

The Problem of the Origin and Continuity of Statehood in Georgia

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ABSTRACT. Scientific discussion on “At the Outset of Georgian Statehood” was held on June 2 and 12, 2000 in the I. Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences. Different viewpoints of Georgian scholars on the date of the origin of Georgian statehood were discussed. © 2007 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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The problem of state formation is one of the most important issues in the history of all peoples. To give a simple, unified answer to this question is connected with many problems for the countries, Georgia proper, having ancient history: no Georgian written sources of that period existed for the ancient history of Georgia; no direct reference to this issue exists in the oldest foreign sources (Assyria and Urartu cuneiform inscriptions, Greek sources), which give information on the South Caucasus. Study of abundant archaeological material is of great importance in specifying the problem which we have in abundance, but the issue cannot be solved only on the basis of archaeological material.

The 12th-8th centuries B.C. Assyrian and Urartian cuneiform inscriptions mention Daiaeni and Diauhi on historical Georgian territory. Some scholars consider Daiaeni and Diauhi to have been the same formations [1:192-194; 245]. The Diauhi to were connected with the Armenian Taik and the Georgian Tao (Georgian historical-geographic province within present-day Turkey). At the same time, in the opinion of M. Dyakonov and G. Melikishvili, there was population of Hurrian generation there.

Grigol Giorgadze doubts the sameness of the Daiaeni and Diauhi considering them to have been different formations existing in different periods [2]. Neither does he share the supposition on the Daiaeni and Diauhi population belonging to the Hurrian ethnos. According to him “there can be no doubt that the Daiaeni

and Diauhi belonged to the Kartvelian world”, however, he does not think the existence of a state in Daiaeni in the 12th century B.C. fully convincing, considering the Diauhi to have been “an earlier statehood formation”. [3:16-17].

David Muskhelishvili puts the issue in a different way. He thinks that “the problem of the first Georgian state formation should be connected with the activities of Parnavaz,” i.e. in the turn of the 4th-3rd cc B.C., when a single eastern Georgian state - Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia) – was formed. The scholar considers the existence of a western Georgian state = the Kingdom of Colchis - in the 1st millennium B.C. real. Sharing the view on the identity of the Daiaeni-Diauhi, he thinks it possible to connect the origin of the Georgian statehood with eastern Georgian [4:3-4].

Guram Qorashvili categorically rejects the statehood of both Daiaeni-Diauhi and Ancient Colchis. In his opinion, the history of Georgian statehood can start only from the period of King Parnavaz [5: 98-135].

To clarify the issue, consideration should be taken of the opinion of Otar Lordkipanidze, who sharing the view of Simon Janashia, according to which the Kingdom of Colchis took shape in the 6th century B.C. However, on the basis of recently obtained rich archaeological material, Lordkipanidze tends to believe that the Kingdom of Colchis really existed from the 8th century B.C., if not earlier [6:31-97].

In the 1940-1950s, and even later, some foreign (mostly Russian) and Georgian scholars did not acknowledge Simon Janashia's view on the existence of the Kingdom of Colchis (Egrisi) in the 6th century B.C. Mary Inadze, sharing the opinion of S. Janashia, sets the date of the formation of the Kingdom of Colchis in the 6th century B.C. [7: 21-30].

The newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" (December 26-27, 1999) published a joint article of Otar Japaridze, Roin Metreveli and mine, in which we raised the question of dating the history of Georgian statehood to 2800 years, connecting it with the Kingdom of Colchis of the 8th century B.C.

The research conducted over the last decade has shed new light on the formation of the Kingdom of Colchis. In the first volume of the eight-volume history of Georgia G. Melikishvili expressed the opinion that in the 12th century B.C. there existed a community at the stage of Colchian tribal order, which assumed the shape of a "statehood formation" with all the features characteristic of a state. [1: 205-208].

Study of the material obtained as a result of long-term joint archaeological excavations conducted by Georgian and foreign scholars in Western Georgia, in my opinion, proves the fact of the existence of the Kingdom of Colchis in the 8th century B.C. The latter emerges as a Georgian (Western Georgian) state with a single Colchian culture, whose area, in addition to Colchis proper, extended to the south, north and east, embracing Shida Kartli as well. Towards the end of the 8th century South Caucasian countries, including Colchis, were raided by the nomadic tribes from the north. As a result the Kingdom of Colchis lost some part of its southern territory and the centre of the state moved from the river Chorokhi valley to that of the river Phasis (Rioni).¹

I consider it doubtful to start the history of Georgian statehood from the Daiaeni-Diauhi on the basis of the view expressed on the ethnic belonging of its population (Dyakonov, Melikishvili). G. Giorgadze also rules out the identicalness of the Daiaeni-Diauhi. At the same time, the Diauhi are mentioned only in the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions of the 9th century and from the end of the 8th century it is no longer mentioned. It is presumed that its territory was divided by the strengthened Urartu and Colcha [1: 196, 205]. Thus, the state suspended its existence.

Unfortunately, on the territory of the former Diauhi, which at present is within Turkey, no archaeological excavations have been conducted, depriving us of the

¹ I don't think it is necessary to refer to the "materials" of scientific symposiums and the works by O. Lordkipanidze, dedicated to the problem, because all this and his opinion are represented in the volume "At the Outset of Georgian Statehood", which involves his article mentioned above.

opportunity to discuss the material culture of the ethnos living there in the period of the Diauhi.

As for Colchis, in the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. the existence is attested of a highly developed bronze culture, with important density of population, developed agriculture, farming and cattle-breeding. Intensification of agriculture promoted gradual development of the community, reaching considerable progress in the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. with attendant economic and social differentiation.

In the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. the area of the prevalence of Colchian culture involves a considerable part of East Anatolia, located to the south, a significant part of Meskheta and Shida Kartli. From the end of the 2nd millennium the influence of Colchian culture increases in Shida Kartli and the influence of eastern Georgian culture grows in Colchis. In the very first century of the 1st millennium B.C. the use of iron expands considerably.

At the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. Colchian culture reaches a high level of development. And special note should be taken of the fact that the boundary between the local cultures disappears. A single culture is represented in the entire Colchis [8:119-141]. The present discussion would seem to support the assumption on the existence of a state here. However, only archaeological material, though being an indicator of highly developed culture, cannot be sufficient to settle this problem. Special attention here is attached to the Urartian inscriptions, namely, those of King Sardur II (764-735) of 750-748 and 744-742, which prove the existence of royal autocratic power, administrative governance and other factors in Colchis, giving ground to consider that the state of Colchis (Colcha) was formed from the 12th century B.C. to the 8th century B.C. [1:205-208]. The state was formed within this chronological period, but when? If as a result of the study of the material culture, we take into consideration the evidence cited above on Colchis of the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. and the data on the inscriptions of Urartian King Sardur II of 750-748 and 744-742, we may assume the end of the 2nd millennium and the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C., the 10th century B.C. to be the date sought.

This, surely, is a tentative assumption, but not quite groundless [9:140]. It seems relevant to point out here that O. Lordkipanidze considers acceptable to determine the existence of the Georgian statehood over the past three thousand years [6:24]. The Kingdom of Colchis had more or less stable territory – mostly Western Georgia, single culture, the Colchians spoke a western Georgian dialect, the present continuation of which is known to us in the form of Megrelian and Laz [10], single ethnic self-consciousness, well-preserved memory of the existence of royal dynasty, known in the ancient sources as the myth of Argonauts, descendants of King Aeetes

- the Aetids. In the 4th century B.C. the Kingdom of Colchis loses its power. In this period the western Georgian state – the Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia) – was founded, comprising the greater part of Colchis (Egrisi proper). Thus, an uninterrupted line of the existence of the Georgian state continues [9:140-141], which is of major importance for the history of statehood. In the 4th century B.C. Egrisi was within the Kingdom of Kartli. With the administrative system, founded in the period of King Parnavaz, it is one of the principalities of Kartli [11:24]. Kuji, governor of Egrisi, acknowledges his subjection to Parnavaz. He says: “You are our sovereign and I am your slave” [11:22]. Therefore, decline and fall of the Kingdom of Colchis did not suspend the line of statehood, Egrisi joined the Kingdom of Kartli and the state of Georgia continued its existence.

“King” in Georgia is a symbol of statehood. In the 540s A.D. the court of Sassanid Iran abolished the power of the king of Kartli and entrusted the governing of the country to its official – *marzpan*. But soon¹ in revolted Kartli, the local supreme power was assumed by the circle of Eristavis: “Kartli assembled and appointed Guram as an Eristavi” [12: 94]. Simon Janashia calls this process “feudal revolution” [13]. It is true that Guram, elected among the Eristavis, is not “a king” for the Sassanid authorities, but the Georgian public opinion, relations existing in the then Georgian community, recorded in the historical works of that period, recognizes Guram and his heirs as “king”. The historian says that Stepanoz, son of Guram, “did not take the name of king, as he was afraid of the Persians and Greeks and called himself head of the Eristavis”. [11:229]. Such governors were well aware that they were “kings”, i.e. local supreme authorities. Their contemporary Georgian society apprehends them thus. In his opposition to Shio Mghvime monastery, the chief priest, Stepanoz Eristavi says: “I sit in the church of kings [14:256 -257].

In regard to the present problem “the reign” of Archil in the 8th century is most interesting.² A descendent of Kartlian kings, governor of Kartli, Archil is mentioned as “king” by the 11th century historian and in his conception he is the “king” of all Georgia. However, he is well aware and this is obvious from his work as well, that in this period Eastern Georgia is ruled by the Arabs and Western Georgia – by the Byzantines. In reality Archil is an official subordinated to the Arabs, head of the principality under the Arabs, who is also owner of Egrisi. Ac-

¹ Different views have been expressed in regard to the chronology of this event, but they are not essential for our problem, The events develop between the 530s and 590s. See: David Muskhelishvili, Georgia in the 4th-8th centuries, Tbilisi, 2003, pp 225-231.

² Various views are expressed about the period of Archil’s reigning, but they are not important for the present topic, the main thing is that by all datings his activities fall within the 8th century.

ording to the same historian, Archil’s real activities extended to those parts of Georgia where the power of the Arabs and Greeks was less real, e.g. Kakheti, in which he builds churches and monasteries, promotes the strengthening of Christianity [15:243-244]. Georgia of that period was not united either, having many small administrative-political units, but for the Georgian community, its national consciousness it was a single country.

In the 9th-10th centuries, in the process of unification of the Georgian lands into a single state and ongoing formation of new feudal states, there appear “kings” of these states: king of the western Georgian state, the so-called “King of the Abkhaz”, Georgian king of Kartli-Meskheti, king of Kartvelians, kings of Hers, Kakhs. After the formation of the single Georgian feudal monarchy (end of the 10th century), all these “kings” form the titlature of the king of single Georgia [16, 17]. At the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries single Georgia disintegrated into three kingdoms of Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti. Starting from the 6th century, after Bagrationi became head of the Kartli state, a non-Bagrationi was not apprehended as king of Georgia. Representatives of the Bagrationi royal family of single Georgia sat on the thrones of all three kingdoms. In addition to these three kingdoms being independent of one another, they kept fighting with one another, the senior among them being the king of Kartli. It is interesting to note that the term “Georgias” was worked out in this period.

Those Muhammadan Bagrationis who were recognized by the Kartli community as their authorities, though in fact being khans (vali) of the Shah of Iran (Rostom (1632-1658), Vakhtang V (1658-1675), Giorgi XI (1703-1709), were called “kings” in Georgian historical works. Beri Egnatashvili [18: 417, 435 ...] and Vakhushiti Bagrationi [19: 302, 314, 338 ...] also call them “kings”.

In the 1740s, as a result of simultaneous enthroning of father and son Teimuraz II (1744-1762) and Erekle II (1744-1798) East Georgia united and since then senior or superior within the entire Georgia was Erekle II, King of Kartli and Kakheti.

In the most difficult external and internal conditions Georgia managed to defend and preserve its distinctiveness, its own supreme body of power, “king”, as a symbol of the existence of the statehood down to the 19th century.

At the beginning of the 19th century, along with the annexation of Georgia, the Russian Empire abolished the kingdom in Georgia, all the representatives of the Georgian royal family were repressed and exiled to Russia.

On May 26, 1918 Georgia gained independence and the Georgian Democratic Republic was formed, which was annexed by Bolshevik Russia on February 25, 1921. The independence of Georgia was declared on April 9, 1991 by the Supreme Council of Georgia, elected in 1990.

ისტორია და ფილოლოგია

სახელმწიფოებრიობის საწყისისა და უწყვეტობის საკითხისათვის საქართველოში

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2000 წლის 2 და 12 ოქტომბრის საქართველოს მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის ი.ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის ისტორიისა და ეთნოლოგიის ინსტიტუტში ჩატარდა სამეცნიერო დისკუსია თემაზე: ქართული სახელმწიფოებრიობის სათავეებთან. დისკუსიის მასალები ამავე სათაურით გამოქვეყნდა 2001 წელს.

გამოითქვა რამდენიმე მოსაზრება. ქართული სახელმწიფოებრიობის ისტორია შეიძლება დაიწყო: 1. ძვ. წ. XII–VIII საუკუნეების ასურულ და ურარტულ ლურსმულ წარწერებში მოხსენიებულ დაიაენი-დიაუხით, ან საკუთრივ დიაუხით; 2. ძვ. წ. IV–III საუკუნეთა მიჯნაზე ქართლის სამეფოს ჩამოყალიბებით; 3. კოლხეთის (ეგრისის) სამეფოს ჩამოყალიბებით, რომლის შექმნას ზოგი ძვ. წ. VI ს-ში, ზოგი ძვ. წ. VIII ს-ში ვარაუდობს.

ვფიქრობთ, ძვ. წ. II ათასწლეულის მეორე ნახევრის არქეოლოგიური მასალა, ძვ. წ. VIII ს-ის ურარტუს მეფე სარდური II-ის (764–735) 750–748 და 744–742 წლების წარწერები, ენობრივი მონაცემები, უფლებას იძლევა ქართული სახელმწიფოს არსებობა ძვ. წ. II ათასწლეულის დასასრულით და I ათასწლეულის დასაწყისით, პირობით, ძვ. წ. X საუკუნით ვეგარაუდოთ. ამ დროიდან საქართველოში, ამა თუ იმ სახით XIX ს-ის დასაწყისამდე სულ არსებობდა სახელმწიფო, რომლის სიმბოლო იყო “მეფე”. XIX ს-ის დასაწყისში რუსეთის საიმპერიო ხელისუფლებამ გააუქმა მეფის ინსტიტუტი და ამ ეტაპზე შეწყდა ქართული სახელმწიფოს არსებობა.

1918 წლის 26 მაისს საქართველომ მოიპოვა დამოუკიდებლობა და შეიქმნა საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკა, რომელმაც იარსება 1921 წლის 25 თებერვალს ბოლშევიკური რუსეთის მიერ მის ანექსიამდე.

1990 წ. 28 ოქტომბერს არჩეულმა საქართველოს უზენაესმა საბჭომ 1991 წლის 9 აპრილის აქტით, გამოაცხადა საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობა.

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