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# European Integration - Longstanding Aspiration of Georgia

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**ABSTRACT.** The article presents a historical review of the attempts of Georgia towards European integration, this being a longstanding aspiration of Georgia and the Georgian people finding its realization only in our times. In this respect the territory of Georgia may be considered belonging to the sphere of European civilization. It is noteworthy that, on medieval geographic maps, Georgia is usually located in the European part of the Eurasian Continent (cf. "The Map of Europe" by the famous cartographer ORTELIUS dating back to 1575). © 2010 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

**Key words:** *European integration, crossroads of Europe and Central Asia.*

## Past Experience

Traditions of statehood on the Georgian territory can be traced from the mid II ML BC. Preconditions for the creation of a unified state started to form in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, when the western part of the country submitted to the eastern part, resulting in the creation of the Kingdom of Kartvels (Georgians).

Being located at the crossroads, Georgia attracted different invasions. In some cases, frequent invasions led to establishment of foreign rule over Georgian lands that were mostly divided into two main parts: western and eastern. Whereas the eastern and the western parts fell to the Romans in the first centuries AD, in the following times the eastern part was controlled by Persians, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, Khorezmians, Turkmen; while the western part was mostly controlled and influenced by Rome or Byzantium. The western part was just partially occupied by Ottomans before Russia annexed the entire Georgia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> c. and interrupted longstanding traditions of Georgian statehood.

Proceeding from the above-stated, the orientation issue was always topical for Georgians. In most typical situations, when two superpowers rivaled for the Georgian land, there were people inside Georgia with different outlooks regarding the political orientation of the country. Any perception, even wrong, served the desire for territorial integrity and the aspiration towards sovereignty.

Herodotus (5<sup>th</sup> c. BC), who considers the causes of the Greco-Persian wars, refers to Persian sources about kidnapping of women by the Hellenes (*Europe*, daughter of the Phoenician king, later – Medea from Colchis, Western Georgia), the kidnapping of Helen by Alexander to Troy and as a response the invasion of Asia (Troy) by Greeks earlier than the Asians invaded Europe. Hereby the author assumes that Persians considered the Asians and barbarian tribes as their relatives, whilst they were separated from Europe and the Hellenic tribes. In this context Colchis should be placed in Asia [1: 37, 38].

But what was the vision of Georgians on their cultural affinity? Being influenced by the east Christian civilization,

participants of that expedition were known as Argonauts. Eguri was Colchis – a wealthy state, which emerged in the mid-second millennium BC.

In the 6-5<sup>th</sup> cc. BC Greek migrants from Miletus founded trade factories in the coastal line of Egrisi (Colchis): Phasis (Poti), Dioscurias (Sokhumi), Pityus (Bichvinta), Gyenos (Ochamchire). Greek written sources of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC provide us with detailed information about ancient Georgian state formations, filling some gaps in local chronicles of the later period.

As a result of an expedition of the Roman com-



EUROPAE ORTELIUS 1575

mander Pompey (65 BC) Kartli (the same Iberia - Eastern Georgia) fell to Rome, while Western Georgia (Egrisi) as a province of Pontus was included in the Empire in 63 AD. The short dependence took a turn for an alliance, formulated as a “brotherhood and an alliance”. In the first half of the 2nd century the King of Iberia Pharsman was invited to Rome, where his equestrian statue was erected in the temple.

Christianity spread to Georgia in the first century AD. Simon the Canaanite and Matthias came to Georgia together with Andrew the First-Called. The first episcopacy in Georgia was established by Andrew the First-Called in Atsquri; he also assigned the first bishop, sev-

eral priests and a deacon. According to historical sources, Christ's tunic, as well as the Prophet Elijah's mantle, were kept in Mtskheta, and Khobi monastery kept the Virgin's robe, which is now kept in the Museum of Zugdidi. According to the Christian ecclesiastical tradition, the Tsilkani church had an icon of the Mother of God created by Luke the Evangelist. Today it is in the National Museum of Art in Tbilisi.

In 298, under the treaty concluded by Rome and Sassanid Persia in Nisibis, the Kartli kingdom came under Roman political control, enabling the authorities to acknowledge Christianity. There is certain evidence to prove that Georgians were involved in the creation of the Christian creed. Bishop Stratophilus of Bichvinta attended the first Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea and the Bishop of Kartli Pantophilus attended the second Ecumenical Council. The Christian churches in Bichvinta, Nokalakevi, built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Western Georgia, also attest to the spreading of the Christian religion in southern and eastern Black Sea regions.

Kartli declared Christianity as the state religion in 326, and about that time the same was done in Egrisi (Lazica) [4: 34, 35]. This decision for Georgia, situated at the crossroads between the West and the East, implied taking political orientation towards the West, while two strong superpowers, Rome and Sassanid Persia, were rivaling for world domination. The decision determined Georgia's further fate and strongly tied the Georgian people and Georgian culture to Western civilization, even though after that Georgia, as said above, was mostly controlled by Persians or for a shorter time - by Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, Khorezmians, Turkmen, and in the late Middle Ages - by the Ottomans.

In 482, the powerful Georgian King Vakhtang Gorgasali broke with Iran, turned to Byzantium, married the Byzantine princess Helen, achieved independence for the Georgian church, and expressed his loyalty to Byzantium, adhering to this course till his death. His last words to his people were: "Never abandon love for the Greeks" [5: 182], which was a confirmation of Western orientation.

In 596 the Catholicos of Kartli Kyrion, corresponding with the Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), firmly turned the Georgian church to Diophysitism, which meant Western orientation. In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, Abraham, Catholicos of Armenia, wrote to the Catholicos of Kartli: "We hardly believe in devoted love for Byzantium from a slave of the king of kings as well as in his separating from Persia having the same faith" [6: 5]. However, that was true.

Georgia's location at the crossroads manifested it-

self in different ways. Different distinct characteristics made the country prominent. One sign of such a manifestation was the title of the king in united Georgia. According to relevant sources, Giorgi II (12<sup>th</sup> c.) was "The King of Kings, the Caesar of All the East and the West". The title "The King of Kings", adopted from the Achaemenids, by which the ancient Persian Kings were referred to, was complemented by another word *sharavandedtani* ("the haloed"), also derived from Persian. In times when the title of the Georgian king became "the King of Abkhazians, Kartvels, Rans, Kakhs, Armenians, Shahansha and Sharvansha", the king was mentioned in the Georgian Chronicles as a leader combining "kingship and sultanate". The expression "the King of Mashriq-Maghrib" [7: 90-93], frequent parallels between the Georgian Kings and Alexander the Great, Augustine, Constantine the Great means that Georgians evidently considered themselves as heirs of western, Greco-Roman traditions. The Georgian thinker Arsen Iqaltoeli (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> cc.) translated from Greek into Georgian the *Nomocanon*, the complete recension of 920, which was recognized as a canonical code of the World Orthodox Church. Georgians were familiar with the poems of Homer and medical, philosophical and philological anthologies, written in Medieval Georgia, were influenced by Greek thought. "Philosophers such as Democritus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Philo are represented" [2; 8] via the thinking of Corpus Dionysiacum, of which the author, as supposed by Sh. Nutsubidze and the Belgian scholar Honigmann, was Peter the Iberian (401-491), Bishop of Majuma, - a hypothesis not shared by other scholars - Neoplatonic ideas were introduced into Georgian culture [2].

Deriving from Roman-Byzantine traditions Georgian law was based on liberal, democratic and tolerant principles. Since Georgia had almost continuous traditions of statehood, the purpose of Ancient and medieval Georgian law was primarily to defend the interests of the State. Accordingly, treason, a crime against the integrity of the State, was considered a capital offense.

At the top of the hierarchy was the king, who personified the State. The king's responsibilities and duties were as broad as his rights. In ancient Georgia, the king was elected from the royal family and had many responsibilities. Like everywhere else in ancient times, the king was commander-in-chief, the high priest and the supreme judge.

Later on, spiritual and civil powers were divided, and the institution of kingship turned into a hereditary tradition. However, the rights of the monarch were not unlimited and his authority was not untouchable. Important decisions were made by the king together with the *darbazi*

(State Council). An anonymous chronicler of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. is critical of the royal family, while Vakhtang VI's Code (early 18<sup>th</sup> c.) states: "If the king can exercise kingship, let him do it; if not, it is better that he renounce it". The king, as anybody in the state, had to be law-abiding.

In the early 12<sup>th</sup> c., the Supreme Court was established in Georgia. Any person could submit a complaint, regardless of ethnicity or social status, even a lowly peasant against the senior. The court was headed by the Prime-Minister (*mtsignobartukhutsesi*).

One can see some rudiments of a jury system in Georgian justice, and decisions were made on the basis of testimony, specially twelve chosen men, made under oath, as it was, for instance, in England at the same time.

Georgian Law defended private property. Private property on land, unlike the East, was a dominant system in Georgia throughout centuries. Private property could be inherited; however, each new king had to confirm the rights to private property by corresponding documents.

Medieval Georgian society was based on a blood-money system. The price of a person depended on his/her social position. Fines also depended on the crime. In most cases Georgian Law did not distinguish crime based on the social status of the criminal. There was no discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds either. It should be noted that Monophysites and Moslems had their own justice systems in Georgia. They not only coexisted but collaborated peacefully.

The jurisdiction of Law outside the church – "lay jurisdiction" – did not resort to death penalty, or extreme forms of mutilation in punishment. The death penalty for even severe crimes, such as treason against the state or king, was in most cases avoided. Exile or blinding of those found guilty was ordered in such high crimes. Although, there were some instances of people being sentenced to death, this rarely occurred and such a decision was made only in single cases.

Georgian Law protected women's rights, and emphasized their significance. Women, like men, could inherit and participate in governance and diplomacy. Information on a female sentenced to death penalty has not been preserved in historic memory. One can trace the concept of gender equality in Georgian literature, as well as in legal and historic documents. This idea of legal equality was expressed very clearly by Shota Rustaveli, who asserted that:

"A lion's whelps are lions all, male and female alike".

It is noteworthy that the equality of lion's whelps or members of a royal family in the case when there was

no male heir to the throne, as it was in the case of Queen Tamar (12<sup>th</sup> c.), did not apply to Georgian society as a whole. However, it was a step forward. After being held for a long time, that idea made the enthroning of females possible (besides Tamar, who became a beloved heroine of Georgian folklore, this was the case also with her daughter Rusudan). That was the Golden Age of Georgian history.

Kidnapping of women was forbidden, at least on paper. According to written sources, the tradition of kidnapping was eliminated as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Law was strict in the case of the abandonment of an innocent wife by the husband, since the family was considered the basis of a powerful state. When people divorced, the Law was always on women's side. Even if the cause of divorce was adultery by the wife, the Law tried to defend her rights, and ordered her dowry returned [9: 110-114].

Persian author of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Nadjib Hamadani emphasizes the beauty of Tbilisi women who sit in stores and do not hide their faces [10: 102,103].

A Frenchman Jean Baptist Tavernier (1605-1689) emphasizes the fact that "especially in Tbilisi, Georgian women have one more advantage apart from their beauty: They have more freedom than other Asian women". The same author remarks that in Georgia women are better than men, when it comes to writing. The famous French writer Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), who was in Georgia from November 23, 1858 to January 11, 1859, relates: "I have to confess that when I was traveling to Tbilisi I believed I was going to a half-wild city. I was mistaken". He considers that Georgian ladies were only two weeks behind the Italian fashion. This opinion was strengthened at the New Year Party, where he met Georgians in beautiful national clothes [11: 215, 226].

Splitting up into Catholic and Orthodox Churches was not immediately recognized by Georgians and despite the schism of Christendom in 1054 A.D., the Georgian Church retained contacts with the Catholic Church. About 1065, the famous ecclesiastic figure Giorgi the Athonite (Mtatsmindeli) made the following comment concerning the ecclesiastic discord between Rome and Constantinople: "As heresy has occurred so many times among Greeks... Holy Councils among ecclesiastic leaders were summoned and this issue was thoroughly investigated... The Romans (i.e., the Western Church) once they acknowledged God, have never deviated from this faith and they never practiced heresy..." [12: 425-513].

Georgians abstained from participating in the Crusades; however, 200 crusaders joined forces with the Georgians in defeating the invading Moslem coalition at

the Didgori battle in 1121 A.D. The Georgian King Giorgi IV Lasha (1207-1223) was invited to participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> Crusade, supposedly in early 1221. However, Georgians could not respond, since the Mongols thrice invaded Georgia in 1220-1221. Information about that is in the letters of Queen Rusudan and Commander-in-Chief Ivane Mkhargrdzeli to the Pope, dated back to 1223. In her letter Rusudan addresses the Pope as Father, Head of All Christians [13: 7, 8].

There are several Georgian documents in which the Pope is still referred to after 1054:

- 1057: The deed granted by Bagrat IV to Shiomghvime monastery. The document is confirmed by Catholicos Giorgi;
- 1188: The deed granted by Queen Tamar to Gelati monastery, signed by Catholicos Tevdore;
- 1245-50: renewed immunity conferred by eristavi of Kartli Grigol Surameli to Shiomghvime Monastery, confirmed by Catholicos Arsen;
- 1281-1282; the conferring deed issued by Nikoloz the Catholicos to Arvanbeg Sabaisdze;
- 1260-1270; the deed from Shiomghvime collection about granting Samtsirveli to Zosime Tokhaisdze;
- 1454 document of Kulukhi, issued by David the Catholicos about tribute of the Kulukhi Cross population;
- 1467 Endowment to Mary of Mtskheta Metekhi from Catholicos Abraam Abalaki;
- 1470 conferring deed from Catholicos David upon Makharebel Maghaladze;
- 1472 conferring deed from Catholicos David upon Okropir Maghalashvili [14: 42-47].

The early Georgian document, in which the Pope is not mentioned alongside the other Patriarchs is dated back to 1545. It is not accidental that prior to that, the Russian *knyaz* married the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor and assumed the right to raise claims both to the West and to the East. Later on, in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Ivan IV the Terrible took the title of a king, extending his territory eastward within a 4-year interval to Kazan and later Astrakhan khanates. The disappearance of the Pope from the list of Patriarchs has to be somehow connected with the aggrandizement of Russia [14: 42-47].

From 1323, a new Crusade was planned from France. Egypt was informed about that. According to the information by al-‘Ayni (died in 1451) “the Pope intended to send troops against us, infidels”... In the letter of the Georgian King Giorgi the Brilliant to the king of France Philip Valois (1328-41), the former complained that the French kings frequently pitted Eastern kings against the foes, but after that they didn’t come, leaving them alone

in the face of danger [15; 16:150-152]. King Giorgi implied the Georgian kings under the Eastern kings, while the French kings had a wide meaning, covering all Western rulers.

In 1318, a Catholic bishopric was founded in Sukhumi [16: 97; 17]. In 1328, according to the Papal Bull issued by the Pope, a bishopric - placed in Smyrna before, was transferred to Tbilisi, and a decision was made about constructing a church for the Bishop [18; 19]. From that time Georgia was visited by European Roman Catholic missionaries and envoys who contributed greatly to the survival of Georgia throughout the Middle Ages. Contacts with the missionaries were attractive for the Georgian side as a means for establishing trade and cultural links between Georgia and Christian Europe - a challenge of the time. The key factor in the great headway made by Catholic Missions in Georgia was the efforts of the missionaries. The latter strongly supported the idea of the unification of the state, built churches, founded schools, disseminated education, rendered medical aid, bridged Georgia to the rest of Europe, fulfilled diplomatic functions, exposed the slave trade, wrote books extolling Georgia, and, unlike some other foreigners, took time to learn Georgian and the local culture, in every possible way contributing to its continued development.

From the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Genoa got permission from the prince of Odishi to found a trade factory in Georgia [16: 99]. However, Genoa founded a trade factory in Sebastopolis (the same Sukhumi) only after defeating the Venetian fleet in 1354. In 1354-1453 the trade factory was administered via Kaffa. In 1453, the factory passed to the “St George Bank” [16: 99, 100]. According to the regulations of Kaffa (1449) the Consul of Sebastopolis had 1% of the value of the goods brought in or out of Sebastopolis. In those years not only Georgian goods but also silk from Iran and Shirvan were exported via Georgia to Europe. The attempt to establish trade relations with Western Europe can be traced later, for instance in the times of Levan II Dadiani (1611-1657), who invited European merchants to Megrelia to found a company exporting Iranian silk to Europe via Georgia [16: 150-152; 20: 41, 42, 48-50]. The same project was revived in 1714 in the Agreement that was to be concluded between Georgia and France, some paragraphs of which envisaged the trade of France with Iran via Georgia and the Black Sea [16: 151; 21].

Among the distinguished guests of Ferrara-Florence Council were the Georgian Metropolitan and a noble from Iberia (Eastern Georgia), who clandestinely left the Council. Despite attending the Ferrara-Florence Council, Georgians did not join the Florence union (1439),



avoiding losing the independence of the church. However, they still participated in various attempts of Europeans to organize an anti-Ottoman coalition, since the increasing power of the neighboring Ottoman Empire threatened the independence of Georgia [22: 80-84; 23: 179-210].

In 1454 the Pope Nicholas V allowed Lodovico of Bologna to organize an anti-Ottoman coalition. Among others, Georgians were implied as the participants of the new coalition. In 1460 Lodovico of Bologna took with him the envoys of the Georgian king Giorgi VIII and Kvarkvare Atabeg with letters. Those were Nikoloz from Tbilisi and Kusudan (Parsadan), who were going to Europe together with five envoys. Their route was through Hungary, Vienna, Venice, Florence, Rome, Milan. In May, 1461, the Georgian envoys reached France; they first visited the French King Charles VII, who died at that time and the visitors attended the coronation of Louis XI. The envoys also visited Philip the Good, the Duke of Burgundy [24: 88-105]. Despite the failure, Georgians did not lose hope to establish contacts with European countries. Information about the coming of the ambassador from the Georgian King Konstantine to Venice is in the letter of April 12, 1471, sent by the Hungarian ambassador in Venice. The letter says that in that spring, the Georgian king was ready to march with 30 000 troops against the Ottomans. There is also information about the arrival of the envoys from the Kakhetian King Aleksandre and his readiness to fight the Ottomans in 1471-72.

The next envoy to be sent by the Kartli King Constantine in the ninth decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was Nilo, follower of St. Basil's Order. Together with brother Zakaria, in 1495 he was sent with gifts to Spain - to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. The hosts appreciated their visit, expressing thanks for the gifts. However, they declined the request to participate in the anti-Ottoman coalition [22: 98-100]. The ambassadors also met Pope Alexander VI and gave him a letter from the Georgian king appealing to Europeans to rise against the Moslems - who had now gained more power. As a response, the Pope sent to the Georgian king the decision of the Ferrara-Florence Council, inviting him to follow the document [19: 110].

The dissolution of Georgia towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century made its partition by the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century easier. Since then, the aspiration toward unification and independence was an impetus for further activities of Georgian civil as well as ecclesiastic figures. Western Europe was considered by them as a potential ally with whom they tried

to establish contacts in all ways possible. In some cases, they were even ready for concessions in religious affinity. Throughout the late Middle Ages a number of Georgians, who were at the highest social position, adopted Catholicism with an expectation of efficient support in achieving the main goal.

In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Kartli King Luarsab I tried to establish contacts with the Pope via the Armenian envoys. The latter informed the Pope that the Georgian kings and rulers recognized the supremacy of the Pope [18: 519-521; 19: 113]. One can see the relevant evidence in the Pope's letter sent to the Georgian king. In the 9<sup>th</sup> decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a new attempt to establish an anti-Ottoman coalition was undertaken, in which the Pope Clement VII (1592-1605), German Emperor Rudolf II (1576-1612), Venice, the Spanish king, Persians and Georgians were implied. In his letter to the Pope (6 May, 1596) Luarsab's son Simon - the king of Kartli, following his father, mentioned the Pope as a "Spiritual Father", "the Greatest Pope", asking his support against the Ottomans. Simon addressed the Spanish king with the same plea, asking him to attract the German king to the coalition, as well. In his letter, Simon promised to be loyal to the Pope [18: 523, 524; 19: 117, 121, 122; 25: 156, 222, 227]. The Safavid Embassy left Ispahan on July 9, 1599. They were to visit the following eight states: Germany, Rome, Spain, France, Poland, Venice, England, and Scotland. However, they managed to visit only some of them - Germany, Rome and Spain. They failed to achieve their goal, since one of them was assassinated and the remaining three members adopted Christianity.

In 1625 Nikoloz Irbakhi Choloqashvili, the Ambassador of the Kakhetian King Teimuraz, was sent to European countries, to the Pope Urban VIII. The Ambassador asked the Pope to connect him with the Spanish king. When visiting the Spanish King Philip IV, Nikoloz was pleading him to join him in his fighting the Ottomans [23: 248-254]. Though that attempt also failed, it was attended by a positive result - the first printing of Georgian books by the Propaganda Fide [18: 556-558; 19: 160-162; 23: 378-440]. Instead of support, Teimuraz received a letter from the Pope with blessings. In 1630 Teimuraz sent another envoy - missionary Pietro Avitabile to the Pope [18: 556-558; 19: 169-172?].

Beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries and travelers from the West visited Georgia, learning important evidence about Georgia and Georgians.

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Louis Grangé cites the words of the Western Georgian prince Gurieli. The latter said that the reason for the fall of Constantinople was

separation from Rome. In his words, everybody had to be loyal to the Pope [13: 139].

“Tbilisi is one of the beautiful cities. Yet, it is not very big... All the external signs of Christianity are preserved in the city. All churches have crosses above bell towers and numerous ringing bells. Alongside other sorts of meat, pork is also sold in public, without hiding. As for wine, you will come across it in every corner, in spite of the fact that the densely populated Tbilisi was culturally and ethnically diverse, as Jean Chardin (1643-1713) puts it. According to the French scholar De Lille, “Tiflis – the Capital of Georgia – is not a big city... But it is the most beautiful and the most important city of Persia... In Tiflis there are up to 14 churches... In spite of the fact that Tiflis is under Moslem rule and the region is run by a Moslem king, Persians have no mosque in any place apart from the above-mentioned fortress. Georgians are free, indomitable and brave. And though they have been subjugated, they still have preserved a military spirit to regain liberty” [11: 218].

the words of the Georgian king to the Pope [18: 631, 632; 19: 221-224]. Dionigi da Piacenza Carli stresses the positive attitude of Georgians to Catholics and states that Giorgi XI, “when he learnt about the Vienna victory (1683) started learning Italian himself” [11: 219].

Another Georgian King, Erekle I (1688-1703) was forced to recognize simultaneously Islam and Christianity. According to Tournefort, “He went to the mosque”, “came to Mass, too, at the Church of the Capuchins, where he would drink his Holiness’s (i.e., the Pope’s) health” [26: 83; 27: 61]. The missionary Josef informed Rome about the loyalty of the Georgian King Erekle I to the Pope [13: 255]. In the times of the Pope Clement XI (1700-1721), the Georgian Catholicos Domenti was ready to accept Catholicism, however without losing independence. He considered the Pope as a viceroy of Christ, head of the Apostolic Church [13: 306; 18: 430].

The King of Kartli Kaikhosro (1709-1711) informed the Pope that he accepted Catholicism, but was forced to hide it, since Georgia was controlled by Persia and he



In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Vakhtang V, the king of Eastern Georgia addressed the Pope Alexander VII: “The Great”, “the Most Powerful”, “Invincible”, “the Greatest among All Patriarchs”, “Protector of Justice”, “the Head of All Christians” [18: 620, 621].

In the eighth decade of the 17th century (1687), in his letter to the Pope, Giorgi XI expressed the will to join European kings who were under the Pope’s protection. In his letter to the Pope Innocent XI, he explained that the situation in Georgia that was controlled by Persians did not allow him to accept Catholicism publicly, but the king promised to live in loyalty to the Pope. That was the time when the anti-Ottoman forces – Austria, Poland, Venice and others were united. “All Georgian troops in our kingdom are ready and wait for your orders; our dream is to follow your orders. Do not doubt our loyalty. Although we are far, we dream to see you”, – were

asked the Pope for his permission to keep this secret [18: 306].

Hard times in the Persian history in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century raised hopes in Georgia for achieving independence. The first step made for getting help was again toward the West. That time the King of Kartli Vakhtang VI sent an ambassador (Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani) to France to plead with Louis XIV. Orbeliani visited Italy and other European countries (1714-1716). After the attempt to protect his country from the Persians and Ottomans [26: 100-115] failed, Vakhtang was forced to get into contact with Russia, which turned into a tragedy for Georgia. The country was occupied by the invaders, and the Georgian king was forced to emigrate to Russia, accompanied by the greater part of the educated elite.

In the 40s of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholicos of Georgia Nikoloz VII Kherkheulidze sent a letter to Pope

Benedict XIV, in which he described the situation in Georgia, asking him not to recall the Catholic priests who were in Georgia [18: 432].

In the sixth decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after a long time of Kakheti being split from the rest of Georgia, the King of Kakheti Erekle II managed to unite Eastern Georgia, and the unification of the whole country was put on the agenda. Once again he appealed to Europe. The king established close relations with the missionaries. He planned to borrow money. In 1781, Erekle sent Father Dominic of Trieste to Rome and Vienna. The latter died on his way. The following year, Erekle sent Father Mavros (Mauro) of Verona with a letter to the Austrian emperor, the King of France and several of the Italian states. One can read in his letter to the French King Louis XVI, dated October 18, 1782: "...We now make bold to state that our request consists in imploring you for means to maintain two regiments, to enable us to recruit soldiers and organize them on the European model, so that our foes, hearing of the formation of such a corps, may not dare to undertake any further hostilities against us..." [26: 181]. That time Erekle's appeals to the courts of Western Europe did not meet with any response.

A vain quest for an ally in the West throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to an end with the orientation towards Orthodox Russia. In 1783 the Treaty of Georgievsk, signed between Russia and Georgia, actually laid the foundation for the abolition of the independence of the Georgian Church, followed by the abolition of statehood. According to the treaty the Georgian Church had to subordinate itself to the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, occupying the eighth place in the Church hierarchy [28: 34, 74]. By the same document, sympathy and tolerance toward Roman Catholicism would no longer be tolerated. In 1801, the Russian Tsar abolished Georgia's centuries-old statehood in Eastern Georgia on the basis of a manifesto, and a bit later the Western Georgian Kingdom was also abolished.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georgians rebelled many times: once, in the times of Napoleon's invasion of Russia (1811-12); another time, inspired by the 1830-31 rebellion in Poland, Georgians attempted to organize a plot in 1832, which was betrayed. All participants were arrested and punished.

A letter sent to Napoleon by the last West Georgian King Solomon II is the last desperate attempt to attract the attention of the West: "...The Emperor of Moscow has unjustly and illegally stripped us of our royal estate; this Emperor had no legal title whatever; ... since we ourselves had neither the strength to offer armed resistance to the invasion of our domains, nor any means

of obliging the usurper to restore them to us by recourse to Law, therefore this double impotence served to excuse our failure to take effective action ... may You deign to liberate me together with a million Christian souls from the yoke of the pitiless Emperor of Moscow, either by your lofty mediation, or else by the might of your all-powerful arm..." [27: 263, 264].

The international situation was not favorable for the realization of those plans. Activities of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia were suspended in 1845 by the hegemony of Russian authorities, since the Russian administration was established there. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia became a home for some Europeans who were settled there by Russians. In 1817-1819, in the times of the Commander-in-Chief Ermolov, over 500 German families were brought to the Caucasus, mostly to Georgia. A bigger part of the 3000 Poles exiled to the Caucasus after the uprising in Poland in 1830-31. They were brought to Georgia, which was considered a place of exile. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Greeks were also settled in Georgia. After the uprising in Poland in 1863, money was gathered in Tbilisi to support the rebels [29: 3-12].

At the same time, many Europeans visited Georgia. T. Armstrong (1828) describes Georgians as strong brave people, who are keen on taking alcoholic drinks... He considered Georgian women as most beautiful he had ever seen. Armstrong compared Tbilisi to Naples. He described the life of the city and trade that had big prospects.

"When I compare the cities of the Old World known for their wonderful location: Constantinople, Genoa, Naples, Prague, Bursa, Salzburg, Algiers, etc. to the picture of the Georgian capital, I cannot place Tbilisi in the last place", – notes Morritz Wagner in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Richard Wilbraham, who visited Tbilisi in 1837, stresses the beauty of the Georgian people. At a ball in honor of the visit of the Emperor, Georgian noblemen "dressed in their magnificent well-designed clothes proved that they are truly the most beautiful people in the world". The author speaks about the beauty of Georgian women separately. When he remembers Germans living there, he notes that German women living there "cannot compete in beauty with the black-eyed sensitive neighbors of theirs" [11: 224-226].

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Georgians studied in European Universities, becoming involved in political activities, founding political parties, and editing newspapers and journals. Many Europeans visited Georgia with different intentions. However, cultural as well as commercial interaction between Georgia and the West was mainly realized via Russia and under Russian control.



A new experience of relations is connected with a short period of independence of Georgia in 1918-1921. Since proclaiming independence on May 26, 1918, Georgia denied Russian orientation and took a course towards Europe. Two days later Georgia concluded a treaty with Germany, one clause of which was about the creation of an army. In times of WWI such an alliance was risky and lasted for a short time. However, Germans helped in regulating Turkish-Georgian relations. Germany, defeated in WWI, was replaced by England that was an ally of the White General Denikin against the Bolsheviks. That was not acceptable for Georgia. After the departure of the British (May, 1919), they were replaced by Italy, from where a mission headed by Colonel Gamba came. But soon the government changed in Italy and the policy toward Georgia changed, as well. Germany, Britain and Italy, one after another, supported the independence of the small State in different ways. Yet, they finally gave up in the face of more significant challenges. The Georgian delegation that visited Paris in 1919-1920, during the peace negotiations tried to cast light upon the goals of Russia. The only thing that was achieved was the recognition of the *de facto* independence of Georgia in Paris, January 1920. A struggle for admitting the country to the League of Nations, founded on April 28, 1919, became pivotal to Georgia's external policy. The League of Nations membership was extremely important for preserving independence and territorial integrity. However, the end of WWI did not put the independence of Georgia on the political agenda.

This was confirmed by the League of Nations which did not recognize the independence of Georgia. Only 10 out of the 23 members voted for the membership of Georgia. That resulted in 70 years of Bolshevik regime in Georgia. On 23 February, 1921, the Red Bolshevik Army annexed Georgia. Many Georgians left the country, hoping to return soon. Between WWI and WWII many Georgians served in French and Polish military forces. The strong desire to restore independence was supported and favored by the German side. During WWII Georgians were on two sides. Those who collaborated with the Reich did so with a hope of liberating Georgia.

### **Georgia as a bridge between the West and the East.**

Georgia never felt at ease under the Soviet regime. In 1991, the country once again restored its political independence and historical role – bridging East and West. The independence of Georgia is recognized by the International Community. Georgia is a member of a number of International Organizations.

Located at the crossroads of Europe and Central Asia, Georgia is a bridge connecting several important economic regions, including the EU, the CIS, Turkey, and the Caucasus Region. It is a key link in the shortest transit route between Western Europe and Central Asia. After the “Rose Revolution” in November 2003, Georgia firmly adopted the following strategic goals: A strong and stable democracy and Euro-Atlantic integration.

## **ისტორია**

# **ევროპული ინტეგრაცია — ქართველთა საუკუნო მისწრაფება**

## **გ. ალასანია**

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიკოს თ. გამყრელიძის მიერ)

**სტატიაში მოცემულია ისტორიული მიმოხილვა ქართველთა საუკუნო მისწრაფებისა ევროპული ინტეგრაციისაკენ, დაწყებული ანტიკური ხანიდან ვიდრე თანამედროვეობამდე.**

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