

MODERN NATION WITH DEEP ETHNIC ROOTS: GEORGIAN IDENTITY OVER THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

Mariam Chkhartishvili

Introduction.

In the scholarly literature one might come upon the phrase like following: “identity is a narrative” or another formulation of the same idea: “Identity has a discursive structure”.

Grasping the real meaning of these phrases is crucially important for the adequate understanding studies devoted to the collective cultural identities.¹

The point is that from the very beginning the readers have to be informed about the constructed nature of identities. The awareness of this fact allows them get to know that human identities are situated in social practices and do not represent natural givens.

The members of the socially defined in-groups might be tied together through various bonds: the believe in existence of common ancestor, the shared spot of land referred as homeland, common language and religion, the similar economic interests etc., however, for shaping firm and continuous (like ethnic and national we-groups) entities, all these markers might be not sufficient. In addition, it is compulsory that we-group members were conscious about the peculiarities of the native community and importance (“special mission”) of the particular grouping. All of them have to feel solidarity towards co-members. The value system has to be shared by the majority and the interest in communal well-being should occupy the highest position in the hierarchy of the collective values.

The chain of principal facts creates identity narrative in which the overall information about the we-group (its past, present and future, its specialness and uniqueness) is represented. The discourse on common values, perceptions, collective memories serves as cement for the consolidation of we-groups based on collective cultural identities.

Some academics think that nations are distinguished from the ethnic communities by availability of own state; hence they consider territory and political institutions as main markers of the nations, while ethnic communities are viewed as cultural entities. I cannot share above-mentioned opinion as it is not true for all cases. Nations may lose statehood for a while and this fact cannot entails their momentous destruction. As for the ethnic communities: they may have states, however, this fact automatically cannot ensure for them achieving the national level of development.²

The main distinguishing feature of national and ethnic communities is the intensity of a culture’s circulation within the given we-group. In case of nations the culture is public, highly unified and easily accessible for the most members of the homogeneous community; in case of ethnic entities circulation of culture is limited to the part of the society: this is a narrow segment presented by politically dominant classes. The social stratum enjoying political power, monopolizes culture as well.

The Soviet historians often discussed the issues of national and ethnic communities; however, their practices were based exclusively upon Marxism as a social theory. According to Marxism not perceptions and memories, ethnic election myths etc., i.e. subjective factors make groups, but the objective ones play decisive role in formation of ethnic and national communities. In historiographies of post-Soviet space this situation has preserved by inertia and because of this the identity studies as an independent field of academic activities was defined relatively recently. This does not mean that nothing was done. Some aspects were profoundly investigated. The scientists received great stimulus when after the breakup of the Soviet Union they were given an opportunity to be acquainted with the western theories on nations and nationalisms.

In Georgian academic environment identity studies have not long history as well, however, the foundation is already laid. Me also have contributed to this process and in this paper, I intend to familiarize the readers with my experience.

Theory.

For representing the history of such a complex phenomenon as identity, necessary to find the relevant intellectual tool, i.e. social theory. Thus, before representation the history of Georgian national identity, a researcher has to elaborate on theory.

The discussion on this subject I would like to begin with my personal story. As a scholar I began work in late twentieth century with rather narrowly defined tasks like comparing two redactions of hagiographical monuments in order to establish the original text; or investigating particular facts of Georgian history in Late Antiquity. The practice of this kind did not require much theory. It was possible to operate comfortably within the frames of Soviet historiography. However, by the end of the century it happened that I got involved in the research project focused on the self-awareness of Georgians. Just in the process of making this project, became clear for me that it would be impossible to represent the phenomenon like identity based on theory I have in my disposal by that time. I mean Marxian sociology. Thus, I was faced by the problem of obtaining the relevant one.

In those difficult time of Post-Soviet era by lucky accident I was able to find the book which contained the relevant information. This book was entitled as *Nationalism*. It was issued by the Oxford University Press (Hutchinson & A. D. Smith 1994). It was a reader and compilers and editors of this reader were two British scholars: Anthony David Smith and John Hutchinson. I have read this book with an animate interest and for my surprise found out that there were plenty of definitions of nation and nationalism. Before this I (as probably all historians of my generation having been educated in Soviet universities) was aware only Stalin's definition of nation (Meissner 1976: 58-81). As for nationalism we all were taught that it was bourgeoisie ideology, that by that time meant nothing but the false and definitely bad ideology associated with backwardness. In the above-mentioned book, these phenomena were conceptualized totally differently.

After analyzing in detail all chapters of the above-mentioned reader, I was able to distinguish three³ main positions: primordialist, modernist and ethno-symbolist approaches.

Primordialists treated nations as natural givens, as entities with eternal, and unchangeable essence. In Soviet Union all historians actually were primordialists: Soviet social science was based on essentialist understanding of groups in general, and the ethnic communities and nations, in particular. I also shared this position. However, after being acquainted with all papers of the above-mentioned reader for me became clear that this was naïve understanding of social groups. As some scholars convincingly put it, actually, primordialism is not a theory at all, rather a part of nationalist ideology (Coakley 2018). The leaders of nationalist movements are adherents of this position as far as with primordialism which essentializes groups, it is easier to foster the sense of belonging, forge in-group solidarity and mobilize masses.⁴

The modernist understanding of nation was in diametrical opposition to primordialist approach. According to them, nations are modern phenomena, nothing like them existed in pre-modern times. They are imagined or constructed through deferent media by politically motivated intellectuals. According to modernism even ethnicity is totally imagined and constructed for the purposes of the modern processes of national consolidations.

This approach also was not “mine”. It could not help me to represent the history of nation with deep ethnic roots, i.e. history of Georgian nation.

The last one i.e. ethno-symbolism (the editors of the volume were adherents of this position) was somehow between these two. It also asserted the modern origin of nations and considered them as results of activities of cultural elites, however, according to this approach, nations have real ethnic cores and even more: counterparts and pre-figurations in pre-modernity. Ethno-symbolism makes greatest accent on culture, presents nations as specific forms of culture, in particular, public culture. It distinguishes between ethnic and national levels of identity development just with support of culture, more precisely with intensity and limits of its circulation.

I have decided right away that the last one was just that theory which I was looking for. The most attractive feature of ethno-symbolist approach was its moderate character: it was not as naïvely essentialist as primordialism and not as entirely “fleshless” as modernism; it does not consider national culture as full scale coincidence with pre-existed ethnic culture, but as the selective reinterpretation of it. Thus, according to ethno-symbolism, the intellectuals do construct cultural identity for the native communities, however, they do not do this voluntarily outside the frames of available ethnic basis. The nations are constructs and at the same time they are real (Smith 1996: 106-107). This assertion allows to trace the association and continuity between ethnic and national communities.

One more feature which I liked in ethno-symbolist approach was its attitude to nationalism. According to ethno-symbolism, nationalism should not be placed solely in the political context; first and foremost, it

should be situated in the cultural one. And nationalist leaders are not always separatist politicians, but the eminent cultural and public workers, influencers of vernacular mobilizations and founding fathers of the nations.⁵

Gradually, I became familiar with more and more details about the ethno-symbolism. Under the terms of exchange agreement between British and Georgian Academies of Sciences I was able to visit twice (2001, 2003) Great Britain, in particular, the *London School of Economics and Political Science* and meet one of the principal founders of ethno-symbolism Professor A.D. Smith who in those times worked at this institute. The exchanging ideas with Professor Smith, attending his seminars allowed me to enrich my research methods. From 2002 began using Smith's theory for representing history of Georgian past. In 2004 I have published my translation of the one of Smith books into Georgian.⁶ This book was given to me by the eminent Professor just for this purpose. Georgian translation appeared to be one of the first translations of A.D. Smith's creative legacy in all post-Soviet space.⁷

Main Facts.

As far as this paper spans long period of time I will be able to provide a limited number of facts. In this article I aim to present a general picture of the history of Georgian identity, and do not intend to elaborate on details. The individual phases of Georgian identity were already concerned and I will refer to the relevant contributions in case of necessity.

When historians are trying to represent historical processes, they respect chronology and display facts strictly according to the chronological order. This helps them to show dynamics of the historical occurrences' developments. However, for the present paper I will not follow this widely accepted practice⁸ and begin the story from the final stages: at first I will give the readers an opportunity to look at the modern stage of Georgian identity development; I will continue with displaying facts up to present day and only afterwards give look back and consider premodern era: adoption of Christianity by Georgian Kingdom of Kartli and its aftermaths for Georgian community and then epoch of paganism until the very early stages of Georgian we-group's existence. This way of designing the paper is explained by my intention from the very beginning to make the readers familiar with Georgian identity at the moment of its special saliency in the 19th century when premodern ethnic community had been transformed into the modern nation on a ground of newly emerged Georgian nationalism.⁹

Georgian nation belongs to that type of nations which did not result directly from the process of modernization, but emerged on a ground of nationalism being inspired by the European idea of nation.

As it is widely accepted the nineteenth century was an epoch of birth of modern nations for European countries. The European idea of nation was taken by Georgian cultural elite for making national idea and mobilizing the native community. The soil for mobilization of this kind has been prepared already in premodernity, however, this process had fully developed and came to the point in the 19th century.

Very often the above-mentioned date for the emergence of Georgian nation causes negative attitude of the common people and also some Georgian historians who know nothing about the modern social theories of nations or are not sufficiently informed about this issue. They think that the proposed date means the neglect of Georgia's pre-modern past.¹⁰ This is of course misleading interpretation of the above-presented view. Georgian cultural elite has created national idea on a basis of selective reinterpretation of the ethnic culture and fill the available ethnic markers with national sense. When we speak about the emergence of Georgian modern nation in the 19th century, we imply creative use of the past and not its neglect.¹¹

Understanding of the phenomenon of collective-cultural identity ahistorically and arguing that it remains unchangeable from ancient times till nowadays, is not academic position. It is shared by common people (and some academics) mostly in result of the nationalistic rhetoric. Nationalist leaders almost always are proponents of primordialist conceptualization of nations as far as this makes for them easier to foster the sense of belonging in the members of their native communities.

Thus, I think that Georgian national identity is a historical phenomenon and the original given had gone through many transformations over the time. However, I find reasonable to retain the term "Georgian" for the whole history of Georgian identity, for example in phrases like the following: "Georgian ethnic identity". The use one and same term ("Georgian") for both (pre-modern and modern) cases helps to underline the continuity between ethnic and national levels of Georgian identity, its flexible stability: permanent changing alongside with retaining certain unchangeable core. However, some academics has different approach. For instance, S. Rapp uses "Kartvelian" for referring Georgians in period before the emergence united Georgian Kingdom ruled by Bagratians: "in this study, while referring to the political and social enterprises "Georgia" and "Geor-

gian”are employed only for the eleventh century and after, while “Kart’li” and Kart’velian” are preferred for the preceding period“ (Rapp 1997: 3).

“Kartveli” is a self-name of Georgians. Using this term for designating for early period of Georgian ethnic identity might create an impression that there is no continuation between deferent stages of Georgian identity.

Georgian national consolidation in the nineteenth century begins with cultural mobilization. In making of Georgian national narrative was involved Georgian cultural elite. This movement was leaded by the eminent Georgian writer and public figure Ilia Tchavchavadze. As a vehicle for national idea’s dissemination served printed media,¹² which was reaching the majority of Georgian we-group and through the readership fostered the sense of national belonging. The Georgian national identity narrative discussed the topics of existential importance. In particular, it provided answers on question like followings: “Who are we”?, “Who were we”?, “What is our future”?. It aimed at minimization discrepancies (real or imagined) within the we-group and maximization sense of Georgian exclusiveness (real or imagined) in face of others.

For the full picture it would be very important to mention how Ilia Tchavchavadze and his co-workers conceptualized phenomenon of “nation”. Tchavchavadze’s view was ambivalent regarding it: on the one hand, he considered nation in organicist way, as living being with characteristics of humans, on the other hand, he ascribed to this concept some civic features as well.

In the 19th century for designating we-groups based on collective cultural identities Georgians began to use the old Georgian social term *eri* instead *natesavi*. The latter was in practice during the entire premodernity. E. Renan’s famous essay “What is a Nation?” was translated into Georgian as “What is an Eri?” and not as “What is a Natesavi”? Both above-mentioned terms *natesavi* as well as *eri* designate the collectives, however, at least in one point they are different: in case of *eri* the kinship is not necessarily implied as a basic principle for shaping of group, while *natesavi* is an exclusively kinship-based community. The reconceptualization of the nature of in-group bonds indicates the crucial change in designing the national idea: Georgian national identity had been forging according to the European matrix of nation (Chkhartishvili 2014: 286-292); (Chkhartishvili 2014: 202-213).

It would be not out of place to mention here that Tchavchavadze’s view on the essence of nation had many features in common with E. Renan’s definition of nation. However, Tchavchavadze had not borrowed ideas from E. Renan as might be supposed. He had published his views much earlier than Renan’s above-mentioned essay. Evidently, a common European context had served for both authors as a source. Tchavchavadze was proud of the fact that his ideas found confirmation in Renan’s work. Supposedly, Georgians were the first nation who had translated “What is a Nation?” into own language. The translation had been published in Georgian periodical “Iveria” already in 1882, i.e. very soon after French original’s publication. Later on, it was followed by another Georgian translations and discussions. In Georgian society interest to E. Renan’s essay and his conceptualization of “nation” has not faded for decades (Chkhartishvili & Mania 2011/2012: 72-89).

Tchavchavadze’s program of national consolidation implied cultural mobilization. Though from the very beginning he had articulated the ideal of Georgia’s political independence, afterwards he did not undertake any measures to fulfill this ideal. He preferred to be cautious and not make steps against the imperial authorities before the time. As it seems to me, he thought that the cultural phase of national consolidation had not been driven to its end yet.

The confrontation concerning the future activities caused the tension between Tchavchavadze and the new generation of Georgian nationalists: they saw differently the steps had to be taken for emancipation of Georgia. Finally, in 1918 the fully consolidated Georgian nation created his own state (Democratic Republic of Georgia) and acquired political armor for the Georgian national identity. This state was based on democratic principles. In the declaration of independence several clauses were devoted to ethnic and religious minorities and for their rights in independent Georgia (Chkhartishvili *et al.* 2015: 75-86).

The importance of this state is enormous in the history of Georgian identity. It could help to develop its civic features; however, Democratic Republic of Georgia appeared to be very short-lived. It was ruined as a result of the intervention of Soviet Russia. After this Georgia became part of the Soviet Empire. Within the empire it is impossible to forge civic features of nation. Soviet national politics was characterized by great accent on ethnicity (Slezkine 1994: 414-452). This fact made great obstacles for developing civic solidarities within the “independent” Soviet republics. The above-mentioned policy was especially damaging for multi-ethnic and multi confessional Georgia. In Georgia the minorities were privileged and encouraged by the Soviet

central government and infrequently they were the conductors of the policy of the Soviet center. They were not solidary to Georgians, quite on the contrary: they opposed to the consolidation of the society, demonstratively did not speak Georgian. Because of this in 1990s the main targets of the rhetoric of the dissident leaders were ethnic Georgians. Ethnic minorities were not enthusiastic towards the liberation struggle of the titular nation because they saw diminishing their privileges in emancipation of Georgia from Soviet burdens. In this very period the narrative was created aiming at discreditation of Gamsakhurdia (dissident leader and then the first president of – 1991-1992), allegedly he propagated to get rid of all minorities and retain the country exclusively for ethnic Georgians. This is not true. Gamsakhurdia's aim was that titular nation i.e. Georgians enjoy equal rights with minorities and the ethnocratic practices in state affairs have to be stopped.¹³

The *Rose Revolution* of 2003 marked a new stage in Georgia's identity development. A new generation of western-educated politicians came to power. They tried to lead the nation-building process in the framework of the civic conception of nation and refashion social interrelations according to the principles of open society. However, the third president of Georgia Michail Saakashvili (2004-2007 and 2008-2013) and his associates could not finish. Today the majority of the Georgian we-group still conceptualizes native community across the ethno-cultural lines. For Georgians the state matters, however, civic principle for the membership of Georgian we-group does not operate in full scale, despite the fact that Georgian self-same "Kartveli" morphologically is a word designating territorial belonging. Thus, alongside with ethnic Georgian it can be successfully used for ethnically non-Georgian citizens of Georgian state. Interestingly enough that in premodernity "Kartveli" was not used exclusively for denoting the members of we-group defined by collective-cultural identity, but by territorial identity as well. For example, Jews lived in Georgia were called as "Kartveli" while ethnic Georgians alongside with "Kartveli" might be referred as "Kartlosiani". "Kartlosiani" represents the derivative from "Kartlos" – the name of the ethnarch of Georgians. Thus, "Kartlosiani" means the progeny of Kartlos. Today the ethnic minorities who are citizens of Georgian state also find it difficult to distinguish between their ethnic and national identities and do not call themselves "Georgians" (Kartveli) though many of them have rather developed loyalty to Georgian state.

Now let us look at the Georgian premodernity and the most crucial fact of this epoch – adoption of Christianity by the Georgian kingdom of Kartli in early 330s. This very fact is described in the "Life of Saint Nino". It is Georgian hagiographical monument of the fourth century devoted to the deed of the Illuminatrix of Georgians Saint Nino.¹⁴ It represents a collection of memories of the Saint Nino and her pupils and co-workers. The collection was compiled by the Queen Salome of Ujarma – the daughter-in-law (the wife of son) of the first Georgian Christian King Mirian. According to the Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli (11th century) Salome was daughter of the first Christian King of Armenia Trdat. Armenian sources do not mention her. However, we have no reason not to trust Leonti Mroveli.

Christianity is a cosmopolitan religion. Its adoption by Georgians meant destruction of the original religious marker. Thus, conversion was challenging for Georgian identity. The answer to this challenge was given right away. This was the ideology of Georgian specialness created shortly after the conversion in the middle of the 4th century. Through this ideology the Georgian political and cultural elites tried to prove electivity of Georgians as Christians. This ideology is recorded in the above-mentioned hagiographical monument. The core idea of this ideology is a Robe of Christ. According to the text Georgian Jews had brought this precious contact relic to Georgia. It had been interred in the Royal garden in the capital city of Mtskheta (Чхртишвили 2009: 131-150). The non-Georgian personages of the "Life of Saint Nino" narrate about it. Of course, it is not an accident. Evidently, the compilers¹⁵ intended to show that this fact had assumed the overall recognition among the other inhabitants of the Christian oikumene, in particular of Greeks and Armenians. The availability of the Robe in Mtskheta was considered as a sign of the Lord's special attitude to Georgians.

In the following centuries also Georgian political and cultural elites made great efforts to strengthen the cultural (imagined) boundaries of Georgianness. Above described ideology of Georgian ethnic specialness found the peculiar development in the eighth century, Georgian hagiographical monument the "Martyrdom of Saint Abo of Tiflis" by Ioane Sabanisidze, underlined the global mission of Georgians as the gate keepers of Christian oikumene and Georgia as the world's sacral center. This ambitious claim was predated by some happenings important from the point of identity studies. I mean Georgian-Armenian ecclesiastical controversy at the first decades of the 7th century which ended with full scale separation of Georgians and Armenians in ecclesiastical matters. It is impossible for me now to go deeply in case study of this fact.¹⁶ Instead this I will articulate the main message which comes from this historical happening. Without any doubt the controversy

and polemics on the issues of faith was provoked by the identity making processes. Activities of Georgian and Armenian ecclesiastics as well as lay hierarchs were targeted at making bolder the cultural boundaries between these two neighboring peoples.

The next epoch to be considered from the point of Georgian identity is 11th -12th centuries. In this period Georgian state becomes politically very strong: it covers vast territories in the Caucasus extending its frontiers far beyond the lands populated by ethnic Georgians. This epoch also is characterized by the flourishing of Georgian medieval culture. Georgian artists, architects, writers, scholars were able achieved the highest level of sophistication. Alongside with advancing culture the Georgian we-group solidarity sentiments become very salient. Taking into account these facts one can evaluate this period of Georgian identity development as national stage. We can speak about shaping of pre-modern Georgian nation in 11th-12th centuries (Chkhartishvili 2016a).¹⁷

However, the political strength was not long-term. The permanent devastating invasions from outside, intensification of the inner centrifugal tendencies in the end caused breakup of the united Georgian Kingdom and instead emergence several political unites. However, political fragmentation did not have decisively negative effect on sense of belonging. Georgians lived in different kingdoms and principalities still believed in their common origin; they were involved shared culture and tied with collective memory.

The next stage of Georgian identity development can be associated with 17th -18th cc. It is an epoch when modernity paves way in Georgian economic and culture. One important indicator of this is commencing printing of books. Language again became important for Georgian identity forging. Georgian erudite Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's (17th c) explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language is not accident at all, as well as the making the collections of hagiobiographies by Catholocos Anthon I (18th c). presenting Saints of Georgian Church as national heroes. The monumental historiographical work "The Description of Georgian Kingdom" by the eminent historian and geographer Vakhushti Bagrationi (18th c) indicates to further developments: Vakhushti's work helped to reconceptualize collective past, i.e. revitalize collective memory (Kadagishvili & Chkhartishvili 2014: 413-421); (Targamadze 2018); (Chkhartishvili 2017: 217-252).

After this what happened I have already described at the very beginning. Now let us look again back, for this time in pre-Christian Georgia.

The roots of Georgian ethnic community are noticeable already in 15th-14th BC in ancient Colchis with political center in the western Georgia. Assyrian and Uartian sources of 12th-8th cc provide data on early phase of Georgian ethnic identity (Chkhartishvili 2013/2014: 207-221). This phase can be associated with later ones through the community's self-name (Chkhartishvili 2009c: 61-65); (Chkhartishvili 2016b: 304-325) and language (Gamkrelidze 2003: 2-3). The Colchian stage of Georgian ethnic identity becomes part of Georgian collective memory only from 4th-3rd cc when further crystallization of Georgian identity had taken place. This was time of King Pharnavaz – the founder of the new Georgian state – Kingdom of Kartli with the political center in the eastern Georgia. The King Pharnavaz initiated a number of reforms favorable for forging Georgian identity. In particular, he established the new religion – cult of god Armazi intended exclusively for ethnic Georgians; gave official status to Georgian language and invented perfect alphabet with unique graphic – *Georgian Asomtavruli*. The first historical record about the new-born Georgian state also was made in this very epoch (Chkhartishvili 2021: 101-113). Thus, the Georgian collective memory "switched on".

Taking into consideration all these facts one can say with confidence that at this point, the process of Georgian ethnicity formation becomes irreversible.

Concluding Remarks.

In this article my aim was to represent the history of Georgian national identity.

As I have already mentioned, I share the opinion that nations are modern constructs, but some of which have deep ethnic roots. On the basis of premodern cultural premises, the elite of the we-group creates a national narrative, i.e. the idea of a nation around which members of a given ethnic community consolidate and through the process of cultural mobilization, ethnic identity turns into national.

The picture I have represented is as follows: the presence of a Georgian ethnic community can be seen already in the 15th-14th centuries BC in western Georgia. This community was politically represented by the ancient Colchian Kingdom. Assyrian and Uartian sources of the 12th and 8th cc BC also give very important information about the Colchian period of Georgian ethnicity. In the 4th-3rd cc BC, the political center of the Georgian ethnic community moved from western to eastern Georgia, when the Kingdom of Kartli was founded by King Pharnavaz. As a result of King Pharnavaz's fundamental reforms, Georgian ethnicity had been crystalized.

In the 11th-12th centuries, the development of Georgian identity reached such a level that one can speak of the formation of a pre-modern Georgian nation. Political fragmentation in subsequent centuries did not entail the destruction of Georgian identity: the population of different Georgian political units was still bound by the consciousness of a common origin, common culture and strong sense of communal solidarity.

In the 17th-18th centuries the impulses of modernization from Europe reached Georgia and established an imprint on the development of Georgian identity. In the first half and in the middle of the 19th century, the ideology of Georgian nationalism emerged, and in the second half of the 19th century, as a result of an intensive ethno-cultural mobilization, a modern Georgian nation was formed. At the end of the second decade of the 20th century, Georgian identity takes on a political shell: Georgians manage to create a state of the modern type, the *Democratic Republic of Georgia*. The role of this state is enormous in the final crystallization of the Georgian national identity, despite the fact that it was soon destroyed as a result of the intervention by Soviet Russia.

In the Soviet empire, Georgian identity almost completely lost the civic characteristics acquired during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. The situation changed significantly after the 2003 *Rose Revolution*. Georgian national identity gradually becomes inclusive again.

The development of Georgian national identity continues up to now. Maybe it is indeed “open ended process, never fully complete” (Suny 1993: 11).

Epilogue.

The paper is based on presentation made at the online international conference initiated by the Materadaran (Mesrop Mashots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) on July 1, 2021 dedicated to the Professor Hakob Papazyan. The subject and chronological frames of the conference was not strictly defined by the organizers. Accordingly, the choice of the presentation’s topic was up to participant. I considered several themes. Finally, I have decided to present paper on history of Georgian identity over the long period of time (actually historical panorama) with the purpose to prepare soil for future collaboration with Armenian colleagues (and not only with them as the conference was international). I could well hope for cooperation, because *National Identity Studies* represent the most internationalized and interdisciplinary sphere of academic inquiries.

In the present paper I was able to display limited number of facts and underline only the main stages of Georgian identity development. However, even this brief historical account can help pinning points for future comparative studies. As the readers might noticed in several times, I have made the references to the contributions devoted to the analogous facts of Armenian history. I am sure that finding the similarities (and discrepancies as well) and their close investigation would help to represent not only the particular cases with due insights, but go deeply in understanding of the phenomenon of national identity, in general.

In my previous contributions I was able to identify a number of topics for comparisons like followings: *perception of homeland*, *ideologies of ethnic election* (Chkhartishvili 2009a: 386-391), terms used for designating a nation (“eri”, “azg”), *conceptualizing others* (Chkhartishvili 2009b: 107-125), *conceptualizing the West* (Chkhartishvili 2019a: 147-164) etc. These are universal markers of national collective-cultural identities. They (and also many others) have to be considered in the wider context. The joint efforts of Georgian and Armenian scientists in initiating comparative researches will ensure the best results.

P.S.

This paper was intended to be published in the above-mentioned international conference proceedings. However, it was rejected shortly after the submissions without any evaluation procedure. I have received the letter of Vahan Ter-Ghevondian – the director of Materadaran who in behalf of the editorial board explained non-acceptance of the article by its inconsistency with their subject area, i.e. middle ages.

As I have mentioned above, the subject area and chronology of the presentations was not defined by the conference organizers; in addition, my paper covers not only modern period, but premodernity as well because it is about the pre-modern roots of the modern nation. Thus, the declared reason for rejection is not convincing at all. As I have already mentioned in some cases, I had referred to Armenian experience in order to widen the context of the representation. For me it is not easy to decide what kind of facts might be problematic for the editorial board: those reflecting history of Georgian identity or those reflecting Armenian one? I was specially invited to participate the conference, I was allowed to present this paper on this topic at the conference, I was asked to prepare presented paper for publication, even reminded not to miss deadline. After this the paper was rejected without any argumentation! I do not intend to evaluate the decision of the editorial board. Let’s the readers decide themselves if the act of this kind can be compatible with academic ethics.

Notes

- ¹ The ethnic and national identities belong to this very type.
- ² For more details on the issue *ethnic communities* (ethnies) vs *nations* see (Smith 2001:10-15).
- ³ Actually, this is oversimplification as far as all these approaches are available in many sub-types.
- ⁴ On constructivist conceptualization of nations see (Hebling 2007).
- ⁵ For more details see (Smith 2009). The readers can consult many other publications as well, among them (Frödin 2003).
- ⁶ ე. დ. სმიტი. ნაციონალიზმი. თეორია, იდეოლოგია, ისტორია. თარგმანი ინგლისურიდან მ. ჩხარტიშვილისა. ქართული ტექსტის რედაქტორი რ. ამირეჯები-მალენი, ქართული ენის საერთაშორისო ცენტრი, 2004 (Chkhartishvili 2004).
- ⁷ As far as I know, the publication of the first Russian translation of A. D. Smith's book (though of the another one) is dated by the same year i.e. 2004. See (Смит 2004).
- ⁸ Some scholars solve the same task i.e. the problem representing history of a national identity in different way: they begin with early stages. See (Van Lint 2009: 251-278).
- ⁹ Nationalism is an ideology of in-group solidarity. The ideologies with similar functions were available in premodernity as well (without solidarity ideologies it is impossible shaping we -groups. In premodernity also Georgians had solidarity ideologies, for example the ideology of ethnic specialness. However, the ideologies for the modern epoch are characterized by essentially new content and form of discourse. It is why they are referred by special term, i.e. "nationalism".
- ¹⁰ For the critical review of this kind of views see (Chkhartishvili 2020: 187-208).
- ¹¹ It would be not out of place to mention here that by the analogous problem are confronted the researchers who share constructionist position while representing history of Armenian identity. For example, R.Panossian finds necessary to provide detail explanation for his constructivist position so that to justify view about the emergence of Armenian nation in the 19th century. He (as me for Georgian case) underlines deep ethnic roots and premodern religious-cultural identity of Armenians. The researcher considers the cases of essentialist, organicist conceptualization of Armenian nation among the academics in post-Soviet Armenia as well. See (Panossian 2010: 122-123, 141-142); (Panossian 2006: 13-18); R.G. Suny also is concerned by the primordialism and even gen nationalism among some Armenian scholars and common people. See (Suny); However, today as far as I was able to grasp the primordialist view on the emergence of Armenian nation is seriously challenged by new approaches. See (Harutyunyan 2009).
- ¹² See (Chkhartishvili 2012: 188-211); (Chkhartishvili 2012: 426-447); (Chkhartishvili & Mania 2011). In this work Georgian periodical 'Iveria' which was issued since late 1870s during the three decades, is analyzed as a source for describing the history of Georgian national mobilization. The book represents the perceptions of Georgian national identity markers in all possible fullness. The analogous study though for the shorter period and with the relatively limited number of evidences was conducted for the Armenian case by M. Bazinyan in her paper "Constructing a Nation: Identity Markers of Armenians (According to the Mshak Periodical Published during 1872-1892)", (Bazinyan 2015: 67-80). The author has investigated the Armenian language periodical "Mshak" issued in Georgia approximately in the same period as "Iveria". Both these works (M. Bazinyan and mine) conceptualize nations as an "imagined communities". This notion comes from the eminent scholar B.Anderson. It reflects the researcher's constructivist view of the immanent nature of association between the print media and consolidation of nations in the modern era. See (Anderson 2006).
For national consolidation very important is the unified system of education. It is why for representation history of national identity; history textbooks also can be used as historical sources. See. (Chkhartishvili at al. 2016) and compare it with the work which has an analogous focus, though based on Armenian case-study: (Zolyan & Zakaryan 2008: 785-795).
- ¹³ For more details concerning Z. Gamsakhurdia see (Chkhartishvili 2019b: 138-146).
- ¹⁴ On this monument see (Чхартишвили 1989).
- ¹⁵ Salome should be backed by whole staff while compiling the text so important for the state ideology.
- ¹⁶ It would entails displaying many facts for this there is no place in this paper, however, in case of special interest the readers can see the most recent publication on the subject: (Aleksidze 2018).
- ¹⁷ For more information about the Georgian history and culture of this period the readers can consult (Khintibidze 2011); (Lordkipanidze 1987); (Raynfield 2010); (Raynfiled 2012).

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თანამედროვე პერიოდში ეთნიკური ფენომენი: ქართული იდენტობა *LONGUE DURÉE* პერსპექტივით

მარიამ ჩხარტიშვილი

სტატია ეფუძნება 2021 წლის 1 ივლისს მესრობ მაშოტის სახელობის ძველი ხელნაწერების ინსტიტუტის – მატენადარანის მიერ ორგანიზებულ პროფესორ ჰაკობ პაპაზიანის ხსოვნისადმი მიძღვნილ ონლაინ საერთაშორისო კონფერენციაზე ჩემ მიერ წაკითხულ მოხსენებას. ის გამიზნული იყო ამ კონფერენციის მასალების კრებულისათვის და გაგზავნილ იქნა კიდევ კონფერენციის ორგანიზატორებისათვის. თუმც მალევე მივიღე მატენადარანის ინსტიტუტის დირექტორის ვაჰან ტერ-ლევონდიანის წერილი, რომელშიც მითითებული იყო, რომ სტატია ვერ დაიბეჭდება, რადგან ის არ შეესაბამება მათ თემატურ ფოკუსს ანუ არ შეეხება შუა საუკუნეებს. მაგრამ ბატონი ტერ-ლევონდიანის მიერ დასახელებული მიზეზი არაა დამაჯერებელი ახსნა სტატიის უარყოფისათვის: მოხსენებების თემატიკა და ქრონოლოგია კონფერენციის ორგანიზატორების მიერ არ ყოფილა შეზღუდული, პრეზენტაცია უპრობლემოდ იქნა ჩართული კიდევ კონფერენციის პროგრამაში და საკონფერენციო წარდგინებაც შედგა. ამას გარდა, წინამდებარე სტატია, რომელიც, როგორც ითქვა, ხსენებულ მოხსენებას ეფუძნება, ეხება არა მარტო საქართველოს ისტორიის ახალ და უახლეს პერიოდს, არამედ შუა საუკუნეებსაც და ანტიკურ ხანასაც, რამდენადაც მისი მიზანია მოდერნული ქართული ნაციის ღრმა ეთნიკური ფესვების ჩვენება. ქართულ იდენტობაზე ჩემი სხვა ნაშრომებისაგან განსხვავებით ამ სტატიაში არაერთ შემთხვევაში შედარებისათვის მოხმობილია სომხური იდენტობის ისტორიის კვლევის გამოცდილება. ამიტომ ჩემთვის გამოცანად რჩება რეალურად რა გახდა კონფერენციის ორგანიზატორების მიერ სტატიის უარყოფის მიზეზი: ქართული იდენტობის ისტორიის ის რეპრეზენტაცია, რომელიც წარმოდგენილია ჩემს ნაშრომში თუ შედარებისათვის მოხმობილი მაგალითები

სომხური გამოცდილებიდან. იქნებ სტატიის გაცნობის შემდგომ მკითხველმა უპასუხოს ამ კითხვას და მკითხველმაც განსაჯოს აკადემიური ეთიკის თვალსაზრისით რამდენად მართებულია საერთაშორისო კონფერენციაზე წაკითხულ მოხსენებაზე დაფუძნებული სამეცნიერო სტატიის რეცენზირების გარეშე უარყოფა.

როგორც სათაურიც აჩვენებს ამ ნაშრომის მიზანია წარმოაჩინოს ქართული ეროვნული იდენტობის ფორმირება როგორც ხანგრძლივი პროცესი. ავტორი იზიარებს და ეყრდნობა მოსაზრებას, რომ ერები თანამედროვე კონსტრუქტებია, თუმცა ზოგიერთ მათგანს ღრმა ეთნიკური ფესვები აქვს. პრემოდერნულ კულტურულ წანამძღვრებზე დაყრდნობით მოცემული ჩვენ-ჯგუფის ელიტა ქმნის ეროვნულ ნარატივს, ე. ი. ერის იდეას, რომლის ირგვლივ კონსოლიდებიან მოცემული ეთნიკური ერთობის წევრები და კულტურული მობილიზაციის პროცესში ეთნიკური იდენტობა გადაიქცევა ეროვნულად.

ქართული ეთნიკური ერთობის არსებობა უკვე ძვ.წ. XV-XIV საუკუნეებში ხდება შესამჩნევი ამ ერთობას პოლიტიკურად წარმოადგენდა ძველი კოლხეთის სამეფო. ქრისტეს შობამდე XII და VIII საუკუნეების ასურული და ურარტული წყაროები, აგრეთვე, ძალიან მნიშვნელოვან ცნობებს გვაწვდის ქართული ეთნიკურობის კოლხური პერიოდის შესახებ. ჩვენს წელთაღრიცხვამდე IV-III საუკუნეებში, როდესაც მეფე ფარნავაზმა ქართლის სამეფო დააარსა, ქართული ეთნიკური ერთობის პოლიტიკური ცენტრი გადმოვიდა აღმოსავლეთ საქართველოში. სწორედ ფარნავაზ მეფის რეფორმები იმის მაუწყებელი იყო, რომ ქართული ეთნოსის ჩამოყალიბების პროცესი შეუქცევადი გახდა.

XI-XII საუკუნეებში ქართული იდენტობის განვითარების დონე საშუალებას იძლევა ვისაუბროთ წინარემოდერნული ქართველი ერის ჩამოყალიბებაზე. შემდგომ საუკუნეებში პოლიტიკურ ფრაგმენტაციას არ მოჰყოლია ქართული იდენტობის ნგრევა: სხვადასხვა ქართული პოლიტიკური ერთეულების მოსახლეობა კვლავ შეკავშირებული იყო საერთო წარმომავლობის რწმენით, საერთო კულტურისა და კოლექტიური სოლიდარობის მძაფრი განცდით

XVII-XVIII საუკუნეებში მოდერნიზაციის იმპულსები ევროპიდან საქართველოში აღწევს და თავის ტვიფარს აჭდევს ქართული იდენტობის განვითარებას. XIX საუკუნის პირველ ნახევარში და შუა ხანებში გაჩნდა ქართული ნაციონალიზმის იდეოლოგია, ხოლო XIX საუკუნის მეორე ნახევარში საყოველთაო ეთნოკულტურული მობილიზაციის შედეგად, ჩამოყალიბდა თანამედროვე ქართველი ერი. XX საუკუნის მეორე ათწლეულის ბოლოს ქართული იდენტობა პოლიტიკურ ჯავშანს იძენს: ქართველები ახერხებენ შექმნან თანამედროვე ტიპის სახელმწიფო: *საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკა*. ამ სახელმწიფოს როლი უზარმაზარია ქართული ეროვნული იდენტობის გამოკრისტალებაში, მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ იგი მალევე განადგურდა საბჭოთა რუსეთის ინტერვენციის შედეგად.

საბჭოთა იმპერიაში ქართულმა იდენტობამ თითქმის მთლიანად დაკარგა ის სამოქალაქო მახასიათებლები, რაც მან საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის პერიოდში შეიძინა. ვითარება მნიშვნელოვნად შეიცვალა 2003 წლის *ვარდების რევოლუციის* შემდეგ. ამ დროიდან ქართული ეროვნული იდენტობა თანდათან ისევ იბრუნებს მოქალაქეობრივი ერის ნიშნებს. ქართული ეროვნული იდენტობის განვითარება დღესაც გრძელდება.