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EDITORIAL

Georgia. Historical, cultural and political landmarks

Tamar BERUCHASHVILI
Sabin DRĂGULIN

Abstract: *The editorial staff of the science journal Polis, from Iași, has decided to continue its research activity by hosting an issue dedicated to Georgia in its pages. The initiative is part of a broader project that aims to present to readers and interested specialists articles and studies signed by university professors and researchers from Georgia and Romania. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 allowed the opening to the world of cultural spaces that for a long time were closed or at best semi-open. Georgia is a country that in its multi-millennium history came into direct contact with the great Greco-Roman culture and civilization, which left visible traces in the mythology, archaeology and culture of the Georgian people. Together with these elements of antiquity, Christianity represents the fundamental identity element of the Georgian nation. Due to its geographical position, Georgia is a gateway for the European Union to Asia. In this context, Georgia can become a multidimensional and multifunctional regional centre fundamental for connecting the middle corridor with Europe.*

Keywords: *Georgia, history, statehood, Christianity, continuity.*

Georgia – a three-millennium history of statehood

Georgia, a country with a 3,000-year history, stands as a testament to the resilience and pride of its people. Nestled in the heart of the South Caucasus, Georgia is a cradle of ancient civilization, boasting a unique alphabet, language, and a Christian tradition that spans 17 centuries. Throughout its past, Georgia has

managed to preserve its cultural identity, traditions and national character, despite centuries of invasions and conflicts.

Georgia's strategic location has shaped country's history and culture and continues to play an important role in the geopolitical context.

The nation's history is a chronicle of struggle and survival, with its people fiercely protecting their homeland against invaders. Yet, amidst the

turmoil, Georgia's cultural environment has always been distinguished by exceptional humanism, tolerance and compassion. The country's rich cultural heritage is reflected in its unique polyphony, national traditions and epic literature, such as Shota Rustaveli's XII century epic poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin," a masterpiece that embodies the spirit of Georgian culture.

Georgia's European future starts with Georgia's European past based on shared history, cultural roots and most importantly, shared values.

Since the beginning, Georgia has shared the three pillars considered to be at the foundation of Europe's civilization: Greek and Roman heritage and Christianity. Antique Greco-Roman civilization has left its influence and visible marks in our mythology, archaeology, and culture. Christianity has been central to our identity as a Nation. As the kingdom converted to Christianity in 326, Georgia has been fighting for centuries to preserve its faith and identity against numerous empires and invaders. All along, on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, it has served as a small Christian outpost facing the empires of Asia. This common heritage has influenced our core values. Among them, tolerance, protection of minorities, and human rights have been most significant. The capital city, Tbilisi's architecture is a true testimony to this history: mosques, synagogues, Christian churches of various denominations, and even Zoroastrian sites coexist side by side.

This long-standing tradition of peaceful coexistence between religions and cultures is best symbolized by more than 26 centuries of Georgians and Jews living together, free of any repression or discrimination. Today, 13,2% of Georgia's population is of Armenian, Azeri descent, Osetian, Ukrainian, Greek, Kurdish or Yezidi heritage, maintaining the old tradition of hospitality that has reached well beyond our borders. As to gender equality, this very modern notion stands at the core of the national epos when Shota Rustaveli in the XII century already said: "ლეკვი ლომისა სწორია ძუ იყოს, თუნდაც ხვადია" (Lions cubs are equal, be they female or male). This again notion was also reflected in the role that women have played throughout our history: in the IV century, St Nino converted the Georgian state; Queen or as she was called, King Tamar reigning (1184-1213) over Georgia's golden Age; or in 1919, the first Democratic Republic of Georgia giving women both the right to vote and be elected.

Today, as an EU candidate country since 2023, Georgia remains committed to the process of European integration that is our civilizational choice enshrined in the Georgian Constitution.

In a time marked by uncertainty, meaningful dialogue and close cooperation remain indispensable. Therefore, Georgia is committed to dialogue, peace and stability in the region. Amidst global challenges like conflicts, climate change, and hu-

manitarian crises, Georgia contributes to transforming the South Caucasus and wider Black Sea region into a space of dialogue and economic prosperity. Drawing from our own bitter experience of the Russian invasion in 2008, the Georgian government supports initiatives like the US President Donald Trump's efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war as well as his peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite 20% of Georgia's territory (historic regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali) remain under Russian occupation, we continue to pursue development and progress with great energy and determination. Georgia is staunch supporter of the UN principles and a multipolar international order, aiming to ensure global peace and stability. The Georgian government prioritizes peace and economic growth, improving the quality of life for its citizens despite external challenges.

Georgia's strategic location, as the EU's gateway to Asia, offers the shortest alternative route connecting Europe and Asia. In addition, important projects like the Middle Corridor, the Black Sea submarine electricity cable, and the Caspian-Black Sea-Green Energy Corridor provide opportunities for enhanced connectivity and energy security. The country is emerging as a multidimensional and multifunctional regional hub, actively modernizing its infrastructure, including roads, rail, sea and air transportation.

I would like to mention that the preparation of this editorial coincided

with the important and highly symbolic event for my country: the inclusion of **Georgian wheat culture traditions and rituals in the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity!**

This fact inspired me to share the stories of the five elements of Georgian intangible heritage recognized by UNESCO as examples of traditions that define the identity of my country and people. These are: Georgian polyphonic singing, Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine-making method, Living culture of three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet, Chidaoba – wrestling in Georgia and Georgian wheat culture: traditions and rituals.

Georgian polyphonic singing (in the UNESCO list since 2008) is a long-standing secular tradition that has helped preserve the country's identity through centuries of foreign domination and cultural pressure, holds a special place in Georgian culture. There are three main styles of Georgian polyphony. The first is complex polyphony, found mainly in the mountainous region of Svaneti. The second, common in eastern Georgia's Kakheti region, features a vocal dialogue built over a deep bass line. The third style, typical of western Georgia, is contrasted polyphony, with three vocal parts that allow a degree of improvisation. Many of these songs are connected to ancient rituals, such as the cult of the grapevine, and some can be traced back as far as the eighth century. Traditionally, polyphonic songs accompanied

every aspect of daily life. They were sung while working in the fields, as in the Naduri songs that echo the rhythms of physical labour, as well as in healing rituals and Christmas carols known as Alilo. Georgian polyphony also influenced Byzantine liturgical hymns, becoming an important element of religious musical expression.

One well-known example of the Georgian polyphony is song Chakrulo, which was one of 29 musical compositions included in the Voyager Golden Records that were sent by NASA into space in 1977. Although Georgian traditional music survived the constraints of socialist cultural policies, it continues to require careful preservation. The Georgian State provides various programs aimed at safeguarding, studying and promoting this unique cultural heritage.

Archaeological evidence suggests that wine was first produced in Georgia around 8,000 years ago, earning it the title of the “cradle of wine.” Qvevri winemaking (in the UNESCO list since 2013) is practiced across Georgia, especially in village communities where distinctive local grape varieties are grown.

Georgian grape names are nearly always descriptive of their appearance or flavour, reflecting the historic widespread viticulture of the country. Georgia has at least 500 native varieties. Among them, around 45 varieties are commercially produced today, but the Georgian state is on a mission to save and reintroduce the old grapes. A Qvevri is a large, egg-

shaped clay vessel used to make, age and store wine. The skills and knowledge involved in creating Qvevri and producing wine are passed down through generations, shared among families, neighbours and friends who come together during the grape harvest and wine-making season. After the grapes are pressed, the juice, along with the skins, stems and seeds, is poured into the Qvevri. The vessel is then sealed and buried underground, where the wine ferments for five to six months before it is ready to drink. This method of winemaking is still widely used in Georgia. Qvevri winemaking is more than a technique: it shapes the way of life of local communities and is an essential part of their cultural identity and heritage. Wine and grapevines appear frequently in Georgian songs, stories, and oral traditions, reflecting their deep-rooted significance in Georgian culture. Wine plays an important role in both religious and secular celebrations and rituals. Wine cellars are traditionally regarded as the most sacred space in the family home.

Living culture of the three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet (in the UNESCO list since 2015).

The Georgian alphabet is considered one of the 14 truly unique writing systems in the world. Over time, Georgia’s written language has developed three distinct alphabets: Mrgvlovani, Nuskhuri, and Mkhedruli. All three are still in use today. Mrgvlovani was the earliest form, from which Nuskhuri later evolved, followed by Mkhedruli. Each alphabet

has its own cultural and social role, and together they reflect the richness and diversity of Georgian identity. Their continued use also gives communities a strong sense of historical continuity. Mrgvlovani and Nuskhuri are mainly practised and passed on within the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church. These alphabets appear in religious texts such as psalms and hymns, as well as in inscriptions on church objects, including icons. In addition, some theological schools, universities and scholars, including linguists and historians, continue to study and teach them. Mkhedruli, on the other hand, is the alphabet used in everyday life and forms the basis of Georgia's education system. It is taught in primary and secondary schools and is also passed down informally within families, from older to younger generations.

Chidaoba, a traditional form of wrestling (in the UNESCO list since 2018), is one of Georgia's oldest martial arts and is practiced widely across the country. It is popular among men of all ages and is carried on by young people, city residents, sports clubs, schools and amateur groups in both rural and urban communities.

Chidaoba is more than a sport. It brings together wrestling techniques with music, dance, and distinctive traditional clothing known as the *chokha*. Originally developed for combat purposes, Chidaoba gradually evolved into a public and ceremonial sport by the late Middle Ages. The

sport follows a strong code of honour and fair play. At times, wrestlers even leave the arena by performing a Georgian folk dance, highlighting the close connection between physical skill and cultural expression. The specific fresco depicting wrestling was discovered in the Alaverdi Cathedral in the Kakheti region of Georgia. This medieval wall painting, dating back to the 11th century, shows two men engaged in a wrestling match and is one of the earliest known visual representations of Georgian wrestling.

Georgian wheat culture: traditions and rituals (in the UNESCO list since 2025) is built around the cultivation and use of local, endemic varieties of wheat, along with traditional tools such as stone mills and hand-made bread ovens. For local communities, wheat symbolizes life, growth, and abundance. Families and villages follow time-honoured customs for planting and harvesting, saving the best grains for special occasions, including ritual meals and religious holidays. Wheat culture fosters cooperation, hospitality, and respect, and the tradition of baking and sharing ceremonial bread remains a powerful symbol of prosperity and fertility. Typically, men take care of the fieldwork, while women manage the wheat stores and bake bread for ceremonies. Knowledge and skills are passed down through participation in family and community events such as births, weddings and funerals. Of the 27 cultivated and wild wheat species recognized

worldwide today, 14 are found in Georgia, among them, 5 are endemic. Certain varieties of wheat that are evolutionarily close to wild species have been preserved exclusively in Georgia, such as Zanduri, Kolkuri Asli and Makha. Archaeological studies conducted on Georgian sites have uncovered wheat remains dating back to the 6th millennium BC, confirming that for 8,000 years - parallel to the ancient tradition of winemaking, the cultivation and sowing of Georgian wheat has continued uninterrupted.

All five elements of Georgian intangible heritage are deeply interconnected and together form a coherent cultural system that shapes Georgia's national identity. Rather than standing alone, they reinforce one another through shared values, social structures and symbolic meanings. Continuity and resilience unify these elements. The Georgian alphabet preserved language and knowledge through centuries of foreign domination, just as polyphonic singing and ritual practices safeguarded cultural memory. All five elements embody a distinct Georgian worldview - one that values harmony (in music), balance (between nature and human labour), honour and discipline (in wrestling), spirituality and literacy (in the alphabets) and abundance shared through hospitality (in bread and wine). Together, they tell a single story: of a nation whose identity is not defined by borders or monuments alone, but by living traditions that continue to shape everyday life.

Finally, it could be said, that the Georgia's story is one of resilience, cultural richness, and a deep commitment to peace and cooperation. With its rich history, cultural heritage and commitment to peace, Georgia stands ready to engage in dialogue on global and regional issues as the world navigates pivotal moments. There is a strong willingness to overcome challenges and unlock opportunities for future generations for a more stable and prosperous future in the Black Sea region and beyond.

As the country looks to the future, it does so with a sense of pride in its past and a vision for more harmonious tomorrow.

Cultural diplomacy and political science magazine *Polis*, from Iași

The aim of the coordinators of this issue of the political science journal *Polis* is to bring to the attention of the interested public at home and abroad a series of articles and scientific studies aimed at illustrating significant episodes in the history of Georgia. Located on the other side of the Black Sea, Georgia is an emblematic example of a country whose people, and later the nation, have manifested a constant European vocation over the millennia. It has been in direct contact with European civilization and culture, whether in its Greco-Roman, Byzantine or Western forms, but which, as a result of its geographical position, has been at-

tracted in different historical periods also to the sphere of oriental culture and civilization.

Of course, this latter space also experienced remarkable cultural and civilizational values, superior in certain historical eras to those of Europe. However, the emergence and development of humanism and the Enlightenment led, in Europe, to the configuration of a type of modernity that raised the individual to a new level of political and social existence, that of "citizen". Within a society characterized by a special cultural wealth, at the level of Georgian thought, an aspiration emerged over time that, at certain historical moments, transformed into necessity and political will: that of breaking away from a model of thinking perceived as excessively restrictive for the ideal of personal liberation.

In this sense, assuming the inherent limits of the knowledge of a cultural and civilizational space of particular complexity, spread over several millennia and marked by diverse historical experiences, one can identify a state of mind that explains why a significant part of the citizens of contemporary Georgia express their desire for integration into the European Union. The European space of thought, which was the basis for the establishment of nation-states and transformed the status of the individual from that of subject to that of member of a nation of citizens, has exerted a constant attraction on the peoples located on its borders. It is a reference model to which individuals animated by the desire for freedom and civic participation aspire.

Romanians and Romania have had a similar historical experience, facilitated by a geographical context that favored a closer proximity to Western Europe compared to Georgia. However, beyond the differences in context, what remains fundamental, regardless of the era, vicissitudes or difficult geopolitical circumstances, is the maintenance of this permanent thirst for freedom.

In the view of the members of the editorial board of *Polis* magazine, dialogue – in this case a cultural and scientific dialogue – represents one of the most effective ways of mutual knowledge. Only through knowledge can stereotypes generated by ignorance be overcome. Culture, regardless of its forms of expression, constitutes an essential tool for opening a dialogue that will facilitate, over time, a substantial political and economic integration.

The corpus dedicated to the history and culture of Georgia brings together 18 contributions, of which 15 come from the Georgian academic environment and 3 from the Romanian one. The approaches are diverse and cover fields such as historiography, philosophy, diplomacy, economics, geopolitics, bilateral relations Romania-Georgia, minority issues, religion, as well as other related areas. The ordering of the articles and studies was carried out according to chronological and thematic criteria.

The thematic issue dedicated to Georgia opens with the contribution of Professor Jaba Samushia, Doctor of History and Rector of the Ivane

Javakhishvili State University in Tbilisi. Right from the title – Georgia and Europe: A centuries-long tradition of relations – Georgia’s aspiration to join the European family is explicitly formulated. This option, the author emphasizes, is anchored in a long historical process, shaped by factors such as geography, culture, religion and security imperatives. The geopolitical position of the Georgian state, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, has over time constituted a space of interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations; however, Georgia has constantly identified with the Western cultural and political sphere. Even though the same geographical position attracted periods of foreign domination, which determined a temporary distance from the European cultural and civilizational space, the European vector remained a central element of Georgian statehood. The conclusion of the article is that Georgia’s contemporary approach to European integration represents the continuation of a deeply historically anchored civilizational choice.

Professor Demur Jalaghonia, PhD in Philosophy, is distinguished by an exceptional institutional career, among the positions held, the one of director of the Department of Political Philosophy is worth mentioning. His contribution, entitled „Georgian Philosophy from the Phasis Academy to the Present Day (Main Tendencies)”, highlights the fact that Georgian philosophy benefits from a long and consistent tradition, which ex-

tends over fifteen centuries, starting with the 4th century. This tradition reached remarkable levels in the 11th, 12th, 19th and, later, in the 20th century. Georgian thinkers often familiarized themselves, even simultaneously, with the philosophical heritage of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern era, interpreting, translating and elaborating original works. Through these efforts, they integrated themselves into the dominant intellectual paradigms of their eras and actively contributed to addressing and developing fundamental issues of philosophy. The author’s conclusion is that this multi-century tradition provides a solid basis for speaking, with full legitimacy, about the existence of a “Georgian philosophy”.

Professor and historian Dimitri Shvelidze proposes an article entitled „Diplomatic Structures of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)”, the subject addressed being in full accordance with his specialization in the modern and contemporary history of Georgia. The study is structured around three main thematic directions. The first one aims at the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and its activity in the direction of establishing diplomatic relations with as many states as possible. The second theme analyses the network of embassies and consulates opened by foreign states on the territory of Georgia. The third research direction focuses on the identification and description of Georgian diplomatic missions abroad in the

period 1918-1921. The author demonstrates that the young and still insufficiently recognized Democratic Republic of Georgia managed, despite the difficult international context, to establish contacts and diplomatic relations with numerous countries. Its independence was recognized *de jure* only on January 27, 1921, just a few weeks before the invasion of Georgia by Soviet Russia.

Lela Tsiphuria, PhD in Arts, screenwriter, producer and film director, signs the article entitled „Becoming from Real Story in Surrealist Feature Film in the Most Anti-Soviet Film, in Tengiz Abuladze’s “Repentance””. This contribution provides access to a moment of political dissidence manifested in the midst of the Soviet period. Specialists consider the film *Repentance*, made in 1984 by Tengiz Abuladze, to be one of the most anti-Soviet cinematographic productions in the former Soviet Union. Although Soviet censorship was still extremely severe during the years the film was made, it was the first not only in Georgia, but in the entire USSR space, to openly and critically address the issues of Soviet totalitarianism and the Great Purge.

A landmark contribution, which makes the transition from the communist to the post-communist period, is the study signed by professor and economist Avtandil Silagadze, entitled *Contemporary Trends in the Georgian Economy*. The author is, among others, a member of the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia and the International Academy

of Sciences, Education, Industry and Arts of the United States of America. The paper analyzes the main contemporary trends of the Georgian economy, systematically examining the evolution of economic growth, the current state of various economic sectors, the dynamics of employment and unemployment, foreign investment flows, trade-related challenges, the level of international reserves, external public debt, remittance patterns, inflation, poverty, as well as other relevant aspects. According to the study's conclusions, the Georgian economy is on a positive growth trajectory in the post-pandemic period.

Tengiz Pkhaladze is a prominent political scientist and public opinion leader with extensive experience in governance, diplomacy, civil society, academia, and think tanks. His areas of expertise include foreign and security policy, geopolitics, Russia and the post-Soviet space, the Eastern Partnership, and European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. His contribution, titled „Ideological Foundations of Russian Aggression in Georgia (August 2008)”, analyses the Russian Federation’s military aggression against Georgia in August 2008 as a watershed moment in the post-Soviet international order. The author highlights that this episode marked the first open, large-scale use of the regular armed forces of the Russian Federation beyond its national borders for offensive military purposes, leading to the illegal occupation of parts of the internationally recognized territory of a neighbour-

ing state. Another dimension of the analysis concerns the role of Eurasianist, understood both as a long-standing intellectual tradition and as a contemporary political discourse, in shaping the way Russian political elites interpreted Georgia, the Caucasus, and Russia's regional role. The author's position is that the 2008 aggression translated Eurasianist narratives into concrete political practice, through mechanisms of discursive legitimization, spatial reimagining, and symbolic restoration. In this sense, the Georgian case anticipated Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as the large-scale military intervention in Ukraine, launched in 2022.

Professors Giorgi Gaganidze, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business, and Badri Ramishvili, both prestigious economists, sign the article entitled „The Importance and Economic Prospects of Strategic Relations between Georgia and Romania”. The central theme of the study consists in the analysis of the historical relations between Georgia and Romania, based on cultural-religious and commercial ties. The first element highlighted is represented by an emblematic figure that connects the two cultural spaces: Saint Antim the Ivirian, born in Georgia, who later became a major spiritual and cultural personality in Romania. The second element refers to the commercial dimension of bilateral relations. In the authors' view, economic cooperation between Romania and Georgia is based on solid foundations and is in

an upward trend, especially in the field of trade and emerging strategic projects.

Professor Ketevan Khutsishvili proposes the article entitled „The Strategies on Cultural Heritage: Challenges and Discourses in Urban Environment (The Case of Georgia)”. Although this contribution may seem, at first glance, atypical within the thematic corpus, it brings a particularly relevant angle of analysis to the issue of cultural heritage in Georgia and the challenges specific to the contemporary urban environment. In the context of modern Georgia, the theme of cultural heritage protection gains increased importance, and the proposed analysis pertinently complements the historical, political and economic perspectives brought together in this file.

The contribution entitled „Religious Challenges in the Georgian Socio-Political Environment” is signed by Professors Salome Dundua and Nika Gigauri. Salome Dundua is, among others, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, within the Department of Political Science of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. Nika Gigauri is an Assistant Professor at GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and Manager of the Quality Assurance Service.

The study aims to analyse a sensitive issue of contemporary Georgian society, that of religious conflicts. In this regard, the authors aim to identify the factors that generate tensions between Georgian Muslim communities and Orthodox Christians, as well

as to assess the effectiveness of the state response in the process of managing and resolving these conflicts. The conclusion of the research is that state institutions demonstrate a limited capacity to act as an “arbitrator” in the regulation of religious conflicts, and public policies are oriented more towards conciliating conflict situations than towards addressing the structural causes that led to their emergence.

Professor Otar Janelidze is a leading figure in the field of Georgian history and culture. A doctor of history, specializing in the history of Georgia, the history of Georgian emigration and the relationship between history and politics, he signs the article entitled „The Issue of National and Religious Minorities in the Democratic Republic of Georgia”. Although the Democratic Republic of Georgia existed for only three years, the author emphasizes that it constituted a notable precedent in modern political history, being the first case in which a government was led by a social-democratic party.

The central theme of the article is the analysis of the policies applied towards national and religious minorities during the existence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. According to the author, the religious policy of the state leadership was characterized by tolerance, and minorities enjoyed the right and the effective opportunity to participate in political, economic and cultural life. Their rights were guaranteed by a coherent legislative framework,

which included the Law on the State Language, the Regulation on Citizenship and the Constitution.

The article entitled „Quota-Based Approaches to Ethnic Minority Integration in Higher Education: The Case of Georgia” concludes the series of three contributions dedicated to the issue of minorities. Signed by Tamar Karaia and Lika Kvinchia, the study approaches the integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia from the perspective of education and civic identity formation. Tamar Karaia is a doctor in political science, with specializations in the politics of memory, archival politics, social movements, identity transformation and civic education. Lika Kvinchia is a lecturer in political science at the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi and holds a master’s degree in public administration and public policy, as well as a bachelor’s degree in political science.

The article analyses the integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia through the lens of language education and strengthening civic identity, focusing on educational initiatives aimed at enhancing social cohesion. The authors argue that learning the official language and foreign languages by minority students is not only an educational process, but also an identity-forming one, which facilitates the promotion of a common civic identity, without affecting the cultural distinctiveness of these communities. Strengthening these dimensions contributes to building a more united and inclusive society in Georgia.

The article entitled “Two Important Episodes from the History of Relations between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches” is signed by historians Mikheil Kartvelishvili and Eter Bokelavadze.

Mikheil Kartvelishvili is a specialist in the history of religions, historiography and international politics, and Eter Bokelavadze is a researcher and guest lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. The article signed by the two authors aims to analyse lesser-known episodes of Romanian-Georgian relations, which have not been the subject of dedicated scientific research to date. The subject of the study is the visit of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Justinian, to Georgia in 1948, and the ecclesiastical relations generated by it, as well as the visit of the Georgian Orthodox Church delegation to Romania in 1986, in the context of a long history of Georgian-Romanian political and religious relations, which extends over several centuries.

Rozeta Gujejiani is an Associate Professor of Ethnology-Anthropology at the Institute of Ethnology-Anthropology of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. Her study explores two exemplary theological and moral approaches to repentance, reflected in the lives and writings of two major figures of Georgian and Romanian spirituality: Saint King David IV of Georgia, known as David the Build-

er, and Saint Antim the Ivirian, a hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Although they lived in different historical eras, the analysis highlights the fact that both thinkers belong to the same conceptual and intellectual tradition. In their view, repentance is not reduced to simple remorse for sin, but constitutes a conscious act of spiritual reorientation, an authentic return to God. Through their teachings, the two saints encourage constant examination of one's own life, the practice of moral self-evaluation, and the relentless search for divine guidance.

In a complementary perspective, Professor Anastasia Zakariadze proposes the article entitled “The Beginning of Renewed Life – A Code of Repentance (Saint David the Builder and Saint Anthim the Iberian)”. The author is, among others, the director of the Scientific Research Center for Philosophy and Theology “Antim Ivireanul” within the Institute of Philosophy. Her contribution discusses the correlation between traditional lifestyles and religious beliefs, while analyzing the social interactions associated with sacred places and sacred objects, in the context of religious practices and community identities.

Continuing the presentation of Antim Ivireanu's personality, the contribution of researcher Nicoleta Zagura, who built a career at the intersection of academic research, cultural management and heritage diplomacy, entitled “Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim Ivireanul – Culture as a Strate-

gy of Resistance in the Orthodox World under Ottoman Domination”, is presented.

The author brings together two great Christian, Orthodox personalities of the first half of the 18th century; Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim Ivireanu, who died as martyrs in 1714 and 1716. The work of these cultural personalities moved towards a theological and historical model of resistance based on faith, education and dignity. The Brâncoveanu era thus appears not only as a political episode, but as a fundamental moment in the articulation of Orthodox culture as a strategy of survival and resistance under Ottoman domination.

The last part of the thematic section, which addresses topics regarding politics, geopolitics, democratic governance, power and interest groups, etc., includes three articles.

The first of these is entitled “Slipping and Sliding Between Formalities and Informalities: Lobbying, Interest Groups, and Democratic Governance in Georgia” and is signed by Nino Machurishvili and Irakli Samadashvili.

Nino Machurishvili is an Associate Professor at European University, Tbilisi, and works at the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia.

Irakli Samadashvili, an Ph.D. candidate, is a political scientist specializing in governance, political systems, and institutional dynamics in post-Soviet contexts. The article analyses the complex interaction between formal regulatory frameworks and

informal political practices through the lens of lobbying in Georgia.

The analysis documents how formal lobbying mechanisms, designed to ensure transparency and accountability, may remain underutilized or bypassed in political cultures where influence is traditionally mediated through personal networks and informal channels.

Anton Carpinschi is Professor Emeritus of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and Doctor Honoris Causa of the “Petre Andrei” University of Iași. His study, entitled „Politicoscopy and Interculturality in the Post-Soviet South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan”, is an essay in applied political philosophy, which proposes a critical analysis of multiculturalism and interculturality in the post-Soviet South Caucasus, using an integrated theoretical framework of political analysis and comparative cultural studies. The central argument argues that the limits of interculturality in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be explained exclusively by institutional or geopolitical constraints, but must also be understood as the result of a specific configuration of cultural values, collective cognitive representations and political strategies oriented towards the securitization of difference.

The last contribution of the file belongs to two Romanian researchers in the field of sociology; Ciprian Iftimoaei is a sociologist and professor at the “Petre Andrei” University of Iași and Vicențiu-Robert Gabor is a statistician and assistant professor

at the Faculty of Geography and Geology of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and presents us with the contribution entitled „Geopolitical risks and insecurity in the South Caucasus. The role of geographical constraints in the case of Georgia”.

In the authors' opinion, the South Caucasus region is characterized by a high level of geopolitical instability, determined by the overlapping of frozen conflicts, the competition between regional and extra-regional actors and the structural vulnerabilities of the states in the area. In this context, the article analyses the role of geographical constraints in generating and perpetuating insecurity, taking Georgia as a case study. The premise from which the analysis starts is that geography is not a simple passive framework of international relations, but an essential explanatory variable that shapes the strategic choices, foreign policy behaviour and security vulnerability of small states.

Instead of conclusions

The intention of the coordinators of this issue was to identify special-

ists from various fields, capable of covering, through their contributions, a broad period of Georgian history and culture. In this endeavour, the role of Ambassador Tamar Beruchashvili was essential¹. The difficulties inherent in approaching a history that spans several millennia are obvious, and the present issue of Polis magazine did not aim to provide an exhaustive treatment of this vast thematic field, but rather to outline relevant analytical benchmarks and stimulate interdisciplinary academic dialogue. Through the 18 articles, studies and essays signed by professors and researchers with solid academic experience, the reader has access to relevant fragments of the history of Georgia. The history of a people, a nation or a state cannot be contained within the limits of a single issue of a magazine, and the intention of the coordinators of this thematic file was not, as previously stated, an exhaustive one. The intended approach was to open a broad perspective on a historical, cultural and political space insufficiently known in Romania, in an intellectual context often dominated by ethnocentric and Eurocentric landmarks.

Note

1. The Romanian coordinator of this issue would like to thank Ms. Mariam Tsereteli (Minister Extraordinary and

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GEORGIA. REPERE ISTORICE, CULTURALE ȘI POLITICE

Georgia and Europe: A Centuries-Long Tradition of Relations

Jaba SAMUSHIA

Abstract: *Georgia's aspiration to join the European family is rooted in a long historical process shaped by geography, culture, religion, and security needs. Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the Caucasus has been a space of interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations, yet Georgia consistently identified with the Western cultural and political sphere. From antiquity and Christianization through the medieval era, Georgian elites repeatedly chose Western alliances, values, and institutions, despite persistent pressure from Eastern empires. Cooperation with Byzantium, European monarchies, and the Crusaders reflected this strategic and civilizational orientation. Although foreign domination and geopolitical constraints often hindered effective integration, the European vector remained central to Georgian statehood. The article argues that Georgia's contemporary European integration represents the continuation and restoration of a historically grounded civilizational choice.*

Keywords: *Caucasus, Georgia, Europe, Christianity, civilizational identity.*

Georgia faces a significant prospect of becoming a member of the European family¹. This aspiration is a logical continuation of the foreign policy trajectory developed by the Georgian state over the centuries. It should not be examined in isolation; this process has its roots in millennia of preconditions.

The Caucasus is a connecting link between Europe and Asia. Due to its geographical location, this region has

long attracted great empires striving to establish their control over this territory. The Caucasus functions as a juncture where the political and cultural areas of North-South and East-West intersect, thereby amplifying the importance of this seemingly small region in global political processes. This geopolitical location has and continues to determine the fate of the nations occupying the Caucasus for centuries.

Within the structure of global international relations, the Caucasus was mainly distinguished as a meeting point of multiple great powers. Multipolarity and bipolarity significantly decided the fate of this region. A significant role in the state and cultural evolution of the Caucasian people was played not only by the region's division into the spheres of influence of great empires but also by its position along the dividing line separating two major civilisations. Nowhere is the interaction of the Western and Eastern worlds more evident than in the Caucasus region. A distinct intercultural environment was formed as a consequence of the proximity of these two civilisations, in which Western values are merged with characteristics of Eastern culture. Politicians were also aware of this reality, since the phenomena such as David IV the Builder's visits to mosques, the presence of Muslim scholars at the courts of Demeter I and Queen Tamar, the appearance of Arabic inscriptions on Georgian coins, etc. caused no surprise². Despite this, Georgia has always remained part of Western civilisation, with Christianity creating a big gap between Georgia and the East. Modern researchers of civilisations (e.g., Samuel Huntington) unequivocally note that religion produces sharper divisions between people than ethnicity, whereas religious unity presents a stronger determinant of civilisational identity than any other factor³. Thus, after Christianisation, Georgia finally separated itself first from the Zoroastrian and later from the Islamic East.

It would, however, be incorrect to conclude that Georgia's European orientation was attributed to the adoption of Christianity. This tendency has much deeper roots. After Alexander the Great's campaign through the East in the 4th century BC, Georgia became part of the Hellenistic world. From the 1st century BC, Roman influence extended into the Caucasus, integrating Kartli and Egrisi into relations with the Roman world.

The establishment of the Christian faith on the territory of Georgia intensified ties with the Christian civilisation of Europe. Christianity was not just a faith; it functioned as an entire system of cultural values. The decision of King Mirian, to use modern political terminology, implied the integration of Georgia into the European cultural space. For this reason, it is reasonable to assume that the Christianisation of the country was, in part, politically motivated. Georgians adopted a distinctly pro-Western orientation and distanced themselves from the Eastern Zoroastrian world.

West or East?

This question has consistently confronted the Georgian political elite. The response to it shaped the country's foreign policy trajectory. One point requires clarification, namely, the last words spoken by Vakhtang Gorgasali before his death: "*Do not forsake the love of the Greeks*", did not particularly signify a pro-Byzantine stance, but rather support for Western, Christian values⁴. One of the clearest examples of

how the Georgian political elite resolved this dilemma is the dispute held at the Council of Nobles in 554 after the murder of the king of Egrisi, Gubaz. The nobles of Egrisi discussed whether to adopt a pro-Iranian or a pro-Byzantine orientation⁵. It is evident that this discussion did not concern the continuation of cooperation with one specific state. The issue was more global - East or West? From this dispute we may draw an important conclusion, which does not only apply to the 6th century but may be extended to the entire medieval era. The Georgian nation, in terms of its mentality, belonged to Western civilisation and found comfort in its cultural space. The aspiration to orient towards the West was not driven solely by political expediency.

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, the Georgian state possessed a national security doctrine that encompassed a comprehensive set of political, military, religious, economic, and cultural priorities. It was the co-occurrence of these factors that shaped the national values of the Georgians and determined the political interests of the country.

The Arab invasions and the spread of a new religion – Islam – once again divided the Near East into two parts. Georgia found itself under the pressure of the Arab Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire. Once again, Georgian society had to choose between the alliance with the Muslim East and Christian Byzantium.

Although Byzantium was never a classical European state, it represented one of the centers of Christian civilisation. This clarifies the motivation of King Ashot Kurapalates and a part of Georgian society in relocating the political and cultural center of the country from the Arab-controlled territory to Tao-Klarjeti, a region under Byzantine influence. This created the possibility for the national statehood and culture to flourish.

In the 11th century, Georgians fought the Byzantine Empire for almost half a century for supremacy in the South Caucasus. Notably, during this same period, Georgian monasteries operated within the Byzantine Empire, exporting the Western culture to Georgia.

The 11th-13th centuries represent a period of political strength for Georgia. The international interests of the Georgian state increased significantly, which facilitated the establishment of closer contacts with European powers. The Crusades demonstrated that the Near East lay within the scope of their interests. Georgia's military cooperation with European knights was conditioned by the aim of maintaining the balance of power in the Near East, from which the military threat to Georgia originated.

The relationship between Georgia and the Crusaders is a notably significant issue, and we will consider it in more detail.

In 1095, in the small French town of Clermont, Pope Urban II called on Christian believers to liberate the tomb of Christ. This event marked the beginning of the longest confrontation between the West and the East, known as the Crusades⁶. For nearly two centuries, Europe organized eight military campaigns against the Muslims of the East. For the first time in European history, a large-scale military-political coalition was formed, bringing together virtually all Western countries.

The arrival of the Crusaders in the East radically altered the regional balance of power. Byzantium and Georgia were no longer alone in the face of Muslim states. The certain impact of the Crusaders' appearance on the political life of Georgia is also acknowledged by the chronicler of King David IV the Builder. It is no coincidence that the historian links the capture of Jerusalem by European knights with David the Builder's decision to stop paying *kharaj* tax to the Seljuk Turks: "At this time, the Franks came, seized Jerusalem and Antioch... David gained more power, and gathering his forces, he stopped paying *kharaj* to the Sultan", the chronicler notes⁷.

At the beginning of the 12th century, two fronts emerged in the East – the Crusaders and the Georgians shared common military-political interests. This fact significantly accelerated the expulsion of the Seljuks from the Caucasus. For more than two decades, the unification of the Muslim world proved to be impossi-

ble, a situation that was advantageous for both Georgia and the Crusaders. The defeat of the coalition army of Najm al-Dīn Ilghazi near Didgori in 1121 brought relief not only to Georgia but also considerably improved the situation of the Crusaders in the East. Ilghazi earned the nickname "Nejm ad-Din" ("Star of Faith" Arab.) after defeating the Crusader knights on the so-called "Bloody Field" on the banks of the Orontes River in 1119. Naturally, elimination of such an opponent was the primary concern of the Crusaders⁸. Thus, the political motivation of the relationship between Georgia and the military coalition of the Crusaders is absolutely reasonable – they had a common enemy and plans in the East. In this context, the visit of the King of Jerusalem, Baldwin II, to Georgia appears entirely logical (Baldwin II's visit to David the Builder is recounted by a later chronicler and is therefore regarded as unreliable by some historians)⁹. It was evident that the European knights had a serious ally in the East in the form of Georgia. Later, in the XII-XIII centuries, when the situation of the Crusaders in the East had notably deteriorated, the legendary figure of the Savior of Christians, John the Presbyter, was created in Europe, whose prototype, according to several scholars, should have been David the Builder¹⁰.

After the initially intense phase of Georgian-Crusader relations, a partial shift occurred in the 1180s. Following the death of George III in

1184, the throne was taken by the young Queen Tamar. In fact, the kingdom was ruled by Tamar's aunt Rusudan - the wife of the Sultan of Western Iran, Ghiyath ad-Din Mas'ud, who returned to Georgia after his death. Rusudan appeared to have been well acquainted with Eastern politics and harboured a certain sympathy toward Muslim rulers. In any case, during her regency, the Georgians chose a neutral stance in the confrontation between the Crusaders and Muslims. In 1185, the Georgian royal court concluded a non-aggression pact with the Egyptian Sultan Salah ad-Din¹¹. Two years later, Salah ad-Din seized Jerusalem from the Crusaders. Owing to their miscalculated foreign policy, the Georgians practically contributed to the unprecedented consolidation of the Ayyubid Sultanate. Soon, the interests of Georgia and the Ayyubids in the Near East also intersected. Unfortunately, by this time the Crusaders no longer presented a significant force in the East. Georgian politicians quickly perceived this loss, and Lasha-George proceeded re-established close relations with the Crusaders. At the request of Pope Honorius III, the Georgian king resolved to join the Fifth Crusade (1219-1221). The principal goal of this campaign was the recovery of Jerusalem and the weakening of the Egyptian Sultanate in the Near East. Then Georgian and Western European interests aligned; however, the Mongol invasion of Georgia in 1220 prevented any practical implementa-

tion of this intention. Queen Rusudan wrote to Pope Honorius III: *"We received your noble advice and command from your legate in Damietta to go to the aid of my brother Christians. This was his sincere desire, and he was preparing to depart. Yet, as you have heard, a wicked tribe of Tatars has entered our land and caused great damage upon our people"*¹². Georgians were also actively preparing for the Sixth Crusade, but the organisation of this campaign was significantly delayed. In the meantime, Georgia was devastated by Jalal ad-Din, rendering its participation in the Pan-European coalition impossible.

In the 13th century, the Mongol invasions constrained Georgia's active foreign policy. Relations with European states weakened. The country became preoccupied with the domestic issues¹³.

In the 14th century, under George V the Brilliant, the situation changed drastically, and Georgian-European relations resumed their old pace. The Catholic world of Western Europe was interested in securing a strong ally in the East. In turn, Georgia also tried to establish a military-political alliance with European monarchies. Pope John XXII transferred the episcopal residence from Smyrna to Tbilisi in order to strengthen ties with Georgia¹⁴.

At the same time, King George V of Georgia proposed the creation of a coalition with the monarchs of Europe in order to protect Christianity. A letter from George the Brilliant to

the French King Philip VI of Valois has been preserved, in which he states: *"The divine sovereigns of France often incite the kings of the East to fight against the Saracens, but the fact is that they do not join them anymore, leaving them alone in this painful war. Therefore, I ask you to determine how and when you will cross the sea, and to meet me there, according to your good will, with thirty thousand soldiers"*¹⁵.

The style of this letter is particularly noteworthy. There is no plea or request for help; rather, the correspondence reflects negotiations between partners of equal standing and thus George V's reproach to Philip VI ("The divine sovereigns of France often incite the kings of the East... and leave them alone in this painful war") should be understood in this context. Evidently, the Georgian king sought a genuine military alliance with European states. However, soon France and England themselves turned against each other (the so-called Hundred Years' War), and the problems of the Middle East consequently lost their relevance in Western Europe.

The need for military-political cooperation between European states and Georgia re-emerged after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Europe now acutely perceived the growing Ottoman threat, and, at the initiative of the Pope, began to create a powerful anti-Ottoman coalition. The Georgians, for their part, were motivated by specific considerations: following the

fall of Constantinople, the principal route through which Georgia maintained contact with European civilisation was cut off. In 1456, the famous diplomat Ludovico da Bologna arrived in Georgia with the aim of persuading Eastern rulers to join the anti-Ottoman alliance. At the same time, Pope Pius II tried to transform the fight against the Ottomans into a shared European issue. He convened the Congress of Mantua in 1459 and appealed to the rulers of all major states to participate. He even sent a special golden rose to the French king and awarded him the title of "Defender of the Faith". Simultaneously, Ludovico of Bologna returned to Georgia, and King George VIII dispatched his envoy, Nikoloz Tbileli, to accompany him to Europe. Atabeg of Samtskhe Kvarkvare II also actively participated in the anti-Ottoman coalition¹⁶. Georgian envoys appeared before the Pope as well as other European rulers; however, the effort to create a unified European coalition was not successful. Georgia found itself alone in the face of the Ottomans and Safavid Iran.

In the Middle Ages, Western civilisation was associated with the Christian world. The religious factor certainly played a big role in shaping Europe as a coherent geo-cultural space. The Georgians' aspiration towards Europe was rooted in this factor. In the late Middle Ages, Georgians, surrounded by Muslim states, sought guarantees of national security within Western space.

Since the 15th century, after the division of Georgia into kingdoms and principalities, ties with Europe have not been severed; however, from this period onward, negotiations were conducted between unequal partners. Georgian rulers mainly appealed to Europe for assistance, although there were still instances in which initiatives for establishing a common military-political coalition originated from Georgia itself¹⁷. King Simon I of Kartli wrote to King Philip II of Spain: *"Therefore, we beseech your royal power that Caesar grant us an alliance and not make peace with the Turk, so that after the peace he may not rise up against us, against our people, and against all Christians indiscriminately, that destructive one..."*¹⁸. Simon I appealed to the Pope of Rome: *"Let us encourage the Christian kings to come out against the common enemy..."*¹⁹. Georgia faced the aggression of two great empires alone. In 1578, following the campaign of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mustafa Lala Pasha, a large part of the Caucasus came under Ottoman control. Had the European powers opposed them, Georgia might have had a chance to free itself from foreign domination. However, if we realistically assess the international political situation of that period, Simon I's proposal could only be regarded as a dream. The embassy of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani – sent to Europe in search of support – likewise ended in failure. The only thing that remained memorable from the visit of the Georgian diplomat at

the French court was Saba's witty exchange with Louis XIV. During the audience, when Sulkhan-Saba congratulated the French king on his recovery, "Sun King", Louis XIV complained that maintaining his health was no easy task at his age, being over sixty. Saba responded: *"Your Majesty lives this age with such grace that anyone would wish to be in your place..."*²⁰. This clever retort remained in the memory of those at the Louvre, while the request he presented was quickly forgotten.

Since the 18th century, a third major power – Russia – began to intervene actively in the politics of the Caucasus. Georgia's rapprochement with Russia was partly motivated by the hope that this would facilitate its return to the broader European space. At the same time, Georgian political entities sought security guarantees through a strong alliance with Russia. Initially, it seemed that Russia would serve as a shield for Georgia and act as a defender of our national interests. Georgia in turn also offered Russia an alliance in the fight against the common enemies – Iran and the Ottoman Empire. The conclusion of the Treaty of Georgievsk with Russia by Erekle II in 1783 was an attempt to halt the Iranian-Ottoman aggression through external force. The treaty clearly outlined the obligations of both parties - two full battalions, with four cannons, were to be stationed in Kartli-Kakheti, the costs of which Erekle II would bear²¹. However, this process soon took a different course. In the late 1780s Russia refused to

fulfill the obligations assumed by the treaty. Moreover, a plan for the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was drafted in St. Petersburg. By the late 1780s, Russia had effectively refused to fulfill its treaty obligations. Moreover, a plan for the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was drafted in St. Petersburg. Contrary to the terms of the treaty, after the death of Giorgi XII in 1800, a new king was not confirmed; instead, the monarchy in Kartli-Kakheti was abolished altogether. Shortly thereafter, Imereti and the remaining Georgian kingdoms and principalities shared the same fate.

The prospect of our country's integration into the European family existed in 1918-1921.

The foremost priority of the foreign policy of the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia was to establish cooperation with European states and institutions. In 1919, within the framework of the Versailles Peace Treaty, 44 countries founded the first intergovernmental organization – the “League of Nations”. The aim of this organization was to establish a system of collective security for the first time in Europe. Article 10 of its Covenant declared: “The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obliga-

tion shall be fulfilled”²². Moreover, the League of Nations laid the foundation for the formation of shared European foreign policy priorities. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia actively sought to join the League of Nations. On December 6, 1919, the Georgian organization of the League of Nations was founded in Tbilisi²³. Georgian politicians believed that integration into this European structure would strengthen the international authority of Georgia and provide at least a degree of security.

The first European delegation visited Georgia in 1920. With this visit, the Georgian government sought to gain international recognition. On September 15, 1920, at a session held in honor of European guests, the deputy of the Constituent Assembly, Giorgi Gvazava, laconically formulated the foreign policy priority of our country: “Over the course of a century, we have become disconnected from global culture, and some have even grown accustomed to the notion that Georgia must necessarily remain within the borders of Russia. Yet, you see that England and France are closer to Georgia than Russia. Georgia began its existence at a time when Mediterranean culture was flourishing. The turmoil of the Middle Ages cut Georgia off from this natural course. The most recent clash and war between nations have restored this original direction. Georgia has naturally separated from Russia, as it should have, and has regained the initial path that brings us

closer to and unites us with Western Europe. We have become closer to Belgium, France, England, and those countries where the modern human culture thrives”²⁴.

On November 15, 1920, at the first session of the League of Nations, Georgia’s membership was put to a vote. Sixteen votes were required for admission; Georgia received ten²⁵. This outcome, to some extent, accelerated the occupation and Sovietization of Georgia by Bolshevik Russia in February-March 1921.

To summarize, Georgian-European relations can be divided into several distinct periods: First, when the Georgian royal court maintained equal relations with European monarchies and participated in European military alliances. This mainly occurred during the era of the unified Georgian state, when Georgia had

higher international authority. Second, the period in which Georgian contacts with European powers were conducted indirectly, mediated by a third party – Rome, Byzantium, or Russia. Third, the most humiliating and fruitless period, during which Georgian politicians attempted connecting with European states, yet the latter took no effective steps in response. In such circumstances, Georgia, segregated into spheres of influence between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, did not have a single allied state capable of assisting its rapprochement to Europe. Considering this historical background, it becomes evident that in the event of joining the European Union, Georgia would integrate directly, without any external force or intermediary, into a large international economic and security system.

Notes

- ¹ The issue of relations between Georgia and Europe has been the subject of research for numerous Georgian historians. A summary of this scholarship is presented in D. Shvelidze’s article “Georgia and the West (The First Millennium of Relations),” in D. Shvelidze’s book *The Road to the West*, Tbilisi, pp. 145–190.
- ² History of the Jazira, 1100-1150, *The Contribution of ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi*, Volume II, By Carole Hillenbrand, Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, 1979, p. 279; 524. On the Arabic legend on the coins of Georgian kings, see G.

Dundua and T. Dundua, *Georgian Numismatics*, Part I, Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 199-203 (in Georgian).

- ³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The clash of civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, Vol. 72, Number 3, p. 27.
- ⁴ Juansher Juansheriani, *The Life of Vakht'ang Gorgasali*, translated and commentary Dmitri Gamq'relidze, Kartlis Tskhovreba, *A History of Georgia*, Editor in Chief of the English edition, Professor Stephen Jones, Mount Holyoke College (USA), Tb. 2014, p. 105.
- ⁵ Agathias, *The Histories*, English translation with introduction and short explanatory notes by J. D. Frendo, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 2A, Series

- Berolinensis, Berlin-New York, 1975, pp. 76-80.
- 6 J.S.C. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, London, 1986, pp. 20-30. R. Grousset, *L'épopée des Croisades*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1995, pp. 10-17. A. B. Грановский, *Крестовые походы*, Т 1, С.П. 2013, pp. 24-41. Jean Richard, *The Crusades, c.1071–c.1291* (Cambridge Medieval Textbooks), Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 24-27. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades, The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. I, Cambridge University Press, 1954. Marcus Bull, „Origins”, *The Oxford history of the crusades*, Edited by Jonathan Riley-Smith, Oxford University Press, 1999.
 - 7 The Life of David, King of Kings, translated and commentary Dmitri Gamq'elidze, Kartlis Tskhovreba, *A History of Georgia*, Editor in Chief of the English edition, Professor Stephen Jones, Mount Holyoke College (USA), Tb. 2014, p. 174.
 - 8 On Najm ad-Din Il-Ghazi and the Muslim coalition formed prior to the Battle of Didgori, see J. Samushia, *The Battle of Didgori: "The Wondrous Victory"*, Tbilisi, 2021 (in Georgian); see also G. Japaridze, *Georgia and the Islamic World of the Near East*, Tbilisi, 1995 (in Georgian).
 - 9 R. Metreveli, *David the Builder, Queen Tamar*, Tbilisi, 2002, p. 333 (in Georgian).
 - 10 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see A. Gogoladze, *On the Historical and Biblical Foundations of the Legend of Prester John*, Tbilisi, 2005, pp. 47–50 (in Georgian); see also Sh. Badridze, „The Crusader Legend about David the Builder and Demetre I”, in Sh. Badridze, *Georgia's Relations with Byzantium and Western Europe (10th-13th Centuries)*, Tbilisi, 1984 (in Georgian).
 - 11 The Georgian translation of the letter of pledge addressed to Salah ad-Din, see M. Todua, *Georgian-Persian Studies*, Vol. III, Tbilisi, 1979, pp. 26-27.
 - 12 I. Tabaghua, *Georgia in European Archives and Libraries (13th-16th Centuries)*, Vol. I, Tbilisi, 1984, pp. 176-177 (in Georgian).
 - 13 On the foreign affairs challenges faced by Georgia during the Mongol period, see J. Samushia, *David Ulu*, Tbilisi, 2019; and J. Samushia, *David Narin*, Tbilisi, 2020.
 - 14 M. Tamarashvili, *A History of Catholicism among the Georgians*, Tiflis, 1902, p. 33 (in Georgian).
 - 15 V. Kiknadze, “European Sources of Georgian History,” *Journal Mnatoobi*, 1983, no. 4, pp. 158-164 (in Georgian). Idem, *Georgia in the 14th Century*, Tbilisi, 1989, p. 96 (in Georgian).
 - 16 D. Paichadze, *The Anti-Ottoman Coalition of European Countries and Georgia in the 1460s*, Tbilisi, 1989, pp. 76-125 (in Georgian).
 - 17 On the anti-Ottoman activities of Georgian kings in the 16th century, see M. Papashvili, T. Karchava, T. Tsitlanadze, A. Gogoladze, N. Silagadze, *Georgia in 16th-Century European Sources*, Tbilisi, 2021.
 - 18 I. Tabaghua, *Georgia in European Archives and Libraries (13th-16th Centuries)*, Vol. I, p. 225 (in Georgian).
 - 19 *Ibidem*, pp. 229-230 (in Georgian).
 - 20 Idem, *Georgian-French Relations (First Quarter of the 18th Century)*, Tbilisi, 1972, p. 182 (in Georgian).
 - 21 *The Treaty of Georgievsk: The 1783 Agreement on the Entry of Eastern Georgia under Russian Protection*, text prepared for publication with an in-

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- ²² „The League of Nations”, Old Colony Trust Company, Boston, 1919, p. 10.
- ²³ Newspaper *The Georgian Republic*, 9 December 1919, p. 1.
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Georgian Philosophy from the Phasis Academy to the Present Day (Main Tendencies)

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Abstract: *Georgian philosophy has a long and rich tradition spanning over fifteen centuries, dating back to the 4th century. It reached particular heights during the 11th–12th and 19th–20th centuries. Georgian thinkers became familiar, often contemporaneously, with the philosophical heritage from antiquity to modern times, interpreting, translating, and producing their own original works. Through this, they engaged with the prevailing intellectual paradigms of their eras and contributed actively to the study and development of the fundamental problems of philosophy.*

There was a prolonged period characterized by a decline in philosophical thought (from the second half of the 13th century to the 17th century), which was primarily conditioned by the weakening and fall of Georgian statehood. Notably, the 20th century saw the rise of Georgian philosophical thinking, which fully integrated European intellectual traditions and gave rise to a new and original body of philosophical thought.

For a long time, the prevailing assumption was that philosophy could only be either German or Greek, as Wilhelm Windelband asserted, and that its study was confined to these two centers. Yet perhaps Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were correct in suggesting that wherever philosophy emerges, it undergoes a process of territorialization. Philosophy, as the exchange of ideas, requires wandering across various “territories”, Thinking about the “geography of philosophy” has become relevant since the paradigm of a single philosophical center was abandoned. This provides a solid foundation for confidently discussing the existence of a “Georgian philosophy”.

Keywords: *Georgian philosophy, Phasis, Gelati, Areopagitic tradition, Eastern Renaissance.*

Introduction

The cultural affinity of Georgia with Western Europe is distinctly evident. The process of Georgian philosophical thought, which boasts a

history of over a millennium, originates from the intellectual interactions of Late Antiquity. In Georgian philosophy, during the late Middle Ages, human existence and the universe began to be interpreted through

and understanding of modern European transcendental idealism, particularly the classical German philosophical systems, and, more recently, toward the postmodern philosophical examination of human existence within an era of rapid change. Such is the intellectual journey and evolution of philosophical activity in Georgia.

The idea of a “Georgian philosophical school” emerged in the mid-19th century and became a subject of debate in the 20th century. In Judeo-Christian scripture, philosophy is referred to as “Hellenic wisdom”, Martin Heidegger considered philosophy to be a “mode of Greek thinking,” which later found renewal in modern Europe, especially within classical German idealism. During the 19th century, philosophy underwent a period of modernization once again, a process that continued throughout the 20th century with the establishment of several well-known philosophical schools.

The beginnings of Georgian philosophy coincide with the spread of Christianity, and it naturally developed in close connection with theology. From its origins to the present day, Georgian philosophy has traversed an intellectually engaging path. The development of Georgian philosophical thought can be conditionally divided into distinct stages, each encompassing specific centuries. In these stages, the influence, assimilation, and creative transformation of Western philosophical models are clearly observable processes that have collectively shaped what we

refer to as Georgian philosophy. These stages may conditionally be envisioned as separate epochs, each representing a distinct phase in the evolution of Georgian philosophical reasoning.

1. The Era of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (4th-9th Centuries). This period begins with the existence of the Phasis Philosophical Academy and the intellectual activity of Peter the Iberian. At this stage, it is still difficult to speak of a distinct “Georgian philosophy” in the strict sense. However, certain philosophical reflections can already be found in various types of Georgian literary monuments. It is therefore more appropriate to speak about the presence of philosophical thinking in Georgia during this time rather than about an original Georgian philosophical system. Nevertheless, it would not be unfounded to acknowledge the efforts of historians and specialists of philosophy who, in discussing the history of Georgian philosophical thought, analyze the particular characteristics of philosophical reflection within Georgia and examine the influence and intellectual legacy of philosophical-theological schools that existed within the framework of ancient Greek colonies in the region.

2. The Medieval Era (10th-12th Centuries). This period in Georgian philosophy is marked by the foundation of the Gelati and Ikalto Academies, as well as the translation and intellectual activity of the Athosite Fathers. It was during this era that philosophical literature and terminol-