaijani troops and the occupation of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, the width of the Armenia-Iran land road was reduced. The Armenian authorities constructed an alternative road. Nevertheless, this road does not have the capacity for the volumes of transportation of goods that would ensure the North-South direction.

In my opinion, the intensification of the activities of India and Iran to promote the Armenia's participation in the North-South route is connected with Pakistan's support to Azerbaijan during the 2020 war. However, the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem managed to push Armenia out of the North-South project

because the Armenian authorities failed to construct the Armenian part of the North-South highway, and because the width of the Iran-Armenia road was also reduced in the result of the 2020 war. Authorities of Armenia currently are carrying out work for the construction of the Armenian section of the Yeraskh-Julfa-Ordubad-Meghri-Horadiz railway.

A railway line from the Iranian border to join Armenia's existing railway system could have been an alternative. However, there has been no progress until now, mostly due to high costs and lack of investors. Plans to restore the railway link between Armenia and Azerbaijan following the trilateral statement on November 9, 2020, still have not been implemented. Azerbaijan and Turkey press for a 'corridor' to connect to each other and Iran is not in their priority plans. Therefore, the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway seems to be the only practical and visible opportunity for Iran to join a railway system linking with the Russian and European markets. This would increase the influence of Baku and further isolate Yerevan from regional trade.

Today, the authorities of Armenia face a serious challenge to do everything to have their place and role in North-South project, so that Iran considers the territory of Armenia as an alternative way to export goods to the European markets.

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Features of the economic policy of Turkey in Georgia and its consequences¹

Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, South Caucasus throughout centuries was at the epicenter of clashes of different civilizations, religions and states. The strategic location of this region attracted the attention of strong neighbors and at present moment global transformations, changing power relations in international relations have their direct influence on the political processes taking place in the South Caucasus. Turkey has also joined this great game, which actively reengaged into the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Understanding the importance of the energy resources of the Caspian region and the potential benefits from their transit, official Ankara is gradually turning it into a well-defined foreign policy priority and concept.

Georgia assumed significant role in the context of Turkey's regional policy. Not only did Turkey realize Georgia's crucial importance as a transit country of the Caspian energy resources, but it also viewed Georgia as a link with Azerbaijan and Central Asian republics.

In other words, after the collapse of the USSR, the issue of the lack of a direct border with Azerbaijan was the most serious problem for Turkey, and in this case, Georgia becomes a

“bridge” and enables Turkey to enter the Caspian region rich in energy resources. Based on these facts Turkey has been developing close relations with Georgia since and has successfully reached a high level of cooperation in almost all spheres. In the article has been analyzed the role of South Caucasus in the foreign policy of Turkey. Georgia, in its turn, began to view Turkey as a reliable political and economic partner both in bilateral relations and in the regional dimension. The main motivation for Georgia is its integration into the Euro-Atlantic alliance with the help of Turkey. In the report are analyzed Turkish-Georgian economic relations.

The foundations of bilateral Turkish-Georgian economic relations were laid down in two documents. The first of them is the Treaty on Friendship and Neighborliness (1992), which included an article on investments and protection of investment capital. The second document – the Treaty on Trade and Economic Cooperation (1994) was aimed at creating conditions for the expansion of cooperation between the two countries. Nevertheless, until the mid-1990s, the relations between the two countries did not differ in activity due to the internal political instability of Georgia.

The situation began to change from the mid-1990s, when Georgia became a participant in regional energy and transport projects. To advance its regional policy, Turkey has activated economic relations with Georgia. After all, in the period 1995–2003 the turnover between the two countries did not exceed 200 million dollars, and Turkey's direct investments in Georgia amounted to approximately 150 million dollars. This was due to the fact that Turkey at this stage was mainly interested in deepening military-political cooperation with Georgia.

After coming to power of the Justice and Development Party in 2002 the main goal of Turkey's new strategy is to include

¹ The work was supported by the Science Committee of MESCS, RA, in the frames of the research project № 21T-5F218.

neighboring countries in its sphere of influence, primarily due to the active development of economic relations. The internal political situation of Georgia also contributed to this. After the so-called "Rose Revolution" (2003), the country began to pursue a pro-Western foreign policy and in the context of this to expand relations with Turkey.

Analyzing the economic strategy of Turkey in relation to Georgia, we can come to the following conclusions. Economy is one of the main aspects of Turkey's foreign policy in relation to Georgia. Thanks to its active regional policy, Turkey managed to establish close economic relations with Georgia, thereby strengthening its position in the Georgian economy. As a result of close trade and economic relations and active investment policy of Turkey, Georgia was involved in the sphere of Turkish influence.

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The Arab-Islamic direction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy in transition: the main trends

The report discusses transformation and main trends of the Arab Muslim direction of the Azerbaijan's foreign policy since independence in 1991, its significance for Azerbaijan from the political, socio-economic and cultural point of view. Particular attention will be paid to Azerbaijan's policy of exporting the Artsakh/Karabakh issue to the Arab Islamic world, as well as the peculiarities of Azerbaijan's propaganda in MENA region. The transformation of existing insights to Azerbaijan in the Arab Muslim world will be analyzed, as well. The factors supporting and hindering Azerbaijan within the framework of the Arab Muslim direction thereafter are matter of interest. In general, the topic is important and actual for understanding the agenda of Baku's foreign policy from a regional perspective and leads to new conclusions. Research methods include digital anthropology, content and discourse analyses.

In early years of independence, Azerbaijan faced national security challenges from the Islamic world, which threatened to undermine Azerbaijan's internal public solidarity, the secular state and the regime. Particularly, Turkey, Iran, and some Arab Gulf countries used religious soft power, humanitarian and social projects to spread their influence in the region. Since 1993 when Heydar Aliyev took the power, Baku gradually managed to neutralize the main challenges, and improved political, economic and cultural relations with a number of Arab countries, including the Gulf monarchies. The rapprochement of relations with the

Arab Muslim world was the result of the consistent efforts of Azerbaijan, one of the components of which was the discreditation of Armenia and the Armenian World. By the way, all kind of speculations about Republic of Armenia eventually became not only the toolkit of Azerbaijan's foreign policy, but also the most important means for the regime to keep the power and consolidate the society against the enemy.

The Arab Muslim direction in foreign policy of Azerbaijan gradually acquired an importance. In the beginning of 1990's, Azerbaijan started the process of exporting the Artsakh issue to the Islamic world in order to get maximum support. Over the years, Azerbaijan developed close cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and became one of its most active members. In turn, the organization strongly defended Azerbaijan against Armenia not only within the framework of the organization, but also in various international platforms, relying on the idea of Islamic solidarity and geopolitical interests. In contrast to the former Soviet Muslim states, the integration of Azerbaijan into the international International Islamic family was quite successful because of Turkish unconditional support. Baku managed to present itself to the Arab and Muslim world by specific Islamic image. Azerbaijan being a secular state and society, considered itself a close part of the Islamic world and Ummah. It is noteworthy that mainly Shia oriented Azerbaijan was able to create favorable conditions for itself in both the Sunni and the Shia worlds whereas presented itself with completely different images in Turkish world or in the West. On the other hand, close cooperation with Israel did not hinder either. Azerbaijan quite successfully maneuvered between the centers of power. In fact, Baku diversified its identities, which contributed to foreign political achievements.

The transformation of ideas about Azerbaijan in the Arabic Islamic environment is also directly related to the discussing issue. Azerbaijan is not very popular state in MENA region. The 44-day Artsakh/Karabakh war meanwhile somewhat broadened the perceptions about Azerbaijan. From this point of view, it is important to understand how Azerbaijan is perceived in the Arab-Islamic environment, what kind of centers of power and states besides Turkey supported Azerbaijan in advancing the Islamic foreign policy agenda. Thus, Azerbaijan has demonstrated a long-term vision in developing strong cooperation with the region. It is my humble view that Baku in further will aggressively and consistently advance its national interest in different international platforms, particularly in MENA region.

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On the features of the ethno-religious identity of the Islamic community of Adjara

The Adjara Autonomous Republic is the only region of Georgia where the majority Muslim population is ethnic Georgians, most of whom are Sunni Hanafi Mazhabs. Islam in Adjara differs significantly from the Azerbaijani form not only by Sunni-Shia division. The historical process of Islamization, the religious dichotomy and the Georgian ethno-linguistic identity of the Adjarian people are of paramount importance in the context of the formation and establishment of this community and its participation in regional processes. I will try to briefly present the process and peculiarities of formation and development of identity of Adjarian Islamic community.

The mass conversion of the population in Adjara - Islamization was carried out during the reign of the Ottoman Empire (15th-19th centuries). Comparing the existing studies on the process of Islamization of Adjara, one can see that it certainly took place on both forced and voluntary basis, often with a combination of personal initiation.

Supporters of the thesis on the violent Islamization of Adjara claim that the process of conversion in Adjara has taken place with the destruction and burning of churches and monasteries, villages and cities, torture and oppression of population, executions and bloodshed.

According to the thesis of self-imposed conversion into Islam in Adjara, the first manifestation was observed among the nobility. Significant influence on self-imposed Islamization has

given the people of Adjara an opportunity to receive spiritual and military education in the Empire. Here they got acquainted with the Islamic environment, values and language, received a better education, which gradually affected their identity and consciousness, promoted their integration into the Ottoman socio-political environment, and advanced in the military and spiritual spheres.

With Batumi's transition to Tsarist Russia, Georgian intelligentsia, nationalists, and the Georgian Orthodox Church began to seek ideological grounds for the return of Muslims of Adjara to the Georgian national identity, using common values: language, culture, and customs. Already in the 1940s, historians and ethnographers in Soviet Georgia seriously engaged in the reconstruction of national identity on ethnic, linguistic and cultural basis, excluding Islamic identity, considering it as a consequence of the Ottoman past.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the interest in religion in Georgia increased and gradually Orthodoxy became an important component of national identity and ideology. The redefinition of religious identity has also occurred in Adjara, which has led to the conflict of «Islam-Christianity» in the inter-communal public sphere. The Georgian Orthodox Church with high state support has started to «encourage» religious minorities to convert.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey tried to increase its presence in Georgia, which, despite initial enthusiasm, was not understood by either the authorities or the newly formed nationalists.

Turkey's attempts at economic penetration faced serious obstacles in those years, given the infiltration of radical Islam and the threat of a possible return of Turkish invaders.

In 1992, the participation of 50 Adjara Muslims in Mecca for the Hajji marked the beginning of the Islamic revival in Adjara. A new system of religious governance, the Muftiat, was established. It coordinates the activities of the Muslim community, reconstructs mosques and madrasas, organizes and finances religious education of Adjarian youth, distributes Islamic literature and reassesses identity. Various Islamic movements also became active in Adjara in the 1990s such as Gulenists, Suleimanijil Tarikat, Mustafa Sunguri Tarikat.

The religious influence of Turkey is not limited to private initiatives, it has a well-developed concept of soft power policy, which is implemented by three major structures: the Office of Religious Affairs (Dinayet İşleri Başkanlığı), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Office (Türkiye İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi - TİKA), the Yunus Emre Centre for Turkish Culture.

According to various sources, today there are 180 mosques in Adjara (the number of churches does not exceed 40). There are 400 Muslim educational institutions.

As a result of our research, we can underline that the agenda of re-Christianization of Adjara is important for the Georgian government and the Church, because the region is a historic gateway on the border of Christian and Islamic civilizations. This is probably the only way to prevent the Turkish second try to takeover of Adjara, which, according to president Erdoğan, does not seem so unreal.

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China-South Caucasus: Cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative

The South Caucasus is an area of cross influences, where the interests of global and regional, old and new powers intersect. Russia, Turkey and Iran have traditionally had a significant influence on the SC, to which non-regional actors - the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) - have been added after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As for China, until recently, Beijing's interests in the SC could hardly be considered strategic compared to global actors like Russia, the USA and the EU. China's limited interests in the region, far from its traditional sphere of influence, non-border and not a foreign policy priority, were determined solely by its foreign policy goals of establishing cooperation with all countries of the post-Soviet area.

However, developments in the international arena since the 2010s have highlighted the geostrategic and geopolitical relevance and importance of the SC in terms of controlling Caspian Sea oil and gas resources, East-West, North-South security lines, trade crossroads and transport corridors. Based on the geopolitical realities of the region, especially its connectivity and transit capabilities, Beijing began to slowly but surely consolidate its political influence and growing economic role in the region. The SC, adjacent to the Middle East, is also important for Beijing in terms of confronting and countering threats related to pan-Turkist ideology and Islamic

fundamentalism, due to the presence of Xinjiang separatist ideology supporters among Muslims living in the region.

The rapprochement of relations with the countries of the region was also facilitated by the absence of historical wrinkles, China's advocacy of maintaining regional stability, the pursuit of the principle of non-interference in political conflicts and problems, as well as human rights, Eurasian integration issues, the development of trade and investment activities without political preconditions, etc. In practice, Beijing, unlike Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), has not sought to integrate SC countries into military-political or economic projects, or unlike the European Eastern Partnership, has not tried to involve them in democratic processes. Through Chinese educational and cultural projects, the use of "soft power" tools also contributes to the expansion of the Chinese presence and the advancement of geopolitical and economic interests in the SC region.

China's presence in the SC became more tangible when the attention of the traditionally active players there - Russia, the US and the EU - shifted to the Ukraine crisis, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the Iran nuclear issue, and when the countries of the region began to look for new economic partners in the background of the relative decline of Russian power in the region and the inability of Iran and Turkey to assume a more significant role. For the countries of the SC, China was perceived as an alternative force balancing Russia and the West.

The "Belt and Road" initiative (BRI) announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 became a powerful impetus for Chinese interests in the region, which includes four land and two sea corridors: the Economic Road of Silk Belt (EBSR) and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR). Of the three EBSR corridors, the middle one (China - Central and Western Asia - Persian Gulf

and Mediterranean Sea) is planned to pass through Transcaucasia.

SC countries actively support the BRI, as it is in line with their foreign policy visions of serving the region as a corridor connecting Europe to Asia. In addition to the modernization of transport and communication infrastructures envisaged by the BRI, the countries of the SC expect China's support in gaining access to new export markets, as well as potential sources of investment and financial support. China has already become one of the main trading partners of these countries: Azerbaijan's 4th, Georgia's 3rd, and Armenia's 3rd trade partner as of 2015.

As part of the BRI, in 2017, Beijing and Tbilisi, despite Georgia's declared course to join NATO and the EU, signed a free trade agreement, which was the first in its format in the entire post-Soviet space. Within the BRI framework, the Baku-Akhalkalak-Tbilisi-Kars railway stretching from the Caspian Sea coast to the Black Sea coast is also of great interest to Beijing, as one of the windows from Asia to Europe. Despite the vulnerability of Armenia's position in terms of participation in many regional logistics and energy projects, due to the fact that only two of the four neighboring countries - Georgia and Iran - have an open border, Beijing considers the Armenian direction a connecting link between EEU and Tehran.

In 2015, China signed documents (protocol, declaration, memorandum) with Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the latter's participation in EBSR. In April 2015, Georgia and Azerbaijan became founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In March 2017, the AIIB approved Armenia's application to join the financial institution. In May 2019, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's historic visit to three countries of the SC and the reaching of agreements on the

EBSR indicate that the SC can be part of the Chinese geopolitical mega-project reaching continental scales.

It is worth noting that Beijing's BRI is credited with ambitions to reorganize Eurasia under its umbrella to counter American influence. But Beijing's interests also collide with Moscow, which considers the post-Soviet territories its sphere of influence and whose EEU and Greater Eurasian Partnership strategy compete with the BRI. In order to avoid such a prospect, in 2015 Moscow and Beijing signed the agreement on the convergence of the BRI and EEU. The undeclared division of spheres of influence between the parties was also expressed in the geopolitical calculations of the two countries, according to which China willingly cedes defense and security spheres to Russia in return for freedom of action in SC financial and economic spheres that do not interfere with Moscow's interests. Thus, Beijing's actions can be evaluated as "preparatory work" or "diplomatic intelligence" in the SC, which can serve China's interests in various spheres of activity at the right time.

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Sunni-Shia current interactions in Georgia: foreign influences and "soft power" tools

The report aims to focus on the current Sunni-Shia interactions in Georgia, the challenges that probably will face Shia populated areas of the country caused by the dissemination of Sunni Islam (also radical). This reality necessarily has an impact on the security environment of Georgia and the region as well.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) war led to the shifts of the geopolitics and regional order in the South Caucasus. Within the framework of current transformations, the study of the Islamic factor in Georgia and the perspectives of its development are of great importance.

The report is going to discuss the following questions: what are the features of State-Shia community relations in Georgia? What kind of integration policy is implemented in the country's Shia community? What identity transformations are taking place among Shia at the current stage? what tools of "soft power" do external players (Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan) use in order to enforce their influence? Whether the trends of Sunni Islam are becoming dominant among the Shia population of Georgia? Does the enforcement of Turkey's influence, sometimes also mediated by Azerbaijan, lead to a weakening of Iran's position in the Shia areas of Georgia?

The three regional states, Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan, are trying to spread their influence in the Shia populated regions of

Georgia by emphasizing the economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious instruments.

Turkey and Azerbaijan consistently implement a "soft power" policy in the Azerbaijani populated regions of Georgia, the aim of which is to increase the influence of the Turkic element in those regions (as a counterweight to the existing influence of Iran).

The best tools for spreading Turkey's religious influence are the new generation of Muslim clerics who have received theological education at the highest religious institutions in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have superior religious knowledge, adequate preaching skills, and external support.

The expansion of the radical Sunni Islamic ideology also contributes to the retreat of traditional Shia Islam in the Azerbaijani populated regions of Georgia. Turkey, also using the Islamic tools, is trying "to push out" Iran of the ethnic Azerbaijani areas of Georgia, strengthening the frame of Turkish Sunni Islam.

For Turkey, Georgia has both geopolitical and geo-economic importance. It can serve as the shortest and most stable transit to the Caucasus and Central Asia. Within the framework of current balance of power in the South Caucasus, Ankara and Baku will continue to use all the possible tools - investment, cultural, religious, ideological and military - to keep their influence in Georgia.

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Caspian Sea issue in Iran-Azerbaijan relations: security and delimitation aspects

The report will discuss the issues related to Iranian-Azerbaijani relations in the Caspian Sea basin, in particular, the features of the foreign policies of the countries in this direction, will highlight the contradictions and dynamics of relations between them after the signing The Agreement of the Legal status of the Caspian Sea in 2018 between the "Caspian Five".

The collapse of the USSR disrupted the mechanism of Soviet-Iranian interaction in the Caspian. With the increase of the number of coastal countries, the Caspian Sea has transformed from a Russian-Iranian closed water space into a region of new geopolitical rivalry. The new independent states Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan received their national sectors in the Caspian Sea, and did not want to adhere to the previous Russian-Persian (1921) and Soviet-Iranian (1940) agreements. They advocated for the development a new legal status format of the sea and independent exploitation of hydrocarbon resources.

Due to its favorable geographical position, significant hydrocarbons, the intersection of transport corridors and a strategic springboard for pressure on Russia, Iran and China the Caspian Sea region became the manifestation of close interest of the leading world powers. For the Russia and Iran, the priority in the negotiation process for development the new legal regime of the Caspian Sea was to ensure security and preventing the military presence of non-regional forces. For Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the issue was considered in the

economic dimension, in other words, from the point of view of the extraction of energy resources and their supply to international markets. Thus, the new geopolitical realities that have developed in the Caspian basin prompted Russia and Iran to rebuild their security architectures and search alternative forms of interaction with the independent republics.

The most radical position regarding the determination of the new legal status of the Caspian Sea was Azerbaijan. Before the establishment of the new legal status Baku began to actively implement an "open door" policy, ensuring the inflow of capitals from Western oil and gas companies, getting involved in Western and Turkish energy projects bypassing Russia and Iran (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines). Iran became interested in its oil and gas fields in the Caspian Sea much later, as its oil and gas exploitation and revenues are mainly concentrated in the southern fields of the country. Tehran worked to preserve the framework of the previous regulations and advocated not dividing the water area into national sectors, was in favor of the principle of condominium (joint realization of resources and wealth) in the basin. At least he saw the solution of the problem by dividing the sea into five equal shares, 20% between five countries. Unlike Azerbaijan, for whose economic and political survival the exploitation of energy resources was paramount, Tehran firstly promoted the principle of not allowing the entry of extra-regional players, including in the form of energy corporations.

Despite some contradictions in the Iranian-Russian approaches, these states managed to fix the clause, in the Convention on the Legal status of the Caspian Sea, signed by the presidents of all the Caspian states in 2018, according to which the parties undertake not to provide their territory to armed forces not belonging to the parties (Caspian five).

However, the following consensus did not finally resolve the contradictions and problems at sea. Tehran will have to come to terms with its two neighbors, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. After the signing of the convention, sharp domestic political discourse and criticism of the Rouhani government that signed the document unfolded in Iran. Many representatives of Iranian experts and political circles continue to insist that Iran does not abandon its previous position on dividing the sea into five equal 20 % shares, despite the fact that, according to the 7-th article of Convention, the border of states is the outer border of territorial water. According to this principle, Iran gets from 11 to 14 %. Iran is the only country of the "Caspian five" that has not yet ratified the Convention.

The northern regions of the sea divided between Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan is based on bilateral and trilateral agreements; only the southern part remains, which Iran, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan should divide among themselves. It is important to note that, an active negotiation process has already launched between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to determine the starting points of their water borders and the principles of exploitation of disputed mines, and have tactile progress in this direction. However, Tehran and Baku have been arguing over the Alov-Araz-Shargh (Persian: "Albroz") oil and gas sector for many years, as well as the rich gas field "Sardar Jangal". The issues of demarcation of national parts and settlement of subsoil use disputes between Tehran and Baku and mutual obligations imply a rather complicated process, considering the problems that arise regularly in Azerbaijani-Iranian relations.

The Iranian side continues appeals to the lack of clear security guarantees from Azerbaijan and stresses the need to prevent the build-up of any foreign military presence in the

region. Azerbaijan maintains diplomatic, economic, and security contacts with two of Iran's key adversaries, Israel and Turkey. Azerbaijan's increase in naval capabilities, active military-political cooperation with the USA, Israel, Turkey, and recently Pakistan, fundamentally contradicts Iran's security and geopolitical interests and prompts Tehran to consistently strengthen its military presence at sea. After the 2020 war in Artsakh (Karabakh), Azerbaijan generally ignored the obligations under the 2018 Convention not to give up its water territory to the armed forces of third countries, and conducted joint exercises with Turkey at sea, which forces Tehran to regularly contain Baku, using diplomatic tools and statements by the military-political leadership that Iran will not renounce the use of force at sea. Those realities indicate an arms race in the southern part of the sea, as well as serious contradictions in Iranian-Azerbaijani relations, not excluding a possible military-political escalation between these two countries with external interference.

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On Some Armenian-Georgian Lexical Isoglosses

In this presentation, several Armenian-Georgian lexical isoglosses are examined from an etymological point of view. Here we do not discuss the obvious borrowings from each other which have been already examined by the previous researchers. Through a thorough linguistic analysis, we try to show that the chosen words, according to their phonological and semantical features, can not be borrowed from each other and hence come from a common substrate basis. Being two autochthonous languages of the region, Armenian and Georgian have naturally fed from a common source, which united the local languages and dialects of the tribes and the tribal unions which ever inhabited the region. In some cases, there exist quite reliable Indo-European etymologies for appropriate Armenian words, nevertheless, the Georgian cognate forms are obviously not borrowed from Armenian. In such cases, it is possible to assume the origin of the Georgian forms from the Nostratic protolanguage or from an intermediate language state, which, again, proves the autochthonous nature of the Armenian and the Georgian languages, as well as the ancient contacts which have existed between them. Besides, in rare cases, we have independent borrowings in Armenian and in Georgian from a third ancient language.

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**Tbilisi as a Literary Hero on the Threshold of a New
Century (according to Archil Kikodze's Novel "Southern
Elephant")**

Archil Kikodze's novel "Southern Elephant" was published in 2016 and is the first novel of the author. The main character of the book has no name. He is a former director who did not make more than one film because a stuntman died during the shooting of the second film. This event changed his life to a great extent. The story of the novel covers one day in the summer of 2016, when his childhood friend Tazo asks the narrator to lend his house "to take a woman". The main character leaves the house early in the morning and begins his journey through the streets of Tbilisi from Kiacheli 11.

In the novel, we meet different types of people who are an integral part of the narrator's life, whom he meets every day, both in the present and in his memories of the past. The latter enters the text gradually, together with the simultaneous stories of the action. Through his memories, the narrator takes us back to the recent historical past of Georgia, in the 1990s. It revives the post-totalitarian Tbilisi of the last decade of the 20th century with the stories of that time. In the background of all this, a new understanding of the history of Georgia is offered.

Of course, in addition to the Tbilisi stories of the past, the novel depicts the Tbilisi of 2016, socio-economic changes, as well as the characters of the "old time" who could not adapt to the new era.

Archil Kikodze suggests a metaphorical title for the novel. The metaphor is "unfolded" at the very beginning of the text, and we learn that the skeleton of a southern elephant was an exhibit of the National Museum of Georgia, in front of which the narrator and his best friend Tazo took a photo when they were children. This photo is behind the mirror at Kiacheli 11 during the development of the story. The photo is, as it were, the embodiment of the childhood paradise, which in many episodes of the novel gives the narrator strength and faith in life.

The author himself in one of the interviews, talking about the title of the novel, notes that he does not know exactly what the elephant can symbolize. However, he says that the skeleton of a prehistoric elephant should be understood as a symbol of a city that will never be the same again, and also a symbol of the people living in this city, who are on the verge of extinction, because they have changed together with the city and will never be the same again.

In my opinion, the title of the novel is a metaphor for the pasttime. According to symbolism, in Asia and Africa, the elephant has several symbolic meanings, one of which is the memory. From my point of view, this meaning should be actualized in the case of Archil Kikodze's novel. The southern elephant skeleton "stores" information about the narrator and Tbilisi in general. This "stored" memory is the force that defines the lives of the characters and, at the same time, restores the narrator's life force and faith.

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