

PRO GEORGIA
JOURNAL OF
KARTVELOLOGICAL
STUDIES
N^o 28 — 2018

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PRO GEORGIA
JOURNAL OF
KARTVELOLOGICAL
STUDIES

№ 28 — 2018

(Published since 1991)



CENTRE FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW
WARSAW 2018

Cover: St. Mamai, Gelati Tondo (silver, gilt silver), 11th century

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PRINTING: Duo Studio

ISSN 1230-1604

Edition of 500 Copies
The printed version is the basic version of the journal

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IVANE JAVAKHISHVILI
(1876-1940)

Georgian historian and a linguist
founder of Tbilisi State University (1918)

Photograph from the National Archive of Georgia

OSSETIANS AND GEORGIANS IN KAZBEGI REGION HISTORIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES¹

by Lavrenti Janiashvili
Tbilisi State University

According to a modern administrative-territorial division Kazbegi municipality unites historical Khevi, Truso (located in the upper reach of the Tergi Valley; nowadays a depopulated ethnographic region) and a small part of Mtiuleti to the south of the Jvari Pass (Gudauri resort and nearby settlements). The main part of the region (Khevi and Truso) is situated beyond the Watershed Ridge of the Caucasus and is bordered by Russian Federation (Ingusheti and North Ossetia) to the north of the Dariel Pass; It borders on the historical Dvaleti with the Truso gorge in the west, the so-called South Ossetia in the southwest, Mtiuleti and Gudamakari in the south and Khevsureti with the Sno gorge in the east.

Ossetians lived together with Georgians in Kazbegi region until the end of the last century. Nowadays this region is almost empty from the Ossetian population due to their migration. The present ethno-demographic situation is tightly linked to the strict natural environment, difficult economic situation and its location in the border area. Relatively easy communication with North Ossetia, economic benefits, comparatively accessible education and intensity of relative and friendly ties conditioned migration not only of Ossetians but also of Mokheves (autochthon Georgians of Kazbegi region) to the north.

Over the last years, the keen interest of the Russian/Ossetian and Georgian media was focused on the Ossetians, migrated in the last century from Kazbegi region to North Ossetia (the Russian Federation) and their abandoned villages. On the one hand, the Ossetian side, mainly the representatives of the de facto government, several researchers and journalists declare,

The article is written within the framework of the project: Perspectives of Georgian-Ossetian relations in Kazbegi region, Financed by the Rustaveli National Science Foundation.

that “The territory, adjacent to Tskhinvali region is the Ossetian property and it will also be freed from Georgians”²; on the other hand, the Georgian media and some experts consider that Kazbegi region has become a potentially dangerous place where new Russian aggression is expected under the pretext of the return of the Ossetian “refugees” from Kazbegi region. This situation inspired a group of researchers to accomplish the scientific project “The perspectives of Georgian-Ossetian relations in Kazbegi region”.

According to historical sources, Tsanars were aboriginal inhabitants of the region in the second century, who lately plaid an important role in the struggle against Arab invaders and in formation of Kakhetian Principality.³ There are different suppositions about Tsanars’ ethnic origin in scientific literature. Part of researchers consider them of Svan (N. Mari, S. Kakabadze, J. Gvasalia) or Chaldean-Chan (T. Papuashvili) origin, and part regard them as the North Caucasian-Vainakh (V. Minorskiy, A. Genko, A. Novoseltsev, A. Mkrtumian) or Dagestanian (V. Bartold) origin.

In the early feudal epoch Tsanars defended Georgian Kingdom from the North Caucasian nomad invaders and acted as organizers of the Georgian political unit - The Kakhetian Diocese. Architectural monuments preserved in the territory of their settlement are by all signs similar to the Kakhetian monuments of the same period. As for the epigraphic materials, they are totally Georgian.⁴ All these evidence that Tsanars, by the time of Arabic invasions, completely and inseparably belonged to the Georgian ethno-cultural world.

Since the 13th-14th centuries, Dvals (an ethnographic group of Georgian origin) penetrated near the source of the Tergi River - the present day Truso gorge. Initially it could have been a natural migration, when excess population started reclaiming the upper reaches of the Terek River. From the 16th century this process intensified. Ossetians driven out from the North Caucasian valleys by Mongol invaders, settled in the Caucasian highlands including Dvaleti and oppressed the native population, who moved to other parts of Georgia and preferably to the neighboring Truso gorge. The first

С. К о з а е в, *Вопрос Восточной Осетии не снимается с повестки дня*, <http://osradio.ru/obshество/91476-obshество.html>; М. Ч е р н о в, *Границы Осетии должны быть пересмотрены*, <http://expert.ru/2013/08/21/granitsyi-osetii-dolznyi-byit-peresmotrenyi/> voskanapat.info; А. Т у а е в а, *Трусоское ущелье. почему оно за границей?*- http://iratta.com/materials/sovremennost/48-trusovskoe_ushhele_pochemu_ono_za_granicejj.html/.

М. Л о р т к и п а н и д з е, *feodaluri saqarTvelos politikuri gaerTianeba*, Tbilisi 1963, pp. 139-150; Т. Р а п у а ш в и л и, *ranTa da kaxTa samefo* (VIII-XI ss.), Tbilisi 1982, pp. 26-53.

Т. Р а п у а ш в и л и, *ranTa da kaxTa samefo* (VIII-XI ss.), pp. 50-53.

contingent, driven from Maghran-Dvaleti seems to have occupied initially the area before Kasara. Lately, oppressed by Ossetians, they moved even more to the east, along the Tergi Valley⁵.

In the 17th century Ossetians came to the source of the Tergi River and the process of assimilation of the Dvals began. More lately they occupied the territory to the east before the village of Kobi. Simultaneously, Ossetians settled in several villages of Khevi (Kobi, Achkhoti, Ukhati, Toti). The initiators of their settlement are often considered the promoted Georgian families of Ghudushauri and lately Kazbegi.⁶ By some Ossetian specialists, Dvals which were completely assimilated by Ossetians are considered to be a tribe of Ossetian origin⁷.

The royal court could not pay proper attention to mountainous regions after dissolution of the united Georgian kingdom. Political disintegration, economic isolation and limited communication characteristic of the feudal epoch, created an opportunity to strengthen the local community governance. Ossetians gained ethnic dominance in Truso and even formed a separate territorial community⁸; though, politically the Truso gorge stayed within the space of the Georgian state. Lately, the region of contemporary Kazbegi municipality was joined to the principality of the Aragvi Eristavs, and in 1743 the Georgian Royal court directly subordinated it.⁹

By the time of the Russian supremacy in Georgia, the Ossetians, living in the upper reach of the Tergi River were totally integrated into the Georgian social-political milieu and actively participated in the ongoing processes. The situation definitely changed from the 19th century after the Russian dominance in Georgia. Initially, the uprisings of Ossetians against Russian dominance were systematic and irreconcilable. They fought against Russian Rule side by side with Georgian insurgents. Later Russia managed to

⁵ Vakhushტი Batonishvili, aRwera samefosa saqarTvelosa, qarTlis cxovreba, IV, Tbilisi 1973, p. 647; R. Topchishvili, dvaleTi da dvalebi, Tbilisi 2016, p. 50; V. Itonishvili, dvalebi da dvaleTi, II, Tbilisi 2016, p. 86; Itonishvili, Temi da Temobrioba saqarTveloSi, Tbilisi 2017, p. 43.

⁶ V. Itonishvili, moxveebis yofa-cxovreba, Tbilisi 2016, pp. 40-50.

⁷ З.Н. Ванети, *К вопросу времени заселения Юго-Осетии*, Изв. Юго-Осет. НИИ АН Грузии, 1936, вып 3, pp. 270-278; Ю. А. Дзидцойты, *Диалектология и древняя история Южных Осетин*, Ю. С. Гаглойти, *Сарматы и Центральный Кавказ. Тезисы докладов на конференцию по осетиноведению*, под редакцией А.А. Магомедова, Владикавказ 1994, pp. 58-59.

⁸ A. Kazbegi, xevisberi goCa, Txzulebani, Tbilisi 1985, pp. 619-622; V. Itonishvili,

⁹ Temi da Temobrioba saqarTveloSi, p. 45.

¹⁰ G. Togoshvili, saqarTvelo-oseTis uerTierToba XV-XVIII ss., p. 195;

¹¹ I. Bagrationi, qarTl-kaxeTis aRwera, Tbilisi 1986, p. 35.

entice hostile Ossetians and used them as a political weapon in the great Caucasian confrontation¹⁰.

There are different suppositions in the Georgian and Russian/Ossetian historical societies concerning the question of ethnogenesis of Ossetians, their political history and settlement in Georgia. Migration of Ossetians to Georgia and the stages of their settlement are the subjects of bitter debates. In the 20th century a part of Ossetian specialists considered the 3rd-4th or 6th-7th centuries the oldest periods of Ossetian migration¹¹; others supposed that the first period of their infiltration in Georgia was connected to Mongol dominance in the North Caucasus. There were attempts, based on genealogies of Ossetian family names, to attribute their migration to the 15th-16th centuries. The results of investigations of some Georgian and Russian researchers corroborate that the settlement of Ossetians in the mountainous part of Kartli occurred in the 17th century and their migration to western Georgia – in the 18th century.¹² Compact settlements appeared gradually in the northern part of Shida Kartli, in the valleys of the rivers Liakhvi and Ksani, though the majority of Ossetians dispersed throughout Georgia.

For the whole period of the 18th century, Ossetians actually didn't live in the villages of Kartlian foothills. Migration of Ossetian there (mainly in destroyed villages) began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In this period Ossetians occupied considerable part of the foothills of the Patara Liakhvi valley. Since that period and especially in the first decade of the 19th century, there was an individual migration of Ossetians from the mountainous part of Shida Kartli to the villages of its foothills and

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Kh. К о к р а ш в и л и, ruseTis politika Sida qarTlis mTianeTsi, saqarT-velo-ruseTis urTierToba XVIII-XXI saukuneebSi, II, Tbilisi 2016, p. 10; М. Т к а в а ш в и л и, *Русско-осетинское противостояние в Грузии в начале XIX века, Некоторые вопросы истории осетин Шиды картли*, Tbilisi 2010, pp. 218-251.

М. Б л и е в, *Южная Осетия в коллизиях Российско-Грузинских отношений*, Москва 2006, p. 11; Ю.С. Г а г л о и т и, *Сарматы и Центральный Кавказ*, pp. 44-46; Б.В. Т е х о в, *этнической принадлежности создателей кобанской культуры Центрального Кавказа, от скифов до осетин, Материалы по осетиноведению*, Москва 1994, pp. 44-46

Е.Г. П ч е л и н а, *Краткий историко-археологический очерк страны Ирон-Хусар, Материалы по изучению Грузии: Юго-Осетия*, Tiflis 1925; В.И. А б а е в, *Осетинский язык и фольклор*, Москва 1959; B. G a m k r e l i d z e, kudasros xeoba, VIII, 2003; G a m k r e - l i d z e, osTa gansaxlebis sakiTxisaTvis saqarTveloSi, osTa sakiTxi, Tbilisi 1996; G. Ч х и к о в а н и, *dasavleT saqarTveloSi osTa Casaxlebis sakiTxisaT-vis (raWa)*, 2003; N. A b k h a z a v a, *kulturul-eTnikuri procesebi Sida qarT-lis Crdilo-dasavleT nawilSi uZvelesi droidan gvian Sua saukunee-bamde (arqeologiuri masalebis mixedviT)*, osTa sakiTxi, Tbilisi 1995.

Р. Т о р ч и ш в и л и, saqarTveloSi osTa Camosaxlebis da Sida qarTlis eTno istoriis sakiTxebi, Tbilisi, 1997, pp. 21-23; B. G a m k r e l i d z e, kudasros xeo-ba, VIII, 2003, p. 155.

plains.¹³ There are different opinions on the history of creation of South Ossetian administrative unit in Georgia. It's worth mentioning, that the terms South and North Ossetia are not stated in written sources until the 19th century. This term appears only after Georgia annexed to Russia. In their reports to the emperor the Russian military officers refer the territory inhabited by Ossetians in Liakhvi mountainous regions as Ossetia", "Georgian Ossetia" or "Kartlian Ossetia" (1812-1837). Then a binary opposition "South Ossetia –North Ossetia" appeared. In the 1840s the "Ossetian district" was established in Georgia. This served as the basis for naming the territorial-administrative unit created by the Bolsheviks in Shida Kartli as the South Ossetian autonomous district.

It should be mentioned that the field ethnographic materials of the ethnographers: B. Kaloev, Z. Vaneev, L. Chibirov and others, give definite information to specify the period of resettlement of Ossetians in the upper reach of the Tergi Valley. However, when interpreting the material the same authors are usually tendentious which is reflected in their conclusions. These conclusions formed the basis for new false ethno-genetic conceptions.

Georgian and Ossetian authors come to radically different conclusions owing to diverse interpretation of one and the same archeological data, written sources and ethnographic materials. In order to corroborate statements about Ossetians indigenusness the most Ossetian authors are compelled to search for new conceptual basis for argumentation and comprehend distinctively the archeological material due to scarcity of written sources. The process of creating new Ossetian mythologemas is noticeable. Even comparatively moderate historians (for example Mark Blied) avoid exact quoting, fearing that Georgians will destroy the historical sources stored in Georgia¹⁴. However, these publications are cited already by other authors. Thus, it seems as though the work is based on a solid scientific sources. Such publications are apprehended negatively by the Georgian society aggravating negative attitudes, whereas in Ossetians it strengthens the feeling of national pride and sense of historic distinctiveness and makes them lose the desire to compromise. In this situation, the idea of restoration of "historical Ossetia" and re-turning "old lands", primarily Kazbegi region and the Ghuda gorge became popular, which significantly reduces the perspectives of resolution of the Ossetian question.

In the 20th century, intensive migration proceeded in present day Kazbegi municipality. On the basis of scientific literature and field ethnographic material obtained in the targeted region, the economic, political and ethno-cultural factors determining the Ossetian migration can be identified.

Animal husbandry (mostly sheep breeding) and agriculture with preference of cattle breeding were traditionally the main fields of farming in this region. Alternation of winter and summer pastures is not proved before Russian dominance in Georgia. The main reason was the difficult accessibility of winter pastures. In the Kakheti valley Kazbegians failed to compete with Tushs, who had tight economic contacts with Kakhetians, and the population of the foothill zone in winter pastures of Kartli. Keeping of many sheep in cattle shed was almost impossible. If a family possessed more than two tens of sheep they had to care about contacts with the low-lands¹⁵.

The potential of sheep breeding enhanced significantly when after the Russian rule the use of the winter pastures of the North Caucasus became possible. Since the 1870s -1880s, the population of Khevi and Truso extensively used the winter pastures of Chechnya and Kizlyar, where they kept their sheep from October till the end of April. The share of cattle breeding was enhanced in the Soviet period. Sheep flocks of collective and private farms were pastured intensively in mountains in summer and in northern valleys in winter. In the 1930s the economic environment of the region was changed drastically due to collectivization. Livestock which was mainly in private ownership before, was nationalized and became the property of collective farms. As a result the profitability of this economic field was enhanced. Herewith transformation of symbiotic forms of farming proceeded systematically, which reduced the share of agriculture in the mountainous zone and limited the usage of arable lands for individual farmers. Under the Soviet labor organization the forms of mutual aid that have existed for centuries were forgotten gradually. As a result of increasing the share of mechanization, the use of old agricultural tools in the field was limited.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the definite raise of income, the harsh climate of Kazbegi region, bad communal conditions and less available education conditioned high intensity of Ossetian migration to North Ossetia. The migrants were mainly Ossetians, because there already existed a springboard of

V. I t o n i s h v i l i, *moxveebis yofa-cxovreba*, Tbilisi 2015, pp. 43-44.

G. J a l a b a d z e, *miwaTmoqmedeba Tergis xeobaSi, saqarTvelos saxelmwi-fo muzeumis moambe*, 22-II, Tbilisi 1961, pp. 201-202; V. I t o n i s h v i l i, *centraluri kavkasiis mTielebis saojaxo yofa*, Tbilisi 1969, p. 224.

Ossetians immigrated in 1944, they had tight relative ties with. The Ossetian settlements of the region gradually got emptied.

This process was especially evident in Truso. Hard living conditions and less perspective of social-economical development made people search for labor and housing in North Ossetia. Massive constructions of new types of houses started in the 1960s along the Military road; but this did not happen in the Truso gorge. The Living, farming, defensive and religious buildings in Truso, which is nowadays totally depopulated, evidence that since the 1960s nothing has been built there. Unlike the Khevi villages, gasification of the Truso gorge was not accomplished.¹⁷ This increased the desire of population to improve their living conditions and leave the woodless area. It could be said that the possibility of comfortable housing in Orjonikidze served for population of the Truso gorge as an important motivation.

The change of ethno-cultural vector, implying replacement of Georgian orientation with Russian, promoted migrational aspirations of Ossetians. Prior to Russian hegemony the integration of Ossetians into the Georgian world occurred naturally, which implied gradual assimilation of components of the Georgian material and spiritual culture. Until the 1970s, the family names of the majority of Truso and Kobi population ended in suffix -shvili as in Georgian surnames. Lately the tendency of replacement of the Georgian anthroponomical model with the Russian one was noticeable. The number of family names with Russian endings (suffixes -ov -ev) increased.¹⁸ Since 1905 the liturgy and church registers were conducted in Russian. It was planned to replace the Georgian language by Russian as Lingua Franca and change the political, economic and religious vectors focused on Georgia in favor of Russia.

After the collapse of the Soviet regime, on the background of the radical political, economic and demographic transformations, the scale of sheep breeding was reduced significantly. The winter pastures of the North Caucasus, due to the locked borders with the Russian Federation, were inaccessible. The economically unproductive Truso gorge was totally depopulated; but in turn Mokheves, who were oppressed by Ossetian refugees - the migrants from Tskhinvali region, started massive immigration from North Ossetia.

In the 1990s diminishing of animal husbandry made the local population of the region to seek alternative sources of income. As Khevi vil-

V. I t o n i s h v i l i, *xevi Zvelad da axla*, Tbilisi 1967, pp. 66-75.

saqarTvelos erovnuli arqivi, f. 254, p. 436; saqarTvelos erovnuli arqivi, f. 489, p. 46.

lages were provided with free natural gas, the locals started development of private greenhouses, where cucumbers and tomatoes were grown. Mokheves were basically occupied with this business, though Ossetians, migrated from Georgia to North Ossetia were actively occupied in trading relations and became the main distributors of production into Russia.

Soon appointing the limits on free gas by the state, greenhouses lost their actuality, but as my respondents notice, Ossetians have maintained friendly and business relations with Mokheves until today. The change of the economic profile of the region was painful for all social layers of the population. Animal husbandry and agriculture is unable to provide perfectly the life of local population. Tourism remains to be the only prospective sector in the region, though the number of people occupied in tourist business is not large. In such conditions most people believe that the prospect of returning Ossetians in the Truso gorge is doubtful. Moreover, the new direction of agricultural contacts is evident, which is linked to seasonal transhumance from Kazbegi region to the lowlands of Eastern Georgia. For the last period, besides Mokheves Azeri herd-ers from Iormughanlo also use the summer pastures, and the most sheep flocks of Kazbegi region are moved to the winter pastures in Kvemo Kartli valleys. And the Ossetians themselves, the former residents of Truso, rarely visit their dwellings, places of worship and ancestors graves even in summer.

The Georgians and Ossetians of the region were involved in long-term mutually beneficial cultural and economic relations. Usually in ethnically mixed villages Ossetians and Georgians had common shrines and sanctuaries, they celebrated their religious festivals together and performed cult practices within the same space and at the same time. In mono-ethnic villages Georgians came to visit their Ossetian friends and relatives and vice versa at each other's religious festivals. The influences of confessional, ethnic, social-economic factors and state institutions determined the character (syncretism, unification, nationalization etc.) and dynamics of these rituals. The study of mutual sacred places is important for determination of direction of their migration, since the Georgian highlanders, wherever they migrated, almost universally retained the habit of visiting the sacred places of their ancestors at festivals of their pagan shrines and participate in religious rituals.

Field materials evidence that the number of Ossetian visitors to traditional festivals is decreasing for the last period. Presumably, most of them replaced old festivals with rituals typical of the new environment. Trans-

formation of political, economic and ethnic environment has been clearly reflected on traditional rituals. “Vachiloba”, which used to be the festival of Ossetians, living in Toti, nowadays is celebrated by Georgians, settled in neighboring village, they are the main actors (Dekanoz - priest at pagan shrine, flag bearer, feast leader etc.) and Ossetians have the guest status. The individual elements of the ritual have been modified (for example to the sacred place they bring the state flag of Georgia, instead of a specially designed traditional flag), women sit with men at the table and etc. It could be said, that the nature of transformation of the above mentioned traditional rituals, is closely linked to the concrete local socio-economic and political changes on the one hand and the general socio-cultural tendencies in the world on the other.¹⁹

Definite developments were peculiarly depicted on the Georgian-Ossetian relations in Kazbegi region: massive migration of Ossetians to the North Caucasus from the 1940s to former settlements of the Ingush people, deported from their homeland in 1944; the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in Tskhinvali region; declaration of a visa regime by Russia and giving definite privileges to the population of border region; the Russian - Georgian war in August, 2008; transformation of Russian policy after this war etc.

Mokheves distinguish between North Ossetians, the so-called “Irons” and “Kudatses”, those migrated from Tskhinvali region and other territories of Georgia to North Ossetia. Interviews manifested the negative attitude of majority of Mokheves towards the last group. They consider Ossetians of Tskhinvali region to be aggressive and unfair. It’s worth mentioning, that according to Mokheves, North Ossetians have a similar attitude towards “Kudartses” and the relations between them are not so good.

Integration of individuals and ethnic groups under the conditions of prolonged relations is accompanied by their cultural modification i.e. acculturation, when the primary cultural paradigm of both groups more or less change and in the result definite cultural unification occurs. Usually this process goes independently and is characterized by transformation of orientations in values, role behavior and social attitudes. Therefore, it’s not surprising that in the opinion of some interviewees Kudartses are on much higher cultural level than North Ossetians, as they underwent influence of Georgian culture and adopted many cultural elements. They think that after migration of Ossetians of Tskhinvali to the north, the culture of North Ossetians, which was far behind and pagan, “upraised”.

19 L. Janiashvili, *osta sakitkhi kazbegis regionshi*, Tbilisi 2017, pp. 66-80

Personal assessment of Ossetians revealed that they are regarded mainly as tradition followers, friendly, hospitable and respectful for the elderly people, though comparatively minor part considers them to be untrustworthy, less cultural and aggressive.

The following picture was depicted concerning the perspectives of Georgian-Ossetian coexistence in Kazbegi region: a 46% of interviewed population consider impossible returning of migrated Ossetians to their dwellings; a 27% think about their partial return (e.g. in summer), though according to the majority, it can occur only if political circumstances change (free will of the government, allowing them to transfer their cattle etc.) or improvement of the housing conditions. According to the absolute majority of respondents (Georgians and Ossetians) geostrategic interest of Russia is the core reason inducing the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, which by encouraging the separatist processes, hinders the formation of a strong, independent Georgian state in Transcaucasia. They often bring positive examples (David Soslan was ethnic Ossetian, Georgian Kings used to involve Ossetians in their troops etc.) from the history of Georgian-Ossetian interrelations, in order to show the perspective of coexistence of the two people, though opposite tendencies are also met (e.g. Georgians remember Ossetian betrayal during the Mongol period and the first independent Republic of Georgia; Ossetians recollect punishing expedition against Ossetians, carried out by Valiko Jugheli in the period of first Republic of Georgia, events developed in the 1990s, etc.).

There are sharply negative estimations concerning Ossetians and nuances of their life and culture. Ossetian respondents are more reserved, though their narratives also contain negative connotation. Many of them believe that territorial claims of Ossetians in Georgia are fair.

Most respondents are convinced that repatriation of immigrated from Georgia Ossetians is not expected because they are well able to integrate in their new places of residence (basically in Russia).

The talks on the annexation of the territory of Kazbegi and Kvemo Kartli (the so-called "Trialetian Ossetia") to the Ossetian state are inspired by the Russian political circles and activities of separate organizations like "Dariali" that serves only the financial interests of its leaders.

As a result of the aforementioned processes, the number of Mokheves having intensive contacts with Ossetians has been halved. The economic ties and the practice of joint participation in religious rituals have been lost. Intercultural sensitivity is directed from ethno relative to ethnocentrist. Ethno political processes which started from the 1980s obliged people to make

distinctive ethnic identification; this resulted in full integration not at the group but at the individual level (expressed by Georgianization or Ossetianization). According to the survey, the majority considers it impossible to return the Ossetians to the Kazbegi region and considers this issue as another provocation of Russia.

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and the Russian-Ukrainian confronting made actual the model of hybrid future war, elaborated by military theoreticians of Kremlin. Theory of a hybrid war was elaborated for achievement of military and political goals and implies multilateral, complex attack on the antagonist party. All kinds of methods are applied openly and secretly, like: diplomatic, military, economic, informational and conventional, irregular (partisan and asymmetric), terrorist, criminal and cyber methods.

The imperial strategy of Kremlin, in relation with Georgia historically is characterized by considerable diversity. In the end of the 20th century the change of geopolitical realities made Kremlin to apply different methods. Simultaneously, a new national politics of Moscow, ensuring the nationalist (state) interests of the Russian state and society on internal and external arenas, actually represents the transformed version of the Tsarist policy. The Soviet state originated from the ruins of Tsarist Russia and its main legal successor, the Russian Federation, inherited the task of full assimilation of the Empire peoples. However, the delicacy of the situation is that without the obvious violations of universally recognized general principles, the Georgian state should be represented as an unsuccessful project, in order to convince Georgians of their helplessness and refuse political independence. By Kremlin calculations, in perspective, it will provide staying of Georgia on the Russian orbit at the initial stage and total assimilation in future. For such a purpose it was considered the most appropriate to provoke internal conflicts and use compactly dwelling “minorities” in Georgia to incite the conflict. It goes without saying that Russia intended to undertake monitoring and control of this confrontation as a peacekeeper.

Separatist regions play a decisive role in achieving the strategic goals. In the 1990s Russia managed to practically separate these regions from the Georgian political and economic space, which after the war of 2008 ended by open occupation and annexing. Moscow for embellishing the situation recognized Abkhazia and the so-called South Ossetia as independent states, and explained its own action as an act of support of Abkhazian and Ossetian people living in these territories.

Kremlin tries to restrict the historical territorial possessions of Georgia and extend frontiers to the south as much as possible primarily to broaden the territory of favorable for them Ossetians. Corroboration of century old dwelling of Ossetian ethnos and proving ethnic hegemony of Ossetians on the territory of upper reach of the Tergi River would be the best opportunity to legitimize pretensions of the so-called south Ossetian State.

Pseudo historical works could be applied especially effectively for the above mentioned purposes. The influence of historical literature on interethnic relations naturally evokes temptation to veil ethnocentric aspirations with "Patriotic feelings". Scientists against their will are exposed to the open or hidden influence of society, which, naturally, affects their creativity. This was well known to the Soviet authorities, who very effectively controlled historical literature to manage the processes in the desired direction.

The Georgian-Ossetian/Russian conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon. Beside political, economic, social and ethno cultural aspects each Party's claim to get back the historically granted place has a great influence on inspiration of this conflict. Thus, a part of scientists have possibilities to fulfill the geopolitical order of conjuncture and by exaggerating the historical role of this or that people, influence ethnocentric sentiments.

According to the recently published scientific literature, the conception of the Ossetian side about the perspectives of Georgian-Ossetian relations is the following: the Georgian government imposes a despotic princely ide-ology on the population and on the establishment – an orientation towards NATO (Western Europe, USA) and military support for the current govern-ment. Ossetians are oriented to absolutely different values. This plan con-tains the following objectives: the unification of Ossetians with the support of Russia; modernization, carried out by Russia, and participation in the global processes.

The conception of Georgian side on this issue is different. Euro-Atlantic choice is primarily related to the establishment of democratic values and consolidation of human rights. The essence of the national policy is as follows: consolidation of the Georgian society and integration of different groups into the single state organism.

Ossetians and Georgians in Kazbegi region
historial and cultural issues

The article presents historical and ethno-cultural issues related to Georgian-Ossetian relations of Kazbegi Region. According to historical sources, Kazbegi region was originally inhabited by Georgian tribes - the Tsanars some of whom migrated to the eastern Georgian lowlands in the Principality of Kakheti. Later (the 13th -14th centuries) Tsanars were replaced by the ethnographic group of Georgian origin - Dvals; in the 17th century Ossetians penetrated to the source of the Tergi River and began to assimilate the Dvals who had migrated there. In the 19th century, as a result of ethnic processes, the area close to the upper reaches of the Tergi River (now Truso) were completely inhabited by Ossetians; below, the settlements from the village of Kobi to the village of Jaryah, were mostly inhabited by the Georgian Mountaineers, Mokheves.

Ossetians were fully integrated in the Georgian social-political space and actively participated in the ongoing processes. Integration of Ossetians into the Georgian world occurred naturally, which implied gradual assimilation of components of the Georgian material and spiritual culture.

Later the Russian Empire managed to entice hostile Ossetians and use them as a political weapon against Georgia's interests. In the second half of the 20th century, Ossetian population almost completely moved to North Ossetia from today's Kazbegi region due to the ecological, socio-political and economic factors. However, some of the Ossetian organizations and political circles instigated by the Russian propaganda consider Kazbegi region as their historical homeland and declare political claims on the territory.