

ABKHAZIA



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**Ministry of Education and Culture of Abkhazia
Institute of History and Ethnology of Iv. Javakhishvili**

Assays from the History of Georgia

ABKHAZIA

from ancient times till the present days

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The first generalizing work of Georgian scientists in the English Language on the History of Abkhazia from ancient times to the present days. It gives the readers the possibility of getting acquainted with the opinions of Georgian and Abkhazia historians on different disputable issues and accept or not accept this or that position.

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Introduction

Creation of the generalizing work in history of Abkhazia and its publishing in the English Language was extremely delayed. The necessity of creation of such a work is conditioned by the numerous circumstances. First of all we have to emphasize the fact, that permanent aspiration of the Russian State to tear from Georgia its North-West part has already been the reason of the politization of history of that latter for already more than one century and consequently the brute falsification of the historical past of Abkhazia and together with it of the whole Western Georgia. Namely, at the beginning of the 20th century on the soil of the falsificated history under the slogan “Abkhazia is not Georgia” was formed Apsua-Abkhazian political separatism— one of the verities of the Russian imperialism and its foothold in Georgia. The affair took a dramatic turn, as the non-legislative regime existing today in Abkhazia and its protectors in the person of the highest Heads of the Russian Federation announce the “historical rights” together with the “people’s will”, as the basis for the statehood independency of the ancient Georgian region”. With the aim of protection of the mentioned “historical rights” separatistically predisposed authors (S. Lakoba, O. Bgazhba, V. Chirikba, M. Gunba, E. Ajinjal, D. Dbar, etc), published tens of tendentious works in the Russian and English languages. Unfortunately, the separatists pursue and serve the illusory and rather dangerous political aims and not the scientific ones. The false historiography is under a special attention and protection of the Separatist Regime as well as the Highest Political Leadership of Russia.

In the Soviet epoch studying and analyzing of the issues from the ancient history of Abkhazia, was practically forbidden for the Georgian historians and they had to defend themselves from the falsifiers of History. From the end of the 80-ies of the 20th century a number of interesting and significant work on the History of Abkhazia was published, the authors of which are: M. Lordkipanidze, T. Gamkrelidze, D. Muskhelishvili, T. Mibchvani, G. Gasviani, M. Inadze, E. Khoshtaria-Brosse, N. Lomouri, L. Toidze, A. Menteshashvili, Z. Papaskiri, T. Phutkaradze, G. Kalandia, J. Anchabadze, D. Chitai, N. Berulava, B. Kudava, T. Koridze, L. Akhaladze, M. Baramidze, S. Bakhia-Okruashvili, T. Beradze, L. Bitadze, T. Gvantseladze, I. Gelenava, B. Gogia, K. Okujava, B. Khorava, D. Jojua and others.

But, it is obvious, that the Georgian historiography has not yet worked out a single and whole approach towards the main problem: The negative influence of the Soviet historiography is not yet overcome during the study of such problems, as ethno political history of the Colchis (Egrisi) Kingdom of the before the antique and especially antique periods, ethno genesis of the Georgian and Abkhazian people etc. This from its side, affects the comprehension of other important issues from the history of the region of the further period.

This work being offered to the attention of the public is the translation of the same title books, being published in 2007 in Tbilisi in the Georgian language and 2009 in the Russian Language. In certain parts it is remade. The aim of the authors guiding with the integral, conceptual approach to the analyzed important problems is spotlighting of the ethno political history of the territory of modern Abkhazia (and not only Abkhazia, the borders of which did not always coincided with the modern ones), well-grounded refutations of the conclusions of the separatist-falsifiers. The main arguments are the Georgian and foreign historical sources. The book is crammed full with the information from those

sources. One of the peculiarities of the study is that it has a complex character. In the book are used the newest scientific achievements of the historians and archeologists, specialists of the historical geography, church architecture and the anthropologists, linguists, ethnologists and demographers.

This work does not have and cannot have anything in common with working out the current policy and problems of defining the future status of Abkhazia. The aim of the present work is restoring of the historical truth. Though, the views and opinions of the Georgian and Abkhazian historians on this stage are incompatible, the authors of the book are ready for collaboration with the Abkhazian colleagues.

The authors of the book thank for the advice and kind wishes Academician Mariam Lordkipanidze, professors: Otar Zhordania, Vakhtang Japaridze, Geronti Gasviani, Gela Saitidze, Ioseb Chikava, Zurab Papaskiri, David Chitaia, Murman Papashvili, Igor Kveselava, Givi Rogava and others.

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The present work can be used as the additional text-book at the Universities and Institutes in teaching the course of the Georgian history, political science, geopolitics, conflict resolution studies and other educational courses.

Chapter I. The Brief Historical-Geographical Review

One of the corners of our country, the Autonomous Republic of Georgia - Abkhazia is located in the North-West part of Georgia, on the banks of the Black Sea, between the rivers Inguri and Psou.

The river Psou and the main watershed range of the Caucasus separates the republic from Russian Federation and the river Inguri and spurs of the Big Caucasus - Kodori and Abkhazian-Svanetian ranges from the neighboring Georgian regions – Svaneti and Samegrelo. The area of Abkhazia equals 8, 7 thousand square kilometers, which comprises 13% of all the territory of Georgia. The capital of the Autonomous Republic Sokhumi is one of the most ancient and famous Georgian towns. Toponym Sokhumi derives from the Georgian word Tskhomi/Tskhumi and means beech. In the ancient Greek sources (Pseudo-Skilak of Kariand- IV centuries B. C.) it is mentioned as Dioskuria. According to the antique traditions this name originates from the mythical Dioskures. Dioskures- Greek Dioskurio, (exactly - sons of Zeus) – twin brothers Kastor and Polidevkes (Polluks). It was believed that, the town was established by the coach-men of the Dioskures, the Argonauts Telkuis and Amphyst. But, the names of the town must be the Greek comprehension of the old Georgian word combination. It is significant, that “dia” in several dialects of the Georgian language and among them in Megrelian means mother and “Skuri” means water. The Romans in the I century B. C. renamed the town into Sebastopol in honor of The Roman emperor Gai Octavian Augustus (27 B. C- 145 A. N.), carrying together with the title Augustus the title “Sebastos” (Great). Throughout the whole medieval centuries the name of the town is met in the Georgian sources in two variants - Tskhomi and Tskhumi. At the beginning of the 14th century the Arabian author Abu-Al – Pheda for the first time mentions it as “Sukhum”, which is the Arabian form of the Georgian name “Tskhum”. Turk-Ottomans, who appeared in the Black sea area in the second half of the 15th century, also called the town Sukhum//Sokhum. In the oriental languages (Turkish, Arabian) the sound “ts” is absent and pronunciation of the two consonant sounds one after another is also impossible. Thus, from the Georgian name Tskhumi//Tskhomi is got the Turkish Tskhum//Tskhom, being established in Georgian in form of ‘Sokhumi “and in the Russian language in form of “Sukhumi”. The Abkhazians call the capital town -“Aqua”. In 1561 this Abkhazian Geographical name is fixed for the first time on the map of the Italian cartographer J. Gastald in the form of “Aqua” in the middle flow of the river Kuban (see here map N14). And only in 1737 on the map of the West Georgia being compiled in the Georgian language it is denoted on the territory of Sokhumi in the form of Aqua, though next to it is designated the “Tskhum Fortress” (see here map N13).

From the North Abkhazia is bordered by the main Caucasian watershed range being spread from the North-West to the South –East. Within Abkhazia are located such peaks of the Caucasus, as Dombi-Ulgen (4046m), Gvandra (3985m), Ertsakhu (3910m), Pshish (3790m), Agepsta (3257m), Sanchar (2292m), Adzapsha (2497m), Alashtrakhu (2723m), Nakhar (2931m), Marukh (2746m) and Klukhor (2781m). All across the pass, pedestrian paths go to the North Caucasus. The main watershed range steeply descends to the canyons of the rivers Bzip, Chkhalta, Sakeni. The mountainous middle part of Abkhazia is occupied by the spur of the Caucasus – Gagra, Bzip, Chkhalta (Abkhazian), and Kodori

(Panavi) ranges having numerous branches from its side.

Abkhazia is a mountainous country. Its 74% are occupied by the mountains and foothills and the rest part by the valleys and lowlands. In some places the mountains come directly to the sea, in other places there is a significant gap between them. On the North-West, on the left bank of the river Psou, between the sea and the Caucasus is situated the 10-15 kilometer valley. From the South-East the Gagra range comes directly to the sea. To the South-east from Gagra the mountainous massive gradually withdraws and the narrow seaside valley zone passes onto the Pitsunda lowlands. To the South-East from Pitsunda the mountains approach the sea and in the outskirts of Akhali Atoni edge it. To the South-East from Sokhumi the seaside zone gradually widens and starting from the left bank of the river Kodori, passes into the Kolkhida lowlands. The seaside zone is quite straight; The Sokhumi, Gagra Bays, Sokhumi and Pitsunda capes are remarkable.

To the North of the Kodori range, in the middle flow of the river Kodori is situated the highland region Tsebeli and in the upper reaches of the river another highland region Dali. In the upper flow of the river Bzip, between the Caucasian and Bzip ranges the mountainous region of Pskhu is located.

There are a lot of lakes in Abkhazia: The Ritsa, Adueda Adzij, Derikvara Adzish, Kvarash, Small Ritsa, Amtkel, Blue Lake, Inkit, Bebesir, Papantskvili etc.

Abkhazia is covered with the dense net of the rivers of the Black Sea basin: Psou, Bzip, Kodori, Gumista, Kelasuri, Galidzga, Mokvi, and Inguri. The bordering river of Georgia and consequently Abkhazia and Russia - the Psou flows from the mountain range of Aibga and falls into the Black Sea near the village Leselidze. To the South-East from it flows the river Mekhadir, the sources of which are located on the South-West slopes of the Gagra range. It falls into the Black Sea near the village Gantiadi. To the South-East from the village Gantiadi the river Begerepsta - the same Cold River falls into the sea. The longest river of Abkhazia is Bzip. Its sources are located on the South slopes of the Caucasian range, at the Adange pass. It is 110 kilometers long. On the greatest part of its flow till the place where the river Iupshara falls into it, it flows to the West and then turns to the South. In the upper flow the gorge is narrow and deep. At the village Pskhu it widens and the river comes apart into branches, lower the gorge is narrow and canyon like. At the village Bzip it comes to the valley and near the Pitsunda cape flows into the Black Sea. It is significant, that "Bzip is a comparatively new name of the river. Till 20^{ies} of the 19th century it was called "Kapoetis Tskali (river Kapoeti). This is a Georgian name and comes from the name of the fish Kapoet". Fish Kapoeti belongs to the trout-salmon family. This large variety of trout dwells in this river. The opinion about the Georgian origin of the hydronime "Bzip" was also expressed, being associated with the name of the plant "Bza" (box tree, pussy-willow). The main river of Abkhazia flowing along the box-tree or the gorge of Bzip is called box-tree or Bzip.

In the gorge of the right tributary of the Bzip - the river Iupshara at the height of 884m above the sea level the picturesque lake Ritsa is located. It was formed as a result of the avalanche of the mountain Pshegishkha and overhead of the river Lashipsa. The banks of the Ritsa are surrounded with the mountain slopes being covered with the needle and mixed forests, thus making it one of the most picturesque lakes of the Caucasus.

On the right bank of the river Bzip a small, but extremely beautiful Blue Lake is located.

To the South-East of the Bzip flows - the karst river Mchishta or Shavtskala (Black River) taking its start from the South slopes of the Bzip range and falling into the Black Sea to the West of the town of Gudauta. In the middle centuries it was called “Mitsis Tskali”, id. est “Ground River” (Underground River) as its great part flows under the earth. It’s Abkhazian (Mchishta) and Russian (Black river) names are the translation of the original Georgian name of the river - “Shavtskala” (Black water).

To the South-East of Mchishta flows - the river Khipsta, having the sources on the South slopes of the Bzip backbone and flowing into the Black Sea near the town of Gudauta. Its Russian name “Belaia Rechka” (White River) is the translation from the Georgian original name of the river - “Tetrskhala” (White water). In the middle centuries it was called Zupu (Zup River). On its banks the village Zupu is located (now Likhni). After which it was named. The right tributary of Khipsta is the river Egri.

To the South-East of Khipsta flows the river Aapsta taking its source in the East part of the Bzip range and flows along its South slope and falls into the Black Sea between Gudauta and Akhali Afoni. It is also called Baklanovka, though historically the river was called Agatso. The name comes from the same name village. In 19th century this river was called Aaths, which is the Abkhazian form of the Georgian name “Agatso”. The village even nowadays has the name of Aats.

To the North-West from Akhali Atoni a small river Psirtkha falls into the Black Sea. In the middle centuries it was called Anakopiis Tskali – the river of Anakopia, after the town-fortress Anakopia (now the modern Akhali Afoni).

To the South-East from Psirtkha flows the river Gumista. It is formed as a result of confluence of the rivers West Gumista and East Gumista. It goes out to the Sea to west of Sukhumi. In the middle centuries it was called Tskhomi or Tskhumi River after the name of town Tskhumi (modern Sukhumi). Within modern Sukhumi the karst river Besleti, having taking its source from the karst springs falls into the Black Sea. The 4 kilometer karst tunnel connects the Besleti with the river Kelasuri falling into the Black Sea from the eastern side of Sukhumi in the village of Kelasuri. It takes its source on the South slope of the Bzipi range on the glacier Khimsa. The name “Kelasuri” comes from the Greek “Klisura, ” which means the narrow mountainous path.

To the South-East from Kelasuri the biggest river is Kodori, the second longest river of Abkhazia. It forms in the Dali gorge as a result of merging of the rivers Gvandra and Sakeni. The Kodori first flows to the west, then turns to the south-east and falls into the Black Sea to the South of the village Adziubja (historical village Shkatskari or Shuatskali (Georgian name) – which means between the rivers - the translation of which is Adziubja. Its length is 84 kilometers. On the right bank of the river Kodori the Dranda cathedral, one of the religious centers of the West Georgia of the 10-17th centuries is located. According to the information given by the prominent Georgian historian and geographer Vakhushti Bagrationi (1696-1758), “Kodori” initially was the name of the village, later acquired by the river as well. The village Kodori in the form of “Skotori” was first mentioned in the 7th century by the Bizantine author Thodosius Gangr. The name Kodori is Georgian by root as well as the grammar formation. The main tributary of Kodori is: Chkhalta (in

Abkhazian Atsgara), Mramba and Jampala together with Amtkel. In the gorge of the river Amtkel the lake Amtkel or Azanta is situated, having been formed in 1891 as result of the avalanche, which covered the river Amtkel.

To South of Kodori flows the river Tskenis Tskali. Its name in the Greek translation (river Gipp) is met in the work of Phlavius Arian.

The significant Abkhazian River is also Mokvi. It starts from the South slopes of the Kodori range and falls into the Black Sea not far from the town of Ochamchire. One of the main religious centers of the West Georgia of the 10-17th centuries the Mokvi cathedral is situated on the spot, where with the river Mokvi confluencies with its right tributary the river Gvab. To the east of Ochamchire the river Galidzga flows into the Black Sea. (The name Galidzga is of the Megrelian origin and means bank of the river and initially was the name of the seaside village), taking its start from the east slope of the Kodori range not far from the peak Khodjal. In the medieval centuries it was called “Egristskali”, in Georgian the river Egrisi. On the South slope of the Kodori range starts the river Okumi and falls into the Sea near the village Gudava. On its left bank the historical village Okumi is situated after which the river was named. The right tributaries Okumi are: the rivers Tsarche (according to the medieval Georgian sources Dadistskali) and Okhodje, on the bank of which is situated one of the most famous religious centers of the West Georgia of the 10-18th centuries-the cathedral of Bedia. The left tributary of the river Okumi is called Didi Eristskali - the same Ertistskali. To the East from Okumi flows the fast and deep river Inguri. It takes its source in Svaneti from the glacier situated on the height of 2714 meters over the sea level and falls into the Black Sea near the village Anaklia. In some places its lower flow separates the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia from Megrelia.

Abkhazia is situated on the extreme North border of the subtropical belt. The main watershed range protects it from the north cold winds. Warm, never freezing sea and mountain rapid rivers create mild, humid subtropical climate. The significant part of Abkhazia, approximately 55% is covered with forests. More than 2 000 plants including 150 species of trees and bushes are spread here. Others are represented in the grass forms. Nearly 400 endemic species of plants of the Caucasus are located in Abkhazia and more than 100 species are met only in Abkhazia. Out of the trees must be specially mentioned: Oak, beech, pine, chestnut, fir tree, nut-gall, box-tree, abies, elm tree, hornbeam, maple, lime etc. Here dwell the species of animals familiar for the valleys and mountain forests and the highlands: aurochs, doe, and chamois, in the Ritsa woods – Deer. Besides are met: Bear, wolf, boar, jackal, fox, lynx, forest cat, marten, mink, weasel, budger, otter, ermine, hear etc. At the beginning of the 20th century the Caucasian aurochs was exterminated. Out of birds the following are widespread: eagle, hawk, merlin, kite, Caucasian mountain turkey, pheasant, partridge, seagull, hoopoe etc. In rivers and lakes dwell: trout, Kolkhidian moustache – fish, sheat-fish, salmon and sturgeon are met in some places in the sea. For protection of the useful Flora and Fauna Ritsa-Avadhara, Pskhu, Pitsunda, Gumista and Miusera preserves have been formed.

Abkhazia is rich with useful fossil. We have to mention Tkvarcheli and Bzipi coal bed. There are a lot of lead, zinc and copper deposit, plaster, lime, ceramic clay etc. The gorges of Kodori, Sakeni, Bzipi, Avadhara etc. are especially rich with the mineral medical

waters. There are thermal medical waters in the outskirts of Tkvarcheli, Sukhumi, Novi Afon and Gagra. Magnificent and gorgeous nature and unique sources turn Abkhazia into the richest climatological health-resort.

The main population of Abkhazia is Georgians and Abkhazians. The modern Abkhazians (Apsua) ethnically belong to the people of the Abkhazian-Adigean family and their language belongs to the north-western Abkhazian-Adigean group of the Iberian-Caucasian family. Together with the Abkhazian language in the mentioned group enter the Abazian, Adigean, Kabardinian, Ubikh and other languages which is spoken by the relative people of the North Caucasus – The Abazians, Adigeans, Kabardinians, and Cherkess etc.

From the ethno cultural point of view till the late medieval centuries the Abkhazians were Georgians like the population of other provinces of Georgia (Kartalinians, Kakhetians, Megrelians, and Svans etc.), and were the active participants of the formation of the Georgian Statehood and culture. In the late medieval centuries as a result of the onset of the mountaineers - invasions and purposeful migration to Abkhazia of the residents of the Mountainous zone of the West Caucasus radical ethnical changes had place. As a result of the mixing of the alien mountaineers and local Georgian population the modern Abkhazian ethnos (Apsua) was formed.

According to the census of 1989, the population of Abkhazia comprised 525. 061 people. The national structure was the following: Georgians - 239. 872 (45, 7%), Abkhazians – 93267(17, 8%), Armenians – 76. 541(14, 6%), Russians- 74. 914(14, 2%), Greeks -14, 664(2, 8%) and other ethnical groups – 25. 804 (4, 9%0) (see *ibid*, chapter XXII).

According to the administrative - territorial division of 1991, in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia are included 5 administrative regions – Gali, Ochamchire, Gulripsh, Sukhumi, Gudauta and also the territory under the control of the Gagra town council: 4 villages – Akhali Atoni, Pitsunda, Gantiadi and Gulripsh.

Formation of Abkhazia within its modern borders is the result of the complex historical processes having place during the centuries and having been completed at the end of the 20-ies of the 20th century.

There were times when Abkhazia did not exist as an independent administrative-territorial unit. In 15-2nd centuries B. C. the territory of modern Abkhazia was the part of the Kolkhidian kingdom and was fully populated with the tribes and communities of the Georgian origin.

In the 1st century B. C. and 1st A. D. The Georgian communities under the name of Sanigs, Apsils and Abazgs are fixed on those territories. In the 2- 8th centuries the territory of modern Abkhazia was included within Egrisi (Lazika). According to the information of the historical sources, in the 6-8th centuries the South-East part of the named territory between the rivers Kodori and Inguri subdued the Odishi Eristavs of the Egrisi kingdom. In the upper reaches of the Kodori-Darial gorge lived the Svan community of the Misimians, being subordinated only to the ruler of Egrisi. The Apsils dwelling on the Black Sea side, between the rivers Kodori and Anakopiis Tskali also were subdued to the Egrisi administration. Further, to the North-West till the river Akheunt (modern Shakhe), was located the Principality of the Abazgs being subdued to the Lazik kingdom.

In the 9-10th centuries the territory of modern Abkhazia was the part of the independent

Western Georgian kingdom, traditionally named as the “Kingdom of the Abkhazians”, according to the name of the ruling dynasty. In that kingdom the territory between the rivers Inguri and Kodori was included into the Odishi Principality. Dali gorge subordinated the Svaneti Prince (Eristav). The former Apsilia was occupied by the Tskumi principality, to the North-west of which was located Abkhazian principality being spread along the sea-side till the river Nikopsia (modern Negopsukho in Russia).

After the unification of Georgia, the administrative-territorial division of the region was not changed during 2, 5 centuries. At the beginning of the 14th century Tskumi principality was annexed to the Odishi principality. After this the border between the Odishi and Abkhazian principalities went along the river Anakopiis Tskali.

In the 70-90-ies of the 15th century the integral Georgian State fell to pieces. The Territory of modern Abkhazia with the previous administrative-territorial division entered into the Western Georgian (Imereti) kingdom. Princes (Eristavs) of Abkhazia were in the vassal bondage at one and the same time from the Imereti kings and Odishi possessing princes.

In the 50-ies of the 16th century Guria, Odishi and Abkhazia in fact separated from the Imereti kingdom. Initially the border between Odishi and Abkhazia went along the river Anakopiis Tskali. But from the 80-ies of the 16th century the border shifted to the South-east and went along the river Kelasuri. But, in that period the rulers of Abkhazia recognized the superiority of the Odishi possessing princes (mtavars).

In the 16-17th centuries, as we have already mentioned in Abkhazia radical ethnical changes took place, connected with the migration of the highland tribes of the Western Caucasus. With their help and the crucial support of the Ottoman Empire, the Abkhazian princes at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries managed to widen the borders to the South-East till the river Egristskali (modern Galidzga), and later the river Inguri. Little by little between the rivers Inguri and Galidzga the small feudal estate–Samurzakano was formed. From 1702 till 1840 this region was included into the Odishi (Megrelian) principality, excluding the short period from 80-ies of the 18th century till 1805 when it was subdued to the possessing ruler of Abkhazia.

In 1810 the Russian Empire took Abkhazian principality (from the river Bzip till the river Galidzga, without Tsebelda and other highland communities) under its “protection”, with the purpose of its following occupation and annexation. In 1864 Russia annihilated the Abkhazian Principality and included the territory from the river Inguri to Gagra into the Sukhumi military division, later (1883) being renamed as Sukhumi region.

The territory of Abkhazia, practically with its modern borders (excluding sector of Mekhadir-Psou) was officially called “Abkhazia” for the first time in May of 1919, when the government of the independent Georgian Democratic Republic recognized its autonomy and the National Board of Abkhazia passed the special resolution about the renaming of the region. Abkhazian autonomy with its modern borders was finally formed in 1929, when RSFSR gave back to the Georgian SSR the territory between the rivers Mekhadir and Psou.

Chapter II. Archeological Monuments of the Pre - Antique Epoch on the Territory of Modern Abkhazia

1. Stone Age (1 800 000-50 000)

The Stone Age is the oldest and the most prolonged period in the development of the mankind on the earliest stage of which the investigators as a rule distinguish two main periods – Shel and Ashel. But, they must be preceded by one-the oldest stage known as the Olduvai culture. This stage is characterized with the applying of the stone tools called eoliths without the additional working up. Under that epoch the beginning of the Quaternary period, approximately from 1 800 000 B. C. must be meant.

The Quaternary period is sometimes also called the anthropogenic (associated with the process of anthropogenesis - origin of a human being). The four glacier and three interglacial periods are singled out. On the Caucasus the trails of the glaciations or reduction in the temperature are relatively weak and not denoted. Due to its vertical zoneness a human being practically always had the conditions for living here. Simultaneously with the fall in temperature a human being descended onto the lower warmer zone, and after warming ascends to the mountainous zone again. The vertical location of the places of dwelling of a human being is characteristic not only for the stone age, but is fixed in the following epochs as well. Thus, it is obvious, that the geographical location and climate are the crucial factors and should to be taken into consideration in studying the process of settling of a humane. On the territory of Abkhazia all the vertical zones are present: the narrow coastal zone of the Colchis lowland, foothills, 80-100 meters high terraces, mountainous-hilly and alpic zones. These circumstances together with the climate change created the conditions for the inner, local migration of the population.

The modern territory of Abkhazia is widely known with its monuments of the Stone Age. In this respect we have to mention the works of S. Zamiatin¹, B. Kuffin, L. Soloviev, A. Lukin, and Ju. Voronov, V. Bzhania², N. Berdzenishvili, A. Kalandadze, L. Tsereteli, G. Grigolia and L. Korkia³. Their merit in discovering, excavation and scientific study of the monuments is great.

On the basis of the above-mentioned works dozens of monuments of all the stages of the Stone Age are fixed on the territory of modern Abkhazia. ⁴ Among them most significant and worth mentioning is the Jashtukh camp. It is located on the slope and foot of the mountain Jashkhtva in the north-west part of Sukhumi. The whole territory of the settlement (70 hectare area) is covered with the cultural remains. Existence of all the necessary materials for the production of the tools, good climate and location created the favorable conditions for dwelling of the primitive man on the given territory. The slopes

1 S. N. Zamiatin *Paleolith of Abkhazia, Sukhumi 1977; of the same author Articles on the Paleolith. M-L. , 1961.*

2 B. A. Kuffin *Material for Archeology of Colchis, v. I. Tb., 1999; A. L. Lukin. Neolith settlement Kistrick near Gudauta-Soviet Archeology, XII, M. , 1950; Ju. Voronov. Archeological Map of Abkhazia . Sukhumi, 1969. V. Bzhania. TheAncient Culture of Abkhazia. Abstract of the cand. thesis M., 1966; L. N. Soloviev. The Primitive Society on the Territory of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1977.*

3 N. Berdzenishvili, A. Kalandadze and others. *Archeology of Georgia. Tb., 1959; (In Georgian). N. Berdzenishvili. New Data on Paleolith of Abkhazia. -Works of the Institute of Abkhazia, V. XXX, 1959; A. Kalandadze. Searches in Archeology of the Preantique. Abstracts, Tb., 1969; L. Tsereteli, L. Korkia, G. Grigolia, M. Baramidze. Exploring Archeological Works on the Precinct Territories of Hydroelectric Station of Ingur. Tb., 1964 (in Georgian).*

4 Today about 150 monuments are known and among them 15-20 of the lower paleolith.

of Jashtkhva are densely covered with the manufacturing wastes and refuse. Nucleuses, rough plates, points, scrapers. Rarely are met the massive axes. Axes made by means of the bifacial technique are widely spread among the monuments of that epoch; they actually represent the main farming tools and weapon. Usually they have the oblong-oval and in some cases pointed shapes. The studied material obviously belongs to the Ashel epoch; though some samples have more archaic preashel signs.⁵ This problem needs the further verification.⁶

The lower Paleolithic monuments of the Caucasus are quite numerous and fixed nearly in all the climatic zones. About 100 points are fixed only on the territory of Abkhazia, where Mustie artifacts were found. They are located practically in every vertical zone, beginning from the Lowlands till the Highlands. The growth of the population in that epoch makes the settling of the new living spaces of a paramount importance. In the late Ashel and Early Mustie epochs the climate dramatically changed, the temperature fell and the population had to leave the highlands. In the late Mustie period it became warmer and the population returned to the mountainous regions. Materials of the developed and late Mustian period are found in the Kodori gorge up the village Ajara, practically in the Alpic zone. But as for the early Mustian and the following epoch monuments of Gali, Ochamchire, Kelasuri, Bzip grotto etc. are located in the plain and foothill zones. From the point of view of the history of the region the fact, that Mustian monuments are met in the bordering with Abkhazia Sochi region is especially significant. Unlike Abkhazia there the open dwellings were not found and the Mustian epoch is fixed only in the Navalishen, Akhtir, Vorontsov, Khostian and other caves; this must have been caused by the influence of the climate.

We have to denote, the fact that in the Stone Age monuments of Abkhazia the craniological material is practically absent and this hinders the process of father judgment about the process of ontogenesis. The only discovery is the anthropological remains being found in the late Mustian layers of the Akshtir cave. The opinion that the Akhshtir Paleonthrop is close to the modern human and belongs to the so-called Palestinian people with some characteristic features of the modern man is also expressed. Small number of anthropological material from Sakajia, Djrchula, Tsutjavati and especially Akhshtira supposedly prove that the human of the modern physical type-Homo sapiens must have been developed precisely from this group. Not every researcher shares this opinion. The situation radically changed after the Dmanisi discovery, in the light of which the South Georgia and in the wider sense the West Trans Caucasus must be recognized as one of the main hearths of the formation of a modern humane. Namely, the regions of Abkhazia, Achara and Upper Imereti are meant.

In conditions of the primitive technical equipment the primitive people had to live in small groups and lead a quite active mode of life in conditions of collectionism. In time of the developed Mustie the density of population is fixed and the early stage of the primitive society gradually became obsolete and the preambles for the formation of the clan society are formed.

At the beginning of the Upper Paleolith on the whole territory of the Caucasus the
5 L. Soloviev. *The Primitive Society on the Territory of Abkhazia*, p. 27, 35.

6 I. I. Korobkov. *Results of the Five Year Exploration of the Localization of the Jashtykh Paleolith*. –*Soviet Archeology*, M., 1967, p. 201; O. Japaridze. *On the Problem of the Ethnic History of the Georgian Tribes*. Tb., 1976, p. 12-13.

dramatic fall of the temperature influenced the vegetation and animal world. A human being leaves the mountainous regions and occupies warmer plains and deep gorges and canyons. Thus, the bone and plant remains being found in the culture layers are typical for the glaciations Upper Juraic period. Two main regions are densely populated – The basin of Rioni-Kvirila and North-West Colchis. The chronological scale has been worked out. ⁷ This period is relatively short and lasts for 25 000 years. The technique of stone work up changes. New forms emerge – scrapers, chisels, points, oblong plates, nucleases. The fact of developing of geometrical microliths, bone tools being worked up with the retouch are worth mentioning. In several monuments (Mgvime grotto) are noticed unsystematic lines being cut on the walls.

On the territory of Abkhazia the paleolithic material is more profoundly studied in three points: Apiancha, Supinipshakva (Cold Grotto) and Okumi. Interesting monuments are explored in the caves of Sochi –Adler region – Akhshtir, Novolisheno, Khosta and others. The upper Paleolithic layer of the Akhshtir cave is dated with 19 500 + 500 according to the radiocarbon method (Dating by means of the calibrated method shows more ancient results). Precisely, those upper paleolithic monuments cover the region of the North-West Colchis, though the opinion about the local differences with the synchronous monuments of the West Georgia is still doubtful.

Among the monuments of Abkhazia the most significant and fully studied is the cave Apiancha. ⁸ The common thickness of the cultural layers come up to 12 meters. A human being settled there in the epoch of Mustie and lived during the Upper Paleolith, Mezolith and the end of Neolith. Thus, the picture of the continuous development of the culture through the three stages of the Stone Age is clear. From the aspect of the stratigraphical section of Apiancha is actually unique and model for studying the stone age of the Caucasus.

In the upper Paleolithic layers of Apiancha (2 levels) were found the tools of all the above mentioned types. Most significant is the existence of the abundance and variety of the microlithic tools. In those layers the polished bone tools emerge: needles, pins, awis, knife type and harpoon like tools etc.

The analogues materials are discovered at the sources of the rivers Kodori and Amtkel in the two layer cave “Cold Grotto” (Khupinipshashkhva). The remains of animals are also worth mentioning. Among them we have to pick out: cave bear, noble deer, boar and various birds. It is clear, that hunting together with the collectionism comprises the basis for the farming. Probably fishing played an important part. From the social point of view the Upper Paleolithic is the primitive clan society. The Upper Paleolithic population is concentrated mainly on the territory of the west Georgia and supposedly from this place starts its dissemination to other regions of the Caucasus. From this respect the fact that the given materials have a lot in common with the monuments of the North Caucasus attracts our attention. The contacts and typological resemblance with the Iran-Iraq and Azov coast materials are observed. This fact points to the common character of the Caucasian (including Abkhazia) Upper Paleolithic being conditioned by the same type historical processes.

Lack of the craniological materials does not give us the possibility of determining
⁷ S. N. Zamiatnin. *On the Local Differences in the Paleolithic Period Culture-Works of the Institute of Ethnography*, XVI. M., 1951, p. 131

⁸ L. Tsereteli. *Mezolithic Culture on the Black Sea Coast of the Caucasus*. Tb., 1979, p. 131 (in Georgian); L. Tsereteli, L. Korkia. *Material Culture of the Stone Age of Abkhazia – Problems of Archeology of Abkhazia*. Sukhumi, 1988.

the physical type and moreover –the ethnical belonging of a humane of that epoch. Supposedly it is the following stage of the development of the Neanderthal_intelligent of the Lower Paleolithic for which there were all the conditions in Georgia.

The following stage of development of the Lower Paleolithic_culture is known under the name of “Mezolith. ” This period first of all can be characterized by the dramatic change in climate. There ends the ice stage and the modern geological period- the Golotsen starts.

Mezolith develops on the basis of the local Upper Paleolith. The fact, that in the above-mentioned monuments (Apiancha, White Cave, Rioni-Kvirila Basin) mezolithic layers come directly after the Upper Paleolithic ones covering them. ⁹ Typological analyses of the achieved materials reveals the evolutionary picture of the gradual development. Mycolithic industry being born in the Upper Paleolithic gradually refines and reaches the perfection. A humane still dwells mainly in caves; though warming of the climate gives him a possibility of the repeated pioneering of the plains and mountains. This is the reason, why during the Mezolith period all the landscapes and climatic zones were settled, though the leading part still belongs to Rioni-Kvirila and Abkhazia. On the territory of the latter are fixed and partly studied the monuments of paramount importance such as: Kvachara (Kvabchaar), Cold Grotto, Jampal, Jashtkhv open dwelling and others. Study of the materials enables us to distinguish two periods of these monuments – early and late. Further development of the microlithic technology and emerging of the geometrical figures (segment, trapezium, and triangle) are characteristic for this period. Simultaneously, emerge combined tools made of wood and bone, in the special groove of which with the help of special sticky substance microliths having the form of a geometrical figure were attached. In case of damage of the inset it was not difficult to replace it. It is supposed, that the combined tools were used in the collectionist farming, forgetting of the vegetation products. Their applying in processing the animal remains (F. E. hides) is quite possible.

Household and economy of the primitive man had a possessing character and was based on the collectionism and hunting, that is proved by the bone remains. In getting the vegetation products, the bone points and stone hoes were used like tools. This period may be considered an initial phase of the farming. From this point of view the findings in Apiancha is quite significant (Gulripsh region).

Certain changes in the character of farming and economy caused the alteration of the social-community sphere. The basis for the clan society and its oldest stage - early Matriarkhat are formed. This stage supposes existence of the settled, early tribal communities. Population lives on the one and the same place for a long time, does not migrate, that would be impossible without the existence of a rather organized and cohesive collective body. The first organization of such type must have been the clan community being based on the Matriarchal principles. The like communities would become the unions of the tribes, the embryo of which are seen starting with the Upper Paleolithic epoch. Existence of several tribal communities is supposed in the Black Sea coast Georgia during the Upper Paleolithic. Later the relative tribes settle all over the territory of the West Caucasus causing disintegration of the common Caucasian

⁹ O. Japaridze. Archeology of Georgia. p 34-39 (in Georgian). The same author: On the Problem of the Ethnic History of the Georgian tribes. p. 25-29; L. Tsereteli. Mezolith Culture, p. 77 etc.

cultural union. Reflection of the named processes must be emerging of the local regions. But mainly the uniform character of the material culture gives us the possibility of saying that there were no serious ethnical changes on the territory of the west Caucasus. This process had to take place at the end of Paleolithic and Mezolith.

Neolith or the New-Stone age (9-5 millenniums B. C.) - is one of the most significant stages in development of the human society. At that time the essential changes occur in the type of farming. The possessing farming of Paleolithic moves to the producing basis. During the Neolith rise and development of the main types of the producing farming –agriculture and cattle-breeding had placed.

Emerging of the new forms and their development caused great changes almost in all spheres of the social relations. A human being is closely connected with the land and firmly settles on it. The settlements of the village type with the man-made dwellings are formed. Tools of a new type, new technical skills and methods emerge: grinding-polishing, drilling, macrolithic processing of a stone. Neolithic axes are made using this technique. This is quite effective and practical tool, which appeared on the late stages of the Stone Age.

Emerging of the farming influenced all types of the social life. This is the reason why this phenomenon is called “Neolithic Revolution.” Economical revolution must have had place where the conditions were optimal. Because of this Neolithic culture did not occur simultaneously in different places. In this respect the most prepared appeared to be the front Asian region, including the Trans Caucasus and among them Abkhazia. Formation of the Neolithic culture there had place as a result of the evolutionary development of the local Mezolith, which is clearly seen in the microlithic technique of the stone processing. The monuments of the Neolithic culture are less studied. Their concentration is obvious in the West Georgia. Two steps can be pointed out – early and late Neolith. Shift to the farming or manufacturing is clearly reflected in the monuments of the later period. On the territory of Abkhazia Neolithic monuments are fixed in different points.¹⁰

The most ancient seems to be the Gumurishi settlement, which can be included into the monuments of the “Non-Ceramic Neolith.” Chronologically, the closest to it is Gali –I and then -Lesia, Kistrik, Chkhortoli and Atara.

A special closeness is noticed with the materials of near Kuban (Kamenomostskaia) and probably we deal here with one and the same local variant. The second such local variant is the group of the monuments of the lowland part of West Georgia (Anaseuli I-II, Odishi, Gurianta, Paluri, Mamati, Tetramitsa, Sataplia and others). All of them are characterized by the specific features (emergence of the ceramics of hand-made type), enabling their grouping according to the stages. Mainly the one-type character of the material gives the possibility of distinguishing of two local variants of one integral material culture of the West Trans Caucasus.

¹⁰ Nebieridze. Neolith of the West Trans Caucasus. Tb., 1982. O. Japaridze on the Problem of the Ethnical Culture of the Georgian Tribes, p. 35-44; of the same author: Archeology of Georgia, p. 41-56; K. Kalandadze. Neolithic Culture of West Georgia. Tb., 1986 (In Georgian); Ju. Voronov. Archeological Map, p. 17 O. Bgashba, S. Lakoba. History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 2006, p. 26.

2. Epoch of Eneolith – Middle Bronze (Middle of the Vth and Middle of the II millennium B. C.)

“Eneolith” is the Latin word and means bronze-stone age and is often called “Khalkolit”, from the Greek word “Khalkos” (Copper, Bronze). Now in the special literature this period and culture are referred under the term of “Early Rural Culture.”

Monuments of this culture are abundantly presented in Abkhazia. But we have to mention here, that one of them has not been yet fully unearthed. This of course, makes the complete reconstruction of the building technique used in constructing villages and other objects of the farming importance difficult. ¹¹ The monuments of the early rural epoch (eneolith) of Abkhazia are of the two types: open and cave dwellings. Eneolithic monuments of Abkhazia mainly consisted of one type material: stone, bone, pottery; in this epoch the first metal things start to appear. They were made by means of the cold wrought from the crude copper.

The Eneolithic culture of Abkhazia is genetically connected with the previous Neolith epoch. Continuation and development of the traditions of the neolith culture are vividly presented in such leading elements as the type of settlement, kinds of farming, stone industry, ceramic production and décor.

Two types of settlements of the eneolithic period are stated: cave dwellings and open settlements. Of the cave type are: Okumi, ¹² the Vorontsov cave – “Hearth Grotto”¹³, “Akhshtir.”¹⁴

The open type settlements are: Psou¹⁵, Atara¹⁶, Machara¹⁷, Gvandra¹⁸ etc. The trails of the solid buildings were not discovered, though the specialists think, that in Machara and Gvandra the existence of the dug outs and semi dug outs, the upper part of which might be the watted dub constructions of “Patskha” type are supposed.

Archeological material being discovered in those settlements is mainly of one type. This is stone, flint, ceramics. Rarely are met the productions of bone and horn. The materials are as a rule concentrated on the stamped fields of the supposed dwellings around the stone paved containing ash hearths.

The stone industry is the basis of the farming in the eneolithic society. Typological and morphological analyses of the stone tools reveal the trails of the Neolithic traditions. The tools made of cobble-stone, basalt, serpentine and other sorts of stone are widely used. The most significant are the ground-polished one sided and wedge like axes, cutters,

11 G. Pkhakadze. Eneolithic Monuments of Abkhazia. -Abkhazia, I, Tb., 2006, p. 20-29 (in Georgian).

12 G. Pkhakadze. Eneolithic Remains of the Okumi Cave. Materials on Archeology of Georgia and Caucasus, VII. Tb., 1979, p. 68-76 (in Georgian).

13 L. N. Soloviev. A New Monument of the Cultural Relations of the Trans Caucasus Black Sea coast of Eneolith and Bronze – camps of the Vorontsov cave-Works of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of Abkhazia, 29. Sukhumi, 1958, p. 115-135.

14 Excavations of S. Zamaiafin. Materials are kept in Petersburg, in the Museum of ethnography and Anthropology.

15 L. N. Soloviev. A New Monument of the Cultural Relations of the Black Sea Coast of the Caucasus of the Eneolith and Bronze Epoch, p. 120.

16 M. B. Baramidze, G. G. Pkhakadze, A. Z. Orjonikidze. Excavations of the village Atara – Archeological Discoveries, 1977. M., 1978, p. 174-175.

17 V. V. Bzhanina. Settlement of Machara of the Epoch of Eneolithic and Bronze in Abkhazia. –Soviet Archeology, 1977, I. M., 1966, p. 113-126.

18 I. Tsvinaria. Gvandra Settlement. Tb., 1978.

chisel-like tools etc. made of the cobble-stone. Also in neolith takes its origin the new technique of chipping and compression point processing of the surface, later being developed and acquired its universal character in the early eneolithic and early bronze epoch.

The most part of the eneolithic tools: axes, chisels. Cutters, hoes, tools of the lance type and others are made using the above-named technique. Lengthwise split pebbles, later after additional processing used as a scraper, cutter etc. were widely used. A special place in the stone industry was occupied by the stone hoes. Hoes of the Sochi-Adler type are characteristic for the Sochi-Adler region. In the Sukhumi region the hoes have the oval shape and are called the hoes of the “Sukhumi type.” Both types of the hoes are simultaneous and continue their existence in the early bronze epoch as well.

The flint tools are not numerous. These are splinters and rough oblong plates without retouching. Okumi cave is an exception. The geometrical microliths, trapezium, segments and retouched plates are found there. In the like complex are represented the flint tools in Akhshtir cave+neolithical traditions are observed in the ceramic production. The composition of the clay, ornament and shape point to it.

The grotto “Ochajni” is distinguished with its numerous two piece polished flint arrow heads. The above-mentioned tools show, that eneolithical cultural layers of the caves are older than the open dwellings (Machara, Gvandra). This fact is proved not only by the degradation of the stone industry, but by the ceramic production as well.

For defining of the age of the eneolithic monuments of Abkhazia we use the date having been obtained through the method of radio carbon analyses of the wooden remains of the IVth layer of the Machara settlement 3810+, as a foothold, though according to the verified caliber method this culture is dated with the Vth millennium B. C .

Morphological analyses of the stone and flint tools point to the fact, that in the settlements being located in different geographical zones different types of farming is fixed.

In the settlements of the open terrace type (Machara, Gvandra, Psou, Guadikhu) lance type, hoe type tools are in abundance due to the agricultural activity.

Hoes of the “Sukhumi” and “Sochi-Adler” type and grain grinders are connected with the agriculture. Round and oval sinkers plummets for the fishing nets being found on these territories illustrate the significant part of fishing in economy.

In the settlements of the cave type (Okumi, Ochajni, Akhshtir) are not found the agricultural tools. Arrow heads and spears heads prove the dominant role of hunting in economy of those settlements.

Eneolithic materials, stone tools and especially hoes speak about the close resemblance with the monuments of the front Asia (Khasun, Sialk, Djemdet – Nasr, Suza etc.). The concrete materials show a certain connection with the simultaneous materials of the caves of the Rioni –Kvirila river basins. A number of the leading elements of culture of the materials of both west region of the Caucasus give the basis for associating them with the early Maikop culture of the North Caucasus. ¹⁹

The direct continuation of the eneolith culture is the Bronze Epoch, which in its turn is divided into three periods: early, middle and late bronze.

By the end of the IVth century B. C. in the life of the West Caucasus are revealed the significant changes, being conditioned by the historical processes. Through the follow-

19 A. A. Formozov. Stone Age - Eneolith of the Cuban Area. M., 1965.

ing millennium intensification of agriculture has place, as well as emerging of the new cattle farms, development of the trades and first of all metallurgy conditioning the further development of the producing abilities and manufacturing relations being reflected in the material culture.

Agriculture and cattle breeding together with the highly developed metallurgy created the firm basis for the new economy, causing the serious social shifts in the public life.

By that time the settling of the territories of the West Caucasus including Abkhazia completes, though all the cultural layers of the monuments are of the different might. In the cave (Vorontsov Grotto) and on the river and sea coast settlements (Machara, Gvandra) early bronze is the direct continuation of eneolith. The cultural layers seem more intensive on the slopes of the natural heights and artificial-settlements (Ochamchire, Pichori).

The III millennium B. C. is the chronological frame of the early bronze period. This is the period when metallurgy was the basis for the economical, cultural and social development of the society.

Metal (copper together with its admixture), which in the previous eneolithic epoch was represented by the single objects being made by means of the cold wrought experiences the sharp ascend. The ancient metallurgists knew how to obtain copper from the ore and add to it for improving the quality of the alloy different admixtures in the appropriate quantities: first arsenic and antimony and then lead.

Discovery of the molding methods gave the society of the early bronze epoch the possibility of producing of the various tools of farming and weapon. Out of the common group of the population a specific group of the craftsmen skilled in the metal processing and smelting. One of the main markers of the early bronze epoch is the serial character of producing of the metal tools. The proof of it is numerous open and two – sided casting forms met in abundance in the settlements of that period (Pichori).

The local population mined the ore in the upper sources of the river Bzip. In the copper mines of Bashkapsara both – the open minings and adits of the III – VIIIth millennium B. C. are found. In the west Trans Caucasus of that period is fixed – the second powerful metallurgic hearth in the upper flow of the rivers Rioni and Kvirila.

On the early stage of the early bronze period carst caves were not used (“Kolokolni” and “Zalejni” Grotto).²⁰ The traces of the clay floors with the built-in hearths are found there. In the sea cost coastal settlements of the North-West Colchis – Maxhara²¹ and Gvandra dug-outs and semi dug-outs are met. These are round plan, flat bottomed pits, surrounded by the holes for adjusting of the wooden poles. It is supposed that the wooden frame were woven from the special plant of the bamboo type. Then the whole construction was plastered by the clay coating. The grounds for the dwellings were preliminary tramped.²²

Quite different picture is seen on the artificial hill like settlements and the monuments of the developed, final stage. The Hills are usually not high, natural or artificial, being located close to each other and surrounded by the moats and connected with each other with the ditch-canals. (Ochamchire, Pichori, Nakargali, Ganmukhuri etc.).

²⁰ For more information see: G. Pkhakadze. Problems of Interrelations of the Early-Bronze Culture of the West Georgia and Maikop Culture – Problems of Archeology of Georgia, III. Tb., 1975 (in Georgian).

²¹ V. V. Bzhania. Settlement of Machara...-Soviet Archeology, I. M., 1966.

²² I. I. TSvinaria. Settlement of Guandra. Tb., 1978.

The first Abkhazian monument of the early bronze period was found in Ochamchire harbor at the fall of the river Jikamut into the sea, on one of the three settled hills – the western one. (L. Soloviev²³, B. Kuftin²⁴). The cultural layer was beneath the sea level. The tramped clay grounds being paved with the cobble stone with the wattle dub dwellings of the “Patskha” type were found.

In the second monument object near the river Gumista (Sukhumi region) the architectural trails are not found. The borrows was excavated therein which the dead corpses laid in the crouched position on their sides.²⁵ The materials being found in the settlements of Ochamchire and Gumista – ceramics and stone tools are identical with other stone and ceramic production of the same epoch.

The early bronze culture by the place of its discovery is called the “Ochamchire “culture. (L. Soloviev, V. Bzhanian, I. Tsvinaria).

But at the same time in literature the term “Protocolch culture” was also popular. (T. Mikeladze)²⁶. Lately, on the basis of the old and new materials we came to the conclusion that one type middle bronze culture covered the East coast of the Black Sea, Colchis lowland with the foothill line and as a result the term “Colchian early bronze culture” emerged. (G. Pkhakadze),²⁷ as wider and all- embracing notion corresponding to the real situation.

In spite of the commonness and one typness three local zones can be picked out: North-West Colchis (Abkhazia), Central Colchis and South-West Colchis (Achara-Guria). Among the settlements of the early bronze a special place is occupied the settlement Pichori (Gali region). It may be considered a model monument, as on the central hill 8 cultural layers are fixed being dated with the second half of the III millennium B. C. till the beginning of the III century B. C. 3 The VII and VIIIth payers can be considered the early bronze period of 9 width 0-3 centimeters). In the VIIIth cultural layer the traces of the constructions on the piles with the wooden platforms and clay floors are recorded. We can conclude from the traces of the clay coating with the trails of the wooden twigs, the dwelling walls were woven and clay coated. In the 8th layer there is an open cult facility on the floor of which around the hearth various pottery, stone tools, wooden ploughs, metallic objects and 50 clay two - piece melting forms for casting of the tubular- butt axes, hoes and four sided forms for the 4 different objects. Study of the Pichori settlement and artifacts being found there enabled the researchers (M. Baramidze, G. Pkhakadze, and L. Jibladze) restore the complete picture of life, farming, economics, technical equipment and cult rituals of the early bronze society.

Early bronze culture of Abkhazia – is the direct heir of the local eneolith. The stone industry demonstrates the strong eneolithic traditions: the tools made of pebble stones are

23 L. N. Soloviev. Eneolithical Settlement at Ochamchire harbor in Abkhazia-Works of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1939. Of the same author: Archeological Excavations near Ochamchire in Abkhazia. – Soviet Archeology, IV, v. 5, 1950, p. 267.

24 B. A. Kuftin. Material for Archeology of Colchida, II, V. Tb., 1950, p. 267.

25 V. V. Bzhanian. The Results of the Study of the Gumista Settlement in 1967 – Brief Notification Information of the Institute of Archeology, 15. M., 1969.

26 T. Mikeladze. Searches on the History of the Oldest Settlement of Colchis and East Black Sea Coast. Tb., 1974, p. 41 (in Georgian); M. Baramidze. Pishori Settlement and Several Problems of Archeology of the Caucasus. Tb., 1977 in Georgian). L. Jibladze. Settlement of the Colchis Lowland in III-II millennium B. C. Tb., 2007p. 7-12 (in Georgian).

27 G. Pkhakadze. The West Trans Caucasus in the III millennium B. C. Tb., 1993, p. 120-121 (in Georgian).

processed using the chipping technique and polishing of the surface.

Flint industry experiences decline, as the nucleases are amorphous like the most part of the splinters. The oblong plates are absent. Scrapes, cutters and scrapers are small in number and atypical. Only three arrow heads were found. All of the three have the asymmetric shape. One of them is hefty. The spear heads have the same shape. The flint inset of the sickles having the two sided polishing and toothed edge is worth mentioning.

The most part of the pottery is hand-made. The clay dough is with the admixtures of calcite, shamos, lime and quartz. The baking is grayish-brown and pink, or reddish and grayish brown, grayish and light-brown. The shapes are the following: jars, pots, bowls, mugs, big vessels. Most of them have parallel lines on the surface- the trails of the preliminary to the plaster-work smoothing by the comb-like object. Functionally they represent the table-ware for keeping of the provision and liquids.

The handles are characteristic for all the types of pottery. They are mainly adjusted to the corolla and shoulders of the vessel, as for the big vessels (pots) they are adjusted to the neck and body. The mostly met type of ornaments are nipple like, thorn like, prolonged, oval, saddle like, cone like and other stucco moldings. The relief belts are met around the shoulder.

In the Pichori and Ochamchire settlements together with the above-described traditional pottery radically different table-ware modeled from the well-kneaded clay is also met. It can be distinguished from the general bulk of the ceramic vessels and is closely connected with the materials of the East Georgia, of the so-called Bedeni group. The age of the early bronze monuments is defined by the 8th layer of the Pichori settlement dated with C14 2290±60, which after calibration traces back to the first part of the III millennium B. C.

The soil is cultivated by the wooden ploughs. Two different type wooden ploughs are found in Pichori. Thus, agriculture is of the plough type and this means usage of the draught force. The figurines of bulls being spread all over the Trans Caucasus, part of them having the holes in the neck area are the proof of this. The appearance of vehicles is connected with this period.

In the Pichori settlement a great deal of the remains of cultural cereals are found: wheat, oats, and rye etc. The bones of the small and large (ox, cow) livestock and also of the pigs are found. It speaks about the significant part of the cattle breeding in the farming of that epoch.

The real basis for the economic rise of the society on this given stage is the sudden and rapid development of metallurgic manufacturing. The serial molding of the farming and military tools and weapons are organized. The Pichori settlement demonstrates unique samples of metallurgy: 60 two - sided shapes for molding of axes and hoes, four sided open shapes for four different objects (spoon, dagger, spear head and unidentified object). Namely, in this place was discovered the set of objects proving the process of metallurgic manufacturing. Together with the shapes these are: ash-boxes, dippers, pipes, bowl like vessels with the remains of the melted metal, slag, 8 bronze hoes etc.

It is supposed that in the bronze metallurgy the copper deposit of Abkhazia and Upper Racha was used.

Magnificent metal articles are found in the middle sized dolmens tracing back to the early bronze period: floppy-butt axes, lifelike daggers, ornamented pitchforks with the open and closed plugs, pins etc. In order to produce them the methods of molding, wroughting and smoldering by the wax model were used. Some articles are first molded in a shape and then additionally wrought.²⁸ Metal articles are made of arsenic copper. Depending on the usage of the article admixture of arsenic was 2, 7 or 6, 73%.

Development of metallurgy and the intense development of agriculture put forth the paramount part of a man in farming that resulted in the final formation of the patriarchal society.

In the epoch of eneolith and especially of the early bronze on the whole coast and foothill line of the Eastern Black Sea coast mainly one type material culture was spread. Ethnical belonging of the tribes is difficult to define, but according to the archeological material, this territory at that time must have been settled by the group of the kin of blood tribes. In the one type culture local regions are also depicted.

Abkhazia is one of such regions the main characteristic and specific feature of which is dolmens. Early small-sized dolmens trace back to the middle of the III millennium B. C. They are located both in the coastal and mountainous zones (Eshera, Azanta, Otkhara, Kulanurkhva, Shroma, Doi). A very important part in there studying and excavating belongs to A. Lukin, L. Soloviev, B. Kuftin, O. Japaridze, and I. Tsvinaria.²⁹ All the known today dolmens are of one type. They are trapezium megalithic burial constructions. Dolmen is generally constructed by means of four vertically placed massive, solid flat slabs and covered with the same type slab. In some dolmens the floor is covered with the stone plates. In the front wall always having the South or South-East orientation is made a round hole being locked by the plug.

Dolmen is a collective clan burial. The dolmens are used for the secondary burial rituals. The dead being wrapped in the hides were hung on the trees. The bare, fleshless bones were put into the dolmen through the front hole. Small and middle sized dolmens are of the early bronze period. The large dolmens are attributed to the following epoch and were used till the late bronze period.

As it is known, dolmens are widely spread in the North Caucasus, especially on the Novosvobodnenski stage, but by the external shape and the materials being found there, it is clear, that dolmens of Abkhazia are older than the North Caucasian ones.³⁰

Monuments and culture of Abkhazia of the early bronze period are developed in the middle bronze epoch. It is one of the most poorly investigated periods. The reason is the lack of the monuments and their incorrect dating. On the basis of the Dikhagudzuba I and II prof. T. Mikeladze was the first to distinguish the middle bronze stage of the multilayer settlements of the West Georgia and defined them as “Protocolkhis II”.³¹ Stratygraphical slit, cut on the central hill in Pichori confirmed T. Mikeladze’s classification. Existence of the two cultural layers of the middle bronze period corrected the chronological scheme. Two chronological stages of the middle bronze were distinguished – “Protocolkhis Iа

28 G. G. Pkhakadze. Eastern Black Sea Coast in the second half of the IV-III millennium B. C. (On the Problem of the Cultural Contacts.). Petersburg, 2000, p. 50-59.

29 O. Japaridze. Dolmen culture in Georgia – works of the Tbilisi State University, 1995 (In Georgian); O. Japaridze. On the History of the Georgian Tribes on the Early Stages of the Metal Production. Tbil., 1961 (in Georgian).

30 G. Pkhakadze. Some Aspects of Studying of Dolmens of Abkhazia. -Abkhazia, I, p. 138-142.

31 T. Mikeladze. Findings..., p. 41 (in Georgian).

and B³².³² According to the latest studies VI-Vth layers of PichoriI, III-VI of Pichori VI, Anaklia II, II-III layers of Anaklia I and I-II layers of Nosiri are considered the Eastern-Black Sea Coast monuments of the middle bronze.

In the Protocolkhis II ceramics production of three groups are picked out. In the first group are united the so-called black polished or brown polished pottery. Among the shapes the most widely used is the egg-shaped large vessel with the flat, ribbon like handles, being attached to the neck, wide necked mugs, vases on the tall stem, flat bottomed bowls, fragments of the thin table-ware especially the handles, ornamented with the cut, geometrical, wavy or zigzag lines.³³

Samples of the black polished ceramics are met in the VIII-VIIth layers of Pichori, Ochamchire and lower layers of Ispani. Black polished production of the interesting for us period is found in VI-IVth layers of Pichori I, Pichori – VI, Nakargali, Anaklia I and II, in the upper layers of Ispani etc. Almost in every monument black polished and brown polished ceramics is represented with single objects. Even in Pichori where pottery production is more than in other monuments, it does not exceed 1% of the common ceramic entity. Arising out of it, acknowledging this group as a local Colkhis ceramic production is doubtful (T. Mikeladze), since if the society possesses the technology of production of such a high quality production is natural, that it prefers it. But, here the mass production (99%) is represented by the rough ceramics of the low quality and absolutely of different shapes, Part of the researchers consider it to be imported (L. Soloviev, B. Kuftin, M. Baramidze, L. Jibladze, E. Gogladze).³⁴ Sometimes the hearth of the production of this type of ceramics is considered Maikop. But in it the viselike goblets, the same type bowls, long ribbon like handles and carved ornament are not met. Another part of the researchers (Ju. Voronov, J. Apakidze)³⁵ think, that this kind of pottery originates from the Front Asia (Anatolia). But it is significant, that in that region the like type carved pottery is not spread. Here, mainly the brown-polished production is more common, as for the black polished, it is represented with single objects.

More real ways of finding the origin of the black polished ceramics is on the territory of Eastern Georgia. Pichori ceramics most of all resembles the articles of the so-called “Bedeni circle” and precisely shapes (bowls, viselike goblets, double vessels, ritual ceremonial vessels with the ribbon like handles) carved ornament and metallic shine. These elements unite the two regions and enable posing the question of their common origin. Appearance of the black polished ceramics in Colkhis actually coincides with the golden age of the Beden-Martkopi culture.

In the second group of ceramics articles of rough clay with admixture of sand and basalt are united. Baking is gray and brown and rarely black. This is typically protocholkhis production spreading of which is noticed in Colkhis from the middle of the III and middle of the II millennium B. C. It is natural, that in the course of this time a certain development of some shapes, though the common look of these vessels is mainly of the same type.

Among the shapes are distinguished large pithoses with the open corollas and hori-

³² M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast...*, p. 117-145; L. Jibladze. *Settlements of the Colkhis Lowlands*, P. 103-126.

³³ M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast...*, p. 117-126.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Speech of J. Apakidze at Signagi International Symposium, 1995.

zontal handles. The most characteristic ornament is the relief belt with the fingerlike or hatch like prints and sometimes pouch like nods. The latter is especially characteristic for North-West Colchis; together with it the table-ware with the vessel with the three handles, bows with the vertical holes or the nipple like cones, jars with the cylinder body and vertical, often double handles and ornamented upper part; round pots with thin walls and remains of plants or wattle on the bottom. Hornlike andrions are also met.

In the middle bronze period the third type of the ceramic production characteristic for the following late bronze period is also met. For this group are characteristic the bowl-like shapes, fine-grained well-kneaded dough, even baking, black polished surface. The pottery is decorated with the concentric circles, half arches and chevrons round the cone like projections or the false handle. The ceramics of this group has certain connection with the production of Terramar culture in Europe.³⁶ It might have been the Eastern-European cultural influence. It is worth mentioning, that Colchian ceramics of the VII-VIth centuries B. C. reveal certain impulses of the early settlements in Bulgaria that speaks about the periodical contacts of the Eastern Europe and Caucasus being reflected in the material culture.

This kind of pottery appear in the IVth layer of Pichori I together with the ceramics of the I and II groups being described above. Thus, the materials of the IVth layer of Pichori are of the mixed character. The typical "protocolchian ceramics" of the early and middle bronze together with the articles of the following late bronze period. It is clear, that we are dealing here with the transitional stage between the middle and late bronze cultures and it is no use in including them in any of them. It is significant, that the like mixed material was fixed in the lower (VI) layer of Namcheduri III layer of Anaklia I, Layer of Nosiri and IV-V layers of Ergeti. Thus, in the Colchian settlements a number of monuments are obviously uniting the middle and late bronze stages. This opinion is supported with the appropriate dating being performed by the interdisciplinary methods with the middle of the II century B. C.

Study of the protocolchian ceramics of the II stage according to the stratigraphical section of Pichori enables us to divide this period in two chronological stages: protocolchian IIa and IIb. To the protocolchian IIa belong the 6th cultural layer of Pichori I, IST layer of Machara III, Gumista I, and the upper layer of Gvandra, Akhra Kapsh and Pal. The detail characteristic for this stage defining its chronological frames are long, ribbon like handles of vessels originating from the VIII-VII layers, but disappearing in the Vth layer. Chronologically the protocolchian stage IIa includes the period from the middle of the 20th till the end of the 18th century B. C. To the II stage belong the Vth layers of Pichori I, Pichori VI, IV-VI horizons of Nakargali, the upper layer of Anaklia II and III layer of Anaklia I. For this period are characteristic the vessels with the concave, fiber traced bottom or horizontal, pair or cut from the top handles and also bowls with the nipple cones and vertical holes, hornlike andrions, imitations of the black polished ceramics with the carved ornaments, ribbonlike or wide, flat handles etc. Chronologically the II stage includes 17-16th and probably the first part of the XVth century B. C.

Out of the metallic components of the middle bronze culture the various variants of the tubular butt axe are worth mentioning. The first variant unites the axes of the so-called

36 B. A. Kufin. *Materials on Archeology of Colchida*, V, II, p. 237-240; T. Mikeladze. *Findings...*, p. 21.

Sachkhere type (In Imereti) being met on the final stage of the early bronze period and spread me the mountainous and foothill Abkhazia. The second variant unites the axes from the dolmens of Abkhazia and early necropolises of Trialeti (Eastern Georgia). They differ from the second variant with relatively short plug, concave but quite massive, solid body and slightly widened blade.

Chronological gamut of the axes being found in Pichori (third variant) and their molded shapes is quite widespread in the 13-15th centuries B. C. They are characterized by the straight, six sided body, ornamented in the upper part with the relief stripes, short socket, and rounded blade. Original shape of those axes gives the basis of uniting them into the separate, " Pichori" variant of the tubular butt axes. Approximately analogues articles are found in Krasnodar, Gantiadi and Svaneti. It somehow resembles the weapon from Urup and Paskau. Prototypes of the North Caucasian weapons can be searched in the "Pichori variant", which is proved by the straight body and concave blade. We have the entire basis to consider the articles from Pchori the prototypes of the Colchian axes.

The stone axes are characterized by the prolonged, cylinder shape, rounded butt, and wedge-shaped wide blade. In the middle part is drilled a hole. They appear at the end of the early bronze epoch. The most part of it is found in the North-West Colkhis and they might have been considered the peculiarity of that region.

The dagger is one of the rarest sorts of weapon. There are several samples from Sachkhere, dolmens and two articles from Pichori I. They are flat, short and with the usually weakly pronounced haft. They are traced back to the early bronze period, though their appearance in the VIth layer points to the fact, that they were spread at the beginning of the middle bronze epoch. Daggers of the second type were also spread. The combined molding shape form Pichori I is the proof of it on one of the facets of which the dagger is sub-triangular, prolonged and haftless overdue. Typologically it resembles the articles of the following period.

Copper hoes are fixed in several points of the East Black Sea Coast. The three hoes being found in the 8th layer of Pichori I have the oval and sub-triangular_shape and approximately ten moldering shapes reveal three main variants of the hoe. They appear in the last fourth of the III millennium B. C. though exist in the middle bronze epoch as well.

Flint tools are represented with the inlets of the sickles and arrow heads and spears. For the middle bronze period thorn like from one side inlets, sometimes concave form the back side narrow shapes are characteristic. They are very old and do not need the chronological differentiation.

Arrow heads of the triangular shape with the symmetrical shoulders are characterized for the monuments of the late bronze and early iron of Colkhis. The shapes with the asymmetrical – concave shoulders of the Pichori type are characteristic for the protocolchian culture.

Analyses of the material culture reveals that the II stage of the protocolchian culture has the genetic connections with the previous and following stages and it is impossible to separate them. That small number of material of the middle bronze period shows, that we have the entire basis to divide the protocolchian culture into the two stages – earlier and later.

The problem of relation of the Middle and Late Bronze cultures of Colkhis is interest-

ing. Till recently those connections seemed problematic and suspicious. The excavations of Pichori settlement gave a clue for solving of this problem. In the IVth layer of the central hill, as it was mentioned earlier was found the mixed material and this probably means penetration and merging of the two local-chronological variants of Colchis culture. In this respect Pichori is not an exception. Such kind of mix is characteristic for Ergeti settlement,³⁷ IIIrd layer of Anaklia I, IVth layer of Nakargali, VIth layer of Namcheduri, II layer of Nosiri. This fact gives basis for dating those monuments with the transitional period between the middle bronze and late bronze epochs. In that period a part of the population - metallurgists actively pioneer the mountains, as the need in copper ore increases. Another part of the population – farmers stay in valleys and plains and keep to the traditions of the Colchian culture. This is the period when on the Caucasian range slopes are fixed hundreds of copper mining pits which gave thousands of tons of ore. The tribes dwelling in the South territories move to the vacant lands and occupy part of it. The painless merging of micro cultures has place. The firm genetic connection of those cultures is better seen in the metal production than in ceramics of the transitional period. From this point of view interrelation of the tubular butted axes with the Colchian ones; the same is with hoes, arrow-heads, spears and daggers. They confirm the fact, that in the North-West Colchis on the transitional stage of the middle and late bronze epochs the ethnical structure of the population was not changed.

The denoted innovations must have been connected with an additional phenomenon solving of which is crucial in explaining of the historical processes having place in the Caucasus. In the early and middle bronze periods in the North-West Colchis as it was mentioned earlier the dolmen culture with the specific constructions, rituals and stock was spread.³⁸ Dolmen as a burial place unexpectedly disappears by the middle of the II millennium B. C. and gave place to the new necropolis (Cromlech, Osuari) though the genetic connection in the burial ritual and stock is obvious. When the part of the population leaves the lowland regions among them are the carriers of the dolmen culture as well. The proof of it is the vaults of the Bril burial,³⁹ being built of the shale plates using the dry laying method. With its architectural details and stock (mainly ornaments) it repeats some complexes of the late layer of Abkhazian dolmens and complexes from Gari, Tlia, Sachkhere, and Nuli. The Bril necropolis resembles the burial N16 of the upper Rutkha in Koban.⁴⁰

Comparison of the Bril and Tlia complexes means that the upper Rutkha N16 is to be dated back to the 14th century B. C. The rout from Colchis to the territory of Koban culture across Racha can be traced. This process being proved by the archeological facts fixes impulses and innovations coming from the South to the North Caucasus.⁴¹ Actually this is the first stage of spreading the southern influence to the North and is connected

37 T. Mikeladze and others. *About the Works of the Colchida Archeological Expedition – Field Archeological researches in 1984-1985*. Tb., 1987, p. 40.

38 M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast*, p. 102-117.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

40 E. I. Krupnov. *Materials on Archeology of the North Osetia of the before Koban Period. -Materials and Researches in Archeology of the USSR*, 23. M., 1951, p. 49-60; V. I. Kozenkova. *Cultural-economical Processes in the North Caucasus*. M., 1966, p. 74-103.

41 M. Baramidze. *On the Problem of Relations of Colchis and Koban Cultures According to the Ceramic Production. -Abkhazia*, I. Tb., 2006, and p. 49061 (In Georgian).

with the above-described ethnocultural processes. These phenomena must have had an essential meaning in searching the south roots of the Koban culture.

3. The Late Bronze - Early Bronze Epochs.

Starting from the second half of the II millennium B. C. practically in all the Caucasus is noticed changes in the local material culture and everyday life. The cultural contacts with the outer world obviously decrease and a certain “cultural isolation” is observed. Within the Caucasus a homogeneous and at one and the same time specific line of development is noticed. On the territory of Georgia in this period like the earlier epochs two archeological cultures are formed: in the East - Central Trans Caucasian and in the West-West Georgian (Colchian). In each of them homogeneous material culture and the mode of development are noticed. At the same time it is possible to pick out local regions and in them micro local manufacturing hearths. The North-West Colchis (The territory of the modern Abkhazia) is considered the local variant of the integral Colchis culture.⁴²

It has to be mentioned here, that this period is characterized by the abundance of the monuments. A sharp rise of different trends of farming, especially bronze and iron metallurgy resulted in a specific “demographical outburst”, which covered both the plain part of Colchis and the mountainous zone of the Caucasus. The rise of the manufacturing production and especially in pottery and metallurgy is characteristic for this period, as well as population increase and a number of necropolises and settlements. In some settlements (Pichori, Mziuri, and Nakargali) are fixed the embryos of the urbanistic civilization (fortifying of the settlements with the man-made ditches, manufacturing producing etc.). Thus, we have all the right to consider this period “protourbanic civilization, ” or the period preliminary to the formation of the early class state.

On the territory of Abkhazia are fixed almost 300 objects of that period. They are represented with the settlements, necropolises, manufacturing hearths and hords, I. E. With all the cultural components characteristic for the archeological monuments. It is natural, that not all of them turned to be the objects of the scientific investigation and study, though the studied objects give the possibility of restoring the general picture of that period. One fact is clear, that Colchis culture emerged on the basis of the original local culture and neither cataclysm, and not the ethno-cultural changes can be stated here.

The studied material enables us to pick out three micro regions: I micro local variant consists of the settlements of the low flow of the river Inguri, II-III layers of Pichori settlement and adjusting to it hills N2-10 and also artificial hills – settlements of Mziuri, Abaju, Tagilon and Tsarche the archeological material of which with some specific elements is mainly the replica of the findings of the Colchis valley plain and lowlands and settlements of Southwest Colchis. The II micro local variant is represented by the settlements of Mokvi and Tamish. Tamish is the complex of artificial hills and Mokvi is the settlement on the natural terraces. The Archeological findings resemble the product of the I variant and at the same time it reveals a certain connection with the findings of the III variant settlements.

42 O. Japaridze. *Archeology of Georgia*, p. 200 (in Georgian); M. Baramidze. *East Black Sea Coast . of the same author: On the Problem of the Relations of Colchis and Coban Cultures*, p. 49.

Settlement of the III micro local variant (Kistrik, Bombora) are represented with the cultural layers being discovered on the low coastal terraces. Wattle semi dug-outs of the Patskha type are fixed being met in the settlements of the II variant. The buildings of the I variant are the wooden constructions typical for the ethnographical everyday life of the West Georgia. The wooden architecture has the uniform character and does not change throughout the history of Colchis. In fact, the same can be said about the “patskha” with the woven walls and clay coating.⁴³ During the late bronze period simultaneously with the wooden architecture of the construction of other types practically is not met. An exception is a settlement “Abaju” in the village Pirveli Gali, where in the lower layers (8-7th centuries B. C.) are discovered the trails of the rectangular, open from the west side of the 3-1, 6 meter, more than 400 square m. construction being cut in the sandy rock (“Tiri”).⁴⁴ The like constructions are not known in archeology of Colchis. Their function is not clear, though the idea, that it was the temporary camp for the cattle run.⁴⁵ But, in this case its original construction, special size, usage of the wooden posts in covering etc. is obscure. We can suppose that they were the guar system locking the gorge in the past. This construction must have been the ritual one as well.

The like picture is stated throughout the whole Colchis lowland territory.⁴⁶ It is worth significance, that in arrangement of the artificial hills a certain peculiarity is observed. One of the hills – the central one- from the very start was dominant. After the example of Pichori settlement is obvious, that the central hill existed during 20 centuries till the beginning of the 3rd century B. C. ((layers I-VIII). Only in the I part of the I millennium B. C. (layers III –II) the population starts to settle the territory around the hill. By the 9-8th centuries B. C. around the central hill 10 artificial hills develop in two rows, in which are mainly presented the layers of the pre-antique. Hellenistic epoch (8-3rd centuries B. C.). In this period the settlement already occupies almost 10 hectares of the area. It was a large settlement and according to the modern type it belongs to the settlements of the small village type.

The like picture is observed in a number of monuments of Colchis: Mziuri, Nakargali, Ganmukhuru, Tamish (Abkhazia), Namarnu, Tskemi, Nosiri, Namcheduri (Colchis lowland) etc.

Around the each hill in Pichori and the whole system there is an artificial ditch, which must have been filled with water from the river Zorgati and in the South-East was connected with the Sea. It is significant, that the information by the Greek author of the IVth century Hippocrates is the direct proof of the existence of the Colchis canals and their usage as road arteries. He says: The houses of the Colchs are built on the water. As material trees and reed are used. They rarely go on foot, only to town or market. They usually travel in boats up and down the numerous canals.⁴⁷ It is clear, that the canals play the role of the road arteries, though they probably had another function as well. They was used in the defense system and for drainage. It was multifunctional system.

43 M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast...*, p. 57-72; T. Chigoshvili. *The Culture of the Settlements of the Inguri-Kodori river system. - Abkhazia, I. Tb., 2006, p. 133-136 (In Georgian).*

44 M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast ...*, p. 38040. See the Reports of the Expedition 1983-1990.

45 T. Chigoshvili. *Culture of Inguri-Kodori River System Settlement. -Abkhazia I, p. 134.*

46 G. Grigolia. *Problems of Historical Geography of the Egris-Lazik Kingdom. Tb., 1978, p. 4-5 (in Georgian).*

47 V. V Latishev. *Information of Greek Writers about the Scythia and Caucasus I, ed. I. S-Pb, 1895, p. 58.*

The system of canals of the Pichori settlement is well preserved and can be seen throughout 4 kilometer extent to the North. On this route in two kilometers is located an artificial hill “Djvaralebi” and in 4 kilometers “Nakargali.” From this place the canal supposedly turn to the South-East and after 3 kilometers comes to the Ganmukhuri dwelling complex (5 hills). Then the canal turns to the South to the sea. Thus, it is clear, that 4 synchronous to each other settlements ((villages) are located within one system of canals. It is significant, that the canals of that type are fixed in central Colchis in the Abahsha-Senaki region (Hills Tskhemi-Dzigura-Ketilari and Sangvichio and the system of Namarna in the Lanchkhuti region).

The described system of the settled hills shows us, that by the end of the late bronze period the whole territory of Colchis – the west Georgia was densely populated. A great area of settlements, system of fortification, producing character of farming, existence of the group of masters of ceramics, mining of the metallurgic ore, toll, weapon and jewel making point to the fact, that we deal with the protourbanic civilization and signs of the state-political formation. Dozens of necropolises were discovered and studied on the territory of Abkhazia. Among them are worth mentioning such famous clan family necropolises as the Red Warf, Guadikhu, Eshera, Djantukh, Akarmara, Merkheuli, Pichori etc. The fact, that all of them are synchronous is extremely interesting. The chronological frames of those monuments of the 8-5th centuries B. C. typologically belong to the so-called Colchic monuments being studied during the decades in Pilauri, Larilari, Brili, Mukhurcha, Ureki, and Ergeta etc. In dating of those monuments one common peculiarity is noticed. Tombs of the late bronze early stage (the second part of the 2nd mill. B. C.)

Are not yet discovered in the Colchis lowlands. There are dwelling layers, treasure, occasional findings, necropolis complexes in the mountainous part, but synchronous to them necropolises on the Colchis lowlands. It is difficult to explain this fact. Researches of problem are the main task of archeology of Colchis. Without solving it, it is impossible to understand the chronological stratigraphy of the separate monuments. Arising out of these circumstances all the above-mentioned necropolis complexes are sometimes summarily dated with the late bronze epoch, which is the source of contradictions.⁴⁸ The fact is that the tombs being discovered on the territory of Abkhazia are especially significant with their diversity. There are sandy necropolises with the corpse position, secondary burial ritual, cremation, semi cremation etc. The most significant is the ritual of the secondary burial, characteristic for the Colchian necropolises and spread on the whole territory of Colchis.⁴⁹ In the ethnographical everyday life of Megrelia, Imereti and Abkhazia is testified, that the given burial ritual is equally characteristic for the whole territory of the West Georgia and this points to the fact, that the population was homogeneous on this territory and is the valid source in studying of the problems of the ethnical history of the region. One type of burial is especially peculiar and is spread only to the North-West of Sukhumi and is known with its clay ossuaries. The burial ritual is secondary. This fact is the characteristic sign of the micro local variant of Colchis culture. This variant is characterized by the group of bronze ornaments – radiant beads, animal headed belts, birdlike

48 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 39-41. In this work the late complexes are practically arbitrarily dated with the early period. The total shift of chronology and separate articles belonging to the well-studied types have place.

49 M. Baramidze. *Mercheuli Necropolis*. Tb., 1997, p. 13-14 (in Georgian).

pendants etc. For this group is typical ceramics of the archaic form, terracotta or grayish color with relief inlaid or carved ornament. Colchian diversely ornamented ceramic production is not numerous. Flint arrow heads, sickle insets, stone grinders, and other are relatively abundant material. Specificity of the region is conditioned by its peripheral location in the Colchian culture. Area of spreading of this group of archeological material includes the region of modern Adler, which is recognized the North border of spreading of the Colchian culture.

One of the most specific components of the Colchian culture is the so-called dune settlements. They are spread practically along the whole Black Sea Coast, including the territories of Achara and Abkhazia. The like settlements are discovered and partly studied in Batumi, Kobuleti, Ureki, Kulevi, Gagide, Gagra etc. They are the sandy bank earth wall of 1, 5-3, 5m height, on which several layers (from 203 to 12) of blackish-grey color are fixed. These layers are large spots (40-50 cm. width and 10-15 cm. long). As an exception some monuments have adobe floor (Gudava II). The archeological material discovered in the layers is numerous and homogeneous. "Tub like" oval and square vessels with fiber print on the bottom and hornlike or pointed top andrions were discovered. The pottery is rough, with the admixture of sand of the reddish color. Almost all the vessels of tub type have the trails of being in fire. According the accompanying Colchian ceramics and bronze articles those settlements emerged by the beginning of the 8th century and ceases their existence to the middle of the 6th century. In the scientific literature theses settlements are considered to be either the salt-works, or having the other function.⁵⁰ One part of the researchers even today share this opinion.⁵¹ On the basis of the historical sources and new interpretations of the archeological data. The idea is expressed about the dune settlements as the remains of the metallurgical ore mining work-shops from the magnetite sand.⁵²

This fact is proved by the existence of the iron ore in the magnetite form practically in all the camps and its processing obtaining from the sand is quite real.⁵³ This process being restored by A. Ramishvili, probably arises some issues, but the general picture is acceptable and convincing. The fact is that the iron ore is the leading element of the Colchian culture from ten VIIIth century B. C. Though its first appearance on the territory of Abkhazia must have happened earlier this date. It is significant, that the first iron articles are exact replicas of the bronze shapes and are the imitation of the local, Colch bronze shapes.⁵⁴

It has to be specially pointed, that the iron metallurgy fully replaced the bronze one. Bronze was used only for the ornaments.

Judging from the scale of metallurgic manufacturing, part of the iron ore simultaneously with the copper ore was the product of change and import. The circumstance, that the most part of the investigators connects the origin of the metallurgy with the name of

50 L. Soloviev. The Trails of the Ancient Salt-Works near Ochamchire and Sukhumi. - The Works of the State Museum of Abkhazia, I. Sukhumi, 1947.

51 O. Bgazhba, S. Lakoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 41; I. I. Tsvianria. Settlement of Guandra. Tb., 1978.

52 G. Inanishvili. Iron-Molding in the Central and west Trans Caucasus in the XIIIth-Ist centuries B. C. Tb., 1997.

53 N. V. Khoshtaria. Archeological Researches in the village Ureki. A. T. Ramishvili, I. Grdzlishvili. Iron smelting in Ancient Georgia. Tb., 1964. p. 17. D. A. Khakhutaishvili. Iron Manufacturing in Ancient Colchida. Tb., 1987, p. 6-39.

54 P. Abramishvili. On the Problem of Iron Manufacturing Development. -Vestnik of the State Museum of Georgia XXIII. Tb., 1967.

the Kartvelian tribe of the Khalibs has to be taken into consideration. These problems were studied by academician D. Khakhutaishvili. The scientists point to the fact, that the ore metallurgy being emerged in the South Georgia (Guria-Achara, Lower Kartli) must be dated with at least the 14th century B. C. ⁵⁵ It might have happened, that namely from this place spread the iron ore metallurgy to the other regions of Georgia, but not simultaneously, but in different chronological periods. On the territory of modern Abkhazia its spreading was dated with the beginning of the I millennium B. C. ⁵⁶ The high level of the iron metallurgy together with the dune camps confirm the existence of the iron smelting work-shops being studied on the territory of Achara-Samegrelo. It is significant, that analogues work-shops are studied in Abkhazia, namely in the Gali region – on the territory of Mziuri. The work-shops of the four iron molding forges with the residue of the metallurgic slag are excavated. Typologically they belong to one and the same type with the forges of Achara, Samegrelo and are obviously simultaneous with the dune camps and can be referred to the preantique period.

On the whole territory of spreading of Colchian culture one of the most specific characteristic components of culture is hoard of the bronze articles. For today approximately 200 of such complexes are known in the scientific literature. ⁵⁷ 65 of them are discovered on the territory of modern Abkhazia. ⁵⁸ They include defective, rejected goods: Colchian axes, segment like tools, hoes, rarely jewels and semispherical shape ingots. These are the so-called” hoards of smelters. ” Their use for remolding and producing of the new tools is supposed. Their emerging mainly refer to the middle of the II millennium B. C. (Gali, Ureki, Pitsunda, Lidzava, Gantiadi); this is the period

Directly preceding the Colchis culture and being referred to the transitional stage. Bronze hoards are met on every stage of the late bronze-early iron epoch and disappear to the middle of the I millennium B. C. (Pichori, Gali). Their disappearance must have been connected with the decrease of the bronze production manufacturing due to the full transition to the iron metallurgy.

The Colchis culture⁵⁹ covers most of the period from the middle of the II to the middle of the I millennium B. C. Typological-chronological study of the archeological material show us that there two main stages are represented. The first stage is characterized by the high level of the bronze industry and is represented by all the tools, being characteristic for that culture throughout its period of existence. The second stage is the time of the flourishing of culture, when together with the bronze metallurgy the leading trend becomes iron production. ⁶⁰ Within those stages several chronological periods are distinguished. ⁶¹

Character of the Colchian culture is conditioned with the peculiarities of its farming. This culture is mainly agricultural and most of the tools have the appropriate function.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ D. Koridze. *From the History of the Material Culture of Georgia*. Tb., 1965 (in Georgian); A. Ramishvili. *From the Material Culture of Colchida*, Tb., 1974 (in Georgian). L. Sakharova. *Bronze Hoards from Lechkhumi*; Ju. N. Voronov. *The same work*; M. Baramidze. *Eastern Black Sea Coast...and others*.

⁵⁸ J. Apakidze. *Hoard of Abkhazia of the Late Bronze –Early Iron Epochs – Apkhazeti, I*, Tb., 2006 (in Georgian).

⁵⁹ Term “Colchian Culture” is used in the scientific literature for denoting the period of the late bronze-early iron and is the conditional notion, as like the previous the following culture of this region is also Colchian.

⁶⁰ O. Japaridze. *Archeology of Georgia*, p. 202.

⁶¹ M. Baramidze. *the Eastern Black Sea Coast...*, p. 149-159.

From the early bronze epoch the leading trend of farming, when the plough was used. It continuous its existence in the period being investigated, the poof of which are wooden ploughshares, being discovered in the late-bronze layers of Pichvnari.⁶² Some of the ploughshares must have had metallic binding. However in the middle of the 1st millennium B. C. (7-6th centuries B. C.) in Colchis existence of the iron ploughshares are archeologically stated (Necropolises of Nigvziani and Pichori).⁶³ For soil cultivation various bronze hoes were used. They are spread practically throughout all Colchis, though on the territory of Abkhazia they are rarely met. The extreme North point of their spreading is the lower Eshera. To the south of it hoes are found in dozens of points.⁶⁴ To the North of the river Gumista the metal hoe appears there comparatively late due to wide usage of stone hoes, which can be considered a peculiarity of that microloan region.⁶⁵

One of the main characteristic tools of the given culture is considered axes. On the territory of Abkhazia all the three main sorts of this tool is met: with the concave body and pointed butt, with straight, faceted body and twice concaved body.⁶⁶ On the second stage of their development of culture their shapes are more refined, accurate and light. Some of them are ornamented. They must have had a military function, though the massive, rough copies had the farming function.

One of the main elements of Colchian culture are the segment like tools often met in Abkhazia, chiefly to the South of the river Gumista. There are several opinions about their usage and function. Part of researches think, that the large copies had the function of spades, another part considers them to be scrapes and third part sees in them the edge of the wooden ploughshare. The opinions about their usage as barter unit are also expressed.

We have considerably little information about the material of other type (military weapon, jewelry), as the necropolises of the early stages Colchian culture is not appropriately studied. In hoards those articles are met quite rarely and it is an exception. On the second stage (The first half of the I millennium B. C.). Bronze articles of the named function are quite numerous: These are different variants of spear heads, daggers, jewelry. It is significant, that in conditions of uniformity of those articles the specific shapes characteristic for the Abkhazian local region are singled out, F. E. spear heads with the long graft and triangular blade, flat badges, bracelets, hollow leaf like beads, pendants – animal and bird shaped charms etc. The bronze production of the Colchis culture pointes to the high level of metallurgy. From the early bronze period mining of copper is one of the prioritative trends in the everyday life of the Colchian tribes (communities). On the territory of the South slopes of the Caucasian range are known several points in which the whole process of mining and primary processing of ore is fixed. (Bashkapsara and Chkhalta in Abkhazia, Brili and Gona in Racha, Mestia I Svaneti, Tlia and its surroundings in the

62 L. Dzidziguri. The Oldest Ploughing Tools from North-West Kolkhida. -Aphkazeti. I, Tb., 2006, p. 40 (in Georgian); I. Chavleishvili. The Oldest Ploughing Tools from Pichvnari. -Works of Batumi Archeological Museum. III. Tb., 2005 (in Georgian).

63 M. Baramidze. the Eastern Black Sea Coast..., p. 152-153.

64 J. Apakidze. Treasures of Abkhazia of late bronze and early iron epochs, p. 65-85 (in Georgian).

65 O. Japaridze. Colchian axe. -Vestnik of the State Museum of Georgia, XVI. Tb., 1955 (in Georgian); D. Koridze. From the History of Material Culture of Colchis (in Georgian); L. Sakharova. Bronze treasures from Lechkhumi.

66 D. Koridze. From the History of Material Culture of Kolkhida; L. Sakharova. Bronze Treasures form Lechkhumi; L. Japaridze. Agricultural Tools in the West Georgian Culture. -Works of the Tbilisi State University, V. 49, 1953 (in Georgian).

Tskhinvali region). Among these monuments the best studied is the mining-metallurgical centre in Racha⁶⁷ a special development the mentioned trend obtains in the late bronze epoch. Pitches, drifts, exploring ditches, cells (chambers) and processed slag wastes and residues being left after the primary, partial processing show that several hundreds of tons copper was obtained. This amount was sufficient not only for the local needs and manufacturing, but it is absolutely adequate to suppose, that it can be exported to Front Asia, Anatolia, and probably via the transit route even farther. ⁶⁸ It is significant, that in Racha in the VI-Vth layers of the Bril necropolis kilograms of navkratic beads made of the blue glass, Egyptian scarabs and glass balzamarium for perfumes, Phoenician bronze fish shaped coins are met. These latter may have pointed to the significant part of Phoenician towns (F. E. Punej) in the dealing trade. ⁶⁹ The fact, that the Egyptian import is not noticeable in the monuments of that period Colchian lowland has not got an occasional character. It is fixed in great quantities in the Racha region mining-metallurgic centre and in single copies in the mountainous part of the Caucasian range. The abundant existence of the bronze semispherical ingots having the suitable for import shape throughout the whole area of spreading of Colchian culture is explained by the supposed import of copper to the South.⁷⁰

The high level of bronze metallurgy and manufacturing habits prepared the transition to the more progressive and developed iron metallurgy. Thus, the role of the Georgian tribes in iron metallurgy must have been significant. Unfortunately, some researches fully ignore this fact and try to associate appearance and spreading of iron metallurgy in Abkhazia with the influence of the Northern, Scythian ethnos.

Cimmerian and Scythian tribes are noticed in the first part of the 1st millennium B. C. in the North Black Sea Coast, supposedly in the step zone. According to the sources the Scythians drove out the Cimmerians from this zone and on the border of the 8-7th centuries appear on the territory of front Asia. The Scythian mass being noticed in this region from the 90-ies of the 7th century follows their trail. Both these ethnos played an important role in creating a new political situation of the front Asia, as they participated either separately or as mercenaries in destroying a number of states. The probable ways of penetrating of those tribes into Front Asia is interesting for us. Part of investigators and among them the Abkhazian ones think, that their main route was the Eastern Coast of the Black Sea, the so-called Meoto-Colchian route. This conclusion is based on a wrong interrelation of the sources and absolute ignoring of the archeological data. The second fourth of the I millennium B. C. Is the period flourishing of the Colchian culture? Metallurgy of bronze and iron being risen to the highest levels, demographical spurt, protourbanic civilization etc. give us the possibility to say, that Colchis of that period (including Abkhazia) is the strong political-state unit and violation of its borders and crossing the territory must have been a hard task. It is significant, in the Colchian settlements trails of the invasion of the

67 G. Gobejishvili. Archeological excavations..., p. 87; A. Apakidze, G. Gobejishvili and others. Archeology of Georgia. Tb., 1959 (in Georgian).

68 M. Baramidze. The Eastern Black Sea Coast..., p. 175-184; of the same author: The Main Problems of the History of Bronze Metallurgy of the Eastern Black Sea Coast – Sea and a Man. Tb., 1995, p. 26-27 (in Georgian).

69 This aspect was stressed by K. Kushnareva at the International (Georgia, SSSR, USA) colloquium in Signagi in 1995.

70 O. Bgazhba, S. Lakoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 48, 50-54.

foreign ethnic is not found. It is impossible, to imagine, that the invasion of such quantity of nomad tribes did not leave their trail such as fire, signs of battle or the typical articles of Cimmerian or Scythian origin. Throughout the whole territory of West Georgia only one Cimmerian bronze Kelt (The Tkhmor treasure of the upper Racha). Thus, penetration of the Cimmerians into the front Asia, via Colchis is not proved by the archeological data.

According to the sources the Cimmerians were pursued by the Scythian tribes (the end of the 8th century B. C.), though not a single sign of the battle or material articles are found in Colchis and namely in Abkhazia. It is clear, that coming from the Black Sea Coast Scythians did not cross the territory of Colchis and probably they could not have done this, in case of presence of the powerful state union and diverse and strong military forces. At the same time the Moorish territory and climate of Colchis were not optimal for the foreign marches. We have a bit different picture from the middle of the 6th century B. C. After returning from the front Asia marches a part of the Scythians quite a little one chooses for his returning route the Colchian way. In this given case there is not a single sign of the armed conflict. Exactly from this period appears the so-called Scythian akinak being made by the sample of the front Asian swords and experiencing a certain modification in Colchis and transforming into a special Caucasian variant. In the same period appear the articles of the so-called Scythian animal style obviously having the influence of Front Asia. The third component being considered the element of the Scythian culture is the so-called arrow heads. Their appearance is dated with 7-6th centuries B. C. They are spread on the vast territory including Siberia, European part of Russia, the Caucasus and the front Asia. Arising out of it is incorrect and not logical to consider the home-land of the arrow heads one of the countries and its creators a concrete ethnos.

In connection with the Scythian march to the North Black Sea Coast front Asia certain perspectives are seen for spreading of the articles and production to the Eastern Caucasus where probably via the Derbend path appears the Scythian production, but these materials belong to returning to the North the Scythians.

The version about the usage by the Cimmerians' and Scythians of the Colchian route has no basis. Linking the iron metallurgy with the Scythes is also incorrect, as the oldest Scythian articles are not older than the 8th century B. C. In Colchis (in Achara and Kvemo Kartli) starting from the 14 –13th century B. C, appear the iron articles being produced by means of cementation (steel). Arising out of the technique of producing and making of these articles it was necessary to overcome the simple smelting of the iron, i. d. the time of appearance of the first iron articles are to be traced back to minimum two centuries. It is clear that from the South Georgia the iron metallurgy spreads to other regions of the Eastern Trans Caucasus, This process is not of a simultaneous character and need stages of development.

Their appearance in Abkhazia date back to the 1st millennium B. C. It cannot be associated with the Scythians.

Finally, it must be noted, that even such a brief review of the archeological monuments of the preantique period clearly points to the genetic, evolutionary line of development of the material culture of Abkhazia. Preserving a certain local peculiarity and specificity, being conditioned mainly by the geographical peculiarities the given territory was always

the part of the material culture of Georgia and its artificial tearing and separating is not objective from the scientific point of view not to say anything about objectiveness. The ancient tribes living on the territory of Abkhazia in cultural respect judging from the archeological materials are the same Georgians like the Kartalinians, Svans and Megrelian – Chanians.

Chapter III. The Territory of Modern Abkhazia within Ancient Colchis

Before the I century B. C.

1. The Data on the Pre Antique Period

The Information on the Colchis kingdom (Egrisi) - the ancient Georgian State covering the most part of the territory of modern Georgia from the middle of the II millennium B. C. is reflected in the ancient Greek myth about the Argonauts. ¹ The separate events being described in the myth take place in the basin of the river Rioni. According to some authors Argonauts arrived in Dioskuria (Sukhumi). For instance Appian (II century) wrote, that the town of Dioskuria is considered “ by the Colches the proof of the Dioskures’ travel with the argaunats”² According to the information given by Nikonor of Alexandria (VIII century) the old name of “ Dioskuria was Aia”. ³ (the parallel name of Colchis and its capital). About the connection ties with the territory of the modern Abkhazia wrote other researchers as well. ⁴ The Russian linguist G. Turchaninov on the basis of the ancient sample of would be Abkhazian letter writing being found in Maikop, tried to locate Aia on the North Caucasus. ⁵ It is known, that G. Turchaninov’s opinion about the Maikop inscription was not shared by the well-known Russian scientists (I. Diakonov, L. Lavrov, E. Krupnov, P. Autlev and others.). ⁶ They don’t share the similar opinions even today. ⁷ About the connection of the myth of the Argonauts with the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians (and not with the Colchians) the separatist historiography makes only hints and as an argument draws allegedly Abkhazian (Apsuian) sounding of Medea’s brothers Apsirts name. ⁸ But the names and family names having the similar phonetics are abundantly met in the ancient world. ⁹ Thus, ascribing them to the Abkhazians is baseless, as such names have no valid explanation in the Abkhazian language.

1 Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautics. Translation, introduction and remarks of G. F. Tsereteli. Tb., 1964; A. V. Urushadze. The Ancient Colchis in the Tale of Argonauts. 1. Researches. 2. The Greek texts with the Georgia translation and notes. Tb., 1964.

2 V. V. Latishev. Information of the Ancient Writers Greeks and Latins on Scythia and Caucasus – Vestnik of the Ancient History, 1948, N1, p. 285. Appian. History of Mithridates wars. The Greek text with the Georgian translation, introduction and comments made by T. Kaukhchishvili. Tb., 1958, p. 195.

3 Collection of Materials for Location and Tribe Description of the Caucasus, issue IV. Tb., 1884, p. 212-213.

4 M. Brosse. History of Georgia, part I. Tb., 1895, p. 13 (in Georgian); P. K. Uslar The Ancient Tale about the Caucasus. Tb., 1881, p. 378; K. Kudriavtsev. Collection of Material on the history of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1926, p. 39, 41-42 etc.

5 G. F. Turchaninov. Monuments of writing and language of the Caucasian Peoples and Eastern Europe. L., 1974, p. 11-34.

6 Messenger of Ancient History, 1966, N2; Soveit Ethnography, 1967, N2; Problems of Hsitory, 1964, N8, 1965, N4 etc.

7 G. Turchaninov tried to create a significant history for the “Apsua-Abkhazians”. He identified the Maikop inscription with the characters of the Khettians and dated it from the XIII-XIIth centuries B. C. and” read” it in Abkhazian. According to it the Colchians were Abkhazians occupying the territories from Asia Minor to the river Kuban; they had their own alphabet and a state with the town Aia. The aim of G. Turchaninov was neutralization of the Georgian version on the Colchis kingdom. His “discovery” greatly influenced the separatist historiography (V. A. Shnerelman. Wars of the Memory. M., 2003, p. 349-354).

8 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba History of Abkhazia, p. 59. An extremely interesting version exists about the origin of the name Apsirt, according to which it can be explained on the Georgian language basis. (M. Chukhua. Comparative Dictionary of the Kartvelian languages and dialects. Tb., 2000-2001, p. 206 (in Georgian). Three Egyptian Pharaohs VII-VIth centuries B. C. -Psametikhi, Opsita in Lazika and Abkhazia (VIth century)

9 Byzantian writer Mikhael Pselos (11th century) etc.

Information about Argonauts visit of the territory of modern Abkhazia is significant because of the fact, that the authors name Sukhumi as the town of the Colchis kingdom.

Different opinions are expressed about the exact time of formation of the Colchis kingdom, its political and social organization.¹⁰ L. Sanikidze thinks that it was formed in the 17-15th centuries B. C. ¹¹ Approximately the same opinion is expressed by T. Gamkrelidze, who writes: "According to the data of the latest researches, we can suppose existence of the Colchis statehood in the 15th century B. C. as in the Greek inscriptions of the Mycenaean epoch (15-14th centuries B. C.) many names being known for us from the Argonaut myth and among them "(country) Aia", "Colchis", "Jason" etc. ¹² are documentally proved. Origin of the Egrisi (Colchis) kingdom is dated by T. Beradze from the 15-11th centuries B. C. by M. Lordkipanidze from the beginning of the Ist millenium B. C. R. Gordeziani thinks, that the Colchis kingdom reached the peak of its power in the 15-12th centuries B. C. and the period of existence of Aia can be dated from the 14-12th centuries B. C. ¹³ The first to mention the "country of Colchis" within the Argonauts' context is Emvel of Corianth (8th century B. C.)¹⁴ Today it is impossible to state the exact date of forming this state, but its existence from the middle of the IInd millennium B. C. is quite real.

According to "Argonautics", Aia is an independent, strong and civilized state. ¹⁵ People and king of Colchis being welcoming to the Argonauts "occupied more developed stage of civilization, than the adventure seekers and their army, having come to them like the medieval century Normans to rob, violating of all the rules of the hospitality". ¹⁶ According to Apollonius of Rhodes the Argonauts having stolen the golden fleece and Medea, were afraid "Aietes will soon visit Hellada, to revenge his son's death." ¹⁷ The Greeks believed it was not recommended to make the kings of Colchis angry, as nobody is "as powerful as Aietes and though he lives far away he can invade Hellada is he desires". ¹⁸

The power of the State and its stable economic conditions are reflected in the epitaph of the Colchis king, in the work "Peplos" written by Aristotle:

"Aietes was buried in Colchis.

In Colchis rich with gold

Was buried the ruler Aietes

By the will of godly bane". ¹⁹

According to the Argonaut myth, ancient Colchis in the cultural aspect was a quite

10 G. Koranashvili. on the Origin of the Georgian State. Tb., 2000. In the book are given different opinions of the Georgian and foreign authors concerning this issue.

11 L. Sanikidze. Not less than 3 500 – I say!!!- Sakartvelos Respublica (Republic of Georgia) 1997, 16 february (in Georgian).

12 T. Gamkrelidze. What is Georgia –Europe or Asia? –Literaturuli Sakartvelo, 1999, 18-25 june, p. 4 (in Georgia).

13 T. Beradze. Ancient Egrissian (Colchis) Kingdom. -Aia, 2001, N9-10, p. 32 (in Georgian); M. Lordkipanidze. A Permanent Line of Existing the Georgian State. – At the origin of the Georgian Statehood. Tb., 2001. P. 140 (in Georgian); R. Gordeziani. On the Formation of the Georgian Self-Consciousness. Tb., 1993, p. 38 (in Georgian).

14 A. Urushadze. Ancient Colchis in the Tale of Argonauts, p. 195 (in Georgian).

15 According to O. Lordkipanidze's opinion in the XIIth century B. C. it already existed, but dating of the social structure, being described in the "Argonautics" from the second half of the II millennium B. C. is doubtful. The scientists think that it is more appropriate and adequate to the realities of the VI-IVth centuries B. C. (O. Lordkipanidze. Heritage of Georgia. Tb., 1989, p. 210, 217).

16 Fr. Dubua de Monpere. Travel around the Caucasus, v. I. Sukhumi, 1989, p. 12.

17 Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautics. book IV, 743-744.

18 Ibid, IV, 1104-1105.

19 A. Urushadze. Ancient Colchida in the Tale of Argonauts. p. 249 (in Georgian); V. Latishev. Information of the Ancient Authors ...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1947, N2, p. 331.

developed country and had its own writing system:

“And the columns with inscriptions Betrothed from fathers
With the paths and routes on the lands and sea
Are kept by them.”²⁰

Here is the oldest information about the existence of the Georgian written language and cartography. In Aia-Colchis people had their own language. Medea spoke her own mother-tongue, though she knew the language of the Tavr as well.²¹

Colchis is the rich with gold, vast state. Especially rich and luxurious is its capital – town of Kutaisi. When the Argonauts were sailing up the river Phasis :

“On the left of the Argonauts
Were the high Caucasus and
The town of Kitaid - Ei.”²²

The borders of the Colchis kingdom were spread to the Caucasian range. Even the “Odyssey” (8th B. C.), by Homer giving the information about the Argonauts and Aia being included into the sphere of Odysseus’s travel indirectly points to this fact. According to the poem, the kingdom of Aia borders with the land in Greeks opinion being located in the far Northern lands, where is the “the Cimmerian’s sad country”.²³

In Ovidius Nazon’s work (Herodius, XII, 25-28) Medea says:

“My parent was rich.
This one possesses Ether sitting on the two seas,
And mine till the Scythians’ snow
Possesses all the far beyond the lands of Ponto”.²⁴

Thus, North-West borders of Colchis in Aiete’s times probably passed near the Azov Sea. The information given by Diodores of Sicily (I century B. C.) prove the same about the formation of the Colchian tribe 33 centuries ago in the neighborhood of the lake Meotia (Azov Sea).²⁵ All this fully coincides with the data of the “ Life of Kartli”, and namely the work of the Georgian chronicler of the 11th century Leonti Mroveli, according to whom Targamos gave the lands to Egros and defined the borders: “ From the East- The Small mountain, which is now called Likhi; from the West the Sea and the river of the Small Hazaria (Kuban-author), till the range of the Caucasus.”²⁶ T. Beradze thinks, that the borders of Ancient Egrisi spread from the Chorok river basin to the river of Small Hazaria.²⁷

20 Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautics, book IV, 48, -Vestnik of Ancient History, 1947, N4, 279-281.

21 Diodorus of Sicily. Library, IV, 48-T. S. Kauhchishvili. Information of the Greek authors about Georgia, book III. Tb., 1976, p. 90, 91.

22 Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautics, book II, 266-267.

23 Homer. Odyssey. Translation from Ancient Greek made by V. A. Zukovski. M., 1987, book XI, 13-15.

24 Ovid. Elegies and Small Poems. M., 1973, p. 125.

25 T. Kauhchishvili. Information made by Greek Authors..., book III, p. 75. Diodores of Sicily repeats the data given by Herodotus about the origin of the Colchians. Georgian historiography does not share this information, considered to be the “fantasy” of Herodotus (I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into the history of the Georgian people, book I. Historical Ethnological problems of Georgia, Caucasus and the near East. Tb., 1950, p. 17 (in Georgian), though there is quite many data on the kinship and cultural connections of the Georgians and Egyptians in that oldest epoch; M. Janashvili. History of Georgia, v. I. Tb., 1906, p. 4, 28-32 in Georgian; S. Kakabadze. Problems of Genesis of the Georgian Statehood. –istoricheski vestnik, 1924, I, p. 61-62). In this precise case the information given by Diodores of Sicily about the formation and dwelling of the Colchian tribes on the banks of the Azov Sea and not only on the Phasis as Herodotus thought is significant (Herodotus. History in nine books. Translation and comments by G. A. Stratianovski, M., 1972, book I, 103-105; T. Kauhchishvili. Information on Georgia given by Herodotes. Tb., 1960, p. 71).

26 Life of Georgia. The text identified by S. Kauhchishvili according to the manuscripts, v. I. Tb., 1955, p. 5.

27 T. Beradze. The Ancient Egrissi (Colchian) Kingdom, p. 349 (in Georgian). See T. Beradze, M. Sanadze. History of

For stating the ethnical belonging of the of the population of the Aia- Colchis kingdom, first of all we have to analyze “Life of Kartli “and archeological and though rare, but interesting linguistic material. According to the “Life of Kartli”, the west Georgia including the modern territory of Abkhazia and regions to the north-west from it is the place of dwelling of the Egress – the ancient Georgians. This is proved by the valid conclusions made by archeologists about the formation of the integral Colchian culture on the whole territory of the west Georgia.²⁸ The important conclusion is made on the basis of the linguistic data. In the joint work of T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov (“Indo-European Language and Indo-Europeans”) a special paragraph is dedicated to the topic of “Greek-Kartvelian lexical connections and myth on Argonauts”. The authors prove that the Greek language already in the ancient epoch adopted dozens of Kartvelian words. Among them is named the word “tkov” (“tkavi”-hide, skin), and this points to the fact of dwelling of the ancestors of Georgians in Egrisi and within the territory of modern Abkhazia.²⁹ The name of the medical herb -“moli” growing in the country of Aia and being fixed in the “Odyssey” proves the same.³⁰ This kind of term is not met in other Greek texts and its explanation on the Indo-European basis is impossible. The specialists think the word “moli” is the adopted by the Greeks Georgian word.³¹ In the meaning of the medical ointment or cloak it is mentioned in the poem of the Georgian poet of the 12-13th centuries Shota Rustaveli “Knight in the Panther’s Skin”.³² According to prof. M. Chukhua fixed in “Argonautics” and other Greek historical sources, by the origin is the Megrelian-Laz variant of the common Georgian literally term “kerb”, being preserved in the Dictionary y S. -S. Orbeliani (compiled in 1685-1716) in the form of “kepi” (the full sheet of paper).

The Georgian historical tradition, information from the ancient Greek mythology, linguistic data and the archeological material having been revealed in the previous chapter give the basis for supposing, that at least from the II millennium B. C. the territory of modern Abkhazia was the organic part of the Aia-Colchis kingdom, id. e. The old Georgian state and was populated by the ancestors of the Georgians-the people being the carriers of the common Kartvelian parent language. According to O. Lordkipanidze Colchis included the whole west Georgia and was the possession of the ancient Georgians.³³ In the epoch of this kingdom as impartially write R. Gordeziani and G. Melikishvili the language difference between the Megrelo-Chans and Karts did not exist at that time. In G. Melikishvili’s opinion the term “Colchians” in that epoch must have denoted the “com-

Georgia, book I. Tb., 2003, p. 45-46 (in Georgian). As it will be shown further till the XVIIIth century (in spite of the radical changes of the ethnic picture in the East Black Sea region) in a number of foreign (and among them Russian) sources the State border of Georgia in accordance with the historical tradition is fixed on the Geographical maps exactly along the river Kuban, near the Azov Sea or not far from it.

28 O. Japaridze. At the Origin of the History of Georgia. Tb., 2003. P. 2039in Georgian). See in the same source Chapter II.

29 T. V. Gamkrelidze, V. Ivanov. Indo-European Language and Indo-Europeans, v . II. Tb., 1984, p. 904-909; T. Gamkrelidze. From History of the Tribal Names of Ancient Colchis. - Foreign and Georgian Terminology Denoting Georgia and the Georgians. Tb., 1993, p. 588 (in Georgian).

30 Homer, X, 303-306; R. V. Gordeziani. Problems of the Homer Epos. Tb., 1978, p. 209.

31 “Sweet and Fresh Grass”. See: S. S. Orbeliani. Dictionary of the Georgian Language, v. I. Tb., 1991, p. 500 (in Georgian). This words exists eve nowadays.

32 Shota Rustaveli. Knight in the Panther’s Skin. – Georgian Writers, v. 4, Tb., 1988, p. 262; Sh. V. Dzidziguri. The Georgian Language’s. , 1968, p. 69.

33 O. Lordkipanidze. Development of the Colchis Ethno cultural System. - Ethno genesis of the Georgian People. Tb., 2002, p. 18-28 (in Georgian).

mon Kartvelian or Kartoan (Megrelo-Chan) element. Ionian Greeks were acquainted with the Georgian tribes in the “Colchian” period of existing the Karto-Zanian union and the name “Colchians” supposedly was used to denote this integrity.³⁴ Then existed all the premises for intense development of the process having supposedly been started earlier of formation of the integral Georgian ethnos. Such premises might have been existing during the centuries economically developed (“gold-abundant”), strong in the military aspect (“in case of desire, will invade Hellada”), prosperous in the cultural sphere (having the written language and cartography) and territorially vast (“till the snows of the Scythians”) Colchis state; its borders primarily were significantly beyond the borders of Egrisi of the Georgian sources and included quite a big part of the East Georgia (later “Colchis” and “Egrisi”-identical notions). The sector of Inguri –Psou being within the structure of Colchis, was actually the territory on which the ethno genesis of the Georgians had place.

We have the entire basis to think, that the Georgian people namely in the epoch of Aia – Colchis reached the high stage of consolidation, which later overcame all the misfortunes of history. The first and not the last thing is that the common national self-consciousness being based on the historical memory on the common origin, common cultural language (in spite of the formation of dialects), cognition of the integral and common state (in spite of the territorial split being thrust from the outside). The truth is, that the process of consolidation of the nation continued in the future (in this matter the special part belongs to Christianity), but the strong spiritual integrity, common consciousness of the Georgian people was formed in the Aia-Colchis epoch. Another explanation of the unique fact of the firm union of the three main branches of the Georgian people (Megrelians Svans, Karts) is not valid, having in mind the circumstance, that in the following epochs during the more long-timed period of existence of the Georgian people the processes being conditioned mainly by the outer factors, causing the disintegration were already dominant.

On the borders of the 3-2nd millennium B. C. or even in the more remote past (6-5th millennium B. C.), in the West Georgia and namely in the Inguri-Psou sector, “is excluded the possibility of defining the precise, concrete ethnos”, because of the absence of the sufficient source studying base –supposes M. Lordkipanidze. According to the rather valid opinion of R. Gordeziani the basics of the integral national self-consciousness of the Georgians were formed in the Bronze age.³⁵ In spite of this the radically different opinion about the ethnical belonging of the oldest population of the Eastern Black Sea region, is expressed. It is based on the groundless hypothesis, according to which the Kashka-Abeshlaish tribes dwelling in the Asia Minor in the III-II millennium B. C. as if were the ancestors of the Abkhazian-Adigeans. This point of view was shared by P. Uslar, N. Marr, P. Ushakov, D. Gulia, V. Struve, I. Diakonov etc.³⁶ N. Marr was looking for the ancestor country of the Abkhazians to the South of Colchis and Asia Minor; The modern Geographical names –Gubazouli, Chibati, Ancha (Guria) and also Achara (Achara), Phasis etc. was considered by him to be Abkhazian-Adigean toponymes.³⁷ D. Gulia

34 *Essays on History of Georgia*, v. I. Tb., 1970, p. 395 (in Georgian); R. Gordeziani. *Problem of Formation of the Georgian Self-Consciousness*, p. 37-39.

35 M. Lordkipanidze. *Abkhazians and Abkhazia*. Tb., 1990, p. 39; R. Gordeziani. *Problems of formation of the Georgian self-consciousness*, p. 19-32, 77.

36 *World History*, v. I. M., 1965, p. 379, 515.

37 N. Marr. *History of the Term “Abkhaz”*. - *Information of the Imperial Academy of Sciences*. Series VI, 1912, N11, p.

without any argumentations declared the Colchians - the ancestors of the Abkhazians (Apsua) and concluded, that during B. C. E. the whole Colchis, Armenia Minor, North Mesopotamia and others regions of the South and North Caucasus neighboring with the Colchis regions were populated with the peoples speaking the Abkhazian-Cherkessian languages. ³⁸ Even the more, the whole chapter of his book (Chapter IV) was dedicated to the “proof”, that the Abkhazians came from Egypt and Abyssinia (Abassia). ³⁹ D. Gulia relied on the opinions of the European and Georgian scientists of the 19-20th centuries on the migration of the ancestors of the Georgians and other peoples of the Caucasus from the South, ⁴⁰ and on the Theory of Herodotus about the Egyptian origin of the Colchis. The opinion about the Southern origin of the Georgians was put under suspicion as soon as the western science (B. Grozni from Chekhia and others), recognized the Tubals and Mushks (supposedly the ancestors of the Georgians), as Indo-Europeans. After this I. Javakhishvili, supporting the theory about the Southern origin of the Georgians, made his position more precise. He started working out the theory on the kinship of the Georgians and other peoples of the Caucasus. On the basis of the analyses of the epigraphic sources, tribal, and toponimical names, being recognized by the Iranian language peoples of the Scythians and Sarmats, I. Javakhishvili announced thrm the ancestors of the Adigeans, the Chechens and Lezghins. The trails of the North Caucasians in his opinion are obvious in Georgia and neighboring Albany. This trail of toponymes and ethnonimes reached the Asia Minor, - wrote the scientist. I. Javakhishvili was sure, that the relative Georgian, Kartvelian and Scythian-Sarmatian tribes migrated from the South to the North; thus, the direct ancestors of the Georgians –the Tubal-Tibarens and Mushks//Meshekhs could not have been the Indo-Europeans. ⁴¹

Academician S. Janashia introduced a radically different, new theory. “ The Georgians by their origin belong to the oldest aboriginal population of the Asia Minor” and “ are the off-springs of the Khettian-Subars” – wrote the scientist; 6 thousand years ago, this population being settled on the vast territory (Asia Minor, Balkans, Apennine and Pyrenees peninsulas) gradually limits and reduces its areal. From the 13th century B. C. (the date of fall of the Khettian kingdom) it split into the small states. In the first centuries I millennium B. C. the western and eastern cultural areas were formed, coinciding with the two unions – western and eastern-Georgian; “The Western cultural areal included the Western Georgia, Plato of the North Caucasus to the West form the river Terek, Gorge of the river Chorok and the eastern coast of the Black Sea”: For the VIth century B. C. when

697-706; the same author: Linguistic Travel to Abkhazia (on the etymological problems). - Information of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, p. 1013, N6, p. 303-337; the same author: Caucasiology and the Abkhazian language. -Journal of the ministry of Education, 1916, N5, p. 154. See Critics on the N. Marr’s opinion: T. Gvantseladze. Opinion on the N. Marr’s effort of etimologisation of the term “Abkhaz”. -readings A. Chikobava-12 Materials. Tb., 2001, p. 33-34 (in Georgian). See in the same source- chapter XI.

38 D. I. Gulia. History of Abkhazia, v. I. Tb., 1925, p. 76.

39 Ibid, p. 79-134.

40 The brief historiographical review on this problem sees: G. A. Melikishvili. For the problem of the Ancient Population of Georgia, Caucasus and the Near East. Tb., 1965, p. 18-26 (in Georgian).

41 I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into the History of the Abkhazian People, book Lithe Original System and Kinship of the Georgian and Caucasian Languages. Tb., 1937 (in Georgian); of the same author: Historical-Ethnological Problems of Georgia, Caucasus and near East. –Vestnik of the Ancient History, 1939, N4, p. 47-48; of the same author: Historical-Ethnological Problems of Georgia, Caucasus and near East. Tb., 1950, p. 250 (in Georgian).

the kingdom of Urartu fell, the centers of the statehood were shifted to the Noeth.⁴² The theory of S. Janashia gained a great popularity and support. The problem of the search of the ancestors of the Georgians in different places and their migration were removed from the agenda. The views of D. Gulia also lost their significance. We can suppose, that under the influence of S. Janashia's theory D. Gulia denied his main conclusions,⁴³ though in the 30-ies of the 20th century⁴⁴ he was not able to avoid the sharp criticism from the side of the scientists and authorities.⁴⁵

The idea about the migration of Abkhazians from Egypt and Abyssinia was never seriously taken into account, though a lot of well-known authors identified the tribes of the Kaska-Abeshlaians with the ancestors of the Cherkes-Kerkets and the Abshil-Apsils being announced the ancestors of the Abkhazians without a valid proof, mainly on the basis of the phonetic resemblance. One of the first, together with other European scientists was Ed. Meier in the 1884 identified the Colchians with the Kashkas.⁴⁶

The same opinion was expressed by the Michel Tamarati (Mikhail Tamarashvili) in 1910 in the book "The Georgian Church from the Start till Today", being published in Rome in the French language. In the author's opinion Kashka is the same Colchis. As a proof he uses the list of the Tubal, Mosokh and Kaskaian kings.⁴⁷ I. Javakhishvili also thinks, that the Kasks were the Colchs.⁴⁸

The different opinion are expressed by I. Diakonov, I. Dunaevskaia and G. Melikishvili.⁴⁹ In the latter's opinion the Kaska-Abeshla kindred to the Protokhettians (The Khats) are two different variants of one and the same tribal name of the collective meaning. The Khettians called the Kashks the mountaineers of the North - Eastern Asia Minor, among whom according to G. Melikishvili were the ancestors of the Abkhazian-Adigeans, as well as the Georgians.⁵⁰

From the 50-60-ies of the 20th century, the theory on the Southern origin of the Abkhazians was especially worked out and this was connected with the official incrimination of P. Ingorokva fundamental work "Giorgi Merchule" (Tb., 1954). In that work was grounded the earlier existing theory about the North-Caucasian origin of the Apsua-Abkhazians

42 History of Georgia. Editor S. Janashia. Tb., 1943, p. 14, 16, 21, 45-48.

43 D. Gulia. on My Book "History of Abkhazia". Sukhumi, 1951.

44 From the 30-ies of the 20th century in the Soviet Historiography was rooted the new concept of N. Marr being ordered from the "High level" about the local origin of the peoples. This repudiated the migration theories and the struggle was declared to Nationalism and Chauvinism. (See V. Shnirelman. Wars of Memory, p. 290).

45 Criticisms of the anti-scientific theories of D. Gulia (from the partorganization side as well), and also of S. Basaria (S. Basaria. Abkhazia. Sukhumi 1923) and S. Asdkhatsava (S. Ashkhatsava the Ways of Development of the History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi 1925), see: A. Fadeev. The brief Essay of the History of Abkhazia, part I. Sukhumi, 1934, p. 13-18; V. Shnirelman. Wars of Memory, p. 290-291).

46 A. S. Khakhanov. The Ancient Borders of the Settling of the Georgians throughout the Asia Minor. Tb., 1903, p. 17; G. Melikishvili. For the Problem of the Ancient Settlement.... p. 32.

47 Tamarati Michel. L'eglise Georgienne des origines jusque'anos jours. Rome, 1910, p. 56.

48 I. Javakhishvili, History of the Georgian People, book I-II. Tb., 1913, p. 26.

49 I. Diakonov. The Languages of the Ancient From Asia. M., 1967; of the same author: The Prehistory of the Armenian People. M., 1968, p. 12-13; of the same author Urartu, Frigia, Lidia. -History of the Ancient World. Prosperity of the Ancient Nations. Publishing House III. M., 1989, p. 40, 46-13; I. M. Dunaevskaia. On the Structural Resemblance of the Khettian Language with the Languages of the North Caucasus. - Researches on the History of Culture of the People are of the Orient. M-L., 1960. G. A. Melikishvili. NAiri-Urartu. Tb., 1954, p. 77, 401; of the same author: For the History of the Ancient Georgia. Tb., 1959, p. 97, 120-122; of the same author For the problem of the Old settlements.... p. 32 (in Georgian); of the same author: Researches in the Field of the History of Ancient Georgia, Caucasus and the Near East. Tb., 1999, p. 84-06.

50 Essays on the History of Georgia, V I, p. 360 (in Georgian).

and settling by them of the North-West part of the Megrelian Principality (Odishi) in the late medieval century. With the purpose of pacifying of the discontent, caused by the publishing of that work of the Abkhazian society and with the other political motives, the Presidium of the Central Committee (CC) of the Comparty of the USSR (under the special control of which was the historical science) brought an accusation against the Georgians for the trial of liquidation and assimilation of the national culture of the Abkhazians (and also the Ossetians and Armenians) in accordance with the resolution from the 10th of July of 1956. “The accusation” was recognized by the Plenums of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia (6-8 August of 1956) and regional Party Committee of Abkhazia (16 August of 1956).⁵¹ Accusation of the Kremlin of the non-existing” Georgian Chauvinism” and the national-cultural “oppression” of the Abkhazians, gave way for implementation into the historiography of the versions, directed towards the theory of P. Ingorokva and among them for the conception on the Southern origin of the Abkhazians.

The above mentioned topic was analyzed by K. Shakril. He thought, that the Kashks were the ancestors of the Abeshla-Abkhazians (Apsua). Approximately, on the borders of the III-II millennium B. C. they apparently moved towards the Caucasus and in the I millennium B. C. reached the territory of the modern Abkhazia; in the author’s opinion the alien Abkhazian –Adigean tribes were on the higher level of development, than the local population whom they foisted their language and culture.⁵²

But K. Shakril did not say anything (and cannot say) about the cultural advantages of the aliens from the Asia Minor and why and how it disappeared in the following years. We have to denote, that the archeological material (we do not have the other information) does not proof the radical changes in the composition of the local population in the I millennium B. C. or aboutt the fact of its migration from the Asia Minor towards the North Caucasus.

The theory about the migration of the Kasko-Abeshlaian tribes from the Asia Minor to the Caucasus and namely to the western Georgia including Abkhazia was supported by L. Soloviev. In his opinion the dolmens were brought by the Kashks to Abkhazia, though he also noted that the existence of the dolmens was fixed before the would-be migration of the tribes from the Asia Minor.⁵³ L. Soloviev’s views were shared by Z. Anchabadze. He asserted that the formation of the Abkhazian ethnos was the result of the longitudinal process of consolidation (beginning with the period of Neolith to the last centuries of the pre antique epoch) of the aboriginal population of the Caucasian Black Coast and the alien tribes having come from the North-east part of the Asia Minor.⁵⁴ Later Z. Anchabadze presented a bit different idea. He asserted that the Abkhazian-Adigean-Kartvelian tribes occupied the part of the Caucasus and its neighboring regions of the Asia Minor from the time immemorial. The period of flourishing of the so-called Dolmen culture (the end of the III-and the first part of the IIst millennium B. C.) as he thought, must be revealed as the period of formation of the ancient Abkhazian ethnos, namely at that time occurred

51 Zaria Vostoka, 1956, 9, 23 August; Komunisti, 1956, 9, 25 August (in Georgian).

52 K. Shakril. for the Problem of the Ethno genesis of the Abkhazian-Adigean People. -Scientific Notes of the Adigean Scientific Research Institute, IV. Krasnodar, 1965, p. 205-221.

53 L. N. Soloviev. A new Monument of the Cultural Ties of the Caucasian Black Sea Region in the Epoch of Neolith and Bronze - Camps of the Vorontsov Cave. -Works of the Institute of the Language , Literature and History of Abkhazia, v. XXIX. Sukhumi, 1952, p. 163-165.

54 Z. Anchabadze. History and Culture of Ancient Abkhazia. M., 1964, p. 121.

the final and ultimate split of the proto Abkhazian –Adigean union. ⁵⁵ But Z. Anchabadze does not have the valid proof and arguments for the dwelling of the Abkhazian tribes in the West Georgia in the 3-2nd millennium B. C. In Sh. Inal-Ipa's opinion the Khato-Abkhazian – Adigean tribes were not aliens from the South, but lived on the territory from the North Caucasus to the Asia Minor in the III-II millennium B. C. ⁵⁶

O. Japaridze also studied the problems of the ethnical history. After the split of the Caucasian Cultural-Ethnical integrity (4-3rd millennium B. C.), the western part of the Caucasus (including Abkhazia) was occupied in his opinion by the Khato-Abkhazian-Adigean tribes. As for the Kartvelian tribes they were at that time in the western and central regions of the Trans Caucasus. The culture having been revealed in the Western Caucasus is considered by O. Japaridze to be Abkhazian-Adigean. ⁵⁷ The position of O. Japaridze even today is unchanged, though not very confident. Now he asserts, that in the late Eneolith period (the III millennium B. C.) the ancestors of the Abkhazian-Adigeans dwelt in the pre – Kuban area, though their existence in West Colchis cannot be excluded, where they supposedly lived in the neighborhood with the Georgian tribes. ⁵⁸

The opposite views also exist. The migration of the Kashks from the Asia Minor to the West Caucasus is not proved by the archeological material, ⁵⁹ among them with the dolmens not fixed in the Asia Minor. ⁶⁰ We have to consider the circumstance, that the ethnical group of the Kashks even today lives in Iran. ⁶¹

Linguistic connections of the Abkhazian-Adigeans with the Khats are denied by the German scientist A. Kammenhuber. He thinks, that the effort to connect genetically the Khattian and Caucasian languages will bring no results, as after the disappearance of the Khattians to the written fixation of the Caucasian languages passed 3000 years; consequently, the material for the scientific analyses does not exist. Arising out of this, he does not accept the pretenses of I. Dunaevskaia, who says, that the structural and possible genetic connections between the Khattians and Abkhazian-Adigean languages are not studied; the scientist is sure, that the words of those languages having one and the same sounding are not connected with each other. ⁶²

Existence of the genetic connection between the terms “kasag-kashag” (ancestors of the Cherkeso-Adigeans) and the Kashks is not real in N. Volkova's opinion, as they are mentioned with the two thousand years interval . To this we can add, that the same interval is between the “Abeshlas” of the cuneiform texts and “Apshils” from the “Life of Georgia”.

Only the long-timed gap in time and space between the terms is not considered by G. Giorgadze the valid arguments. He thinks, that for stating the identity of the ethnonymes “Kashag”-“Kashka”, existence of the phonetical resemblance is not enough (as it can be

⁵⁵ Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on the Ethnical History of the Abkhazian People*. Sukhumi, 1976, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. *The Problems of Ethno-Cultural History of Abkhazians*. Sukhumi, 1976, p. 423-424.

⁵⁷ O. Japaridze. *On the Ethnical History of the Georgian Tribes According to the Archeological Data*. Tb., 1976, p. 61, 266, 305 (in Georgian); Of the same author: *At Dawn of the Ethno-Cultural History of the Caucasus*. Tb., 1989, p. 393.

⁵⁸ O. Japaridze. *at the Origin of the Ethno genesis of the Georgian People*. Tb., 2006, p. 248 (in Georgian).

⁵⁹ E. Alekseeva. *Ancient and Medieval Century History of Karachaevo-Cherkesia*. M., 1971, p. 186-198.

⁶⁰ V. Markovin. *Dolmen Culture and the Problems of the Early Ethno genesis of the Abkhazian-Adigeans*. Nalchik, 1974, p. 29.

⁶¹ A. Kammenhuber. *the Khattian Language – The Ancient Languages of the Asia Minor*. Editors I. M. Diakonova and V. V. Ivanova. M., 1980, p. 23-98.

⁶² N. G. Volkova. *Ethnonims and Tribal Names of the North Caucasus*. M., 1973, p. 22.

accidental), “Kaska” of the Khettian sources is consonant with or identical the names of the peoples of different epochs, living (even today) in different parts of the world (In Cameron there is a tribe “Kaska”, in India-Gashka, in Pamphilia in the South of Asia Minor lived the “Kerkois” etc). G. Giorgadze pays attention to the circumstance, that the “Kashags” is explained by S. S. Orbeliani, as the “Stout Captive”. The Georgian scientist of the 15th century Zaza Panaskerteli writes that the word “Kashki” means “ the juice of the wheat grain”, sometimes this word was used to denote beer. ⁶³ S. -S. Orbeliani gives the following definition: “Kashag” - are a tall and big captive and the baby-infant” . ⁶⁴ D. Chubinashvili gives even the more concrete meaning of this Georgian word: “Kashag –is a stout fellow, being destined to be sold in slavery. ”⁶⁵ For further analyzes, here we can note, that the personal guard of Chingiz-Khan was called “Keshig”. Thus, assertion of identity of the word “kashag” –“kashka” has no valid ground.

G. Giorgadze studied the ethnical belonging of the “Kasks”; He did not share the version of their identity with the Khattians. As long as those peoples were on different stages of development; the kindred of the Kasks with the Abkhazian-Adigeans is not considered by the author based and proved, because of absence of other arguments, but the consonance of the terms; we do not have the materials proving the facts of migration and moving of the Kashks. The primary analyses of the Khettians and cuneiform texts of the Kask toponymes, ⁶⁶ of the proper nouns⁶⁷ and of the separate words⁶⁸ inspired the author to make a conclusion that the Kasks have more in common with the Georgians (megrelians, lazs and svans), than with the Abkhazian-Adigeans. ⁶⁹ G. Giorgadze analyses the problem of the ethnical belonging of the tribe Abeshla. ⁷⁰ In the texts being compiled on behalf of the Assyrian king of Tiglatpalasar the Ist (1115-1077 B. C.) Obeshla is mentioned as the variant of “Kaska”. This may mean, that “Kashka” of the cuneiform texts is the synonym of “Abeshla” – thinks the scientist and concludes: “ If we accept the opinion (that Kaska and Abeshla) are synonyms, then the “Kasks” ((Kashks) of the Khettian and Assyrian sources and “Abeshlaians” of the Assyrian texts (and Apsils as well in case of identifying the terms “Abeshla’ and “Apsil”) are the tribes of one and the same South Colchis

63 G. Giorgadze. *The Oldest Near East Ethnoses and Origin of the Georgians*. Tb., 2002, p. 96-97 (In Georgian).

64 Sulxan-Saba Orbeliani. *The Dictionary of the Georgian Language*, II. Tb., 1993, p. 218.

65 D. Chubinashvili. *Russian-Georgian Dictionary*. Tb., 1993, p. 313.

66 Askharbaia/Ashkharbaia, Eluria/Iluria, Tsitakharia (mountain); Gakharia/Kakharia (settlement), Patkharia, Patalia, Susuria/Shukhuria, Tipia, Tsikharia (country), Saria/Sharia (river), Tekhulia, Tashkuria, (settlement), Timia (settlement), Tsulia (river), Duduska/Dudushka (main settlement of the Kashks), Muniska/Munishka, Tatiska/Tatishka, Tsiantiska/Tsiantishka, Khatentsuva, Karansuva, Tapasava, Kataladuva, Katitimuva etc.

67 Pskhapala, Khatsina, Kaskamuva, Faata (Paata), Patalia, Pikhunia, Pia (Bia), Suismeli (Shushmeli), Dadi (Data), Tata, Dadidu, Temeti, Tita (Dita), Kaskaili (Kaskeli), Sametili (Sameteli), Dadilu (Dadieli) etc.

68 Pegapilu, Piguriali, Pipalala, Pitauria, Pituntush etc. (their meaning is not known).

69 G. Giorgadze. *The Oldest Near Eastern Ethnoses and Origin of Georgia*. p108-111; N. Khazaradze thinks, that the interrelations between the Mushks and the Mosks and the Mushks and the Kashks, The Kashks and the Mosks is obvious, which can be considered one of the proofs of the identity of the terms denoting the Mosks and the Mushks. (N. Khazaradze. *For the History of the Ethnical Term “Meskh”*. - Foreign and Georgian Terminology of the Notion “Georgia” and “Georgians”. Tb., 1993, p. 39 (In Georgian).

70 I. Gelb associated the term “Abeshla” with the name “Apshil” (“Abshil) from the Mesopotamian sources and the territory of the Abeshlaians with the regions situated between the river Tigris and the Lake Van. The word “Abeshla” by its phonetic compositions stands near to the name of one of the Assyrian kings – Abishal (Apiashal); The same words can be understand as a male name – “Abeshalam “. Considering this G. Giorgadze assumes, that Abeshlaians were of the Semite origin (G. Giorgadze. *The Oldest Near East Ethnoses and the Origin of the Georgians*”, p. 119).

origin.⁷¹

Through bringing a number of arguments (inexactitude in the Assyrian texts, localization of the Abeshlaians, absence of information about them in the texts of the Khetians, comparatively late appearance of them on the political arena etc.). G. Giorgadze denies the identity of Kashka and Abeshla and supposes that the Abeshlaians together with the Kashks and the Mushks have the Western Caucasian origin. He calls the trial of identifying of the "Abeshla"-"Apsil"-Apsua" hypothetical and based on the approximate resemblance of the terms; in case of assuming such identity, "Then the Apsils must be recognized to be the tribes of the Colchis (Megrelo-Lazian) origin, as the Abeshlaians together with the Kashks are considered by G. Giorgadze to be the like tribe."⁷² This is the trustworthy opinion of G. Giorgadze being radically different from the opinions of the other authors and among them G. Melikishvili.⁷³ We hope, that in the future this opinion will be strengthened by the additional arguments.

In the scientific literature the trial of basing of the theories of migration of the ancestors Abkhazian-Adigean tribes to the West Caucasus or their primary settling from the Caucasus to the Asia Minor basing on the modern toponymics of the western Georgia. As it was already mentioned, one of the first was N. Marr, who ascribed the toponymes existing in different regions of Georgia (Achara, Guria, Svaneti, Racha) to the supposedly living here approximately 5000 years ago the ancestors of the Abkhazians. In the Soviet time this conception was developed by D. Gulia, S. Janashia and I. Javakhishvili and others. On the basis of the names of the rivers and the proper names having the "Abkhazian-Cherkessian" etymology . D. Gulia, as it was already mentioned above, announced the whole west Caucasus, Armenia and Turkey the historical territory of the ancestors of the Abkhazian people.⁷⁴

In publication by S. Janashia "Cherkessian (Adigean) Elements of the Toponymics of Georgia", (1933), on the basis of the "non-Georgian" names (akamps, supsa, agidakva, achkva, maltakva, bobokvati, berekva etc.), is drawn a conclusion: "Existence of the Cherkessian toponymics on certain parts of the territory of Georgia should be considered to be proved... it is the trail of dwelling of the Cherkessian population on this territory".⁷⁵

The same idea is expressed by Javakhishvili. Hydronymes with the ending "ps" are considered by him to be only Cherkessian and with the ending "psh" – Kabardinian and the ending "kva" – "kuara" was ascribed exceptionally to the Abkhazians.⁷⁶ He, in the report having been read at the meeting of the Academy of sciences of the USSR in 1939 announced having the Adigean origin such Georgian family names as Ingoro-kva, Chanukva-dze, and Gele-kva on the basis of the particle kva having the meaning of a "son" in the Cherkessian. Besides, he considered of the Adigean origin the toponyms of the West Georgia – "Khopa" and "Sinop". The name of the village "Bjinevi" (Kharagauli region) was also considered Cherkessian, as bjinevi in Cherkessian means garlic. Thus, concludes

⁷¹ G. Giorgadze. *The Oldest Near East Ethnoses and Origin of the Georgians* p. 115. We have to consider the circumstance that in the III-II millennium B. C. the Georgian Parent Language was not yet split into the dialects.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁷³ G. Melikshvili. *Researches*, p. 93-96.

⁷⁴ D. Gulia. *History of Abkhazia*, v. I, p. 76-77.

⁷⁵ S. Janashia. *Works*, v. III. Tb., 1949, p. 120-122 (in Georgian).

⁷⁶ I. Javakhishvili. *Introduction into the History of the Georgian People/ book I, Historical-Ethnographical Problems*. P. 43-46 (in Georgian).

I. Javakhishvili, in the prehistoric epoch Adigean tribes may have lived in the West Caucasus on the territory of historical epoch Georgia.⁷⁷

Onomastics including the elements ps-, psh-, kva-, due a number of causes cannot be considered the trail of the ancestors of the Cherkessian-Adigeans. In the first place, the given toponyms have the Latin, Greek and Georgian origin and this fact was also considered by I. Javakhishvili;⁷⁸ In the second place, a part of these toponyms do not have the 3-5 thousand standing, when West Georgia supposedly were occupied by the ancestors of the Adigeans, but they can be ascribed to the old Antique or early medieval epoch, when on the practically unsettled territory, being spread to the South of the river Rioni (modern Guria, a part of Imereti and Achara) the Georgian population was being re-settled.⁷⁹

Another part of the toponyms is not mentioned at all in the historical sources. On the necessity of the dating of the geographical names, being considered the trails of temporary dwelling of the Cherkessian-Adigeans in West Georgia paid attention M. Inadze.⁸⁰ In the third place, the analogous toponymes are met in abundance as in Georgia, so in the Euro-Asian and African continents; the words having the components of kva (kua), psh are met in other languages and in the Georgian as well.⁸¹ In the fourth place, the fact of existing of the Abkhazian-Adigean ancestors' settlements in Georgia approximately 3-5 thousand years ago, the names of which unchanged came to our days is unbelievable. The same can be said about the hydronimes, and most of all about the family names, the formation of which is far later event. (8-9th centuries B. C. and the following period);⁸² In the fifth place, it is impossible to imagine, that the onomastics including the elements ps-psh-kva, which the Abkhazian-Adigeans left on the territory, that they crossed in that remote past moving to the North (or temporarily occupied) and when the similar names being corresponding to the ancient period are not preserved in the region of their

⁷⁷ Vestnik of Ancient History, 1939, N4, p. 34-35.

⁷⁸ I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into History, p. 34-38. Later G. Akhvlediani neglecting the view of K. Lomtadze noted that the complexes "ps" and "kva" may have been common for the Adigean and Kartvelian languages. G. Akhvlediani. For some Aspects of the Historical Toponymics of Abkhazia. -Mnatobi, 1957, N2, p. 113-114 (in Georgian).

⁷⁹ Byzantian historian Procopius of Caesarea (6th century) noted, that to the left of the river Phasis the Colchis have not a single settled point "neither fortress, not a settlement", and that this area lacks important settlements, or is not settled at all. (Georgika. Information of the Byzantine writers on Georgia. V. II. The Greek texts together with the Georgian translation and comments was edited by S. Kaukhchishvili. Tb., 1965, p. 101, 127, 182; Procopius of Caesarea. The War with the Goths. M. 1950, p. 380, 416.) This quite valid information (considered by D. Muskhelishvili a mistake. See him: Main Problems of Historical Geography of Georgia. I. Tb., 1977, p. 102-104) given by the competent author – contemporary of the described events –help us to clarify in the chronology of the problem. Doubtful geographical names because, of their old origin must have disappeared (not a single source have them), due to the deserting of that area. Formation of the new and among them interesting for us onomastics in the mentioned part of Lazika can be ascribed to the period after the VIth century

⁸⁰ M. Inadze. Problems of the Ethno Political History of Ancient Abkhazia-Izvestia of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, series of history..., 1992, N3, p. 52.

⁸¹ Apshi (village in the Dusheti region of Georgia), Aki/Akva (now the town Ecse in France), town Akvanendente (Italy), town Akvilea (ancient Italy), Kvandjou (South Korea), Kvalea (siland in Norway), Psakhia, Pserimos (Greek towns), Town Pskov (Russia), town Psodoritos (Greece), Psatura, Psara/Ipsar/Ipsara (Greek islands). Pseletscoe (village in the Kursk region), Pskent (Uzbekistan), Pshemisl (now Peremishl in Poland); Akvitianian basin (France), Kva (river in Zair), Kvango, Kvanza (rivers in Angola), Kvando (river in Africa) Kvancken (strait in the Baltic Sea), Kvaliford (strait in the Arctic Ocean), Kvarnero (strait in the Adriatics), the river and town Moscoa, the river Psiol (the Ukrain, tributary of the Dneper). Pskent (river in Uzbekistan), Pekova (river in Russia), Upsala (ancient capital of Sweden) etc. Ampson (pal in Georgian), Apsida, Apsindi (wormwood), Apsus (it's apity –in Georgian), Akvalang, Akvamarin (Mineral), Akvapark, Akva (water), Akvavit (mineral water), Elysis (Greek), psalmun, psaltir, pseudonym, pson, psili (lightly armed infantry-man in Greece), psylofit (plant), pselomelan (mineral), msilos (naked in Greek), pcin, psycho, pskeri (bottom –in Georgian), psoryasis etc.

⁸² R. Topchishvili. When emerged the Georgian family names and first names. Tb., 1997, p. 38-40 (in Georgian).

permanent(according to separatist historiography) dwelling - in Asia Minor⁸³ and especially in Abkhazia and also in the regions being located to the north-west of it. It appears, that the toponymics being announced by the separate authors to be Adigean or Cherkessian existed everywhere in the remote part, but the modern territory of Abkhazia. For the first time, the names including the complex “ps” is met in the North-West Caucasus in Claudius Ptolemy’s work(Ist century A. D.). This is the town Ampsalida sitting on the bank of the river Shakhe, near the cape Golovin. ⁸⁴ The anonymous author of the Vth century, names “Nykopsy” beyond the borders of modern Abkhazia (the former “Ancient Lazika”, being situated to the North-West of modern Tuapse), “Psakhapsi”(the river near the town Nikopsia) and “ Topsida” (the river Tuapse). ⁸⁵Supposedely, those Latin, Greek and Georgian names were adopted by the Jiks, having been settled near Nykopsy and other peoples of the North Caucasus.

It cannot be the other way round – so that, F. E. the complex “kva” was adopted by a number of languages of the world from the Apsua-Abkhazian, which had no written system till the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the version about the dwelling of the Abkhazian-Adigean tribes in West Georgia in the prehistorical times has no ground. Academician S. Janashia, worked out a new theory of the ethno geneses of the Georgians and with it practically denied it. Dwelling of the ancestors of the Abkhazian-Adigean tribes in West Georgia is considered quite doubtful by N. Lomouri. ⁸⁶ This opinion is denied by the modern linguistics (see in the same work, chapter XI).

The Ancient Greek Myths and other materials, containing more or less valid information about the population of West Georgia (including Abkhazia) of the prehistorical period, state on that territory existence of the Georgians and the Georgian State and nothing more. It is supposed, that at the end of the 8th century B. C. Cimmerians having set off from the North Caucasus to the South crossed the territory of the Colchis Kingdom and ostensibly stroke it a hard blow. As O. Lordkipanidze denotes, if the devastating Cimmerian invasion had had place, then the South-Eastern Part of Colchis would have been damaged. ⁸⁷ T. Beradze does not share the opinion about the end of the Colchis Kingdom in the last fourth of the 8th century and supposes that the Cimmerians would be invasion did not have a disastrous outcome. Otherwise, this fact would be reflected in the archeological material (see in the same work, Chapter II, paragraph III) and in the Greek written tradition. ⁸⁸

We have to emphasize, that the direct and indirect data for other suppositions namely: about the total ruin of the Colchis Kingdom by the Cimmerians, invasions of it by the neighboring highlanders and their settling there, ceasing of the process of the nation-

83 G. Giorgadze associates the near East ethnoses, including the summers, not with the Abkhazian-Adigeans, but with the western-Georgian world and his argumentations are valid and grounded (See G. Giorgadze. *The Oldest Near East Ethnoses and Origin of the Georgians*, p. 22-26).

84 N. Lomouri, Claudius Ptolemy. “Geographical Guide”, Information about Georgia. - *Materials on History of Georgia and the Caucasus*. Issue, 32. Tb., 1955, p. 43, 52 (in Georgian).

85 *Georgika*, v. 2. Tb., 1965, p. 11.

86 N. Lomouri. *From the Ethno-Cultural History of Ancient Abkhazia*. Tb., 1998, p. 5 (in Georgian); of the same author: *Some Problems from Early History of Abkhazia (Answer to Prof. Sh. D. Inal-Ipa)*. –Macne, Series of History, 1990, N3, p. 165-166.

87 O. Lordkipanidze. ” Gold Abundant Colchis” (myth and Reality). – *Megrelia, Colchis, Odishi. Tbilisi-Zugdidi*, 1999, p. 16 (In Georgian).

88 T. Beradze. *the Ancient Egrissian (Colchis) Kingdom*, p. 34 (in Georgian).

al consolidation of the Georgian people and dominance of the particularistic tendencies, change of the “balance of the power” etc.⁸⁹ do not exist. If the science does not know exactly, whether Cimmerians crossed the East Black Sea Coast and invaded the North-West Colchis or not, then the following discussions about the negative consequences of that “blow” loses the sense. We have far more valid proof for other suppositions: Colchis kingdom reached the peak of its power and strength namely from the 8th century (crushing and capturing of Diaokhi etc.). From that time starts and continues intensive process the Greek colonization of the Black Sea Coast, that influenced the further development of the political processes. M. Lordkipanidze’s opinion about the unbroken line of the History of the Georgian State is quite legitimate.⁹⁰

This continuity of the Georgian statehood is supported by the periodization T. Mikeladze,⁹¹ according to which, from the 13th century B. C. till the middle of the VIth century B. C. continues the first period of existence of the Colchis Kingdom. The scientist calls it “the period of the Ancient Kingdom”; after this starts and continues till the Ist century B. C. the new period of the “middle kingdom”, being replaced by the author’s opinion with the period of the “new kingdom” (1-4th centuries).⁹²

2. Ethno-Political Situation in the VI-I centuries B. C.

By the end of the 6th century B. C. the Coast of the Black sea was covered with the net of the Greek colonies. This problem is studied in details in the Georgian historiography.⁹³ It is ascertained, that on the territory of modern Abkhazia at the end of the VIth century new settlements appeared in Dioskuria. (Sukhumi) and Gienose (at the estuary of the river Moqvi);⁹⁴ Esheri settlement with the Greek trading station (site of the ancient town) is dated from the Ist millennium B. C. Foundation of the colonies had place in the previously existing trading-economical centers and towns. This fact attracted Frederic Dubua de Monpere’s attention.⁹⁵ The Greek colonies despite the expansionist aims of their founders, due to the serious opposition from the locals were formed not as independent Polises, but as the trading stations. N. Lomouri convincingly proves, that “the settlements of west Georgia being considered Greek, where not purely Greek towns, but had a peculiar, “mixed’ character”: together with the Greek colonists in those towns, in

89 *Essays on History of Georgia*, V. I, p. 392-393; G. A. Melikishvili. *For the problem of the Ancient Population of Georgia ...*, p. 86; N. B. Berulava. *Town Dioskuria-Sebastopolys and region of the Sukhumi Bay in the Antique Epoch (VIth century B. C. -III century. A. D.)*. Tb., p. 28.

90 *At the Sources of the Georgian Statehood*, p. 136-141.

91 T. K. Mikeladze. *Researches in the History of the Oldest Population of Colchis and the Black Sea Coast*. Tb., 1974, p. 179-182 (In Georgian).

92 *History of the first ancient Georgian state and the idea about the continuity of statehood*, Shnirelman called the “Colchian Mirage”. He considers T. Mikeladze’s the periodization is not correct and it is the repetition of the periodisation history of ancient Egypt. The chronologic frames being offered by T. Mikeladze are not probably flawless, though V. Shnirelman cannot counterpoise anything, to the arguments for the benefit of the continuity of the Georgian statehood, except the malicious estimations (V. A. Shnirelman. *Wars of the Memory*, p. 336-349).

93 N. Lomouri. *The Greek Colonization of Colchis*. Tb., 1962 (in Georgian); M. P. Inadze. *The Greek Colonization of the East Black Sea Coast*. Tb., 1982 (in Georgian); N. Berulava. *Dioscuria-Sebastopolis...etc.*

94 N. Lomouri considers the opinion of M. Inadze on the foundation of Dioskuria and Gienos in the VIth century B. C. quite valid, though he himself thinks that their foundation should be dated from the period not earlier, than the Vth century B. C. (N. Lomouri. *Greek Colonization ...*, p. 46-52; M. Inadze. *Greek Colonization ...*, p. 100, 101, 105-106 etc).

95 *Federic Dubua de Monpere. Travel around the Caucasus*, V. 1, and p. 11.

comparison with other Greek colonies, Georgian population played an important part.⁹⁶ The Greek colonies limited themselves with the mediation trade. This means, as O. Lordkipanidze thinks, that they were the emporiums or the trading towns. They were not able to become large, trading towns, which was caused by the “Political Condition – Colchis statehood and the local demographic situation. The special study of the latter showed us, that before the beginning of the colonization, the East Black Sea Coast economically was fully cultivated by the local population, which stayed on the same territory without any demographical changes.”⁹⁷

In connection with the opinion about the formation of the integral state union of the Colchis tribes and factually, the revival of the State in the last fourth of the VIth century B. C. needs an additional argumentation, as well as the statements, that the ground for this appeared to be the economical and political development of the last period (M. Inadze) and the formation and foundation of the Greek colonies supposedly coincided in time with the existence of the “powerful and vast union”, being on the way “to the statehood” (N. Lomouri).⁹⁸ Arising out of the development of the events and the scarce information of the researchers, we have to denote that, first of all nobody proved the fact of ceasing the existence of the Aia-Colchis kingdom; in case we suppose the probability of ceasing of the statehood in the 8-7th centuries B. C. and its restoration at the end of the 6th century B. C. it is necessary to have the answer to the following question: Who was the ruler of Colchis during the period of non-existence of the statehood? In the second place, quite a rich archeological material reveals a rather high level of economic, political and social development of West Georgia (including the territory of Abkhazia), which would be impossible without the state organization. In the third place, control over the new-comers, resistance and banning of formation of the self-governing Greek polises, would be impossible without the powerful State power; If on the North-East Black Sea coast the local state would not be waiting for the Greeks, they would necessarily form the independent polises (like it was the North and South-East Black Sea coast) and later, they would not allow formation of the local state, being able to limit their right. Finally, circulation of the Colchis silver coin from the last fourth of the 6th century (Colchidka)⁹⁹ also points to the fact, that before coming of the Greeks the strong state existed on that territory. Thus, we can speak about the shift of the Colchis kingdom onto the new level of development in the 6th B. C. century, that was conditioned by the economic and cultural ties with the antique world, through the Greek colonies, as well comparatively favorable foreign conditions (peaceful and even friendly relations with the Akhaemenid Persia)¹⁰⁰ and not about the formation of the latter.¹⁰¹

Ethno-political situation existing on the territory of modern Abkhazia in the early antique epoch is reflected in the written monuments. Especially important is the information

96 N. Lomouri. *The Greek Colonization*, p. 57.

97 O. Lordkipanidze. *Did the Colchis Kingdom Exist?—At the Sources of the Georgian Statehood*, p. 68, 72 (in Georgian).

98 N. Lomouri. *Greek Colonization ...*, p. 54; M. Inadze. *Greek Colonization...*, p. 126-127.

99 D. Kapanadze, K. Golenko. *For the Problem of Origin of the Colchidka*. –*Vestnik of Ancient History*, 1957, N4, p. 895;

O. Lordkipanidze. *At the Sources of the Oldest Georgian Civilisation*. Tb., 2002, p. 206 (in Georgian).

100 See in details: O. Lordkipanidze. *Antique World and Ancient Colchis*, Tb., 1966 (in Georgian); of the same author *Argonautics and Ancient Colchis*. Tb., 1969 (in Georgian).

101 Z. V. Anchabadze. *Essay of the History of the Abkhazian people*, p. 27 etc.

given by the Greek Logographs:¹⁰² Hecataeus from Miletus (6th century B. C), Scylak of Caryanda (6th century B. C.) - the information of which is given by the author of the 4th century B. C. – Pseudo Scylak of Coryanda), Hellanicos from Mithilenes (the second half of the 5th century B. C.), the Father of History” Herodotus (5th century B. C. and others).

The fragments of the work of Hecataeus from Miletus (“Description of the Earth”), being preserved in the dictionary “The Ethnica” by the author of the VIth century Stephanus of Byzantium¹⁰³, describe the ethnic picture of the Eastern Black Sea Coast, as follows:

“Koraks, the tribe of the Colchians near the Kols. Hecataeus in description of Asia. The fortress of Koraks and the country of Koraks.

The Kols-people near the Caucasus. Hecataeus in the description of Asia:”The foothills of the Caucasus are called the Kol Mountains”. The country is called Kolika.

The Moskhs - the tribe of the Colchians is neighboring to the Matiens. Hecataeus in description of Asia.¹⁰⁴

In Scylak’s essay “Description of the Sea, Bordering the Populated Europe, Asia and Livia” - eastern Black Sea Coast is described from the North of the River Tanais (Don) to the South. There are named the people living there, as well as the towns and rivers. He wrote:

70. Savromats. Asia starts from the River Tanais and the first people on the Pontus are the Savromats. The people of Savromats are ruled by the women.

71. Meotians. Next to those being ruled by the women, live Meotians.

72. Next to the Meotians are the people of the Sinds. Their regions spread beyond the lake and it contains the following Hellenic towns: The town of Phanagora, Kepi, the harbor of Sind and Patus.

73. The Kerkets. The Kerkets live next to the harbor of Sind.

74. The Torets. Next to the Kerkets is living the people of Torets and there is a Hellenic town Torik with the harbor.

75. Achaeans. Next to the Achaeans are the Heniocs.

76. Heniokhs. Next to the Heniocs are the Koraks.

77. The Koraks. Next to the Heniocs are the Koraks.

78. Kolika. Next to the Koraks are the Kolika.

79. Melankhlenos (Black Robes). Next to the Kolika are the people of Melankhlenos and the river Metasoros and Egibius.

80. The Gelons. Next to the Melankhlens are the Gelons.

81. Colchians. Next to them are the people of Colchis and the town of Dioskuria and Gien-the town of the Hellenic and river Gien, Kherobius the river, Khors-the river, Kharius-the river, Phases-the river and Phasis the Hellenic town and 180 stadia up the river to the big barbarian town from where Medea came, here is the river Ris and the river Isis, the robbers’ river and the river Apsar.”¹⁰⁵

In the “Foundation of the Towns” by Hellanicos from Mithilenes and also in the works by Palephat of Abydos (IVth century B. C.) is the information about the peoples living to

102 Historian writing in prose, - See N. Lomouri. Information of the Greek Logographs about the Georgian Tribes.

103 Georgika, v. III. Tb., 1936, p. 272-289.

104 N. Lomouri. Information given by the Greek Logographs..., p. 29; V. Latishev. Information of the Ancient Writers... -Vestnik of the Ancient History, 1947, N1, p. 300-301.

105 T. Kauhchishvili. Information by the Greek Authors...I, p. 46-49; V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Authors...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1947, N3, p. 240-243.

the South from the Sinds and Meotian Scythes. Palephat of Abydos in the VIIth book “On the Trojan War” says: **“The Moskhs border the Kerkets and the Kharimatians possess Parphenius to the Pontus Euxinos”**. Hellanicos from Mithilenes in the work ”Foundation of the Towns” writes: **“Up the Kerkets live the Moskhs and Kharimatians, lower them - the Heniokhs and the Koraks.** ¹⁰⁶

“History” by Herodotus contains rather important information:

I 104. From the Lake Meotida to the river Phases and the country of Colchians is 30 days of walk for those pedestrians traveling light.

II. 104. The Colchis is probably the Egyptians: I understood this before I heard this from others. Having an interest in them, I started to ask about these kindred in Colchis, as well as in Egypt. The Colchis remembers the Egyptians better, that the Egyptians remember them. Though the Egyptians said, that the Colchis come from the warriors of the Sesostris army. I came to this conclusion, as the Colchis is dark-skinned, curly haired...I have further valid proofs, as only the three peoples on the earth have circumcisions: The Colchians, Egyptians and Ethiopians...

II . 105. I will mention one more feature of resemblance between the Colchians and Egyptians. They weave the linen using one and the same method. The everyday life and the language of the Colchians and Egyptians are alike, though the Hellines call the linen being woven in Colchis – Sardonian and that brought from Egypt – Egyptian.

III. 97. Even the Colchians and their neighbors till the Caucasian range ... voluntarily tax themselves with the gifts. These peoples even nowadays send to the King (king of Persia – author) a hundred boys and a hundred girls.

IV. 37. The Persian live in Asia till the South Sea being called the Red. To the North from them dwell the Midians, up the Midians live the Saspirs, then the Colchians bordering with the North Sea into which flows the river Phases. These for peoples occupy the regions from Sea to Sea.

IV. 106. Among of all the tribes the most wild features have the Androphags. They have no courts and have no laws and are the monads. They clad themselves in clothes resembling those of the Scythians, though their language is different. This is the only tribe of the man-eaters in this country.

IV. 107. All the Melankhlens wear the black clothes and their names comes from this tradition. They have the Scythian mode of life.

VII. 78. the Moskhs had the wooden helmets on their heads. They had also the small shields and spears with the long spear heads.

VII. 79. The Marians wear the aborigine wattle helmets...the Colchians had the wooden helmets on their heads; they had small shields made of raw leather, short spears and also daggers. The Marians and Colchians were led by Farandat the son of Thespis. Alarodius and the Saspirs took the field armed like the Colchians. Their leader was Mosistius the son of Siromitra. ¹⁰⁷

106 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1947, N1, p. 316; in the same work, N3, p. 250; A. Urushadze. Ancient Colchis in the Tale of the Argonauts, p. 278; see N. Lomouri. Information by the Greek Logographs..., p. 32.

107 T. Kaukhchishvili. Information by Herodotus..., p. 65, 71-73, 76, 82, 88, 113; Herodotus. History..., p. 45, 110-111, 169, 196, 213, 335.

Before revealing the given data and stating of the ethnical belonging of different tribes it is more expedient to clarify the term “tribe”, to understand what the ancient writers meant under it and whether it is always correctly used in the historiography or not.

In the ancient Georgian literature and also in “The Life of Georgia” the term “tribe” (“tomi”) is used in the three meanings: as a mankind in the whole,¹⁰⁸ a concrete ethnos (people),¹⁰⁹ a part of the people or its branch – union according to the kindred or administrative- territorial (community) principle etc.¹¹⁰ In different Georgia translations of the Bible “tribe” is mainly used in meaning of people (nation) and its branches.¹¹¹ Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani explains this term as follows: “kin, coming from a kin, let us say from the Israel kin and then afterwards let us say –from which tribe? We will answer: from the tribe of Ruben or Levi or other: as one kin is divided into the tribes, the tribe into the families, the families and seeds into the people. The tribe is also the crowd of people being divided into the groups.”¹¹² Thus, the tribe is a particular group of people being composed of several families from the community of the relatives, families etc. As we see according to S. S. Orbeliani, “the tribe” is not an ethnical category. In the old Georgian language this term (tomebi) means kinship and is the same as according to the posterity.¹¹³

Further the notion “tomi” (tribe) acquires mainly the meaning of the ethnos; by this term is denoted the ethnical integrity in its primary form. The western sociological and historical science reviews the origin of nations, as the continuation and development of the clan-tribal unions.¹¹⁴ The Soviet sociology and historiography under the term tribe meant the ethnical integrity, as well as the type of the social organization of the pre class society, the primary form of ethnoses. The following form is considered people and then the nation.

Georgian-Abkhazian historiography often treated the problems (and even today does it) according to the Soviet measures (three stage ethnogeneses),¹¹⁵ being connected with the identifying of the ethnical belonging of the population, being fixed by the old authors in the East Black Sea Coast. They considered them consisting from the separate ethnoses. For instance, Z. Anchabadze considering the situation having place in the Colchis Kingdom, noted that the tribes there were actually the territorial-ethnical groups, which in conditions of the administrative division of the State were not organically merged with one another. He thought that the term “tribes” in every separate case should be used under a certain meaning. In one case, they were the ethnical units of the primitive-communal society, in another-the unions being on different levels of the early class development, small ethnos. – Wrote Z. Anchabadze. It is absolutely groundless, but arising out of the process aims, the scientist announced, that the Colchis kingdom, covering the most part

108 Shota Rustaveli. *Knight in the Panther's Skin*. -Georgian Writers, v. 4. Tbilisi, 1988, p. 207; *Life of Georgia*. IV. Tbilisi, 1973, p. 14.

109 Giorgi Merchule. *Life of Grigol Khandzteli*. . . -Georgian Writers, v. 1, Tbilisi, 1987, p. 536 9in Georgian). Shota Rustaveli. *Knight in the Panther's Skin*. -Georgian Writers v. II. Tbilisi, 1959, p. 8.

110 Jacob Tsuraveli. *Martyr of Shushanik*. -Georgian Writers, v. I, p. 230; Giorgi Merchule. *Life of Grigol Khandzteli*. -Georgian Writers I, p. 611. *Life of Georgia II*, p. 26, 312; v. IV p. 14, 459 etc.

111 D. Melikishvili. *from the History of the Ancient Georgian Philosophical-Theological Terminology*. Tbilisi, 1999, p. 208-229 (in Georgian).

112 S. S. Orbeliani. *Georgian Dictionary*, II. Tbilisi, 1993, p. 142.

113 Z. Sarjveladze. *Dictionary of the Old Georgian Language*. Tbilisi, 1995, p. 197 (in Georgian).

114 R. Topchishvili. *Ethnical History of the Georgian and Historical-Ethnographic Provinces of Georgia*. Tbilisi, 2002, p. 6 (in Georgian).

115 See: I. V. Stalin. *Marxism and the National Problem*. Works, v. II, p. 290-303.

of the modern territory of Georgia is ethnically heterogeneous State, in which besides the Colchians supposedly lived a lot of people of different in ethnical individuality. ; The North-West part of that State – modern Abkhazia, was also distinguished in Z. Anchabadze's opinion with its diversity. ¹¹⁶

Let us take one more example. M. Inadze regrets, that the Greek-Roman authors name different tribes of the East Black Sea Coast without denoting of their ethnical belonging and this complicates the researches of the ethno-political processes having place on the territory of Abkhazia in ancient times and creates the preconditions for contradiction in opinions on the matter. In the given case, the fact, that the tribes on the East Black Sea Coast, at least within historical Georgia were not the separate ethnic groups is not considered. Here we have to be more precise and note, that the complex process of formation of the nation out of the tribal units, started not in the pre antique epoch, ¹¹⁷ but on the contrary, by that time this process had been finished.

As it was mentioned above, If the Georgian nation was not a rather firm union already in the pre antique period and namely in the second half of the II millennium B. C. and did not have the common national self-consciousness, the common language, culture, statehood, in the future its split into the different ethnoses would be inevitable, ¹¹⁸ as the conditions for the consolidation of the relative Georgian tribes and formation of the integral ethnos on the whole territory of historical Georgia till the early feudal epoch (8-10th centuries), had the episodal character (3rd century B. C. 5th century B. C.). Under the influence of the outer factors the antique epoch factually, was the period, when the disintegration factors were dominant, when the integral Georgian nation was divided into the different branches. T. Phutkaradze proves, that divergence of the Georgian language had place precisely in that epoch at the verge of the chronology. ¹¹⁹ Arising out of it, it is high time to say nay to the Soviet theory about the formation of the Georgian nation, as a result of the three supposedly different tribes (Karts, Megrelians, Svans); on the contrary all the three branches were formed by themselves, through the process of disintegration of the integral ethnos. For all that, the process of separation did not go too far and did not result in the disappearance of the common Georgian consciousness and the common cultural language. Namely, this condition enabled in the future, the separate Georgian kings in the favorable conditions temporarily and sometimes for a rather long time to unite the state fully or partially.

The hostile outer forces tried to separate the people as a whole and its separate branches into the different “ethnoses”. An especially, complex situation in this respect was formed in an attractive for the conquerors Black Sea Coast, where according to the Greek-Roman sources are fixed variety of “people”. Their ethnical belonging from the very start was interesting for the writers and chroniclers. Already Strabo (1st century) criticized Hellanicos, Herodotus and Eudoksos for distortion of the names of the tribes of the North-West

¹¹⁶ Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on the ethnical History of the Abkhazian People*, p. 27-28.

¹¹⁷ M. Inadze. *The Problems of the Ethno Political History of Ancient Abkhazia*. -Macne, Series of History.... , 1992, N1, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ As a comparison we can take an example of the Jewish people. If before the defeat in 722 B. C. of the Israelians and in 586 B. C. of the Judean Kingdoms and settling of the Jews in different countries, they had not manage to form into a stable and firm integral nation they in the future would not be able to preserve the integrity and wholeness and restore and revive their State in 1948.

¹¹⁹ T. Phutkaradze. *Georgia*, p. 50-51. *On the period of Existence of the Common Georgian Language*. See. p. 280-297.

Black Sea Coast.¹²⁰ The Russian historian of the 19th century P. Burachkov, wrote that new Geographical names and ethnonymes being fixed to the South of Russia represent one and the same names, being translated into different languages. Sometimes alteration of toponymes and ethnonymes are the result of change of the place of dwelling of the rulers.

He supported his opinion by the fragment from one Russian chronicle, in which is said, that the ancient tribes “are called after the names of the places they had settled.”¹²¹ Cabardinian historian G. Kokiev alleged, that the ancient authors called different parts of one and the same tribe differently depending on the place of dwelling, change of place of settlement and geographical peculiarities of the places being occupied.¹²²

Giving of the tribal names occurred according to other features as well – by the kind of activity, profession, appearance, this or that functions of the “tribe” etc. The same “Koraks” from the Old Greek are translated as “crows”, “heniokhs” – as the “coaches, horsemen, holders of the bridle”; “savromats” as “lizard headed”; “Melakhlens”- as “being clad in black”, “Black robed”. “Kerkets” – as the “helmsman”. “kharimats” –as the “fair eyed”; “telons” as “tax gatherers”; “Pterophags”- as “cone eaters”, “ louse eaters” “macrocephalus” – as “long headed” etc.¹²³ In connection with this A. Diachkov-Tarasov wrote, that one of the geographers (Eustaphius. Comments. Dionisus Periegetu, 12th century A. D. 700) called Heniokhs the tribes of “khamarites”, as they used the pirate vessels, which the Hellines called the kamares.¹²⁴ “In General-he writes- the Hellines were blunt in selecting the names to the local tribes: F. E. they noticed the untidiness – then they called the tribe the Pterophagus “ louse eaters”, they saw the long beards they called the tribe - the Macropagonus (long bearded); one of the neighboring with the iniokhs or it is probable that it was one of the tribes of the iniokhs themselves was called the “cephalotoms” - (cutthroat, bashibuzuk). “Iniokhs” is the Greek name being invented in association with the name “Dioskuriades” .¹²⁵ Sometimes the Greek-Roman comprehension of the local name of the tribe and its corresponding change had placed.

Everything points to the fact, that the etymology of the tribal names in most cases does not indicate the ethnical peculiarities. Certain misunderstanding was given to the condition, that the Greek - Roman authors could not clearly define the term “tribe”. Sometimes it means people, ethnos,¹²⁶ or as it has already been mentioned the groups (communities) being separated from them according to different features and signs or the administrative- territorial units. In the old Greek language the term “ethnos” had a lot of

120 Strabo says in his work, that those distorted tribal names were “chattered to us by Hellanicos, Herodotus and Eudoksos”. -Strabo. Geography in 17 books. Translation. An Article and Comments by G. A. Stratanovski. Under the edition of S. A. Utchenko. M., 1964, p. 516.

121 P. Burachkov. On the Location of the Ancient Town Karkinites and its coins. -Notes of the Imperial Odessian Society of History of Oldtimes, v. IX. Odessa, 1875, p. 118.

122 G. A. Kokiev. Some Pieces of Information from the Ancient History of the Adigeans (Kabardinians). Nalchik, 1996, p. 7.

123 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 28-30; B. Gogia. On the Ethnonimes of Some Tribes of Ancient Colchis. Paris. 2003, p. 51-54.

124 V. V. Latishev. Information of the Ancient Writers, the Greeks and Romans about Scythia and Caucasus. 1, edition 1. S-Pb, 1893, p. 205.

125 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. Gagri and its Neighborhood. Tb., 1903, p. 35-36. For comparison we have to remember, that the Turks called the Imeretians “Bashiachuks” (without a headwear), “Kizilbash” means the red head etc.

126 See F. E. “terminology of Strabo.” – T. Kaukhchishvili. Geography of Strabo. Information about Georgia. Tb., 1957, p. 26-30.

meanings: so were called not only “tribes” or “people”, but it also had a common differentiate meaning and denoted a state, “barbarian” not Hellenistic society¹²⁷ etc. In the famous work written by Stefanos of Byzantine - “From the Description of the Tribes” with the term *ethnos*, besides the ethnical units, were denoted states, towns, islands, mountains, some places, settlements etc. F. E. Gogarena is a place between the country of the Colchians and Eastern Iberians, the name of the people - Gogaren”; “Tienida is the town of the Colchians derived from the river Tienida. The name of the population is Tienitos”¹²⁸ (Town Gienos is meant).

G. Melikishvili paid attention to the problem of the tribal names. He justly noted, that existing of a number of tribal names does not mean the existence of the tribes of different ethnic origin. “Some names are the Greek common nouns (descriptive) names (F. E. “Macrocephalos” “longheaded”) and cannot be reviewed, as the names of the definite tribes, which in other cases may be denoted by the other names. In many cases we deal with the distortion or modification of the tribal names... One and the same ethnical group in the sources, may be mentioned under the different names, as a result of the adoption and borrowing from the different language sources or through different neighbors Thus, we cannot regard the names of the Black Sea coast tribes having been mentioned in the antique sources, as the real names of different tribes and speak about certain shifts and displacements or even the destruction of those ethnic groups etc.”¹²⁹ This absolutely righteous conclusion is very rarely considered by the researchers. Unfortunately, historiography cannot get rid of the tendency to regard any “tribe”, as an ethnical formation. Consequently, the meaningless and groundless, disputes having no prospects from the truth determining point of view (especially between the Georgian and Abkhazian historians) are under way, as well as the suppositions about their ethnical origin and belonging. Incorrect understanding of the term “tribe” leads to false conclusions in historiography, namely about the “multytribbness” of Colchis, “invasions” of the North Caucasian highlanders, permanent “migration” of people and among them in the Inguri-Psou sector. The like erroneous approach to the given problem gives the separatists the chance of falsification and “appropriation” history of the Georgian State - Colchis.

While using the term “tribe” we have to think about all these moments and not about the social-political formations, as it was strictly demanded by the Soviet ideology. By the antique period and beginning of the medieval centuries, application of the term “tribe” in the sense of the separate branches of the integral nation is possible only in case with the Colchians (Lazo-Megrelians and Svans). We now speak about the right definition of the term “tribe” of the antique sources. Here we have to mention, that the terms “tribe” and “branch” (off shoot) is quite often used in the parallel meaning in the works by I. Javakhishvili, S. Janashia, P. Ingorokva etc.¹³⁰ To the unimportant administrative or political units being singled out from the west Georgian tribes and being presented in the sources separately is more adequate the term “community”. This term was sometimes

127 O. Lordkipanidze. Did the State of Colchis exists? P. 41-43 (In Georgian).

128 *Georgika*, v. 3, p. 277, 286; V. V. Latishev. *Information of the Ancient Writers...*, v. 1, p. 258, 267.

129 G. Melikishvili. *for the History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 83.

130 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*, book. I-II. Tb., 1913, p. 59 (in Georgian); S. Janashia. *works*, II. Tb., 1952, p. 21 (in Georgian); P. Ingorokva . *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 143-145 (in Georgian)

used by I. Javakhishvili.¹³¹ In the theses to the work “From the History of Genesis of the Georgian Statehood” S. Janashia wrote about the Colchis kingdom: “ It unites multytribal or multy community population”; “ Integrity of the multytribal (or multy community) of the Colchian world”; “ Characteristic for the Colchian kingdom multytribness (multy community)”¹³² ... etc. Expediency of application of the term “community” for denoting of the population of different corners of modern Georgia is founded by T. Phutkaradze. In his opinion “tribe” is applicable only for denoting of the pre ethnos and in other cases the term “community”¹³³ is more appropriate. For R. Topchishvili application of the term “community” is possible in the given meaning, though he offers other variants (“ethnographic group”, “ethnographic-dialectal unit etc).¹³⁴

The reviewed opinions are in the main acceptable, but in respect of the antique period requires a certain correction. F. I. in case of application of the term “community” to the Colchians, then it would not be quite correct to say the same about its branches. Thus, for the population being fixed in the antique sources more appropriate are the terms “tribe” (for Lazo-Megrelians and Svans) and “Community” (for unimportant units).

The above given information of the authors of the early antique period place the Colchians and Colchian communities on the Black Sea coast of Georgia. On the modern territory of Abkhazia and in the neighboring to it regions, besides the Colchians in belonging of which to the Georgians nobody doubts, are fixed the Koraks, Kols, Heniokhs, Moskhs and Kerkets. In the Georgian historiography the ethnic belonging of the Koraks and Kols having been fixed by Hecateus of Miletus is determined. About the belonging of the Koraks to the Colchian tribe, speaks the source itself. Together with the Kols they are attributed to the Colchians by I. Javakhishvili,¹³⁵ P. Ingorokva,¹³⁶ N. Lomouri,¹³⁷ M. Inadze¹³⁸ and many others. Z. Anchabadze tried, but did not manage to identify the Koraks with the Sanigs and Apsils, thus drawing a conclusion, that we do not have enough ground for identifying the Koraks and Kols with the ethnical Colchians.¹³⁹ It is worth mentioning, that even D. Gulia thinks, that the Koraks were the Georgians and namely the Svans.¹⁴⁰

The “Koraks wall” being mentioned by Hecateus of Miletus, by different authors is located near the river Kodori (Frederik Dubua de Monpere),¹⁴¹ or Kelasuri (K. Kudriavstev, P. Ingorokva).¹⁴² But for the researchers from the beginning of the XIXth century

131 I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into the History of the Georgian People, book I. Historical-Ethnological Problems of Georgia..., p. 12.

132 S. Janashia. Works, II. Tb., 1952, p. 19, 20.

133 T. Phutkaradze. The Georgians, p. 37-41.

134 R. Topchishvili. Ethnic History of Georgia, p. 26, 28, 78, 83, 90 etc. ; Ethno-historic Sketches, b, I. Tb., 2005, p. 53 (in Georgian).

135 I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into the History of the Georgian people. Book. I. Historical Ethnical Problems of Georgia, p. 12.

136 P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule..., p. 132, 141.

137 N. Lomouri. Information of Greek Logographs, p. 8, 10.

138 M. Inadze. Problems of the Ethno-Political History of Ancient Abkhazia. –Macne, 1992, N1, p. 9-10.

139 Z. V. Anchabadze. Essay on the Ethnic History of the Abkhazian People, p. 30-31.

140 D. I. Gulia. Sukhumi is nor Dioskuria. –Works of the Institute of Abkhazia, edition II. Sukhumi, 1934, -. 87; G. Gasviani. Abkhazia. Ancient and Modern Abkhazians. Tb., 2000, p. 16.

141 Frederic Dubua de Monpere. Travel around the Caucasus, V. I. Sukhumi, 1937, p. 148. Here we have to note, that the catholic missionaries Chr. Kastelli, Arc. Lamberti and Jack Sharden identify the river Kodori with the Karaks. See. J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia Historical Region of Georgia, p. 251, 252; Lamberti Arc. Description of the Colchis. Odessa, 1876, p. 6; Travel of Sharden through the Trans Caucasus in 1672-1673, p. 21.

142 K. Kudriavstev. Collection of the Materials on the History of Abkhazia, p. 28-29; P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule, p.

it was known, that the narrow path between the mountains and sea near Pitsunda was already blocked by the wall made by the Greeks in the old epoch.¹⁴³ This is the “Koraks Wall”. Majority of the authors (B. Kuftin, N. Lomouri, D. Kacharava, G. Kvirkvelia, B. Gogia etc.) locate it at the Bzip gorge, where the ruins of the wall of the oldest masonry are discovered.¹⁴⁴ Consequently in the environs of the river Bzip and town Gagra - the “Land of the Koraks”, “Wall of the Kolic” and “Kolic Mountains” can be located. In P. Ingorokva’s opinion, the Colchis (Kolic) mountains was called the Kluchori zone of the Caucasian range. Its name was “Kolchori”, from which the later, altered form “Kluchori” was derived.¹⁴⁵

A special attention of the scinetists are paid by the Heniokhs, who from the VI-Vth centuries B. C. (Skilakes of Kariand, Hekateus of Miletus) to the 1st century A. D. are mentioned in the works of many writers within the North-West Colchis.¹⁴⁶ Plinius the Elder (the 1st century) informs, us that the charioteer Sanns or Heniokhs live to the North of Trapezund (VI, 12). The same author calls the Heniokhs the different names and locates them in the North-West Black Sea coast (IV, 14).¹⁴⁷ Phlavius Arian (2nd century) places the Heniokhs on the South- East Black Sea Coast (11).¹⁴⁸ According to the Anonym of the Vth century, the Heniokhs are fixed in the North-East as well as in the South -East Black Sea Coast (1, 8, 9, 18).¹⁴⁹ Aristotle (the 5th century B. C.) and Alexandrian author of the IInd century A. D. - Heraklides consider the Heniokhs the residents of Phases, who were later replaced by the Colonists from Mileth.¹⁵⁰

One of the first scientists dedicating a special work to the Heniokhs was I. Orbeli. In the letter “Town of the twins Dioskuria – and tribe of the Charioteers - Iniochs”, the author expressed an opinion, that Sukhumi from the remote times was the property of the Georgians (or the conjeneric people) and as for the coachman-Heniokhs being associated with the foundation of the town (Dioskuria); they are the same Sanigs or Svans.¹⁵¹ In relation with this topic N. Marr agreed with the conclusion of I. Orbeli, that “Heniokh” is the distorted form of the originally right form –“henioq”/”Sanig”; considering the suffix

141.

143 The Current Geographical and Historical Information on the Caucasus, being collected and added by S. Bronevski, part 1. M., 1823, p. 293.

144 B. A. Kuftin. Materials on Archeology of Colchis. V. I. Tb., 1949, p. 124; N. Lomouri. Information of the Greek Logographs...p. 9; D. Kacharava. Towns And Settlements of the Black Sea Coast in the Antique Epoch. Tb., 1991, p. 149; B. Gogia. On the Ethnonymes of Some Tribes of Ancient Colchis, p. 49-50.

145 P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule, p. 143.

146 See. J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 168 (Strabo), 170 (Pomponius Mela), 171 (Plinius), 175 (Dionysius Periegetus), 177 (Ammian Marcelinus), 182 (Anonym the Vth century), 189 (Stephanos of Byzantine). N. Lomouri. Claudius Ptolemy. “Geographical Guide”, Information about Georgia. – Materials from History of Georgia and the Caucasus, issue, 32. Tb., 1955, p. 44. The author of the IST century. Valerius Phlavius mentions the “Formidable Heniokhs” in connection with Medea. According to his information Medea had a nun-The Heniokh woman (T. Kauhchishvili. For the Problem of the Caucasian Tribes According to the Antique Sources. 2 Heniokhs-Macne, Series of History..., 1980, N4, p. 68).

147 L. Arbolishvili. “The Natural History” of Plinius the Elder, as the source of history of Georgia, Tb., 2006, p. 146.

148 Phlavius Arian. Travel around the Black Sea. Translation, researches, comments and map of N. Kechakmadze. Tb., 1961, p. 42 (in Georgian).

149 Georgika, v. 2. Tb., 1965, p. 3, 7, 11.

150 T. Sh. Mibchuan. From the History of Ethno genesis, settling and culture of the west Georgian Highlanders. Tb., 1989, p. 51 (in Georgian); B. Gogia. On the Ethnonymes of Some Tribes of Ancient Colchis, p. 83-93.

151 The Journal of the Ministry of the Public Education. New sequence, part XXIII, 1911, May, S-Pb. 1911, p. 202-215. Kisling considered Heniokhs or Henioques to the Georgian tribe and identified them with the Lazs and this latter with the Kerkets (T. Kauhchishvili. For the Problem...2. Heniokhs. -Macne, sequence of History..., 1980, N4, p. 72).

“q” he supposed, that this word belongs to that branch of the Yafetid languages, the representative of which is the Abkhazian language. But N. Marr did not agree with I. Orbeli, that the old Georgian word “hune” (horse) has nothing in common with the “henioqs” -// Heniokhs, who according to the Greek-Roman sources were famous with their robberies, banditism and piracy; The Armenian “heun” - concludes N. Marr – also denotes a pirate, robber (avazak in Armenian); This latter in form of “Avazaki” was adopted by the Georgian language and from it supposedly originated the Avazg//Abazg//Abkhaz.¹⁵² Thus, through the artificial linguistical combinations N. Marr in the end connected the Heniokhs with the Abkhazians.

II chapter of the “History of Abkhazia” was dedicated by D. Gulia to the study of the Heniokhs identifying them with the Colchians and declaring both of them the ancestors of the Abkhazians.¹⁵³ Z. Anchabadze considered Heniokhs//Sanigs to be Jiko-Sadzians.¹⁵⁴

This version being expressed in 1903 for the first time by G. A. Diachkov-Tarasov¹⁵⁵ was¹⁵⁶ and is¹⁵⁷ spread by the separatist historiography.

I. Javakhishvili associated the Heniokhs with Enoch/Enokh from the Book of Genesis¹⁵⁸ and considered Chano-Megrelians.¹⁵⁹ The same opinion was expressed by S. Janashia.¹⁶⁰ In Ingorokva’s opinion Heniokhs, the same Sanichs or Sans belong to the Megrelian-Lazian branch of the Georgian. The views of the author were grounded also on existence, on the territory of the Heniokhs of the Georgian toponymics.¹⁶¹

The question about the ethnic belonging of the Heniokhs was studied by G. Melikishvili. He shared the position of P. Ushakov, having identified them with the Urartian Iganehs.¹⁶² G. Melikishvili studied this problem very profoundly and in details and came to the conclusion, that the Heniokhs are the ancestors of the Western branch of the Georgians - Chans, especially the Sans.¹⁶³ In his special researches A. Urushadze¹⁶⁴ and B. Gigineishvili¹⁶⁵ considered the Heniokhs the ancestors of the Georgians. B. Gigineishvili denied the relation with Enoch-Enokh (I. Javakhishvili) and also with the Iganiechs. (P. Ushakov).

Among the works being dedicated to the Heniokhs, the best so far is the research of T. Kauhchishvili.¹⁶⁶ Practically, the whole ancient information is revealed and thoroughly analyzed in the book and the opinions of the Georgian and Foreign specialists are maintained. (Kisling and others); It is shown, that “according to the majority of the sources

152 N. Marr. *From the Linguistical Trip to Abkhazia*, p. 325-330.

153 D. Gulia. *History of Abkhazia*, v. I, p. 35-52.

154 Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on the Ethnic History of the Abkhazian People*, p. 62-68.

155 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Gagri and its Environs*, p. 43.

156 Yu. Voronov. *Material Culture of the Heniokh Tribes in the VI-I centuries B. C.* – Collection of Works of the Young Scientist-Historians of Abkhazia. Sukhumi. 1974; of the same author: *Dioskuria-Sebastopolis-Tskhum. M.*, 1980 etc.

157 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 62-68.

158 *The Book of Genesis*, IV. 17, 18; V. 18, 19, 21-24.

159 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*.

160 S. Janashia. *Works*, III. Tb., 1959, p. 8.

161 P. Ingorokva. *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 129, 134-136.

162 P. Ushakov. *For the Campaigns of the Urartians to the Trans Caucasus*. -*Vestnik of Ancient History*, 1946. N2, p. 38.

163 G. A. Melikishvili. *On the History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 86-93, 223, 373-374; of the same author. *For the Problem of the Oldest Population of Georgia...*, p. 67 (in Georgian).

164 A. Urushadze. *On the Heniokhs*. –*Works of the Tbilisi State University*, v. 96. Tb., 1963, p. 243-248.

165 B. Gigineishvili. *for the Origin of the Ethnonime Heniokh*. -*Macne. Sequence of History...*, 1975, N1, p. 115-124.

166 T. Kauhchishvili. *On the Tribes of the Caucasus according to the Antique Sources*. –*Macne. Sequence of History...*, 1980, N, p. 57-77.

from the V-IVth century B. C. till the Ist century the Heniokhs lived from modern Sochi till Pitunt - Dioskuria and by the origin those people belong to the “ obviously one of the oldest Georgian tribes”; In the author’s opinion, the shift of the Heniokhs to the South began only from the Ist century, which was caused by the onset of the Jiks or other causes. ¹⁶⁷

A large paragraph is dedicated to the Heniokhs in the book of T. Mibchvani. The author considers them in the Georgian world. ¹⁶⁸

After the serious historiographic analyses G. Gasviani comes to the same conclusion. ¹⁶⁹ M. Inadze develops the topic of the Heniokhs in several works, giving certain arguments in favour of their belonging to this or that branch of the Georgians. ¹⁷⁰ In N. Berulava’s opinion, as the sources mention the Heniokhs, as the people having “different names” (Plinius the Elder) and note there the existence of four independent autonomous “kingdoms” , then logically, the structure of their union must have included the separate communities of the Svans, Megrelians, Karts (in person of the Moskhs) and the ancestors of the Abkhazians. ¹⁷¹

B. Gogia spotlights the problems of belonging and area of spreading of the Heniokhs. “We have to conclude- his writes- that the main tribe of the Heniokhs dwells in Dioskuria and in the neighboring to its territory; as for the other Heniokh tribes (colonies) they migrated and settled in different places: near the Cimmerian Bosphorus, Tuapse, Rize and Phasis. ”¹⁷² His conclusions are based on the works of the Georgian and foreign authors and the data of the original sources.

Concerning the Heniokhs a special opinion is expressed by N. Lomouri. If in his early works he assumes belonging of the Heniokhs to the Megrelian-Chanian branch, ¹⁷³ lately his position has changed. Without the appropriate argumentation N. Lomouri denied the fact of settling the Heniokhs on the territory of Colchis and consequently –Abkhazia, their belonging to the tribes of the Megrelian-Chanian and Svanian origin and connection with the Sanigs. ¹⁷⁴ The scientist thinks, that only from this position is possible to ground the presence of the Georgians on the territory of Abkhazia and decisively repulse the historian – separatists considering the Heniokhs (and also the Sanigs) to be the Apsua-Abkhazians and regard the whole Colchis as the area of their settling. Erroneous views of N. Lomouri in respect of the Heniokhs were scrutinized and refuted in the Georgian historiography. ¹⁷⁵

N. Kvezereli –Kopadze expressed an interesting idea. He thought, that the Heniokhs were not a separate ethnic group, but professional handlers, (or guides)¹⁷⁶ helping the

167 *Ibid*, 69. 75, 76.

168 T. Mibchvani. *from the History of Ethno genesis, settling and Culture of the Georgian Highlanders of West Georgia. Tb., 1989, p. 48-83* (in Georgian); of the same author: *History of the Autonomous Republic of Georgia. Tb., 2003, p. 36-44* (in Georgian).

169 G. Gasviani. *Abkhazia, p. 21-25* (In Georgian).

170 M. Inadze. *Problems of the Ethno-Political History of Ancient Abkhazia. -Macne, sequence of History...., 1992, N1, p. 10-24.*

171 N. Berulava. *Dioskuria-Sebastopolis...., p. 129.*

172 B. Gogia. *On the Ethnonimes of Some Tribes of the Ancient Colchians, p. 93.*

173 N. Lomouri. *Information of the Greek Logographs...., p. 24; Of the same author: Claudious Ptolemy, p. 54.*

174 N. Lomouri. *From the Ethno-Cultural History of Ancient Abkhazia. Tb., 1998, p. 20* (in Georgian).

175 B. Gogia. *On the Ethnonimes of Certain Tribes of Ancient Colchis, p. 36-39, 54-60, 77-93; J. Gamakharia. For the problem of the Ethnic Belonging of the Apsil-Abazgs. Tb., 1989, p. 34-36* (in Georgian); *Essays on the History of Georgia. Abkhazia from the Ancient Times till Our Days. Tb., 2007, p. 47-49 etc.* (in Georgian).

176 In D. Gulia’s opinion without the defense of the pirate –Heniokhs it would be impossible to travel along the East Black Sea Coast. That was the reason why the Greeks called them the charioteers. (D. Gulia, *History of Abkhazia, v. I, p. 45-46*).

traders in their travel from one place to another.¹⁷⁷ Though, this version was not recognized by the science,¹⁷⁸ but only with the help of this version (and not through the large number of “migrations”) is possible to explain simultaneous mentioning of the Heniokhs in several regions of East Black Sea coast and in the South-East as well.¹⁷⁹ In favor of this version speaks the etymology of the Heniokhs, their “Multy tribness” (numerous of settlements) and also sudden and unexpected disappearance of from the historical arena after coming of the Romans to that region, strengthening of the local political formations and accepting by them the function of guarantors of the safe trade. “There are all the bases to attribute to the Heniokhs having “different names” not only the Sans (Plinius), but the Kerkets as well. The widespread opinion about their Cherkessian origin was founded only on the non-existent or rather approximate resemblance of the terms. T. Kaukhchishvili emphasizes the condition, that the legendary ancestors of the Heniokhs – charioteers of the Dioskures are mentioned in the sources under the different names. One of them is called Amphistratos (Strabo, Trogus Justin) or Amphitus (Plinius, Ammianus Marcellinus); the name of another is known in four variants-Rekas or Krekas (Strabo), Telkhuis (Plinius), Phrigius (Trogus Justin) and Kerkius (Ammianus Marcellinus). “Krekas” and “Kerkius” are probably different forms of one and the same name and perhaps under it is hidden the eponym “Kerket”.¹⁸⁰ - Thinks T. Kaukhchishvili. In connection with this G. Melikishvili righteously noted, that the word “Cherkess” is not a name being emerged on the local ground (and in fact the name “Cherkess” in the Turkish language means “a highway robber”), when the word “Kerket” can be connected with “egr”, which is mentioned by Plinius (VI, 14) in the form of “Kegritika” and in Ptolemy’s works (9, 4), as “Ekrectika”. The mentioned opinion is confirmed – in G. Melikishvili’s words – through existing of the town of Old Lazika,¹⁸¹ on the territory of the Kerkets.

The similar opinions have all the right of existence. Besides, the semantics of the Heniokhs enable us to associate this term with the Heniokhs. As we have already mentioned the word kerket in Greek means the “helmsman”, “a man at the wheel” (comp. Heniokh – charioteer, horseman, holding the bridle). It’s Georgian interpretation is extremely interesting: “Kerkets” are people guardians, being on the night vigil, in order not to allow the villains to pass.”¹⁸² Thus, in the Greek and Georgian semantics of the term “kerkets” is reflected a rather strong connection with the Heniokhs¹⁸³ and of both with the Georgian world. There is also the following interpretation: Kerket is a tall, slender person, which also supports the made conclusion.¹⁸⁴ Kerkets are mentioned to be on the South-East Black Sea coast by the authors of the 1st century A. D. – Strabo (XII. 3, 18),¹⁸⁵ Kvintus

177 N. Kvezereli-Kopadze. *Road Constructions of Ancient Abkhazia*. Sukhumi, 1955, p. 30-55.

178 T. Kaukhchishvili. *for the Problem of the Caucasian Tribes...-Macne*, 1980, N4, p. 71 (in Georgian); M. Inadze. *Problems of the Ethno-political History of Ancient Abkhazia*. -Macne, 1992, N1, p. 13-14.

179 The Heniokhs being fixed in the 1st century in the South-East Black Sea Coast probably changed the crushed in 64 B. C. Cilician pirates and robbers.

180 T. Kaukhchishvili. *for the Problems of the Caucasian Tribes...*, p. 58-59.

181 G. A. Melikishvili. *For the History of ancient Georgia*, 89.

182 S. S. Orbeliani. *Dictionary of the Georgian Language*.

183 According to the Georgian translation made by T. Kaukhchishvili, in Strabo’s work Heniokhs and Kerkets are one and the same people (XI. 2, 1): “Then come Achaeans, Zigeans, Heniokh-Kerkets” (T. Kaukhchishvili. *Geography of Strabo*, p 111 in Georgian).

184 D. Chubinashvili. *Georgia-Russian Dictionary*. 604.

185 T. Kaukhchishvili. *Geography of Strabo*, p. 203 (in Georgian).

Kurtsius Rufus.¹⁸⁶ This situation strengthens even more the probability of connection of the Kerkets with the Georgian world and among them the Heniokhs.

Torets being identified by Anonymous of the Vth century with the Kerkets¹⁸⁷ is probably one of the groups of the Heniokhs and belongs to the Georgian community.¹⁸⁸ According to B. Gogia's quite argued opinion the Telons ("Tax gatherers", "oppressors"), the name of which is connected with the name of the charioteer Telkhius,¹⁸⁹ are also the Heniokhs.

On the territory of the antique period Abkhazia, in accordance with the above given information by Hellenic of Mithilenes and Palephatus of Abydos, dwelled the Moskhs.¹⁹⁰ This is confirmed in Strabo's work by the information of the historians of the 'Mithridates wars, being very trustworthy'. They, first of all name the Achaeans, then the Zigians and then the Heniokhs, after them the Kerkets, Moskhs, Colchians, the Ftirophages and Svans living above them and other small people near the Caucasus" (XI. 2. 14).¹⁹¹ The convincing information ("worth more trust") are not the obstacle for Strabo to place the "country of the Moskhs", being split into the three parts (between the Colchians, Iberians and Armenians) together with the "Moskhan Mountains" in the South of Georgia. (XI. 2, 1517; XI 12, 4; XI. 14, 1; XII. 3, 18).¹⁹² Strabo did not see the contradiction on the given information. Existence of the Moskhs in the South is undoubtful. They were mentioned already by Herodotus within the XIX satrapies of Darius.¹⁹³

The topic of the discussion is the question of dwelling of the Moskhs in the North and also within the borders of modern Abkhazia. According to Pomponius Mela, the Moskhan Mountains are located in the North (Caucasus).¹⁹⁴ Such a confident author of the VIth century, as Procopius of Caesarea locates the country of the Moskhs in the Caucasian mountains and describes their farming activity.¹⁹⁵

According to the sources the Moskhs live in the North and in the South. N. Marr associated them with the Abkhazians.¹⁹⁶ I. Javakhishvili expressed a very interesting opinion. "Prof. N. Marr must have been right - he wrote - when the ancient name of the Abkhazians "Abaskhs", associates with the "Mas-kh", only at the beginning stands the usual Abkhazian particle "a" ... Thus, Abkhazians and Moskhs have one and the same tribal name, but only through it is impossible to prove their tribal union, before the meaning of the words "Mas"-, "Mos"-, "Mes"-kh are not revealed. On the contrary, it may have appeared the proper name. Anyway, we have to think, that this name denoted not only those two tribes - Abkhazs and Moskhs, but the Lezgins (Dagestanians - author), Tushians (Georgian ethnographic group-author) are called even nowadays the "Moseks" or

186 T. Kauhchishvili. *on the Problem of the Caucasian Tribes...*, Macne, 1980, N4, p. 75.

187 *Georgika*, v. 2, p. 12.

188 In S. Kauhchishvili's opinion the Torets, Evdusins etc "were probably in distant relation with the Georgian element" (*Georgika*, v. 2, p. 28).

189 B. Gogia. *On the Ethnonimes of Some Tribes of Ancient Colchis*, p. 57.

190 *On the History of the Term*, see. N. Khazaradze. *on the History of the Ethnographic Term Meskhs*. - *Foreign and Georgian terminology denoting the Georgians and Georgia*. Tb., 1993, p. 21-42.

191 Strabo. *Geography...*, p. 471; T. Kauhchishvili. *Geography of Strabo*, p. 20.

192 T. Kauhchishvili. *Geography of Strabo*, p. 121-124, 125, 174, 185-186, 203.

193 T. Kauhchishvili. *Information of Herodotus*, p. 45.

194 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia - Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 170.

195 *Georgika*, v. 2, p. 127; Procopius of Caesarea. *War with the Gotts*. M., 1950, p. 380.

196 N. Marr. *History of the Term "Abkhaz"*, p. 703-705.

the “Moskhs”.¹⁹⁷ In discussions of I. Javakhishvili the most important is the supposition about the common meaning of the term “Meskhs”, which implies possibility of meeting of such a name throughout the wide area of settling of the Georgians – in Abkhazia, South Georgia, Tushetia etc.

P. Ingorokva shared that part of views of N. Marr and I. Javakhishvili, which concerned the identity of the “Moskhs” and “Abkhazian”; As far as the Meskhs lived next to the Koraks dwelling in the author’s opinion in the Kelasuri gorge (in reality they dwelt in the Bzip gorge), P. Ingorokva considered it the area of their dwelling – Abkhazia - from Dioskuria till Bzip.¹⁹⁸ As the fact, of belonging of the Meskhs to the Georgian ethnos was undoubtful, P. Ingorokva came to the conclusion, that the Abkhazians and Meskhs are identical (see *ibid*, p. 100).

Z. Anchabadze opposed P. Ingorokva. He noted, that the used sources (Hellanic, Papephatus, Historians of the Mithridatian wars) do not name the exact place of dwelling of the Moskhs and this makes impossible locating of them on the territory of modern Abkhazia on the basis of doubtful in Z. Anchabadze’s point of view – the data of the separate authors. The real place of dwelling of the Moskhs is the South- West Black Sea coast, where according to N. Marr the Abkhazian may have dwelt.¹⁹⁹

N. Lomouri does not trust the information given by Hellanic.²⁰⁰ As, according to the fragment from the work of Papephatus of Abydos neighboring to the Moskhs -Khatrimats possessed the river Parphenion.²⁰¹ N. Lomouri shared the opinion of N. Khazaradze²⁰² about dwelling of the Moskhs in Asia Minor and not Abkhazia next to the Matiens, emphasizing, that in case of proving the fact of dwelling of the Moskhs on the territory of Abkhazia the position of P. Ingorokva’s followers can be strengthened.²⁰³

We have to stress, that the fact of mentioning the communities of the “Meskhs” on other territories of Georgia does not mean that the same community did not live in Abkhazia. The firmness of P. Ingorokva’s and his followers’ position does not depend on whether the above mentioned fact was supposed or not. This is well understood by the researchers. Though, G. Chitaia in 1955 in the review on the book of P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule” does not agree with P. Ingorokva about the connection of the term “Abkhaz” and “Meskh” but, anyway he fully accepted the main idea on the belonging of the historical Abkhazians to the Georgian ethnos.²⁰⁴ T. Mikeladze is not P. Ingorokva’s follower, but perfectly proved the fact of dwelling of the Moskhs on the territory of Abkhazia.²⁰⁵ M. Inadze in her early works considered doubtful localization of the Moskhs on the modern territory of

197 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*, book, I-II, p. 21-22.

198 P. Ingorokva. *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 137-140.

199 Z. Anchabadze. *The Problems of History of Abkhazia in the book of P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule – The Georgian Writer of the Xth century”*. – *Woks of the D. Gulia Institute of Language, Literature and History of Abkhazia*. XXVII. Sukhumi, 1956, p. 162-164.

200 N. Lomouri. *Information of the Greek Logographs*, p. 10-12, 26.

201 As. B. Gogia writes, Parphenion existed not only in Asia Minor, but next to Khersones and Feodosia (next to the Kharimats)). -B. Gogia. *About the Ethnonimes of some Tribes of Ancient Colchis*, p. 127.

202 N. Khazaradze. *Ethno-Political Problems of Ancient History of Georgia*. Tb., 1984, p. 34 (in Georgian).

203 N. Lomouri. *From the Ethno cultural History of Abkhazia*, p. 24. 25 (in Georgian).

204 G. Chitaia. *On the Ethnic Origin of the Population of Ancient Abkhazia – Collection of Works in 5 volumes*, III. Tb., 2000, p. 119 (in Georgian).

205 T. Mikeladze. *Findings on the History of the Oldest Population of Colchis...*, p. 21-24 (in Georgian).

Abkhazia.²⁰⁶ Later she used as the additional sources information given by Strabo and especially Procopius of Caesaria and came to the conclusion, that one group of the Moskhs lived in the Abkhazian highlands; M. Inadze also confirms the fact of localization of the Moskhs in Asia Minor.²⁰⁷ B. Gogia also notes, that in the oldest sources are two (North and South) different traditions on the problems of localization of the Moskhs.²⁰⁸

Thus, the fact of dwelling in the early antique period on the territory of modern Abkhazia of the Georgian community of the Moskhs must be considered proved. But only recognizing of this fact cannot be proved the identity of the names “Moskhs” and Abaskhs”.

Together with the Abkhazians are named also the Achaeans²⁰⁹ and Melankholens,²¹⁰ about which little is known, though T. Kaukhchishvili attributes those communities to the Georgian world.²¹¹

According to the early antique sources the whole territory of modern Abkhazia was included into the Colchian kingdom and was populated with the Colchians. In spite of the expancy of the Akhemenid Persia and subduing to it of the South regions of the country in the Vth century B. C. Colchis maintained independence, though according to Herodotus’ information every five years Colchis sent to Persia 100 boys and 100 girls as a volunteer tribute (III, 97). The Kartvelian population of the kingdom together with the Koraks and Kols, which are considered Colchians by the ancient authors, lived to the river Bzip or the Caucasian range. According to Herodotus’ data the Colchians possessed the vast territories till the Meotian Lake (Azov Sea);²¹² The South border supposedly passed at the Apsaros (Chorokh), or Kerasunt of the Trapezund region.²¹³ According to the data of the sources, other ethnic groups do not exist on that territory. Especially clear is the situation on the sector of the Inguri –Psou, where there is not a single sign of life and activity of another ethnoses.

The version on the common or “wide” (geographical) and narrow (ethnic) meaning of the term “Colchis” satisfied the political ambitions of the separatists.

The terms “Colchis” and “Colchians” sometimes have the collective meaning, but under them we should imply the Georgian regions, different branches and communities of the Georgian people. The same opinion was expressed by I. Javakhishvili about “Common, collective (generalizing) name of Colchis.”²¹⁴ Even in the Soviet Historical Encyclopedia the term, “Colchis” is recognized to be the collective generalizing name of the

206 M. Inadze. On the Problem of the Ethnic Composition of the North-East Black Sea Coast Population of Antique Priod. -Moambe, 1960, N2, p. 148 (in Georgian).

207 M. Inadze. Problems of the Ethno-Political History of Ancient Abkhazia. -Macne, 1992, N1, p. 16-20 (in Georgian); The same in Russian - see; Findings in History of Abkhazia//Georgia, Tb., 1999, p. 66.

208 B. Gogia. About the Ethnonimes of Some Tribes of Ancient Colchis. , p. 127-130.

209 T. Kaukhchishvili. on the Problems of the Tribes of the Caucasus according to the Antique Colchis. 1. Akheaens. -Macne, 1080. N3, p. 31-40.

210 N. Lomouri. Information of the Greek Logographs...., p. 32, 33.

211 Georgika, v. 2, p. 28.

212 T. Kaukhchishvili. Information of Herodotus, p. 76; Herodotus mentions “Neighbors of the Colchians till the Caucasian range” (III, 97); M. Inadze. Taking into account the data of other sources, he quite righteously considers the neighbors of the Colchians the same Colchis tribes – the Koraks and Kols. (M. Inadze. the Problems of the Ethno-Political History of Ancient Abkhazia, p. 63.

213 Z. Anchabadze. Essay on the Ethnic History of the Abkhazian People, p. 27; T. Kaukhchishvili. Information of the Greek Authors, I, p. 31 (in Georgian); D. Muskhelishvili. Main Problems of Historical Geography of Georgia. Tb., 1977, p. 46 (in Georgian) etc.

214 I. Javakhishvili. Introduction into History..., P. 12.

Georgian tribes.²¹⁵

Radically different point of view is expressed by G. Melikishvili. The borders of Colchis being indicated along the Caucasian range and Dioskuria in the Pitsunda sector by the early antique period authors – were groundlessly declared by him to be Geographical, but not ethnical.²¹⁶ He was supported by Z. Anchabadze.²¹⁷ The same opinion is shared by N. Lomouri.²¹⁸

The above-mentioned authors pursued the aim of finding by all means a place for the ancestor-Abkhazians, not being fixed in the sources of the early antique period writers on the territory of historical Colchis. But it is undoable. It is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to state the ethnic belonging of a tribe or community being many times mentioned by the ancient authors. In such conditions assertion (even as supposition) about dwelling in the Inguri-Psou sector of the Apsua-Abkhazians being absent in the sources, to put it mildly, it is an allegation.

Distortion of the term “Colchis” and “Colchians” were and are used in the separatist historiography denying all the possibilities of dwelling of the Georgians (Colchians) on the modern territory of Abkhazia.²¹⁹ But the sources, as it is shown above, prove the opposite. The above mentioned terms denoting Colchis (ancient Georgia) and Colchians (Georgian) had a precise meaning starting from the ancient time. Not a single fact, of referring of this term to other, non-Georgian ethnoses is not known. Vice versa, The Greek-Byzantine sources reflected the official State policy “Divide and Impera” or caused by other reasons (political separation and others) real conditions of the things and the integral tribe of the Colchians in majority of cases, were introduced by them, as small units (and not in the “wide geographical sense). Thus, discussing the “generalizing” meaning of the term “Colchians” pursue only the political aim – to find for the ancestors of modern Abkhazian-Apsuas not confirmed by the sources place on the territory of ancient Colchis. This gives the researcher-separatists the possibility of trying to appropriate the whole Colchis civilization.

In historiography, ethno-political events of the 3-1st centuries B. C. are tendentiously spotlighted. As it is known, from the first part of the 3rd century B. C. according to the Georgian historical tradition, west Georgia of its own free will joined the kingdom of Kartli²²⁰ (East Georgia) and represented a part of the integral state. It is not likely, that it was caused by weakening of Egrisi or its split. The king of Kartli Parnavaz appealed to the west Georgia ruler - Kuji²²¹ asking help, as Egrisi was then still the strong state.²²²

215 The Soviet Historical Encyclopedia, v. 7. M., 1965, p. 546.

216 G. Melikishvili. *On History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 62-63; of the same author: *On the problem of the Oldest Population of Georgia...*, p. 37.

217 Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on the Ethnic History of the Abkhazian People*, p. 29; of the same author: *History and Culture of Ancient Abkhazia*, p. 132.

218 N. Lomouri. *Information of the Greek Logographs...*, p. 25; of the same author: *For Understanding of the terms “Colchis” and “Colchians”*. -Works of the Tbilisi state university, v. 1 B. p. 19-13 (in Georgian); *From the Ethno-Cultural history of Ancient Abkhazia*, p. 6; of the same author *Some Problems of the Early History of Abkhazia* (reply to prof. Sh. D. Inal-Ipa). -*Macne, sequence of History...*, 1990, N3, p. 161.

219 Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. *Problems of the Ethno-Cultural History of Abkhazia*, p. 200 of the same author: *About My People, Its History and Mother-Land*. -*Soviet Abkhazia*, 1989, 16 September; O. Bgashba, S. Z. Lakoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 60-84 etc.

220 *Life of Georgia*, v. I, p. 22-24 (in Georgian).

221 *Ibid*, p. 22.

222 King Parnavaz was in friendly terms with the weakening Seleukids (Syria), See: *Life of Kartli*, v. 1, p. 25.

That time unification of east and west Georgia had a volunteer basis, and was a historical action being conditioned by the common national interests the realization of which was stimulated by the international situation – the beginning of the disintegration of the Hellenistic states and intensification of the contradiction between them.²²³ This process must have led to the weakening of the international economical activity, emergence and restoration of the new states and other geopolitical shifts. In that given situation the unification of Kartli and Egrisi, restoration of the strong and integral Georgian state, was the real necessity, being prompted by the existing reality.

As N. Berulava indicates, then not only central Egrisi till the river Galidzga, but other territories including Dioskuria joined Kartli as well.²²⁴ Considering the condition of scattered and being occupied with the internecine wars – Greece, the information given by Leonti Mroveli on the transfer the territory to the North-West from the river Egristskali (Galidzga) into the hands of the Greeks (and among them to the Pontus kingdom, being weakened by the fight with the Galats throughout the 3rd century B. C.) is doubtful.

From the start of the 2nd century B. C. when Kartli was defeated by Armenia (having been emerged as a result of the disintegration of the Selevkid kingdom), Egrisi again becomes an independent state, the prove of which are the coins of the king Savlak being minted in the second half of the same century.²²⁵ Disseminating of those coins in the region of Sukhumi must have denoted restoring of the kingdom within its previous borders.²²⁶ According to the information given by Plinius, “ In Colkhis rules Savlak - the off-spring of Ayet , who having got the vast lands into heritage, mined as the rumor goes large amounts of gold and silver in the lands of the Svan tribe and in general in his state , being “famous of its golden fleece”²²⁷ (runes). This information makes clear one thing, that Savlak possessed “the virgin lands” of Egrisi, including modern territories of Abkhazia and Svanetia.

On the borders of the 2-1st centuries B. C. Mithridates VI Eupator (111-63 B. C.) included the whole eastern Black sea coast (and Egrisi as well) within his state.²²⁸ Egrisi continued its existence within the structure of the Pontus kingdom as a separate unit. Its ruler became Mithridates Junior (the son of Mithridates the 6th), being soon suspected in the treachery and executed.²²⁹ The persons being close to Mithridates were directed to Colkhis as the rulers. For example such was “ Moaphernus – uncle of my mother from my father’s side”, - wrote Strabo. The king of Pontus from Egrisi “Received help mainly for equipment of his fleet” (XI, 2, 14).²³⁰

From the middle of the 1st century B. C. when the Romans defeated Mithridates the

223 *Life of Georgia*, v. 1, p. 24.

224 N. Berulava. *Town of Dioskuria – Sebastopolis...*, p. 90.

225 G. Melikishvili. *On History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 305.

226 *Opinion of M. Inadze on the restoration of the Colkhis kingdom from the North-West border only till the river Galidzga is rather confidently refuted by N. Berulava* (N. Berulava. *Town of Dioskuria – Sebastopolis*, p. 89-90).

227 V. V. Latishev. *Information of the Ancient Writers*, v. II. Edition I. SPb. 1904, p. 1970198.

228 The Pontus kingdom being founded at the end of the VIth century and strengthened in the II century B. C. is regarded by the Georgian historiography , as the part of the Georgian world, as its population was composed of the Meskhs, Tabal-Tibarens (Iberians), Khalds, Khalibs, Colchians, Mossiniks and others. See. L. Sanikidze. *Kingdom of Pontus*. Tb., 1956, p. 3 (in Georgian); *History of Georgia*, I. Tb., 1958, p. 58 (in Georgian); G. K. Gozalishvili. *Mithridates of Pontus*. Tb., 1962, p. 278-279 (in Georgian). The above mentioned problem needs further investigation and study.

229 *Essay on History of Georgia*, v. I, p. 475 (in Georgian).

230 T. Kauhchishvili. *Geography of Starbo*, p. 124-125 (in Georgian); Strabo. *Geography...*, p. 473.

Vith and captured into their possession the eastern Black Sea coast, former Colchian kingdom including the territory of modern Abkhazia. Mithridates being pursued by the Romans, spent winter of 66-65 B. C. in Dioskuria, where worked out the great plan of the action never been fulfilled.²³¹

Colchis//Egrisi took an active part in the lively economical connections with the Hellenistic world. Information of Strabo about gathering of representatives dozens of peoples in Dioskuria, especially the Caucasian ones belong to Hellenistic period.²³² In N. Berulava's opinion this information goes back to the beginning of the Roman influence on Colchidians, namely to the period of ruling of Aristarkhes. He, being an energetic ruler united Colchis, minted coins in Dioskuria, where he had one and probably the only place of residence (G. Gamkrelidze, T. Todua); He also managed to enliven (reanimate) the trade through involving into the trade operation the Roman merchants.²³³ In 48 B. C. the king of Bosporus – Farnak (the son of Mithridates the VIth) made use of the death of Pompeus and weakened position of Aristarkhes and after the hard battles seized Colchis, returned the kingdom of Pontus and announced himself King of Asia. But, in 47 B. C. Julius Caesar (49-44 B. C.) easily defeated Farnak.²³⁴ Colchis again appeared to be under the Roman provincial ruling.

We don't have archeological material, especially we don't have the written witnesses about the change of the ethnic situation on the modern territory of Abkhazia and neighboring regions in the II-I centuries B. C. Though, in spite of this fact, G. Melikishvili writes about the militant tribes ostensibly living on the Plato of Abkhazia, about the penetration of the highlanders from the North Caucasus, invasion of the Jiks and capture of the land of the Kerkets, oppression of the lowland citizens etc.²³⁵ Conclusions of the author are based on the subjective interpretation of information given by Strabo about the first appearance of the Zigs in the North-East Black Sea coast; The Greek writer informed about the well known fact – sea raiding and piracy of the Acheaens, Zigs, Heniokhs, kidnapping and oppression of the population by them (XI. 2, 12).²³⁶ Strabo tell nothing about the invasion of the highlander, replacing the population of the Kerkets with the Jiks, opposition of highlanders and lowlanders, changes of the ethno-demographical character and consequently of the political situation. It is absolutely incomprehensible, why G. Melikishvili loads with great importance appearance of the Zigs in the sources. These people during Mithridates the VI²³⁷ had occupied the North-East Black Sea Coast. Semantics of the word “Zig” (“ being harnessed into the yoke” – Greek), in a certain extent points to the sort of activity of the population; Appearance of those people on the North-East Black Sea coast did not lead to any political or territorial change. Their ethnical belonging is not clear (according to the ancient sources they were of the Pelazgian origin). Widespread opinion about the

231 Appian. Wars of Mithridates..., p. 285; G. Gamkrelidze, T. Todua. Military-Political Expansion of Rome in Georgia. Tb., 2006, p. 28-3.

232 T. Kauhchishvili. Geography of Strabo, p. 1220123. Strabo. Geography..., 472.

233 N. Berulava. Town of Dioskuria – Sebastopolis..., p. 97-98; G. Gamkrelidze, T. Todua. Military-Political Expansion of Rome..., p. 40.

234 G. Gamkrelidze, T. Todua. Military-Political Expansion of Rome. 41-42. Triumphant Julius Caesar sent an urgent message to Rome “came, saw, won” (veni, vidi, vici) (K. Rizhov. All the Monarchs of the World. M., 1998, p. 604).

235 G. Melikishvili. On History of Ancient Georgia, p. 307-310; Essays on History of Georgia, v. 1, p. 478-471.

236 T. Kauhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 118-119; Strabo. Geography..., 470-471.

237 T. Kauhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 119.

Adigean origin of the Zigs is not convincingly proved. Even if it had been so, anyway Abkhazia has nothing to do with it. The Zigs lived quite far from its modern North-West border and only in the Vth century captured the town Old Lasika (Nicopsya)²³⁸ being located to the North of modern Tuapse.

Complicated, but unreal situation is depicted by M. Inadze, who thinks, that “Skheptukhias” of Strabo (XI, 2, 13)²³⁹ represented the administrative units being formed on the basis of the tribal organizations, existing before the early class epoch.

Throughout the centuries they supposedly they maintained ethnic originality, tendency towards singling from the united kingdom, that resulted in the end in destruction of Colchis state or fall to small political units at the end of the early antique epoch.²⁴⁰

Later M. Inadze mitigated her position, though the essence of the “skheptukhias” (as if the ethno-territorial units) remained the same.²⁴¹ The theme of disintegration of the Colchis kingdom into ethno-territorial units is artificial and pursues the aim of explaining “multy tribeness”, “multy nationality” of Western Georgia in the Ist century B. C. The causes of the given phenomenon in M. Inadze’s opinion is in stage-by-stage (gradual) arrival of highlanders from the North Caucasus or in “multytribness” of Colchis being divided into skheptukhias.²⁴²

The groundless version about the skheptukhias was criticized by O. Lordkipanidze. “In multitribness of Colchis is very difficult to believe – writes the scientist – all the historians studying interesting for us period... on the territory of modern coastal West Georgia from the North to the South (which Strabo calls “Colchis Sea”... XI. 1, 6), from Pitunt (modern Pitsunda) to the river Apsaros (river Chorokh) and to the East to Iberia – always name only one people – Colchians (not a single nation, but Colchians is mentioned on that territory till Arian)”²⁴³ T. Beradze concludes, that skheptukhia is not an ethno political unit, but a principality, which in some cases represented only the territorial – administrative unit and from to time to time this or that Georgian tribe is united in teh skheptukhia.²⁴⁴

Thus, according to the information of the sources, in 6-1th centuries B. C. on the modern territory of Abkhazia did not occur more or less significant alterations of the ethno political character and it remained the Georgian region. Passing of the Eastern Black Sea Coast into the Romans’ hands led in the future to the serious political changes.

238 Georgika v. 2. p 11; V. Latishev. Information of the Greek Writers..., v. 1, edition. 1, p. 278.

239 T. Kauhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 124; Strabo. Geography..., 471.

240 M. Inadze. On the Problem of Skheptukhias of the Colchis Kingdom. Tb., 1994, p. 54 (in Georgian).

241 M. Inadze. One More about the Ethno-Territorial Units. . . -Ethnogeneses of the Georgian People. Tb., 2002, p. 93-111. (In Georgian); on the “separatism “and “inner opposition” of the Skheptukhias writes N. Berulava (N. Berulava. Town of Dioskuria-Sebastopolis..., p. 87, 88, 121, 131 etc.).

242 M. Inadze. Problems of ethno political History of Ancient Abkhazia, Macne, sequence of history..., 1992, N2, p. 47, 48, 58; of the same author: Problems..., 64, 71, 77-78, 80 etc.

243 O. Lordkipanidze. Did the State Colchis Exist, p. 49-50 (in Georgian).

244 T. Beradze. History of Megrelia. -Aia, 2001, N9-10, p. 39 (in Georgian).

Chapter IV. Territory of Modern Abkhazia from the I Century A. D. till the Middle of the VIII Century.

1. Ethnic Situation

On the border of chronology, Colchis including the territory of modern Abkhazia was a separate administrative unit within the Pontus Kingdom, being in vassal dependency from Rome. Before the 14th year B. C. in Pontus (and consequently in Egrisi) ruled Polemon the I and after him his spouse Pifodorida; in 38 A. D. according to will of Rome, the throne was occupied by their grandson Polemon II. In 63 Emperor Neron (64-68) neglecting the policy of relying on the buffer states annihilated the Pontus Kingdom and turned it into the province of Rome and together with Egrisi included it into Galatia. From 72 till ascending to throne of emperor Domitian (81-96) Egrisi was within the “Cappadocia complex” - united province of Cappadocia and Galatia and afterwards it became a part of Cappadocia. ¹

In the Black Sea Coast towns of Colchis – Phases and Dioskuria from 60-ies of the I century stood the Roman military garrisons. In that time, those towns were considered the relying points of the Emperor’s fleet. According to Josephus Flavius words (66) the king of Judean’s Irod Agrippa (29-93) announced, that Heniokhs and Colchians, Tavrs and Bosphorians and in general all people living around the Pontus and Meotida, “ who before did not recognize even their own ruler and now are subdued with the three thousand goplits and forty military ships and keep peace on the non-navigable and severe sea”² . We can conclude, that the Romans controlled a significant part of the East Black Sea coast quite solidly, especially territories neighboring with the military garrisons and among them the territory of modern Abkhazia.

From the point of view of the ethno-political history of the east Black Sea coast the information given by Strabo (beginning of the I century) , Pompinus Mella (The first part of the I century), Pliny the Elder (till 79), Flavius Arrian (134), Claudius Ptolemy (20-60-ies of the II century) and others is of a paramount importance.

In “ Geography” by Strabo about Colchis, the information of the writers of the previous centuries are used as sources, but there are the contemporary to the author data as well. We mean, the period of ruling in the Pontus kingdom of Polemon the I and Pifodorida (IX, 2, 18), when within Colchis according to Strabo Dioskuria and Pitsunda were the towns of Colchis kingdom (IX, 2, 14). ³ Of an extremely significant importance is information about dominion of the strong tribe of the Svans over Dioskura and its neighborhood. Strabo writes, that the Svans (“Soans”) “are practically the most militant and strongest out of all. Anyway, those are dominant over all people around them, occupying the peaks of the Caucasus over Dioskuriada. They have a king and a board of 300 men and as the saying has they can collect the army of 200000.

In reality, the whole people mass is a fightable, though unorganized power” (9, 2, 19). ⁴

¹ G. Melikishvili. On the History of Ancient Georgia, p. 363-364; Essays on History of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 537-538 (in Georgian); T. Todua. Roman World and Colchis, I-IVth century. Tb., p. 7-8 (in Georgian).

² Georgika, vol. 1, p. 274; V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient writer’s...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1947, N4, p. 276.

³ T. Kaukhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 120-121, 125-126; Strabo. Geography ..., p. 471, 473.

⁴ T. Kaukhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 125-126; Strabo. Geography..., p. 473.

The probable numerosity of the Svans' volunteer corps has no special significance here, as the main point is, that the region of Dioskuria and the Caucasian gates are yet in hands of the Georgians. Moreover, we have to stress, that "Geography" by Strabo does not contain any direct or indirect indication on the change of ethnic situation on the territory of modern Abkhazia. The same can be said about the "Description of the Earth" by the author of the I st century Pomponius Mela. In the first book of this work is given the information about the eastern Black Sea coast : After Phasis is indicated the town, " which according to the legend, was founded by the Greek merchants and called it Kiknos (swan) ⁵ In T. Kauhchishvili's opinion it must be the town Gienos⁶ (Ochamchire), beyond the borders of which Pomponius Mela names " the wild and ignorant tribes, living at the vast sea – the Melankhlens, Toretiks, 6 Koliks, Koraksiks, Louseaters, Iniochs, Acheaens, Kerektsi and at the borders of Meotida – Sindons. On the lands of Iniochs Dioskuria is founded..."⁷ In estimation of the given information we have to consider, that Pomponius Mela - as A. Gamkrelidze wrote – Though-"occupies an honorable position among the representatives of antique geography", but his work needs "a careful treatment, as he puts together information of different epoch authors" . ⁸

This is the reason of violation of the order of the above mentioned "tribes", though mentioning of Dioskuria within the people having the Georgian origin – Heniokhs - clarifies the problem of localization of the others. It is impossible, that Melankhlens being fixed by certain authors near Moscow or Kharkov or to the North of the Scythians , ⁹ can be farther south than Heniokhs. Out of the " tribes" being named by Pomponius i. d. - the Heniokhs, Koliks, Koraks and probably Phtiropages, being identified with the Svans¹⁰ is possible to locate on the territory of modern Abkhazia.

Quite a complex ethnic picture is depicted by Plinius the Elder. According to his information, after the river Phasis is **"another river, Khariant, the people of Saltia being called by the ancient louse eaters and other people – the sans; across the region of the Svans flows the river Khob. Further – Roan, the region of Kegritika, the rivers:Sigania, Fers, Astelief, Khrissoroas, a tribe of Absils, the fortress of Sebastopol in 100 000 steps from Fasida, the tribe of Sanniks, the town of Kigni, the river and town Penia and at last, the tribe of the Iniochs being distinguished by different names (VI, 14). The Pontus region of Kolika is neighboring to it, in which the Caucasian range turns to the Ripei Mountains...Other banks are occupied by the wild tribes – Melankhlens and Koraks, with the Colchis town Dioskuriada at the river Anfemunta; Now it is desolated. (VI, 15).**

"Next to Dioskuriada is the town of Iraklion. It is 70 000 steps away from Sebastopolis. Here live Achaeans, Mards, Kerkets, beyond them live the Serras and

5 V. Latishev. Information by the ancient writers..., vol. II, ed. I, p. 117; A. Gamkrelidze. Information by Pomponius Mela on Georgia. -Georgian Source Study, collection of works I. Tb., 1965, p. 29 (in Georgian).

6 T. Kauhchishvili. On the Problem of Caucasian Tribes..., - Macne, 1980, N4, p. 64 (In Georgian); In M. Inadze's opinion Kiknos is the village Kulevi at the sources of the river Khobi (M. Inadze. Ancient Georgian Towns – Kignum and Ea – Aia). -Georgian Source Study. X, Tb., 2004, p. 36-42 (in Georgian).

7 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers..., vol. II, ed. I, p. 118; A. Gamkrelidze. Information by Pomponius Mela..., p. 29.

8 A. Gamkrelidze. Information by Pomponius Mela..., p. 12, 13.

9 See. T. Kauhchishvili. On Some Information by Pseudoskilak. -Georgian Source Study, collection of works me, p. 6 (in Georgian).

10 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 527.

Kephalotoms. Within this space the richest town of Pitiunt has been robbed by the Iniokhs. In the rear, in the Caucasian mountains live the Sarmatian people of Epagerit and beyond them the Savromats(VI, 16)...

The first bay (The Caspian Sea – author) is called Scythian, as on both sides of it live the Scythians..., on this side live Nomads and Savromats under many separate names and on the opposite side live the Abzois having numerous names like others” (VI, 38) ¹¹.

It is clear, that Plinius, like Pomponius Mela, uses the sources of different epochs, ¹² that result in wrong localization of the geographical points and separate groups of population. Sebastopolis and Dioskuria are presented by the author, as separate towns; Information on the Melankhlens and Koraks with the Colchian town – Dioskuriada obviously dates from the older period and does not reflect the reality of the I century. ; But the information about desolation of Dioskuria, must have been the truth, as it may have been caused by abolishing of the Colchian kingdom, disappearance of the trade factorias and foundation of a new town – Sebastopolis with its military garrisons into which was transferred the active life. Town Kign, being mentioned by mistake to be to the North-West from Sebastopolis, is supposedly Kyknos//Gienos having been mentioned by Pomponius Mela. We can agree with the supposition of G. Lordkipanidze about the identity of Penia and Pitiunt; according to that version the river Penia is to be identified with the river Bzip. ¹³Town Heraclea, being named to the North-West from the town Dioskuria must have been identified with the Heraclea cape mentioned in the works of Arrian¹⁴, which is localized by S. Janashia near Khosta. ¹⁵ The evident mistake of Plinius was mentioning of the Pthirophages (Saltians) in modern Megrelia (the country of Kegritika), when the early authors (Strabo) ¹⁶ and late (Phlavius Arrian) ¹⁷ locate them in the outskirts of Gagri. The fact of robbing the rich town of the Ist century Pitsunda seemingly corresponds to the reality. At the same time it is impossible to explain (as well as desolation of Dioskuria) it by invasions of the Caucasian highlanders, which is permanently stressed by G. Melikishvili. Mentioning in the rear of Pitsunda, in the Caucasian mountains (in fact outside the borders of Abkhazia) the Savromatian tribes cannot be the proof of the thesis on the change of the ethnic situation in Abkhazia. Information given by Plinius contains mentioning of the Apsils and also - the “Abzoa.” Discussions about their localization and ethnic belonging are under way even today.

The most important source on history of Abkhazia is the “Travel around the Black Sea” by Phlavius Arrian. ¹⁸This work is a report being presented to the Roman emperor Adrian (117-138) by the author (governor of Cappadocia) after the visit (by Emperor’s

11 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers, vol. II, ed. I, p. 179-180.

12 See: M. Inadze. Description of Colchis in the “Natural History” by Plinius the Elder. - Caucasian Near East Collection of works, X. Tb., 2001, p. 211-212, 218 (in Georgian); L. Arbolishvili. ” Natural History” by Plinius the senior, p. 10, 13-14.

13 G. Lordkipanidze. Pitsunda Nekropolis. Tb., 1991, p. 12 (in Georgian). See also: L. Arbolishvili. “Natural History “ by Plinius the Elder, p. 35-36.

14 S. Janashia. Works, vol. 6. Tb., 1988, p. 267.

15 T. Kauhchishvili. Geography by Strabo, p. 111.

16 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers, vol. 1, ed. I, p. 223; Phl. Arrian. Travel around the Black Sea, p. 52.

17 G. A. Melikishvili. On the History of Ancient Georgia, p. 364.

18 Publication of V. Latishev is being used (Information of the Ancient Authors, v. 1, ed. I, p. 217-228) and published by N. Kechakmadze. “Travel around the Black Sea”. This work together with the other works of Phlavius Arrian was translated and edited with the introduction and comments by T. Kauhchishvili. See. Information of the Greek Writers about Georgia, V. Tb., 1983 (in Georgian).

order) of the Black Sea Coast from Trapezund to Sebastopolis and inspection of the Roman garrisons in 134. The rest of the Coast is described according to the oral witness of other persons or the basis of the earlier written sources.

To the North-West of Trapezund Phl. Arrian names the Colchians, Drils or Sans and writes: **“Next to them live the Macrons and Iniochs; their king is Ankhial. Zidrits are the neighbors of Macrons and Iniochs; they are subdued to Farsman. Next to the Zidrits are the Lazians. The king of the Lazians is Malas, who is given the power by You. Then after the Lazs, come Apsils. Their king is Julian, who was appointed king by your father. The Avasks have the border with the Apsils. The king of the Avasks is Rismag. He was also appointed by you. Next to the Avasks are the Sanigs on the lands of which sits Sebastopolis. The king of the Sanigs Spadag got the power from You...On the way to lip (Hipus –author) till Astelef and Dioskuriada were seen the Caucasian mountains resembling the Celtian Alps in high; we were shown one peak of the Caucasus – the name of the peak is Strobil – on which according to the myth Promety was hung by Ifest by order of Zeus”** ¹⁹. Dioskuria having been the terminal fortified point of the Roman dominion is not the desolated town any more. Sebastopolis earlier being called Dioskuriada was founded by the Miletians – is said in the :”Travel”; There are 2260 stadia²⁰ from Trapezund, there are 350 stadia from Sebastopolis to Pitunt; from here to the region of Stenitika (old Triglit) were 150 stadia”; That regions was populated louse eaters (Phterophages). The distance from Stenitika to the river Abask ²¹ (Psou or Mzimta) comprised 90 stadia, from this place to the river Akheunt (Shakhe) – 420 stadia. On this river passed the border of the Sanigs with the Zikhs, to the ruler of which (Sanigs) the power was given by Adrian. This fact proves that the Roman power did not end at Dioskuria, where stood the last garrison. From the town of Shakhe to Old Lazika are 450 stadia; from this place to Old Akhea – 150 stadia. ²²

In Arrian’s description throughout all the space from Trapezund to Old Lazika only one Georgian worlds is being presented, but due to the circumstances being split into the small political and administrative units. A special interest arise the Abazgs being mentioned for the first time in sources and also the Apsils. Worth attention is the fact of replacing of the Heniokhs by the Sanigs in the North-West Colchis being mentioned by Plinius and Arrian (See below).

By its contents, the “Travel around the Black Sea” by Anonym of the Vth century is the most like the text of Arrian, in some places repeating word by word the text of the latter, especially in description of the population, living between Trapezund and Dioskuria and till the towns of the “Old Lazika” and “Old Achea”. Anonym mentions the same administrative-political units and even the rulers (9, 13-17) ²³ Unlike Phl. Arrian he made such a

¹⁹ V. Latishev. Information of the Ancient authors, v. 1, edition I, p. 222-223; Phlavius Arrian. Travel around the Black Sea, p. 42-44.

²⁰ 1 stadia approximately equals 178-180 metres. See. N. Lomouri. From Historical Geography of Ancient Colchis. -Vestnik of Ancient History, 1967, N4, p. 97.

²¹ The river Abaskos is mentioned on the territory of the Sanigs and namely higher Gagra, thus, connecting it with the Abazgs being located to the South from Dioskuria (M. Inadze. Problems of Ethno-Political History of Ancient Abkhazia. –Macne, 1992, N2, p. 49) cannot stand any criticism. The named river not only did not get its name from the Abazga, but vice versa, completely lost it after the replacing by Abazgs of the Sanigs and Svanocolchians on that territory.

²² V. Latishev. Information of Ancient Writers..., v. 1, ed. I, p. 423-424; Phl. Arrian. Travel around the Black Sea, p. 52-53.

²³ V. Latishev. Information by Ancient Writers, v. I, ed. I, p. 275-278.

passage before the description of the “tribes”:²⁴ From Dioskuriada the same Sebastopolis to the river Apsara before lived people called the Colchians and being renamed into the Lazians.²⁴ Thus, according to the information given by Anonym of the Vth century the section Dioskuria-Chorokh, in spite of existence of the three administrative-political units (Lazika, Apsilia, and Abazgia) is ethnically homogeneous.

After the description of the territory to Old Achaea, the author says: “ From the “Old Achea to Old Lazika” and then to the river Acheunt, earlier dwelt the people under the names of: Iniokhs, Koraks, Koliks, Melankhlens, Makhelons, Colchians and the Lazians and now there live the Zikhs.²⁵ Anonym does not give the precise information, whether a simple renaming had place there (quite probable) or it was the matter of replacing of the local population from their own territories (which is not fixed in the sources) and settling it with another tribe.

New and quite important information about the ethno political history of Abkhazia are given in the “Geographical Guide” written by Claudius Ptolemy, which was translated and equipped by the introduction and comments by N. Lomouri. In the eight paragraph of the fifth book – “Condition of the Asian Sarmatia” - the listing of the settled points starts from Ermonas²⁶ and ends at the estuary of the river Koraks (Bzip). Among the named points is also town of Taz (Old Lazika), estuary of the river Vurka (Mzimta), Inanfeia (Nitika//Gagri of Arrian), Karteron Tuh//Strong fortress (Koraksian wall).²⁷ On the given territory “along the Pontus”, according to Cl. Ptolemy lived the Achaeans, Kerkets, Heniokhs and unknown for other sources of that time - the Suanocolchians.²⁸

The IXth chapter of the fifth book of the “Geographical Guide” is dedicated to Colchis. It begins from the river Bzip.²⁹ In the book are mentioned “Dioskuria - the same Sebastopolis”, estuary of the river Hoppus (here – Kodori), estuary of the river Kianea (Mokvitskali), Siganei (Eristskali), Neapolis, Aia³⁰ etc. The fact, that in spite of usage of the works Plinius and Arrian, Ptolemeus does not mention the small administrative-political units and all the population of Colchis (from the river Bzip to Cappadocia) attributes to the Colchian attracts our attention: “The Black Sea Coast of Colchis is settled by the Lazians, the upper territories are settled by the Manrals and the peoples living in the country of Ekrektika”.³¹ It is commonly known, that the Lazians and Manrals are the Megrelians (the Georgians) and the “country of Ekrektika” is Egrisi.³²

About the reasons of emerging in Egrisi at the verge of the 1-2nd centuries of the small administrative-political units in the Georgian historiography is not a homogeneous opinion. I. Javakhishvili paid attention to the condition, that “instead of integral West Georgia in 134 A. D. the country was split into four kingdoms. As it seems, the Romans imple-

24 Ibid, p. 275.

25 Ibid, p. 278.

26 Supposedly on the Taman peninsula; here and further localization of geographical places, if literature is not mentioned is given in comments. N. Lomouri, Claudius Ptolemy, p. 52-57.

27 D. Kacharava, G. Kvirkelia. Towns and Settlements of the Black Sea Coast in the Antique Epoch, p. 141-142.

28 Is identical to Egersvans of Favstos Buzand (history of Armenia by Favstos Buzand. Translation from Ancient Armenian by M. A. Gevorkian. Yerevan, 1953, p. 15.

29 Cl. Ptolemy mentioned Colchis (Colchika) among the large countries of the world (Tetrabyblos) and placed it under the Caucasian range. - J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – historical region of Georgia, p. 532.

30 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Authors, v. 1. ed. I, p. 236-240; N. Lomouri. Claudius Ptolemy, p. 43-45.

31 V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Authors, v. 1. ed. I, p. 241; N. Lomouri. Claudius Ptolemy, p. 45.

32 N. Lomouri. Claudius Ptolemy..., p. 57; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – historical region of Georgia, p. 523.

mented there favourite political rule : “Divide and Empire” and supposedly they tried to create four kingdoms instead of the integral - Colchis kingdom. ³³

S. Janashia had different opinion. He thought that some out of Arrian’s principalities were the products of development of the former skeptukhias. ³⁴ Strabo’s skeptukhias (ibid, p. 79-80) - administrative-territorial units of Colchis kingdom – according to S. Janashia were the tribal organizations and Colchis - the “multy tribal kingdom”. ³⁵ Under the “further development of skeptukhias” were meant emergence of the” kingdoms” of Arrian on the ground of the primitive “social differentiation”, feudalization. ³⁶ Political formations of the Apsils, Abazgs, Sanigs etc. S. Janashia calls “tribal principalities”, formation of which was as if conditioned by the unwilling concession of Rome to the local forces ³⁷ fighting for independence.

If the administrative-political units of Egrisi in the II century were the “tribal principalities”, then the Apsils and Abazgs being in S. Janashia’s opinion the ancestors of the Abkhazians and occupying the limited territory next to each other, would obviously create not two, but one “tribal” union. It did not happen so, as in the interests of Empire was to weaken the Colchians being displeased with the loss of the centuries –old statehood and prevention of the restoration of the Colchis Kingdom. ³⁸

The opinion of S. Janashia on different forms was repeated by a number of authors. N. Berdzenishvili believed, that the Colchian kingdom represented a large union of tribes after the split of which appeared the “self-preserved” other tribes – the Apshils, Abkhazians etc. ³⁹ G. Melikishvili wrote about the onslaught onset of the “formidable, terrible disaster” from the North Caucasus in the I century, displacement of the ancient population from the central Colchis and settling here of the “undoubtedly” of the Apshils, Abazgs and Sanigs being the part of this “disaster”. All this happened , in G. Melikishvili’s opinion due to the formation in Colchis of the small political units, representing the tribal unions with the “strong ground for the statehood” and their “kings” –the leaders of those unions. ⁴⁰

All these reasoning and conclusions are not based on the historical sources, but on the fact of appearance on the territory of Colchis in the I century of the “tribes” being in his opinion the highlanders of the Apsua-Abkhazian origin. It is not understandable why, but the Heniokhs and Sanigs (who are considered the Georgians –Megrelians and Svans by G. Melikishvili and other researchers) must be the part of the North Caucasian “formidable disaster”?

By the way, the Jiks of the 1st century B. C. (as if the vanguard of the “formidable disaster”) don’t seem the alien force, being a special threat. According to Arrian, they had a king being appointed by the Romans. On the territory of the Jiks, sat the Georgian town Old Lazika. One more “shock force” of the highlander “formidable disaster” - the

33 I. Javakhishvili. Works, v. I. Tb., 1979, p. 214 (in Georgian).

34 S. Janashia. Works, v. II. Tb., 1952, p. 311 (in Georgian).

35 S. Janashia. Works, v. I. Tb., 1949, p. 201; v. II, p. 311.

36 Ibid, II, p. 312.

37 S. Janashia. Abkhazia within Colchis Kindgom and Lazika. Formation of Abkahlzian Kingdom”. – Macne, series of history..., 1991, N2, p. 23.

38 N. Kechakmadze mistakenly asserts, that Empire had no interests and wish to “ establish a new order” in Colchis. –Phl. Arrian. Travel around the Black Sea, p. 13.

39 N. Berdzenishvili. Problems on History of Georgia, book VIII. Tb., 1975, p. 245-246 (in Georgian). Of the same autho”Problems on History of Georgia. Tb., 1990, p. 554 (in Georgian).

40 G. Melikishvili. On History of Ancient Georgia, p. 365, 373-375.

Acheaens, after the would be mass invasions, being described by G. Melikishvili soon disappeared from the historical arena together with the Heniokhs. All this is the proof of the fact, that (the “formidable disaster”) never took place at the beginning of A. D.

N. Lomouri thinks, the reasoning of G. Melikishvili having a very “unstable base”. Simultaneously, he develops none the less erroneous and already known opinions (S. Janashia) on existence of Colchis of the territorial-tribal units (skeptukhias), having the tendency and aspiration for the independence. Before, the strong royal power (at first Colchian and then Roman) withstood the particularize, but in the first centuries A. D. when the situation changed, Rome made a compulsory compromise and in order to maintain at least the formal suzerainty and a certain influence in Colchis, recognized” the pretences of the leaders of different ethno-territorial units and the fact of their real independence”, -writes N. Lomouri. ⁴¹

In the 6th century on the territory of modern Abkhazia one more political unit is stated – Misiminia. Agaphius Scholastic (6th century) gives a detailed information about the rebellion of the Missimians against Byzantine and its cruel oppression by the Empire. ⁴²

Thus, in the late antique epoch and early medieval centuries on the Inguri-Psou section (and to the North-West from it) except the Lazians (the Colchians and Manrals) dwelt the Apsils, Abazgs, Sanigs, Svanocolchians and Misimians. Stating of the ethnic belonging is a focal issue of the ethno political history of the region.

The Sanigs were the oldest population of that region. Their ethnic belonging is practically stated in historiography, not taking into consideration the idea fix of the separatists on permanent dwelling from the river Inguri to the river Psou of only the Abkhazian (Apsuan) population. Z. Anchabadze, Sh. Inal-Ipa and others, announce the Sanigs the ancestors of the Sadzians⁴³ without a sufficient argumentation, when the name of those people (Sadzians) is mentioned only in the late medieval sources and not in the antique ones.

The Sanigs are mentioned by Memnon (I-II centuries) in connection with the events of the middle of the I century B. C. He wrote, that the extreme oriental regions of the Pontus, where escaped the advocates of Mithridates, “was settled by the Sanigs and Lazians”. ⁴⁴ If we take into consideration, the fact, that king Mithridates the VIth being persecuted by Pompeus spent winter in the town of Dioskuria, according to Arrian sitting on the territory of the Sanigs. We have to agree with the supposition of T. Kaukhchishvili about dwelling of the Sanigs in the environs of Dioskuria. ⁴⁵ According to Arrian their territory reached the river Shake – the border with the Jiks. It was mentioned above, that I. Orbeli connected with each other the words “Heniokh” (“Henikh”) and “Sanig”, attributing it to the Georgian (Svanian) tribe (chap. III, 2). The Sanigs are considered to be the representatives of this or that branch of the Georgian people (Megrelo-Chanian, Svanian or of both) by N. Marr, S. Janashia, S. Kaukhchishvili, P. Ingorokva, G. Melikishvili, N. Kekchakmadze, M. Inadze, N. Lomouri, T. Mibchvani, G. Gasviani, B. Gogia, D. Letodiani

41 N. Lomouri. *History of Egrisi Kingdom*. Tb., 1968, p. 21-23 (in Georgian).

42 *Georgika*, v. 3. Tb., 1936, p. 85-90, 154-157, 159-174.

43 Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on Ethnical History of the Abkhazian People*, p. 34-36; III Sh. Inal-Ipa. *Abkhazians...*, p. 97-98.

44 Information given by the Greek authors about Georgia, VI. Translation from the Old Greek and comments by T. Kaukhchishvili. Tb., 1987, p. 46.

45 T. Kaukhchishvili. Tb., 1987, p. 22-23.

and many others.⁴⁶ The Georgian historiography while regarding this issue, is based, in the first place on the exact and precise data of the sources. For Example, Ippolitus from Rome (III century) writes, that after Cappadocia come “ from the left side the Scythians, Colchians and Bosphorians..., the Savns the so-called Sanigs, whose territory spread to the Pontus, till the place, where are located Apsaros (and Sebastopolis), harbor of Gisos and the river Phasis. These tribes live and spread to Trapezund”.⁴⁷ Thus, according to the data of the source on the territory of Colchis, on which ostensibly were located a lot of “kingdoms” and lived numerous “tribes”, in reality live only the Colchians and Savns /Svans (/Sanigs.)The same tribes are named by Eustafius of Caesarea (260-340). He writes about the sans, ” who are called the Sanigs”.⁴⁸ According to the data of Eustafius, historical Colchis is solely the territory of the sans//Sanigs and Colchians.

The author of the VIth century Procopius of Caesarea basing on the valid information of the authors of the previous epochs, repeatedly mentions Sanigs//Sagins and the country in which at Traian’s ((98-117) time, “were camped the Roman legions till the country of the Lazians and Sagins”. “The coastal part of the country of the Sagins was the possession of the Romans from the ancient times. In order to frighten them two coastal fortifications Sebastopolis and Pitunt were built...from the very start there was located a military garrison”.⁴⁹

The information about the Sanigs is given in the source of the VIIIth century – “Easter Chronicle”, in which is described a territory of the “so-called Salls, being called the Sanits⁵⁰by the others”. We cannot forget about the “tribe of San-Heniokhs” written by Plinius the Elder (VI, 12), and also the common “kingdom of the Macrons (which are called the Sans⁵¹by Stefanos of Byzantine and Heniokhs of Arrian (Ibid, p. 84), in order to emphasize once more the identity and Georgian origin of the sans//Sanigs and Heniokhs. Even the separistically dispositioned scientists don’t lay the claims to the Savns//Svans and sans, as their (and consequently of the Sanigs) Georgian origin is doubtless. Procopius of Caesarea wrote, that the Chans “earlier were called the sans”. Certain authors – goes on Procopius of Caesarea-called “the neighbors of the Trapezundians, the sans (we now call them the Tzans), or Colchians, giving the name of the Lazians to the other people, being mentioned under this name even today”.⁵² Thus, according to the historical sources, the Sanigs –the same sans//Chano-Colchians and Svans i. e. the Georgians. It is worth mentioning, that this undoubtless fact, unlike the other separatists is recognized by D. Gulia.⁵³

The absolute prove of the Georgian origin of the Sanigs is mentioned by Cl. Ptolemy in the zone of the town f Gagra of the Svano- Colchians, as well as the town Old Lazika being fixed by Phl. Arrian and Anonym in the Vth century to the North-West from modern

46 Review of the literature. see. ; T. Mibchuani. From the history of Ethnogenesis, Settlements and Culture of the West Georgian Highlanders, p. 83-94; M. Inadze. Problems of Ethnopolitical History of Ancient Abkhazia. -Macne, 1992, N2, p. 45-47; Z. Anchabadze. Essay on the Ethnical History of the Abkhazian People, p. 34; D. Letodiani. Political Relation of Abkhazia, Abshilia and Sanigia with Egrisi(Lazika) in 4-8th centuries. Tb., 1991, p. 120-140 (in Georgian).

47 Georgika, v. I, p. 19-20.

48 Georgika, v. I, p. 32. V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1948, N3, p. 322

49 Georgika, v. 2, p. 125-126; Procopius of Caesarea. War with the Goths. M., 1950, p. 379, 383, 384.

50 Georgika, v. 4, book 1, p. 10.

51 Georgika, v. 3, p. 281. V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers, p. 1, ed. 1, p. 262.

52 Georgika, v. 2, p. 53, 120. Procopius from Caesarea. War with the Goths, p. 376.

53 “Sans” (Sanigs, Svans, modern Svans) real tribe of the Abzgians. B. C. and long after they lived near Dioskuria”. -D. I. Gulia. Collection of Works, v. 6, p. 100-101.

Tuapse (chap. IV, 1), and from the Vth century - Nicopsya.⁵⁴ The Separatistic historiography prefers to fully ignore these facts, as they completely destroy the false conception of the aboriginality (autochthonism) of the Abkhazian –Apsua. M. Inadze logically and convincingly enough associates existence of Old Lazika with the oldest historical tradition of spreading the kingdom of Egros to the Sea, “ where the range of the Caucasus reach” and denotes, that the western slopes of the Caucasian range go down to the sea, exactly in the region of Old Lazika”.⁵⁵

The arguments for the Georgian belonging of the Sanigs is not questioned by the Abkhazian authors. Their main reason is the very remote phonetical resemblance of the ethnonimes “Sanigs”and “Sadz”, which was easily refuted by M. Inadze and N. Lomouri.⁵⁶

It's far more difficult, to determine the ethnical belonging of the Apsils and Abazgs. In this matter, Georgian historiography has not got a homogeneous opinion, not to say anything about the Abkhazian historians. A part of the specialists considers the Apsil-Abazgs the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians under the pretext that the ethnonyme “Apsil”, which a sort of coincides with the name “Apsua”, given to the Abkhazians by themselves –, and the name “Abazg” with the name “Abkhaz”. Other more serious and convincing arguments of the followers of such ideas don't name. Meanwhile, the opposite opinion has always existed, according to which the section Inguri-Psou beginning from the remote times till the late medieval centuries was settled by the Georgians; historical “Abkhazian” is the same Georgian, but modern Apsua-Abkhazians is the population of the North Caucasian origin having come in the 16-17th centuries. Starting from the 14th century the given opinion was gradually studied and worked out, verified and obtained a complete form in the 20th century.

The ancient history of Abkhazia and the origin of the Apsua-Abkhazians from the late medieval centuries was the sphere of interests of travelers, missionaries, diplomats and scientists. German diplomat S. Herbershtein, in the first fourth quarter of the 16th century having been visited Russian twice through the extraordinary mission, attributed the territories to the South of the river Kuban to Megrelia (“ beyond the river Kuban is situated Mingrelia”); and in the same place he denoted, that “ along the river Kuban...dwelt the people of Aphgasi”.⁵⁷

The Turkish historian of the 17th century Kiatib Chelebi considered the Abkhazians (Abazians) the people having the Jewish origin. ; under the “Jews” he meant Khazars in majority confessing Judaism; The direct ancestors of the Abkhazians the Turkish historian named the population of Kara Adjakhana⁵⁸ (Astrakhan), where among the Khazars most of all was spread Judaism. The opinion of Kiatib Chelebi is confirmed by the information of Plinius about the dwelling of the Abzoe to the North of the Caspian Sea.

The catholic missionary Archangelo Lamberti, serving in Megrelia in 1633-1649 and having a profound knowledge of history of Georgia, wrote: “Georgia in the North reached

54 *Bordering point of Georgia, at least till the second half of the XIVth century – Life of Georgia, v. 4. Tb., 1973, p. 201.*

55 *M. Inadze. Problems of ethnopolitica Hostpny...-Macne, 1992, N2, p. 47.*

56 *M. Inadze. Towns of Colchis of the Ancient Epoch. -Moambe, 1960, N2, p. 148-156 (in Georgian); N. Lomouri. Form the Ethnopolitical Hsitory of Ancient Abkhazia, p. 31-33.*

57 *S. Herbershtein. Notes on Moskovia. M., 1988, p. 181.*

58 *Information given by Kiatb Chelebi about Georgian and Caucasus. Translated from Turkish, with comments, interdiction and appendix G. Alasania. Tb., 1973, p. 132-133 (in Georgian).*

Kaffa”⁵⁹, i. e. Pheodosia. Jean Sharden, who arrived in Georgia in 1672 noted: “Ancient kingdom of Colchis did not occupy such a limited territory as now, it was spread from one side till the Meotian moor (Azov Sea – author) and from the other side to Iberia”.⁶⁰ He considered the Caucasian the off-springs of the Huns being split into the small tribes.

In the Georgian historical literature only in the 18th century for the first time appears the term “Apsar//Apsua”, being introduced as an inset in the work of the 13th century “History and Praise of the Crown Bearers”.⁶¹ According to the point of view of the publisher of the text “Life of Georgia” - S. D. Kaukhchishvili, - “Apsars” is one of the Georgian tribes in west Georgia.⁶² According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, “To the west of Anakopia is Abkhazia, being called from the beginning as Egrisi. ” When the Greeks occupied this country, ” they called it Abasa, but the Georgians called it Abkhazeti. But, more probable is that, it was called by the sons or grandchildren of Egnos.⁶³ Thus, the territory of settling of the Abazgs was the possession not of the Caucasians, but of Egrissians. Modern Apsua-Abkhazians, as Vakhushti wrote, at the end of the 17th century annexed that land till “the river Egrisi”.⁶⁴

The first Russian professional historian and state figure V. Tatishchev (1685-1750), whose works in Russian historiography are considered the source - touched the topic of Abkhazia. According to his words, the territory of modern Abkhazia is the North Megrelia, ” now the main part of it is filled with the Kubanians.⁶⁵” V. Tatishchev connected the term “Avkhazos” with the “Obez” of the Russian historical sources and chronicles, being identified as Georgians. “From the Obez or the Georgian princess⁶⁶” – it is how he calls the Georgian wife of the Kiev prince Izyaslav II (1246-1254). The opinion, that Abkhazia is the North part of Megrelia, i. e. the same Megrelia, was dominant in Russian science and political thought till the end of the 18th and beginning of the 20th century.

General (colonel) Pietro-Simeon Palas (1741-1811), the member of the Academy of Sciences of Petersburg, having travelled in 1794 through the Caucasus, called the Abkhazians (“Absne”) Abazs and wrote: “These people supposedly come from the North-West Part of the Caucasian mountains.”⁶⁷ Thus, according to Palas, modern Abkhazians cannot be attributed to the ancestors of the Apsil-Abazgs.

Jean (Ian) Pototski (1761-1815) – historian and geographer, member of the staff of the Russian Foreign Department having visited the Caucasus in 1799 and located Apsils
59 A. Lamberti. Description of Megrelia. Tb., 1938, p. 9-10 (in Georgian). A. Lamberti. Description of Kolchida. Odessa, 1876, p. 7.

60 Travel of Sharden through the Trans Caucasus in 1672-1673. Tb., 1902, p. 22.

61 Life of Georgia, v. 2, Tb., 1959, p. 58 (in Georgian); Abkhazia and Abkhazians of the medieval Georgian narrative sources. Georgian text was translated into Russian with comments and introduction by G. A. Amichba. Tb., 1998, p. 91.

62 Life of Georgia, v. 2, p. 636 (in Georgian).

63 Ibid v. IV, p. 783, 784.

64 Ibid, p. 845.

65 V. N. Tatishchev. History of Russia, v. I. M., -L. 1962, p. 171.

66 Ibid, p. 375. V. Tatishchev based his work on the information of the Russian chroniclers. Namely, in the Sophian second chronicle of the 16th century “Obez”, “Gurzians” and “Iberians” are used in the parallel meaning (Complete collection of the Russai Chronicles, v. VI. S-Pb., 1853, p. 125, 152), what speaks about the identity of those terms. In the “Tolkovaia Polea”. Where the list of 72 nationalities is given. Into which the were divided the people during the Babel, is given a phrase:” Iberians are the same Obezians”. This is the proof of the fact, that under the “Obezians” of the Russian sources are meant only the Georgians –Obezians. (G. Paichadze. Name of Georgia in the Russian, Written Historical Sources. Tb., 1989, p. 20, 21. See: G. V. Tsulaia. ”Pbezians according to the Russian Sources”. – Soviet Ethnography, 1975, N2, p. 104 and others).

67 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia, p. 285.

in Megrelia.⁶⁸

In Minas Medichi-Bjishkian's opinion, who travelled along the east Black Sea coast in 1815-1819, the Abkhazians are known under the name of the Abazs (Abazins). According to his conclusion, "the Abasians – the Scythian tribe, having come from the big Tatria and settled here and dwelling next to Megrels, in the course of time accepted Christianity and merged with the Megrels on the coast of the Black Sea. Afterwards, the Abassians, gave up Christianity and started to worship the trees. As, M. Medich-Bjishkian observed, "Abassians from Sukhumi by all means belong to these tribes (megrels- author). Later on, they became the tree worshipers and merged mainly with the Abassians".⁶⁹

German traveler and linguist Henrikh Julius Klaprot (1783-1835) knew Abkhazia and Abkhazians (Abazians) quite well. Having completed his travel along the Caucasus (1807-1808), he published several works in the German and French languages. In 1812 he wrote about the Abkhazians ("Absne"): "It is considered, that they are aborigines of the North-West Caucasus and later they spread in the other regions as well, till the Cherkessians did not withdrawn to the highlands after which they were assimilated with other peoples".⁷⁰ As we can see, Klaprot is based on the idea being then dominant on the migration of the Abkhazians from the North-West Caucasus. In the next work (1823) he wrote: "the Abazians ("Absne") "probably lived in the North-West Caucasus during the antique epoch", from where they were driven out by the Cherkessians.⁷¹ This conclusion is especially significant. The fact that the ancestors of modern Abkhazians did not live in west Georgia during the antique period and the ancestors are not Abazgo-Apsils, is convincingly proved by the analyses of the Abkhazian language material and folk customs. Unlike the others,⁷² it was momentarily understood by the German scientist. In a book, published by Ju. Klaprot in 1827 once more confirmed: "Apsua-Abkhazians for a long time lived in the North-West part of the Caucasus".⁷³

A French man from Switzerland Frederik Dubua de Monpere, the member of the Academy of sciences of Paris dedicated a serious and profound study to his travel through the Caucasus and Georgia, including Abkhazia (1833). The terms "Abkhazia" and "Lazika" were used by the author in the parallel meaning; He denoted, that, as a result of the invasion of the highlanders the border of Megrelia during the previous two centuries was moved first to Anakopia and then to the river Galidzga.⁷⁴ Concerning the ancient history and namely the "tribes" being mentioned by Arrian, Djubua de Monpere did not notice

68 Jean Potocki. *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, t. I. Paris, 1829, p. 219.

69 Is cited from G. Chitaia's book. *On the Ethnic Origin of the Ancient Abkhazians*. Works in 5 volumes, II. Tb., 2000, p. 118.

70 Klaproth Y. *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien unternomen in den iahren 1807 und 1808*. Hale und Berlin, 1812, p. 447.

71 *Voyage ou mont du Caucase et en Georgie par M. Jules Klaproth*, t. I. Paris, 1823, p. 201.

72 Russian Hsitorian M. Seleznev did not hide his amazement by the backwardness of the talented in his words Abkhazians. "It is amazing – he wrote – that the Abkhazians being in permanent contact with the Greeks, Romans, Bosphorians, Genuezinas, did nit borrow from them, neither civil formation, nor education or having acquired it, thaty did not manage to adopt it" (M. Seleznev. *Guide for Comprehending the Caucasus*, book II, S-Pb., 1848, p. 203). M. Seleznev did not understand, that Apsua-Abkhazians never had close contacts with the Greeks and Romans. Compare T. Gvantseladze. *On the Ways of Borrowing of the Greek Christian Lexics in the Abkhazian Language*. -Rocznik orientalistyczny. T. L. z. 2. Warszawa, p. 130-134.

73 *Tableau historiye, geographjiqe, etnographes entre la Russe et la perse*. Par Ju. Klaproth. Paris, 1827, p. 83.

74 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 312-313, 681.

any ethnical alterations.⁷⁵ The problem of the ethnical belonging of those tribes was not specially studied by him, but in the comments he wrote: “The Apsils is Megrelian population (were earlier called the Heniokhs)⁷⁶”. He explained, that Egrisi is the place of dwelling of the residents of Colchis – Georgians; they are “mentioned by Plinius in the form of “Ekrektika” and this name he gives to modern Megrelia”.⁷⁷ Thus, Djubua de Monpere did not know in Colchis – Egrisi non-Georgian tribes.

According to Teimuraz Bagrationi – Abkhazia is the lower Iberia, “being called Egrisi”; the name “Abkhaz” in his opinion is associated with the off-spring of Egros - Apkhazos, the hero and first ruler of Abkhazia .⁷⁸ As we see, Teimuraz grounds on the version of Vakhushti Bagrationi – legend about Egros and his off-springs (chap. IV, 1). But, this legend, reflecting the historical realities, emphasizes the Georgian origin of ancient Abkhazians. Simultaneously, exists the legend about the Caucasian people and among them the Apsua-Abkhazians – the epos of the Narts. The main area of the action of its heroes is the basin of the river Kuban, but they are not connected with the territory of modern Abkhazia. The oldest and most significant part of the epos is “the product of creation of the people living in the Kuban area”, - concludes N. Antelava.⁷⁹

About the ethnical belonging of the Apsils is mentioned in the French translation of the works by Procopius of Caesarea (1856) made by M. Isamber. It reads:” The Apsils are the Lazians living in the North-West and bordering with the Abazgs (they are undoubtedly modern Megrels)”.⁸⁰

In I. Shopen’s opinion, the Apsils (together with the Heniokhs and Sanigs) have the Georgian (Megrelian) origin; as for the Apgasians (Abazgs) they “lived in the mountain (Caucasian) gorges and canyons for a long time”.⁸¹

D. Bakradze in the book, being written with the consideration of the old epigraphical and archeological materials, considers modern territory of Abkhazia till Gagri the area of spreading of the Georgian language and of its Megrelian and Svanian dialects, though “the Megrelians occupied the whole sea-coast territory from Kuban till Trapezund, i. e. the zone was as we think fully, or partially was later settled with the Cherkessians and Abkhazians...”.⁸² Later he returned to the Abkhazian topic. “We think, -writes D. Bakradze, that the Abkhazians after coming down from the highlands being stronger, forced out the Megrels and the latter due to their weakness yielded their land ...It must be clear, that the Abkhazian language from the ancient times gradually replaced the Megrelian language, their land and as we think, to which belongs the above mentioned remains (of the 11th century - author), the whole Tsebelda and Abkhazia if not completely, in any case in its greatest part were the possession of the Megrelian tribe. As we have said earlier, the old Geographical names in the altered forms remain the local even after replacing the language of those names by another one. It resulted in existence of numerous Megrelian names

75 Fr. Dubois de Montpereux. *Travel around the Caucasus*, vol. I. Sukhumi, 1967, p. 148.

76 Fr. Dubois de Montpereux. *Vooyage autour du Caucase*, vol. VI. Paris, 1843, p. 396.

77 B. Gogia. *Abkahzia – Historical Province of Georgia*, p. 4.

78 Teimuraz Bagrationi. *History on Foundation of Iberia*, i. e. Georgia, which is the whole Georgia, S-Pb., 1848, p. 56 (in Georgian).

79 N. Antelava. *Abkhazian Myths, Rituals, Symbols. Encyclopedia. Tb.*, 2006, p. 56 (in Georgian).

80 B. Gogia. *Abkahzia-Historical Province of Georgia*, p. 7.

81 Ivan Shopen. *Fresh Notes on the Ancient History of the Caucasus and its Dwellers*. S-Pb, 1866, p. 282-283, 286.

82 D. Bakradze. *History of Georgia on the Basis of New Invetigations*. S-Pb., 1873, p. 2-3.

throughout the whole Abkhazia till nowadays; among them the most historical Tskhumi or Tskhomi (Sokhumi), which was no longer in use and by which (Tskhum – the author) the Abkhazians even today call the ruins of one of the fortresses not far from Sukhumi”.⁸³ In D. Bakradze’s opinion the Abazgs are the ancestors of the Apsua-Abkhazians,⁸⁴ but they lived “beyond the mountain” and only later (17th century) spread on the territory of their modern settlement.

The Abazgs as well as the Apsils were for the first time named the ancestors of the Apsua-Abkhazians by Mari Brosse. In *Abazgia//Abkhazia* – he wrote – “besides the Abkhazians lived the Abjvis - Apsili”. According to M. Brosse’s assertion the “Abjvis-Apsili of Byzantine and Apsheg of the Armenian writers,⁸⁵ means “Middle”, as the Apsils lived between the Missimians and Abazgians, between the rivers of the Galidzga and Kodor”.⁸⁶ We have to denote the fact, that the Apsils in reality were the ancestors of the residents of the “middle country” (“Abzhua”) - the Georgians. Unfortunately, M. Brosse did not know that the section Galidzga-Kodori from the ancient times and till the end of the 17th century was settled by the Megrels and was called “Shua Sopeli” (“Middle Country”). The Apsua-Abkhazians being settled there in the 17-18th centuries translated this name into their language. It was how the denomination Abzhua appeared. Mari Brosse announced the residents of the Georgian “Shua Sopeli” (the Apsils) the ancestors of the newly come Apsua/”Abzhua”. We have to emphasize the fact, that the scientist did not consider the problem of origin of the Abkhazians and Cherkessians⁸⁷ to be resolved.

Till the beginning of the 20th century in historical science, the opinion, that the ancient residents of the Black Sea coast of Georgia were Georgians was dominant. The great historian, native of Abkhazia F. Zhordania had the same opinion. Spreading of the Abkhazians to the South of Kelasuri only from the end of the 18th century, he connected with the inner discord in Megrelia and intrigues of Turkey with its crucial support.⁸⁸ F. Zhordania thinks, that to the end of the 17th century, that Abkhazians did not live farther South than Kelasuri (in the area of settlements of Arrians Apsil-Abazgians).

Iliia Chavchavadze touched the problem of the ethnic history of the Black sea coast in his work “The Crying of the Stones”, being the sample of the scientific publicism even today. His thought, that from the ancient times “the Georgian people possessed the whole space from the river Halis in Asia Minor - to the coast of the Black Sea and all the eastern part of this Sea and also the places being located between the Kura and Araks”. The scientists having the anti - Georgian attitude, like K. Patkanov (and also Niko Marr, being severely criticized in the “Crying of the Stones”), having a desire of appropriating of those lands or “annihilate the right of possession of the Georgians”, - continues I. Chavchavadze, - they seek to prove, as if the Meskhs, Tibarens; Colchians etc. “have never belonged to the Georgian origin”.⁸⁹ The falsificators of History of Georgia have always pursued the same aims.

⁸³ D. Bakradze. *History of Georgia*. Tbilisi, 1889, p. 272-273. “Tskhumi”, in D. Bakradze’s opinion is translated as “hot” (Ibid).

⁸⁴ D. Bakradze wrote like this, as he did not have an answer on the question: “The Georgian term Apsili has the Greek origin or the Greek Abazgian has the Georgian origin? (D. Bakradze. *History of Georgia*, p. 271-271). The answer on the question was given by T. Gamkrelidze (in the same source, p. 103).

⁸⁵ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia-historical provenience of Georgia*, p. 191, 547-548.

⁸⁶ Mari Brosse. *On the Essay of A. Vereshchagin under the title of “Travel Notes on the Black Sea Region”, N. 1, 1874, p. 2.*

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 3. The same opinion had V. Cherniavski. See his: *Brief Essay on Abkhazia*, p. 11, 15.

⁸⁸ F. Zhordania. *Abkhazian Catholicos*. Stavropol, 1893, p. 21.

⁸⁹ I. Chavchavadze. *Selected Works in five volumes*, vol. V. Tbilisi, 1987, p. 40 (in Georgian).

On the pages of the newspaper “Chernomorski Vestnik” of 1899 was held the first open discussion on the problems of Samurzakano (modern Gali region) and Abkhazia.⁹⁰ The opponents were the Georgians: K. Machavariani and Amvrozi Khelaia at that time the monk (“Samurzakanian”), the future Catholicos – Patriarch of Georgia (1921-1927). The first of them had the opinion, that Samurzakanians were the off-springs of Apsua-Abkhazians and Abkhazia is not Georgia. His arguments (Abkhazian first names and family names and statements of the Abkhazian elderly men) were not valid. The second one – Amvrozi Khelaia basing on the then known historical documents was seeking to prove the opposite of the opponent. After the brief review of the sources, father Amvrozi asked the opponent: “Don’t you think valid the opinion of the historians, that modern Sukhumi district was populated by the Megrelians to the river Psirtska, who afterwards were withdrawn to the borders of modern Samurzakano?”⁹¹ The sides knew the historical literature and sources on history of Abkhazia thoroughly well. They considered the Apsils to be Megrels. They had the only discrepancy in the matter of their localization. According to K. Machavariani’s assertion, the Apsils dwelt in modern Megrelia till the river Inguri; consequently they are the Megrels, who could not have lived on the right bank of this river, i. e. in Abkhazia. Father Amvrozi basing on Pr. of Caesarea information replied that that Apsils lived if not till the river Psirtska, at least till the river Kodori. Correspondingly, the ancient residents of this territory are the Megrelians. Amvrozi Khelaia afterwards repeatedly returned to this topic about the ethnic belonging of the Apsil-Abazgans, belonging of Abkhazia to Georgia and the late migration of the Apsua-Abkhazians from the Northern Caucasus.⁹²

In the prominent scientist- Al. Khakhanashvili’s opinion at least till the 11th century lived the Megrels and not the ancestors of modern Apsua-Abkhazians⁹³ on the territory of Abkhazia. Russia historian A. Diachkov-Tarasov well-known in the Caucasus and being brought up in Abkhazia in various his works being written in 1903, 1905 and 1909-1910 developed the version about the migration of the Apsua –Abkhazians to modern territory of Abkhazia from the Northern Caucasus in the XVI-XVIIth centuries.

In problems of ancient history of Abkhazia was interested great Georgian historian I. Javakhishvili. As a result of the thorough study of the data given by Strabo, Pliny, Arrian, Ptolemy and Pr. Of Caesarea he came to the following conclusion: “As we see, the population of Colchis belonged to the three branches of the Georgians: Lazo-Megrelians, Apshil-Abazgians and Svans”.⁹⁴ Later I. Javakhishvili made his viewpoint more precise, but he never denied the given important scientific conclusion. Thus, the conclusion about the Georgian belonging of the Apshil-Abazgians was included into the edition of 1951 and 1961 of the first volume of the “History of the Georgian People”,⁹⁵ written by I. Javakhishvili. From the last edition of this volume it is excluded (1979) and is only left I. Javakhishvili’s answer to N. Mar’s criticism in respect with the ethnical belonging of the Abkhazians: “I consider the Abkhazians related to the Georgian people, but I don’t

90 Saint Confessor Ambrosius (Khelaia). The collection of works was compiled, commented and studied by J. Gamakharia. Tb., 2006, p. 62-75.

91 Ibid, p. 423.

92 Ibid, p. 330, 554-555, 593, 602, 667.

93 A. Khakhanov. The Oldest Borders of the Georgians’ Settlements in Asia Minor. Tiflis, 1903, p. 62-63.

94 I. Javakhishvili. History of the Georgian People, book. I-II. Tb., 1913, p. 55 (in Georgian).

95 I. Javakhishvili. History of the Georgian People, book, I. Tb., 1951, p. 420; of the same author: vol. I, Tb., p. 427 (in Georgian).

call them the Georgians”.⁹⁶ The author, as we see does not concretize consciously who is meant – the modern Abkhazians not considered the Georgians by anybody or the historical Apsua-Abazgians. We have to maintain the circumstance, that once I. Javakhishvili was practically the only one, estimated Arrian’s “kingdoms” not as separate ethnoses, but the manifestation of the Roman policy “divide and empire” (chap. IV, 1). By this fact, he indirectly confirmed his old loyalty to his “old” position about the Georgian origin of the Apsil-Abazgians.

Niko Marr, being the founder of the Abkhazian separatist historiography and a specific spiritual teacher of the first generation of the Abkhazian regional ethnographers, on the 23 of May 1912 presented an information about the “History of the Term - “Abkhaz”⁹⁷ - to the historical-philological department of the Russian Empire Academy of Sciences. “Abaskians” (Arrian), “Obezians” (Russian chronicles), “Apsils” (Plinius, Arrian) in this work are introduced as the names of the Apsua-Abkhazians; the speaker located the Apsils on the right bank of the river Rioni, i. e. modern Megrelia.

N. Marr penned a lot of works on the Abkhazian language and history.⁹⁸ He officially did not refute the previous conclusions, but from the 20-ies of the 20th century he obviously tried to rethink his positions. In particular, N. Marr looked for the Abkhazian roots not in the South-West Georgia and Asia Minor among the Protokhetians, but in the North, in neighborhood with Russia and spoke “about the obvious Abkhazian-Russian ethnic relations”.⁹⁹ Now he started to assert, that “the Abkhazian language in his main layers was formed in the North Caucasus”. The name of the Abkhazians in its original form a-bas-k in its pure basis bas//bus FS reproduces -as N. Marr affirmed – the simple Iberian tribal title (i-ber).¹⁰⁰ Liberating from his old views, he started to assert, that the Megrelo-Chans from the ancient times occupied “the whole Black-Sea coast from Sinop with Halis till Anapa and Pantikapeia”¹⁰¹; the Abkhazians came from the North Caucasus and consequently the Megrelo-Chans left the North-West Black –Sea coast. But it did not happen in the antique epoch, as N. Marr wrote, but in the late medieval centuries. But N. Marr knew quite well the historical truth, but distorted it, first by the order of the Russian Empire and then – the Soviet power.

From the beginning of the 20th century the books and brochures of the Abkhazian nationality authors are published on the problems of history of Abkhazia, the basis for which were the “old” ideas of N. Marr and books being compiled by the chauvinists.¹⁰² S. Basaria, S. Ashkhatsava, D. Gulia¹⁰³ are meant, whose works already got and objectively negative estimation in historiography.¹⁰⁴

96 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*, book I. Tbilisi, 1979, p. 151.

97 N. Marr. *History of the Term “Abkhaz”*, p. 697-706.

98 N. Marr. *On the Language and History of the Abkhazians*. M., -L., 1938.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 211.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 246-247.

101 N. Marr. *Selected Works*, vol. V. M., -L., 1935, p. 24, 25. According to N. Marr’s assertion Megrelo-Chans and Iberians are the off-springs of the Scythians; It seems as the Abkhazians having been penetrated like a wedge into the Scythian Mass divided them into the Northern Scythians and Southern Colchians and later into the Iberians (N. Marr. *On the Language and History of the Abkhazians*, p. 240-241).

102 L. Voronov. *Abkhazia is not Georgia*. M., 1907; F. Hershelman. *The Causes of the Confusion in the Caucasus*. S-Pb., 1908; N. Vorobiev. *On the Groundlessness of Georgian Claims on the Sukhumi District (Abkhazia)*. Krasnodar, 1919.

103 S. Basaria. *Abkhazia in Geographical, Ethnographical and Economical Aspects*. Sukhumi, 1923; S. Ashkhatsava. *Ways of Development of Abkhazian History*. Sukhumi, 1925 (Editor N. Marr); D. Gulia. *History of Abkhazia*, vol. I. Tbilisi, 1925.

104 T. Mibchuan. D. Gulia. *On the Abkhazian Ethnogenesis. – Problems of History of Abkhazia*. Tbilisi, 1998, p. 167-179 (in

In 30-40-ies of the 20th century a prominent scientist-historian S. Janashia dedicated some of his studies to the problems of Abkhazian history. In his opinion the Apshil-Abazgians were the ancestors of the Apsua-Abkhazians. At the same time on the basis of the analyses of the names of the ancient camps in Abkhazia (Tsanigvari//Chanigvari-dwelling, camp of the Tsans//Chans) S. Janashia came to the conclusion, that the Abkhazians on the most part of the territory being occupied by them nowadays were preceded by the Georgian (Svan and Chano-Megrelian) population.¹⁰⁵ In spite of the conclusion being made by S. Janashia, one of the well-known scientist-historian N. Berdzenishvili did not consider (in 1950) to be finally stated, "what kind of tribes lived on the territory of modern Abkhazia..., being organically involved into the formation of the history of Georgia throughout the whole span of this history".¹⁰⁶ He did not give the direct answer to the posed question, but in the letter to the director of the scientific Institute of Abkhazia P. Ratiani from the 7th of October 1950 ("Small note on the big issue") brought forth the theory on the fact, that "Abkhazia culturally and historically is the organic part of Georgia", and that the "Abkhazian culturally and historically was the "Georgian".¹⁰⁷ N. Berdzenishvili did not keep the strict sequence in his views on history of Abkhazia. On one hand it seemed as if he did not consider the historical Abkhazians to be ethnically Georgians, on the other hand he strictly distinguished from each other the ancient and modern Abkhazians and very often was inclined to recognize the ancient Abkhazians as a part of the Georgian people. N. Berdzenishvili in the letter being addressed to P. Ratiani wrote: "science has no proof, that the tribes living in Abkhazia (Apsils, Abazgians, Sanigs etc) were more distant to the Iberian-Lazians, that the Svans, Meskhs, Hers" and that because of the evil fortune "we have to prove today, that the Abkhazians, Meshes, (Shavsho-Klardj-Taoians), Lazians, Acharians, Kobuletians and Ingiloians¹⁰⁸ are the Georgians". As we see the author considered the ancient Abkhazians not only culturally and historically, but ethnically as well to be the Georgians. Later, he expressed this idea even more definitely, when he wrote, that from the point of view of feudal culture in West Georgia, including Svaneti and Abkhazia "we cannot speak about different nationalities as about the ethno cultural notion. Abkhazia as a feudal country was Georgia and the Abkhazian was the Georgian as well as Egrisi and Megrels, as Ereti and Hers, as Kartli and Kartalinians... There is a great resemblance between the Abkhazians and Caucasian highland people in everyday life things and confession... They, of course are not aboriginal people. Thus, Niko Berdzenishvili in the "ethno-culturally" (ethnically and culturally) aspect sometimes did not separate Megralians and Kartalians, but he did not consider the modern Abkhazians the aboriginal People.¹⁰⁹

In 1951 was published work of one of the founders of Abkhazian historiography D. I. Gulia "On "My Book - "History of Abkhazia". Having reviewed his previous ground-Georgian); G. Gasviani. Georgian Scientists on P. Ingorokva's Opinion. P. Ingorokva on Abkhazia and the Abkhazians. Tb., 2003, p. 41-53 (in Georgian); Z. Papaskiri. Essays of the Historical Past of Modern Abkhazia, II, Tb., 2007, p. 110-111 (in Georgian); V. Shnirelman. Wars of Memory, p. 280-289.

105 S. Janashia. Works, vol. III. Tb., 1959, p. 15 (prominent archeologist B. Kuftin also thought, that on the East Black Sea Coast the Megrelo-Chanians were predecessors of the Abkhazian population. -B. Kuftin. Materials from archeology of Colchis, vol. I. Tb., 1949, p. 90). Review of S. Janashia's works on history of Abkhazia. See : E. Khoshtaria – Brosse. Problems of History of Abkhazia in Georgian Historiography. Tb., 2000, p. 7-9.

106 N. Berdzenishvili. Problems of History of Georgia, book III. Tb., 1966, p. 278 (in Georgian).

107 Ibid, p. 279, 280.

108 Ibid, p. 278, 281.

109 N. Berdzenishvili. Problems of History of Georgia. Tb., 1990, p. 608 (in Georgian).

less opinions, he came to the conclusion, that “the historical Abkhazians are the same Georgians and all the people being fixed throughout the west Georgia were “close relative ancient Georgian tribes (having one common name of the Colchians). In his opinion the number of the tribes decreased during the feudal period and modern territory of Abkhazia was presented by the three principalities out of which only one had the name “Abkhazian Principality” (starting from modern Afoni to the river Bzip) and those tribes were not a single step distant from the Iberian-Lazians, than the Svans or Meskhs’.¹¹⁰D. I. Gulia never denied his point of view.

Among the works on the ethno political history of Abkhazia and ethno genesis of the Abkhazians the work of P. Ingorokva:” *Giorgi Merchule*” (Tb., 1954) has a crucial meaning. The IVth chapter “The feudal state of west Georgia (Abkhazian kingdom) and information about him in the monument – “Giorgi Merchule” is dedicated to the problems of ethnical belonging and ethno genesis of the Abkhazians”. P. Ingorokva restored and with the help of the new sources gave a substantial basing to the ignored conclusions of the European, Russian and Georgian researchers and scholars of the previous times on the autochtonity of the Georgians in the East Black Sea coast and the late appearance of the Apsua-Abkhazians. He laid the valid scientific foundation for the historiography of Abkhazia.

As one might expect, publishing of the monograph by P. Ingorokva gave rise to the dissatisfaction of the separatists, though during 2-3- years (1954-1956) it was not felt. The well-known resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from the 10th of July 1956 about the false discrimination of the Abkhazian, Ossetian and Armenian people in Georgia and the trial of the assimilation triggered the open confrontation of the separatists. The separatists considered the book published by P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule” the manifestation of “discrimination”. In 1956 according the wish of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia was handed in a short report on this book signed by director of the Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of Georgia – N. Berdzenishvili.¹¹¹ Afterwards, the authorities decided to hold a discussion on the pages of the Journal of Literature “Mnatobi”. It must be remarked, that already in 1955 a part of the work of P. Ingorokva dedicated to the history of Abkhazia was estimated by historian and ethnographer Giorgi Chitaia. He shared the main thesis, that Abkhazia is originally Georgian country and from the ancient times and in the antique epoch as well it was settled by the Georgians, though the relation of the term “Abkhazian” with the term “Moskh” (about this wrote N. Marr as well) G. Chitaia¹¹² did not consider sufficiently grounded; but this did not break the thesis, similarly as the problem of the Georgian origin of the historical Abkhazians was not withdrawn. G. Chitaia analyzed the opinions of N. Marr, Arn. Chikobava, L. Blaikhshtainer, Kissling, A. Namitok, M. Medichi-Bjhishkian and others about the origin of the Abkhazians, studied the ethnographical material and came to the conclusion: “It must be clear, that the Abkhazians, to be precise ancient Abkhazians differ from the Abassa-Apsua-Apsils. That this latter is the tribe having come from the other side of the mountains, when the Abkhazians

110 D. Gulia. *On My Book. "History of Abkhazia"*. Sukhumi, 1951, p. 10, 12, 14.

111 E. Khoshtaria-Brosse. *From the Scientist's Archive.* – Mnatobi, 1990, N5, p. 138-145 (in Georgian).

112 G. Chitaia. *On the Ethnic Origin of the Ppulation of Ancient Abkhazia.* -Works in five volums, II. Tb., 2000, p. 112-122 (in Georgian).

is the ancient, local population”.¹¹³

In the same 1955, linguist G. Akhvlediani highly estimated the work of P. Ingorokva; he published an opinion under the title of the “Worth Work on the History of the Georgian Culture” in the Russian newspaper of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Georgia – the newspaper “Zaria Vostoka”. One of the main values of “Giorgi Merchule” the reviewer considered the new approach towards the history of Abkhazia and recognition of the Apsil-Abkhazians and historical Abkhazians as Georgians. “Historical grounding of this by P. Ingorokva cannot give rise to contradictions”, -wrote G. Akhvlediani.¹¹⁴ He called the serious research a part of the reviewed work - “Geographical name of the regions of Abkhazia and their relations with the Georgian language world”, though in G. Akhvlediani’s opinion the etymology of some toponymes was not uncovered and understood with the equal sureness. The position of both prominent scientists pointed to the fact, that Georgian historical and linguistical science shared the main theses of P. Ingorokva.

Within the scientific discussion being organized by the authorities was published a very positive opinion of S. Kaukhchishvili concerning the main –philological part of P. Ingorokva’s¹¹⁵ monograph. N. Berdzenishvili and K. Lomtadze¹¹⁶ published critical reviews. In Sukhumi were published negative opinions of Z. Anchabadze and Kh. Bgazhba.¹¹⁷

Among P. Ingorokva’s opponents a special position was occupied by N. Berdzenishvili. As a head, director of the scientific Institute officially he did not oppose the authorities, but the researchers, being for the theory of the double aboriginality basing on N. Berdzenishvili must consider, that Edition of the III volume of works of this well-known scientist and “distortion “in it of history of Abkhazia in P. Ingorokva’s style, played the role of the pretext of the regular protest action of the separatists in 1977. Before publishing of “Giorgi Merchule” and especially before receiving the party directives in 1956, as it was shown above, N. Berdzenishvili had identical with P. Ingorokva ideas. Thus, one-sided evaluation of N. Berdzenishvili’s position would not be correct, moreover, that he did not specially study this problem and arising out of the urgency of the problem, he expressed this or that opinion as a scientist and leader.¹¹⁸

The position of P. Ingorokva was substantially defended by G. Akhvlediani, S. Kaukhchishvili and D. Kobidze.¹¹⁹As the materials of the discussion are profoundly analyzed in historiography,¹²⁰ we can limit ourselves with the statement of the fact, that the theory of

113 G. Chitaia. *On the Ethnic Origin of the Population of Ancient Abkhazia*, p. 119.

114 *Zaria Vostoka*, 1955, July the 9th.

115 S. Kaukhchishvili. *Fresh Materials on History of the Ancient Georgian Poetry*. -Mnatobi, 1956, N10, p. 109-119 (in Georgian).

116 N. Berdzenishvili. *On the book written by P. Ingorokva -“Giorgi Mechule”*. – Mnatobi, 1956, N12, p. 125-131 (in Georgian); K. Lomtadze. *On Some Problems of the Ethnic Belonging and Placing of Abkhazians*. _ Mnatobi, 1956, N12, p. 132-139 (in Georgian).

117 Z. Anchabadze. *Problems of History of Abkhazia in the book written by P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule – the Georgian Writer of the XXth century”*. – Works of the D. Gulia Institute of Language, literature and History of Abkhazia, vol. XXVII. Sukhumi, 1956, p. 216-268; Kh. S. Bgazhba. *Some Problems of Ethnonimics and Toponymics of Abkhazia (on the work of P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule”)*. - in the same source, p. 279-303.

118 From the position of eth supervispr (being obliged to defend the official position) is written “ On the book of P. Ingorokva “Giorgi Merchule” (Mnatobi, 1956, N12, p. 126).

119 G. Akhvlediani. *For Some Problems of the Toponymics of Abkhazia*. -Mnatobi, 1957, N2, p. 107-114; S. Kaukhchishvili – On “Giorgi Merchule”. _ in the same source, p. 115-125; D. Kobidze. *Meaning of the term “Abkhaz” according to the Persian sources*. - in the same source, p. 126-128 (in Georgian).

120 G. Gasviani. *Georgian Scientists on P. Ingorokva’s point of view*.

double aboriginality being compiled in the lines of false Soviet ideology of the “friendship of peoples” was firmly established from the end of the 50-ies of the 20th century in the Georgian historiography and successfully competed with the separatist theory of autochtonity.¹²¹ The Apsil-Abazgians were announced the indisputable ancestors of the Apsua-Abkhazians, as for the other tribes, the researches may have the different form each other opinion.¹²² This theory became a specific “life belt” due to which the Georgian scientists fixed the fact of dwelling in Abkhazia of the Georgian population from ancient times, being opposed by the separatist historiography with its invented theory of autochtonity. Taking into account this circumstance it is difficult to overestimate the merits of the prominent scientists-historians-G. Melikishvili, M. Lordkipanidze,¹²³ M. Inadze, N. Lomouri¹²⁴ and all those, who in conditions of the Soviet regime opposed the unbridled separatism in the historical science.

On the given stage of development of the historical science, the ungrounded theory about the double aboriginity in the form it was offered by the Soviet historiography from 50-ies of the 20th century and even nowadays is offered by some authors turned into the anachronism. The modern Georgian historiography gradually releases from the imposed stereotypes and mistaken and incorrect ideas with the new arguments and additional proof and returns to the traditional, long forgotten evaluations¹²⁵ having the opponents even today.¹²⁶ Thus, even nowadays the problem of the ethnical belonging of the Apsil-Abazgians remains current and actual. T. Gamkrelidze expressed a very interesting idea. He rejected the assertion, as if the name “Abazg” corresponds to the “Abazs”. The term “Abkhaz” (“Apkhaz”), in T. Gamkrelidze’s opinion is the primary Georgian form,

121 Essays on History of Abkhazian ASSR, 1. Sukhumi, 1960; Essays on History of Georgia, vol. 1 and others.

122 The model for such an approach is the work of M. Inadze “On the Problem of the Ethnic Composition of the of the North-East Black Sea Coast Population” (Moambe of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, 1960, N2, p. 145-163) in which separate statements of Z. Anchabadze’s monograph are critically analyzed (from History of the Medieval Century Akhazia”. Sukhumi, 1959).

123 In M. Lordkipanidze’s opinion clarifying of the ethnic origin of ancient Abkhazians is very difficult, because of the scarcity of the historiographical basis, “But who were they? They were the Georgians, as they served the Georgian interests, national state”. – See. : Orthodoxy in Abkhazia and Problems of National self-Identification. Tb., 2005, p. 7 (in Georgian).

124 N. Lomouri earlier shared the position of P. Ingorokva. In 1963 he wrote: “In his research - “Giorgi Merchule” –P. Ingorokva, as it is known, poses in our opinion a very true statement about the Georgian origin of the Abkhazian tribes (Abzgians, Apsils), but in order to prove this hypothesis, we think he sometimes uses groundless arguments” (N. Lomouri. Information of the Greek Logographs..., p. 25-26).

125 T. Mibchuan. From History of Ethnogenesis, settling and culture of the West Georgian Highlanders; of the same author; History of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, part. Tb., 2003 (in Georgian); G. Gasviani. Old and New Abkhazia (in Georgian) of eth saem author: Georgian Scientists on P. Ingorokva’s Point of View; D. Gogoladze. Problem of the Ethnic elonging of the Ancient Eposes and on the Dwelling of the Ethnos of the “Abkhazian”Principality and Modern Abkhazia. Tb., 1995 (In Georgian); J. Gamakharia. B. Gogia. Abkhazia - the Hsitorical Region of Georgia. J. Gamakharia Abkhazia and Orthodox Faith. Tb., 2005 (in Georgian) of the same author: On the Problem of the Apsil-Abazgians. Tb., 1998 (in Georgian). B. Gogia. Abkhazia - Historical Province of Georgia. Tbilisi-Paris, 2005; of the same author: On the ethnonimes of Ancient Colchian Tribes. Paris, 2003, p. 51-54 (in Georgian); Z. Ratiani. Cryong Sources or Foreign Georgia. Tb., 1995 (in Georgian); A. Songulashvili. Abkhazian or Apsua? Tb., 2007 (in Georgian) etc. The conclusions of the Georgian historiography is confirmed by linguistics (T. Gvantseladze. Linguistic Basis of Historiography of Abkhazia. Doctoral Thesis. Tb., 1977 (In Georgian); T. Phutkaradze. The Georgians...) and Anthropology (L. Bitadze. Anthropological History of the Abkhaians. Tb., 2008 (In Georgian).

126 N. Lomouri. From the Ethno Cultural History of Ancieth Abkhazia; E. Khoshtaria-Brosse. Problems of Hsitory of Abkhazia... O. Japaridze. On the History of Ethnogenesis of the Georgian Nation. Tb., 2006 (in Georgian); M. Inadze. Problems of ethnological History of Ancient Abkhazia. –researches on History of Abkhazia/Georgia. Tb., 1999, p. 61-88 etc.

being borrowed by the Greek language in the form of the abazg/abaskh¹²⁷ (alien for the Greek language the consonant complex pkh/bkh was replaced by zg/zkh); as for the name “abaz”, if it were primary then it would be borrowed by the Greek language without the alteration and from it in the same form by the Georgian language. According to the qualified opinion of the scientist “abkhaz’abazgs “must have been closely related by the svan and Megrelian –Lazian tribes¹²⁸ dwelling in Colchis”.

The question of the ethnical belonging of the Apsils was specially studied by the well-known historian D. Muskhelishvili. He came to the conclusion, that the ethnonyme “apsil” has nothing in common not from geographical, nor chronological or formal-linguistical point of view with the “Apsua” and, must have belonged to one of the West Georgian tribes.¹²⁹ Relying on the above given conclusion of T. Gamkrelidze he also supposed, that the thesis about the relation of abazgs and the ancestor of the Apsua-Abkhazians is not “undoubtful”.¹³⁰ Unlike T. Gamkrelidze and D. Muskhelishvili, prof. N. Lomouri does not even try to ground his opinion about the non-Georgian origin of the Apsil-Abazgians. As nothing is directly said in the sources – he writes- we have only one way of the linguistical analyses of those ethnonimes, and this analyses makes the connection of the name “apsil” with the name of the Abkhazians –“Apsua” and “abazg” with the name of one of the Abkhazian-Adigean tribes – the Abazines.¹³¹ This is all the argumentation and analyses. It is remarkable, that N. Lomouri does not make linguistic analyses and limits himself with the pointing to the phonetic resemblance of the terms that is not enough for the identification of the “Apsils” with the “Apsua” and the “Abazgs” with the “Abazines”. For Instance, Apsil in Greek means not being bald, naked (psil –naked, bald etc.). Apsil is also translated as” galloping” “ hopping” “Jumping” , ”Flee” etc.¹³² in spite of the phonetic resemblance the names Apsar/Apsaras (the ancient Indian half divine), Ops (the Roman god), Apsat (god of the Svans and also of the Karachaians, Balkars and Ossetians) etc. has nothing in common with the modern Apsua. Abasko in the Greek means “impassable” or “impenetrable”, Abaskia is the impassable place.¹³³ It is obvious, that how risky is making of the serious conclusion on the basis of only the external resemblance of the terms. The Greek etymology of the Apsua-Abazgians has nothing in common with the Apsua-Abazs¹³⁴ and ethnonimes in general. It is impossible to associate modern Ap-

127 In S. Janashia’s point of view the Greek word “Abazgs” was accepted in the Georgian form “Abkhaz” (S. Janashia. Abkhazia within Colchis Kingdom and Lazika, p. 39).

128 T. Gamkrelidze. Form the Hsitory of Ethnonymics of Anciety Colchis. -Foreign and Georgian Terminology of the Notions “Georgia” and the “Georgians”. Tb., 1993, p. 591-600.

129 D. Muskhelishvili. On the Problem of Ethnic Belonging of the Apsils. –Artanuji, 2000, N10, p. 17-24 (in Georgian)’analogues iponion, but based on different arguments was expressed by N. Apkhazava. See his: For the Ethnic Belonging of the Apsils. –Problems of Hsitory of Abkhazia. Tb., 1998, p. 6-13 (in Georgian).

130 D. Muskhelishvili. Historical Status of Abkhazia in the Georgian Statehood. -Researches in History of Abkhazia/ Georgia. Tb., 1999, p. 124.

131 N. Lomouri. Form the Ethno Cultural Hsitory of Ancient Abkhazia, p. 31; of the same author: on the History of one of the Oldest Georgian Regions – Abkhazia. Tb., 2008, p. 61 (in Georgian).

132 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia- Historical Region of Georgia, p. 28-30. Material connection of the root “aps” of the term “Apsil” with the name “Apsua” is doubtless, though to it is attached the Georgian suffix il//el. Most remarkable is the circumstance, that semantics of “Apsil” and “Apsua” is different. In history there are numerous such examples (F. E. Caucasian and Balkanioan Albasn etc.). – See. : T. Gvantseladze. Language Data and their Meaning in Classification of Ethnic History of Abkhazia. – Problems of Hsitory of Abkhazia, p. 34-35.

133 B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Province of Georgia, p. 9.

134 In order to prove the belonging of Phtirophags (cone eaters) to the ethnos of Apsua Sh. Inal-Ipa explained “Apsua”, as “pine nation” (“apsa” in Abkhazian means - pine). See. : Sh. Inal-Ipa. Problems of Ethno Cultural History of the Ab-

sua-Abkhazians// Abazs with the Bazguns of Zakharuis from Mithilenes (VIth century), though the obvious phonetic resemblance¹³⁵; The medieval century Abeskur and Abkhaz on the territory of modern Azerbaijan is in no form related to the Apsua-Abkhazians despite the all phonetic likeness. ¹³⁶ Simultaneous existence in medieval centuries of two towns having one and the same name “Abkhaz” on the North-West of Georgia (in the area of Adler-Sochi ¹³⁷) and its then North-East borders, gives all the basis of supposing, that the towns having those names performed one and the same function (and not ethnical), for instance two Derbends (gates) - on the Black (Gagri) ¹³⁸ and the Caspian (Derbend) Seas. Thus, linguistic analyses and conclusions of N. Lomouri run into the serious obstacles.

Belonging of the Apsil-Abazgians and the tribes ‘of the Georgian ethnos living on the territory of modern Abkhazia are proved in the first place by the data of the sources. Let us analyze once more “Travel around the Black Sea” by Phl. Arrian (chap. IV, 1). The Colchian tribe is split by the author into several parts” Drils or San//Chans, Makrons//sans (chap. IV, 1), Heniokhs, Zidrits (a part of Iberia), Lazians; Nobody can doubt the Georgian belonging of the “tribes” being located between the “Colchians” and “Lazians”. Next to the Lazians were Apsil-Abazgians, to the north-west from which we can see again the Georgian-Sanigs with the towns – Dioskuria/Sebastopolis, Pitiunt and Old Lazika. Nobody has managed to give a valid explanation, how could “non-Georgian” Apsil – Abazgs appear in the centre of dwelling of the Georgians. M. Inadze was the first to try to do it. The tribe Abzoe being named by Plinius in the I st century and located as if by mistake to the North of the Caspian Sea, she “shifted” to the South-East, identified it with “Abaza” and then expressed a supposition about their migration in the same I st century to Abkhazia and formation of the “kingdom” in the II nd century. ¹³⁹ M. Inadze’s version being based mainly on a number of “probabilities” is very weak and it is impossible to accept it. Plinius’s mistake in localization of the “Abzoe” is not proved. On the contrary, the author knows quite well the area of dwelling of this tribe – “On this side of the bay of the Caspian Sea live the nomads and Savromats and on the other side - the Abzoe”. – writes Plinius. If anyway Plinius is mistaken, then it is not clear where the territory of Abzoe’s dwelling was located. Crossing of the Caucasian range by the numerous, organized mass and its unimpeded settling on the territory of Colchis being controlled by the Pontus kingdom, afterwards by the Romans seems absolutely unreal, especially the father formation of the “kingdom” in the neighborhood of the “co tribal” Apsils. At the same time the Abzoe// Abazgs, who lives in the North Caucasus could not manage to form the state formation on their own territory; till the late medieval centuries they are not even mentioned in the sources. ¹⁴⁰ The fact, that there is not a single written source denoting such a massive re-

khazians, p. 225. In the same monograph qw read, that “Apsua” is the nation of “Apsilia” (in the saem work, p. 345). D. Gulia once said, that Apsua-Absua is the nation from Abassia, Abyssinia (see his. : History of Akhazia, vol. 1, p . 95). In G. Pipia’s opinion, absta (gorge) + uaa means “dwelling in the gorge” (Saxalxo Ganatleba, 1990, 5th of July. In Georgian).
135 Georgika, vol. 3, p. 17-19; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 187, 542-544.

136 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 543, 553, 577-578.

137 Ibid, p. 211, 590.

138 G. Alasania. Georgia on the Map of the Cacusus of “Jakhan Niuna”. – Macne, series of history ..., 1971, N2, p. 101.

139 M. Inadze. On the ethnical composition of the population of the Black Sea Coast of the Antique period – Moambe of Academy od sciences of Georgia, 1960, N2; of the same author: Problems of ethno-cultural history...-Macne series of history, 1992, N1 (in Georgian); see also: N. Berulava. Town of Dioskuria – Sebastopolis..., p. 140-141.

140 Supposition of M. Inadze on the migration of Abzoe-Abazgians from the North Caucasus on the territory of modern Abkhazia in the I-II th centuries contradicts her versions on dwelling of the Cherkesso-Adigean tribes in pre antique and

location of people is incredible. In spite all the said above, M. Inadze's version contains the rational grain as well. It is the identification of "Abzoa" and "Abaz". In historiography has been expressed the idea about the identity of "Abzoa"- "Apsua", about the gradual shift of the tribe of Abzoa in the direction of Kuban and the Azov Sea, its settling in the period of the Mongolian invasions to the South from the river Kuban (at the North-West border of historical Georgia, and possibly within it), and in the late medieval centuries settling by them of modern territory of Abkhazia. ¹⁴¹This version is based on the conception of the Greek historian of the 14th century Nikiphoras Grigoras on the Scythianisation of the part of the Asia. ¹⁴² Without taking this theory into consideration, it is impossible to comprehend correctly the ethnical processes having place on the North-East Black Sea coast. The opinion of Kiatib Chelebi being mentioned earlier is the confirmation of the interrelation of Apsua -Abzoa , considering the Abkhazians the off-springs of the population of " Kara Adjakhan", i. e. Astrakhan (chap. IV, 1). Relation of the Scythian tribe of Avkheti, being fixed by Plinius in the North-East Caucasus with the modern Abkhazians is not excepting. ¹⁴³

Let us return to the information given by Phl. Arrian. Elementary reason prompts us, that on the described territory starting with the Colchians and Lazians (which is one and the same) and at least till the undoubtedly Georgian town Old Lazika is to be supposed the Georgian population, being represented according to the principle " divide and empire". The author of the second half of the 1st century Dionysius in his "Description of the Population of the Earth" denotes that along the most far off part of the Pontus, beyond the country if the Tindaryds lived the Colchians. ¹⁴⁴ He does not fix the Apsils and Abazgians considering them to be the Colchians. The same is repeated by Pristsian (borders of the 5-6th centuries). ¹⁴⁵ The Latin author of the second half of the IVth century Rufus Fest Avien to the South-East from the Zigs fixed only the "energetic Colchians" and "Severe Iberians". ¹⁴⁶ Approximately the same opinion is expressed by the nameless author (not earlier than the Vth century). In the work "Narration on the Earth Description in Brief" he wrote:" Below Sarmatia sits Colchika and at the Caspia – Albania and between those areas is located Iberia. ¹⁴⁷ These data prove the above mentioned information of Anonym of the Vth century about the fact of dwelling between Dioskuria and the river Chorokh of the people, being previously called the Colchians and afterwards being renamed into the Lazians (chap. IV, 1). Thus, the source of the Vth century identifies the Apsil-Abazgians with the Lazians. The "tribes" and "kingdoms" being mentioned by Arrian and then by Anonym of the Vth century it is quite a different thing, as they are only the big and compact settlements - the communities having their own leaders. We have to take into account

early antique epochs on the South-Eastern coast of the Black Sea and the statements, that under the "Caucasians", being mentioned by Strabo in Dioskuria (information of the II-Ith centuries) are meant the ancestors of the Abazgian-Apsua (M. Inadze. Problems of Ethno-Cultural history of Ancienn Abkhazia. -Macne, 1992, N1, p. 15-16; N2, p. 57).

141 J. Gamakharia. B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 26, 31, 528; B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical province of Georgia, p. 11, 12.

142 Georgika, vol. 7, p. 124-131-in Georgian); J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 221-223, 590-593.

143 V. Latishev. Information given by the ancient writers, vol. II. ed. I, p. 181.

144 V. Latishev. Information given by the ancient writers...-Vestnik of ancient history, 1948, N1, p. 240

145 V. Latishev. Information given by the ancient writers...-Vestnik of ancient history, 1949, N4, p. 310.

146 V. Latishev. Information given by the ancient writers...-vol. II, ed. 2, p. 358-359.

147 V. Latishev. Information given by the ancient writers...-Vestnik of ancient history, 1948, N4, p. 242.

the opinion of Anonym of the Vth century about the dwelling of the Georgian “tribes” from “Old Achaea” to “Old Lazika”, when about the Abzoa//Abazgians the source says nothing. Thus, all the authors describing the ethno-political situation of the first centuries A. D. (Arrian, Ptolemy, Anonym of the Vth century and others) name only the Georgians living between the rivers of the Inguri and Psou.

This conclusion is confirmed by another author of the IVth century – Agatangel. His work (7-8th centuries) about the baptizing of the Armenians and afterwards being translated into the Arabian language was discovered by N. Marr on the Mountain of Siani in 1902. He dedicated to this source a vast research “Baptizing of the Armenians, Georgians, Abkhazians and Lazians by Saint Grigol”.¹⁴⁸ In this document the Abazgians are mentioned as the Lazians.¹⁴⁹ Even N. Marr admitted, that “under the Abkhazians... here must have been meant the Lazians”. In the early edition of the work written by Agatangel instead of the term Abkhaz is really used the Lazian”.¹⁵⁰

Not a single author giving the genealogical schemes of the peoples considers the Apsil-Abazgians the different ethnoses. The ancient literary men tried to divide the mankind into the off-springs of the sons of Noah – Shem, Ham and Japheth and determine the place of all the known ethnoses by help of this division. Evstafios of Antiokhia an (280-360) and Ioan Zonara (12th century) put of the off-springs of Japheth among the Georgians mention only the Iberians.¹⁵¹ Zonara knew the Abazgs well through Procopius of Caesarea, write about their baptizing, but did not include into the genealogical scheme, as he considered the Abkhazians to be Iberians- Georgians.

Byzantine writers and among them - the author of “Liber Generationis” (being written in 334), Evsevius of Cesarea (died in 340), Epiphany of Cyprus (314-403) compiler of the “Easter Chronicle” (630-640) basing from his side on the data given by Ipolitus of Rome (3rd century), Georgius Singeloz ((8-9th centuries), Leon Grammatiko (9th century), Georgius Kedren (9th century) in their genealogical schemes mention the Colchian – Iberians and also Khalibs, Mosiniks, Tibarens, Sans and Kols, but not Apsil-Abazgians or Abkhazians.¹⁵² Only Joanne of Antiokhia (7th century) says, that Japheth together with other territories was given a country of the Abzagians.¹⁵³ The author does not mention the Colchian-Iberians. The fragment of the work by Joann of Antiokhia, in which is given the genealogical scheme is preserved only in the edition of the 14th century, giving us a serious base to suppose, that the copyist uses the term “Abazgia” (Abkhazia) in the meaning of All Georgia, like the other authors of that epoch.¹⁵⁴ After this, we must be more considerate to the ethno genetic conception of Leonti Mroveli.¹⁵⁵ In which the Abkhazians are not mentioned and the modern territory of Abkhazia is presented as the lot of Egros

148 Notes of the Department of Orient of Russian Geographical Inperial Society, vol. 16, ed. 2-3. S-Pb., 1905, p. 36-211.

149 Ibid, p. 160. This obvious fact was not reflected in the title of the investigation carried out by N. Marr, which can be formulated as follows: “Baptizing of the Armenians, Georgians, Lazians anda Alans...” The author disrted the contents of the documents already in the title.

150 Georgika, vol. 1, p. 2.

151 Ibid, p. 35. vol. 6, p. 191; V. Latishev. Information guven by the acnient writers...-Vestnk of ancient history, 1948, N3, p. 237, 293.

152 Georgika, vol. 1, p. 11-20, 39-41; vol. 4, book, 1, p. 6-9, 61-63; vol. 5, p. 3-4, 10; V. Latishev. Information of ancient writers...-Vestnik of ancient history, 1948, N3, p. 221, 245-246.

153 Georgika, vol. 1, p. 2.

154 Georgika, vol. 7, p. 90-91; vol. 8, p. 25-26 etc.

155 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 3-6; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 37-38.

– eponym of the western Georgians.

When the well-known to the Byzantine authors the Abazgians and Apsils are not mentioned among the off-springs of Shem, Ham and Japheth and the Abkhazians are absent among the off-springs of Targamos (Leonti Mroveli), when they are not mentioned by the absolutely disinterested authors, it supposedly means only one thing – the separate ethnos under those names did not then exist. This is the reason, why the “Abkhazians” are not included into the “Easter Chronicles” containing the detailed information about the tribal composition of the world of that period (7th century). Among the peoples being listed between Bosphorus and Trapezund instead of the Abazgians - having then the strongest principality, it names only the Colchian-Iberians.¹⁵⁶ The Byzantine author of the 12-13th century Niketa Khoniati also did not name the Abkhazians, when he was enumerating subjects of the Manuil Porhrogenitis (1143-1180), being called the “appointed by God over the Lazians, Iberians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Jiks, Khazars and Guts.”¹⁵⁷ On the basis of the observed material we can conclude, that the peoples being mentioned in the first centuries A. D. on the modern territory of Abkhazia ethnically belong to the Georgian world.

Z. Anchabadze in his researches did not use information of the Byzantine authors on the classification of the ethnos and remarked, that the individuality of the Apsua-Abkhazians is confirmed by the list of the peoples, being compiled by Eqvtime Atoneli (11th century) and Georgian Anonym of the 13th century.¹⁵⁸

Eqvtime Atoneli based on the data given by Epiphanies of Cyprus and other authors. Though, he added to them the Abkhazians, Ossetians, Jiks and Hers, he separately mentioned the Colchians and Megreles. Anonym of the 13th century named the Georgians, Abkhazians, Svans, Megreles, Dvals and Tushians.¹⁵⁹ In Z. Anchabadze’s opinion the basis for the lists given by Georgian authors was the language difference, that’s why the Abkhazians in those documents - wrote Z. Anchabadze – were presented as if a different ethnos.¹⁶⁰ Eqvtime Atoneli has the radically different opinion: “Each out of these kins does not have its own language. Many of them use the common language, though they are considered the different tribes and kins”.¹⁶¹ This means, that the language difference was not the ground for the list of the above mentioned Georgian authors. It is really impossible to recognize the carriers of the different languages, the Georgian communities being mentioned in the document. Eqvtime Atoneli and Anonym of the 13th century use the term “tribe” in the meaning of the dictionary compiled by S. S. Orbeliani (see here, chap. III, 2), i. e. the Abkhaz in these documents is presented as a compound part of the Georgian people and not the separate ethnos.

To the ethnical belonging of the communities living in Abkhazia and among them of Apsil –Abazgians, point the Georgian toponymes, being fixed before the early period of the medieval centuries.¹⁶² The most ancient among them is the legendary Egrisi being as-

¹⁵⁶ Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 10.

¹⁵⁷ Georgika, vol. 6, p. 133.

¹⁵⁸ Z. V. Anchabadze. Form History of Medieval Abkhazia, p. 216-217.

¹⁵⁹ K. Kekelidze. Problems of classification and geographical location of the nations in ancient Georgian writers, works (the Georgian version Liber generetionis). -Works of the Tbilisi State University, 1938, VII, p. 7, 11, 102 (in Georgian).

¹⁶⁰ Z. V. Anchabadze. Form the Hsitory of Medieval Century Abkhazia, p. 217-218.

¹⁶¹ K. Kekelidze. Problems of Calssification and Geographical location of the nations..., p. 12.

¹⁶² See. : P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule, p. 145-189; G. Gasviani. Abakhzia, p. 83-134 (in Georgian); T. Mibchuan. Toponimics of Abkhazia. –Problems of Hsitory of Abkhazia, p. 154-166 (in Georgian); D. Muskhelishvili. Main problems of historical geography of Georgia, 1. Tb., 1977, p. 108-1239 (in Georgian); T. Gvantseladze. Longuistical basis

sociated with the name of Egros. ¹⁶³ According to M. Janashvili, this town was founded in the 21st century B. C. ¹⁶⁴ In the first half of the 3rd century B. C. in times of Parnavaz and Kudji it was called Bedia. ¹⁶⁵

Dioskuria¹⁶⁶ is also one of the oldest towns being mentioned in the sources of the 6-4th centuries B. C. (Skylak of Kariand and Pseudo Skylak) till the 1st century A. D. (Plinius the Elder). From the 1st century A. D. it is called Sebastopolis, from the 7th century Tskhumi. ¹⁶⁷ Pseudo Scylac mentioned the town of Hienos (Ochamshire); it is also mentioned by Pomponius Mela (Kyknos) and Plinius (Kignum). From the II century B. C. Pitsunda//Pitiunt//Pitiot is also mentioned (Artemidor of Ephesus, Strabo). ¹⁶⁸ From the IVth century are known Ziganeos//Gudakva (Gudava)¹⁶⁹ and from the Vth century – Koman and also the river Mokvi. ¹⁷⁰

In the VIth century Trachea, the fortress Tibeleos//Tsebel¹⁷¹ and also Darin, ¹⁷² the fortress of Tsakhar (Chkhalta), Buklos//Bukolus (Georgian Bokeri)¹⁷³ are mentioned. The Jerusalem monk of the 7th century Feodosius from Gangr kept the letter of Anastasius Apocrisiar (7th century) in his letter, being evicted to Lazika//Egrisi, containing the data on the Kartvelian toponymes, being located on the territory of modern Abkhazia: The fortress of Skhemari, Skymar (Skiomar, Khimar), Tusum, Mokvi, Jikhakhora, Pusta, Skotor, Svanid, Mukoris. ¹⁷⁴ None of these toponymes has an Abkhazian etymology. (See here, chapter XI).

We have to stress the fact, that on the section of Inguri-Psou not a single toponyme was fixed being explained in the Abkhazian language till the late medieval centuries. This fact eliminates the possibility of living on this territory of non-Georgian population. Moreover, the toponimic material being presented in the book written by K. Meretukov –“Adigean Toponimic Dictionary” (M., 1990), ¹⁷⁵ according to the author contains a great number of obviously Georgian geographical names. This is one more

for historiography of Abkhazia, p. 183-200 (in Georgian); of the same author: For the problem of original name of Pitsunda. -Vestnik of Kutaisi University, 1995, N1, p. 25-32 (in Georgian); of the same author: Kartvelian toponymics of Abkhazia: Gagra. -problems of structure of the Kartvelian languages, vol. 6. Tb., 1996, p. 44-49 (in Georgian); Georgian Substrate Toponymics in Abkhazia (Sukhumi, Gagra, Tkvarcheli). -Artanuji, 2000, N10, p. 87-92 (in Georgian); P. Tskhadia, V. Jojua. Geographical names of Samurzakano (linguistical research). Tb., 2004, p. 166 (in Georgian).

163 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 5; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 38.

164 Saint Confessor Ambrosius and Abkhazia, p. 606.

165 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 5.

166 On the Georgian etymology of Dioskuria. see. :A. Tugushi. Dioskurishi – Main Water (Aia, 1999, N7, p. 62-76), -in Georgian.

167 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 235; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 49.

168 T. Kawkhchishvili. Geography of Strabo, p. 120, 121.

169 O. Akishbaia. Gudava. Tb., 1998; Plinius mentions the river Sigania (chap. IV, 1) Arrian-Singam (in N. Kechakmadze' s opinion this is the river Eristkali flowing into the Black Sea at Siganea// Gudava. See. ; Phl. Arrian. Travel around the Black Sea, p. 69, 70, 90).

170 Georgika, vol. 2, p. 6; in the same place p. 187-188; 203-204.

171 In the same place, vol. 3, p. 160; Arrian mentions the Strobil (Tsebelda) peak (chap. IV, 1); Georgika, vol. 2, p. 59.

172 Georgika, vol. 3, p. 236-237. S. S. Orbeliani explains “darani”. As the hiding place in the rock and under the ground (Georgian dictionary, vol. 1, p. 197). In Megrelian “darini” – dwelling, camp. The words “Darin raod” can be understood as the safe (from the Persian’s invasion) “the road of life”.

173 Georgika, vol. 3, p. 85-87, 163; vol. 1, p. 42; D. Muskhelishvili. Main Problems of Historical Geography of Georgia. I, p. 122.

174 Georgika, vol. 4, part 1, p. 42-46, 50-51; on their localization see D. Muskhelishvili. Main Problems of Historical Geography of Georgia, II. Tb., 1980, p. 52-57.

175 The dictionary is studied in the monograph; Z. Ratiani. Crying of the sources or foreign Georgia. Tb., 1995 (in Georgian).

additional argument in favor of a version about the settling of the Georgians not only till the river Psou, but the river Kuban.

2. Dissemination of Christianity.

In the study of the ethno-political situation of Abkhazia the history of dissemination and gradual spreading of Christianity may appear of great help. According to the Georgian historical tradition-Iberia is the lot of Our Lady. According to the God's will and Our Lady's request the Apostles Andrew the first called and Simeon Canaanites¹⁷⁶ arrived in Georgia. It happened approximately till the year of 35. ¹⁷⁷ According to other data the Apostles came to Abkhazia in 55. ¹⁷⁸ Their missionary activities were described in the work "Remembrance on the Travel and Preaches of Andrew" written by Eqvtime Atoneli, who lived on the borders of the 10-11th centuries. He took as a basis a narration of the authors of the 8th century – "The life of Andrew"; That latter based his work on the previous authors (Clementies of Rome, Evagros of Sicily, and Epiphanies of Cyprus). ¹⁷⁹

Saint Simon of Canaanite (Zilot) died in Abkhazia and supposedly was buried in Nikopsia and afterwards reburied in Anakopia. Pious Andrew "strengthened in Christianity Megrels and Abkhazians and went to Scythia". ¹⁸⁰ In Mytropolites Anania Japaridze's opinion under the Scythians often Colchian-Iberians¹⁸¹ are meant. According to Apiphanius of Cyprus opinion - Saint Andrew really converted the Scythians, Sogdians and Gorsins into Christianity on the territory of Georgia-"in great Sebastopolis, where the Apsar fortress, the Hiss harbor and the river Phases is located; there live the Iberias, Sussians, Fustians and Alans". ¹⁸² Mentioning of the Fustians in the text confirms saint Andrew's presence in Abkhazia. Fusta is the highest peagant god of the Georgian highlanders – the Svans; Besides, existence of the quarter under the name of Fusta¹⁸³ is preserved kept even today in the Sukhumi district. According to Apiphanius of Cyprus, Saint Andrew baptized the Iberians, Svans, (Sussians, Fustians), Alans; the Abkhazians are not mentioned among those being baptized, though according to the sources the apostoles converted them as well. In the 1st century Abkhazia and the Abkhazians are not seen on the historical arena, but the Georgian authors Eqvtime Atoneli, Ephrem the Small, Leonti Mroveli use the terminology contemporary to them (XIth century). T. Gvantseladze supposed, that Leonti Mroveli in the "Life of the Georgian Kings concerning the Apostles did not use the word "Abkhazia", but "Egrisi", "megrs" and "megrels" being often mentioned in the text is the generalized name of the all West Georgia (to Nikopsia) and its residents, later being replaced in the same meaning with "Abkhazia" and "Abkhazian". ¹⁸⁴

176 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 38; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 38.

177 Anania Japaridze. *History of the Georgian Apostolic Church*, vol. 1, 1996, p. 38 (in Georgian).

178 *Story on Saint Apostle Simon Kananite (the same Zilot)*. M., 1892, p. 7.

179 *Chrestomathy of the Ancient Georgian Literature*, vol. 1, Tb., 1996, p. 27-28 (in Georgian); *Georgika*, vol. 4, book 1, p. 57-59; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 25-26.

180 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 42-43; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 39-40.

181 Anania Japaridze. *History of the Georgian Apostolic Church*, vol. 1, p. 71, 86-102.

182 *Georgika*, vol. 1, p. 186, 245-246.

183 *Ibid*, p. 54; T. Mibchvani. *Monuments of the material culture of Abkhazia- epigraphics*. Tb., 1999, p. 22 (in Georgian). Usage of the name of deity for naming of the geographical point is quite typical for the Georgian language space. To such type can be referred F. E. toponyms: sameba (Trinity), Dali (Dali gorge), Mtavarangeloz, i. e. Archangel (with the fixed on the territory of Abkhazia Targeloz) etc.

184 T. Gvantseladze. *Linguistical basis of historiography of Abkhazia*, p. 40-45.

Dissimination of Christianity is not limited only by the activities of the Apostles. In the 2-3rd centuries this process was common for the whole Black Sea Georgia and is associated with the names of the first Christians migrating to Lazika and Abkhazia (Klimentius Palm, Orentius and his brothers, Ioan the Gold Mouthed).¹⁸⁵ In the matter of spreading of Christianity, they were supposedly helped and supported dislocated on the territory of Abkhazia Roman garrisons and also the local Georgians having served in the far off provinces of the empire and returned home. The bishop of Lioni Ireneus (IInd century) confirmed the fact of spreading Christianity in Iberia.¹⁸⁶ For that time in Georgia, including Abkhazia had already existed the Christian communities.¹⁸⁷ Announcing of Christianity the state religion in Roman empire and then in Georgia – Iberia, Lazika and Abkhazia and Apsilia being the subjects of the latter, greatly helped dissimination of a new faith in Abkhazia. Saint Nino of Capadokia was supposedly the enlightener of West Georgia as well. According to the information given by the author of the Vth century *Gelasi of Kizik* (based on the works of Gelasius of Caesarea), during the reign of the emperor Konstantine the Ist (306-337), “The Commandments of God was accepted by the people living on the lands along the Pontus – by the Iberians and Lazians”¹⁸⁸, he considered the merit of the “captive” – Saint Nino. Presence on the Ist World Nikean Ecclesiastical Assembly (325) of the bishop of Pitsunda Stratophilus and also the Domnus of Trapezund¹⁸⁹ witnesses the wide dissemination of Christianity in West Georgia. From this period till the invasion of the Hunns the main religious centre of all the Georgian Black Sea coast, supposedly was Pitsunda.¹⁹⁰ In the 5th century – in the epoch of Vakhtang Gorgasali – Georgia was integral and consequently the church was also integral; It subdued Mtskheta and church service was performed in the Georgian language; After stating the borders along the river Kelasuri, the territory of Abkhazia being located to its North-West, in Mithropolite Anania Japaridze’s point of view in statly and consequently in religious respect became a part of Byzantine.¹⁹¹

On the territory of modern Abkhazia Christianity was spread quite widely, the evidence of what is the activity of the bishop of Koman – Basiloskos. He was the relative of the Great martyr Theodor Tiron. Martyrdom of Basilisk because of the confession took place approximately in 308. He showed to Ioan the Gold-Mouthed before his death.¹⁹² Saint Basiliskos and Ioan having passed in 407 were buried side by side in Koman. The sign of the religious status and attitude of the local population was the respect of the Ioan the Gold-Mouth grave from the Bishop of Koman and the parish. The decision of Emperor Feodosius II (408-450) to rebury the relic of the Saint in Constaninople (438) met a great resistance from the Bishop of Koman and the parish. They did not give the remains of Ioan the Gold-Mouth to anyone and they grieved and mourned. When the undecayable body of the Saint was taken out of the sarcophagus, the local population and clergy having

185 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Religion*. Tb., 2005, p. 47-56.

186 *Ibid*, p. 51.

187 Anania Japaridze. *History of the Georgian Apostolic Church*, vol1, p. 133

188 *Georgika*, vol. 1, p. 186, 245-246.

189 *Ibid*, p. 1-10.

190 B. Diasamidze. *Christianity in West Georgia (I-Xth centuries)*. Batumi, 2001, p. 105; *Megrelia. Colchis, Odishi (T. Beradze)*, p. 105 (in Georgian).

191 Anania Japaridze. *History of the Georgian Apostolic Church*, vol. 1, p. 16-28.

192 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Religion*, p. 56 (in Georgian).

been gathered in great number spent all night chanting and worshipping the Saint with the candles in their hands. The resistance of the population was broken down and it saw the relic of Ioan the Gold-Mouth¹⁹³ off weeping and lamenting over it. The greatest sacred possession - the sarcophagus was kept in Koman and during the centuries it became the object of worship of the believers.¹⁹⁴

The prove of the scale of dissiminating of Christianity is the complex of the cult constructions (4-6th centuries) with the unique objects being discovered in Pitsunda and its neighbourhood. A significant Christian hoard was found in Tsebelda¹⁹⁵ as well. The material having been revealed there confirms the information about the Tsebeldian Apsils given by Pr. of Caesarea: "The Apsils are the subjects of the Lazians and Christians for a long time".¹⁹⁶ The fact, that modern Apsua-Abkhazians don't have their own Christian terminology and it is fully borrowed from the Literary Georgian or its Megrelian dialect (see here, chapter XI), simply points to the Geogrian origin of the ancient population of the modern territory of Abkhazia.

Dissimination of Christianity became the precondition of establishing the close contacts with Rom and Byzantine. For ensuring the security of the region, its cultural-economical rise and further consolidation of the Georgians. At the same time it served the reaching of the political goals – strengthening of the positions of Empire in Lazika. In accordance with those aims the formation of the separate political units had place and consequently - strengthening or vice versa weakening of some of them and also the foundation and reorganization of the Christian centres.

3. Abkhazia within Egrisi (lazika)

The complex international situation influenced the political processes having place in the region. Sasanid Iran having been come into power to the middle of the IIIrd century gradually drove back the Roman empire being seized by the inner anarchy; The emperors often changed each other ("the period of emperor - soldiers" from 235 to 284); Britain, Spain, Gallia and Syria-Egypt ("Palmyra Kingdom") split away from the empire. The invasions of the barbarian tribes became commonplace. Kingdom of Lazika is likely to restore in the IIIrd century, though they reached the independence later. In the 50-ies of the same century The Black Sea coast of Colchis was invaded by the Gots. They attacked Pitsunda, but were defeated by the local Roman garrison. Soon the Gots appeared near the Phases (where they met a serious resistance), then they invaded Pitsunda, defeated it, robbed it and killed the most part of the Roman soldiers¹⁹⁷ and captured the rest. The Gots plundered Trapezund¹⁹⁸ as well. At the end of the IIIrd century the Bosporian kingdom

¹⁹³ Abkhazia and Simono-Kananites Monastery, M., 1898, p. 200; History of the Orthodox Church till the beginning of the division of the church. S-Pb, 1902, p. 158.

¹⁹⁴ Catholicos –Patriarch of All Georgia His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia the II being the Tskhum-Abkhazian Mytropolit (1967-1977) moved the sarcophagus of Joanne the Gold-Mouth into the Sukhumi Cathedral Church and got rid of it of ruin. Later the faithful family of Yuri (George) Anua and Zoia Adamia restored the Koman church and on the 25th of November of 1990 placed the sarcophagus in it. The next day his holiness Ilia the II performed the first church service in the Koman church. -Madli, 1997, September 18th (in Georgian).

¹⁹⁵ See. J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and the Orthodox Religion, p. 97.

¹⁹⁶ Georgika, vol. 2, p. 128; Prokopius of Caesarea. War with the Guts. p. 380.

¹⁹⁷ Roman garrison in Pitsunda was located between 135-152 (T. Todua. Roman World and Colchis, p. 26).

¹⁹⁸ N. Lomouri. History of Egrisi Kingdom..., p. 40-42; T. Todua. Roman World and Colchis, p. 32-33.

marched against Rome; it annexed Lazika and went further to the Asia Minor. In G. Melikishvili's point of view the Lazs defended against the invaders independently; As for the Romans, they probably had left the territory of Lazika before.¹⁹⁹

The end of the 3rd century was the period of a certain stabilization for the Roman Empire and restoration of the lost territories. It was managed to return the most part of the lost territories, repulsed the attack of various tribes and succeeded in the war with Iran. In that period the centre of Empire begins to gradually shift towards the Orient, where its positions are strengthened. To the end of the 3rd century in Pitsunda was restored the Roman garrison and they were soon extended. Probably there was located the main nuclear of the land and marine forces of Rome on the East Black sea coast with the residence of the commander. The garrison of Sebastopolis was restored and extended (It was also likely to be robbed by the Gots). In the first part of the 4th century must have occurred the restoration of the Roman garrison in Lazika.²⁰⁰ In T. Beradze's opinion, in the 60-ies of the 4th century, Egrisi is already a country beyond the borders of the Empire.²⁰¹

S. Janashia associates restoration of the independent kingdom of Lazika with the weakening of Rome and strengthening of Iran.²⁰² It is necessary to maintain and consider the position of G. Melikishvili as well, in whose opinion Lazika was needed for Rome as a strong ally from defending the Caucasian gates and stop invasions of the Barbarian tribes. The main threat were the Hunnes. They destroyed the Bosphorian kingdom, union of the Alans, invaded the Caucasus, devastated Pitsunda (in the 70-ies of the 4th century) etc. Withstand the Hunnes pressure comprised the interest of both sides.

We have to consider one circumstance. At the beginning of the 4th century a great attention was paid to the Christian factor, having become one of the basis for the ally relations of Rome and Lazika in conditions, when a new correlation of the forces did not give the empire a possibility of restoring of the full control over Egrisi. Rome neither helped Lazika to extend towards the North-West direction and return its original lands, nor interfered in this matter. But we consider categorically unacceptable the statement of G. Melikishvili and others on the driving back by Lazika the Apsils, Abazgians and also Svans to the North-West.²⁰³ Not a single shift and change of the "ethnic" borders was not noticed on the territory of Abkhazia in the sources. In spite of this N. Lomouri writes: "For the beginning of the 5th century if not earlier, as a result of strengthening of the Lazian kingdom, the border between the Lazians and Apsils was moved to the river Kodori; The Lazians shoved back the Apsils and these latter in their turn the Abazgians... The Abazgians shifted to the North and occupied the territory between the rivers Gumista and Psou. The section of the sea coast between the rivers Psou and Shakhe was at the Sanig's disposal".²⁰⁴ It came so, that as a result of the Lazian "attack" the Apsils moved to the river Gumista and the fellow-tribesman Abazgians being "oppressed" by the Apsils occupied Gumista –Psou sector. It appeared, that the "oppressed" tribes occupy better and bigger lands, than they had possessed before the "oppression". The reason of such

199 G. A. Melikishvili. *On History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 381.

200 G. Melikishvili. p. 381-385. T. Todua. *Roman World and Colchis*, p. 30-36.

201 Megrelia, Colchis. Odisi, p. 102.

202 S. Janashia. *Abkhazia within the Colchis kingdom and Lazika*, p. 24-25.

203 G. A. Melikishvili. *On History of Ancient Georgia*, p. 83.

204 N. A. Lomouri. *From Ethno Cultural History of Ancient Abkhazia*, p. 40.

groundless and alogical discussion is announcement of the Apsil-Abazgians the hinglanders, as well as their mentioning in different times and different places. On the territory of modern Abkhazia in that period lived people being artificially divided by the Romans into the four “kingdoms”. Change of the borders between those units (i. e. the process of union or split of Lazika//Egrisi) did not give rise to the mass migration from the one country between the rivers to the similar one. Fixation by the separate authors on one and the same place of different ethnoses only stresses their ethnical identity and did not imply the migration and shift being unknown for the sources. It is high time to get rid of those imperial-separatist version.²⁰⁵ T. Mibchvani must have been right, when he tries to explain the appearance of the Heniokhs, Sanigs, Suano-Colchians and Abazgians being mentioned by different authors in different times in the Gagra-Pitsunda sector not by their migration, but belonging to the one Georgian ethnos²⁰⁶ (though from time to time they were known under different names).

By the second half of the 4th century Lazika, with the capital Tsikhe-Goji (Archeopolis) included the whole west Georgia.²⁰⁷ On the North and North-West its jurisdiction spread to the Apsils, Abazgians and Svans and also to the Skvimnia-Takveri of the ancient Georgian sources (Racha-Lechkhumi) and supposedly to the Sanigs. Rulers of those lands kept their power, but remained the vassals of the Lazian king, appointing them on the positions. “Those Abasgs were the subjects of the Lazians from the remote times – wrote Pr. of Caesarea – and for the leaders they from the ancient times had two of their fellow-tribesmen; one of them ruled over the western part of the country and another occupied the eastern part”²⁰⁸. Existence of two rulers – is the sign of weakness and low status of Abazgia. As Prokopius of Caesarea witnesses, the Apsils from the ancient times were the Lazian subjects.²⁰⁹ As it turned out, Apsilia was a part of Lazika, though it was a separate administrative unit, ruled by the officials being in turn appointed by the Lazian kings. In the local fortresses the garrisons²¹⁰ were located. The Lazian king was also appointed by Constantinople. He had no other obligations before the Romans, but the mutual interests in the defence of the Caucasian crossings. Feodorit of Kir (5th century) said: “ Most people, even accepting the bridles of the slavery, cannot live according to the rule of their enslaver... Neither the Lazians, nor the Sans or Abasgs and other Barbarians being subdued to the Romans law do not make an agreement with each other by the Roman laws”.²¹¹ Prokopius of Caesarea confirmed, though the Lazians were the subjects

205 According to the groundless statement of the separatists, the Apsils were withdrawn by the Lazians to the river Inguri in the 6th century. (!?). See. : O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 85.

206 T. Mibchvani. Monuments of the Material Culture of Abkhazia, p. 16 (in Georgian); of the same author: History of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, p. 45-46 (in Georgian).

207 Essays on the History of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 555-558 (in Georgian).

208 Georgika, vol. 2, p. 133; Prokopius from Caesarea. The war with the Gots, p. 382. In D. Letodiani's opinion we must have dealt here with the existence of two different units -Sanig and Abkhazian principalities (D. Letodiani. Political Relations of Abkhazia..., p. 145 (in Georgian).

209 Georgika, vol. 2, p. 128, 162-165. Ju. Voronov, falsifying history of west Georgia, considered Apsils the off-springs of the population of the central Colchis of the Hellenistic epoch and beginning of A. D. denied, that in the 4-7th centuries they were the subjects of the Lazians (Ju. Voronov. Secret of the Tsebelda Valley. M., 1975, p. 135-144). V. Japaridze criticized the point of view of Ju. Voronov (V. Japaridze. On Some Problems of History of the Tsebelda Culture. -Problems of Archeology of Georgia, II. Tb., 1979, p. 78-88).

210 Ibid, p. 162-165; Prokopius of Caesarea. War with the Gots, p. 403; Essays of History of Georgia, vol. II, p. 165-166 (in Georgian).

211 Georgika, vol. 1, p. 226-227; V. Latishev. Information by the Ancient Writers...-Vestnik of Ancient History, 1948, N3,

of the Romans, but they did not pay a tax and did not subdue them in anything, but in case of death of their king, the emperor sent to the heir of the throne the symbols of the power.²¹² Rome defended the borders of that territory, in order to prevent the invasion of the Hunnes to their territory through Lazika. The Lazs even were obliged to participate in Roman military marches. According to the information given by Agaphius Scholastic “The Lazians are numerous and militant people. They rule over many other tribes.

Being proud of the old name of the Colchians, they exalt themselves to a considerable extent and even more and possibly they have all the reasons for it. Among the peoples, being under the alien power, I have never seen anybody so famous and so happy with the abundant reaches, numerous subjects, convenient geographical location, abundance of the necessary provision, virtue and toughness (III, 5).²¹³ This information points to the high degree of independence of Lazika from Romans and its dominion over the neighbouring political units and among them Abazgia and Apsilia.

In 50-60ies of the Vth century Lazika unsuccessfully tried to reach the complete independence from Byzantine. It not only failed to reach the goal, but lost the control over Svaneti,²¹⁴ which happened due to Byzantine will and participation. According to the Georgian historical tradition, as it was already said, the king of Kartli Vakhtang Gorgasali exactly at that time (middle of the Vth century) made use of the Greek king's Leon the Great's involving into the war with Persia and unablensness of sending the army to Abkhazia and captured West Georgia till Tsikhe-Goji. March out against the Greeks was successful and completed with the agreement: “And found out the Caesar the limits of possession of Greece, the country on the sea coast –Abkhazia and told Vakhtang the following: “From Egristskahli to the river Small Khazaria are the possessions of Greece from the times of Alexander (of Macedonia –the author), which you capture from us using the force. Now return it to us and when you marry my daughter I will give you this country through her”. And gave Caesar through her as a dowry the lands between the Egristskhali and Klisura, as for the rest of Abkhazia, Vakhatng returned it to the Greeks”.²¹⁵ This legend is based on the historical reality reflecting the trial of Byzantine to weaken Lazika through seizure of Abazgia - out of the tactic reasons being inclined to Iran. As it seems in the Vth century they failed to reach this goal.²¹⁶

In the first half of the 6th century the situation became aggravated. In 523 Iran abolished the king's power in Kartli and decided to occupy Egrisi; as Western Georgian including Apsilia and Abazgia turned into the arena of opposition of Iran and Byzantine. Egrisi for that time must have been maintaining the contacts with Iran and even had certain obligations before him. But the urgent measures being taken by Byzantine forced Egrisi to change a position. On the throne of Egrisi/Lazika instead of the passed away in 523 king, Byzantine the same year appointed king his legitimate heir - Tsate; He, as it appeared earlier denied Christianity (probably it was one of the duties and obligations

p. 300.

212 *Georgika*, vol. 1, p. 72; Agaphius on Reign of Justinian. M., 1953, p. 73.

213 *Georgika*, vol. 3; p. 50-51; Agaphius on Reign of Justinian. M., 1953, p. 73.

214 *Essays on History of Georgia*, vol. 2, p. 167-169.

215 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 157, 177; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 45.

216 From the sources it is not clear, that Abkhazia split from Lazika, as wrote A. Bogveradze (*Essays on History of Georgia*, vol. 2, p. 258). As we'll see below it happened a bit later.

before Iran). Now with the purpose of strengthening on the throne he baptized for the second time and together with his wife – a daughter of Byzantine noble – returned to his mother-land. Shakh Kavad estimated Tsate's baptize, as tempting his vassal Tsate over to Byzantine's side. On the pretext of punishing of disobedient "subject" Iranian army invaded Egrisi in 528, but was halted and pushed back beyond the country borders by the united Egrisi-Byzantine forces.²¹⁷

On the basis of the Iran-Byzantine "eternal peace treaty" in 532 Byzantine located its garrisons in West Georgia and in Pitsunda and Sebastopolis as well. Arbitrariness of the commanders of those garrisons inspired Lazians to a new ally to Iran. In 542 called by king Gubaz the Iranian army marched into Egrisi and with the support of the local forces occupied the main strong point of the Byzantines - Petra. Right after this the Byzantines themselves destroyed the Pitiunt fortress and left the territory in haste. In 545-546 Byzantine and Iran made the five-year truce. At the same time king Gubaz failed to bear the cunningness of the Iraninas and again took a course to Byzantine. In 549 the Iranians were driven out from Egrisi. In 550 they tried to return, but without any success. A new Iranian army under the commandment of Nabad tried to consolidate Abkhazia (Abazgia), which had split from Byzantine and Egrisi.²¹⁸

On the background of the historical events baptize of Abazgia took place. Dissimination of Cristianity in Abazgia and the events being connected with it are dated from 542-548.²¹⁹ Converting of the Abazgians and constructing a cathedral²²⁰ for them, foundation of the Metropolitan chair in Phases,²²¹ foundation of the Sebastopolis eparchy in the middle of the 6th century, invitation of its Bishop to the Vth World Church Assembly (Constantinople, May, 533)²²² and other arrangements of the religious character²²³ were in direct connection with the Iranian-Byzantine opposition in the region and served the purpose of strengthening the position of Byzantine in Western Georgia and interests of its security defence. All those arrangements pursued one aim of weakening the untrustworthy Lazika, splitting of Abazgia from it, formation of the obedient, single faithed political unit, defence of the Caucasian gates etc. Together with Christianization of Abazgia their rulers were forbidden castration of fellows, being met with an approval by the population. Soon, the Abazgians, decided to live independently and abolished their rulers, but new order having been implemented by the Romans appeared even more oppressing. That is why the Abazgians split from Romans and Lazians. "Fearing not to become slaves of the Rome, they again appointed their own kinglets – Opsita for the Eastern country and

217 Megrelia, Colchis, Odishi (T. Beradze), p. 107-108.

218 Ibid, p. 109-112.

219 D. Letodiani. Research. Tb., 2003, p. 121 (in Georgian).

220 Procopius of Caesarea. War with the Goths, p. 383. On M. Uridia's opinion Justinian I built for the Abazgians a cathedral in Likhni, where the ruins of the oldest church of the Roman style is found. About other opinions on the construction of the cathedral see. : J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodox Faith, p. 71-72

221 B. Kudava. West Georgian Church (9-11th centuries). Kand. Dissertation, Tb., 2002, p. 12, 13 (In Georgian).

222 B. Diasamidze. Christianity of West Georgia, . p157; B. Kudava. West Georgian Churches..., p. 14. The fact of presence of the bishop of Sebastopolis on the Vth world Church Assembly is considered doubtful by Anania Japaridze. –see of the same author: World Church Assemblies with participation of the Georgian bishops. Tb., 2003, p. 11.

223 In B. Diasamidze's opinion in 60-70-ies of the VIth century the bishop of Sebastopolis was raised to Archbishop Rank; consequently, the Pitsunda episcopacy was deprived the leading position and Byzantine obtained a zealous and strong ally in condition of continuous war with Iran.

Skeparna for the Western one”.²²⁴ T. Beradze sees in this the hand of the king of Egrisi Gubaz the II, as his uncle -Opsita became the king of the Eastern Abkhazia. The offsprings of this representative of the Egrisi royal house, in T. Beradze’s opinion were the future Abkhazian aristocrats – princes having the legitimate right on Egrisi.²²⁵

Abazgians not only restored the power of their rulers, but secretly took the Persian’s side (To negotiate with them went Sceparna); This soon became known for the Byzantines and gave rise to Justinian’s rage. In 550 he sent a powerful army being led by Bessa against the Abazgians. The crucial fight occurred at the fortress Trakhea (Modern Afon or Gagra). The Romans crushed the Abazgians; Opsit managed to flee to the Hunnes”the others - wrote Procopius – either were turned into ashes together with their houses or captured by the enemy. The Romans captured the wives of the leaders with their offsprings; They erased the walls of the constructions to the ground and severely devastated all the country. So ended the trial of the Abzgians to split.²²⁶

At the same time (552) split the Apsils. Magister of the Apsils being offended by the Lazian king - the famous Lazian Terdet²²⁷ gave the Tsebelda fortress to the Persians. The help was nowhere, the Romans and Lazians were occupied with the war with the Persians at Petra. The initiative was taken by the commander of the fortress, who had not forgiven the Iranian commander the insult of his wife the Apsilian and completely destroyed the Persians at night. “As a result the Apsils split from Colchians, blaming them in denying them the help, when they were violated by the Persians. But Gubaz sent to them a thousand Romans under the commandment of Ioan the son of Foma..., by means of friendly words and promises, he managed to incline them to his side without a battle and make them again the subjects of the Lazians”.²²⁸ Egrissians and Romans completely liberated Abkhazia from the Persians.

Opposition of those great empires did not finish with it. The Byzantines razed to the ground the fortress Petra and completely destroyed its garrison. Near Archeopolis, the Persians were bitterly defeated, but manages to fortify in Kutaisi. The 5 year truce of 552 was beneficial only for the Iranians. One noble Lazian surrendered the fortress Ufimera (Uthimeros), due to which the Persian could control Lechkhumi and Svaneti. Iranians occupied one more fortress – Telefis (in the neighbourhood of Tolebi), strengthening with it their position.

King Gubaz being loyal to Byzantine, informed Caesar about the shameful actions of his commander, that became later the reason of his treacherous murder (554). Indignant Lazians after the extra public meeting and discussion stayed on the Byzantine side provided that the murderers of Gubaz would be strictly punished. Caesar satisfied their demands. A new king Tsate II being appointed in Constantinople was sent to Egrisi with great honor. In inner matters he was independent.²²⁹

Byzantine commander Soterich accompanying Tsate from Constantinople with his

224 Procopius from Caesarea. Wars with the Goths, p. 400; Georgika, vol. 2, p. 156-157.

225 Megrelia, Colchis, Odishi, p. 112; In S. Kauhchishvili’s opinion, Gubaz’s uncle – Opsit and one of the rulers of Abkhazia Opsit are different persons. -Georgika, vol. 2, p. 156-157.

226 Georgika, vol. 2, p. 156

227 Separatists deliberately hide the fact, that Yerdet was not only the noble Lazian – being known to the Apsils quite well (see. O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 88), – as they write – but the ruler (magister) of that region.

228 Georgika, vol2. p. 164-165. Procopius from Caesarea. War with the Goths, p. 403.

229 Essay of History of Georgia, vol. 2, p. 259-265; Megrelia, Colchis, Odishi (T. Beradze), p. 113-115.

harsh and tough actions caused the rebel of the Missimian community. It is stated, that they lived on the territory of modern Abkhazia in the Kodori gorge. Their belonging to the Svan branch of the Georgians is undoubtful.²³⁰ “When Soterich came to the country of the Missimians – wrote – Agaphius Scholastic –like the Apsils they were the subjects of the king of Colchis, though they spoke the different language and so was the disposition. They live more to the North than Apsils and a bit more to the East” (III, 15).²³¹ The dialect being different from the Apsil is the Svanian and the region more to the North-East is the Kodori gorge.

Soterich having arrived at the fortress Bukhloon in 555 gave the salary to the representatives of the allied highlanders. The Missimians decided, that Byzantine commander intended to hand the fortress to the Alans and because of this the delegation was sent with the demand to leave the fortress. Soterich ordered to whip the messengers, thus insulting the whole community. The infuriated population burst into the camp of the Byzantines and killed everybody, taking at the same time the money and weapon. The Missimians asked for a help the Persians being then in Iberia promising the support from their side. After making an agreement the Missimian delegation told the Iranian commander – “ You will have a region within the territory of the Colchis – safe strategical point, suitable for making invasions and being a bastion against the enemies” (VI, 12).²³² In no time all this became known to the Byzantines. They smashed the Iranian army of Nakhoragan (and who received the delegation of the Missimians), who invaded Egrisi and afterwards they started to get ready for the campaign against the Missimians. The activation of the Iranians became an obstacle for this operation being planned for spring and it was postponed to winter. The army of the Byzantines arrived in Apsilia; from their the ambassadors were sent to the Missimians - the Apsils with the offer of peaceful solving of the conflict. The offer was not accepted, moreover, the Missimians killed the ambassadors. In spite of the desperate resistance and selflessness of the Missimians the Byzantines cruelly dealt with the rebels, exterminated 5 000 fighters, more women and even more children.²³³ After this the Byzantines taking the hostages and money being deprived from them, returned back with the great booty. As for the Missimians they were allowed to plow their lands fearlessly and restore the previous mode of life”.²³⁴ The Georgian community of the Missimians being weakened after the barbarism performed by the Byzantines after the middle of the 8th century is not mentioned in the sources. Supposedly they moved towards Svaneti into more safe places. The population remaining on the old places from the end of the 17th century was underwent Apsuanisation, was converted into Islam and later became Mukhadjirs.

In 542 the great war in Egrisi ended with the 20-year Truce agreement. In West Georgia only Svaneti was subdued to Iran. In 575 the Byzantine-Egrisian division captured the ruler of Svaneti, being of the Persian orientation; after this event the Persians left Egrisi

230 S. Kauhchishvili. *The Tribe of the Missimians. – Works of the Tbilisi State University*, vol. 1. Tb., 1936, p. 277-280 (in Georgian); T. Mibchvani. *Form the history of ethno genesis, settling and culture of the west Georgian highlanders*, p. 128-143 (in Georgian); G. Gasviani. *Who were the Missimians. – Tskhumi*, 1990, N3, p. 23-42 (in Georgian) etc.

231 *Georgika*, vol. 3, p. 86; Agaphius. *On the Reign of Justinian*. M., 1953, p. 87.

232 *Georgika*, vol. 3, p. 155; Agaphius. *On the Reign of Justinianus*. p. 115.

233 *Georgika*, vol. 3, p. 156-157, 160-174; Agaphius. *On the Reign of Justinianed*, p. 123-124.

234 *Georgika*, vol. 3, p. 160-174; Agaphius. *On the Reign of Justinianed*, p. 124.

kingdom forever.²³⁵ In Egrisi, the subjects of which were as usual the Apsils, Missimians and Abazgians (Altogether they were within the sphere of influence of Byzantine), the peace was established for a while. In Z. Anchabadze's point of view, Abkhazia from the middle of the 6th century subordinated only to Byzantine, when Apsilia and Missimia were the vassals of Lazika.²³⁶ More convincing is the supposition of P. Ingorokva, that in the first half of the VIth century there was only a trial of separation of Abkhazia from Lazika. Church separation²³⁷ was also partial, politically Abazgia occupies somewhat detached position among the regions of the kingdom of Lazika. Though it is known as a part of the country of Lazika (and by its composition it is a Georgian country), but Byzantine political influence is stronger here, than in other parts of Lazika. This kind of situation was created in the 6th century and continued in the 7-8th centuries".²³⁸ The summarizing part of P. Ingorokva's version needs more profound conditioning and concretization, as well as statement about abolition of the kingdom in old Lazika in the second part of the 6th century.²³⁹ Abolition of a kingdom and separation of Abazgia from Lazika in the second part of the 6th century as we will see below were conditioned by the following events.

At the beginning of the 7th century in 604 Iran using as a ground - the State upheaval of Constantinople, renewed the war and in a short period delivered several crushing blows to Byzantine occupying most of its territories. With the purpose of helping to ease the hard situation, the Senate enthroned an energetic ruler - Irakli (610-641). In the 20-ies of the VIIth century he attacked Iran. In that deadly fight participated Iberia, Lazika and Abazgia, but they did not support Irakli's plan to invade Iran and when the Persian army caught up with Caesar and the situation tensed and became critical, the Lazians and Abazgians repudiated from the ally duties and obligations and went back.²⁴⁰ This fact points to the rather high degree of independence from Byzantine of the Georgian political units.

In the war with Iran, Byzantine needed more reliable and strong ally. Such ally was Khazaria, with the support and help of which Irakli in 627-628 defeated Iran and established a long-timed hegemony of Byzantine²⁴¹ throughout the Trans Caucasus. Just in the 20-ies of the VIIth century Byzantine removed Abazgia from Lazika, subduing it directly to itself and appointing in Anakopia its Archont - the "Eristav-Prince of Abkhazia" of the Georgian sources.²⁴² In the same period must have occurred the church ecclesiastical division being confirmed by the first notification (lists of the chairs of the Constantinople patriarchy) being compiled in the period of Irakli's ruling. On the territory of North-West Georgia are fixed Nikopsian autocephalian Archbishopry being the part of the eparchy of the Jiks, Sebastopolitan autocephalian archbishopry within the eparchy of Abkhazia and Siganeian (Gudava) episcopacy²⁴³ being the part of the Lazian eparchy

235 Megrelia, Colchis, Odishi (T. Beradze), p. 117.

236 Z. Anchabadze. *Essay on Ethnic History of the Abkhazian people*, p. 48, 49.

237 In B. Kudava's opinion Sebastopolitan episcopacy were subdued to the metropolitan of Phases (B. Kudava. The mentioned work, p. 185-187).

238 P. Ingorokva. *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 94.

239 *Ibid*, p. 191.

240 S. Janashia. *Abkhazia within Colchis Kingdom and Lazika*, p. 36-37; *Essays on History of Georgia*, vol. 2, p. 279-280.

241 *Essays on History of Georgia*, vol. 2, p. 281-283.

242 S. Janashia. *Abkhazia within the Colchis Kingdom and Lazika*, p. 37; D. Muskhelishvili. *Historical Status of Abkhazian Statehood. - Researches on History of Abkhazia/Georgia*, p. 125.

243 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith*, p. 79, 100. B. Diasamidze thinks, that transformation of the Sebastopolis episcopacy into the autocephaly archbishopric happened in the 70-ies of the 6th century (B. Diasamidze.

(Phases Metropoly). Abkhazian eparchy included Apsilia in the main town of which – Sebastopolis was located the autocephalous archbishopry.

The “autocephalian archbishopry” of that time was not an independent Apostle church in its modern meaning, as mistakenly supposed E. Ajinjal, but directly subdued to the Constantinople church centre, “independecy” of which was formal and deprived of the real contents. It is how another Abkhazian researcher D. Dbar²⁴⁴ understands autocephaly. Establishment of the autocephalian archbishopry in Sebastopolis, supposedly was condition by the circumstance, that its jurisdiction was extended to two independent from each other political or administrative units. – Abazgia and the part of Lazika – Apsilia. As a defender and mouthpiece of the interests of Empire, it was independent not only from the Phases Mitropoly,²⁴⁵ but from not very loyal to Byzantine rulers of Abzgia and Egrisi. That last factor (independecy from the secular power) seemingly played quite significant part, which was perhaps the reason of numerosity of the autocephal archbishopries in the North-East Black Sea coast. Only in the Jik eparchy were the three autocephaly chairs ((Kherson, Bosphor and Nikopsy), altogether subordinate to Constantinople 41 autocephal chairs.²⁴⁶ Their relation with the political aims and tasks of the Empire is obvious.

There exists a point of view, that is worth attention; namely, it is remarkable, that simultaneously with the subordinate to Constantinople chairs - defenders of interests of Constantinople, in Western Georgia including the Inguri-Psou sector, existed the local, Georgian church centers.²⁴⁷ Alienation from Constantinople, started in the 7th century, when the monophelites and monophysites were strengthened in the Empire, when the main antagonist of that trend Maksim the Confessor together with his followers being banished to Lazika passed away in 662 while in Georgia and was buried in Lechkhumi.²⁴⁸ The above mentioned alienation became more profound in the period of the so-called iconoclasm (20-ies of the 8th -40-ies of the 9th) and it ended in separation. In Anania Japaridze’s opinion in the first part of the 8th century West Georgian in the church aspect separated from Byzantine. The author bases on the following information given by the patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheus in 1669-1702: “After Iraklius (610-141) and to Lev Isavros (717-741) Lower Iberia²⁴⁹ (western Georgia- author) had already been autocephalous archbishopry, but it is unknown who was the emperor then and which assembly gave to it autocephaly. Lower Iberian Cathalicos is higher in rank, that the Higher Iberian Cathalicos, as he at Isavr’s time in 720 had already been the Cathalicos of Iberia”. According to the patriarch of Antiochia Makarius (1648-1672) blessing of the first Cathalicos of All Georgia – Ioan (whose throne was sitting in the country of Abkhazia) had place at the time of Theophilactos of Antiochea.²⁵⁰ V. Goiladze asserts, that Ioan being ascended to the throne in 744-750 in Antiochia was the first Cathalicos of All western Georgia.²⁵¹ Before Christianity in Western Georgia, p. 161).

244 E. Ajinjal. From History of Christianity in Abkhazia, p. 4-5 (introduction of D. Dbar), 85-87.

245 Anania Japaridze thinks that the autocephalian archbishops of the North-East Black Sea Coast subdued to the Metropolitan of Phases (see of the same author. World Church Assemblies, p. 25-27).

246 Georgika, vol. 4, book 2, p. 129.

247 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith, p. 88-89; L. Tkeshelashvili. Gelati, Kutaisi, 2007, p. 5-18 (in Georgian).

248 Life of Georgia, vol 4, p. 749.

249 Anania Japaridze. History of the Georgian Apostolic Church, vol. 2, p. 90-91.

250 Armaghan. Samples of the Oriental Literature, Tb., 1932, p. 89-90 (in Georgian).

251 V. Goiladze. At the Sources of the Georgian Church. Tb., 1991, p. 169-178.

formation of the Abkhazian kingdom he must have had a title of the Catholicos of Pitsunda and had no ties with the Patriarchy of Constantinople. The Pitsunda chair developed simultaneously with political strengthening of Abazgia, as an opposing to the iconoplast important Georgian clerical centre. It deservedly became the Catholicos chair of west Georgia. In 758 in Pitsunda had place ascending to the throne of the Gott archbishop.

Thus, church union of West Georgia and its demarcation from the Constantinople patriarchy²⁵² preceded the political union of the region and its separation from the Empire and obtaining of the state independence. Existence of the independent Georgian church was conducive for the further consolidation of the people and the restoration of the church service in the Georgian language supported revival and development of the national culture. All this undoubtedly played the part of the catalyst in the matter of acceleration of the political processes.

The real picture about the political situation being formed in Abkhazia in the middle and second half of the 7th century, depicts a Jerusalem monk Feodosius of Gangr. Besides, that private and personal reminiscences of the author on arrival in Lazika (668-669) in it is published the letter written by Anastasius Apokrisiar containing the information about the last period of the life of being exiled to Lazika Byzantine thinker and theologian Maksim the Confessor (the author of the letter was also exiled to Lazika together with Maksim).²⁵³ From Feodosius's essay we understand, that Lazika and Abkhazia are independent from each other, but subdued to Byzantine political units. They did not have kings and were ruled by the patrikiuses, being appointed from Constantinople. The most part of the territories of modern Abkhazia including Apsilia (between the rivers Kelasuri and Gumista or Anakopya) and Missiminia (Kodori gorge) is within Lazika (the borders of Lazika reach Kelasuri). The tendency of strengthening of Abazgia is obvious. Defeated Lazian rulers flee to Abazgia; Due to the advice and support being acquired there, one of them managed to return temporarily his power. Lazika and Abazgia are genuinely Christian countries. ; The rulers of Abazgia are also Christ loving people. The ruler of Lazika Grigori was called "beloved by God patrikius –magister". His first residence was in a small place having the pure Georgian name - Jikhakhora (modern Ochamshiri district or Gulripshi district of Abkhazia); the name of another ruler of Lazika - Lebarnik is also mentioned, whom Feodosius of Gangr personally met and spoke. It is remarkable, that the rulers of Lazika and especially Abazgia show a kind attitude towards the exiled, openly demonstrating unobedience to the monophelitic secular ruler of Byzantine and the monophelitic patriarch of Constantinople. From the middle of the 7th century Georgia faced a new outer danger from the Arab's side. To the end of the century followers Mokhammed firmly sat in Kartli. In 697 patrikius of Lazika - Sergi Barnukisdze rebelled against Byzantine and handed the country over to the Arabs. At the beginning of the 8th century all the West Georgia appears in the hands of the Arabs including Abkhazia and Kodori gorge.²⁵⁴ Byzantine tried to drive out the Arabs from West Georgia and retake the region under their control. Pursuing this purpose Caesar Vardan Philipik (711-713) gave the title of prince of Egrisi (including Abkhazia) to Kartlian erismtavari (possessor) Stefanoz the III (710-738)

²⁵²Opinion on the foundation of the Abkhazian Catholicosate in the middle of the 8th century is shared by D. Dbar (E. Ajinjal. From the History of Christianity of Abkhazia, p. 5-8).

²⁵³ Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 38-56.

²⁵⁴ S. Janashia. Abkhazia within Colchis Kingdom and Lazika, p. 38; Essays of History of Georgia, vol. 2, p. 285-288.

and ordered to fight against the Arabs.²⁵⁵ In 712 Stefanoz the III and his elder brother Mir moved to Egrisi, where together with the Byzantines participated in the battles for liberating from the Arabs Tsikhe-Goji. In autumn of 714 the Arabian commander – Maslama ibn Abd-el-Malik having returned through Derebend from Khazaria with the purpose of punishing Stephanoz invaded Kartli with the numerous army and afterwards Egrisi. Byzantines and Iberians had to raise the siege of Tsikhe -Godji. The Byzantien forces withdrawn to Phases and Mir and his brother Archil (having fled from Kartli after Maslama’s invasion) went to Abkhazia and fortified in Anakopia. The Arabian army was smashed by the Georgians. At the same time Stephanoz III in T Beradze’s and M. Sanadze’s opinion was alive and sound with his sons (less probable) or in the Byzantine camp in Phases.

The exact dating of the first stage of Stephanoz the III and his sons activities in Egrisi, stating of the identity of the Arabian commander (Maslam), whom the Geogrian fight in 714 enabled M. Sanadze and T. Beradze through new sources to state the fact of two Arabians invasions into Georgia under the command firstly of Maslama (714) and Mervan II ibn Mukhammed (738); to verify the dates of being in Egrisi and Alania of the ambassador of Enperor Justinian II (705-711) –Leon (the future emperor of Byzantine in717-741 Lev III Isavr). The Caesar gave Leon a task to bribe the Alans and set against the Abazgians while, the Saracines possessed Abazgia, Lazika and Iberia,²⁵⁶ - informs Feofan Chronicler (760-818). The Alans invaded in reality invaded the Kodori gorge and returned with the rich booty. The trial of the Abazgians to capture Lev Isavr by means of bribe, turned it to a new invasion of the Alans, robbing and smashing of the Abazgians. After this the Abazgians eagerly accepted the offer of Justinian II on the safe seeing off through there territory of his ambassador. Instead, “we forgive you all you deeds”.²⁵⁷ – promised Caesar . Lev Isavr did not trust the Abazgians and only via support of the “first from the Apsils” Marin reached the safe place. On his way, he seized the so-called “ iron fortress”, being guarded by “a Farazman, a subject of the Saracins”.²⁵⁸ Leon occupied and smashed the fortress, after which with the help of Marin (Marian) departed from Apsilia to Constantinopol. Together with him departed the messenger of Mir and Archil informing Constantinople about the victory over the Arabs. By that time Justinian had already been killed and after him was blinded Filippik and reigned Artemius (Anastasius II).²⁵⁹ M. Sanadze and T. Beradze proved, that the mentioned in the context of the battle with the Arabs “eristav- prince of Caesar - Leon”, who “ entered the fortress of Sogbi”²⁶⁰, is not a prince of Abkhazia Leon, as it is usual in historiography, but returned from Alania Leon Isavr. He successfully completed his mission, subdued Abkahzia to the Empire, but his departure to the mother-land was interfered by the dominancy of the Arabs in Egrisi; he was supported by Marin (Marian) – the same Mir, the son of Stefanoz III.²⁶¹ T. Beradze

255 In spotlighting the history of struggle against the Arabians in Western Georgia, of Stephanoz the IIIrd activities, of Archil Mir and the Abkahlzian commander Leon we base on the new and grounded data. T. Beradze, M. Sanadze (M. Sanadze. Erismtavars Archil and Mir “Life of Georgia”. -Meskheti, 2001, IV, p. 71-88 (in Georgian); T. Beradze, M. Sanadze. History of Georgia, part 1, Tb., 2003, p. 97-99 (in Georgian); T. Beradze, M. Sanadze. From the Political History of Kartli and Egrisi of the first part of the 8th century – Georgian Source Study, 2004, X, p. 70-81 (in Georgian).

256 Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 106-107; Chronicle of Byzantine Feophan. M., 1884, p. 286.

257 Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 109; Chronicle of Byzantine Theophan. M., 1884, p. 288.

258 Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 111; Chronicle of Byzantine Theophan. M., 1884, p. 287.

259 Georgika, vol. 4, book 1, p. 113; Chronicle of Byzantine Theophan. M., 1884, p. 289.

260 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 235; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 49.

261 M. Sanadze, T. Beradze. From the Political History of Kartli and Egrisi of the first half of the 8th century..., p. 73-75.

and M. Sanadze assert, taht, as soon as Leon III Isavr occupied the throne (717-741), he gave the highest appraisal to the merits of Archil and Mir. In 717-718 the Caesar sent him two crowns for Egrisi and Kartli. Consequently, the titulatura of Stefanoz III ascended one step higher and he became the “king of prince of princes of the Megrelians and Kartvels”.²⁶²

The Trans Caucasus turned into the arena of the frequent collisions of the Khazars and Arabs, due to which Stefanoz III and his sons did not feel themselves safe and asserted neither in Kartli, not in Egrisi. Only after 730, when the Khazars having been invaded on Stefanoz’s invitation the eastern Trans Caucasus defeated the Arabs, his kingly power spread to all Georgia. The unification fo the country was followed by the new executive campaign of the Arabians. To struggle with the ally of the Khazars, Stefanoz III, the Arabian khalif sent his relative, cruel and merciless Mervan ibn Mukhammed, due to his extreme cruelty called Murvan the Deaf in the “Life of Kartli” (he was khalif in 744-750). Stefanoz III and Archil moved again to Egrisi. Chasing them, the Arabians defeated and tormented Eristavs of Argveti -David and Constantin²⁶³ (they are canonized by the Georgian church), Took on Tsikhe-Godji, devastated inner Egrisi, crossed “Klisura, which at that time was a border between Georgian and Greece”, destroyed Tskhumi and went up to the fortress of Anakopia, where was “an icon of the Virgin, not made by hands, but being sent from above...at that time there were the kings of Kartli Mir and Archil; their father(by that time he had died and was buried in Egrisi)”.²⁶⁴With the kings of Kartli and Egrisi was eristav of the Abkhazians Leon with the detachment of 2000. In the battle at Anakopia, the Georgians were defeated and Mir was severely wounded.

In 738 the Arabians invaded Kodori gorge and won back the Iron (Sodgian) fortress. Here they captured Evstafius, the son of Mir (Marin//Marian). According to Pheofan Chroniclers’ information in 740 “ Isam - the leader of the Arabians, killed all Christian captives in all the towns of his dominion, Evstafius the Blissful also suffered, who is the son of Marin the famous patrician. Despite the all compulsion he did not deny the true faith and in the famous town of Mesopotamia Kharan became a true martyr, his saint relics by God’s grace performs various healings”.²⁶⁵

As far as, the Arabs had the most important task of conquer of Eastern Caucasus and defeat of the Khazars, they had to leave West Georgia, which enabled Byzantine to restore its positions in the region. In 738-739 Lev Isavr regulated the relations between Mir, Archil and Leon. Abkhazia was the heritage of Leon and his was given the title of eristavi; the emperor obliged him to honor the “kings of Kartli and their people”. He ordered Leon: “From now you have no right of harm them and the borders of the land of Egrisi during their visit there and after their departure as well”.²⁶⁶ The king of Egrisi – Mir soon died from the wounds he got in Anakopia. He must have died after the death of his son – Evstafius (740). Therefore, he said to his brother Archil before the death:”I haven’t got

262 Ibid, p. 76.

263 Martyrdom of David and Konstantine. – The Georgian Wrtiers, vol. 1, Tb., 1987, p. 488-501 (in Georgian).

264 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 235; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 49. , vol. 4, book 1, p. 113. Chronicles of Byzantine Theophan, p. 301; 303; J. Gamakharia, L. Akhaladze. Evstafius the Blissful. – Iverielni, 2007, N6, p. 21 (in Georgian).

265 Georgika vol. 4, book 1, p. 113. Chronicles of Byzantine Theophan, p. 301; 303; J. Gamakharia, L. Akhaladze. Evstafius the Blissful. – Iverielni, 2007, N6, p. 21 (in Georgian).

266 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 240; Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 52.

a son-the heir, but only 7 daughters”.²⁶⁷ “In Egrisi till Shoropan” settled down Archil.²⁶⁸ Juridically he was the king of Georgia, Archil thanked eristav of Abkhazia Leon “for your kind hospitality and reliable protection; but now we started building on the lands up Klisura. I will go and settle down in Tsikhe-Goji and Kutaisi”.²⁶⁹ Archil promised to fulfill every wish of eristav of Abkhazia, Leon in his turn asked the Georgian king to make him his subject: “Caesar gave me this land as a heritage due to you efforts. From now it is my heritage from Kelasuri till the river Big Khazaria, where the range of the Caucasus reaches. Add me to your servants, who today have the honor of being your sons and brothers. I don’t need a share from you and everything I possess let be yours”.²⁷⁰ North-West border of Leon’s possessions (“where the range of the Caucasus reach”), as we see exactly coincides with the borders of the hereditary possessions of the legendary Egos. According to the Georgian historical tradition, eristavs of Abkhazia were also the heirs of Egos. As far as, the Georgian origin of the future Abkhazian kings is practically proved (here, chapter V), it is clear, that eristav Leon (an uncle of the first Abkhazian king) was the representative of the same dynasty. In the “divan of the Abkhazian kings” his name is not included, apparently as differently from the mentioned in that document persons, he didn’t possess the whole Abkhazia in the wide sense of this term, i. e. – West Georgia and ruled only Abkhazia-the territory to the North-West from the river Kelasuri.²⁷¹

King Archil married Leon to his niece, the daughter of Mir – Gurandukht; and gave to Leon the crown, which “was sent by the king of the Greeks for Mir. And promised to each other and gave a terrible oath that an enmity will never appear between them and Leon will all his life obey Archil”.²⁷² This act was the foundation for the legislation, for restoring the territorial integrity of historical Egrisi kingdom, being destroyed by Byzantine in the 20-ies of the 7th century.

After 744, when Murvan the Deaf left the South Caucasus and ascended on the throne of Khalif, Archil with his younger son Juansher moved to Eastern Georgia²⁷³ and gave Egrisi to his elder son - Ioan.

Thus, liberation of West Georgia from the Arab dominion led to restoration of the king’s power in Egrisi under the guidance of the Kartli royal house, having spread its jurisdiction on Abkhazia. Eristav Leon became a vassal of the Egrisi (and also the Kartalinian) king and after the marriage and getting the crown of Mir - the member of the Royal House. In 8th century other political units disappeared from the historical arena; they were naturally integrated within Egrisi and Abkhazia. In conditions, when Eastern Georgia was groaning under the heavy yoke of the Arabians, in Tbilisi was sitting an Emir

267 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 240.

268 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 243; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 54.

269 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 242; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 54.

270 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 242; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 53-54.

271 Mir, Archil and Ioan possessed Western Georgia, but were not included into the “Divan of the Abkhazian Kings”, as they were the kings of all Georgia.

272 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 242-243; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, 54.

273 The Arabian commander, who invaded Kakheti in 762 demanded from Archil, who in his turn came to him by his free will, to deny Christianity and be converted into Islam. After the categorical denial he got from the Georgian king, the commander arrested him and personally inquired him several times. On the last investigation the Arab was put such a question: “Were you there, when the Saracens were defeated in Abkhazia?” Archil answered: “I was there, when God struck you” (*Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 274; *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, 42). The Arabs executed Archil. The Georgian church canonized him.

and the Georgian statehood was very weak and poor, this first step to the direction of state unification of western Georgia had a great significance in the history of development of the Georgian statehood and further consolidation of the people.

In spite of the clear and unambiguous information of the sources concerning the political processes of the middle of the 8th century the separatists continue to drive into an error the reader ‘they write, that after the battle of at Anakopia as if Leon seized the territory to the South of Tsikhe-Godji till Inguri and to the North till the Caucasian range.²⁷⁴ Falsifiers don’t say anything about the “terrible oath” of Leon to subdue to Archil for the rest of his life, due to which he became a vassal, subject of Egrisi and Kartli. In the middle of the 8th century Abkhazia instead of taking the way of independence as the separatists claim,²⁷⁵ became an organic part of Egrisi kingdom by its own good will and its aristocracy turned into the legitimate heir of the Egrisi-Kartli throne. Volunteer joining with the weakened Egrisi of rather strong Abkhazia is the additional argument in favor of the ethnical identity of Egrisians and historical Abkhazians; unmistakable confirmation of their ethnical integrity is also the fact of handing to Leon the Georgian royal crown.

Arising out of it and other above mentioned arguments, the claim of the Abkhazian separatist historiography on the formation in the 8th century of an integral feudal Abkhazian people, as result of merging of in the 6-7th centuries of the Abkhazian people – Apsils, Sanigs and Missimians²⁷⁶ is absolutely groundless. The similar statements contradict with the mentioned above historical sources and what is the most important, with the rich, all common Georgian political and cultural heritage of the “feudal Abkhazian nationality”, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Unfortunately, Georgian historiography after the actual prohibition of the book written by P. Ingorokva, opposed the statements with the only argument, that by the 8th century in the Caucasus “formation of the Abkhazian feudal people was late”. In that period, as though formation of the “new feudal people” did not have place, but it was the unification of the people in the already existing units (Kartli, Armenia) etc.²⁷⁷ We have to note, that the notion “feudal nationality” is based on the mistaken communist theory about the formation of the nation. According to this theory (which has already been discussed hap. III, 2), nation is the historical category connected with the social – economical formation; it is arisen in a certain epoch and then develops and finally disappears. In particular, tribes and tribal unions being characteristic for the primitive and slave-holding societies merge with each other, as though forming “feudal nationality”; As a result of merging of the “feudal nationality” in epoch of capitalism modern nations are being formed; merging of these latter and disappearing of the nations in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist ideology and Soviet historiography must occur in the period of Communism. Till the ruin of the Soviet Union, the soviet historians and among them such prominent scientist as N. Berdzenishvili, Z. Anchabadze and others could not guide with non-communist theories of the origin of the nations, though in modern conditions we don’t have to observe the

274 O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 126.

275 *Ibid*, p. 127.

276 Z. V. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia*, p. 69. of the same author: *An Essay on the Ethnic History of the Abkhazian People*, p. 48-51. ; O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 127 etc.

277 N. Berdzenishvili. *Essays on History of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1990, p. 591-592; N. Lomouri. *From the Ethno Cultural History of Ancient Abkhazia*, p. 45.

problem in the light of Communistic ideology. Vestige of that ideology is the notion “feudal nationalities”, which is widely used in separatist historiography and not only by it. Under the influence of the same ideology in Georgian historiography is not clarified the following problem: Why were not the “non-Georgian” tribes of the Apsils and Abazgians (if they really were highlanders and not the Georgians), who had their own statehood in the 1st -2nd century, were not able to be formed into the separate nationality even in the 8th century, with its written language, literature and church. Dependency from the Lazians cannot be considered a hindering factor (This factor could only slow down the process) or “flying of the time”. Vice versa in the 7-8th centuries, in the period of dominion of the Arabians and extreme weakening of Kartli and Egrisi, the Abazgs having been strengthened by this time had the favorable conditions for separation and national consolidation. But, this didn’t happen, because Abkhazia//Abazgia was purely Georgian region. From the middle of the 8th century due to the historical circumstances, precisely it appeared that powerful political unit, where occurred the farther consolidation of the Georgian nation and where were formed the common Georgian religious- cultural centers and ripened preconditions and ideas of the stately integration of the Georgian provinces.

Chapter V. Abkhazia within the Abkhazian Kingdom in the Second Half of the 8-10th Centuries

Emergence of the Abkhazian kingdom was conditioned by the outer political and inner factors being current for the 7-8th centuries. Strengthening of the Arabian dominion in Kartli from one hand and weakening of Byzantine Empire on the other hand connected with the inner political and church split¹ creating a positive situation and conditions for formation of the new political units.

In the middle of the 8th century a new process was under way in the political life of Georgia resulting in formation of the West Georgian State in the 80-ies of the same century. It was the Abkhazian Kingdom. Nephew of Leon the I – eristav Leon the II set free from the vassal dependency and acquired the title of the king. According to the “Chronicles of Kartli”, “when the Greeks weakened, eristav of Abkhazia Leon split from them, who was the nephew of eristav Leon, who was given Abkhazia in heritage. This second Leon was the son of the daughter of the Khazar king and with their help he split away from the Greeks, appropriated Abkhazia from Egrisi to Likhi, called himself the king of Abkhazia, as Ioan was dead and Juansher grew old. Soon after these events Juansher passed away.”² This political reality, when the heirless Egrisi throne was vacant, Leon the II having inherited from Leon the I the crown of Mir had all the possibilities and right of uniting all the west Georgia in one state, especially as the Khazar kaganat supported him in political and military matters. The Abkhazian state covered the whole west Georgia and was gradually spreading its borders in the East, as well as South-East direction.

According to the historical sources, the State Union of the West Georgia in the 80-ies of the 8th century under the leadership of the eristav of Abkhazia was a benevolent political action.³ This step of Leon the II is not reviewed by the Georgian sources in a negative context, as Abkhazia, as well as other regions of West Georgia where the part of the Colchis (Egrisi) kingdom, then - Kartli (Iberian) and Egrisi (Lazian) and then again of the Kartli kingdom during the centuries. In the 80-ies of the 8th century, the entire west Georgia was united within the Abkhazian kingdom. As it is known, in the epoch of king Archil – the heir of Stefanoz the III, Georgia, as it was said above was the integral state and Archil bore the title of a king.⁴ This integrity was based on the ancient traditions of the state integrity, which as a political heritage was accepted by Leon the II and used positively for forming of the West Georgian State.

From the second half of the 80-ies of the 8th century the meaning of the term “Abkhazia” significantly widened and spread onto the all United Georgia.⁵ It is significant,

¹ The struggle in the Byzantine church is meant – the so-called iconoclast (VII-VIIIth centuries), that led to the split with the Constantinople church.

² Chronicle of Kartli. Translation, introduction and comments by G. V. Tsulaia. Tb., 1982, p. 48.

³ M. Lordkipanidze. Emergence of the new Georgian principalities, Egrisi-Abkhazian kingdom. In the book: Essay on History of Georgia, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁴ These pieces of information are confirmed by the historical sources: “Chronicles of Kartli”, “Martyrdom of Saint Archil” – by Leonti mroveli, Juansher and Vakhushti Bagrationi.

⁵ P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule. Georgian writer of the Xth century, p. 119-120 (in Georgian); M. Lordkipanidze. Abkhazian kingdom. – Researches in History of Abkhazia/Georgia, p. 155.

that the foreign authors called the integral Georgian State “Abkhazia” and the Georgian kings– “the kings of Abkhazia”. ⁶According to the information given by the Georgian writer of the 8th century Ioan Sabanisdze, West Georgia was ruled by the “possessor of Abkhazia”. ⁷In the 80-ies of the 8th century Leon the II united the whole West Georgia, though he did not yet have the title of the king. In this context evolution of the title of the Abkhazian eristavs is interesting. From the start Leon the II was given the title of “eristav”, then a “possessor” and in the end of the 8th century – of the “king”. ⁸Evolution of Leon’s title is in direct proportion to the spreading of his power on the territory of West Georgia. In historiography is dominant the opinion, that Leon managed to set free from the vassalage of the Byzantine emperors only after tending the inner political situation of the empire. ⁹ Most part of the researchers think, that the political rise of Leon and his anti - Byzantine political course ¹⁰ must have been started during the reign of the Byzantine empress Irina. ¹¹(797-802).

The problem of the borders of Abkhazia was studied for several times, but this issue gives rise to different opinions. As it has already been mentioned, the territory of the Abkhazian kingdom covered the whole West Georgia. During its foundation its eastern borders reached the Likhni range, the northern borders to the land of the Jiks and Nikopsia. On the west the borders covered the coast of the Black sea, but as for the Southern border –this problem is doubtful even today. Ioan Sabanisdze (8th century) considered Trapezund within the Abkhazian kingdom. According to his information “Blissful Abo was grateful to God even more, when he saw the land full of the Christian faith and not a single non-believer could be found there. The contiguous to it was the Pontus Sea, along which everywhere live the Christians till the borders of Chaldea. There is Trapezund, the place of dwelling of Apsarei and the Napsai harbor. ¹²In S. Janashia’s opinion Trapezund was not considered within the Abkhazian kingdom. ¹³The same opinion share Z. Anchabadze and M. Lordkipanidze. ¹⁴ K. Kekelidze thinks, that Trapezund was within

6 See: N. Lomouri. The designations of Georgia in the Byzantine Sources. -Foreign and Georgian terminology of the notions “Georgia” and “Georgians”, p. 82, 83; G. Japaridze. The arabic designations of the Georgians and Georgia. -Foreign and Georgian terminology of the notions “Geogia” and “Georgians”, p. 132-134; Z. Papaskiri. Abkhazia is Georgia. Tb., 1998, p. 141-142; Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., part 1, p. 67-68 (in Georgian).

7 Ioan Sabanisdze. Martyrdom of Saint Abo. GeorgianParadise. G. Sabinin. S-Pb, 1882, p. 339 (in Georgian).

8 Concerning the title of the “Abkhazian” kings, on the basis of the Georgian, Armenian written and Georgian epigraphic sources is expressed an opinion, that the kings of West Georgia in the VIII-IXth centuries did not have the title of the “kings” of the Abkhazians”. It is proved by the Armenian sources (Ioan Draskhanakertsti and others) and Georgian inscriptions of the “Abkhazian” kings in which they are called the “kings of Egeri (Egrisi) or them call themselves “kings”. In the Georgian epigraphic monuments and Armenian sources, “the king of the Abkhazians” is first met in the titlature of the king of the united Georgia Bagrat the III Bagrationi (978-1012). According to the Georgian historical tradition (“Chronicles of Kartli, Sumbat Davitisdze, Vakhushti Bagarationi and others) the term the “king of the Abkhazians” appeared after the integration of Georgia, i. e. after becoming Bagrat the III (L. Akhaladze. Georgian and Armenian sources on the titlature of the kings of “Abkhazians”. -Historical Researches, vol. VII, Tb., 2004, p. 26-33).

9 S. Janashia. Works, vol. II, Tb., 1952, p. 216; M. Lordkipanidze. Abkhazian kingdom. -Researches in History of Abkhazia, p. 156.

10 On the foreign political orientation of the Abkhazian kings see: Z. Papaskiri. For verification of the foreign political orientation of the kingdom of “Abkhazia”. -Georgian Diplomacy, vol. 6. Tb., 1999, p. 325-335.

11 Sh. Gloveli has another opinion about this chronology, asserting that Leon the II was eristav till 781-782; till 786-787 was the possessing prince of Abkhazia and Egrisi and only afterwards was the “king of Abkhazians”. See. SH. Gloveli. ”Abkhazian Kingdom”. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation. Tb., 2004, p. 9.

12 Abkhazia and Abkhazians..., p. 8-9.

13 S. Janashia. The problem of Emergence..., p. 338.

14 Z. V. Anchbadze. From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia, p. 11-16; M. Lordkipanidze. Political Integration of Feudal Georgia. Tb., 1963, p. 185.

the Abkhazian kingdom, the prove of which is not only the piece of information given by Ioane Sabanisidze, but other written sources of that time and namely the Acts of the World Church Assembly of 787 being signed by Christophores, bishop of Phasis, i. e. the same Trapezund.¹⁵ In the works of the Byzantine writer of the second half of the 8th century Epiphany of Constantinople is confirmed the statement “Lazian town of Trapezund”. It is met in the information of “Geography”, written by the anonymous Armenian writer, in which are said that within the borders of Georgia were the towns of Atina, Rise and Trapezund.¹⁶ Having in mind those sources P. Ingorokva agrees with the opinion of K. Kekelidze about the Southern borders of the Abkhazian kingdom. Sh. Gloveli also shares this opinion.¹⁷ Mentioning in the ecsthesis of the Constantinople church of Trapezund, as the Metropolitan town of the Laz eparchy only at the end of the 9th century cannot be the sufficient argument for putting under suspicion the information given by Ioane Sabanisidze. The fact, that mentioning of Trapezund among the parish of the Polemon Pontus does not reflect the political situation on including Trapezund into the Abkhazian kingdom and is the source informing about the church dependence, that should be taken into consideration. F. E. from the political point of view from the first quarter of the 8th century, Egrisi, as it was said above became the possession of erismtavar of Kartli Stephanos the III and his successors. But, in the church aspect he subdued not the Cathalicos of Mtskheta, but Constantinople. i. e. The area of spreading of the political power does not coincide with spreading of the clerical - church jurisdiction. Thus, according to the Constantinople ecsthesis it is not always possible to state the borders of the political formations and among them of the Abkhazian kingdom.

Let us return to P. Ingorokva’s point of view. He compared the above mentioned information of Ioane Sabanisidze with the anonymous Armenian Geography, in which is said: “Colchis is a country of Asia and is located from the Pontus Sea to Sarmatia and from the river Dracon to the Caucasian mountains and till Likhi, which separates it from Iberia... It is divided into four small countries (provinces); Margveli, Egrevik, Lazi, Chani, which is Chaldea...has five towns: Iani, Kota, Rodopolis, Atina, Rizoni and other numerous harbors and densely populated town Trapezund”.¹⁸ Comparison of these four different sources – Ioane Sabanisidze, Armenian Geography, Epiphany from Constantinople and information of the Church Assembly of the year of 787 enable us to conclude, that during a certain period of time Trapezund in reality was within the Abkhazian principality first and then of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

Right after the formation of the Abkhazian kingdom – Leon the II carried out the administrative-territorial reform, meaning the division of the kingdom into the principalities. According to Vakhushti Bagrationi’s information Leon II divided the Abkhazian kingdom into eight principalities: Tskhumi, Egrisi, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi, Svaneti, and Argveti with the centre in Shorapani, Kutaisi and Abkhazia itself.¹⁹ All the principalities had their own territories with definite borders. Leon II “appointed him over Abkhazia and gave him Abkhazia and Jiketi to the Sea and the river of the Khazars. Appointed in

15 K. Kekelidze. *the Early Feudal Georgian Literature*. Tb., 1935, p. 28.

16 P. Ingorokva. *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 213.

17 Sh. Gloveli. “Abkhazian Kingdom”. *Autoreferat*, p. 1.

18 *Armenian Geography VIIth century; being attributed to Moisei Khorenatsi*. S- Pb. , 1881, p. 27-28.

19 *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 128.

Tskhomi and gave him territory beyond Egrisi – Anakopia with Alania. Appointed in Bedia and gave him more to the east from the river Egrisi to Tskhenistskali. To Leon joined the lands of Ozrakhos to the South of Chorokh, he having split from Ozrakhos called (this land) Guria and appointed there his eristav. Appointed in Racha-Lechkhumi. Appointed in Svaneti. Appointed in Shorapani (possessor) of the whole Argveti to the East from the rivers Rioni and Khanistskali till Likhi. Appointed in Kutaisi as eristav of Vake, Okriba lands to the west from Khanistskali to Guria and more to the west of Rioni to Tskhenistskali”.

²⁰The performed administrative-territorial reform of Leon the II reminds by its contents administrative reform of the king Parnavaz during formation of Kartli kingdom. Like Parnavaz with the purpose of strengthening of the King’s power Leon II tried to create reliable support on the spots in the form of principalities and appoint as leaders the officials loyal to the king. Abkhazia itself was one of the principalities of the Abkhazian kingdom.

Out of the stately arrangements being made by Leon the II we have to mention announcement of Kutaisi the capital of the Abkhazian kingdom. According to Vakhushti, “He built a town and fortress Kutaisi and made it the residence of the Abkhazian kings. Instead of Anakopia he chose Kutaisi”.²¹ This political action was the logical continuation of the state arrangements having been arrived out before. Geographically and politically Kutaisi became the centre of the Abkhazian kingdom, what was conditioned by the geopolitical location of the town. This event must be regarded as continuation of the historical traditions, having the source in the Colchis kingdom, when Kutaisi was the political and cultural centre of that time Georgia. According to the historical sources, for Leon the II the situation in Kutaisi is as native and familiar, as in Anakopia. But, in modern Abkhazian historiography this politics is presented, as the exspancy of the “Abkhazian” kings to the direction of the east.²² If we believe this, then it becomes unexplainable, why Leon the II moved the capital of his kingdom to the occupied by him territory surrounded by the hostile population.

The fact, that “ expansion “ of Leon II into West Georgia - the anonymous writer of the “Chronicles of Kartli” regards as the positive phenomenon for the Georgian statehood. He benevolently and respectfully retells about the stately activities of the “Abkhazian” kings. The only explanation of the benevolence of the Georgian chroniclers in respect of the “ aggressive ‘ policy of the “Abkhazian kings”, Z. Papaskiri thinks, that they did not comprehend those kings not as the foreign conquerors, but as similar to the members of the Bagrationi dynasty Georgian political leaders.²³ In case of “expansion” the Georgian chroniclers tried to reveal an indignation and anger towards the “conqueror” Leon, the way they did, while spotlighting the hostile invasions and policy of the malevolence and ill-will of the neighbors.

20 Ibid, p. 128-129.

21 Life of Kartli, vol. IV, p. 796.

22 One of the first to express such an opinion was the Englishman J. Huit asserting that the word *დაიპყრა* being used by the Georgian chroniclers means not took possession of, but captured using force, i. e. in his opinion Leon II did not join West Georgia, but annexed Egrisi to Likhi. J. Gamakharia and B. Gogia on the basis of the Georgian sources showed that the term “daipkra” the Georgian chroniclers used in the sense of take possession of, occupying the throne, receiving the guests and etc. (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 576-568. See also: I. Imnaishvili. Symphony – The dictionary of the Georgian Gospel. Edited by A. Shanidze. Tb., 1986, p. 129). Despite this, the opinion of J. Huit is repeated by the separatist historiography * (O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 132).

23 Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., part 1, p. 208.

The problem of the ethnic belonging of the: Abkhazian” kings is closely connected with the declaring Kutaisi the capital of the Abkhazian kingdom. In the Armenian author’s Vardan the Great’s opinion the Abkhazian kings were the off-springs of Vakhtang Gorgasali.²⁴ P. Uvarova,²⁵ D. Bakradze,²⁶ D. Gulia,²⁷ and others thought that the “Abkhazian” kings were the ethnic Greeks. V. Latishev attributed them to the family of the Bagratians.²⁸ Abkhazian historians – Z. Anchabadze, Sh. Inal-IPA, M. Gunba, O. Bgaghba, and S. Lacoba²⁹ considered them the ethnic Abkhazians. In M. Lordkipanidze’s opinion the “Abkhazian” kings arising out of their political and stately activities were the Georgian public figures.³⁰ The similar opinions are proved by the epigraphic material of the “Abkhazian Kings” and other historical sources. On the basis of those materials we can conclude, that the indicator of the national-state and religious identity of the “Abkhazian” kings is the material and spiritual culture being created by them with their help and support and also the state policy being carried out by them. Arising out of it, their national identity is possible only with the Georgian ethnic and political world. Consequently, the “Abkhazian “kings belong to the outstanding gallery of the Georgian state figures of the medieval centuries.³¹ Z. Papaskiri thinks that whoever the “Abkhazian” kings would be by their ethnic –tribal origin, with their political and state activities they belong to the common Georgian cultural-political integrity, though he does not exclude their Abkhazian-Apsua origin.³² P. Ingorokva considered the “Abkhazian “kings the off-springs of the Egrisian Patrikios.³³ The direct prove of this hypothesis is mentioning by the Armenian historians of the 10th century - Ioan Draskhanakertsi and Pseudo Shapukh Bagaratuni of the Abkhazian king Konstantine III (893-92) in the first case the “ King of Egeri” and in the second case the “ king of the Lazians (Lazians).³⁴

On the basis of the analyzes of the Georgian source “History of the Abkhazian Kings”, according to P. Ingorokva were confirmed by the new arguments by T. Beradze and M. Sanadze. Origin of the dynasty of the “Leonides” they assuredly connected with the heritage line of the Egrisi patrikios – Sergi Barnukisdze.³⁵ In favor of this idea speaks the state and church policy of the “Abkhazian” kings, on the basis of which they identify themselves. Announcement of Kutaisi the capital of the Abkhazian kingdom in no case corresponds to the political step of the “conqueror”. As it was said, for Leon Kutaisi and environs of Anakopia were equally native. He took advantage of the moment and moved the capital to the

24 *Common History of Vardan the Great with the comments and appendix* made by N. Emin. M., 1861, p. 115-116.

25 P. Uvarova. *Christian Monuments of Abkhazia. Materials on the Archeology of the Caucasus*. IV. M., 1894, p. 8.

26 D. Bakradze paid attention to the fact, that the Abkhazian kings had the Greek names (D. Bakradze. *History of Georgia from the Ancient Times to the end of the Xth century*, part I. Tiflis, 1889, p. 273-274).

27 D. Gulia. *History of Abkhazia*, vol. 1, p. 208.

28 V. Latishev. *on the History of the Christianity of the Caucasus*, S-Pb., 1911, p. 10-11. T. Michbuani shared his opinion. See: *The Abkhazian Kings and Nobility*. Tb., 1997.

29 Z. V. Anchabadze. *From History...*, p. 80; Sh. Inal-Ipa. *Problems of the Ethno-Cultural History of the Abkhazians*, p. 120; M. Gunba. *Abkhazia in the First Millennium A. D.* p. 234-244; O. Bgaghba, S. Z. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*. Sukhumi, 2006.

30 M. Lortkipandize. *The Abkhazian Kingdom*, p. 127.

31 L. Akhaladze. *on the Problem of the National-Religious Identity of the Abkhazian Kings. –Materials of the Republican Conference*, p. 12.

32 Z. Papaskiri. *Essays...*, part 1, p. 51.

33 P. Ingorokva. *Giorgi Merchule*, p. 192.

34 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 192, 196.

35 M. Sanadze, T. Beradze. *From the Political History of Kartli and Egrisi of the First Part of the VIIIth century*, p. 76-77.

historical center of Colchis//Egrisi. During his ruling Kutaisi extended; significant building works were carried out, were erected new defense constructions and palaces.³⁶

Ethnic origin of Leon II is well-observed by his other political steps as well and also by his attitude towards the rest Georgian political world. From this point of view the fact, that he rendered assistance to Kartli eristav Nerse II having fled from the Arabs is interesting, as well as, the dynasty wedding of his heir with the Tao-Klardjeti Bagrationi etc. Especially significant is the information by Vakhushti Bagrationi being described above: “to Leon were joined the lands of Ozdrakhis to the South of the Chorokh. After split with eristav Ozdrakhis, he called this land – Guria and appointed their eristav”.³⁷ They simply confirm that the residents of Guria and Chorokhi according to their good will prefer to be under the jurisdiction of the Abkhazian king. Consequently king Leon was not for them neither an alien, nor a conqueror, but in ethnic as well as in the cultural-religious aspect was close to them and the Abkhazian kingdom was the strong guarantee of the protection from the Arabian dominion.

In the books written by the Abkhazian authors O. Bgaghba and S. Lacoba being published in 2006 and 2007, is ignored not only the information of the historical sources, but the estimation often of historians of the previous epoch on the origin of the Abkhazian kingdom and its church policy. The National-State aspect of the Abkhazian kingdom its ethnic composition and ethnic belonging of the “Abkhazian” kings is well seen in the church policy being carried out by them and having the anti Byzantine, obviously Georgian character.

O. Bgaghba and S. Lacoba observing in their book the period of the “Abkhazian kingdom” left without an attention such an important problem as the church policy of the “Abkhazian kings”. Moreover, one of the authorities of the Abkhazian historiography Z. Anchabadze on the basis of the Greek sources wrote, that Abkhazia was a Christ loving country and their rulers were the “friends of Christ”,³⁸ the modern Abkhazian historians think, that the church policy of the “Abkhazian kings” must not be the subject of investigation and in this respect nothing interesting happened. According to their assertion on the formation of the personality of the founder of the Abkhazian kingdom Leon II his mother – Khazarian in origin had the greatest impact. She respected only the pagan traditions and was the follower of Judaism, was declared by the Khazars the state religion in the 9th century.³⁹ As we can see, the Abkhazian authors for showing the state and religious-church policy of Leon II use not real historical facts, being fixed in the sources, but groundless suppositions, in order to create the impression, that Abkhazian kingdom and kings of Abkhazian the religious aspect were far from Christianity and consequently from the Georgian world. It may come, that - they wrote – Leon II paid little attention to Christianity because of this fact and supposedly in the period of his ruling appeared the religious “syncretism” in the Abkhazian kingdom. The cross, being cut into the six corner star on the North wall of the Likhni palace plays the role of an argument.⁴⁰ In connection with this, we have to underline, that the analogous symbols are often met in

36 M. Lordkipanidze. *Abkhazian Kingdom*, p. 158.

37 *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians ...*, p. 129.

38 Z. V. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia*, p. 80.

39 O. Bgaghba, S. Z. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 132.

40 *Ibid*, p. 132.

art of the Christian world and among them in different regions of Georgia. Furthermore, this symbol is characteristic for the Georgian ornament art. F. E. The similar samples are met in small forms of the ornaments in west as well as in east Georgia being studied by R. Shmerling⁴¹ and L. Khrushkova.⁴²

O. Bgaghba and S. Lacoba touching the religious problems wrote, that the Abkhazians have always been respectful to the pagan deities, worship the tress, especially the oak etc.⁴³ Thus, they neglect a number of statements on the religious and church condition of the Abkhazian kingdom and about the church policy of the ‘Abkhazian “kings being firmly established in historiography, studied in the works of Z. Anchabadze, M. Lordkipanidze, P. Ingorokva, Z. Papaskiri. Lately, the researches made by Anania Japaridze, B. Kudava, T. Koridze, Sh. Gloveli, A. Akaladze, J. Gamakharia and others have been published.⁴⁴ In those works is obviously shown, that the Abkhazian kingdom was the Christian state of the feudal epoch and the “Abkhazian” kings took an active part in strengthening Christianity. The vivid example of which is the active participation of the Abkhazian kings in the matters of the church construction almost on the whole territory of Georgia. Besides, they also took part in spreading Christianity among the neighboring north—Caucasian people. Here we’d like add, that spreading of the pagan faith in Abkhazia (not considering the pre Christian period)- is the phenomenon of the late medieval centuries (16-18th centuries), and not the period of the Abkhazian kingdom, when the state and religious activities of the “Abkhazian kings “was fully directed to the strengthening of the Christian faith.

The trial of presenting of the Abkhazian kingdom as a pagan state was needed for the authors for the making a false conclusion, that the states of the Abkhazians and Khasarians of the early medieval centuries as if had the close religious and political contacts and also for proving the fact, that spreading among the Abkhazians of the pagan faith is not the phenomenon of the late medieval centuries, but had the deep roots already in the midst of Abkhazian kingdom. All the researches, opposing the Georgian historiography, pass along the religious and church policy of the “Abkhazian kings”. The Georgian and foreign written sources – historical essays, church documentation and epigraphical monuments - are the well-reasoned proof of the religious identification of the “Abkhazian Kings”.

The analyses of these sources enable us to rethink the problems of the church policy of the “Abkhazian kings”. In this policy we can pick out two periods: from the 90-ies of the 8th century to the beginning of the 60-ies of the 11th century; and after the 60-ies of the 9th century. On the first stage the “Abkhazian kings” were more attentive to the matters of the state construction. Efforts of Leon II, Feodosius II (806-825), Dimitri II (825-861) were directed to political and church freedom from Constantinople, obtaining of the complete political independence. From the middle of the 9th century the situation changes – Came a good time for the “Abkhazian” kings, especially for carrying out more active policy

41 R. Shmerling. *Small Forms in Architecture of the medieval century Georgia*. Tb., 1962.

42 L. R. Khrushkova. *Sculpture of the Early Medieval century Abkhazia of the V-Xth centuries*. Tb., 1982.

43 O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 133.

44 Anania Japaridze. *History of the Georgian Church*, vol. II. Tb., 1998; B. Kudava. *West Georgian Church centers subdued to the Constantinople Patriarchy (VI-Xth centuries)*. Tb., 2002; B. Kudava. *From the History of the Abkhazian Cathalikosat (IX-Xth centuries)*; B. Kudava. *The Church of West Georgia of the IX-Xth centuries*. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertaion. Tb., 2002; T. Koridze. *Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertaion*. Tb., 2003; Sh. Gloveli: “Abkhazian Kingdom”. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation. Tb., 2004; L. Akhaladze. *On the Problem of the National-Religious Identity of the Abkhazian Kings*, p. 12; J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith*, p. 102-121.

being directed to the church and political unification of the Georgian lands. This inclination transformed into the more active phase and was brilliantly and strikingly revealed in the church and state policy of Georgi I (861-868), Bagrat I (881-893), Konstantine III (893-922), Georgi II (922-957) and Leon III (957-967). In the church policy of the “Abkhazian” “Kings several trends can be singled out: 1. the first and main thing of this policy was gradual liberating from the dependency of the Constantinople patriarchy. 2. Broadening of the church building and creation of the new Christian centres 3) Inclination to reintegration with the Georgian autocephalian church. 4) Struggle for Christianization of the neighboring North-Caucasian people and through it providing of the more reliable defense of the state borders.⁴⁵

The Georgian sources – “Chronicles of Kartli”, Sumbat Davitisdze, Vakhushti Bagrationi, Georgian epigraphic monuments and Greek sources – aesthesis - a list of the subdued to Constantinople chairs – altogether give awareness of this problem. It was the sphere of interest of many historians and the results were generalized in the work of M. Lordkipanidze. The work says that after the unification of west Georgia and getting rid of the political influence of Byzantine was impossible to tolerate the church hegemony of Constantinople. The common Georgian policy of the Egrisi-Abkhazian kingdom actively put in agenda the matter of the church integration. The struggle was long-time and hard. The Church split from Byzantine as well as obtaining of the political independence was carried out step by step.⁴⁶ After obtaining of the state independence, the matter of the church independence became the main problem of the “Abkhazian” kings. Leon II was not able to conduct the independent church policy till it was dependent on Constantinople. Besides, the empire tried, with the help of the church to influence the inner and foreign policy of the West Georgian kingdom and subdued it. Church split of Abkhazia from Constantinople in Vakhushti Bagrationi’s opinion had place during Leon II reign: “we have to suppose the liberation of the Abkhazian catholicos with the Greeks allowance”.⁴⁷ It seems that political independence of Abkhazia – wriote M. Lordkipanidze, - is directly connected with the split of Abkhazian church from Constantinople.⁴⁸ In that period Byzantine could not resist to the split from the Abkhazian church due to the hard inner political and foreign conditions. Probably, it was beneficial for Byzantine at the cost of maintaining good relations with the Abkhazian kingdom temporarily to yield in the church matter, especially, that in the Black Sea Coast line during some time remained the church jurisdiction of Constantinople. The most important was that in conditions of struggle against the Arabs the Abkhazian kingdom could render a significant support for the Empire.

For obtaining a complete church independence it was necessary to make further steps. About this historical fact points the information of the “Chronicles of Kartli”: “Bagrat appointed and legalized the position of a Catholicos in Abkhazia in 830 A. D”.⁴⁹ According to the source, the possessor of Tao-Klardjeti Bagrat I Kuropalat supports the formation of the independent church in West Georgia – Catholicosat i. e. independent from Byzantine

45 L. Akhaladze. On the Problem of the National –Religious Identity of the “Abkhazian” Kings, p. 12.

46 M. Lordkipanidze. Emergence of the New Georgian Principalities. Egrisi-Abkhazian Kingdom. -Essays of the History of Georgia. vol. II, p. 422; M. Lordkipanidze. The Abkhazian Kingdom, p. 155-170.

47 Abkhazia and the Abkhazians..., p. 129.

48 M. Lordkipanidze. Political Unification of Feudal Georgia. Tb., 1963, p. 193 (in Georgian).

49 Abkhazia and the Abkhazians..., p. 58.

church. As it seems, this process was longitudinal and complex and in this matter the Georgian kings and possessors supported the “Abkhazian” kings. As for the unification of Abkhazian Catholicosats with the Mtskheta throne, it must have been the second stage of the church reform.

After the death of Leon II the throne of the Abkhazian kingdom were successively occupied by his sons: Feodosius II (806-825), Dimitrius II (825-861) and Giorgi I (861-868).

Feodosius ascended the throne in 806. As it was mentioned above, Leon II during his life strengthened the contacts with the political circles of Tao-Klardjeti by means of the dynasty marriage.⁵⁰ At that time Abkhazian kingdom was the stage of the state building and was less active in the matter of spreading the borders of the kingdom to the East, but in the common coalition with Ashot Bagrationi opposed the Kakheti Chorbishop Grigol. Besides, between Tao-Klardjeti principality and Abkhazian kingdom there were dynastic and relative connections, and their integrity was prompted by the common Georgian interests – struggle for Kartli and its seizure. This in its turn meant the first place in struggle of unification of Georgia. Such an aspiration for the first time revealed in the united struggle of Ashot Bagrationi and Feodosius II.

In the Georgian sources is kept quite important information about the church building of the “Abkhazian” kings not only on the territory of the kingdom, but in other historical regions of Georgia, which were gradually annexed by them. In this respect, the information from the “Chronicles of Kartli” and Georgian epigraphic monuments preserving the building inscriptions of the “Abkhazian” kings is very important. Early chronological information about the church construction being carried out by them is in the works of the Georgian writer of the Xth century Giorgi Merchule, “Life of Grigol Khandzteli”, in which is described the history of building of the church in the village Ubisa on request of the “Abkhazian” king Dimitri II. It must be remarked, that Giorgi Merchule describes the king of Abkhazia Dimitri II with a special respect and depicts his portrait as a zealous and ardent Christian king: “And the king told the blissful Grigol: “Holly Father, your wish has come true, may God fulfill the desire of my heart, as I have an intention of building the new monastery. Let us go and examine the places in Abkhazia and where your holiness would decide and choose we would build a monastery”.⁵¹ As we can see, the idea of building of the church belongs to Dimitri II and inspired by him Grigol Khandsteli started to build a church: “and Grigol Khandsteli being encouraged by the king built a monastery and named it Ube”.⁵² About this historical fact reads the inscription being made on the Ubisa monastery in which king Dimitri is mentioned”.⁵³ Through comparing of the narration and epigraphic sources we can conclude, that this monastery was built during the “Abkhazian” king Dimitri II.

After the death of Dimitri II (861) the throne was occupied not by his juvenile son, Bagrat, but by his brother Giorgi I (861-868). Like the predecessors Giorgi I continued to

⁵⁰ According to the information given by the “Chronicles of Kartli” and Vakhushti Bagrationi, the Abkhazian king Feodosius was married to the daughter of Ashot Bagrationi. – *The life Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 252-253; the same work, vol. IV, p. 797.

⁵¹ *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians...*, p. 18.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵³ *Corpus of the Georgian Lapidar Inscriptions. Inscriptions of West Georgia (IX-XIIIth centuries). Compiled and prepared for print Valeri Silogava (in Georgian). Tb., 1980, N163, p. 140-141.*

fulfill an active state and church policy. He was the first king out of the kings of Abkhazia, who started to struggle for annexing Eastern Georgia and took an active part in the political processes, which was called by the author of the “Chronicles of Kartli” the struggle for possessing Kartli. If at the beginning of the 9th century the king of the Abkhazians helped Ashot Bagrationi in struggle for Kartli, then from the second part of the 9th century, the strengthened “Abkhazian” kings try to participate independently in this struggle. Interference of the “Abkhazian” kings in the affairs of Inner Kartli in the 60-ies of the 9th century takes a rather, real shape and had political as well as economical significance. From this point of view the struggle of the “Abkhazian” king for the trade routes of Eastern Georgia is extremely interesting.⁵⁴ Afterwards, the Abkhazian” kings spread their activities to the South-East direction.

The name of the king Giorgi I is preserved in one of the inscriptions in Armazi (near Mtskheta), being dated from 864. The inscription reads: “In the name of God, I Giorgi Mamasakhlisi (senior man) of Armaz started building in choronikon 864, during the reign of Giorgi”.⁵⁵

In the 60 -ies of the 9th century (864), when started construction of this monastery, out of the Georgian political units the title of the “king” had only the “Abkhazian” kings. It is natural, that mentioned in the inscription “king”, must have been “Abkhazian” king Giorgi I.

The mentioned in the Armazi inscription “king Giorgi” was identified with Giorgi I – the ruler of the Abkhazian kingdom together with Kartli⁵⁶ in 861-868. This is confirmed by another source – “Chronicles of Kartli”: “Giorgi, king of Abkhazians, brother of Feodosius and Dimitri, the son of Leon captured Kartli and appointed the son of Dimitri as *eristav* in Chikha”.⁵⁷ The given information is accepted in the Georgian historiography. In M. Lortkipanidze’s opinion, starting from that period, the rulers of Kartli were not able to struggle for Kartli; Abkhazia took advantage of it and actively participated in the struggle for Kartli.⁵⁸ Soon Giorgi I declared Kartli the principality of the Abkhazian kingdom. Later, it temporarily lost inner Kartli, but the fact, that in this period started the construction of the Armazi cathedral in the epigraphic of which is reflected the struggle of the “Abkhazian” kings for annexing Kartli,⁵⁹ is undoubtful.

The fact, that the Abkhazian authors S. Lacoba and O. Bgazhba call this policy a usual “aggressive” policy as a result of which they as if extend the area of settling of the Abkhazian ethnos is significant. From this point of view, the fact, that Giorgi I appear before us, as not only the supporter of spreading of the political borders (annex of Inner Kartli), but the active conductor of the church policy, i. e. for him Kartli is not a “captured” country, but a territory being under his protection, where with the support of the king the church construction is performed. Probably, Giorgi I stood at the sources of second stage of the church reform, the purpose of which is unification of the Western Georgian church with

54 M. Lordkipanidze. *Political Integration of Feudal Georgia*, p. 196.

55 *Corpus of the Georgian inscriptions. Lapidary Inscription*, vol. 1. East and South Georgia (V-Xth centuries), was compiled and prepared for the print by Nodar Shoshiashvili. Tbilisi, 1980, p. 168, (In Georgian); L. Akhaladze. *Inscriptions of Egrisi – Abkhazian kings*, p. 56 (In Georgian and English).

56 L. Akhaladze. *Inscriptions of the Egrisi-Abkhazian Kings*, p. 56.

57 *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians...*, p. 59.

58 M. Lordkipanidze. *Political Union of Feudal Georgia*, p. 155-170.

59 L. Akhaladze. *Inscription of Egrisi- Abkhazian kings*, p. 56.

the Catholicos of Mtskheta. The integration process was performed step by step and was finished in the epoch of Bagrat I (881-893). In connection with this problem it is necessary to take into consideration the fact, that Giorgi I was the first king to widen the political borders to the direction of the East. It is obvious, that after this, the idea of the church integrity existing before, could become more current from the political point of view as well. It seems to be the start of the process of unification of the Abkhazian Catholicos with the throne of Mtskheta. The second stage of the church reform being started by Giorgi I was stopped as a result of the dynastic changes in the Abkhazian kingdom in 868-881, though after returning into power of Bagrat I – the nephew of Giorgi I, the process of unification of the Georgian church successfully completed.

In 868 died the childless Giorgi I. According to the heritage traditions the throne belonged to the son of Dimitri II - Bagrat, who was given the title of eristav of Kartli by Giorgi I.⁶⁰ From that period appointing of the heir of the throne the eristav of Kartli became a tradition. Bagrat becomes eristav of Kartli at the end of the reign of Giorgi I after the death of which the king's throne was captured by force by the Dynasty of Shavlians. In 868 Ioan Shavliani became the king, the legitimate heir fled to Byzantine. The dynasty of the Shavlians – Ioan and then his son Adarnase reigned till 881. In that period the Abkhazian kingdom could not manage to keep after it inner Kartli and the kings of Kakheti took possession of it. In 881 Prince Bagrat with the help of Byzantine returned the throne. According to the words of the ancient Georgian historian: "The king of Greece gave him the army and sent him by sea and He by that ships approached Abkhazia".⁶¹

In the history of the Abkhazian kingdom Bagrat is known under the name of Bagrat I. During his reign the Abkhazian kingdom strengthened even more. Arising out of the political situation, Bagrat married the widow of Adarnase Shavliani, who was the daughter of Guaram Mamfal (the possessor of South Georgia – Javakheti, Trialeti, Artaani, and Tashiri). From that period West Georgian state actively interferes into the affairs of the South Georgian state. Being strengthened with the support of Byzantine, Bagrat I rendered the military assistance in the struggle for the throne to the brother of his wife, the son of Guaram Mamfal – Nasr, who returned from Byzantine.⁶² Interference of Bagrat I was not successful, but in the following century, his heir Leon III (957-967) had a serious support in South Georgia and possessed its significant part, namely Javakheti.

After the death of Bagrat I the rules of heritage were changed – the throne of the Abkhazian kings was passed from father to elder son. In 893 the son Bagrat I - Konstantine III became the king (893-922). He conducted more active policy in uniting Georgia, than his predecessors. Though the Abkhazian kingdom lost inner Kartli on the borders of the 9-10th centuries, being temporarily possessed by the local feudal authorities, but in 904 Konstantine III restored his power and appointed his eristav in Uplistsikhe.

In 912 under the command of Abu-al-Kasim the Arabians invaded the Trans Caucasus. They pursued the purpose of subduing Armenian king Sumbat Bagratuni. Sumbat was de-

60 During the study of the script of the "Life of Georgia" in the Georgian historiography was expressed an opinion, that Giorgi I left as eristav of Kartli the son of his brother Dimitri II(825-816) Tinine and not the elder son of Bagrat. See Z. Papaskiri, "Who was eristav of Chikha". On the expediency of making of correction to the text " Matiane Kartlisa" ("Chronicles of Kartli") . - The Georgian Source Study, vol. IX, Tb., 2006, p. 64-68. (In Georgian).

61 Chronicles of Kartli. Translation, introduction and comments made by G. V. Tsulaia. Tb., 1982, p. 51.

62 Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 261.

feated by the Arabs and had to find shelter in Abkhazia at his allies Konstantine III court. Abu-Al-Kasim invaded Kartli being the part of the Abkhazian kingdom. Konstantine was not able to resist him.⁶³ This time West Georgia escaped the invasion of the Arabs, but the king of Abkhazia destroyed the walls of Uplistsikhe to avoid the Arab's fortification inside it. After the departure of Abu-Al-Kasim Konstantine the III activated his policy concerning East Georgia. The Kakhetian Chorbishop - Kvirike invited King Konstantine to the joint march out to Ereti, after fulfilling of which, the Abkhazian kingdom was enriched by the two forts of Hereti: Arishi and Gavazi. These historical events are spotlighted in the Georgian epigraphic monuments narrating mainly about the activities of Konstantine the III concerning the church construction.

By initiative of Konstantine the III in Eredvi and Samtsevisi were built the cathedrals, the proof of which are the building inscriptions of Konstantine the III. In 1943 on the façade of the Eredvi church of Saint George - R. Mepisahvili enciphered and read the main building inscription informing about the campaign of Konstantine the III to Hereti.⁶⁴

In the inscription is read the date of starting of the building process in 906, though the described events occurred later. They found an exact reflection in other historical sources. F. E. the author of the "Chronicles of Kartli" writes, that after the second campaign of Abu-Al-Kasim 'Kvirike the Chorbishop called the king of the Abkhazians – Konstantine; they marched into Hereti and besieged the fort Vezini. The king of the Abkhazians besieged it from the upper side and Kvirike from the lower side. They were almost to take the fort, when came Patrikios Adarnase and on the Cross (Good) Friday he made a truce with them and handed to the king of the Abkhazians Arishi and Gavazi and to Kvirike - Orchobi. As soon as the truce was made and they returned, arrived Konstantine – the king of the Abkhazians prayed in Alaverdi to Saint George and trimmed with gold His icon. The main part of his army he sent by the circular way, he was honored by chorbishop Kvirike and returned (the king of the Abkhazians) to his country".⁶⁵ As we can see, both documents - inscription and chronicle describe one and the same event about the campaign of the king of the "Abkhazians" to Hereti, probably having place after the invasion of Abu-Al-Kasim into Georgia, i. e. after 914. We won't be mistaken if we date starting of the construction of the Saint George cathedral in Eredvi by Konstantine the IIIrd's initiative from 906 by architect Theodor Taplaisdze and its completion after 914.

Separate details of the joint campaign of King Konstantine and chorbishop Kvirike to Hereti attract our attention. The chronicler stresses East Georgian king's attitude towards the Christian sacred places. By that time the king of Abkhazia possessed inner Kartli, which was ruled from Uplistsikhe by the appointed by him *erstav*. After the campaign to Hereti King Konstantine obtains "Arishi and Gavazi".⁶⁶ From that time historical Kartli almost completely subdues (Except Tbilisi Emirate, which gradually shrank) to the "Abkhazian" king, which was the great political success in the matter of unification of the Georgian kind being conducted by the kings of Abkhazia from the 60s of the IXth century.

The important source for studying the church-construction activities of Konstantine

⁶³ *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 263.

⁶⁴ *Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions*, vol 1, p. 171; L. Akhalakdze. *Inscriptions of the Egrisi-Abkhazian Kings*, p. 56-57.

⁶⁵ *Life of Georgia*, vol 1, p. 264; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 63.

⁶⁶ Arishi was located in Ereti and Gavazi in the present Kvareli region.

the III is the inscription in Samtsevrissi being made by the church warden Domninos and Giorgi Tualoisdze with mentioning of the name of King Konstantine. It read: “20 years after the ascending to the throne of Konstantine, I Domninos, the churchwarden of the Samtsevrissi cross and Giorgi Tualoisdze brought ruyi (water pipe) to the Cross Monastery. Whoever reads this, be so kind to mention me in your prayers – Domninos the slave of the Samtsevrissi Cross Monastery. Christ has mercy on Giorgi Tualoisdze, Amen”.⁶⁷

The inscription is dated from the year of 20 after the accession to the throne of Konstantine the III, i. e. the year of 912. If we take into consideration the inscriptions of the Saint George cathedral in Eredvi and the above given data of the “Chronicles of Kartli”, then it is the time when Konstantine the III possessed the main part of Kartli.

Mentioning of the Abkhazian kings in the architectural monuments of Armazi, Eredvi and Samtsevrissi groundly prove, that the local secular and spiritual persons are obliged to date the construction of the important monuments with the years of ascending to the throne of these kings.⁶⁸ It goes without saying, that this kind of event could not take place during the “conquerors”.

The fact, that the Abkhazian authors -S. Lacoba and O. Bgaghba know about the Samtsevrissi and Eredvi inscriptions, but by a mistake localize Eredvi in Kakheti⁶⁹ is significant. In their opinion, these inscriptions point to the fact, that king Konstantine conquered Kartli, emphasizing simultaneously, that then for Kartli struggled Abkhazian and Armenian Kingdoms. In the book written by O. Bgaghba and S. Lacoba nothing is said about the “Kingdom of the Kartvels (Georgians) or Kakhetian kingdom. There is such an impression, as the territories of the modern eastern and southern Georgia were located within the Armenian kingdom and the Armenian and Abkhazian kingdoms were in war because of those territories.⁷⁰ The separatists ignore the fact, that the epigraphical material - the inscriptions of the Abkhazian kings are compiled in the Georgian language and say nothing why they wrote about their activities in Georgian and not in the Greek or Abkhazian (Apsua) languages. At the same time a special attention is paid by them to the only Greek inscription on the bulla, being sent from Byzantine to Konstantine the II⁷¹, for proving the fact of processing all the office documents in the Greek language by the “Abkhazian” kings.

Let us return to Konstantine the III trying to strengthen his positions in Kakheti and Kartli. With that purpose he became related through the dynastic marriage with the chorbishop of Kakheti wedding his daughter. This secured his rear in conditions of spreading his policy. He tried to annex the territories lying near the Alanian gates, i. e. he tried to institute the control over the route connecting Kartli with the North Caucasus, having strategic as well as economical significance. According to the information of Armenian

⁶⁷Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol I. p. 222; L. Akhaladze. Inscriptions of Egrisi-Abkhazian Kings, p. 57.

⁶⁸. See. Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol. I. Lapidary Inscriptions. Eastern and Southern Georgia (V-Xth centuries), p. 34 (In Georgian).

⁶⁹ O. Bgaghba, S. Z. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 133.

⁷⁰ We have to note, that in this book the Armenian theme is presented widely and variously . F. E. It appeared. that the Klisuri fortress was built by the Armenians and namely a Thoma; the commandant of the fortress Tsibilium in the mountains of Abkhazia in the VIIIth century was an Armenian; in 550 among the defenders of the fortress Petra was Armenian Ioan; Kartli was supposedly in the hands of the Armenians and Abkhazians (Apsua); at the same time, not a single word is said about the Georgian political units and the fact, why the Abkhazians (Apsua) “cared” so much about the Georgian language, that completely “forgot” their mother-tongue (O. Bgaghba, S. Z. Lacoba, History of Abkhazia, p. 156).

⁷¹ Such Bullas were sent to the Christian kings, being considered the vassals of Byzantine.

historian Iovan Draskhanakertsi, “ the King of Eger Konstantine...gathers an army and marched out, he went to the North regions through the forges of the Caucasus mountains for subduing to himself the country of the Gugars and thw population living near the Alanian gates. ”⁷² This inspiration of the “Abkhazian” king was resisted by Armenian king Sumbat Bagratuni – writes Draskhanaketrsi. Konstantine lost this battle, but neither Sumbat managed to capture the lands near the Alanian gates.

As we see, besides the aim of taking possession of the Alanian gates (Darial gorge) - Konstantine the III had other purposes and namely Christianization of the Alans. In History of the Abkhazian kingdom this problem occupied one of the most important places. The Byzantine Empire actively tried to spread Christianity among the Alans, but this problem remained unsolved to the 9-10th centuries. In spite of the fact, that the Alans from the remote times got acquainted with Christianity, it anyway did not spread among them. Starting from the 9th century the process of Christianisation among the Alans was more successful. ⁷³ For the Byzantine Empire and strengthened Abkhazian kingdom obtaining an unfluence over the Alans was very important. In M. Lordkipanidze’s point of view, Byzantine and Egrissian-Abkahzian kingdom trying to subdue the Alans, used for this purpose the ideological weapon – Christianity and tried to spread it among the Alans. ⁷⁴ The Abkhazian kingdom concerning the Alans and other North Caucasian peoples had other more important aims and aspirations and in particular, securing the safety of the North borders. King Konstantine thinking in that direction supported sending to the Alans of the archbishop for preaching the Christianity, which by all means comprised the sphere of interests of Byzantine. Thus, this arrangement of Konstantine III was approved by the byzantine ruling circles and Constantinople patriarch. About this historical fact say the letters of Byzantine patriarch Nikolay the Mystic (914-925) to the Abkhazian king Giorgi II. ⁷⁵ As these letters make clear, spreading of Christianity between the Alans started during the reign of Konstantine the III. He revealed his interest towards the Alans, when he decided to capture the Alanian gates (Darial), but could not manage it. It obviously was the struggle was a part of the big policy, stipulating the strengthening of the North borders of the Abkhazian kingdom and spreading of Christianity among the North Caucasian people and obtaining of the significant ideological support in struggle for the political influence in that region.

The Successor of the policy of Konstantine the III was his son Giorgi the II (922-957). He “took possession of the whole Abkhazia”. By that time the term “the whole Abkhazia” maintained the whole West Georgia, Inner Kartli and a part of Hereti.

The historical sources characterize Giorgi the II, as the builder of the churches, strong believer and merciful king. According to the words of the author of the “Chronicles of Kartli”, “he had all the virtues, courage and boldness; was faithful to God, was famous as the builder of the churches, merciful towards the poor, generous, modest, full of noble

⁷² Iovan Draskhanakertsi. *History of Armenia*. Translation from the Old Armenian, the introductory article and comments were made by M. Darbinian – Melikian. Erevan, 1986, p. 152-153.

⁷³ G. Togoshvili. from the *History of the Georgian –Ossetian Relations*. TSkhinvali, 1958, p. 108-115; M. Lordkipanidze. *Emergence of the New Georgian Principalities. Egrisi-Abkhazian Kingdom*, p. 443.

⁷⁴ M. Lordkipanidze. *Emergence of the New Georgian Principalities. Egrissian –Abkhazian Kingdom*, p. 443.

⁷⁵ Three letters written by Nikolay the Mystic to Giorgi the II are known. Lately the opinion was expressed, that one of those letters was sent to Konstantine the III; Seer. E. Ajinjal. *From the History of Christianity in Abkahzia*, p. 83, 89, 91; J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith*, p. 112-113, 115.

features and kind”.⁷⁶ The same characteristic was given to Giorgi the II by Vakhushti Bagrationi: “Giorgi was the God-Fearing and pious king, stately, bold and courageous, merciful, generous, church builder, kind to orphans and widows”.⁷⁷ The similar characteristic cannot be given by the Georgian chroniclers to the “conquerors”, this kind of attitude of the Georgian chroniclers to the Abkhazian kings, the state and church policy being conducted by them, simply point to the ethnic belonging and political orientation of the Abkhazian kings and their place and part in the history of the Georgian statehood.

In the second part of the 9th century inner and foreign situation of Byzantine greatly improved, but they could not manage to restore the old influence in west Georgia. From that time Byzantine changed its tactics towards west Georgia and tried to maintain at least the formal impact on them; about this wrote I. Javakhishvili as well.⁷⁸ The rulers of Byzantine during a long time maintained the formal influence over Georgia and other Christian kings. In this respect the titulature being given to the Abkhazian kings and the rules of addressing to them is worth interest. The Patriarch of Constantinople Nikolay Mystic calls Giorgi the II “Ecsusiast” or “Brilliant Ecsusiast”, but not the “king”. The Byzantines did not address with this title the Abkhazian kings, but anyway considered them the independent rulers. Nikolay the Mystic speaks about the kingly dignity of Giorgi the II, which is the proof of the great authority and political independence of the king of Abkhazia in comparison with the other rulers of the Caucasus.

In the first letter the patriarch advises Giorgi the II to continue education of the Alans being started by his father and support their archbishop.⁷⁹ Giorgi the II in reality continued the deeds of his father, taking an active part in spreading Christianity among the Alans, baptizing of their ruler and of many others, who appeared worth of the holly christening.⁸⁰

The North Caucasian policy of the Abkhazian kings was directed to the spreading of the political influence of the Abkhazian kingdom in that region and as it was denoted earlier to the strengthening securing of the safety of the North borders of the Kingdom. The Orthodox churches along the road from West Georgia to Ossetia and the existence of the Georgian Christian terminology in the Ossetian language⁸¹ is the proof of it.

The religious policy of Giorgi the II can be followed not only according to the “Chronicles of Kartli” and letters of Nikolay the Mystic, but other sources as well. F. E. in the Georgian in lapidary and chased epigraphic monuments is told about the activities of King Giorgi in that direction. During his reign were built the Chkondidi (present Martvili region), Khopa (present Gudauta region) and Kiacha (present Ochamchire region) cathedrals; information about these cathedrals is kept in those epigraphics.

About building of the Martvili Cathedral by Giorgi the II is told in the “Chronicles of Kartli”: “The cathedral was erected in Chkondidi, formed episcopacy and adorned it with the relics of the numerous martyrs”.⁸² The modern data on the dating of the building time

76 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 265; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 64.

77 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 7099; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 132-133.

78 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*, vol. II, p. 109.

79 *Georgika*, vol. IV, book II, p. 213.

80 *Ibid*, p. 214.

81 S. Janashia, *Works*, vol. 1p. 215-252; M. Lordkipanidze. *Egrissian –Abkhazian Kingdom*, p. 445.

82 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1. p. 265.

contradict with the information about the construction of the cathedral. Special research being conducted by G. Chubinashvili and N. Aladashvili showed that the cathedral was built in the VIIIth century.⁸³ On the basis of study of the cathedral inscription V. Silogava came to the conclusion, that the author of the “Chronicles of Kartli” is right when he re-tells about the establishment of the Bishop’s chair in Chkondidi by Giorgi the II; but the cathedral was built in the VIIth century. The king of Abkhazia only renewed the cathedral, built bishop’s residence and other facilities.⁸⁴ As for the building inscription of the cathedral, it is the narration about the history of construction of the font by Bagrat the III in 996.

The building inscription on the Khopa (The Gudauta region) cathedral of Saint Nickolas built by Giorgi the II reads: “This Holly Church was built by the high priest {....} During the reign of Giorgi, when (Guarandukht) was born. Saint Nickolas solicit for him before Christ.”⁸⁵

The inscription tells us, that the Khopa cathedral was built in honor of Saint Nickolas. As for dating of the inscription, in V. Silogava’s opinion it goes back to the 12th century and king Giorgi being mentioned in the inscription is supposedly the king of united Georgia – Giorgi the III (1156-1184); arising out of it the inscription can be dated from the periods of 1156-1178, thinks V. Silogava.⁸⁶ But according to the data given by the first publisher of the inscription A. Avidzba – at the time, when it was discovered it was possible to read the name of a woman- Guarandukht⁸⁷ (According to L. Shervashidze’s deciphering); this is a rather solid grounding for changing of the dating of the inscription. It is well-known, that Guarandukht, the daughter of the king of Egrissia-Abkhazia Giorgi the II (922-957) was married in Tao-Klardjeti to the son of king Bagrat the II Bagrationi (958-994) - Gurgen. The name Guarandukht to honor her birth was carved on the façade of Saint Nickolas cathedral, the construction of which was supposedly completed by Giorgi the II at her birth. Thus, king Giorgi the II being mentioned in the inscription is the king of the “Abkhazians” and the cathedral of Saint Nickolas in Khopi was built by his initiative.

The Georgian chased inscriptions inform about the riche donations of Giorgi the II to the Kiachi cathedral - the silver censer and rapid, that are also called the Kiachi icon.⁸⁸ The silver censer has the Georgian inscription: “Holly Church, be to me King Giorgi intercessor before God.”⁸⁹

After studying of the silver censer G. Chubinashvili concluded, that it is a brilliant sample of the early Georgian chased art and king Giorgi being mentioned in the inscription is the king of the “Abkhazians” Giorgi the II. The inscription of the Kiachi icon informs that it was made by the initiative of King Giorgi.

“In the name of God, I, king Giorgi put these rapids in this Holly Church of Kiachi as

83 G. Chubinashvili. *Monuments of the Jvari Type*. Tb., 1948, p. 31, 59; N. Aladashvili. *Monumental Sculpture of Georgia. Figured Reliefs of the V-XIth centuries*. M., 1977, p. 48-61.

84 V. Silogava. *Epigraphics of Megrelia and Abkhazia*. Tb., 2004. P. 51.

85 L. Akhaladze. *the Epigraphics of Abkhazia as an historical source (Lapidary the fresco inscriptions)*, p. 444.

86 *Corpus of the Georgian inscriptions*, vol. II, p. 142.

87 A. Avidzba. *A Curious Page of the History*. -The Soviet Abkhazia, 1967, 7th of October.

88 Was discovered in the village Obudji of TsalenJikha region, where they were had been take already by the end of the XVIIth century after occupying the modern territory of Abkhazia by the highlanders – the ancestors of the present Abkhazians.

89 G. Chubinashvili. *the Georgian Chased Art*. Tb., 1959, photo N 29-31, p. 148; L. Akhaladze. *Inscription of the Egrissian –Abkhazian kings*. p. 58.

a prayer for my soul. Priests, when you will be performing the sacrifice with the flesh and blood of Christ remember me in your prayers, Amen. Holly Virgin, be my – king Giorgi’s protector before Your Son and our Lord”.⁹⁰ The Kiachi icon and censer was studied by G. Chubinashvili from History of art point view and dated from the first part of the 10th century.

As we can see, the church and state policy of Abkhazian kingdom, the basis for what had already been laid in 60-ies of the 9th century by Giorgi the I and then it was extended during Bagrat the I and Konstantine the III and reached the third, new phase during Giorgi the II. His deeds are the most successful period in history of Abkhazian kingdom. Armenian historian of the 10th century Ukhtanes wrote about that period of the Abkhazian kingdom: Here is the tribe having been settled on the coast of the Pontus, it revived and multiplied to the borders of the Armenians and Albanians. Formed quite numerous population and that state is called Abkhazia... They multiplied and enlarged and emerged a tribe, that in its first country (Spain – author) is called Vetia (Iberia – author), and here they are called the Georgians”.⁹¹ The information of Ukhtanes is the direct confirmation of the obvious fact, that the population of the Abkhazian kingdom was settled not by the Apsua, but by the ethnic Georgians. The modern Abkhazian historians and among them O. Bgazhba and S. Lacoba⁹² falsifying history of Abkhazia often refer to the first part of information by Ukhtanes, but as for the second part, in which the ethnic composition of the Abkhazian kingdom is analyzed they thoroughly hide it from the uninformed reader.⁹³

The important trend of the state policy of Giorgi the II was the struggle for joining of Kakheti. After the death of chorbishop Fadli a part of the feudal lords did not recognize the power of chorbishop Kvirike the II (929-976) and decided to give Kakhetia under Giorgi the IInd’s rule (922-957). In the “Chronicles of Kartli” we read: “Then split the nobles of Gardabani and started to negotiate with king Giorgi. King Giorgi set out and campaigned Kakheti, burnt it and destroyed and then returned... Then camped in Ateni. His son Leon was eristav of Kartli.”⁹⁴ The significant support in struggle for Kakheti for Giorgi according to the chronicler’s words was Kartli, the eristav of what was his elder Leon. Kvirike II sent to Giorgi II his brother Shurta, who handed to the king of Abkhazia the fortresses of Ujarma, Bochorma, Lotsobani and Nakhichevani. King Giorgi easily took on those fortresses.” After possessing Nakhchevan, Chorbishop Kvirike seeing how he lacked the strength begged for the guarantee to leave him alive and gave to Giorgi Kakheti as a gift.”⁹⁵ With the help of another part of the Kartli feudal lords “Kvirike again became the possessor of his patrimony. -“⁹⁶ writes the author of the “Chronicles of Kartli”.

Despite this, king Giorgi continued his struggle for annexing Kakhetia, as his major political task was unification of Georgia. By 956 king Giorgi charges his son eri-

90 G. Chubinashvili. *the Georgian Chased Art*, Photo NN 22, 23, 24, p. 138.

91 Ukhtanes. *The History of Split of the Georgians forms the Armenians*. The Armenian text with the Georgian translation and research was published by Z. Aleksidze. Tb., 1975, p. 66-67.

92 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 156.

93 On falsifying by the Abkhazian historians of the information of Ukhtanes. See. J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 197, 556.

94 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 268.

95 *Life of Kartli*, p. 54-55.

96 *Life of Kartli*, vol. 1, p. 269.

stav of Kartli - Leon with joining Kakhეთia. Leading his army he invaded Kakhეთia, but during that campaign Leon got information about the death of “Great and God fearing king Giorgi.”⁹⁷ As we know, Leon fulfilled his father’s commission, but due his father’s death, he temporarily postponed annexation of Kakhეთi, made peace with Kvirike and hastily returned to Kutaisi.

In 957 the throne of Abkhazian kingdom was occupied by Leon the III (957-967). Giorgi the II had four sons and a daughter: Leon, Dimitri, Feodosius, Bagrat and Guarandukht. Earlier he sent his two sons (Feodosius and Bagrat) to Byzantine, to prevent the bloodshed war for the throne between the brothers after his death.⁹⁸ In spite of this fact, one of the brothers – Feodosius anyway returned to his motherland with the claiming the throne. . . It was not an obstacle for Leon to continue his father’s policy energetically for annexing the rest of the lands of Kartli. In the first years of Leon’s reign, he annexed Javakheti and appointed their devoted to him eristav – Zviad Marushiani. About this historical fact speaks the inscription being made on the walls of the cathedral in Kumurdo: “With the help of God, bishop Iovane laid a foundation of this church by my hand – the sinner Sakotsari – during the reign of Leon – May God glorify him – Choronikon 184, the first of May, Saturday, the first phase of the moon, during the rule of eristav Zvia (Zviad); He laid this balavar. Christ is the protector of your slave, Amen.”⁹⁹

From the inscription we understand, that in 964 Leon had already taken possession of Djavaketi, where his power was represented by Zviad eristavi. Thus, from 60-ies of the Xth century the Abkhazian kings together with Kartli possessed Javakheti as well and spread their power to the South, which is proved by the epigraphic and narrative sources. The building inscription of Kumurdo is a bright example of it.

Leon the III continued his struggle for annexation of Kakhეთi. According to the “Chronicles of Kartli”, King Leon “Started again the war with Kvirike and renewed his claims on Kakhეთia. Marched out leading a great army and camped on the banks of the river Aragvi. Took Mukhnari, Kherki and Bazaleti”, but according to the chroniclers words “during this campaign he got ill, returned and passed away”.¹⁰⁰ Leon was not able to finish his father’s commission, though spread the borders of the Abkhazian kingdom to the South-East direction. Historical sources characterize Leon the III, as Christ loving builder of the Churches, protector of orphans and widows. In the “Chronicles of Kartli” we read:” God multiplied his kingdom like his father’s. He was God loving and full of all the kindness. He built a church in Mokvi and established a bishop’s chair in it.”¹⁰¹ The above mentioned monuments point to the fact, that Leon was successful performer of the state and church policy of his predecessors. He built Mokvi, Kumurdo, Tsirkoli and Khobi (Ancient) cathedrals. In the epigraphic monuments of the cathedrals in Kumurdo, Tsirkoli and Khobi are said about their construction. On the walls of the Tsirkoli cathedral the Georgian inscription Asomtavruli was cut: “May God save me from the jaws of a lion, Saint Gabriel help me avoid the

97 *Chronicles of Kartli*, p. 55.

98 *Life of Kartli*, vol. 1, p. 270.

99 V. Silogava. *Epigraphic of the Kumurdo Cathedral*. Tb., 1994, p. 39.

100 *Life of Kartli*, vol. 1, p. 270.

101 *Ibid*.

punishment of King Leon.¹⁰²

We have to mark, that the Abkhazian authors such as S. Lacoba and O. Bgazhba in their works don't mention the state and church arrangements being carried out by Giorgi the II and Leon the III, presenting them, as Abkhazian (Apsua) conquerors of Georgia.

After the death of Leon in 967, his brother Dimitri the III ascended to the throne (967-875); his brother Feodosius on his return from Byzantine opposed him. In spite of the support of the Meskhetian feudal lords - Feodosius was captured and blinded by Dimitri. After the death of Dimitri, the throne was occupied by childless and blind Feodosius; his only heir was his nephew - the grandson of king of the Abkhazians Giorgi the II from his daughter Guarandukht and grandson of Bagrat the II Bagrationi the king of Kartvels. From 70-ies of the 10th century started a new epoch in the history of Abkhazian kingdom, having been completed with the unification of Georgia.

Samples of literature, being made by the order of the west Georgian clergy and Abkhazian kings only in Georgian, using the Georgian written language is important for understanding the cultural-religious situation in the Abkhazian kingdom. As it is known, in the medieval century Georgia the centers of the Georgian education and culture were the monasteries. They were that rich vein from which took source the Georgian culture, education and spirituality. In the 6th century monastery life started in Georgia. A special rise is noticed in the monasteries of Tao-Klardjeti being founded in the 8-9th centuries by Grigol Khandsteli (759-861); they became the significant centers of the Georgian culture, where were created the original and translated literature of the secular and religious character; the wonderful schools of icon-painting and painting, various calligraphic trends etc. About the spiritual and cultural influence of the Christian centers being founded by Grigol Khandsteli and about the ideological, religious and culture of Abkhazia speaks the fact of inviting Grigol by Dimitri the II for founding the Ubisi Monastery Center. This cultural- religious union of the Georgian kingdoms continued further. The religious centers being established by the kings of Abkhazia (Ubisa, Samtsevrisi, Armazi, Martvili, Khopi, Tsirkoli, Eredvi, Mokvi), were the most important hearths of the Georgian culture during the epoch of the Abkhazian kingdom and in the following centuries. They were often the carriers of the progressive educational tendencies and were the initiators of the new cultural beginnings.

It is clear, that this was the result of the political and religious independence of the Abkhazian kingdom. In the struggle for obtaining and strengthening the church and political independence, side by side with the kings of Abkhazia were standing the West Georgian church and population of the region having been liberated from the Byzantine dominion; The kingdom of Abkhazia not only obtains and strengthens the state sovereignty, but continues the struggle for annexing the Georgian lands and restoration of the integral Georgian State.

It is remarkable, that namely in the Abkhazian kingdom worked the famous representatives of the Georgian culture, clerical and secular persons. Among them we can name a translator and hymnographer of the 10th century – Stefanoz Sananoisdze (the

¹⁰² L. Akhaladze. *Inscription of the Egression – Abkhazian Kings*, p. 59.

author of the “Songs of Stephen the First Martyr”);¹⁰³ He worked in the Chkondidi cathedral being founded by king of the Abkhazians Giorgi the II and having become the most important and significant hearth of the Georgian culture. Giorgi the II also protected and supported another great Georgian hymnography Ioan Minchkhvi¹⁰⁴ - the author of magnificent “Easter Hymns”. The representative of the kingdom of Abkhazia was the author of the martyrdom of Michael Sabatsmindeli or “Abukura”¹⁰⁵. During the king of the Abkhazians Konstantine the III was started compiling of the “History of the Abkhazian Kings”,¹⁰⁶ in the Georgian language, being the chronicle of the Egrissian-Abkhazian kings of the 8-9th centuries. Separatist historiography says nothing about this rich culture heritage of the Abkhazian kingdom, as it is purely Georgian. Not a single other culture existed and was created in that period Abkhazia.

The religious and state language of the Abkhazian kingdom was Georgian and the written language culture was also Georgian, about which simply point the above mentioned facts and also the inscriptions being made by the order of the Abkhazian kings in the Georgian Capital print letters (asomtavruli) and having come to our days. This fact is marked by the all researchers, who once studied the history of the Abkhazian kingdom¹⁰⁷ and among them the Abkhazian authors.¹⁰⁸ Despite this, the modern Abkhazian historians M. Gunba, O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba and others ignore these facts. We have to stress, that the development of the written language on the territory of Abkhazia was studied by Kh. Bgaghba (the father of O. Bgaghba). According to his conclusion the Abkhazian kingdom was the west Georgian kingdom and the state language of which was the Georgian language.¹⁰⁹ In D. Gulia’s opinion there are “numerous scientific, verified facts, being the proof, that the Abkhazians always had the one historical and cultural life with the Georgians and the Abkhazians are the Georgians... It is obvious, that in the Abkhazian kingdom, at least from the 9th century Georgian is the only written language of the State and private record-keeping, church practice and service”.¹¹⁰

From the point of view of development of the culture of the written language of west Georgian and in particular on the territory of modern Abkhazia the preserved epigraphical material of the Abkhazian kingdom period is especially significant. The source study analyses and their paleographical comparison with the sample of the written language of other regions of Georgia showed the progressive cultural-historical tendencies of Abkhazia. It (Abkhazia) was the first to respond the changes occurring in the samples of Asomtavruli (capital letters). The fact, that the first samples of asomtavruli were discovered in west Georgia in the present Gudauta region of Abkha-

103 Georgian writers, vol. 1, Tb., 1987, p. 515-516.

104 Poetry by Ioan Minchkhvi. Prepared for edition and commented by L. Khachidze. Tb., 1987.

105 Essays on the History of Georgia, vol. II, p. 427.

106 Ancient History, vol. II, edited by E. Takaishvili, p. 46-54.

107 S. Janashia. Giorgi Sharvashidze. Cultural-Historical Essay. -Works, vol. VI. Tb., 1988, p. 26; M. Lordkipanidze. Emergence of the New Georgian Principalities. Egrissian-Abkhazian Kingdom. In the book: Essays on History of Abkhazia, p. 416-445; Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., part I, p. 52-53; J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith, p. 119; Sh. Gloveli. Abkhazian Kingdom, p. 24-25 etc.

108 Kh. S. Bgaghba. From the History of the Abkhazian Written Language, Tb., 1967, p. 12; Z. V. Anchabadze. From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia, p. 196.

109 Kh. S. Bgaghba. From the History of the Written Language of Abkhazia.

110 D. Gulia. on My Book – History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1951 (Reprint edition). Tb., 1998, p. 10, 15.

zia in the ruins of the church at the mountain Msighva is the valid proof. Especially as, exactly in this region in the Georgian written language culture was founded a new, excellent calligraphic school of the arrow-ended (pointed) letters being spread from Abkhazia to the other regions of Georgia. ¹¹¹

The above mentioned material points to the fact, that Abkhazia were the progressive region of Georgia and were not only the area of spreading the Georgian culture, but its creator as well. It (Abkhazia) was an organic part of the Georgian cultural and political world, as Kartli, Kakheti, Odishi and other historical regions.

¹¹¹ L. Akhaladze. *Paleographic Characteristics of the Georgian Written Language in the Epigraphic Monuments of Abkhazia.* -Intercultural Communications. Tb., 2007, p. 32-40.

Chapter VI. Church Architecture of Abkhazia

Medieval material monuments having been preserved and revealed in different times on modern territory of Abkhazia, as a result of archeological excavations - Christian cathedrals, enable us to follow the picture almost a continuous development of the Christian cult architecture during the 4-18th centuries, change of the styles, of the historical process of evolution, change of the periods of the creative searches, complete artistic maturity and crises. These monuments occupy a significant place in the history of the Georgian culture and art and in the first place in the church construction.

The monuments of the church architecture are thoroughly studied and spotlighted by the researchers of the Georgian art. ¹ Below will be revealed only those specific distinguishing features of the church architecture of the region of the early medieval centuries (4-7th centuries) and transitional period (7-10th centuries), which reflect common for the Georgian regional trends, common taste, general trends of the creative research, being the result of the creative approach of the creative elaboration of the important for Georgia theme.

Christian church put before the architects certain tasks: creation of a special building, being able to contain a great number of praying people and fit for performing of the religious rituals. In Europe and Near East in the early Christian epoch two main types of the constructions were spread: prolonged domeless construction, the so-called Basilica and centric, round, eight facet (octagon), cross-like building. ² In all corners of Georgia, including Abkhazia in the Christian cult architecture are met the same two types – prolonged domeless and centric. Nuclear of the centric cathedrals in Georgia comprises a quadrangle, on which sit the dome and around it the cross like plan is developed. This style is genetically connected from one aspect with the analogous compositions of the ancient architecture of the Near East (F. E. Sassanid palaces in Iran), on the other hand with the traditions of the Georgian folk architecture, in particular with the local, peasant “hall type” being elaborated and worked out long time before the spreading of the Christian tradition. ³

The buildings of the basilica type with the stressed lengthwise axes, being built by means of the rhythmic repetition of certain elements were alien and not familiar for the Georgian architecture. That type was implemented by the official church, as long as it needed from the very start already accepted and famous, hallowed by faith the samples. Such were the oldest basilicas of Palestine, as Palestine according to the divine or Holy scripture was the arena of Christ’s activities in this world. ⁴

In the early Christian epoch in Kartli, Kakheti and Abkhazia almost simultaneously appears a peculiar variant of basilica, having acquired in Georgian science a name of the “three church basilica”. From outside by its “profile” it did not differ from the ordinary

¹ I. Tsitsishvili. *History of the Georgian Architecture*. Tb., 1995 (in Georgian); Sh. Amiranashvili. *History of the Georgian Art*. Tb., 1961 (in Georgian); V. Beridze. *Ancient Georgian Architecture*. Tb., 1974 (in Georgian). of the same author: *Several Problems of the Georgian Central-Dome Architecture of the Transitional Period*. Tb., 1983; L. D. Rcheulishvili. *Some Aspects of the Georgian Architecture of the Black Sea Coast. –mediaeval century art. Rus. Georgia. M., 1978; of the same author: The Dome Architecture of the 8-10th centuries in Abkhazia*. Tb., 1988 etc.

² V. Beridze. *Ancient Georgian Architecture*, p. 18.

³ *Ibid*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid*.

three nef basilica, but inside the naves were separated from each other not with the columns, but the walls i. e. as a matter of fact, here in one construction were united three independent forms each other chapels. This topic, having been created in the 5th and 6th centuries, from the 7th century overcomes a certain evolution and in the pointed period acquires a form of the artistically completed construction⁵

Next to the three naves and three church basilicas in Abkhazia, as well as in other corners of Georgia had already been worked out one more, simplest type of the domeless construction – one nave church. Most of the small village chapels belong to that type, though big one nave and also two nave churches are also met.

The Georgian church fully and completely keeps to the norms usual for the entire Christian world. From the functional point of view it is identical with the other churches of Christian countries (In the first place - the Orthodox): The altar facing East with the semi circle apse, diakonik and sacrificial; from the both sides (excluding the most ancient churches, which hadn't yet had such kind of places, is located the hall for those wanting to pray). The Georgian churches at that time were built without the atriums. The narthex from the west side and separately built font (Baptisteries) of the western churches is only an exception, otherwise they are without them; as for the belfry in appears from the 13th century. ⁶

On the modern territory of Abkhazia more than 20 cult architectural construction of the early Christian epoch are known, being revealed mainly as a result of the archeological excavations. As we understand on the basis of the archeological data, the Christian cathedrals and temples were built not only in known from the written sources centers (Pitsunda), important and fortified places (Sebastopolis, Anakopia, Tsebelda), but in the place unknown for literature (Gagra, Alakhadze, Hienos, Dranda, Gantiadi, Khashupsa, Miusera, Mramba, Shapka, Abaanta, Kiach-Abaa etc.).

In the early medieval centuries churches in Abkhazia are presented by the one – nave (Pitsunda, churches N1 and N4, two churches fixed to the west of the Cathedral church, and also the churches in Hienos, Khashupsa, Tsebelda, Mramba, Shapka) and two-nave (Pitsunda) constructions; three-nave basilicas(Pitsunda churches N 2 and N3, Gagra, Alakhadze) and “ three church basilicas” (Gagra, Miusera, Aba-Anta, Kiach-Abaa) and cross-domed construction(Dranda).

Though, in the country being under the Greek confessional influence the forms of the cult architecture came from Byzantine, but the cultural integrity and connection of Abkhazia with other Georgian “countries” (regions) does not seize and in the creations of the cult constructions of that time is apparent the combination of Byzantine and local (Georgian) art trends.

If a part of the churches having been built in Abkhazia on the first stage of the early medieval centuries are Greek (F. E. Ancient Pitsunda, basilicas being built one on another of the 4-5th centuries and baptisteries of the 4th century in Gudava) then the so-called “three church “basilica being constructed a bit later in the 6th century on the territory of modern Gagra is one of the variations of the Georgian domeless constructions. In Abkhazia are preserved four monuments of this type – in Old Gagra in the fortress Abaaneti (vil-

5 G. Chubinashvili. *History of the Georgian Art*. Tb., 1936, p. 65-66 (in Georgian); of the same author: *Architecture of Kakheti*, Tb., 1959, p. 41.

6 V. Beridze. *Ancient Georgian Architecture*, p. 20.

lage Likhni) on the hill Kiachi and Ambare, on the Miusera cape. The oldest is the church in Old Gagra being the part of the Gagra fortress. In this fortress is kept, characteristic for the Georgian early Christian reliefs inserted in the circle – an isosceles, the so-called “Bolnisi” cross.

Architectural theme of the “three church” basilica, as it was denoted earlier, is one of the variations of the domeless cathedral, from the outer side being typical three nave basilica, but inside, from both – the constructional decision and the space impression is completely different. It has already been said, that here instead of the columns and piers, usually dividing the inner space of basilicas on naves have the walls. In Georgia constructions of such type have undergone an interesting evolutionary process and after a certain period of time resulted in the artistically completed creation.

This type of basilicas is known in other countries as well, but in Georgia such sort of churches comprise an independent type. The hearth of their creative development is considered Kakheti, where almost two dozens of such type monuments are preserved. The like buildings must have been accepted and interesting for the residents of eastern and western Georgia equally. This circumstance naturally and regularly was reflected in the fact of practically simultaneous emergence of the “three church basilicas” in Kakheti, Kartli and Abkhazia. ⁷ Existence of the named common Georgian types of the churches in Abkhazia is a specific marker of the real cultural-historical situation. ⁸

Obviously, the fact of constructing of the “three church basilicas” in Abkhazia points to the religious-cultural integrity of Kartli and Egrisi even in 5-7th centuries. ⁹ On the basis of the first Georgian historical essay “Converting of Georgia”, “Life of Georgia” and data of the Armenian historian of the 9-10th centuries Ioan Draskhanakert their unification under one arch guide (main clerical person), famous Georgia spiritual leader, active participant of the Armenian – Georgian split – Irion the I, Cathalicos of Kartli on the borders of the 6-7th centuries is not excluded. ¹⁰

The vivid example of synthesis of Byzantine and local, characteristic for all Georgia common artistic trends is the Cathedral of Assumption of Our Lady in Dranda, on the dating of which there are different opinions. G. Chubinashvili¹¹ after architectural analyses of the cathedral comes to the conclusion, that it is the variation of the Djvari of Mtskheta (6th century). R. Mepisashvili by means of art critics and biophysical methods dates the cathedral from the 8th century. ¹²M. Khotelashvili and A. Jacobson consider it the Byzantine monument and basing on the archeological material, date the cathedral from the 6th century. ¹³ The brick cathedral with the low and wide multy window dome, numerous doors and rotund space in the middle, is the late Roman heritage. Shift of the axes of Narthex (vestibule) and entrances of the main space meet the common Georgian inclination

7 D. Tumanishvili. on the National Integrity of the Medieval Century Georgian Architecture. –Literature and Art, 3-6, 1993, p. 177 (in Georgian).

8 V. Beridze. Monuments of the Culture of Abkhazia. – Jvari Vazisa, 1, 1995, p. 65 (in Georgian).

9 S. Janashia. Works, vol. 1. Tb., 1949, p. 124 (in Georgian).

10 Z. Aleksidze. Epistolic Book. Tb., 1968, p. 167-168 (in Georgian).

11 G. Chubinashvili. History of the Georgian Art, p. 167-168.

12 R. Mepisashvili. Dranda 9 Monument of Architecture of the 8th century). The IVth International Symposium dedicated to the Georgian art. Tb., 1981, p. 12.

13 M. Khotelashvili. A. Jacobson. Byzantine cathedral of the village Dranda (Abkhazia). -Vizantiiski vremennik, vol. 45. M., 1984, p. 192-200, 204-205.

of the 8-9th centuries and the entwining of the vaults of the apse by means of the three protuberance of the altar is based on the experience of the “Djvari of Mtskheta” and other cathedrals of the same group (F. E. - Martvili cathedral).¹⁴

Later in the cult constructions on the territory of Abkhazia gradually intensify the Byzantine principles, though construction of the “three church basilicas” continues. Abant and Ambarsk “three Church basilicas”¹⁵ being built in the 7-8th centuries and also known for the whole west Georgia Kiachi “three church basilica” of the Saint Archangel¹⁶, reflect the tendencies being reflected and revealed in architecture of eastern and south-west Georgia (complicated planning, elaboration of the inner walls with the protuberances).

The one nave Hall Church of the transitional period being found during the archeological excavations in the village Chkhortoli (Gali region of Abkhazia) has the parallels in the 9-10th centuries in Javakheti (Khvilisha - 8-9th centuries) and Shida Kartli (Snekvi – 9-10th centuries, the church of the Elderly of the 10th century in Eredvi and Eredvi church of Saint Georgia of 906 and also the churches in Kusireti in 8-10th centuries, Kheiti church of Saint Sava of the 10th century and church of the 10th century in Disevi)¹⁷; The hall church of the 9th century in Tselikari of Gali region has an analogue in the Southern Georgia – Javakheti (Agara – 10th century).¹⁸

Characteristic for the Georgian architecture signs and tendencies are reflected in the monuments of Abkhazia of the 9-10th centuries that belong to the last period of the transitional epoch and are marked with various creative searches. In the course of the process of such researches the central-dome construction occupies the dominant position in Georgian architecture, the main characteristic feature of which is the prolonged construction of the western-eastern orientation. Mass of such construction forms in the space the shape of a cross. The dome being sat on the four loosely standing columns is raised on the joint of the four wings of the cathedral. This type of a cathedral is distinguished by its diversity and the cathedrals of the “free cross” and “inserted cross” are built.¹⁹

The main nuclear of the “inserted cross” comprises a cross dome structure. This theme gradually develops and becomes more complicated in the course of time, which is seen in adding of the separate elements to the main compositional structure. To the main composition of the Anakopian and Bzipi cathedrals from the west side the narthex directly merging with the main corps is added. Those vestibules form a protruding shape. The plan of the Anakopian cathedral is repeated in the Likhni temple. The patronik being placed above the narthex makes the interior of the cathedral different from the Anakopian one. The impression of grandiosity and magnitude of the interior of the Likhni cathedral is intensified by means of the two store circle extension and two columns being added from the western side.

Characteristic for the previous period the search of the architectural forms become absolutely different in Mokvi cathedral. The cathedrals in Anakopia and Bzip with their

14 D. Tumanishvili. *on Architecture of Abkhazia*, p. 80; L. Shervashidze. *Archeological excavations in the fortress Aban-ta. Field Archeological Study in 1976 Tb.*, 1979, p. 233.

15 L. Rcheulishvili. *Dome Architecture of the 8-9th centuries in Abkhazia*, p. 73-74.

16 D. Tumanishvili. *Christian Monuments of Abkhazia*. – *Jvari Vazisa*, 1, p. 68 (in Georgian).

17 R. Khvistani. *Chkhortoli Church, -Abkhazia*, 1, Tb., 2006, p. 129 (in Georgian).

18 L. Shervashidze. *Tskelikari. -Material on Archeology of Abkhazia*. Tb., 1971, p. 64.

19 G. Chubinashvili, N. Severov. *Ways of Development of the Georgian Architecture*. Tb., 1936, p. 82-83 (in Georgian); V. Beridze. *Some Problems...*, p. 7; of the same author: *The Ancient Georgian Architecture*, p. 47.

strict and calm symmetry resemble the Georgian cathedrals for the classic epoch. Likhni and Mokvi cathedrals with their asymmetry and dynamism meet the norms of the dominant in the Georgian architecture of that period the picturesque-artistic style.

The monuments of the “inserted cross” style – Bzip (9th century), Anakopia, Likhni and Mokvi (6-ies of the 10th century, were built during the reign of the king of Abkhazia Leon the III, the uncle of Bagrat the III) have the obvious Byzantine trail. This is for example the dome being constructed from the segments being concaved inside, which are called by the Englishmen “pumpkin like” and the three apses with the protuberances on the eastern side of the cathedral and the open places to the inner space side (excluding the western wall). Because of these features from the 19th century they were considered the constructions of the Byzantine art. But those churches have very peculiar features and artistic-historical signs enabling us to attribute those monuments to the monuments of the Georgian architecture and their “Byzantism” to recognize as a sort of a mixture. All those four cathedrals belong to the so-called “inserted cross” type with the dome being sat on the four loosely standing columns. The buildings with the domes of the similar construction are spread from the 10th century on the Balkans, in Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and Kiev Russia and in general through the whole Christian east. But the oldest ones are met today in Georgian and Armenia. In eastern Georgia there is a discontinuous row of the similar cathedrals (Tsromi -8th century, Samshvilde – 8th century, Ikalto and Ruisi – 8-9th centuries) when in Byzantine this kind of architectural theme was only being implemented.

Among the cathedrals of Abkhazia of the “inserted cross type the oldest is the Bzipi cathedral obviously being connected with the monuments of Kartli. Other buildings of Abkhazia of the similar type (as well as, the “three church basilicas”) emerged on the Georgian ground. On the connection with the Georgian world, point the outer and inner construction of those monuments, where the under dome vaults sit directly on the basis; as for the domes of the analogous Byzantine monuments rely on the walls standing on the low basis. The domes of the analogues Bizantine monuments sit on the walls with low basis. The walls of the cathedrals of Abkhazia are not speckled with the windows from the outer side, as the walls of the Byzantine churches. From the Bzip (9th century) cathedral to the Mokvi (10th century) cathedral in the axes leading to the altar is observed a gradual growth of the size, their prolongation, while in the Byzantine churches of the 7th century the inverse process has place - the shortening of the axes.²⁰

Arcade consisting of several stores on the west patronika of Likhni, is absolutely alien for the Byzantine art, was elaborated in Kakheti in the Gurdjaani church of All Saints and then was transformed into the Ambari (located in Abkhazia) “three church basilica”. In Georgia, for Kakheti and Abkhazia large, vault gates are characterized, that is also unfamiliar for the Byzantine architecture.

The Pitsunda cathedral, because of its original under dome construction stands out among the group of the monuments of the “inserted cross” type. The monument is located on the territory of the ancient necropolis on the coast of the Black sea in the Pitsunda bay. To the South-West of the cathedral the archeologists found the remains of the baths, palace and a temple; floor in one of the churches is covered with the mosaics, containing the early Christian symbolic-allegorical images and ornamental motives (4-5th centuries).

20 Z. Jangveladze. Church Architecture of the 9-10th centuries in Abkhazia. -Historical Researches, 1, Tb., 1998, p. 44.

The Pitsunda Cathedral is the cross-dome construction, but it has narthex from the west side and three protruding apses from the east. Narthexes are rare in Georgia, but protruding apses are characteristic for the early Georgian churches; later they are used on the Black sea coast and in some places in eastern Georgia. The west side of the cathedral in Pitsunda is equipped with the three sides patroniks. The dome of the cathedral rests on the altar walls and not on the loosely standing columns. In the Georgian architecture this theme was worked out in the transitional period. Its early samples are met from the 9-10th centuries in Kakheti and Tao-Klardjeti (Bartskhani, Ozaani, and Khandzta) and from the 11th century become firmly rooted in the Georgian architecture. Unfortunately, the cathedral in Bedia (999), being built by Bagrat the III and described with the great delight did not come to our time. L. Khimshiashvili as an architector-restorator stated, that the present building was built in the second half of the 13th century on the ruins of the previous cathedral. But, he restored the plan of the original church, being almost similar to the plans of the above-described domed churches.²¹

The monuments of the transitional period in Abkhazia are characterized with the following signs: -protruding apse from the eastern side, open additional compartments to the main space of the cathedral, narthex from the west side and the sparse ornamentation of the façade. The churches of other regions of Georgia are characterized with the same common Georgian signs. The protruding apses are in the Vachnadze church of All Saints (8th century), the main cathedra in Gelati (12th century), the church in Timotesubani (12-13th centuries) and Metekhi cathedral (13th century). Free opening of the additional compartments to the side of the main space of the cathedral is fixed in the Samshvile Sioni (8th century), Ikorta (12th century) and other Georgian monuments of the 12th -13th centuries. The western narthex is met in the cathedral of Tsromi. This form is characteristic not only for the Byzantine architecture, but in general for the Christian architecture.²² Though patronic is not a necessary part of the Georgian medieval century architecture, but it is met in other places as well (Vachnadze church of All Saints – 11th century; Alaverdi - 11th century).

On the Georgian tradition in the central-domed cathedrals in Abkhazia point their numerous components. In Abkhazia (excluding Pitsunda) as well as, in east Georgia in the wall laying the cut stones are used. In both regions in shifting from the under dome square to the domed circle are used characteristic for that period veils, instead of which in Byzantine the tromps were used. In the cathedrals of Abkhazia and western Georgia the gradual prolongation of the west-east length wise axes has place, while in the Byzantine cathedrals the similar axes shortens. For the cathedrals of Abkhazia the horse-shoe like construction of the altar apses and scarce ornamentation of the façade is characteristic. These features make them similar to the monuments of Kakheti, but Alaverdi having no ornamentation.

Receptacles on the north side of the apse being connected with the main nave with the door are shorter, than the naves having the step like cut in the appropriate façade are met

21 V. Beridze. *The Ancient Georgian Architecture*, p. 44-45; L. Khimshiashvili. *Some Problems of Restoration (Tsromi, Bedia)*. - *Friend of the Monument*, 14, Tb., 1969, p. 77(in Georgian); I. Varsimashvili. *Bedia*. -*Friend of the Monument*, p. 31-32, Tb., 1973, p. 31032 (in Georgian).

22 L. D. Rcheulishvili. *Domed...*, p. 77; P. Zakaraia. *The Georgian Architecture of the 11th 013th centuries*. Tb., 1990, p. 22, 42 (in Georgian).

in the domed churches of Abkhazia – Ilori (11th century), Lashkendari (10th- 11th centuries), Gumurishi (11th century) and Achanua.²³ Their analogues in the compositional and architectural aspect are met in all the regions of Georgia (Kartli, Javakheti, Aragvi gorge, Racha). The above mentioned monuments complete the Georgian architectural line of that epoch.²⁴

Russian archeologist B. Raev studied remains of the five obviously Georgian hall churches of the 11-13th centuries (Lipnitsk, Krien, Neron, Golitsino, Akhshtir) in the environs of the town Adler (near the Red Field). Planning of those churches he considers analogous of the Georgian churches – Dranda (Abkhazia) and Nokalakevi (Senaki district - Megrelia).²⁵

In Pitsunda, Mramba, Tsebelda, Anakopia, Sukhumi, Kulamba, Dranda and Gagra are revealed the monuments of architecture of the 6-8th centuries with the relief sculptures, among which the special place is occupied by the bas-reliefs of Tsebelda. These Bas-reliefs being based on the Biblical plots show the east Georgian impact on this region. In the wall of the church being restored by the Russian monks in the 19th century on the territory of the fortress of Anakopia are inserted several stones from the churches of the 10-11th centuries being destroyed in the neighborhood, resembling the reliefs from Kartli and South Georgia.²⁶ The relief stones (with the so-called “bolnisi “ cross being placed into the circle, the “ tree of life”) being found in Summer of 2008 by the pedagogue and students of the Tagiloni (Abkhazia) school while cleaning and tidying the local church (“Che Okhvame”) also have the parallels in the monuments of Kartli and South Georgia of the 6-7th centuries.

Some authors in the past, as well as in the present times, through falsification and ignoring the cultural-historical roots connecting with Georgia, try to introduce into the science a mistaken, tendentious opinion on the existence of the independent way of development of Abkhazian history and art, particularly – architecture. The mentioned authors, close their eyes on the above described Georgian parallels, peculiarities and architectural features, ascribe the Abkhazian churches of the early medieval century and transitional epochs to the so-called “ Abkhazian-Alanian school of the Eastern-Byzantine Architecture” or the peculiarities of the “Abkhazian Architecture”,²⁷ which has no scientific ground. Existence of the separate local peculiarities in the Georgian medieval century architecture is regular and ordinary phenomenon. Some, and sometimes rather serious differences are between the monuments of Kartli and Kakheti and other Georgian provinces.

This is the reality of the cult architecture of the early medieval centuries and transitional period depicted on the territory of Abkhazia. This picture can be falsified, but it cannot be altered.

23 A. Katsia. Ilori (monuments of the XIth century). Tb., 1963, p. 78; M. Trapsh. Wprls, vol. 4. Sukhumi, 1975, p. 85; R. Khvistiani. Christian Monuments of the Upper Flow of the river Okumi (Gumurishi church). - Researches N2, Tb., 1988 (in Georgian); A. Katsia. Monuments of Architecture in the valley Tskuara. Materials of Archeology of Abkhazia, Tb., 1967, p. 91.

24 A. Katsia. Monuments of Architecture..., p. 19.

25 V. Belotserkovskaia. Medieval Century Fortresses in the Olympian Besiege. – Nauka and Jizn, N1. M. 2008, p. 148-149.

26 R. Shmerling. Small Forms in the Architecture of the Medieval Century Georgia. Tb., 1962, p. 77; D. Tumanishvili. On Architecture of Abkhazia..., p. 81.

27 V. P. Pachulia. In the Country of the Golden Fleece. M., 1863; L. D. Khrushkova. The Sculpture of the Medieval Century Abkhazia. M., 1980; Yu. Voronov. In the World of the Architectural Monuments of Abkhazia. M., 1978; History of Abkhazia. Edited by S. A. Lacoba. Sukhumi, 1991 etc.

Chapter VII. Territory of Modern Abkhazia within the United Georgia of the 11-15th Centuries.

1. Abkhazia from the 11th Century till the 40s of the 13th Century.

From the 70s of the 10th century (from 978) a new epoch starts in the history of the Abkhazian kingdom, when the struggle for annexing the Georgian lands being started by the “Abkhazians” kings ended in unification of Georgia. The head of the state was the legitimate heir of the “Abkhazian” kings and follower of their state policy - Bagrat III Bagrationi (978-1014), the grandson of Giorgi II (922-957) – the king of Abkhazia. Coronation of Bagrat III as the “king of the Abkhazians” was performed in accordance with the far-seeing plan of Ioan Marushidze and political group of the adherents for the unification of Georgia through military support of David III (Kuropalat) – the king of Tao.¹

Ioan Marushidze came from the Dali-Tsebelda gorge.² Seemingly, he was the retainer of the Abkhazian Royal House and this fact predetermined his appointment as an Eristav of Kartli. Exactly this political horizon gave rise to the perspective of unification of Georgia being conditioned by that moment by the objective and subjective factors equally.

Seemingly, the struggle for unification of Georgia was a long time and complicated historical process. According to the plan of Ioane Marushidze, the first step was unification of the kingdoms of “Kartvels” and “Abkhazians”. After this the main problem of Bagrat III was annexation of the rest Georgian lands. By that time, only the Kakheti choir episcopacy, Ereti kingdom and Emirates of Tbilisi was not listed within the Georgian kingdom. In 998 after the death of Bagrat II, a significant part of the lands of South Georgia (Tao-Klardjeti) was included into the kingdom of the “Kartvels” and the title of the “king of the Kartvels” was held by the “King of Kings” Gurgen II (998-1008), who was the father of Bagrat III.³ The father and son conducted a coordinated policy and the territory of the “Kartvels” appeared under the control of Bagrat III. Then the border between the kingdom of the “Abkhazians” and Kakheti passed on the river Ksani. Tbilisi and a part of lower Kartly were ruled by the Muslim Emir of Tbilisi. On the North the border between the “kingdom of Abkhazia” and Emiracy passed on the Digomi gorge. From the Xth century a significant part of Lower Kartli – Samshvilde, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Lore, Lore-Tashir (the same Tashir-Dzoraketi)- were within the possessions of the kings from the family of Kvirikides being called the Tashir-Dzoraketi kings. The South – West Georgia belonged to the representatives of the Tao branch of Bagrationi family. Its part (Amier-Tao, Shavshet –Klardjeti,

¹ M. Lordkipanidze. King Bagrat III. Tb., 2002, p. 25-26 (in Georgian).

² On the origin of the Marushidze family name see. : N. Berdzenishvili. Problems of History of Georgia, vol. VIII. Tb., 1975, p. 610. K. Chkhatareishvili. Inscription made by Abulasan Iobidze from Tsebelda and its Historical Significance. –Problems of History of Georgia of the Feudal Period, vol. VI. Tb., 1990, p. 98 (in Georgian).

³ On the chronology of acquiring by Bagrat the title of “King of the Kartvels” opinions of the scientists differ. I. Javakhishvili pointed to the fact, that Bagrat III acquired it in 1008, after the death of his father (I. Javakhishvili. History of the Georgian People, vol. II. Tb., 1983, p. 130-131, -in Georgian). In M. Lordkipanidze’s N. Shoshiahvili’s and V. Silogava’s opinion Bagrat III had this title from 1001 (Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol. 1, p. 56; in the same work, vol. II, p. 52-53. -in Georgian). On the basis of the analyses of the “Chronicles of Kartli” and other sources. Z. Papaskiri came to the conclusion, that Bagrat had to acquire the title of the “Kings of the Kartvels” after the death of Bagrat II, i. e. from 994 (Z. Papaskiri. Formation of the integral Georgian Feudal State and some Problems of the outer-political conditions of Georgia. Tb., 1990, p. 75-82. -in Georgian). In reality it must have happened in 1008 and this is confirmed by the epigraphic material (L. Akhaladze. Georgian and Armenian Sources on the titulature of the king of the “Abkhazians”. -Historical Researches, 2004, N7, p. 26-27 (in Georgian).

Samtskhe-Javakheti etc.) was ruled by Bagrat II and after his death by the King of Kings - Gurgen II, the father of Bagrat III. Another part of the South Georgia was possessed by the strong and famous king – David III Kuropalat. His kingdom on the South reached the Vani borders. This was the political map of Georgia at the end of the Xth century and at the beginning of the XIth century. ⁴ It is natural, that Bagrat III faced the hard and difficult task of unification of the above mentioned Georgian lands with the kingdom of Abkhazia.

In 975, when the Kartlian aznauris (nobles) swore allegiance to Bagrat, in Abkhazia (West Georgia) at that time ruled Bagrat's uncle - Feodosius the Blind. Arising out of the interests of unification of the country, as it is said in the "Chronicles of Kartli", king Bagrat sent Feodosius to Tao to David Kuropalat: " He sent the king Feodosius, his uncle to David Kuropalat, as believed it was the best way to settle the matter, in order for people-small and great would be in good hope and trusted him or feared him in case of disorders".

⁵ According to the chronicles this step was made considering the political interests of the country. I. Javakhishvili made a just remark, that existence of Feodosius the Blind next to Bagrat gave the cause for plots and open action and it will " become an obstacle on the way of Bagrat's policy". ⁶ This precise historical event in historiography is unanimously estimated , as one of the most important steps to way for the unification of the country.

But, Abkhazian historian M. Gunba think, it to be the " court overthrow", that resulted in pushing aside of the power the Abkhazian" dynasty and usurpation of the throne by the Bagrationi family. ⁷ Russian scientist K. Kudriavtsev earlier expressed the same opinion. ⁸ Developing his ideas M. Gunba, in spite of belonging of Bagrat III from his mothers line to the "Abkhazian" Royal dynasty, states that after debarring Feodosius the Blind from the power the throne of Abkhazia was occupied not by the national, but by the absolutely alien for this country Royal dynasty of the Bagrationi family. Only this can explain – continues M. Gunba – the disorders having place in Abkhazia after the overthrow of Feodosius II.

⁹ It is not clear, what kind of disorder is meant by the author, as the historical sources say nothing about the facts, about the separatist attitudes of the Abkhazian feudal lords (concerning the whole west Georgia and Abkhazia itself) against the central power", ¹⁰ as if being caused by the abolition of the Abkhazian kingdom. On the contrary all the sources having come to our days inform, that in the process of Bagrat's ascending to the throne the feudal lords of West Georgia took an active part."Even Iovan Marushidze expressed the will of appointing Bagrat the king of Abkhazia. Together with him all the aristavs and nobility of Abkhazia and Kartli asked David Kuropalat to appoint Bagrat as king", ¹¹ - writes the author of the "Chronicles of Kartli". As we can see, Bagrat's ascending the throne was

4 M. Lordkipanidze. *Struggle for Unification of Georgia (end of the Xth century – 60-s of the XIth century)*. – *Essays on History of Georgia*, vol. III. Tb., 1979, p. 153 (in Georgian).

5 *Life of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 276 (in Georgian); *Chronicles of Kartli*. Translation, introduction and comments made by G. V. Tsulaia. Tb., 1982, p. 58; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 76.

6 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian People*, vol. II, p. 126.

7 M. M. Gunba. *Abkhazia in the second millennium A. D. (XI-XIIIth centuries)*. Sukhumi, 1999, p. 78.

8 K. Kudriavtsev. *Collection of Materials on the History of Abkhazia*. Sukhumi, 1922, p. 120.

9 M. M. Gunba. *Abkhazia in the second millennium A. D.*, p. 66.

10 This opinion belongs to K. Kudriavtsev and later in a milder form is repeated by SH. Inal-Ipa, but in the monograph of M. Gunba it acquired more categorical form.

11 *Chronicles of Kartli*. Translation, introduction and comments made by G. V. Tsulaia, p. 58; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 75.

unanimously decided by the feudal lords of west Georgia (Abkhazia) and Kartli.

Bagrat III was the legitimate heir to the dynasty of “kings of Abkhazia”, not to say anything about the fact, that he was the first to call himself the “king of the Abkhazians”. It is significant, that after that time the titlature of Bagrat III and the following kings of the united Georgia started from : “ the king of the Abkhazians” and continued with the consequent listing of the lands having been annexed later. In the royal titlature of Bagrat III the process of gradual unification of the historical regions of Georgia was reflected in its full. In the inscription made on the church ritual cup (bardzimi) from Bedia being dated from 989-999, he is mentioned, as “ Bagrat, the King of the Abkhazians”.¹²The same titlature is used in the inscription of 980 made on Ateni Sioni”.¹³ In the inscription of 1001-1008 made on the Kutaisi cathedral of Bagrat the title of the king looks as follows: “Bagrat the king of the Abkhazians and Kartvels and Kuropalat”.¹⁴ In this case is reflected acquiring by Bagrat III the title of “kuropalat” and in 1008 of the title of “king of the Kartvels”¹⁵ after his father’s Gurgen’s death. By the lapidary inscription of the Nikortsminda cathedral of 1010-1014, Bagrat III is the “ King of the Abkhazians and Rans and Kuropalat of the Kartvels” .¹⁶ The inscription was made after the Georgian kingdom annexed Rani in 1010-1014. From the respect, is significant the inscription in the church of the village Katskhi in the Chiatura district, in which Bagrat is mentioned , as the “King of the Abkhazians and Kartvels, Tao and Rani, Kakhs and the Great Kuropalat of the whole East”.¹⁷According to Sumbat Davitidze, after the death of Gurgen II, his son took possession of his domain: “ Died Gurgen , King of Kings, the son of Georgian king Bagrat in choronikon of 228 (1008), and left his son Bagrat, the king of the Abkhazians, the great Kuropalat; and the latter took hold of Tao, his ancestral lands and subdued the whole Caucasus autocratically from Jiketi to Gurgen”.¹⁸ The historical events being indicated by Sumbat are reflected in the titlature of Bagrat mentioned in the Katskhi inscription. Thus, royal titlature of Bagrat III, in reality reflects the process of the stately unification of Georgia. In the following centuries the titlature of the Georgian kings was being widened as far as the new lands were being annexed, but the name of the region – Abkhazia (West Georgia), from where started the process of unification, steadily occupied the first place. It was the reason, why the foreign authors called Georgia – “Abkhazia” and the kings of the united Georgia were briefly named as, the “kings of Abkhazia”.¹⁹ Besides the Georgian sources, “Abkhazia”, as the title of the integral Georgian feudal monarchy is mentioned in the foreign sources

12 G. Chubinashvili. Golden Cup from Bedia. –Moambe. Academy of sciences of Georgia, 1940, X. B. (in Georgian).

13 Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol. III, Mural inscriptions, I, Sioni of Ateni. G. V. Abramishvili and Z. N. Aleksidze prepared for publishing and provided with the research and index. Tb., 1989, p. 177, N47 (in Georgian).

14 Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol. II, p. 53. N33.

15 L. Akhaladze. Georgian and Armenian Sources on the Titlature of the King of the “Abkhazians”, p. 29 (in Georgian).

16 Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions, vol. II, p. 55, N35.

17 Ibid, p. 56, N36.

18 Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 83; Life of Georgia, vol. 1, p. 281 (in Georgian); Sumbat Davitidze. History and Narration about the Bagrations. The text was prepared for publishing, commented and provided with the index by G. Arakhamia. Tb., 1990, p. 53 (in Georgian).

19 On this problem see: N. Lomouri. The designations of Georgian in the Byzantine Sources. – Foreign and Georgian terminology of the notions “ Georgia” and “Georgians”, p. 82-83; G. Japaridze. The Arabik designations of the Georgians and Georgia. - Foreign and Georgian Terminology of the Notions “Georgian” and “Georgia”, p. 132-134; Z. Papaskiri. Abkhazia-Georgia. Tb., 1998, p. 141-142; of the same author: Essays . . . , i, p. 67-68; L. Akhaladze. Georgian and Armenian. . . p. 30-31 (in Georgian).

of that period - Armenian²⁰, Greek²¹, Arabian²², Persian²³ and even Russian²⁴. As for the accepted in separatist historiography above mentioned thesis, as if ascending to the throne of Bagrat III ended the existence of the Abkhazian kingdom and the stately interests of the Abkhazian people were oppressed, does not stand any criticism, as it has already been mentioned, he was the only legitimate heir of king of the Abkhazians Giorgi II and primarily, in 978-1008 – he possessed the lands of the Abkhazian kingdom, as well as the kings ruling before him. The name of the state, capital and state-juridical aspect of the kingdom remained unchanged. On the contrary, Bagrat III continued the stately and religious policy of his predecessors. In this respect first of all we have to stress the struggle for joining of the Georgian lands, which as it has been mentioned above started in the period of reign of Giorgi I (861-868), The inner policy of Bagrat III was directed to restraining of the arbitrariness of the Kartlian feudals and annexing of Kartli and Khakheti, being the object of struggle of Abkhazian kings Giorgi II and Leon II. Bagrat III completed this historical struggle and in 1008, after the death of his father, King of Kings Gurgen marched out to Kakheti. “ Bagrat - the king of the Abkhazians and Kartlians got angry. At that time Kuro-palat was in Dliava, where he ruled Tao and Kartli. Tao was his personal possession after his father’s King of Kings Gurgen’s death. He quickly sent his representative, invited the Abkhazian and Kartlian armies and marched out together with warriors from the upper part of his possessions, passed through Trialeti, crossed the Mtskheta bridge and the Abkhazians and Kartlians joined him. He camped in Tianeti and started. . . to fight against the fortresses and then he took Hereti, appointed Abulala the chief and turned back”.²⁵ The first king of united Georgia managed to complete the deed (pursuit) being started by the “kings of the Abkhazians” – the struggle for annexing Kakheti.

Bagrat III continued the traditional church policy of the “Abkhazian Kings”. First of all, it was reflected in abolishing of the Greek church centers and opening of the new Georgian chairs. As it was pointed above, kings of the Abkhazians - Konstantine III, Giorgi II and Leon III opposed the Greek metropolitan chairs, that remained on the west

20 Aristarchus Lastivertshi. History. Georgian translation with the research, comments and index was edited by E. Tsagarishvili. Tb., 1874, p. 42.; Vardan Areveltsi. World History. Translated from ancient Armenian N. Shoshiahvili and E. Kvachantiradze. Introduction, comments and index made by E. Kvachantiradze. Tb., 2004 (in Georgian), p. 122. Term “Abkhaz” in meaning of the Georgia was used by Armenian historian of the XIIIth century –Stepanoz Orbelian. See.: Stepanoz Orbelian. Ancient Georgian translations of “ Life of the Orbelians”. Armenian text translated into Georgia, commented and edited by L. Davlianidze-Tatishvili. Tb., 1978, p. 34 (in Georgian).

21 N. Lomouri. Name of Georgia in the Byzantine Sources, p. 23-88; Z. Papaskiri. Essays. . . , part i, p. 67 (in Georgian).

22 G. Japaridze. The Arabik designations of the Georgians and Georgia. – Foreign and Georgian Terminology of the Notions “Georgia “and “Georgians”, p. 132-134 (in Georgian).

23 D. Kobidze. Meaning of the Term “Abkhaz” according to the Persian Sources of the X-XVth centuries. Mnatobi, N2. Tb., 1957. p. 126-128 (in Georgian). K. Tabatadze. Terms designating “Georgia” and “Georgians” in the Persian Sources of the X-XVth centuries. - Foreign and Georgian terminology of the notions “: Georgia” and “Georgians”, p. 218-222 (in Georgian); Z. Papaskiri. At the Sources of the Georgian-Russian Political relations. Tb., 1982, p. 116-123.

24 Sh. Meskhia, I. Tsintsadze. From the History of the Russian-Georgian Relations. Tb., 1958, p. 14-21; . Z. Anchabadze. From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia, p. 171-177; N. F. Kotliar. Georgian Plots of the Ancient Russian Chronicles. – Form the History of the Ukrainian-Georgian Connections. III. Tb., 1975, p. 8-19; Z. Papaskiri. At the Sources of the Georgian-Russian Political Relations, p. 116-123. Z. Papaskiri. On the Problem of the International Role of Georgia in the XIth century. -Problems of History of USSR, ed. V. M., 1976, p. 121-123; Incorrect Interpretation of the Russian Sources. see.: Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. Problems of the ethno-Cultural History of the Abkhazians, p. 416-417; A. L. Papaskiri. Problems of the Russian-Abkhazian Literary Ties. -works of the State University of Abkhazia, vol. VI. Sukhumi, 1988, p. 114-129; Abkhazians. Chief Editors Yu. D. Anchabadze, Yu. D. Argun. M., 2007, p. 69.

25 Chronicle of Kartli. Translation. . . G. V. Tsulaia, p. 60.

Georgian Black Sea coast to the Georgian chairs being established in the inner districts and subdued to the Catholicosate of Mtskheta. The simple proof of it is the construction of the churches in Khopi, Kiacha, Chkondidi by Giorgi II and in Mokvi and Tsirkoli by Leon III. Those cathedrals were built to counterbalance the Greek chairs with the final aim of uniting of the West Georgian church with the Catholicosate of Mtskheta. From the 70s of the Xth century - Bagrat III made an energetic effort to finish successfully the pursuit having been started by his ancestors. According to the words of the author of the “Chronicles of Kartli”, he “built the cathedral of Bedia and founded in it the episcopate, replacing by it the Gudava episcopate, donated a lot of villages with the gorges and places, created for it the code, blessed and appointed the bishop”.²⁶ According to the historical sources replacing of the Greek chairs with the Georgian chairs had already been started at the borders of the 9-10th centuries and traditionally lasted in the church policy of Bagrat III²⁷. This fact is the additional proof, that Bagrat III was the worth successor of the deeds of his predecessors and on the west Georgian political arena he was not an “alien” and “conqueror”. It was the purposeful policy, maintaining unification of the West Georgian church with the Catholicosate of Mtskheta. This process was finally completed during the reign of Bagrat III.²⁸

The modern territory of Abkhazia was included into the united Georgian State as the three administrative units – Tskhumi, Egrisi²⁹(partly) and Abkhazia principalities³⁰. In the Egrisi principality besides the territory of modern Megrelia were included the South-East regions of the present day Abkhazia – Gali, Ochamchire and Gulripsh districts; Tskhumi principality covered the territory of the former Apsilia, from Kelasuri to the river Anakopia and the Abkhazian principality consisted of the vast territory from the present New Afoni to Nikopsia. Z. Anchabadze having incorrectly interpreted the text of the composition of Queen Tamar’s historian “History and Eulogy of Crown Bearers” expressed an idea, that the principalities of Tskhumi and Abkhazia were united in Tamar’s epoch (1184-1213), as those territories were settled by the Abkhazians³¹. This idea was undoubtedly rejected, as by the other sources it is confirmed, that in the epoch of Queen Tamar Amanelisdze was the eristav of Tskhumi and Otago Sharvashidze was the eristav of “Abkhazia”.³²

The principalities of Odishi, Tskhumi and Abkhazia as well as the other west Georgian principalities were supervised and subdued by msakhurtukhutsesi (Superintendent). This tradition was established in the Abkhazian kingdom, when the superintendent represented a leading political power in the royal court.

Inclusion of the Abkhazian kingdom into the integral Georgian state is negatively estimated by K. Kudriavtsev, Sh. Inal-Ipa, Yu. Voronov, M. Gunba etc. They denote, that

26 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

27 B. Kudava. *The church of the west Georgia in IX-XI.*

28 B. Kudava. *Form the History of the Abkhazian Catholicosate (XI-XIIIth centuries) – Georgian Diplomacy, vol. 9. Tb., 2002, p. 579.*

29 According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, the centre of Egrisi was Bedia (life of Kartli), vol. IV, p. 796.

30 *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 796; M. Bakhtadze. *Institute of the Principality in Georgia. Tb., 2003; p. 245-249.*

31 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 177-178.

32 On this problem see: G. Tskitishvili. *For reading one place from the “Eulogy of the Crown Bearers”.* – *Georgia in the epoch of Rustaveli. Tb., 1966, p. 222-227; I. Antelava. On Stating of the Interpretation of the Text “History and Eulogy”.* – *XI-XIVth centuries. Georgian Historical Sources. Tb., 1988, p. 42-47; M. Bakhtadze. Institute of Principality. . . , p. 245-249.*

the united state of Bagrat the III turned Abkhazia into an “ordinary, neglected, remote provincial region”.³³ This opinion does not reflect the reality. Firstly, the tendency for unification and widening of the borders was inspired by the Abkhazian kingdom. Secondly, Bagrat III, like his predecessors ruled the kingdom from Kutaisi and continued the stately and church policy being started by the kings of Abkhazia. Even the more, the cathedral of Bedia was erected by his initiative; and this promoted and widened the cultural-religious significance of the present territory of Abkhazia. From this period, the Bedia cathedral becomes one of the most important church centers of that epoch and according to Vakhushti Bagrationi’s words – the symbol of greatness and richness of King Bagrat³⁴. It then turned into the burial-vault for the kings. About the significance of the Bedia cathedral speaks the fact, that eristav Zviad buried Bagrat there and not in Kutaisi, where had been built Bagrat’s famous cathedral. On the present territory of Abkhazia of that epoch were built and constructed other famous all over the country church and secular monuments and among them The cathedrals of Ilori and Likhni, the fortress of Bagrat near Sukhumi, Besleti bridge³⁵, fortress of Satamashia (Tamish) etc. It must be specially mentioned, that king Bagrat, or local leading church figures and feudal lords were the initiators of those building works. F. E. the ctiores of the Ilori cathedral were - archbishop Giorgi, priest Giorgi Khocholava and supervisor of that area Giorgi Gurgenisdze. According to the Abkhazian authors, the Georgian inscriptions³⁶ start to appear on the territory of modern Abkhazia during the reign of Bagrat III. In fact, the Georgian epigraphic is met in west Georgia from the 8-9th centuries. Moreover, the oldest epigraphic monuments of West Georgia were considered the 48 Georgian inscription on the antefixes, being found on the mount Msighva of the Gudauta district³⁷, as well as the inscription in made in honor of “king of the Abkhazians Giorgi II in the church of Saint Nickolas in the village Khopi (Khuapi) of the Gudauta district and others. Separatist historiography deliberately avoid mentioning of the Georgian architecture, being created by order of the “Abkhazian Kings” and having only the Georgian inscriptions. At the same time, they widely speak about the Greek inscriptions, when on the present territory of Abkhazia during the mediaeval centuries were found only three dozens of Greek inscriptions³⁸, but the number of the Georgian epigraphic monuments comprise approximately a hundred. Unfortunately, the Abkhazian authors say nothing about the reasons of the total absence of the Abkhazian inscriptions.

In the conditions of strengthening of united Georgia the historical Abkhazian kingdom and the territory of present Abkhazia were included into the integral Georgian, social-political and cultural- economic space. This fact is proved by all the historical sources,

33 K. Kudriavtsev. Collection of Materials on History of Abkahzia, p. 122; Sh. Inal-Ipa. Problems. . . , p. 67; Yu. Voronov. The Abkhazians – Who are they, Gagra. 1993, p. 8-12; M. Gunba. Abkhazian in the second millenium, p. 67.

34 Life of Georgia, vol. 4, p. 780.

35 People call this bridge, - the bridge of Queen Tamar, but the Georgian inscription being made on the bridge reads – King Bagrat – supposedly Bagrat the III. See. : S. T. Barnaveli. For Dating of the Besleti bridge. – Macne, 1970, N6, p. 143; V. Beridze. Cultural Monuments of Abkhazia. -Jvari Vazisa, 195, N6, p. 67; L. Akhaladze. Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the historical source (lapidary and mural inscriptions), I. Tb., 2005, p. 181.

36 M. M. Gunba. Abkhazia in the second millenium, p. 65; O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 2007, p. 152.

37 A. K. Katsia. Monuments of the Valley Tskuara - Materials on Archeology of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1967. p. 67; Corpus of the Georgian inscriptions. vol. 2, p. 30-31; V. Silogava. Epigraphic of Megrelia and Abkhazia. Tb., 2004, p. 257-259; L. Akhaladze. Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the historical source (Lapidary and mural inscriptions), i. Tb., 2005, p. 140-146.

38 T. Kauhchishvili. Corpus of the Grek inscriptions in Georgia. Tb., 2004, p. 59-72.

narrating about this period in Georgia.³⁹ Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, as well as the other historical regions together with their population are observed in the centre of all the political processes, having place in Georgia.

The separate, Abkhazian researchers write about the existence of the Abkhazian separatist movement in Georgia in the XIth century. It supposedly started in the period of reign of Bagrat IV, who was opposed by his half-brother Dimitri – the son of Giorgi the I (1014-1027) from the second marriage. Dimitri together with his mother, Alde (the daughter of the king of Alans) after the death of Giorgi the I (lived in Abkhazia in town Anakopia. The factor of Dimitri's claim to the throne was used by Byzantines, against the king of Georgia Bagrat the IV (1027-1072). In 1032 being instigated by Byzantine, Dimitri organized the plot with the aim of dethrone Bagrat the IVth. In Z. Anchabadze's opinion, as far as the centre of plot was Anakopia, consequently in the anti state plot must have participated private Abkhazian feudals⁴⁰. The mentioned opinion is developed and differently interpreted by M. Gunba. He is sure, that in the plot of prince Dimitri participated the Abkhazian (Apsua) feudal lords, as if remembering about the palace revolution and debarring from the power the Abkhazian royal dynasty. In M. Gunba's, opinion the Abkhazian feudal lords pursued their own political interests⁴¹ in this plot. In reality, attitude of that time population to the Georgian royal power is obvious from the activities of eristav of Abkhazia - Otago Chachasdze, who supported Bagrat IV and commanding the military operation of taking the Anakopia fortress by the Abkhazian army and liquidation of the plot. According to the words of the chronicler of the "Chronicles of Kartli", "Bagrat was in Abkhazia; he approached Anakopia and was to take it, when . . . then he went back, leaving Otago Chachasdze and his army to take charge of the fortress."⁴² This political topic doesn't inspire the suppositions about the existence of separatistic attitudes among the population of Tskhumi and Abkhazian principalities against the that time Georgian king.⁴³ On the contrary, in this case Otago Chachasdze seems to be the loyal and devoted companion – in – arms of Bagrat the IV and supporter of his state policy. Seemingly, this region was more devoted to Bagrat the IV, that the other Georgian regions. Just exactly, owing to the active support of the Abkhazian eristav, Bagrat IV managed to return the fortress of Anakopia to Georgia.

Another Georgian source "Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli (Holly Mountaineer) narrating about the traditional winter travel of Bagrat IV in Abkhazia also contradicts the assertion so the Abkhazian historians. The source says:"Having finished the deeds of that time, he as usual headed to Abkhazia, as the winter came and he offered the monk to accompany him and have a rest there, as that country is lowlands and warm. . . and when they arrived at Chkondidi, the king went on to Abkhazia. The bishop of Chkondidi didn't let us go, as he was the pupil of the monk".⁴⁴ As we can see from the source, Bagrat IV "as usual" was

39 Z. Papaskiri. Territory of Abkhazia in the XI-XVth centuries, p. 180-181.

40 Z. V. Anchabadze. From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia, p. 179. Approximately the same opinion is shared by S. Lakoba, O. Bgazhba. History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 2007, p. 151.

41 M. M. Gunba. Abkhazia in the second millennium A. D., p. 91.

42 Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 79-80.

43 This fact, was estimated in historiography as the struggle for the royal power. See.: Z. Papaskiri. Territory of Abkhazia in the XI-XVth centuries, p. 180.

44 Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 31; Giorgi Mtsire. Life of Giorgi Mtastmindeli. I. Lolashvili prepared the text for publishing and provided with the research and glossary. Tb., 1994, p. 222.



N1 Likhni Cathedral (Gudauta District of Abkhazia). Holy Trinity with the Georgian Inscription (14th century).



NN 2-3. Pitsunda (Bichvinta) From the Georgian Gospel, image of the Evangelist Mark and the fragment of the text by Evangelist Luke (12th century).



NN4-5 From the Mokvi (Ochamchire district of Abkhazia) Georgian Gospel (1300).



N6 Georgian inscription from the church of Archangel Mikhael being located on the Mount Msikhua of Gudauta District of Abkhazia (9th century).



N7 Village Mokvi (Ochamchire district). Georgian inscription made by Grigol Mokveli on the stone plate of the Mokvi Cathedral. (12th century).



N8 Georgian inscription of the Tsebelda (Gulripshi district of Abkhazia) church of Saint Giorgi (12-13th centuries).



N9 Village Chlou (Ochamchire district). Georgian inscription of the Eristav of Eristavs (Prince of Princes) of Odishi (Megrelia) and Mandaturtukhutses (equals the position of the minister of the Inner Affairs) - Ozbeg Dadiani (Middle of the 15th century).

traveling in that part of the country and tended to the royal matters. One concrete detail attracts our attention in this information, where the chronicler narrates about king's "departure to Abkhazia" and in another place he specifies, that he "went to enter the bounds of Abkhazia". In the first case the term "Abkhazia", is seemingly used in the meaning of west Georgia and in the second case in the meaning of the principality, i. e. the territory being beyond the bounds of the present Akhali Afoni.

We can draw an interesting parallel between the information given by "Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli" and "Likni Inscription". The stated fact is, that a part of the Likhni inscriptions was made soon after Giorgi Mtatsmindeli's travel over Georgia. In the famous inscription about the appearance of the comet is mentioned Bagrat IV and the fact is dated from 1066. The comet appeared in the 38 indiction of reign of Bagrat the IV, i. e. in 1066. In the same Likni cathedral on its west wall on the second floor, on the ceiling from the left side is the inscription in which are mentioned Vache Protospatar and Ipat and Petrik Patrikius and Iona Mtsignobartukhutsesi.⁴⁵ Petrik Patrikius the famous Georgian political figure of the XIth century was the Bagrat's empower person and his representative at the Byzantine court.⁴⁶ His brother Ioan Chkondideli was also the famous clerical figure of Georgia in the XIth century. He occupied the Chkondidi Episcopal chair by recommendation of Saint Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, when the latter refused to accept the offer of Bagrat the IV to take the chair.⁴⁷ Information of "Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli" about Bagrat's travel around Abkhazia, resting of the monk Patrik has parallels with the arrival of the Patrikius at Abkhazia, his activities in the Likhni cathedral and then departure to Byzantine. In connection with this event was created the inscription mentioning Petrik Patrikius, Ioan Chkondideli and Vache. In the same inscription is mentioned Giorgi II (1072-1079), the son of Bagrat IV. The author of the inscription asks the All Mighty Lord: "May You make him Great, Protect him, promote, bless, give long life to his reign".⁴⁸ The inscription was made after the coronation of Giorgi II, when he was still a young fellow.

The fact, being reflected in the "Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli" about the travel of Bagrat IV "as usual;" around west Georgia (Abkhazia) and namely Abkhazia finds a parallel with the separate pieces of information of the historians of great Georgia kings – David IV the Builder (1089-1125), King Tamar (1184-1213), and also Lasha-Giorgi (1213-1223). In particular, the named kings of Georgia, like Bagrat IV, "as usual" travel to Abkhazia in order to decide and settle "their matters". This precise detail is repeated by the above mentioned sources and this is an additional proof how important the historical area was for the Georgian kings. According to the words of the second historian of King Tamar, she "from time to time, used to go to Abkhazia and settled their matters and hunted in Geguti and Adjameti".⁴⁹ The same historian says, that Tamar often visited Tskhumi, where she had one of the summer residences: "King Tamar spent winters in Duri and summers in Kola and Tselis-Tba and sometimes visited Abkhazia: Geguti and Tskhumi."⁵⁰

45 V. Silogava. *Georgian Epigraphic of Megrelia and Abkhazia*, p. 207.

46 E. Metreveli. *For Identification of Ioan Patrikius and Petrik Patrikius. – Essays from History of Cultural-Educational Hearth of Afon. Tb., 1996, p. 196-225.*

47 Giorgi Mtsire. *Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli*, p. 173, 204.

48 V. Silogava. *The Georgian Epigraphic of Megrelia and Abkhazia*, p. 204.

49 *Life of Georgia*, vol. II, p. 99.

50 *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 94.

Special attitudes towards Abkhazia is seen in the inner policy of king Lasha-Giorgi (1213-1223). Like his predecessors he “with the elevated mood traveled around the kingdom for settling all the affairs. Crossed the bounds of Adjameti on foot and hunted in Tskhumi and Abkhazia and managed all local affairs.”⁵¹

Thus, the information of the Georgian epigraphic monuments and narrative sources confirm, that the modern territory of Abkhazia was not a “neglected and forgotten province”, but one of the leading and important regions, where the famous Georgian religious and secular figures lived and worked. The Georgian kings “as usual” often visited Abkhazia and were in command of the Abkhazian affairs.”

The Abkhazian authors write about the separatism of the Abkhazian feudals in the epoch of David the Builder (1089-1125), King Tamar (1184-1213), though they are not able to refer to the valid historical facts. The similar ideas are developed by Z. Anchabadze, Sh. Inal-Ipa, M. Gunba, S. Lacoba and O. Bgazhba.⁵² Their assertions are based on the works of David IV the Builder’s historian, where we read: “That winter David arrived in (king David) Abkhazia, came up to Bichvinta, settled all the affairs: forgave those worth of mercy, seized and punished, those being guilty; the winter was severe and abundant in snow. . . Then he quickly departed from Abkhazia”.⁵³ In the words of that historian is never mentioned, that in Abkhazia lived the separatistically dispositioned feudals. On the contrary, according to the tradition, king David IV the Builder arrives in Abkhazia, deals with their affairs and like the other regions, those forgave those worth of mercy and punished the sinners. Those arrangements were directed towards the strengthening of the central power. On other regions they were conducted more strictly (Let us take for example - the Kldekari principality), than in Abkhazia.

Support of the Georgian royal power from the side of the Abkhazian population is well observed in the historical sources. In particular, according to the chronicler of Lasha-Giorgi’s period, against Giorgi III (1156-1184) in fact rebelled his nephew Dimitri, but “Abkhazia, Svaneti and All the Samokalako stayed in peace”.⁵⁴ i. e. Abkhazia simply supported the power of the Georgian kings.

In spite of this fact, the Abkhazian historians look for the separatistically dispositioned Abkhazian feudals among the participants of the rebellion of King Tamar’s first husband-Giorgi Rusi (Giorgi the Russian) in 1911. Meanwhile, they omit the fact, that all the West and South Georgia participated in that rebellion, and Giorgi “assembled all Svaneti, Abkhazia, Saegro, Guria Samokalako, Racha, Takveri and Argveti”.⁵⁵ In this given case here we obviously deal with the struggle for the royal throne and not with the separatist revolt of one region against the central power.

That time Abkhazians, as well as the representatives of other regions had their own place at the ceremony of the royal council (Darbazi) during receiving of the honorable guests. According to the information of the “History and Eulogy of the Crown Bearers’, before King Tamar the Hers, Kakhs, Meskhs and Torelis’ Shavshet-Klardj-Taoians, Ab-

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 101.

⁵² Z. V. Anchabadze. Form the History of Abkhazia, p. 182; Sh. Inal-Ipa. Problems. . . , p. 413; M. Gunba. Abkhazia in the II millennium A. D. p. 93; O. Ch. Bgazhba, S. Z. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 151.

⁵³ Abkhazia and the Abkhazians. . . , p. 86.

⁵⁴ Kartlis Tskhovreba. History of Georgia. Chief editor R. Metreveli. Tb., 2008, p. 214.

⁵⁵ Life of Georgia, vol. II, p. 49; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 90.

khazians and Suan- Megrel-Gurians and others have the equal rights. According to the information of the same source: “ Immediately after their marching out from the town Tbilisi, the Ossetians and new Pechenegs came to meet them; Then the Hers and Kakhs; after them the Kartvels, then the Meskhs and Torians, Shavsh-Klardj-Taoians; then Somkhits, then the Abkhazians and Svan-Megrel-Gurians together with the Rachians, Takverians and Argvetians and the palace officials and courtiers”.⁵⁶

Against the ungrounded opinions of the separatistically minded historians speak the proved by data of the historical sources, facts of participation of the Abkhazians together with the representatives of other regions, in such military – political actions of the Georgian kings, as Didgori (1121), Shamkhori (1195) and Bassiani (1203) battles, as well as the military campaigns to the South –East, as a result of which the Georgians took possession of towns and fortresses – Rize, Trapezund, Heraklea, Limnia etc. (1203-1204).

The contribution of the historical Abkhazians for the Bassiani battle being described by the both historians of King Tamar is significant: “ The forces were lined, the commanders-in –chief were Zachariah Mkhargrdzeli, Shalva and Ioan Akhaltsikheli and other Torians; one side was occupied by the Abkhazians and Imers and the other - by the Amers and Her-Kakhs. . . and a fierce battle started, the like similar to which was performed only by the courageous warriors in the remote past”.⁵⁷ The second historian of the “life of King Tamar” analogically describes the battle. From those sources is obvious, that the Abkhazians, as well as other Georgians selflessly fought for the freedom of their country.

After the death of King Tamar, the population of Abkhazia from the political and military point of view was an active force. The historical sources often mention them in the battles against the outer enemy. Among the warriors Lasha –Giorgi having captured the town Ganja are named the Abkhazians as well: “ The king had (the army) consisting only of four thousand warriors; Majority of them were the Meskhetians, as separately stood Mkhargrdzeli, from one side the Hers, Kakhs and Somkhits, Kartlians and Torians; form the other side – the Abkhazians, Dadian-Bedians and all the forces the beyond Likh, following one another”.⁵⁸ The Abkhazians fought as bravely against the cruel conqueror - Jalal-ed-Din (1225); “Having heard about it Queen Rusudan – writes the chronicler - assembled all the troops, Omer Shanshe, Amirspasalar Avaga, Msakhutukhutses Varam, Hers adn Kakhs, Somkhits, Javakhs, Meskhs, Taoians, Dadiani Tsotne –a man of great nobility and devout, the Abkhazians, Jiks and everybody from the kingdom of Imereti. . . countless numbers of them assembled in Nacharmagevi and sent the Queen them to fight with the Khorezmians”.⁵⁹

Representatives of the separatist historiography M. Gunba, S. Lacoba and O. Bgaghba and others deliberately did not mention about these events. Unfortunately, in their works often appear the ignorance of the elementary historical facts. F. E. in O. Bgaghba’s and S. Lacoba’s opinion King Tamar was the daughter of David IV the Builder; Tskhumi from the 11th century was called Sukhumi and before that - Sebastopolis. They assert, that the Georgian inscriptions are met in Abkhazia only from the XI-XIIth centuries, the monetary

⁵⁶ Life of Georgia, vol. II. p. 65; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 92.

⁵⁷ Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 93.

⁵⁸ Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 101.

⁵⁹ Life of Georgia, vol. II, p. 182-183; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 105.

unit was there only the Byzantine one and the Georgian money were not there used and as if the Abkhazians had their own autonomy in the Georgian kingdom etc.

In reality, the historical sources depict absolutely different picture. In this respect numismatic material is of a special interest. In 1983 during the excavations being conducted on the territory of the Likhni palace of the Abkhazian possessors – art historian - L. Khrushkova discovered the “Likhni hoard” with the numerous Georgian coins.⁶⁰ The inscriptions being made on these coins point to the fact, that they were made by the order of the Kings of United Georgia – Bagrat IV (1027-1032) and Giorgi II (1072 -1089).

Besides Likhni, the Georgian coins were discovered on the territory of modern Abkhazia near Sukhumi and Akhali Afoni, on the mountain of Iveria. The silver coins being discovered near Sukhumi in 1871 belonged to David IVth Builder (1089-1125) and the coins being found on the mountain of Iveria belonged to Giorgi II.⁶¹

From all the said above we can conclude, that on the modern territory of Abkhazia the Georgian money circulated equally, as they circulated in the rest of Georgia.⁶²

Abkhazia and its population is represented in the context of the Georgian history and in the work of Zhamtaakhmtsereli (Chronicler). Describing the first period of the Mongols' dominion in Georgia, he denotes, that Queen Rusudan out of some political reasons crowned his 5 year old son –David in Kutaisi. Next to the Queen then stood the west Georgian feudals and clergy; “Called all her army – the Abkhazians, Dadian-Bediani, Eristav of Racha and catholicos of Abkhazia and proclaimed king David, the son of Rusudan, blessed him to be the king and put a crown on his head”.⁶³ This political act obviously prove, that the feudal lords and army of the Abkhazian Principality served the Queen and the Abkhazian catholicos during the coronation of David Narin (1247-1293) was the main figure.

Among the famous Georgian state figures and commanders of the first third of the XIIIth century the Georgian chronicler names Dardin Sharvashidze, from the feudal house of Sharvashidze:” an appointed the leader of the army- the Abkhazian Sharvashidze by the name of Dardin, who was, for his courage was elevated and was firm in his faith”.⁶⁴ The chronicler called Dardin Sharvashidze, who died in the battle - “ prominent “ and “courageous”.

The information of the author of the “ Eulogy of the Crown Bearers” is worth paying attention, as it says, that the son of King Tamar (1184-1213) Giorgi IV was called Lasha, “that in the language of the Apsars is translated as the enlightener of the universe”.⁶⁵ On the basis of this information, the majority of the researchers shares the opinion, that the name Lasha spread in the Georgian reality and it is the Apsar (Apsua) name. Though, in the Abkhazian onomastics this name is not met, but in Georgian it had been known four centuries before the birth of Lasha – Giorgi. In particular, on the pedestal of the cross be-

60 On the Likhni Hoard see. : L. Khrushkova. Likhni. Mediaeval Century Palace Complex of Abkhazia. M., 1998; S. Shamba. Monetary Circulation on the territory of Abkhazia (Vth century B. C.). Tb., 1987. Inscriptions on the Likhni coins were studied by V. Silogava. See. : V. Silogava. Georgian Epigraphic of Megrelia and Abkhazia, p. 221-225.

61 S. Shamba. Monetary Circulation on the Territory of Abkhazia (Vth century B. C.). p. 76; D. Kapanadze. Georgian Numismatics. Tb., 1969, p. 69.

62 Together with the Georgian money in that period Georgia were circulating the Byzantine coins as well.

63 Life of Georgia, vol. II, p. 180.

64 Ibid, p. 192-194; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 104.

65 Life of Kartli, vol. II, p. 58; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians, p. 91.

ing found in the yard of the church of Tbisi of the Tetrtskharo district is carved an inscription saying: "Saint Trinity show mercy on its constructor - Lasha".⁶⁶ The inscription is cut around the cross and dated from the VIIIth century. This sources convincingly refutes the assertions of the researchers considering that, the name Lasha appeared in the Georgian reality only in the XIIth century.

About the active cultural and political role of Abkhazia in the united Georgia, speak numerous monuments of the Georgian culture, being met on the territory of modern Abkhazia. In the 11 -13th centuries the role of the church centers being founded during the Abkhazian kingdom became more significant. Despite, the unification of the Georgian church, catholicosate of Abkhazia continued to function and the catholicos was sitting in Pitsunda. According to the "Rules and traditions of blessing to be the king" (13th century), catholicos of Abkhazia participated in the ceremony of coronation of a king' the same rights are given to him by the document "Agenda of the Royal court" (14th century), according to which catholicos of Abkhazia together with the patriarch of Georgia, Chkondideli-Mtsignobartukhutsesi and rural dean of the monasteries (Modzgvart-Modzgvart) is the highest representative of the State power.⁶⁷

On the verge of the 10-11th centuries on the territory of modern Abkhazia were built the cathedrals of Likhni, Ilori, Anukhva, Tskelikari and also the churches of Saint Giorgi, Andrew the First Called and Saint Feodor in Tsebelda, on the facade of which are preserved the numerous Georgian lapidary, fresco and chased inscriptions. The scripts and other objects of the church utensil are also preserved. Among them the most significant is the Bichvinta Gospel of the 12th century, being compiled in Georgian (see. : pictureNN2-3). They assertively prove, that Abkhazia played an important part in the matter of development of the Georgian culture. We have to specially mention the Bedia monastery complex. There, right from the start emerged the powerful episcopacy centre. By the "Agenda of the royal court", "Bedia bishop has the function of burrying the kings", but according to the rule of "Sanctifying the Myrrh" (13th century), Bedia bishop was also greatly honored.⁶⁸

On the chair of Bedia served the well-known and prominent clerical figures of that period Georgia and among them archbishop – Ioan Bedieli – the retainer of the royal court of Bagrat IV, prominent clerical and political figure of the XIth century. In the epoch of David IV the Builder there served Svimeon Bediel-Alaverdeli. Existence of the like institution (when only one bishop guided two chairs in the west and the east of the country) stressed the spiritual and territorial integrity of Georgia. Later, Svimeon-Bedieli becomes Chkondideli-Mtsignobart-Ukhutsesi, i. e. the second figure in the State, being in charge of not only the church matters, but the problems of the State rule. Nikolai, Sofron and Mikael Gonglibaisdzes, Anton and Kiril Zhuanisdze, German Chkhetisdze and others worked on the Bedia chair and monastery. The role of the above mentioned persons is great in formation in the monastery of the great centre of the Georgian spiritual culture.⁶⁹

66 *Corpus of the Georgian Inscriptions*, vol. 1, p. 104-106.

67 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Religion*, p. 141-147.

68 *Monuments of the Georgian Law*, vol. 2, p. 48, 51-53.

69 See. : B. Khorava. *Episcopacy of Bedia. -Historical researches*, vol. III, Tb., 2000, p. 21042; G. Kalandia. *Odishi Episcopacy*. Tb., 2004, p. 79-96; L. Akhaladze. *Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the Historical Source*, I, p. 36-51.

The lapidary inscriptions of the Ilori cathedral are worth mentioning. As we have mentioned above, they narrate the history of the construction of the cathedral by archbishop Giorgi, priest Giorgi Kocholava and local feudal Giorgi Gurgenisdze. In the epigraphic monuments of the Anukhvi cathedral the history of its construction by the local feudal Giorgi Basilisdze and his brothers is reflected. On the facade of the Likhni cathedral more than 20 Georgian fresco inscriptions are preserved (see picture N1). They simply point to the fact, that this cathedral was one of the main hearths of the Georgian culture and inseparable part of the Georgian cultural-political world. In the whole, the Georgian epigraphic material depicts a simple picture of the social spectrum, population, political and religious condition of that epoch Abkhazia. The inscriptions name all the layers of the population: Kings, feudal, region rulers, highest clergy, priests, master-constructors, parish etc. ⁷⁰ Are mentioned in particular: Kings of Abkhazia and united Georgia – Giorgi II (922-957), Bagrat III (978-1014), Bagrat IV (1027-1072), Giorgi II Kuropalat (1072-1089), King of Kings - Konstantine (1293- 1327) – the son of David Narin; Eristav of Erstav and Mechurchletukhutsesi - Abulasan Iobisdze having built the Tsebelda church of Saint Andrew the First called; Mtsignobartukhutsesi and Chkondideli of the period of Bagrat IV; Archbishop Daniel, who rewrote the Mokvi Gospel of 1300; Giorgi Basilisdze and his brothers (Dimitri, Feoder, Merkil), who built the Anukhvi cathedral; secular ctitor of Ilori cathedral Giorgi Gurgenisdze; Queen of the Queens – Sagdukht, who built the Gumurishi cathedral; Queen of the Queens Marikh, Giorgi Dadiani and eristavt-eristavi Giorgi Dadiani and Niania Novelisimos from Racha renovated the Bedia cathedral; Constructors of the cathedral in Khopi – Giorgi Galatoz, Svimeon Galatozukhutsesi, parishioner – Mikhael, Giorgi, Roshia and others. ⁷¹ This is not a complete list of the historical persons, who during the centuries created the Georgian material and spiritual culture on the modern territory of Abkhazia. Thus, the Abkhazians of that period created and developed only the Georgian culture. From the cultural heritage of that period Abkhazia the samples of the Georgian written language attract out attention and namely the new calligraphic schools of the artistic writing being emerged in Abkhazia and then being spread in the rest of Georgia. ⁷² Furthermore, the study and poligraphic comparison of the epigraphic monuments of Abkhazia of the 11 -12th centuries with the samples of the other region Georgian written language vividly show, that Abkhazia in this case as well (as in the period of the Abkhazian kingdom) played the leading role in the formation and development of the Georgian culture. It was the first to react to everything the new in the Georgian written language. It is confirmed with the fact, that the earliest samples of the civil writing in west Georgia were revealed in the village - Dikhazurga of the Gali region. ⁷³ Analyses of the Georgian epigraphic material of Abkhazia indicates to the fact, that namely in this region was born the artistic written language of the arrow end stone calligraphic school having reached the perfection in the 11th century.

The above mentioned historical sources prove, that in the 11-13th centuries the modern

⁷⁰ L. Akhaladze. *Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the historical source*, I, p. 209.

⁷¹ In the inscription of later period were named significantly more Georgian historical persons.

⁷² L. Akhaladze. *Paleographic characteristics of the Georgian written language in the epigraphic monuments of Abkhazia*, p. 32-39.

⁷³ L. Akhaladze. *Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the historical source*, I, p. 83, 246, photo N17.

territory of Abkhazia from the political, cultural and religious point of view was the inseparable part of the integral Georgian world. More often, than the regions of Georgia it played the leading part on the common State and cultural arenas.

2. Abkhazia from the 40s of the XIIIth century to the 90s of the XVth century.

In 1235-1242 Georgia was captured by the Mongols. But west Georgia and among them Abkhazia avoided the destroying hostile invasions. In 1245 died Queen Rusudan and Georgia leapt into arbitrariness. The Mongols tried to rule according to their laws the newly subdued country and divided it into the 8 districts – “Tumens” (10. 000 families). In each of them was appointed “ Temnik” – the person from the Georgian nobility being in charge. West Georgia was given by the Mongols to the temniks – Tsoetne Dadiani and Eisitav of Racha.⁷⁴

Temnik corresponding the Mongolian Noins possessed the full civil and military power. It is significant, that the Mongols gave to Eristav of Racha – Kakhaber Kakhaberisdze, besides the Racha principality, Lechkhumi and Argveti- the territories from the Likhni range to the river Rioni. Tsoetne Dadiani was given the Principality of the Svans, together with the Dali gorge in the upper reaches of the river Kodori and also Guria and all the Black Sea coast of Georgia including Odishi and Abkhazia from the river Chorokhi to Nikopsia.

The Mongolians soon made sure, that for such a developed feudal state, as Georgia of the 13th century, the Mongolian administration system was of no use. Thus, in 1247 the royal power was restored in Georgia. The Mongolians ascended to the throne simultaneously two kings – David VI (the same David Narin) the son of Rusudan and David VII-the son of Lasha-Giorgi.

Diarchy continued only for several years. Soon David Narin rebelled against the Mongolians, but after the failure in east Georgia, he fortified in Kutaisi. In historiography the date of David Narin’s rebel is considered 1259. But, it appeared that this rebellion had taken place at least 6 years earlier of the mentioned date. The information of ambassador of French king Ludovic IX - Wilhelm de Rubruk about Georgia is the prove of it. In 1253-1254 travelling to Mongolia and then on his way back passed through Georgia, he visited all the parts of Georgia. Describing the coast of the Black Sea Wilhelm de Rubruk names the country “ Iveria” and marks, that “the Iverians living to the north from Trapezund don’t obey the “Tatars”, i. e. the Mongolians”. N. Asatiani was the first to pay attention to this fact, who dated the anti- Mongolian rebellion of David Narin by 1249.⁷⁵

West Georgian feudal lords accepted the rebelled David Narin with great joy “and having heard about this, the Eristavs of the Abkhazians, Svans, Daidani, Bediani, Eristavs of Racha and Likht-Imers – writes the Chronicler – assembled with great happiness and proclaimed the son of Rusudan the king of Abkhazia to Likhi”.⁷⁶ David Narin’s move to West Georgia liberated this part of the country from the Mongol’s power, but the integral

⁷⁴ Life of Georgia, vol. II, p. 207-208.

⁷⁵ Wilhelm de Rubruk. Travel to the Orient. Introduction, translation and comments made by A. G. Mallen. S-Pb. 1911, p. 66-67; N. Asatiani. History of Georgia from Ancient Times to the XIXth century. Tb., 2001; p. 220-221.

⁷⁶ Life of Georgia, History of Georgia, p. 268.

Georgia state stayed split in two kingdoms – Eastern and Western.

In 1261 David Narin was visited by his cousin David VII the son of Lasha-Giorgi, who also rebelled against the Mongols. After some time, a part of the feudals of West Georgia tried to overthrow David Narin and replace him by David VII. During this discord – Bediani the son of Juansher was devoted to David Narin the son of Rusudan to the end, Juansher was the “man of honesty, of high moral, generous more than anyone and full of wisdom”.⁷⁷

Bediani being mentioned in the text of the Chronicler is the Odishi eristav – Bedan II Dadiani.⁷⁸ His support appeared to be decisive for David Narin. David VII had to accept with division of Georgia into two parts and temporarily abandoned the west Georgian throne. In 1262 he returned to east Georgia and reconciled with the Mongols.

David Narin was generous not only to Bedan II Daidani, but to the whole Dadiani clan. The king donated to this family the most precious Christian relics and elevated them more than other feudal families. With the support of David Narin, the Odishi Principality became the strongest in west Georgia.

During David Narin’s reign, the territory of modern Abkhazia belonged to four principalities. The Black Sea coast between the river of Inguri and Kodori was included within the bounds of Odishi. The sources of the river Kodori (Dali gorge) belonged to the Principality of the Svans. To the north-west from Kodori to Anakopia was located the Tskhomi//Tskhumi principality and more to the north-west to the river Nikopsia (present Nechep-sukho) – was the Abkhazian principality.

David Narin died in 1293 and the throne was occupied by his son Konstantine. Vakhushti Bagrationi describes his reign, as the period of permanent anarchy in west Georgia. “Against Konstantine rebelled his brother Mikel and did not let him reign and possess Imereti; Mikel occupied Racha, Lechkhumi and Argveti and there was a permanent struggle, discord, insurrection and skirmish between them and the country was devastated – wrote Vakhushti – the high officials and nobility were troubled and worried, but were not able to establish peace between them”.⁷⁹

As it appeared Konstantine’s epoch was the period of the cultural renewal of west Georgia. On the borders of 13-14th centuries was built and painted the famous Khobi cathedral. This is the period when to west Georgia came and spread an absolutely new art style “the School of Paleologists”, preceding the paintings of the renaissance period. Gelati cathedral was repainted using this style. During Konstantine, at the end of the 13th century were performed great building and restoring works. The belfry of Bedia was built in that period and the cathedral itself was practically rebuilt and repainted. The inscription on the west wall of the belfry of the Bedia cathedral is the proof of it: “May God ennoble Konstantine, the son of David, amen”. On the eastern entrance into the same belfry is cut an inscription, in which Nikoloz Bedieli and Sofron Bedieli are mentioned, who during Konstantine’s rule together with the king supervised the construction of the Bedia cathedral.⁸⁰ The historical documents bear evidence, that the church centers on the territory of

⁷⁷ Kartlis Tskovreba. History of Georgia, p. 268.

⁷⁸ Ibid, vol. II, p. 243.

⁷⁹ Life of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 801.

⁸⁰ L. Akhaladze. Epigraphic of Abkhazia, as the historical source, 1p. 33-39 (in Georgian); L. Shervashidze. Mediaeval Century Painting in Abkhazia. Tb., 1989, p. 62-64.

present day Abkhazia on the borders of the 13-14th centuries greatly contributed into the cultural life of the whole Georgia. Among the Georgian handwritten books the Gospel being rewritten in the Mokvi cathedral by order of Daniel – the archbishop of Mokvi in 1300 is especially important. The Gospel is ornamented with 157 miniatures and 531 Capital letters (see. : pictures NN-4-5).

King Konstantine played the crucial part in returning for the Orthodox church its possession in Jerusalem- the Monastery of Cross. The cathedral being bought out by him was redecorated and painted. The synodic in the Georgian Cross monastery in Jerusalem proves it: “ That day the commemoration and funeral of Konstantine - King of Kings from Abkhazia was performed in full, with the night vigil and the prayer of celibate priest”.⁸¹

From the information of Vakhushti Bagrationi being given above is obvious, that the main part of West Georgia during the reign of Konstantine obeyed him , including the territory of the present day Abkhazia. Thus, the following information of Vakhushti cannot have been quite correct, that “ Dadiani Giorgi saw this condition between them (i. e. the opposition of brothers – author), took the Tskhumi principality and all Odishi to Anakopia. Sharvashidze also captured Abkhazia – Gurieli – Guria and the eristav of the Svans took possession of Svaneti and they did not obey the kings”.⁸² At the same time, this information given by Vakhushti is the evidence of the willful appropriation of the wide authority by the eristavs of Odishi, Abkhazia, Guria and Svaneti.

Giorgi Dadiani being mentioned in the text is the eristav of Odishi Giorgi I Dadiani, the son of Bedian II Dadiani.⁸³Spreading of the power of the eristavs of Odishi to the Tskhumi principality (to Anakopia) has deeper reasons (historical and ethnical), than the internecine war in west Georgia. Mentioning of the territory to Anakopia, as of the “whole Odishi” points to the legitimate rights of Dadiani to possess Tskhumi principality.

After joining the Tskhumi principality to Odishi in the 13 -14th centuries the towns Tskhumi//Tskhomi and Anakopia were included within the bounds of Odishi. As a result, Odishi became a direct neighbor of the Abkhazian principality from which it was separated by the Small Mount to the west of Anakopia descending to the Sea, to be more exact - “Small River”, being localized by Vakhushti to the north-west from Anakopia (the present day Psirskha).

Giorgi I Dadiani died in 1323 and his son Mamia I Dadiani (1323-1345) became the eristav of Odishi. South-east part of the territory of the present day Abkhazia including Anakopia was under his dominion.

In 1327 died king Konstantine. His brother Mikel ascended the west Georgian throne; his reign lasted only for two years. Mikel had a son - Bagrat, who because of his small age “dared not become king”. West Georgia was practically left without a king and anarchy seized it. Then the nobility appealed to Giorgi V the Bright, the king of East Georgia. In 1330 he entered the west Georgia with the numerous troops and headed to Kutaisi. Prince Bagrat did not dare to oppose him and handed to Giorgi V the bright -Kutaisi and all the fortresses of Imereti. “ Dadiani Mamia, Gurieli and eristav of the Svans and (eristav – the author) of the Svans seeing this came to him with rich gifts and blessed him to be the king

81 E. Metreveli. *Materials on History of the Georgian Colonies in Jerusalem*. Tb., 1962, p. 43, 100-101, 196 (in Georgian).

82 *Life of Georgia*, vol. I, p. 801.

83 T. Beradze. *From the political Geography of Odishi*, p. 160.

of Imereti and all Georgia – wrote Vakhushti – Then he marched into Odishi and from there into Abkhazia; Settled all the affairs there and occupied the fortresses; He gave the principality of Tskhomi to Bedieli, as originally he was the eristav) of Abkhazia”.⁸⁴ Thus, in 1330 all the parts of west Georgia and among them the present day territory of Abkhazia were united again within the bounds of the integral Georgian kingdom having existed almost one century and a half.

In 1318 the Pope of Rome established the catholic archbishopric in the Mongolian state of the Ilkhans of Persia and subdued to it the catholic episcopacy of Sebastopol or present Sukhumi. In the same year the bishop of Sebastopolis was appointed Bernardo Moro, who was replaced by Petrus Herald ⁸⁵ in 1330.

A new catholic bishop appealed to the archbishop of Canterbury and other clerical hierarchs of England with the special message, the text of which came to our days. Below is given the wide passage from that letter, having the interesting information about Georgia of the 20s of the XIVth century:

“ Sir Archbishop of Canterbury , by the mercy of God the first in all the kingdom of England! Archbishops and Bishops of the Kingdom! I, your brother is appealing to You from this kingdom – Petrus by the will of God - the bishop of Sebastopolis in Lower Georgia (inferioris Georgiane). Here is the town being seized with the ambition, where I was unworthily appointed by the will of the Highest Priest. As they say, 100 Christians were here sold to the Saracens and they were taken to the Saracen land and were turned there into the Saracens (Muslims-author). . . Deliverer of this letter Jakhia de Kremona . . . is so poor, that he could not afford even the half of the trip, I cannot help him, as I have no church or house to find a shelter. I haven't got a single dinar to give him. I wait for weeks for a donation from a poor Georgian. . . The ruler of this country, who is the commander-in – chief of all Georgia is ready together with his army to accompany the western Christians in the war against the Saracens. . . He gave to the local Catholics the place for cemetery, in spite of the tradition of the two Georgian kingdoms, as here they did not distinguish the deceased catholic from Schismatic. But the Catholics did not accept it and burry their dead beyond the bonds of their cemetery. The fact of giving place of the above mentioned cemetery was quite angry the bishop of the Schimats and their clergy, as because of that cemetery they loose the right of burring the Catholics. The anxiety is so great, that the cross, having been erected by the catholic-Latins in the centre of the cemetery was rooted out from the ground and 15 grave stones being laid by the Latins were broken. The Latins put them again. . . . The local priests – Schimats and the people, being supported by the Saracens and Judeans, carried it to the local Bishop of the Bishops (Cathalicos of Abkhazia is meant – author). . . Was written in town of Sebastopolis, in the Kingdom of Lower Georgia (in reign inferioris Georgianae). On the festival of King Saint Edward, in 1330 from the Birth of Christ”.⁸⁶

Under “Inferior Georgia” Petrus Herald ⁸⁵ means west Georgia. Division of Georgia

⁸⁴ Life of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 257-258; 801-802; Abkhazia and the Abkhazians. . . , p. 137-138. It is not correct, that “the significant part of Abkhazia and namely the Tskhum (Sokhumi) principality” was allotted to Bediani in 1330 (Essays on History of Abkhazia, ASSR, part I, p. 89). Vakhushti says, that Bedieli got what he had possessed before.

⁸⁵ Richard J. La Papante et les missions d'Orient an moyen Age, XIII-XVs. Rome, 1977, p. 178.

⁸⁶ V. Kiknadze. Latinian Historian about Georgia of the XIVth century. -Works of the Tbilisi State University. History, Arts and Ethnography, 1983, vol. 243, p. 101-103 (in Georgian).

into Superior and Inferior are met in the monuments of the Georgian literature of the 10-11th centuries, where “Inferior” always meant west Georgia. It is not occasional, that the catholic bishop of “Sanastopol” mentions the two countries and among them the “inferior Georgia”. Unification of east and west Georgias was the inevitable fact and the author of the letter to England knows well, that both parts of Georgia are united into one kingdom.

“Commander – in – Chief of all Georgia” mentioned by Petrus Heraldi is obviously Mamia I Dadiani, though the catholic bishop is not exact. Eristav of Odishi commanded only the army of West Georgia. This was the right of the Dadiani House already in the 12-13th centuries, before establishing of west Georgian kingdom⁸⁷ by David Narin. Seemingly, Giorgi V the Bright after joining the west Georgian kingdom restored this right of the Dadiani House giving it to Mamia I. Thus, between the king of Georgia and eristav of Abkhazia stood the commander of west Georgia – the eristav of Odishi. After this, eristav of Abkhazia obeyed fist eristav of Odishi, as the commander-in –Chief of all the armies, being assembled in west Georgia and only then the king of Georgia. This situation lasted, as we will later, see for a long time. This confirms the information of the Arabian authors of the 14-15th centuries, according to whom the principality of Abkhazia is under the dominion of the eristav of Odishi.

In the 14-15th centuries the main trade ports of Georgia - Poti and Tskhumi were within the Odishi principality. This strengthened the international significance of Odishi. Furthermore, sometimes the eristavs of Odishi were comprehended by the foreign observers, as the independent rulers. Seldom, but the like comprehension of the situation acquired the official-diplomatic character. In the first place it concerns the Sultan of the Mamelukes of Egypt.

Egypt acquired the right of sending the ships to the Black Sea in 1261-1262, when he established the close relations with the Golden Horde. The Sultans of the Mamelukes paid great attention to the maritime contacts with Georgia, as one of the sea routes connecting Egypt via Bosphorus strait, Black and Azov Seas with the Golden Horde⁸⁸ passed along the Georgian shores. The main part of this coast was controlled by the ersitavs of Odishi. That’s why from the first part of the 14th century, Sultan of Egypt established the direct contacts with the Odishi eristavs; this is reflected in the works of the great Egyptian official and scientist of the 14th century – Al-Mukhibi-“the perfection of interpretation of the high terminology”. “Georgia has two kings – the Great King, who rules Tbilisi and Dadiani – king ruling Sukhumi and Abkhas. . . With each of them there is the following rule of the writing on one part of the paper, -writes the Arabian encyclopedian. -“Mighty Allah may give his highness long life, great, magnificent, courageous, believer, the glory of the Christian faith, treasure of the religious society of the Cross, pride of Christianity, King of the Abkhazians, Georgians and Djurdjans, friend of the kings and sultans, each of them is called the king of the Georgians”.⁸⁹

This information given by Al-Mukhib almost word- by word is repeated by another Arabian encyclopedian - Al-Kalkashand.⁹⁰ Al-Mukhib died in 1384, as for Al-Kalkashand

87 T. Beradze. *From the Political Geography of Odishi*, p. 154-156 (in Georgian).

88 T. Beradze. *Navigation. . .*, Tb., 1982, p. 41-42, 81-82.

89 *Information of the Arabian Historians of the XIV-XVth centuries about Georgia* (Al-Umari, Al-Mukhibi, Al-Kalkashanda). Tb., 1988, p. 53 (in Georgian).

90 *Ibid*, p. 57.

– he lived in 1355-1418. Thus, their data on the strengthening of west Georgian eristavs reflect the reality more than of one century. According to the Arabian sources, from 30-s of the XIVth century till the 20s of the XVth century the Abkhazian eristavs were subdued to the possessors of Odishi.

In 1386-1403 Tamerlane eight times invaded Georgia. During the eighth invasion Timur marched into west Georgia, but didn't go beyond the borders of Imereti. Thus, Odishi and Abkhazia avoided the invasion of the middle Asian possessor.

After the first invasion of Georgia by Timur, in the west part of the country appeared the throne seekers trying to restore the kingdom of Imereti. The initiative was shown from the off-springs of king Mikel and the deputies being appointed by the royal family. According to the information given by Vakhusti Bagrationi in 1387 the great - grandson of David Narin – Alexander was crowned in Gelati, but couldn't receive the support of west Georgia, among them Odishi and Abkhazia having been loyal to the common Georgian kings.⁹¹

After the death of Alexander his son Giorgi tried to occupy the Georgian throne, but west Georgian eristavs refused to obey him. Then Giorgi marched out against the main opponent – the possessor of Odishi. Vamekh Dadiani defeated the army of Imereti in a fierce battle. Giorgi died in that battle in 1392.⁹²

The above mentioned Vamekh is Vamekh I Dadiani (1384-1396). As a leader of west Georgian troops he was one of the first to struggle against the disaster from the highlands from the Western Caucasus – the Jiks. They were coming into power in that period and tried to invade the lowlands. The last onset of the highlanders started in the 14 -15th centuries, when the geopolitical conditions radically change in the North Caucasus. From that time, the tribes being withdrawn by the Mongolians to the gorge of the North Caucasus, tried to compensate their losses at the expense of the territory of the Trans Caucasus and first of all – of Georgia. The North-West Georgia was the first to experience the onset of the highlanders of the West Caucasus (the present Sochi-Tuapse sector).

The North-West borders of Georgia in the 10 -13th century coinciding with in this sector with the borders of the Abkhazian principality passed along the river Nikopsia. To the north-west of this river to the straight of Kerch and Azov Sea within the bounds the Caucasus, lived the tribes of the Cherkessian - Adigean origin. The Georgians called them the Jiks and Kashags, as for the west Europeans they called them the Jiks and Cherkessians.

In the Georgian historical sources – Nikopsia (more to the north from the modern Russian town - Tuapse), as the extreme North-West border of Georgia is for the last time mentioned in the description of the crowning procedure of David IX(1346-1360) – the son of Giorgi the Bright. Vakhusti Bagrationi wrote:“ After king Giorgi his son David became king. The catholicoses, bishops and nobility and high officials from Nikopsia, Speri to Derbend assembled and blessed him to be a king”.⁹³

The Jiks were famous for their piracy on the Black Sea from the ancient times. In the 9 -13th centuries, in the period of strengthening of the Abkhazian principality and afterwards of the united Georgia their piracy came to minimum. But in hard for Georgia times, in the 13 -14th centuries, their activity on the Black Sea was renewed. By that time, the high-

91 *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 803.

92 *Ibid*, p. 803-804.

93 *Ibid*, vol. II, p. 201.

landers of the west Caucasus had not obey Georgia any more and started to widen their territories at the expense of its north-west lands.

Information about the campaign of Vamekh I Dadiani (1384-1396) in Jiketi is found in the lapidary inscription on the side-altar of the Khobi monastery: “Christ, by name of God eristavt eristavi and Mandaturtukhutsesi Dadiani Vamekh after the Father of their patron eristavt eristavi Dadiani Giorgi invaded Jiketi for their being unfaithful and disloyal and defeated them and their fortresses strong and inaccessible (Gagari and Ugagni-author) became disgraced and useless; and he captured them due to his strength, devastated the places of the rulers of Jiketi, captured as many hostages as possible and put others to flight. . . ”. ⁹⁴ It is usually considered, that the: “Gagara” and “Ugagi” being mentioned in the inscription are the geographical points and Vamekh Dadiani fought with the Jiks in the environs of Gagari. ⁹⁵ But, in the inscription on the side-altar of the Khobi monastery is said about absolutely another region.

“Ugagi” in the ancient Georgian language meant “impassable road”, and “Gagara” vice versa, must have denoted “the easy way”, “the pass”. In fact, Gagra is a specific pass on the Sea coast. Vamekh Dadiani, must have devastated the whole Jiketi to the Azov Sea, destroying everything – those being easily reached and those being famous for their inaccessibility. From the submissive Jiks he took hostages, but the territory of the Jiks, rebellious Jiks were mercilessly ravaged. ⁹⁶ To the end of the 14th century the Christianity of Jiketi weakened and most churches were left without the church service and perish. The possessor of Odishi took from the deserted churches the marble columns of the Byzantine style, patterned tiles and decorated the cathedral in Khobi and churches of his possessions. Vamekh I Dadiani attacked Jiketi from the Sea and significantly shook the naval piracy of the Jiks, though he was not able to stop the expansion of the Adigean- Cherkessian tribes.

At the end of the XIVth century brother of Giorgi II (1393-1407) - Konstantine trying to occupy the Georgian throne, opposed the central power being weakened as a result of Tamerlane’s invasion. Prince Konstantine had to leave West Georgia, but now the west Georgian throne was claimed by the off-spring of Imeretian kings -Dimitri. At that time Giorgi VII finished the war with Tamerlane and spared his time for west Georgia, especially, that the eristavs of that region were not going to subdue to the impostor claimant to the throne. King Giorgi took advantage of the situation and captured the whole Imereti – writes Vakhushthi Bagrationi. He was joined by Dadiani Mamia, Gurieli, Sharvahsidze and the Svans. ⁹⁷

The trial to launch a new internecine war in west Georgia had place in the first years (1412-1414) of ruling of Alexander I the Great. It was inspired by Mamia II Dadiani (1396-1414), who decided to join his subordinated to him principality of Abkhazia. He wished” to subdue the Abkhazians; in the same year he assembled the army of Megrels from Odishi and campaigned against Abkhazia, – writes Vakhushthi Bagrationi – The army was destroyed, Mamia Dadiani killed, those having been survived fled away and returned

94 E. Takaishvili. Archeological travel around Georgia. -Ancient Georgia, III133; I. Lordkipanidze. Wall-Paintings in Tsalenjikha. Tb., 1992, p. 22.

95 P. Ingorokva. Giorgi Merchule, p. 149-150; K. Berulava. Historical Place of Abkhazia, p. 77.

96 T. Beradze. “On the Etymology of “Gagari”and “Ugagi”-Macne, Series of History. . . , 1973, N1, p. 122-123.

97 Life of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 275, 804-805.

to Odishi”.⁹⁸

The royal court was worried by the death of Mamia II Dadiani. In his effort, to invade the Abkhazian principality without the king's permission, the king of Georgia saw a dangerous symptom of splitting the State and didn't delay with the response. In 1414 Alexander I moved together with the army to west Georgia and arrived in Odishi.

“On arriving the king to Odishi the son of Mamia Dadiani – Liparit welcomed him and asked to forgive him his father's sins. And the king forgave him, as he was tender and merciful did no harm to anybody; Liparit was appointed instead of his father. After this the King left for Abkhazia taking together with him Liparit Dadiani. He was met by Sharvashidze, who obeyed his orders, as was during the first kings' reign. He settled all the matters there, calmed them down and arrived in Kutaisi”.⁹⁹ After the military expedition of Alexander the Great to West Georgia the peace was not broken for 40 years.

In 1453 the Turk – Ottomans took possession of Constantinople and the millennial Empire of Byzantine seized its existence. In the same year, in summer, in Edirne (Adrianople) Mekhem II, who returned from Constantinople was visited by the representatives of the Christian countries of the Black Sea Coast. Some sources name among them the Georgian ambassadors as well. According to the Englishman S. Ransimen, the court of Sultan was visited by the envoy of Dadiani - the “prince of Megrelia and Imereti”; the Turkish historian - M. Kirzioglu informed about the ambassadors of “Gurieli, Megrelians and Abkhazians”.¹⁰⁰

The both authors base on the information given by the Byzantine historian Ducae, according to whom, among the ambassadors having come in 1453 to Mekhmed II were the “Trapezundians and everyone living at the Pontus Sea”.¹⁰¹ As we can see, the ambassadors of Georgia are not named at all.

After the fall of Byzantine, the Ottomans threatened the Georgian Black Sea Coast. Vakhushti Bagrationi dates their first attack by 1451. M. Kirzioglu and M. Svanidze think, that the invasion had place in 1454. The basis for such information are the Italian sources, in which is described the raid of the Ottoman fleet on the Black Sea in 1454 during which Sevastopolis, i. e. Tskhumi, the present day Sukhumi was burnt.¹⁰²

Dating of Vakhushti Bagrationi seems not to be correct. Information about the invasion of the Ottomans and then the Abkhazians in the present day Sukhumi is kept in the letter, being sent in the second half of 1454 to the protectors of Genoa by the consul of Sevastopolis – Jerardo Pineli. He wrote, that after his arrival to Sevastopolis he “ spent there little time. . . All of a sudden he was attacked by the Avazgians and the population fled saving their lives and I followed them. They decided to took out town and capture us. . . Besides, I am informing You, that before my arrival , this place had been robbed by the Tavrks (the Turks – author)”.¹⁰³ According to the information of earlier Italian source, the

⁹⁸ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 278; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 138.

⁹⁹ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 278; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁰ S. Ransiman. *The Fall of Constantinople in 1453*. . . , 1983, p. 150; M. Kirzioglu. *Osmanlilar in Kafkaz-elieri ni fethi (1451-1590)*. Ankara, 1976.

¹⁰¹ Ducae Michaelis. *Historia Byzantina. Patrologia Graeca*, t. CLY, II, p. 128.

¹⁰² M. Kirzioglu. *Osmanlilar*. . . , p. 6-7; M. Svanidze. *From the Chronology of Vakhushti Bagrationi (the first invasion of the Turks into the Black Sea coast of Georgia)*. - *Researches in Source Study*, 1982, Tb., 1985, p. 107-111.

¹⁰³ *Codice Diplomatico delle colonie Tauro-Ligurt durante la signoria dell'ufficio di S. Giorgia*, ed. A. Vigna, Parte II, ASLSE, VII, 1871, p. 317-318.

Turk-Ottomans burnt in the Sukhimi port one Genoan trade ship , another was taken as a trophy. A part of the Genoan merchants living in the town were captured and another part managed to escape. ¹⁰⁴

Vakhushti Bagrationi writes nothing about the destruction of Sukhumi by the Abkhazians, but remarks, that the Ottomans devastated the whole Abkhazian Principality during that attack. In 1451 “ Came fifty battleships full of the warriors. . . , -writes Vakhushti, - devastated and destroyed Tskhomi and Abkhazia and all the Black Sea coast. Turned away and left the area. King Giorgi hearing about this the last king of united Georgia Giorgi VIII (1445-1466 – author) hurried to help him, but he was late. Anyway he settled there people from the aborigines, built fortifications for them, arranged all the matters and returned to Geguti”. ¹⁰⁵ The word “arranged” must have meant the oppression of the rebellion of the Abkhazians during which, as it has been mentioned above Tskhumi was mercilessly destroyed. In 1454 the appearance of the Genoans in Sukhumi was not accidental. By that time their trade factory had already existed in the town.

Giorgi VIII was the last king of the united Georgia. The political split of the country was speeded up by the opposition in the House of Eristavs of Samtskhe-Saatabago. ¹⁰⁶ The internecine war in Georgia seemed unavoidable, when the ambassador of the Pope of Rome – Ludovic from Bologna came to Georgia. He offered the Georgians to participate in the anti Ottoman coalition.

The fall of Constantinople (May 29th of 1453) had a great resonance all over the world and first of all in the Christian countries. The idea of anti - Turkish coalition, maintaining liberation of Constantinople and restoration of the Byzantine empire emerged in West Europe. Inspire of this idea was the Pope of Rome – Kalist III. With the purpose of joining the coalition of the neighboring to Turkey countries, in 1456-1460 he sent Ludovic from Bologna two times to the East with the ambassador mission.

The struggle with the Ottomans with the help of the united forces of the Christian countries appeared so tempting for Georgia, that thanks to the ambassador of Pope the temporary truce was concluded between the king of Georgia and Atabag of Samtskhe. Ludovic from Bologna, travelled in all the neighboring countries, opposing the Ottomans besides Georgia and persuaded them to join the anti - Turkish coalition. As a result, after the ambassadors of the Eastern Countries assembled in Georgia together with Ludovic from Bologna, they headed to the Western Europe. Atabag of Samtskhe – Kvarkvare II Jakeli (1451-1498) sent his ambassador to Europe. Other Eristavs of Georgia by that time felt themselves independent. In spite of this, they did not send their ambassadors to Europe on their own and regarded the ambassador of the Georgian, as their representative. The Latin language documents connected with the activities of that embassy enable us to state the names of the Eristavs of Georgia and of their principalities. It helps us to restore the picture of arranging of the political forces of Georgia in the 50s of the 15th century.

Analyses of the corresponding Latin language documents show us, that the significant part of West Georgia – Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi, the most part of Svaneti was ruled by the nephew of Alexander I the Great – Bagrat bearing the title of the “king. ” The Black

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 102-103.

¹⁰⁵ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 284.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 284, 704-705.

Sea Coast of the South-West Georgia was included into the Principality of Guria, which was ruled unknown from other sources – Mamia (Mania) Gurieli, being mentioned under the title of “marquis”. In those Latin language documents the possessor of Odishi – Dadiani is mentioned under the name or the title “Bediani”. According to those documents according to the old tradition, to Odishi subdued the principality of Abkhazia as well. This is the reason, why Bediani is mentioned, as “the king of Megrelia and Abkhazia” in other documents (Bendas rex Mengrelia et Abasiae). Despite this fact, Abkhazia anyway represented a separate administrative-territorial unit of Georgia. Thus, in the corresponding documents, under the title “Duke” is mentioned the principality of Abkhazia - Rabia (Rabia dux Anocaciae).¹⁰⁷

In the Italian documents of the 13-15th centuries the principality of Odishi is called “Bediani” or “Bendiani”. In the letter, being sent in 1460 by the Trapezund emperor to the ruler of Burgundies in connection with the anti - Ottoman coalition, Bediani is mentioned together with his son. In the letter, being sent in the same year by the “Duke of Georgia” Kvarqvare II Jakeli to the doge of Venice, is clarified the personality of Bediani. He is there called ‘de la chan de liparit’¹⁰⁸ without any doubt, it is Liparit I Dadiani (1414-1470), and his son is Shamadavle Dadiani (1470-1474) ruling the principality together with his father.¹⁰⁹

It is widely known, that the first dynasty of the possessors of Odishi comes from Bedian I Dadiani, ruling in the 80s of the 13th century and at the beginning of the 14th century.¹¹⁰ Probably, the information on this issue were kept not more than the two centuries. It is the reason, why the Italians of the 14 -15th centuries mentioned the rulers of Odishi under the name of Bediani.

The European mission of the Georgian and Oriental ambassadors was not successful. The West Europe did not seem ready for the united actions against the Ottomans. After the failure of the Anti -Ottoman coalition in Georgia the internecine war broke out with the new force. The initiator was again Kvarqvare II Jakeli. In 1462 he called against the king of Georgia the leader of the union of Ak Koiunlu (White Rams) – Uzun Khasan, who invaded Kartli. His invasion was used by the king’s governor of the west Georgia – Bagrat. He promised the independence to the principalitys and located his garrisons in that area. For this the King was given “the firm promise and appointed king of Imereti”¹¹¹, by Dadian-Gurieli, Abkhazians and Svans, - writes Vakhushti Bagrationi. In 1463 Bagrat defeated Giorgi VIII at Chikhori not far from Kutaisi. “Dadiani, Gurieli, Abkhazians and Svans came to the conqueror and expressing the wish of all the Imerians blessed him to be King. He fulfilled the promise given to those possessors and they were liberated, but the duty to give the army and be the vassals of the king. From that time Imereti turned into one kingdom and four Duchies or satavado, as Dadiani was allotted Odishi, Gurieli - Guria, Sharvashidze-Abkhazia and Jiketi, Gelovani –Svaneti; and Bagrat was Their King”.¹¹² Bagrat was the king of only west Georgia for a short period. In

¹⁰⁷ M. Tamarashvili. *History of the Catholicism among the Georgians*, p. 50-52, 56-63, 594-598 (in Georgian); *History of the Georgian Diplomacy*. Tb., 2003, p. 364-374 (in Georgian); Fallmerayer, *Geschichte des Keisertums von Trapezuna*. Munchen, 1827, p. 265; W. Miller. *Trebizond, the last greece empire*. London, 1926, p. 96.

¹⁰⁸ D. Paichadze. *Anti - Ottoman coalition of the European countries and Georgia*. Tb., 1989.

¹⁰⁹ T. Beradze. *The Principality of Odishi in the XVI-XVIIth centuries*. -Samegrelo. Tb., 1989 (in Georgian).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 805; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 140.

¹¹² *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 806; *Abkhazia and the Abkhazians*, p. 158.

1466 he crossed the borders of East Georgian and proclaimed himself King of all Georgia. He entered the History under the name of Bagrat VI. In fact, he possessed only West Georgia and Inner Kartli. Giorgi VIII was consolidated in Kakheti and formed an independent Kakhetian kingdom. In the Inferior Kartli was consolidated the grandson of Alexander the Great Konstantine II (the son Dimitri), recognizing as a sovereign of Bagrat VI. Samtskhe-Saatabago became an independent principality. In 1477 Vamekh II Dadiani (1474-1482) opposed Bagrat VI. He “assembled the Abkhazians and Gurians and began the raids, devastation and capturing of Imereti”. The reaction of the king of Georgia was immediate. Bagrat VI attacked Odishi with the great army, defeated and subdued Vamekh II Dadiani.¹¹³

The king of Kartli and west Georgia – Bagrat VI died in 1478. Konstantine II (1479-1505) ascended the throne of Kartli. The son of Bagrat VI - Alexander tried to ascend the throne in west Georgia. For coronation he summoned “ Dadiani, Gurieli, Sharvashidze and Gelovani”, but headed with Vamekh II Dadiani refused to support him and invited Konstantine II to West Georgia. Konstantine with the help of the eristavs of western Georgia took Kutaisi and for a short time restored the integrity of Kartli with western Georgia. The allies were planning to unite the whole Georgia and in the first place tried to join Samtskhe-Saatabago. Vamekh II Dadiani with the army of west Georgia helped Konstantine II in 1481 in the battle with atabag and after this the King subordinated Samtskhe and Javakheti¹¹⁴. Konstantine II became the King of All Georgia. He “subdued Imer, Odishians and Abkhazians; Atabag served him and the Kakhetians were in his subordination. The Christians were nowhere persecuted; and the country was in peace and rest”.

¹¹⁵ But, in 1483 Konstantine II was defeated at Aradeti in the battle with Atabag. The son of Bagrat – Alexander took advantage of it and captured Kutaisi and was crowned King. Then, the new possessor of Odishi – Liparit II Dadiani (1482-1512) invited Konstantine II to West Georgia for the second time. In 1487 Konstantine came to west Georgia again with the army and occupied Kutaisi and other significant fortresses with the help of Liparit II Dadiani and other great feudals of West Georgia. But he failed to fully annex west Georgia. In 1488 the ruler of Iran- Jakub Han invaded East Georgia and the king of Kartli went to fight with him. Alexander-the son of Bagrat VI again took advantage of it and captured Kutaisi and all fortresses of Imereti again and after that” reconciled with Dadiani and Gurieli. By this act, he pacified Imereti and firmly subdued the Abkhazians and Svans”.¹¹⁶

In 1490 Konstantine asked a specially assembled royal court (Darbazi) for an advice concerning restoration of the integral kingdom. The royal court advised Konstantine II to postpone this struggle till the better times.¹¹⁷ After this the king of Kartli had to temporarily reconcile with the kings of Kakheti and Imereti and also Atabag of Samtskhe having thus formed the factual split of Georgia.

Spotlighting the political history of West Georgia of the second half of the 15th century we have to mention the opinion being established in the scientific literature about “Sabadiano”, according to which in the 50-70s of the 15th century existed partly independent

¹¹³ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 807; the same work, vol. II, p. 342.

¹¹⁴ *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 386.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, vol. II, p. 343.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 809.

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p. . 390.

political unit “Sabediano”, the ruler of which united under his power principalities of the Georgian Black Sea coast – Guria, Odishi and Abkhazia. I. Javakhishvili was the first to express this opinion, being later repeated by different historians.¹¹⁸ It appeared, that “Sabediano” had never existed and the incorrect reading of the above-mentioned documents concerning the anti - Ottoman coalition, gave rise to this version.

3. The Trading Stations of Genoa in Sebastopolis – Tskhomi//Tskhumi

After taking Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204 the half closed Black Sea gradually opened for the world trade. The conditions were not changed even after 1261, when the Byzantines conquered back Constantinople. At the end of the 13th century merchants having the interest in the Black sea coast used to arrive from different countries into Byzantine. Among them were the merchants from the Italian State cities from Sicily and Catalonia and also from Egypt. By that time the Black Sea was well-known for sailors and merchants. Awareness of the West Europeans of the 13-15th centuries about the Black Sea coast was reflected first of all on the geographical maps of 1318-1519.

On those maps to the South-East of present-day Sochi the first one to be marked is Costo//Cussto//Sosto//Costa//Chasto, i. e. the present day Chosta. More to the South-East is designated Laiazo//Aiaco//Layazo//Laiaco—Liaushia. On the Venetian maps of the 13th century made by Petra Visconte (1318), Bianco (1436) and others is marked Abcazia//Augazia, i. e. Abkhazia having here the meaning of the area or the populated point. On some naval maps, F. E. the map of Soleri 1385 and Andreus Beninkazi 1518 this area or the Sea side point is put between the present day Sochi and Tuapse. On the extreme North-West of the Black Sea Coast of modern Georgia, Cacaru//Chachari//Cacar//Chatari, i. e. the Old Gagari and modern Gagra is marked. To the South –East one after another are placed San Sofia//Sancta Sofia//s. Soffia – the famous Pitsunda cathedral, Giro-the cape of Pitsunda, Cavo de Giro – The Bay (Gulf) of Pitsunda and Pecunda//Pezonda -Pitsunda itself.

To the South-East from Pitsunda – Cavo de Buxo//Cavo de Bux//Cavo Buxo//Cavo de Bussi is marked. This toponyme is translated as “The Creek of Bzip”. The significant part of the researchers thinks, that here the Bombori Bay is meant, into which flow the rivers Mchishta (Mutsu), Khipsta (Zupu) and Aapsta (Agatso). Lately B. Gogia and J. Gamakharia expressed an opinion, that under the “Bzip Creek” the esatuary of the river Bzip is meant¹¹⁹. To the South-East of “the Bzip Creek” on the sea maps Nisoffia, Flum Nisofia and Flum Nicola are marked. It goes without saying, that they are the town-fortress Anakopia and the “river of Anakopia”, i. e. the present day Psirtska.

To the South-East from Anakopia on the naval maps Savastopoli//Scoanstopoli, the ancient Georgian Tskhomi//Tskhumi (modern Sukhumi) are designated; in its neighbourhood are marked the river Mengrello//Porto Mengrello, Catancha//Cicaba//Cichaba//Cicaba- Tskubun/Tkhubun - in the surroundings of the Sukhumi airport; Gotto/goto - the cape of Kodori and Tamamxa// Tamassa//Tama//Tamasa. This place is designated on one

118 I. Javakhishvili. *History of the Georgian Nation. Essays in XIIth volumes*, vol. III. Tb., 1982, p. 329 (in Georgian); *History of Georgia*, I. Tb., 1956, p. 242-243 (in Georgian). Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 240.

119 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia -Historical region of Georgia*, p. 821-834, 882.

of the West European maps of Megrelian (Odishian) principality in 1654, as Satamashia. This is Satamashia, the fortress in the environs of modern Tamish till existing in the 70s of the 19th century. Its description was left by V. Cherniavski. According to his data, in 1875 there tried to excavate the territory and for this purpose one of the fortress towers (turrets) was exploded¹²⁰.

To the South-East of Satamashia is designated Merkula – village Murkula, Laxopotamo – the river Galidzga, Castro Corenbedia – probably the village Ilori, Corebedia – Bedia or Shua (central) Bedia, Megapotamo//Megapotami-the river Inguri, Lipotimo – the river Khobi, Lofasio /Fasso// Faxo//Fasso//f. Fasop – the present day Poti and the river Rioni, Paliastomo//Paliastoma – the lake Paliastomi, San Giorgio – Grigoleti, Vati//Lovati – Batumi and Gonea – the fortress of Gonio¹²¹.

The sea maps of the 13-15th centuries are called portolans, as they, as a rule are accompanied by the descriptions. One of such portolans must be considered the “Book of Knowledge”, about the world possessions, each country, their kings and rulers, being compiled by the Franciscan monk in 1350-1366. The passage concerning Abkhazia and neighboring to its regions the north-east Black Sea Coast says: “ Then I reached the cape of Got, being located between the Great Sea (Black Sea – the author) and the Sea of Tan (the Azov Sea). . . The cape borders with the two vast provinces, country of king David (the mythical kingdom-the author) and the province of Anogasia (Anogasia//Abkhazia -the author) and Tana. . .

Form the Tan Sea I went on and passed along the eastern coast of the Great Sea, having covered the great distance through Arva-Saksia and Pesonta (Pitsunda – the author) in the empire of Uksleto (Uzbeko//Golden Horde – the author), and came to the kingdom of Sevastopolis, being settled by the Christians – Kumans. There are a lot of people of the Judean origin, but all of them keep to the Christian traditions and rituals – more often to the Greek, than the Latin church. On the banners of the king the “silver hand”¹²² is depicted. Under that “ kingdom’ Odishi principality is meant; under the “silver hand” – the palm of the right hand, being met on the sea maps¹²³ next to the five cross flag. In the “Book of Knowlegde”is also mentioned – “Anogazia”, the distorted” Avogazia “. According to the text, it is located in the environs of the Crimea.

In the 13-15th centuries in the Black Sea trade the most active were the Italians. In the beginning, among them the most prevailing were the Venetians. Afterwards, the Genoans became the leaders. About the trade of the Venetians in Georgia in the 13-15th centuries little is known; this can be explained by the peculiarities of the Venetian sea trade. In Venetia the government took an active part in the economic life of the State. Thus, in the 13-15th centuries from Venetia to the Black and Azov Seas came only the state galleys, having the right of dropping anchor only in the Trapezund and Tanai ports. ¹²⁴ In those towns the Venetians had the factories being established consequently in 1319 and 1333.

120 V. Cherniavski. Notes on the Monuments of the West Trans-Caucasus, the research of which is especially persistent. –Vth archeological session. Tiflis, 1879, p. 19, 127.

121 F. Brun. The Eastern Coast of the Black Sea according to the ancient periples and compass maps. – Notes of the Society of Odessa of History and Antiquitiesvol. IX. Odessa, 1875, p. 410-432; Topographical Table of the Eastern Coast of the Black Sea Nameless and according to the compass maps; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia-Historical Region of Georgia, p. 820-838; B. Gogia. Abkhazia. . . , p. 22-29.

122 T. Beradze. Navigation. . . , p. 46.

123 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia –Historical Region of Georgia, p. 828-829.

124 S. Karpov. Trapezund Empire and the West European States, p. 48-59.

¹²⁵ In spite of the strict prohibition, the Venetian galleys from time to time went into the other Black Sea Coast ports and among them in Sukhumi as well.

The Georgians maintained the contacts mainly with the Venetian merchants living in Constantinople. F. E. in August of 1437 the Venetian merchant bought from Megrelian Giorgi from Sevastopolis (Tskhumi) 157 kilograms of wax being brought in Constantinople in the special vessel and paid 23-25 perpers. After the two days the same merchant bought the wax in great amounts from the Italian merchant, who also arrived from Sevastopolis.¹²⁶

From the 60s of the 13th century the leadership in the Black Sea trade goes to Genoa. In 1267 Genoa got from the Byzantine Emperor the right of founding the trading station in the suburbs of Constantinople - Pera (Galatia). Soon the Genoans settled in town Soldaia (present Sudak). In 1270-1275 they founded the town Kaffa in the Crimea on the territory of present Feodosia, which after this became the trading centre of the international significance. During the following fifty years all the Black Sea Coast was covered with the nets of the Genoese trading stations. The ships of the Genoese navigated even in the Caspian Sea. The Genoese trading station existed almost 70 years in the capital of the Ilkhans – Tabriz (Iran), they had the significant trading interests in the Black Sea coast of Georgia. Georgian-Genoese trading contacts of the 13-15th centuries and Genoese trading station in the Black Sea coast of Georgia interested many historians. First of all, they were interested in existing of such trading station on the present territory of Abkhazia. According to their opinion in the 14-15th centuries there were not less than 100 trading stations¹²⁷ on the territory of modern Abkhazia. The similar opinions are based mainly on the sea maps of the 14-15th centuries. Some authors thought, that all the populated points designated on those maps in the section between Inguri and Psou were the trading stations. Some of them go even further and consider the Genoese trading stations such geographical points having the “Italian Sounding”. F. E. K. Kudriavtsev because of the sounding “Olaguane” – announced it the Genoese trading station, when this Georgian toponyme is translated as “place of the Pitchers” – the wine cellar. The same author together with A. Fadeev names one more, to his mind trading station – “Santandjelo”, as if being located on the right bank of the river Inguri, on the high mountain. In fact, the name Satandjo” and the fortress of the VIII-Xth centuries sitting there has nothing in common with the Genoese. We have to say, that the reason of the similar versions is the lack of knowledge of the language of the local Georgian population and the principles of system of the Genoese trading stations on the Black Sea Coast.

The relations of the Black Sea Coast trading stations of the Genoese and the local authorities were not always similar. The common thing was, that the existence of the

¹²⁵ Badoer L. I. *lebero dei conti di Giacen o Badoer (Constantinopoli 1436-1440), testo a cura di Dirini e. T. Bertele (FL muavo Ramuse, III)*. Roma, 1956, p. 59.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 188.

¹²⁷ N. Murzakevich. *The History of the Genoan Settlements in the Crimea*. Odessa, 1837, p. 37; Primandie *Histories de commerce de al mer Niore, et de colonies de la Krimec*. Paris, 1847, p. 123-127; Pr. Uvarova. *Abkhazia. – Materials on Archeology of the Caucasus*, ed. IV. M., 1894, p. 125-127; E. Zevakin, N. Penchko. *The Essays on the History of the Genoan Colonies in the West Caucasus in the XIII-XVth centuries. – Historical Notes*, 1938, N3; Z. Anchbadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 23-24; R. Katsia. *Economic Expansion of teh Mediaeval Century Genoa in the west Caucasus. -Izvestia of the Institue of Abkhazia*, 1989; E. Mamistvalishvili. *Form History of Odishi. -Works of the Tbilisi University*, 1992, N320, p. 52-59 (in Georgian); Z. Papaskiri. *Essays. . .*, I, p. 80-81 (in Georgian); K. Kudriavtsev. *Collection. . .*, p. 134-139; A. Fadeev. *Brief Essay on Abkhazia*, p. 116.

trading stations necessarily meant self-government for the Genoese and existence of their own churches and cemeteries. In 14-15th centuries the Genoese lived in Batumi and Poti. They didn't have self-governance in those towns and consequently had no trading stations. On the Georgian Black Sea Coast the Genoese founded the trading station having the self-governance system only in Tskhumi// Sevastopolis. The first Genoans are there fixed in 1280, when in Sukhumi one Italian bought from another the trading ship "Mugetto" (Lyly). The act of buying and selling was confirmed by the Italian notary on the spot. In 1289 the same ship was sold again and this act bears the information about the first bargain.¹²⁸

The text of the letter being sent by the English bishop from Sevastopolis to his fellow-citizen about the resistance of the local population against the opening of the catholic cemetery in Sebastopolis was given above. It goes without saying, that only the faith was not the main thing in this matter. The local merchants knew well, that allotting the place for the cemetery and correspondingly the right of building a church for the Genoese in Tskhumi would be the first step towards opening the trading stations being troublesome for the local merchants. In the Georgian historical sources of the 12 -15th centuries this information is not met. It is the proof of absence of the military skirmish between these two countries. Because, of the relatively strong military force of Georgia the Genoese tried to get the right of opening the trading stations through negotiations. It is obvious, that not only one delegation from Genoa arrived with this purpose. According to the Italian historical tradition, the Genoese established the Sukhumi trading station by the agreement of the local authorities¹²⁹ (here Odishi possessor is meant). We must assume, that before giving the consent he had to take the permission from the king of Georgia. The right of opening the trading station was obtained by the Genoese in 1354. The political success of Genoa on the international arena played an important part in reaching the agreement. In the sea battle of 1354 the Genoese almost completely destroyed the fleet of their permanent rival - Venetia. The rulers of Georgia in such conditions "considered righteous" to meet the regular appeal of the Genoese and allowed to establish the trading station in Sukhumi. The first consul of that trading station was Ambrodjio di Pietro¹³⁰. The catholic bishopric of Georgia subordinated the Bosphorus archbishop, whose residence was in Kaffa and not the Sultanian archbishop. After Petrus Geraldini five more bishops are known: Robert Khintelskham, Bertold Voli, Nikolai Pasek, Jan-Paul Franciscanian and Jan -Georg da Redjib. This latter lived in Italy, after the trading stations had seized their functioning.¹³¹

The choice of Sukhumi, as a trading station was not accidental. In the antique epoch and mediaeval centuries this town was the only place on the Black sea Coast, where in special canals¹³² was possible to keep the ships after closing the navigational season.

From 1290 Genoa managed its trading stations on the Black Sea through podest being located in the Constantinople suburbs - Pera (Galatia). In 1314 with the purpose of managing the Black Sea trading stations the authorities of the town-state created a special

128 *Acts des notaries Genoises de Pere et de Caaf de la fin du XIII e siecle*, ed. G. Bucarest. 1927, p. 177.

129 T. Beradze. *Navigation*. . . , p. 99.

130 W. Heyd. *Historie du Commerce de Levant an Moyen-Age*, t. I. Leipzig, 1923, p. 192.

131 J. Richard. *La Papante et les missions d'orient an moyen age, XIII-XV s.* Rome, 1977, p. 185.

132 T. Beradze. *Navigation*. . . , p. 22.

department being called “*Officium Gazaria*” in 1341. The trading station being established in 1354 in Sebastopolis subordinated this department. From 1398 the “*Officium Gazaria*” managed the Black Sea colonies through the consul of Kaffa. After the fall of Constantinople on November 17th of 1453 the government of Genoa handed to the Black Sea Coast trading stations to the Genoese bank :”of Saint George”. That bank was managed by the eight “protectors” being elected annually. A special committee consisting of 24 persons, after appointed the consuls of the Black Sea coast trading colonies, after what they were approved by the protectors. From 1456 Genoa stopped sending of the consuls to the Black Sea Coast. All of them, and among them the consul of Sevastopolis was appointed by the consul of Kaffa.¹³³

In the 14-15th centuries the Genoese trading stations in Sukhumi occupied a small seaside estate near the port. The head of the trading station was a consul. At first, the trading station consisted of the consul, notary and court secretary. The administration got its salaries for Kaffa. The government of Kaffa paid for the rent of the building of the consulate. Later, the stuff of the administration of the trading station of Sebastopolis and the means of its financing changed, . According to the regulations of Kaffa from 1449 the consul of Sebastopolis left for himself 1% from import and export. This sum was enough to give salaries to the notary and the secretary of the trading station, the interpreter and courier.¹³⁴ The court, headed by the consul, solved the conflicts between the Genoese according to the Genoese law.

Till 1456 the consul of Sevastopolis was appointed in Genoa for a year. He arrived in Tskhumi via Kaffa. His identity and rights were certified by the special “patents”. In the archive of Genoa several such “patents “are kept. In 1455 the protectors of the Genoan Bank of Saint George appointed on the position of a consul of Sevastopolis - Ambrojdjo de Potso and gave him a patent, which said:”As we have chosen and certified on the position of a consul of Genoese and having the Genoese possession in Sebastopol and also of those being there and trading and of all those who will be there and trade, the virtuous man, best beloved Ambrojdjo de Potso(de Puteo), the citizen of Genoa, with all the rights, authority, salary, honor and income corresponding to that position for a year and for more or less time by our decision. We are sending to you Ambrosio as a consul of the Genoese in Sebastopolis, to accept him and treat him kindly and politely in the proper way and obey him in what concerns his position, as well as us, as we approve all his decisions and resolutions within his competence, if He –the consul Ambrojdjo will make them correctly and in accordance with his position and law will act on Our behalf. We entrust You to pay consul Ambrosio his appropriate salary an income on time’.¹³⁵

In the 14th century the Genoese in the trading stations of Sebastopolis paid the tax in benefit of Genoa in amount of 0, 5% from the sum of all the import and export of the trading station. In the 15th century this tax was doubled. The right of gathering the taxes for one or more years was sold on the special auction.

The Genoese trading station in Tskumi, as it has been already mentioned above existed from permission of the Georgian authority. At the beginning of the 70s of the 14th century

133 M. Balard. *La Romanie enoise*, vol. I-II, 1978, p. 142; W. Heud, *Histoierer du commerce*, I, p. 142-143;

134 M. Balard. *La Romanie. . .*, p. 141.

135 *Codice diplomateo delle colonieTauro-Liguri durante la signoria dell’ufficio di s. Giorgio*, ed A. Vigna, hfste I, ASPSP, VI; 1868, p. 266.

relations between Georgia and Genoa became tensed. In 1373 the Genoans had to send from Kaffa to Georgia, an urgent and special embassy, in order to keep the trading factory of Sebastopolis. The relations with the possessor of Odishi within the bounds of which Tskhumi (Sukhumi) was located had a special significance for the Genoese. In 1438 the government of the town Genoa tried to gather taxes for their benefit from the local citizens trading with the Genoese. The possessor of Odishi put a veto upon this decision of the government of Genoa. After this act, the Genoese even didn't try to gather the similar taxes.

The sums being gathered in the trading stations of Sebastopolis for the benefit of Genoa for the separate years, about which we have the information give an impression on the trade circulation of this trading station. F. E. In 1373 were gathered 12 000 soms or 2 628 kilograms of silver. In the XVth century the volume of the trade circulation of the trading station of Sebastopolis doubled and there were the years when the circulation even tripled.¹³⁶

The Black Sea Coast trading stations of Genoa didn't have the right of their own monetary emission. Only from the 40-s of the 15th century the trading colony of Kaffa obtained the right of their own money. Therefore, in the 13-15th centuries on the Black Sea Coast any economic activities were based on the circulation of the silver coins of the Golden Horde and Trapezund Empire. In the Italian documents the coin of the Golden Horde was called "Aspra Barikata" and the "Trapezund coin" was called "Astra Komminata". The silver bars weighing 216 grams, in Italian "som"¹³⁷ were also in circulation.

In Georgia the Trapezundian "aspra" was called "Coin from Kirmanei". This name comes from the Trapezundian "aspra kirmanuelata", the word by word translation of which, is the "silver coin of Kir Manuil". Kir Manuil was one of the Trapezundian emperors, who was the first to issue the coins of that type. In the XIII-XV the centuries in west Georgia the emission of the imitation of the coin also called the "silver of Kir Manuil" was made. The possessor of Odishi by permission of the King of Georgia also minted coins in Tskhumi, being called in Georgia the "Tskhumi silver" (Tskhumuri Tetri). The Genoese called it the "Astra of Sebastopolis", in the documents of Kaffa in 1386 is mentioned the "Tetri of Tskhumi" ("the Silver of Tskhumi") – "Aspra of Sebastopolis", which appeared to be of higher standard, than the same year coin from the Golden Horde. In 1927 a rich monetary treasure was found in Sukhumi, the significant part of which was lost soon afterwards. Only several coins of the kirmanuil type came to our days. On the reverse of one of them was an extended Georgian inscription, which read: "Vamekh". It goes without saying, that it was a sample used for emission of the similar coins. Thus, in the 13-15th centuries there was a mint place in Tskhumi. "Vamekh" being mentioned in the inscription is Vamekh I Dadiani and the coin itself is the only copy of the "Tskhumuri Tetri" having come to our days. It was minted in the Tskhumi mint place. The emission of this type of coin pursued the same aim, as the emission of "kirmanueli": The Georgian government tried to ease to its merchants trade on the Black Sea Coast. The only difference between these coins was, that the emission of "kirmanueli" was performed by the royal power and the emission of "Tskhumiri Tetri" was minted by the the possessor of

¹³⁶ T. Beradze. *The Navigation*. . . , p. 100-101.

¹³⁷ M. Balard. *La Romanie*. . . , p. 658-668; Yurjevich. *On the Monetary Genoan Findings in Russia*. -Notes of the Society of Odessa of History and Antiquities, vol. III. Odessa, 1878, p. 53-155.

Odishi¹³⁸ sanctioned by the central power.

At the beginning of the 60s of the 15th century in Tskhumi and the whole Black Sea Coast the relations between the possessor of Odishi and the Genoese became tense and complicated, about what the government of Kaffa informed the protectors of the “Bank of Saint George” in Genoa. The bank tried his best to avoid conflicts with Georgia and it was the reason why the protectors asked for reconciliation with the Odishi possessor through the letter being sent to Kaffa in May of 1465. The letter read: “having studied all, we think, that first of all, it is necessary to abstain from the conflict, due to which you and the merchants from Kaffa could be banned from the trade in the above-mentioned areas and in order not to break the peace we prescribe you to behave carefully and not provocatively. . . You can clarify everything without using the weapon and its not recommended to indulge our Genoese, as it may be followed by the things being harmful. . . It is useful to write letters, appeals, persuasions etc. We don’t allow the Genoese to use the weapon and strength, but vice versa we forbid them to it, but this commission must be kept in secret”.

¹³⁹ According to this instruction, the administration of Kaffa regulated the conflict with the possessor of Megrelia peacefully; this becomes clear from another instruction of the protectors of the “Bank of Saint George”, being sent on the 4th of December of 1465 to Kaffa: “You succeeded in solving the conflict with Bendiani – the possessor of Megrelia, but if this matter needs some expenses, then we’d like to cover all the expenditure by means of clubbing and gathering money from those going to trade in his possessions. ¹⁴⁰

But, anyway the misunderstanding between the Genoese and Georgians were permanent in the following years as well. The government of Kaffa compensated to the Genoese the losses they had experienced in Georgia by means of introducing a special tax for the Georgian merchants in Kaffa and sent the embassy to Odishi. The instruction being sent to Kaffa on behalf of the protectors of the bank from June 18th of 1472 is the evidence of it: “We approve, that you solved this matter about the harm being inflicted to the Georgians, through taxes on the Georgian good and not confiscation usually causing the serious discord. The same can be said about the messenger being sent to the son of Bediani. Try to solve this matter with him and others and try not to cause a conflict without any urgent necessity”. ¹⁴¹ “Bediani” of the Italian documents is obviously Liparit I Dadiani (1414-1470) and his son is Shamadavle Dadiani (1470-1474), who ruled Megrelia together with his father.

Sending of the ambassadors into Megrelia (Odishi) was conditioned by the oppression of the Genoans in Sukhumi. Supposedly, the taxes were increased and probably they were planning to deprive them of the self-governance. The ambassador of Kaffa successfully fulfilled his mission and this was known in Genoa. This is clearly observed from the instruction of the bank of Saint George from the 1st December of 1472. “. . . We are also content, that you hope to establish peace with Bendiani –the possessor of Megrelia”. ¹⁴² The items, of the agreement being expected between the Kaffa community and principal-

138 D. Kapanadze. *Georgian Numismatics*. Tb., 1969, p. 174 (in Georgian); D. M. Lang. *Studies in the numismatic history of Georgia in Transcaucasia*. New-York, 1955, p. 87; M. Balard. *La Romanie*. . . , p. 608; T. Beradze. *The Navigation*. . . , p. 100-112.

139 *Codice diplomatico delle colonie Tauri-Lagiri durante la signoria dell’ufficio di S. Giorgio*, A. Vigna, parte II, ASLPS, VII, 1871, p. 338-339.

140 *Ibid*, p. 53.

141 *Ibid*, p. 873-874.

142 T. Beradze. *The Navigation*. . . , p. 110.

ity of Megrelia, must have concerned mainly the Sebastopolitan trading station functioning at that time. Its last consul well-known - Christoforo de Kanevale was in position in Sukhumi in 1473.

In 1475 the Ottomans captured Kaffa and all the colonies of the Genoans in the Crimea. The Genoans must have lost the self-governance in Tskhumi as well. Thus, The Genoese trading stations in the town Tskhumi (Sebastopolis) of the Odishi principality (and not in the Abkhazian principality) had been functioning for 121 years. The Genoese from the Sukhumi trading stations had the relations only with the Georgians and the Georgian political unit – Odishi. The separatist historiography say nothing about this fact, asserting without any bases that the Genoese had been trading in Abkhazia. ¹⁴³

143 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 165-173.

Chapter VIII. Territory of Modern Abkhazia in the 16th century

Georgia met the 16th century divided into three kingdoms and one principality. After the split of integral Georgian kingdom, West Georgia and the territory and among them of modern Abkhazia, was united within the Imereti Kingdom. At the beginning of the 16th century the king of Imereti possessed Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and a significant part of Svaneti. On the Georgian Black Sea Coast were located partially independent principalities – Guria and Samegrelo and also Abkhazian Principality. At the beginning of the 16th century South-East part of modern Abkhazia to the river Anakopia, as well as in the XIV-XVth centuries was included into the Odishi (Megrelian) principality. "More to the west from Tskhomi is situated Anakopia and its small river – writes Vakhushti Bagrationi, - which starts from the Caucasus and flows into the Sea from the North." ¹ The small river Anakopia is called Psirtskha today. It starts from the mountain Khimsa the spur of the main Caucasian range. Parallel to the right bank almost to the Sea comes the small mountainous range – "Small Anakopian Mountain descending from the Caucasus". ² As we will see further, according to Vakhushti, there was a bordering line between Odishi and Abkhazia. In the 20-30-ies of the 16th century Turkish spy Pataksh also calls the Odishi-Abkhazian border the range along the right bank of the river Psirtskha "... Below Imereti is Guria bordering Trapezund. Beyond it is situated Sukhumi – the land of Dadiani. Sukhumi in the old times was a port. Here to the Sea descends the spur of the Elbrus (of the main Caucasian range – author), -he writes – Beyond them are the Abkhazian regions". ³

Unlike the Turkish spy, German diplomat S. Herbershtein had another opinion about the location of Abkhazia. He visited Russia at the beginning of the 16th century and information about Megrelia and Abkhazia got obtained from the Russians. Herbershtein wrote, that: near the Meotian moors (Azov Sea-author) and Pontus (The Black Sea – author) along the river Kuban flowing into the moor, live the people of Abkhazia (aphgasi)... Beyond the river Kuban is located Mengrelia ". ⁴

In the 16th century Tskhomi (Sukhumi) was within Odishi and was considered the most significant town of the east Black Sea Coast. In the middle of the 16th century from that town to Crimea were sent a great number of the silk cocoons and packed in the special sacs rice being cultivated in Georgia. ⁵

More complete and exact description of the medieval century Abkhazia is given in the work written by Vakhushti Bagrationi and in the compiled by him atlases. In this essay and on the corresponding maps, Abkhazia and other political-administrative units of west Georgia were given within the borders being occupied by them at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries in the period of split of the Georgian kingdom. ⁶

Vakhushti calls Abkhazia one of the sectors of the Black Sea coast being situated to the North-West from Anakopia to the river Kappeti; from the east more to the west of Anakopia is a small mountain descending from the Caucasus to the sea; from the west side

¹ Life of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 781.

² Ibid, p. 776.

³ Turkish sources on History of Samtskhe-Saatabago. The Turkish documents with the Georgian translation was edited, investigated and commented by Ts. Abuladze. Tb., 1983, p. 57.

⁴ S. Herbershtein. Notes on Moscovia. M. 1988, p. 181.

⁵ T. Beradze. Navigation..., p. 125.

⁶ T. Beradze. From the political geography of Odishi, p. 171; of the same author: Vakhushti Bagrationi about Abkhazia and Jiketi. -Problems of the History of Abkhazia. Tb., 1998, p. 103-104 (in Georgian).

is the sea and the river kappeti...; From the North border the Caucasian mountains –he wrote – and from the South the Black Sea”.⁷

“The river Kappeti//Kappeti river “in the late medieval Georgian sources is mentioned as the “Kappoeti river”. This is the river Bzip.⁸ To the North-East from it starts Jiketi, that according to Vakhushti is bordered from the “east the river Kappeti; from the west –the Black Sea; from the south is again the sea, from the North – the Caucasus”.⁹ The river Bzip, or to be more exact the cape “Kavo de Buxo” sitting in its estuary is called the border between Avogazia and Jiketi by G. Interiano from Genoa. In his description of the west Black Sea coast (1551) he denoted , that the Jiks calling themselves Adigs are” spread...along the sea coast (of the Black Sea- author)...to the South to the Samshit bay (Cavo de Buxo), to the direction of the river Phasu and borders with Avogazia being a part of Colkhis’.¹⁰

Vakhusti Bagrationi called the “Zupu” the political centre of Abkhazia being located on the banks of the same name river: ”There is Zupu - a small town-home and place of dwelling of Shervashidze, who rules Abkhazia”.¹¹ The “river Zupu” is now called Kh- ipsta and the populated place Zupu is modern Likhni. To the South-East from the river Vakhushti names the river “Agatso” and to the North-West the river Mutsi. The River Mutsi as it was denoted above are the river Mchishta and the river Agatso is modern Aapsta or Baklanovka.¹²

In the first part of the 16th century Abkhazia was considered the principality of the Imereti Kingdom, though in the 14-15th centuries it to more extent subdued to Odishi, than the king. Sharvashidze tolerated such dependency without any enthusiasm. At the beginning of the 16th century “Not all the orders of Dadiani were obeyed by Shervashidze”.¹³ Supposedly, the dominion of Dadiani in Abkhazia somewhat weakened. Despite this fact, anyway Dadiani had the right of giving to the Pitsunda chair the villages of Abkhazian principality. The monument of the clerical law of the 16th century – Iadgar of Pitsunda” is the proof of it according to which Mamia the III Dadiani (1512-1533) gifted to Our Lady of Pitsunda (or the same catholicos of Pitsunda) the “villages Aitarne, Arukha and Rabitsa in Abkhazia (near Pitsunda) as well as the Aitarne Mountain with the olive trees”.¹⁴ This gift was consecutively confirmed by Levan I Dadiani (1533-1572), Georgi III Dadiani (1572-1582) and Mamia IV Dadiani (1582-1590). I. E. the Dadiani really possessed the lands and peasants in Abkhazia during all the 16th century.

The Jiks living on the zight bank of the river Bzip and their highlander allies continued to attack the west Georgia trying to invade the valley passing through Abkhazia. Mamia III Dadiani and Mamia I Gurieli in their turn organized the great invasion of Jiketi in 1533. The Georgian army headed Jiketi on the military battle boats being constructed in Odishi.

7 *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 784.

8 T. Beradze. *Vakhushti Bagrationi about Abkhazia and Jiketi*, p. 104-105.

9 *Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 786.

10 Fr. Dubua de Monpere. *Travel around the Caucasus*, vol. 1, p. 24-25.

11 *Life of Kartli*, vol. IV, p. 784.

12 T. Beradze. *Vakhusti Bagrationi about Abkhazia and Jiketi*, p. 104-105.

13 *Life of Georgia*, vol. II, p. 349.

14 *The monuments of the Georgian Law*, vol. II. The texts were edited, commented and appended by I. Dolidze. Tb., 1965, p. 179.

The time of attack was not occasional: In winter the navigation on the Black Sea, as a rule was suspended and the Jiks did not expect an attack from the Sea. On the first day of the battle on the 30th of January, the Georgians defeated the Jiks, but on the second day the 31st of January, the Georgian fleet having been landed the brothers-in arms and returned back. The encouraged Jiks energetically attacked the Georgians. In spite of their courage, the number of the enemy played the crucial part. Mamia III Dadiani was killed in the battle; Mamia I Gurieli with his soldiers what was left from his army was captured. The captives and the bodies were ransomed for a great sum by Abkhazia and Catholicos of Abkhazia Malakhia Abashidze, ¹⁵who specially traveled to Jiketi.

The defeat in Jiketi did not weaken the influence of Odishi. The Abkhazian eristavs with their army as usual served the Dadiani family. In 1547 when Guria was attacked by the Ottomans from the South-West, Levan I Dadiani collected the Abkhazians and Odishians to help Guria. “In that time - write Vakhushti, - Dadiani gathered the army and Abkhazians and marched out; he camped in the Rioni harbor”. ¹⁶Unfortunately, due to the political intrigues the possessor of Odishi did not supported Guria and Chaneti was left in the hands of the Ottomans.

In 1548 King of Imereti Bagrat fraudulently captured Levan I Dadiani and locked him in the belfry of the Gelati Monastery. In 1550 Dadiani escaped and returned to Odishi.

After this he declared himself the independent possessing Duke and accepted the title of “Sovereign Dadiani”. This title was left to Levan I Dadiani by the Turkish Sultan in 1557 (As it was known according to the Ammasian agreement between Iran and Turkey from May 29 of 1555, west Georgia was given to Turkey and East Georgia to Iran). In the same 1557 Levan I Dadiani arrived in Istanbul and wheedle out of the Sultan several military battle ships and launched the Sea war with the Jiks. The war was completed approximately in a year with the truce. Thanks to this agreement invasion of the Georgian coast by the Jiks temporarily seized. ¹⁷

After the death of Levan I Dadiani 1572 the throne of the duke was occupied by his son Giorgi III Dadiani. Soon he was overthrown by his own brother Mamia IV Dadiani. Giorgi III asked for support the Abkhazians, Jiks and Cherkessians. Enmity and bloodshed between the brothers continued in Odishi for 6 years. This weakened the influence of the Dukes of Odishi in Abkhazia. In 1578 the throne was returned to Giorgi III Dadiani by his brother and the possessor of Abkhazia again strengthened his influence in Abkhazia. ¹⁸

In 1578 Turkey launched the regular war with Iran. Simultaneously, the Ottomans tried to annex the Georgian Back Sea Coast in order to get admission to the direct route to the eastern Trans Caucasus through west Georgia. In August of 1578 the Turkish squadron entered the Sukhumi bay led by Circassian in origin - Khaidar Pasha being appointed beglarbeg in Sukhumi. Khaidar Pasha did not meet any resistance. The purpose of appointing beglarbeg as wrote historian of the 16th century J. Buasardo was “taming of the independency Georgian Iberians”. After the conquest of Sukhumi the Ottomans started to construct there a fortress, for what they used the ruins of the fortress constructions of antique Dioskuria – Sebastopolis on the left bank of the river Gumista near the Sea. In 1579

¹⁵ Life of Georgia, vol. II, p. 497; The same work, vol. IV, p. 811; Life of Kartli (Parisian Chronicles, the text was edited, provided with the introduction, comments and appendix by G. Alasania. Tb., 1982, p. 42 (in Georgian).

¹⁶ Life of Kartli, vol. IV, p. 814; in the same work, vol. II, p. 360, 502.

¹⁷ T. Beradze. Navigation..., p. 208-210.

¹⁸ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia the Historical Region of Georgia, p. 231.

the Ottomans occupied Poti. Sukhumi beglarbegary existed only several years.

The Ottomans even did not make a description of it (defter). Khaidar Pasha left Sukhumi in 1580. The name of the following beglarbeg is not preserved. As it became known after 1581 the Ottomans called their administration away from Sukhumi and left the town. It was at the end of the Ottomans beglarbeg. ¹⁹

The Ottomans took Sukhumi and kept for themselves and their dominion with the help of the Abkhazian nobles and first of all Shervashidze. This kind of support was meant to be provided from the very start, which was the reason of appointing the Cherkessian Khaidar Pasha as beglarbeg. ²⁰ Thus, after annihilation of the beglarbeg's power the Turks gave Sukhumi to Shervashidze and this resulted in spreading the borders to the South-East. After Ottomans departure from Sukhumi Mamia IV Dadiani restores the political influence in Abkhazia. This influence remained the same during his heir's Manuchar Dadiani's ruling (1590-1611). ²¹

In the 14-15th centuries, as well as earlier - the territory of modern Abkhazia in the religious aspect subdued to Catholicos – Patriarch of All Georgia. It was divided the four episcopacies. The villages between the rivers Inguri and “river Dadi” (Eristskhali) were the part of the Tsalenjikha eparchy. The territory from the river Eristskhali to the river Mokvi belonged to the Bedia eparchy, from the river Mokvi to the river Kodori to the Mokvi episcopacy and from Kodori to the town Anakopia to the Dranda episcopacy. ²² The Abkhazian principality was subdued directly to the Catholicos of Abkhazia (West Georgia).

After the unification of the Georgian church (end of the 10th century), the throne of Catholicos of Abkhazia (West Georgia) in Pitsunda was not abolished, it only subdued to the Catholicos – Patriarch of All Georgia. Together with the growth of the tendency for the disintegration of Georgia, the role of the Catholicos of Western Georgia gradually increased. This situation was used with the purpose of strengthening of the political positions by the King of Imereti – Bagrat II (1455-1478) and possessor of Odishi Shamadavle Dadiani (1470-1474)²³. They took an opportunity from the visit of Patriarch of Jerusalem and Antiokhia – Michael to West Georgia, having arrived for collecting the donation. He persuaded by the kings to bliss the “bishop of Tsaish-Bedia – Joachim” on the throne of Patriarch of Abkhazia. It happened between 1470-1474. The “ Court Directions or Commandements ”, was hastily compiled on behalf of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and Antiochia, in which was “grounded” the split from the jurisdiction of the Catholicos-Partiarch of all Georgia, by the west Georgian church and was justified the appointment of Joachim - the independent Catholicos of Abkhazia, i. e. west Georgia. Pursuing those aims the compilers of the document tried to depict the situation in west Georgia in quite dark tones: “Abkhazia (West Georgia – author) completely denied the Christian faith and is excommunicated from the commandments of Christ”. ²⁴

The first independent from Mtskheta Catholicos-Patriarch Joachim was given the right of appointing of bishops in “Likht-Ameri, on this side of the Chorokh, this side of Ovseti,

19 T. Beradze. *Navigation...*, p. 21-22, 58-60.

20 B. Khorava. *Relation of Odishi and Abkhazia*, p. 70.

21 *Ibid*, p. 71.

22 *Life of Gorgia*, vol. IV, p. 778-781.

23 *Monuments of the Georgian Law*, vol. III, p. 222.

24 *Ibid*, III, p. 222.

of this side of the Pontus Sea, where the borders of Great Pitsunda lie". The Abkhazian Catholicos (of West Georgia) besides Imereti, Odishi, Guria and Abkhazia considered other lands of historical Georgia to be his eparchy. "The eparchy of the catholicos is the parish between Likhi and Kafa, between the borders of Russia and Chaneti". Those borders of the Abkhazian Catholicos are fixed in the "Pitsunda Iadgar"²⁵ (Memorable Gift), being compiled in 1525-1550. It was a significant monument of the Georgian church legislation. The fixation of the North-West border of the Catholicos near Kafa and South borders of that time Russia reflects the reality of those remote times, when the borders of historical Georgia spread to the river Small Khazaria (Kuban) and also the period, when the Black Sea Coast Jiks and Kashks recognized the superiority of the Georgian king.

The "Pitsunda Iadgar" includes the list of donations, being made by the kings and princes of west Georgia; the legislation norms for protection of the possessions of Pitsunda and the Catholicos; the right of the church peasant; the notes of the secular and clerical persons being made later. The document is signed by the eight Catholicoses of Abkhazia starting from Malakhia I Abashidze (20-50-ies of the XVIth century) the contemporary of compiling the "Pitsunda Iadgar" to David Nemsadze (1673-1696) in whose period the process of annexing of the North-West part of Georgian lands by the highlanders was completed. Without considering the "Pitsunda Iadgar" it is impossible to objectively spotlight of the ethno-political history of Abkhazia of the 16-17th centuries, as the separatist authors "managed to do" - faking the history of Abkhazia.

The Cathedral church of the Abkhazian Catholicos to the middle of the 16th century was the Pitsunda cathedral of Our Lady's Assumption. In 1554-1569, when the throne of Abkhazian Catholicos was occupied by Evdemon Chkhetidze, his main residence (but not the chair) was moved to the Saint George church of the Gelati Monastery complex.²⁶ The shift of the residence was conditioned by the mass settling of Abkhazia by the pagan-highlanders, that resulted in devastation of the monasteries and churches, complete evacuation of the clergy and depression of Christianity.²⁷ The forced move of the Catholicoses of Abkhazia from Pitsunda to Gelati and decline of Christianity, especially in Abkhazian Principality were caused by the dramatic change of the ethnic composition of the local population and not by the Turkish expanse, as the separatist historiography tries to prove.

In the 16th century, as well as in the old times, the churches and monasteries on the territory of modern Abkhazia were the most important centers of the Georgian education and culture, where worked the representatives of all the parts of the country. It is remarkable, that Pitsunda remained the religious centre of West Georgia, where the unction (myrrh-making) occurred. Abkhazian Catholicoses never ceased to take care about the Pitsunda Cathedral and the episcopacies of Dranda, Mokvi and Bedia being within Odishi. Moving of the being fled from Pitsunda Catholicos to Gelati, furthered the rapprochement of his residence with the Imereti king residence, church and secular power. Especially significant is the activities of the Catholicos of Abkhazia Eqvtime I Sakvarelidze (1578-1614). He occupied as well the chair of the Mokvi archbishop. By his order, the copyist N. Tsintsadze copied in the Mokvi cathedral the methapras; deacon Zebede and scribe

²⁵ Ibid, vol. II, p. 180.

²⁶ B. Lominadze. from the History of the Feudal Relations in Georgia, I. Tb., 1966, p. 117-186 (in Georgian).

²⁷ J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and the Orthodox Faith, p. 173-183.

Giorgi copied Gulan; The Bedia cathedral was also equipped with the magnificent library, where the scripts were created by Bedia church leaders - Anton Zhvanisdze and German Chkhetisdze. There worked the calligraphists and man of letters Gabriel Lomsadze, Saba Napotadze and others. ²⁸ All the church literature and documentation was created only in the Georgian language. And in the 16th century the persons with the Abkhazian –Apsua family name are not met in the church documents or any other sources. Unfortunately, the separatist historiography does not refer to the similar numerous historical sources and continues its gross falsification of the history of Abkhazia.

Gulan of Bedia of the 17-18th centuries is the proof of the fact, that the present territory of Abkhazia was a very significant hearth of the Georgian culture. In one of the addition to the Gulan (colletion of documents) is said: “ God bless Metropolitan of Bedia, archbishop Chkhetisdze German..., by the order of which through the mountains of Shavsheti, Diob Valley, foothills of Karchkhali and by will and help of God arrived at the Bedia cathedral in Odishi and the church of Our Lady of Vlakhern and under its protection and with his support started to write about the Saints and Spiritual educators from the first of January till today and fully and flawlessly as it was done, searched in numerous books and completed properly the original and managed to find and lacked nothing with the help of God. May God show mercy on the sinner having written it, the deacon Gabriel Lomsanisdze..., his friend, the scripiter Simon Georgiev the son...? God have mercy on us’ . ²⁹

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 185-186.

²⁹ *Description of the Georgian scripts, collection (A) of the former Church Museum, vol. I. 1969, p. 319.*

Chapter IX. Abkhazia in the 17th Century.

Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia. At the beginning of the 17th century the North-West border of the Abkhazian principality was still the river Bzip, beyond which Jiketi was situated; To the East, according to Italian missionary Giovanni Guliano da Lucca it passed along the river Absi flowing in the town of Schissornum – the place where Abkhazia bordered with Odishi. ¹ “Scissornum is the distorted form of the Turkish “ Eski Sukhum” (Old Sukhum”). Thus, According to Giovanni da Lucca’s information the border between Abkhazia and Odishi can be considered the river Besleti, flowing within the town Sukhumi (Tskhumi). So, the old Turkish fortress appeared to be within Abkhazia, but the town Tskhumi sitting then on the left bank of the river Besleti - in Odishi. ² At the beginning of the 17th century Abkhazia, as in the 16th century was the part of the Odishi principality.

After the death of Manuchar Dadiani (1611), his son Levan II Dadiani (1611-1657) became the ruler of Odishi. Because of Levan’s infancy, Manuchar’s brother and Levan’s uncle Giorgi started to rule Odishi on Levan’s behalf. Giorgi was the possessor of one of the appanages of Odishi – Salipartiano. In A. Lamberti’s words Lipartiani Giorgi was rather just and experienced in the State matters and he ruled so thoroughly and patiently, that his ruling was calm and peaceful. Levan II Dadiani started to rule the principality approximately in 1615. ³

During the Persian-Ottoman war of 1603-1612 the possessors of Odishi and Guria seized to pay the tribute to Ottoman Empire and chose the road of disobedience. After signing an armistice with Persia in 1603-1612 Turkey in order to subjugate Odishi and Guria declared a blockade of the Black Sea coast of Georgia. The import of important goods, such as salt and iron was discontinued. The possessors of Odishi and Guria being restrained by the economic blockade had no way out, but to send their ambassadors to Istanbul for negotiations in 1614. But the negotiations were dragged out, as Porta, judge by the situation, raised hard claims, being unacceptable for the possessors of Odishi and Guria. ⁴ But, in December of 1614 Mamia Gurieli (1600-1625) concluded the peace agreement and pledged to pay the tribute in Batumi. Some time later, in February of 1615 Levan II Dadiani also signed a peace agreement with Porta ⁵ in his palace in the village of Merkula (now the Ochamchire district in Abkhazia). At that time, the Imereti kingdom also paid tribute to Turkey and the Abkhazians paid “Khara Haraj”. ⁶ Part of the historians think, that in 10-s of the 17th century the Abkhazians using the hard conditions of Odishi for their personal benefit, set free from the vassal dependency and established an independent Abkhazian principality with the center in Zupu (Likhni). ⁷ But anyway, Abkhazia was not the stable and centralized political unit. It was divided into a number

1 I. Tabagua. *Georgia in European Archives and Book Depositories*, III. Tb., 1987, p. 157 (in Georgian).

2 B. Khorava. *Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia in XV-XVIIIth Centuries*, p. 94-95.

3 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 17-18; I. Antelava. *Levan II Dadiani*. Tb., 1990, p. 40-47 (In Georgian).

4 II. Antelava. *Levan II Dadiani*, p. 49.

5 I. Tabagua. *Georgia in European Archives and Book Depositories*, II, p. 46.

6 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 273; G. Jamburia. *West Georgian in the First Third of the XVIIth century. –Essays of History of Georgia*, vol. 4. Tb., 1973, p. 300.

7 I. G. Antelava. *Essays on History of Abkhazia of the 17-18th Centuries*, The second edition. Sukhumi, 1951, p. 28; Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Medieval Centuries Abkhazia*, p. 261-262; N. Berdzenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia*, vol. III. Tb., 1966, p. 288.

of appanages having their own possessors, out of which one was the chief. According to G. Lucca, “ This country subdued to two princes”. One was called Karabei and the name of the second was Puto. This latter had his residence in Scisornum and the first ruled the neighboring areas – Abkhazia of Bzip. ⁸ Italian missionary Castelli mentioned the three brothers-the Abkhazian princes – the elder Beslako (Baslakus), Salamon and Settemani. Among them the eldest by age and position was Beslako. ⁹

The possessor of Abkhazia (in Abkhazian Ah) had the military and administrative power. The whole population considered themselves his vassal, though due to the feudal breaking up the power of the possessor was weak. The possessors of other principalities were in nominal dependency from the Possessor and spreading of the power to the small Abkhazian possessions depended only on his strength. In fact, he was the Senior among the equals. ¹⁰ The brothers of the possessing Prince had the equal rights; they after coming of age got the appanages and were given the titles of the Princes. The title of the Prince was passed from brother to the brother being the elder in the family.

The power of the possessor was limited by the villages communities and assemblies of their representatives. Especially, important matters was made the subject of the public meeting by him, and the decision was made through voting, though the votes of the possessor and his brothers had the great influence. ¹¹ In the late medieval century Abkhazia leveling of the rights of the Chief Possessor with his brothers and weakness of the power of the Chief Possessor can be explained by the stability of the patriarchal-family survivals. They were revealed in the farming communities being the basis for the communal system of Abkhazia (in Abkhazian “Akita”). They stood somewhere between the communal and feudal units. The whole Abkhazia was divided into Akita – the administrative units, headed by the representatives of the Princely Houses. ¹²

After becoming the independent ruler of the Principality –Levan II Dadiani first of all strengthened the connections with the neighbors. He married Darejan - the daughter of Settemani Sharvashidze one of the appanage princes of Abkhazia. According to A. Lamberti’s characteristics, she “ besides her natural beauty, had all the virtues becoming for a woman of her family name. She had no rivals in embroidering, reading, writing, generosity and politeness, so her nobleness conquered the hearts of her subjects”. ¹³ As it is known, the marriage of possessors were conditioned by the political factors. In this respect, Levan II Dadiani was no exception. Having related with Sharvashidze, Dadiani strengthened the political ties with Abkhazia; otherwise he wouldn’t be able to get help from the “Abkhazian-Jikian “armed forces”, a common experience for the possessors of Odishi in the second half of the 1`6th century. ¹⁴ In addition Levan II Dadiani nurtured the

8 I. Tabagua. *Georgian in the European Achieves and Book Depositories*, III, p. 156-157; Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia*, p. 239.

9 Chr. Castelli. *Informations and Album about Georgia*, p. 194, picture N 549.

10 I. G. Antelava. *On the Problem of the Feudal Relations in Abkhazia in the XVII-XVIIIth centuries*. –*Works of the State Museum of Abkhazia*, ed. I, Sukhumi, 1947, p. 61; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Collective Farming....*, p. 212.

11 I. G. Antelava. *On the Problem of the Feudal Interrelations in Abkhazia....*, p. 108.

12 *Essay on the System of Social Political Every Day Life of Abkhazia and Samurzakano*. –*Collection of Works About the Caucasian Highlanders*, ed. III. Tiflis, 1870, p. 3-5; K. Kudriavtsev. *Collection of Materials....*, p. 16; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Collective Farming....*, p. 17.

13 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis....*, p. 18.

14 II. Antelava. *From the Political History of the Odishi Principality*, p. 110.

plan of subduing Abkhazia, but he waited for the more suitable time.¹⁵ Levan Dadiani established dynastic ties with the Princely House of Guria as well. The son of the possessor of Guria, heir to the throne Simon married Dadiani's sister in 1621. The political alliance of Gurieli and Dadiani was directed towards the King of Imereti. From that time the idea of the political hegemony over western Georgia came to Dadiani's mind.¹⁶ Levan II obviously had the anti- Imeretian course. King of Imereti Giorgi III (1604-1639) decided to forestall him and he began to assemble troops. Levan II Dadiani with lightning speed assembled the "Odishian-Abkhazian –Jikian army" and 1622 unexpectedly invaded Imereti and near Kutaisi crushed the King.¹⁷ Starting from that time the position of Levan II Dadiani became so stable, that till the end of his life he had the complete dominion over West Georgia.

In the same 1622 Levan II Dadiani divorces with the daughter of Sharvashidze blaming her in disloyalty and cruelly punished: he ordered to benosed her.¹⁸ According to Castelli, Sharvashidze "greatly respected and feared" Dadiani, though certain forces managed to "break the friendly ties between them and kindle hatred".¹⁹ Sharvashidze couldn't forget the insult. Being aware of this Levan II Dadiani decided to be the first to assemble the army and he invaded Abkhazia. It was a blitzkrieg and the Abkhazians even had no time to repulse him and fled to the mountains. Dadiani deserted the land, left there his ex-wife and turned back.²⁰

In the second half of the 20-s of the 17th century the against Levan II Dadiani was organized a plot with the purpose of murdering him and ascending to the throne his brother Ioseb. According to the information given by Lamberti and Castelli the participants of the plot were: king of Imereti Giorgi III, Simon Gurieli being frightened by the strengthening of Odishi Principality, Sharvashidze having his private reckonings with the his former son-in-law and the vizier being accused in being the lover of Dadiani's wife (owing to his authority and social position, he managed to avoid the death penalty and was temporarily given to Gurieli).²¹ By the plotters' agreement it was planned to organize three separate armed groups, that were going to unite later and "besiege Dadiani's kingdom".²² Attempt on Dadiani's life was performed by one Abkhazian, but the possessor of Odishi survived. The plot failed and the possessor strictly punished the plotters. –The former vizier, his own brother and other traitors, then he invaded Guria, defeated Simon Gurieli (His sister's spouse) and in his stead appointed "Abkhazian" (west Georgian) catholicos Malachia II (Gurieli). Thus, the principality of Guria over a long period of time appeared to be under the control of Odishi. Catholicos Malakhia was the formal possessor of Guria, the political course of which was determined by Odishi.²³

After this came Sharvashidze's turn. According to Lamberti, "the Abkhazians, due

15 I. G. Antelava *Essays on History of Abkhazia...*, p. 28; II. Antelava. *From the Political History of the Odishi Principality*, p. 110-111.

16 II. Antelava. *From the Political History of the Odishi Principality*, p. 112.

17 *Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia)*, vol. IV, p. 825.

18 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 16.

19 Chr. Castelli. *Information and Album about Georgia*, p. 43.

20 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 19.

21 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 19-21.

22 Christoforos Castelli. *Information and Album about Georgia*, p. 44.

23 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 21-22; I. Antelava. *Levan II Dadiani*, p. 69.

to their wildness, are not peaceful and considered themselves offended, as he (Dadiani) disgracefully drove away his wife, the daughter of their prince. Because of this, the Abkhazians were in rage and discontent with Dadiani and when Dadiani was busy taming of his own principality, they permanently attacked the borders of Mingrelia, being completely ravaged by them; they enslaved the residents and took to Abkhazia”.²⁴ It seemed, as if Sharvashidze revenged Levan II Dadiani, because he insulted him, but in reality it was only the cause. Attacks of Odishi made by the Abkhazians had more serious reasons, than the personal insult and offence. In that period, the expansion of the Jikian-Abkhazian tribes had place on the East Black Sea coast and namely in Abkhazia. In addition, the Abkhazians struggled for capturing the north-west part of Odishi.²⁵ Levan II decided to subdue the Abkhazians again. “ Dadiani Levan assembled the troops and attacked the Abkhazians willing to subdue them”.²⁶ –Wrote Vakhushti Bagrationi. According to Lamberti, “ as soon as, Dadiani got rid of the inner rebels, invaded the Abkhazians and oppressed them and they submitted to him and they promised to pay the tribute. But, as the people is so wild and has no money and goods to pay the tribute Dadiani obliged them to give him the hunting dogs and hawks”.²⁷

On the basis of this information Z. Anchabadze expressed an opinion, that such tribute was conditioned not by the poverty of Sharvashidze, but by the nominal character of dependency being imposed by Dadiani.²⁸ The Theatinian missionary (Lamberti) assertively explains the reason of taxation the Abkhazians, namely with such an unusual tribute.

Information of Lamberti is enriched by the relation of Giudice, according to which, Abkhazia was obliged to help the Possessor of Odishi in case of war.²⁹ Thus, except the tribute Sharvashidze had to carry the compulsory military service in Dadiani’s benefit. Spreading of the power of the Odishi possessor in Abkhazia is confirmed by Castelli: “ The Abkhazians live in severe and inaccessible mountains. This was the reason, why Dadiani could not manage to subdue this region with the fire and sword and therefore, his small detachments attacked the Abkhazians and harmed them. So far as the highlanders could not bare this kind of inconveniences, they decided to subdue to the heavy burden.”³⁰

The fact of being Abkhazia a part of Odishi (Megrelia) is confirmed in the information about the borders of Megrelia, given to the Russian, foreign policy department (Ambassador order) in December of 1636, by the ambassador of Georgian king Teimuraz I in Russia - metropolitan Nikifor. According to the Metropolitan’s information , Megrelia from one side borders the Black Sea, from the other side with Turkey, from the third side with the territory of the Khizilbashes and from the fourth side with the highlander Circassians.³¹ Among the neighbors of Dadian’s country, Nikoforos did not mention Abkhazia and the Abkhazians considering them the part of Megrelia.

24 A. Lamberti. Description of Colchis..., p. 24.

25 Il. Antelava. From the Political History of the Odishi Principality, p. 128.

26 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 828.

27 A. Lamberti. Description of Colchis..., p. 24.

28 Z. Anchabadze. From the History of Mediaeval Abkhazia, p. 265.

29 Giudiche Giuseppe. Letters About Georgia. Translated from Italian, introduced and commented by B. Georgadze. Tb., 1964, p. 86 (in Georgian).

30 Chr. Castelli. Information and Album about Georgia, p. 51.

31 S. Belokurov. Materials..., p. 267.

Levan II in his letters to the king of Russia (1636 and 1640) emphasized, that his principality – Megrelia including the present territory of Abkhazia, was one of the countries of Iberia i. e. Georgia. Russian King - Mikhail Feodorovich in his charter to Levan II Dadiani from May 30th 1639 names the mentioned the territory of Megrelia, as Iberian (Georgian) country.³² The Russian ambassadors having arrived to Megrelia on the 13th of November 1639 travelled around the principality, visiting the churches and monasteries. Traveling throughout Megrelia in February of 1640, they visited the villages located on the territory of Abkhazia: Putskur (Gali district), Gambli (Beslakhuba – Ochamchire district), Merkula (Ochamchire district), Dranda (Gulripsh district), Pshekhap (Gulripsh district), Kvitouli (Ochamchire district), Mokvi (Ochamchire district), Ilori (Ochamchire district) and Bedia (Ochamchire district). In these populated points, the Russian ambassadors met only the Georgian priests and attended the church service being conducted in Georgia. They were aware about the fact, that Catholicos of Megrelia and the whole west Georgia was sitting in Pitsunda. Thus, the Russians, for the first time officially got acquainted with the modern territory of Abkhazia, as the part of Georgian (Iberian) country – being called Megrelia. In the charter to Levan II Dadiani for the Russian king, being compiled on May 15th of 1640 is said: I, Leonti Dadiani, living in the country of Iberians, in the place of Megrelia worship and glorify the True God, the Son and Holy Spirit”.³³

One more foreign source confirms the fact of being Abkhazia the part of the Odishi principality. According to the information given by Dominican missionary Emidio Doretelli D'Askoli in 1634. “Abbaza, the seaside town of Circassia, sits on the very border of Megrelia”.³⁴ The town of Abbaza (the same Abkhaz, Avogazia) was located at the estuary of the river Mzimta in the place of modern Adler (Russia).

About subduing of Abkhazia by Levan Dadiani, inform the Georgian sources as well. As it was said in the continuation of the “Kartlis Tskovreba” (“Life of Georgia”) by Egnatashvili, “Dadiani was quite rich; All the Abkhazians subdued him; and Sharvashidze obeyed him and took part in the campaigns together with him”.³⁵ According to Georgian Poet Peshangi's (Khitariashvili) word, Levan II “occupies Abkhazia for tributes, in summer he usually arrives in Zupu and stays there for a long time”.³⁶ In connection with this, the personality of David Chijavadze being imprinted in Kastelli's album triggers a great interest. He is mentioned, as a possessor of the Anakopia fortress and Port.³⁷ It is clear, that David Chijavadze was appointed to his position by Levan II and he ruled this part of Abkhazia on his behalf.³⁸ In 1643 Levan II himself confirmed in his letter to Pope Urban VIII, that by God's will he subdued Abkhazia, Imereti and Guria.³⁹

Thus, from the historical sources it is obvious, that Dadiani was the sovereign of Sharvashidze, having certain duties towards Odishi, paying it the tribute and performing com-

32 Materials on the Ecclesiastical and Ethno political History of Abkhazia. Embassy of Fedot Elchin and Pavel Zakhariyev in Megrelia, p. 163-167.

33 Ibid, p. 272, 296-301. See also: Materials on the Ecclesiastical and Ethno - political History of Abkhazia. Embassy of Fedot Elchin and Pavel Zakhariyev to Megrelia (1639-1640). Tb., 2005, p. 171.

34 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia - Historical Region of Georgia, p. 240.

35 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. 2, p. 421.

36 Peshangi. Shakhnavaziani. Edited by G. Leonidze and S. Iordanishvili, vol. I. Tb., 1970, p. 157 (in Georgian).

37 Chr. Castelli. Information and an Album about Georgia, p. 82.

38 K. Okujava. Abkhazia in XVIIth century. Tb., 2002, p. 36.

39 M. Tamarashili. Georgian Church from its Foundation to Our Days. Publishing, Edition and Introduction made by Z. Aleksidze and J. Odisheli. Tb., 1995, p. 611 (in Georgian).

pulsory military service. Thus, till the end of the 50-s of the XVIIth century – in the period of ruling of Levan the II is impossible to talk about the formation of Abkhazian principality; Sharvashidze is not a political figure of that rank, as Dadiani or Gurieli. Besides, Abkhazia was not then the whole political unit and was divided into the principalities and this is clear from the information of the XVIIth century authors – Govanni da Lucca, Evlia Chelebi, Paul of Aleppo, Chr. Castelli and others.⁴⁰

After being subdued the Abkhazians continued their incursions to Odishi, devastating the country and capturing people. As a response to their deeds, Dadiani also several times invaded Abkhazia and defeated Sharvashidze. To celebrate the victory over the Abkhazians by the order of Levan the II a special inscription was made on the Icon of Saint Giorgi of the Ilori church: “ We marched against Sharvashidze to Zupu, destroyed everything on this side of the bank of the river Mutsu. Returned to Zupu, burnt everything on this side of the river Kapoeti and devastated it and captured all the forts. On the river Kapoeti we were attacked by Zupuar and Sikhuar Marshania and defeated them and killed them; some were captured and we returned triumphantly”.⁴¹

The mentioned in the inscription river Kapoeti is the present Bzip, the river Mutsu is the Mchish; Zupu is the Megrelian name of Likhni. After Zupu’s becoming a residence of Sharvashidze, this name designated the whole Abkhazia. As for “Zupuar and Sikhuar Marshania”, in Z. Anchabadze’s opinion they are the proper names.⁴² Though, as we can see here the proper names are not mentioned. In these words the suffix “ar” indicating the place of origin in the Georgian language, dwelling (compare: Opizari, Mtbevari, Odis-hari) is easily distinguished. Levan Dadiani defeated the Abkhazian and Jikian army led by Marshania (by origin the feudal family of Marshania, as it has already been mentioned belongs to the clan of Marushiani from Svaneti, but later they became Abkhazians) from Zupu (Abkhazian Marshanias) and from Zicch (Jiketian Marshanias). Levan II realized the dangerous, threatening Odishi from the Abkhazian side and it was the reason of his fierce and cruel fight against them.

Strengthening of the Odishi Principality was conditioned by the international situation. In the first part of the 17th century Turkey was involved in war with Iran, continuing with a short intervals till 1639. Iran tried his best to found an anti-Ottoman coalition with the help of the west European countries, Poland, Cossacks and Odishi. From the 20- s of the XVIIth century the incursions of the Cossacks to the Black Sea Ottoman points became frequent; The interrelations of Turkey with Poland and West Europe became tensed. Dadiani was considered to be the Turkish vassal, but maintained independence and from time to time even participated in the anti-Ottoman actions. The Ottoman Empire itself appeared to be in a mess. The Janissary having been rebelled in 1622-1623 dethroned two sultans. In 1622 started a great rebellion of Abaz Pasha, having taken under his control the territories from Erzurum to the Bosphorus. It created the barrier between Georgian and Istanbul. In 1631-1632 the Janissaries rebelled again.⁴³ It is clear, that in such conditions the Sultan could not carry out the active policy against the invincible Dadiani. In May of 1637 after denial of Levan II Dadiani to obey the Sultan’s order on the mutual struggle

40 Chr. Castelli. *Information and an Album about Georgia*, p. 192, 194.

41 K. Grigolia. *Inscription on the Ilori Icon...*, p. 157.

42 Z. Anchabadze. *From History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 266.

43 I. Antelava. *Levan II Dadiani*, p. 88.

with the Cossacks, the Ottomans landed the marine landing in the estuary of the river Kodori and devastated Dranda monastery and its environs.⁴⁴ Other measures against Odishi were not carried out by the Sultan, but he helped the enemies of Dadiani. For reaching its goal, Porta used the Abkhazian feudal lords and the highlanders from the North-West Caucasus being under their influence.

Missionaries and Abkhazia. On May the 4th of 1626 the Holy Congregation de Propaganda Fide – the department of Vatican coordinating the missionary activities, enacted a special decree to establish in Georgia the mission of the Theatines order. On the 16th of June of the same year was named the delegation leaving for Georgia. To prefect Don Pietro Avitabile were handed the recommendation letters of Pope Urban the VIIIth to the following persons: Catholicos of Georgia and Metropolitan, kings of Kakheti and Imereti, possessors of Odishi and Guria.⁴⁵ Among the addressees of Pope's letter is not mentioned the possessor of Abkhazia, the fact indirectly proving the non-existence of any independent political unit to the north - west from Odishi, in the first part of the 20-s of the XVIIth century. In the XVIIth century the missionary activities in Odishi were performed by the representatives of the Order of Theatines: Arcangelo Lamberti, Christophoro Castelli, Giuseppe Giudice, Joseph - Marie Zampi, Gaetano Turco, Gaetano Rasponi and others, having left interesting information not only about Odishi (Megrelia), but about Abkhazia as well.

“Alienation” of the Abkhazians from the Georgian World. In late medieval century Abkhazia, the alienation of the Abkhazians from the Georgian ethnical world is obvious. It was mostly seen in the radical changes of the social-political character and first of all in the cultural-economical decline. For the Abkhazians of the following period a high level of feudal relations and developed culture is characteristic, but in the late medieval centuries the situation radically changes. This fact is clearly seen in the Georgian and foreign sources reflecting the religious situation and social life of the Abkhazians. The main indicator of the cultural degradation of the Abkhazians is the fact of decline of the Christianity, spreading and restoration (animation) of paganism. According to G. Lucca's observation – Abkhazia is the Christian country, the Abkhazians by faith are Christians, but without performing any Christian rituals”, though by his remark, “in this country one can meet a lot of erected crosses”.⁴⁶ A. Lamberti also denoted, that “the Abkhazians, Alans, Cherkessians, Jiks, Karachays - in spite of calling themselves the Christians, nothing Christian, neither the faith, nor the godliness is not familiar to them”.⁴⁷ In this period the Islam spreads throughout the North Caucasus, but it is not true in connection with Abkhazia, where the population was mostly pagan.⁴⁸ Later, Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote, that “The Abkhazians by their confession are Christians; though they didn't understand anything in faith and are reckoned to be idolaters, as they don't bury their dead, but put them into a coffin together with ornaments and adornments, utensils and armor, clothes and place it on the tree”.⁴⁹

The vivid indicator of the decline of the general conditions is the fact, that throughout

44 S. Belokurov. *Materials for the Russian History*, p. 324, 351-352.

45 I. Tabagua. *Georgia in European Archives and Book Depositories*, vol. II. Tb., 1986, p. 211 (in Georgian).

46 I. Tabagua. *Georgia in the European Archives and Book Depositories*, vol. III, p. 170.

47 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 187.

48 B. Lominadze. *From History of the Georgian Feudal Relations*, I. Tb., 1966, p. 211.

49 *Kartlis Tskhivreba (Life of Georgia)*, vol. IV, p. 786.

all the late medieval centuries here was not built a single more or less significant architectural monument. It goes without saying, that the education and literacy being once so developed in this area was in poor conditions. According to G. Lucca's information, the Abkhazia's "do not have any written laws and don't have a written language".⁵⁰

For defining the common level of the social-economic relations, is quite significant the information of the sources, that the Abkhazians by their mode of life, every day life and religion are more like the Circassians, than Megreles; and their main activity is not agriculture, but cattle breeding and they do not live in towns and fortresses, but in clan communities.⁵¹ All this is a valid proof, that in Abkhazia the feudal culture was replaced with the highlanders every day life, the paganism was restored, the intense feudal farming was replaced by the extensive mountain farming. In the social life, the patriarchal-family system is the main one and the social structure is more appropriate to the legging behind mountain communities, than the developed feudal relations, being dominant in the neighboring Odishi; The religious situation was also more in line with highlander society.⁵²

Thus, we can observe the decline of the social-political system and cultural level. The reason of this is named by Z. Anchabadze to be the political breaking up, feudal conflicts, dominion of the natural farming etc.⁵³ All these factors in reality negatively affected the development of the area, but they couldn't radically transform the faith and mode of life and make them every day life and belief like the Caucasian highlanders. This kind of metamorphoses cannot be explained by the hardships Georgia experience after the XIII-XVIth century (collapse of the feudal monarchy, invasions and raids of the foreign enemies, internecine wars etc.), as all the Georgian political units were in one and the same situation and condition. All the arisen difficulties and hardships must have followed by the distortion of Christianity, decline of farming, extermination of a part of the population, restoration of the primitive forms of the feudal relations, but they cannot have been common, covering the wide masses. Neighboring Odishi was facing the same difficulties, but the similar regress of the social system like the Abkhazian one, was not noticed there.⁵⁴

Decline of the socio-political and cultural level in the late medieval century Abkhazia can be explained only with the fact of predominance of the highlanders. The highlanders of the North Caucasus used the weakening and split of the Georgian feudal state and used to settle in the devastated and desolated lowland regions. This process, being known as the predominance of the highlanders, took place in the east Georgia, where settled the Dagestan highlanders and Alano-Ossetians. Thus, in Kakheti the Charo-Belokan and Talian Lezghins free communities and on the plateau and foothills of inner Kartli – was formed the Ossetian compact settlement. The analogous process occurred in North-West Georgia where the Abazian-Adyge communities were firmly established.

50 I. Tabagua. *Georgian in the European Archives and Book Depositories*, vol. III, p. 170.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 169170. ; *Kartlis Tskhivreba (Life of Georgia)*, vol. IV, p. 787 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis...*, p. 188-189; Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*

52 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Medieval Century Abkhazia*, p. 292, 300; B. Lominadze. *From the History of the Georgian Feudal Relations*, vol. I. Tbilisi, 1966, p. 228 and further; N. Berdzenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia*. Tbilisi, 1990, p. 593. 615-616; K. Grigolia. *Some Considerations about P. Ingorokva's book "Giorgi Merchule"*. -*Mnatobi*, 1990, N3, p. 130-131; D. Muskhelishvili. *In the Name of the Historical Truth*. -*Komunisti*, 1989, April the 5th.

53 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 300.

54 B. Lominadze. *From the History of the Feudal Relations*, vol. I. Tbilisi, 1966, p. 229; K. Grigolia. *Some Considerations on P. Ingorokva's Book "Giorgi Merchule"*, p. 130; D. Muskhelishvili. *In the Name of the Historical Truth*. -*Komunisti*, 1989 5th of April.

Striving of the Caucasian highlanders for the lowlands of Georgia was conditioned by their ousting by the Mongols from their previous places of inhabitants and by the intertribal discord and internecine wars. Besides, the Ottoman Empire aspiring for oppression of Levan II Dadiani's tendency of being independent and alliance with Russia, had its interest in settling the north-west Georgia with the highlanders. The highlanders used to become the main foothold of the possessors of Abkhazia in the internecine war with the Dadianis. Devastated and weakened Georgia was not able to withstand the onset of the highlanders. The Jiks being pressed by the Adyghe tribes head to the south-east and settle in the north-west Georgia in Abkhazia. Georgian sources call them the Jiks, the foreigners gave them the collective name Abazians. In the Georgian sources under the Jiks are meant not only the Jiks (Sadzians), but other Abazian tribes as well and among them the Circassianized ones. As a result of their invasion in the second half of the 15th century Georgia loses the north-east Black Sea coast from the town of Nikopsia to the Gaga ravine (pass); in the middle of the 16th century to the river Bzip and then to Anakopia. This fact is reflected in the Adyghe folklore according to which, the Adyghe leader Inal conquered Abkhazia, but unexpectedly died and was buried in Pskhu: "After subduing Abkhazia, being on Dziba (Bzip) for making truce with the Abkhazian tribes, he after finishing all his affairs died with the death of a pious (righteous man). His body is buried in the mentioned land and his grave being known till the present days has the name of Inal-Kuba."⁵⁵

The process of penetration of the small groups of highlanders into Abkhazia occurred even earlier, but its consequences were obvious only in the XVI-XVIIth centuries, when the aboriginal population was not able to neutralize the pressure of highlanders in the social-religious respect. All this resulted in the radical ethnic changes. The newly arrived mass oppressed the local population and started the process of merging of the local population with the newly come highlanders and formation of the present Abkhazians (Apsua) ethnos.

The Abkhazians of the XVIIth century had already been the Caucasian highlanders, not yet completely mastered the feudal farming, feudal social system. They had not been yet converted into Christianity. By their primitive every day life and paganism they are not the off-springs of the historical Abkhazians, being the participants of the cultural-political formation of the Georgian feudal State. Thus, genetic line in the main mass of the population – the lower layers was interrupted. Only the feudal nobility, especially possessive prince Sharvashidze preserved the Georgian traditions, the Georgian colloquial and written language, Christian faith. According to N. Berdzenishvili the characteristics given to Sharvashidze's daughter by A. Lamberti confirms, that fact, that at that time the house of the Abkhazian feudal was Georgian by confession, as well as by the common culture. Academician N. Berdzenishvili specially introduces the term had already been established in historiography "present Abkhazia", thus, tried to distinguish "ancient" and "new" Abkhazia from each other.⁵⁶

In connection with this one phenomenon is worth mentioning. From the second half of the XVIth century in the Turkish language the term "Abkhaz" almost completely disappears and its place is occupied by the term having wider meaning – the collective name of

⁵⁵ Sh. B. Nogmov. *The History of the Adyghe People*. Nalchik, 1970, p. 54-55.

⁵⁶ N. Berdzenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia*, Book III, p. 277-288; N. Berdzenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia* (1990), p. 610-611.

the Abkhazian-Abazians – “Abaza”. This change of the term is the important document for studying the history of the penetration into the territory of Abkhazia of the Abazian-Adyghe communities.⁵⁷ The mass immigration of the Abkhazians must have had the scales so wide, in that according to the Ottoman sources, the population of Abkhazia was called by the name of the new comers – “Abaza” and not its ancient name – “Abkhazia”. This latter was kept by the Georgians.⁵⁸

In the study of history of Abkhazia identifying of the ethnonymes “Abkhaz” and “Apsua” caused a great chaos and misunderstanding. It was usual thing, to consider “Apsua” the real name of the people, being called the Abkhazians by the neighbours. The aboriginal population of Abkhazia the Georgians, being assimilated by the highlanders of the North-West Caucasus, continued to call themselves the Abkhazians; the new comers called themselves “Apsua” (it was the name of the Abazian highlanders).

Kelasuri Wall. In the last years of his rule Levan II Dadiani had no way out, but to use to the policy of defense in connection with the highlanders. His Campaigns to Abkhazia did not reach the aim and were not able to root out the danger for the North-West borders of the Principality coming from the highlanders side. Moreover, the possessors of Abkhazia attacked Odisi more violently with the help of the highlanders.⁵⁹ The “Abkhazian-Jikian” army being so frequently used by the possessors of Odishi in the XVIth century and Levan II Dadiani himself were in hand of Sharvashidze. If not this support, the small principality of Abkhazia, within the rivers Bzip and Anakopia (Psirtskha), would never be able to widen its borders to Tskhumi. With the purpose of defending its borders from these raids, Levan II Dadiani started to build and erect fortification constructions on the new border with Abkhazia. A. Lamberti wrote about this: Megrelia “...is protected by the nature from the mountain side and if the nature was made a mistaken on the other side of the mountain, then it was improved with the help and mastership of the possessor. In reality, in some places from the side of the Sea there are no forests, marches and an enemy can easily reach us; Here for protection of this pass, several wooden fortresses were built being guarded by the armed guard. The same protection was built from the side of the mountains: in one place, called Olushe, the mountains are open and enemy can penetrate experiencing no difficulties and devastate the land and thus there they built a 60000 step wall, which took quite considerable expanses and had several distanced from each other towers being occupied by the significant amount of the shooters. In order to make the guard permanent, Odishi bishopric, princes and nobility, had their monthly turn, and every month each of them had to protect it together with his people”.⁶⁰ A special attention was given to the defense of the roads coming from the Kodori gorge to the Colchis valley. On the maps of Colchis⁶¹ being compiled by A. Lamberti and Castelli is designated precisely the wall being built there. About the building of the fortifying construction on the new border with Abkhazia writes Vakhushti Bagrationi, marking, that Levan Dadiani built a wall, begin-

57 Ts. Abuladze. Name of Georgia and Georgian Political Formations in the Ottoman Written Sources. _ Foreign and Georgian Terminology of the Notions “Georgia” and Georgians”, p. 274.

58 D. Muskhelishvili. Historical status of Abkhazia in the Georgian statehood.

59 S. Kakabadze. History of Georgia. Tb., 1922, p. 90.

60 A. Lamberti. Description of Colchis, p. 185-186.

61 See here map N16.

ning from the sea side to the mountains in order to withstand the raids of the Abkhazians.⁶²

The system of fortification started at the estuary of the river Kelasuri, on its left bank, where till today sits the four square tower. The wall went along the Kelasuri gorge, then turned to the east, crossed the rivers Machara and Kodori. The upper part of the river Kodori was then within Abkhazia; from this place the wall passed along the Panavi range, crossed the river Mokvi and came to the sources of the river Galidzga near Tkvarcheli. More to the east to the river Galidzga in the gorges of the rivers Okumi and Eristskhali were built and renewed the fortresses, blocking the gorges with the winding mountainous paths. The Kelasuri wall was not a solid, entire construction. The wall having only 275 towers being spread to 60 kilometres and the wall was in length only 25 kilometers. The separate parts of the fortifications of the system were constructed in haste and in some cases the towers were erected without any foundation. It is clear, that the fortification system was built only for repelling the attacks of the enemies coming from the North-West side.⁶³

The Italian missionaries, serving in Odishi in the second quarter of the XVIIth century name the administrative border between Abkhazia and Odishi the river Kodori, though they denote, that the Dranda eparchy being located beyond the river was included into Megrelia. Thus, the information given by the missionaries need some specification. During the construction of the Kelasuri wall the border between those two political units did not pass along the river Kodori, but the river Kelasuri on the line of this wall.⁶⁴

Several Abkhazian authors try to refute the fact of construction of the Kelasuri wall in the XVIIth century and consequently deny, that it was built for stopping the raids of the Abkhazians and even more call it the “Great Abkhazian Wall”.⁶⁵ The facts speak about the opposite. The fortification system being placed by Lambertini on the map is followed by the inscription: “The wall being in length 60 000 steps (being erected) for defending from the raids of the Abazgians”. Almost the similar inscription has the map made by Castelli: “The wall having the 60 miles, being constructed to withstand the raids of the Abazgians”.⁶⁶ The arrangements being carried out by Levan II Dadiani halted for some time the invasion of the highlanders into the territory of Odishi.

Abkhazia in the second half of the XVIIth century. In 1657 Levan II Dadiani died; his death was followed by the longtime struggle for the princely throne. With the help of king of Imereti – Alexander the III (1639-1660) who invaded Odishi the throne was occupied by Levan’s cousin Vamekh -the ruler of Salpartiano. Levan’s nephew – Liparit Dadiani was also claiming the throne. Again with the help of Alexander the III, Vamekh the III Dadiani (1657-1661) defeated Liparit near the village Bandza and kept the throne for himself. In this battle the Abkhazians led by Solomon Sharvashidze fought on Vamekh’s

62 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 782.

63 T. Beradze. From the Historical Geography of Odishi, p. 237; of the same author: Vakhusti Bagrationi and the Problems of the Historical Geography of Odishi, p. 67-73; Yu. Voronov. The Kelasuri Wall. –The Soviet Archeology, 1973, N2, p. 98-115. Of the same author: In the World of the Architectural Monuments of Abkhazia. M., 1978, p. 98-103. Of the same author: Dioskuriada-Sebastopolis-Tskhum. M., 1980, p. 21, 114; L. I. Lavrov. Ethnography of the Caucasus, L. 1982, p. 90.

64 Z. Anchabadze. From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia, p. 295-296; T. Beradze. Vakhusti Bagrationi..., p. 72.

65 M. M. Gunba. The Kelasuri Wall. – Proceedings of the Institute of the Language, Literature and History of Abkhazia, vol. VI. Tb., 1977; of the same author: Abkhazia in the first millennium B. C. Sukhumi, 1989, p. 201-203.

66 Ibid, map N1; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 837-840.

side.⁶⁷ Seemingly, Vamekh III Dadiani with the help of the same king of Imereti managed to spread his power over Abkhazia and this was the reason why the Abkhazians fought on his side. It is worth mentioning, that the brother of Vamekh - Giorgi Lipartiani was married to the daughter of Sharvashidze.⁶⁸ Apparently, this factor played quite a significant part in regulating the interrelations with the Abkhazians.

To memorize this victory was made the setting of the Pitsunda Gospel, in the inscription for which is kept the information on the Bandza battle: “ Great Virgin of Pitsunda, by the upon our request and by your mercy being led by King and Dadiani we defeated Gurieli and Liparit Dadiani and for this we wrought this Holly Gospel ...We, Sharvashidze Solomon and Our Son Arzakan to Honor You, may We and Our Son Arzakan live long and our Souls be Saved”.⁶⁹

In the inscription made to the Pitsunda Gospel – Solomon Sharvashidze marks the superiority of the king of Imereti and Dadiani. He is proud to distinguish himself before the king of Imereti and Dadiani. In the XVIIth century Abkhazia was under the nominal vassal dependency from the king of Imereti⁷⁰, who was even earlier considered by the Abkhazians to be their sovereign.

Solomon Sharvashidze – the brother of Beslako and Setteman are mentioned by Chr. Castelli. He and his son Arzakan are mentioned in the Georgian inscription being made on the silver vessel donated by him to the Likhni church of Our Lady’s Assumption for “ longevity, victory, saving and supporting of My sinful soul and rearing up of My son Arzakan”.⁷¹

In 1659 Vamekh III Dadiani invaded Guria in order to push aside Kaikhosro Gurieli from ruling, but failed. On Vamekh’s side fought the Abkhazians, among them possessor Sharvashidze and princes of Anchabadze. About this campaign is said in the inscription made on the Achi icon of Saint George:”Saint George of Achi I Gurieli Kaikhisro pray to Your Name. While We were within Your Church, Dadiani Vamekh brought a numerous army against us. He was accompanied by the Imeretians, Odishians and Sharvashidze with the famous people. Attacking Us, they devastated the centre of Guria. Having no strength beyond You and being clad in armor in Your Cathedral, We went to Ozurgeti, where (Vamekh with his people) fortified in the palace. We liberated our Gurian nobility people from captivity and on the next day retook the fortified palace. We beat off Giorgi Shustani, Dadiani Lipartiani’s brother, Chiladze, Mikeladze, Chidjavadze, Anchabadze, Sesiashvili from Djumati being a Sardar, we beat off everybody with the help of Your victorious power and support and came before You...”.⁷² These events show, that Sharvashidzes were in vassal dependency from Odishi possessing Prince, as he used to help him with his army.

In March of 1660 died king of Imereti Alexander III and anarchy broke out in West Georgia. By the invitation of several nobles, Vamekh Dadiani came to Imereti and took Kutaisi and usurped the throne. At this time king of Kartli Vakhtang V Shah Navaz

67 B. Khorava. *The Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia*, p. 100.

68 Chr. Castelli. *Information and Album about Georgia*, p. 80, picture 22.

69 *Description of the Scripts*. Collection H, vol. V. Tb., 1994, p. 74.

70 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval century Abkhazia*, p. 289.

71 Th. Sakhokia. In *Abkhazia – Tsnobis Purtseli*, 1903, December 11th, N 2349.

72 Dm. Bakradze. *Archeological Travel Through Guria and Ajara*. S-Pb., 1878, p. 193.

(1658-1675) marched into Imereti. The king of Kartli and Dadiani signed the agreement about the division of Imereti. But soon, Vamekh was no longer in good terms with Shah Navaz. In 1661 Vakhtang V marched onto Imereti for the second time. Dadiani did not dare to fight him and fled to Svaneti.⁷³ Princess of Odishi Elena Gurieli tried to get help from Solomon Sharvashidze, but he refused to fight with the King.⁷⁴ This was the recognition of the supreme power of Vakhtang the Vth. Though he was the king of Kartli, but Sharvashidze considered him (and king of Imereti) to be the kings of all Georgia and his possessions only the part of Georgia. Vakhtang Vth Shah Navaz occupied the fortresses of Odishi and marched into Zugdidi. Having fled to Svaneti Vamekh the III Dadiani was killed by the King's order. According to his wish, the Odishi throne was occupied by the nephew of Levan II – Levan III Dadiani having married the niece of Vakhtang Vth – Tamar. “Sharvashidze together with the Abkhazians and rich presents”, went with cap in hand to Vakhtang the Vth in Zugdidi – wrote Vakhushti,⁷⁵ - and subdued to him.⁷⁶ According to the information given by poet Peshangi, contemporary and witness of this campaign. ” All the Abkhazians came and asked him either to take them under his patronage, or “give them to “serve Levan”,⁷⁷ i. e. to the vassal dependency to Levan Dadiani. Apparently, Shah Navaz was visited in Zugdidi not only by Solomon Sharvashidze, but the other “Abkhazian possessors” as well.

The decision of the king being narrated by the poet is especially interesting. According to his words, Chah Navaz ordered: “As I gave the Odishians to their hereditary possessor (Levan III Dadiani), then I have no right to deprive them of Abkhazia, as his state would appear defective” and ordered the Abkhazians to subdue to the possessor of Odishi.⁷⁸ In the charter of 1665 Levan III Dadiani calls himself “possessor of all Megrelia and Abkhazia”,⁷⁹ though in reality the power of Dadiani spread seemingly to one part of Abkhazia, being the direct neighbour of Odishi – the possessions of Solomon Sharvashidze. Thus, the supreme power of the possessor of Odishi was recognized only by eastern Abkhazia. The residents of western Abkhazia together with the representatives of the other west Caucasian tribes performed permanent raids to Odishi.

Accession of Archil - the Son of King of Kartli Vakhtang the Vth - to the throne of Imereti appeared a serious step towards the unification of Georgia including Abkhazia, as he spread his power in the whole west Georgia. But this plan failed under the pressure of the Turks. These facts prove, that Abkhazia in that period was a part of Megrelia and the common Georgian world.

In 1664-1666 Macarius of Antiochia and his son Paul of Aleppo visited Odishi. Information of Paul of Aleppo being written in Moscow (1667) specially for the Russians gives a definite idea about the political situation of that period Abkhazia. He writes: “Apkhazana consists in fact of two countries; one of them subdued to Dadian of Mengrelia and anabaptized Christians; they worship holly icons and respect churches. They are not

73 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 836.

74 Peshangi. Shahnavaziani, p. 73-74.

75 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia) vol. IV, p. 836.

76 Z. Anchabadze. From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia, p. 267.

77 Peshangi. Shahnavaziani, p. 83.

78 Peshangi. Shahnavaziani, p. 83; B. Khorava. Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia, p. 104.

79 D. P. Purtseladze. Georgian Church Gudjars. Tiflis, 1881, p. 147.

Christened, as they have neither High Priest, nor priests.

Another country is impious and near it live Olans, Avazgs, Zichs, Circassians, Lezings, Soans and they are great enemies of Megrelia and capture them”.⁸⁰

Under the first Abkhazians “state” Paul of Aleppo obviously meant the territory within the rivers of Kelasuri and Bzip; The second one was Jiketi.

In the period of Levan III Dadiani’s rule the situation in Odishi principality was gradually hardening. Patriarch of Antiokhia Macarius, who was in Odishi then wrote (1669), that Levan III Dadiani had no power and all power was in the hands of his high officials. Levan was characterized as a man, who was notable neither for his smartness and wisdom and nor for his eloquence; he was not authoritative among his warriors.⁸¹ An internecine war broke out with a renewed intensity in west Georgia; The Ottomans also joined this war. In 1672 Pasha of Akhaltsikhe marched into Imereti. He summoned Levan III Dadiani to Kutaisi. The Turks wanted to deprive him of the power and elevate to the throne the grandson of Levan II Dadiani, who was being reared up by the Pasha of Akhaltsikhe.

⁸² Levan III Dadiani asked for help the possessor of Abkhazia. The Abkhazians really entered Odishi, but instead of supporting and helping them, they devastated and ravaged everything on their way kidnapping people and cattle. The population fled looking for the shelter. On the 20th of September in the evening, the Abkhazians robbed and burnt the Sea port and market Skurcha in the estuary of the river Kodori. So they came to Anaklia and at the beginning of the October 1672 with the great loot returned, taking to captivity 1200 people and driving away a lot of cattle.⁸³

The Pasha waited for Dadiani in Kutaisi during a month and then invaded Odishi. Levan III locked himself in the Rukh fortress, which the Turks failed to take. They declared grandson of Levan II Dadiani the possessing prince of Odishi and Eqvtime II Sakvarelidze (1669-1673) - the Catholicos of West Georgia appointed his vezier. The Turks sent the Catholicos to Abkhazia to ask for a hand of Sharvashidze’s daughter for a new ruler.⁸⁴

After the Turks left Odishi, the war between Levan III Dadiani and Sultan’s protege continued and was finished only after the death of Levan II’s grandson. The permanent feudal internecine wars weakened the defending ability of Odishi. The North-West border of the Principality, being well fortified by Levan II Dadiani, gradually came to decline, as it was no more protected by anyone. During Chardin’s visit in Odishi (1672) the border of the principality officially passed on the river Kelasuri, but the Kelasuri wall itself did not function any more.⁸⁵ The Abkhazians practically liberated themselves from the vassal dependence of Odishi, as it was in times of Levan II Dadiani’s, Vamekh III Dadiani’s and also at the beginning of Levan III Dadiani’s rule. Even the more, they used the inner political hardships of Odishi and in 60s renewed raids on the principality, being described

80 N. Asatiani. *Materials on History of Georgia of the XVIIth century (description of Georgia being made by Paul of Aleppo)*. Tb., 1973, p. 75.

81 Macarius of Antiochia. *Information about Georgia*. Translated from Arabian by T. Margvelashvili. –*Armagani*. Tb., 1982, p. 119-120 (in Georgian).

82 *Travel of Chardin through the Trans Caucasus in 1672-1673*. Translated by E. Bakhutova and D. P. Kosovich. Tiflis. 1902, p. 207, 248.

83 *Ibid*, p. 206-209; 215-216.

84 *Ibid*, p. 248-251.

85 *Ibid*, p. 107.

by Vakhushti Bagrationi.⁸⁶ The new wave of the Abkhazian-Highland aggression against Odishi started again. They invaded not only the bordering districts of the principality, but broke into the inner regions as well.⁸⁷ In the 60s of the XVIIth century the Abkhazians ravaged the Tsaishi and TsalenJikha cathedrals. The inscription inserted into the Tsaishi Gospel Anika Kortodze narrates about the devastating attack of the Abkhazians on the Tsaishi cathedral church, about the saving of the icons and the Gospel from destruction.⁸⁸ According to the information given by Macarius of Antiokhia, the Abkhazians, Circassians and other highlanders permanently used to break into the Georgian lands, took the residents and sold into captivity.⁸⁹ The Abkhazians devastated not only the neighbouring Odishi, but their pirate boats from time to time reached even Guria. According to Vakhushti Bagrationi's words, Giorgi III Gurieli (1664-1684) "killed the Abkhazians having repeatedly come to Guria for piracy".⁹⁰

Theatin missionary – Jozeph - Marie Zampi visiting Odishi from the end of the 40s of the XVIIth century wrote at the start of the 70s: "Megrelia does not resemble real Megrelia any more, as the wars impoverished, destroyed and devastated it. . . Nobody has the cattle and everyone lacks the food. . . Now not a single person can feel himself safe, as they are under the threat of invasion of the Abkhazians; even the ships used to come to Kavro (Tkauru, Skurcha in the estuary of the river Kodori – B. Kh.) and Morbila (village Merkula-B. Kh.), are heading to Anaklia out of fear. The dangour of the Abkhazians exists on the land till Ogaskure, as they often robb that area, and that's why our men hide in the woods day and night and gurd it. They are so scared, that run away even from their shades". The same Dzampi after his return to Rome in 1679 remarked; "Our missionary activities can gradually, day by day become more fruitful if not the enemies of (Megrelian –B. Kh.) possessor and bordering with Megrelia peoples, such as the Alans, Circassians, Jiks, Abkhazians and others permanently devastating this country and bothering the population and priests".⁹¹ The highlanders pemanently invaded Odishi and did not spare the missionaries as well. During one attack on their monastery in the village Tsipuria, being located on the right bank of the river Inguri, patres had to hide and save themselves from the inevitable death.⁹² According to the words of the witnesses of those events, patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos, "Dadiani. . . was so weak, that the Abazgians devastated his (Levan III-author) possessions, ravaged cathedrals and monasteries: Mokvi, Khobi, Kiacha, Zugdidi and every country till Dioskuria (Sukhumi-B. Kh.) to Hippus (Tskhenistskhali -author)and Phases (Rioni-B. Kh.)", besides. "Dadiani had no strength to drive the Abazgians out".⁹³

In 60-70s the devastating invasions of Odishi were led by Abkhazian possessing prince Saustan (Bagrat) Sharvashidze.⁹⁴ He is mentioned in the additon made to the Pitsunda

86 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 842.

87 B. Khorava. Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia, p. 110.

88 E. Takaishvili. From the Archeological travel throughout Megrelia, p. 188, 222.

89 Makarius of Antiokhia. Information about Georgia, p. 105.

90 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 840.

91 M. Tamarashvili. History of Catholicism. . . , p. 204-207; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 266-267.

92 M. Tamarashvili. History of Catholicism. . . , p. 207.

93 M. Seleznev. Guide for Understanding Caucasus, Book 1, p. 46.

94 I. G. Antelava. Essays on the History of Abkhazia of the XVII-XVIIIth Centuries, p. 38.

Gospel, in which is said, that Saustan Sharvashidze sacrificed to Pitsunda Virgin two peasants for his longevity and victory, rearing up of his son Savarekh and saving of their sinful souls.⁹⁵

In 1681 the Abkhazians occupied the north-west part of Odishi from the river Kelasuri to the river Galidzga. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote about it: “The Abkhazians brought a lot of trouble to Odishi, as they used to come in boats and on land and capture the Odishians, occupied the territory to Egrisi (Galidzga) and settled there and in Dranda and Mokvi there were no bishops any more”.⁹⁶ The fact of destroying of the famous Mokvi Cathedral by the Abkhazians was confirmed by M. Seleznev. He wrote: “The inner construction of the side-altars, of the elevated stone galleries and columns are so amazing, that even the wild minds of the Abkhazians are fascinated seeing them. In old times two palaces were attached to the cathedral: of Dadinani’s and the bishop’s, but they were destroyed by the Abkhazians simultaneously with the cathedral in 1678”.⁹⁷

Thus, the Abkhazians would capture the lands and settle there, destroying the churches and monasteries located on the occupied territories. In such a complicated situation, in Summer of 1681 died Levan III Dadiani. The heir to the throne Manuchar was Gurieli’s hostage. The possessor of Guria wanted to occupy the throne. He killed Manuchar and organized invasion of Odishi, but failed to take it. Odishi had no possessor and heir now. Savarekh (Sorek) Sharvashidze - the son of the Abkhazian possessing prince decided to use the complicated situation for his personal benefit and claimed the Odishi throne. In Autumn of 1681 he set out to Odishi and proclaimed himself its possessor,⁹⁸ though he did not control the whole territory of the principality. We can assume, that Savarekh Sharvashidze had a certain legitimate right on the Odishi throne. Supposedly he represented the Odishi possessing House from his mother’s side.⁹⁹

A part of the Odishi nobles did not recognize the claims of Savarek Sharvashidze on the princely throne. In such a critical situation died the factual ruler of Odishi Katsia Chikovani, who was substituted for his son Giorgi –the ruler of Salipartiano. He also dreamed about the princely throne of Odishi and was cruel with his enemies. Vakhushti Bagrationi described the situation of that time Odishi as follows:” Odishi was siezed with grief, because of Giorgi Lipartiani, who was killing and selling the slaves, but most of all Odishi suffered from the Abkhazians as they came with war, devastated the country (Odishi) and openly robbed it”.¹⁰⁰

Savarekh Sharvashidze tried to spread his power on the whole territory of Odishi. Gurieli repeatedly tried to occupy the throne of Odishi. Pasha of Akhaltsikhe solicited before the Sultan on appointing the illegitimate son of Levan III Dadiani – Levan, who was then in Akhaltsikhe, as a possessor of Odishi. The appeal was satisfied and in 1683 Levan IV Dadiani (1683-1691) ascended the throne of Odishi, but the principality was factually ruled by Giorgi Lipartiani.¹⁰¹ Their power spread on the whole Odishi, but the territory

95 Description of the Scripts. Collection N, vol. V, N2102, p. 74.

96 Kartlis Tskhkovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 845.

97 M. Seleznev. Guide for Understanding the Caucasus, book 1. S-Pb., 1847, p. 162-163.

98 M. Tamarashvili. History of Catholicism. . . , p. 208.

99 B. Khorava. The Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia in the XV-XVIIth centuries, p. 114.

100 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 850.

101 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), vol. IV, p. 850.

more to the north-west from the river Inguri, where ruled Savarekh Sharvashidze.

Savarekh Sharvashidze repeatedly tried to occupy the whole Megrelia, though he failed. But on the other hand he consolidated himself in the north-west part of his principality. It is remarkable, that the Italian missionaries call Savarekh/Sorek the possessor of Megrelia and not Abkhazia.¹⁰² North-West Odishi being captured by Savarekh Sharvashidze was not annexed to Abkhazia and was still called Megrelia and its ruler was known as the possessor of Megrelia. Savarekh Sharvashidze not only refused to subdue to the possessor of Abkhazia, but even resisted him. According to Italian missionaries G. Turco and G. Torichelli, on the 10th of April of 1685 the Abkhazians broke into his possessions and devastated the whole region.¹⁰³ Supposedly, after this campaign, or after the death of Savarekh, this part of Odishi (from the river Kelasiru to the river Inguri) was annexed to Abkhazia by Zegnakh Sharvashidze.¹⁰⁴

In 1689 during the fierce battle for the Imereti throne, Archil - the son of Shah Navaz arrived in Abkhazia.¹⁰⁵ "He was met by Sharvashidze, with honor appropriate for the king; he spent some time in Zupu".¹⁰⁶ This fact proves, that though Sharvashidze was not longer under the dominion of Megrelia, but he recognized the supreme power of the king of Imereti. The fact of Sharvashidze's participation in the political processes of west Georgia and supporting of Prince Archil is worth interest. Besides, the traditional hospitality - emphasizes Vakhushti - Sharvashidze accepted Archil as King. From Abkhazia Archil tried to move to the Crimean Khanate, but after realizing that the road was not safe, he returned to Racha and from Racha entered Ossetia. The possessor of Abkhazia accepting Archil as King, must have been Zegnakh Sharvashidze. He ruled quite a vast territory between the river Bzip, Caucasian range and the lower flow of the river Inguri, though the Abkhazia existed within those borders for a very short period. Approximately in 90s of the 17th century, after the death of Zegnakh, his sons divided their father's possessions. The elder - Rostom, was given the territory between the rivers Bzip and Kodori and the title of the possessing Prince of Abkhazia, the middle son - Jikeshia got the territory between Kodori and Galidzga, being named afterwards Abzhua (which is direct translation of the Georgian name of that territory and means "Shua Sopeli" - the middle country); The younger brother Kvapu took possession of the lands between Galidzga and the lower flow of the river Inguri. In the first part of the 18th century the given territory acquired the name of Samurzakano according to their ruler's name Murzakan.¹⁰⁷ The possessors of Abzhua and Samurzakano were in the nominal dependency from the possessor of Abkhazia.¹⁰⁸

As the devastated territory fell to Kvapu Sharvashidze's lot, he had to move from Zupu "several princely and noble families; namely" The Anchabadze, Emukhvari, Inalishvili, Margania, Zvanbaia, Lakerbaia and Akirtava and between them divided the ter-

102 M. Tamarashvili. *History of Catholicism*. . . , p. 208.

103 M. Tamarashvili. *History of Catholicism*. . . , p. 209-210.

104 Z. Anchabadze. *From the History of the Mediaeval Century Abkhazia*, p. 270.

105 M. Brosse. *Correspondence in Foreign Languages of the Georgian Kings with the Russian Rulers from 1639 to 1770*. S PB., 1861, p. 130.

106 *Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia)*, vol. IV, p. 851.

107 T. Chichinadze. *Manuscript from Bedi*. -Kvali, 1897, May 11th, N20 (In Georgian).

108 *Essays of The Abkhazian ASSR*, part 1, p. 122; Z. Anchabadze, G. A. Dzidzaria, A. E. Kuprava. *History of Abkhazia*. Sukhumi, 1986, p. 63.

ritories; he himself took the villages Bedia, Pakhulani and Barbalo (Koki)".¹⁰⁹ New settlers took together with them the people of the low class. From that period the off-springs of the modern Abkhazians appeared in Samurzakhano, who then assimilated with the local population. The Sharvashidzes living afterwards in Samurzakhano were descendants of Kvapu Sharvashidze.¹¹⁰

We cannot say, that only the territories between the rivers Galidzga and Inguri were devastated and deserted. Supposedly, that same fate befell Zupu, but the population of this territory was repeatedly renewed by the highlanders from the North-West Caucasus.

To the beginning of the XVIIIth century Giorgi IV Dadiani (1701-1709, 1710-1714), finally confirmed on the throne and tried to win back the lands being captured by the Abkhazians. In winter of 1702 Dadiani asked for a help "against the Abkhazians the regent of king of Imereti – Giorgi Abashidze, as the Abkhazians took hold of the river Egrisi and would devastate Odishi and killed and captured people."¹¹¹ Abashidze assembled the army and marched to Abkhazia. Sharvashidze was not able to withstand him and Abashidze deprived Sharvashidze of the annexed territory and reconciled Dadiani and Sharvashidze.¹¹²

The possessor of Abkhazia had no way out, but to give to Dadiani a part of the annexed lands, the territory between the rivers Inguri and Galidzga, being passed on to the jurisdiction of the possessor of Odishi. As a token of obedience to Sharvashidze he gave the hostages to the ruler of Imereti. After the returning of the lands between the rivers Inguri and Galidzga within Odishi the possessors of this region remained the representatives of the collateral branch of the Abkhazian princely House. In 1704 Kvapu Sharvashidze died in Rukhi. Catholicos of Abkhazia Grigol Lordkipanidze arrived from Gelati to attend his funeral; he performed a mass liturgy and took a token (the tax, which the close relatives of the dead person had to pay: personal weapon and the passed man's things, saddled horse, serf peasants and estate for the church etc.).¹¹³ The fact, that Kvapu Sharvashidze died in Rukhi and the Catholicos arrived from Imereti for taking a tax proves the fact, that the territory to Galidzga politically and clerically was the organic part of Odishi. After the death of Kvapu Sharvashidze his son Murzakan ruled in that area. According to the legend, Murzakan Sharvashidze forbid to sell the slaves in his possessions and punished the thieves and robbers and the relative peace was established in the region. All this gained him the love and respect of the population. Later, in the 30-40s of the XVIIIth century the territory between the Inguri and Galidzga was called Samurzakhano to honor him; in Georgian it means the "region of Murzakan".¹¹⁴

Thus, till the middle of the 60s of the XVIIth century the Abkhazian principality remained within Odishi. Princes of Sharvashidze were the subjects of Dadiani and it was reflected in various duties and namely in paying the tribute and compulsory military service. Till the 70s Sharvashidze's struggle against Odishi had a character of struggle of

109 T. Chichinadze. Bedian Inscription. -Kvali, 1897, May 11th, N20 (In Georgian).

110 T. Chichinadze. Bedian Inscription. -Kvali, 1897, May 11th, N20 (In Georgian).

111 Kartlis Tskhovreba (Life of Georgia), Vol. IV, p. 862-863.

112 Monuments of the Georgian Justice, III, p. 670.

113 The Monuments of the Georgian Law, III, p. 670.

114 T. Chichinadze. Manuscript from Bedia. -Kvali, 1897, May 11th, N20; V. Zukhbaia, Kh. Zantaraia. Gali. Sukhumi, 1988, p. 72-73.

a vassal for liberation from the power of the sovereign. This fact basically was different from the fight between Dadiani and Gurieli for the hegemony in west Georgia from Sharvashidze's struggle. Factually, split of Abkhazia from Odishi and its formation as an independent principality starts from the end of the 70-80s of the XVIIth century, when it was liberated from any duties from Dadiani. ¹¹⁵

Ethnic Processes. According to the sources, till the 80s of the XVIIth century, the territory between the rivers Inguri and Kelasuri was the part of Odishi not only in political, but in ethnic sense as well, what is obvious from the documents.

Toponyms of the region are completely Georgian. In the clerical documents and materials of the XVI-XVIIth centuries the villages more to the north-west part of Odishi are mentioned and namely: Galidzga, Gudava, Gupu, Zegani, Ilori, Kamuleti, Kvitauli, Marmariskari, Mukhuri, Reka, Subeishi, Chala, Tiliti, Khaujeli, Khoiri and others. The majority of those villages are designated on the maps of Lamberti and Castelli. On those maps between the rivers of Inguri and Eristskhali are fixed: Tsipuria, Sudjona, Tsamkhari, Bargebi, Genati, Nabakevi, Khviti, Shesheleti, Satandjo, Gogisli, Kadari, Paronio; between the rivers Eristskhali and Okumi are designated: Gudava, Gagida, Tsarche, Arkama, Bedia, Papati, Chkhortoli; between the rivers of Okumi and Galidzga are: Sachino, Sanardo, Subeishi, Putskuri, Martskhule, Olushe; between the rivers of Galidzga and Mokvistskhali are – Galidzga, Ilori, Merkula, Mokvi, Tiliti; between the rivers Mokvistskhali and Marmaristskhali are: Kvitauli, Dgvana, Iskuria, Jgerda; between the rivers of Marmaristskhali and Kodiri are located: Satamashia, Tskurgili, Pshia, Marmariskari, Tkvarcheli.

Geographical names on the maps are sometimes designated in the Megrelian dialect of the Georgian language: Nabakia (Nabakevi), Guda (Gudava), Marmaristskhali (Marmaristskhali) and others. Monk of Jesuitical order – Louis de Grange in the relation being written in the Megrelian village Mokvi on the 2nd of March of 1615 remarks, that he considers necessary for his missionary activities in this region to study Megrelian and literary Georgian language. ¹¹⁶ It means, that Mokvi and its environs were settled by the Megrelians and the Georgian language was there the state, church and cultural language.

The data of the clerical documents are more informative, as in them are listed not only the villages between the rivers Inguri and Kelasuri, but the name and surnames of the peasants living there. This is a roll of the villages, serf peasants and the income given by them, being the property of the West Georgian Catholicosaty. Judging from the onomastics all the serf peasants were the Georgians. The following names and surnames of the local population living on the territory from Inguri to Kelasuri are fixed:

The village Najaneuli (end of the XVIth century): **Shushania, Jgviburia, Toliokro, Subukia, Jakobia, Gugutia, Mchishia, Kakauri, Uchaia Mamisshuri, Uchaia Sokherdia, Uchaia Tolskvamia, Didia Gabriela, KodiaKatsibaia, Elishia Tomikhila, Ruskia Martsvalia, Matupia Shuritoli, Gogilava Mamismama, Mamasperi, Gurua Chucha, Tsistaria Mamismama, Kodia Tolibedi, Kajana Deismama, Logua Kurikhan, Jguburia Nikolaa, Dzadzua, Konjaria, Piolia and others.**

The village Najaneuli (1621): **Uchana Mikhilia, Uchana Gurmikhili, Uchana**

¹¹⁵ K. Okujava. *Abkhazia in the XVIIth Century*. Tb., 2002, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ M. Tamarashvili. *History of Catholicism*. . . , p. 135.

Mirchkilia, Jakobia Toliokro, Didia Jgekochi, Didia Kochilei, Kodia, Orkolei, Kodia Machikhola, Kodia Solerdia, Kodia Mikhilia, Djguburia Gurishia, Shushania Sokherdia, Kochivara Kuatara, Dzadzua Gabrieli, Dzadzua Ardashela, Dzadzua Ingaria, Gogilaa Toliokro, Kadjana Mestumchishna, Khistaria Tolimanu, Davitia Mestumria, Tsistaria Kochna, Logua Tolishia, Elishia Kocheli, Elishia Tolmikhila, Elishia Uskuamada, Kondjaria Mamalei, Kondjaria Toskuamna, Chutishia Toliokro, Michkilia Piolia, Chuchu Kontaria and others.

The village Khoiri (1621): **Dadiani Khakhuta, Chagua Gogia, Lasuria Ukulashi, Lasuria Uskuamia, Lasuria Mikhilia, Mamulia Tseblaria, Chagua Gurmikhila, Gunia Babadia, Grigolia Gokurtskhia, Jikia Skuamilen, Didia Toliokro, Ambalia Khukhulia, Ambalia Khutsi, Djomnia Gamigona, Jomnia Vajikocha, Kakua Mkh-iarula, Kakua Moirdina, Gamkervalia Khakhuta and others.**

The village Subvi//Subeishi (1621): **Kitia Kuakualia, Kitia Kerabimi, Kitia mamulia, Kitia Shurimigdi, Kitia Jgirkochi, Kitia Pirnate, Pertia, Korcholua mamashi, Jaknia kaka, Jakonia Vajoba, Jakonia Papishia, Jakonia Babadish, Djakonia Skuamili, Jakonia Kodziria, Luadjagia Sanatreli, Artoni Mamulia, Khungia Utskinara, Mikelia Shurimigdi, Bigua Uchalei and others.**

The village Tiliti (1621): **Tipshkhua Khutsesi, Tipshkhua Nanatria, Tipshkhua Iese, Tskuria Jgekochi, Zvanekeria Babashuri, Tskuria Sordi, Gulua Tutashkhia, Stepanaskeri Shuritoli, Stapanaskeri Mikhilia, Bulia Mordilia, Tutashkhia Kupacha, Toliskuami Pazha, Toliskua Kirchkheli, Shantia Uchakochi, Marulava Shuritoli, Chkhirua Shurimigdi, Gorgilava Orkona and others.**

The village Khauzheli (1621): **Vardania Khutsesi, Vartangia, Bagia Mitanapi, Tseblaria Gachirdia, Tseblaria Kakalia, Khalibesshvili Dalaba, Salatia Uchardia, Salatia Gairchkini, Dushia Toskuamia, Dusia Dzuka, Dushia Mamaia, Vardania Sabedo, Vardania Mikhilia, Vardania Skumishia, Shonia Uchardia, Niseria Mamikordi, Niseria Kakha ber, Niseria Utskinari, Niseria Kakalia and others.**

The village Tkauru (1621): **Shangia Tavaza, Shangia Kukualia, Shangia Mashutua, Chuchuria Uchakochi, Gavasheli Datia.**

The village Chala , where the church and the family palace of Djaiani (1621) was located: **Gogordava Khutsesi, Gogordava Gvata, Mikhilia Chaglia, Chania Machikholi, Palia Shurimigdi, Margia Kvatskha, Lorteg Bibilia, Gichordi Pkha and others.**

From the point of view of ethnic history study names and surnames being fixed in the sources of the 17th century and other populated places of Abkhazia and among them in Tsamkhari are of great importance: **Mchitnava, Margia, Tanna, Dzasania**; in Kadari and neighbouring villages: **Datuskaria (Datuskiria ?), Chkhorelia, Kobakhia, Albaria, Borkia**; in Ilori: **Golidzula Tsatsulua, Chkhokhodze, Shegua, Germania**; in Kamuleti: **Gurmikhili Kubetsia**; in Galidzga: **Alesendria, Moirdi Kvirkvelia, Uskvama Kvirkvelia, Gvianishi Chagaloskiri**; in Zegani: **Mutagigun Khubilava, Gogua, Nadaraia**; in the village Tkhalari: **Gabrava**; in the village Martskhuli: **Gurmikhili Esebia**; in Kvitouli: **Totodji Davitia, Gaizardi Apia, Anchbukhu Chkhangua, Bebelia Bagatelia, his wife was from the family of Apakidze and their son Masi Bagatelia, Beleshia**; in the village Gupu: **Makhu Vardania, Sabedo Vardania, Nikhilia Vardania, Skumishia**

Vardania, Giorgi Vardania; in the village Pshia: **Jaiani Bibilia.** ¹¹⁷

Thus, till the 80s of the 17th century in the north-east part of Odishi, between the rivers of Inguri and Kelasuri, according to the sources (church records of West Georgia, maps of the missionaries etc.), are represented only the Georgian toponymes and hydronimes; There lived only the Georgian population.

After capturing of the territory by the Abkhazians, the ethnic picture significantly changed. The fate of the aboriginal Georgian population was tragic; the part of which was extinct; another part had no way out, but to flee into the inner parts of Megrelia in order to get rid of the unavoidable perish or slavery. The invaders treated the Georgian nobility especially cruelly, as it was the main military-political stronghold of the possessor of Megrelia. The possessor of the village Chala (the present Chlou) Merab Jaiani escaped and handed to catholicos of Abkhazia - Grigol Lordkipanidze the following chart: "This chart is presented to you - catholicos Grigol, Jaiani Merab, as our country appeared under the authority of the Tatars (i. e. the Muslims – auth.), after this I could not stay and came to you with the request, to give us the possibility to live and give us three peasants..."¹¹⁸ On the border of the XVII-XVIIIth centuries the fate of Merab Jaiani was shared by a lot of people, as Abkhazia appeared to be "under the authority of the Tatars".

One part of the Georgian population was assimilated with the Abkhazians, ¹¹⁹ thus a lot of the Abkhazians have the Georgian family names. Another part of the Georgians were sold in captivity to the Turks or driven out from Abkhazia by the Abkhazians. The historical documents of the Catholicate of Pitsunda confirms, that from the occupied territory "the Abkhazians deported" the Georgian population. In this respect, the fate of the population from the village of Najanevi is worth mentioning, where out of the 60 homesteads of the church peasants living there to the 17th century, by 1706 only 7 homesteads were left. In order to save them from selling into the slavery was managed only with the help of moving them to the eastern part of Odishi. In the settlement charts of Catholicos Grigol Lordkipanidze is said: "The Abkhazians deserted for the population the village of Najanevi; Catholicos Nemsadze gave the residents to Kvapu Sharvashidze. One eldest person was lost. That Catholicos like me, tried his best, but we couldn't manage to help him out. Sharvashidze died in Rukhi; We performed a liturgy and we took 7 persons with us together with the members of their families" Grubelaia Amakhsneli and his relatives Elishia Khukhua and his brothers Kodia, Zumila, Jguburia, Subukia, Bigvava and Uchaia and one servant.

Elishakh son of Nanai Narmania and Khutsobava Papa were rescued from that side of the river Inguri for a great ransom. Some of them were settled in Khibula and some of

117 *The Monuments of the Georgian Justice*, vol. III. Tb., 1970, p. 382, 419, 423, 425, 426, 428, 431, 434; J. Gamakharia, *B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 165-167.

118 S. Kakabadze. *Church Documents of West Georgia*, Book I, p. 149-150.

119 For the aboriginal Georgian population of North-West Megrelia, being captured by the Apsua-Abkhazians the only way of surviving the cruelty of the new-comers was the Apsuanization, accepting of the language, religions and traditions of highlanders. It resulted in vanishing of the lower layers of the local population, being sold in captivity or being turned into the slaves. It is interesting, that in the Abkhazian language for defining the the category of out law people, slaves was accepted the ethnonyme "agirva" denoting the Megrelian". (T. Gvantseladze. *Terms, denoting the Georgians in the Abkhazian and Abazian languages. – Foreign and Georgian terminology of the Notions "Georgia" and "Georgians"*, p317). That part of the Georgian population, having settled in Abkhazia according to their free will, escaping from the serfdom yoke (N. Berdzenioshvili. *Problems of History of Georgia*, 1990, p. 610, 616).

them in Khobi”¹²⁰.

Kvapu Sharvhasidze (in 1696 and 1705) gave an oath two times (for the first time together with his brother Kerekim and for the second time – with his son Avtandil) to the catholicoses David Nemsadze (1673-1696) and Grigol Lordkipanidze (1696-1742), to quit slave trade, not to forbid the church perish from the villages of Najaneuli and Khiori to serve Catholicos ... When you will come let them serve you, accompany you and pay tax, as they served other catholicoses before you “. ¹²¹ But he did not keep his word given to the catholicoses David and Grigol had to save the Georgian population from the insult and slavery. Grigol Lordkipanidze had to buy out a part of the peasants being captured by the Abkhazians. ¹²²

On the deserted territory settled the Abkhazians (Apsua) communities. They ethnically assimilated the whole territory between the rivers Kelasuri and Galidzga, but they don't feel themselves at home on the territory between the rivers of Galidzga and Inguri, where the Georgian population comprised the majority. But, the dominion of the alien Apsua nobility was established on the whole territory of Abkhazia.

Settling of the Abkhazian-Adigeans on the territory of Abkhazia and capturing of the lands did not always have the military character. They, according to the possessor's and nobility's will settled in Abkhazia as landless highlanders. The fact of settling of the cheap labour forces from the neighbouring regions of the country and the North Caucasus¹²³ in the estates of the landlords was a common experience and wide practice throughout the whole Georgia.

Ethnic changes on the territory being captured by the Abkhazians resulted in disappearance of the Georgian geographical names; some of them acquired the Abkhazian sounding. The river Tskhomistskhali became Gumista, Anakopiistskhali – Psirtskha, Mutsutskhali – Mchishta, Agatsotskhali – Absta, town Tskhumi”Tskhomi – Akua, Anakopia – Psirtskha. Disappeared the names Kamuleti, Tkhalaria, Martskhuli, Khaujeli, Tiliti and others. The village Chala acquired the name Chiloy//Chlou, village Subvi//Subeishi became Achigvara, village Galidzga, where is located one of the palaces of Levan II Dadiani was called Beslakhuba; Marmariskari was renamed in Marmal Abaa (Abaa in Abkhazian means fortress); Satamashia (In Georgian the place of Games) became Tamish; village Tiliti- Tkhina in the environs of which was kept the toponyme “Tlit Abaa” (in Abkhazian the fortress of Tiliti) and others. On the maps of Lamberti and Castelli, Olushe together with the fortification system is designated at the sources of the river Galidzga. Today we call Olushe the mountain near Tkvarcheli. “Olushe”//Olu, in Megrelian means a pass. Usually, during the invasion of enemies the similar passes were locked with the lime wall having a narrow pass and an oak door. ¹²⁴

Reports on settling of the territory of modern Abkhazia with the Apsua ethnos can be found in the Abkhazian (Apsua) folklore. According to one legend, the ancestors of

120 *The Monuments of the Georgian Justice*, vol. III, p. 668, 670; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia -Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 269.

121 E. Takaishvili. *Georgian Antiquities*, vol. 1. Tb., 1920, p. 36 (in Georgian); Kh. Bgashba. *From the History of the Written Language in Abkhazia*. Tb., 1967, p. 29; J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox Religion*, p. 276-281 (in Georgian).

122 *Monuments of the Georgian Justice*, vol. III, p. 677.

123 N. Berdzenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia* (1990), p. 238.

124 G. Eliava. *Megrelian-Russian Dictionary*. Tb., 1997, p. 255.

the Abkhazians came from Arabia via Armenia to Kuban and afterwards because of the unusual for them cold climate, moved to Abkhazia; one part of them (Abazians) stayed in the North Caucasus.¹²⁵ In the researchers' opinion the process of settling of Abkhazia is reflected in the legends about the Narts and Atsans. According to one legend, in the remote past the people of Tsans lived in Abkhazia and they were the shepherds; as they were the godless people, God punished the Tsans and their dwellings, together with them perished in the fire.¹²⁶ The present legend is connected with the specific archeological monuments of Abkhazia having the semi cylinder, megalithic character. They are met in the mountains and are the hedges having the square or roughly a circle shape, supposedly they serve as enclosures and pens for the cattle. The Abkhazians call them "Atsangvara" //Tsanigvara", i. e. "dwelling of the Tsans". In academician S. Janashia's opinion from the legend about the Tsans is obvious, that on the modern territory of Abkhazia the Kartvelian(Svanian and Megrelo-Chanian) population preceded the Apsua-Abkhazians. In the legend mentioned above precisely this fact¹²⁷ is reflected. Abkhazian historian Sh. D. Inal-Ipa specially studying the Abkhazian ethno-genetic legends, remarks, that the real history is reflected in them.¹²⁸ It is interesting, that in the Abkhazian (Apsuan) folklore, differently from the folklore of other corners of Georgia, the names of Queen Tamar and other famous Georgian kings are absent. Founder of the Abkhazian kingdom – Leon II and his other successors also did not leave any imprint in the Abkhazian (Apsuan) historical folklore. Absolutely different life and relies are presented in it ; it is in no way surprising. In the Abkhazian (Apsuan) historical folklore are reflected the realities of the late medieval century history (historical-heroic songs and legends), or of the remote past (Narts, Song about Airga, Ajveipshaa and others). They show the primitive every day life and religious conceptions of the highland tribes.¹²⁹ It is worth mentioning, that according to the Abkhazian epos of the Narts, the Narts (the same Abkhazians, Apsua) live along the banks of the river Kuban. Though in some traditions about the Narts the river Bzip is also mentioned, but it is the reflection of later relaiies. During the scientific expedition in Abkhazia, one elderly Abkhazian man said to famous researcher – V. Abaev: "The Narts come from Kuban".¹³⁰

Famous Russian historian and public figure V. Tatishchev (1686-1750) –the contemporary of the completion of this process pointed to the ethnic expansion of the north Caucasian highlanders of north-west Georgia. In his book "History of Russia" he writes, that Abkhazia – the part of North Megrelia which is called by the Turks and Kabardinians - Avkhazos and the Russians gave them the name of Obezians " adn now the major part of it is full of the Kubanians".¹³¹ The veritability of the information of the historian is not doubted, as this information V. Tatishchev could get while his being the governor of Astrakhan. Well-known German scientist J. Klapproth cofirmed the fact, that namely the "Kubanians" and particularly the Apsua-Abazians took part in that process. That's

125 Sh. Inal-Ipa. *The Abkhazians*. Sukhumi, 1965, p. 103-105; S. Zukhba. *Abkhazian Oral Folk Arts*. Translated from Abkhazian by T. Gvantseladze and A. Arabuli. Tb., 1988, p. 201-202.

126 S. Janashia. *Tubal-Tabal, Tibaren, Iber. _Works*, book III. Tb., 1959, p. 14 (in Georgian).

127 *Ibid*, p. 15.

128 Sh. Inal-Ipa. *The Abkhazians*. Sukhumi, 1965, p. 201-212.

129 N. Berdenishvili. *Problems of History of Georgia* (1990), p. 618; B. Khorava. *Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia*, p. 140.

130 V. Abaev. *The Ossetian Language and Folkore*, vol. 1. L. , 1949, p. 321.

131 V. Tatishchev. *History of Russia*, vol. 1. M., -L. , 1962, p. 171.

why, the Circassians living in the North Caucasus called the “Kush-Khazib-Abaza”, that means “Beyond the range Abazians”.¹³² In his works J. Klaproth repeatedly emphasized, that the Apsua –Avkhazians were the aboriginal people of the North-West Caucasus and not of Abkhazia (see here, chap. IV, 1).

The Englishman E. Spenser wrote (1851), that the Abkhazians living in the environs of Sukhumi are” partly the off-springs of the Crimean (Kabardinian –auth.) and Kubanian khans and sultans, who together with their tribes settled in those area”.¹³³

The opinion of famous Russian historian A. Diachkov-Tarasov is significant, as he knew Abkhazia very well. “I think – he wrote- that the numerous tribe of the Abaskians. . . (i. e. the Jiks and Abazins-auth.) being pressed by the Adigean tribes, went beyond the Gagra range, another part of them crossed the passings of Pseakhka, Akhbiri, Tsagerker, Marukh, Klukhor. It happened, not lonh ago in the XVI—XVIIth centureis. . . Some of them think, that Megrelians lived more to the North and in the epoch of Sukhumi the Megrelains ruled over this region. . . ”.¹³⁴ Soon he came to the final conclusion, that : “the Abkhazians did not always dwell there, where they live now. Their legends, historical data and traditons point to the fact, that they came from the north and pressed the Kartvelian tribes away, till they did not stop at Inguri”.¹³⁵ We have to note, that till the beginning of the XXth century Georgian, Russian and European historiography, with the rare exception, considered the modern Abkhazians the new- comers from the North-West Caucasus (see here chap. IV, 1).

In the Abkhazian family legends the plots about the migrants are often met. For example. among the elder the family name Ashuba exists a legend about migration of their ancestors to the village Jgerda from Pskhu. The family name Adleiba, Agrba and Inal-Ipa arrived in Abkhazia from Karachay. About the surnames Kvitsinia, Avidzba and Zubkha are the legends about their arrival from the North Caucasus or the district of Sochi. According to one Abkhazian legend, the surname Achba came to Abkhazia from beyond the range. The representatives of the family names Gunba, Tvanba and Tania know, that the first place of their settlement was the village Duripsh together with the noble man Lakrba, having got this village as a gift from the possessor himself. At the end of the XVIIth century in the village Zvandripsh settled Pchkul Amaba, who came from Akhchipsa together with one Dautia and three Pabpas. They brought with them 18 families of the dependent peasant by the family name of Kiasalaa. The possessor asked Amaba to look after his Zvandripsh vineyard and wine cellar. The representative of the family name Chirikba arrived from Kabarda, settling in Sochi first and then in Abkhazia - in Iashtukh.¹³⁶

It goes without saying, that the given cannot precisely define the epoch of migration of the Caucasian highlanders to Abkhazia, but together with the above analyzed information

132 Klaproth J. *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien unternommen in der Jahren 1807 und 1808. Erster band/Halle und Berlin, 1872, s459; D. Muskhelishvili. Historical Status of Abkhazia in the Georgian Statehood. -Researches on History of Abkhazia/Georgia. Tb., 1999, p. 141.*

133 Reports given by K. Kokh and E. Spenser About Georgia and Caucasus. Translated from German, introduced and Commented by L. Mamatsashvili. Tb., 1981, p. 135 (in Georgian).

134 A. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Gagri and its Environs. Tiflis, 1903, p. 36, 50.*

135 A. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Abkhazia of the Bzip. – Proceedings of the Caucasian Department of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, vol. XVIII. Tb., 1905, p. 65.*

136 A. Fadeev. *A Brief Essay. . . p. 51. S. Zukhba. The Abkhazian Oral Folk Art, p. 214, 336; I. Antelava. Essays on History of Abkhazia of the XVII-XVIIIth ceneturies. Sukhumi, 1951, p. 93, 109; Sh. Inal-Ipa. Duripsh.*

about, the data on migration and ethnic processes having place in Abkhazia in the 17th century are worth paying attention.

Religious Situation. Till the 80-s of the 17th century Christianity flourished (between the rivers Inguri and Kelasuri). There functioned the three bishoprics - of Bedia, Mokvi and Dranda. The famous Kaichi and Tsipuri monasteries and dozens of churches were located in that region. Radically different situation was in Abkhazia. The hard political and socio-economical situation having place in the late mediaeval century, being caused by the change of the population, was reflected in religious life of the local population, as well as in the spiritual culture at large. Christianity was considerably weakened, churches and monasteries did not function. The Pitsunda cathedral being practically deserted from the middle of the 16th century was no exception, though formally it was the chair of Catholicos.

Dj. Lucca remarks, that in the church of the Cathalikosat of Pitsunda only one priest performed a church service and the village population goes to Cathedral. He spoke not about the general situation, but about the separate case, when the divine service is performed in accordance with the rules. The local ruler arising out of its name - Karabei is likely a Muslim, and the fact, that he did not attend the church service being described by Giovanni da Lucca¹³⁷ is the additional proof. Unlikely Karabei, "prince" Puto having heard about the arrival of G. da Lucca, offered him to stay in Sukhumi informing the guest, that he himself and his subjects are Christians and they need the priest like the one, who serves the neighboring Georgians or similar to him.

According to Kastelli's words, princes Sharvashidze "are eager to enlighten the country with the holly faith of Christ, which they recognize, but they don't have a priest".¹³⁸ Evlia Chelebi characterizes the religious situation in Abkhazia as follows: "If we call them the Kafirs (i. e. faithless, or not Muslims-the auth.), they can kill a man. If they are called Muslims they will be happy. They are not familiar with Qur'an and have no confession. They do not like Kafir, but they give their soul for a Muslim".¹³⁹

Witness of a Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheus about the christening of 40 000 Abkhazians by Levan II Dadiani and appointing a bishop for them¹⁴⁰ is the obvious proof of the fact, that on the territory of that time Abkhazia between the rivers of Bzip and Anakopia (now the river Psirtskha) the aboriginal Christian Georgian population had already been replaced by the pagan-highlanders. Otherwise the necessity of mass Christening of this district would not be needed, where during the centuries had been functioning Cathedral in Pitsunda, churches and monasteries in Likhni, Anakopia, Gagra, Bombora, Anukhva etc.

During the visit of Patriarch of Antiochia Macarius in Megrelia and namely in Mokvi the Abkhazians came to him and were christened by him. They asked the Patriarch "to visit them and Christian all the Abkhazians, as it was their long time wish to be Christened and thought the Christian faith. Those Abkhazians comprise today a great nation and are called Abazians. Till recently all of them were considered the Christians and the cathalicos throne sitting now in Imereti was located there. Even today the magnificent church of

137 B. Lominadze. *From History of the Georgian Feudal Relations*, vol. 1. Tb., 1966, p. 216.

138 Chr. Castelli. *Information and Album about Georgia*, p. 177, 192.

139 *The Book of Travel by Evlia Chelebi*, part 1, p. 106.

140 M. Seleznev. *Guide for Understanding the Caucasus*, book, 1, p. 28.

Apostle Andrew (In Pitsunda – auth.), through which they were converted into Christianity stays in their country and is rather respected by them. Nowadays few of them know how to cross and make metanias (majority of them even do not know what it is), as they have no priests and nobody takes care of them and don't teach them". Patriarch Macarius "ordained for them a new Mokvi bishop, presented him to the above mentioned representatives of the Abkhazian tribe and ordered him to go to them for teaching and christening them".¹⁴¹ The Abkhazians, who came to Macarius were by all means Georgians having stock to the Christian faith, but the majority of the population was the population being ignorant in Christian religion – was the new pagan population, that became firmly established in Abkhazia from the middle of the XVIIth century. No other reasons of vanishing of Christianity in the neighbourhood of the Pitsunda Cathedral besides the change of the population is not known to history.

During the invasion of the Abkhazian and North Caucasian tribes in Megrelia, the churches and monasteries were ruined and destroyed together with the villages. As the Italian missionaries witness, are the beginning of the 80-ies of the XVIIth century by Kvapu Sharvashidze's order more than 100 "Greek", i. e. Orthodox clergymen were killed.¹⁴² The real reason of the mass massacre and banishment of the clergy from the captured territories was their loyalty and devotedness to Odishi and disobedience to the Abkhazian possessors and not the artificial reason of the theft of Saint Stephan statue, being decorated with the precious stones.

Due to the situation, having place in the north-west part of Odishi from the end of the XVIIth century, the clergy was obliged to take the books, icons, crosses and other church utensils to the inner district of Megrelia. For example, the icon of Saint George from the Kiachi monastery was taken to the Obuja church. The Kiachi icon of the Archangel to the village Choga; Mokvi gospel being rewritten in 1300 – to Martvili; One of the two Mokvi icons of the Virgin was taken to the Zugdidi church and another to the Khobi Monastery. The icon of the Blachernitissa from Bedia being considered the main object of worship of Dadiani was conveyed to Martvili.¹⁴³

At the end of the 70-ies and beginning of the 80s of the XVIIth century Dranda and Mokvi episcopacies seized to exist. At the verge of the XVII-XVIIIth century other hearths of Christianity were fully destroyed, as well as church economy, especially to the west from the river Galidzga. In spite of the efforts of catholicoses David Nemsadze and Grigol Lordkipanidze keeping of the church territories on the territory of present Abkhazia was not managed. Those church peasants, who survived were sold as slaves to the Turks by the new-comers. A small part of the peasants with the support of Catholicos Grigol Lordkipanidze moved beyond Inguri.¹⁴⁴

In spite of establishing the pagan rules in Abkhazia respect of churches and reverence for sacred things and places were anyway maintained. This circumstance is the proof of the fact, that despite all the migration processes a significant part of the previous Georgian population remained there. According to Lamberti, the Ilori church of Saint George was greatly worshipped not only by the Georgians, but by the Abkhazians as well. "This church is greatly

141 Macarius of Antiochia. *Information about Georgia*, p. 106.

142 M. Tamarashvili. *History of Catholicism. . .*, p. 209.

143 B. Khorava. *Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia*, p. 112-113.

144 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodox Religion*, p. 112-113.

worshipped and respected by all Megrelians and by the neighbouring nations as well. That's why this church is very rich with silver and gold: all the icons are made of these metals and decorated with the precious stones... This church is respected by all the people, as though it stands in the far off place and near to the Sea, but it will never be robbed... even if near the church the precious stones would scattered on the road, even those would be safe and untouched. Not only the local population are in awe of this Saint, but the Abkhazians being the skilful thieves by nature and Turks being completely deprived of the light of Christianity as well".¹⁴⁵ According to the words of the same author the festival of Saint George of Ilori "is widely celebrated not only by Odishians, but even by the Abkhazians and Svans..."¹⁴⁶ According to Zampi's one relation, Ilori church is greatly respected by the neighboring peoples. He wrote: "Neighboring people though non-Christian are very pious. The closest neighbors – the Abkhazians, Alans, Jiks and other doubting people dare not rob it, though they know how rich it is and especially with precious stones and money."¹⁴⁷ Sharden met a noble Abkhazian accompanied by a servant in Skurcha (by the authors words in Isgaura) in the estuary of the river Kodori; Among the things being brought by him "was a solid silver riza from an icon". It appeared, that the icon was left in the church "as they dared not take it, for the fear of being killed by the Saint".¹⁴⁸

Destroyed Christian centers are replaced by the new pagan sacred places, being brought by the highlanders: Inal-Kuba (Inal's grave in Pskhu), Didrish (in the village Blaburkhva), Chigur-nikh (in the village Jirkhva), Aats-nikh (in the village Aats), Agan-ikha (in the village Marmariskari) and others. It is worth interests, that a part of the pagan objects of worship was located in the place of orthodox churches being destroyed by the Apsua-Abkhazians.¹⁴⁹

145 A. Lamberti. *Description of Colchis*, p. 153.

146 *Ibid.*

147 *Travel of Chardin through the Trans Caucasus in 1672-1673. Tb., 1902*, p. 95.

148 *Travel of Chardin through the Trans Caucasus*, p. 108.

149 B. Khorava. *Relations of Odishi and Abkhazia*, p. 158.

Chapter X. Anthropological Data on the Ethno genesis of the Abkhazians.

In anthropological respect, the Abkhazians are one of the best studied ethnic groups of the Caucasus. Somatology¹, craniology², blood genetic markers³, dermatoglyphics⁴, odontology⁵, physical development of the Abkhazians⁶ were studied. But the authors' point of view concerning the anthropological type and the ethno genesis of the Abkhazians is the subject of discussion.

V. V. Bunak in his famous work "Anthropological Composition of the Population of the Caucasus" regarded the anthropological type of the Abkhazians, as the local variant of the Lower-Rioni type of the Caucasian race. The Georgian Anthropologists⁷ included them into the Black Sea Coast variant of the Colchian type of the front Asian race. V. Alekseev considered the Abkhazians together with the Adigeans as the majority of the Acharian population the members of the group of the Pontus population of the Balkano-Caucasian race.⁸

1 V. V. Bunak . Anthropological Composition of the Population of the Caucasus. – Vestnik of the State Museum of Georgia, vol. XIII. Tb., 1946, p. 95-108; G. K. Janberidze. Abkhazian-Adigean relations in the light of the data of Anthropology. Theses of the reports of the VIIth century scientific session of the Institute of Experimental morphology of the Academy of sciences of Georgia. Tb., 1956; G. K. Janberidze. The Problem of the Abkhazian Origin in the Light of Anthropological Data. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation. M., 1963; M. G. Abdushelishvili. Anthropology of the Ancient and Modern Population of Georgia. Tb, m1964; A. A. Voronov, P. K. Kvitsinia, A. P. Pestriakov, N. V. Salamatina. Anthropomorphological Characteristic of the Abkhazians. – Abkhazian Longliving. M., 1987, p. 940100; P. K. Kvitsinia. Anthropological Characteristic. – Abkhazians. M., 2007, p. 39-48; Essays from the History of Georgia. Abkhazia. Tb., 2007, p. 173-177 (in Georgian); L. O. Bitadze, Sh. G. Laliashvili, T. N. Jashashvili. Anthro-Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians. – Analebi, 2008, N2, p. 341-360 (in Georgian).

2 M. G. Abdushelishvili. Materials on the Craneology of the Caucasus. – Works of the Institute of Experimental Morphology of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, vol. 5. Tb., 1995, p. 327-392 (in Georgian); M. G. Abdushelishvili on the Craniology of the Ancient and Modern Population of the Caucasus. Tb., 1966. V. P. Alekseev. Origin of the Caucasian Peoples. M. 1974; Bogdanov A. P. On the Skulls from the Caucasian Dolmens and on the Skulls from the Caucasian burial mound and cemetery. –Information of the amateurs of the science, anthropology and ethnography, vol. XXXV, ed. 4. M., 1882.

3 A. A. Voronov. Genogeography of the blood factors in the Trans Caucasus. -IX International Congress of the anthropological and ethnographical sciences. M. 1983, p. 1-20; Robert E. Ferrell, Naira Salamatina, S. M. Dalakishvili, N. A. Bakuradze and Ranajit Chakraborty. A Population Genetic Study in the Ochamchire Region Abkhazia, SSR, American journal of Physical Anthropology, 1985, p. 63-71, 66. ; A. A. Voronov, S. M. Dalakshvili, N. V. Salamatina, R. U. Ferrell. Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians. Genetic Study. –Abkhazian Longliving. M., 1987, p. 127-135.

4 I. P. Ladarina. On the study of dermatoglyphics of the population of the Caucasus. -Soviet Ethnography, 1975, N4, p. 121-130; G. L. Khit, V. O. Aslanishvili. New Materials on Dermoglyphics of the Population of the West Caucasus. -Field Research of the Institute of Demography. M., 1986, p. 170-174.

5 R. S. Kochiev. Odontological Characteristics of the Ethnic Groups of the Caucasus. -Thesis of the Reports at the All Union Scientific Session, being dedicated to the results of the field researches, 1970, Tbilisi, April, 1971; R. S. Kochiev. Odontological Characteristics of the Ethnic Groups of the Caucasus. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation . M., 1971; V. F. Kashibadze. Differentiation of the Population of the Caucasus according to the Odontological data. -Problems of Anthropology, 1988, ed. 80, p. 75-83; G. A. Aksianova. Characteristics of the Dental System (the age of coming out, racial peculiarities, caries disease). -Abkhazian Longliving. M., 1987, p. 120-127; V. F. Kashibadze. The Caucasus in the Anthropological Space of Eurasia. Odontological Researches. Rostov-na-Donu, 2006.

6 P. K. Kvitsinia. Morphological peculiarities of the aboriginal population of Abkhazia (on the example of the male Abkhazians). Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation. M. 1982; E. N. Miklashevskaya, V. S. Solovieva, O. A. Giliarova, M. Yu. Peskina. Peculiarities of the Somatic Development of the Abkhazian children and juveniles of the different ethno territorial groups of the SSSR; Autoreferat of the Doctoral Dissertation. M., 1985, p. 47.

7 Abdushelishvili. Anthropology of the ancient and modern population of Georgia. Tb., 1964; G. K. Janberidze. The Problem of the Origin of the Abkhazians in the Light of the Anthropological Data. Autoreferat of the Candidate Dissertation. M. 1963.

8 V. P. Alekseev. Origin of the Peoples of the Caucasus. M. 1974.

In P. Kvitsinia's opinion the Abkhazians should be included into the local anthropological variant of the Adigean type of the Balkano-Caucasian race.⁹ He thinks that formation of the morphological type of the Abkhazians occurred on the territory they occupy today. As the basis for this conclusion he uses the "comparative morphological and paleo anthropological materials",¹⁰ though on the first page of the cited work, the author marks, that besides the modern Abkhazian seires, that was repeatedly used by a number of the authors, "Any other series of the skulls from Abkhazia were not studied for stating the anthropological type of the Abkhazians."¹¹ As for the comparative morphological analyses in the given work it has not been carried out and the work itself is the variant of the earlier published article.¹² P. Kvitsinia denies the opinion of the Georgian anthropologists and says: "... The following anthropological and genetic investigations (Alekseev, 1974; Khit, 1983; Voronov. 1974) seriously shook their point of view".¹³

Let us analyze in details the works that P. Kvitsinia names, as those ones that changed the opinion about the origin of the Abkhazians.

The ethno genesis of the Abkhazians on the basis of the anthropological data is reviewed in several works. The first, who showed an interest in these works, was G. Janberidze. In his opinion, the somatological data point to the historical closer connections of the Abkhazians with the Georgian ethnic world, than with the Adigean. He considered the ethno genesis of the Abkhazians, as shift of one of the Georgian ethnological groups to the Adigean language.¹⁴ G. K. Janberidze concludes, that the anthropological researches enabled him to make a historical conclusion of an ethnic importance, that the "vast majority of the physical ancestors of the Abkhazian nation was related not to the ancestors of other Adigean people, but the Georgian speaking ancestors of modern Georgians".¹⁵

The peoples of the Abkhazian-Adigean language family (Acharians), in V. P. Alekseev's opinion "in their overwhelming majority belong to the Pontus group of the population and consequently, are the off-springs of the ancient population and are of the local origin."¹⁶ In the named by P. Kvitsinia work V. P. Alekseev basing on the data of G. Janberidze considers the "including of the Abkhazians into the group of the Adigean language speaking nations had place comparatively later and is the secondary phenomenon in their ethnic history. But the craniological materials on the Abkhazians don't give us a possibility of finally deciding this problem, as the materials on the west ethnographic groups of the Georgian peoples- Megrelians and Imeretians don't exist."¹⁷

G. L. Khit in the monograph "Dermatoglyphics of the Peoples of the USSR (1983) among the 41 population of the Caucasus stated the place of the Abkhazians among the Pontus race. On the basis of the five elements (D1 10, I cum, t, Hy Sum of DMT) of the skin relief having the racial-diagnostic value and one (TH/1), having the limited taxonom-

9 P. K. Kvitsinia. *Anthropological Characteristics. - The Abkhazians. M., 2007, p. 39-48.*

10 *Ibid*, p. 42.

11 *Ibid*, p. 39.

12 A. A. Voronov, P. K. Kvitsinia, A. P. Pestriakov, N. V. Salamatina. *Anthropomorphological Characteristics of the Abkhazians. - Abkhazian Long -living, p. 94-100.*

13 P. K. Kvitsinia. *Anthropological Characteristics. -The Abkhazians, p. 41.*

14 G. K. Janberidze. *The Problem of the origin of the Abkhazians in the Light of the Anthropological Data. Autoreferat...M., 1963.*

15 *Ibid*, p. 10.

16 V. P. Alekseev. *Origin of the Caucasian Nations. M., 1974, p. 193.*

17 *Ibid*, p. 194

ical significance. In G. L. Khit's opinion analyses of the main features showed, that the Abkhazians stand closer to the Pontus race, than to the front Asian, but at the same time they are different from the Pontus in the aspects, the Pontus race differs from the front Asian.¹⁸ The detailed analyses being carried out by G. L. Khit revealed, that the percent difference between the Pontus and front Asian races on the basis of the main features is minimal according to the Delta index (D110)-0, 39%, according to the index of Cammins (Icum)-0, 42%, ornament of the tenar and I finger – cushion (Th/1)-0, 1%, additional between finger Triradius - 1, 0%, axes triradius (t)-1, 3%, pattern on the hypotenar (Hy0-1, 3%). At the same time the amount of the AFT among the Abkhazians (16, 4%) – not far more and anyway it's closer to the frequency of this feature characteristic for the representatives of the front Asian (20, 7%), that the Pontus (21, 7%) races. In the female groups the difference between these races is bigger and the greatest percentage difference is marked on the axes triradius t (4, 8%). According to t the Abkhazians (52, 1%) is far closer to the front Asian race (53, 9%). Besides, the dermatoglyphic characteristics being given in the table 27 of the main local races of the Caucasus¹⁹ points to the very small morphological resemblance of the population of the Caucasus. The Pontus race is far more closer to the front Asian race according to the three sings (Ic, AFT, Th/1), to the Caucasian by two (D1 10, t) and to the Caspian according to the existence of the pattern on Hy. The oriental complex being calculated by the author is maximal among the Pontus race (41, 6) and minimal among the Caucasians (34, 0) and an insignificant difference is marked between the front Asian (39, 0) and Caspian (39, 4) races. The assertion of the author, that ... “first of all the three races reveal the resemblance between each other and it is more emphasized in the male groups. The Caspian race occupies a more isolated position”²⁰, it becomes a bit difficult to understand on the background of the oriental complex being expressed in the figures. A bit unusual are the data of the generalized dermatoglyphical distances of the peoples of the Caucasus²¹, namely the short distances between the Svans and the Kurds, Mokhevs and Kumiks, Armenians and Balkars, Mtiuls and Assyrians. The Abkhazians are placed in the sub cluster together with the Kabardians and Gurians, who on the level for the middle distances are united with the Ossetian-Chechenian-Udian and Mtiulo-Assyrian sub clusters. The listed nations cannot have belonged to the Pontus race.

I. P. Ladaria²² dedicated special studies to the dermatoglyphics of the Abkhazians. She says that between the Abkhazian-Adigean nations there is no significant difference. In the work 11 ethnographic groups of the West Caucasus are analyzed: The Abkhazians of Ochamchire, Gudauta, Gagra regions and Megreles from Zugdidi, Imeretians form the Samtredia region, Cherkessians of the Khabez and Adige-Khabal regions, Abazians of the town Cherkesk and Uchkeken districts and Kabardinians from Nalchik. The distribution of the dermatoglyphic sings in the studied groups is dispersal and greatly varies. Each population is characterized with the peculiar match of the magnitude signs. Difference between the three Abkhazians populations according to the sum of the sings is

18 G. L. Khit. *Dermatoglyphics of the Nations of the USSR*, p. 109.

19 *Ibid.*

20 G. L. Khit. *Dermatoglyphics of the USSR Nations*, p. 109.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 101-107.

22 I. P. Ladaria. *On the Study of the Dermatoglyphics of the Population of the Caucasus.* _ *Soviet Ethnography*, 1975, N4, p. 121-130.

approximately the same. The Ochamchirian and Gagra Abkhazians (men) are far from each other. The free Abkhazian series according to the sum of the signs stands closer to the Acharians and is far much distant from the Svans.²³ Here we have to emphasize one more work²⁴, in which is given the genetic characteristic of the Abkhazians according to the groups of blood: ABO, MNSs, Rhesus (extensive), Kell, Duffy, Kidd, Lewis, serum albumin: Hp, Tf, Gc, Cp, Al; erythrocyte ferments: AH1, ADA, ACP, GPT, GLO1, LDH, PGM, PH1, PGD of the villages of Clou, Mokva, Gvada, Jgerda, Atara of the Ochamchire region and villages of Likhni, Duripsh, Kaldakhvara of the Gudauta region. This work was performed within the program of the complex study of the population with the increased level of long living and thus, the main aim was to clarify of the connections of the genetic peculiarities with long living and stating of the of homogeneity of each of the studied systems. On the basis of the genetic distances being calculated between each pair of the population the author comes to the conclusion that “Abzhuan and Bzip Abkhazia are on the verge of the subpopulation division. By all means the population of the Anjua Abkhazians in the Ochamchire region is highly homogeneous”.²⁵ In this work the genetic interrelation of the Abkhazians and other Caucasian peoples according to the sum of the genetic markers was not analyzed. The comparison was performed according to the separate systems. F. E. Distribution of the gen frequencies of the system AVO of the ethnic groups –resident so West Georgia and having the Colchian and Caucasian anthropological type (Gurians, Megreles, Abkhazians, Svans), is not quite usual and he picks them out from the other peoples and nations of the Trans Caucasus having the gen frequencies according to the AVO systems and being similar according to this system with the majority of the European and front Asian peoples²⁶. From the said above comes, that the point of view on the including of the Abkhazians into the Colchian type of the front Asian race according to the “ latest researches” being observed in the works of P. Kvitsinia²⁷ are unshakable.

Thus, the analyses of the given literature concerning the anthropological type of the Abkhazians as well as the ethno genesis do not lead to one single opinion. We have to maintain, that study of the ethno genesis of any people is a very complex process. Several factors arise an exceptional interest to the ethno genesis of the Abkhazians. The language of the modern Abkhazians is included onto the Abkhazian-Adigeian group of the Iberian-Caucasian languages and the centuries-old historical, close cultural-political and economic connections reproach them to Georgia and the Georgians. Furthermore, the widespread Abkhazian family names more than in 80 % are Georgian. SO, in order to state the ways of comprising of such a complex phenomenon as the ethnos is necessary to make great efforts from the side of each representative of different scientific fields. One of the main sources of in study of the ethno genesis of any people is anthropology. The anthropological material together with the paleontological, craniological and somatological data practically covers all the history, being imprinted in the morphological signs.

²³ Ibid, p. 126.

²⁴ A. A. Voronov, S. M. Dalakishvili, N. V. Salamatina, R. U. Ferrell. Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians. – The Phenomenon of Long living, p. 127-135.

²⁵ A. A. Voronov, S. M. Dalakishvili, N. V. Salamatina, R. U. Ferrell. Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians. – The Phenomenon of Long living, p. 134.

²⁶ A. A. Voronov, S. M. Dalakishvili, N. V. Salamatina, R. U. Ferrell. Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians. – The Phenomenon of Long living, p. 129.

²⁷ P. K. Kvitsinia. Anthropological Characteristics. –Abkhazians, p. 39-48.

given work for clarifying of the anthropological type of the Abkhazian and directing of their ethno genetic connections were studied the Ochamchirian (see graph. N1), Gagrian and Gudautian Abkhazians compared with the nations of the West Caucasus by means of the modern statistic methods. Program of the study included craniology, anthropometry, anthroposcopy, quantitative and qualitative signs of dermatoglyphics, groups of blood of the system AVO, Rhesus (D), MN, P, Kell, Duffy.

The inner population analyses of the modern craniological series of the Abkhazians showed the high polymorphism according to the majority of the craniological signs. The brachycranial²⁸ of the Abkhazians being mentioned earlier with slight and middle cross-cut diameters of the skull. Besides brachycranial, the Abkhazians series are characterized by the straight, moderate width forehead, sharp protruding nose bones and middle in width and high eye-sockets. According to the vertical profile they are orthognathic, in the horizontal flatness profiling is sharp. Characteristics of the male and female part of the series are identical. There is no difference on the separate forms of the skull (2/3 of which are characterized by brachycranial and 1/3 by the dolicho-mesocrania).

Including into the comparative analyses of the modern craniological series of the Acharians and Megreles showed that the Abkhazians, Acharians and Megreles with the comparatively narrow face and nose are by all means the representatives of the Colchian type. Peculiarity of the Abkhazian series is a small length of the face basis, length wise diameter and upper width of the face and middle width of the cheek-bone diameter. The Abkhazians, as well as the Georgians are the groups being characterized by the Strong profiling of the face being confirmed by the II component. Unlike, the Acharians, the Abkhazians are more polymorphic. Componential and discrimination analyses showed that the Abkhazians and Acharians are more like each other and slightly differ from the Megreles.²⁹

Craniological polymorphism of the Abkhazians is impossible to estimate only on the basis of the modern series. For the ethno genetic reconstructions is necessary to obtain and analyze the materials on population living in Abkhazia in the space and time. Unfortunately, the craniological data not only from Abkhazia, but throughout the whole territory of Western Georgia are scarce. The territory of western Georgia was settled by humans, the numerous monuments being the proof of the heritage and cultural activities of human beings are known, but the craniological of the early epochs are absent. In the archeological literature is mentioned the Gumistian culture of the early bronze period. In the necropolises of that period the buried lied on the side in a writhed position.³⁰ Craniological and post craniological skeletons from those necropolises have not been used in the science yet. According to the latest archeological discoveries, in the mountainous Abkhazian village Achmarda of the Gagra district were studied the five earlier disturbed graves and was excavated one undamaged burial. The humane skeletons lie on their backs, their head oriented to South-West, the legs mostly stretched, the hands were probably crossed and

28 M. G. Abdushelishvili. Materials on the Craniology of the Abkhazians. -Works of the Institute of Experimental Morphology of the Academy of sciences of Georgia, 1995, vol5. p. 327-392 (in Georgian); V. P. Alekseev. Origin of the Caucasian Nations. M. 1974.

29 Anthropologic History of the Abkhazians, p. 62.

30 V. V. Bzhanina. The Results of the Study of the Gumista Settlement in 1967. – The Brief Information of the Institute of Linguistics of the USSR, 15, M., 1969.

the writhes were located on the pelvis bones. According to the discovered artifacts, the authors date the necropolis from the IV-Vth centuries A. D.³¹ In the village Arasadzikh of the Ochamchire district are started the excavations of the numerous settlement.³² In the first field season were found more than 1500 fragments of the ceramic vessels, 70-80 % of which belong to the fragments of the vessels of the bronze epoch; the rest is dated from the antique and mediaeval centuries³³. The craniological material from the territory of Abkhazia of the developed medieval centuries (5 male and 1 female skulls) is excavated in the Gudauta district in the village Duripsh.³⁴ The Duripsh series are characterized by the middle lengthwise and cross-cut diameters, the head marker is brachycranial, the face is of the middle size and according to the face marks it is europrotopropean. The nose is of the middle size and height, bridge of the nose is very high, the face is sharply profiled in the horizontal plane. The set of the named signs attributes them to the front Asian race. The population of Georgia and Abkhazia as well of that period genetically and morphologically belonged to the circle of variations of the front Asian race. According to the craniological signs the resemblance of the medieval century Abkhazian series with the modern is obvious.

In the last period, appeared the craniological material from the territories of western Georgia. The skulls are obtained in Imereti of the middle bronze epoch (Sagvarjile 1m), early antique period (Sairkhe, 2m and 1j), late antique (Jieti, 10 m and 10 j), early feudal (Vani, 1m), Hellenistic (Nokalakevi, 12m), early feudal (Nokalakevi, 1m) developed medieval centuries (Tsalenjikha in Samgerelo, 1m, 1j), late medieval centuries (Nokalakevi, 1m); in Acharia – of the developed medieval centuries (Vernebi, 12m1j; Skhalta, 20m, 7j, 1sv; Tkhillvana, 11m, 3j; Kalota, 3m, 2j); of the modern period – Megrelians (Uchabona, Tsalenjikha, Medana, 9m, 3j) and Acharians (Batumi, 34m, 26j). The comparative analyses of the mentioned above materials in the space and time with the simultaneous series being obtained in eastern and southern Georgia enable us to make a conclusion, that the common process of brachycephalization and europrotopropeanisation took place throughout the whole territory of Georgia. Comparison of the synchronous craniological materials from the territory of Abkhazia, North Caucasus, Georgian and Armenia are the simple proof about the typological and genetic resemblance of the Abkhazian series of the corresponding periods. In spite of the fact, that in the 15-17th centuries penetration of the North Caucasian groups in Abkhazia is fixed, this phenomenon in comparison of the morphological signs of the series of a developed medieval centuries (11-13th centuries) and modern (19th century) is not stated. This fact proves that in the 19th century there were few North Caucasian ethnic groups in Abkhazia.

As, the two main dialects are distinguished in the Abkhazian language – The Abzhan and Bzip,³⁵ somatological materials on the Abkhazians speaking both of those dialects were collected by M. G. Abdushelishvili in the 50-s of the 20th century. The Abkha-

31 V. V. Bzhania, D. S. Bzhania. *The Newest Archeological Discoveries in the mountainous Abkhazian villages - Achmarda and Arasadzikh. Archeology, Ethnology and Folklore of the Caucasus. Makhachkala, 207, p. 189-193.*

32 *Ibid*, p. 191.

33 *Ibid*, p. 191.

34 In 1977 the excavations were carried out by archeologists M. Baramidze and M. Tsvinaria and anthropologist V. Aslanishvili.

35 K. V. Lomtadze. *The Abkhazian Language. -The Languages of the USSR. Iberian-Caucasian Languages, vol. 4. M., 1967, p. 101-123.*

zians from Gagra (in the village Bzip), Gudauta (Abgarkhuk, Achandara, Djirkhva) and Ochamchire (Kvitouli, Jgerda) were studied. The author studied the peculiarities of the morphological type of the Abkhazians on the basis of these materials. He defined their place in the anthropological classification of the Caucasian nations among the Georgian groups of the east Black Sea coast. ³⁶ The signs according to which the Abkhazians were attributed to the Black Sea coast variant of the Colchian type of the front Asian race are: Large heads, wide faces, comparatively dark pigmentation, protruding, bulgy nose, with the pointed end and base, abundant hair on the chest and face. These are the signs differentiating the Adigean and Colchian types. The Black Sea coast and west Georgian variants of the Colchian type, width of the eye slot, cartilaginous nose profile (frequency of the bulgy shapes), percent of the lowered end and base of the noses. These signs are mostly characteristic for the representatives of the west Georgian variant. A number of signs – the thickness of the lips, high percentage of the light eyes, fair hair, and a middle percentage of existence of the fold of an upper lid are more characteristic for the groups, being included into the Black Sea coast variant of the Colchian type. These differences have the different directions. The signs characteristic for the Black Sea coast variant in the morphological respect give the Adigean type and the opposite sequence of these signs lead to the west Georgian – Iberian type. ³⁷

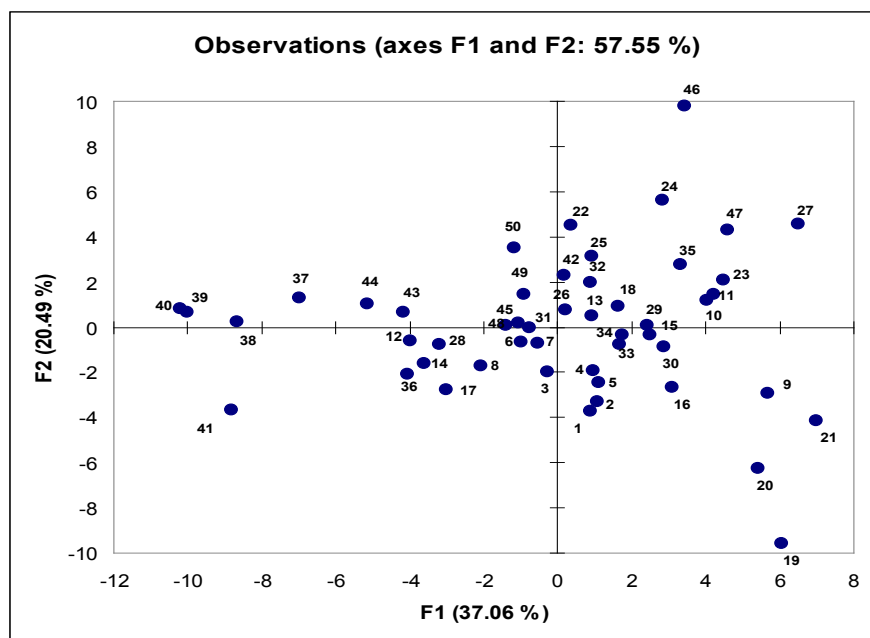


Fig. N1. Location of the West Caucasian ethnic groups on the projection of the I-II components on which the Abkhazians are ; 1 – Ochamchire, 2-Gudauta, 3-Gagra, 4-Senaki, 5-Zugdidi, 6-Gali, 7-TsalenJikha, 8-Chkorotskhu; the Lazians are: 9-Sarpi, 10-Khelvachauri, 11- Khelvachauri (migrants); Gurians are: 12-Ozurgeti, 13-Chokhatauri, 14-Lanchkhuti; The Acharians are: 15 – Batumi, 16-Khulo,

³⁶ M. G. Abdushelishvili. Anthropology o the Ancient and Modern Population of Georgia. Tb., 1964.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 67.

17-Kobumeti, 18-Keda, 19-village Gordjomi, 20-village Riketi, 21-village Shubaani, 22-Kvemo, 23-Balszemo, 24-Balskvemo; The Rachians are : 25-Ambrolauri, 26-Oni, 27-Highlanders; The Sechkhumians: 28 – Tsageri; The Imeretians are: 29- Bagdadi, 30-Vani, 31-Chiatua, 32-Zestafoni, 33-Samtredia, 34-Terjola, 35-Tkibuli, 36-Sachkhere; The Adigenas are : 37-Abadzekhi, 38-Chemgui, 39-Bzhedugi, 40-Shapsugs from Takhtamukai, 41-Shapsugs from Lazarevskaia’The Chekessians are: 42- from Zelenchuk, 43-from Besleneevka; The Abazians: 44-from Tapant, 45-from Ashkhara; The Karachaians are: 46-from Ust-Djegutinsk; The Balkarians are : 47- from Elbrus; The Kabardinians are: 48-from Baksan, 49-from Lesken, 50-from Nagorn.

Besides that, the modern Abkhazians speak two dialects, among them are spread the family names of the Georgian, North Caucasian, Russian and other origins.³⁸ This is the reason of carrying out the intergroup analyses according to the complex of the signs, including cephaloscopic and cephalometric signs, descriptional and qualitative signs of dermatoglyphics, izoantigen systems (ABO, Rhesus, MN, Kell, Duffy) using the methods of multidimensional statistics. The analyses of each of the listed systems within the three populations and also among them is revealed the polymorphism of the Abkhazians. On the background of intrapopulation diversity the interpopulational homogeneity of the population is marked. The opinion about the morphological homogeneity of the population was expressed, which is supposedly based on the small number of the family names, being spread among the modern Abkhazians, specificity of their marriage structure (strict exogamy, marriage preference and direction of the marriage link tie circle) and also the ancient substrate being one and the same and common for all the territorial and ethnic groups of west Georgia.³⁹ Comparison of the spectrum of the Abkhazian family names, being involved into the research on the basis of the somatological and dermatoglyphical systems, revealed the main nucleuse of the family names, living compactly in every Abkhazian population.⁴⁰ The amount of the common family names in each pair of the population is not big. Thus, the intrapopulation homogeneity of the Abkhazians being marked is not connected with the family composition of the studied populations and as a matter of facts; it is the result of the free and continuous merging. The data given by G. Janberidze confirm all the said above. Thus, in spite of the different composition the differentiation between the Abkhazians was not noticed. It seems, that due to the frequent and repeated migration (the 15-17th centuries) of the North Caucasian groups the assimilation was so natural and organic, that the specificity of the migrated and local population disappeared. Such a phenomenon was possible, in case, if the migrated element morphologically did not significantly differ from the local (common Caucasian substrate) and the part of the new component was not high and overwhelming the proof of which is the correlation of the family names of different origin among the modern Abkhazians.

38 T. Mibchuani. *Following the Bloody Trails of the Abkhazian Separatists*. Tb., 1994, p. 82-88.

39 L. O. Bitadze, Sh. G. Laliashvili, T. N. Jashashvili. *Anthropo-Genetic Characteristic of the Abkhazians*. -Analebi, 2008, N2, p. 341-360 (in Georgian).

40 *Anthropological History of the Abkhazians*. Tb., 2008, p. 311 (in Georgian).

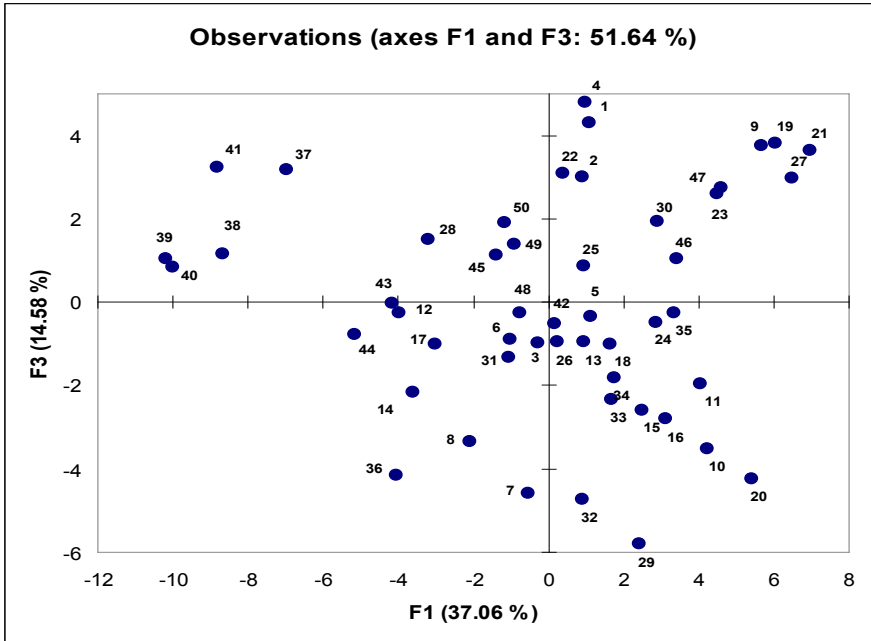


Fig. N2. Location of the ethnic groups of western Caucasus on the projection of the I and III components. 1-50 are ethnic groups pointed in the graph N1.

For stating the place of the Abkhazians on the anthropological map of the Caucasus a special research was conducted on the set of the signs.⁴¹ Componential analyses of the somatological signs (fig. 1) revealed the great tendency towards the North Caucasian groups of the Georgian ethnographic groups, that towards the Abkhazian ones. The connection with the Gagra population is noticed with the wider circle of the Georgian population (fig. 2). In the span of the I and III components is necessary to mark the division of the Abkhazian population, but for the Abkhazians from Ochamchire closer are the Megrelians from Senaki and for the Abkhazians from Gudauta Kvemo (lower) Svans.

On the bases of these signs were calculated the morphological distances between the each pair of the population of the west Caucasus,⁴² being the proof of the close morphological resemblance of the peoples of this region. At the same time, the Abkhazians appear to be closer to the Georgian groups, that with the North Caucasian. Average morphological distances between the Megrelians and Abkhazians (0, 0893), are practically identical with the analogous distances between the Megrelians and Gurians (0, 0840). The most important is that the Abkhazians and speaking the same language the Abazians according to the componential analyses cannot be included into the nearest circle of the ethnic groups. Thus, on the basis of the conducted analyses is impossible to share the point of view⁴³ on including of the Abkhazians together with the Adigeans into the Pontus group of the populations. It is also difficult to agree with the opinion⁴⁴ on the shift of one

41 Anthropological History of the Abkhazians, p. 89-160-182-242, 254-275.

42 Ibid, p. 74-160.

43 V. P. Alekseev. Origin of the Caucasian Peoples. M., 1974.

44 G. K. Janberidze. The Problem of the Origin of the Abkhazians in the Light of the Anthropological Data. M., 1963.

group of the Western Georgians to the Adigean language. In spite of the fact, that among the modern Abkhazians having the Georgian family names most are Megrelian in form the data do not confirm the specific resemblance with the Megrelians; but vice versa, the nearest circle for the Abkhazians is the common Georgian, as together with the Megrelians among them are the Svan, Acharians, Gurians, Imeretians and Rachians.⁴⁵

Distribution of the Qualitative dermatoglyphical signs of the west Caucasian population is characterized with the significant polymorphism. Average morphological resemblance of the Abkhazian populations according to the skin relief is rather high ($r = 0.9979$). At the same time, the Abkhazian populations reveal the greater resemblance with the separate Georgian groups. F. E. The Abkhazians from Ochamchire and Gurians from Ozurgeti (0, 9989), Megrelians from Zugdidi (0, 9986), Megrelians from Senaki (0, 9982), Imeretians from Bagdadi and Gurians from Chokhatauri (0, 9972) etc.⁴⁶ The analyses of the circles of close population revealed, that the Abkhazians by the morphological (in this case with the dermatoglyphical) resemblance are most closely connected with the Georgian ethnic world. Their resemblance with the Adigean-Cherkessian groups is marked only on the level 0, 9110-0, and 9384. It is necessary to emphasize, that the level of resemblance 0, 9 is quite high, but significantly lower, than the Average Abkhazian (0, 9979) and Georgian (0, 9955) resemblances. Among the Georgian ethnographic groups the average weighed resemblance between the Gurians and Abkhazians does not much yield to the average Abkhazian group. Besides, distinguishing of the coefficient clusters of resemblance with the help of the Pao⁴⁷ method and pair-group weighed method created by Sokal-Rohlf⁴⁸, componential analyze was carried out.⁴⁹ Usage of the above mentioned methods confirmed the close connections of the Abkhazians with the Georgians. For the first time have been studied the quantitative signs of dermatoglyphics of not only the Abkhazians, but of all the populations of the West Caucasus being represented by the qualitative signs. Among the closest groups according to this system together with the Abkhazians appeared to be the Lazians, Megrelians from Zugdidi, Senaki, Gali, Balskvemo and Kvemo Svans, Acharians from Batumi. Unlike, the Abkhazians from Ochamchire and Gudauta, the closest circle of the Abkhazians from Gagra is the Georgian. The obtained information of the qualitative and quantitative signs of dermatoglyphics is as a matter of fact identical, as it fixes existing in the population of the West Caucasus the ancient, common for all of them substrate. The Abkhazians don't show the great resemblance with the North Caucasian groups (fig. N3).

45 *Anthropological History of the Abkhazians. Tb., 2008 (in Georgian).*

46 *Ibid.*

47 S. Rao, *Linear Statistical Methods and Their Usage. M., 1968, p. 461-540.*

48 R. R. Sokal, F. S. Rohlf. 2000. *Biometry. Freeman Co., New York, p. 887.*

49 Hammer, Harper DAT, Ryan PD. PAST: Paleontological statistics software package for education and data analysis. *Paleontological Electronica* (2001) 4:9. (http://paleo-electronica.org/2001_1/past/issue1_01.htm).

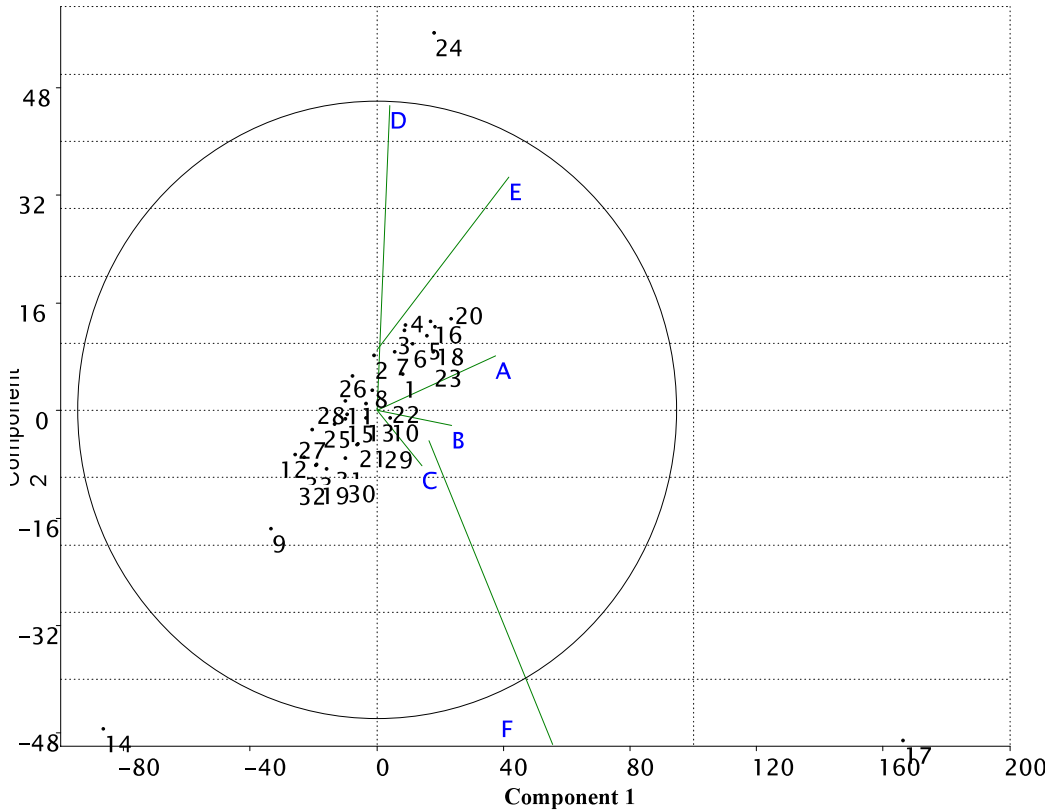


Fig. N. 3 Location of the ethnic groups according to the quantitative signs of dermatoglyphics on the projects of the I-II components, where the Abkhazians are: 1-Ochamchire, 2-Gudauta, 3-Gagra; The Megrelians are: 4-Senaki, 5-Zugdidi, 6-Gali; The Lazians are: 7-Batumi; The Gurians are: 8-Ozurgeti, 9-Chokhatauri; The Acharians are: 10-Batumi, 11-Khulo, 12-Keda, 13-village Gorjomi, 14 –village –Riketi, 15-villageTkhilvani; The Svan are: 16-Lentekhi, 17-Mestia (Balszemo), 18-Mestia (Balskvemo); The Rachians are: 19-Ambrolauri, 20-Oni (highlanders); The Lechkhumians are: 21-Tsageri; The Imeretians are: 22-Bagdadi, 23-Chiatura, 24-Zestafoni, 25-Samtredia, 26-Terjola; The Adigeans are: 27-Abadzekhs, 28-Chem-guans, 29-Abazians of the Ashkhar dialect ‘The Cherkessian are: 30-Adige-Khabal; The Karachaiaians are: 31-Karachaevsk; The Kabardinians are: 32 from Beslen; The Balkarians are ; 33 – from Elbrus.

The closest resemblance is often observed by the Georgian (Acharians, Imeretians, and Samtredia) groups. This fact, by all means is not the result of mixing between them, but revealing of the ancient common roots.

The data according to the izoantigen systems of blood revealed the great heterogeneity of the population of the Caucasus in comparison with the dermatoglyphical and somatological sings. It is necessary to emphasize the great resemblance of each Abkhazian popu-

lation with the separate territorial groups of the Georgians and Adigo-Cherkessians compared with each other. The most peculiar and unusual is the Gudauta population, which reveals the low levels of resemblance, except the Gurians of the Ozurgeti (0, 995), Imeretians of the Sachkhere (0, 992) and the Adigeans of the Koshe-Khabal (0, 997) districts, when with the Abkhazians from Ochamchire (0, 964) and Gagra (0, 977) those markers are significantly low. The Koshekhalian Adigeans is the only group in respect of which all the Abkhazian populations show the high resemblance. The most polymorphic is the population of the Ochamchire Abkhazians. On the level of 0, 99-0, 997 it reveals the elements of resemblance with the biggest circle of population: Megrels (Zugdidi), Gurians (Lanchkhuti), Acharians (Batumi, Kobuleti), Rachains (highlanders), Imeretians (Bagdadi, Vani, Chiatura, Zestafoni, Samtredia), Adigeans (From Uliap and Koshe-Khabalsk), Cherkessians and Abkhazians from Gudauta. Into the circle of the closest populations of the Abkhazians from Gagra were included the Megrels (Senaki, Zugdidi), Gurians (Chokhatauri and Lanchkhuti), Cherkessians, Karachaians and Kabardinians. According to the izoantigen systems the Abkhazians show a great resemblance with the North Caucasian groups. This fact forces us to analyze all the coefficients of resemblances of the North Caucasian groups with the Georgian ones. It appeared, that the Adigeans from the Koshe-Khabalsk district reveal the resemblance on a quite high level (0, 990-0, 996) with the groups of the Georgians from various territories: Megrels from Zugdidi and Gali, Lazians from Batumi and Kobuleti, Imeretians from Bagdadi, Chiatura, Zestafoni and Samtredia.

The Acharians of Batumi appeared to be the only group revealing the resemblance with the Uliap and Koshe-Khabalian Adigeans and Khabezian Cherkessians. The examples of the resemblance necessarily reflect all the mosaics of the separate common elements in the genetic structure of the Caucasian population. Of course, the groups of blood more than the other anthropological systems are susceptible to drift of the genes and natural selection, their distribution is closely connected with the geographical environment etc. Thus, the izoantigen systems in major differentiate the population of western Caucasus. All the said above and also the result of comparison of the Abkhazians having the Georgian and non-Georgian family names according to the signs, having the high taxonomic significance (the least width of foreheads, cheek-bone diamtre, morphological height of the face, nose width, percentage of the protruding and bulgy parts of the nose, profile of the upper lip, head marker, body length), exhausted all methods and possibilities, enabling to simply determine the place of the Abkhazians among the Georgian language groups of the Western Caucasus.⁵⁰

Majority of the Abkhazian family names are of the Georgian origin – Megrelian in form. In spite of this fact, as it was mentioned above, the resemblance of the Abkhazians with the Megrelians according to the on the strength of all the anthropogenetic sings do not have one direction, i. e. the closest circle of the Abkhazians is the Georgian. Different according to the family composition Abkhazian groups with the Georgian and non-Georgian family names with their anthropological appearance are connected with the Georgian

⁵⁰ G. K. Janberidze. *Interrelations of the Abkhazians and Adigean Ethnic Groups in the Light of the Data of Anthropology*. Manuscript, 1960, p. 1-25 (In Georgian). The manuscript is kept in the fund of the department of Anthropology of I. Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology.

ethnic world. Explanation for this fact, as well as the high level of the resemblance of the Adigean-Cherkessian groups with the Georgians according to the three independent (somatology, dermatoglyphics, and izoantigen systems of blood) anthropological systems of the signs, is made possible by the existence of the common substrate. As a rule, the racial peculiarities of the ethnic groups keep for a long time that forms of the resemblance and wholeness that preceded their comprising. The ethnic integrity, emerging due to the territorial closeness of the groups, anthropologically remains within changeability, characteristic for the given territory.⁵¹

Thus, anthropologic data simply solve the problem of the origin of the Abkhazians. The anthropologic appearance of the Abkhazians is like with the appearance of the ethnographic groups of the Georgians and i. e. their origin is closely connected with a lot of concrete territorial group (Megrels) and in a certain doze is revealed in respect with the west Georgian groups. Anthroposcopic data and modern family composition of the Abkhazians clearly point to the direction and level of the ethnic connections, as if the historical sources, toponymes, ethnonimes, hydronimes, and monuments of architecture having the Georgian inscriptions etc. did not exist. All this would be enough for proving the closet ethnic and cultural ties of the Abkhazians with the Georgians.

Analyses of the somatological data according to the family composition of the Abkhazians confirm that the ethnic belonging of the ancient tribes being settled on the territory of Abkhazia was the Georgian. The morphological proof of it we find in the sign of dermatoglyphics as the most conservative and revealing the more ancient ties not susceptible to the assortive crossing.

Any ethnic group is comprised by means of the different elements. The Abkhazians are not the exception in this respect. Concerning the ethnic belonging of the Abazgians and Abshils exist the contradictory opinions. Though, if these tribes were morphologically significantly different from the surrounding tribes, then this fact would necessarily be reflected in the anthropological appearance of the Abkhazians. Thus, we can conclude, that the oldest population of West Georgia was morphologically integral.

51 V. V. Bunak. *Ethnic Commonness and the Racial Division. - The Racial - Genetic Processes in the Ethnic History, 1974, p. 3-10.*

Chapter XI. Linguistic bases of ethnic history of Abkhazia

During the researches of historical and ethnological problems, historians and ethnologists usually use lingual materials, which is quite natural, because the written sources are either not enough, or they do not exist at all or because of objective and subjective reasons the existing written information is obscure for restoring the historic pictures of different epochs.

The language appears to be the phenomenon which reflects the historical path of the concrete ethnos quite exactly and gives primary information about when and where the ethnos lived, what kind of historical and cultural steps of progress were passed, what kind of relationships they had with the other ethnos and so on. The first researcher who gave the great attention to lingual historygraphical problems about the genesis and history of Abkhazian (Apsuisian) nation was academician N. I. Marr; ¹ and his suggestions became the principals for hypothesis of the following authors.

1. The territory of West Georgia, including modern Abkhazia is said to be inhabited with mutual ancestors of actual Abkhazians (Apsuisians), Abazians, Adigatians, Kabardians and Ubikhans, in other words, Proto- bkhazian- Adighian ethnos. In confirmation of all this some of the scientists thought to be geographic names containing following syllables: **ps(a)**, **q'va** and **ra**.

2. The south border of Proto-abkhazian-Adighian ethnosis settlement supposedly has been the central part of Anatolia. This hypothesis is based on the phonetic resemblance between tribe names of Abeshlains and Kashks (II millennium B. C.) and autoethnonym of modern Abkhazians **Apswa** and late medieval Georgian name of Adigs (Chircassians) **Kašag-i** (Mid. Rus. Kasogi).

3. Apsils and Abasgs who were recorded in Greek-Romanian sources in the beginning of A. C.

are undoubtedly supposed to be the ancestors of the actual Abkhazians. It is also supposed as if the half of Abazins (Tapants) moved from the territory of the modern Abkhazia to the north Caucasus in XIII – XIV centuries, and the second half (Askhars or Shkaraura "Gorians") – moved in XVII – XVIII centuries. This hypothesis is based on phonetic resemblance between terms of **Apsil** and **Abasg** Greek-Romanian ethnic sources and current terms of **apswa** and **abaza**.

4. In the beginning, Georgian (Kartveli) population is supposed not to have resided on the territory of the west Georgia. For the proof of this, signs of Abkhazian - Adighian language substratum in Megrelian and Svanian dialect etc., has been searched and is still being found.

For the purpose of establishment of the verity level of the listed hypothesis, it is appropriate to have short critical analyses of the primary sources, in other words, the conclusion of N. I. Marr. Let's take for example his article "From the linguistic trip in Abkhazia" (1912 y.) In the article, on the bases of the superficial judgment, the author offers the analyses of the Abkhazian surnames Gubaz (g^oəbaz) he willfully singles out 3 "components": g^o+ba+z In his opinion, the first "component" is being the root of the Abkhazian word a-g^oə "heart", syllable **ba** – Abkhazian suffix which forms the surname (Mid. Ab-

¹ N. J. Marr. *On the History and Language of the Abkhazians*. M-L., 1936.

khazian surnames: Tar-ba, Axal-ba, Ak'a-ba) and the consonant **z** supposedly ascends to the Georgian surname ending – dze(ze)- “son”. The Author believed that the form g^oəbaz is Georgianized version of the baselined Abkhazian version g^oəba “son of the heart”. In his opinion the version Gubaz subsequently became the men’s first name, for example, the kings of the Egyptian kingdom Gubaz the I (50-60 years, V century) and Gubaz the II (40-50 years, VI century). With the same name N. I. Marr also connected the name of the river Gubazouli in Guria, after what he made the conclusion, as though, long before the fifth century A. C. , the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians inhabited as on the land of current Abkhazia as on the other territory of the west Georgia and the Georgianizing of the Abkhazians ended before the birth of the king Gubaz the I. ²

This hypothesis can not stand the critic for the next reasons:

1. There are no real historic reasons to assume the existence of neither the surname with suffix **-ba** nor any models of the Abkhazian surnames, before V century A. C. By that time not only Abkhazians had no surnames (There is no such information in the written sources) but many high level progressed nations as well.

2. If we share the hypothesis which tells as that the common ancestors of the Abkhazians and the Abazians both inhabited on the land of the modern Abkhazia till XIII century and the Tapans were the first who moved to south Caucasus there is the logical possibility that the surnames with the suffix **-ba** must also be spread among the Tapans and Ashkhars, however, the materials gathered in Tapan and Ashkhar villages show that there is no model of the surname with the ending **-ba** among the Tapans, and there are only 13 surnames with this suffix among the Ashkhars and they are only the official Russian passport form and not in the spoken Abazian. ³The fact of using the suffix **-ba** gives us the reason of the conclusion only in Russian language, that the model with the suffix **-ba** is not being ancient historical for the Ashkhar surnames and it must be thought as the latest loanword from the Abkhazian language. The next fact shows this: In the 20th years of the XX century 60 Ashkhar families were moved from the north Caucasus to Abkhazia, to be more exact, to Pskhu, ⁴ with the purpose of their integration with the Abkhazians and by that way to increase the weight of the Abkhazian population in Abkhazia, though they went back to their homeland before the war between USSR and Germany had began. It can be supposed that it was the period of Ashkhars living in Pskhu when the Russian official passport version of the surnames with the suffix **-ba** appeared, so the spreading of this surname model is being the result of the language-demographical politics of the Abkhazian communists and not the repercussion of the ancient historical fact.

3. The ending of the Georgian surnames **-dze** (ze) in cases of Abkhazianizing of the ones with the corresponding surnames is not transforming into the version **-z**. Here are the rules: If the owners of such surnames were Abkhazianized recently, the ending **-dze** (ze) is being saved without changes (Chakvetadze, Rukhadze>Arukhadze, Chkhaidze>Ckhiidze...); If the Abkhazianizing has been made a long ago, the vowel **e** is being replaced with the diphthong **ia** (**ja**) and the consonant **dz** (z), as we will see afterwards, is being saved without changes (Georg. K'asraze > abkh. K'aslanzia...).

² Ibid, p. 57-58.

³ K. V. Lomtadze. The Achkharian Dialect and its lace among the other Abkhazian-Abazian dialects (together with the texts0. Tb., 223 (in the Georgian language).

⁴ Ibid, p. 224.

4. Hydronum Gubazouli is not formed from the clear stem of Gubaz (by the way, the given men's name ascends to the Megrelian word Gubaz-I''free'') it is formed from the secondary diminutive- endear mental forms of Gubaz-a (Mid. Georg. Otar-I, Guram-I, Tamaz-i... and Otar-a, Guram-a, Tamaz-a...) in combination of Georgian suffix – **ur//ul**, which defines the belonging of something to somebody. ⁵ Such toponymes often turn into hydronymes. Besides it, the hydronym Gubazouli can not be older than VII-VIII centuries, because the expression of the endearment and diminutive with the suffix –**a**, has began exactly after this period.

This way leads us to the conclusion that neither N. I. Marr nor other famous scientists could reliably prove the fact about Abkhazians inhabitation in Guria – there is no any concrete historical and lingual reasons for a such conclusion.

The same has to be concluded about the hypothesis of Proabkhazian – Adighian tribes inhabitation in the west part of Georgia (including Abkhazia). This hypothesis, in spite of the fact that it has been offered by the notable scientists (N. I. Marr, I. A. Javakhishvili, S. N. Janashia...) is based on self-willed and wrong interpretation of some geographic names, containing syllables **ps(a)**, **q'va**, **ga**. The modern researchers do not share this <<theory>> because they see a lot of mistakes and discrepancies (A. Oniani, N. Lomouri, T. Phutkaradze, M. Chukhua, J. Gamakharia, T. Gvantseladze and so on.) Let's briefly discuss one issue for the clearness of the matter:

There are found some geographic names with the syllables **q'va** on the territory of Georgia and Achara : Malta'kva, Juruk'veti... and in Georgia there are spread some surnames with the same syllable : Ingorok'va, Rok'va, Artilak'va... with one look the root **q'va** is Adighian (Chircassian) origin with the meaning of "ravine, beam" in geographic names, supposedly it has to be separated, and in surnames as though include omonimical Chircassian root with the meaning of "son", which supposedly is being the unquestionable proof of the fact, that in the beginning Guria and Achara were populated with ancestors of Adighians (Chircassians). According to the second opinion, segment **q'va** in geographic names is harmonized with the Abkhazian name of the city of Sokhumi (Mid. Ancient Georgian name of this city Tskhumi from the Svanian language **tskhum//tskh-wim** "hornbeam, white beech"), which supposedly proves the inhabitation of Abkhazian ancestors in Guria and Achara during the prehistorical epoch. Although, there are common methodological deficiencies in both ideas. In the given toponyms, absolutely intent, only on the bases of the phonetical similarity, only one segment comes out and "identifies", but there is no way to explain the essence of other parts of the same words. It means that the etymologies and the composition of the analyzed toponyms is not set convincingly, because it is not known, what does the segments **Malta**, **Bobo**, **Jura** mean , and it is not clear in what language they should be interpreted. As to the up given surnames, we have to consider that among the representatives of Inoroqva, Rokva and Artilakva origins, the legend is spread on base of which their ancestors "under the leadership of a certain Asmid Ingorokva left the country of Chircassians to settle in Turkey. For some time they stayed in Abkhazia but then they changed their primary intention and resettled in Guria.

⁵ G. T. Gvantseladze. On the History of one Type of the Georgian Toponymes – Materials of the VIth International Scientific Conference “ Current Problems of the General and Adigean Phylology”. Maikop, 2008, p. 99.

They were given an estate in the village of Makvaneti by the Gurieli Princes".⁶ According to the writer and the scientist P. Ingorokva, his infirmity, the old men Okropir Ingorokva remembered all the generations of the surname Ingorokva, settled down in Guria, leaning on his information, P. Ingorokva thinks that the time of their resettlement in Guria, was the beginning of the 18th century (P. Ingorokva. About the Chircassian origin of surname Ingoroko. - Egnate Ninoshvili (State publishing house p. 421 and after).⁷ The facts and the information completely exclude unproved hypothesis about the initial inhabitation of Proabkhazian-Adighian, Chircassian or Abkhazian nations in Georgia and Achara.⁸

1. The place of the Abkhazian language among the relative languages, with the consideration of the historical aspects. The ethnos, original name of which is "Apswa" is designated by the late Georgian sources, with the name "Aphkaz-i" (Russian Abkhaz is from here) The Abazins, Adighians, Kabardians and not any more existing Ubikhians are closest to Abkhazians with the lingual-ethnic originality. Adighians and Kabardians have their summarizing name in their native languages (**Adəyā**) and in Georgia they were designated also with the summarizing name "Chircassians" (**Čerkez-eb-i**).

The Abkhazian language is one of the north-west or Abkhazian-Adighian groups of Iberian-Caucasian language families, as well as Abazian, Adighian, Kabardian and Ubikhian language.⁹ Actually the Abkhazian and Abazian languages are so close to each other in the all levels of the language, that it would be right to isolate one – Abkhazian-Adighian language instead of isolating two independent languages, if there was no quite long tradition and the influence of outward linguistic factors (It is a significant fact, that the famous researcher of the Abkhazia-Adighian language, academician K. V. Lomtadze was not separating the Abazian language and she had considered the Tapanian and Ashkharian annunciation as the dialect of the Abkhazian language, in her works, published before 1954 year) Adigeisian and Kabardisian languages are much more closer to each other. That is why, in merely scientific way, we can speak about existence of not five but three Abazian-Adighian languages.

1. Abkhazian-Abazian; 2. Chircassian or Adighian; 3. Ubikhian. These languages come to isolated from General Iberian- Caucasian language to Proto-abkhazian-Adighian language, which could exist from the end of II century B. C. and had splitted in three languages by the beginning of A. C. Otherwise it is impossible to explain – the amazing material and structural resemblance, clearly presented in Abkhazian-Abazian, Chircassian and Ubikhian languages.

Appears a question about, where exactly the common ancestors of Abkhazians, Abazians, Adighians, Kabardians and Ubikhians inhabited, to be more exact, there is a question about the inhabitation of Proabkhazian- Adighian language speaking people. By the reason that there is no proof of this language speakers presence on the territory of the west

6 S. Janashia. On the Genealogy of Egnate Ingorokva. – in the book. : S. Janashia. The Cherkessian Dairies. Tb., 2007, p. 203.

7 Is Cited according to the book. : S. N. Janashia. "The Cherkessian Dairies". p. 204.

8 The Toponymes with the syllable q'va is convincingly etymologized on the Kartvelian Base by M. Chukhua. His work is in print.

9 Some politicized authors under the pressure of the Russian empire ideology fully deny the kinship of the Georgian language with the Caucasian language of hilghlanders and this is beyond the criticism. This problem was solved by the academician A. S. Chikobava in 1979. See A. S. Chikobava. Introduction to the Iberian-Caucasian linguistics. Tb., 1979 (in the Georgian language, the Russian variant is in print).

Georgia, it is quite logical to search for their place of settlement on the north Caucasus, to be more concrete, on the territory between the Black Sea coast of the north Caucasus and the left shore of the river Terek.

These are the lands where Ubikhsians, Adighians, Kabardians and Abkhazian-Adighian tribes are registered by mid. century sources, and the lands where Abazians, Adighians and Kabardians still inhabit and Ubikhsians also inhabited till 1864 year. It is significant that from the ethnos of Abkhazian-Adighian group, the Abkhazian nation appears to be the only nation who inhabited south from the Caucasian range and all the others unit 1864 lived in north Caucasus. It is also important that before XVI century there are no any undoubted data's in any sources about the presence of any from these ethnoses in the west Georgia, but on the other hand, long before the beginning of the new era here was the continuous indication to the tribes of the Kolkhs, who are the ancestors of Georgians (there are no serious arguments to form the opinion, that supposedly the ancestors of Abkhazians and Abazians were designated by the name <<Kolkhi>>. At the same place there are registered many geographic names which obviously have Georgian origin.

Where and when could the common ancestors of Abkhazians and Abazians isolate from the Proabkhazian-Adighian ethno-linguistic unity? The decision impotence for the ascertainment of this question is the part of the Georgian chronicle of Leonti Mroveli "The life of Kings", in which there is given the scheme of the settlement of ethnarchy-eponyms of the Caucasian nations. We have to consider the important circumstance, that Leonti Mroveli, during the elucidations of the facts from ancient times till V century A. C. never uses terms like "Abkhazi" (Abkhazians) and "Abkhazeti" (Abkhazia), what expresses the set conception of the author, to whom, by the way, the territory of the modern Abkhazia does not appear to be the independent unit and this land is not only the inalienable part of Egrisi (look before) but the sacral location of the royal city Bedia//Egrisi – the most important political and cultural-ideological centre of the west Georgia (Egrisi). Leonti Mroveli writes about the common ancestor of the Georgian nations, Targamos, that "the ancestor gave the coastal country to the Egrisi (Egrosi) and set the borders, it was the small hill from the east, at present called Likhi and the seas from the west, river Small Khazaria where the wedge of the Caucasian range leans. This Egros built a city and called it his name – Egrisi. This place is called Bedia at present".¹⁰ This way the chronicler of the XI century proves that the name Egrisi (varieties: Egri and Eguri) initially designated the territory from the Likhi (suramian) range to the Black Sea and its south border was reaching the outfall of the river Kuban ("the river of the small Khazaria"). Leonti designates the inhabitants of this place with the common name Megri//Megreli, and with this he means not only the ancestors of the present Megrelians, but all the Georgians who had inhabited on this land, including Svanians and Lazians but by no means the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians and Abazians.

At the same place, Leonti mentions ethnarchy-eponym Acucas(os) who appears to be the common ancestor of the modern Abkhazians, Abazians, Adighians, Kabarians and Ubikhsians. The land, inherited to him from Targamos is called the territory from the left coast of the river Terek to the farther west point of the Caucasian range and the outfall of the river Kuban ("the river of the small Khazaria"), in other words, to the north-west

¹⁰ *Life of Georgia. The list of the Queen Anna. Tb., 1942, p. 2 (in Georgian).*

border of the Egros's property: "And (Targamos) gave to Caucas the (lands) from the river Lomek (=Terek) to the end of the Caucasus (Caucasian range) in the west".¹¹

There are no reasons to suppose, that the chronicler considered Egros, the common ancestor of ethnic Georgians, Abkhazians and Abazians by mixing them up. It is absolutely clear from the text, that Leonti Mroveli considered Kaukasos as the common ancestor of Abkhazians (Apswa), Abazians, Adighians, Kabardians and Ubikhians, which is quite logical, and he indicated the west border of their settlement – Outfall of the river Kuban, nearby of which, according to the information from the ancient Greek authors, was located the city Ancient Lazika (Lazika was the name of the whole west Georgia and this term was the Greek synonym of the Georgian names: Eguri, Egri, Egrisi).

This way, there are all reasons to consider that from the end of II century to the beginning of the new era, the common ancestors of the Abkhazians (Apswa), Abazians, Chircassians and Ubikhians were not yet spitted ethno-linguistical community and were settled down not in the west Georgia but in the north Caucasus, on the territory from the left coast of the river Terek to the outfall of the river Kuban "where the wedge of the Caucasian range leans", in other words, to the farther point of this range.

By the beginning of the new era, Proto-abkhazian-Adighian community starts to breakup and so appeared, from the one side, Abkhazian-Abazian, Chircassian and Ubikhian ethnoses and from the other side Abkhazian-Abazian, Chircassian and Ubikhian languages. It is more possible that the Abkhazian-Abazian ethnos consisted of two main ethnical groups, with two corresponding dialects: 1. Apswa and 2. Abaza. The resumptive autoethnonym of Abkhazian-Abazian must be considered the term "Abaza", which is also used to designate Abazians by their neighbors and from the late middle centuries the Turkish people designate with the same name not only the Abazians but the Abkhasians as well, which is very important.¹² From up told, it is becoming clear why there is no stamp of inhabitation of the ancestors of modern Abkhazians, Abazians, Chircassians and Ubikhians on the territory of Georgia, not only during the pre historical period, but also before XVI century A. C. , when the ancestors the modern Abkhazians started to settle down on the land of the modern Abkhazia, and we should not look for it. It is also clear, that the mythologized statements of some Abkhazian authors are absolutely unfounded, for example: "It is accepted that Abkhazian language appears to be, one of the ancient languages in the world"; "The decomposition of the Abkhazian - Adighian protolanguage in three main spurs (Abkhasians- Adighians – Ubikhians) started nearly five thousand years ago"; "The nation speaking Abkhazian –Adighian protolanguage had agriculture, propagated animal stock, made different handicraft goods and turned around metal. These are proved by the archeological materials from Abkhazia. For the interest for the protolanguage speakers lived approximately in the same conditions as the modern Abkhazian-Adighians and they were formed on the west Caucasian territories, such words are told about: "sea", "coast", "fish", "hill (woody)", "wood (broadleaved)", "wood (acerous)", "fir", "beech", "cornel", "chestnut", and so on. The toponymical names show the same. For example, the names of the rivers which include the element (ps) – water, river (Ar-

11 Ibid, p. 3.

12 Ts. I. Abuladze. *The Name of Georgia and Georgian Political Formations in the Ottoman Written Sources.* -Foreign and Georgian terminological notions of "Georgia" and "Georgians". Tbilisi, 1993, p. 274-276 (in Georgian; Summary in Russian and English).

ipsa, Supsa, Akampsis, Apsar, Lagumpsa) and also with the name “kua” – “clough”, “ra-vine”, “small river” and so on.”¹³

Neither of these statuses corresponded to the truth because: a) The Abkhazian language is not older than Abazian, Chircassian or Ubikhian languages, and its age is not more than 2000 years, there are much more older languages in the world. B) Only Protoiberian- Caucasian and not the Abkhazian-Adighian protolanguage could exist in Caucasus, 5 thousand years ago. C) The archeological materials do not prove the presence of Abkhazians and Adighians on the land of modern Abkhazia in that far epoch (look before, chapter II) and if the archeological materials show something in it is not in the interest of the inhabitation of Abkhazian ancestors. D) Abkhazian-Adighian protolanguage speakers inhabited together in the north Caucasus and the modern Abkhazians do not appear to be the aboriginals of Abkhazia, so the archeological materials found on the land of Abkhazia are not created by their ancestors. E) The words which mean sea, coast, fish, hill, wood and so on are also included in the dictionaries of the non aboriginal nations, who settled down in Caucasus later (Karachaians, Balkarians, Nogaians, Ossets) only the presence of such words is not enough to prove the aboriginality of the Abkhazians on the territory of the modern Abkhazia. The real matter is that, that in Abkhazian language there is no vocabulary of common Abkhazian – Adighian origin, which would have reflected the flora and fauna of the exact subtropical zone (in details about this read after) F) Neither of the already mentioned toponyms O. Bgaghba and S. Lakoba etymologize in Abkhazian – Adighian protolanguage or Abkhazian – Abazian, Circassian and Ubikhian languages. If we even assume that the geographic names with the elements **psəand qv’a** are really Chircassian, which was vainly being proved by some scientists, then where does Abkhazians come in? Are the Abkhazian and Adighian – Kabardian languages the same once?

In this way, the discussed language material gives us the full base for the next conclusion: On the territory of the north-west Georgia (Modern Abkhazia) till XVI century, had never inhabited the ancestors of Abkhazians and Abazians, not to mention about Ubikhians and Chircassians. As to the invented “theory” about the mutual inhabitation of the two aboriginal ethnoses (Abkhazians and Georgians) on this land, it also has no any historical and linguistic bases.

2. The semantics of the terms “Apkhazi”, “Apkhazeti” and their correlatives by the materials from the ancient sources. The half of the specialists’ string along the opinion, which says that the Georgian terms “**Apkhazi**” (Abkhazian) and “**Apkhazeti**” (Abkhazia) were used with the next meanings in the historical past:

A) They meant ethnos till IX century, the outoethnonym of which is **apswa**, and the territory of the modern Abkhazia.

B) In IX-X centuries, the same names, were used at the same time and with more wide semantics, meaning the whole west Georgia and its inhabitants (As Abkhazians as Georgians);

C) From XI to XVI centuries, “**Apkhazeti**” meant whole Georgia and “**Apkhazi**” – any inhabitant of Georgia;

D) From XVI, these names lost their wide meaning and from then they mean the ethnos of **apswa** and Abkhazia.¹⁴

¹³ O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 4-5

¹⁴ *Abkhazia and Abkhazians...*, p. 3.

This conception has a serious drawback. To be more exact: It does not consider that doubtless fact, that neither the terms “Apkhazi” and “Apkhazeti”, nor phonetically close other varieties are recorded in any written sources made before the beginning of the new era. In fact, among the Georgian written sources, the term “Apkhazeti” is being used for the first time with facts of Vth century A. C. in the part of Juansher’s chronicles, authenticity of which is doubtful: “At the same time the Greeks went out from Abkhazia (in chronicles A: in Abkhazia, On Abkhazia’s side) because the Greeks owned all sides down the river Egristskhali to the (castle) Tsikhe-Goji. ¹⁵ At this place, the borders of Abkhazia are not clear. As to the one chronicle addition Abkhazeti was located in the north-west part of the Egristskhali (The modern river Galidzga in Abkhazia) and as to the another addition, it comes out that Abkhazia was located in the south-east part of the same river and included the modern Gali region and the whole Samegrelo as well.

As to the other terms, the first among them, in I century A. C. , in Latin language source, is being used the term **apsil**, which is phonetically close to the Abkhazians auto ethnonym **apswa** (more late varieties: Georgian. **Apšil-et-i//apšel-et-i**, Greek. **Apsell//apsil**, Armenian. **Apšey**), and phonetically similar varieties **abasgos//absdkod//abasxos** appear in the Greek sources from II century A. C. The part of the sources identifies the terms **apsil** and **apswa**, **abasgos** and **abaza** considering Apsils and Abasgs the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians and Abasians. However, to solve the problem it is not enough to proceed just from the phonetical similarity of these names, because there are no additional, undoubtfull linguistical and historical-ethnological materials to prove this hypothesis. For example, it is not yet known for sure, in what concrete languages did Apsils and Abasgs speak in the I-II centuries A. C. (We have only got an unconcretized information, that they spoke on different languages); There are no any written material of the Apsilian or Abasgian words, to solve the issue about the essence of the Absilian and Abasgian language or languages. The external similarity of the terms is not enough to form the semantics of the words, because the ethnonyms and the tribe names often change their meaning, under the influence of the external linguistic factors, what is clearly shown in the history of using the terms **apxazi** and **abasgos**. So before these issues are not cleared up the ethno-linguistic similarity problem of Apsils and Abasgs to I-II centuries remains open, although, in spite of this, we can conclude:

In the Georgian language, the term Apkhazeti has meant neither the territory of the modern Abkhazia, nor its part, before VI century A. C. The fact of using the terms Abasgia and abasgos in Greek language, in VI century A. C. , in wide, clearly political and not with ethnic meaning, draws attention. By that time, Byzantium, with the purpose of weakening Georgian Laziki (Egrisi), unified Abasgia and truly Georgian Sanigia, this reflected on Greek language – The Greek authors started to name the new political formation with the collectively-widened term **Abasgia**, ¹⁶ to be more exact, this term turned into politonym, in Greek language, in VI century, it was the result of the Byzantium’s imperial politics and reflected the view of the conqueror. Accordingly, it is possible that till VI century A.

¹⁵ Life of Georgia. The list of Queen Ann...p. 94. Here we meet the case of usage of the term “ Abkhazeti” concerning the events of the I century B. C. though, this example is justly considered to be anachronism and interpolation. See.: I. A. Javakhishvili. . Works in 12 volumes, vol. VIII. Tb., 1977, p. 177 (in Georgian).

¹⁶ D. S. Letodian. Political Relations of Abkhazia, Abshileti and Sanigeti with Egrisi (Lazika) in the VI_VIIIth centuries. Tb., 1991, p. 39 (in Georgian).

C., in Georgian language has never been used the terms **apkhazi** and **Apkhazeti** which correspond to the terms **abasgos** and **Abasgia** (In any case, these names are not recorded in Georgian sources, till V century). This political action helped to implement analyzed names exactly with the political semantics. To say in other words, the terms **apkhazi** and **Apkhazeti** entered Georgian written language as clearly political names and not as ethnically marked names. We remember that Leonti Mroveli, in his chronicles never uses these names and it is in the story, which describes Georgia from the ancient times exactly till V century A. C. and in which the special attention is drawn to the issues of the Caucasian nations settlement.

From the beginning of the VI century, Abasgia, in other words Abkhazia, becomes stronger with the help of Byzantium and widens its borders in north-west direction, which in 70-80 years, in VIII century ends with the fact that Abkhazeti kingdom included the whole west Georgian in.¹⁷ Obviously, the growth of the territory reflected the semantic widening of the analyzed terms (**Abasgia-Apkhazeti** and **abasgos – apxazi**); in VI-VIII centuries and the terms **apkhazi-abasgos** were politonyms and not the ethnonyms. As to the terms **Apkhazeti – Abasgia**, in VI century they were the names of just small, north-west part of the modern Abkhazia and by the end of the VIII century – names of the whole west Georgia, there is a direct indication about it, in the writings of Georgian the writer Ioane Sabanisidze. “The torture of the saint Abo” (about 786 year), according to the writing the kingdom already included the lands from Khaldey and Trapezunt (modern city of Trapzon in Turkey) to Napsaian (Nikopsiian) port(modern Novomikhalilovsk near to the city of Tuapse, in Russian federation) and Likhian (Sumarian) range.¹⁸ These data disprove the hypothesis on bases of which, before IX century, the term **apkhazi** stood for ethnic Abkhazians, in other word Apsuians, and the term **Apkhazeti** allegedly was named the territory of the modern Abkhazia. The existing actual material testifies that from VI century till IX century, both terms in Georgian language and the terms **abasgos** and **Abasgia** in the Greek language just had wide political semantics and the semantic had been growing wider constantly, till that names became the labels of the whole west Georgia and the inhabitants of this large territory.¹⁹ As to the ethnic meaning of **Abasgos** and **Absils**, in I-V centuries A. C., this issue remains open for the linguists because of the corresponding, straight lingual materials deficiency. Although, there are more arguments (For example, Geographic names, which do not etimologize in Abkhazian and Abazian languages, but are easily identified on Georgian base) to consider, this period **Abasgos** and **Apsils** as Georgians (Look Chapter IV), but if it will be proved, that they were the ancestors of Abkhazians and Abasians, it still will be impossible to consider them being the aboriginal inhabitants of Abkhazia, because of the simple reason, that before the beginning of the new era, they are not recorded here in any written source.

In IX-X centuries, in times when the kingdom of **Apxaseti**, or **Egrisi** which included the whole west Georgia, existed, the terms **apkhazi** and **Apkhazeti** designated exactly

17 Z. V. Papaskiri. *Abkhazia is Georgia*. Tb., 1998, p. 110-111 (in Georgian).

18 Ioane Sabanisidze. *Martyrdom of the Saint and Blissful Abo. -Chrestomaty of the ancient Georgian literature*, vol. I. Compiler S. Kubaneishvili. Tb., 1946, p. 62 (in Georgian).

19 The data of the text of the chronicles by Juansher Juansheriani need a special analyses: anachronisms, problems of authenticity etc. For the details see.: T. I. Gvantseladze. *Interpolations, concerning Abkhazia in the text of chronicles by Juansher*. Tb., 1997 (in Georgian).

this territory and its inhabitants, in other words, these terms were used with clearly political meaning, but there are more data, which appear to be very interesting, to be more exact: In the Armenian written sources of this period as the synonyms of the terms **apkhazi** and **Apkhazeti** were used the terms **egeracik** “Egrissians” and **Aškharh egaracuc** “the country of Egrissians”,²⁰ which are the exact match to the Georgian terms **Egri//Eguri//Egrisi** “Egrisi” and **megri//megreli** “The inhabitant of Egrisi”. This means that the Armenian authors of that time had known that the west part of the Georgia was inhabited with Georgians and not with Apsuans. The same meaning has the fact, that the anonymous Persian author of X century, in the book “Ketabehodud al-alem” (“The book about the world borders”) which was created in 982-983 years, as the name of the black sea, in five cases uses the syntagma **Gorji Darja (Gorji darja)** “The Georgian sea”. There is no other name²¹ of this sea in the text at all. It is also important that in that same Xth century, in the writings on the wall of the Athens temple (near the city of Gori) one of the Georgian governors, Stefanos Mampali is mentioned as the owner of the Egrisians (Megrelta) and west Georgians (Kartvelta). This way, the sources do not mention about the inhabitation of the ancestors of the Abkhazians and Abazians on the territory of the modern Abkhazia in IX-X centuries.

As to the period between the beginnings of XI century to the end of XV century, on this stage, analyzed Georgian terms basically were used with the widest political semantic, meaning the whole Georgian kingdom, including Armenia and the most part of the modern Azerbaijan and its inhabitants (Georgians, Armenians and so on). The Greek, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Arabian, Persian, Slavic and foreign correlates of that time, had the same semantic of the terms **apkhazi** and **Apkhazeti**.²² However, there is information which belongs to the same period, it is from the Georgian chronicles “The history and glorification of wearers of crown” about the ruling of Queen Tamar’s father George the III (1156 -1184) in which Apkhazeti is shown in the south Caucasus, by the country of Alan’s (Karachaians and Balkarians): “The king started to have joy, rest and hunting. Sometimes in winter period he used to take a trip along the Likhi ringe and reaching the Pontian (=black) sea he turned and hunting along he was reaching the country of Alans, which is Apkhazeti and sometimes he was reaching the Gurenian (=Caspian) sea”.²³ This information appears to be the ancient written proof of the ethnic Abkhazia location in the north Caucasus, particularly in the basin of the river Kuban. Forseeing of the next circumstances lead to this conclusion:

A) The country of the Alanians has never been located more southerly of the Caucasian ringe, as well as on the territory of the modern Abkhazia.²⁴

B) As to the given information, to get to the country of Alanians and Abkhazia, the king had to turn to the east from the black sea (Georgian. **Moic’iis** means “He came along

20 E. V. Tsagareishvili. The name of “Georgian” and “Georgia” in the Armenian written monuments. –Foreign and Georgian terminology of the notions “Georgia” and “Georgians”. Tb., 1993, p. 207-208 (in Georgian).

21 Holud-Al-Alem - in the book.: Istahri, Hodud-Al-Alem, Hamdalakh Kazvini. Transaltion and comments by V. Puturidze. Tb., 1937, p. 13-16 (in Persian and Georgian).

22 See. : Foreign and Georgian Terminology...Tb., 1993.

23 Life of Kartli, vol. II, Tb., 1959, p. 15 (in Georgian); T. I. Gvantseladze. On understanding of one fragment of the “Life of Georgia” (“the country of Alans, that is Abkhazeti”). –“The Heritage of the Kartvels”, vol. II. Kutaisi, 1998 (in Georgian).

24 About the settlements of the Alans in different historical epochs see. : A. Aleman. The Alans in the ancient and medieval century written sources. M., 2003; R. Topchishvili. The Area of the original settlement of the ancestors of the Ossetians – the Alans. Tb., 2008 (in Georgia, summary in Russian and English).

here time to time”, **miuc’iis zywad p’ont’osa** “He came along there to the Pontian sea”). It means that the Georgian king, hunting along, was turning from the coast of the black sea to the east and that way he was getting to the Alania and Apkhazeti. The city of Nikopsia appeared to be the turning point (Near to the modern city Tuapse);

C) In that epoch, Alania was not included in the united Georgian kingdom, in other words the political Abkhazia; it only appeared to be nationals.

D) In the text of “Life of Georgia”, the terms **alani** and **ovsi** (“osset”) obviously are not synonyms **ovsi** and **Ovseti** (“Ossetia”) are often used in it, but the country of Alanians is being used only in this one case). **Alani** – in the given example do not designate ossets, they mean Karachians, about this indicates the fact of using the given word with this meaning in the writing and on the maps of the European authors of mid. Centuries (A. Lamberti, Khr. Kastelli...) and also the fact, that 100 years ago, the term **alani**, meant Karachian in Megrelian language, and **alani k’oci** – strong, brave man.²⁵

E) The neighborhood of Abkhazians and Alanians, in the north Caucasus is being proved by the information of 1375 year from the Englishman John Mandeville, which is being the ancient foreign recording of Abkhazians in the north Caucasus. J. Mandeville name **Alania** as **Alon**, and the ethnic Abkhazia – as **Abson**, on the one side Abkhazian. **Apsnə** “Abkhazia” on the other side **Apsne** in the writings of I. A. Guldenshted.²⁶

F) The localization of the ethnic Abkhazia besides the Caucasus, in XII century, excludes the non evident hypothesis, which says that Abkhazians and Abazians first inhabited on the land of the modern Abkhazia and the Tapanians were the first who moved to Kuban in XIII-XIV centuries.

G) The localization of the ethnic Abkhazia at the north Caucasus is also proved by the discoveries in 1997 year, in the library of Lund University (Sweden) 13 maps. On one of them, made by famous Italian map-maker Jakopo Gastaldi in 1561 year. Abkhazia or Absuisian region (**Abevas regi.**) and the little city **Aq’wa** (on the map: **Acva**, modern Abkhazian name The city of Sokhumi **Aq’wa**) are marked in the north Caucasus, in the centre of the river Kuban basin, and the modern Abkhazia is not singled out and appears to be the organic part of Samegrelo – **Mingrelia regi** (Look here, map #14). As to the other 12 maps, on them the city Acva is also marked on the Kuban (Merkators maps 1591 year, the maps of Merkator and Judokus Khondius 1633 year, Judokus Khondius map of XVII century, the map of Frederic De Vitt 1671 year, the map of Johan Janson XVII century, the map of David De Vilgelm XVIII century and so on.).²⁷

Thus, there is a whole complex of written, cartographic and lingual data, which clearly prove, the first homeland of the modern Abkhazians was located in the south Caucasus, more exactly, in the centre of the river Kuban, and moving of the migration of the modern Abkhazian to the land of the modern Abkhazia, has started from XVI century.

25 I. Kipshidze. Grammar of the Mengrelian (Iberian) language with the chrestomaty and vocabulary. S-Pt. 1914, p. 193. N. Bagaturia. The Turk tribal names in the Georgian dialects and folklore (q’azakhi, alani). – “Kartvelian Heritage”, vol. II, Kutaisi, 1998, pp. 38-39 (in Georgian). Com. R. Topchishvili. Area of the original settlements of the Ossetian ancestors, p. 6.

26 T. I. Gvantseladze. Importance of the information of Jhon Mandevil from 1375 for localization of ethnic Abkhazia. “Collection of works of Caucasiologists”. Tb., 2004, p. 48-51 (in Georgian).

27 See. The maps published in the following books: P. Allen. The Atlas of Atlases. The map maker’s vision of the world. Atlases from the Cadbury Collection. Birmingham Central Library. London, 1988; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia-Historical Region of Georgia, p. 817-854.

3. The issue about the origin of the term apxazi and its connections with other basics. About the ethymology and mutual connection of the terms apkhazi, apswa, abaza, abasgos//abaskos//abaskhos, apsil//apšil//apšel, apsari, there are told different, sometimes alternative opinions by the scientists, but the issue still remains. Here are given the opinions, in which the specific of the Georgian and Abkhazian-Adighian language group is considered more objectively.

The term apswa. This term appears to be the autoethnonym of the modern Abkhazian nation. In the Abzhuan dialect of the Abkhazian language and in the Abkhazian written language it is given in the form aps(ə)wa, and in Bziphian dialect, in this name, instead of the sibilant consonant **s**, there is specific sibling-hushing consonant **s'**, which is considered to be the ancient phoneme. In these two varieties of the terms, the initial is considered to be the Bziphian form. Probably, vowel **a**, which stands in the beginning of the word is not the part of the root, on which the facts of its truncation point, in other cases: on the one side, s-a-psewop' "I am Abkhazian" and psewa c'asla "in Abkhazian order" – on the other side. The initial form of this prefix **a-** has to be considered the variety **Ja-** (**a-ja-dəgj** "Adighian"). In the name **apswa** the suffix-root **-wa** "human" is also separated, which truncates in plural and at that time the vowel **a**, renews after the root consonant **s'**://**s:a-psa-cwa//a-psa-kwa** "Abkhazian". So the variety of the root **ps'a** is being renewed, which we must consider as the secondary form from **pas'a** (It is established that the Abazian roots were composed by the models: "vowel + consonant" or "consonant + vowel + consonant + vowel")²⁸ accordingly we have a next scheme of the term **apswa: ja-pas'a>aps'a>aps'a-wa>aps'ə-wa. aps(ə)wa.** In this case we have to mark, that there is no reason to harmonize this term **pas'a** with the name **meskh-i** "Meskhian", as this was done, without enough reasons, by N. I. Marr. We also have to mark, that there is no opportunity to establish the initial semantic of the root **pas'a** as well.

With the really existing and renewed varieties of the name **apswa**, in clearly phonetical way, the closest standing were, Latin **apsil**, Greek **apsil//apsel**, Georgian **apšil//apšel**, Armenian **apšey** and also Georgian **apsar** about the structure and initiality of which are told not few hypothesis. Among them, the most realistic seems to be the next opinion: Presence of the consonant **s** and **š** in the given varieties indicates that for the Latin, Greek, Georgian and Armenian forms the initial appeared to be the variety of the root **aps'a** which included sibling-hushing consonant. In the varieties **apsil//apšil** and **apsel//apšel//apšey** obviously contains the Georgian suffix of the initial of human –**el** (alternation of the vowels **e>i** is ordinary case for the Georgian dialects) the Greek form **apselloj** points at it (joining the suffix –**el** to the tribe names is familiar to Georgian language: **K'akh-i>k'akh-el-I** –"Kakhetian", **meskh-i>** surname, **meskh-el-i** – "Meskhian", **svan-i>** surname, **svan-el-i** – "Svanian"). The consonant **y** in Armanian, is regularly replacing consonant **l** (Georgian- **kalak-I**, Armenian – **kayak** "city", Persian- **pol**, Georgian **pul-I**, Armanian – **poy** –"money"...). As to the form **apsar-i**, from the middle century interpolation "The living of Georgia", in it also singles out the Georgian suffix initialed from human –**ar** (Georgian, Literature. **Somkhit-ar-i** "Inhabitant of Somkheti", **samsvild-ar-i** "inhabitant of Samshvilde", **oltis-ar-i** "inhabitant of Oltisi, worker from Oltisi" **opiz-ar-i**

²⁸ K. V. Lomtadize. The word **aow**, denoting a human being in the Abkhazian language. – Information of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, vol. IV, 1975, p. 8-9, 80-81, 103-104, 240 (in Georgian).

“inhabitant of Opizi, worker from Opizi”, Megr. Zupu-ar-i “inhabitant of Zupu”, senak-ar-i “inhabitant of Senaki” and so on.). Although it has to be marked, that the establishment of the initial structure of the word, does not mean at all that the initial semantic of this word is established too, because the semantic is less unstable than the form of the words.

Proceeding from the up marked, we have to conclude: the name *apsilae*, given for the first time, in the story of Plinia in the I century A. C. , undoubtedly contains Georgian suffix initialed from human – it means, that Romans got to know the name of the corresponding nation with the solicitation of Georgians.

The terms abaza, abasgos//abaskos//abaskhos, apkhaz-i and aba(a)zakha. The questions about the initiality and formal correlation of these terms, also appears to be the cause of disagreement between linguists and historians.

If we assume, that the variety *abask-oj*, firstly recorded in II century A. C. in the works of Flavia Arrian, really comes to the form *abaza*, as the certain historians and linguists think, than the morphological function of the final consonant *k*, remains unclear. If the form *abaskoj* takes initiality from the form *abaza*, than in ancient Greek language had to exist the form *აბაჭა* because in ancient Greek language consonant *z*, had not existed at all and it was naturally being replaced by the consonant *dz* (ζ). So, the point of view about the analyzed terms remains just hypothesis and needs undoubtful analyze of the phonetic and morphological sides of the issue.

In this connection, we have to especially discuss trials by N. I. Marr, about the establishment of the ethymology of the term *apkhaz-i*. The case is that, the hypotheses of this author are very popular, in spite of lots of disorders. The conception of N. I. Marr is this way:

The term *apkhaz-I* appear to be japhetic (Kartvelian) and gets to the variety *abaz-kh*, in which supposedly singles out japhetic suffix of plurality – *kh*, which is far away from the truth. Marr immediately renews supposedly older varieties *apaz-kh*, *apas-kh*. In his point of view, *apas-kh*>*apaz-kh*> Georgian. *apkhaz-i*, and from *abaz-kh* comes Greek *abasg*//Chircassian. *Aba?*+*e-kh*. The same form *abaz-kh* , by the opinion of the author, is connected with the name *abaza*, the originality of which he singles out in forms: *baz-g-un*//*baz-g-on* (*Bazguns* are recorded near the Caspian sea), *bas-il-k* and *apsil* (Marr undoubtedly considered that *Apsils* were *Abkhazians*). The root **bas**, is also singled out by the scientist, in the hydronym *bzeb*(which in fact does not exist either in *Abkazian* or in *Kartvelian* language world. There are varieties: Georgian *Bzip-i* and *Abkhazian* *Bzəp* for the river *Bzip*) and in the toponym *zupu*, in choronym *Abžwa*, in the names *apswa*, *Apsne*, and also in words: *Tuapse*, *jiki*//*ჭყოი*, *adəye*, *Odiši*, *Pasi*(hill), *Pašgvaši*, *Basiani*, *Fasis*, *Dvabzu*, *meskhi*//*mosokh*, *maskut*, *Masis*, *Mckheta*, *Samckhe*, *somekhi*”*Armenian*”.²⁹ It comes out that the author, the place of inhabitation and migration of the ancestor of the modern *Abkhazians* considered to be almost the whole *Caucasus*. It does not mean anything for him, that how much his point of view is corresponded to the historical past, or how thorough they are with the linguistic point of view of his “ethymology”. For example, his invented considerations about the correspondence of such different language words

29 In the details see.: N. J. Marr. History of the term “Abkhaz”. -in the book. : N. J. Marr. On the Language and History of the Abkhazians. M-L., 1936.

like the most of the up mentioned names can not stand the critics. In a huge number of his willful considerations are being lost those rational particles, which surely are in the analyzed work of N. I. Marr. For example: It is convincing, with the clearly linguistic point of view that the Greek varieties abaskh//abask//abasg come to the Georgian form apkhaz-i. It is not hard to prove that the strange for the Greek language, unclout complex pkh, on the base of separation had been replaced in Greek language, by outclout complex skh, which is natural for the Greek language, from which it was quite possible to get secondary complexes sk//sg.³⁰ Accordingly, we have to consider, that closer to the II century A. C. , Greeks had borrowed this word from the Georgian language, although, it does not mean at all that in Georgian or in Greek language, by this name, the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians were designated. The question about the semantics of the terms apkhaz-i, abaskhos//abaskos//abasgos for this time is waiting for the ascertainment.

It also is not clear yet, the structure and the initial semantic of the term abaza, but at the moment it is absolutely undoubtful, that from XVI century till today (the term is never used before then) this name has the next meaning: 1. abaza appears to be the autoethnonym of Abazians and as well their name in the languages of their neighbor nations (Adighians, Karachaians, Balkarians, Nogaians, Ossets, Russians...) 2. From the second half of the XVI century till today, in Turkish language, the term is being used as the resumptive name of Abkhazians and Abazians. 3. In the late middle century European sources, and also by the data of XIX-XX centuries, west Adighian tribes were named abaza:

Abadzekhians, Shapsughians, Natukhians, Mokhoshians, Bzhedugians, Janeevians..., who had appeared to be Abazians with their language and their ethnic signs and became Adighians in XVII-XVIII centuries (S. Bronevski, L. Lulie, Khan-Girey, L. Lopatinski, A. Dirr, L. Lavrov, N. Volkova, J. Kokov...). The process of the Abasians Adighization, who inhabited in Adighia, was being in the final stage, by the arrival of the academician S. Janashia by the year of 1929.³¹

With the term abaza, there are phonetically close varieties in ancient Russian chronicles obezi and obezhanii, which obviously come to the form abaza, but they mean the whole Georgia and Georgians.³² With the same term abaza, is also close, with its sound, Karachaian-Balkarian term ebze – meaning Georgia and Georgians (more exactly Svaneti and Svanetians), but in the same language there is the term abaza, but with the meaning – “Abazian”. Appears a question: Where and when could Slavians and Karachaian-Balkarians borrow these terms for the designation of Georgia and Georgians? It seems that only then, when the west Georgia and its inhabitants were called Apkhazeti and apkhazi in their language, which is in IX-XV centuries, and the mediator appeared to be any nation, who inhabited in the north Caucasus (Polovians, Pechenegians, Khazars).

30 T. V. Gamkrelidze. From the History of Ethnonymy of Ancient Colchis. -Foreign and Georgian Terminology...p. 584-585 (in Georgian, summary in Russian and English).

31 Ts. I. Abuladze. The Name of Georgia and Georgian political formations in the Ottoman written sources, p. 274-275; L. I. Lavrov. "Obezs" of the Russian Chronicles. – The Soviet Ethnography, N4, 1946, p. 163; N. G. Volkova. Ethnonymy and the tribal names of the North Caucasus. M., 1973, p. 36; S. Janashia. An Expedition to the Adigean autonomous Region. April-May of 1929. Works, vol. IV. Tb., 1968, p. 74, 77, 98, 104, 110, 124 (in Georgian); S. N. Janashia. An expedition to the Adigean Region. April-May of 1929 in the book: S. Janashia. Cherkessian Dairies. Tb., 2007, p. 80, 82-83, 104-105, 110, 117, 131. Autonomous Region. April-May of 1929. Works, vol. IV. Tb., 1968, p. 74, 77, 98, 104, 110, 124 (in Georgian); S. N. Janashia. An expedition to the Adigean Region. April-May of 1929 in the book: S. Janashia. Cherkessian Dairies. Tb., 2007, p. 80, 82-83, 104-105, 110, 117, 131.

32 G. G. Paichadze. Names of Georgia in the Russian Written Sources. Tb., 1989, p. 11-60.

In the lots of trials to establish the ethimology of the term apkhaz-i, in the linguistic side, the point of view of O. I. Kakhadze looks interesting, by which this name comes from the name of one of the Adighian ethnographic group abazakha. In his opinion the correspondence of this basis could be imagined this way: Adighian: abazakha. abzakha. Megrelian dialect. abkhaza>abkhaz-i>apkhaz-i.³³ The scientist fortifies his opinion with to important data from the Chircassian diaries of S. Janashia: 1. In the Adighian languages, the suffix –kha is used to make the collective forms of the surnames and the tribe names. 2. Abadzekhs, before Mukhajirun in 60 years of the XIX century, used to inhabit in the canons of the left flowing of the river Kuban, and were neighbors from the west to the Abazian tribes – Barakaiaans and Bagians.³⁴ We have to add here, that abadzekhi, as it was marked before, in the ethno-linguistic way, were Abazians till XVII-XVIII centuries, and in 1929 year, S. Janashia witnessed that abadzekhi were not considering themselves as Adighians yet and the Adighians were not setting them up to their nation, and almost Chircassianized Abazians from the mountain village Ulap (Adigia) considered abadzekhs as their closest relatives and their name abazakha was being translated as “lower from Abazians”³⁵ by them. It is important to mark one more circumstance: In Chircassian language, the suffix –kha, except of the already marked functions, also expresses the conception: “lower”, “in the lower parts of the river”, “more west” (S. Janashia, J. Kokov.). Considering this data, the name abazakha, can be translated from the Chircassian language as “lower Abazian” or “west Abazian”. It also can be assumed, before borrowing this term from the Megrelian dialect, the initial variety abaza appeared to be common name of Abazian-Abkhazian ethno-lingual unity, which inhabited in the north Caucasus and this society makes two branches: a) upper or eastern abaza, who appear to be the ancestors of the modern Abazians. b) Lower or western abaza, who are supposed to be the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians, Shapsugs, Abadzekhs and other modern west Adighian groups.

This conclusion, besides of the up marked statuses, is also fortified with information from the chronicles of Juansher about the trip of the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali (V c.) to the north Caucasus, against the ossets: “Then, the Pechengs country was located there, who had the border with Ossetia, by the coast of the Ossetian river, and Jiketi was also there. Afterwards, after ages, Pecheng and and Jiks were running away from the Turkish; and Pechengs went to the country of west, and the jiks came to stay by the end of Apkhazeti”.³⁶ This information proves, that in the V century, Jiks, with the Abkhazian – Adighian nationality were not yet inhabited either on the land of the modern Abkhazia or by the coasts of the black sea. This is perfectly harmonized with the theory of Leonti Mroveli about the settlement of the Caucasian nations (look. up.).

This way, the assumption of O. Kakhadze is perfect in the linguistic point of view;
33 O. I. Kakhadze. On the Base for Abkhaz//abkhaza. “Foreign and Georgian Terminology...”, p. 557 (in Georgian; summary in Russian and English).

34 S. Janashia. Svanian-Adigean (Cherkessian) Language encounters. Works, vol. III, Tb., 1959, p. 102 (in Georgian); The same in Russian. see: S. Janashia. Cherkessian Dairies, p. 184; of the same author: Abadzeki. Enciclopedic Material. Works, vol. VI, Tb., 1988, p. 227-228 (in Georgian).

35 S. Janashia. An Expedition to the Adigena Autonomous Region..., p. 74, 77, 98, 104, 110, 124 (in Georgian); S. Janashia. An Expedition to the Adigean Region..., p. 80, 82-83, 104-105, 110, 117, 131 (in Russian).

36 Life of Kartli. The list of Queen Ann...1942, p. 103 (in Georgian). The brief contents of the document remains in the Armenian translation of the “Life of Georgia”as well: “ They entered Badjaniketi and Sjiketi, that are located lower Apkhazeti”. See. : Old Armenian Translation of Life of Georgia. The Georgian text and Armenian translation with the research and vocabulary was edited by I. Abuladze. Tb., 1953, p. 150 (in Georgian).

however it is not being proved by the data from the antic and early feudal epoch sources: abadzexi are not mentioned at all in any written documents, till the late middle ages.

4. Kartvelian substratum in Abkhazian language. On the bases of the fact, that the analyze of the written sources, ethnonyms and tribe names, unequivocally prove that the historic homeland of the ancestors of the modern Abkhazians had been in the north of Caucasus, but the territory of modern Abkhazia firstly had been inhabited by the kartvelian tribes, and it is also natural, that in the phonological system and mostly in the different thematic groups of vocabularies of the Abkhazian language, the strong influence of the substratum stratum of the kartvelian dialects is boldly reflected. From the special literature it is well known that on the land of the modern Abkhazia, firstly inhabited some of the undoubtedly kartvelian tribes or communities,³⁷ who firstly spoke on the Pro kartvelian language, and nearly the beginning of the new era – on Megrelian and Svanian groups dialect. Also it must be marked, that the Svanians of this place (except the inhabitants of the upper sides of the river Kodori) were mixed with Megrelians in the middle ages, and this explains the absence of the Svanian substratum in the Abkhazian language – by the XVI century, when the massive settlement of Abkhazians (Apsuians) starts on this land, here the Megrelian settlement prevailed.

Kartvelian substratum in the phonological system and structure of the roots of Abkhazian language. The difference between Abjuisian and Bzipian dialects of the Abkhazian language is formed by the number of the phonemes (sounds): In Bzipian language are presented 9 specific consonants, which are now absent in the Abjuisian language. From these 9 sounds, 7 of them are sibilant-hushing and other 2 – glottal. However, even in the Bzipian dialect these specific consonants are not spread everywhere, obviously zoned character of their spreading is noticed, to be more exact: The first zone appears to be the Otkharian dialect (the farther north-west part of the Gudauta and Gagra regions) where all 9 specific consonants remain; The second zone appears to be the Likhnenian dialect (The central part of the Gudauta region), where 7 from 9 specific consonants are saved; The third zone appears to be Aatsianian dialect (the south-east part of the Gudauta region) where just 4 specific phonemes are saved. It is also interesting, that in the speech of the part of the Abkhazian mukhajir descendants, who settled down in 1867 year in the city of Batumi and surrounding villages, who are the out comers of the zone between the river Kelasuri and the village Dranda, there are used just 2 specific phonemes,³⁸ it means that before 60s years of the XIX century in Abkhazia there also existed the fourth zone of the specific phoneme spreading – From the river Kalasuri till the village Dranda. It is not hard to notice, that the tendency of losing the specific consonants is getting stronger from the north-west part of Abkhazia to the south-east side, in other words, from Gagra to Dranda. It is obviously caused by the fact, that from the beginning of the XVII century, when Abkhazians started to settle down in the south-east side of the territory of the modern Abkhazia, till 60s years of XIX century, exactly the fourth zone of the mentioned phonemes spreading, appeared to be the place of the direct contact of Abkhazian language with the continuum of the Megrelian speech. At the same place the assimilation (Apsuiza-

³⁷ The detailed survey of the corresponding sources and literature see. : in the same source, in chapter VI and also: T. Phutkaradze. The Georgians. Part I..., p. 175-200, 264-297 (in Georgian).

³⁸ In details see. : K. V. Lomtadze. Historical-Comparative Analyses of the Abkhazian and Abazian Languages. I...p. 9, 170-172 (in Georgian); E. K. Kilba. Peculiarities of the Speech of the Abkhazians from Batumi. Tb., 1983, p. 7, 10.

tion) of Georgians was being done from XVII century. As to the central and north-west parts of Abkhazia, Abkhazians were settled down earlier, from XVI century and their rows were continuously growing with the new migrants from the north Caucasus, which helped there to strengthen the positions of the Abkhazian language and saving of the specific phonemes.

The results of the influence of the substratum of the Megrelian speech are the often breakings of the so called rules of Abkhazian language, in two consonants. As a meter of fact, as it is formed (K. Bouda, K. V. Lomtadze) in Abkhazian and Abazian languages, the structural model of the words and affixes is severely held, CV (consonant + vowel) or CCV (consonant +consonant +vowel). According to this rule, if in the word form, in the neighborhood appears more than two consonants, then after the first or the second consonant has to be input of the vowel, however, in the modern Abkhazian, this rule is being often abolished, which appears to be the obvious influence of the Megrelian substratum, and in Megrelian speech 3-4 article consonant complexes are widely spread.

Kartvelian Christian terms in Abkhazian language. As in Georgian, as well in Greek sources, there is information about the spreading of Christianity on the territory of the modern Abkhazia, by Greeks, in I, IV and VI centuries. If the ancestors of modern Abkhazians and Abazians really had inhabited on the territory of the modern Abkhazia and had saved the Christian religion for ages, then at the one side, there undoubtedly must be the signs of their direct contact with the Greek language in Abkhazian and Abazian language vocabularies. On the other side, there must be Christian terms of actual Abkhazian-Abazian originality, and the third side- Biblical phrases (phraseology, epithets, comparisons and metaphors, which got into language from the text of Bible). The special analyze shows, that: 1. there is no sign of the long, direct contact with the Greek language in Abkhazian – Abazian vocabulary. More than that, the ethnonym a-bezen “Greek” in Abkhazian language is borrowed from the Megrelian dialect (comp. Megr. berzen-I, Georg. Lit. Language berzen-i), as to the ethnonym a-grek’ (Abkhazian)//grek(Abazian), it has been borrowed from the Russian language, not long ago, it is proved by the presence of different consonants k’//k in Abkhazian and Abazian languages, which reflects the difference in the orthoepy of Russianism in these languages (By the way, in Abazian language, there is also a form yrek “Greek”, which is borrowed from the speaking language of Kubanian Cossacks and reflects the specific of north Russian dialects in the pronouncement of the Russian consonant g) 2. There are no existing any original or replicated Christian terms, mutual for Abkhazian and Abazian languages. The signs of oldness of a group of Abkhazians own religious terms are unnoticeable (except the word ancwa “god” which is being the survival of heathenism and exactly means “mother, mom” and some more words). They are obviously made up in the late middle centuries. 3. Neither in Abkhazian nor in Abazian language, there are hardly any biblical phrases. On the bases of this information, we have to conclude: The ancestors of Abkhazians and Abazians had no any direct, long and intensive contacts with the Greek Christian world in I-VI centuries A. C. In this context, it is very important, that in Abkhazian language, to designate some of the main Christian conceptions, were used Mussulman terms, borrowed from the Turkish language or by its mediatory after XVI century (till that time, the Turkish people had never

appeared on the land of modern Abkhazia). For example, next words are from this group: janat “heaven”, jahanem “hell”, a-maalekj “angel”, a-paajmbar “foreteller”, a-k’aamet “the end of the world”, a-jal “one’s hour” and so on. It is not less important, that in the Abkhazian Christian terminology there is a large group of Kartvelians own and kartvelized terms, which gives an opportunity of close definition of the time of their borrowing by the Abkhazian language. Accordingly, with their help it becomes possible to ascertain the epoch of Abkhazians Christianization. The ascribable term to such words is, for example: a-wakhwama “church” which meets as in Abzhuisian, as in Bzipian dialects of Abkhazian language. The first source of the given word appears to be the Megrelian form o-khvam-e “church” (more exact. “Place for prayer”) as well from the Megrelian khvama “to pray” comp. Svan. la-qwam “to pray” . The presence of the glottal consonant q in Svanian speech points to the fact, that firstly in Megrealina forms, there was the presence of the same consonant, which with the consonant v, naturally would have become in Bzipian, a specific glottal consonant x’w, by borrowing the word oqvame by the Abkhazian language, what happens with the Abkhazian consonant qw and Bzipian kh’w (In Abzhuan, original qw is always changing by tertiary consonant khw). Although, in Bzipian there is not an expected form a-wakh-wama, there is a-wakhwama. This means, that by Abkhazian language, the name of the church has been borrowed only after the change which means that in Megrelian language the consonant q was already replaced by the consonant x, as in the most of Georgian dialects. The process of the replacement q>kh. x in kartvelian dialects, had started from X century. So, the term meaning church has been borrowed by Abkhazian language only after X century.

In both dialects of Abkhazian language, the big wakh candle is meaning the word a-k’jalant’ar, which gets to the Greek form kerolampter “candlestick”, however, the term is not borrowed from the Greek language, it is borrowed by the mediatory from the Megrelian speech: Georg. Lit. k’elap’t’ar-i>Megr. K’elant’ar-i > Abkhaz. A-k’jalant’ar. So, when is this word borrowed from the Megrelian speec by Abkhazian language? When and where was the semantic of the given word changed (from “candlestick” to “the big wax candle”) Ancient Georgian written sources answer on these questions, to be more exact: The story of George Mtatsmindeli in 1042-1044 years “the life of Joane and Eqvtime” the word k’elap’t’ari – “kelaptari – candlestick, but now the big candle is called so, which is wrong”.³⁹ It is natural to suppose that the Megrelian word also could change its semantic exactly in the same period, between XI-XVII centuries, and Abkhazian language had borrowed this term with the changed semantic in the period between XI-XVII centuries.

Of course as here analyzed, as well the other Christian terms, which have important religious meaning, clearly are pointing to the next:

a) the need of using Christian terminology in Abkhazian ancestors arose in the period between XI-XVII centuries and this means that at least XI century they were not Christians;

b) The Abkhazian ancestors did not get to known to the Christianity from the Greeks but from Georgians and from them they borrowed the Christian terminology (also from the Greek originality);

³⁹ George Mtatsmindeli. *The life of Joane and Eqvtime*. Georgian prose, v. I. Tb., 1981, p.382 (in Georg. Lang.); Sulxhan-Saba Orbeliani. *Georgian dictionary*, v. I. Tb., 1991, p. 364.

c) We must consider groundless, the hypothesis which says that Apshils and Absgs who nowadays inhabit on the territory of the modern Abkhazia, supposedly the ancestors of Abkhazians and Abazians, dechristianized in I, IV and VI centuries);

d) We also have to admit, that the terms apsil//apšil and abaskhos//abaskos//abasgos// were meaning Georgian nation in I-IV centuries too.

These conclusions are also supported with the fact that in Abkhazian language on the whole by kartvelian or kartvelized terms are meant such important Christian words like: cross, Christ, Christianity, Christian, Christmas, Archangel, christening, bishop, monk, most of the Christian holidays and so on, later after the spreading of the Christianity among Abkhazians (this could happen not earlier than XVI century) and the weakness of the Christianity is also reflected in the fact that in Abkhazian language there are mostly never used biblical terms and in Abkhazia, the geographic names, connected to the Christianity and saint names, are never met. (Comp. Georg. Toponyms: Jvari “Cross”, sameba “trinity”, Šemokmedi “the creator”, Amaγleba “The Ascention”, Nino’cminda “Saint Nino”, Andriac’minda “Saint Andria” and so on.⁴⁰

5. The kartvelian social terminology in Abkhazian language. If Abkhazians have always lived on the territory of the modern Abkhazia or even if from XI century they were the citizens of the united Georgian kingdom, or if, as B. G. Hewitt thinks that their ancestors were the main inhabitants of the west Georgia⁴¹, already in VII-IX centuries, then as in west kartvelian dialects (Megrelian, Imeretian, Gurian, Acharian, Lazian, Lechkhumian, Rachian, Upper Balian, Down balian, Lentekhian, Lashkian) as in Georgian written language, Abkhazian terms connected with the ruling of kingdom, social relations, and office work had had to be presented inevitably, and in Abkhazian and Abazian languages there had had to be presented, at least the smallest part, corresponding to the Greek terms. However, naturally, in kartvelian dialects there are no any Abkhazian words from this groups, and in Abkhazian and Abazian also are absent not only the signs corresponding to the Greek terminology but the aboriginal terminology, related with the ruling of the kingdom and office work as well (except the word meaning “to write”), which is very important.

At present, in the Abkhazian language are presented the next main social terms: ah(a) “sovereign prince”; sir”, a-hwentkar // a-k’ral “ruler, king”, a-hk’wažw “mistress”, a-tawad “prince”, aamsta “nobleman”, a-upšwel “prince”, a-kjahia “land manager”, a-pkhawe “peasant”, a-mac’urazku//a-mac’urazdu “maidservant, moinale”, a-khuwe “maidservant, dolmakhore”, a-šnaq’wma “maidservant, shinakma”, a-khašwala “maidservant, modjalabe”, a-gandal “wet-nurse”, a-ʒʒej “baby sitter, governess”, a-grua “prisoner; modjalabe”... The historians think that in these terms there are reflected the social relations of late middle centuries.⁴² From these terms, the words, meaning : prince, princess, shinakms, wet-nurse, baby sitter are of kartvelian originality, and agrua besides prisoner, means Megrelian and draws attention with the fact that it reflects the aggressive relation to the Abkhazians, who were the comers from the north Caucasus, who had lived on the

⁴⁰ In details about this look: T. Gvantseladze. To the question about the kartvelian substrate in Abkhazian language on the base of the Christian hieratic vocabulary. Coll. “Georgian heritage”, v. I. Kutaisi, 1996 (In Georg. Language).

⁴¹ B. G. Hewitt. The valid and non-valid application of philology to history. “Revue des etudes Georgiennes et Caucasiennes”, N 6-7. Paris, 1990-1991, p. 260-261.

⁴² The sketches of Abkhazian history. Part I. Sokhumi, 1960, p. 111-113.

territory of the modern Abkhazia before, and were Georgians (Megrelians). The thing is that, by the data from the written sources of the late middle ages (A. Lambert, Khr. Kastel, J. Sharden, Vakhushti Bagrationi, Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani, V. Tatishev) Abkhazians were attacking at the Megrelians, who were the inhabitants of the land of modern Abkhazia, they were robbing, killing or taking them prisoners. For the massive character of taking Megrelians as prisoners, the word *agrua* “Egrissian, Megrelian” took an new meaning – prisoner, for this stage, and on the next stage, when unexpiated by the relatives or by the owners, the prisoner were given a right to settle on the land of the new owners- Abkhazians (*apswa*), the term got one more new meaning, and started to mean the low social category of maids-modjabe, which is being proved by the position paper of the Abkhazian princes B. Emukhvari, M. Marshania, T. Marshania and K. Inal-Ipa from the 23d of march of 1870 year⁴³. Exactly such maids were the cause of appearance of Abkhazian surname *Agrua*, the large amount of the representatives of this surname had inhabited in the Dalian and Tsebelinian canyons and also on the plains of Abzhua till the second half of XIX century, and in 1867 year they all were evicted to the Turkey⁴⁴. It is important for the analyzed issue, that in Abkazian language, to designate the king there are no any primordial words (the word *a-hwentkar* is borrowed from the Turkish and *a-k’ral* – form Turkish or Russian), there are no any original terms to designate kingdom and royalty.

As to the common Abkhazian – Abazian word *ah(a)* “sovereign prince; sir”, it just now widens the semantic and gets the meaning “king, ruler”, and ethimologically is connected with the root of the word *ajhabe* “highest rank” and *ajjha* “more”. The next circumstance is not less important which shows that the meaning of the homeland in Abkhazian is designated by the terms *a-psadgil* and *a-jenj’twela*, in the group of which are included kartvelian bases *adgil-i* “place, plot of land” and *jinj-i* (megr.) “root”. This means that the meaning of homeland as the juridical and cognitive unit had been become active for Abkhazians only after their settlement on the territory of the modern Abkhazia.

6. The kartvelian substratum toponyms in Abkhazia. We have to mark, that in none of the written sources of the antic, early feudal and middle century epochs, on the territory of modern Abkhazia, there is no sign of mentioning of any geographic names, which could have been ethimologized without any problem on the bases of Abkhazian and Abazian languages, when in the same sources are mentioned a lot of geographic names with obvious kartvelian originality.

Let’s have a look at the partial list of the geographic names, which are authenticated only in the narrative (legendary) sources from the ancient times to 1801 year and the kartvelian originality of which is absolutely undoubtfull:

Zigana//ziganevi//siganei (firstly is being mentioned from I c. A. C.), *Mokhora//Mukhoris//Mukhuri* (from V c. A. C.), *Tsibilium//Tsibel//C’ebeli//C’abal* (from 554y. A. C.), *Dandari//Dranda* (from VI c. A. C.), *Fusta//Pusta*, *Mokvi* and *Jikhakhora* (from 662 y.), *Tskhumi//Tskhomi* (from VIII c.), *Nazhaneu//Nazhanevi//Nazhaneuli//Nazhanauri*, *Ts’amxari*, *T’q’auri//T’q’avru*, *Marmarisk’ari*, *Bedia* (from XI c. with the connection to the prehistoric events), the city of *Egrisi* (from XI c. with the connection to the prehistoric

43 T. Gvantseladze. Language data and their meaning for the research of Abkhazia’s ethnic history. – Problems of the Abkhazian history. Tb., 1998, p. 49 (in Georg. Language).

44 The list of Mukhadjirs, who had this surname look: B. Khorava. Abkhazians being Mukhadjirs in 1867 year. Tb., 2004, p. 123-170 (in Georg. Language).

events), the river Egrists'q'ali (from XI c. with the connection to the events of IV c. B. C.), Magula//Margula//Morgula//Merk'ula (from 1615 y.), Khoiri, Khauzheli, Tiliti, Č'ala (all 1621 y.), Sk'urča//skurča (from 1630 y.), the village and the river ʒalizga (from 1639 y.), Skavri//Isgauri//Izgauri (from 1634 y.), K'vit'auli//K'vit'ouli//K'it'ouli//P'it'auri and Puc'q'uri (from 1640 y.), Okumi, K'odori, Ilori, C'ipuria, K'orckheri//K'orckheli, Oluse (all from 1654 y.), the river K'ap'et'is C'q'ali (from XVIII c.) and so on.

Some of these names are megrelian (Mukhuri, Jikhakhora, Tkauru, Khoiri, Skurcha, Galidzga, Putskuri, Okumi, Kodori, Ilori, Tsipuria, Kortskheli, Olushe...) the others – Svanian (Pusta, Tskhumi) and the third part come to the written Georgian language (Zigana-zegani, Mokvi, Nazhanevi-Nazhaneuli-Nazhanauri, Chala-Chlou, Kvilauli-Pitauri⁴⁵...) there are also singled out prokartvelian toponyms (Bedia, Tsabali-Tsebeli, Egrisi, Egritskhali...) and also hybrid, mid. dialect names (Margula, Marmariskari, Kapetistkhali...).

The issue of the origin of the varieties of ancient name of Pitsunda (Geo. Bic'vinta) which is presented in antic Greek sources in the varieties Pitiunta//Pitius, also draws attention. Clears out that from these two Greek forms the older one is Pistius, which in Greek means pine-tree. This name has to be considered as the replicated translation of the Georgian name pič'vi “pine-tree, branches of conifer”¹. Next geographic names, which are spread mostly on the whole territory of Abkhazia, appear to be undoubtedly kartvelian : Gagra//Gagari//Gaak'ari//K'ak'ari (from the Svanian gak'ar (nut-tree, nuts), Awadhara, Othara (both from Megr. Otkhire “the place to plant small nuts”) T'q'varčeli (from Megr. T'q'varčelia “cycleman”), Genc'viši (from the Svan. Genc'is “willow” , Mguʒerkhva (hybrid name from the ancient Georgian meboʒiri “crossroads” + Abkhazian – Abazian khwa//akhwe “hill”), Merkheuli (from Svan. merkhel “nettle”), K'op'it'i (from Geo. K'op'it'i “ash-tree”), Amt'q'eli (from Geo. T'q'emali “ plum, tkemali”), Khobi//khwap and much more². In the present Abkhazian villages, there is recorded a lot of micro toponyms with the kartvelian origin, which surely had been made by Georgians a long before Abkhazians were settled down in these villages.

For example, in the village Mokvi of the Ochamchire region, where the ancient Georgian christian temple is located, is toponym Asaq'udara, which goes to the ancient Georgian word saq'udari “nomad camp of anchorit monks”;

In the village Adziubzha there are micro toponyms: Pškjar < megr. Dialect pšker-i//pšk'er-i “rhododendron”, Urak' < Geo. Urek'i “impenetrable forest”, Šwkurča< megr. Skurče “white river”, the lake of Alagvana//Olagvana< Megr. Olagvane “the place of burial of the wine pitcher”...;

In the village Arasadzikh: T'q'auc(a)<megr. “Black forest”; A-sacejkh//A-čacejkh< Geo. Sacikh-I “corral for cattle” or sacekh-i “the place to chop firewood”; Kvabal< megr. Kobal-i “bread, wheat”; Mdar (grassland)< Geo. Mindor-i (Imeret. mindor-i)...;

In the village Gvada: A-saljan < Geo. Selian-i “flakhy field”; Kvian < Geo. Kviani-i “stony”;

In the village Gupi there is a river, named P'ap'anc'q'ur. This name goes to the Megrelian p'ap'anc'q'vil-i (missing priest”, it is related with the legend about greedy priest. This name is also often met in Samegrelo)...;

In the village Kvitouli there is a backwater with the two parallel names: megr. Ont'q'alasi// Abkh. Aʒbaa...;

45 G. T. Gvantseladze. To the etymology of the name of the village Kvitouli. – Kartvelian heritage, v. XII. Kutaisi, 2008.

In the village Kindgiare are presented micro toponyms: Ap'arakhja//Op'arakhj'a < megr. Op'arakhe "the place of sheepdogs"; At'ranj//At'aranja < megr. Ot'oronje "piggeoner" ...;

In the village Pokveshi there is a toponym Abut'k'ujra < megr. But'k'uji "arm"...;

Resembling micro toponyms are also met in Abkhazian vilages of the Gudauta region: Mekhverskha "Mukhurian hill" (mukhur-i megr. -svan. "Side corner"); Gerze "Megrelian water" (v. Blaburkhva); Midar adve (v. Achandara; comp. Imeret. dialect Geo. Language midori "field"); Mtargjalaz < Geo. Mtavarangelozi "archangel" (v. Duripsh); Akhvaja (v. Kaldakhvara) , megr. Okhoje "the place for bullocks". . . ; Wakara (v. Likhni) < Megr. Okare "windy place"; ḡjajgvala (v. Jirkhva) < ḡej(iš)gvala "the mount of pigs" and so on.

Of course in the present Abkhazian villages, if they had been inhabited exclusively just by Abkhazians, the Georgian micro toponyms did not have to appear, but as they do exist, it means, that the first inhabitants of these villages were the Georgians and not Abkhazians.

The next two settlements have to be considered as the ancient geographic names on the territory of Abkhazia, formed by the rules of Abkhazian language: Aitarne and Arukha, which are recorded in the firs half of XVI century in the position paper of the owner prince of Odisha (Samegrelo) Mamia III Dadiani (1512-1523 years) on the name of Pitsunda church of mother of god. From these toponyms, the firs one goes to Abkhazian name of heathen god of stock raising Aitar (comp. megr. Jini Antari "upper, higher Antari" , Khevsurian Anatori), to the base of which is added the Abkhazian toponymic suffix -ne, which is transferred to the Georgian text as -ne. As to the second toponym, ruxa must be considered as its base, which may not be Abkhazian with its originality (comp. v. Rukhi in Samegrelo), but it is formalized with Abkhazian prefix a-. The reflection of name of heathen god of stock raising in the toponym, appears to be the direct point to the fact that the main activity of Abkhazians, who settled down in Abkhazia in XVI century, had been stock raising, which harmonizes with Katiba Chelebi's information (not earlier than 1645 y.) which says that it is impossible to meet seamen, ploughmen and arobs⁴⁶ among the nation of Abazians (Abkhazians).

7. The Kartvelian surnames among Abkhazians. The undoubtful prove of the massive ethnical identity replacement of the Georgian nation, who inhabited on the territory of the modern Abkhazia before the settlement of ancestors of the modern Abkhazians (apswa), who had come from the North Caucasus, appears to be a fact of widest spreading among the last kartvelian surnames. The small part of the ancestors of the people who had such surnames, not too long ago (in XIX – XX centuries) was settling down here from the different regions of the west Georgia (mainly from Samegrelo and also from Imereti, Guria, Racha, Lechkhumi).

The cause of the individual, trans-regional migrations of partly Abkhazian, Georgian ancestors, according to the expedition materials, appeared to be: murder of princes or neighbors and run away from the blood revenge, castle peasants who were with the daughters of Georgian princes who had been made to marry Abkhazian princes, the change of castle men for the pure-bred dogs and vultures between Georgian and Abkhazian aristo-

⁴⁶ Data of Kiatiba Chelebi about Georgia and Caucasus. Translated from the Turkish, with preface, commentaries and added pointers, G. Alasania. Tb., 1978, p. 136 (in Geo. Language).

crats, work motives (appointment of Georgian priests, teachers, doctors, agronomist... to work in Abkhazia) and so on. Eventually, children and grand children of the individual migrants, who had been living in Abkhazian surrounding, at first were losing their native language, moving to Abkhazian, and later their ethnical identity was also changing. For example, the representatives of the family Chkhaidze (in Abkhazian: Chkhiiჴე) in Abkhazian village Jgerda, who call themselves Abkhazians at present, appear to be the ancestors of deacon Chkhaidze who had been sent here...⁴⁷

The second group of Abkhazianized Georgians is composed by interregional migrant's ancestors. Their ancestor, who used to live in Georgian region villages till XVI century, in XVI-XVIII centuries had been taken as prisoners or hostages and eventually had been assigned to category Agrua (Modjalabe) in Abkhazian settlements, which were taken away the right to leave their surnames and were given new "surname" Agrua (about this, look up). As it is seen from the documents, by 60 years of XIX century, the surname Agrua was quite widely spread in Abkhazia, mostly in its high hilled part (Kodorian canyon), which directly points to the fact that Abkhazians had been gathering Georgian prisoners and hostages exactly in that place, while they were waiting for their ransom. The rightness of this conclusion is proved by the geography of the spread surname Agrua, which is reflected in the list of Abkhazian mukhajirs, made by Russian officials in 1867 y. , according to which, 239 families with the surname Argua were expelled to Turkey, from the next villages: Naush- 28 families, Beshikvara -21, Lata – 18, Amchara -17, Pushta – 15, Akitartsukhva, Jikhashkari and Azhara – each 13, Azanta – 10, Shvakvaran – and Uarda – each 8, Dali – 7, Amtkel, Untpir, Naa and Kada – each 6, Shvkhvatsaa, Rkhabla and Abgvalakhvara – each 5, Jampal, Kamgara and Tabsh-Ipa Ikhabla – each 4, Psirtskha, Pshauri, Mramba, Shvakv and Gentsvishi – each 3, Abgara and Zima – each 2, anikhva, Gupi and Beslakhuba – 1 families⁴⁸ from each. After the Mukhajiring in Abkhazia there were left none of the Argua surname secondary representatives, and in Turkey, the owners of this surname were forbidden to have it and during the passport system "were gifted" with Turkish surnames.

The third and the largest group of Abkhazianize Georgians is composed by the people who in live on the land of Georgian ancestors, at present, the aboriginals of Abkhazians, who are not the descendants of the migrants, but because of the objective reasons, their ethnic identity had been changed and today they appear to be the part of the Abkhazian nation.

In Georgian juridical documents, made in XVI-XVIII centuries, on the territory of modern Abkhazia are mentioned a lot of Georgian surnames, such as: Abashia, Ablotia, Ardashelia, Bebuia, Bekveria, Buliskeria, Basania, Vardania, Vacharia, Gamsakhurdia, Gamisonia, Gargulia, Garmelia, Gvagvalia, Gvinjilila, Gochava, Gurgulia, Janjulia, Jguburia, Jejeia, Eteria, Elerjia, Kvarandzia, Qvachakhia, Kvekveskiri, Kilanava, Korsantia, Kurdgelia, Lamandzia, Markhulia, Markelia, Melia, Mirtskhulava, Minjoraia, Morokhia, Nanava, Orjonia, Papava, Papaskiri, Papaskua, Rigvava, Rogava, Saria, Sarua, Sekania, Sirginava, Sondzia, Sopia, Topuria, Torua, Tupuria, Ubiria, Shavaia, Shangua, Sharangia,

⁴⁷ This deacon is mentioned in the document in 1888 y. look. J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy (I c. – 1921 y.)*. Tb., 2005. p. 994 (in geo. Language the list of priests of Sokhumian eparchy for 1888 y. – in Rus.

⁴⁸ B. Khorava. *Makhajiri....*, p. 123-170.

Sharia, Chabrava, Chachkhala. Chilava, Chkotua, Cholaria, Tsatsua, Kharania, Kharbedia, Kharebava, Kharchilava, Khetsia, Khorava, Khubutia a lot of more. ¹ On the same territory in the middle century written sources, with Georgian surnames and Christian-canonical anthroponomies (first names) are also mentioned some none canonical anthroponomies of Kartvelian origin, and also lots of Kartvelianized names. For example: Č'uč'uria and Datia Šamigia (v. Tkauru at the coasts of the river Kodori); K; ak; a Jaiani, Lominia Gogolda, Mikhlia, Kvakvalia, Vgič'ordi, Obiškhuai, Mač'ikholi, Toliokro, Gurmikhili, Mirčkilia, Jgek'oči, Orkolei, Jguburia Gurišia, Nak'aymeliu, Babut'ia, Sokherdia, Iane, Ivane, Sultama, K'očivara, K'vat'ara, Bakhut'a Didia, K'očilei Didia, Abramaisšvili, Mč'itanaa Čaraču, Gabriel Žažua, Abram Žažua, Irdašela Žažua, Ingaria Žažua, Marsalia Samelia, Toliokro Gogilaa, and 31 more from the v. Najaneuli (At present the part of Abkhazian village Chlou of Ochachire region); Khakhut'a Didia, K'ak'aia Čagua, Gogia Čagua, Uk'ulaši Lasuria, Usk'wama Lasuria, Mikhilia Muzurgnia, mamulia C'ebelara, Jgergešia Čagua, Gurmikhila Čagua, Kakalia Čagua, Babadia Kunia, Jit'a, Jwarisa Jit'a, Važoba Grigolia, Gok'urckhia Grigola, Sk'wamilei Jikia, Gamigoni Bičva, Mašut'ia Didia, Toliokro Didia, Gavašeli Damak'očia, Dabala, Hryuna, Khuxulia Ambalia, Khuces Ambalia, Gamigona Jomnia, and 14 more inhabitants of v. Khoiri (at present v. Okhure in Ochamchire region); Taimaz K'it'ia, Kwakwalia K'it'ia, , Kerabin K'it'ia, Mamulia K'it'ia, Babak'wia K'it'ia, Šurimidgi K'it'ia, P'ert'ia, Jgergek'oči Kit'ia, Žyirua, Elijar K'it'ia, Gavašel K'it'ia, Amuyabar K'it'ia, Gavašel Amilyambari, Q'elgrželi Korčolua, mamši Korčolua, (comp. the surname Kocolava from Georgian writing on the church of Ilori XI c.), K'ak'a jak'onua, Važoba Jak'onua, P'ap'išia Jak'onua, Babadiši Jak'onua, Sk'wamili Jak'onua, Kozira Jak'onua, Sanat'reli G'wajagia, Gomtinatia Maxut'ia, Mamulia Art'onua, and 15 more peasants from v. Subvi (Subeishi; at present the part of v. Achigvari, Gali region) and Mukhuri (Gali region);

Xuces Tipšxua, Mart'išia Tipšxua, Iese Tipšxua, Nanart'ia Topšxua, Jgek'oči Ckuria, Sordi Ckuria, Mikhilia Šunia, Šorda Gulua, Tutaškia Gulua, Mikhilia Stepanask'iri, Šuritoli Stepanask'iri, Babasuri Zhvanesk'iria, Tasia Čerčia, K'ut'ulia Stepanaskiri, Babašuri Zhvanesk'iria, Badia Momardia, Mordilia Bulia, Tutaškia Kupača, Tolisk'wami Paža, Tolisk'ua K'irčkheli, Kažara Zhvanesk'iria, Toskwamia Khukhua, Khukhuloba Zrkua, Učak'oči Šant'ia, T'orolja, Gwagwala Šarinava, Bartime Šarinava, Lominia Cirk'arava, Šuritoni Malurava, Mama Šunia, Tosk'wamia Markhalia, Šurimidgi Čkhirua, Bebli Šunia, Orkoia Girkolava, Vargibia Girgola, Tauzar Girgola, P'inate Girgola from v. Tiliti (At present the part of Abkhazian village Abaajvakhv in the Ochamchire region); Khuces Vardania, Vartangia, Parsmania, , Mitanapi Bagia, Ginžia, Čokua, Ivana K'uk'uaa, Talaber C'ebelaria, , Dalaba Khalibesšvili, Gač'irdia Ceblaria, Guguriši C'eblaria, Kakalia C'eblaria, Gac'irel C'eblaria, Dask'una C'eblaria, Zangelar C'eblaria, Girdia from the v. Khaujeli (Near to the Abkhazian v. Chlou); Gairčkini Salat'ia, Učardia Salat'ia, Tosk'wamia Dušia, Žuk'a Dušia, Mamaia Dušia from the v. Gachu (Supposedly is located between villages Chala-Chlou and Gupa in the Ochamchire region) Makhu Vardania, Giorgi Vardania, Guguri, Sabedo Vardania, Mikhilia Vardania, Tena Šonia, Sk'umišia Vardania, Mažyvabla, Khwit'ia Miseria, Mamiq'ordi Niseria, K'akhaber Niseria, Učardia Šonia, Uc'q'inar Niseria, Kakalia Niseria, Asp'andeli Sarina, Mač'ikholia,

C'ic'iaNiseria from the present Abkhazian village Gupi; Tavaza Šamgia (the origin form of this surname Šamigia look up, in the document from 1525 – 1550 years); Mašut'ua Šamgia, Kwakwalia Šamgia, Učak'oči Č'uč'uria, Gavašel Datia from the v. Tkauru; Khuces Gogordava, Gvat'a Gogordava, Mikhilia Čaglia (comp. up: Čangelia in the document from 1615 year); Biškhoplia, Marčikholi Č'ania, Šurimidgi Palia, Gičordi P'k'a, Maryia Kvackha, Lorteyi Bnibilia from the v. Chala (at present Chlou) and so on.⁴⁹ It is important that in these names are never mentioned Abkhazian (Apsuisian) inhabitants of the modern Abkhazia.

The attention is being drew to the fact, that on the territory of modern Abkhazia there are found more than 100 Georgian inscriptions, which are made from IX century on the walls of churches, crosses, bridges and so on. However in neither of them are mentioned Abkhazian church wardens, builders, religious persons and noblemen. At the same time, from XI century, the Georgian surname Kocholvaj (The church of Ilori) is being recorded for the first time, a lot of Georgians from different social stratum⁵⁰ are consequently being mentioned in the epigraph of the region. In this context, we have to mark that on the territory of modern Abjui and Samurzakano (between the rivers Kodori and Inguri) before the appearance of Abkhazian inhabitants here, to be more exact, before the boundary in XVII-XVIII centuries⁵¹.

None of the Abkhazian toponyms were recorded, except the name Agu, on the map of A. Lamberti from 1654 year, exactly after the boundary of XVII-XVIII centuries Kartvelianized Abkhazian surnames, could have appeared in Samurzakano, and they could have been formed with joining Georgia suffix- ia < -ian on the bases of Abkhazian suffixes –ba//–iba: Ak'iš-ba-ia, Alš-ib-aia, Ezug-ba-ia, Zvam-ba-ia, Zukh-ba-ia, Kec-ba-ia, Q'ol-ba-ia, Lacuz-ba-ia, Tar-ba-ia... The owners of these surnames, who are already being Georgians, know that their ancestors were Abkhazians and had moved here from South Caucasus or the mountainous regions of Abkhazia.

Apsuisation (Abkhazianation) of the Georgian surnames has happened with the obeying the rules of word borrowing, which is characterizing the Abkhazian language, more exactly:

a) The ending – (v) a of the Megrelian surnames, which comes to the suffix – an (comp. Geo. surnames: Gig-an-i, Bablu-an-i, Panh-an-i, Nak-an-i...), is rethought as Abkhazian suffix of the form of collective, plural nouns, which is met in Abkhazian surnames (comp. : Amč'-ba > collect. Amč'-aa “Amichbians”...), and sound splitting consonant v is not presented, because it is not pronounced in Megrelian speech. This way we have got the Abkhazian versions of Georgian surnames: Č'ətanaa < Č'itana(va), Səč'ena < Sič'ina(va), Tarnaa < Turna(va), Bigvaa < Bigva(va), Gerzmaa < Gerzma(va), Lagwlaa < Lagvila(va) and so on.

b) The surnames with the ending – ia < -ian are saving this ending or are cutting it off at all, at the same time taking the Abkhazian prefix of the names common form a-

49 Statues of Georgian right, v. III, ecclesiastical legislator statues (XI – XIX cc.). Texts were published and provided with notes and pointers by Prof. I. S. Dolidze. Tb., 1970, p. 419-434 (in Geo. Language).

50 Look in details: L. Akhaladze. The epigraphy of Abkhazia as the historic source I. Lapidary and fresco inscriptions. Tb., 2005 y. (in Geo. Language); T. Gvantseladze. The ethnic membership of the north-west Georgia by the lapidary inscriptions of the middle centuries. – Kartvelian heritage, v. III. 1999 (in Geo. Language).

51 P. Tskhadaia. The historic and modern toponymy of Samurzakano...

Comp. , at the one side, surnames: Ger-ia, K'uc-ia, Khasa-ia, Berzen-ia, Gul-ia... and surnames: a-maršan < maršan-ia < maruš-ian-i (comp. maruš-iž-e), a-mkwab//a-nkwab < mikvab-ia//mekvab-ia < *mekvab-e, a-mpar < mepor-ia, a-jenjal < jinjol-ia, a-blesk'ira < bulisk'ir-ia//buelisk'ir-i...

d) The ending –ua remains unchanging: Logua, Mat'ua, Asabua < Esabua... It seems that it is being done by the help of analogy with transformation of Abkhazian names with the human originality, in which there is the next Abkhazian suffix, into the surnames, suffix –ua//–wa: agr-ua – “Megrelian”, ašwan-ua – “Svanian”, aškhar-ua – “Gorian” (comp. the surname Aškhar-aa from the same root).

During the critic of the groundless conclusions of N. I. Marr, in the upper part has been marked, that mainly Abkhazian surnames with the suffix –ba could not have appeared in the early feudal epoch, considering that, then among the ancestors of Abkhazians were no any corresponding historic, cultural and social conditions. And really, the existing written sources show, that the first surname, from the present Abkhazian surnames was the princely surname Sharvashidze (on the bases of data in “The living of Georgia”, the representative of this surname Dardin Shervashidze had lived in XIII century), however by the forming, this surname (has Georgian suffix –dze (“son”) does not appear to be Abkhazian. Besides this, there is no any documental information, which undoubtedly could have proved, that the representatives of this surname had been Apsuicians in XIII century⁵². As it clears out, the form Šawrvašisze, which is recorded in Georgian sources from the beginning of XIII century, comes to the Svanian phonetic varieties Šawreš > Šawreš (comp. the surname Šawreš-ian-i), which are coming from the men's name Šaorš (comp. with surname Šaorš-a-ze). The original form Šawrvašisze could give the variety Šarvašisze, from which, is given the spoken Megrelian form Šarašia, which has been recorded in late middle century sources (for example in the writing of K. Kasteli...) as the variety of the surname Sharvashidze. We also can assume this way of changes: the men's name Šalva > Šalva-ši-s-ze > Šarvašisze. As to the present Abkhazian equivalent of this surname – Chachba, it is got from the Megrelian spoken form Sharashia in the way of the consonant's Africization (š>č), the loss of the consonant g and the replacement of the Georgian suffix –ia by the Abkhazian suffix –ba. This conclusion is also being proved by the fact, which says that the surnames Sharvashidze considered themselves Georgians till XX century.

The second place with the ancient recording in history takes the surname Inalipa – “the son of Inal”, which is presenting in continuation of “the living of Georgia” in the connection with the facts of 1533 year, in the form of Inaldipa. The Abkhazian originality of the surname Inal-ipa is undoubtful. It is also undoubtful that the structural form of the Abkhazian princely surnames with the suffix –ipa – “his son” already existed in the first half of XVI century, which surely doesn't mean the massive existence of Abkhazian peasant surnames with affixes, in the same period. When has the process of Abkhazian surname's structural models massive execution began and ended? To ascertain this question we have to analyze, the structural models of Abkhazian surnames, existing at present, considering the corresponding data of nearly relative Abazian language.

At present, In Abkhazian language, are given the next structural models of the surnames:

52 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 588.

1. The surnames without any affixes, presented in the way of the clear bases (about 40 ones): Aukhat, Bagapsh – “ginger fox or ginger jackal” (comp. Abkhaz. a-bga//Abaz. Baga “fox, jackal” + Abkhaz. Aps “ginger”, Baras, Barach, Bartsits, Bgeu//Bgou, Giruapsh – “ginger Megrelian”, Dbar, Tarkil, Trapsh, Kapsh, Kiut, Kchach, Sharmat, Chablakh, Chalmaz... this surnames com to the men’s names or nicknames.

2. The surnames with the suffix – ipa- “his son” (14 ones): Dadal-ipa, Demerdj-ipa, Inal-ipa, Kiakhir-ipa, Lad-ipa, Naa-ipa, Omer(e)kech-ipa, Pate-ipa, Samakv-ipa, Kijv-ipa, Shakar-ipa, Chakmach-ipa, Dzansh-ipa. In the documents of XIX century, some of them are presented in more ancient form with the Turkish ending Olgi – “son” (Dadal-olgi, Demerdj-olgi, Omerekech-olgi, Chakmach-olgi), by which is being proved the Turkish originality of the one part of this surnames.

3. The surnames with the ending –iba// -jba (, -ipa) (8 ones): Abdiba, Adleiba, Alteiba, Ashvmeiba, Galdiba from Georgian Gadelia//Gadilia, Leiba, Tseiba, Tsveiba.

4. The surnames with the ending –ba(< - iba < -ipa) (about 140 ones): (A)bag-ba, Abragba, Abikhvba, Abijba, Agrba (from Agrua “Megrelian”), Akaba, Akshba, Alshvimba//Alshvinba, Amaba, Amchba, Anshba, Apba, (A)jiba and so on.

5. The surnames with the collective suffix – aa (13 ones): Abgadj-aa, Agvkhaa, Agvmaa, Atvmaa, Aimkhaa from the Georgian Emkhvari//Amilakhvari, akirtaa (literally: “Georgians”), Ashkharaa – “Gorians”, Ashvkhvatsaa, Barmishaa, Darmaa, Paptasa, Shvardlaa (from Georgian Shurdulava), Sharmataa, jardalaa.

From the given models, for Abkhazian and Abazian language appear to be common, the first (surnames without affixes) and the fifth (the surnames with the collective suffix), and the other models with the suffixes – ipa, -iba// -jba, -ba, which naturally appear to be the phonetic varieties of the one and the same model, are only spread in Abkhazian language (there are no excepting of some official, Russian forms, which had been forcedly spread among Ashkharians and Abazians in 20-30 years of XX century. Look. up). We also can add here, that absolutely groundless opinion, on the bases of which the ending – va of the Georgian surnames, some how, comes to the Abkhazian surname ending – ba (N. I. Marr) because: a) the ending – va is not heard at all, either in Abkhazian or in Megrelian speeches; b) None of the surnames with such ending a re ethimologized on Abkhazian ground; c) Suffix –ba is not added to this surnames, in Abkhazian speech. d) The consonant v in these surnames appears to be splitter of the vowels, gathering of which is not characterized, in the end of the word, for the Georgian language, so the mentioned consonant has no morphological function⁵³.

In the most (at 160 ones) of the allocated in the 5 models, about 220 Abkhazian surnames are included in three structural models, which are not met in Abazian language – these are the surnames with the ending – ipa, -iba // -jba, -ba. This fact is undoubtedly proving that before XVI century, when the Abkhazian - Abazian ethno-lingual unity existed, there were only 2 morphological models: a) without affixes and b) with the collective suffix –aa. The proof of such conclusion also appears to be the fact, that among Abazians are also met the surnames without affixes or with suffix –aa, which in Abkhazian are for-
⁵³ K. V. Lomtadze was relating this surname ending with the Abkhazian word a-wawe - : “human”. However in the bibliography of his science works, which were made on her own, the scientist has written a note to one of her works names: “In Georgian surnames, the connection of the ending –va with this words is doubtful” look. the bibliography of Academician Ketevan Lomtadze works. Tb., 2007, p. 11.

malized with the suffix –ba, comp. , for example: Abaz. Kap’a – Abkhaz. Kap’ba, Abaz. –Abkhaz. Smer –Abkhaz. Smerba (Among the Abkhazians of Batumi), Abaz. Meswhaj – Abkhaz. Muskhajba, Abaz. Liaa – Abkhaz. Lejba, Abaz. Azenaa – Abkhaz. Azenba... This way, it is clear, than the Abkhazian surname models with the suffix – ipa, Iba//–jba, –ba appeared after the settlement of Abkhazian ancestors on the territory of the modern Abkhazia, in XVI century in much the same time the Georgian surnames with suffixes – ze and –svili and this process had started in the princely area (comp. the first mentioning of the surname Inal-ipa in 1533 y.) and the formalizing of the peasant models of this surnames had started much more later and it wasn’t finished by the end of 60 years of XIX century. To such conclusions are leading the data from the lists of Abkhazian Mukhadjirs, made in 1867 year, which are drawing attention with breaking the main rules in use of Abkhazian surnames.

As to these rules, if before the surname with suffix –iba//–jba there is a personal name, the surname has to be presented in the complete way, without any changes (for example: Adgur Leiba, Alkhas Amichba) but if the surname comes first and the name, in that case the surname must be presented without suffixes (for example, correct: Lei Adgur, Amchi Alkhaz...). In the mentioned lists of the Mukhadjirs, these rules were broken 306 times and the surnames with the mentioned suffixes were presented without suffixes even then, when their existence was inevitable. For example in the original version of the up mentioned document is written next: Mamud Abdi instead of Abdiba, Susran Abukh instead of Abukhba, Smail Agodzi instead of Agvadzba, Khusin Agum instead of Agumba, Jakub Aka instead of Akaba, Mustaf Akush instead of Akusba, Daut Amchi instead of Amichba and so on.

This way, it clears up, that the massive formalizing of the Abkhazian surnames in the way of suffixation had ended before the mukhajir process (the process of mass deportation to the front Asia of people of the Abkhazian and Chircassian nobility) , not before the beginning of XX century. In this context, it is important that among the Batumian Abkhazians are spread the suffixed forms of the surnames, which are presented without suffixes in Abkhazia. Comp. for example: Smer-ba (In Batumi) and Smer (in Abkhazia), Q’ajt’an-ba (in Batumi) and Q’ajt’an (in Abkhazia). To these surnames, the suffix –bu had obviously been added after mukhadjir process, by the similarity of Georgian Surnames.

The note: the princely surname Anchabadze (Abkhazian version: Achba) in sources is firstly recorded in XVIII century at Vakhushti Bagrationi as Ancapize. Other Abazian authors, leaning on the Abkhazian saying: Ačba umhwak’wa Čačba uzhwom – “by not saying Achba you can not say Chachba”, think, that the representatives of the surname Anchabadze had been ruling Abkhazia before the representatives of the surname Sharvashidze (Chachba). Such conclusion does not match with the data of the historic sources, in which, as already marked before, Sharvashidze is mentioned 500 years earlier, in XIII century. This opinion is also contradicted by up analyzed linguistic facts, which show that the Abkhazian surnames with the suffix – ba could not exist before XVI century. As to the hypothesis about the owning of Achabeti, near the city Tskhinvali, by the representatives of the surname Chabadze, then this hypothesis, which is leaning on the phonetic likeness of the surname and toponym, is unproved, as it is not supported by sources as well.

The historic fact which says, that on the territory of the modern Abkhazia, before the settlement of the Absuisian ancestors had inhabited the autochthonic Georgian inhabitants, is also proved by the micro toponyms of the modern Abkhazian villages, which include the Georgian surnames. Such names are as much as in Gudauta region as in Ochamchire region.

In the village Abgarkhuk (Gudauta region) is a district with the name Argunaa rkjaptazw “waste land (the place where ones had lived) of Arguns”. The surname Argun is few at present and can not be explained in Abkhazian language. It is more realistic to assume its Georgian originality: comp. Megr. Arguni “little axe”, which at first could have become the nickname of the men, and then turned into the surname. The massive character of Abkhazianizing the little number of surnames does not disagree with this **opinion**.

In the same village there is a canyon and a cliff Biaa rgwawja “Cliff of the family Biava”. As this surname is Georgian, the given name confirms that the first inhabitants of this land had been the representatives of the surname Biava.

In the village Blaburkhva (Gudauta region) is the hybrid, Georgian – Abkhazian toponym kanrəps < Geo. Surname Kantaria + Abkhaz. rə-pš “their sacred place”.

In the village Mgudzirkhva (Gudauta region) the place at the coast of the sea is called Ckwan itep “Place of Chikovani”, though the representatives of the Georgian princely surname Chikovani do not live here any more.

In the village Kaldakhvara (Gudauta region) there are micro toponyms: amparaa rt-abgara “landslide, the linn of the family Ampar, Mempora” and Ampar ixwe “the hill of Ampar”.

In the village Kulanirkhva (Gudauta region) one of the blocks with contiguous upland is called Osiaa rxəkw “the land of the ravine Osia”.

In the village Jirkhva (Gudauta region) there is a Clough and a canyon with the name Emkhaa rgwawja “the cliff of the name Emkhvari” and this surname comes to the ancient Georgian social term amirakhori >amilakhori “the head of the royal horse-breeders” from which afterwards, is made princely surname Amilakhvari > Megr. Emkhvari > Abkhaz. Amjmkhaa//Emkhaa.

At the same place, there is a hydronym Sakaniaa r3ejxi “the spring of the family Sakania”. The surname Sakania//Sekania is Georgian.

The part of the village Abkhazian Atara (Ochamchire region) is called Andetwlow//Andeywlowaa, the first variety, of which is being the singular form of the Georgian surname Andyulava (comp/Andyulaze), and the second appears to be the plural form of the same surname.

At the same place, the hill and the block are called Gjargjaa rkhwe (the hill of the Gergia family; the other hill and the block are called Gegiaa rkhwe “the hill of the family Gegia”. There is a little river Dopuak’wara “the little river of the family Dopua”, the block Dopuaket//Dopuaa rket “the village of the family Dopua”.

The village Adzubzha “between two rivers” (Ochamchire region) in XIX century, was being called in Georgian names: Šuac’q’ali//Šuac’q’ari/Švac’q’ali “middle water”, which is reflected in the official Russian documentations. For example, this village is mentioned with the name Shuatskali in 1862-1863 years in the report of the society of orthodox

Christianity renewal in Caucasus⁵⁴, in the report of the same society, in 1868 year, the village is mentioned as Shuatskari⁵⁵, and in the report in 1888 year, is recorded the name Shvatskali⁵⁶. It is obvious that the Abkhazian name appears to be the duplicated translation of the Georgian varieties. In this village are still being recorded the toponyms in which we have an interest: Guliaa rkjapta – “plot of land of the family Gulia” (the name of the block), Dadianisi namarani (Megr.) – “the former wine-cellar of Dadiani”, Malaniaa rkjapta – “plot of land of the family Malania”... These toponyms obviously prove that this village had been inhabited by Georgians of Gulia and Malania family, and the village belonged to the princes Dadiani – The owners of Megrelia.

In the village Gupi (Ochamchire region) the ruins of the castle are called Aranaa abazw “the old castle of the family Aronia”. There also are the blocks: Bagateliaa, Rexwc’a – “The pedestal of sublimity of the family Bagatelia”, Bresk’elaa renxarta – “the place of living of the family Buliskiria”; Sublimities: Daciaa rkhwe – “The sublimity of the family Dochia”, Kakaa rxwe – “the sublimity of the family Kakava”, Lazariaa rxwe – “the sublimity of the family Lazaria”, Khunt’uaa rkhwe – “The sublimity of the family Khuntua”. All these toponyms are proving the autochthony of Georgians in the given village.

In the village Tkhina of Ochamchire region (comes to the Georgian word txilnari “hazel-nut bosket”) the one of the little rives is called Bigwaa rk’wara – “the little river of the family Bigvava”. And the surname Bigvava appears to be Georgian.

In the village Kvitouli (Ochamchire region) are toponyms and hydronyms: Vardanaa Rzejx (spring) – “the spring of the family Vardania”, Sabuaa rzechj (spring) – “the spring of the family (E)sebuu”, Zanaa rdwe (field) – “the field of the family Janava”, Sabuaa rxwe – “the sublimity of the family Sabua”, C’olok’uaa rhabla – “small town of the family Cholokua”. The village Samakharia is included in the community of Kvitouli “The place owned by the family Makharia”, which is formalized with Georgian prefix – sa-.

In the village Kindgi (Ochamchire region) are micro toponyms : Gwagiaa rxwe (sublimity) – “the sublimity of the family Gogia”, Dautiaa (district) “Dautia, Dautians”, K’oyoniaa rkjapta (district) – “the plot of land of the family Kogonia” Lak’wat’aa rxwe (sublimity) – “The sublimity of the family Lakmatava”, Khukhuliaa (district) – “Khakhulia, Khakhulians” and so on.

In the village Mokvi (Ochamchire region): Adian iqjapta (district) – “the plot of land of Dadiani” (Adian appears to be the Abkhazian form of the Georgian princely surname Dadiani – the owner princes of Samegrelo), Guniaa rgawjara – “The cliff of the family Gunia”, K’wak’wask’iraakhrkhwe (upland) – “the upland of the family Kwekweskiri”, K’wart’aa rxwe (upland) - “the upland of the family Kortava”, Kwabal – (block) “Kobalia”, Camaa rrac’es (district) – “the young tree of the Greek nut of the family Chamava”, C’ak’waaraaptra (district) – “shepards place of staying of the family Chakvava” and so on.

In the village Otapi (Ochamchire region) there are microtoponyms: Kuteliaa rcuta (block) – “the village of the family Kutelia”, Kuteliaa rkhwe (upland) – “the upland of the family Kutelia”, jeliaa rxwe (upland) – “The upland of the family Jelia” and so on.

54 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy (I c. – 1921 y.). Tb., 2005, p. 927.

55 Ibid, p. 944.

56 Ibid, p. 993 .

In the village Tkvarcheli there is a river with the name Gogiaa rk'wara – “the river of the family Gogia”, also there is a district C'abriaa rjajpta – “the plot of land of the family Cabria”...

In the village Pokveshi (Ochamchire region) are recorded the blocks with the pure Georgian formalization: Satania: - “Set for the family Tania”, Sak'ort'aa – “Set for the family Kortava”, Sak'ozmaa – “set for the family Kozmava”, in which are living already Abkhazianized representatives of the surnames Tania, Kortava and Kozmava. There also is met micro toponym Jenjalaa rgawja – “the cliff of the family Jinjolia”...

In the village Jgerda (Ochamchire region) are some hydronyms and micro toponyms: Kaciaa rk'wara (river and spring) – “The river of the family Kacia”, K'warciaa rexwc'a (block) – the pedestal of the upland of the family Kvarchia”, Sabuaa rzekhj (spring) – “the spring of the family Sebu”, Sabuaa rxwe (upland) – “the upland of the family Sebu”, Q'urdjalaa rxwe (upland) – “the upland of the family Kurdgelia”, Sowaa rekhwc'a (block) – “the pedestal of the hill of the family Shou”, Khubt'iaa rk'wara (river) – “the little river of the family Khubbutia”, Jaliaa (block) – “Jalians or Jolians” and much more.

That way, the up given large language material (about 70 micro toponyms) give us the reason for the next conclusion:

The territory of the present Abkhazian villages of Abkhazia's Gudauta and Ochamchire regions was inhabited with the mononational masses of Georgian nation before XVI – XVII centuries, and they were settled by the surname settlement principal. The large part of these geographic names, is surely not the coincidence and is corresponding to the Georgian and foreign historic sources, and proves the autochthony of Georgia in this region. The attention is also drew to the fact, that in the composition of lot of the mentioned names, as one of the members, comes out Abkhazian word akjajpta (the plot of land, former place of settlement”, that undoubtedly points to the change of the ethnic membership of the inhabitants of these villages and the lands of Georgian's settlement taken by Abkhazians.

8. The terms of sailing and fishing in Abkhazian language. In the livings of seaside ethnos, the sea has a great practical and spiritual – cultural meaning, because, for them it is being the main transportation artery, it defines the geoclimatic life conditions, supplies with food and different necessary materials, helps to develop the specific religious views, ideology, folklore and mythology. The closeness of the ethnos with the sea is immediately being reflected on its language as wealth of the sailing terms, fishing and culinary and in the phraseology. If the ancestors of Abkhazians had always inhabited at the coasts of the black sea, then the presented, mentioned groups of vocabulary must be abundantly presented in Abkhazian language. The first scientist, who had tried to make conclusions from the historic meaning on the bases of this vocabulary, appears to be N. I. Marr. By noticing the existence of the Georgian – Abkhazian term –*apra* – “canvas”, which can be etymologized differently as in Abkhazian as in Georgian languages (comp. , at the one side, Abkhaz. *A-per-a* – “to fly”; comp. on the other side, Geo. *Pr-e-na*, Megr. dialect *pur-in-u-a* – “to fly”; comp. also the Georgian words with prefixes *a-*: *a-dg-il-I* – “the place, a plot of land” < *dg-om-a* – “to stay; to stop”, *a-črd-il-i/črd-il-I* “the shadow”...). The scientist, without any special analyzes announced it as an Abkhazian word and made the far taking

conclusions: “The Abkhazians who were thrown away from the coastal line, by the now coming elements, once in the sailing business, could naturally have been the teachers for their neighbors...”; “The Georgian word –*apra* – “canvas” appears to be the borrowing from Abkhazian. And it has not only the vocabulary meaning but the real cultural – historic meaning as well: It comes about, that the Abkhazians as sailors had been giving the sailing terms to their neighbors. Although the modern way of life of Abkhazians does not agree with such conclusions, but the Abkhazian speech and Abkhazian heritage are full with the memories about Abkhazian’s close contact with the sea”⁵⁷. Unfortunately, these conclusions are not based on the exhaustive analyzes of the great lingual, Ethnographical and historic material (the scientist had no enough time for this). Otherwise he could be informed about the existence of K. Chebeli, A. Lamberti, N. Vitzena, Vakhushti Bagrationi, I. Blaramberga and others data, about the fact that from the late middle centuries Abkhazians did not eat fish and were laughing at the other ethnoses, which did this with great pleasure.

The hypothesis about the Abkhazians autochthonism lays in the bases of the Abkhazian linguist O. Dzidzaria (Dzaria), in which the Abkhazian vocabulary related with sea, is analyzed⁵⁸. In the book, the author shows his opinions about the originality and the structure of 124 main words⁵⁹. By the conclusion of O. Dzidzaria (Dzaria), from 124 terms, 80 appear to be actually Abkhazian, the originality of 15 words is not clear, and the other 29 are borrowed from the Georgian dialects (mostly from Megrelian), Turkish, Greek and also from the Phoenician languages⁶⁰. The main feature is, that the author considers to be the actually Abkhazian words, which are meaning such “main” sea notions as: coast, coastal inhabitant, boat (ship), rope, to moor, to moor to, oar, whirlpool, to swim, to stay in sea for a long time, flood, to inundate, to go for sailing, to lost in sailing, wash over (in waves), overflow, piracy, seaway, float, pier, stern, corf for fishing, pillar, rail stanchion, sea, scales, salty (sea) water, sand, fish, canvas, canvas boat, diagonal canvas, come to the top, deck, to sail in the sea, to dive, anchor, wave (sea), dragging, crotchet, fishing tackle, harpoon, kayak, pirates, storm, waterspout, flounder, stickleback (fish), scad, redfish, pike, herring, cruccian carp, sheat fish, dolphin, shark, eel, tadpole, drum (fish), chub, striped mullet, relay swimming, swimming on back, crawl (swimming variety), dark drum, breast stoke (swimming variety), swimming on the bottom, to drown, steering wheel, island, half-island⁶¹.

The quite large part of the given notions and the corresponding terms (shark, eel, tadpole...) are not related to the sea at all, or their relation with the sea is too conditional, because the terms which mean the same notions are existing among the terms of the languages of the ethnoses, which are not inhabited near the sea, although the lakes and rivers are well known for them (notions: coast, boat (ship), rope, to moor, to moor to, oar, whirlpool, to swim, to stay in sea for a long time, flood, to inundate, to go for sailing, to lost in

57 N. I. Marr. *About the language and history of Abkhazians*, p. 87, p. 143.

58 O. P. Dzidzaria (Dzaria). *Marine vocabulary in Abkhazian language*. Sokhumi, 1989.

59 Let us mark to compare, that M. Salia had gathered and had analyzed in high academic level 536 Megrelian – Lazian vocabulary units, just related with fishing, and now shi is gathering and researching also the vocabulary of sailing. Look: M. Salia. *The vocabulary of fishing in Zanian language*. Tb., 2005 (in *Geo. Language*).

60 O. P. Dzidzaria (Dzaria). *The Naval Lexics in the Abkhazian Language*. Sukhumi, 1989.

61 *Ibid*, p. 66.

sailing, wash over (in waves), overflow, piracy, seaway, float, pier, stern, corf for fishing, pillar, rail stanchion, sea, scales, salty (sea) water, sand, fish, canvas, canvas boat, diagonal canvas, come to the top, deck, to sail in the sea, to dive, anchor, wave (sea), dragging, crotchet, fishing tackle, harpoon, kayak, pirates, storm, waterspout, flounder, stickleback (fish), scad, redfish, pike, herring, cruccian carp, sheat fish, dolphin, shark, eel, tadpole, drum (fish), chub, striped mullet, relay swimming, swimming on back, crawl (swimming variety), dark drum, breast stoke (swimming variety), swimming on the bottom, to drown, steering wheel, island, half-island and others). The amount of such words in the list is 48 ones, it means 38.7% of the analyzed 124 words and the half part of the words announced as peculiar Abkhazian. If we consider that from 124 words, 34 are borrowings, it comes out that in Abkhazian language there are 42 peculiar words, directly related with the sea, and if we single out 15 words with uncertain originality, than the common number of Abkhazian peculiar words goes down to 27, which naturally does not reflect “the close connection of Abkhazians with the see”, as it seemed to N. I. Marr.

These facts also make groundless the information, which says that Abkhazians somehow had been the teachers of their neighbors in marine business, and that none of 42 terms, which appear to be peculiar Abkhazian in O. Dzidzaria’s (Dzaria’s) opinion, are borrowed from Abkhazian language by the Kartvelian lingual world (the issue about the originality of the word apra “canvas” remains open).

That way, it is very important, as already marked before, that in the past Abkhazians were not eating the fish, but in the late middle centuries they were famous as the skilled, season, sea pirates, about this fact there is direct data of K. Chelebi, A. Lamberti, N. Vitzeni, J. Shardeni, S. -S, Orbeliani, Vakhushti Bagrationi, I. Blarambergi, F. Dubua De Monpere and others. There is also a characterizing fact that Abkhazians, who live in the coastal villages hardly ever eat the fish, hardly ever make boats or fishing devices, and with that it is certainly proved that Abkhazians had been introduced with the sea tardily and used it just for pirating. We also have to draw attention to the fact, that in Abkhazian language, from the Kartvelian lingual world, are borrowed the names of precious by taste sorts fishes (sturgeon, great sturgeon, flounder, catfish, trout, salmon, barbell...). The names of these fishes, in Abkhazian language, have only nominative function and are not related with ethnographic and religious – cultural flaunts. In such situation, the attempt of O. Dzidzaria (Dzaria) to explain Abkhazian’s aloof relation to the fish as to the food, which was the expansion of the Turkish in the black sea and the danger of captivity⁶², looks naive. The fact is that Abkhazians were the ones who attacked the neighbor regions from the sea (Samegrelo, Guria, Achara, Lazistana) and had been taking Georgian local inhabitants as prisoners. Besides that, the Georgians, Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians had been living in the same conditions of Turkish expansions but they did not withdraw the sailing, fishing and eating fish by no means.

The obvious proof the absence of “Abkhazian’s close connection to the sea” also appears to be the fact, that in Abkhazian language there are no simple but complex structured names⁶³, which have descriptive character. Usually, simple bases are more ancient, than the complex names.

⁶² Ibid, p. 25.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 82.

The especially important meaning to localize the original homeland of Abkhazians; have the results of analysis of one term:

To designate the sea in Abkhazian language at present is being used *amšen* and *aga*. The word *aga* has much more wide meaning, then the first word and it does not mean just the sea but the coast of the sea and the south⁶⁴ as well. In the modern Abkhazia the sea is located to the south from the few kilometer line from the city of Gudauta, before the village Psirtskha, and on the other territory – to the west, or to the south – west.

This fact gives us the reason to conclude the word *aga* could take the meaning of south only then, when the ancestors of Abkhazians had still been living in the north Caucasus, in the basin of the river Kuban and in its left feeders, from where the shortest way was in the north side. As the additional argument for this conclusion we have to consider the existence of two synonym words in Abkhazian language, which have the meaning of marine, west wind: *agapša* (detailed: “marine, west wind”) and *agerpša* (detailed: “Egrisi wind”). The structure of these synonyms directly points to the fact, that the black sea and Egrisi, before the 16th century, (comp. ancient Georgian choronyms *Egr-i//Egur-i//Egris-i* and the component *Ager-* with the words *Agerpša*) were located at the same place, to the south of Abkhazian’s ancestors settlement. In other words, Abkhazian language proves, that in the past, between the black sea and the place of settlement of the modern Abkhazian’s ancestors was located Egrisi.

9. The vocabulary of other sectorial groups in Abkhazian language. By the technical causes, here are the short results analysis of botanical, stock-raising, horse-raising, agricultural, building and the other groups of Abkhazian language vocabulary.

It clears out, that in the analyzed 120 names of the cultural plants, 24 terms (28. 3%) are borrowed by Abkhazian language from the Megrelian dialect or Georgian language. To this group are related the names of rye, barley, turnip, beet, cucumber, peach, quince, bean sorts, grape sorts, and other plants. In percentage there is much less Katvelizms in the mentioned wild plants – 20 words from 145 (13. 7%). To this group are related the names of plants with practical meaning (medically and domestically important): bent grass, yellow head, barberry, Lucerne, ivy and so on. The most important appears to be the fact that among Kartvelizms there are no any of the names of the plant, the spreading area of which is limited with high hill vein system (Alpin and subalpin zones). In Abkhazian there are borrowed Katrvelian names of just the cultures and wild plants which grow in marshlands or in the zone of the middle height hills. Because of the flatness and low hill zoning of the Kuban’s basin, Abkhazians (apsuians) firstly had settled down in the high hilled part of the north Caucasus (look, here, the map #14 from 1561 y. Jakopo Gastaldi), where during along time they formed the psychology of mountain people, which also reflected the language (for example, in Abkhazian, it is deeply detailed the vocabulary which reflects the high hill landscape, flora and fauna, Among Abkhazians there is widely spread anthroponym *akhra-* “cliff” and so on.). From the XVI century, Abkhazians are starting to settle down in the high hilled parts of the rivers *Mdzimta*, *Psou*, *Bzipi* and *Gumitsi* and later in the beginning parts of the river *Kodori* where the Svanians used to live.

64 K. Shakril, V. Kh. Konjaria. *The Abkhazian language vocabulary*, vol. I, Sokhumi, 1986, p. 33. The coast of the sea is also designated by the composite *agac’a*, composed with the words *aga* “the sea” + *a-c’e* “mouth”. It is remarkable that O. Dzidzaria (*Dzaria*) does not point to the fact that the word *aga* has the semantic of “south”.

Here, in the high hills, they did not have to borrow from the Georgians, the terms which reflected the high hill landscape, flora and fauna, because this vocabulary had already been perfectly developed and detailed in their language. But when they went down on flat and boggy coastal lands, appeared the inevitability of Georgian vocabulary borrowing, which reflected the fresh geographical and vegetative area⁶⁵ for Apsuans. The results of the special monographic researches made by M. Bukia are shown that in Abkhazian language there are 52 horse-raising units which appear to be mutual with Megrelian dialect. These words compose 4 groups: 1. Own Megrelian or common Kartvelian terms, borrowed by Abkhazians directly from the Megrelian speech (27 units); 2. Terms with the Arabian, Turkish or Persian originality, which came into the Abkhazian language with the help of Megrelian speech (8 units); 3. The word of Abkhazian originality, borrowed by the Megrelian language (9 words); 4. The terms, mutual for the Abkhazian and Kartvelian speech, the originality of which is hard to define (8 units). The main horse-raising terms, which are borrowed from Abkhazian language by Megrelian speech, are related to horse dwelling and the ones which are reflected the mountain landscape. It is interesting that such vocabulary does not exist in Lazian dialect, which points to the fact, that Abkhazisms could have got in the Megrelian speech, only after the separation of Megrelian and Lazian speeches, that means that it has happened after VIII – IX centuries, and the Kartvelian vocabulary of this group, which is witnessed as in Abkhazian as in Abazian languages, gives us the base for the conclusion, that this words, were borrowed as Abkhazian – Abazian unity before XVI century⁶⁶. As to the shepherd vocabulary, one circumstance is drawing attention, that in this branch, the mutual and “common changing” words are mainly related to the arrival of the cattle and shepherds at the high hilled pastures⁶⁷.

A lot of Kartvelian terms have been borrowed by the Abkhazian language from the agricultural vocabulary (from the names of plots of lands for different use, to the domestic units), by this, the fact that the main action of Abkhazians had been cattle-raising and before the 16th century they had not been in the intensive agriculture⁶⁸ action, is being proved once again.

For this group of Kartvelisms are related the next words, for example: a-dgil “land, plot of land” (from Geo. Adgil-i – “the place, a plot of land”), a-dwe – “field, grassy plot” (from Geo. Lit. mdelo//Megr. Dolo, ndolo), a-wartal – “the land measure” (from Megr. ortal-i), a-sanzyv – “middle, border” (from Megr. sanzyu//sanzyo. Geo. Lit. sazyva-i. ancient Geo. Samzywar-i), a-caala//a-calaa – “slantwise” (from Megr. -Laz. *cal-i), a-k’watan – “plough” (from Go. Gutan-i), a-magana – “sickle” (from Megr. Magana, comp. ancient Geo. Mangal-i), a-khandej-ra – “to work”(mainly in the field)” (from Megr. khandada//khandeba), a-uyw – “yoke”)from Megr. uyu, comp. geo. Lit. uyel-i), a-r-ašwa-ra – “the second weeding of the field” (from Geo. Aošva), a-čart- “the part of the bullock-čart” (from Megr. cart-i), a-q’iar – “two pair of bullocks” (from Megr. q’iar-i, comp. Geo. Lit.

65 Look in details: T. Gvantseladze. Kartvelizms in Abkhazian botanical terminology and Abkhazian historic migration direction. Thanks to Giorgi Rogava (anniversary collection). Tb., 1997 (in Geo. Language); N. Machavariani. The vocabulary of plants in Abkhazian. (semantic – structural analyze). Tb., 2006 (in Geo. language).

66 M. Bukia. The vocabulary of horse-raising in Zanian. Tb., 2006, p. 183 (in Geo. language).

67 M. Bukia. The semantic field of the word with Abkhazian originality – Apuni, in Megrelian. – Linguistic researches, v. X. Tb., 200, p. 243 – 245 (in Geo. Language).

68 I. Bebia. The Megrelian borrowings in agricultural vocabulary in Abkhazian language. The materials of XX republic’s science dialectological session. Tb., 2000, p. 27- 30 (in Geo. Language).

q'avar-i), a-c'k'ar – “the line of plants” (from Megr. c'k'ar-I, comp. Geo. Lit. bc'k'ar-i//p'c'k'ar-i), a-k'ela “sheaf” (from Megr. k'ile//k'ele) and so on.

As to the building vocabulary, In Abkhazian language the main types of living places are designated by Kartvelisms (except patskha – twisted little house) which are suppressing the great parts of buildings and building tools. For example: a-jargwal “log house” (from Megr. jargval-i//jargual-i, in details meaning “the round log”, a-ganwne – “the type of house with the rooms lined at one side” (copied from Megr. ganisi okhori//ganisi 'ude), a-k'wask'ja – “two floor house on piles” (fro Geo. k'osk-I “tower”), a-na-nera – “store-house, shed” (from Megr. nania//nalia), a-waskher – “ground-work” (from Megr. oskhiri//oskheri//oskheri), a-berk'wel – “handrail” (from Megr. birk'ul-i), a-k'iba – “ladder” (from Geo. k'ibe), a-k'untkhw – “corner” (from Megr. k'untkhu//k'utkhu, Geol. Lit. k'utkhe), a-lart'q'a – “a log in the ceiling, on which there are fixed shingles or tilling” (from Geo. lart'q'a), a-khjarkhj (in Bzipian dialect) - //a-khwarjkh (in Abzhuian dialect) – “saw”, the first variety is borrowed from the Georgian literary language, and the second one from the Megrelian speech (comp. : Geo. lit. kherkh-I and Megr. khorkh-i), a-q'awar – “batten” (from Geo. q'avar-i), a-ura – “hammer” (from Geo. uro), a-c'ark'ant – “mattock” (from Megr. c'ark'ant'-i//c'ak'art'-I, comp. geo. lit. c'alk'at'-i), a-c'k'jap'ar “the tool to gouge the log” (from Megr. c'k'ep'ar-i) and so on⁶⁹. It is not less important, that as it is seen from the given examples, there is not the own, root vocabulary in Abkhazian related to the capital building and for the designation of corresponding conceptions and there are mainly being used Kartvelian terms. These data give ase the completely clear point to the fact, that the ancestors of modern Abkhazian (Apsuians) hade never been involved in the building of the large amount of the middle century architectural monuments in Abkhazia, about what the other fact also points, as already marked before, neither in lapidary nor fresco epigraphic texts are ever mentioned creators, architects, masters, feudalists, the representatives of spirituality or just the people of Abkhazian nationality (Apsuians)⁷⁰.

Thus, the up analyzed lingual material proves completely clear and undoubtedly, that the first homeland of the modern Abkhazians (Apsuians) does not appear to be the territory of modern Abkhazia, and they did not live here before the 16th century. Besides that, we also have to mark, that as to this materials, local Georgian population, who appear to be autochthons on this land, had played the main role as the substratum for the final formalization of the Abkhazian nation. The same data give us the reason to affirm that Abkhazians and Georgians – are related with each other by double kinship: on the one side, these nations appear to be the descendants of their common ancestor – Proto-Iberian – Caucasian ethnos, and on the other side, the significant role of the local autochthonic Georgian population in the creation of modern Abkhazian ethnos is obvious.

69 T. Gvantseladze. The main themes of Abkhazians living buildings and their names. Materials of the # 57 science session of the institute of language of the name of A. S. Chikobava. Tb., 1998, p. 20-21 (in Geo. Language). Comp.: I. Adamia. Georgian ntional architectonics, v. II. Tb., 1968 (in Geo. Language).

70 In details look: L. Akhaladze. The epigraphy of Abkhazia as the historic source. I. Lapidary and fresco inscriptions.

Chapter XII. Ethnological Interpretation of Historical and Cultural Features of Abkhazia

As it has already been mentioned, the integration of pagans, migrated from the highlands in the 16th -17th centuries, and the local Christian population of the Abkhazian principality – who were the bearers of the high developed Georgian culture, promoted the emergence of a new ethnic unity on this territory. Exactly at that time, the elements of traditional life and culture of the modern Abkhazians began to take shape.

Since the 1860's, as a result of the colonialist policy of Russia, Abkhazia had become a multi-ethnic region (see here, chap. XV, 5). However, the aboriginal Georgian population had long-term close historical and cultural relationship exactly with the Abkhazians, formed as a small ethnic group on this territory. The formation of the elements of original culture of the Abkhazian ethnos took place on the territory of Georgia in close relationship with Georgian culture. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the Georgian-Abkhaz ethnographic relationship.

The first information about the originality of the culture and the mode of life of the modern Abkhazians, appears in the 17th century. Despite the paucity of the data, they nevertheless give a certain idea about the ethnos that had formed on the territory of Georgia – abasians/abashians/abazians/Abkhazians, on their form of settlement, material culture, economic structures, customs, holidays etc .

As a rule, ethnologists start to research the culture and mode of life of an ethnos by studying the traditional forms of its settlement and material structures, which are largely influenced by the conditions of geographical environment. A medieval Italian author Giovanni Da Lucca speaks on the mode of life that emerged due to the integration of the migrants from the mountains Abkhazians with the Kartvelian population “the Abkhazians have no written laws , because they do not have the writing language, they do not perform any Christian ceremonies , but they are only formally considered Christians. The lifestyle of Abkhazians and Circassians is identical”¹.

The Italian missionary, Arkanjelo Lamberti wrote about Abkhazians or Abashians, “who are called Abazians by Turks... Abkhazians do not live in cities and fortresses, but (usually) 10 or 20 families of one kinship gather, they choose some high place, built here a few huts of straw and encircle all with strong fence and a deep ditch. The latter they do so, because they have the custom of plundering each other. They just do not rob the household utensils, since the Abkhazians have not got them at all, but they steal people, men, women and children and sell them to the Turks to slavery”.

We found the similar data in the story of the Turkish traveler of the 17th century, Evlia Chelebi, who, based on personal experience from communicating with migrants from the Northern Caucasus characterizes them as “disobedient and rebellious” nation and calls them “Abaza” – obviously, among the immigrants there is the population who are calling themselves “Abaza” . Evlia Chelebi, had traveled in this area (in “the country of Abaza”) in 1640 – 1641 and 1646 – 1647. From his descriptions, it is clear, that the settlements of migrants were monogenic : “In the settlements on the top of the mountain inhabited by 40 -50 households of “family tribes” – Chach, Arlan, Chanda, Gech, Art, Sadz, Ka-

¹ I. Tabaghua. *Georgian in European archives and libraries*, v. 2. Tbilisi, 1987, p. 170 (In Georgian language).

msh – were located batten covered wattle houses with gardens and vineyards, facing the sun. Each of these tribes represented a single community. The grouped settlements on the hills were protected by a fence, like fortresses ... All houses were located in the forest, because the inhabitants of the settlements were afraid of their tribesman more than their enemies”².

Evlia Chelebi indicates the difference between the settlements of separate “family tribes”, which testifies to their inhomogeneous ethnicity (Abazians, Circassians). Under the tribe Chach who spoke in Georgian (Megrelian) and Abkhazian languages, the Turkish author considers the population, who were formed through a merge of indigenous and alien peoples. Nomadic life of Circassians in the 18th century is described by M. Peisonel: “Circassians live approximately the same way as Nogaiaans: They have neither cities, nor permanent places to live”³. Although, the North Caucasian highlanders, who had been migrated in Abkhazia were merged in settled way of live, they had been continuing to live as isolated groups, for a long time, this fact are proving such authors like N. Vitzen (the 17th c.)⁴, F. Tornau (the 19th c.)⁵, N. Dubrovin (the 19th c.)⁶, T. Sakhokia (abroad the 19th –the 20th cc.)⁷ and so on. At the same time, in the works of other authors of the 20th century, is spoken about the form of scattered settlement of migrants on the large territory. Partly, K. Chernishev was writing, that “Abkhazians, living in the separate houses, which were scattered in the stocked and rank woods, in the canyons and the tops of hills..., each have their own life, independent from their neighbors’ life that is why there is no aspect of social life in Abkhazia”⁸.

As to S. Bronevski, Abkhazians “do not live in the large villages, but are scattered over the hills and slopes by small farmsteads of two or three yards.”⁹.

The type of isolated, but yet group settlements I. Adamia considered the most ancient. By his recordings, such hills represented independent living units, remote from each other at a distance of 10-15 kilometers¹⁰. Such little, monogenic settlements, were called “Atsuta” (atsuta = acuta)¹¹ by Abkhazians, and this name at the same time, also was used as a term, meaning the social unit (a- presumptive prefix, c- conformity prefix¹², y < ya – relative, close person, brother-in-law¹³, ṭa- place; in details “acuta” means “the place of tribesmen common inhabitation”). At first the migrants had been living isolated, in related groups. This form of settlement served as a reliable means of mutual assistance for the

²The book of Evlia Chelebi’s travel. Translation G. Puturidze, part I. Tb., 1917, p. 100 -105 (In Geo. language).

³ V. P. Kobichev. The settlement and the place of inhabitation of the North Caucasian nations in the 19th – XX centuries. M., 1982, p. 19.

⁴ N. Vitzen. North and East Tataria or the concise feature story of few countries and nations. – Adigians, Balkarians and Karachians in the data of European authors XIII –the 19th centuries. Nalchik, 1974, p. 90.

⁵ F. F. Tornau. The memories of Caucasian officer, M., 1864, p. 83.

⁶ N. Dubrovin. Abkhazians (Azega). – The history of the war and owning of Russians in Caucasus. v. I, book II. S-Pb., 1871, p. 37.

⁷ T. Sakhokia. Traveling. Tb., 1950, p. 310 - 312 (in Georgian).

⁸ K. Chernishev. More about Abkhazia. – Caucasus, 1854, 23 October, # 83.

⁹ S. Bronevski. The latest geographic and historic information about Caucasus, part 1. M. 1823, p. 325.

¹⁰ I. Adamia. Georgian national architecture. Book 2, 1968, p. 39 (in Georgian).

¹¹ I. A. Ajinjal. From the ethnography of Abkhazia. Sukhumi 1969, p. 15.

¹² K. V. Lomtadze. The category of mutuality (mutual unity, reciprocity) in Abkhazian – Adigian languages. – Iberian – Caucasian linguistics, v. XII. Tb., 1960, 275 -288.

¹³ B. Janashia. Georgian vocabulary. Tb., 1954, p. 263 (in Georgian).

migrants in the alien environment in case of trouble and defense against enemy attacks. The reticence of ethnic system of the migrated inhabitants in strange social and ethno cultural encirclement served for the strengthening of the migrant's unity, which, served for the conservation of their traditional way of life. Also the great role has played the idea of common origin, by the help of which they acquired the weak rudiments of the collective identification. However, hardly the isolated system of migrants in the neighborhood with a more developed nation, could hold out for long. After passing some period of adaptation, such form of the settlement had undergone certain transformations.

Abkhazia's "mountainous" type of settlement and the monogenic form of the living unit, witnessed in modern Abkhazians, was the stage, which already had been passed a long time ago for Kartvelian population. That is why such ancient form of settlement, in the 17th century had made able to distinguish original inhabitants and migrants. The social structure, the material culture and the social – economic line of Georgian population – all these together had also caused the corresponding type of settlement. In the epoch of feudalism, the centre of local agriculture had appeared to be the village with its own church, cemetery, and household constructions. For this time the process of destruction of its monogenic quarters had already been started, mostly in the lowland places. During his trip in Megrelia, Evlia Chelebi had visited about "seventy villages, looking like cities"¹⁴.

As to the Georgian written historical monuments, since the 8th century the word "so-peli" (village) means the settlement, the bulk of the inhabitants of which, were busy with rural economy, especially with agriculture¹⁵. The above mentioned ancient form of "mountainous" settlement of the North Caucasian highlanders, which has appeared due to their semi-nomadic way of life, was brought into Abkhazia by migrants, contrast to a family -clan groups - patronymy - headed by a leader that has developed here as an independent unit, and which owned common collective property. This is proved by general plan of Circassian village made by Jan-Batist Taverne in 1679 and P. Palas' description of the same village 18th: "Circassians every time and Kabardians partly, inhabit their settlements which they leave after a certain period . . . and then look for a convenient place to settle . . . They are build houses close to one another by one or more circles or quadrangles, so that the interior space is a common cattleyard, with only one gate, and the houses surrounding it are as if to protect it."¹⁶ Over the next centuries Kabardians built their houses in the same principle - round or quadrangles, maximum close to each other, which had a protective function, but in the inside area cattle yards and horse stalls were located ¹⁷. As to Adigians "they also "lived in the mountain canyons or deep in the forests, which protected them from the enemies and were comfortable for hunting. They built their huts in wild and lonely places among impenetrable swamps, so it was hard to travel on their lands without guide. . . , they were making different exits in their homes, that in case of an attack to be able to quickly escape. They were hiding belongings, best things and bread in caves or deep pits; they they drove livestock in the forest . . . They were putting ditches

14 The book of Evlia Chelebis travel, part I, p. 95 (in Georgian).

15 I. Javakhishvili. The history of Georgian nation. V. II., Tb., 1948, p. 10 (in Geo. language)

16 V. P. Kobichev. Settlements. . . , p. 15; P. C. Palas. Notes about the trips. . . , Adiginas, Balkarian and Karachians. . . , p. 219.

17 A. Miller. Circassian buildings. – The materials by the Russia's ethnography, v. II. S. -Pb., 1917, p. 60.

and made blockages around the settlements”¹⁸ The principle of such settlement was also characteristic for Abazians, dictated with their cattle-raising and seminomadic way of life¹⁹. The peoples of the Western Caucasus – Georgians, Adigians, Abkhazians, and others – were traditionally avoiding the settlement on a bare ground, and preferred to build their homes among the impassible forests, which served them as the reliable shelter in unforeseeable cases.

As the time passed, the social – economic development of Georgia, the disintegration of the isolated way of life, the integration of migrants with Kartvelian population and the resettlement of inhabited hills had caused the starting of the migratory movement from highlands to foothills and lowlands, which, for its turn, required mastering of new large areas. These phenomena have contributed to the gradual change of the Abkhazian’s settlement form. The mountain settlement had been changed by the settlements of farming types.

As was shown above, in the 1680’s, Abkhazian migrants settled first on the territory up to the river Galidzga, and then - partially up to Inguri. They were attacking the local inhabitants quite often, they were robbing and killing them, they were taking them as prisoners and afterwards sold them in slavery to the Ottoman empire²⁰. In addition, the migrants imposed their customs and traditions to the indigenous population. In turn, the integration of migrants with the Georgian population affected their ethnic features. The highlanders, who were settled down on the territory of modern Abkhazia, adopted lots of elements of Georgian culture and the way of life, including the form of the settlement of Western Georgians, modifying it in their own way. The merger of the indigenous and newcomers caused the formation of Abkhazians “Abzhua”. In the 18th century, the famous traveler, I. Guldenshtedt wrote that the farmsteads of Abkhazians were similar to the farmsteads of Megrelians and Imeretians (Georgians), but they were settled in the woods mostly²¹. The changes of the settlement form, the adaptation to the climatic, geographic and domestic conditions of the Georgians helped the migrants to get used to the sedentary, agricultural lifestyle.

In the 19th century, the focused attention of the ruling elite of the Russian Empire towards the Abkhazian nation grew. In the works of the Russian authors of that time a lot of information is preserved about the modern Abkhazians —the highlanders who resettled in the 16th-18th centuries in Georgia and merged with the local Georgian population. Just on the basis of these data it becomes clear that by the end of the 19th century, Abkhaz village occupied quite a vast area. What were the bounds of stretch of these village, “to find out, where is the beginning and the end”, it was quite difficult for the outsiders²².

The initial type of housing and household buildings of Abkhazians, kept up to the 19th century, was typical of all the Western Caucasus:

round, later – squared, wooden weaved construction, without windows, standing

18 S. B. Nogmov. *History of the Adigean People*. Nalchik, 1958, p. 883.

19 N. Dubrovin. *Abkhazians...*, p. 37 – 38.

20 Arkanjelo Lamberti. *The description of Kolkhida, which is called Megrelia at present*, p. 188 – 189.

21 *The trip of Guldenshtedt in Georgia*, v. I. Tb., 1962, p. 372 (in Geo. language).

22 E. Prudkov. *From Sokhumi. – Caucasus*, 1870, 17 (29) July, # 82, p. 2; G. A. Ribinski. *Sokhumi area. – Abkhazia in agricultural and domestic way*. Tiflis, 1894, p. 13; *Abkhazians and Pitsunda. – home conversation (journal)*, addition 39. S-Pb. 1877, p. 929 and others.

straight on the land²³. Although, it has to be noticed that with the outward resemblance, there is also found the terminological resemblance with the names of such housing types in the languages of Abkhazian population and highlanders of the North – West Caucasus. This way, for the designation of the weaved house (patskha) with the conical roof, in Adigian language is used the term *k/oc/* (*кoc*)²⁴.

In Abkhazian and Abazian – *акуацə, куацə* (*a-kwacw*)²⁵; For the square house in Circassian language – *уыһə* (*wəna*), in Abkhazian- *аҭһы* (*aṭʰnə*), in Abazian – *unag/va* (*unaṭʰa*)²⁶. “Each settlement is including the house, or to be more exact, with weaved shed in one room. This room is being warmed by hearth, consisting of a large stone slab, which is used to stack wood and pipes from wicker brushwood; in most of the houses pipes do not exist, and the smoke goes through the roof hole, covered with ferns “ From the house, which appears to be the living place for the families . . . there is a small wicker barn or a couple of them. ²⁷”. The appearance of such easy and cheap living place which is characteristic for the whole West Caucasus, was conditioned by the special climatic features and geographic area, the relief of the land, domestic establishment of highlanders and the main thing is the availability of the corresponding building materials. Out of the all authors of the 19th century, the most detailed information about the living conditions of Abkhazians is described by P. Charaia: “Abkhazians’ patskha is not particularly remarkable. There are two types of them: round and square. Patskha is a hut, the walls of which are made by weaved walnut twigs – thick in height and thinner in width. In the up side of weaved wall, on which are leaned roofing rafter are tackled with stranded twigs... the house is covered with fern, hay or cane, the roof is conical... The other type of patskha having a shape of an irregular quadrangle, on both sides of the front door at a small oblique angle to one another stuck chestnut stakes, overlapping cusps on two fingers, like scissors. . . . There is a large (corridor) passage in front of patskha, which probably leads to the subsidiary place, where all kinds of domestic items are saved, and the cattle is being brought here in the winter. In winter, to hold the warm in the living place, patskha is being coated with clay or tied with fern, all around”²⁸. To keep heat in the house in winter patskha is covered with clay or strapped outside with the fern. “

Social progress, change of the family type, entailed changes of lifestyle, housing complex and the type of dwelling; all these together was reflected on the form of settlement. Of great importance was the specificity of economic life, while the ratio of the utilized agricultural land proportionally depended on the specific share of agriculture and cattle breeding. By the end of the 19th century the weaved huts, without windows and straightly

23 Fr. Dubua De Monpere. *The trip around Caucasus*, v. I. Sokhumi, 1937, p. 41; S. Janashia. *The works*, v. IV. Tb., 1968, p. 93 -94; A. Makhvich-Matskevich. *Abadzexi*. 1864, # 3, p. 3; V. Vasilkov. *Articles about the Temirgoans domestic life. – The collection of materials for the description of the local area and Caucasian tribes, addition 1901*, p. 99; E. N. Studenetskaia. *Karachaians – Caucasian nations*, v. I. M. 1960, p. 380 and other.

24 P. U. Autlev, T. D. Alibrđov. *About the national metrology of Adigians (Karachians) the scientific notes of Adigian scientific – researching institute*, v. VIII. Maikop, 1968, p. 103.

25 Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. *The Abkhazians*, p. 190.

26 A. K. Shagirov. *Ethimological Dictionary of the Adigean-Chircassian languages*. M., 1977, p. 96.

27 *Economical Conditions of the Aboriginal Population of the Sukhumi department – Collection of Information on the Caucasian Highlanders*. Edition VI. Tiflis, 1872, p. 4-5.

28 P. Giorgidze (Petre Charaia). *Abkhazia and Abkhazians – Iveria*, 1888, 12th of August, N169, p. 2 (in Georgian).

standing on the land were changed with more improved wooden ones, to be more exact, houses made of logs of “jargval” type (Abkhazian аџаргуал – оны (ajargwal o^ona) has the Georgian (Megrelian) origin, the word “jarguali”, which has the meaning of the round wood), which were standing on the poles, the houses of “oda” type, but not everywhere. These Abkhazian wooden houses were analogous with Georgian (Megrelian, Imeretian, Gurian) living houses. In the end of the 20th century, N. Albov was writing: “Just a little time ago, the local inhabitants started to make wooden houses акеака (ak’wask’ja – rare) as Georgians, like the ones that Imeretians and Guriians build. As usual, in ever garden there are several hoses: one is where the head of the family lives with his household, the second one has a kitchen function, and the third one is cattle shed. There is always weaved settling for goats, were the goats go up by stairs. Also there is a hen-coop”²⁹. The plank and wooden houses “oda” for Abkhazians, as usual was being built by Georgian (Gurian, Rachian, Megrelian, Imeretian) masters, which is proved not only by the historical sources of the 19th century but by the modern scientific literature as well³⁰. Since the late of the 19th – the early 20th centuries, among Abkhazians, there start to spread, elongated in width, larger in the butt-end, plank houses. In the one settlement complex were settled a few married couples together as one big family, each of them had their own room. In Abkhazian, such house was called “agan оны” (agan o^ona) similarly with Georgian (megrelian) “ganish kudə//ganish oxori” “it means the building elongated in width”, which proves the obvious influence of Georgian culture on the Abkhazians lifestyle: the type (planning) of living place, as well its designating term, got into the Abkhazian lifestyle and language from Georgian. In the 1950’s, Abkhazians changed the name of this house in “Аџсуа оны” (apswa o^ona)” (“Abkhazian house”)³¹. Neither stone architecture, nor “sculpture or carpentry”³² was known to Abkhazian culture. Abkhazians had started to use stone in building only during the soviet times. In the struggle of the old and new traditions, certainly won the new, but this winning depended on the temps of social development. As the old traditions, among Abkhazians had a solid ground, the rootage of the new elements of culture and lifestyle was meeting obstacles and was taking much time.

Unfortunately, a lot of modern Abkhazian authors have questioned the Abkhazian credible ethnographic materials, and they are distorting and changing them with unconvincing and for them profitable information. The one of such inventions is not a long time ago published book in Moscow “Abkhazians”, the authors of which are denying any connection of Abkhazian and Georgian cultures, and are trying to erase all the points of their contact. All the articles of the mentioned book serve one and only, narrow national purpose, and this, for its turn is undermining the bases of the genuine scientific approach to the studying of issues of Abkhazian ethnography and it is counter to the science. Let’s have a look at the one extract from the mentioned book, which is consecrated for the description of Abkhazians living place style: “the last and the most improved type of the

29 N. Albov. *Ethnographical Observations in Abkhazia- Alive Oldities*. Edition. 3, S-Pb., 1893, p. 308.

30 Kotsia Chkaphshaneli. *A letter from Abkhazia – Moambe*, N1. Tb., 1898, p. 105-106 (in Georgian); N. Albov. *Ethnographical Observations in Abkhazia*, p. 308; I. A. Ajinjal. *From the Ethnography of Sukhumi*. 1969, p. 80.

31 S. I. Bakhia. *Abkhazian “Abipara” – Patronomy*. Tb., 1986, p. 30.

32 A. Miller. *Circassian Constructions. Materials on the ethnography of Russia*. v. 2. S-Pb, 1917, p. 2; *Abri de la Motre – Travel of Sir Abre Motre to Europe – Adigeans, Balkarians and Karachians*. Nalchik, 1974, p. 135.

plank house, which had been widely spread by the second half of the 19th century, is called “akeacka”. By origin, this term is related to the Turkic “kunak” - a guest, which had infiltrated into the Abkhazian language, through the Russian “kunatskaya”.³³ Firstly, akeacka means house “oda”³⁴, which look like the type of Megrelian – Imeretian house “oda”, and as to the data of I. Ajinjal, “its builders were Rachians and Gurians”³⁵. Secondly, with the linguistic point of view, there is nothing in common between Abkhazian term akeacka (ak’wasja) and the Turkish word kunak, especially with its Russified version kunackaia. In the case of the borrowing of the word from the Russian, in Abkhazian language, the form kunackaia would have given not the existing form, but the variant *akunackaia. Besides that, there are much more phonetic and semantic bases to think that the Abkhazian term is a modified Georgian word koski— “a tower”. It should be noted, that the house “Oda” could not find widespread popularity among the Abkhazians, it is observed with the Abkhazian feudal lords and is described in the works of Du Bois De Monpere³⁶, F. Tornau³⁷, N. Dubrovin³⁸, S. Zvanba³⁹ and others.

If we take into account only the outward signs, than the main settlement of Abkhazians, before the soviet period, had been adjoining the farm complex, where the features typical of West Georgia were observed. These special features were the main sign of the fact which meant the existence of united farm adjoining complex, which included all lands, houses and and farm buildings⁴⁰. The specific form of the settlement was stipulated with disposition – behind and around the main family house in few metres there were round wattle houses (patskha) with the conical coverings “amkhara”, which were meant for the young married couples. “Amkhar”-s preceded the lately spread houses increasing in width. They were as much as the married sons in the family. Thus, there was formed a custom of the isolated residence of several married couples, in one house, which was the prerequisite of amore progressive form of settlement - patronymic, monogenic organization.

Later, (after the isolation of individual families and division of property) in the one living complex appeared as many full-fledged families and homes, as there were “amkhar”-s. Such specific kind of settlement shows the similarity with the lifestyle of the Caucasian peoples – Adigians, Circassians, Abazians⁴¹ and others. The segmental differentiation of the large families both among Abkhazians and North Caucasian peoples, coincided with the number of matrimonial houses.

33 Abkhazians – Nations and Cultures. M., 2007, p. 248 – 249.

34 B. Janashia. Abkhazian – Georgian vocabulary. Tb., 1954, p. 152.

35 I. A. Ajinjal. From the ethnography of Abkhazia, p. 80.

36 Fr. Dubua De Monpere . The trio around Caucasus, v. I, p. 116 – 142.

37 F. Tornau. The memories of Caucasian officer, p. 8.

38 N. Dubrovin. Abkhazians..., p. 38.

39 S. G. Zvanba. The kiss beyond the curtain. – Caucasus , 1853, 22 July, # 53.

40 S. I. Bakhia. Abkhazian “abipara”..., p. 22.

41 I. Kh. Kalmikov. About some terms, which characterize the development of the living house and the becoming of the monogamy family in Adigian nation. – Archeological – ethnographic collection. Nalchik, 1974, 152 – 153; E. N. Danilova. The family and patronymics in the system of rural unity of Abazians in the second half of the 19th century. - Soviet ethnography 1973, # 5, p. 85 -87; T. Lapinski. Highlander nations of Caucasus and their war against Russians for freedom. – notes of the Caucasian department of Russian geographic unity. Book I. 1861; A. Makhvich-Matskevich. Abadzexi..., p. 3; V. Vasilkov. The article about the Temigroian lifestyle. – the collection of the materials for the description of local lands and tribes of Caucasus, add. 29, 1901, p. 99; A. Miller. Chircassian constructions, p. 9.

The Unified homestead complex consisted of a front yard, where were located the main house and the traditional amkhars, and the household yard, isolated with fence. The size of the last one was depending on the amount of family members and the amount of cattle. The undivided, large family had the large amount of cattle. In the household yard, there were separately enclosed plots for the summer stripping of cattle “agvara”, and the winter dwelling next to it – “abora”. In the front part of the household yard, near the house, there was weaved warehouse for the grain, which was standing on the wooden piles – “aca”. The size of the grain warehouse depended on the family financial conditions. Besides that, there was located a special easement “akazarma”⁴². In the end of the fence on the household yard, there was a pigsty (only with Abkhazian Abzhua) and hen-coop, and there was a bee hive in the front yard. The both sides and the low part of the household yard was joined with the ploughed field of large territory, and also, not very far, there was a little pasture and forest grounds. In the centre of the front yard, with the back side to the gates, there was located a large house “aqni du”. In Georgian reality both an increasing in breadth houses and “Odas “occupied a central place of the residential complex, but, unlike the Abkhazian habit, it was always facial fronted to the gate. The Abkhazian custom, to locate the house with the back façade to the gates is related to the custom of North Caucasian highlanders. As to the type of the Abkhazian gates, it is similar with privileges with the type of gates which are met among Adigians and Kabardians⁴³.

Western Georgians during the construction of a residential complex traditionally paid great attention to the gate, one of the most important elements of the estate. The Georgians thought that gates gave impression towards the family. The ancient types of gates had been of two kinds – simple and complex. The simple gates were small in size and had primitive construction. The complex gates were large in size and from the architectural point of view were interesting constructions. Usually, such gates were roofed⁴⁴. Abkhazians has started to build gates, as west Georgians, only from the beginning of the second half of the 20th century.

That way, Georgian – Abkhazian cultural – historical relations, geographic and climatic conditions of Georgia, its social and economic situation, all these together had obviously influenced the form of the settlement, the type of living place, domestic tools and the estate complex of migrants. The special place was given to the cemetery in the settlement form. The same way as the North Caucasian highlanders, Abkhazians used to make cemeteries directly on the territory of the living complex of the patronymic ancestor on the hill. ⁴⁵ For example, I. Ajinjal wrote: “Homesteads had their family cemeteries,

42 This construction and the term with its meaning are not traditional for the Abkhazian lifestyle, because they got into Abkhazian only in the 19th century with the spread of the tobacco culture. The term is borrowed under the influence of Russian language.

43 A. Miller. Circassian constructions, p. 66.

44 I. Adamia. Georgian national architecture. Tb., 1968, p. 52 – 56 (in Geo. language).

45 I. Kh. Kalmikov. Circassians. Cherkesk. 1974, p. 206, 207; A. Kunina. Family customs and ceremonies of Shapsugs. M., 1940, p. 22; E. N. Danilova. The family and patronymic in the system of rural unity of Abazians in the second half of the 19th century. – Soviet ethnography, 1973, #5, p. 86; M. Mamakaev. Circassian type (family) and it's the process of its disposition. Grozny 1962, p. 18; karachaians. Cherkessk, 1978, p. 130, 261; T. Sakhokia. A trip. Tb., 1950, p. 314 (in Geo. Language); A. Vekua. From the lives and customs of Abkhazians. – Transcaucasia, 1912, 15 – 16 June, p. 3; Sh. D. Inal – ipa. Abkhazians, p. 559; G. F. Chursin. Materials by Abkhazia ethnography, p. 190; N. Janashia. Articles about Abkhazia's ethnography. Sokhumi, 1960, p. 81 and others.

located at usually here within a family homestead”⁴⁶. The ancient, genetically related with the culture of the North Caucasian nations, traditional organization (function and place of location) of the cemeteries, had appeared to be so viable among the Abkhazians that it has been preserved until today in the form of their settlement. The cemeteries, arranged on the plot a big family and transformed over time into common patronymic, are still preserved in the Abkhaz reality. Unlike the Abkhazians, the autochthonic Kartvelian population of Abkhazia and the whole west Georgia, as to the generally excepted Georgian cultural custom, has been burring their decedents on the land around the Christian churches, which was though as the “holy land of their ancestors”. In each village there was at least one church with the churchyard, which was divided into family plots. All separate families, having the common ancestor, had their own place on this plot. Such kind of the cemetery organization is still being traditional and characteristic for all (highlanders and lowlanders) Georgian regions. The burring ceremonies have important place in culture and lifestyle of any ethnic education, including Abkhazian nation. From the ancient times, on the territory of Abkhazia there many different burying ceremonies are recorded, except inhumation. Different buried items were dug out by archeologists, a jug, stone boxes and others. The attention is drawn to the graves where the secondary burring⁴⁷ is recorded.

There was an assumption, that such kind of burring was preceded by the stage which excluded the decedent’s burial in the ground⁴⁸. Such custom of burring is known under the name – burring in the air, in the scientific literature, and we find its description in the written sources. In the works of ancient Greek authors of the 4th – 2nd centuries B. C. partly clears out that the ceremony of decedent’s burial in the air, existed in Kolkhida in the 7th – 6th centuries B. C. This peculiarity of Colchic Culture and lifestyle, Abkhazian scientists Z. Anchabidze⁴⁹, Sh. Inal-ila⁵⁰, Russian scientist G. Chursin⁵¹ and others ascribe to Abkhazians, because such custom was noticed among the modern Abkhazians in the 17th -18th centuries A. C. (Arkanjelo Lamberti, Evlia Chelebi, Vakhushti Bagrationi...). However, due to the ethnologic researches it is ascertained that there is no reason to believe, that the Megrelian (Georgian) ceremony, witnessed on the territory of West Georgia before our era, is Abkhazian. In the period of the description of this burring custom, the whole space, from Caucasian range to Trebizond, was inhabited by Kolkhian that are Kartvelian tribes. That way, with the ethnic and as well historic and cultural point of views, the direct relation of Abkhazians to this custom is absolutely impossible. According to medieval sources, the indicated form of burial was introduced in the 17th century via migration flows from the North-West Caucasus. Although it is obvious that on the territory of Abkhazia the traditional custom underwent transformation very soon⁶.

It is known that the conditions of the geographic area, with the form of the settlement,

46 I. A. Ajinjal. *From the ethnography of Abkhazia*, p. 17.

47 M. M. Ivashenko. *The researches of archaic monuments of the material culture in Abkhazia. – The information of science – researching institute. Add. #3. Tiflis, 1935, p. 63 – 64; B. A. Kufin. Materials for the archeology of Kolkhida. V. I. Tb., 1999, p. 178 – 189; M. M. Trapsh. Works, v. I. Sokhumi, 1970, p. 98 – 113; T. K. Mikeladze, D. Muskhelishvili. Kolkhidian archeological expedition in 1978 y. – field archeological researches, add. 78. Tb., 1981, p. 9 and others.*

48 T. Mikeladze. *The grave – diggers of Kolkhida of early Paleolithic age. Tb., 1985, p. 14 – 17 (in Geo. language).*

49 Z. V. Anchabidze. *The history and culture of ancient Abkhazia. M., 1964, p. 180 – 183.*

50 Sh. D. Inal-ila. *Abkhazians...*, p. 547.

51 G. Chursin. *Materials of Amkhazia’s ethnography*, p. 203-204.

also determine the character of farming. But for the North Caucasian migrants, the traditional form of the household appeared to be extensive – nomadic herding. This branch could not have remained principle for the modern Abkhazians, because “The large part of Abkhazia was covered with forest, there were few places for pasture”⁷.

It is clear, from the historical sources and scientific literature, that the number of cattle was decreasing, which was under the ownership of the family but the agriculture was developing instead. In the beginning, the equivalent of wealth, for the Northwest Caucasians had appeared to be the amount of cattle, because, as to the writings of A. Lamberti, in the 17th century, they had a lot of herds, every day they were eating food and cheese, milk and the fowl meat⁵². The landlord of the Abaz “killed ten sheep and made a great feast” for his guests – Evlia Chelebi and his companions. Evlia Chalebi describes the wedding in the village of Khavdak, where he was as a guest: “We were presented — one hundred trays of boiled lamb, soup with beans, mead - buzu, pasta, meat stew, gravy”⁵³. As it is seen, firstly, the families of migrants, who had a large amount of cattle, were not rare. With the cattle – raising, in the domestic lives of the resettled population, as well as in Circassians, the main place was taken by the hunting and bee – raising⁵⁴. From the 19th century literature it becomes evident that by the end of the 19th century, the specific authority of cattle – raising in the domestic lifestyle of large Abkhazian family, was noticeably brought down, but to compare with agriculture the cattle – raising had maintained its great role. As to the data of N. Dubrovin, Abkhazians “have no idea, what the plough is. Cultivation of their land... with spade or plough, with a special wooden blade, this is the exclusive invention and belonging only to Abkhazia. By cutting down the tree with curved penem, a native sharpens the stump with the wedge, to the long ending he attaches the tool made with rope for traction, and with such tool, with the help of buffalos, ploughs the land. . .”. At the same time it is known that “Abkhazians were not busy with trade, they thought that it was shameful business”⁵⁵, however, the change spare cattle for the necessary items of use and products, especially for salt, iron vessel, fighting tools, working tools and so on. For Abkhazians as for the other Caucasian nations, cattle was the basic unit of account: It was used for the material compensation, by cattle was paid blood money and bride money, provided assistance etc.

By the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries in lowland areas of Eastern Black Sea region the leading industry becomes the agriculture but in the mountainous zone, where there was concentrated most of the Abkhazian population, the dominant industries were cattle breeding, hunting and beekeeping.⁵⁶ The traditional customs of the North Caucasian highlanders about the cattle – raising, making milk products and other customs, had been saved for a long time in the lifestyles of migrants. With this, because of the economical area of inhabitation, in the speech custom of the resettled population the specific idiomatic expressions, greetings and prayers, are reflected in folk-

52 A. Lamberti. *The description of Kolkhida*, p. 189.

53 *The book of Evlia Chelebi traveling...*, p. 103 (in Geo. language).

54 A. Lamberti. *The description of Kolkhida*, p. 228 – 231, *The book of Evlia Chelebi traveling*, p. 101, 103; E. Kovalevski. *Articles of Caucasian ethnography, - Europe's informatory*. v. III. S-Pb. 1867, p. 90 and others.

55 N. Dubrovin. *Abkhazians...*, p. 7, 9; P. Giorgidze (P. Charaia) *Abkhazians and Abkhazia. – Iveria*, 1882, 12 August, # 169 (in Geo. language).

56 F. A. Zavadski. *Abkhazia and Tsebelda. – Caucasus*. 1867, 30 July, # 59.

lore (folk tales, legends proverbs, songs) and related to the number of livestock and in general with animal husbandry⁵⁷.

A comparison of ethnographic field and literary materials revealed that initially the highlander- migrants were seasonally raking cattle, sheep and horses on mountain pastures of the North Caucasus. Besides the fact that as shepherds as cattle had to go through the hard way because of it, the long road was worth of it – there were communal pastures of their ancestors for them, and the famous cattle – raising families had their own lands their. According to the opinion of several scientists, the term “bijeara” had appeared exactly at that time and means “wintering in non Abkhazian conditions”. As to their opinion, this term has the Abazian originality, and the corresponding term for it in Abkhazian is “azinraxgara”⁵⁸. Routes which led to the pasture were different. One of them was along the river Mzmita through the pass Aishxa. This route was being used by the shepherds of the villages Gech, Tsviji and others. After passing Axchips, they went to the sources of the rivers long and little Laba. The other route was along the rivers Bzipi, Gega, Jupshara and the lake Rica at the Pskhu mountain, and after, through the Sanchari pass to the North Caucasus, in the upper part of the river Urup and to the slopes of the Zaadan mountain. There were two routes from the central Abkhazia, which led through the Chxali range, and after, through the passes to the mountain fields, which were along the rivers of long and little Zelenchuk. The main route, which connected the migrants with the North Caucasus, appeared to be the military – Sokhumian road, which was leading through the high hilled Alpine zone of the Kodory canyon, through the Ckhaltaska and Sekenska ranges to the Kluxori pass. Through the Ckhaltaska and Sekenska roads, shepherds were raking the herd till the Makhura pass, where on the north slopes of the side range of great Caucasus, in the middle of the Chkhalta spur were located the rich Soudidi pastures⁵⁹. The Shoudidi pasture was mainly being used by the inhabitants of Tsebeldi, Dali canyon, Svaneti and Odisha. The part of the inhabitants of Samurzakano and Odisha had their pasture lands on the right coast of the river Inguri, where they got through the settlements of arasadzix and Tkvarcheli. The other route for Samurzakians was through the settlements of Chkhortoli, Okumi, Rechki, Pakhulani and was ending in the valley of the river Avadkhara and in the outskirts of the lake Ritsa. Abkhazians also were able to get to the Klukhori pass from here. The fact, that Abkhazian cattle – raisers were using pastures intensively, which were along the mountain slopes of the North Caucasus, is being proved by the data of Sh. Inal – ipa, G. Smir⁶⁰, Ts. Bzhania⁶¹ and other authors.

The one of the most important places in Abkhazians lives has the spiritual culture. The religious beliefs and the prejudices in the lifestyles of Abkhazians are related with different objects of nature, which symbolize the life, and with their souls which were always treated with reverence, because the fear of their “punishing” strength. Along the whole 20th century, in the Abkhazians heathen pantheon, the central place was taken by the cult

57 Sh. D. Inal-ipa. *Abkhazians...*, p. 217; Ts. N. Bzhania. *From the history of the culture of Abkhazians. Sokhumi, 1973*, p. 211.

58 Ts. N. Bzhania. *From the history of the culture of Abkhazians*, p. 20.

59 *At the same place*, p. 16 – 19, 30.

60 Sh. D. Inal-ipa, G. V. Smir. *Cattle – raising. – cattle - raising and agriculture of Abkhazians. Tb., 1986*, p. 125.

61 Ts. N. Bzhania. *From the history of the culture of Abkhazians*, p. 31 – 32, 36.

of nature and productivity, family, patronymic, household, community idols. The steadiness of the ancient ideas in the lifestyle of the modern Abkhazians is caused by the character of their rural household activity, by the stage of the social and communal development. Abkhazians used to revere idol – patrons of the nature, ground, cattle raising, agriculture, hunting, bee raising, farriers and sanctuaries. For getting the benevolence and endearing these idols, the community, the family, patronymics were performing the collective magic rituals. The main sanctuaries of Abkhazians were, as it has been already told before, the concrete objects of the nature – mountains, forest border, bushes, and also the separate tree and so on. None of their cultic objects are presented as the material constructions, except the patronymic sanctuary *ajira nixea*, which presents the symbolic farriery – the construction without the walls, covered with the shed, leaning on the four poles. Here on the cut, round log was placed the anvil and were put several necessary farrier's tools. That was also the place where the sacrificial wine was put in the ground in pitchers. This sanctuary had a special role in the lifestyles of Abkhazians. Related with farriery, the idol *shiashei* was the patron and the savior of patronymics. In cases of some kinds of rule abolishment the farriery was addressed for the truth. For this the suspect was forced to swear about his/her guiltlessness or to repent about the done at his/her own farriery. Abkhazians piously believed that on the sinner criminal the anger of the idol *Shashvi*, would have fallen, and in case if he appears to be innocent, the opposite way, *Shashvi* will gift him/her with his charity. Such symbolic sanctuaries of farriery were called *tlepsh* in Circassians.

However, the same authors relate the spreading of Abkhazian toponyms in the pastures in the upper parts of long and little rivers *Labi*, long and little river *Zelenchuk* not with the cattle – rising raking and the exploitation of the mentioned pastures by Abkhazians, but with the resettlement Abkhazian element in the mountains of the North Caucasus in XIV century⁶². In the opinion of the mentioned authors, with whom we cannot agree, this was the forced migration, which had been conditioned with the resettlement of the territory of Abkhazia and the problem which had appeared because of it – shortage of land⁶³. First of all, in the scientific historical literature, there is fixed that in the XIV century, the migration process from the black sea area to the North Caucasus had affected only *Abazian-Jiks*, who were the inhabitants of the upper Northwest Abkhazian edges⁶⁴. Second of all, in the scientific literature, in this period, to the south from the river *Anakopia*, on the territory of Abkhazia, neither the shortage of lands nor the redundancy of population are recorded anywhere. The issue of the pasture land had always been settled in Abkhazia: As the main business of the local Kartvelian population had been agriculture, the profitable area has always been enough, and it has never become the reason of anyone's dispute. The resettlement of the North Caucasian highlanders to the north slopes of the Caucasus, in the central Abkhazia, entailed the land tightness of the Kartvelian population in *Odisha* and the present *Gali* region and the disputes about their pastures. The highland tribes of *Abazians* (*Mdaa*, *Pskhu*, *Aibga*, *Axchips*...), who were settled in the basins of the rivers

62 Sh. D. *Inal-ipa*. G. V. Smir. *Cattle – raising*..., p. 125

63 *Ibid*.

64 L. I. Lavrov. "Obezs" of Russian articles. – *soviet ethnography*. 1946, # 4, p. 161 – 170; L. I. Lavrov. *The origin of Kabardians and their inhabitation on the modern territories*. – *Siviet ethnography*, 1956, # 1, p. 19 – 28; *The history of south Caucasian nations from the ancient times till the end of the 18th century*. M., 1988, p. 198.

Mzimta and Bzip, in the 16th century, usually were busy with their individual mountain cattle – raising and in the winter and in the summer they held their cattle in the same place. The rich mountain pastures were next to the Abazian villages, which enabled the population to make hay for future use as the food for cattle, which was held in special heated wooden cattle, sheds during the winter. On the same pastures, the cattle – raisers of the present Gudauta and Gagra regions, were raking their cattle, so the mentioned lands were not dispute. In the THE 16TH century, because of the weakening of the kingdom authority, the massive migration stream flew into the shattered Georgia, which, as it was mentioned before, had forced out mostly the whole Kartvelian population from the Abkhazian Eristavi lands, which was along till the river Anakopia, and the remained part of the original population had been assimilated.

Since 1660's-1670's, as it was already mentioned, the North Caucasian migrant Abkhazians started the systematic attacks against the Kartvelian population, who had lived along the lower flows of the river Kelasuri. Besides the unstoppable suppressions and annihilation of primordial Georgian population of the historic Odisha, the migrants could not force out all Georgians from this area. So the pastures of Sokhumi, Ochamchire, and Gali regions became dispute. In the mountains of Sokhumi region, the pastures were divided between rural communities, which helped to settle the problem of the pasture use: from those times the original population and migrants had the equal rights about the usage of these lands. The hardest situation had formed between the autochthonic and the newcomer population of Odisha. These facts are proved by the data of Sokhumi local – family committee and the data of K. Podozerski.⁶⁵

According to the Russian code from 29 June of 1887 year, firstly Alpine and then all the other pastures become the owning of the government. The government could dispose these lands its way. The pastures were given in rent as to the communities as to the private persons for three years⁶⁶. Soon the government brought in the sub rent⁶⁷, which complicated the order of the pasture usage. The rich feudalist or the rich cattle – raisers, who were close to the kingdom administration, had the superiority upon the other people, were able to buy the rent ticket, after what all the families of the community became depended on the lesser, and had to pay the double price for the pasture rent. The payment of the rent was too hard for the poor cattle – raisers that are why the cattle amount of such people was retrenched. The fact that the cattle – raiser Abkhazians, who had resettled from the Northwest Caucasus and then mixed up with Kartvelian population, were not the original inhabitants of these lands is being proved by the different kinds of distinctive signs – stamps and notches, on the cattle bodies. Among all Caucasian nations there were two ways of cattle marking: heavy beasts, horses, mules and donkeys were marked on the back side or on the neb, small cattle was marked by the cuts on their ears. Such signs of owning had different patronyms and families. For example, in Abkhazia, there were

65 The article about the formalization of communal – political lifestyle of Abkhazia and Samurzakano. – The collection of data about Caucasian highlanders, add. 3. Tiflis, 1870, p. 2; K. Podozerski. Sancharian, through the Caucasian range, path and plot of land Pskhu. – in formation of the Caucasian department of Russian geographic community, v. the 16th. Tiflis, 1903, p. 23.

66 Sh. D. Inal-ipa, G. V. Smir. Cattle – raising..., p. 123 -124; Ts. N. Bzhania. From the history of house holding and culture of Abkhazians, p. 13.

67 Ts. N. Bzhania. From the history of house holding and culture of Abkhazians, p. 13.

famous marks and scratches of Sharvashidze – Chachba, Amichba, Marshania, Kvicinia, Chegem, Emuxvari, Inal-ipa, Canba and others⁶⁸. The given issue was discussed in details in the 19th century by S. Bronevski, who had drawn his attention to the fact that the marks of owning of family in Abkhazians and Circassian – Abazians are similar. The comparison of typological schedule of marks and scratches of these nations proves the assumption of S. Bronevski. Several patronymic marks of Circassians and Abazians (Kakupsh, Jantemir, Lacushba, Sharmat, Klich, Karabash, Trapsh, Loo, Dudarukva and other.) are also recorded at Abkhazians⁶⁹, which proves the commonness of their originality from one ancestor and the blood relation of the modern Abkhazians and the North Caucasian highlanders, once again.

Such definitive signs of owning – marks and scratches – were stamped to the cattle: on the right or on the left hip, on chest, on neck, right or left ear. It is obvious that the North Caucasian migrants had brought their patronymic marks with them and were continuing to use them in the new area. According to the ethnographic materials of Sh. Inal-ipa, The Abazian migrant Xutov, from the North Caucasus, who had settled down in the village Duripsh in the 20th century, brought metal marking with long frip, which he had got as heritage from his ancestors? This relic had passed the generations of Khutov, and was so precious for the owner that even when he was migrated, he was not able to part with it.⁷⁰ That way, the character of the household work of the modern Abkhazians and the inhabitants of the North Caucasus, Circassians and Abazians was determined by semi sedentary cattle – raising. But under the influence of the geographic area, many century historic – cultural relationships, and the territorial commonness with the Kartvelian world, the household structure of Abkhazians had been changed. Although, many common features and elements of culture, lifestyle and customs are still saved in Abkhazians and several nations of the Northwest Caucasus.

Several authors of the 19th century characterize differently the household work of Abkhazians. “The main way of Abkhazian’s personification of prosperity appears to be the livestock – the base of the principals of his existence, the source of the living strength and subsistence, in his own opinion... The shepherds use a lot of meat for food; they feed with milk and butter. So that is why, that if Abkhazian has no enough rakes for just few cattle, he is ready to move to the other place... Abkhazian moves easy because it is not difficult for him to build patskha... If Abkhazian resettles in the near village, he brings the whole patskha with the help of somebody else... The lifestyle of Abkhazians has changed now... They put agriculture on the first place, and they make more cord day after day...”⁷¹

“Abkhazians are exercising in cattle – raising and arable farming; hold horses, horned cattle and sheep; they sow wheat, barley, Turkish wheat (corn) and the particular specie of smut, which is called gomi in Georgians. At midday (north – Auth.) in Abkhazia, they are also making grape wine, but their main industry is kidnapping and selling the hostages.”⁷²

68 Ts. N. Bzhania. *From the history of house holding and culture of Abkhazians*, p. 59; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. *Abkhazians...*, p. 218 – 225.

69 S. Bronevski. *The newest geographical and historic data about Caucasus, Part I*, p. 326, 345.

70 Sh. D. Inal-ipa, *Abkhazians...*, p. 223.

71 P. Giorgidze (P. Charaia). *Abkhazia and Abkhazians. – Iveria*, 1888, 12 August, # 169, p. 1-2 (in Geo. language).

72 S. Bronevski. *The newest geographical and historic data about Caucasus, part I*, p. 326.

Unlike S. Brionevski, A. Paxov writes: "... there is no corn anywhere. In very rare cases, where we can see it, it is being used exclusively for making the special pressed bread, which is being used for oblations and several heathen ceremonies, which are still made by Abkhazians and by Moslems as well"⁷³.

Lavrentev marks: "Abkhazian is using the things that are given to him by the splendid nature and hardly cares at all about the improvement of his lifestyle. The small field and kitchen garden give him enough corn, gomi and different vegetables, and the wild trees – give him different fruits; the large amount of herd gives him milk, cheese and also the materials for clothing"⁷⁴.

That way, from the written sources of the 19th century it clears out that, the agriculture of Abkhazians had been extensive in the beginning; their household work had been characterized with weakly developed production, with the primitiveness of the household tools, the weak style of the work distribution – natural household⁷⁵. Abkhazians made corn, barley, wheat, grain culture "gomisgomi" and grapes. The products got by them was enough just to feed their families⁷⁶. The move of Abkhazians to the settled life gave them the knowledge of the new branches of household - crop farming, garden farming, grapes farming, vegetable farming. They learned well the system of regularity of grain sowing, cutting off the bushes (underbrush) under the ploughed field; they were working on the lay land and they were sowing as much as the family needed the crop. In Abkhazians, as well as in Circassians, till the 20th century, women were working in agriculture. The migration streams from the North Caucasus in the 16th century, which had brought the simple working tools, highland customs and lifestyle with them, were the reason of the fact that the agriculture of Abkhazians at the new place had had the extensive character in the beginning. The same way were the Circassians, Karachians⁷⁷, Abadzexs⁷⁸, and others.

In the 17th – the 19th centuries in all corners of the west Georgia, including Abkhazia, along with the feudalistic and community owning, there was the private property on the pasture lands. We read in the materials of the economical condition of Kutaisi province: "Kutaisi province is rich in the differences of land owning forms... next to the yard-land owning... and with the endangered remains of community land owning, we also find the types of family - generation communities, which are peculiar of the aboriginal culture"⁷⁹.

73 A. V. Pakhomov, *Abkhazia in agricultural way – articles of the rural agriculture Caucasian community*, # 1-2, p. 49.

74 Lavrentiev. *The short statistic description of Abkhazia and Tsebelda. – The statistic description of the provinces and regions of the Russian empire. Caucasian region, v. the 16th, part 5. S-Pb. 1858, p. 264; E. Prudkov. From Sokhumi. - Caucasus, 1870, 17 July, # 82.*

75 A. V. Paxomov. *Abkhazia...*, p. 42-43, 49-50; N. Dubrovin. *Abkhazians...*; P. Giorgidze. (P. Charia). *Abkhazia...*, p. 1; A. N. Diachkov – Tarasov. *Bzipian Abkhazia. The data of Caucasian department of imperial Russian geographic community, v. XVIII. Tiflis, 1905, # 1. p. 52; N. Berdzenishvili. The issues of Georgian history, v. VIII. Tb., 1990, p. 614-615 (in Geo. language); I. G. Antelava. Articles about the history of Abkhazia of the 17th – 18th centuries. Sokhumi, 1951, p. 119-120; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. Duripsh. – The works of Abkhazian institute of language, literature and history, v. 29. Sokhumi, 1959, p. 82.*

76 Lavrentiev. *The short statistic description of Abkhazia and Tsebelda*, p. 264; I. Averkiev. *From the south east coast of the black sea. - Caucasus, 1866, September 29, # 76.*

77 N. Dubrovin. *Circassians...*, p. 153; A. D. Besleneev. *To the issue of the development of rural house holding of the highlanders of Kubani region. - From the history of rural household of Karachian –Circassians. Chircassik, 1971, p. 5; I. M. Shamanov. The agriculture and agricultural lifestyle of Karachians. - From the history of rural household of Karachian- Chircassians. Chircassk. 1971, p. 67*

78 A. N. Diachkov – Tarasov. *Abadzekhi. Tiflis, 1902, p. 17.*

79 S. A. Egizarov. *The forms of the peasants land owning in Kutaisi province and the appearance of ques-*

Besides these forms of land owning, there is also mentioned church – monastery owning⁸⁰. Abkhazians had much more ploughable lands in the communal and patronymic owning, although there are recorded the facts of private property of the land. N. Albov and K. Gan consider in details, what the way of the annual distribution of lay and sowing lands did and the way of giving the plots of lands from communal own, to each family considering the number of family members⁸¹. The same form of the communal land owning, in the 20th century, was also spread among the North Caucasian highlanders⁸². According to the researches of I. Shamanov, the plots of lands, which were distributed by the head of the community were polished with mattock, the work was based on the operative principles here. The patronymic or neighbor groups (5- 10) worked collectively on the land and harvested also together⁸³.

As it is cleared out from the science literature, with many century history of existence, Georgian nation has stored great experience in agricultural production, that is why the technique of working on the land, working tools, folk technique of looking after the plantings, the rational ways of the exploitation of forests, pastures and hayfield, was highly developed.

The two types of arable tools are recorded at Abkhazians: “aceaxe” in Abkh. Ace = peace of wood, axe = move around; in details: the tool which is moving around, destroys⁸⁴. For the same arable work Bzipian Abkhazians were using plough “aceamatea”, the name which is translated by Sh. Inal-ipa, as “mellowing tool”, and Ts. Bzhania – as “bull heel”, “bull handle”, “bull cloth”. Abkhazian ace – bull, amatea = cloth, so this word really means “bull cloth”. As we see, the term has the descriptive character. The other type of the arable tool – “akeatan” (Geo. Gutani – plough). In Megrelia the iron plough “ogapa” has an incisor (“sakveti//sakveteli”), and in Svanian it has this name – “sakveteli”. That way, Abkhazians, who had borrowed the Georgian incisor plough, has formed this tool with the name “akaetan”(look also here, p. 295). I. Guldenshtedt, who was traveling in Abkhazia in the 17th century, had written the name of the plough in by form “koten-madsa” (koten-macha), which obviously had the originality of Georgian “guano”(plough), and “macho” in Abkhazian means “little, small sized”, according to this “small plough”. The fact that the Megrelian arable tools were spread among Abkhazians is proved by the data of A. Pakhomov⁸⁵ and G. Chitaia⁸⁶.

In Abkhazian, mattock was called “achaga” (in Geo. achacha). It had a triangle form and was different from Megrelian just with the size⁸⁷; It is assumed that the Abkhazian mattock was more alike Imeretian one⁸⁸; Abkhazians had two names for sickle: “achalaa”

tionable lands. – the collection of the materials of the studies of economical lifestyle of state peasants of Caucasian region, v. I. Tiflis, 1887, p. 159.

80 G. A. Ribinski. Sokhumi region. – Abkhazia according to its agriculture and lifestyle. Tiflis, 1894, p. 8.

81 N. Albov. Ethnographic..., p. 309; K. F. Gann. A trip to Mingrelia, samurzakania and Abkhazian in 1900 y. – Caucasian informer, 1902, # 4- 5.

82 F. I. Ieontovich. The customs of Caucasian highlanders, v. I. Odessa, 1882, p. 176; Kh. M. Dushanov. Several issues from the studies of Adigian families and patronyms – informer, Kabardian – Balkarian science – researching institute, add. 4, 1970, p. 79; A. D. Beleneev, To the issue..., p. 5.

83 I. Shamanov. Agriculture and agricultural lifestyle of Karachians. – From the history..., p. 69.

84 Ts. N. Bzhania. From the history..., 172 – 173; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. Abkhazians..., p. 231 – 232.

85 A. V. Pakhomov. Abkhazia..., p. 41.

86 G. S. Chitaia. To the issue of the origin of Abkhazian arable tools. – Moambe of the academic science of Georgia, book #2, # 3. Tb., 1941, p. 249 (in Geo. language).

87 A. V. Pakhomov. Abkhazia..., p. 51.

88 R. K. Chanba. Agriculture. – Agriculture and cattle – raising of Abkhazians. Tb., 1986, p. 53.

(from Megrelian chali “aslant”) and “amagana” (Megrelian –Guriiian Magana “sickle), it had a sharp blade of 20 sm. Length and was being used for cutting gomis-gomi and corn. As it looks, the both terms are borrowed from Georgian. The hammer had no less meaning in agriculture – “aixa” (=iron), which was mainly used for cleaning off the underbrush under the field. There were two types of hummer: The one – old, Circassian type, with the wide and round blade and the other – “caldi”, which was called in Abkhazian “auguvsh”, but was more often met in the nation called “calda” who were using it for cleaning off the underbrush under the field and cutting off the grapes vine. “caldi” – is an ancient Georgian term, which means “the tool for the cutting of brushwood⁸⁹”.

It is well known that the grapes farming in Georgia has started with the cultivation of wild breeds of grapes. One of the ancient hearts of this branch of rural household appeared to be Kolkhida. Due to the warm and soft climate, on the damp and fertile ground of the west Georgia, from ancient times, had grew on wild grapes, with large, high and twisted trees⁹⁰. The attention is drawn to the fact, that for the designation of the name of grapes which was growing skyward, Georgians were using the name of trees, on the rods of which the vine was leaning: “oak grapes”, “maple grapes”, “alder grapes” and so on. These terms were taken by Abkhazian population. Although the tradition of wine making also existed in Circassians, who had lived on the coasts of the river Kuban and their technology of wine making was different from Georgians⁹¹.

In the literature of the 19th century, there are a lot of data about the field work and viticulture in Abkhazia, but between which ethnic nations – Kartvelian or Abkhazian – were this branches developed, it is not clearly shown. In the mentioned works, there are spoken about the area of the grape spreading, about its species and names, average annual harvesting, there are described the rules of wine making and saving, and its quality is also characterized. There is marked, that Abkhazian villages, before mukhadjir process had blooming “gardens and vineyards⁹²”. But nevertheless, according to the data of M. Ballas, the first wine makers in the region (1836 y.) were Georgians (Megrelians)⁹³. According to the ethnographic materials, there are reasons to assume that it was hardly possible to make wine for Abkhazians during this period, because the technology of wine making had not been learnt well by them, by then.

In ethnographic materials of the 19th century, there is described, quite primitive method of wine making of Abkhazians: They were strewing grapes in to the holes in the ground, which were coated with burnt clay and well cleaned before, crushing it with their feet and were leaving there, and they were covering it with the leaves of fern till the end of fermentation. The fermented liquid, they were pouring in the wooden barrels or the large crock jars, which were buried in the ground, and were coated with clay or goat fat, which helped the wine not to take moisture⁹⁴. According to the data of Abkhazian authors (Sh. Inal – ipa, Ts. Bkania, R. Chanba...) Abkhazians, from ancient time, have been growing

89 Sulxan-Saba Orbeliani. *Georgian dictionary*, v. II, Tb., 1993, p. 362 (in Geo. language).

90 I. Javakhishvili. *Novels*, v. V. Tb., 1986, p. 383 (in Geo. language).

91 N. Dubrovin. *Circassians...*, p. 158.

92 *Ibid.*

93 M. Ballas. *Wine making in Russia*, part 2. S-Pb., 1896, p. 87.

94 F. F. Tornau. *The memories of Caucasian officer*, p. 37; I. A. Ajinjal. *From the ethnography of Abkhazia*, p. 147 –156; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. *Abkhazians...*, p. 245 – 359; R. K. Chanba. *Agriculture...*, p. 67.

grapes, knew how to look after vine, due to this have stored empiric experience of looking after grapes and making wine. However, neither lingual nor folk materials, and nor the religious points of views all together, and also the scarcity of the corresponding stock enable us to make such conclusions. Bzipian Abkhazians were digging the wholes for pitchers on some high land, on the territory of near estate complex, because they did not have any special place for saving the wine, as the Georgian marani (cellar). Abkhazians were covering the wine pitchers with open shed twigs, to save them from rain. Abjuian Abkhazians had different relation with this branch of household, who had much more close economical and household contacts with Georgian. They were adapted to the nature – climatic conditions of Georgia; they gradually took from the Kartvelian nation, the culture of marani and pitcher – kvevri for the cult wine “zedashe”, and also the technology for making “chacha” (Geo. grapes, squeezing) and its using for making vodka.

The decrees of viticulture in Abkhazia in the 17th – the 19th centuries, is explained by one part of the scientists with the invention of Islam, Muslimisation of Abkhazians and mukhadjir process, and the other part – with the spreading of grapes damager phylloxera. But about the real reason they are not saying a word. The real reason of the decrees of this branch was the displacement of the aboriginal Kartvelian population from this region, mainly from its Northwest part, where the viticulture and wine making had been developed mostly. And the migrants, who had come here from the North Caucasus, had started to learn this branch of rural household only after some time, after they had got used to this place’s natural – geographic and house holding area. By that time, lots of the local species of grapes, the ones which needed to be looked after, degenerated and disappeared. The terminology, related to the viticulture and wine making, learnt by B. Janashia, is very interesting. The scientist established, that the part of this terminology, in Abkhazian language, has descriptive character, and the main part is borrowed from Georgian.

For example, Georgian vazi (vine), is called in Abkhazian აჯახა, which in details means “twisted tree”, ჯა comes from the ancient Georgian “dzeli” (tree), and ხა – Abkhazian root, meaning “twisted”; აჯყიმჯა – grapes bunch – is the composite, where აჯ has meaning of “grapes”, and (ა)მჯა – “mulberry tree” (in details: “mulberry grapes”); Georgian “machari” (new wine) – Abkhazian амацар (with the same meaning); Georgian “dzmari” (vinegar), in Abkhazian – abjei (sour juice – comp. with Geo). “baja” – sauce made with nuts and vinegar, and soar in taste); the word აფы, meaning wine, is borrowed from Georgian (“gvino”); The name of the wine cellar (marani) აფцара has also the describing character in Abkhazian and is translated as “the place where wine was poured”⁹⁵.

The proof of Georgian – Abkhazia intensive contacts appears to be the fact, that Abkhazians has the same names of trees for the high quality grapes, as Georgians: “elm grapes” (“telis kudzeni”), “oak grapes” (“muxis kurdzeni”) and so on. It is also noticeable that some of the scientists are mentioning ausirxua, among Abkhazian species of grapes, which is Megrelian – Imeretian breed “kraxuna”; The breeds amlaxe and apsuaj (<abkurdzen) : amlaxə comes from the Georgian princely surname Amilaxvari, the representative of which had brought to Abkhazia, one of the Kakhetian breeds of grapes, which was left there and called after his name “amlaxv”; As to the breed აფцужь, it was bred only

⁹⁵B. P. Janashia. The Abkhazian vocabulary of viticulture and wine making. Auto referent. Tb., 1955, p. 5-15.

in the 20th century and then its name was abkurzen (kurdzeni – Megr. grapes) – “Abkhazian grapes”, which have been changed with “Apsuisian grapes” afterwards.

Among the North Caucasian migrants, before getting known the local, west Georgian products of wine making, was spread the hard honey drink – აძაჟჱ, which was called “buza” at their homeland. This drink had been popular in Abkhazians for a long time. They were using “buza” mainly in their religious rituals; it was the necessary attribute of table on festal and wedding ceremonies.

For Georgian Abkhazians, as well as for all Kertvelian population of every corner of Georgia, the grape vine has been the symbol of life and productivity, and the wine, squeezed out from its fruits - the holy drink. For Georgians, marani and the delicious red wine “zedashe”, saved there in the pitchers, for the special church rituals – intiction and wedding ceremony, were the holy belongings, due to this, marani was considered to be not only the household place, but the cultic construction. This is being proved by the often met facts, recorded in ethnographic sources, which describe the wedding ceremonies in marani.

From the monuments of the material culture, it seems that clothes are saving the ethnic originality most off all. It is different with its comparative conservativeness by its social and ethnic function. The form and the type of this major element of the culture are determined by naturally – climatic conditions of inhabitation and the character of the traditional household activity of the ethnos. The technique, tradition, ethnic specifics of material making, and its household – cultural type reflect the special features of its production ways, which is peculiar to population of any region or any historic epoch. The clothes - which have the art taste and lifestyle of the nation, are marked with the sign of the historic development. Naturally, as the time has passed, in the process of the historic cataclysms, with the migration of the population from the one region to another, the image of the clothes is changed. The clothes of the small nations of the North Caucasus had been formalized under the influence of many economic factors. The large part of the archaic clothes, these nations, as well as Abkhazians, were making with wool, thick felt and fur, because there was no other material made in their households. Later, with the development of trade, the assortment of materials has also been widened.

The modern Abkhazians were not using the silk cloth for clothing for a long time, in spite the fact that Georgians had many centurial tradition of silk making. In their imagination, caterpillar and cocoon of the mulberry silkworm and its products were unclean, and because of that they were unacceptable for them. On the bases of the existing ethnographic materials, we can establish, that the ancient Abkhazian costumes (for men and women) have the closest parallel with the genetically related to the North Caucasian nations (Abazians, Adigians, Kabardians)⁹⁶. The hats, cherkeska and burka had represented the common Caucasian phenomenon. In the ancient times, “cherkeska” of the North Caucasian highlanders and also Abkhazians, due to the conditions of the surrounding area and the specifics of the household activities, was long enough to reach heels. Later, after

⁹⁶ I. Guldenshtedt. *The geographic and statistic description of Georgia...*, p. 145; *The living of Georgia*, v. IV, p. 747 (in Geo. language); F. F. Tornau. *The memories of the Caucasian officer*, p. 61; E. M. Malia, L. Kh. Akaba. *The costumes and hoses of Abkhazians*. Tb., 1982, p. 7; E. N. Studenetskaia. *The common features of the men costumes of south Caucasian nations and their reflection on terminology*. – *The problems of cartography in linguistics and ethnography*. L. 1974, p. 257 – 263. ; *Karachians and Circassians*. – *Caucasian nations*, v. I. M., 1960, p. 168 – 169 and so on.

the migration from the mountains, in the result of changing the household – geographic conditions and under the influence of the cultural relations with Kartvelian population, the length and the form of shoulders of “cherkeska” had changed. From the ritual clothing of Abkhazians, the wedding costume was also close to the clothes of the North Caucasian people (Circassians), and the crape costumes, which had been changed basically, had the likeness in the form and color (black) with the west Georgian clothes.

“The widow, she was wearing a long, black, woolen shirt, she was barefooted, with open chest and tresses hair”⁹⁷.

Also we have to notice that the migrated population was contractively approaching the changes to the local, west Georgian, traditional costumes. Due to this, the clothes of Abkhazians can be considered as the distinctive synthesis of the common Caucasian culture: in it, there are twisted the elements of traditional clothing of Adigian and Kartvelian population. Despite of the considerable influence of the west Georgian traditions, the terminology, meaning clothing materials and archaic costumes was left Northwest Caucasian for Abkhazians, which points, once again, to their genetic relation with this nation and the commonness of their origin. The marks of the Georgian – Abkhazian cultural contacts, we find in the details terminology and clothing accessories. Partly, the men clothes names have been strengthened in Abkhazian, the ones they were wearing under cherkeska, “beshmeta”. And the women’s dress with the collar and little neckline – akaba (in Geo. “kaba”). As the winter clothes, with the costume with the fur coat, Abkhazians were using felt cloak – ageabanak (from Geo. “gvabanaki”. From Georgian (svanian), Abkhazians had borrowed the term, with the meaning of decoration (buttons) of women’s dress, “achapraz” (in Geo. “chaprasti”); the term with the meaning of the weapons (dagger or saber), accessory for the men’s costume – akama (Megr. “kama”), and all the accessories together were called abzar (Geo. “abjari”⁹⁸). “All the accessories of Abkhazian were put on him so that they did not hamper each other, - I. Ajinjal was writing, - they were not loose and did not hamper the movement... The custom of hanging the weapons and different items on their belts, to have them with, all the time, had also met in Megrelians”⁹⁹. A. Lamberti¹⁰⁰ was also writing about this custom of Abkhazians. Abkhazians had also taken the technique of processing the flax and cotton.

The major life need for human appears to be the food, the character and assortment of which are also depended on the natural – geographic conditions, household – economical and cultural activities of the nation. The culture of feeding is inseparably connected with the culture of ethnos. The foodstuff studies in cultural – historic aspects of national traditions, helps to clear out the special features of Abkhazian lifestyle. The food taking schedule and related daily and annual dietary partly reflect the ethnic belongings of the person. As it is well known, the most essential and traditional foodstuff, appears to be bread. The thick porridge, boiled from maize flour, without salt – mamaliga (Geo. “gomi”), with name abista (comp. Abkh. And Adig. - Kabard. Pasta) was changing bread for Abkhazians.

97 F. F. Tornau. *The memories of the Caucasian officer*, p. 75.

98 Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani. *Georgian vocabulary*, v. I. Tb., 1991, p. 38 (in Geo. language).

99 I. A. Ajinjal. *From the ethnography of Abkhazia*, p. 365.

100 A. Lamberti. *The description of Kolkhida. The collection of materials for the description of the local places of Caucasian tribes*, add. 43. p. 41 – 42.

Not too long ago, “abista” had the first place among the food of village and city population of Abkhazians¹⁰¹. This herb is brought to Georgia from America in the 17th century. The exact time of corn culture spreading among Abkhazians is hard to say, but as we see, they were already taking it, in the mentioned century. Before that, the traditional food of Abkhazians as Circassians¹⁰² and Ubikhians¹⁰³ was the boiled dough made of millet. Before that, they were eating millet mamaliga in cold way, and not slide in pieces. As corn, as well the millet mamaliga was used as garnish for all kinds of meals. The Abkhazian ethnographers consider “abista” as the ancient, purely Abkhazian term, which has been formed from the Abkhazian name of grain culture, spread in Megrelia and Abkhazia, and called “gomis-gomi”¹⁰⁴ in Georgian. However, the opinion of linguists about this issue is different. For the meaning of the stiff millet mamaliga, the term “basta // baste” is also being used among the North Caucasian nations. According to the opinions of several linguists, the term басте > бысте > абыста with the meaning of Adigian millet mamaliga, from the single root word “paste”, is borrowed by Circassian language from the Greek – Italian¹⁰⁵ or from original Greek¹⁰⁶ language. The Circassian linguistic, A. Shagirov thinks that this term (paste) was spread in Tersian Russians, and from there it got in Circassian, and then in the Abkhazian language¹⁰⁷. That way, according to the up told, we can make just one conclusion: This term had already existed in the proto language of the Northwest Caucasian tribes before its differentiation, and afterwards had been brought by migrants on the territory of modern Abkhazia.

The differences and the specifics of the food, as already was told, depend on the conditions of the surrounding area and on the character of the ethnos’s main household activities. From the literature of the 17th – the 19th centuries it becomes clear that the assortment of meals of Abkhazians had been connected closely with milk products – milk, goat milk, new cheese, and also with the products of tallow and floral origin – beef, lamb meat, goat meat, bird meat (first of all the domestic chicken). From ancient times, the special place in traditional Abkhazian cuisine was held by specific spices, sharp trimmings, and sauces. From the literature of the given centuries it is undoubtedly known that Abkhazians were not fishing, they did not know to make fish, so there were no fish meals in their menu, and they hated crawfishes¹⁰⁸. Such ignoring of the fish products (look, here, chap. XI), as the rule, is recorded among the highlander nations. That way, this fact

101 Caucasian nations, v. II. M., 1962, p. 397; I. A. Ajinjal. From the ethnography of Abkhazia, p. 340.

102 Emidio Dorteli d’Askoli. The description of the black sea and Tataria – the notes of Odessian community of history and ancient times, v. XXIV, part 2, Odessa. 1922, p. 126; The trip of Jan Sharden in Caucasus in 1672 – 1673 years. Tiflis, 1902, p. 25.

103 S. T. Zvanba. Winter trips of Ubikhians to Abkhazia. – Ethnographic etudes. Sokhumi, 1955, p. 46.

104 Sh. D. Inal-ipa. Abkhazians, p. 341; K. S. Shakril. Several vocabulary and sound accordance in Abkhazian – Adigian languages. Sokhumi, 1968, p. 65.

105 A. I. Abdokhov. The phonetic and vocabulary parallels in Abkhazian – Adigian languages. Nalchik, 1973, p. 65.

106 L. G. Lopatinski. Russian – Kabardian vocabulary with notes. – Collection of materials for the description of local lands and tribes of Caucasus, add. 12, dep. 2, 1981, p. 60; N. F. Jakovlev. The grammar of the literal Kabardian – Circassian language. M.-L., 1948, p. 137.

107 A. K. Shagirov. The etimologic vocabulary of Adigian (Circassian) languages. Part 2. M., 1977, p. 42 – 43; Karachians and Circassians. – Caucasian nations, v. I. M., 1960, p. 175.

108 A. Lamberti. The description of Kolhida. – The collection of materials for the description of local places and tribes of Caucasus, add. 43. Tiflis, 1913, p. 206 – 212; N. Vitzen. South and East Tataria. – Adiginas, Balkarians and Karachians, p. 90; Leonid (L. A. Karelin). Abkhazia and its Christian antiquities. M., 1887 and so on.

proves the undoubted migration of North Caucasian highlanders to the south, at Black sea side, which had been the reason of appearance of the modern Abkhazian's ancestors on the territory of Georgia.

By the edge of the 19th – the 20th centuries in the lifestyle of Abkhazian nation, the specific place was taken by the special system of the relative connections, with the name *abipara*, the original base of which, appeared to be the large family. The term “*abipara*” itself has the descriptive character and the detailed meaning of it, is sons of one father (*ab* – father, *ipa* – son, *ra* – abstractive suffix). The studies of the history of Abkhazian patronymic organization, has cleared out, that the given social institute had played the most important role in the determination of the class society nature, it had reflected the certain stage of social development and had united the agnatic groups of five, six and more generations, which had had the one common ancestor. The patronymic in Abkhazia had been composed in the result of growth, widening and segmentation of the one large family. The character of “*abipari*” was being ascertained due to the sternly observed exogamy, with the united, communal features of social, household and ideological spheres with the distinct scheduling of the heirs and inheritance order, with the territorial - compacted settlement. The given institute of Abkhazian social lifestyle, in spite of loosening and disintegration of its bases, as survival, was being saved before the beginning of last century and was discovering likeness with the analogical patronymic organization, which had been recorded in the lifestyle of the Northwest Caucasian, small nations¹⁰⁹. The social order, the forms of Abkhazian properties are identical with the forms of properties of Caucasian highlanders, which had been spread predominantly in their lifestyles¹¹⁰.

The main determinative elements of the economical development of the society are the forms of property. The comparison of the Abkhazian lifestyle and other, mountain regions of Georgia, of feudal epoch, had shown the definite difference of the property forms, in it. In the Abkhazian lifestyle there were communal, family and patronymic forms of property. With the collective form of property, there was also spread the private, individual property (dowry, the origin personal property of the women, - In Georgia it was called – “*satavno*”). The woods, fields, pastures, unused lands and sometimes the ploughed fields were left as the collective, community property.

“The touch of Abkhazians with the Georgian feudal culture was superficial; they had been predominantly connected with feudal relations inside of their own community. ¹¹¹” The land was the property of feudalist, but the common relations between the Abkhazian, land owner and the peasant, was pasturing the land, unlike the other corners of Georgia, were much more loyal. In the result of the longstanding Caucasian war, the conquest of Caucasus by the Russian empire, the displacement of the origin population from their primordial places of inhabitation, the massive captivity of Abkhazians to the Ottoman empire, which is known in history under the name *muxajir*, - in the result of all these factors, the population of Abkhazia had significantly decreased. The Russian imperial govern-

109 S. I. Bakhia. Abkhazia “*Abipara*” – patronymics. Tb., 1986. .

110 B. K. Gardanov. The communal order of Adigian nations. M., 1967, p. 148 – 150; V. V. Vasilkov. The article of the Temigroians lifestyle. - The collection of materials for the description of local places and tribes of Caucasus, add. 29, p. 82; M. A. Meretukov. Householding at Adigians. – The culture and the lifestyle of Adigians. Maikop, 1980, p. 9 and so on.

111 N. Berdzenishvili. The issues of Georgian history. Tb., 1990, p. 603 (in Geo. language)

ment was rewarding their officials for their faithful service with the best fertile lands of Abkhazia. On 25th of September of 1893 year, the newspaper “Iveria” was writing, that “the one third of the origin Caucasians have a deficiency of lands, and the empty lands at the coasts of the black sea are gifted to the Russian officials. In the 1886 year day had cultivated just 840 dgiuri lands (“dgiuri” – the unit of the measure of lands, which is equal to 0.5 ha; there is considered the part of the land which is for one day tillage – auth.) when the officials are gifted with 180 000 dgiuri lands”. In the feudal Caucasus, the peasants had much less oppression from their master’s side, then in the other regions of Georgia. The communal lands were redistributed once in a year or once in tree years. The main property of the large Abkhazian family appeared to be the farm adjoining complex, which included the household yard, living house and the subsidiary constructions. The objects of the patronymic property were appearing due to the division of the large family and the distribution of the property. The main resources of the production were left to the family and the subsidiary ones were left in the communal patronymic property.

The development of the society is always reflecting the social – economic and ideological status of the family. The Abkhazian family, leaning on the form of the collective family property, on the principles of the common economics, committed to the natural household, had appeared to be more conservative. It was the carrier of ethno cultural norms and traditions, which had the roots in their lifestyle for centuries, and had been gone through the generations. This conservatism had helped to strengthen the Abkhazian’s self – actualization.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the community and its national gathering – the highest authority of legislative, executive and court boards – were regulating the social relations, the norms of the community and the private person’s behavior on the bases of the low of simple rights – “adata¹¹²”. The members of the national gathering were the men – the respected representatives of the older generation, from whom the ruling circle had been chosen – “council of older ones”. The property prince was always on the meetings, and had an honorable place on it. The presence of the property owner mostly had a nominal character, although his word sometimes was deciding. We have to notice that the functions of the given national meetings, which were regulating the relations between the members of the community and the council of the older ones, were never out of the community and the village. It (the meeting) had never been the unifying of either territorial units or the both Abkhazian ethnographic groups – “Bzipian” and “Abjuian” Abkhazians: There had never existed the united system of the board with the common administrator. “Bzipian” and “Abjuian” Abkhazians, who were aspired to have the name of Abkhazian, were always standing against each other: both considered themselves as “the true Abkhazians”.

The system of the communal order and board of administration, which appeared to be the base of the formalization and regulation of all traditional morals and customs, of the norms of rights (blood revenge, mutual help, the stereotype of behavior, social normative and so on), was also defining the form of the family. The traditional Abkhazian family

112 F. A. Zavadski. *Abkhazia and Tsebelda. – Caucasus, 1867, 30 July, # 59*; N. Dubrovin. *Abkhazians...*, p. 72 – 74; *The historic note about the administration of Caucasus, v. I, 1907, p. 118 – 120*; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. *Abkhazians, p. 399 and so on.*

and the family lifestyle, with their main components – family membership, the system of administration, the work organization, the principles of the family divisions and the property distribution and so on – were drawing attention of the researchers from the beginning of the 19th century¹¹³. But the intensive studies of the Abkhazian family institute came in sight in the soviet period, when a lot of works were dedicated to this issue¹¹⁴.

In the historic way, there were two main forms of ruling family: the complex, poly-nomial - large family, representing the developed type of the family community, and the other type – individual, simple or nuclear, - small family. The form of the large family, which had the special function, along with the individual family, was being saved in Abkhazian lifestyle as the survival right up to the Soviet period. After the spreading of the Muslim religion among the Abkhazians, (the present Gudauta region), likewise Circassians, the despotic elements of administration were intruded into the democratic form of their families. However, in the Abkhazian family, which is based on the norms of the local rights, the system of the individual administration had not root itself.

Unlike the middle Asian and Cossack, originally Islamic families¹¹⁵, in Abkhazian and Adigian families, the paternal rights on the inheritance had never been unlimited¹¹⁶. As it has already been marked before, all the conflicts that had appeared in the family, related to the property and property partition were regulated by the eldership of patronymic and community.

The study of the Abkhazian institute of marriage proves the consideration about the North Caucasian origin of the modern Abkhazians one more time. For Abkhazians, as well as for the Northwest Caucasian nations, the maintenance of exogamy had been the necessary norm. The marriages neither between the blood relatives nor the artificial (related in the result of nepotism, brotherhood) relatives were allowed. The marriages between the enemy families and also between the representatives of different social stratum were categorically forbidden. The ones, who had abolished the norms of exogamy, were sternly punished, right up to the banishment from the village. In Georgians, the marriage was liberal and was giving opportunities of choosing husband or wife, but also demanded to obey the norms of exogamy. Although, such established conceptions in ethnographic groups of the west Georgia (Svaneti, Racha, Megrelia and others.) as “gvaris katexva” and “gvargatexiloba” – the marriage between the same surnames – are pointing at the cases of exogamy abolishment inside the family.

The Kartvelian families, who were settled down on the territory of Abkhazia, had such ancient history (coming from VIII – IX centuries) conditioned with their deep social

113 I. Averkiev. *From the north-east coast of the black sea. -Caucasus, 1866, 22 September, # 74; F. A. Zavadski. Abkhazia; A-a. Economic condition of the native population of Sokhumi department. – The collection of data about the Caucasian highlanders, v. VI. Tb., 1872, and others.*

114 Sh. D. Inal – ipa. *Articles about the history of the marriage and family of Abkhazians. Sokhumi, 1954; L. Kh. Akaba. Abkhazians of Ochamchire region. – Caucasian ethnographic collection, v. VII. M., 1955; A. Kuchuberia. The large family of Abkhazians. – Macne (the series of history), # 5, 1968; S. I. Bakhia – Okruashvili. The main features of the Abkhazian lifestyle before the revolution. – The Caucasian ethnographic collection, v. VII. Tb., 1988. p. 85 – 114.*

115 I. A. Kislakov. *The inheritance and the property division of the nations of the middle Asia and Kazakhstan. L., 1977, p. 16 and so on.*

116 M. L. Meretukov. *The family and the marriage of the Adigian nations. Maikop, 1987, p. 52; S. I. Bakhia – Okruashvili. The main features..., p. 96 – 98.*

roots¹¹⁷, that the norms of the blood relation had often been abolished there (except the separate surnames). The marriage between the same surnames had been undesirable but permissible.

The decision about the marriage among the modern Abkhazians had been made after the peaceful negotiations of the sides, but there were also exciting the customs of the brides kidnapping, matchmaking through the middleman (svaxu), the custom of “throwing the bullet” and other forms of matchmaking. According the highlander nation’s custom, the financial conditions were established between the couple, which was considering the fiancé’s relatives the payment of bride price for the bride’s relatives, which was called in Abkhazian – “achma”. The amount of the price, according to the negotiations, was established by the cattle number; however the fiancé had the right to change the cattle with other precious gifts with the same price.

The special features of Abkhazian’s wedding ceremony religious – magic attributes, for example, the custom of taking the bride out from “amkhara” and her housel to the family heart of husband, the ceremony of her “cleaning” at the fire and others. , with its ethnical character, had the likeness with the analogical ceremonies of the Northwest Caucasian nations.

In the ethnic groups of Circassians, Abazians and Abkhazians, the wedding ritual was played differently, but at the same time it was identical, and served as the addition for the patronymic with the new member¹¹⁸. The bride was given a new name in the family of her husband, and on her girlish name was put taboo. Only her relatives from the father line could call the married women the tabooed name.

In the old times, the Abkhazian family, as well as the families of the North Caucasian highland nations , was polygamic. The men could have two or even tree wives at the same time regardless of their religion (Muslim or Christian)¹¹⁹. Such norm of behavior was absolutely unacceptable for West Georgians as Christians.

“Abkhazians, along with Abazians, Ubikhians, Adigians, Kabardians and Circassians, who were jointly represented with one common name “Circassians”, in the pre-Revolutionary, historic – ethnographic literature, in the linguistic way and with the origin, they represent one Abkhazian – Adigian group of the west Caucasian origin nation... Abkhazian – Adigian ethnic parallels, with the wide meaning of this word, are so obvious, that the book about the Adigian etiquette due to the known reason, could also have been named the work by the Abkhazian models of behavior, and on the contrary”¹²⁰.

The stereotype of the behavior, which is characterized with the sequence, finely is being formed as the norm of behavior. Such similarity of the traditional behavior stereotype of Abkhazians and Northwest Caucasian highlanders is quite remarkable, but also explainable with their genetic relation. A lot of old stereotypes of behavior have been formed as social norms in modern Abkhazians. Partly, the custom of avoidance of parents

117 R. Topchishvili. The origin of the Georgian surnames. Tb., 1997, p. 38 – 39 (in Geo. language).

118 Sh. D. Inal-IPA. Abkhazians..., p. 461 – 461; M. A. Meretukov. The fire cult of Adigians. – Science note of the Adigian science – researching institute of language, literature and history, v. VIII. Maikop, 1968, p. 305 – 307.

119 Ksaverio Glavani. The description of Circassia. – Adigians, Balkarians and Karachians, p. 163; E. Chistiakova. The religion and the lifestyle condition of women at Shapsugians. – The religious survivals of Circassian – Shapsugians. M., 1940; Sh. D. Inal-IPA. Abkhazians..., p. 476, 448 – 449.

120 Sh. D. Inal-IPA. The article about the Abkhazian etiquette. Sokhumi, 1984. – p. 172.

– in – law, older brother – in – law and the whole family of husband, by daughter – in – law; For the son – in – law, the names of parents – in – law are tabooed, which he has not right to pronounce; The young people, and mainly girls are not allowed to sit when older people are present; Men and women never sit at the table together; According to the etiquette of the sexual – age – specific relations, neither the young man has the right to sit or eat during his father’s presence, not to speak about, to contradict or talk back to him; The father is not allowed to take in hands or caress his own child and many others. We have to notice, in the old times, the analogical customs of avoidance and tabooing was peculiar to the all Caucasian nations practically, including Georgian. However, we cannot hide that in Georgian lifestyle, these customs had overcome themselves, differently from the North Caucasian nations, were they are still saved.

That way, such identity of social norms of Abkhazian and the Northwest Caucasian highlanders – the stereotypes of behavior, the specifics of the ceremonies of engagement, marriage, the custom of prohibition, avoidance, tabooing, the birth and the raising of child, women’s conditions, men’s preferential rights as the head of the family, the system of the sexual – age – limited relations and others do not allow us to doubt about the genetic relation of Abkhazians with the ethnic groups of the North Caucasian origin.

The one of the most important places in Abkhazians lives has the spiritual culture. The religious beliefs and the prejudices in the lifestyles of Abkhazians are related with different objects of nature, which symbolize the life, and with their souls which were always treated with reverence, because the fear of their “punishing” strength. Along whole 20th century, in the Abkhazians heathen pantheon, the central place was taken by the cult of nature and productivity, family, patronymic, household, community idols. The steadiness of the ancient ideas in the lifestyle of the modern Abkhazians is caused by the character of their rural household activity, by the stage of the social and communal development. Abkhazians used to revere idol – patrons of the nature, ground, cattle rising, agriculture, hunting, bee raising, farriers and sanctuaries. For getting the benevolence and endearing these idols, the community, the family, patronymics were performing the collective magic rituals. The main sanctuaries of Abkhazians were, as it has been already told before, the concrete objects of the nature – mountains, forest border, bushed, and also the separate tree and so on. None of their cultic objects are presented as the material constructions, except the patronymic sanctuary *ajira nixea*, which presents the symbolic farriery – the construction without the walls, covered with the shed, leaning on the four poles. Here on the cut, round log was in placed the anvil and were put several necessary farrier’s tools. That was also the place where the sacrificial wine was put in the ground in pitchers. This sanctuary had a special role in the lifestyles of Abkhazians. Related with farriery, the idol *shiashei* was the patron and the savior of patronymics. In cases of some kinds of rule abolishment the farriery was addressed for the truth. For this the suspect was forced to swear about his/her guiltlessness or to repent about the done at his/her own farriery. Abkhazians piously believed that on the sinner criminal the anger of the idol *Shashvi*, would have fallen, and in case if he appears to be innocent, the opposite way, *Shashvi* will gift him/her with his charity. Such symbolic sanctuaries of farriery were called *tlepsh* in Circassians.

Abkhazians piously revered the idol *Shashvi*, in honor of whom, every large family

offered prayers at New Year time, to guarantee for themselves the income and wellbeing for the New Year. At that day, for the each men representative of “apipar”- i, a cock was being killed, and hen – for women; There were being made as many cheese cookies as the number of separate patronymic family members.

The information about the Abkhazian patronymic of heathen idols, as well as the data about the heathen cults of the Northwest Caucasian nations, who were worshipping the natural force as the symbols of life and productivity¹²¹, is included in the science literature¹²².

Among Abkhazians, each family had had a “share” of idol – patron – xanceaxe “the share of our god”, to whom they were praying for health, longevity and the continuance of their family. For the each concrete family, there was one fixed day each year, and that day, only the representatives of that family were allowed to play the religious ceremonies. One of the most important ancient cultic places, for Abkhazian families, was the holy hill ПԻՏԻՔԻ, sublimed on the north spur of main Caucasian range. This hill was not only the protector of families, but it also included the cult of ancestors, in other words, it was connecting the resettled highlander with their ancestors. So, according to the all kinds of ethnographic and genealogical legends, a lot of families were apprehending the hill Pskhu as their own supreme idol – protector. Exactly due to the ethno genealogical connection of stories of the North Caucasian highlanders with this common sanctuary, it becomes possible to determine the direction of the migration processes. The micro territorial idols probably help us to clear out the real historic picture of the original inhabitation of Abkhazian families and their connection with the north Caucasus. Obviously, the migrants, who had went down to the Georgian flat lands, have also taken with them the “share” of the main idol, which (this part) they continued to worship at the new living place. These singled out “parts” of the head idol, had been rooted on the new mountains and hills. At the same time the migrants were not forgetting their supreme head idol, which had embodied their origin. Exactly with the mountain Pskhu and with its singled out “part” Inal – Kube (the sanctuary of Inal) are related the origins of majority of Abkhazian surnames: Ptish, Khvatish, Adzinaa¹²³, Adleiba, Bagapsh¹²⁴, Ashuba, Kikhipira, Sadzba – Chichba¹²⁵, Cimcim¹²⁶, Amichba, Chegem, Inal – ipa, Canba¹²⁷, Khukhba, Ardzinba¹²⁸, Bazba, Sadzba, Trapsh¹²⁹ and many others¹³⁰. Once in a year, at the feast, these surnames were ought to make a sac-

121 N. Dubrovin. Circassians (Adige)...; L. J. Lulie. The beliefs, religious ceremonies and prejudices of Circassians. – The data of the Caucasian department of the Russian geographic committee, book. 5, 1862; E. Veidenbaum. The holy groves and trees of the Caucasian nations. – The data of the Caucasian department of the Russian geographic committee, v. 5. Tiflis, 1877 – 1878 and other.

122 F. Tornau. The memories of the Caucasian officer, p. 41; F. A. Zavadski. Abkhazia..., ; I. Pantukhov. About the condition of Abkhazian by the religious means. – Caucasus, 1868, 10 January, # 5, p. 3 – 4; The religious beliefs of Abkhazians. – The collection of data about the Caucasian highlanders, add. 5, 1871, p. 6 – 7; G. F. Chursin. The materials about the ethnography of Abkhazia. p. 64 – 76; Sh. D. Inal – Ipa. Abkhazians..., p. 516 – 564. , Ts. N. Bzhania. From the history of the household and the culture of Abkhazians, p. 251 – 266 and others.

123 S. Nogmov. History..., p. 70-71.

124 Sh. Inal-ipa. Problems of the Ethno-Cultural History of Abkhazia, p. 175.

125 G. F. Chursin. The materials about the ethnography of Abkhazia, p. 34.

126 Ts. N. Bzhania. From the history of the household and the culture of Abkhazians, p. 59, 61, 63, 305.

127 S. Bronevski. The newest geographic and historic data about the Caucasus, part I, p. 229; L. I. Lavrov. Historical-Ethnographic Essau on the Caucasus. L., 1978, p. 41-47.

128 Sh. D. Ina- ipa. The issues of the ethno – cultural history of Abkhazians, p. 175.

129 Kh. S. Bgazhba. The Bzipian dialect of the Abkhazian language. Tb., 1964, p. 244.

130 G. F. Chursin. The materials about the ethnography of Abkhazia, p. 28.

rifice of the Lamb for the sanctuary, and with that they were praying for the protection of their health, longevity and wellbeing of their relatives. Anyway, in the Abkhazians imagination, the ritual of sacrifice, guaranteed the benevolence of the idol, let them to count on the definite welfare, help and absolution. The inevitability of the bloody sacrifice was made because, according to the highlanders prejudices, the blood of the killed animal was embodied the source of life. The care for the dead, had taken one of the main roles in the formalization of the cult of ancestors. To gain the benevolence of the deceased's souls, who were the protectors of their live descendants from that world, they had to show them their respect, which was the immediate sacrifice ceremony. The killed animal represented a kind of earthly message to the underworld inhabited by departed souls.

The Georgian – Abkhazian cultural relations has made the obvious influence on the heathen pantheon of Abkhazians: There appeared, analogically with Georgians, the sacred places Aitar (comp. Megr. Jini Antari) and Amkamgaria (Megr. Mikamgario – Michael and Gabriel); After moving to the intensive agriculture, in Abkhazian lifestyle, was formed the cult of the idol – protector of the nature and agriculture, with the name Adgil dedopal (For the name of the land, Abkhazians had borrowed the term “adgili” from Georgians (look, here. P. 254). The cult “adgilis deda” (in details. “the mother of the place” – multifunctional female idol), which had the agrarian character and was related with the productivity, had been spread in all corners of Georgian. In the function of this idol were included the guarantee of productivity and reproduction of people (their surname) and animals, the abundance of milk products, the high productivity of graining, fruit trees and so on. The consequence of Georgian – Abkhazian contact, was the spreading of the definite Georgian Christian feasts and ceremonies, which were transformed their way, in the lifestyle of Bzipian and Abjuian Abkhazians.

Such were the feasts of Easter (amshap – “resurrection”), the feast of Dormition of Virgin Mary (nanxea – “the prayer of mother”); The feast of Christmas (kirsia < Megr. “kirse” – Christ); the feast of worship of the saint George (Giorgoba), which was mostly popular among Abkhazians. At the feast, all Georgian population, including Bzipian and Abzhuian Abkhazians were gathering in the church of the saint George in the village Ilori on the territory of historic Odishi (at present, Ocamchire region). This church was called Elinikha by Abkhazians and for its honor they were having the sacrifice ceremony.

The study of the religious beliefs and ideas of Abkhazians has a great importance with many points of views, because these materials, along with the other unquestionable proofs, make clear the issue of ethnogeny of the modern Abkhazians. Partly, they let us to conclude, that the modern Abkhazian are not the aborigines of Abkhazia – the ancient, integral, historic part of Georgia, they had appeared here in the result of the migration processes from the North Caucasus. The role of the migration for the different nations has often been mentioned in the science literature. Such territorial movements always reflect the lifestyle of migrated nation. The new geographical, cultural and political environment has led to the change of customs and traditions, the traditional way of life, material culture and the way of life of migrants from the Northwest Caucasus. Naturally, the relationship with the indigenous Georgian population had partially changed the ethnic consciousness of modern Abkhazians, the mode of their economic life. Intensifica-

tion of the integration process of the new ethnic community with Georgians contributed to the formation of sustainable historical, political, economic and socio-cultural relations, to such an extent that close relations (especially as a result of conjugal relations) were established among these nations. Unfortunately, these centuries-old relations, developed on the basis of mutual respect and good will that are being destroyed due to the rude interference of a third force.

That way, the retrospective researches of Abkhazian ethnographic materials, convince that the Abkhazian ethnic group has historically passed a complex migration path. The modern Abkhazian ethnos has been formed through a merger of the different kindred ethnic groups of the North – West Caucasus with the Kartvelian population. Abkhazians, undoubtedly, had felt the significant influence of Georgian traditional lifestyle in the result of living together with Georgians in one Georgian kingdom and having continuous ethno – cultural contacts with the local population. But, despite this, due to the conservative nature of the traditional culture of modern Abkhazians, there is an obvious similarity between them - in terms of language, ethnic culture – with peoples of the Northwest Caucasus, which demonstrates their indisputable genetic affinity.

Chapter XIII. Abkhazia From the Beginning of the 18th Century to the 80-s of the 18th Century

On the verge of the 17-18th centuries, West Georgia still remained in the sphere of the political influence of Turkey. Sultan approved Kings of Imereti, the owners of Odishi, Guria and Abkhazia. The annual payment of definite tribute pointed to their dependence to Porta. Unlike the secular authority, the orthodox clergy did not depend on the Turkish and intensively fought against the dominance of the conquerors¹. The rulers of West Georgia were trying to use even the smallest opportunity, to get rid off the Turkish dependence.

In 1702, Imereti, Guria and Odishi stopped to pay the annual tribute to the Pasha of Akhaltsikhe and with that they refused to obey the Ottoman government. Abkhazians, who used to attack the Turkish merchants, also followed this example. The Georgians took on several fortresses from the Turkish². These facts had the direct connection with the that time Russian plans against Turkey. Taking of the Azov fortress by Peter I in 1696 and the appearance of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea gave the definite hopes to the owners of West Georgia.

The splendid Porta, being troubled with the existing situation, undertook the drastic measures. In the summer of 1703, the Ottomans attacked West Georgia. Local inhabitants showed the heroic resistance against the conquerors, but the numerical superiority of the conquerors and the feudal disunity of West Georgia appeared beneficial for the conquerors. The Ottomans took under the control the fortresses of Guria, then they attacked Odishi and destroyed it, they dispositioned their garrison in the fortress of Rukhi, aiming to create a new coastal fortification and built fortress Anaklia. After those steps, the Turkish sent the ships against the Abkhazians, who were fighting near the coasts³. The danger of eternal enslavement threatened West Georgia from the Ottoman's side, but soon the situation changed. The army, being meant for the transportation to Georgia rose up in Istanbul. All this resulted in Sultan's change. The new Sultan Ahmad the III (1703 – 1730), being inspired by the ideas of domestic – policy, ordered to recall the armies back from West Georgia.

The Ottomans remained only in the fortresses of Batumi, Poti, Rukhi and Anaklia. Local population, with the use of the propitious circumstances, soon started the war against the conquerors. In 1704, the owner of Odishi attacked the fortresses being taken by the Ottomans, with the help of the Abkhazians.

In the letter of qadi Elhaj Omer of Kutaisi from 1 September of 1704 is told that Dadiani was no longer under the submission, rebelled on the land and was joined by the Abkhazians in the Sea and they together took on the fortresses of Anaklia and Rukhi, which had been occupied by the Turkish before. But the Turkish army took back the fortresses quite soon⁴.

¹ The Historic Documents of Kingdom of Imereti and Provinces of Guria and Odishi (1466-1770). Edited by Sh. Burjanadze. Tb., 1959, p. 45; K. Chkhatarashvili. From the History of Georgia's Domestic Relations..., p. 43 – 44; Ibid: West Georgia. . , – In: Essays of History of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 455 (in Georgian).

² Kartlis Tskhovreba, vol. IV, p. 863 (in Georgian); Mehmed Rashid. History, vol. II, p. 581; V. Chochiev. The Data of Mehmed Rashid..., p. 25 (in Georgian).

³ Kartlis Tskhovreba, vol. IV, p. 863-864; K. Chkhatarashvili. From the History..., p. 58-61; Ibid: West Georgia..., pp. 457-458; I. Tabagua. Georgian-French Relations. Tb., 1972, p. 63 (in Georgian).

⁴ N. Shengelia. The Ottoman Documental Sources About the fortresses of Anaklia and Rukhi. Tb., 1982, p.

The Odishian arrays together with the Abkhazian ones, were continuing to fight against the Ottomans; they were attacking the garrisons being located in the fortresses. In 1714, the Turkish soldiers being located in the Rukhi and Anaklia fortresses, got into a very big trouble related to the “ attacks of the disloyal Megrelian and Abkhazian ”. They had to leave the Rukhi fortress, but by the end of 1719, they took it on again⁵.

At the beginning of the 20th of the 18th century, the Russian Empire activated its actions in the direction of East Caucasus. Their move to the Caspian Sea region, and their relations with the Georgian kingdom and principedom concerned the ruling officials of the Ottoman Porta. After the fall of the Safavids in Iran (1722), in 1723 the Turkish, took the North and Central regions of the country. At the same time, they sent the additional forces to the Caucasus and forced the Russians to stop the movement in the direction of the Caspian Sea region. In the month of June of the same year the Ottomans took Tbilisi, and at the same time they arranged the fortification of the Black Sea coasts, particularly, they rebuilt the fortresses in Poti and Sokhumi and replenished the fortress of Anaklia. Turkish garrisons were positioned in Tsikhisdziri, Anakopia and Pitsunda⁶. Poti was being protected by 200 Turkish soldiers, The fortress Sokhumi – by 100 soldiers and fortress Anaklia – by 10 and the same number was standing in the fortress of Anakopia. In 1725, the Ottomans located the double crescent Pasha in Poti, who was ruling the whole East coast of the Black Sea⁷. In one of the Turkish sources of 1722, the nephew of Rostom-beg – Giorgi is mentioned as the owner of the Sokhumi fortress⁸. Rostom-beg must have been the son of Zegnak Sharvashidze, who had shared Abkhazia with his brothers. The Ottomans got the important points of the Black sea coast of Georgia having the strategic importance. The population did not tolerate the violence of the Ottoman conquerors and was continuing to show its resistance. According to the data of the Turkish chronicler Kuchuk Chelebi, the Abkhazians were regularly attacking the Ottomans, who were building the fortress in Sokhumi. Thus, in order to conquer Abkhazia, the Ottomans had to mobilize their forces. ⁹

In the summer of 1725, the owner of Odishi, Bezhan Dadiani (1714-1728) and the rulers of Imereti were preparing to march against Ottomans, but failed to fulfill their plans. The same year, Abkhazians tried to drive away the Ottomans from the Sokhumi fortress, but their efforts were unsuccessful¹⁰. Concerning this fact, the Russian envoy in Istanbul, A. Rumiantsev and the resident I. Nepluev were informing: “The disorders, being organized by the famous Megrelian prince Bezhan Dadiani, are getting worse and supposedly the Turkish are driven out of one of the fortresses being built at the coast of the Black Sea in Abkhazia”. In the report of June 22 of 1726, A. Rumiantsev was informing about the new disorders in Megrelia and Abkhazia. In 1728, Abkhazians beleaguered the Sokhumi 21, 23, 27 (in Georgian).

⁵ Ibid, p. 90-92, 97.

⁶ Kiatip Chelebi. The Calendar of the Historic Fact, p. 135; The Data of Katip Chelebi..., p. 134, 253; Kartlis Tskhovreba, vol. IV, p. 883 (in Georgian); Sh. Burjanadze. The Map of Likht-Imereti of 1737 as the First Source of the History of Georgia. – The News of the Institute of Manuscripts, # 1. Tb., 1959, p. 192-197; K. Chkhatarashvili. From the History..., pp. 461-462 (in Georgian).

⁷ Sh. Burjanadze. The Map of Likht-Imereti of 1737..., p. 183; K. Chkhatarashvili. From the History..., p. 462 (in Georgian).

⁸ The Data of Kiatip Chelebi..., p. 134.

⁹ N. Shengelia. The Ottoman Sources on the History of Georgia 15-18th Centuries, p. 116.

¹⁰ K. Chkhatarashvili. From the History..., p. 467 (in Georgian).

fortress. The Turkish suspected Russians, as the supporters of the anti - Ottoman actions of the Georgians; they thought, that the outcast king of Kartli, Vakhtang the VI (1703-1724)¹¹, being inspired by the Russians controlled the Georgians. In 1728, the son of Pasha of Akhaltsikhe - Yusuf-beg reconciled with the Abkhazians, and the head of the anti Ottoman actions Bezhan Dadiani was treacherously killed.

In spite of that, fight against the Ottoman aggression was continuing in West Georgia. The Turkish could not conquer Georgia, including Abkhazia. The aggressors did not consider themselves safe even in the fortresses, taken by them¹². According to the words of Vakhushti Bagrationi, this was the period when the Abkhazian princes “were under the command of nobody”¹³.

In spring of 1730, the Ottomans decided to conquer for good the Black Sea coast from Batumi till the Sea of Azov, and subordinate the Jiks. In the campaign against them being led by the Poti Pasha, the king of Imereti was also taking part. Odishi had been defeated by the Ottomans. The local population from Abkhazia to the river Galidzga, had no way, but to hide. “Ottomans and Imeretians defeated Odishi and captured everybody they met. “ – wrote Vakhushti Bagrationi. The Ottomans entered Ilori. However, the icons, crosses and other church utensils had been hidden in advance (from the aggressor). They burnt churches; they stripped off the roof made of leaden tile and ruined the wall inscriptions. Then they moved (from there) and came to Abkhazia”¹⁴. The owner of Abkhazia showed them resistance but was defeated and had to obey. The Ottomans forced the owner and his relatives to convert to Islam and afterwards they moved to the direction of Jiketi.

The king of Imereti understood that his part in the campaign against the Ottomans, was just bringing the trouble to his country and he decided to go back home with his army. After the departure of Imeretians, Abkhazians rebelled and the Ottomans had to give up the idea of campaign against Jiketi. Abkhazians killed the part of the Ottoman army, and the other part, including the commander of the army, escaped. In spite of the defeat, the Ottomans after some time renewed their influence on the Abkhazians. In 1730-1731, in the Sokhumi castle, under the leadership of Ali Arslan Bek was positioned the Turkish garrison of 70-100 soldiers; the same number of soldiers was located in Anakopia castle in 1731-1735¹⁵.

The Abkhazians were well aware about the danger awaiting for them in case of establishing of the Ottoman leadership in West Georgia and despite the opposition with the Odishi Princedom they were fighting against the aggressors together with the Georgians. At the same time, the Abkhazian leaders were taking part in the feudal civil war in West Georgia as the allies of Odishi. It can be explained on one hand with the joint struggle of Odishi and Abkhazia against the Ottomans, and on the other hand – with the close relationships between the princely houses of Dadiani and Sharvashidze.

The circumstances in Abkhazia made the Ottomans extricate their garrisons from Ana-

11 G. Paichadze. *Russian-Georgian Political Relations in the First Half of the 18th Century*. Tb., 1977, p. 63, 79.

12 S. Jikia. *The Documents About the One Episode of the Life of the Ottoman Garrison in Sokhumi. – Georgia and the East*. Tb., 1984, p. 217-223 (in Georgian).

13 Kartlis Tskhovreba, vol. IV, p. 784 (in Georgian).

14 *Ibid.*

15 N. Shengelia. *The Ottomans “Kuchuk Notes” About the Sokhumi Castle. – In: The Near East and Georgia*. Tb., 1991, p. 311-314 (in Georgian); N. Shengelia *The Ottomans Petitions...*, p. 274 – 286.

kopia and Pitsunda, though the Sokhumi fortress was still replenished by them. The fact, that, the double crescent Pasha had been sitting there from 1737, stresses the importance of the fortress; the Anaklia fortress was also under his leadership. 200 janissaries being armed with guns¹⁶ stood in the Sokhumi fortress.

In the result of the Ottoman incursions and feuding, West Georgia was completely ruined. The same full with the turmoil situation had place in Abkhazia. Abkhazian princes were able to control the situation. Slave traders were spreading terror in the seaside line. Abkhazians were mostly distinguished among them. According to the data of Vakhushti Bagrationi, they were attacking “the ships of Ottomans, Lazians, and Chans, but mostly Odishi and Guria”¹⁷. Abkhazians used to moor to the coast and kidnap the people. The part of the hostages was sold to the Turkish traders, and the other part was taken by them and settled down in Abkhazia as slaves¹⁸. At the same time, Abkhazia itself was becoming the object of the attacks of the neighboring highlander nations. Its central regions were often attacked by Tsebelian, Dali, Pskhu and Akhchipsian independent communities. According to the legend, once, the neighboring highlander tribes with the help of Tsebelian and Dali inhabitants ruined Dranda, Merkheuli, Kvitouli and with the great plunder and prisoners went back to the North Caucasus.

The ruler of Abkhazia Jikeshia went for the negotiations with the tribal chiefs. After the successful negotiations, on his way back, he ran into the group of robbers in the woods and was killed in fight with them¹⁹.

After the death of Jikeshia, his son Manuchar ascended the princely throne. At that time, the Ottomans conquered Abkhazia and Jiketi, after what they were actively intervening in the internal affairs of principedom and were on the side of the principedom opposition. In 30^s of 18th century, they toppled Manuchar Sharvashidze with his two younger brothers – Zurab and Shirvan, and sent him to Istanbul, where the brothers were forced to adopt the Islam religion. The ruling of Abkhazian was over passed to Jikian Aslan-bey Gech, who was appointed by the commandant of Sokhumi. By that period, the opposition of the principedom from the Dziapsh-ipa family being supported by Aslan-bey Gech, gained the great influence. The Dziapsh-ips took the Sokhumi regions, the territory between the rivers Psyrtskha and Kodori, and they appropriated the income sources, which belonged to the ruler²⁰.

Despite the existing situation, the princely family of Sharvashidze found the common language with the Ottomans. In 1744, Manuchar Sharvashidze was appointed the Bey of Batumi, Zurab – Sokhumi, and Shirvan, who got the title of a Pasha²¹, was ruling the Rioni (Poti) fortress and Chaneti farther than Riza. According to some data, Zurab Sharvashidze was met with great honor in Abkhazia, but he was demanded to adopt Christianity. He

16 Sh. Burjanadze. *The Map of Likht-Imereti of 1737...*, p. 123, 225-226.

17 *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, vol. IV, p. 785 (in Georgian).

18 I. G. Antelava. *The Essays of the History of Abkhazia of XVII – XVIII centuries. The second edition. Sokhumi, 1951*, p. 156.

19 F. F. Tornau. *The Memories of the Caucasian Officer. Part I. M., 1864*, p. 45; Sh. D. Inal-ipa. *Duripsh. – In: The works of Abkhazian institute of XIX c. Sokhumi, 1958*, pp. 78, 81; K. Machavariani. *The Descriptive Guide...*, p. 246.

20 B. Khorava. *Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia...*, p. 131 (in Georgian).

21 K. Chkhataraisvili. *The West Georgia...*, p. 469 (in Georgian).

ascended the princely throne only after being christened in the Ilori church²². It seems that the tradition, which obligated to be Christian, was still alive. Zurab had no heirs, so he brought back his nephew, the son of Manuchar Sharvashidze – Kelaish-Ahmed Bey (Kelesh-bey), from the Porta, who had been in Istanbul from his young age as prisoner, and announced him his heir. Soon, the ruler of Abkhazia brought another nephew, the son of Shirvan – Bekir-bey, to whom he passed over the ruling of the Abzhua region (the territory between the rivers Galidzga and Kodori). The possessing prince of Abkhazia married the daughter of the family Dzapsh-ipa to Kelesh-bey, in order to reconcile two influential families and to weaken the positions of the family of Dzapsh-ipa²³.

In the middle of the 18th century the border of Abkhazia in the south-east passed along the river Galidzga, where it bordered with Odishi. In the north -west – it passed along the river Bzipi (Kapoeti) – to Jiketi²⁴. The territory between the rivers Galidzga and Inguri – Samurzakano – was included in Odishi principedom, but it was being ruled by the representatives of the side branch of princely family of Sharvashidze.

For designation of Samurzakano, in that time's Georgian sources was accepted the term "upper Abkhazia" or "Samurzakanian Abkhazia"²⁵. It was remained as the Georgian region and was included in the Odishi principedom. One of the bright examples of loyalty in that period, appears to be the bravery in the Khresili struggle in 1757, of that time's Samurzakano owner - Khutunia Sharvashidze, when the united armies of Georgians under the leadership of the king of Imereti Solomon the I (1752-1784) defeated the Ottomans.

We read in the description of the Imereti Kingdom being written in 1769 by the ambassador of Imereti - metropolitan Maksim Kutateli, that in 60's of the 18th century, the Turkish garrison was left only in the Sokhumi fortress. Sokhumi had the port as well as the fortress, where the Ottoman garrison was located. In 1770, Russian officer Iazykov, in his reports on the Black Sea coastal fortresses mentions also Aku or Sokhumi, where the Ottoman garrison is located and all the inhabitants are Turkish²⁶.

In the second half of the 18th century, the war against the Ottoman aggressors was activated in West Georgia. It was mainly inspired by the fact, that the rulers of Imereti, Odishi and Guria fought together against the common enemy. At that time, Solomon the I perfectly understanding that only their forces are not enough for achieving the final victory, was searching for the union with Russians as well as Kakhetian king Irakli the II (1762-1798). Solomon I and Irakli II were counting on the proscription of the Turkish with the help of Russia. In 1769, the Russian expedition corps entered Georgia, which from 1770 during the two years, had been fighting together with the Georgians in West Georgia. Aim of the allies first of all appeared to be the proscription of the Ottomans from the Black Sea coasts of Georgia. In October of 1770, the Russian expedition corps moved towards the town Poti. With the entrance of the corps within Megrelia, the Ottomans left the Rukhi and Anaklia fortresses being afterwards taken by the owner of Odishi. Then, the

22 K. Machavariani. *The Descriptive Guide...*, p. 247.

23 B. Khorava. *Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia. . .*, p. 131-132.

24 *Ibid*, p. 132.

25 *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, vol. IV, p. 783 (in Georgian); B. Khorava. *Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia. . .*, p. 132.

26 A. A. Tsagareli. *Literacy and Other Historic Documents of XVIII century related to Georgia*, vol. I. SP-b., 1891, p. 28, 261.

commander of the Russian corps, General Totleben and the owner of Odishi besieged the Poti fortress, which continued for three and a half months. In February of 1771, Solomon the I informed General Totleben that Zurab and Kelesh-bey Sharvashidze were planning to attack the Russian corps with the purpose of taking off the siege of the castle. Abkhazians attacked the Russians and deprived them of their horses²⁷. In the summer of 1771, the Russian corps renewed the siege of Poti, but unsuccessfully. The Odishian armies also took part in the siege, with Russians, including the Samurzakano detached force under the leadership of Levan Sharvashidze. At the same time Abkhazians attacked the Ottomans. The ruler of Abkhazia, Zurab Sharvashidze as well as the owner of Samurzakano, Levan Sharvashidze, took the Sokhumi fortress, after the hard fight, and banished the Turkish from there. But soon, disagreement rose between them and Levan Shervashidze passed the fortress back to the Turkish, although they were hardly repulsing the attacks of the Abkhazians.

After that, the Ottomans did not trust Zurab Sharvashidze and were supporting Kelesh –bei, but still did not dare to keep Zurab away from ruling¹.

The stubborn confrontation against the Ottomans in West Georgia had brought its results. The Turkish garrisons left the Imeretian fortresses. After the making of Kuchuk - Kinarji agreement (July 10, 1774) it became clear for the Ottomans, that they were losing the control of Imereti and tried to strengthen their positions in Odishi (Megrelia). With this purpose, they started a campaign against Odishi with the help of the rulers of Abkhazia - Zurab, Kelesh-bey and Bekir-bey Sharvashidze. The ruler of Samurzakano, Levan Sharvashidze, who was set aside of Odishi, also joined them². “The whole Abkhazia gathered with their princes, Jiks, Alanians, Circassians and other foreign armies and troops being armed with guns and cannons” and marched to Odishi³. According to the several sources, Kelesh-bey Sharvashidze and not Zurab was the leader of the united armies. Probably, the Ottomans had the agreement about the campaign with Kelesh – bei and Zurab Sharvashidze had to join them²⁸.

The ruler of Odishi, Katsia II Dadiani (1758-1788) asked for help the king of Imereti Solomon I. That latter ordered his arrays and the owner of Guria to gather in the village Bandza. Soon, the united West Georgian armies came to the Rukhi fortress, where in March of 1780 a battle had place. N. Dadiani depicts the picture of the struggle that way: “After some time came the Abkhazians; they easily crossed over the river Inguri, and stopped opposite them. On the second day the Abkhazians started to march forward with their army and artillery against the King and Dadiani, and a terrible battle began. The King got onto a horse with his usual agility and at the head of several Imeretian and Odishian arrays attacked the right wing; he split the army of enemy and the arrays of the King and Dadiani appeared in the midst of the armies of the enemy. The Abkhazians witnessing all this, could not resist and withdrew; the King and Dadiani won a brilliant victory”²⁹. The Rukhi struggle ending with the final victory of the Georgians, ended Abkhazians attacks against Odishi. In the Georgian world, this war from the very start was perceived as the struggle between the Christianity and Islam.

27 K. Chkhatarashvili. *The West Georgia in 70-80's of XVII Century*, p. 665 (in Georgian).

28 B. Khorava. *Interrelations of Odishi and Abkhazia...*, p. 162.

29 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 180.

Heroic behavior and devotion of Georgians in this war saved Odishi from ruining by the Abkhazians and Caucasian highlanders, behind which were standing the Ottomans and a Crimean Khan.

The fact of settling of the North Caucasian highlanders in Abkhazia created hard conditions for Christianity. New inhabitants brought their heathen beliefs and Islam was also spread. Efforts of the West Georgian bishops (Catholicoses of Abkhazia), to revive and strengthen Christianity in Abkhazia, did not give any results. In the memorandum, made by the ambassador of the king of Kartli in Europe, Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, for the king of France Louis XIV (1714), at the request of Abkhazian (West Georgian) Catholicos - Grigol Lordkipanidze (1696-1742) was included the point with the petition of sending the missionaries to Circassia and Abkhazia for reviving Christianity³⁰. At that time, the efforts of fulfillment of this plan was unsuccessful³¹, but the fact shows the concern of the Georgian bishops about the religious condition of the regions being under their leadership – Circassia and Abkhazia. By the end of 60's of 18th century settling of the Abkhazian – Muslims in Samurzakano resulted in the annihilation of the Bedia cathedral³². After the annihilation of Mokvi, Dranda, and Bedia eparchies in Abkhazia, the only active church was the church of Saint George in Ilori being included in the Tsaishi eparchy. Metropolitan Grigol Tsaisheli (1777-1823) noted that he “was the shepherd of the neighboring Samurzakanian Abkhazia, did everything for strengthening the faith among the population³³”. That latter did a lot for spreading Christianity in Abkhazia; he had christened a lot of people and rescued the eparchy from ruining. In his will, which was made by the end of the 18th century, he wrote: “The inhabitants of Abkhazia were deviated from the belief, but it was easy for me to make them convert them to Christianity and baptize them. My caution and efforts repeatedly protected the church and eparchy from ruining by heathens”³⁴.

The population of Samurzakano (Georgians) had somehow saved the Christianity, unlike the inhabitants of Abkhazia itself, where the arrived heathens had ruined it. During the 18th century, in the north- west from the river Galidzga there were no functional churches, and the Catholicos of Abkhazia and banished clergy could not serve freely on the territory of the heathen Abkhazia³⁵.

From the end of the 17th century, the painful process of the formation of the modern Abkhazian (Apsuian) nation had place, through junction of the local Georgian – Christians and arrived Apsuian – heathens, who were controlling the situation, and were partly Moslems.

This process ended in the 19th century. The junction of the different ethnoses and religions influenced the religious situation, (the mix of Christianity, Islam with the main role of heathenism), customs and manners of the nation (in lot of things common with Georgians).

Despite of the establishment of heathenism, the arrived ones could not extirpate Chris-

30 I. Tabagua. The Legation of Sulkhan -Saba Orbeliani in France. – In: *Matsne*, the series of History. . . , 1965, #3, p. 84 (in Georgian).

31 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodoxy, p. 301-303 (in Georgian).

32 B. Khorava. Episcopate of Bedia. – In: *Historical Researches*, vol. III. Tb., 2000, p. 41.

33 A. Tughushi. Episcopate of Tsaishi. Zugdidi, 2001, p. 87.

34 Ibid, p. 65.

35 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodoxy, p. 301-309 (in Georgian).

tianity in Abkhazia. Its marks were left in the lifestyle of the assimilated Georgian population. In Abkhazia they were still worshiping Ilori (Elyr-nikha), Kiacha (Kiach-nikha), Lykhni, Pitsunda, Lashkendari and other Christian shrines. At this time, as it already has been marked, the new heathen sacred places are strengthening: Inal-kuba (the grave of Inal in Pskhu), Didripsh (in the v. Achandara), Lapirnikh (v. Blaburkhva), Chigurnikha (v. Jirkhva), Aga-nikha (v. Marmariskari) etc. We have to mark, that the part of these sacred places, were born on the places of Christian orthodox churches, and the other part – is obviously brought by the resettled Abkhazians from the North Caucasus. From the 18th century, Islam had been spreading in Abkhazia, but before the end of the first half of the 18th century that process was not successful. First of all, Islam was adopted by the highest stratum of the population – the Princely House and feudal lords being dependent on the Ottomans.

The 18th century Abkhazia was much different from Abkhazia of the preceding epochs. Practically, a completely new Abkhazia, a new political unit of the large territory was formed having the other ethnic composition of the population, with the other dominant religion, with the new political status, (saeristavo was gradually turning into the principedom), with the weakened connections with the Georgian world and stronger influence of Turkey.

Despite the radical ethnic changes, the Georgian princes of the family of Sharvashidze were left as the rulers of Abkhazia. They never separated themselves from the Georgian world and never refused the Georgian language, which was the only language of work production and church service in Abkhazia. Kings of Imereti always considered Abkhazia their province, although their authority over the owners of the region was nominal. According to the map of Imereti kingdom, which was made in Kutaisi by Alexander the V in 1738, and was sent to Petersburg (presented to the Empress Anna Johonovna), the whole territory of modern Abkhazia was the part of Imereti (see, *ibid* the map #13). King of Imereti Solomon the I (1752-1784) hold the title of the king of Abkhazians and Imeretians. In the letter from April 26 of 1776, he calls himself “the ruler of Abkhazians, Imeretians, Gurians and the whole lower Iveria”³⁶. It is well known, that the lower Iveria, in other words, the lower Georgia included Tskhumi (Sokhumi) and also the whole territory of present Abkhazia.

The rulers of Megrelian (Odishi) principedom, though had lost the real control above Abkhazia,

but called themselves “the ruler of Odishi-Lechkhumi-Svaneti and Abkhazians”³⁷. It was the title of Katsia II Dadiani (1758-1788), Grigol Dadiani (1788-1804) and others.

The principedom of Abkhazia and the local aristocracy had the private family relations with the Odishi, Imereti and Guria ruling houses and local nobility. Abkhazian princes considered themselves the part of the Georgian world. They formally recognized the suzerainty of the kings of East Georgia and Imereti. In Abkhazia of the late medieval centuries, the Georgian language is gradually losing its positions. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote about his time’s Abkhazians (the first half of the 18th century) – “that they have their own

³⁶ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 649.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 287, 650.

language, but they also know Georgian³⁸. The importance of the Georgian language in Abkhazia is proved with the fact, that it was being used by the part of the population. For example, in December of 1714, when Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani was coming back from Paris and Rome to Georgia, he met Georgians on the Malta isle. “I saw Georgians, some of them were Abkhazians, some of them – Imeretians, Gurians, Megrelians, which were taken away from the Tatars, they spoke Georgian well, but the most suprising was the fact, that the Abkhazians knew the Georgian language”³⁹. The reason of the surprise - that Abkhazians still knew Georgian - was absolutely different ethno political situation, that had been formed in Abkhazia by that time.

38 *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, vol. IV, p. 786 (in Georgian).

39 Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani. *The Trip to Europe. The works*, vol. I. Tb., 1959, p. 231.

Chapter XIV. Abkhazia In The Late XVIII - Early XIX Centuries. Entry of Abkhazia Under The “Protection” of Russia

At the end of the 18th century, the Ottomans, who were striving for the strengthening of their positions in Abkhazia, tried to get rid of the pro-Georgian frame of mind ruler prince Zurab Sharvashidze and to stir Kelesh-bey up against him. As N. Dadiani wrote, Zurab Sharvashidze, the ruler of Zupu (Bzipian Abkhazia) and his nephew Kelesh-bey, the ruler of Sokhumi and its vicinity, had fight with each other. Zurab Sharvashidze asked for help the owner of Odishi – Katsia Dadiani. Katsia immediately gathered armies and sent him to Abkhazia under the leadership of his brother Giorgi. “As they came to Abkhazia, they defeated and ruined Zurab’s enemies, and then came up to the Sokhumi fortress”, - N. Dadiani wrote. In spite of the desperate resistance of the garrison, Giorgi Dadiani took the fortress on and made the rebellious ones to obey Zurab Sharvashidze again¹.

Thereby, Zurab Sharvashidze, with the help of the Odishi ruler managed to save his authority. It also was included in the interests of Katsia II Dadiani, to whom it was more profitable to have pro Georgian frame of mind ruler prince Zurab Sharvashidze than pro-Turkish Kelesh-bey. By that time the Abzhua region - the territory from the river Galidzga till the river Kodori – was ruled by the nephew of Zurab Sharvashidze, Bekir-bey, and the Sokhumi fortress and the territory from the river Kodori till the river Gumista - Kelesh-bey. Zurab was owner the lands between the rivers Gumista and Bzipi, and was the sovereign of the whole Abkhazia².

Despite the defeat, the Ottomans were trying hard to resurrect their plans according Abkhazia, to give the princely throne to their protégé – Kelesh-bey Sharvashidze, which they managed to fulfill through dethroning Zurab Sharvashidze, by the beginning of 80th-ies of the 18th century. First, the new ruler moved the principedom residence from Likhny to the Sokhumi fortress, where the Turkish garrison had been stationed³. According to the contemporaries, Kelesh-bey was the brave, sagacious and quick-witted person, who had the great influence not only on his nationals, but on the North Caucasian highlanders as well.

As soon as Kelesh-bey became the ruler of Abkhazia, he divorced with his first wife, from the Dzapsh-ipa family, who was married to him due to the political reasons. The second wife of the ruler had become the girl from the lower stratum family of Leiba from the village Mugudzirkhva⁴. Kelesh-bey’s action tensed relations with the influential family of Dziapsh-ipa, because, according to the tradition, divorce with a wife was considered a great offence to the family and get rid of this shame was possible only by blood revenge.

Kelesh-bey appeared to be a strong ruler. He immediately started to care about the strengthening and centralization of the princely authority. With this purpose, he attacked and subordinated to himself his cousin, the ruler of Abzhua - Bekir-bey, who had the support of the influential feudal family of Anchabadze. The ruler had also subordinated the owner of Tsebeli, prince Marshania, and tried to spread his influence also on Samurzakano.

1 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 181.

2 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 181-184; A. Pakhomov. *Notes on the Estates of Prince George Sharvashidze*. – In.: *Saistorio Moambe*, #7, 1953, p. 244.

3 I. G. Antelava. *The Essays on the History of Abkhazia of XVII-XVIII centuries*, p. 82; G. Dzidzaria. *Accession of Abkhazia into Russia*. – In.: *The Proceedings*, vol. I. Sukhumi, 1988, p. 22.

4 A. Pakhomov. *Notes on the Estates...*, p. 231, 244.

In the struggle for the consolidation of the divided principality and its centralization, he had maximally used the support of the Ottomans. At the same time, the ruler established close relations with the Jikian and Ubikhian tribes. Thereby, Kelesh-bey had strengthened his position and became the plenipotentiary ruler of Abkhazia. The king of Imereti and the ruler of Odishi were deemed to him. According to the several data, Kelesh-bey was able to gather the army of 10000 men and had the fleet composed by the well-armed galleys.

At the same time the head of the Ottoman garrison being stationed in the Sokhumi fortress limited the authority of Kelesh-bey. The Porta was protecting Sokhumi fortress from any encroachment from outside, because they had realized its importance. In the times of ruling of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) the shipyard was constructed in Sokhumi, where the military ships were built for the needs of the Ottoman navy. But due to the remoteness from the imperial center, deficiency in the local qualified workers and working forces, the shipyard was closed⁵.

After the death of the King of Imereti - Solomon I, David son of George was given the throne (1784-1789). By that time, the Georgevski treaty was already signed⁶ and Porta, with all its strength was trying to preserve its presence in West Georgia. In 1784, the king of Imereti is sending to Saint Petersburg Catholicos of Abkhazia Maxim II Abashidze, Z. Tsereteli, and D. Kvinikhidze with the purpose of signing analogous treaty with Russia. The meeting of the Imeretian ambassadors with Empress Ekaterina II on December 29 of 1784 was ended without any results. From 1787, Maxim II together with the new ambassador of Imereti, Besarion Gabashvili⁷ continued the diplomatic activity. There were getting the entry of Russian armies through Abkhazia with the purpose of release of the Abkhazians and the whole West Georgia from the Ottomans and the entry of this region into the Russian protection.

Catholicos Maxim II and Besarion Gabashvili, in spite of their serious efforts, failed to reach their aim. In one of the letters, which was addressed to the clergy of Megrelia on July 27 of 1792, the Catholicos of Abkhazia wrote, that he stayed in Russia with the following reason: "There was no doubt, that the armies which were moving along the Black Sea, would enter Abkhazia and Imereti after they had taken Anapa. When Anapa was taken (June 22, 1791 - auth.) there was left less than 50 miles till Pitsunda, and who would think that they would miss that region. I was preparing to ask the Empress the help for our church in Pitsunda. I was hoping that the request would be honored, but my hopes did not come true, because of my sins, which left the eternal pain in my soul"⁸. The liberation of West Georgia, including Abkhazia, from the Ottomans, and its unification, as well as the renewal of the Cathedral church of Pitsunda Catholicosate was left as the unrealizable dream of Maxim II, who never returned to his homeland. On May 30 of 1795, he died in Kiev and was buried in Kiev Pechersk Lavra.

In the feudal war, started in West Georgia in 90-ies of the 18th century, Kelesh-bey was also involved. The reason of resistance appeared to be willingness of the King of Imereti - Solomon II (1789-1810) of the unification of the whole West Georgia. This was also sup-

⁵ Z. Tsurtsumia. *Several Issues about the History of Abkhazia in the Turkish historiography*. – In: *Historical Researches*, vol. V. Tb., 2002, p. 130-132 (in Georgian).

⁶ The protecting treaty between Russia and Georgia (by kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti), signed in 1783.

⁷ Besarion Gabashvili (Besiki) – the famous Georgian poet (1750-792).

⁸ J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 331-339 (in Georgian).

ported by the international situation, partly the upcoming weakening of the main base of the centrifugal forces and the inability of the Ottoman Empire to have an influence on the political processes in West Georgia. Solomon II, who was calling himself “the King of the Lower Iveria (the West Georgia - auth.) and the Other Lands”, used the existing situation for his benefit. The associate of the Imeretian king - Solomon Lionidze was writing, that “Abkhazia had belonged to Imereti from ancient times”, as well as Poti Fortress. Solomon II was considered the Megrelia ruler the rebellious vassal, who had to obey the king and did not have the right to resist⁹. Actually, possessing princes of West Georgia were holding their selves self - reliant and did not except the sovereignty of the King of Imereti. In 1792, the opposition of Grigol Dadiani, with the support of the King of Empire, dethroned him. The princely throne was taken by his younger brother, Manuchar. Grigol Dadiani escaped to Samurzakano¹⁰.

In 1794, one of the pretenders to the Imereti throne, the former king David the son of Giorgi, with the purpose of the dethronement of Solomon II, invaded into the kingdom borders. Manuchar Dadiani came to help the king. Grigol Dadiani, who was in Samurzakano, with the support of Samurzakanians and Abkhazians, under the leadership of Kelesh-bey, supported David the son of Giorgi. Solomon II, who got the military support from the king of West Georgia Irakli II, defeated David the son of Giorgi, on October 24 of 1794.

Due to these conditions, Kelesh-bey decided not to interfere in the struggle against Solomon II and returned to Abkhazia¹¹. In 1798, Grigol Dadiani ascended the Odishi throne. Solomon II tried dethrone him once again, but unsuccessfully. For the next years, Imeretian king with the purpose of dethroning Grigol Dadiani, invaded Odishi and ruined it.¹²

In the summer of 1802, Solomon II defeated Grigol Dadiani once again. The ruler of Odishi asked for help Kelesh-bey Sharvashidze, who had been the possessor of Samurzakano, by that time¹³. Kelesh-bey demanded hostages in return. Grigol Dadiani had to send his son and the heir of the throne, Levan, as a hostage, to him. After that, Kelesh-bey, with the army of 20 000 soldiers and with 3 cannons went to Odishi and camped by the village Abedati (by Martvili). In the autumn of the same year Solomon II invaded Odishi, once again and tried to place it under his command. Kelesh-bey decided not to struggle against the King, he made the truce and went back to Abkhazia¹⁴. Grigol Dadiani convinced himself, that he would not be able to defend himself with his own forces from the King of Imereti and decided to enter under the protection of Russia. In the December of 1803, he presented the corresponding petition on the name of Russian administration of Georgia.

By end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, the condition of the Georgian political units was harshly changed, being related with the conclusion of protective treaty, in 1783 between the kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti (East Georgia) and Russia. The treaty was limiting the sovereignty of Georgia but the country was able to maintain its independence and remained the subject of the international right. It is important to mark that one of

9 M. Dumbadze. *West Georgia in the first half of XIX century*. Tb., 1957, p. 134 -135 (in Georgian).

10 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 186; M. Rekhviashvili. *Imereti in XVIII century*. Tb., 1982, p. 220 (in Georgian).

11 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 186-188; B. Khorava. *The mutual relationships of Odishi and Abkhazia...;*, p. 167-168.

12 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 190.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Acts...*, vol. II, p. 577, # 688, p. 340; N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 192.

the paragraphs of the treaty (the forth separate article) was considering the obligation of Russia, to support the release and returning of the historic lands of Georgia under the ruling of the Kings of East Georgia¹⁵. With that, Petersburg (In return of the limiting the Georgian sovereignty to Russia) took the liabilities to support the Georgian kingdom to reestablish in its historic borders. Therefore, the treaty of 1783 had the direct relation with Abkhazia, which was still considered as the main part of the Megrelian principedom in Russia. According to the “historic map of the Russian Empire” of 1793, the north - west border of Georgia, reaches the Sea of Azov. There are also marked West Georgian provinces - Imereti, Megrelia (see here: Map # 19). Megrelia includes the territory of modern Abkhazia, which is not marked separately on the map at all. The forth separate article of the treaty of 1783 was exactly considering the renewal of the Georgian kingdom in the borders, which are pointed in “the historic map of the Russian Empire” of 1793.

However, the Russia failed the hopes of Georgia, which had entrusted its destiny to the Empire. Russia did not do the liabilities about its protection and the renewal of the united state, and in September of 1801 it annihilated the East Georgian kingdom and established the direct Russian ruling in the country. With that, Russia also temporarily refused the provincial form of ruling and in 1802 it established “Georgian administration”, under the leadership of Commander - in Chief, who was also called president. Such form of ruling - “retention” of Georgia - let the Russians give the “legal” character to the capture of the historic Georgian provinces, which were under the ruling of Turkey, and to renew the historic Georgian kingdom, but not as the so called State (as it was considered in the treaty of 1783) but as the Russian province.

After breaching of the treaty of 1783, and annexing East Georgia, Russia started to get into its hands, the west part of the country. Russian general of the Georgian origin from Petersburg, P. Tsitsianov (1802-1806) was given the instructions to seek the joining of West Georgia and strengthen at the Black Sea coast. With that, the Russian administration of Georgia had to act carefully, not forcing the process of joining of the separate political units, mainly Abkhazia, where the interests and position of Turkey were quite strong. With the activities of P. Thsitsianov the Empire step by step, was taking under the “commandment” the west Georgian provinces. In the December of 1803, as it has already been marked, Grigol Dadiani, as “the legal ruler of Odishi, Lechkhumi, Svaneti, Abkhazia and all the lands of ancestors of my owning”, asked for the request about taking of the Megrelian principedom under the commandment of Russia “with all my owning, as above mentioned, as in some cases taken away”¹⁶. The ruler of Megrelia, is obviously considering as Abkhazia and Jiketi and other Georgian historic lands up to the sea of Azov, as well (look, the map of Russia of 1793). There are no doubts that the request of the entrance of Megrelia under the commandment of Russia, also with its “taken away” territories is written under the dictation from Petersburg considering the forth separate article of the 1783 treaty. According to this article and request of Grigol Dadiani, Russia was getting the legal right to fight for the joining of the whole North-East Black Sea coast, including Abkhazia. For the realization of this plan was built the first supporting point of Russia

15 A. Tsagareli. *Literacy and other Historic Documentations*, vol. II, add. II. S-Pb., 1902, p. 39-40.

16 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia*, p. 287. Moscow bishop discussed the pretensions of the ruler of Megrelia about the main part of the territory of that time Abkhazia in the appointment of the archimandrite Pafnoti Khoziashvili (who was sent as the ambassador to Russia).

at the Georgian Black sea coast, in 1804, in the village of Kulevi (the entry of the river Khobistskali), where the Russian regiment had debarked.

Kelesh-bey was still expressing his secret wish to enter under the commandment of Russia, in 1803, and with the mediatory of the Megrelia ruler, was trying to establish the contacts with the head commander of Georgia, General P. Tsitsianov. The General offered Grigol Dadiani to advice Kelesh-bey to send his representative to Tbilisi or make the written request about the wish of entering under the commandment of Russia. With that, he had to declare, that he was defending Poti and Anaklia, not because that he was getting the emolument from the Ottomans, but because he was defending his possessions, which he was ready to hand to Russians. P. Tsitsianov gave his word to Grigol Dadiani that the request of Kelesh-bey would be contented and he would get the “protection”.

With joining of Megrelia, Russia had cleared the way to the Black Sea coast and at the same time it could show the pressure also to the Imeretian kingdom. On April 25 of 1804, Solomon II had to enter “under the commandment” terms. The Elaznaurian “protection” treaty, which was signed on 25 of April, between Russia and Imereti, was also including the Guria principedom as the main part of Imeretian kingdom¹⁷. Emperor Alexander I (1801-1825) with the command from the forth of July of 1804 came to an agreement with the King of Imereti and the owner of Megrelia. Soon, there was brought in the special position of the ruler of Megrelia, Imereti and Guria. This position was given to General P. Litvinov by the head chief commander of Georgia. His mission was the realization of the agreements between Russia and the West Georgian political units.

Russian forces were especially interested in the Black sea coast of the Caucasus, namely, in Abkhazia, the population of which, like the other highland nations, did not have any laws - as Solomon II was writing on January 2 of 1803.¹⁸ The head commander of Georgia P. Tsitsianov was motivating the opportunity of Abkhazians joining the Russia, with the historical argument. On October 27 of 1803, he was writing to the state chancellor, ¹⁹ A. R. Vorontsov: “Also I will consider as a duty to concern the story of Kelesh-bey and his possessions. In the 15th century, and to be more exact, till 1414 A. C. , when Iveria was not divided, Kelesh-bey was known under the surname Sharvashidze :his owning was one of the provinces of Iveria”²⁰. This was giving the “legal” right to Russia for acquirement of Abkhazia. In the conditions, when Russia had already been established in West Georgia, including Megrelia, Abkhazia could not stay away from these processes.

At the beginning of the 19th century, due to the strengthening of the Russian positions in the Caucasus and Georgia, Kelesh-bey is reconsidering his political orientation²¹. With the support of Turkey he had gained the main political aims - he had become the prince of Abkhazia, subordinated the rebellious feudal lords, strengthened the central authority and so on.

Kelesh-bey could not leave unconsidered the circumstance that Russia had been firmly

¹⁷ M. Dumbadze. Abolition of the Imeretian state, p. 855-856 (in Georgian).

¹⁸ Acts..., vol. II, p. 340-341.

¹⁹ It seems that there is considered the year of arrival of the king of the united Georgia, Alexander I (1412-1442) to Abkhazian Eristavty, to whom the Eristav of Abkhazia, Sharvashidze, showed the taciturn obedience (see here, chap. VII, 2 of this book).

²⁰ Acts..., vol. II, p. 463.

²¹ Ibid, p. 337-339.

established in Georgia, and the Ottoman Empire was in the deep political and social-economical crisis. He understood that after strengthening of Russia in West Georgia, would come Abkhazia's turn, as the main part of Georgia²². Considering all the advantages and disadvantages, Kelesh-bey is starting to get closer to Russia. It is also significant, that the entrance under the commandment of Russia was also needed for him for more strengthening of the heritage rights for his youngest son - Sefer-bey²³.

Due to the complicated international conditions, Russia was acting carefully. Considering the fact that the war with France of Napoleon was starting, it did not want to make the situation with Turkey more difficult. At the same time, Russia was also very interested in the inclusion of Abkhazia and with that, the creation of the basement in the West Caucasus.

Kelesh-bey was officially continuing relations with Porta and stayed on its duty, because he was trying to get closer to Russia and enter under its protection. It seemed that he was playing the double political game²⁴. However, Kelesh-bey's resistance and the obvious striving for getting away from Turkey was being discussed gradually, for what he needed the definite reason. The attorneys of Grigol Dadiani reported to P. Tsitsianov in 1803, that Kelesh-bey was not connected at all with the Porta²⁵. The Russian officials were interested how sincere was the devotion of Kelesh-bey to Russia and in what relations he was with Porta, who considered him as his national. P. Tsitsianov instructed P. Litvinov to make the secret negotiations with Kelesh-bey about the entrance under the Russian commandment, although, the head commander himself, was not sure about the sincerity of the Abkhazian owner. P. Litvinov studied the political orientation of the West Georgian rulers; he gathered the necessary materials also about Kelesh-bey, after what he reported to P. Tsitsianov, that they must not believe the Abkhazian ruler²⁶.

By that time, Kelesh-bey's relationships with the Russian commandment in Georgia became complicated, because of the 12-year-old Megrelian principedom heir, Levan, whom he had been holding as a hostage. On October 23 of 1804, Grigol Dadiani died, and Kelesh-bey was not giving freedom to the heir and was asking for the large ransom. When P. Tsitsianov heard about it, he ordered the commander of the Russian armies being located in Imereti and Megrealia – General – Mayor I. Rikhoff, to attack Sokhumi with all his military forces, rescue Levan and give him the throne of the ruler²⁷, in case Kelesh-bey was not going to release the hostage. In March of 1905, I. Rikhoff with his detached forces and the Megrelia's squad, went through the river Inguri and went into Samurzakano for 20 miles, he took several villages, he also took a few hostages and made the princes and noblemen swear to Russia about loyalty. The further move of Russians was prevented by the bad roads, so the General turned his armies in the direction of Anaklia fortress and on March 28 he took it after the three hour long struggle. At the same time he started to prepare for the attack on Sokhumi from the side of the Sea. Kelesh-bey, who was afraid of hostilities, set Levan free on April 2, and as a sign of obedience, he sent 8 hostages, and

22 I. G. Antelava. *Essays on the History of Abkhazia of XVII-XVIII centuries*, p. 88-99; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russian-Turkish War of 1806-1812. Tb.*, 1964, p. 109.

23 G. Dzidzaria. *The Struggle for Abkhazia in the beginning of XIX century. Sokhumi*, 1946, p. 11.

24 I. G. Antelava. *Essays on the History of Abkhazia of XVII-XVIII centuries*, p. 98-99.

25 *Acts...*, vol. II, p. 536.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Acts...*, vol. III, p. 190, 194.

asked to stop hostilities. On April 16 of 1805, General I. Rikhoff was writing to P. Tsitsianov, that, Abkhazian princes, from whom he had got the hostages, and who had been under the leadership of Dadiani right up to the river Galidzga, entered the membership of Megrelian principedom once again, on what they made an oath to Dadiani and expressed their wish about the entrance under the protection of Russia²⁸.

Russians activation against Abkhazians was painfully interpreted. As for taking of the Anaklia fortress, that belonged to them and was formally owned by Kelesh-bey and the Ottoman garrison was also located there, Porta sent the protest note to Petersburg. Alexander I in the letter, which was addressed to the Sultan, with apologizes about the incident, also marked that the pointed fact was the result of a mistake and misunderstanding. In July of 1805 Reis-Efendi of Porta categorically demanded from General P. Litvinov, the release of the Black Sea coast, from Sokhumi to Batumi²⁹. The Emperor gave an order to P. Tsitsianov, to give back the Anaklia fortress to the Ottomans and the Russian ambassador in Turkey, Italinski, was ordered to assure Porta, that that unpleasant incident was made by mistake. The explanations of the Russian side satisfied the Ottomans. In the October of the same year the Russians gave back Anaklia to Kelesh bey and also gave him 1000 rubles for the caused damage. The incident was exhausted, but upon that, P. Litvinov insisted Porta, to forbid Kelesh-bey the slave trade activities³⁰. Thus, due to the firm protest of Porta, the Russian forces decided to stop the continuance of the drastic measures in Abkhazia, because they did not want to deepen the conflict with Turkey.

On July 9 of 1805, the new ruler, the prince of Odishi (Megrelia), Levan V Dadiani (1805-1840) in a formal ceremony, took an oath of the loyalty to Russia. The rulers of Samurzakano, Manuchar and Levan Sharvashidze also took an oath of the loyalty to Russia. The oath which was written in the Georgian language, says: “We, signing this below, the Abkhazian princes, Samurzakano rulers, have entered together with our land, princes and noblemen under the slavery of the Imperial Majesty of the Russian King, we swear almighty god and Saint Gospel that we will be the loyal slaves and nationals for his Imperial Majesty and will never betray Him, and even the more, if we hear about the betrayal and rebelliousness of others, we will inform about it, If we do not act this way as it has been written above, may we be be cursed by God and the Saint Gospel and be outcast by the almighty King. We are the slaves of the almighty King, as well as the slaves of autocrat Levan Dadiani, as our lands had always belonged to the Megrelian autocrat prince Dadiani”.³¹

Thus, by the end of 90-ies of the 18th century, Samurzakano, which was under the leadership of Kelesh-bey, acknowledged the leadership of the sovereign prince of Megrelia and entered under the Russian “protection”. After the entrance of Samurzakano under the “protection” of Russia and Russian’s strengthening in West Georgia, Kelesh-bey takes the direct course towards the obvious confrontation with his sovereign. The reason was escape of Taiash-pasha from Turkey in 1806, who was accused for the high treason, and wanted to hide in Russia³². The Chanetian Pasha, Taiar, turned away from the Sultan Selim III

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 190.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 202, 209; *The Assertion of the Russian Ruling in Caucasus*, vol. III, part II. Tiflis, 1901, p. 541.

³⁰ *Acts...*, v. II, p. 191-192, 574.

³¹ *Acts...*, v. III, p. 190, 194.

³² *Ibid*, p. 190.

and was trying to turn other Pashas of the central Anatolia away from him too. With this purpose he started the correspondence with the Russian forces about the entrance under their leadership and had promised to make the whole Anatolia and the east coast of the Black Sea, the nationals of Russia³³. When the betrayal of Tairar-pasha was exposed, the Sultan ordered to execute him, but the rebellious Pasha had the time to hide in Abkhazia³⁴. It seems that he knew well the pro Russian feelings of Kelesh-bey and trusted him. Tairar-pasha was having the negotiations with the Russians forces from Sokhumi and was offering them his mediation in the case of taking Abkhazia under the leadership, which would have led to the Russian ruling on the Black Sea's east coastal part³⁵. When the Sultan was informed about the location of Tairar -pasha, he ordered Kelesh-bey to execute him, but he refused to obey the order. Then the Sultan turned to the Abkhazian feudal lords – Dziapsh-*ipa*, Margania and others and asked them to exert pressure on Kelesh-bey or otherwise he would start the war.

In May of 1806, Kelesh-bey turned to the Russian administration of Georgia with the request, to take Abkhazia under their leadership and to protect it, in case of the Ottomans attack. However, Russia, considering the factor of Turkey, was avoiding the official relations with them, but Russia was also admitting that the drawing near or even the neutralization of Kelesh-bey to avoid his union with the revolted Imeretian king, Solomon II, was quit useful³⁶.

At the same time, Kelesh-bey, with the mediataion of General I. Rikhoff reconciled and ecomplished friendly relations with the Megrelian princedom. The difficulties, which started between them in the beginning of the 19th century, were settled. In the letter, written on May 20 of 1806, which was addressed to the temporary ruler of Megrelia, Nino Dadiani, Kelesh-bey wrote: “We will be your well-wishers and we will not interference any thing that can harm or ruin you, let me be your well-wisher, – the enemy of your enemy, and the friend to your friend”³⁷. Before that, the princedom of Abkhazia was made related to the Megrelian princedom. The son of Kelesh-bey, Sefer-bey, after the secret christening (the christening name Giorgi) married Grigol Dadiani's sister, Princess Tamar³⁸. The fact was meaning the establishment of the political union between Abkhazia and Megrelian princedom, which was under the “protection” of Russia and pointed at the changes o f Kelesh-bey; political orientation. It was obvious that he had firmly decided to enter under the protection of Russia and in June of 1806, he put this question for discussion on the national meeting in the village of Likhni. The meeting supported Kelesh-bey's political course, and that had strengthened his positions much more.

Porta tried to obey the rebellious vassal by force. It was searching for the reason to attack the west Georgia, for a long time, because it was very concerned with the Russian's activity on the Black Sea and there acquisition of the Anaklia castle. By the beginning of June of 1806, the Sultan ordered to the Akhaltsikhian and Erzerumian Pasha's, under pretence of Kelesh-bey's punishment, to attack Imereti and Megrelia and to acquire the

33 *Ibid*, p. 202, 209; *The Assertion of the Russian Ruling in Caucasus*, vol. III, part II, p. 541.

34 *Acts...*, v. II, p. 191-192, 574.

35 *Ibid*, # 905, p. 517; # 906, p. 517 – 518; # 908, p. 518.

36 *Acts...*, vol. III, p. 193.

37 *Ibid*, # 912, p. 521.

38A. Pakhomov. *Notes on the Estates of Prince George Shervashidze*, p. 231.

Black Sea coast. The marines were also included in this war³⁹. In July of the same year the Turkish squadron was moving to the Abkhazian coasts composed with 11 ships, under the leadership of Iuiruka Baiakhdar. The commander of the squadron was trying to command several Abkhazian feudalists to him, including the ruler of Samurzakano, Manuchar Sharvashidze, but unsuccessfully. Kelesh-bey asked Russian forces for help, but Petersburg was still showing carefulness to the Abkhazian issue. Despite of that, the Russian military forces in Georgia were given the order from the Emperor, to cut the Turkish's way if they will try to attack Abkhazia from Megrelian side⁴⁰.

To reflect the aggression of Porta, Kelesh-bey gathered 25 thousand warriors, among them Abkhazians were just 10-12 000 people, the other part-hired Circassians. On July 25 of 1806 the Turkish squadron came to Sokhumi, but when they were convinced that the city was well protected and Kelesh-bey was going to show the determined resistance, the Ottomans went back. The Erzerumian and Akhaltsikhian Pashas also abstained from the attack of Abkhazia⁴¹. It became clear for Porta that any reason of attacking Imereti or Megrelia, will be apprehended by the Russian forces as the abrogating of the peaceful treaty, because these lands were under the "protection" of Russia. The given circumstance made Turkish forces to abstain from the sending the land military. From that time – as Taiar – may was marking – the ruler of Abkhazia was not obeying the orders of Sultan⁴².

Very soon, the political situation in Abkhazia worsened. The Turkish used the situation, which was in Abkhazian principedom and tried to worsen the situation between Kelesh-bey and his oldest son Aslan-bey, who had not been in a good terms with father, before. As it was told above, Kelesh-bey took his right of inheritance, by giving this right to his other son Sefer-bey. The Ottoman group of Esherian Dzipshians and Aslan-bey, with the support of Turkish, organized the conspiracy with the purpose of throwing down Kelesh-bey. But when the ruler heard about it, he cruelly punished the conspirers, one part of them were executed and the other part ran away to Tsebel and had loosen the right of property. Their homeland estates, which were located between the rivers Shitskvara and Adzapsh, were joined to his lands, by Kelesh-bey⁴³. Thus, with the decisive measures, the ruler stabilized the situation in the principedom.

In this modification, the Porta started preparing for the war against Russia. With this purpose it started the strengthening of the Black Sea coastal fortresses in Batumi, Poti, Sokhumi, Sujuk-kale, Anapa, to turn them into the impartial outposts. The Russia, who was waiting every day for the war with the Turkish, was trying to bribe the commandants of these fortresses⁴⁴. On September 5 of 1806, the minister of the foreign affairs of Russia, A. Budberg, informed the commander of the Caucasian line and the commander in Georgia, I. Gudovich (1806-1809) the wish of the Emperor, that at the exact moment of the break of relations with Porta, the entrance under the protection of Russia must be immediately announced to Kelesh-bey. In that case there would not have been any obstacles for sending the official literacy and investiture to Kelesh-bey, from Petersburg⁵.

39 Acts..., v. III, p. 193.

40 Ibid. # 905, p. 517; # 906, p. 517-518; # 908, p. 518.

41 Ibid, # 918, p. 525-526.

42 Ibid, # 912, p. 521.

43 Ibid, p. 191-192.

44 Ibid, p. 194-195.

Russia was very interested in holding of Abkhazia. The wide line of the Black sea coast from the Anapa fortress to the fleet of the river Inguri and also the left coast of the river Rioni were the owning of Porta, including Sokhumian, Isgaurian, Potian, Gonio's fortresses. On September 25 of 1806 concerning that matter, A. Budberg was writing to I. Gudovich, that all these fortresses "belonging to the Georgian kingdom from the ancient times. So, it is impossible not to wish to have an opportunity to join all these places under the Russian power and provide Georgia with that and suppress the nations above Kuban, who find the shelter in Anap and in other Turkish cities"⁴⁵. That way, the belonging of the Black Sea costal castles, including Sokhumi, to the historic Georgia, was the main right argument of their joining to Russia. Kelesh-bey, also thought that way. In the oral reassignment he was asking the ruler of Abkhazia, pr. Amirejibi (September, 1806) "report to the Russian head commanders in Georgia that last year in the great post, I have sent the letters to the late prince Tsitsinaov, who was writing to that he had presented that letters to the king and I am waiting for the permit from there. . . When in Imereti and Gerogia, there were only kings, and not under the leadership of Ottoman Porta, and as the proof, here are the churches built by them; Now I have also given Abkhazia to the king"⁴⁶.

In October of 1806, Kalesh-bey sent Taiar-pasha to Tavrida, giving him right to be the middleman between him and the Russian authorities in the issue about the entrance of Abkhazia under the Russian protection. With that also he gave his terms to the pasha, in case of gratification of which he agreed to enter under the Russian protection. These terms, composed with 8 paragraphs were passed to the General-Governor of Novorossiysk E. Richelieu by Taiar-pasha. There was told, that Abkhazians are ready to serve loyally to the Emperor in case of their entrance under the Russian protection; Kelesh-bey had to be left as the ruler, with getting the corresponding rank and fixed corresponding payment; Seferbey, who was one of the six sons of the ruler, also had to be given the corresponding rank and reward: and Kelesh-bey also agreed to send his another son to Petersburg to study there (practically as a hostage); Kelesh-bey demanded a reward of 30 Abkhazian noblemen in case of the war with Porta-supply of provisions and armament, including guns and cannons: the ruler was demanding for the permission for the slave trade and with that he obligated himself to serve for the Emperor, with his 6 000 army, inside the Georgian borders and about Tbilisi, also to supply Russia with forest materials for ship building, allotment of the comfortable place which could serve in winter time as the reliable shelter for the Russian fleet⁴⁷.

In the letter of A. Budberg to E. Richelieu from November 14 of 1806, was marked the importance of Kelesh-bey's taking under the Russian Empire's leadership and also was given the recommendation to sign with him the preliminary (provisional) agreement of the terms presented by him (without the right of slave trade)⁴⁸.

On December 24 of 1806, the Port declared war to Russia. According to this, in the letter of January 27 of 1807, A. Budberg instructed I. Gudovich to achieve the signing of peace with Iran or at least the temporary armistice, to through all the existing forces

45 Acts..., vol. III, p. 193.

46 Ibid, p. 196.

47 O. A. Ardashelia. *Eastern Policy of Napoleon I and Georgia*. Tb., 2005, p. 79-80 (in Georgian).

48 A. R. Ioanisian. *Accession of Caucasus to Russia and the International Relationships by the beginning of XIX century*. Yerevan, 1958, p. 145.

against Turkish regions which were bordered with Georgia; To get involved Kelesh-bey, Karsian pasha and also the Trapesund pasha Taiar, who was in peace with the Sultan and was through the negotiations with the commander of Anapian castle about the entrance under the protection of Russia, in the war against Ottomans.

The military operations started at Dunai and Transcaucasia. One more war with Turkey was helping Russia to decide the issue about Abkhazia. In the beginning of the war, Kelesh-bey reported to the Russian commander, that the Turkish were planning to attack Kulevi and in case of the necessary need, he was asking for the support².

The ally of Turkey - France was trying to create the strong anti Russian coalition³. The minister of the foreign affairs, Taleiran, was writing in the instruction to Sebastian, who was the ambassador of France in Turkey: "It is necessary for the Turkish squadron to act in the Black Sea, where the Russians can not resist the Turkish. We also have to try to make Persia move there forces to Georgia. Get from Porta the order to the Erzerumian pasha, to move all his forces to that direction. Stay in the good relationships with the Abkhazian prince and make him want to participate in the great diversion against the common enemy. Make that prince, Erzerumian pasha, Persians and Porta to attack Georgia, the Crimea and Bessarabia at the same time"⁴⁷. Obviously, Taleiran knew Kelesh -beyas the vassal of Porta and the owner of the important military potential, which must had been used. We have to consider, that the Russian knew about the French plans according to Kelesh -bei, so they did not enjoy his confidence, because they though that he is was playing the double game.

The military operations in the Caucasus started with the attack of Turkish at Redu -kale (Kulevi) on February 8 of 1807. Russians were able to resist the attack of the enemy, but could not continue the attack against them and get the Black Sea castles, including Sokhumi and Poti. In June of 1807, I. Gudovich defeated Persians, and in July of the same year, the Tilzian peace agreement was signed between Russians and French. With that, the trial of creating the Persian-Ottoman union was deranged.

During the military operations in the Caucasus, Kelesh-bey stood in the waiting position. In the letter of I. Gudovich to Kelesh -bey of July 14 of 1807, he was not hiding his dissatisfaction about the fact, that the ruler of Abkhazia was not helping the Russian armies, and more than that, he was calling a question that he was supporting the enemy. I. Gudovich demanded Kelesh-bey to prove his loyalty to Russia with joining the war against Turkey, and also he threatened him, that if he does not take the part in the defense of Kulevi, he will not get the "mercy" from the Emperor, in other words, from the Russian "protection"⁴⁹. Kelesh-bey had never joined that war, though he did not let the Turkish to land the forces at the coast of the Black Sea and turn this region into the cockpit of the military operations⁵⁰.

In August of 1807, the temporary agreement was forged between Russia and Turkey, on the terms of which the Russian forces were staying in Georgia, its positions were strengthened at the east coasts of the Black Sea and with that the base of releasing from Ottomans and the capture of the Black Sea coastal regions of Georgia, including Abkhazia by Russians was being prepared⁵¹.

49 Acts..., v. III, p. 197 – 198.

50 Acts..., v. III, p. 199.

51 N. Kortua. Georgia in the Russian-Turkish War..., p. 185.

On August 23 of 1807, ship “Konstantine”, under the leadership of F. Skirnevski came to Sokhumi from Redut-kale. Here he met Kelesh-bey. According to his information, the ruler of Abkhazia was looking forward for the news about entering under the Russian protection and was ready to send his 16 year old son for the military service to Petersburg. Also he was offering the right of staying in Sokhumi inspection for the Russian fleet ships. F. Skirnevski saw the fortress and the town of Sokhumi. He was characterizing Kelesh-bey as the 60 year old, brave, tall man with the heavily built body⁵².

The “Brilliant” Porta was not able to control the rebellious vassal and made the conspiracy against him with the participation of the son of the ruler, - Aslan-bey. Although he was starting to get along well with his father, but the idea of getting rid of his father and brother and ascend the throne, had never left him⁵³. At night of May 2 of 1808 Aslan-bey and Bezhan Sharvashidze mortally wounded Kelesh-bey in the Sokhumi Palace⁵⁴. After the murder of his father, Aslan-bey captured the Sokhumi fortress and announced himself the ruler of Abkhazia and the national of Porta⁵⁵. The Sultan of Turkey immediately reacted to the happened, with supporting Aslan-bey with military and financial aid⁵⁶.

Sefer-bey (Giorgi Sharvashidze), who had been announced the heir to Kelesh-bey before his death, proclaimed himself the ruler of Abkhazia and declared war to Aslan-bey. He was not able to take Sokhumi with his own forces, so he asked for help the Russian forces (General I. Rikhoff) and promised to pass Abkhazia under the leadership of Russia. He also asked for the support, the ruler of the Megrelian principedom - Nino Dadiani. She was the one who had made Giorgi Sharvashidze swear for loyalty to the Emperor of Russia. In the letter, which was from Nino Dadiani’s and his young aged heir of Megrelia - Levan V Dadiani’s names, Giorgi Dadiani was committing himself and his “loyal and zealous subjects to obey the orders of the head - commander of Georgia”.

Abkhazia’s entrance under the protection of Russia did not represent the united political unit; it was divided into the separate independent regions. The authority of Giorgi Sharvashidze included Zupu-Bzip region (between the rivers Bzip and Gumista). The territories between the rivers Gumista and Kodori (Guma or Abkhazia) and between the rivers Kuma and Galidzga (Abzhua) were ruled by the other representatives of the Sharvashidze Principedom. The mountainous regions, Tsebeli and Dali, which were located in the middle and upper parts of the river Kodori and also Pskhu, being situated in the upper parts of the river Bzip, had the nominal connection with the mentioned territories. These territories were owned by the Princes of Marshania, who were not admitting the authority of Prince Sharvashidze and had not entered under the “protection” of Russia⁵⁷. In the same 1810, after the example and the authority of the Abkhazian ruler, the ruler of Jiketi, Levan Tsanba (Tsanubaia) also entered under the “protection” of Russia and recognized the highest position of the ruler of Abkhazia⁵⁸.

The ruler of Abkhazia was realizing that by entering under the Russian protection, his

52 *Internal Policy of Russia*, vol. IV, p. 59-50.

53 G. Dzidzaria. *The Struggle for Abkhazia*, p. 16.

54 The fact is disclaimed by the Abkhazian historiography (O. Bgazhba, S. Lakoba. *The History of Abkhazia*, p. 213-214).

55 *Acts...*, vol. III, p. 200; *The Asseveration*, vol. II, p. 41; N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 197.

56 *Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR*, Part I, p. 137.

57 *Ibid*, v. IV, # 575; B. Khorava. *The mutual relationships of Odishi and Abkhazia...*, p. 135-136, 178.

58 *Acts...*, v. IV, # 578, p. 426; # 583, p. 429.

possessions were becoming the part of Georgia, which were no longer ruled by the Georgian kings, but ruled by Russian generals. Already mentioned letter of Giorgi Sharvashidze contained request to the rulers of Megrelia: “As you made me swear in with my faithful princes for the loyalty of our most graciously sovereign, our emperor, . . . because I have already shown myself to Tatars as their opponent and the enemy, and also I have given you the hostages as you asked. Therefore, it depends on you, how you will take some pains for me, or how you will open for me the door of Our monarch”.⁵⁹ The decision of Abkhazia’s destiny really depended on Megrelia, as far as I. Gudovich wrote to the emperor Alexander I on May 19 of 1808, Russia couldn't help Giorgi Sharvashidze with military aid out of fear of not provoking Turkey and break the truce⁶⁰. In such conditions Megrelia was active, the rulers of which had always made Russian authorities let know that Abkhazia historically was within their possessions. On 8 of June of 1808, in the letters to I. Gudovich and Emperor, with the request of Abkhazia’s entrance under the Russian protection, Nino Dadiani emphasized the strategic meaning of Abkhazia and that after taking it under protection it would have been possible for Russia’s boundaries to be spread till “Jiketi, with adjacent Tavria” (with the Crimea). She also wrote: “Though the changeability of time and neighborly disagreement had taken Abkhazia out from our possession, but long since Nikopsia had been the ancestral capital of Levan Dadiani (Levan II, 1611-1657) And of his ancestors and also of Katsia Dadiani (Katsia II, 1758-1888) who had imposed tribute to Abkhazia and it is the part of Megrelia’s possessions, it is convenient for you to join it to your monarchy”.⁶¹ So Abkhazia was entering under the Russian protection, as the part of historical Georgia, and as the “member of Megrelian possession”.

Nino Dadiani’s persistent attempts made the issue about Abkhazia to be solved. On 13th of June of 1808, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian N. Rumiantsev directed to I. Gudovich, that if he is convinced in Sefer-bey’s sincerity, he will meet his request in such conditions that it would not be announced till the negotiations with Porta are over⁶². On June 21 of 1808 Sefer-bey asked the General - Major I. Rikhoff to take him with his nation under the protection of Russia.⁶³

In the conditions of interim armistice (1807-1809) when the negotiations with Turkey were still proceeding, Russia could not openly engage in the affairs of Abkhazia, though it was not against of its annexation. I. Gudovich was ordered from Petersburg, to begin taking Abkhazia under Russian protection. He wasn’t hurrying, but he ordered I. Rikhoff for frightening Abkhazians, who were Aslan-Bei’s supporters to demonstrate willingness of helping Sefer-bey with military forces, but not to march into Abkhazia. Also, he ordered the ruler of Megrelia Nino Dadiani and the owner of Samurzakno Manuchar Sharvashidze to help Sefer-bey. I. Gudovich informed the last one that the emperor would make him his citizen.⁶⁴

In the beginning of August of 1808 the combined forces of Megrelia and Abkhazia

⁵⁹ Acts..., v. III, pp. 200, 201-202, 205; N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 197; *Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR, Part I*, p. 137.

⁶⁰ Acts..., v. III, p. 198 – 199

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 201, 203.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 206 – 206.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 206.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 208 – 209; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War...*, p. 261.

and also the Russian regular units allocated by I. Rikhoff under the overall commandment of Niko Dadiani tried to take Sukhumi fortress, but without any success. However they forced Aslan-bey to set free the wife of Kelesh-bey (the third wife) Rebia-hanum Marshania and her son Batal-bey. As N. Dadiani wrote, “they took hostages throughout Abkhazia from the border of Dzhiketi to the river Galidzga -Dadiani’s border-and handed to Sefer-Bei and after that they went to Odishi in peace”⁶⁵. In this military expedition, Aslan-bey was supported with three ships, which were sent by the commandant of the Poti fortress - Kuchuk-bey Sharvashidze. Three hundred Circassians had also arrived to help him. Bezhan Sharvashidze who was one of the members of attempt on Kelesh-bey was also with Aslan-bey. Since the entry of Samurzakno under the patronage of Russia, he had been hiding in the mountains. Aslan-bey had supporters between the local feudal lords too. One of them was the private ruler of Abkhazia’s region, Hassan-bey and the other was the ruler of Abzhua, Ali-bey Sharvashidze.

The unsuccessful attempt of taking on the Sukhumi fortress convinced Giorgi Sharvashidze (Sefer-bey) in the need of execution of the document of the so-called “Pleading Items”.

The documents were drafted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, then were translated into Georgian and the original was sent to Giorgi Sharvashidze. On August 12 of 1808, the owner of Abkhazia, and also his loyal princes and nobles signed the document “Pleading Items”, on entering of Abkhazia into the Russian patronage. Giving the full text “of the allnational letter of Giorgi Sharvashidze to the august and almsgiving Monarch of ours, about the request and bringing himself with his belongings through his letter the following way:

1. I the rightful heir and the owner of Abkhazia, consciously and honestly am acquiring the citizenship and into service, as a hereditary subject of the most gracious monarch of Russia - Emperor Alexander Pavlovich.

2. From now on, with this letter, I undertake to commit myself and Abkhazia and everything founded in it, into hereditary citizenship and the slavery of the throne of the Russia’s gracious monarch and his successor, within confession of the formal faith of ours, from where our ancestors were Christians by the Greek law.

3. Let his Imperial Majesty with his kindness be merciful with me, mark me with the sign as the other princes and nationals of the Imperial throne are marked.

4. I will be given the document by holly goodness and mercy of his Imperial Majesty, which will ascertain my inheritance, for my son and his grandsons to be the rulers too with noninfringement of the higher - ups and the ownership of our belongings and let it be ascertained by the mercy of Monarch, when the Imperial throne will be happy and strong let our inheritance and higher - ups be the same way with your holly mercy, with the signing of the document by the king of ours, let it be ascertained.

5. Protect my inheritance by the army of our Emperor.

6. With the mercy and love of mankind of his Majesty Emperor, let me have my good deeds of heritable remuneration from the Ottoman Porta.

7. I wish to be the loyal national till the last drop of my blood and I commit myself with the oath and promise of being under the inimical nationality to be obedient to the head commander of Georgia with my loyal and diligent slaves, I will give the woods for

65 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 197.

ships, as the Ottoman Porta was receiving it from me before, also the factories, golden and silver, which will be my belongings, with giving me some part with the generous kindness of the kindest and autocratic King of ours.

With the subjectly and sincere assiduity I commit myself and all my possessions to the throne of the Russian Empire with the promise and oath and with the religion of the Greek Law, in which we sign this way: Prince Giorgi Sharvashidze⁶⁶.

Besides the ruler, the pleading issues were signed by Tulaa Sharvashidze, Tuflasu Lekerbaia, Levan Zepisshvili, Khutunia and Levan Anchabadze, Khitu, Rostom, Bezhan and Jambulat Margania and others.

In the document is marked once more, that Abkhazia had entered under the Russian “protection” as a part of Georgia and therefore, the ruler had to be “obedient to the head commander of Georgia”. The pleading issues have the following postscript made by Giorgi Sharvashidze: “first of all the sent letters of mine, I forced to write archpriest Ioan Ioseliani (Father superior of the Megrelian chapel royal – auth.), who had advised with the sincere heart to commit myself under the protection of the Imperial throne⁶⁷”.

From the document, which had been written in the Georgian language, according to which there were established “protective” relations of Abkhazia with the Russian kingdom, we can clearly see the belonging of the Abkhazian Principdom and the princes to the Georgian State and cultural world⁶⁸. It has also to be marked, that the modern Abkhazian historiography which considers Aslan-bey and not Giorgi Sharvashidze to be the legal owner of Abkhazia, believes the pleading issues⁶⁹ to be illegal

In March of 1809, the temporary truce between Russia and Porta was broken and the military actions were restarted. From this period, the Russian commandment in Georgia activated its actions for the solution of the Abkhazian issue. In the letter of March of 3 of 1809, I. Gudovich reported to the president of the military board of Russia - N. I. Saltikov - on the receiving of the “pleading issues” addressed to the highest person from Giorgi Sharvashidze and asked to hand this issue to the Emperor’s discretion. He attached the “pleading issues” of August 12 of 1808, of the Abkhazian ruler to the letter. The new head commander of Georgia A. Tormasov (1809-1811), who was the replacement of I. Gudovich, in June of 1809, was informed from the Petersburg, that the issue about taking of Giorgi Sharvashidze under the protection had been decided and soon the signs of the investiture would be sent. The Emperor Alexander the I awarded Giorgi Sharvashidze with the order of Saint Anna of the highest grade and fixed the remuneration of 2500 Rouble of silver, 1500 Rouble to his stepmother (the wife of Kelesh-bey) Rebia-hanum Marshania. It was assumed that such kind of charity of the Emperor would have the influence on the Abkhazian principdom and would have raised the authority of the ruler⁷⁰. That way Abkhazia was taken under the “protection” of Russia. In spite of the fact that the Russian forces had admitted Giorgi Sharvashidze as the ruling prince of Abkhazia, in fact all kinds of strength and authority was taken away from him. This was

66 Acts..., vol. III, p. 209.

67 Acts..., vol. III, p. 209; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia, p. 661-662.

68 G. Paichadze. Abkhazia within the Russian Empire in 1810-1917. – In: Researches..., p. 217. Z. Papaskiri. Studies in History of Present-day Abkhazia. From Ancient Times till 1917, Part I, p. 128.

69 O. Bgzhba, S. Lakoba. The History of Abkhazia, p. 216 – 217.

70 Acts..., v. III, p. 204; N. Berdzenishvili. Essays on the Georgian History. Book II. Tb., 1965, p. 408.

well understood by the Russian administration of Georgia and that is why A. Tormasov ordered Pr. D. Orbeliani (Orbelianov), the commander of armies in Imereti and Megrelia, to contact the Prince of Abkhazia. After D. Orbeliani had gained their trust he advised them to support the ruler⁷¹. Porta, itself was supporting Aslan-bey. Princess Nino Dadiani informed D. Orbeliani about the arrival of the ship with gifts and money from Istanbul to Sokhumi. The Turkish had promised to help Aslan-bey against the Russian armies, being located in Megrelia. Manuchar Sharvashidze informed Russians that the commandant of the Poti fortress - Kuchuk-bey Sharvashidze had asked for the help the north - east Black Sea costal tribes and it seemed that the army was already gathering there to protect Poti and than to conquer Redut-kale and Anaklia. A. Tormasov ordered D. Orbeliani to take the necessary measures for their protection and to try to separate the independent feudal lords from Aslan-bey⁷², in case of the attack of the Turkish on Redut-kale and Megrelia.

From the spring of 1809, the main attention of the Russian commandment was drawn to the strengthening of the already acquired outposts at the Black Sea and the seizure of the Turkish castles. On June 15 of 1809, Russian navy squadron and land forces under the leadership of General-Major I. Panchulidze (Panchulidzev) took Anapa, which appeared to be the main event of this war.

On August 12 of the same year, the military forces, under the leadership of D. Orbeliani went out from Redut-kale in the direction of Poti. In the operation also participated the national armies of Megrelia and Samurzakano, under the leadership of Niko Dadiani and Manuchar Sharvashidze. The Megrelian armies were accompanied with Levan V Dadiani, the metropolitans of Chkondidi – Besarion and Tsaishi – Grigol. On November 15 the military forces of D. Orbeliani took on the Poti fortress⁷³. Abkhazian had also fought bravely for the castle – the supporters of Giorgi Sharvashidze⁷⁴.

Taking of the Poti fortress strengthened the Russian influence even the more. For establishing its dominion at the Black Sea basin, Russia considered takeover of Abkhazia necessary and important, as Russia understood very well the military - political and economical meaning of this fact. With the seizure of the Sokhumi fortress connection between Turkey and highland nations was significantly weakening, as well as it was limiting their hostile actions against Russia. With the joining of Abkhazian land, the attacks of Turkish from this side were stopped, Anaklia and Sukhum-kale were in Russian's hands, and the safety of Megrelia was guaranteed. Also, the ships, which were coming from the Crimea could sail intrepidly and Russia was also able to get a lot of ship woods⁷⁵.

On February 17 of 1810 Emperor Alexander I ascertained the pleading issues and the document, being given to Giorgi Sharvashidze. Here is the full text of the document:

“With the God’s mercy, We, Alexander I, The Emperor and the autocrat of the whole Russia... and other. Our Imperial mercy and kindness to the loyal national, the possessor of the Abkhazian lands, Prince Giorgi Sharvashidze. Condescend to the request of yours about the entrance under the timeless protection of the Russian empire and without any

71 Acts..., v. IV, #286, p. 206.

72 Ibid, # 284, p. 202 – 203; # 519, p. 389 – 390.

73 Ibid, # 524, p. 393 – 394; # 291, p. 209, # 290, p. 207; N. Dadiani. *The life of Georgians*, p. 200; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russian-Turkish War...*, p. 248 – 255.

74 N. Berdzenishvili. *Essays on the Georgian History*, book II, p. 408.

75 Acts..., v. III, p. 209; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War...*, p. 257.

doubts about your loyalty to our highest throne, which is shown in your mandatory letter, which was sent to the highest name of ours, we ascertain and admit you, our gentle loyal national, as the hereditary prince of the Abkhazian lands under the sovereign protection of the Russian Empire and we include you and home of yours and all the inhabitants of the Abkhazian lands, in the number of our loyal nationals and promise you and your heirs our Imperial mercy and kindness.

Also approving all the issues which were expressed word by word in your request, which is attached to our document with the Russian translation, we ascertain with our Imperial word and it will remain unbroken forever and according to that let as show you Our special kindness and fix you the remuneration of 2500 Roubles of silver annually and to the gracious princess, mother of yours, the remuneration of 1500 Roubles of silver, which will be delivered to her and to you as well, three times a year from our treasury, beginning from the day of your commitment of loyalty under the oath.

With our Imperial kindness, we also give you and you successors the banner with the emblem of Russian Empire, and we order you and your generation to save it in your home and we also announce you the knight of Saint Ann of the highest grade and we also order you to put this sign on yourself and wear it. The successors of yours will have to be ascertained by our Imperial documents which as this one, with the kindness of ours, will be delivered to them.

We entrust you to rule the Abkhazian lands and people with humility and justice, we are sure that you and your heirs as your commitment to our throne, will take the charges and will stay unshakeable.

According to such actions and in security for our Monarch to you and to the whole Abkhazian nation the document of our Imperial kindness is given which is signed by us and includes the State Seal. In our throne city of St. Peter. February 17 of 1810 A. C. and the tenth year of our ruling.

Alexander I⁷⁶.

With the ascertainment of the real document, Abkhazia entered under the Russian “protection” with saving the heritage authority of the ruler and internal self-governing. Abkhazia was also included under the commandment of the head commander of Georgia. The problem still remained, that the real authority in Abkhazia was still left to Aslan-bey, who was strengthened in Sokhumi. The appointed ruler of Abkhazia, Giorgi Sharvashidze, who had no support of his own nation, was not able to take back the authority and to rule the Princedom himself. Russian administration knew all about this very well, but it had no free forces at that time, to support Giorgi Sharvashidze with military help. On June 1 of 1810, A. Tormasov informed princess Nino Dadiani that the Emperor had appointed Giorgi Sharvashidze the ruler of Abkhazia and that he would be given all kinds of support against Aslan-bey and with the first opportunity, the city of Sokhumi would be taken by the Russian navy⁷⁷. On June 8 of the same year, A. Tormasov was asking Nino Dadiani to send to Giorgi Sharvashidze the Megrelian army under the leadership of Manuchar Sharvashidze, at least with the number of 1000 men⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ *Foreign Policy of Russia*, vol. , V. M., 1967, p. 372-373.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, vol. IV, # 529, p. 396.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, # 532, p. 396 -397.

In June of 1810, the squadron was formed in Sevastopol, for the operation of taking on the Sokhumi fortress. The commander of the operation was Capitan-Lieutenant K. Dot. According to the plan the squadron was landing 600 men in Sokhumi; it had to hold the base area before the arrival of the land forces⁷⁹. The part of Megrelia in the operation of taking on Sokhumi was also planned. On June 26 of 1810, in the letter to Levan Dadiani, A. Tormasov was expressing the hope, that at the time of taking on the Sokhumi fortress, Megrelia would support Sefer-bey and the ruler of Imereti - F. Simonovich. Taking of the fortress was planned by A. Tormasov in summer of 1810. In his opinion, seizure of Sokhumi would have strengthened the Megrelian principedom. A. Tormasov was asking Levan V Dadiani to assure Sefer –bey to gather his supporters as much as possible. The plan of taking Sokhumi was remaining secret; otherwise it would help the enemy to take the responding measures⁸⁰. In the period of the preparation for that operation, the anti - Russian actions started in Imereti, under the leadership of King Solomon II. According to this, the Russian military forces, being located in Imereti and Megrelia and also the Megrelian national army, could not take part in the Sokhumi operation.

In the morning of June 8 of 1810, the Russian squadron came to Sokhumi. K. Dot offered the Turkish garrison to give up, but he received the refusal and the enemy also started to fire at the Russian squadron. On July 9 at 4 a. m. Russian squadron started to fire the fortress and they also sank 7 Turkish ships.

During the embittered struggle, the fortress was quite ruined, but the garrison was not giving up. On the June of 10, when the walls of the fortress, from the side of the sea were ruined, the landing, under the leadership of the Major Konradin arrived at the coast and took on the Sokhumi fortress⁸¹.

Before the beginning of the Sokhumi operation, Safar-bey who did not know about the plans of Russia, went to support Solomon II with his 4000 men army. He was going to attack Megrelia, to paralyse its forces, which were meant for the Russian support, and were acting against Imereti. But when he got the information about the attack of the Russians on the Sokhumi fortress, Aslan-bey went back immediately, but the fortress was already in the hands of Russians, so he fled to the mountains⁸². The inhabitants of Sokhumi and of the nearby places were coming to K. Dot and were asking him the protection and showed him the wish of becoming the nationals of the Emperor. The brother of Sefer-bey, Hassan-bey and Batal-bey also came to him⁸³.

The ruined Sokhumi fortress was partly rebuilt and fortified with the Russian garrison in it. After that the squadron went back to Sevastopol⁸⁴.

Seizure of Sokhumi had the strategic meaning. On August 6 of 1810, A. Tormasov was congratulating the minister of the foreign affairs, N. Rumantsev with “taking on the
⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 421; A. Mikhaelovski-Danilevski. Description of the Turkish War 1806-1812, vol. III. S-Pb., 1849, p. 266.

⁸⁰ Ts. Kiria, Sh. Saria. Materials on the History of Georgia. Tb., 1967, # 5, p. 30.

⁸¹ Acts..., vol. IV, p. 422-425; A. Mikhaelovski-Danilevski. Description of the Turkish War..., p. 266; S. Esadze. Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus. vol. I. Tiflis, 1907, p. 248-249.

⁸² Acts..., vol. IV, # 439, p. 328; Essays of the History of Georgia, vol. IV, p. 873; N. Kortua. Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War..., p. 264-265.

⁸³ Acts..., vol. IV, p. 425; A. Mikhaelovski-Danilevski. Description of the Turkish War..., p. 266; N. Kortua. Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War..., p. 265; G. Dzidzaria. Accession of Abkhazia into Russia, p. 46.

⁸⁴ Acts..., vol. IV, p. 424; A. Mikhaelovski-Danilevski. Description of the Turkish War. . , p. 267; G. Dzidzaria. The Struggle for Abkhazia. p. 27.

Sokhumi fortress, which was the ruling centre of the whole Abkhazian nation...and which makes us the Sovereigns of that coast of the Black Sea”⁸⁵.

By the beginning of August of 1810, General F. Simonovich is being appointed the ruler of Imereti. He was officially named the ruler of “Imereti, Megrelia, Guria and Abkhazia” and at the same time he was the commander of the West Georgian armies. The Black sea fortresses and ports were also under his leadership. Thus, in the hand of one person, there was the whole civil and military authority of West Georgia⁸⁶.

On August 23 of 1810, Giorgi Sharvashidze (Sefer -bei) signed the oath of the entrance of Abkhazia under the “protection” of Russian Empire. Essentially it was the beginning of the process of the annexation of the region⁸⁷.

On September 19, A. Tormasov was writing to the ruler of Imereti, General-Major, F. Simonovich, asking him to draw his attention to Sefer –bey and support him against Aslan-bey and as soon as the appropriate time comes, to hand him the document, the signs of the ruler and the investiture for the Abkhazians to see, that he got the “protection” of the Emperor⁸⁸. In October of the same year, accompanied by the hundreds of Russian soldiers, under the leadership of the Major Moizi - Giorgi Sharvashidze got to Sokhumi from Redut-kale. In the company of princes, noblemen, clergy and a large amount of people, he committed the oath of loyalty to the Russian King. After that, Major Moizi, in the solemn surrounding, handed him the princely signs and the document about his ascertainment ruler of Abkhazia. According to A. Tormasov, Abkhazians attending the event “were shocked with such a new spectacle and admitted Sefer-Ali-Bey their legal ruler”⁸⁹.

After taking of Sokhumi, Turkish people, who comprised the great part of its inhabitants, started to leave the town. The town was nearly empty. Just a few Greeks and Armenians remained there, those who were mostly traders, contrabandists and robbers. Taking the Sokhumi fortress, which was the beginning of taking the whole Abkhazia and also giving the throne to the Christian ruler, was the great victory of Russians. They strengthened their presence at the North -East coasts of the Black Sea. Fight between Sefer-bey and Aslan-bey was the fight between the Russian and Ottoman influence. Taking of Sokhumi-kale, and banishment of Aslan-bey was not only the victory of Sefer-bey, but the victory of the Russian against the Turkish in Abkhazia⁹⁰.

The new ruler, Giorgi Sharvashidze chose the Sokhumi fortress as his residence. He maintained only the internal self-governing. The Russian commandment had left three companies of soldiers in Sokhumi for the protection of the governing authority, without which it would have been impossible for Giorgi Sharvashidze to keep his authority. The Russian official, Krok, who knew very well the political life of Abkhazia of the beginning of the 19th century, marked, that Giorgi Sharvashidze was forcibly created ruler⁹¹. The Abkhazian historiography, as it has already been marked, considers him as the illegal ruler⁹².

85 *Essays on the History of Abkhazian ASSR. Part I*, p. 140.

86 *Acts...*, vol. IV, # 434, p. 312; G. Vachridze. *Temporary Governing in Imereti (1819-1840)*. Kutaisi, 1999, p. 117 (in Georgian).

87 *Acts...*, vol. IV, p. 425.

88 *Ibid*, # 434, p. 322.

89 *Ibid*, p. 425.

90 K. Kudriavtsev. *Materials...*, p. 158.

91 *Essays on the History of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 873.

92 O. Bgzhba, S. Lakoba. *The History of Abkhazia*, p. 214.

The Russian forces were trying to strengthen the authority of Sefer-bey. A. Tormasov wrote to Nino Dadiani, that the Russians had helped Giorgi Sharvashidze out of respect to her and would continue the same way. The head commander of Georgia intrusted the ruler of Megrelia to help Sefer-bey with the issue of reconciliation with his own nation and strengthening of the ruling authority. A. Tormasov was interested in the power of influence off Sefer-bey on his nation, whether he had any supporters with the help of which and with the support of Megrelia and Russian forces he would be able to strengthen his authority and what kind of actions were made by the principedom of Megrelia in this direction and if there was any need in the help of the Russian forces⁹³.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the border of Abkhazia on the north - west was considered the river Bzip, where it was bordering with Jiks. Its border on the south - east went through the river Galidzga, which was separating Abkhazia from Megrelia. The north border of the principedom was nominally going through the Caucasian range and from the West-along the Black Sea coast. By the time of entering Abkhazia under the patronage of Russia, it did not represent an integral political unit, as it was divided into the separate, independent regions. The power of Giorgi Shervashidze was spread to Zupu of the Bzip region (among the rivers of Bzip and Gumista). Other representatives of the noble house of Sharvashidze owned and possessed the territories between the rivers – Gumista and Kodori (Guma or Abkhazia) and between the rivers – Kodori and Galidzga (Abzhua). The mountainous regions – Tsebeli and Dali being located in the middle and upper parts of the river Kodori and also Pstskhu and the upper part of the river Bzip had a nominal connection with them. Those regions were possessed by the princes of Marshania, who did not recognize the power of Giorgi Shervashidze and they never asked the “patronage” of Russia. ⁹⁴ In the same 1810 following the example and being under the influence of the possessor of Abkhazia the ruler of the Jiks – Levan Tsamba (Tsanubaia) recognizing the supreme power of the possessor of Abkhazia ⁹⁵ sought the patronage of Russia.

⁹³ Acts..., vol. 4, # 536, p. 398-399.

⁹⁴ Ibid, vol. 4, # 575; B. Khorava. The mutual relationships of Odishi and Abkhazia, p. 135, 136, 178.

⁹⁵ Acts. . , vol. 4, # 578, p. 426; # 583, p. 429.

Chapter XV. Abkhazia in 1810-1880

1. The Trial of Strengthening the Russian Authority in Abkhazia (1810-1820)

The Situation in Abkhazia. After the entrance of Abkhazia under the “protection” of the Russian Empire, in spite of the several petitions of Giorgi Sharvashidze, Russia could not dare to get into the deeper parts of this region and to conquer the highland regions of Pskhu, Tsebeli and Dali. In the beginning, the Tsarism was trying to strengthen its condition at the Black Sea coast and practically was not interfering in the governing of Abkhazia at all. At the same time, the strong pro-Turkish party of feudal lords, under the leadership of Aslan-bey Sharvashidze, existed in the principedom. Unlike the official authorities, he had the great influence and the support in the nation, in the name of anti Russian forces.

The positions of Russian forces in Abkhazia, at that time were still weak. Capturing of Sokhumi fortress did not mean the control over the whole Abkhazia at all. More than that, the supporters of Aslan-bey in 20 miles from Sokhumi fortress, were attacking and robbing the villages and were kidnapping people and cattle. In December of 1810, Giorgi Sharvashidze asked the General-Major F. Simonovich to send him the military support under the leadership of his relative, the ruler of Samurzakano, Manuchar Sharvashidze, to get rid of the disorders and to make the regions obey. For the satisfaction of this request, F. Simonovich turned to Nino Dadiani¹, after what she sent the Megrelian national army to Abkhazia. With the help of the local Russian administration, the army defeated the pro-Ottoman party, and Aslan-bey escaped to Trabzon. In the result of this operation, several Jikian regions obeyed the ruler of Abkhazia. Nino Dadiani had reconciled the sons of Bekir-bey with Giorgi Sharvashidze and made the influential Abkhazian princes Soslan-bey and Ali-bey to obey him, who were against the rulers and were supporting Aslan-bey. Nino Dadiani took the hostages from them and they gave the oath for the loyalty to the Emperor. Also with her order, the wife of Kelesh-bey Rebia-hanum Marshania was having the negotiations with her brothers, the rulers of Tsebeli about the admitting the authority of Giorgi Sharvashidze and entrance under the “protection” of Russia².

The Bucharest Peace. On May 16 of 1812, after the long negotiations with Porta, the Bucharest peaceful treaty was signed, which meant the end of the 6-year long war between Russia and Turkey (1806-1812). The 6th issue of the treaty provided the restoration of the Caucasian border, as it had been before the war. According to the secret issues of the treaty, the Black Sea coastal lands, which were located in two hours walk from the right coast of the river Rioni and in four hours walk from Anaklia, where there were neither fortresses nor the stockaded towns, were given for use to the Russian Empire as the harbour for the guaranteed and eased delivery of the military provides and the other necessary equipment. The right of property of this costal line should have been owned by Porta, and neither of sides has constructed any consolidations there³. The up mentioned, 6th issue of the treaty was giving an opportunity to Russia to leave west Georgia to itself, and the secret issues were practically giving the

¹ *Acts...*, vol. IV, # 452, p. 339.

² *Acts...*, vol. IV, # 544, p. 405-406; # 545, p. 406 -407; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russian-Turkish War of 1806-1812*, p. 266.

³ *Internal Policy of Russia*, vol. VI, p. 413-415, 417.

right of owning the Black Sea coast of Georgia from the river Bzip to the river Choloki⁴.

According to the Bucharest treaty of peace, on September 29 of 1812, Russia handed Akhalkalaki to Porta, and on December 7 Poti, as the conquered “arms by force”. It was the forced concession from the Russian side, which had started the war with Napoleon. The Turkish forces were categorically demanding to give them Sokhumi, but the head commander of Georgia, N. Rtishchev postponed this decision to the spring of 1813⁵.

The Samurzakano issue. 1811 was hard for West Georgia. In Imereti and Megrelia had died more than 32 thousand people, because of plague epidemics and the famine. More than 7 thousand people had to resettle to other regions. To avoid the inevitable death, the part of the Imereti and Megrelia population had moved to Abkhazia and Samurzakano and it resulted in the growth of people trading. To regulate the situation and stop the disorders, the ruler of Samurzakano, Manuchar Sharvashidze offered to Levan V Dadiani to organize a trip to Abkhazia, to help the hostages. The ruler of Megrelia gathered the army and in October of 1812, being accompanied with Chkondidi and Tsaishi bishops, he went to Samurzakano and stayed overnight in Bedia, in the estate of Manuchar Sharvshidze’s brother – Levan. At night, people who were sent by Khutunia Sharvashidze (son of Levan Sharvashidze), killed Manuchar – the initiator of Samurzakano and Abkhazia trip. According to the data of the ruler of Megrelia, he was also supposed to be killed, but he explored the conspiracy before and was able to escape⁶. Levan V went back immediately to Zugdidi. He was not able to hold the well reinforced Bedia fortress on his own, so he asked for help the Russian administration. By the order of the head commander, national army of Imereti and Guria of 200 men, armed with guns, were sent to help Dadiani. In December of 1812, Levan V Dadiani went to Bedia. As soon as the army started to get closer, Khutunia Dadiani ran away to Tsebeli, and Levan Sharvashidze, who was sure that the resistance would be unsuccessful, gave the Bedia fortress to Dadiani.

Levan V Dadiani showed his mercy and sent the old men, Levan Sharvashidze to the village of Pakhulani, and then he secured the Bedia fortress with the guards being located there⁷.

The pretensions of Turkey. In spite of the regulation of the main doubtful problems between Russia and Turkey with the Bucharest peace treaty of 1812, the issue about Sokhumi-kale was still unsettled. Porta was categorically demanding its return. N. Rtishchev was against the return of Sokhumi to Turkish. In the letter, directed to the chancellor, N. Rumiantsev, on January 3 of 1813, he was writing straight about the possible negative results (the fall of the rising Christianity in Abkhazians, the consolidation of the anti Russian forces and impossibility of preserving Abkhazia) of letting Turkish to have Sokhumi. The arguments of N. Rtishchev were approved in Petersburg⁸. Very soon he got the directive from the Emperor, where he was ordered not to give Sokhumi to Porta, because it meant the loosing of the whole Abkhazia⁹. After he had got the directives, N.

4 N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russian-Turkish War of 1806-1812*, p. 420-421; *Essays of the History of Georgia*, vol. IV, p. 876.

5 Acts..., vol. V, # 926, p. 785.

6 *The Historic Documents and the Records of the State Museum of Georgia, II. The Historic Documents. Book I. The Political Documents of the Imereti Kingdom (1784-1810)*. The texts with notes and guides had been prepared for addition by Sh. Burjanadze. Tbilisi, 1953, p. 136.

7 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 204.

8 Acts, vol. V, # 926, p. 785-686.

9 *Ibid*, # 595, p. 504.

Rtishchev refused to give Sokhumi to Porta, and he told them that the reason was the fact that Abkhazia had never been the direct property and that had never been mentioned in the Bucharest treaty¹⁰.

The pretensions of the Turkish were also spread on Imereti, Guria and Megrelia¹¹. According to the Russian administration of the Caucasus, Turkish were setting the rumors, that according to the Bucharest peace treaty, this region was given to them and Sokhumi-kale to Aslan-bey. The setting of such rumors caused the disorders in Abkhazia. According to the opinion of Nino Dadiani, the Turkish were trying to conflagrate the civil war in Abkhazia, to raise against Giorgi Sharvashidze his own nationals and for that they were reinforcing Aslan-bey's supporters. The Russian administration of the Caucasus thought, that in the events in Samurzakano by the end of 1812, the pro-Turkish forces were involved and that the supporter of Aslan-bey, Levan Sharvashidze was the one who killed his brother and the loyal national of the Empire - Colonel Manuchar Sharvashidze. The slave trade was growing at that time and during only 5 months, the Turkish had taken 300 hostages from Megrelia and Abkhazia¹².

As to West Georgia, the Turkish had toughened their positions. Before they were demanding just for its return, but after they were trying to return this territory by force. With this purpose they started to attack the Poti fortress. On June 29 of 1813, Seid-Suleiman Pasha with the army of 2000 soldiers arrived to Poti. He was ordered to conquer West Georgia. At the same time, Aslan-bey who had been hiding in mountains came to Istanbul and then he moved to Poti. With the detachment of the Turkish soldier, which was given to him, he landed at the village of Gudava, and then he took the village of Tamish on and started to prepare for taking the whole Abkhazia.

Giorgi Sharvashidze asked for help the Russian forces¹³. The large part of the Abkhazians, including his stepmother, Rebia-hanum Marshania and her sons took Aslan-bey's side. They left Sokhumi and moved to the camp of Aslan-bey. The main part of the Abkhazian officials also took Aslan-bey's side¹⁴. The Turkish were supplying them with arms and provisions. On July 6 of 1813, the commander of Poti sent soldiers, provisions and money with 17 boats to Aslan-bey and the other part of the soldiers went for taking Sokhumi¹⁵.

By the beginning of July, the Erzerum commander demanded from N. Rtishchev to give Imereti, Guria, Megrelia and Abkhazia with all the fortresses. The same demand was coming from the Trapesund commander Seid-Suleiman Pasha¹⁶. According to the opinion of N. Rtishchev, these incomprehensible demands did not correspond to the VI issue of the Bucharest treaty and because of that they could not be satisfied¹⁷. The Trapesund commander received the warning from N. Rtishchev, that the entrance of the Turkish armies in Abkhazia under the leadership of Aslan-bey and the attempt of taking the places which were demanded by him before, with the armed forces is seen by him, as breaking of the

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 505.

¹¹ *Internal Policy of Russia*, vol. VII, p. 743.

¹² *Acts...*, vol. V, # 928, p. 789.

¹³ N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 205; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812*, p. 446.

¹⁴ N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 205; *Acts...*, vol. V, # 935, p. 798.

¹⁵ *Acts...*, vol. V, # 935, p. 798; N. Kortua. *Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812*, p. 446.

¹⁶ *Acts...*, vol. V, # 929, p. 790; # 934, p. 790.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, # 934, p. 796-797.

Bucharest treaty and due to this he had given an order on the protection of this territories. In case Porta did not take out his armies from Abkhazia, the appropriate measures would be activated¹⁸.

N. Rtishchev ordered Colonel S. Merlin to banish Turkish and Aslan-bey from Abkhazia. The colonel had the agreement with Levan V Dadiani and Giorgi Sharvashidze about the joint actions against Aslan-bey and Turkish. The commander of the 15th regiment of chasseurs, Major Kutiev was ordered to enter Abkhazia with the national army of Megrelia and drive the enemy out of Abkhazia¹⁹.

Kutiev's regiment and the national Megrelian army passed the river Inguri and after the one day long march they arrived to Ilori. As soon as the Turkish noticed that the Russian and Georgian armies were approaching, they left Aslan-bey and went back to Poti, and Aslan-bey had to run to Jiketi once again. Giorgi Sharvashidze took this chance and asked the Russian forces to help him to make the Abkhazian population obey. The armies continued their way to show their strength. There were taken several hostages in the Abzhua region from one of the officials - the supporter of Giorgi Sharvashidze. Then the armies went through Kodori, took several hostages in Abkhazian region too. The nobility swore allegiance to the possessor. When the armies entered Sokhumi, Rebia-hanum with her sons also expressed their obedience to them.

The noblemen and princes of the Bzipian Abkhazia were invited to Sokhumi; from them were also taken several hostages and were forced to take the loyalty oath for Giorgi Sharvashidze. Considering the advice of Levan V, the ruler of Abkhazia started the negotiations with the rulers of Tsebeli and he demanded to stop robberies, hiding of the criminals and slave trade. After that, the armies released the hostages from slavery of Abkhazians and went back. Thus, with the help of Russian and Georgian armies the whole Abkhazia was under the commandment of Giorgi Sharvashidze. At the same time Samurzakano took the loyalty oath to Levan V Dadiani and the widow of murdered Manuchar Sharvashidze - Ketevan²⁰. The little disorders started by the Turkish and Aslan-bey in August of 1813 were easily settled.

In 1813, Porta sent the demands to the Russian forces once again, about the return of Imereti, Guria, Megrelia and Abkhazia and also about the return of the Sokhumi-kale fortress, Anaklia and Kemkhel (Redut-kale) fortresses, with what naturally, N. Rtishchev did not agree²¹. The struggle for West Georgia was continuing.

The Oath of Tsebeli and Samurzakano. The situation in Abkhazia remained complicated. The weak authority of Giorgi Sharvashidze was not enough to subjugate his own brother and the rulers of the separate regions. The principedom was often being attacked by the neighbor tribes and the inhabitants of the mountain communities. The disorders and anarchy also made the negative affect for the neighbor Megrelia. Due to this condition, Levan V Dadiani was allowed by N. Rtishchev, to organize a trip to Tsebeli with the purpose of fixing the disorders there, because it had become the shelter of robbers from Abkhazia and Megrelia. The start of the trip took a long time and soon the trip became needless, because in autumn of 1815, Levan V peacefully regulated the relations with the Tsebeli rulers. On

18 *Ibid.*, # 934, p. 797.

19 *Ibid.*, # 935, p. 798; # 936, p. 800.

20 *Ibid.*, # 940, p. 805.

21 *Ibid.*, # 940, p. 805, 807.

November 29 of the same year, the Tsebeli community rulers arrived in Samurzakano, in the village of Okumi, and brought the oath written in Georgian to Levan V Dadiani:

“We, having signed below, the possessors of the Tsebeli region – Princes Marshania, give this letter to you, to Your Majesty - the ruler Dadiani Levan and assure You in our fathers’ and grandfathers’ were loyalty to Your ancestors, but they due to some circumstances were separated from each other, but now, that You wish us to be close, and You will renew the love and mercy to us, we believe Your true word and we swear to the saint Al-korane, first of all never be against His Majesty Russian King - Emperor Alexander Pavlovich and to the rulers of these territories appointed by him through Your mediation. We will obey Your orders, as much as it is possible for us, we will resist all the enemies of Russia and your Majesty, and we will never agree with them, neither with words nor in action, we will be in the good relationships with your neighbor estates: Samurzakano, the part of Abkhazia and Odishi and with its population, we will never let in the oppositions of the highest Russian throne and your majesty, we will not let in any banished ones and never let any disorders to be caused in Russian and Our estates: no kidnapping of hostages and nothing like that. Our relatives, who are not here, we will try to make obey according to our promise. After this oath we kiss saint Al-koran to prove our oath and we sign: Pr. Misost, the son of Uchardia Marshania; Pr. Saraluf, the son of Tulapsia Marshania; Pr. Zerepsu, the son of Omarov Marshania”²². It is also interesting to mark that the oath of Mislim-possessors of Tsebeli was also taken by Tsaishi Metropolitan Grigol (Chikovani), being accompanied with the archimandrite Giorgi (Kukhalashvili) and the archpriest Johan Ioseliani.

In spite of the rulers’ oath, the principedom authority and the Russian influence was still not spread in Tsebeli. At the same time Levan V Dadiani managed to make the son of Beker-bey Sharvashidze - Soslan-bey to take the side of Russians, and to take the oath to the Emperor²³. The ruler of Megrelia also tried to end the disorders in Samurzakano. On November 20 of 1815, “the ruler of the Samurzakano Abkhazia” Levan V Dadian made an order forbidding the robbery, kidnapping and people trade. Before the order there were made oaths and it was signed by the princes and officials of the following families: Sharvashidze, Anchabadze, Chkotua, Emukhvari, Margania, Inalishvili, Akirtava, Ezugbaia and others.²⁴ They were representing the whole Samurzakano, the inhabitants of which “were under the commandment of My ancestors from the ancient times”. The order of Levan V and the oath of Samurzakano officials had ascertained the rights of Megrelia about Samurzakano and had strengthened the authority of the ruler on this territory.

The beginning of Russian-Caucasian war. In the beginning of the 19th century, the urgent political and strategic matter of Tsarism becomes the attainment of the North Caucasus. The territories which were joined to the Empire were located in the southern part of the Caucasian range. They were attained before the establishment of the control on the mountain line of the North Caucasus. The South Caucasian estates of the Empire were separated from the metropolis of the rebellious North Caucasus, which was hostile to Russia. So the issue of its conquer and taking the territories which were located in the southern side of Kuban-Tersa “cordon line”, was put in the agenda. After the military company against Napoleon was over, the Tsarism started to prepare for the war in the

²² Acts..., vol. V, # 599, p. 507-508.

²³ The Institute of Manuscripts, A-1130, p. 79r-82v.

²⁴ Ibid. , p. 94r-98; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia, p. 293-295.

North Caucasus²⁵.

In 1815, the separate Georgian corps was constructed from the Russian military parts, which were located in the Caucasian line, Georgia and Trans Caucasus. On October 12 of 1816, the General Lieutenant A. Ermolov was appointed the head commander.

Afterwards A. S. Pushkin in the poem “the Caucasian hostage” wrote: “ Subjugate Caucasus: Ermolov is coming!”

Unlike his predecessors, who were organizing the separate punitive expeditions against the rebellious highlanders, he started the planned attack of the remote parts of Chechnya and Dagestan. The Russian were mercilessly ruining the settlements (aul) of highlanders, they cut the forest, constructed the roads, built the fortresses and were creating the system of the military-administrative governing. The military expansion of Russia was followed with the reaction of the highlander population and the Russian-Caucasian war started (1817-1864), in which Russia was pursuing the Imperial goals and namely: conquer of the North Caucasus. From the side of Caucasian highlanders, this war had the anti - colonial, national-releasing character²⁶.

During the war, the Russian commandment drew the great attention to the north- east coast of the Black Sea, because the highlanders of West Caucasus were establishing the contacts with the outer space through the sea and were getting arms and other support from England and Turkey. Russia was also trying to strengthen its positions in Abkhazia for taking the north - east coast of the Black Sea.

The attempt of strengthening the princely authority. On the Abkhazian coast of the Black Sea, Russia just owned the Sokhumi fortress, where 500 soldiers were stationed. The small garrison was not able to guarantee the stability in the region, and the commandment could not enlarge it. The precariousness of the Russian position was the result of the weakness of the princely authority and the low authority of the ruler among the population. He was not able to calm the inside political factions with his own forces. Kidnapping of people, robberies, murders and the obvious disobedience to the princely authority was continuing. In 1817, Giorgi Sharvashidze together with Levan V Dadiani arranged the meeting with the ruler of Imereti, General-Major I. Kurnatovski (1817-1820). He was asking him to give the national armies of Megrelia and Imereti, to make his nationals obey with their help, but I. Kurnatovski and Levan V Dadiani decided to act using the peaceful measures. They sent Niko Dadiani to Abkhazia who had the great authority and influence on Abkhazians. He reconciled Giorgi Sharvashidze with his brother Hassan-bey, stepmother Rebia-hanum Marshania, the ruler of Abzhua, Ali-bey Sharvashidze, with the noblemen and several noblemen of the Bzipi region (including Kats Margania), who had taken the oath to the Emperor. Only separate princes of the Bzipi region had refused to obey the ruler²⁷.

At the insistence of Levan V Dadiani, Ali-bey Sharvashidze was christened and called Alexander and he was married to the daughter of Niko Dadiani, Kesaria²⁸, who afterwards became the famous public figure in Abkhazia.

25 A. F. Fadeev. *Russia and Caucasus...*, p. 282.

26 S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 32; N. S. Kiniapina, M. M. Blied, V. V. Degoev. *Caucasus and the Middle Asia in the Internal Policy of Russia (the Second Half of XVIII – 80'ies. XIX cent.)*. M., 1984, p. 35; *The Articles About the History of the South Caucasian Nations...*, II, p. 144.

27 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 926, p. 644.

28 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209.

For some time peace was established in Abkhazia, but soon, in April of 1818, Giorgi Sharvashidze informed I. Kurtanovski about the disobedience of his nationals and asked for the military support in order to make the population obey the principality without fight. I. Kurtanovski considered Giorgi Sharvashidze quite weak. According to his opinion, the brother of the ruler Hassan-bey, who was a brave, courageous man had the incomparable authority. He was not obeying his brother and it is also possible that he was secretly raising the population against him. But, as long as Giorgi Sharvashidze was the ruler, the governance had to support him. So they were ready to support Giorgi Sharvashidze with Megrelian and Imeretian national armies to end the disorders in the region²⁹.

But soon there was no need of sending the armies to Abkhazia. By autumn of 1818, the ruler of Abkhazia made an agreement with the rebellious ones and found out the solution of the issue peacefully, by taking the hostages and the oath of loyalty from them. The Russian commandment righteously think that the Abkhazian rebellious people would not obey for a long time. To maintain the calm situation and stop the attacks of the Caucasian highlander people, the local administration of Russia thought it right to locate the army divisions in Gagra³⁰, but at that time it was impossible to do.

The Russian Administration had regulated the Samurzakano issue, which appeared to be the reason of discord between Abkhazian and Megrelian principalities. In May of 1818, Levan V Dadiani and Giorgi Sharvashidze being accompanied with I. Kurtanovski agreed to consider Samurzakano as the part of Megrelia. According to the made treaty, the border between Abkhazia and Megrelia passed along the river Galidzga. The both sides obliged not to give the shelter to the criminals and rebels³¹. Recognizing Samurzakano the possession of Dadiani by Giorgi Sharvashidze had to end the pretensions of Abkhazian principality in this region.

A Rebellion in Imereti and Abkhazia. In 1819, started the uprising in Imereti. A. Kurtanovski was writing to the commander of the Georgian corps post, General-Lieutenant A. Veliaminov, about this: “ According to the rumors the rebellious spirit is common and there is no one on our side. The Gurians and Imeretian may act with Imeretians, they will only have to invite Abkhazians... here also go such rumors that the rulers are inviting for the actions against us : Megrelian-Svanetians and Abkhazians and Gurian - Acharians³². ” I. Kurtanovski was admitting that the inhabitants of Guria, Megrelia and Abkhazia felt sympathy for the members of the rebellion, but the threat from the Russian commandment made Dadiani and Gurieli to let go their intentions. The uprising had enveloped Guria and found the response in Megrelia. The French merchant and traveler Poul Gibal, who was in Abkhazia in 1818-1819, was informing, that in Sokhumi and its nearby places were 8 national communities (Seims), where it was talked about the disorders in Megrelia and Imereti. The goal of the Seim was the identification of suitability of taking part in the uprising. The large part of the Seim stood for the uprising³³. In August of 1819, the Georgian writer and traveler G. Avalishvili was in Sokhumi. As to his ob-

29 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 926, p. 644.

30 Acts..., # 930, p. 645-646.

31 The Central Historic Archive of Georgia, fund 1087, schedule II, case 357, p. 14.

32 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 744, p. 537.

33 G. Dzidzaria, J. Kacharava. *From the History of the Common War of the Georgian and Abkhazian Nations (XIX -the beginning of XX c.).* Tbilisi, 1981, p. 21.

servations, Abkhazians were against Russians³⁴. The commandment strictly warned the ruler of Abkhazia and his rebellious brothers, not to give the shelter to the rebels who had ran away from Megrelia³⁵. In spite of that, one of the officials of the uprising in Megrelia, the brother of the ruler—Giorgi Dadiani—was hiding in Abkhazia in June of 1820. Levan V Dadian demanded to pass his brother to him and in case of not obeying his order he threatened: “ I will turn the whole Abkhazia upside down with the help of victorious Russian armies”. The ruler of Abkhazia was going to give George, but as soon as he was informed about it, he escaped to Poti, and then to Svaneti, where, with the order of Levan V, he was captured and handed to the Russian commandment³⁶. In July of 1820, The Russian armies mercilessly suppressed the rebellion in Imereti. Abkhazians were not taking part in it, but fell sympathy for the rebelled.

The renewal of the Ottoman pretensions. The Ottomans, who saw the weakness of the Russian influence and the princely authority in the region, were persistently demanding the return of the Sokhumi and the whole Abkhazia. The Russian forces were hesitating and they even accepted the idea of Porta’s demand satisfaction. According to this, on July 16 of 1820, A. Ermolov presented the large report to Petersburg about the impossibility of giving Sokhumi and Abkhazia to the Turkish. According to his opinion, this step would have weakened the positions of Russia also in the other belongings in the Caucasus and also it would have activated the involvement of the Ottomans. In the future Russia would have to locate the large armies here to save its positions in the region, in case of the weakening of its positions at the Black Sea; the princely throne could have been taken by the enemy of Russia and the fanatic of the Muslim believer -Hassan-bey; spreading of Christianity would have been stopped, this faith would have been denied as by the ruler and by the not long ago christened Abkhazians as well. All this could weaken the prestige of Russia in the eyes of West Georgian nationals and help the amplification of the slave trade. The Russian ships would not have been able to bring the provisions from the Crimea to Redut-kale and protect their property. In this conditions, Russia would have lost not only Abkhazia but the whole West Georgia as well. In case of the other decision about the destiny of Abkhazia and Sokhumi, A. Ermolov was requesting for relief from duty³⁷.

Peterburg foresaw the arguments of A. Ermolov and decided not to give the fortress of Sokhumi and the rest territory of Abkhazia to ottomans.

2. People’s Rebellion and Military-Diplomatic Activities of Russia in 20-ies of XIX Century

Rebellion of Abkhazians of 1821 and 1824. On February 7 of 1821, the ruler of Abkhazia Giorgi Sharvashidze died in Likhni. Before ³⁸his death, as he was appraising the³⁹ correlation of the forces effectively, he asked his young brother Hassan-bey to look after

34 G. Avalishvili. *The Trip From Tbilisi to Jerusalem*. The text for the addition was prepared, with researches, notes and vocabularies was added by El. Metreveli. Tb., 1967, p. 29-30.

35 Acts..., VI, part I, # 896, p. 630.

36 B. Khorava. *The New Dynasty of the Princedom of Dadiani*. Tb., 2001, p. 31-62 (in Georgian).

37 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 932, pp. 653-654.

38 *Internal Policy of Russia*, vol. XI, p. 467.

39 Acts..., vol. VI, part II, # 759, p. 429; # 760, p. 430.

his wife and children and advised him to obey the Russian forces⁴⁰. On February *, Tamar Sharvashidze informed the commandant of the Sokhumi castle, Major P. Mogilianski that Giorgi Sharvashidze had died and she asked him to inform the head commander about it. At the same time, she thought that it was very important to send the heir of the Abkhazian throne, Dimitri, who was brought up in Page corpus in Petersburg and hand the ruling of the principedom to him⁴¹. In such circumstances, when the Russian authority was not spread farther than the Sokhumi fortress with the garrison of 500 men⁴², when the authority of Tamar Sharvashidze in Abkhazia was insignificant and the heir of the princely throne was in Petersburg, the smallest disagreements could lead to the great disorders. It happened that way. On February 8 of 1821, the Abkhazians attacked the Russian soldiers of the Sokhumi fortress, when they were cutting the forest for making firewood.

This ordinary fact for Abkhazia had the result of the stress in the principedom; the Russian forces saw it like the challenge. Due to the fact, that the inhabitants of Sokhumi and its nearby territories were the nationals of Hassan-bey, P. Mogilianski demanded from him to give the guilty ones. Hassan-bey who was in Likhni, promised, that he would find the guilty ones and hand them to the Russian forces⁴³. At the same day, P. Mogelianski informed the head commander of the command post of the Caucasus, General-Lieutenant A. Veliaminov, who was temporary replacing A. Ermolov, about the death of Giorgi Sharvashidze and the Attack of the Abkhazians at the Russian soldiers. This fact was interpreted as the uprising of Abkhazians, who were under the leadership of Hassan-bey, and had the purpose of the palace revolution⁴⁴.

The commandant of the Sokhumi fortress, P. Mogilianski, executing the order of A. Veliaminov, arrested Hassan-bey, who came to the fortress for the negotiations on March 6, 1821⁴⁵. Tamar Sharvashidze was appointed the ruler of the principedom before the ascertainment of the new ruler by the Emperor. On March 14, 1821, she asked directly A. Veliaminov for the request to send back the heir of the princely throne, Dimitri and also to release guiltless Hassan-bey⁴⁶. On April 1 of the same, in the responding letter, A. Viliaminov was trying to calm the widow of the ruler, and he was promising that the principedom of Abkhazia would always be under the Imperial protection. According to the author's words, the Russian military forces were always ready to protect the principedom. At the same time, A. Veliaminov did not satisfy the request of Tamar Sharvahidze about releasing of Hassan-bey, because he thought that he was able to provoke the disorders in Abkhazia⁴⁷.

The ruler of Imereti, General-Major P. Gorchakov (1820-1825) had the different opinion and he thought that arresting Hassan-bey was not the clever decision, because it was not helping with the appeasement of Abkhazia and could escalate the agitation. In the re-

40 The Institute of Manuscripts, fund of Veidenbaum, # 1717.

41 Ibid, # 1716.

42 N. Dubrovin. The History of the War and Authority of the Russians in Caucasus, vol. VI. S-Pb., 1888, p. 456-457.

43 The Institute of Manuscripts, fund of Veidenbaum, # 1717; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 552.

44 Ibid, vol. II, part II, p. 552.

45 Ibid; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 461-462.

46 The Institute of Manuscripts, fund of Veidenbaum, # 1718.

47 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 934, p. 655.

port letter of March 22, 1821, to A. Veliaminov was written that he was offering to release Hassan-bey⁴⁸ to avoid the bloodshed uprising in Abkhazia because the government did not have forces for stopping it.

A. Veliaminov, on his side, was considering the uprising of Abkhazians as the less harm than the releasing of Hassan-bey. "It is much more profitable for the government to have the whole Abkhazia raised in rebellion than to release Hassan-bey, who, as the Muslim, has the great authority in the Turkish government and population, can be much more harmful for us"-he wrote to P. Gorchakov, on March 28, 1821⁴⁹.

The opinion of A. Veliaminov was approved and in April of the same year Hassan-bey was sent to Siberia⁵⁰.

The expectations of A. Veliaminov, that with sending Hassan-bey to Siberia, the problem would have been solved, as it was considered to happen proved to be wrong and the appointment of Tamar Sharvashidze as the ruler of the principality was met with the indignation by the population, who considered that the arrest of Hassan-bey was made with her approval, in order to clear the way to the throne for his son Dimitri. In the middle of April of 1821, P. Gorchakov arrived in Sokhumi to see the situation at the spot. He relieved from duty the commandant of the Sokhumi fortress, P. Mogilianski, who was hated by everyone, and gave his position to the Major Mikhin, who had shown himself in the appeasement of Guria during the uprising in Imereti (1819-1820)⁵¹. P. Gorchakov invited the Abkhazian noblemen for the negotiations to Sokhumi to find out their opinions. At the meeting the noblemen showed their dissatisfaction according to the illegal arrest of Hassan-bey and proved his guiltlessness. They also declared that in case of Russian armies' entrance in Abkhazia, they were ready to burn down their houses and escape to the mountains. Tamar Sharvashidze did not come to Sokhumi at the meeting with P. Gorchakov, showing with that the distrust to the government because of Hassan-bey's arrest, and the ruler of Imereti assumed that the trip to Likhni would have been dangerous for him⁵². P. Gorchakov came back to Kutaisi with nothing. Soon the agitation in Abkhazia grew into the strong rebellion against Russia.

The younger brothers of Hassan-bey - Batal-bey, Tair-bey and Rostom-bey called the population to the disobedience. The call got the universal support. The rebels were attacking the feudal lords who did not sympathize the uprising. Their anger, first of all, was directed to Tamar Sharvashidze and the principality. The commandant of the Sokhumi fortress invited the Abkhazian princes to hear out their opinion about the reasons of discontent concerning Tamar Sharvashidze. The princes did not come to the meeting with Mikhin, but they delivered the message, that they would not obey Tamar Sharvashidze and the Russian government as long as Hassan-bey was not released. The agitations were mainly spread in the estates of Hassan-bey- i. e. Abkhazia region. As to the princely domain - Bzipi region, it had remained loyal to Tamar Sharvashidze⁵³.

By the end of June of 1821, Aslan-bey came from Turkey to Jiketi. With the media-

48 *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 553-554.*

49 *Ibid, p. 554-556.*

50 *Ibid, p. 556.*

51 *Ibid, p. 553-558.*

52 *Ibid, p. 557.*

53 *Ibid, p. 558.*

tion of the deputation he demanded from Tamar Sharvashidze to give him the hostages and the free entrance in Abkhazia. She accepted the deputation in the Sokhumi fortress accompanied with Mikhin. After she listened to their demands, Tamar answered, that she would never let the murderer of her father to enter Abkhazia and the Bzipian noblemen, who were there, also agreed with her about that. In the face to face conversation with Mikhin, she marked that she did not trust her nationals and she was asking him to send a small detached force to protect the Likhi fortress⁵⁴.

Dominion of Russia in Abkhazia was under the threat due to the small number of the supporters, who were just the local Christians. The most part of the Abkhazian population with the Muslim believers or heathens had the Turkish orientation⁵⁵. With such difficult circumstances, colonel Mikhin, who was waiting for the attack of the rebels every day, was not able to satisfy the request of Tamar Sharvashidze. So he offered her to move into the fortress for her safety, but she refused, because she thought that it would be showing of her weakness to the population, and she decided to move into the fortress in the village of Kodori. But the situation there was not less dangerous then in Likhni. In the evening of July 1, 1821, Mikhin received the letter from Tamar Sharvashidze where was told that her house was surrounded by the rebels under the leadership of Rostom-bey, Tair-bey and Tsebeliam Marshanias, who wanted to take her as a hostage and give the throne of Abkhazia to Aslan-bey. The princess was asking for help. Mikhin immediately sent the military ship “Konstantine” to Kodori and ordered its Lieutenant Khomutov to save the widow of the ruler and her sons. Khomutov fulfilled his order and on July 2 he brought them to Sokhumi⁵⁶.

A. Ermolov who was in Petersburg during that period, was trying to quicken the sending of Dimitri to Abkhazia. At the same time he was far away from the thought that “the wild and brutal population of Abkhazia” would completely obey Dimitri, but due to the fact that he was brought up in Petersburg since his childhood, he had to cope with his duty⁵⁷.

In August of 1821, when Dimitri Sharvashidze had left the Page corpus and had got the title of colonel, was appointed the ruler of Abkhazia. On August 21 of the same year A. Ermolov informed Dimitri Sharvashidze about his appointment the ruler of Abkhazia and reminded him about the problems of the region and also added: “the loyalty and the diligent work for the king Emperor is the reliable pawn of your lands happy ruling and the governing of Georgia will also support you with everything⁵⁸. ” On August 23, Dimitri Sharvashidze went to Tbilisi from Petersburg.

Aslan-bey was getting ready for the decisive actions. In Juli-August of 1821, according to the information of A. Ermolov, with the help of the Pasha of Anapa was gathering an army in the mountains and was getting ready to attack Abkhazia, where he was sending the letters with the appeal of uprising⁵⁹. In the middle of August, Aslan-bey, at the head of

54 *Ibid*, p. 558-589.

55 N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 459.

56 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 940, p. 659; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 560.

57 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 935, p. 655.

58 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209; *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 937, p. 656.

59 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part II. *Tiflis*, 1875, # 1094, p. 746.

the army with 600 men, attacked Abkhazia from Jiketi. On August 21 he appeared at the residence of Tamar Sharvashidze.

A lot of her supporters took the side of the rebels. The princely palace in Kodori, where Tamar Sharvashidze was staying, was surrounded by rebels for two weeks. The rebels made her to take the oath about the breaking of all kinds of relations with the Russian authorities. On September 11, with the hoisting banners they came to the Sokhumi fortress, but the garrison threw them far away with the strong fire. Aslan-bay surrounded Sokhumi and took almost the whole Abkhazia. In the middle of September he appeared at the river Galidzga-the border of Megrelia. Levan V Dadiani sent a message to him, that he would not give him the opportunity to attack his own lands, that he would keep the widow and orphans safe. He meant Tamar Sharvashidze and her children⁶⁰.

Levan Dadiani informed P. Gorchakov about the gathering of the army to protect his property and his help to the widow of Giorgi Sharvashidze and her children. The ruler of Imereti “guessed the real goals of Dadiani, who wanted to take chance with the disorders, to take away the part of Abkhazia, which had belonged to Megrelia a long time ago and he demanded prince Levan to forget his goals and leave the worries “about the widow and orphans” to the Russian government”⁶¹. It seems that the Russian government was not interested in the activities of the ruler of Megrelia in Abkhazia, that time. On 15 April, in the letter to Levan Dadiani, P. Gorchakov regretfully marked, that Tamar had started the good relations with the uprising rebels when she could find the shelter in the Sokhumi fortress. The ruler of Imereti was giving an order to the ruler of Megrelia to assume the measures, not to let the uprising get in Samurzakano⁶².

Aslan-bey announced to the population that he had the firman of the Sultan about his appointment the ruler of Abkhazia and that the Russian were giving Sokhumi back to him. This information had a great influence on Abkhazians and multiplied the number of the supporters of Aslan-bey. The bear for the uprising were the village Kelasuri and its nearby territories, it were the nationals of Hassan-bey and also the inhabitants of Tsebeli and Pitsunda. The large part of the Bzipi region population had saved the loyalty to Tamar Sharvashidze for a long time and also had resisted the uprising rebels but then also took Aslan-bey’s side⁶³. That way, in October of 1821 the whole Abkhazia obeyed Aslan-bey.

In these circumstances the Russian administration started to get ready for the expedition to Abkhazia. By the end of September Dimitri Sharvashidze arrived in Tbilisi. On October 20, 1821, A. Veliaminov ordered P. Gorchakov to suppress the uprising of Abkhazians and to bring the new ruler to Abkhazia personally. He made the instructions, according to which Dimitry Sharvashidze had to be accompanied with Levan V Dadiani, the large detachment of the Russian forces, to obey “the outraged Abkhazian population”.

On the bases of the instruction of A. Veliaminov, the proclamation of Dimitri Sharvashidze was made (October 20, 1821), in which the organizers of the uprising against

60 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209; *Acts...*, vol. VI, Part I, # 940, p. 659; # 941, p. 659, vol. VI, part II, # 1094, p. , 646; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 560; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 464-466.

61 N. Dubrovin. *The History*, vol. VI, p. 460; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 560.

62 Ts. Kiria, Sh. Saria. *The Materials...*, # 13, p. 34-39.

63 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 940, p. 659; N. Dubrovin. *The History*. . . , vol. VI, p. 464.

Russia and the principedom were blamed, the honored princes and priesthood were offered to come to the ruler and in token of the true remorse to give “the reliable hostages”, after what they would have been forgiven; “and the vicious and refractory rebels” would have been “killed everywhere”⁶⁴. A. Veliaminov was advising the young ruler not to act without informing P. Gorchakov and in the beginning to live in the garrison of the Sokhumi fortress⁶⁵.

By this time P. Gorchakov had gathered enough military forces in Redut-kale for the organization of the expedition in Abkhazia. On October 21 of 1821, Dimitri Sharvashidze took a trip to Kutaisi, and from there, accompanied with P. Gorchakov and Megrelian police he went to Abkhazia. Levan V Dadiani leaded P. Gorchakov and the new ruler till the border of the principedom-r. Galidzga, and from there, the commandment with the Megrelian national army was taken by Niko Dadiani. He, as the ruler of Lechkhumi was accompanied with the Lechkumi national army with the number of 600 soldiers⁶⁶.

On November 1, P. Gorchakov was informed about the fact that the 3000 soldier army of Abkhazians and Jiks were located between Kodori cape and the village of Kelasuri⁶⁷, and Aslan-bey himself, was staying in Mokvi with the national army. Niko Dadiani made his brother-in-law, the ruler of Abzhua, Ali-bey Sharvashidze and also his wife’s brother, Salaruf Marshania, who had the great influence on Tsebeli population, to take his side. As soon as Aslan-bey heard about it, he ran away from Mokvi. The Georgian and Russian forces, which were chasing him, stayed as a camp in Tskaba⁶⁸. After the cruel fights they reached Kelasuri, and from there they entered Sokhumi without any resistance⁶⁹. After that the uprising started to over. Aslan-bey had run away to Jiketi. The punitive expedition rested for several days in Sokhumi, and then headed to Likhni. When they arrived there, the princes of Bzipian Abkhazia showed their obedience. The rebellious ones were caught by the order of P. Gorchakov and the part of them saved themselves by running away and their estates were robbed and then burnt down⁷⁰.

On November 30 of 1821, in Likhni, there was the solemn ceremony of the proclamation of Dimitri Sharvashidze as the ruling prince of Abkhazia, accompanied with P. Gorchakov, princes and nobleman of Abkhazia, the new ruler was given the signs of the supreme authority- sabers and banners.

Abkhazian princes and noblemen took the oath in front of him. P. Gorchakov left 200 soldiers from the Megrelian regiment, under the leadership of the Major Rakotsi in Likhni for the ruler’s safety. After that, P. Gorchakov, who considered his mission to be over, went back to Sokhumi accompanied with the Russian and Georgian detached forces, and from there-to Megrelia⁷¹.

64 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209; *Acts...*, vol. VI, Part I, # 940, p. 657-659.

65 *Acts...*, vol. VI, Part I, p. # 940, p. 658-659; # 941, p. 659; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 563-564.

66 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209; *Acts...*, vol. VI, Part I, # 941, p. 659; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 465.

67 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 209-210.

68 *Ibid*, p. 210; N. Dubrovin. *The History. . .*, vol. VI, p. 468; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 566.

69 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 210-211.

70 *Ibid*, p. 211; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 468; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 566.

71 N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 211; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 469-470; *The Ascertain-*

The authority of Dimitri Sharvashidze (1821-1822), as his father's, was quiet weak and was completely depended on the Russian military forces. According to J. F. Gamba, who had moved to Petersburg from the Emperor Alexander I palace: "In the simple wooden house, the ruler, who did not know his population, language, was more alike the prisoner than the sovereign"; the principedom was ruled by Tamar Sharvashidze⁷². The young ruler, who was brought up in Petersburg, felt himself very lonely in his homeland and the population regarded him, as a stranger. The main entertainment of Dimitri was the visiting of Likhi garrison officers. This society was more appropriate and close for him with its breeding, education and even the language, then his surrounding and courts⁷³.

By the end of 1821, it became known, that Aslan-bey Sharvashidze with the support of the Pasha of Anapa, who lived among the tribes on the east coast of the Black Sea, was gathering the armies and with the purpose of banishing Dimitri Sharvashidze was planning to attack Abkhazia. The ruler of Abkhazia tried to influence the Jikian princes, and he demanded from them, not to let Aslan-bey to move through their estates. They demanded from Dimitry to banish the Russians from Abkhazia and Sokhumi⁷⁴. The ruler, who was afraid of Aslan bey's attack moved to the Sokhumi fortress from Likhni. In January of 1822, Aslan-bey with the detachment forces of Jiks and other highlander tribes attacked Abkhazia and the Likhni garrison. According to N. Dadiani's data, the Russian had contracted Jiks and made them run away; A lot of them were destroyed⁷⁵.

The plan of Aslan-bey did not come to life. He was defeated and ran away to Jiketi, and then he moved to Turkey and settled in Trapesund. It had already been clear for the Russian administration that Aslan-bey had the support of Porta and the reason of the uprising in Abkhazia was the involvement of the outside forces.

The peace established just for a little period in the principedom. In spring of 1822, J. F. Gamba visited Abkhazia

According to his data, the Russians had just the Sokhumi fortress in this region, out of the walls of which the deadly danger was awaiting them⁷⁶. In spite of the seeming calmness, the hidden tension was felt in the region. Dimitri Sharvashidze had tried to use this period for the strengthening of his authority and he started the negotiations with the opposition forces. When he came back to Likhni, he fell ill with fever and on October 16 of 1822, at the age of 20, he died⁷⁷. Tamar Sharvashidze informed P. Gorchakov about it and asked him for the material help and the support with the ruling of the principedom. She showed her worries about the dangerous situation and demanded about the strengthening of the Likhni garrison. According to her data, Aslan-bey was planning to attack Abkhazia again. The princess was warning P. Gorchakov that if the military help was not given in time, the Abkhazians would upraise again⁷⁸. The heir of the princely throne, after the death

ment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 566.

⁷² J. F. Gamba. *The Trip to Caucasus*. Vol. I. Translation and commentaries by M. Mgaloblishvili. Tb., 1987, p. 86 (in Georgian).

⁷³ *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 568.

⁷⁴ *Acts...*, vol. VI, Part II, # 777, p. 437; # 779, p. 438. N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 471.

⁷⁵ N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 211.

⁷⁶ J. F. Gamba. *The Trip to Caucasus*, p. 81-82.

⁷⁷ N. Dadiani. *The Life of Georgians*, p. 211; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 471; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 568-569.

⁷⁸ *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 944, p. 660.

of Dimitri became his younger brother, 13-years-old Michael. Due to the fact that the Russian authorities were interested in the strengthening of the principedom of Sharvashidze, the commandant of the Sokhumi fortress was ordered to gather the information about the future ruler and hand it to the commandment. The government was also trying to calm Tamar Sharvashidze. Soon, P. Gorchakov informed A. Veliaminov that Michael Sharvashidze really had the capabilities which are highly appreciated by the highlander nations. He was brave, fearless and the good rider. Comparably with his older brother, he seemed to be more courageous and dexterous. The authorities knew that during the uprising of Abkhazians in 1821, he had shown his fighting talents in the defending of Likhni⁷⁹.

In November, when the relations with the Tsebelian Marshania's settled⁵, Tamar Sharvashidze sent the delegation (Temuka Anchabadze and Tlaps Margania) to Ermolov with the request from the name of the whole Abkhazian nation, to appoint Michael Sharvashidze the ruler of Abkhazia⁸⁰. The satisfaction of the request had included the interests of the both sides. On February 14, 1823, Alexander I appointed the new ruler of Abkhazia and he fixed the payment of 1000 ruble annually for him. On April 2 of the same year A. Ermolov informed the temporary ruler of Abkhazia - Tamar Sharvashidze about the appointment of Michael the ruler and giving him the rank of Major; on May 17, 1823 he informed Michael about this⁸¹. A. Ermolov asked Michael to come to Tbilisi, he told him about the order of the Emperor about his appointment the ruler of Abkhazia, he advised him to be fair, to show his warmth to the population, the religious tolerance which will give him the authority in the society⁸².

Back to Abkhazia he was accompanied with P. Gorchakov. In Likhni, being accompanied with the Abkhazia princes and noblemen and the military forces, he read the order of the Emperor about the appointment of Michael Sharvashidze the ruler of Abkhazia, after that, Michael took the oath of the loyalty to the Emperor. 200 solders of the Megrelian regiment with two cannons were left for his defense in Likhni by P. Gorchakov⁸³.

The authority of Michael Sharvashidze appeared to be as weak as it was in the period of his predecessors. It was hard for the young ruler to manage with intrigues the bases of which were in the hands of the strong and dexterous uncle. Due to the young age of the ruler, the principedom was actually ruled by Tamar Sharvashidze. A. Ermolov was advising to the princess to give the suitable instructions to Michael and he instructed the ruler "according to all kinds of issues about Abkhazia, address directly to the ruler of Imereti General-Major prince Gorchakov. He is ordered by me to satisfy your demands and support you against all the enemies⁸⁴".

Tamar Sharvashidze understood very clearly, that Michael's authority was weak and

79 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 946, p. 661; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 670.

80 Ibid, # 949, p. 661; # 948, p. 661; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 569.

81 N. Dadiani. The Life of Georgians, p. 212; Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 951, p. 662; # 953, p. 663; # 956, p. 664; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 471; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 570.

82 Acts..., vol. VI, Part I, # 456, p. 664; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 570.

83 The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 133.

84 Acts..., vol. VI, part I, # 953, p. 662; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 570.

due to this she asked A. Ermolov to strengthen the Likhi garrison. But the Russian administration had refused to satisfy her request.

The North Caucasian tribes of Jiks and Ubikhians using the weakness of the princely authority in Abkhazia, were attacking and robbing the villages every day; they were taking the cattle and hostages. But, those systematic attacks had were not always ending well for the robbers, though they still made a great damage to the population. Ubikhians were attacking Abkhazians usually in winter, in January-February⁸⁵. The oftener attacks of the highlanders made Michael Sharvashidze to ask the Russian commandment to take the natural gates of Abkhazia-Gagra⁸⁶. The Russian authorities, who knew the strategic meaning of Gagra, were not able to take it under control due to the absence of the necessary forces. For that time the primary goal was to gain a foothold in Bzipian Abkhazia⁸⁷.

In spite of the measures assumed by the Russian administration about the strengthening of the authority of the young ruler, his ruling was still too weak. In the several regions of the principedom the agitation was still continuing. The unskillful ruling was conducive to the anti -Russian feelings. The kingdom officials considered Abkhazians to be the wild people and they were ready to deal with them by all means. The agitation got worth in Abkhazia in spring of 1824. In such disturbance situation, Khinkuras Marshania from Tsebeli killed Rostom-bey Sharvashidze, who had reconciled with the Abkhazian principedom a year ago, and got married with the sister of Levan V Dadiani-Ketevan, who had owned Samurzakano. This fact had made the situation more tensed. The Russian authorities decided to organize the punitive expeditions in the several villages to frighten Abkhazians.

On May 22, 1824, detachment force of the Sokhumi garrison with the number of 225 men, under the leadership of colonel Mikhin attacked the village of Akafa, where the rebels had the shelter, according to the information of the authorities. The Russian had burnt down and robbed the village and arrested Khinkuras Marshania. On their way back, the Abkhazians attacked them. Colonel Mikhin and 42 Russian soldiers were killed in the attack and from the Abkhazian side were killed the princes Kizilbek and Levan Marshania, who were considered to be the rebels by the authorities⁸⁸. This event became the signal for the universal uprising for the Abkhazians.

On June 5 of 1824, P. Gorchakov informed A. Veliaminov that the inhabitants of the burnt down village Akafa are were not attacking the Russians anymore and they wish to resettle in Pskhu. The Tsebelians arrived at the Sokhumi fortress for the negotiations, they demanded the release of Khinkuras Marshania, and for that they were offering the obedience and hostages. They were also planning to resettle to Pskhu as well as the opposition of the Russians. According to the data of P. Gorchakov, about 800 families had been living in Tsebeli, the most part of which were planning to resettle in Pskhu, because they were afraid of Sharvashidze's revenge after the murder of Rostom-bey. P. Gorchakov made the insidious decision-he let the Abkhazian princes attack the rebellious Tsebelians

85 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Gagra and Its Nearby Territories*, p. 93.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.*

88 Eduard Eikhvald *About Georgia (the first third of XIX century)*. Translated from the German and added the preface and notes by *G. Gelashvili*. *Tb.*, 2005, p. 217; *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 962, p. 668; N. Dubrovin. *The History...*, vol. VI, p. 512; *The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus*, vol. III, Part II, p. 572.

and take vengeance for the murder of Rostom-bey, to kill and rob them. Soon, the Akafians resettled to Tsebeli, to make the decision, whether to obey the Russian authorities or resettle to Pskhu, but that issue was not solved then⁸⁹.

When the situation got tensed in the principedom, Aslan-bey immediately returned to Jiketi from Turkey, he gathered the army and attacked Abkhazia once again. He called Abkhazians to the disobedience, who were not satisfied with the ruling of Tamar Sharvashidze. The rebels were attacking the estates of the princes with the pro Russian orientation, they were robbing and distorting their properties. At that time, Michael Sharvashidze, with his mother and sister was in Likhni. He realized the danger of the situation very well and sent his family members to the Sokhumi castle and he stayed in Likhi palace which was defended by 300 soldiers of the Megrelian detachment force⁹⁰.

The ones who were considered as the loyal nationals of Michael Sharvashidze were also taking part in the uprising. In the Bzipi region they were under the leadership of Kats Margania, having the great authority with his cleverness, braveness and the strong character, not only among Abkhazians, but among the neighboring highlander nations as well.

A lot of Abkhazian princes and noblemen were seeking friendship with him⁹¹. The other influential princes and noblemen also joined the uprising. They took the oath that they would fight against the representative of the Russian interests - Michael Sharvashidze till the end and they would destroy everyone, daring to break the oath including their own close relatives. The rebels sent the messengers to Tsebeli, Jikheti, Ubikheti and Adigea, requesting their support. The highlanders eagerly accepted the request and started to move to Likhni. The quantity of the rebels comprised 10-12 thousand men⁹².

On June 7, the commander of the Likhni garrison - staff-captain Marachevski got the information that the rebels were planning to attack the princely palace. Next to the palace there was the famous church of the Assumption of Our Lady and the Russian detached force. Marachevski had assumed the emergency measures for its defense. On the morning of the next day, the rebels surrounded the reinforced Russian detached force; they took the church on and started to fire from there. At night on June 18, the Russians stormed into the church and destroyed the Abkhazians who were there. Only Kats Margania survived and he remembered the episode with trepidation in the future. After that Abkhazian did not even try to hold their positions in that church⁹³. The situation was still critical. By the end of the month the Likhni garrison was out off the provision supplies. There was no hope of the help from Sokhumi because the Sokhumi fortress being besieged by rebels was under the threat of the attack all the time⁹⁴. The suppressing of the uprising in Abkhazia was commanded P. Gorchakov. He was ordered to move the Likhni garrison and Michael Sharvashidze to Sokhumi before the situation was tensed and until the authority of the ruler of Abkhazia was not restored⁹⁵. Levan V Dadiani also had to take part in the expe-

89 Acts..., vol. Vi, part I, # 961, p. 665; # 962, p. 668.

90 The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 133; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 572.

91 G. Phillipson. The Memories. M., 1885, p. 191.

92 The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 572.

93 Eduard Eikhvald About Georgia, p. 216-217; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 513; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 573-574.

94 The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 574-575.

95 N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 513-514.

dition. On July 1, 1824, the punishing expedition, under the leadership of P. Gorchakov moved from Redut-kale to Abkhazia. Along the seacoast, it was accompanied with two ships (two-master ships) “Orfei” and frigate “Speshni”⁹⁶. The expedition moved along with the hard fights, the attacks were taken by artillery of the military ships. On July 6, the expedition reached the river Kodori and by the evening of July 10 it reached Sokhumi⁹⁷.

It was decided to move the armies to Likhni by sea because it was very dangerous to continue the way⁹⁸. In the morning, on July of 21, P. Gorchakov made possible to land the army of 800 soldiers near Bombora, in spite of the desperate resistance of the uprising rebels. In the morning, on July of 24 the other part of the army landed on the coast and P. Gorchakov himself went to Likhni. The rebels were showing the brave resistance against the landing force, but when they got the stroke from the rear by the Likhni garrison, they had to scatter, because they appeared between two fires. P. Gorchakov saved Michael Sharvashidze and the whole Likhni garrison which was evacuated to Sokhumi the same evening⁹⁹. The expedition was located next to the Sokhumi fortress. Abkhazians attacked the camp for several times, but unsuccessfully. P. Gorchakov left 300 soldiers from the 44th Egerian detached force and one cannon to reinforce the Sokhumi fortress garrison and the other detached forces were taken by sea to Redut-kale¹⁰⁰. After that the uprising began to decline. Aslan-bey had to run away to Jiketi again. Michael Sharvashidze had also left Abkhazia temporarily due to the hard situation. P. Gorchakov took him to Megrelia, partly to the village of Kheta and then to Redut-kale¹⁰¹. After the expedition in July of 1824, A. Ermolov was interested in opportunity of its repeating to conquer Abkhazia once and for all. On August 24, P. Gorchakov presented the reporting letter to the head commander, where he marked, that Abkhazian did not obey any authority, they as well as Circassians are busy with robberies and slave trade, so it would be appropriate to change their life-style. According to his opinion, it was impossible to rule out the tension even in subjugating the Abkhazians; thus, he thought reasonable to construct several costal reinforced points in Gagra, Pitsunda and Ilori. In a year, after that, it would be possible to make the whole Abkhazia obey. According to the opinion of the ruler of Imereti, the expeditions would not have given the positive results anyway. The arguments of P. Gorchakov seemed convincing to A. Ermolov and he refused to organize the new punitive expedition¹⁰².

After the rough events of 1824 in the hands of Russians was left only Sokhumi, be-

96 Eduard Eikhvald About Georgia, p. 217; The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 134; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 514; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 575.

97 The Descriptor of the Georgian Manuscripts of the State Museum of Georgia. The New Collection (Q), The Manuscripts of the Museum, vol. I. Tb., 1957, p. 265; Eduard Eikhvald About Georgia, p. 217; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 575-576.

98 Eduard Eikhvald About Georgia, p. 217; The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 134; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 516; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III, Part II, p. 577.

99 The Descriptor of the Georgian Manuscripts of the State Museum of Georgia. The New Collection (Q), The Manuscripts of the Museum, vol. I, p. 265; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 516-517; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III. Part II, p. 578; The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 134-135;

100 Eduard Eikhvald About Georgia, p. 218; The Articles of I. Dubetskoy, p. 136; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 517; The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus. Vol. III. Part II, p. 578.

101 The Article of the Management of the Arrangement of the Political Lifestyle of Abkhazia and Samurzakano. - The collection of the data about the Caucasian highlanders, Addition II. Tiflis, 1870, p. 211; N. Dubrovin. The History..., vol. VI, p. 517.

102 The Ascertainment of the Russian Authority in Caucasus, vol. III. Part II, p. 578-580, 581.

ing practically under the blockade of the Abkhazians. In September, Aslan-bey again. He tried to connect with Michael Sharvashidze and his mother; Aslan-bey offered the ruler, that he was ready to obey his authority if he would be given the estates of Hassan-bey, and if Michael will promise not to let the Russians above the borders of the principedom. Michael Sharvashidze refused the request. According to the data of the commander of Sokhumi castle, captain Lindenfield, Aslan-bey was trying to get the princely throne. He demanded the oath of loyalty from the population and his ascertainment as the ruler and for that he was promising to banish the Russians from Sokhumi with the support of Turkish. The appearance of the Turkish boats had really become more frequent, which brought the arms; the slave trade business was growing too.

The first attempts of Christianity revival. The ruler of Abkhazia and the Russian administration with the purpose of strengthening of their positions, were trying to spread Christianity in the region. Tsarism was hiding its annexationist goals and the colonial policy according to Georgia and the whole Caucasus under the flag of Christianity protection. Spreading of Christianity meant the farther widening of Russia's political influence. It is the reason why the great attention was drawn to Christianity after Abkhazia's entrance under the Russian "protection". The archpriest of the Megrelian royal chapel, Johan Ioseliani, renewed with his own resources the Abkhazians royal chapel in Likhni for the name of Dormition of Virgin Mary and also renewed the divine service. The major orders (Johan Kavtaradze and Simeon Zhordania) who were assigned there, had christened many Abkhazians including the family of George Sharvashidze. In 1810, Johan Ioseliani posed a question about the opening of the religious school in Likhni. He was hoping that this way Christianity would revive in Abkhazia. However, due to the critical political situation, the authorities did not support Johan Ioseliani.

Priest Solomon Nadirov (Nadiradze or Nadareishvili) had been the wandsman in Sokhumi church since 1817, who had been preaching the Abkhazians and had christened a lot of them. His warm relation with Abkhazians and the great diligence in his work of their Christianizing was properly estimated by Michael Sharvashidze in 1823. In 1823-1824 Solomon christened 62 heathens and Muslims in Likhni and Pitsunda¹⁰³. But the event that happened in Abkhazia in the first half of the 20-ies of 19th century temporarily blocked the process of spreading Christianity.

Abkhazia in the second half of 20-ies of XIX century. On July 1 of 1826, there were started the negotiations between Russia and Porta in the city of Akerman, which were ended by the signing of the convention. The Ackerman convention proved the terms of the Bucharest treaty. The Ottoman Empire officially admitted the Black Sea ports of Sokhumi, Redut-kale, Anaklia as the part of the Russian Empire, and with that there many century pretensions about that territories were ended¹⁰⁴. The situation in Abkhazia, which was left without the political authority of the ruler, had the negative influence on Megrelia. Abkhazians were often attacking the Megrelian principedoms with the purpose of robbery and took the cattle and hostages.

According to the data of German traveler and scientist E. Eikhvald, as soon as the Megrelian ruler was making the trips for their suppression, they found the shelter in

¹⁰³ G. Rogava. *The Religion and Church in Georgia in XIX-XX Centuries*. Tb., 2002, p. 80 (in Georgian).

¹⁰⁴ *Internal Policy of Russia*, vol. IV, p. 850- 853.

mountains and forests; there punishment was possible only in winter, when they were losing those shelters. When in the May of 1826, E. Eikhvald arrived in Megrelia, he was informed that Abkhazians had attacked the principedom again, and Levan V Dadiani was gone to suppress them and to reinforce the borders of Abkhazia. It appeared that, as soon as the ruler of Megrelia got close, Abkhazians ran away to the mountains as usually¹⁰⁵.

Levan V Dadiani and the Russian administration of the Caucasus were interested in the regulation of the situation in Abkhazia. Michael Sharvashidze was also trying to find the ways and chances for getting back the temporary lost princely throne. After the long-time speculation he got to the conclusion, that only the authority of Hassan-bey could help him in the case of subjugation of the Abkhazians and the getting back the real authority. He was asking A. Ermolov to let Hassan-bey come back from Siberia, who would have been the loyal national of the king and would have helped with the ruling of the principedom. The head commander had considered Michael's request and on January 15, 1827 started the corresponding petition for the minister of the internal affairs. A. Ermolov was marking, that after the 6 year long banishment, Hasan- bei refused to pursue the goal to get the throne of the principedom and with his influence he was able to help the authorities in Abkhazia. The head commander had also instructed Levan V Dadiani to get the information about the situation in Abkhazia and to take the active part in the regulation of the political situation. Levan V Dadian sent Manuchar Chkhotua and Tlaps Margania to Abkhazia. On March 14 of 1827 they came back from Abkhazia. According to their data, Abkhazian and Tsebelian princes were ready to come to the village of Gupu which was the possession of Alibei Sharvashidze and announce their obedience¹⁰⁶. Against the background of the existing situation in the Russian administration of the Caucasus were made the important changes. On March 27 of 1827, A. Ermolov was recalled from the Caucasus and his place was taken by Count I. Paskevich (1827-1831) on March 28. The change of the authority had temporary stopped the process of the regulation of the political situation in Abkhazia. On April 30 of 1829 Abkhazian and Tsebelian princes and noblemen showed their repentance about taking part in the uprising of Abkhazia and took the oath of loyalty to the Russian Emperor¹⁰⁷. Kats Margania was also among them. On April 30, I. Paskevich was informing the head commander of the main Imperial headquarter, that the 1824's uprising Abkhazians had turned down the banner of the uprising and had shown their wish to obey the will of the Emperor; several Abkhazian and Tsebelian noblemen and princes had already taken the oath of loyalty and with the name of the Emperor the forgiveness had been announced to them.

He wrote, that Levan V Dadiani and captain Nikolai Dadiani were sent to Abkhazia to get the oath from other princes and noblemen. I. Paskevich was glad, that after the tree year long alienation, the region was taken back without a single shot¹⁰⁸. It was the merit of Levan V Dadiani. On May 3, I. Paskevich ordered the ruler of Imereti, V. Bebutov (1825-1827) to send Michael Sharvashidze to Likhni, and suggest him to obtain the love of the subjects through warm relations and tolerance and not revenge. It seems that I. Paskevich

105 E. Eikhvald *About Georgia*, p. 173.

106 *Acts...*, vol. VI, part I, # 960, p. 665.

107 *Acts...*, vol. VII. Tiflis, 1878, # 334, p. 401; G. V. Smir. *The Islam in Abkhazia and the Ways of the Overcoming of Its Remains in the Modern Conditions*. Tb., 1972, p. 75.

108 *Acts...*, vol. VII, # 332, p. 401.

was not entirely sure that the calm situation would have remained in Abkhazia, so he ordered V. Bebutov to move Tamar Sharvashidze and her daughter to Sokhumi¹⁰⁹. In May of 1827, Michael Sharvashidze went back to Sokhumi and was received with great honor. The Russian military ships celebrated his arrival with the artillery salute¹¹⁰.

Russian understood very well, that the authority of the ruler with the Christian orientation was the guarantee of strengthening the influence in Abkhazia. It was the reason, why they were supporting Michael Sharvashidze with everything and they were trying rise his authority. In reality, the princely authority was spread all over the Bzipi region, and Abkhazian and Abjuian regions obeyed their ruler just nominally. The princely authority was not admitted by the highlander communities of Abkhazia-Tsebeli, Dali and Pskhu. Jikhians and Ubikhians were often breaking in the borders of the principedom from the north-east coast of the Black Sea, and the coastal line was being attacked by the inhabitants of the highland communities of Abkhazia. The kidnapping of people, slave trading and other crimes were continuing. In 1827, Michael Sharvashidze was asking the Russian commandment to take the positions in Gagra¹¹¹, to end the attacks on Abkhazia of Jikhians and Ubikhians. The difficult situation in Abkhazia also influenced the situation in Megrelia, where the kidnapping of people and slave trading became more frequent. In 1827, Levan V Ddadiani gave the grant book to Manuchar Pagava saying that “the Georgian was sold to the disloyal, this man is in Abkhazia now, buy him out and let him be yours¹¹²”. There were a lot of such examples.

Michael Sharvashidze, according to the ruling of principedom, as it has been already mentioned, had the great hopes of Hasan-bai. So, he and her mother renewed the petition about his bringing back from Siberia. Hassan-bey was giving the advice, that in case of the forgiveness, he would be loyal to the Russian authorities and after his coming back to the homeland, he would show the obedience to the Abkhazian population as well. In 1828, Hassan-bey came back to Abkhazia, by the petition of I. Paskevich¹¹³.

The hard internal political struggle with the direction of strengthening the princely authority starts in Abkhazia, from this period. Hassan-bey did not want to be in the role of the loyal vassal of Michael Sharvashidze, and he thought that he had no less privilege for the princely throne. At the same time, he called for the Abkhazian principedom to collaborate with the Russian authorities and he served them loyally. However, the confrontation between Michael Sharvashidze and Hassan-bey, which grew into the open hostility, was tensing the situation in the principedom. The outward loyal relations between them were saved only with the involvement of the Russian authorities¹¹⁴.

3. The Abkhazian Principedom in 30-50-ies of XIX Century

In 20-ies of the 19th century Russia reached the important progress in Caucasus. After winning the Russian-Iranian war of 1826-1828 it firmly established in the East Caucasus. The success of Russia alarmed England, which was trying to turn Iran into the strong buf-

109 *Ibid.*, # 333, p. 401.

110 M. Seleznirov. *The Instruction to Study Caucasus*. Book II, M., 1847, p. 180.

111 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Gagra...*, p. 94.

112 *The Historic-Ethnographic Museum of Kutaisi. The fund of the Manuscripts*, doc. # 1562 (in Georgian).

113 *Acts...*, vol. VII, # 335, p. 402.

114 A. Fadeev. *The Domestic and Estate of Abkhazian Official at the Time of the Reform of 1870*. Sokhumi, 1939, p. 108.

fer State and to block the way to India for the Russians, with its help. England was also making all efforts to prevent Russia from governing in the Caucasus. After the end of the war with Iran, the new Russian-Turkish war started (1828-1829). Russian's victory in that war solved the issue about the East coast of the Black Sea. According to the Adrianopolsk peace treaty (September 14, 1829), Russians were given Samtskhe-Javakheti with the ancient Georgian cities of Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Aspindza, Atskuri and others, and the coast of the Black Sea from the outfall of the river Kuban to the river of Chorokhi with cities of Anapa and Poti as well. The Porta was giving up all the pretensions about the territories, which were located to the north side of the new Russian-Turkish border and it also was admitting it as Russian empire's "eternal possessions". The West Caucasus was also included in that territories, which was not the belonging of Turkey, but the political influence of Porta, which was considered as the protector and the authority of all the Muslims, was spread among it and also among the highlander Caucasians. They were completely independent in the political way and they were admitting the supremacy of the Sultan only with the religious point of view. Although Turkey admitted West Georgia to be the possession of Russia, but it had also to be conquered.

Russia's authority in the South Caucasus could not be firm before it had not conquered the North Caucasus. Tsarism understood it well and it started to prepare to solve the given issue. When Nikolai I (1825-1855) was congratulating I. Paskevich with the victory in Russian-Turkish war, he wrote: "As you have finished one great business so successfully, you have to do the other, as great as the previous one and according to the direct benefits, much more important business-the subjugation of the highlander population forever or the extermination of the rebels¹¹⁵."

The Emperor's instruction-the complete conquer of the highlanders' or their extermination is characterizing the point of the matter of the colonial policy of Tsarism in the Caucasus. We also have to mark, that even Decembrists, which seemed to have the liberal and democratic positions, had the same point of view. The commander of the South community P. Pestel, was dividing the Caucasian nations as rebellious, calm and complaisant tribes in the program document "The Russian Truth". According to his opinion, the first ones had to be resettled in the inside provinces, and the second ones had to be assimilated gradually and then completely rejoined with the resettled Russian population in the Caucasus¹¹⁶.

After the victory over Iran and Turkey, in the beginning of 30-ies of the 19th century, the Russian activated their actions in the North Caucasus and also on the north-east coast of the Black Sea. I. Paskevich had planned the fast conquer of the highland nations, including Abkhazians, with the purpose of the realization of the up mentioned instructions of Nikolai I. In October of 1829, the Emperor approved of Paskevich's plan¹¹⁷. In the West Caucasus it considered the conquering of the Adighe tribes, which lived at Kuban and on the south slopes of the Caucasian range. According to the plan, except the fortresses, which were at the Black Sea (Sokhumi, Redut-kale, Anapa) there also was considered the building of the new fortified points, well connected with each other with the coastal

115 A. Shchirbatov. *The General-Field Marshal, Prince Pskevich-Erevanski, v, III. SP-B., 1891, p. 229-230.*

116 P. I. Pestel. *The Russian Truth. SP-B., 1906, p. 48.*

117 *Our Ascertainment in Abkhazia. - "Caucasian Collection", vol. X. Tiflis, 1889, p. 123.*

road and also the organization of the several expeditions in the Kuban region from the North. For the realization of this plan, there was made an “Abkhazian expedition”, the purpose of which was holding of the Caucasian coast from Sokhumi to Anapa, the creation of the coastal fortified line and the guarantee of the safe land connection between the fortresses, it meant creating of the Russian military-administrative government in the highland part of the West Caucasus. On July 8 of 1830, the Russian landed forces, which had been formalized in Sokhumi, occupied Gagra. As soon as the Abkhazian expedition, under the leadership of K. Gesse was informed about this, they went out from Sokhumi and occupied Bombora. Michael Sharvashidze joined the expedition there. On July 19 the expedition occupied Pitsunda. In spite of the success, made in the beginning, the farther movement of the Russian armies to the north-west from Gagra was interrupted due to the desperate resistance of Jikians and Ubikhians. I. Paskevich, who was acting simultaneously with the “Abkhazian expedition” crossed the river Kuban and destroyed the settlements of Shapsugians and built several fortresses along the river Kuban. Thus, the expedition could not reach the goal completely. Russians started to build the fortresses on the coastal line of Abkhazia-in Bombora, Pitsunda and Gagra.

The headquarters of “the Abkhazian expedition” was located in Bombora. These fortresses were to block the coastal way for the Ubikhians and Jikians, the way which they used for attacking Abkhazia; there purpose was the strengthening of the Russian authority in Abkhazia¹¹⁸. The fact of occupying the Abkhazian coast by the Russians had a great influence on Jikhians, Ubikhians and also Abkhazians. The fact of occupying the Gagra Gorge was an important event, the one which was asked the Russians for the long time, by Michael Sharvashidze.

Against the background of these events, the ruler of Abkhazia brought his pretensions about Samurzakano. In 1834, Michael Sharvashidze occupied the village of Ilori willfully and he made the local inhabitants to take the oath of loyalty to him. He was strongly warned about his willfulness by the Russian administration. The head commander Baron G. Rosen wrote to Michael Sharvashidze about this: “Such actions of your Majesty help the growth of the disorders in Abkhazia, and I am surprised, that you have dared such willfulness in the strange estates; because the government knows that the present border between Megrelia and Abkhazia is the river Galidzga. And according to the fact that the village of Ilori is located on the left coast of the river, it cannot belong to Abkhazia, so I have to ask your Majesty to give the order to the corresponding one to give back the hostages which were taken by you from Ilorian to their houses. Also you will announce in written form to all the Ilorians, that the oath of loyalty to you, taken by them is not real and they do not belong to your Majesty and that they belong to Megrelia¹¹⁹. ” After that, Michael Sharvashidze had to leave Ilori.

In 1834-1835, the Russian administration of the Caucasus carved the way from Redutkale to Sokhumi and Gagra. At the same time, in 1835, at the Black Sea coast there were built the fortress in Ilori and Dranda¹²⁰. After carving the way from Sokhumi to Gagra, the territory between the river Bzip and Gagra was given back under the jurisdiction of the

118 B. Khorava. *Abkhazian Expedition in 1830. -The Historic Researches*, VI. Tb., 2003, p. 93-112.

119 *Acts...*, vol. VIII, p. 449.

120 B. Khorava. *Muhajirun in 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 28.

ruler of Abkhazia¹²¹.

The Russian authorities had made the rulers of Abzhua and the Abkhazian region, Ali-bey and Hassan-bey Sharvashidze to obey Michael Sharvashidze, who was turned into the one-man ruler. That way, the formalization of the Abkhazian principedom was practically finished by the end of 30-ies of the 19th century, with the help of the Russians.

Abkhazians and Jikians, who lived in the north-east coastal side of the Black Sea and also Ubikhians were attacking the Russian fortresses with the small detached forces and made them stay in the constant fear. The Abkhazian highland communities, who were not controlled by the Russian administration, were supporting these detached forces.

The Russian writer A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinski, who served in Georgia, wrote on June 19 of 1836: "In Abkhazia, at the Black Sea coast, there is an estate between the magnificent mountains... a little fortress is built in that canyon, which is attacked by the enemies from every side and unmerciful fever is there... to be short, the name of Gagra, the most disastrous for the Russians in Georgia is the same as the death sentence¹²²". Tsebelians were showing the most desperate resistance to the Russian forces in Abkhazia. In May of 1837, Baron G. Rosen sent the military expedition there with the purpose of its conquering. The ruler of the region, Marshanias, had to obey and to take the oath of loyalty to Russia (from that time, the historic Georgian name of the community of "Tsebeli" got the Russian name "Tsebelda"). The Dalian Marshanians also had come to K. G. Rosen, who announced their obedience. The Russian governing was established in these highland communities, the Tsebelian unit with the administrative centre in the village of Mramba, was formed¹²³.

The missionary activities in Abkhazia. After the important strengthening of the Russian authority in Abkhazia in 30-ies of the 19th century, the active missionary activities were started here by the Georgian clergy, the inevitability of which was dictated by the poor condition of Christianity. Michael Sharvashidze had understood very well the meaning of spreading the Christianity with the point of view of the strengthening of his authority. In 1831, he marked in the letter, directed to the ruler of Imereti, that the great part of his nationals were Muslims, and they were under the deleterious effect of the Circassians; and they were against the events of the government and the ruler, who had the direction of establishing order in the region. The ruler thought that Christianizing of Abkhazians was the only way to preserve them from the deleterious effect of the Circassians. With this purpose he was offering to open the separate eparchy in Abkhazia and to appoint Father Superior Anton Dadiani as the bishop. Michael Sharvashidze wrote that Anton Dadiani was known and honored in Abkhazia because of his origin and of his bishopric, his human and acting profits and for knowing the local language as well. The ruler was expressing his hope that he was able to do many good things in Abkhazia¹²⁴. The acting head commander, General-Lieutenant N. Pankratiev presented his request to the exarch of Georgia, Metropolitan Ion, expressed his opinion about the petition of the

121 A. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Gagra...*, p. 108.

122 *Abkhazia in the Russian Literature*. Sokhumi, 1982, p. 10-11.

123 B. Khorava. *The Ascertainment of the Russian Governing in Tsebelda in 1837. - Materials of the Science Conferences of the Young Scientists and Aspirants of IV Interuniversity Conference*. Tb., 2006, p. 201-206; *The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR*, part I, p. 180.

124 *Acts...*, vol. VII, part I, # 341, p. 404.

ruler of Abkhazia. According to this, Georgian-Imeretian synodal office had asked the Metropolitan of Megrelia, David Tsereteli (1829-1834) for the data about the number of churches and priests in Abkhazia. On November 5, 1831, Metropolitan David informed the synodal office that the most part of the Abkhazian population were Muslims and there was just one functional church in Likhni, where the priest of his eparchy Simon Zhordania was serving.

As there was just one functional church in Abkhazia, the number of visitors was too small, and the synodal office had refused to satisfy the request of the ruler of Abkhazia, however they thought to be reasonable to send the missionaries from the Megrelian eparchy to the principality. The authorities thought, that for the missionary work in Abkhazia it would be right to use the priest with the Georgian nationality in the first stage. After the consideration of this issue, the Sacred Synod ascertained father superior Anton Dadiani to ordain archimandrite, give him one monastery in Megrelia “and to oblige him to turn Christian the disloyal ones as in Abkhazia as well in Megrelia, first of all¹²⁵”.

In February of 1833 Anton Dadiani was ordained as archimandrite, and by the beginning of the next year he arrived in Abkhazia and started the missionary activity. Soon, the first positive results were brought out. 155 men were christened from March to May of 1834, just in Likhni. Tamar Sharvashidze and the prince Salafur inal-ipa supported to the missionaries in the Bzipi region. The missionaries were also acting in Abzhua region. In 1834, in the village of Kvitouli, 156 men were christened, in Tamishi-93, Kindgi-72. 554 Abkhazians were christened in Abkhazia in the first year. This process was continued for the next years. In 1835, 784 men were christened, and in 1836 - 617 men¹²⁶. The lists made in the Georgian language of those being christened in Abkhazia in 1834-1836 have come to our days. Those lists are the rich source for studying toponymics of Abkhazia, the ethnic composition of the population and other issues¹²⁷. It is clearly seen from those lists that in the region of Bzip there were a lot of Abkhazian surnames, as well as a lot of west Georgian surnames, apparently belonging to the Abkhazianized Georgians; in Abzhua region there were more west Georgian surnames.

In the second half of 30-ies the missionary activity was slowed down a little, due to the several factors. First of all the coastal population was christened, but afterwards came the turn of the highland population. The most part of the coastal population were the descendants of the Abkhazianized from the 16th century Georgians, who were not against their returning to Christianity again and were not alienated from the faith of their ancestors, but treated the ruins of the ancient churches with a great honor. In the mountains lived the not long ago resettled north Caucasians - heathens or Muslims, or both of them. They were resisting the missionaries. For them, the spread of Christianity meant the strengthening of unacceptable Russian authority and the breaking of the connection with their north fellow tribesman. They understood very well that the authorities, in the way of their turning Christians, were trying to reach, first of all, their political goals.

So they fiercely resisted the process of spreading of Christianity and even the more, they were trying to convert into Islam the newly christened ones. On March 31 of 1836, ¹²⁵ J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 378, 379.

¹²⁶ G. Rogava. *The religion and church in Georgia in XIX-XX centuries*, p. 83-85; J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 79.

¹²⁷ G. Gasviani. *The former and new Abkhazians*, p. 139-184.

Levan V Dadiani, in the letter to Baron Rosen, was marking, that the missionary activities in Abkhazia had not reached its goal. According to his opinion, there were “neither ways nor the materials...to act the way which would lead to success and to reach the goal of man loving government, which had the wish to spread the light of the Evangelist study and to win the rebelliousness of highlanders with the cross for the strong wellbeing of the Caucasian region¹²⁸”. After that, the illusive policy of the strengthening of the Imperial positions with the help of the orthodoxy was completely changed with the forced activities, through using of the military forces¹²⁹.

The Black Sea costal line and Abkhazia. By the end of 1837, Baron Rosen, being the head commander was replaced with General E. Golovin (1837-1842). From that time, the Russian commandment was giving more time to the building of fortresses and the formation of the road connections on the conquered territories of the east coast of the Black Sea for the effective fight against the Caucasian highlanders. The fortresses and forts, as usual, were being built at the outfalls of the rivers and on the lands which were taken away from the population. Russia was trying to isolate the Caucasian highlanders from the outer space, to close the sea connections, first of all with Turkey and England, by means of building of the fortresses. At the same time, The Russians were reinforcing at the coasts of the Black sea and were making the wellbeing conditions to ensure the authority of Russian fleet at the Black Sea. On the north-east side of the Black Sea coast were built the following castles: in 1837 - of the Holy Spirit (Adler), outfall of the river Mzimta at the Adler cape, outfall of the river Pshad; Michaelovskoe, outfall of the river Vulkan; In 1838 – the fort of Alexander (from 1839 called Navaginski), outfall of the river Sochi, Veliaminovskoe, the outfall of the river Tuapse, Tenginskoe-the outfall of the river Shapsukho, NovoRosiisk in the Tsemeski bay; in 1839 - Fort Golovinski, the outfall of the river Subash (Shakhe), the fort Lazarevskoe, outfall of Pezuaps. The building of the land connection between the fortified points of the east coast of the Black Sea was over. All these fortified points, from the outfall of the river Kuban to the river Choloki, including Abkhazia and Tsebelda, were united in the system of the Black Sea costal line, under the commandment of General N. Raevski.

The costal line was divided into two sections: 1. from the outfall of the river Kuban to the outfall of the river Socha (Navaginks), 2. From the outfall of the river Socha to the river Choloki (the point of Saint Nikolai, Shekviteli). The commander of the second unit of the costal line was also commanding the armies located in Abkhazia¹³⁰. The union of Abkhazia with the system of the Black Sea costal line appeared to be the first serious attempt of its disconnection from Georgia.

In October of 1840, there was the reorganization of the Black Sea costal line. There were formalized three units: 1. from the outfall of the river Kuban to Gelenjik, 2. from Gelenjik to Navaginsk; The third unit was composed with reinforced points: Navaginsk, Golovinsk, Adler, Gagra, Pitsunda, Bombora, Sokhum-kale, Anaklia, Redut-kale, Poti, Ozurgeti and also with the guarding points in Mramba, Dranda, Kvitouli, Ilori, St. Nicolas. The commander of the third unit had to have “the political supervision of Abkhazia”, 128 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 394-395; *The Central State Historic Record of Georgia*, fond 489, I, case 5095, p. 1.

129 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 398.

130 Acts..., vol. IX, # 401, p. 460-460; B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 29-30.

and in case of need he had the right of using the forces¹³¹.

The Russian commandment thought, that it was impossible to make Abkhazia obey until they had not made Jikians and Ubikhians to obey. By the beginning of 1840, Jikians, Ubikhians and Shapsugs activated their actions against the Russian armies at the south-east side costal part of the Black Sea. England was standing behind them, the country which was trying to weaken the positions of Russia in Caucasus and at last, to take this region away from it¹³². Caucasian highlander also knew that the garrisons of the reinforced Black Sea costal line were small and weakly protected. They used this, and started their attack in February-March of 1840, and occupied the castles of Lazarevskoe, Veliaminovski and Michaelovski. At the same time there was the uprising in Tsebeli and Dali. The uprising rebels were asking for support Svanians and Pskhuians. The Russian commandment sent the punitive expedition to subjugate them, accompanied with the Abkhazian national army under the leadership of Michael Sharvashidze. The expedition occupied Tsebel and made Tsebelian and Dalian rulers to take the oath of loyalty¹³³. In the same 1840, the Russians also made Pskhu to obey, and formed the Russian governing in that highland region¹³⁴.

Conquering of Tsebeli and Dali canyon did not last long. After some time the situation was tensed again in this region. In October of 1840, N. Raevski was writing: "... Tsebelians are initiated by Ubikhians... The part of the population in Abkhazia is ready to upraise against the ruler and join the Ubikhians¹³⁵." The Russian commandment was informed that Dalians were asking the neighbor highlander tribes for help, that Ubikhians had already gathered the detachment force of 1000 men to help them.

The Russian decided not to let the highlanders to unite and to start acting before them. In December of 1840, the punitive expedition, under the leadership of the commander of the third unit of the Black Sea costal line, colonel N. Muraviev, was sent against Dalians. The national armies of Abkhazia and Samurzakano took the part in that expedition. In January of 1841, the expedition took the "gates" of Dali by storm - the Bagdadian gorges, and broke into the Dali canyon. Dalians had shown the heroic resistance but they lost. According to the order of N. Muraviev, the soldiers burnt down the whole settlements, they had destroyed the trade provisions of Dalians and all the inhabitants were banished from there¹³⁶. In order to secure Abkhazia against the farther attacks of the highlanders, N. Muraviov was offering to settle 500 Russian families in the Dali canyon, through which passed the road from Kuban basin to Abkhazia, . But Muraviev was not given such permission, and the North Caucasian highlanders settled down there¹³⁷, and the part of the local population went back too. Thus, the cruel military expedition of the Russians against the Dalian canyon was just a temporary success for the aggressors.

In March of 1841, the Jikian communities submitted to the Russians and it was a merit of Michael Sharvashidze. After that, the main goal of the Russian authorities be-

131 G. A. Dzidzaria. *The Attachment of Abkhazia to Russia*, p. 50; B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 30.

132 N. A. Smirnov. *The Policy of Russia at Caucasus of XVI-XIX centuries*. M., 1958, p. 197.

133 *Acts...*, vol. IX, # 426, p. 492-493; *The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR*, part I, p. 180.

134 G. A. Dzidzaria. *The Attachment of Abkhazia to Russia*, p. 63.

135 S. Z. Lakoba. *The articles of the political history Abkhazia*. Sokhumi, 1990, p. 17-18.

136 *Acts...*, vol. IX, # 432, p. 496, 497; B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 33.

137 G. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun and the Problems of Abkhazian History in XIX Century*. Sokhumi, 1982, p. 373.

comes strengthening of its positions in Jiketi. With this purpose, they started to build the road connecting this region to Abkhazia. In spring of the same year, the uprising in Guria, which had the support among the highlanders too, prevented the punitive expedition against the Ubikhians. Jointly, with the detached forces of the third unit of the Black Sea coastal line, the national armies of Abkhazia, Samurzakano, Svaneti, Megrelia, Imereti and Guria under the common leadership of Michael Sharvashidze were also taking part in it. In the beginning of October, the expedition entered the lands of Ubikhians, they burnt down several villages and reached Navaginsk. At the beginning of November, the expedition had not reached the real goals and went back to Adler¹³⁸.

In 1841-1842 was started the uprising of the local population of Dali, Pskhu and also in the villages of Guma, Djgerda, Chlou, but the Russian authorities suppressed it cruelly¹³⁹. The punitive expedition, under the leadership of Michael Sharvashidze, in December of 1843, made Pskhu obey one more time¹⁴⁰. After some time, Pskhuians continued their disobedience and the fight against the Russians.

The Samurzakano issue. By the end of 30-ies of the 19th century the ruler of Abkhazia with the purpose of occupying Samurzakano, tried to put pressure on Russian authorities. In 1839 Michael Sharvashidze presented his request to the authorities about giving Samurzakano to the Abkhazian principedom¹⁴¹. The revolted ruler of Megrelia, Levan V Dadiani presented the large reporting letter to the government. There was marked, that Samurzakano had been the belonging of Megrelia since ancient times and it was his possession according to his inheritance, so, the pretensions of Michel Sharvashidze, he considered groundless.

Levan V Dadiani was having the negotiations with Giorgi Sharvashidze in 1818 and in 1827 with Michael Sharvashidze about proclaiming Samurzakano the consisting part of Megrelia¹⁴². The authorities refused to meet Michael Sharvashidze's request, on the bases of the fact, that it had been separated from Abkhazia a long time ago. However, according to the decision of the authorities, Samurzakano would not have been left as the part of Megrelia.

In 1840, on the territory from the river Inguri to river Galidzga was established the direct Russian governing. There was created the separate administrative-territorial unit-Samurzakano unit, which was under the commandment of the Kutaisi governor¹⁴³. The territorial struggle between Megrelia and Abkhazia had made easier for the authorities to make the decision about the establishing of the Russian governing, although, before that, the Russian administration had considered it as the belonging of the Megrelian Principedom.

Levan V Dadiani had appealed against the decision about the separation of Samurzakano and demanded its return or the payment of the compensation. In 1847, as the compensation for Samurzakano, the ruler of Megrelia David Dadiani was really paid 25 thousand Acts..., vol. IX, p. 513-519; A. Dziachkov-Tarasov. Gagra..., p. 121; B. Khorava. Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia, p. 35.

138 G. A. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun... p. 55, 69-70.

139 The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR, part I, p. 183.

140 Z. Tsintsadze. The Issues about the Borders of Megrelian (Odishi) Principedom in the First Half of XIX c. - The Collection of the Historic Geography of Georgia. # VII. Tb., 1989, p. 97 (in Georgian).

141 M. Dumbadze. The West Georgia in the First Half of XIX c. Tb., 1957, p. 268 (in Georgian).

142 Acts..., vol. X, # 256, p. 248.

sand roubles in silver, and with it offended and insulted the possessor of Abkhazia. To this was also added the fact, that in the same 1847, the authorities took away from Michael Sharvashidze quite profitable ports of Guda (Gudauta), Ochamchire, Kelasuri, which were passed to the local department. In spite of that he was fixed the pension with amount of 12 thousand roubles annually. The ruler of Abkhazia understood that the Tsarism was gradually limiting his authority. According to this, he expressed his protest (on November 10, 1847) in the form of refusing the ruling rights¹⁴⁴.

The ruler of Abkhazia felt, that his future was hanging by a thread and with this gesture he wanted to forestall the events and push on the Russian administration. The step of Michael Sharvashidze had called out the concern in the highest societies of the Russian administration in the Caucasus, because it was not in the condition to control the situation in Abkhazia alone. It also has to be marked, that the Russian administration had assumed all kinds of measures to make Michael Sharvashidze the real ruler of Abkhazia, who would have the real authority. With the help of the Russian bayonets, he made to obey him not only the feudal opposition but the rebellious highlander communities of Abkhazia as well. The generous dispensation of the governmental awards and ranks among the local feudal aristocrats had risen up his authority in Princedom. Besides that, the Russian administration in the Caucasus was appraising positively the services of Michael Sharvashidze about obedience of highlanders of Abkhazia, the struggle against the West Caucasian tribes and the conquer of the coastal communities of Jikians in 1841 and so on. The ruler of Abkhazia had a great influence on Ubikhians, Jikians, Shapsuians and Abadzekhs. So the Russians still needed him.

The deputy of the king in the Caucasus - M. Vorontsov (1844-1854) made Michael Sharvashidze change his mind¹⁴⁵.

Creation of Abkhazian eparchy. By the end of 40-ies had matured an issue about establishing of the separate eparchy in Abkhazia. On March 14 of 1849, Michael Sharvashidze presented the appropriate initiative to the Exarch of Georgia - Metropolitan Isidor, and after 2 years, on April 30 of 1851, by the instructions of Emperor Nikolai I, the Episcopal cathedral was founded in Abkhazia. The first Episcopo of Abkhazia was a confessor of Michael Sharvashidze - German (Gogelashvili)¹⁴⁶, from September 8 of 1851 to September 2 of 1856. Against the background of the Russian-Caucasian war and attempts of spreading muridism in the West Caucasus, the meaning of strengthening of Christianity in Abkhazia was obvious. The activities of Georgian missionaries were continuing in the region. In 1851, in the administrative centre of Samurzakano, in the village of Okumi and also in Ilori, the first schools were opened. In 1852, in Likhni the first religious school was founded having a great significance for spreading knowledge in the region. Its founder and director was celibate priest - Alexander (Okropiridze). The school was for studying and bringing up the children from all the levels of population¹⁴⁷. In 1855, in the period of the Crimean war, in the evacuated school in Megrelia, with the other Abkhazian children

144 Acts..., vol. X, # 278, p. 268; S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus*, v, I, p. 134-135.

145 S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 135-137.

146 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 413; Saint Archpriest Gabriel (Kikodze) and Abkhazia. Compiled by J. Gamakharia. Tb., 2007 p. 567-568

147 Saint Archpriest Alexander and Abkhazia, p. 14-21.

was studying the heir of the princely throne of Abkhazia-Giorgi Sharvashidze. Alexander (Okropiridze) was personally teaching Giorgi; and he was the only financial supporter of the whole school during the Crimean war.

The Crimean war and Abkhazia. By the end of 40-ies, the situation, the so called “eastern problem”-the complex of problems, related with the attempts of the European states and Russia, to divide the Ottoman Empire into the levels of influence, became tensed. The aggressive policy of Russia had made England and France more close. They were trying to make Porta to start the war against Russia. England and France were trying to banish Russia from the Crimea and Caucasus, and the plans of the statesman of England, G. Palmertson had also included the dismemberment of Russia. According to his plan, the Crimea and Georgia would have been joined to Turkey and in the North Caucasus there would have been created the buffer (closing the way to the south for Russia) Circassian independent State or the State under the protection of Porta under the head commandment of Shamil¹⁴⁸. The plans of England were similar with the revengeful goals of Turkey, which was trying to get back the Crimea and Caucasus under its own influence.

On October 4(16) of 1853, Turkey declared war to Russia. The eastern war started (1853-1856), also known under the name of the Crimean wars. Russia appeared in the international isolation from the very start. In March of 1854, England and France also declared war to Russia. The main scene of the war actions was the Crimea, but the defeat of Russia in the Crimea and on Balkans was compensated with the successes in the Caucasian front.

The superiority of the confederates’ fleet was not letting the Russians commandment make connections with the East Coast of the Black Sea, including Abkhazia. So, in March-April of 1854, they had to take their armies from Abkhazia and weaken the Black Sea costal line. The Russian garrisons were evacuated and the fortresses were blown at the north-east coast of the Black Sea¹⁴⁹. Michael Sharvashidze was personally commanding the evacuation of garrisons of the Black Sea costal line-Sokhumi, Bombora, Pitsunda and Tsebelda.

In March of 1855, the detached forces of the Turkish, under the commandment of Mustafa-Pasha landed in Sokhumi. The Turkish were actively trying to make the Abkhazian officials take their side. The activity of the Abkhazian priesthood, converting into Christianity the large part of the population, the attempts of Michael Sharvashidze himself, did not let Turkish realize their plans-to make Abkhazians take their side¹⁵⁰. After taking the Russian armies from Abkhazia, Michael Sharvashidze went to Megrelia, to the estate of his uncle Giorgi Dadiani. He was hoping for the proper rank as the general-lieutenant of the Russian army, but his wishes did not come true. At the same time, widow of the ruler of Megrelia - Ekaterine Dadiani demanded from the Russian authorities to make Michael leave the territory of the principdom. In May of 1855, Michael Sharvashidze came back to Abkhazia and made the direct contacts with the Turkish authorities in Sokhumi. He was motivating his step with the wish of controlling the situation in Abkhazia, which had been occupied by Turkish, and to support the Russian commandment, as much as it

¹⁴⁸ P. Guedella. Palmerston. London, 1926, p. 360-361; *The History of Diplomacy*, vol. I, p. 656-664.

¹⁴⁹ Acts. . . , vol. X, # 282, p. 270; # 283, p. 271; # 286, p. 273-274; E. Burchuladze. *The Crimea War and Georgia*. Tb., 1960. p. 268-270.

¹⁵⁰ J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 431.

was possible. The ruler of Abkhazia had the secret contacts with the Russian commandment and was passing the important information to them. In June Michael Sharvashidze was able to disturb the plans of Abkhazians and other highlanders, who were planning a campaign to Samurzakano. At the same time, he was trying to find understanding with the Turkish authorities¹⁵¹.

In June of 1855, the Russian armies surrounded Kars and with that they put the important points of Turkey under the threat. In June of 1855, Turkish landed 45 thousand soldiers in Sokhumi to save Kars¹⁵². Omer-pasha was planning to get to Kars through Georgia and help the besieged fortress. In October, the Turkish army occupied practically the whole Megrelia, but the farther movement of the armies was held up.

On October 16 of 1855, the Kars fortress capitulated and the campaign of Omer-Pasha, with the purpose of helping them was of no use. Omer-pasha, being pressed by the Georgian partisans and the Russian armies, withdrew to the Black Sea. In February of 1856, the Turkish army, having experienced the numerous losses, left Abkhazia and Megrelia. The part of the population, mainly the noblemen, had gone with the Turkish¹⁵³. On July 10 the Russian forces occupied Sokhumi¹⁵⁴.

In March of 1856, the peace treaty was signed in Paris. According to the treaty, Russia reserved for themselves its properties in the Caucasus within the pre war borders and Kars and Baiazet possessions of Pashalic, having been occupied by the Russians, were given back to Turkey. Russia had no right to hold the military fleet and military forces at the coast of the Black Sea. Thus, the Paris treaty ended the goal of Russia to govern Middle East.

After the war of the Crimea, Russia had to conquer Abkhazia once again. The Black Sea costal line was occupied by the Russian forces again. The anti- Russian movement in Abkhazia began to decline, but the authorities were not feeling themselves calm. Due to this, In July of 1856, the governor-general of the king in the Caucasus - N. Muraviev, having in mind Michael Sharvashidze's "betrayal" in the period of the Crimean war, put the issue about the weakening of the principedom and the sending of Michael Sharvashidze to the remote Russian province¹⁵⁵. Emperor Alexander II turned down the request of his general-governor. The Russian authorities were considering Michael Sharvashidze as the peculiar guarantee of the restoring the influence in Abkhazia and the West Caucasus. The military activities were continuing in Chechnya and Dagestan, the next step was the conquering of West Georgia and the situation in Abkhazia was also tensed. So, the authorities still needed Michael Sharvashidze. As to the fact about his betrayal in the period of the Crimean war was admitted not proved by the Emperor and the case was closed.

In June of 1865, A. Bariatinski (1856-1862) was appointed the general-governor of the king and the head commander of the Caucasian corpus. He made the reorganization of the administration of the Caucasian corpus and the political-administrative construction

151 N. Takalandze. Michael Sharvashidze and the Crimean War. - *The Historic Researches*. Tb., 1999, p. 114-115.

152 E. Burchuladze. *The Crimea War and Georgia*. Tb., 1960, p. 270.

153 D. Ninua. *Several Issues about the History of Abkhazia in the Period of the Crimea War, 1853-1856*. - *The Proceedings of the A. Gorki Sokhumi Pedagogical Institute*, vol. IX, 1956, p. 196.

154 E. Burchuladze. *The Crimea War and Georgia*. Tb., 1960, p. 405-421; *The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR*, part I, p. 196.

155 Acts..., vol. XI, # 43, p. 54.

of the east coast of the Black Sea. The military activities had demanded the union of the military and civil authority of the Kutaisi province.

In August of 1856, with the purpose of centralization of the administration in the way of union of the Kutaisi principedom and the third unit of the Black Sea costal line, the Kutaisi general-province was created. There was made the post of the commander of armies in Abkhazia. The Abkhazian principedom was nominally under the commandment of the Kutaisi General-Governor, but in fact it was under the commandment of the king's General-governor in the Caucasus¹⁵⁶. Tsarism started to weaken the feudal principedom for strengthening of its positions in Georgia. In 1857, the Megrelian principedom was weakened, in 1858 – the same happened with the Svanetian estates. The Russian commandment was established there. The issue about the weakening of the Abkhazian principedom was the main one, although, as it has already been mentioned before, making of the decision was postponed.

After the end of the Crimean war, the attention was drawn to the Russian-Caucasian war. Tsarism got the opportunity to gather important forces in the Caucasus. The Caucasian corpus was turned into the army. The main attention of A. Bariatinski was drawn to Chechnya and Dagestan. At the same time, he understood that without strengthening at the north-east coast of the Black Sea and Abkhazia, conquering of the West Caucasus would have been impossible¹⁵⁷. The situation in Abkhazia was quite tensed. On May 13, 1858, the commander of the right flank of the Caucasian army, General G. Phillipson was writing to the general commander of the Caucasian army: “the situation in Abkhazia is not changed to better since I have left it: our soldiers cannot leave his fortified point, as he may be killed or taken as a hostage... to be short , we do not own it, we are just occupying it¹⁵⁸”. The commander of the armies in Abkhazia, General M. Loris-Melikov had the same opinion. In the report letter of August 12 of 1858, being directed to the General-governor of Kutaisi, General-lieutenant G. Eristavi - he wrote: “We occupied Sokhumi in 1810. The half century had passed after that, and we have to mark that our influence had not grown at all, in fact, as the general Phillipson had noticed, we do not own it, we are just occupying it¹⁵⁹”. In the circumstances of the war in the Caucasus, Russia was trying not to take the categorical measures and was waiting for the moment for dealing with them.

4. The End of The Russian-Caucasian War and Weakening of the Abkhazian Principedom.

Russia, with all its forces started to attack highlanders and was successful. On August 25 of 1859, the commander of the national-liberation movement of the Caucasian highlanders - Shamil, yielded himself to the enemy. Russia conquered Chechnya and Dagestan. The part of the highlanders, who knew that the renewal of the war against Russia was pointless, were against the established colonial routine. Local clergy, officials and about 100 thousand Dagestanians, Chechnyans and Ossetians, being under the influence of the Russian authorities had resettled in Turkey.

¹⁵⁶ S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 97-99.

¹⁵⁷ A. Zisserman. *The Field-Marshal Bariatinski. 1815-1879. M., 1888*, p. 33-35.

¹⁵⁸ *Acts...*, vol. XII, part II, p. 776.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 792.

Only highlanders of the West Caucasus were continuing the fight after the fall of Chechnya and Dagestan. Russia had moved the main forces of 200 thousand Caucasian army here to stop their resistance. Emperor Alexander II (1855-1881) was demanding for the most rapid ending of the half century Caucasian war devouring enormous sums. The main point of the fight for conquering the west Caucasus was Abkhazia. It was clear for the Russian commandment, that till they had just the coastal side of Abkhazia, their influence in that region would not be strong. By the beginning of 1860, the commandment drew its attention to the road constructing, which were connecting Abkhazia with the North Caucasus and which had the military as well as the administrative significance. First of all, it was decided to construct the wheel road from the Abkhazian coast to Pskhu, the inhabitants of which were continuing the robbery attacks and were taking the hostages. It was decided to send the military expedition to that highland community, to avoid their disturbing actions and to conquer them once and for all. In August of 1860, the Russian detached forces started their movement to Pskhu. About 3000 Abkhazian policeman were taking part in that expedition. In spite of the strong resistance, Pskhuians lost the fight and they announced their obedience to the Russian commander. The success of the expedition had not led to the strengthening of the Russian influence in this region¹⁶⁰. Pskhu was still left as the important base of resistance against the Russian conquerors.

In September of 1860, the commandment of the Caucasian army, with the purpose of ending the war, constructed the new plan, which was considering the banishment of the West Caucasian highlanders from the places where they were settled and settling of the Russian population on these territories. Russia's colonization policy, as one of the main ways of conquering, should have finished the conquer of the Caucasus. Before that, there were established the expeditions which were defeating them. In spite of that, the fight of the highlanders was continuing and the territories which were inhabited by them were still left independent. So there was decided to stop the expeditions which had experienced the great military losses and to start the settlement of Cossack stations in the North Caucasus and to resettle the local highlanders to the lower land and leave them without their natural mountain shelter and to take them under the control of the administration.

A. Baratsinski was admitting that the main goal of the resettlement of the highlanders was the liberation of those marvelous and fertile lands for the Cossack settlements¹⁶¹.

During the military activities in the Caucasus, Russia was drawing the great attention to the Abkhazian factor and the part of Michael Sharvashidze. In April of 1862 A. Bariatinski was writing to the military Minister D. Milutin that the influence of Michael "in Abkhazia and in its neighboring tribes, as far as I am concerned, is very important. So to make this men feel good about us is also very important¹⁶²". It was clear, that the strengthening of the Russian authority in Abkhazia was only possible with the conquering of the West Caucasus. Michael Sharvashidze also knew very well about it. The Russian commandment supposed that the ruler of Abkhazia, who was very honored among the highlander nations, was secretly supporting their war. The ruler of Abkhazia knew, that after

¹⁶⁰ Acts..., # 737, p. 859-860; # 739, p. 861-865; *The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR, part I, p. 188*; B. Khorava. *The Conquering of the West Caucasus and Abkhazia. - The Historic Researches, VII, Tb., 2004, p. 110-111.*

¹⁶¹ G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 198.

¹⁶² A. Zisserman. *The Field-Marshal Bariatinski*, p. 388.

conquering that nations his authority will also be ended, so he was against the construction of the roads in the North Caucasus through the Abkhazian highland communities.

In February of 1864 the Russians started the final operation of the conquering of the north-west Caucasus. In March of the same year, the general-governor of king M. Romanov (1862-1881) was writing about this to Alexander II: "let's act carefully, but firmly, to clean all the coasts of the Black Sea for once and for all. We have to consider that the main part of the highlanders will prefer to move to Turkey then to move to the place which will be fixed for them in Kuban. The case of the final conquering of the East Coast of the Black Sea is mostly depended on the rapid banishment of the locals¹⁶³". In May of 1864, Russians defeated the last resistance of the Caucasian highlanders-the community of Jiks in the outfalls of the river Mzimta. On May 21, in the center of Akhchipsu at the tract of Kbaad, where on that day was held the parade of victory and was announced the end of the war in the Caucasus. In July, the detached forces of the Russian army broke into Pskhu through the Sanchara crossing as well as from the side of Abkhazia, through the crossing of Dou. The Pskhuians showed the desperate resistance, but they lost the battle. After the fight, the survived Pskhuians burnt down their houses and left the canyon¹⁶⁴.

Thus, in July of 1864, the Russian occupied Pskhu; 105 families (862 men) resettled in the North Caucasus in the canyon of the river Kuma, 3500 men went to Turkey¹⁶⁵. After that, the upper part of the Bzipi canyon was left completely empty. In 1858-1864, the inhabitants of the north-east Caucasus partly, the main part of Adighe and Abazians, and Ubikhian had to move to Turkey. According to the records of the Russian commandment, 418000 men resettled from the West Caucasus to Turkey and 90000-to Kuban and Laba.

The process of the resettlement was continuing in 1865 too. There were left practically no Adighe and Abazians on the north-east side of the Black Sea coast, just the small part of them were resettled to Kuban. According to the official, but not the full information, 470 000 men were resettled from North Caucasus to Turkey¹⁶⁶. After the end of the Russian-Caucasian war, Tsarism got the large territories for the canonization. In 1861-1864, there were made 111 Caucasian villages with the amount of 85 000 men. The Russians, Ukrainians and also the Greeks and Armenians having escaped from Turkey, were resettled there from the inside provinces of Russia¹⁶⁷.

In 1866 Tsarism carried out the reform of the administrative formation of the West Caucasus. The large territories from Kuban to the Caucasian range were included into the Kuban region, and the north-east costal side of the Black Sea became included in the Black Sea district and was under the leadership of the commander of the Kuban region. Thus, Tsarism had reached its goal including the North Caucasus in the Imperial administration system. After that the issue of Abkhazia's destiny became the main one. Before the end of the Caucasian war, general-governor, great prince M. Romanov, raised the issue about the weakening of the Abkhazian principedom in the letter from March 27 of

163 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 183.

164 B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 61.

165 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 195; B. Khorava. *The Resettlement of Pskhuians. - The Proceedings of the II Republic Conference. Kutaisi, 2004*, p. 256-259.

166 S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus. vol. I*, p. 52; B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 62.

167 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 2008; B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 63.

1864, being directed to the military minister D. Miliutin. According to his opinion this measure was necessary to finish the project about the construction of the Caucasian vil-lages at the Black Sea coast, from the outfall of the river Kuban to the river Bzip. The Great Prince made practical suggestions : “1. To make its ruler and the heir of the ruler refuse the throne. 2. To fix payment for living for both of them. 3. To make the military district out of Abkhazia, which, with Tsebelda, will be under the commandment of the special military commander with the rights of the commander of the units in the regions under the commandment of the Kutaisi General-Governor. 4. In case the amount of the lands enables, to resettle the Cossack population along the coast (of the Black Sea-auth.) to the outfall of the river Inguri, which, along with the settlements to the river Bzipi could have composed Abkhazian-Cossack army under the commandment of the commander of the Abkhazian military commandment. 5. The border, between the Kuban and Abkhazia must be the range, which is closing the Gagra gorge and which now is separating Abkhazia from the lands of Jikians¹⁶⁸”. In April of 1864, Alexander II accepted the suggestion of the general-governor. In May of the same year M. Romanov received the correspond-ing order from the Emperor, the establishment of which, he had entrusted to the Kutaisi General-Governor D. Sviatopolk-Mirski and to the commander of the armies in Abkhazia - General P. Shatilov.

On June 24, M. Romanov officially informed Michael Sharvashidze about his dis-missal, according to the order of the Emperor, from the duties of the ruler of Abkhazia and about establishing of the Russian governing in the region¹⁶⁹. Representatives of the Russian authority already had the suggestion about the banishing of the origin Abkhazian population after the weakening of the Abkhazian principedom. D. Sviatopolk-Mirski was writing to the commander of the main quarter of the Caucasian army, General A. Kartsov: “If the part of Abkhazians will want to go to Turkey, that way I assume, we don’t have to stand against that¹⁷⁰”. The authorities, as the general-governor of Kutaisi was marking, were trying to get the large estates of the ruler and to start the immediate colonization of Abkhazia with the Russian Cossacks. According to his suggestion, the border between the Kuban district and Kutaisi province must had been the Gagra range and this was just for the one purpose: “the base of the Russian population settlement in Abkhazia will be possible to be made by owning the empty spaces at the both sides of the river Bzipi¹⁷¹”.

On July 12, 1864, D. Sviatopolk-Mirski, who had arrived in Sokhumi, announced to the representatives of the three districts of Abkhazia about the abolition of the Abkha-zian principedom and about the bringing of the direct Russian governing¹⁷². There was established the Sokhumi military unit which was under the commandment of the Kutaisi general-governor. The unit was composed with Bzipi, Sokhumi and Abzhua districts, and also with the Samurzakano and Tsebelda districts. General P. Shatilov, who was the com-mander of the military forces in Abkhazia, was assigned as the head commander of the

168 **The Central State Historic Record of Georgia, fond V, I, case 7506, p. 41; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia, p. 329-333.**

169 **The Central State Historic Record of Georgia, fond 416, II, case 177, p. 48; G. A. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun..., p. 250-252.**

170 **S. Janashia. George Sharvashidze, p. 7 (in Georgian).**

171 **Ibid.**

172 **J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia, p. 711-712.**

Sokhumi military unit¹⁷³. In November of 1864, Michael Sharvashidze was sent to the city Voronezh, where he died on April 16, 1866. In May of the same year he was buried in Abkhazia, in the church of Mokvi¹⁷⁴. That way, with the abolition of the Abkhazian principedom and with bringing the Russian governing into the region, the colonial regime was established in Abkhazia.

After the establishment of the Russian governing, the administration of Abkhazia started to care about the ascertainment of “the state order”, which, first of all, was meant the conduct of the serial colonial politics. In 1866, in Sokhumi military unit were started the preparations for the conducting of the Christian reform, although, the unwillingness of the authorities to consider the special features of the social and public order in Abkhazia, the rude involvement of the officials in the lifestyle of Abkhazians, the economical needs, the administrative reform, which was expectable for the local population and the preparing of the base for the reform which was serfdom with its kernel had caused the massive resentment of the population, which grew into the open uprisings against the colonization politics.

It was started with the many thousand numbered meeting in the village of Likhni, on July 26, 1866. At the same day, the upraising rebels killed the head commander of the unit, General V. Koniar and several officials accompanying him, who were in the Likhni princely palace at that time. The upraising was spread among the whole Abkhazia. The authorities brought the additional military forces here and in the cruelly suppressed the upraising in August and had severely punished its commanders.

After the suppressing the upraising, the authorities started the preparing of the administrative reform, the goal which was the strengthened control of the region. Due to the situation from august 11 of 1866, the Sokhumi military unit was divided in Pitsunda, Dranda, Tsebelda and Okumi districts. The separate administrative unit was the city of Sokhumi. The commander of the Sokhumi unit had the rights of the military governor, although he was under the commandment of the Kutaisi general-governor nominally. According to the fact, that the Russians were planning the Cossack-Russian colonization of the Black Sea coastal side from the river Bzipi to the river Inguri, Samurzakano (Okumi district) was joined to Abkhazia.

After the upraising of 1866, there had appeared the first reasons of the plan about the resettlement of Abkhazians in Turkey. It was mentioned in the report of Kutaisi general-governor D. Sviatopolk-Mirskoy the head commander of the Caucasian highland administration, D. Staroselski, from October of 1866, were is told: “if we decide to assume such measures, all other considerations will become needless and the issue will be solved for once and for all. He had considered this as the complition of the system, which was made for the tribes of the East Caucasus and he had thought it to be very a important fact, due to “with its geographic location, Abkhazia and Tsebelda had had the important role during the Caucasian war and would have the important meaning for any military events in the Caucasus mainly in case of the outer war¹⁷⁵”. Russian authorities, who understood

¹⁷³ The Central State Historic Record of Georgia, fond 416, II, case 177, p. 78; The Essays from the History of Abkhazian ASSR, part I, p. 201; G. Dzidzaria. Accession of Abkhazia into Russia, p. 67.

¹⁷⁴ Kavkaz, 1866, # 68, September 1 (in Russian).

¹⁷⁵ The Central State Historic Record of Georgia, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 19; G. A. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun. . . , p. 284.

very well the important strategic location of Abkhazia, were trying to resettle to Turkey the Muslim part of the population of the region, which, according to their opinion, would have helped the establishment of the political stability in the region. The general governor of the Caucasus, great prince M. Romanov was saying directly: “the main goal of the supposed resettlement (of Abkhazians-auth.) to Turkey is to get rid from our borders of the part of the population, having the elements of hostility towards us¹⁷⁶”.

In November of 1866, Alexander II gave the consent about the resettlement of the Muslim population of Abkhazia and Tsebelda to Turkey.

Great prince, M. Romanov ordered to the head commander of the Caucasian army, A. Kartsov to start the immediate fulfillment of the Emperor’s wish¹⁷⁷. Those Abkhazian Muslims, who had no desire of adjusting with the Russian colonial regime were demanding the resettlement too. The ministry of the foreign affairs of Russia gave the instructions to its ambassador in Turkey, Graf N. Ignatiev, to carry out the negotiations with Porta about this. The ambassador soon got the consent from the minister of the foreign affairs of Turkey Ali-Pasha, about the resettlement of Abkhazians to the Ottoman Empire. The agreement that the Muhajirs will not be settled down at the border territories of Russia was also reached¹⁷⁸.

The Russian administration of the Caucasus thought, that in that period, the issue needed to be solved first of all, was the resettlement of Abkhazians. Also the authorities were admitting that if all the Muslims of Abkhazia would have the wish to be resettled, this could have caused several troubles and complications, so the process of the resettlement had to be regulated. There was also given the recommendation, not to let the resettled ones come back to their homeland¹⁷⁹. The authorities had determined the number of the emigrants beforehand. It was decided to resettle 4500 Abkhazian families; but Porta was ready to receive only 4000 families¹⁸⁰.

General-Governor of the king, M. Romanov, in the letter from February 13 of 1867, directed to Alexander II, noted, that it would have been better not to use the force in the process of the resettlement of Abkhazians, but also to support this process with every possible ways. The Russian administration thought, that first of all they had to resettle the Muslims of the strategically important regions-Tsebelda and Dali canyons, who had the connections with Kabardian and Karachians through the Caucasian crossways. The inhabitants of the mentioned regions were also accused of the resistance against the Christian reform and of the support of the uprising of 1866¹⁸¹.

As soon as the General-governor got the consent of Turkey about the receiving Muhajirs from Abkhazia, he gave the order about the start of the resettlement from the end of April of 1867. The additional detached military forces were brought to Sokhumi and to the other places of Abkhazia¹⁸². On April 6 of 1867, before the start of Abkhazians re-

176 *Ibid.* , p. 74; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 284.

177 *The Central State Historic Record of Georgia*, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 19; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 284.

178 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 285.

179 *Ibid.*

180 *The Central State Historic Record of Georgia*, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 4-6; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 283.

181 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 285-286.

182 *Ibid.*, p. 286.

settlement to Turkey, the first part of Muhajirs from the village of Psirtska was sent on three ships to Batumi, which was still included in the Ottoman Empire in that period. The resettled ones were Jikians and Pskhuians (49 families, 218 men), who had lived in the village of Psirtska since 1864¹⁸³.

By the end of April of 1867, the organized process of Muhajirun started. The resettlement was accompanied with the acts of violence, being told in that time's documents. In the letter of the general-governor of the king, M. Romanov, from March 31 of 1867, on the name of Emperor, is told that the inhabitants of Pitsunda district did not want to resettle to Turkey, so they were even converting to Christianity benevolently¹⁸⁴. The Georgian newspaper "Droeba" was writing about the situation of that period: "Abkhazians are too worried... They are very afraid in Samurzakano, because they assume that they also will be resettled... The locals have great relative connections with them. The Tsebeldians, Dalians and Gurians have already left. A lot of Abjuians have left their houses too. Chlou and Jgerdi inhabitants, which did not want to leave, were also banished from their houses. Abkhazians praise the commander of the Jipi district, Dimitri Chavchavadze, who, with fatherly care was explaining to them that it is better to be under the commandment of Russians than to move to Turkey¹⁸⁵". In spite of the fear of Samurzakano inhabitants, Muhajirun had not touched them, due to the fact that the main part of the population were Georgians-Christians; Abkhazians who lived there were also Christians.

The sacral confessor Ambrosi (Khelaia) was recalling later, the fact when the Abkhazian Muslim, named Urus with his 12-year-old son, in the period of Muhajirun, came to episcope of Abkhazia Alexander Okropiridze (1862-1869), who was highly honored by the Abkhazians. The Muslim told the archpriest, that he was going to leave his homeland for good and he had one request:

"I want to leave my son to you... I have lost my wife and other children before, I don't know what will happen to me in the strange land, but I am sill leaving my homeland. I don't want to share the misfortune with my only son and that is why I have brought him to you, my kind father, I know that you will let him stay and you will bring him up as a Christian and with that he will be happy¹⁸⁶". Sovereign Alexander really brought that boy up.

As the head commander of the Caucasian army headquarters - A. Kartsov was marking, that the resettlement of Abkhazians were supported by their relative and friendly connections with the Abkhazians and the west Caucasian highlanders who had been resettled to Turkey before¹⁸⁷. The before resettled population had really great influence on the process of Muhajirun in Abkhazia. The same A. Kartsov was marking, that the important part of the Abkhazian population, mainly the noblemen, had expressed their wish for several times to act the same way as their same faith highlanders and to resettle in Turkey¹⁸⁸.

The Abkhazian landlords were scared also of the preparing Christian reform. They

183 The central state historic record of Georgia, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 115; G. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun..., p. 286.
184 G. A. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun..., p. 288.

185 Droeba, 1867, #23. We have to mark that in 1868 the inhabitants of Pitsunda district asked the commander of the Sokhumi military unit, General V. Geiman, to leave D. Chavchavadze as the commander of the district, to whom they very quite thankful, mainly because of the position taken by him in the period of Muhajirun in 1867 (The central state historic record of Georgia. Fund 545, I, case 324. p. 5-11)

186 The Saint Archpriest Alexander and Abkhazia..., p. 295; B. Khorava. Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia, p. 70.

187 The central state historic record of Georgia, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 27; G. Dzidzaria. Muhajirun..., p. 288.

188 The central state historic record of Georgia, fund 545, I, case 91, p. 28.

saw, that after the abolition of the principality and the uprising of 1866, the relation to them from the side of the authorities was changed.

The government was not considering the noblemen as their bearing anymore and this was cleared out with not avowing their right about the peasant lands. With that, there was shown the wish of the authorities to get under their disposal the important part of the land for the further colonization¹⁸⁹. Abkhazian noblemen, seeing all this, decided to resettle in Turkey with their peasants¹⁹⁰. On March 16 of 1867, the head commander of the Sokhumi military unit, M. Tolstoy, was writing to the Kutaisi general-governor, that about 40 Tsebelian princes were planning to resettle to Turkey from May 1 with 1270 peasant families¹⁹¹. The peasants had to move to Turkey with their landlords due to the traditions and their relative connections with their principality which undertook them. The members of the uprising of 1866 were also among the resettled ones from Tsebelda and Dali canyons¹⁹².

When the process of the resettlement reached the wide range, the authorities took all the measures to restrict it. In the beginning of June, 1867, the resettlement of Abkhazians was stopped. According to the agreement, the Turkish authorities had settled down the Muhajirs far away from the Russian borders-In Anatolia, at Balkans (mainly in Bulgaria¹⁹³).

The lists of Muhajirs were made during the process of resettlement, with the note about the number of the family members, names and surnames of the heads of families. According to these lists, from the village of Psirtska were resettled 51 families (210 men), Pokveshi-10 (69 men), Chlou-125 families (539 men), Atara-7 families (43 men), and so on. From the districts there were settled out: From Pitsunda district-226 families (1357 men), Dranda district t-629 families (3245 men), Tsebelda district-2503 families (14740 men). Thus, from Abkhazia, including Tsebelda and Dali canyon were resettled not 4500 families, as it had been planned by the authorities, but 3358 families, it meant 19342 men¹⁹⁴.

In August-September of 1867, the commander of Sokhumi unit, General-Major V. Geiman traveled all over his region. On September 26- 28, after visiting Tsebelda and Dali canyons, he got sure that this region was completely “cleaned” from the local population. V. Geiman met Michael Sharvashidze and his peasants (17 families) there, who were not able to move to Turkey yet, because of the high water of the river Kodori and he let them stay there until spring¹⁹⁵.

According to the data about the administration of the Caucasian highlanders¹⁹⁶, the number of the Sokhumi military unit in districts, in November of 1867 was the following :

Pitsunda district-14183 families (26483 men), Dranda district-3278 families (16505 men), Okumu district-3493 families (21858 men), Tsebelda district-27 families (87 men); all together-12696 families, which were containing 64933 men. It is clearly seen from these data that the authorities completely cleaned Tsebelda and Dali canyons, the popula-

¹⁸⁹ G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 279-289.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 280.

¹⁹¹ The central state historic record of Georgia. Fund 545, I, case 91, p. 1; G. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 281.

¹⁹² Sh. Chkhetia. *The documents...*, p. 118-119.

¹⁹³ G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 287-289.

¹⁹⁴ B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 72-73.

¹⁹⁵ The central state historic record of Georgia. Fund 545, I, case 252, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ The Collection of the Statistic Data about Abkhazia, vol. I, unit II, p. 39.

tion of which was 15 thousand men. According to the data of 1868, Tsebelda was inhabited with only 13 000 men and in the Dali Canyon not a single family dwelled.¹⁹⁷ In 1874, the English traveler Grove was visiting Abkhazia. He went to the Kodori canyon from Karachai. The traveler was charmed with the places and he wrote: “It is difficult to find more beautiful and marvelous places, then the fields and the spaces of the forest along which the river Kodori flows”. But, the traveler had the feeling of sadness, because the place was abandoned. “The upper part of the valley was absolutely abandoned¹⁹⁸”.

The necessity of the inhabitation of the lands which were cleared out of the Muhajirs and the further centralization of the administration in the Sokhumi military unit had brought the issue about the new administrative reform. It was established in May of 1868. In the result of the reform two districts were formed: Pitsunda district composed with Gudauta and Gumista units; Ochamchire district composed with Kodori and Samurzakano units; The guardianships of the settlements were formed from Tsebelda, which was for the colonization¹⁹⁹.

The border of the Sokhumi military unit to the north--west went through the river Begerepsa (The cold river), bordering with the Black Sea district. To the north-east - along the river Enguri, and to the north -along the main watershed of the Caucasian range²⁰⁰.

The church in Abkhazia in 60-ies. On June 9 of 1860, there was created “the society of restoring the orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus” with the purpose of spreading Christianity on the conquered territories and to fight against Islam. This organization was including the missionary activities. The Russian missionaries, under the flag of this society, had started the work of the Russification of the highland population of the Caucasus²⁰¹. The society was also acting in Abkhazia. Bishop Alexander (Okropiridze) was able to save and strengthen the positions of Christianity in the region. In 1867, 3000 Abkhazian were christened with his efforts and also with the efforts of the head commander of Pitsunda district, D. Chavchavadze. Bishop Alexander was bringing up and giving the education to the Abkhazian young men on his own²⁰².

On November 14, 1867, the commander of the Sokhumi military unit, V. Geiman presented the large report to the general-governor “about the issue of Christianity in Abkhazia”.

There was marked that the divine service in Abkhazian churches are “in the incomprehensible Georgian language”. He was offering to abolish the Abkhazian eparchy and to put it under the obedience of the Russian Bishopric. After the uprising of 1866 year and Muhajirun, V. Geiman thought, that the time was convenient for the Russification of the left population and with that he also was posing the issue about the replacement of the Georgian priests with the Russian ones. The authorities considered the recommendations of V. Geiman and on May 30 of 1869 joined Abkhazian eparchy to the Imeretian eparchy. The Bishop of Imereti and the administrator of the Abkhazian eparchy - Gabriel

197 *Ibid.*

198 Grove. *The Colt Caucasus*, p. 212.

199 S. Esadze. *Historical Records on the Governance of the Caucasus*, p. 279; S. Lakoba. *The Essays of the Political History of Abkhazia*, p. 89-90; p. 32.

200 B. Khorava. *Muhajirun of 1867 in Abkhazia*, p. 74.

201 *The Russian orthodoxy: the volte-faces of history*. Release of A. I. Klibanov. M., 1989, p. 442.

202 *The Saint Archpriest Alexander and Abkhazia*, p. 141-143.

(Kikodze) was busy with the wide missionary activity in Abkhazia. In 1868-1877, with his efforts, 19 thousand Abkhazian were christened²⁰³. The Imperial plan about the accelerating of the assimilation of Abkhazians did not come true and in that there was the great merit of Bishop Gabriel.

The creation of Abkhazian written language. In 1861, the Russian authorities made the decision about the creation of the written language for the highland population. Linguist and general, P. Uslar was writing about the importance of that problem: “We cannot let these languages out of the consideration, for one reason, that they are meant to go through many centuries... We can know many languages, but none of them impact our spiritual world as deeply, as the native language, the language with which the special features of our custom are expressed... these native languages are the most reliable guides for spreading of the new kinds of customs among the highlanders. To take these guides in our hands means to be able to control them..., the case is not easy, but it also deserves to be thought about²⁰⁴”. The Russian authorities liked the idea of creating the written language for the highlanders, but the issue about the suitability of one or another alphabet (graphics) for that had to be decided. Famous linguists of that period - G. Rosen, A. Shiogren and A. Shifner were supposing that the highland languages and Georgian had the same system of sounding, so the Georgian graphic with little changes would have been quite useful for the Caucasian languages. P. Uslar had the same opinion. According to his opinion, the Georgian alphabet was one of the most perfect among all the existing ones, where each sound was expressed with the special sign and all signs expressed the same sound all the time. P. Uslar wrote: “The system of the Georgian alphabet could be considered as the base for the common alphabet of all the Caucasian languages, which had no written language for that time. But if we borrow the writing style of the letters and not only the alphabet from the Georgians, we will create trouble with that, which will be felt more when the knowledge is spread throughout the Caucasus²⁰⁵”. So, creation of the alphabet for the highland nations pursued not the cultural, but the political goals-to make easy to teach Russian to the highlanders and accelerate their assimilation. Thus, it was admitted suitable for the languages of highlanders to use the Russian alphabet with several changes.

In 1861, in Tbilisi, was created a special committee under the leadership of the famous numismatist and the researcher of the ancientry, general-lieutenant I. Bartholomew, who started the work for the creation of the Abkhazian written language and the composition of the alphabet. In the special committee were included D. Purtseladze, priest E. Trirogov, and also invited from Abkhazia priest - Ioan Gegia, warrant officer Giorgi Kurtsikidze, nobleman Simeon Eshba, who spoke Russian, Georgian and Abkhazian languages. From 1862, P. Uslar also started to learn the Abkhazian language. He sorted out the structure of the language very soon and in May of the same year he published the monograph “Abkhazian language” with the Abkhazian alphabet, being composed by him on the bases of the Russian graphics.

All 24 signs of the Russian written language (19 consonants and 15 vowels), which

203 **The Saint Archpriest Gabriel and Abkhazia**, p. 124, 200-204.

204 **P. A. Uslar. The Ethnography of Caucasians. The linguistics. Abkhazian Language**. Tif., 1887, p. 16-17.

205 **P. A. Uslar. About the Composition of the Alphabet...**, p. 48-49.

were expressing the common phonemes for both languages were included, in Abkhazian alphabet without changes. For the designation of the left specific phonemes there were used the same Russian signs with some changes. Several letters were borrowed from the other alphabets (Georgian, Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic). Later, when the inspector of the Caucasian study district M. Zavadski in 1887 republished the book “Abkhazian language” of P. Uslar, in the typographic way, he took out the Georgian letters ვ , ჯ , ჟ from the Abkhazian alphabet. The other committee under the leadership of I. Bartholomew, which was using the Georgian graphic, had finished the work with the composition of the Abkhazian alphabet exactly at the same time. But in the end, this committee also came to the conclusion, that the alphabet of P. Uslar was more corresponding with the sounds of the Abkhazian language. This decision of the committee was undoubtedly made according to the political considerations. The famous Georgian ethnographic N. Janashia was writing concerning this, that the authorities were doing everything “to end and destroy the little remains of the historic connection, which were uniting Abkhazians and Georgians for ages. To reach this goal, was used such pleasant and cultural event as the creation of the written language of the Abkhazian language ... Bartholomew had used the Georgian letters, as more corresponding ones to the Abkhazian language and those absent -he added himself. But, his idea was not accepted: the guiltless Georgian letters were blamed in the political disloyalty and turned down. won Uslar ²⁰⁶”.

The goal of the creation of Abkhazian written language was the disconnection of Abkhazians from the Georgian world and their Russification. However, independently from the hidden political motive, this was the important cultural-historic event in the life of the Abkhazian nation²⁰⁷. The Russian authorities were completely uninterested about the destiny of the Abkhazian language, because its place would have been taken by the Russian language in the nearest future. P. Uslar admitted, that “... native written language must serve just for easing the study of the Russian language for the highlanders. They will not be able to create and they will never have their independent literature, because of the situation²⁰⁸ they are in”. The fact, that creation of the Abkhazian written language was not for the cultural, but for the political goals, was written by the member of the general-governor’s council in the Caucasus, E. Veidenbaum: “The Abkhazian language, which has no written language and literature is doomed to disappear in the nearest future. The question is: which language will replace it? It is obvious that the role of the guide of the cultural ideas in local population should have been performed by the Russian language and not by Georgian. So it seems to me, that the creation of the Abkhazian written language should not be simply the goal, but just the way of weakening through churches and schools, of the needs of the Georgian language and its gradual change with the government language²⁰⁹”.

The committee of I. Bartholomew had made the great work for the composition of the Abkhazian alphabet. The famous Abkhazian social figures - K. Sharvashidze and Gr. Sharvashidze had taken the part in the work of the committee. The base of the alphabet

206 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia*, p. 374-375.

207 T. Gvantseledze, M. Tabidze, K. Sherozia, K. Chanturia. *The Language of Worship and Religious Education as a Means of Russification Policies*. – *The Georgian Heritage*, vol. V. Kutaisi, 2001, p. 101-102.

208 Sh. D. Inal-Ipa. *The Pages of the Abkhazian Literature*. Sokhumi, 1980, p. 23.

209 Z. V. Anchabadze. *The Essay of the Ethnic History of Abkhazian People*, p. 89-90, p. 96.

had become a little changed alphabet of P. Uslar and the Abjuian dialect of the Abkhazian language. In 1865, in Tbilisi was published the Abkhazian alphabet “the kind reading for the orthodoxies”. It was practically left unused. Tsarism was trying to provide the local population with the church literature in the native language, first of all. In 1866, in Tbilisi there was published one more book in the Abkhazian language “the short sanctified story», written “by the committee of restoring the orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus”. It was translated from the Russian to Abkhazian language by I. Gegia, G. Kurtsikidze and D. Margania²¹⁰. But the position, which was chosen by the authorities concerning Abkhazians, after the uprising of 1866, played a negative role in case of development of Abkhazian literature. In 1868, council of “the committee of restoring the orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus” considered the Abkhazian language so “childish and undeveloped” that “all the attempts of translating the books of holy writing were stopped²¹¹”.

The high level of the Abkhazian society, which was trusted by the most part of the population, was still holding the Georgian orientation, which is clearly seen from the report letter of March 23 of 187, of the deputy noblemen of Samurzakano and Abkhazia on the name of the representative of the Tbilisi committee on the land cases, of General-Adjutant D. Sviatopolk-Mirski. The representatives of the Abkhazian nation, who had signed it, B. Emukhvari, M. Marshani, T. Margani and K. Inal-Ipa asked, “not to be excluded from the common family of the Georgian nations whom they were belonging by their origin²¹²”, during the establishment of the Christian reform. They were marking and pointing at the commonness of the historic customs and lifestyle.

5. Colonization of Abkhazia in 60-70-ies of the XIX Century and the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878

After the abolition of the principedom and Muhajirun in 1867, Tsarism had got the large territories for the colonization. In this period the authorities were planning not only the development of Abkhazian land, but of all the north-east coastal side of the Black Sea. The ideologist of the colonization of the east side of the Black Sea coast - A. Vereshagin was writing concerning this, that it has already been several years, that there are no signs of dwelling neither in the basin of Psou nor in the basin of the river Mzimta²¹³.

After the resettlement of the local inhabitants, there was a mission for the Russian authorities, of the settlement of this marvelous, but abandoned region, and also the adoption of its natural resources-wide forests, and fertile lands, the development of wine making, silk making, tobacco making, gardening, bee raising. The main thing was the settlement of the population in the region. The authorities wanted to inhabit the Black Sea coastal side with the politically loyal population²¹⁴. For realization of that mission there was made “the situation about the settlement of the Black Sea district and its administration”, which was ascertained by the Emperor on May 10, 1866. There was composed the Black Sea district

210 K. Machavariani. *Abkhazia and the National Knowledge in It.* - *Vestnik Obrazovania*, 1892, # 6, p. 136.

211 *The Review of the Activity of the Society of the Restoring of Orthodox Christianity at Caucasus in 1860-1910*, p. 157.

212 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – The Historic Region of Georgia*, p. 336-339.

213 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Road Notes.* . . , p. 66.

214 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Black Sea Coastal Side*, p. 7-16.

to assume the events which were considered by the situation²¹⁵. According to the situation, the coastal line was meant for the creation of the coastal settlements of the Russian resettled population. They were considered to receive fixed benefits: the plot of arable land for each family-30 hundreds, and also the money payment of 50 rubles, the exemption from taxes for 15 years, and the exemption from the recruit charges and so on. But for the first period the number of the Russian resettled population was not large. So the government decided not to refuse to resettle the peasants from Transcaucasia, Anatolia, Moldavia, Slovenia and others. Thanks to such policy, besides Russians, Czechs, Bulgarians and Greeks were also settled down between Anapa and Novorossiia²¹⁶. The Emperor, his relatives, the general-governor of the Caucasus and military and civil officials had taken the best lands of the Black Sea coastal part. At the left coast of the river Psou was made the military settlement, and in two miles, from the river Tsandripsh - there was the settlement of Moldavians, which in 1870 were renamed in honor of the Black Sea district commander as Pilenkovo.

The Russians were settled on the left coast of the river Psou in the mountainous village (aul) of the Jikians, being called Vesoloe²¹⁷.

Colonization of Abkhazia should have been done using the same principle as it was done in the Black Sea district. After the abolishment of the Abkhazian principedom, the properties of the principedom were confiscated. By the result of 1867's Muhajirun, there had appeared many lands in Abkhazia. They had become included in the fond of the formal lands, which was under the commandment of the Caucasian highland administration²¹⁸. There was created the trusteeship of the settlements in the place of Tsebelda district. The Major N. Diachkov-Tarasov was assigned as the first trustee. His duties were the cleaning of the region from the local population, who were hiding in out-of-the-way places and the choosing of the lands for the settlement of the population²¹⁹. The authorities thought to be right to settle Tsebelda with politically loyal population due to the place's strategic location. According to the opinion of N. Diachkov-Tarasov, the colonization of Tsebelda was needed for the development of the economy and industry in the region, which had been in the weak condition in the hands of Abkhazians. The natural resources of this place were good for developing gardening, fruit planting, wine making, bee raising, cattle raising and corn industry. There were forest building materials, copper deposits, iron and lead for the development of the industry in Tsebelda²²⁰. These places were notable with the healthy environment, soft climate and fertile lands. So, according to the opinion of the Tsebelda settlement trustee, there could not have been any problems with the mobilization of the migrants. Thus, this region could flourish, but for that there was steel needed the construction of the roads²²¹.

215 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Black Sea Costal Side*, p. 16-17; A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Road Notes. . .*, p. 20.

216 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Black Sea Costal Side*, p. 16-17; A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Road Notes. . .*, p. 20.

217 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Road Notes...*, p 79-95.

218 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Abkhazia and Sokhumi in XIX century. - The Data from the Caucasian unit of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society*, vol. XX, Tiflis, 1909-1910, p. 191; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 431.

219 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Abkhazia and Sokhumi in XIX century*, p. 194.

220 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Several Words about the Settlement of Tsebelda. - Kavkaz*, 1868, # 129, 3 (15) November.

221 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Abkhazia and Sokhumi in XIX century*, p. 196.

In 1867, 6 points of settlement were singled out for Tsebelda: Michaelovskoe-at the coast of the river Amtkel; Olginskoe-at the outfall of the river East Machara; Aleksandrovskoe-at the river Kelasuri; Anastasievskoe and Nikolaevskoe-at the hill of Apiancha, at the river Naushi, on the territory of the formal settlement of Naushi; Georgievskoe-on the territory of the village Jampal²²². The authorities wanted to inhabit Tsebelda with only Russians, but in the first period they were coming here unwillingly, but the Georgians, which were exhausted with the lack of land, were seeking to settle down there, which made the authorities concerned.

In such situation, the government had made its decision for the benefit of foreigners, considering Anatolians and Bulgarians more reliable. According to the order of the Sokhumi unit, General V. Geiman, the first Greek colonists, who were resettled from Turkey in 1869, were settled down in three villages-Alexandrovskoe, Georgievskoe and Olginskoe.

In 1869, 62 Bulgarian families arrived from Tiraspol to Sokhumi, who were settled down in the villages of Anastasevskoe and Nikolaevskoe²²³. At the same time, the government dispensed the large lands among the civil and military officials but they could not combine their service with the rural economy, and there was no one who would be eager to rent their lands. So the large part of the lands was not cultivated. So, just 8-10 % of the colonists got the lands²²⁴.

After the suppression of 1866's uprising and 1867's Muhajirun, Tsarism started to establish Christian reform more confidently. On November 8 of 1867, Alexander II ascertained the situation of the Christian reform in Sokhumi military unit, the announcement of which, on February 19, 1871, was confined with the tenth anniversary of the serfdom abrogation in Russia. In the result of the serfdom abrogation, in Abkhazia, the peasants got free from the personal feudal dependence, however, they still were left in the depending situation, though they got the fixed plots of arable lands.

From 1872, Abkhazia was going through the so called resort colonization. In Sokhumi and its nearby territories, the Russian officials and Military personnel were given with franchise agreements "the sanitary plots" of the size of 3 "dessiatina²²⁵". But this action of the authorities did not lead to success either. Military detached forces also were asked to settle down on these empty lands. For example, the headquarters of the 21 line battalion and two companies were stationed there to inhabit Pskhu and stayed till 1874. From this period, the upper part of the Bzip canyon became completely deserted. Abkhazians, who were considered politically unreliable, had no right to settle down neither in Tsebelda, nor in Pskhu²²⁶.

In 70-ies, the monastery colonization was started in Abkhazia. Pitsunda Russian monastery, being founded in 1872, got 1049 "dessiatina" of the land, the pine grove and the lake Inkit. In 1875, the branch of the Atoni Russian monastery of St. Pantheleimon was founded in Psirskha. The monastery was immediately given 327 dessiatina of land and 200 dessiatina of the forest massif, then -1000 dessiatina and in the following years-about 4000 dessiatina²²⁷.

222 *Ibid.*

223 *Ibid.*, p. 196-199.

224 A. A. Olonetski. *The Colonization of Abkhazia.* . . , p. 78; G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun*, p. 432.

225 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

226 V. Maevski. *Kutaisi Province. Addition # 7*, p. 90.

227 *Saint Priest-Martyr Kirion II and Abkhazia*, p. 203; *Saint Archpriest Gabriel and Abkhazia*, p. 44-58.

The Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 and the new Muhajirun of Abkhazians.

In April of 1877, the Russian-Turkish war started, the arena of which became the Caucasus as well. In Abkhazia the situation was really hard. The resentment of the population reached the culmination, being conditioned by the colonial policy of Tsarism, which resulted in the next anti - Russian uprising.

In such a tensed situation, on April 29, the Turkish landing troops landed in Gudauta, which was composed mainly of the Abkhazian Muhajirs. The commander of Sokhumi garrison, general-Lieutenant P. Kravchenko, who was at the same time the commander of Sokhumi military unit, did not dare to start the fight with the enemy, who had much more forces and he left Sokhumi and withdrew to the river Kodori. In April-May, the Turkish occupied the whole Abkhazia till the river Galidzga. The rebelled Abkhazians joined the Turkish. Dagestan and Chechnya revolted against Russia too. Porta was hoping, that the whole Muslim population of the Caucasus would have revolted against Russia too, but the success of the Russian armies in the Caucasus and Balkans annihilated all their hopes. More than that, in July, the Russians started to attack and in August they occupied the whole Abkhazia²²⁸. The part of the Abkhazian population left Abkhazia with the Turkish, several Christian-Georgians and Greeks were also taken to Turkey by force²²⁹.

According to the materials of the Sokhumi military unit commander, Colonel P. Arakin, being made by the end of 1878, in Samurzakano sector of Ochamchire district in 9 village communities there had lived 24461 men for that period. The process of Muhajirun had not concerned them by that time too, because of the fact, that Samurzakano was inhabited with the Georgian population. In Kodori sector of Ochamchire district (in 9 village communities) there were 3935 families (17707 men), from which 1071 families (4819 men) resettled to Turkey, and 12221 men stayed on the place. From the Gumista sector of Pitsunda district (in 8 village communities), which was inhabited with 2221 families (9985 men) all of the families resettled. From the Gudauta sector of the same district (17 village communities), which was composed of 5293 families (23545 men) resettled 3775 families (17160 men). 6385 men stayed at the place²³⁰. Thus, in 1877, about 31964 men went to Muhajirun. If in the result of 1867 Muhajirun the upper side of the Kodory canyon-Tsebelda and Dali, had become completely empty, then in 1877, the same happened to the coastal part of Abkhazia, mainly to the Gumista district. It also has to be marked, that the missionary activities of the Georgian clergy and the massive christening of Abkhazians had helped the nation not to disappear completely. If not Christening by Bishop Gabriel (Kikodze) of 19 thousand men, then the muhajirun of all the Abkhazians and that meant the extinction of all the nation, like it happened with the Ubikhians²³¹, would be unavoidable.

The part of the Muhajirs tried to come back to homeland, but the Russian authorities were against it in every way. And according to the agreement between Russia and Turkey, Muhajirs had no rights to come back to their homeland. It resulted in decreasing of the number of those wanting to come back.

228 Sh. A. Megrelidze. *Georgia in Russian-Turkish War in 1877-1878*, p. 77-84; Sh. Megrelidze. *Georgia in the Eastern Wars*, p. 74 (in Georgian).

229 A. N. Diachkov-Tarasov. *Abkhazia...*, p. 296-208; G. A. Dridzaria. *Muhajirun...*, p. 356-369.

230 *Caucasian calendar for 1879 year*, p. 330-331.

231 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 511, 515.

Muhajirs, who had used the fact of signing the preliminary San - Stefan treaty (February 19, 1878), started to settle down in Batumi and on its nearby territories, trying to go back to Abkhazia from there. But the most part of them were left there and their descendants still live in Achara. On January 27 of 1879, Russia and Turkey signed the Constantinopolitan treaty. On the base of which, the Russian administration allowed the partial repatriation of the Abkhazians for the next three years from the day of the signing of the treaty. By 1881, about 15 thousand Mukhadjirs had come back to their homeland²³². Abkhazia, which was empty in the result of Muhajirun, looked scary. As N. Marr was marking, "Abkhazia was deprived even of its central ethnographic part... There were left just panic-stricken gardens with fruit trees, not a single soul of Abkhazians, not a single sound of Abkhazian"²³³.

Tsarism got additional lands for the colonization at the costal line of Abkhazia. The issue about the settlement of Abkhazia was raised again. On September 27 of 1877, the newspaper "Tifliski Vestnik", concerning the Muhajirun of Abkhazians, was writing: "This situation inspires posing of the following question: who is to inhabit the country, having been left by its inhabitants forever?" The author of the letter was the famous Georgian public figure and pedagogue Jacob Gogebashvili (1840-1912). The publishing of this letter was related with the appearance of the article of the chairman of Sokhumi land-class commission A. N. Vvedenski (the commander of Sokhumi district in 1883-1888), in the newspaper "Kavkaz", # 207 in 1877 which was directed against the letters of J. Gogebashvili, which were published in "Tifliskii Vestnik" (# 209-210). The essence of the letter written by J. Gogebashvili was the fact, that the best way for the empty Abkhazia was its settlement with Georgians-Megrelians, Gurians, Imeretians and A. N. Vvedenski was against it. J. Gogebashvili had studied the issue perfectly and published the large article versus A. N. Vvedenski, where he was repeating his arguments. Afterwards, after A. N. Vvedenski's visit to the editorial office of the newspaper, that latter admitted that he agreed with J. Gogebashvili's opinions²³⁴.

From the spring of 1878, the authorities started to establish practical events about the colonization of Abkhazia. For example, the Russian colonists were given three plots of lands in Pitsunda in eternal possession. Out of 137 families, who were settled down here in 1879, only 99 were left after two years. The German colonists also were not able to get accustomed to that place²³⁵.

Thus, in 60-70-ies of the 19th century, the successes of the colonization in Abkhazia were small, Russians were not able to get accustomed to the climatic conditions of Abkhazia-dampness, swampy costal line, mountainous and forest area.

In Abkhazia there were no conditions for wheat planting, and the local culture-maize, was unusual for Russians²³⁶. The fever was taking away the lives of the colonist at the coastal regions and the Russian peasants from the inside provinces could not get accustomed to the highland conditions of Tsebelda and Dali canyons. All the lands of Tsebelda were owned by 24 landlords, and in Dali canyon- by 23, but they were coming

232 G. A. Dzidzaria. *Muhajirun*. . , p. 381, 396.

233 N. I. Marr. *On the Language and History of Abkhazians*, p. 177.

234 J. Gogebashvili. *Writings*, vol. III. Tb., 1954, p. 317.

235 A. A. Olonetski. *The Colonization of Abkhazia...*, p. 79.

236 S. Meskhi. *The Settlement of Abkhazians*. - *Droeba*, 1878, # 24, February 2.

there once in several years²³⁷.

When the most part of Abkhazia became deserted in the result of Muhajirun, the Russian and other foreign resettled population were not hurrying to arrive, peasants from West Georgia had started to settle down in Abkhazia, out of the need and the shortage of land. They were drying the swamps, were getting accustomed to the lands and were busy with developing the economy. The settlement of West Georgian peasants in Abkhazia worried Russian authorities. The newspaper "Chernomorski Vestnik" was writing, that "the Black Sea coast must be immediately settled with Russians, otherwise Megrelians will destroy this holy affair²³⁸". And the Russian officials thought, that "the colonization of the region was established without the system which is needed, so that is the reason, why the Russian were not able to get accustomed to that places²³⁹". On January 19 of 1879, A. Vereshagin marked about this: "At the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea, as well as at the edge of the State, which had cost so much blood and money, the Russian church, Russian language and Russian written language, must be dominant over any others. The different types of the tribes make necessary the foundation of the schools, because only schools will be able to turn this multi tribal population into the Russians in the future²⁴⁰".

The policy of Tsarism was directed against Abkhazians and Georgians too. According to the instructions of the Emperor from May 31 of 1880, Abkhazian settlements of Gudauta, Gumista and Kodori districts were deprived of the right for the land owning, because of their anti - Russian rebellion of 1877 and their lands were passed to the government department. Abkhazians were forbidden to settle down in 20 miles from Sokhumi and at the coastal line from the river Kodori to the river Psirtskha. The whole population got the status of "the guilty population²⁴¹". A pedagogue and famous public figure from Sokhumi - Antimoz Jugeli was writing concerning this: "Now, the main issue about Abkhazia is the settlement of its empty lands. After the last war (1877-1878 - auth.) there was the highest order not to settle down Abkhazians between the rivers Kodori and Psirtskha. Everyone had the right to settle down there, except them. Many had come from different places, but only Imeretians, Megrelians and Greeks could get accustomed to those places. Today, around Sokhumi, there are 7-8 Megrelian villages and 3-4 Greek villages²⁴²". Later, one of the ideologists of the colonization of the East Coast of the Black Sea - S. Sharapov was writing about the goals of Russia in Abkhazia: "throughout its longtime history, the Russian nation makes a sacrifice to get to the south, to the warm sky, to the warm sea. And at last, it has the desired sky and the sea. Here at the Caucasian coast Russia has settled firmly and forever. Here is hoisting the Russian banner and the Russian eagle is flying here... But, then why a Russian man is not feeling well here, why does he feel cramped, suffocated and uneasy here? Why is he a stranger here, on that warm beach, under this warm sun? I think the reason is in the Russian kindness, here on this land, which is conquered with the Russian blood, have come all kinds of foreigners, taken the best places and are not only suppressing the Russians, but insulting and mocking them too. But this will not

237 P. Charaia. *The land using in Abkhazia*. - Kvali, 1897, # 13, March 23, p. 310

238 Tsnobis Purtseli, 1905, # 2821, May 17.

239 F. Gershelman. *The Reasons of Problems at Caucasus*, p. 21.

240 A. V. Vereshchagin. *The Black Sea Coastal Side...*, p. 22.

241 S. Lakoba. *The Essays of the Politic History of Abkhazia*, p. 89-90; p. 35.

242 Droeba, 1883, # 2440, November 29, p 311.

last long. Our governmental duties are to make this region the possession of the Russians as soon as possible and not only nominally, but in reality in order to support, strengthen and give hope to the Russian men. May all this happen soon. May all this various tribes with different mother-tongue be digested in the mighty Russian stomachs and this sky and sea become become Russian²⁴³". In order avoid this quite real danger the Georgian population, that had to leave in the 16-17th centuries was going back to its historic lands. Russian plans about the Russification or plans of digesting in the mighty Russian stomachs" of the locals, including Abkhazian population did not come true only because the fact that exactly Georgian population of Abkhazia had become the main obstacle on the way to the Russification of the region.

243 S. Kaukhchishvili. *The History of the Settlement of Greeks in Georgia. - The Proceedings of A. Tsulukidze. Kutaisi State Pedagogical Institute, vol. VI. Kutaisi, 1946, p. 134-135.*

Chapter XVI. Abkhazia from 1881 till February of 1917

1. Toughening of the colonial policy in 1881 – 1905

Colonization and the ethnic composition of the population. The time of the brutal political reaction came in Russia after the murder of Emperor Alexander II (1881). By the end of the same year, the post of the general – governor of the Caucasus was abolished and the institute of the head commander was renewed. General – Governor, the Great Prince Michael Romanov, had been called off from Caucasus and the extreme conservative A. Dondukov – Korsakov (1882 – 1887) was assigned as the head commander. This period in the Caucasus and also in Abkhazia is characterized as toughening of the national suppression and radical strengthening of the Russificational policy.

One of the developing processes of the Russificational policy in Abkhazia appeared to be the continuance of the intensive colonization of the region. This process had several forms: 1. Rental colonization, when the Russian peasants, who were settled down in Abkhazia were getting lands and rent from the local landlords, which the Georgian peasants could not get (the part of the peasants who had arrived from west Georgian regions, were sent back); 2. Monastery colonization, when the restored or the newly founded Russian monasteries were given the large lands, on the base of which were made the large monastery economies, which appeared to be the bearing for the Russian autocracy. 3. Health resort and princely colonization. The special committee was founded, which was raffling for the winning and selling of plots of lands at the coastal part of Abkhazia¹. The North Caucasian department of the resettlement administration was giving money for the provisions of the necessary amenities to the resettled (Russians, Estonians, Greeks, Armenians). There were getting the forest building materials for free and the Abkhazian peasants were forced to work on the lands of the new comers without any payment. Georgian resettled population had no privileges at all².

The kingdom authorities, who were inviting the representatives of the different ethnic groups and sectarians to Abkhazia without appellation, were creating the artificial obstacles for the Georgian peasants. General – Governor of Kutaisi, F. Gershelman was writing “About the Georgian movement to the Sokhumi district” in his report from 2nd of September of 1900: The Russian colonization of the region has the great state meaning in the political way for it. Abkhazians, who are the main part of the district’s population, are representing the poor cultural nation, which is poorly developed as mentally and in the lifestyle way as well, which are unsteady in their religious point of views and which had shown their political ingratitude for many times already. ” According to the generals opinion, this was the thing that was showing the necessity of the Russian colonization of the region, the strengthening of the Russian civicism, which was interfered with the coming of Georgians (Megrelians), “which have filled the district but who have no moral right of any prevalence there”. So, Because of that “for the strengthening of the Russian influence in the Sokhumi district” there was fixed “the limitation of the Georgian’s rights

¹ D. Chumburidze. *The Russian settlements in Georgia (XIX – XX centuries) and the transcaucasian unit of the resettlement administration.* – The article of the history of the colonial politics of Russia in Georgia, Book I. Tb., 2007, p. 85 – 86 (in Geo. language).

² Tsnobis purtseli, 1902, June 25.

to get registered to the origin population of the village communities³”, - F. Gershelman was writing. The representatives of the Georgian public were revolted with such discriminative politics of the Russian authorities. They had understood very well, that the saving of the poor numbered Abkhazians from the assimilation, and the saving of Abkhazia from the Russian expansion was only possible with the way of returning the descendants of the locals, the origin inhabitants, who were scattered mainly in the east Georgia in the result of the occupation of the modern territories of Abkhazia by the North Caucasian highlanders in 16-17th centuries. The return of Georgians to Abkhazia had appeared to be the responding measure against the Russian colonization of the region⁴.

The local public, which had the patriotic goals, was feeling the danger coming from Tsarism. Here is the writing of the famous public figure Niko Janashia about the dispensation of the lands in Abkhazia: “in the last quarter of the past 19th century – auth.) century, the whole Sokhumi district, namely its best marvelous part, from the river Kodori to Gagripsha has been taken as the target by the Russian bourgeoisie and it had taken the best places. This, well gifted with nature part of Abkhazia, is already in the hands of the Moscowian and Petersburgian moneybags. You walk along the coast: here is the garden which is called “Otradnoe”(pleasant), there is “Schastie” (happiness), if you walk more, you will get to the “Lubov” (love) or to the “Drujba” (friendship). Their former owners – Abkhazians were left with nothing. They had spent the money which was given to them for that and they had lost there estates⁵.

The radical change of the ethnic composition of the region had clearly reflected on the transformation of geographic names in Abkhazia. The changes of the toponymic, from 1864 till today are divided in 5 stages by the specialists: The first stage is covering 1864 – 1918⁶.

All stages had the common features: The large amount of the historic and geographic names, were abolished at the same time and the Russian toponymic was changing them. The new toponyms were mainly dedicated to the members of the Imperial house and to the military and civil ranks. For example, there are 33 villages with the Russicized names in the list of the inhabited units of the Sokhumi district (without Gagra zone), which was made in 1904 and was containing 213 large villages. Here is the partially filled list of these names: Baklanovka, Belorechensk, Veseloe, Petrovskoe, Aleksandrovscoe, Andreevskoe, Naa – Armianskoe, Olginskoe, Vladimerskoe and others⁷. The change of the toponymic in Abkhazia was reflecting the beforehand planned lingual and colonial policy of Tsarism.

The separatists are trying to create the impression, that Georgians had formed “the imperial mind” already then and were encouraging their compatriots, because they wanted

3 A. Silagadze, V. Guruli. *From the history of the fight for the indivisibility of Georgia*. Section 2. Tb., 1999, p. 80, 83.

4 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – The historic region of Georgia*, p. 57 – 58; J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and orthodoxy*, p. 643.

5 J. Gamakharia. *From the history of Georgian – Abkhazian mutual relationships*, p. 17; R. Chanturia. *The liberation movement in Abkhazia in the second half of XIX and in the beginning of XX cc. (1864 – 1905 years)*. Tb., 2006 (in Geo. language).

6 T. Gvantseladze. *The massive changes of the Abkhazian toponyms after 1864 year. – Caucasian – Iberian linguistic*, v. XXXIV, Tb., 2000, p. 45 (in Geo. language).

7 *Ibid*, p. 47.

“to get” the lands of the Abkhazians⁸. Unfortunately, they are forgetting that Georgia was itself in the grips of the colonial regime, which was oppressing its language and was ignoring its national traditions. In such conditions, the Georgian population, was not and was not able to be the carrier of the Imperial mind. In spite of all the attempts of Tsarism, the Georgians had been the main part of the population of Abkhazia in 80th of the 19th century and for the next years too. (see here Chapter XXII).

The social – economic conditions. With its economic point of view, Abkhazia, in 80 – 90th of the 19th century, was mainly the agrarian region. Abkhazian princes – Sharvashidze, Anchabadze, Emukhvari, Inal – Ipa, Marshania and others were owning the large properties. Their feudal right was shortened, but the peasants still had specified obedience’s of their princes⁹.

There were busy with silk making in Abkhazia as far back as in 50^{-ies} of the 19th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, its development was a little slowed down, but the group of enthusiasts was trying to propagandize and implement the silk making in their national economy. One of such enthusiasts was the famous public figure in Abkhazia, the pedagogue Antimoz Jugeli, who had taught the inhabitants of Sokhumi the rules of the manufacture of silk capsule.

The local public figures were introducing the peasants with the progressive methods of rural economy. In 1898, in Sokhumi was founded the Sokhumi rural – economical community with the purpose of giving to the population the agronomic support and to spread the rural economy knowledge. The community had the unit in Gudauta as well and from 1903 it had founded its own printing agency¹⁰. On December 19th of the same year, on the prince A. Oldenbrungski’s initiative “the plant growing exhibition” was opened, where were presented about 300 exhibits.

The industry was aroused in Abkhazia and was developing slowly. In 1881, in Gulripsh, opened the sawing factory of Prince Eristavi¹¹.

In 1898, the largest factory in Abkhazia, the factory of Maksimov was opened, which was functioning till 1913¹².

The development of industry and trade had helped to develop the life in town. But, the beginning of the 20th century, Sokhumi was the only city, which was the main administrative and trade centre of Abkhazia. By 1903, Gudauta was inhabited with 1117 persons (mainly Georgian population); the number of the population of Ochamchire, Gagra and other settlements was also growing¹³.

The use of the unique health resorts of Abkhazia was gradually starting. The serious investments were put in the building of the health resort zone in Gagra, where, on January 9 of 1903, with the efforts of Prince A. Oldenburgski was opened the climatological station. On January 10, in connection with this event, the prince received the congratulating telegram

8 O. Kh. Bgazhba, S. Lakoba. *The history of Abkhazia*, p. 261.

9 G. Zaridze. *Several aspects of the social relations of Abkhazian nobility in XIX c.* – *Klio*, 2006, # 30, p. 104. (in Geo. Language).

10 O. Zhordania. *The history of the Christian reform in Georgia*, Tb., 1982, p. 30.

11 V. Zukhbaia, Kh. Zantaraia. *Gali. Sokhumi*, 1988, p. 89; D. Chitaia. *The Abkhazian issue in the first republic of Georgia. The public council of Abkhazia in 1917 – 1921 years; his: the social – economical condition of Abkhazia in the first 20th years of XX century*. Tb., 2002, p. 3 – 17.

12 Kvali, 1899, # 3, March 28 (in Geo. language).

13 T. Sakhokia. *The travels*. Tb., 1950, p. 303 (in Georgian).

from Emperor, Nikolai II¹⁴. On December 25 of 1904, according to the highest assigned decision of the ministers committee, the territory of Gagra climatological station was separated from the Sokhumi district and was joined to the Black Sea province. This was the step of tearing off Abkhazia from the rest of Georgia and the assimilation of the region¹⁵.

By the end of the 19th century, the economical opportunities of Abkhazia appeared clearly: in the rural economy – tobacco cultivation, in industry – coal industry, processing of the wooden materials and the health resort business.

The anticolonial movement. Georgian and Abkhazian public were worried about the uncontrollable Russian colonial policy and the implementation of the anti - Georgian psychosis in the minds of specified part of the population. Georgian clergy was defending the interests of the population, as it had happened in many other cases. Bishop Gabriel (Kikodze), the oldest archpriest and after that the dean of the Sokhumi cathedral church David Machavariani and the sacristan of the same church – Besarion Khelaia and many others were trying to defend the legal interests of Georgians and Abkhazians, as much as it was possible. Till the end of 1886, the Abkhazian eparchy was ascribed to the Imereti eparchy, in the head of which there stood the famous ecclesiastic and well-known missionary, bishop Gabriel (Kikodze). He had many times traveled around the whole Abkhazia, preaching the Christian religion, morals and values for the population. We also have to mark his attempt about the implementation of the divine service in the Abkhazian language, which was deprecated then by the Russian administration¹⁶.

The part of the Abkhazian population was Muslim, the success of which was supported by the activities of the Turkish mullahs and by the Mukhajirs who had come back to their homeland. Their activities had led to the weakening of Christianity among the Abkhazian population.

One more factor of the weakening of Christianity appeared to be the announcement of Abkhazians as the “guilty” population (on May 31 of 1880) and the limitations in the social and political rights and the colonization of the region, which was related with that¹⁷.

The goal of Tsarism was the way of redistribution of the territories of Abkhazia, which would have guaranteed the organic fusion with the empire, the fastened colonization and painless rejection from Georgia. In 80^{-ies} of the 19th century, there were made the reforms as in administrative so in the church sphere. In 1883, the Sokhumi military unit was renamed as the Sokhumi district, under the commandment of the Kutaisi governor. Four units were made instead of two districts: Gudauta, Gumista, Kodori and Samurzakano units¹⁸. On June 12 of 1885, according to the order of the emperor and to the assignment of the Sacred Synod, Abkhazian eparchy was restored. The reorganization of the Caucasian eparchy, which was divided between Vladikavkaz and Stavropol eparchies had place in the same year. 10 churches of the Black Sea province were given to the Sokhumi eparchy¹⁹.

The policy of Tsarism was gradually becoming tougher, as it was shown by the example of Samurzakano. During the All – Russian census of the population in 1897, the

14 J. Gamakharia. *From the history of Georgian – Abkhazian mutual relationships*, p. 18.

15 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and orthodoxy*, p. 610.

16 Look about this: *The Sacred Archpriest Gabriel (Kikodze) and Abkhazia*. Tb., 2007.

17 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 516 – 517.

18 *At the same place*, p. 524.

19 *Mtskemsis*, 1885, # 18, September 5 (in Geo. language).

Georgian population of Samurzakano with the Abkhazians were purposefully attached to the highlander nations (see, here, Ch. XXII), with that they were trying to strengthen the idea that Samurzakano population have the other nationality. At the same time, the authorities knew very well, that they were not different with anybody from the local Georgian (Megrelian) population. With the purpose to reject Samurzakano from the Georgian world, there was decided to bring in the writing language on the Megrelian dialect. The authorities wanted to reject Samurzakano from the united Georgian nation with that way, to prevent their fusion with the “guilty” Abkhazians and to ease the Russification of the both with that²⁰. The leading Georgian society in Abkhazia was against these insidious goals. We have to mark, especially the services of the famous writer Tedo Sakhokia and of the ecclesiast of the Sokhumi cathedral church and then the student of the Kazan religious academy - Ambrosi Khelaia.

On February 22 (March 6) of 1899, the anonymous correspondence with the title of “Sokhumi” (there also is a version that it belongs to Ambrosi Khelaia or to Tedo Sakhokia) was published in the newspaper “St. Petersburg statements”. The correspondence was informing the whole Russia about the fact, that according to the instructions made by Sokhumi episcopo Arseni, the divine service in Samurzakano and Abkhazia had had to be on old Slavonic language from 1897, and with that the order of the sacred Synod of September 3 of 1898, about the bringing in of church – Georgian language divine service in Megrelian population of Sokhumi eparchy was being broken.

The official statistic data were given in the correspondence, which were proving that the majority of the eparchy population was Georgians – 60 000 from 106. 719 persons; and in Samurzakano 800 from 40. 299 persons were able to express there selves on Abkhazian language, but the others were considering them selves Georgians. The eparchial administration was willfully attaching the whole Samurzakano population to Abkhazians and they were forbidding them to listen to the divine service in Georgian language. The persons, who were demanding to bring in the divine service in Georgian language, were being persecuted in Abkhazia.

The famous pedagogue and at the same time renegade Konstantine Machavariani had responded this publication through the newspaper “Black Sea Vestnik” (1899, N 72 – 75), where the series of his articles were published, with the title “Do the Samurzakanians have the right to call themselves Megrelians”. The author showed the outspoken tendentiousness and incompetence in the issues of the history of Abkhazia. He was trying in vain to prove that Samurzakano population were not being Georgians. Ambrosi Khelaia for the response to that had published in the same newspaper (May 6 of 1899) the responding letter “the voice of a Samurzakaniian”, where he was showing, on the bases of the concrete historic data, that Megrelians had inhabited the Samurzakano district till the river Psirtskha, but then they were pressed back by the highlanders to the borders of Samurzakano²¹. The first open discussion about the history of Abkhazia was continued with the polemical newspaper publications²². It is also necessary to mark, that the issue about the national belonging of Samurzakano population was excessively politicized. Although,

20 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 552.

21 The Sacred priest Ambrosi (Khelaia) and Abkhazia. p. 62 – 68.

22 Look, The Black Sea Vestnik (informer), 1899, May 8 – 9. # 102 – 103; June 17, 18, 19, ##133 – 135; June 20 # 136. June 23 # 138.

all attempts of the government and of the different Russionizers to reject Samurzakano from the Georgian nation was a complete failure. This is clear even from the report of the committee of the restoring the orthodox Christianity at Caucasus in 1898 – 1901, where is told according to the Samurzakano: “This part of the Sokhumi eparchy, from the ancient times had been the part of the Georgian kingdom, and it had always been inhabited with the population of Georgian tribes, as it is now... there can not be any doubts about the belonging of Samurzakano population to the Georgian tribes²³”. However, the verbal acceptance was not reflected on the practical policy.

The large amount of the territories was cut off from Samurzakano (including Ilori with its unique church complex). In 1903, Sokhumi district was taken out from the composition of the Kutaisi province and it was given under the direct commandment of the general – governor at Caucasus²⁴. The region was left under the commandment of the Kutaisi province in the administrative way.

The activity of the Georgian society according to the case of defending the interests of the country was not left without the attention of the Imperial gendarmery.

In this respect, it is interesting to look through the exchange of the letters (1900) between the gendarmerie administration of the Kutaisi province and Sokhumi bishop Arsen. The worry is felt in the letter exchange, which is caused by the activity of the members of the “Georgian party”, which seemed to have the purpose to Georginize Abkhazia and Samurzakano with the help of school and with the way of restoring the divine service in the Georgian language in Churches. The gendarmery wanted to know if the “Georgian party” was persecuting Russophiles in the sphere of divine service and knowledge, and how far it was trying to Georgianize Abkhazia²⁵. Bishop Arsen, in his answers, confirmed the existence of the “Georgian party” in eparchy, the activities of which seemed to harm the interests of the Russian Empire.

The Kingdom gendarmerie gathered the detailed information about the activities of the “Georgian party”, which was presented by the Kutaisi governor to the Caucasian authorities. On May 1 of 1904, the council of the head commander had viewed the activities of the Georgian patriots, who were acting against “the measures of the government about the Russification of the region” and they had decided to banish them from the Caucasus²⁶.

The members of the “Georgian party” were T. Sakhokia, Ant. Jugeli, J. Gegia, I. Burchuladze, S. Norakidze, G. Kandelaki, P. Davitaia, priests – D. Machavariani, I. Kereselidze, I. Chkhenkeli, B. Khelaia and others. According to the Georgian clergy, the council answered, that it “is not only against all kinds of measures of the government in the direction of the fast Russification of the region but it is also expressing the obvious activities against such measures²⁷”. This decision is not an accusation, but the highest estimation of the historic services of Georgian priesthood in Abkhazia, which prevented the assimilation of the region’s population.

The activities of the “Georgian party” for the official authorities appeared to be the

23the committee of the restoring the orthodox Christianity at Caucasus in 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901 years. Tiflis, 1903, p. 88 – 89.

24 B. Zukhbaia. Sokhumi. Tb., 1997, p. 138; 50 years of the soviet Abkhazia. Sokhumi. 1971, p. 26.

25 The Sacred priest Ambrosi (Khelaia) and Abkhazia, p. 144, 145.

26 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 598 – 601.

27 Z. Papaskiri. The articles..., part I, p. 228.

“evil”, had to be eradicated for once and forever²⁸. In spite of the suppressions and persecution, Georgian patriots were continuing the unequal struggle with Tsarism, which was shown by their next public and political activities.

The religious life. By the end of the 19th century, the traditional belief (heathenism) was still predominating among Abkhazians, but also there were people who were trend to the Christianity or Islam. The orthodoxy in Abkhazia was worshiped mainly by the Georgians, Russians and Greeks⁵.

By that time (by the end of the 19th century) there were 74 functioning churches in Abkhazia, 13 churches from that number were in Gudauta district, Gumista district – 14, Kodori district – 16, Samurzakano district – 31; The priests who served there were: 60 Georgian, 7 Greek, 5 Russian

and two Abkhazians²⁹. During the Russian – Turkish war in 1877 – 1878 a lot of Churches were ruined or damaged. Their restoring was actively started after the end of the war, with the help of the great service of bishop Gabriel (Kikodze³⁰). From the second half of 80^{-ies} of 19th century, Abkhazia was the independent eparchy, which after bishop Gabriel was ruled only by the Russian clergy. The Sokhumi eparchy was ruled by: 1. sacred archpriest Gabriel (Kikodze) who was the temporary administrator from June of 1868, from May 30 of 1869 year, who had been the administrator of the eparchy till 1886; 2. Genadi (Pavlinki) – was assigned on November 28 of 1886, he was devoted on December 28 of the same year, and he died on March 31 of 1889; 3. Alexander (Khovanski) - May 24 of 1889 – February 12 of 1891; 4. Agafodor (Preobrojenski) – March 2 of 1891 – 17 July of 1893 ; 5. Peter (Drugov) – August 21 of 1893 – January 28 of 1895 ; 6. Arseni (Izotov) – February 2 of 1895 – March 26 of 1905 year. 7. Serafim (Chichagov) – March 27 of 1905 – February 3 of 1906³¹. Bishop Arsen who was Archreactionary and chauvinist was notable among them. His hate of the Georgians and the Georgian language had led to the fact, that from 1897, the divine service in Georgian language was forbidden by his order. He was the one who renewed the petition on October 20 of 1901, which was presented to the Sacred Synod and which was about the separation of the Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate and the appropriation of the independent status to it. At the same time, the Sokhumi Bishop presented the analogical petition to the head commander G. Golitsin. He agreed the suggestion of bishop Arsen and on December 15 of 1901 he presented the same request to the attorney – general of the Synod, K. Pobedonostsev³². The petition of bishop Arsen with the letter of the head commander was sent for the conclusion to the exarch of Georgia Aleksei by the Sacred Synod on January 4 of 1902 . He had generally agreed with the suggestions of the head commander and episcopo Arsen, however he had advanced the new plan about the attachment of Sokhumi eparchy to the Kubani district, which was supported by G. Golitsin. The only goal of the rejection of Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate and its attachment to the Kubani district had appeared to be the assimilation of the region and the weakening of the Georgian influence in the region. This plan had nothing common with the interest of Orthodoxy.

In October of 1903, the information about the rejection of Sokhumi eparchy from the

28 Look. A. Nodia. *The letter from Abkhazia. – Iveria, 1902, March 29.*

29 *The Sacred priest Ambrosi (Khelaia) and Abkhazia, p. 385 – 391.*

30 *The Sacred priest Gabriel and Abkhazia, p. 64, 631 – 632.*

31 *At the same place, p. 671 – 672.*

32 *J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 610 – 612.*

Georgian exarchate and about its direct submission to the Synod was spread. Supposedly, such decision had been made in Petersburg, but the Sacred Synod was waiting for the opportunity of its announcement.

However, the rising of the revolutionary movement in the Empire, had made the Synod to postpone the final decision or the realization of already made resolution³³.

Policy of the Russian bishops was insidious and far – reaching. Its goal was the forced banishment of the Georgian language from Abkhazia, which had been dominant here for centuries, and the bringing of the Slavic divine service, and creation of the chasm (gap) in the ecclesiastic sphere between Georgians and Abkhazians with that. According to their opinion, the rejection of the Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate would have speeded the assimilation of the region.

Russian bishops had found the support of Kutaisi governor F. Gershelman, who was the active bearer of the colonial and chauvinistic policy. In the up given report of September 2 of 1900, he was writing, that for the eradication of the Georgian influence from the Sokhumi district it was necessary “the deprivation of the church and the school from the hands of the Georgian priesthood, ” and also “to assign the Russian priests and Abkhazians as much as it was possible, in Sokhumi eparchy with the visits of Abkhazian and Samurzakano population... In case of the assignment of the Russian clergy in Sokhumi eparchy, the religious schools would be able to get the wide development there and will serve for the rising of the mental and moral level of the local population, and for the weakening of its customs, and for the fusion of the foreign population with Russians in the future³⁴”.

Forced Christianization accompanied with the Russianizing of the local population, was making Abkhazians to prefer the Islam belief much more – according to the words of S. Basaria³⁵. According to the instructions of the Sacred Synod from September 3 of 1898, the divine service in the Slavic language was brought to the Abkhazian parish (there was allowed to say several prayers in the Abkhazian language). In Georgian parish there was allowed to perform the divine service in the Georgian language, but bishop Arseni was letting in only three parishes (Merkheuli, Abjakva, Pakhulani) of the whole eparchy to have the divine service in the native language of the population (the rest of the population he was willfully attaching to the Abkhazian population). According to the instructions of the Georgian – Imeretian office of the Synod of March 17 of 1898, the teaching of the Georgian language was forbidden in the schools of Abkhazia and Samurzakano³⁶.

According to the census of 1897, the main part of the Abkhazian population were orthodox, there number was – 87 064 persons, Muslims – 11 062, Armenians of the Gregorian belief – 6 536, Lutherans – 954, Catholics – 375, Judaists – 162³⁷; There also were the other small numbered religious confessions.

The bearer of the Russian religious influence in Abkhazia was the Novo Atoni Monastery, which was uniting the hundreds of Russian monks. According to the words of K.

33 *Ibid*, p. 616 – 617.

34 A. Silagadze, V. Guruli. *From the history of the fight about the indivisibility of Georgia*, section II, p. 83-84.

35 S. Basaria. *Abkhaz ia*, p. 55; Look: G. Rogava. *The spiritual activity of Georgians in Abkhazia in XIX century*. Tbilisi, 2002, p. 34.

36 *The Sacred priest Ambrosi (Khelaia) and Abkhazia*, p. 63; A. Silagadze, V. Guruli. *From the history of the fight about the indivisibility of Georgia*, section II, p. 83.

37 *The first international letter exchange*, p. 86 – 87.

Machavariani, this monastery was “the government in the government”³⁸. It had the large estates not only in Abkhazia, as it has already been mentioned before, but also in the different regions of the empire: in Petersburg, Novorossiysk, Tuapse and so on, from where it was receiving the large incomes. The monastery had the fisheries at the coast of the Caspian sea³⁹. The Novo Atoni monastery was busy with the wide commercial activities.

According to the order of the Emperor, in 1885, the Pitsunda monastery with its land property, with pine forests and with the lake Inkit was joined to the Novo Atoni monastery. This meant that one more important centre of the Georgian church, the residence of the west Georgian (Abkhazian) Catholicoses was passed to the hands of the Russian monks⁴⁰.

The church in Abkhazia was the tool of the Russification for Tsarism, which was easing the incorporation of the given territory. The main role was given to the church schools in which the studies were in the Russian language. The number of such schools was growing all the time⁴¹. From the second half of 90-ies years of the 19th century, the Georgian language was being forced out from the schools and Churches of Abkhazia and also Samurzakano, though thanks to the Georgian priests and pedagogues, it was still saving the definite positions. The Abkhazian language was in much more difficult position. In the schools Abkhazians were forced to use the Russian language and in the churches – the Slavic language. All this was creating the base for their Russification, which was calling out the serious discontent of the local Abkhazian population and of the patriotic pedagogues.

Education. In the result of the Russian – Turkish war of 1877 – 1878 years, the large number of the Abkhazian schools were ruined or damaged. Their gradual restoring and the renewal of the study process were started after the war. According to the data for 1880, 190 Georgians and 36 Abkhazians were studying in the schools of Abkhazia⁴². From that time, the authorities started the vigorous activities in the sphere of education, to create the effective mechanism for the region’s Russification with the help of the schools. On June 13 of 1884, the emperor assigned the conditions about the religious schools, and in 1885 the religious schools of the orthodoxy restoring committee were turned into the parochial schools⁴³.

By the end of the 19th century, the main part of the Abkhazian population was illiterate; the part of the educated population in the Sokhumi district was 9.7%, in the city of Sokhumi – 41.7%⁴⁴. It also has to be marked, that there was nobody among the village population of Abkhazia with the high technical education. The Cossacks and other foreign resettled population, who lived in Sokhumi district, also did not have the high education⁴⁵. In the city of Sokhumi, from this category of the population, there were just three persons with the middle special education, and in the whole district there were just 32 men and 36 women with the middle education⁴⁶. The different picture was recorded in the families of the high strata of the society – princes and officials. In this social category 1653 persons

38 K. Machavariani. The descriptive guide – book, p. 190 – 191; look: Sh. Inal – Ipa. Abkhazians, p. 505.

39 S. Avidzba. Novo Atoni Cathedral church of the name of saint Pantheleimon. Sokhumi, 1977, p. 6 – 8; look: The sacred archpriest Gabriel and Abkhazia, p. 45 – 57.

40 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 523

41 Ibid, p. 1020 – 1029

42 Ibid, p. 520.

43 Ibid, p. 520, 521.

44 The first census of Russian empire. LXVI. Kutaisi. S-Pb., 1905, p. 1.

45 Ibid, p. 80.

46 Ibid, p. 80.

had appeared to be educated, and illiterate – 3574 persons⁴⁷; 35 persons had the highest education, specific technical – 7, middle specific – 20, and the middle – 275⁴⁸.

Education level among the clergy and among the other strata of the population of Sokhumi district was also quiet low. T. Sakhokia was seeing in the system of the education the reason of the low literacy level, which had the “goal of the population’s Russification”. “If not this system of the mental and physical defacement – he was writing, there are no other ways to explain that sad fact, that today, from the children of this gifted nation, as Abkhazians appear to be, there is nobody who had graduated the highest educational school⁴⁹”. T. Sakhokia was marking, that because of the Russian educational system, there the process of denationalization of Abkhazians is under way, which are gradually drifted apart from Georgians. The authorities were also trying to drift away Samurzakano with the same educational system. According to this situation, the national education in Abkhazia was given the special meaning. The way out from this situation was the returning of Abkhazia to the traditional Georgian Christian – Orthodox cultural world or its fusion with the Russian cultural world, giving in such case, no chances of the avoidance of the Russification. On the assumption of its colonial policy, Tsarism was obviously not going to create the Georgian educational system in that region⁵⁰. Its global political mission in the strategically important geopolitical space was the active Russification, which would have been possible only in the way of the cultivation of the Russian educational system. So the given policy was the definitive one from the end of the 19th century to 1917. In 1880 – 1905, 86 schools were opened in Abkhazia, from them, the schools of the Committee of the restoring of Orthodoxy were – 3 (in Mokvi, Achandare and Pokveshi); And the others were under the administration of the eparchial educational council⁵¹.

In Abkhazia, namely in Samurzakano, due to the small number of the schools and their inaccessibility, there were used the public methods of the home education

⁵², where the main roles were given to the teachers, priests, monks and to the housewives. In families there existed the “verbal schools”, where were studied the poem of Shota Rustaveli (12 – 13th centuries) “the Knight in the Panther’s Skin” and the other works. These were the “schools” which had saved the Georgian spirit in Abkhazia.

There were 46 teachers in the public schools of Abkhazia in 1900; from them 3 were Abkhazians, 25 – Georgians, 14 – Russians, 1 – Estonian, 1 – German⁵³.

In 1880, in Sokhumi highland school, which was opened in 1863 for the highlander’s children (was functioning till 1917) were recorded 80 pupils. It served to the Russification of the youth for all the time of its existence⁵⁴.

47 *Ibid*, p. 78.

48 *Ibid*, p. 78 – 83.

49 Tsnobis purtseli, 1905, April 1 (in Geo. language), J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 363.

50 Look: I. Gelenava. Parish schools of Abkhazia (1900 – 1917 year). – Logos, Tb., 2007, # 4 , p. 209 – 215 (in Geo. language); I. Glenava. About the several aspects of the religious educational politics of Tsarism in Abkhazia in 1900 – 1917 years – The historic verticals, 2005, # 9, p. 81 – 89 (in Geo. language)

51 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 1020 – 1029.

52 I. Gelenava. About the several aspects of the religious educational politics of Tsarism in Abkhazia in 1900 – 1917 years (on the bases of the data of Samurzakano). -Klio, 2005, # 26, p. 77 – 98.

53 N. Vekua. The elementary education in the pre revolutionary Abkhazia of 1851 – 1917 years. Sokhumi, 1958, p. 143.

54 N. Vekua. Sokhumi highland school (1863 – 1917 years.) - to the communistic raising up, 1958. # 5, p. 73.

By the end of 19th century and by the beginning of the 20th century, the Georgian and Abkhazian pedagogues were working hard in the schools of Abkhazia, from whom there were remarkable F. Eshba, A. Chochua, I. Gegia, P. Charaia, T. Sakhokia, A. Jugeli, K. Machavariani, P. Shakril, N. Chedia, N. Janashia, I. Lakerbaia, G. Eshba, N. Kirtbaia, K. Marshania. D. Adjamov and others.

The work for the improvement of Abkhazian writing language was continuing. In 1892, K. Machavariani and D. Gulia composed the new Abkhazian alphabet and published it in Tbilisi. It is obvious, that the support of the Georgian public figures according the creation of the Abkhazian writing language was the sincere showing of the honor to the Abkhazian nation. “This our alphabet, - as D. Gulia was writing, - was given to the Abkhazian schools first and with it, the children of Abkhazians started to study on their native language⁵⁵”. There had appeared the opportunity to communicate with the nation on its native language. But the alphabet had not played the noticeable role in the case of the Abkhazian population’s education, due to the fact, that the goal of the Tsarism had appeared to be the Russification of the region. On the edge of 19 – 20th centuries in Abkhazia there was functioning the quite influential “the union of the true Russians”. The members of this chauvinistic organization were struggling for the eradication of the Georgian language in Sokhumi district. The main inspirers of the union were the representatives of the local Russian population and the Russian priesthood, including L. Progulbitski (the commander of the district), V. Jastrebov (the eparchial administrator of the parochial schools), the priests S. Protopopov, S. Alferov, G. Golubtsov and others.

They were doing everything for the Russification of the region and for the deepening of the Georgian – Abkhazian resistance, they were trying to harm the Georgians, who were at the responsible posts, not disdaining delations and slander⁵⁶.

In spite of Tsarism’s attempts to drive a wedge between the Abkhazian and Georgian nations, the traditional friendly relation, between the two nations was continuing. The friendship between George Michaelovich Sharvashidze (1846 – 1918) and Akaki Tsereteli was exemplary. The philologists had discovered, that in their works there is felt the deep relation as in aesthetic as well in thematic, ideal and religious points of views. There is also an interesting fact, that the Hungarian painter Michael Zich had sat Michael Sharvashidze for the creation of the imagery of the hero of poem “the Knight in the Panther’s Skin” – Avtandili.

The other public figures of Abkhazia – Konstantine Georgevish Sharvashidze (1813 – 1883), David Chkhotua and others had also played the great role in the case of Georgian – Abkhazian relation strengthening⁵⁷.

The leader of the national liberation movement, the uncrowned king of Georgia, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837 – 1907) was also very popular in Abkhazia. On May 22 of 1903 he arrived in Sokhumi from Gagra, where he was staying by the invitation of the Prince A. Oldenburgski⁵⁸. The inhabitants of the city had met I. Chavchavadze in Sokhumi, who

55 D. Gulia. *The history of Abkhazia*, v. I, p. 21.

56 A. Khvingia. *The memories. Manuscript, notebook # 2*, p. 54; *Look: The museum of Georgian education, case 4669*. p. 56; Z. Tsintsadze. *At the sources of the rejection of Abkhazia from Georgia. – The problems of Abkhazian history*, Tb., 1998, p. 138.

57 T. Mibchuani. *Abkhazia, part I*. Tb., 2006, p. 148 – 150.

58 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia*, p. 777.

was accompanied by Al. Orbeliani and Dimitri Cholokhashvili⁵⁹ with great delight. According to the newspaper “Iveria”, in the evening of May 22, the population strolling along the Sokhumi Boulevard met I. Chavchavadze and his companions with great delight, “Everybody wanted to see the pride of Georgia, and everybody wanted to hear his voice and was stealthily following him⁶⁰”.

The local Georgian and Abkhazian intelligentsia: T. Sakhokia, I. Miminoshvili, S. Turkia, A. Chukbar, E. Gabunia, Masho Anchabadze (the sister of the writer Shalva Dadiani), G. Norakidze and others had arranged the solemn dinner for to the arrival of Ilia Chavchavadze on May 24 in the garden of Alexander and Ivane Sharvashidze. At the table, Ilia chavchavadze proposed the following toast: “From my friends and from me I am thanking you for the great honor, and I pray to god to save you, the local Georgians, from that danger, which appeared in front of my eyes after I walked and looked around this region. This marvelous Georgian – Abkahazian land has been defended by the sword till now and it has been saved somehow. Now the sword is put in the scabbard. Today, as I see, the new enemy is coming, but not directly, as the glorious sabre, but on the quiet, as the robbers do, it comes as the tempter and the thief. This enemy is the evil money. They will treat you with smile on their faces and with caring, and they will take away this beautiful, marvelous and rich country, that primarily you will be thankful.

I will also say: God, please do not lead them into the dangerous temptation, you who had not been defeated with the brave saber, are not to be defeated by the coward money and to save this marvelous country, where the blood of the Georgians had been spilted for you and for your children, for the happiness and pride of your relatives⁶¹.

Thus, from 80 -ies of the 19th century, the Imperialistic politics in Abkhazia was toughened. The most vividly it was shown in the sphere of education, which was marked by the complete displacement of the Georgian language from the schools and the acceptance the Russian language there. The process of the Russification of the church was going on, only Russian archpriests were being assigned at the Sokhumi chair, the active work of the territorial division of Abkhazia was also started. The Gagra district was cut off from Abkhazia and it was joined to the Black Sea district. The foreign colonization of the region was widely established, in the rank of the state politics was risen the deepening of resistance between Abkhazians and Georgians, the suppress of the Georgian population of Abkhazia was mostly grown, mainly of the Samurzakano population.

2. Abkhazia in the period of the democratic revolution, reactions and the first world war (1905 – 1917)

At the beginning of XX century Russia appeared in front of the serious political, economical and social problems. The wide revolutionary – democratic movement had covered the whole Empire, which was getting much more stronger after the defeat in the war with Japan (1904 – 1905). In 1901 – 1903 the pre revolutionary situation was felt in many Georgian regions. The opposition between the autocracy and the democratic forces was

⁵⁹ J. Gogebashvili. *About Abkhazia. Works*, v. IV. Tb., 1955, p. 200.

⁶⁰ *Iveria*, 1903, # 118, June 4.

⁶¹ *Iveria*, 1903, June 28; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia*, p. 362, 727 – 728; look: I. Gelenava. *From the cultural life of Abkhazia (1917 – 1921 years)*. Tb., 2003, p. 36 – 36.

deepened, it was also deepened between the peasants and the landlords, capitalists and workers, between Tsarism and the national liberating movements, which had found the concentrated expression in the revolutionary situation, which arose by the end of 1904 .

The revolutionary and the democratic movement was also under way in Abkhazia, where the bulk of the workers were Georgians (the number of Abkhazians among the workers was very small). After the beginning of the 1905 revolution, in Abkhazia there were held 11 strikes, rallies, manifestations and people's assemblies during the first three months⁶².

In several regions of Abkhazia, the peasants were taking the authority in their hands, and were creating the organs of the national – democratic administration. The same process had place in Samurzakano, where so called “Samurzakano Republic” was founded.

The peasant authority existed for about a year⁶³. The memories about “the Gagra republic” are also left in the history, which existed for 2 months. There are also several data, that from November 16 of to 20 of December 1905, the “revolutionary government” was functioning in Sokhumi⁶⁴.

Due to the democratic movement, the Tsarism had come to terms of the agreement of the liberal reform establishment. Several reforms were also made in Caucasus, namely the institute of the general – governor of the king was restored. In January of 1905, the head commander G. Golitsin was deprived of his post and in February of the same year, I. Vrontsov – Dashkov was assigned on his place as the general – governor of the king. At the same time, the commander of the Sokhumi district, the violent chauvinist V. Progulbitski was replaced by the prince L. Jandieri on this post. The chauvinistic minded bishops – the exarch of Georgia, Aleksei, the Sokhumi episcopo Arsen, the main ideologist of the region's Russification – the Dean I. Vostorgov were taken away from Georgia, including Abkhazia. The new exarch of Georgia, Nikolai (1905 – 1906) and The Sokhumi episcopo Serafim were transacting comparatively liberal politics. For example, the episcopo Serafim, had allowed to have the divine service in the Georgian language after the 15 year long exemption⁶⁵. In spite of the halved compromises from the side of the authorities, the anti government national uprising was still continuing.

The growth of the revolutionary movement in Abkhazia was mainly noticed from the autumn of 1905 , which was caused by the intensification of the revolutionary movement as in Moscow, as well in Petersburg. The tensed situation in the both capital cities reached their apogee on October 17. The Emperor Nikolai II had to publish the manifest the same day about the giving of the main democratic rights to the Russian citizens and about the convocation of the state Duma.

The Georgian and Abkhazian historiography is justly drawing the attention to the fact of the inactivity of ethnical Abkhazians in the revolution of 1905 – 1907. Yet, in 1910, the active warrior against the Imperial regime, George Sharvashidze was marking: “the unexpected event had happened here. How did it come and what was the reason for Abkhazians, “the famous rebels” to sit calmly, when the whole Russia was worried. It is difficult to understand these rascals. They always do such things that you are not expected for. But this is very easy, the smart officials are saying. The feudal regime is still continu-

62 O. Bgazhba, S. Lakoba. *The history of Abkhazia*, p. 265.

63 S. Lakoba. *Abkhazian gunmen of the revolution 1905 – 1907 years. Sokhumi, 1984*, p. 42.

64 *Ibid*, p. 37.

65 J. Gamakharia, *Abkhazia and orthodoxy*, p. 617 – 680.

ing there; this had to be pulled out from them, because it is funny to have the nation with the feudal system in our times... the revolutionary propaganda had no success, because there is no social conflict here⁶⁶”.

In May of 1906, at the council of the general – governor, there was marked, that the population of Abkhazia, which had the official name of “guilty”, during the last events, unlike the other inhabitants of the nearby regions, had shown the loyalty to the government⁶⁷, and the several part of Abkhazian was proud of that⁶⁸. The one thing is obvious: The social conflict in Abkhazia, because of the existence of specific economical relations here had turned into the intra national conflict. “Does the tense of the relations between Abkhazians and Megrelians have the base? Yes it does, - was writing the famous Georgian writer, public and political figure, I. Gomarteli in 1917. – And this base had the pure economical character. Abkhazians are not busy with either the rural economy, or arable farming, or trade, or industry... Abkhazian is – graceful, well - composed, handsome. He loves the horses, feast, nature, but the work – he does not love. He has as much lands that he can afford not to work⁶⁹. He gives his land to Megrelian, Greek or Armenian. The Armenians and Greeks are the main entrepreneurs and manufacturers in Abkhazia. They rent the land from Abkhazian, they grow tobacco, they make a lot of money and they are never late to give the rental payment to Abkhazian, and often they give it beforehand. That’s why there is no dissatisfaction between Abkhazians, Greeks and Armenians on these bases.

The real farmer in Abkhazia is Megrelian. The opposition between Abkhazian and Megrelian always emerges during the period of each revolutionary movement, because the first one is the landlord, and the second one is the farmer. Megrelian does not give the harvest to the Abkhazian, or he gives the less. The socialistic advocacy: the land to the toiler, farmer – this propaganda had been brought through the Megrelians and it is frightening the Abkhazian. Abkhazian is afraid of: If it happens, then Megrelian will take away the land. All these provoke the conflict of interests among the inhabitants of Abkhazia... The democratic mind is growing among Megrelians as well among the whole Georgia. And the Abkhazian nobility is loosing the authority and the ground.

The Abkhazian nobility has the great influence on the Abkhazians. Abkhazian peasants obey their nobility blindly. They do not have that class dissidence, because here is not the land deficiency and those economic relations between the classes, that we have. Abkhazian nobility is trying to maintain its influence. This influence has the danger which is coming from Megrelia, from where the democratic and social – democratic mind is coming. That is why the Abkhazian nobility is trying to break up with Megrelians and to guarantee its own influence and existence in Abkhazia with that⁷⁰”.

66 G. Sharvashidze. *The work in two volumes*, v. I. Kutaisi, 2006, p. 301 – 302.

67 J. Gamakharia. *From the history of Georgian – Abkhazian mutual relationships*, p. 23.

68 Kavkaz, 1906. January 13.

69 *The idea of the Russian about the Abkhazians and their farming was a bit different. In the official textbook of Geography is said: The Abkhazians by their appearance greatly differ from the Circassians. . . , the appearance is wild and rough. The main characteristic feature of the Abkhazians is - laziness and carelessness; during the whole year the Abkhazian works nor more than 20-30 days, the rest of the time he does nothing or wanders. . . The piece of a land being somehow toiled gives such harvest of the corn, that is enough for the Abkhazian during the year”* (A. Baranov, N. Gorelov. *The Geography of the Russian Empire*, Moscow, 1914, p. 139).

70 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia*, p. 393 – 394.

The dominant position and the influence of the nobility had predetermined the negative attitude of Abkhazians to the democratic reforms, which the representatives of the other nations, mainly Georgians were struggling for. Such situation, such position of Abkhazians was deepening the oppositions with Georgians.

According to S. Lakoba's opinion, Abkhazian peasants, unlike the others, were not able to perceive the social – democratic ideas, because there were not into the commodity – financial relations, and into the working activities. The trade was considered as the humiliating activity by them; Abkhazians, with the rare exception, were not living in the largely inhabited settlement places at all – in Sokhumi, Gudauta and Ochamchire⁷¹.

According to S. Lakoba, one of the reasons of Abkhazians deviation from the revolution, after the Russian officials of that period, is the fact that Abkhazians perceived it as “the Georgian revolution”. Such idea about the revolution had appeared to be the cause of the propagandistic “educational” works, which were done by the authorities for the decades. They were the ones (Russians), who were implementing the hate of the Georgians in the minds of the Abkhazians⁷². This was happening then, when on the liberated, in the result of Mukhadjir movement, Abkhazian lands, the government was operatively settling down the different sectarians and the representatives of any nations, except Georgians.

The progressive Georgian society was worried about situation in Abkhazia in 1905. The first results of the Imperial policy – “divide and rule” were clearly displayed. In the Georgian newspapers there were systematically published the letters with the exposures of the “power of darkness”, which were spreading the gossips that Georgians are planning to destroy all Abkhazians with the purpose of getting their lands⁷³. The active ideological work was done in every strata of Abkhazian society, the provokers were activated and they stirred up the brothers against each other and Abkhazians (the influential figures) were given the advices: “We know that you are calm, kind and the right nation, we do not have to expect for any kind of disorder from you... However, your neighbor – Georgians, are not reliable. They are planning something about your annihilation so “bit them”... the advices had given the results and the vicious powers had directed the brothers against each other⁷⁴”.

After the Moscow bloody events of December of 1905, the decrease of the revolutionary movement was started in the whole Empire. In such circumstances, the authorities had decided to establish the administrative changes in the Sokhumi district. The project about the attachment of the Sokhumi district to the Black Sea province was being made for the long time. As soon as, this became known, the Sokhumi city commander Niko Tavdgiridze and Alexander Sharvashidze on behalf of Abkhazia presented the petition to the general – governor about the attachment of Sokhumi district not to the Black Sea district,

71 Z. Papaskiri. The articles..., part I, p. 243.

72 N. Tavdgiridze, who during the years had the highest positions in Abkhazia (head of the town Sukhumi, head of the Sukhumi district etc.), later wrote that:” Here especially during the 15-20 years, their (Russians – author) work and propaganda was directed towards implementing of the idea to the Abkhazians that the integrity with Georgia ruined them”, that the Georgians are trying to swallow and destroy them”. “That idea - he wrote: - with the help of the teachers and clergy was implemented at the schools among the pupils” (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia, Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 66).

73 Tsnobis purtseli, 1905, May 5 (in Geo. language); J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 365.

74 Tsnobis purtseli, 1905, April 22 (in Geo. Language).

but to the Kutaisi province. “This petition - was writing the newspaper “Tsnobis purtseli” on September 7 of 1905, - the general – governor had passed to the Kutaisi governor, and he had ordered him to create the commission composed with the persons being aware of the matter and to find out which will be better – the attachment of Sokhumi district to the Black Sea district or to the Kutaisi province”. On November 19 of 1905, the same newspaper also published the demands of Sokhumi district inhabitants. The authors of the documents were requesting the general – governor:

“1. To leave this district in its historic borders, as the special independent corner with the point of view of the administrative governing – and if such is not possible, than it should be attached to the Black Sea district, but the administrative centre should stay Sokhumi.

2. The Abkhazian inhabitants, who live in this district should never be given abusive and undeserved names as “guilty”, as it is being done by the administration officials, during the written and conversations with them.

3. The inhabitants of this district should have be given the same rights as the inhabitants of Samurzakano district; the inhabitants who has no land, should immediately be given the lands; the inhabitants of the district, the Russian subjects, who had settled down not less then 7 years ago and who own any land, should immediately sign themselves in any of the communities and they and their descendants and nobody else will be using that lands; Megrelians, who live in this district on the lands, which they had bought, should be signed in that communities, where they live at the moment, and they should be signed out from the communities, where they had come from.

4. With the highest allowance that Abkhazian should be returned, which had been resettled to Turkey in 1877 – 1878 and now they want to come back. It is necessary to give the government lands back to them for the farmsteads.

5. The population should be given without any payment the state winter and summer pasture.

6. The police guards of Caucasus should be dismissed immediately, because they do nothing good, but harm the population. Instead of them, the unit composed by the locals for the self defense must be created.

7. The postal road between Gagra and Zugdidi should be opened immediately and to free people from the maintenance of the post - horses.

8. The secular, free of charge and necessary education should be brought in immediately.

9. All the scholarships, after the release from the Stavropolian male classical school should be transferred to the Sokhumi real school and the number of the scholarships should be grown.

10. In all the schools, that are existing in this district the study of the Georgian language should have to be made necessary, and for the ones who wish – Abkhazian too, for the Abkhazians – Muslim – Arabian.

11. The scholarships for highest schools should be singled out for the inhabitants of the district.

12. The Sokhumi highland school should immediately be reorganized as the rural economical school with its prep units.

13. The good medical unit and hospitals should be opened.

14. The soldiers of Sokhumi district should be allowed to serve their military duty at Caucasus and not at the other place.

15. The institute of the jury trial and attorneys from the chosen judges should be created immediately.

16. The population should be given the right to choose the priest and in general clergy on their own as the orthodox, as well the Muslim.

17. The local inhabitants should be offered any posts, in case if they have the corresponding educational skills⁷⁵”.

In this demands, which were made by the inhabitants of the Sokhumi district several antagonisms appear. They are clearly seen, for example in the issues 1 and 10, although there are shown the kind relations to Georgia and to the Georgian language. The first issue appears to be the diplomatic step of the document’s authors, who had agreed the attachment of the Sokhumi district to the Black Sea district only in case if Sokhumi would have been assigned as the administrative centre. With that the authors of the documents were implying about the restoration of the north – west borders of the historic Georgia, which were till Nikopsia (north from the river Tuapse) and the river Kuban⁷⁶. This could not be included in the interests of the government. The general – governor had had to agree with several demands, as to the issue about the attachment of the Sokhumi district to the Black Sea province, it had been temporary postponed.

The withdrawal of Abkhazians from the revolutionary movement was good for the imperial officials. The newspaper “Okrai Rossi” was writing about this: “the socialism had not been brought to Abkhazians yet and that’s why it is still possible to live with them⁷⁷”. The newspaper “Kavkaz”, in 1906, considering the position which was taken by Abkhazians during the revolution and about the “disorders” in Sokhumi, was writing: “Abkhazian are holding themselves commendably⁷⁸”. On April 27 of 1907, for the support of Tsarism during its critical days, the Emperor agreed the petition of the general – governor about taking the name “guilty” off Abkhazians.

On May 11 of 1907, I. Vorontsov – Dashkov in his speech to the Abkhazians was showing the hope, that in the future “Abkhazians will never be guilty against their king emperor” and that in 1905 they “came out from the test with honor⁷⁹”. The Imperial “charity” had inspired the Abkhazians. Soon they requested the right to serve in the army and they got it (only Christians). According to the newspaper “Kavkaz”, which was published on December 12 of 1907, the fundamental change and not the awakening of the self – consciousness of the population was started then. From that period, the national movement being Abkhazian is loosing the progressive composition (the love of freedom, democracy) and is becoming the tool of the Imperial politic establishment against Georgians and the whole Caucasus. The inapplicable fighters against the Empire in the XIX century are against their will becoming its loyal servants and support from the beginning of XX century⁸⁰.

75 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 366 – 367.

76 Ibid, p. 729 – 730.

77 Z. Papaskiri. The articles..., Part I, p. 243.

78 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia, p. 731.

79 Ibid, 368 – 369.

80 Ibid, p. 66.

The convocation of the first state Duma, which was considered by the manifest of October 17 of 1905, had appeared to be the important event in the political life of Russia. The elections for the state Duma could not have been done during the growth of the revolutionary movement, but in February – March of 1906 they were still taken. The elections for the Duma in Georgia were taken in April – May of 1906 year. The deputy from the Sokhumi, Batumi and Karsa districts had become the general Prokopi Sharvashidze⁸¹. He, who had appeared to be the deputy of the III state Duma too, he gave the reproof to the chauvinists, who were bringing the difference between Abkhazians and Georgians with there statements. On February 7 of 1909, P. Sharvashidze wrote a letter which was responding the provocative statements of the candidate Markov II in the state Duma. “as I am looking through the stenographic report of the 46th conference of the state Duma of February 4, which unfortunately due to my illness I was not able to attend, - he was writing, - with the great consternation I have found the next words of the Kursk deputy Markov II, concerning Abkhazia:

“We know, that after the request, the famous prince Jandieri, the commander of the Sokhumi district, who had been to Abkhazians during the revolution and had demanded the verdict from them, in which they would have expressed their wish about the self – ruling with the Georgian language, was dismissed. Abkhazians had refused that, and instead they arrived to Sokhumi with arms and made the statement: “if you do not stop the revolution, we will kill all of you”. This had been one of the most realistic measures, which calmed Sokhumi. Jandieri had presented 8 princes for the banishment almost to the Siberia as the punishment. Prince Sharvashidze can tell this, who had troubled over them and was asking not to send this heroes to Siberia by the order of general – governor of his Imperial Majesty”.

The verification of the fact, that the petition about the banishment of the up mentioned persons was started by the prince Jandieri, is not only impossible for me to be done, but inversely, I consider to be the duty for me to make the statement, that the initiative itself about the request to the local princes, for the support of the more influential representatives of the local nobility, belongs exactly to the prince Jandieri, who, with his knowledge of the local life and the local population and with his rare administrative tact was able to save the prestige of the government in the district during the difficult year of the revolution and I can only express my general regret concerning his dismissal from the post, on which he had stayed with the height of his status, all the time⁸²”.

The Sokhumi episcope Kirion, who had been in Petersburg due to the discussion of the issue about the renewal of the autocephaly of the Georgian church in the Sacred Synod, once visited the state Duma. The Chairman of Duma, S. Muromtsev had met him with the great honor and gave him the seat next to the ministers. “The debates are making quite good impression - The episcope Kirion was writing – as freely, as it is in Duma, I have never breathed in my life. It is full with oratory and it goes over the edges. The order at the sessions is exemplary, but the hot temper of all orators is noticeable. They all serve

⁸¹ In the second State Duma (February – June of 1907) from this regions Konstantine Kandelaki was presented, In the third (September – October of 1907 – June of 1912) Pr. Sharvashidze again, in the fourth (September – October of 1912 – February of 1917) Samurzakono representative Akaki Chkhenkeli (G. Saitidze. Georgian political idea and the state Duma of Russia (1905 – 1917). Tb., 2005).

⁸² The news of the trance Caucasus, 1909, February 18.

for the right work. The history will mark the great meaning of this Duma, but now it will only get the persecution from the side of the government⁸³. Soon, on July 8 of 1906, the refractory Duma was really dissolved.

The assignment of episcope Kirion at the Sokhumi chair (on February 3 of 1906) was already the compromise of the government in front of the main moving power of the revolutionary movement in the Sokhumi district – Georgians. His short timed activity in Abkhazia appears to be the whole epoch in the clerical life of the region. Episcope Kirion had immediately refused the usage of the forced “christening” which was brought by the Russian bishops and he drew his main attention to the meeting with the congregations of the church, to the sermon and preaches, to the opening of the new congregates, to the restoration and the building of the churches, and also to the building of the new schools. He had the plan about the building “two Georgian castles⁸⁴” - Church and school in Sokhumi, but he did not have enough time for that. One of the services of the Sokhumi Episcope was that the congregators of the different nationality – Georgians, Russians, Greeks – he had given the opportunity to have the divine service on their own language. To give the same opportunity to Abkhazians, Episcope Kirion had formed the commission composed with the educated Abkhazians and the priesthood, for the translation of the ecclesial literature into the Abkhazian language. He had time to hold just two sessions of the commission, but after his recall from Abkhazia, the activity of the commission was stopped.

Later the commission still renewed its work. It was continuing till 1913 and it was finished with the translation of the ecclesiastic literature into the Abkhazian language (the translation was made by D. Gulia, the priests - N. Ladaria, N. Pateipa and D. Margania⁸⁵).

Episcope Kirion with the help of the famous Georgian pedagogue Jacob Gogebashvili was planning to make and to publish the Abkhazian textbook – “Mother - Tongue⁸⁶”. But his unexpected deposal with the post had frustrated that plan.

Episcope Kirion was also studying the history of Abkhazia. The published booklet with the name “Abkhazia” under the pen -name of “Cxumeli”, in 1906, in Petersburg, belongs to him. After the review of the history and that period condition of that ancient Georgian region, the author is making the conclusion about the inadmissibility of the rejection of the Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate with the canonical and historical points of views⁸⁷. L. Voronov had spoken against the booklet by episcope Kirion, with publishing the little book “Abkhazia – is not Georgia” in Moscow in 1907. In spite of the loud name, that “work” had no any scientific value. But at the same time the author reached his main goal – the deepening of the opposition between Abkhazians and Georgians. The slogan “Abkhazia – is not Georgia” appears to be the main ideological tool of the separatists and chauvinists to this day.

83 The Sacred priest – martyr Kirion II and Abkhazia, p. 148. Before the attend of the Duma, On February 22 of 1906, the Sokhumi episcope Kirion and the Imeretian – Leonid (Okropiridze) in Gachina met the representative of the Abkhazian nobility origin, with the former Tbilisi Governor, the administrator of the Emperor Nikolai II mother’s council, General G. D. Sharvashidze (who was the great grand son of Kelesh – bei) As soon as the general was informed about the arrival of the Georgian archpriests he said: “ I sympathize autocephaly and autonomy” . After this quite warm meeting, ep. Kirion wrote : “I have heard from a lot, that Sharvashidze in not the loyal Georgian, but this not true” (Ibid, p. 118 – 119).

84 Ibid, p. 213.

85 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and orthodoxy, p. 692; The sacred priest Kirion II and Abkhazia, p. 33, 305 – 307.

86 The sacred priest Kirion II and Abkhazia, p. 268.

87 Ibid, p. 423 – 438.

The assignment of Bishop Kirion at the Sokhumi chair and his fertile service, cause the irritation of the Russian chauvinists. They were openly charging the Georgian bishop for the lobbying of the nationalistic interests, and his assignment in Abkhazia was taken as the infringement of the Russian's rights. The Archpriest I. Vostorgov⁸⁸ was the best in the slanders against the bishop Kirion. His slander lunges with many ways had predetermined the decision of the Sacred Synod in January of 1907, about the call off of the bishop Kirion from Sokhumi, which had ended the 10 year long persecution after the Sokhumi Bishop⁸⁹. From 1907, at the Sokhumi chair, only Russian bishops were being assigned by the Sacred Synod. For the next years, the Sokhumi chair was headed by: Dimitri Sperovski (January 25 of 1907 – July 25 of 1911), Andrei Ukhtomski (July 25 of 1911 – December 22 of 1913), Sergi Petrov (December 22 of 1913 – September 1 of 1919⁹⁰). The activities of the Russian bishops, if we do not consider the liberal – pharisaical policy of the Bishop Andrei, in general were directed to the assimilation of the population and to the creation of the national antagonism between Abkhazians and Georgians.

By the beginning of the 20th century the public life was activated. The democratic powers were trying to change for the better the unvaried and dull life of the population. In that case, the great role had been played by the different societies, communities, charity organizations, expatriates communities. In the sphere of their interests were included the industry, rural economy, the investment policy, health care, the help of the poor and refugees, the organization of the rest and the cultural leisure and other. The unions with the economical character were the most effective ones.

The special attention was drawn to the construction of the railways along the Black Sea coast, which was very important for the Abkhazians. There emerged “the Union of the Caucasian roads”, the activities of which had stipulated the decision of the government in many ways about the start of the railway construction from 1902⁹¹.

Yet in 1899, in Dranda there was founded “the sericulture communities⁹²”, and in 1900, in Sokhumi – “the Caucasian economical community⁹³”. In the same period, in Dranda there was founded “the rural – economical community⁹⁴”. In 1903, emerged “Samurzakano – Kodori community of the bird raising”. In 1911, in Sokhumi there was founded the community of the consumers “Solidarity⁹⁵”, and also there was founded “the Community of the Doctors” and so on.

In 1915, the inhabitants of Ochamchire wrote the petition for the governor about the

88 In March of 1906, in the magazine “Kolokol”, against the assignment of the bishop Kirion in Sokhumi, I. Vostorgov, under the pen-name of “Russian” published the dirty letter “the voice from Sokhumi”. The worthy response was given to him by the archpriest Ambrosi Khelaia in the special letter “According the article “the voice from Sokhumi”. In it there is given the main critic of the Russificational policy in Georgia including Abkhazia. One more letter against the Bishop Kirion under the title of “is the end near?” belongs to I. Vostorgov, and it was published in September of 1906 in the same magazine (N 261).

89 On of them who had supported the rehabilitation of the Georgian archpriest was the deputy of the third state Duma, prince P. Sharvashidze, which is proved with his letter for the name of Bishop Kirion of December 7 of 1909 (The sacred - Martyr priest Kirion II and Abkhazia, p. 329 – 330).

90 The sacred priest Gabriel and Abkhazia, p. 672.

91 Kvali, 1901, February 25 (in Geo. language); T. Sakhokia. My contemporaries, Tb., 1984, p. 52 (in Geo. language).

92 Iveria, 1899, May 28 (in Geo. language).

93 Tsnobis purtseli, 1904, # 2418, February 23 (in Geo. language).

94 Iveria, 1903, April 19 (in Geo. language).

95 Sakhalkho Gazeti, 1911, June 26 (in Geo. language).

foundation of “the Ochamchire Consumers Community⁹⁶”, and the inhabitants of the village Gudauta - about the foundation of “the rural economical community⁹⁷”. In that period, the consumers cooperative community “the patron” started to function⁹⁸ in Sukhumi.

One of the directions in the activities of the communities with the rural economical profile had appeared to be the supplement of the population with the provisions during the hard years of the First World War. They were founding the bakeries, bread shops and so on. In 1915, the cooperative bakery was opened in Samurzakano⁹⁹. By the end of the same year the inhabitants of Ochamchire founded “the consumers community» It was helping people to solve with the difficult material conditions¹⁰⁰. From 1900, in Abkhazia there were functioning the communities of mutual help¹⁰¹. On December 14 of 1904 they opened the night shelter in Sokhumi, where the indigents could get not only the shelter, but the tea and the hot food as well¹⁰².

“The community of the mutual help”, which had united the people with the different professions, was taking the duty to give the material help and the spiritual support to their members and their families; and loan them money. In case of losing the job, the community was taking care about the employment of their unemployed members, about their cultural leisure, and about their mental and moral development¹⁰³.

In 1908 – 1911 in Sokhumi there was functioning “the community of the support to the poor pupils”. “The community of struggle against Tuberculosis”, “the Georgian school community “Abkhazian school community¹⁰⁴”, “the community of the insurance from the fire¹⁰⁵” and so on.

The Sokhumi unit of the Georgian charity community, which was founded in November of 1915, was mostly noticeable with its effectiveness. It was helping the poor families. In the multinational Abkhazia there were not only Georgian, but the other communities as well, which were founded according to the national order – Greek, Armenian and Russian communities. For example, “the union of the true Russians¹⁰⁶” was different with its chauvinistic style and anti - Georgian direction.

In Sokhumi, there was functioning “philharmonic community¹⁰⁷”, “The community of the People’s university”, which was founded in 1908. 30 – 40 persons were counted at the courses of the People’s university; the studies were in Russian language. The group of the dramatic art – fanciers was opened in Sokhumi¹⁰⁸.

The charity societies and organizations were drawing their attention to the issues of education and culture. The Georgian “Community of the spreading of the written language and reading among the Georgian” had played the great part. The first session of the

96 Sakartvelo, 1915, December 12 (in Geo. language).

97 Sakartvelo, 1916, March 1 (in Geo. language).

98 Sakartvelo, 1915, November 3 (in Geo. language).

99 Sakartvelo, 1915, November 3 (in Geo. language).

100 Sakartvelo, 1916, February 9 (in Geo. language).

101 Themes, 1912, # 91, November 1 (in Geo. language).

102 Iveria, 1904, January 6 (in Geo. language).

103 Kvali, 1902, September 29 (in Geo. language).

104 Sakhalkho Gazeti, 1911, December 14; Tsnobis purtseli, 1904, November 17 (in Geo. language).

105 Batumis Gazeti, 1911, October 19 (in Geo. language).

106 Droeba, 1909, June 25; Batumis Gazeti, 1911, November 27 (in Geo. language).

107 Sakhalkho Gazeti, 1912, July 13 (in Geo. language).

108 Sakhalkho Gazeti, 1911, October 20; Sakartvelo, 1915, December 6 (in Geo. language).

Sokhumi unit of this Society was made on May 17 of 1909¹⁰⁹. It has done a lot for the spreading of the culture and knowledge among the local Georgian population¹¹⁰. In 1912 with the agreement of this Society in the city of Sochi, there was founded the group of the stage – fanciers, which was very popular among the local Georgian population¹¹¹. The foundation of the Bzipi committee of the education, on August 25 of 1913, was the great event in the cultural lives of the Abkhazian population. The constituent assembly of the committee was opened by S. Ashkhatsava, and its chairman was the commander of the Gudauta unit, D. Kelbakiani¹¹².

Abkhazian community organizations were trying to give the material help to the poor families; they were organizing the cultural events, and were founding the bases of the health care during the conditions of the First World War too.

By 1917, in the Sokhumi district, there were continuing there on “the Sokhumi community of the nature – fanciers and researchers”, “The Sokhumi medical community”, “The Sokhumi charity community”, “the Sokhumi community of the People’s Universities”, “the Sokhumi Greek community¹¹³”.

After the revolution of 1905 – 1907 in the conditions of the halved democratic transformations in Abkhazia, the cultural life was still being activated. The Georgian pedagogues of the Sokhumi district were studying the history of Abkhazia and its cultural – historic relations with Georgia. Peter Charaia had published the capital science work “Abkhazians and Abkhazia”, Niko Janashia had published the letters, dedicated to the ethnography of the region: “Abkhazians”, “Abrskil”, “Amiran” and so on. Many interesting article about Abkhazia were published by Ivan Gegia, Antimoz Jugeli, Tedo Sakhokia, Masho Dadiani – Anchabadze and many others. In them there was told about the Georgian – Abkhazia historic connection and relations.

The struggle of the Georgian population of Abkhazia about the restoration of the right of the native language in the religious and social schools started to get instanced in 1905 – 1907. On December 17 of 1905, there was held the first illegal meeting of the Sokhumi district teachers. It took the attempt of the willful establishment of the school reform¹¹⁴. At the meeting there were taking part as the teachers of the ministry department as well the teachers of the parish schools. They had discussed the issues about the announcement of all schools as the public ones, the studies of all the subjects in the Georgian language, leaving of the Russian language as the separate subject, about the material and legal statuses of the teachers.

In the period of the revolution of 1905, Tsarism had made several compromises and had allowed the studies in the Georgian language. This had happened during the revolutionary years, when the Georgian language was back again in the Abkhazian, Megrelian, Svanetian and Acharian schools.

After the suppression of the revolution, the priesthood and the social government was trying to restore the former forms of the studies, though the revolutionary movement of

109 Droeba, 1909, July 25 (in Geo. language).

110 Batumis Gazeti, 1912, July 27 (in Geo. language).

111 Gruzia, 1915, December (in Geo. language).

112 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodoxy, p. 693.

113 The Caucasian calendar for 1917 year, Tb., 1916, p. 851 – 854.

114 N. Vekua. The first illegal session of the teachers. – Soviet Abkhazia, 1965, December 28.

1905 had shown clearly, that the Russified schools against the will of the population, were not raising the loyal officials for the Tsarism, there were not turned into the bases of the national regeneration. So the authorities had decided to use more masked and refined methods in the future.

Abkhazian pedagogues were also against the educational policy of the autocracy. In spite of the threatening, they were continuing teaching in the Abkhazian language. For example, F. Eshba was teaching the Abkhazian language the children in the village of Bedia¹¹⁵. It is also interesting the activity of Samurzakanian I. Lakerbaia, who was the priest of the Likhi church, and the rural dean of the Gudauta unit, and also the head master of the local school. He had studied Abkhazian language, and then he was teaching the Abkhazian language the children¹¹⁶. G. Eshba was translating the ecclesiastic literature into the Abkhazian language. Nestor Kirbaia was the head master and the teacher of the Otobaia school.

Owing to his continuous and effective activities, the Otobaia School was turned into the highest elementary school by 1919¹¹⁷. Konstantine Marshania was working in Tamish school. Several schools were opened in Abkhazia by his initiative. By 1917, the number of the schools, which were under the agency of the community of the restoration of the orthodox Christianity at Caucasus and Sokhumi eparchial educational council, had reached 85. Except them, in Sokhumi, there were functioning the highland school, female gymnasia, the real school, the highest elementary school, the pedagogical seminary, in Ochamchire and Gudauta – the highest elementary schools¹¹⁸.

The founder of the Abkhazian literary language was the popular poet of Abkhazia Dimitri Gulia (1874 – 1960). In 1907, his book about the Abkhazian sayings was published in Tbilisi¹¹⁹. Also his first collection of the poems, which were the base of the Abkhazian poetry, was published in Tbilisi in 1912¹²⁰. In 1913 year, the poem of Dimitri Gulia, which was the base of the Abkhazian lyric, was published also in Tbilisi¹²¹.

In 1907, the inhabitant of Abkhazia, K. Machavariani, who was working as the inspector of the public schools of the Kutaisi province in that period, had prepared and published the textbook of the Abkhazian language. According to the information of the newspaper “Zakavkazie” from February 4 (17) of 1907, several public figures had met the publication of the textbook negatively¹²². Jacob Gogebashvili had responded this publication, proving that Abkhazian, as the independent language, has the right for its divine service, its writing language and the popular literature¹²³.

In 1907 F. Eshba wrote the textbook of mathematics in Abkhazian language, in 1908 A. Chochua, on the bases of the new alphabet, published the book for reading, in Abkhazian language, and in 1912, the officer of the Russian army, the first Abkhazian geogra-

115 *The Soviet Abkhazia*, 1917, September 2.

116 G. A. Dzidzatia. *The formalization of the pre revolutionary Abkhazian intelligence*. Sokhumi 1979, p. 111

117 A. Samkharadze. *Pedagogues of the west Georgia in the fight against the educational politics of Tsarism in 1900 – 1907 years*, The candidate dissertation Tb., 1999, p. 105.

118 *The Caucasian calendar of 1917 year*, p. 347 – 348, 373 – 374, 395 – 396, 414, 429, 435 – 436, 443 – 444.

119 *Abkhazian literature*. The short article, red. M. Mirneli. Tb., 1975, p. 14.

120 *The anthology of the Abkhazian poetry*, red. I. Abashidze. Tb., 1957, p. 7.

121 *Abkhazian literature*. The short article, p. 17.

122 *The Sacred archpriest Gabriel and Abkhazia*, p. 617.

123 J. Gogebashvili. *The works*, v. IV. Tb., 1955, p. 200.

pher, M. Sharvashidze finished the composition of the Abkhazian map in the Abkhazian language. Several newspapers were being published in Sokhumi, including “Sokhumi Vestnik (informer)” and “Sokhumi Listok (paper)”.

On August 1 of 1914 Russia levied on the First World War. The War stopped the new revolutionary – democratic movement which had started in the Russian Empire. Thousands of the Georgians living in Abkhazia were drafted to the battlefield. The condition of the population was worsening, the taxes were grown, and the number of the unemployed people was also growing. The difficulties of the war were mostly felt by Georgians (Armenians and Greeks, who were not the Russian nationals, were not drafted to the army, and Abkhazians went just as the volunteers). The massive draft to the army had decreased the number of Georgians; correspondingly, the pressure on them had become more intense. In this difficult period of the time, as it was writing the newspaper “Saxalxo Purtseli” on March 1 of 1917, the unity of Georgian and Abkhazians had happened; several facts of the mutual help were recorded too.

In Abkhazia, there was very well organized help of the battlefield of the soldier’s families. The Abkhazian unit of the Red Cross was acting actively under the commandment of E. Tavdgiridze – the wife of the Sokhumi city chairman¹²⁴.

The famous Georgian public figure - Simon Pirtskhalava, who traveled around the whole region in October of 1915, tells about the political condition in Abkhazia during the years of the First World War. During the stay in “the true Megrelian village” – Ochamchire, he had noticed, that from here “there is not the connection with the rest of Georgia and its pulse is not connected with the common pulse of the homeland”. S. Pirtskhalava had found the different situation in Sokhumi, where, from the 40 thousand inhabitants, the majority was the Georgians; they had the leading places in the property point of view. The Georgian national self – consciousness was more felt here, as for the “Abkhazians in the city of Sokhumi, - he wrote, they do not live here”. According to the data of S. Pirtskhalava, Sokhumian Georgians, “feel their face but there are still not enough cultural workers; there is a lot of work, the ground is perfect; the local Georgians are dreaming to live the national life and want to get closer to their, our country”. The Georgian population of Sokhumi was also having a lot of problems, concerning the satisfaction of their national needs. According to the S. Pirtskhalava open letter in 1915, The Sokhumi pedagogical seminaries was not enrolled a single Georgian; The Georgian language was not taught there, among the four city churches none of them were having the divine service in the Georgian language.

S. Pirtskhalava assumes the Georgian – Abkhazian mutual relationships as the hardest problem of the Sokhumi district. And because of our improvidence, - he was writing, - some people had appeared among Abkhazians, who are affirming, that “we have nothing common with Georgians and we never had anything common with them”. S. Pirtskhalava had been informed, that the carriers of such ideas are under the influence of the latest researches of N. Marr, which is clearly pointing at the close connection of science with the public life. Fortunately, - the author is writing, - the preachers of the separation are fewer and fewer. By 1915, the new intelligence was really formed in Abkhazia, which was raised up under the influence of the Russificational, anti - Georgian politics (M. Tarnava,

¹²⁴ J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and Orthodoxy*, p. 722 – 723.

S. Chanba, A. Chukbar and others). Their points of views were very different from the pro - Georgian way positioned hereditary noble intelligence (Giorgi Sharvashidze and others). In 10^{-ies} of XX century, was not going on the process of the regeneration of the Abkhazian nation, as it is considered by the separatist historiography, but the rejection of the nation from its historic roots and formation of the pro - Imperial self – consciousness. According to the opinion of S. Pirtskhalava, this process was also supported by the works of N. Marr (see *ibid*, p. 97 – 98, 254).

During his stay in Abkhazia, S. Pirtskhalava also visited the NovoAtoni monastery, where the number of the monks was decreased from 600 – 700 to 300 persons; Georgian monks were not being accepted in the monastery. The difficult condition was also in Gudauta, where the Georgians, which were the majority of the population, were still being suppressed. S. Pirtskhalava wrote, that Russian had deprived them of the church, which had been built on their own. Here existed the small numbered group of the Abkhazian intelligentsia, who were willing to spread the knowledge in the population. Abkhazians were just starting the civil life and they needed some help. “The holy duty of the Georgians, - S. Pirtskhalava was writing, - is to support Abkhazians in the brotherhood way, go to them and restore our old union and solidarity. As much as we are able to do for each other, nobody else is able to do for us”. S. Pirtskhalava had left Abkhazia with the bitter assumption “that, the region is completely forgotten, which appears to be the keeper of the treasure house – base of our national development. I have taken with me the assumption of the fact this region is in a great danger; lot of enemies are getting there from every each side and if we do not take the special measures, the region will be taken away¹²⁵”. The conclusions, made by S. Pirtskhalava, nearly century ago, has become more actual and current for today.

The Imperial power was willing to reject Abkhazia from the Georgian world, the premise of which it had considered to be the rejection of Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate. The first attempt of the realization of this plan, as it has already been mentioned before, was failed because of the democratic revolution of 1905 – 1907, the goal was not reached either in 1907 – 1908 or 1912 – 1915.

In the beginning of 1916 the plan of the Sacred Synod was considering the rejection of Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate and from Sokhumi eparchy – the rejection of Samurzakano churches (with that Samurzakano population were finally recognized as Georgians by the Sacred Synod). The Russian authorities were punishing Georgians for the demand of the political autonomy and for the demand of the autocephaly of the Georgian church; the plan of the division of Abkhazia, seemed to be, dictated by the idea the self – ruling and independence of the Sokhumi district, which was very popular among Abkhazians. The Georgian society had given the alarm. The perfidious plan of the Sacred Synod was criticizing N. Durnovo¹²⁶. In April – May of 1916, the archpriest Ambrosi Khelaia published in Petersburg, a rather interesting and hot article “about the Sokhumi Eparchy”. Its main part is dedicated to the issues of History of Abkhazia and Samurzakano. The suggestion is grounded in the article: Sokhumi eparchy has to be left for Abkhazians and Samurzakanians and the Black Sea province must be rejected from it.

125 J. Gamakharia. B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia. p. 383 – 385.

126 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodoxy, p. 342 – 343.

Tskhumeli must be seated in Sokhumi, as it was in the days of the independent Georgian church¹²⁷". The publication of this article with the time is matching the arrival of the Abkhazian delegation in Tbilisi.

The delegation was composed with: A. Sharvashidze, G. Sharvashidze, P. Anchabadze, M. Emukhvari, A. Inal – Ipa, N. Margania, B. Ezugbaia, A. Chukbar and others. During the meeting with the general governor of the Emperor - Nikolai Romanov (Emperor Nikolai II Romanov's uncle), on April 26, the delegation posed the issue about the reformation of Abkhazia as the separate province and it had shown there regrets about "the plan to reject the Sokhumi district from the Kutaisi province, to attach it to the Black Sea province".

On April 27 of 1917, Abkhazian delegation met the exarch of Georgia, Platon, and demanded from him to leave the Sokhumi eparchy within the exarchate of Georgia, the right to have the Georgian divine service in Abkhazian churches and the right of having the studies in the Georgian language in parish schools. The same requests are recorded in the petition of the representatives of Abkhazian intelligentsia made for the Sacred Synod¹²⁸.

The arrival of Abkhazian delegation in Tbilisi had really played the positive and determinant meaning in the failure of the insidious plans of the secular and priesthood authorities, though the matter was not solved for once and for all. On February 27 of 1917, the Sokhumi city council was examining the issue about the destiny of the Sokhumi eparchy, which was brought by the father superior of the Sokhumi cathedral Church Dean G. Golubtsov. Abkhazians, Niko Janashia and Timote Anua jointly with Georgians were supporting the idea of the strong union between the related nations – Georgians and Abkhazians in the church aspect too. The Dean G. Golubtsov and his supporters, with the blessing of the Sokhumi Bishop Sergei, were getting the rejection of the Sokhumi eparchy from the Georgian exarchate. With the voting the resolution of G. Golubtsov had got only 6 votes, and Abkhazian – Georgian – 17 votes¹²⁹. One more risky venture of the chauvinists was failed. At exactly the same day the autocracy regime was over in Petersburg, the democratic revolution won in Russia.

127 **The sacred priest Ambrosi and Abkhazia**, p. 566.

128 **J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – the historic region of Georgia**, p. 385 – 386.

129 **J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodoxy**, p. 374 – 376.

Chapter XVII. Abkhazia – as the part of the democratic republic of Georgia

1. The issue of Abkhazia during the struggle for the state independence of Georgia (February of 1917 – May of 1918)

The democratic revolution of February of 1917 dethroned the self-government and in the lead of the Russian empire appeared the temporary government.¹ The local government body of the temporary government was the Special Caucasian Committee, (Ozakom), which was founded on March 9 of 1917 the leader of which was the representative (commissioner) of the temporary government, the member of the IVth State Duma from Sokhumi, Batumi and Karsk districts, expatriate Abkhazian A. I. Chkhenkeli. On March 10 of 1917, the meeting of the Sokhumi district population representatives with the help of the chairman of the district, Colonel N. Polivanov founded the local government body of Ozakom – the temporary committee of the social safety under the representation of A. Sharvashidze. D. Zaxarov (deputy of the representative), N. Tavdgiridze, V. Lakerbaia and others were chosen as the members of the committee. T. Marshania was appointed the head of the police department and V. Chkhikvishvili² the head of the Sokhumi city.

On July 2 of 1917 there were elections in the Sokhumi district Duma. The social - democrat party won the elections (18 mandates). The social revolutionary party was also included (10 mandates) and socialist – federalists (2 mandates). On September 30 of 1917 the District Duma voted into the district committee: V. Chkhikvishvili, B. Zakharova, Tsvitsivadze, I. Gogelashvili, Tsareva and others. On October 12 of the same year there were held the elections of the district executive government which was led by V. Sharvashidze afterwards. S. Basaria was elected as the district commissioner (On October 27 of 1917 he was replaced by D. Zakharov) and L. Kartoziya³ was elected the head of the district police department.

The Russian officials of the tsarist Russia period, who were fired were trying to provoke intranational discord. They, as well as the separatists were not fond of the policy of the democratization of the social life and the electiveness of the governing structures. The social – democrats of the Menshevik orientation who were holding the reins of the government in their hands were carrying out careful staffing policy, but herewith the national factor was not always being considered.

The hand of the Russian chauvinists was felt everywhere. They were keeping vigilant watch over current political processes and were opposing any measures which where directed for the reestablishment of the Georgia's state independence. Separatists were working with the chauvinists. For example, on March 12 of 1917 the Georgian Church reestablished its autocephaly. This just historic fact was responded with the chauvinists meeting of the Abkhazian priesthood (In Sokhumi eparchy from 100 priests only five were the ethnic Abkhazians.)The meeting which was led by the priest of the Mugudzirkhvi church

¹ R. Grdzelidze. *History of the Political Parties of Georgia (1910-1924)*. Tb., 1998, p. 82 (in Georgian).

² G. Dzidzaria. *Formation of the Pre Revolutionary Abkhazian Intelligentsia*. Tb., 1979, p. 284; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 67-68.

³ D. Chitaia. *Abkhazian Issue in the First Republic of Georgia*. People's Council of Abkhazia. Tb., 2006, p. 106-108.

of saint prophet Ilia, also the member of the atheistic organization – communist party V. Agrba, secular society members – S. Basaria and S. Chanba, they all had decided to found the self-governing Abkhazian church.⁴ The decision of the meeting was not supported by the church meeting in Samurzakano, Georgian priesthood of the rest of Abkhazia, which had joined Georgian church.⁵

As they responded about achieving the agreement between Georgian political parties on issues of the national self-determination, organization of their interparty council (founded on August 3 of 1917) and it started preparations for the calling of the first Georgian national congress⁶. The separatists who were instigated by the chauvinists had started to activate their destructive actions and had strengthened their orientation to the North Caucasus. The temporary central committee of the highland people which was founded on March 6 of 1917, called for the first congress of the highland people on May 1 of the same year where was included A. Sharvashidze from Abkhazia. It has to be marked, that the delegates had shown enthusiastic greeting to the speech of representative of the Georgian national-democratic party. The congress had formed the united alliance of the highlanders and elected the central committee (the government).

On August 10-17 of 1917 the second meeting of the highlanders was held, which had strengthened its position in the state regulation of North Caucasian people. It had considered the creation of the autonomic states of these nations in the Russian union (which was mostly attractive for the chauvinists). On October 20 of 1917 the central committee of the highlanders with Cossack Rada (founded in September of 1917) had founded the “south-east union of the Cossack armies, the highlanders of Caucasus and the free nations of the Steppes”. There is also included “the highland nation of the Sokhumi district (Abkhazians)”⁷, but not the Sokhumi district, which is affirmed by mistake by the secessionist historiography.⁸

On November 16 of 1917 in Ekaterinodar the united government of the south-east union started its activities. The representative of this union, Chechen Aslanbek Sheripov (soon he became Bolshevik), who arrived in Sokhumi in autumn of 1917, had done a lot for the official involvement of Abkhazians in the given organization, but people met him with a little mistrust. The problem was solved after the guest had defined that the union of the highlanders was the political and not the administrative union⁹... With the help and initiative of A. Sheripov, on November 7-8 of 1917 was held the meeting of Abkhazian People¹⁰. He had decided to team up with the union of highlanders and approved the declaration and constitution of Abkhazian national congress, he elected the members of

4 J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia and the Orthodox religion*, p. 777-781. The Delegates of the Assembly were mainly the peasants being brought from the different villages, with who was speaking one of the leaders of the Bolshevik movement N. Lacoba and not the bishop. (G. Dzidzaria. *Formation...*, p. 387-288).

5 Holly Martyr Kirion II and Abkhazia, p. 345-353, 473-474; Holly Confessor Ambrosi and Abkhaiza, p. 193-197.

6 R. Grdzeldze. *History of the Political Parties of Georgia*, p. 109-121.

7 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 389.

8 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of ABkhzia*, p. 289.

9 E. Eshba. *Aslanbek Sheripov. Sukhumi*, 1990, p. 158.

10 Chief speaker of the meeting was A. Sheripov. Georgian social-democrats (Mensheviks) had nothing in common with his call to the congress, as writes V. Shnirelman (V. Shinerlman. *Wars of Memory*, p. 261). Vice versa, even a speech made of by A. Chenkheli did not bring the desired results (O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 290).

national council (Chairman – S. Basaria).¹¹ According to the decision of interparty council of Georgia, at the meeting of Abkhazian nation on November 3 of 1917 appeared the delegation joined by the leader of South Caucasus A. Chkhenkeli and also V. Jugeli (from Sokhumi), I. Gomarteli and others.

This meeting appeared to be the first step to the way of Abkhazians self-determination gaining, though the political orientations were not cleared – out yet. The Abkhazian public council, as the national political organization was admitting the “power and awareness of Sokhumi district committee, Special Transcaucasian committee, all the public- political organizations and the officials of Transcaucasia, the central committee of united highlanders and the temporary government”¹².

Thus, despite of the foundation of the political union between Abkhazians and highlanders, they were left within the Transcaucasia from the administrative aspect. . The temporary government of highlanders union, the member of which (from Abkhazians) became S. Ashkhatsava, determined in the first paragraph of its decree #1 on December 4 of 1917, the territories in which was being spread its state power. Abkhazia is not included in these territories. As to the second paragraph of the same decree is written: “As to the Zakatala and Sokhumi districts, the highland administration has the power according to the issues of the national – cultural and political type, the whole spreading of the governmental power of the highland administration on these districts has to be given for the conclusion to the Zakatala and Sokhumi People’s councils”.¹³

Abkhazian public council never made the decision about the spreading of the state power of the highland administration on the Sokhumi district, inversely, it confirmed many times, that Abkhazia is being left in the composition of Transcaucasia.¹⁴ The meeting of district peasant, which was held in Sokhumi on March 7-10 in 1918, also resolved: “Abkhazia is the part of the Trans Caucasian nations general family, as its possessing member”.¹⁵ Unfortunately, despite of the obvious facts, the separatist continued to ignore the historic facts, claiming that the highland administration had been spreading its power on Abkhazia from the end of 1917.¹⁶

Bolsheviks coup d'état in Russia from October 25 (November 7) of 1917 had change the political situation in Transcaucasia too. On November 11 of the same year, in Tbilisi was founded (after the example of Petrograd) the temporary government of Transcaucasia – commissariat under the leadership of E. Gegechkori. After the dispersion of the constitutive meeting - (Parliament) of Russians by Bolsheviks (On January 5 of 1918) Transcaucasia took the course to the independence. On February 10 of 1918, the members of the dispersed constitutive meeting from Transcaucasia founded Seim. On April 9 of the same year it announced the state independence of Transcaucasia. The new government was led by A. Chkhenkeli once again and this time Abkhazia was left in the composition of Transcaucasia.

11 S. Basaria. Abkhazia, p. 86-90; J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia –Historical Region of Georgia. p. 69, 398-391.

12 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 390.

13 Ibid, p. 397.

14 J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia: Problems of History and Politics. The collection was compiled by R. Kharebava. Tb., 2000, p. 90.

15 Ertoba, 1918, 22, 24 March (In Georgian).

16 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 290.

Georgia also started the way of its self-determination. The first national congress (November 19 – 23 of 1917), after hearing the report of N. Zhordania, raised the issue of program about giving the absolute self-governing too Georgia, but in composition with Russia and elected the membership of the national council. Ivane Gegia, who spoke at the congress on behalf of Samurzakano, reminded the delegates about the fact that Abkhazia had belonged to Georgia historically. He also marked, that Samurzakano the residents had not supported their brother – Abkhazian in the issue about the union with the highlanders and are still playing the part of the middlemen between Georgia and Abkhazia. “Citizens! We wish Abkhazia to be joined to Georgia!” - said I. Gegia- and he finished his speech with the next words: “In the end, we wish that Abkhazia- Samurzakano- Sokhumi district – were left without changes, and be given the national-cultural autonomy in their borders”.¹⁷ The first national congress, was writing in the resolution “the current moment and self-governing of Georgia”, about the political system of the outskirt districts (including Abkhazia): “the wide self – governing will be given to all those outskirts, the inhabitants of which will be ready to be included in the Georgian self-governing unit”.¹⁸

Soon, this issue became the subject for consideration at the meeting of Georgian council representatives (A. Chkhenkeli, K. Meskhi, G. Gvazava, P. Sakvarelidze N. Kart-sivadze) and Abkhazian national council (A. Sharvashidze, M. Emukhvari, N. Margania, R. Chkhotua, B. Tsaguria, which was held in Tbilisi on February 9 of 1918. Abkhazian delegation was demanding for the admission of independence of the region and for the creation of the good relations with Georgia. The Georgian side expressed its willingness for Abkhazia to be included into the composition of Georgia with the autonomous rights. A. Ckhenkeli promised Abkhazians help with the issue of returning Gagra, which was given to Chernomirski district in 1904. The main steps to this direction were already made. As far back on October 30 of 1917, Ozakom, under the leadership of A. Chkhenkeli, after discussing the issue about including Gagra and Bzipi districts again in the borders of Sokhumi district, had admitted that it was necessary “now as the temporary measure, the old border of Sokhumi has to be restored with the raising of the issue to the Russian temporary government at the same time”. After the Bolsheviks had overthrown the temporary government in Petersburg, Transcaucasia commissariat made the final decision on its own considering the given issue on December 7 of 1917: It decided on returning the **Gagra and Bzipi districts into the Sukhumi district**.¹⁹ A. Ckhenkeli ensured Abkhazian delegation, that the given decision of the commissariat would have been carried out. Besides that, for the safeguarding of territorial integrity of Abkhazia there was needed the resolving of the issue about Samurzakano, which was against the entrance of Abkhazian population and union with the alliance of highlanders. “Our aim, - announced A. Chkhenkeli – is to restore Sokhumi district, as Abkhazia”²⁰ The aim was possible to reach only with being in union with Georgia, so Abkhazians made compromises. The first paragraph of the agreement, signed by both sides on February 9th was showing mutual strive for “restore united inseparable Abkhazia with borders from river Enguri to river Mzimta,

¹⁷ Alioni, 1917, 30 November (In Georgian).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Status of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within Georgia (1917-1988). Tb., 2004, p. 213-214, 218.

²⁰ A. Menteshashvili. Historical Premises for the Modern Separatism in Georgia. Tb., 1998, p. 16.

where would have been included Abkhazia itself and Samurzakano – or the one which is Sokhumi district”.²¹ The agreement was providing particular forms of the future political order of Abkhazia (national self-definition) with the founders meeting, elected during the democratic beginnings; the sides were under the obligation, to start agreement relations with the third part in case of wish, but in that case to have mutual preliminary negotiations about that. It meant, that by February 9 of 1918, Abkhazians and Georgians had no any agreements with other nations, including with the highlanders of the Caucasus. It is necessary to consider the circumstance that due to the Russian civil war beginning the connection with North Caucasus was interrupted, highland organizations were not functioning as well.

On February 16 – 20 of 1918, the Russian Bolsheviks took the city of Sokhumi and passed the authority to the so - called revolutionary committee under the leadership of E. Eshba. He mainly was leaning on imprisoned criminals, who were freed from prisons by communists. These criminals robbed the inhabitants, captured large amount of arms. On February 20, the revolutionary committee, which had no support of the population, took off the authority, and its leaders ran away to Russia. On February 21 of 1918, the governmental military formations took the city of Sokhumi. The city head V. Chkhikvishvili was informing the national council of Georgia that the armed criminals had left Sokhumi and had vanished in Dranda region, they had announced themselves as Bolsheviks and had started to gather the local Georgian population around themselves “with the slogan about the war with Abkhazians and Mensheviks”.²² Abkhazians which were desperate, - V. Chkhikvishvili was writing, - but had loyal relations with Georgians and other nations, “may become determined to ask for landing force the Turkish, if there will not be help for restoring the order, from your side”.²³

Soon the members of the Georgian national council D. Suliashvili and Khr. Rachvelishvili arrived to Abkhazia and also the representatives of the peasantry from the Zugdidi district. They took part in the activities of the second peasantry meeting (March 4-9 of 1918) which, as already mentioned, had taken the decision about the entrance of Abkhazia in the united family of Transcaucasian nations, to “forge their destiny and the best future side to side with democratic Georgia”.²⁴ The meeting elected the peasantry council and its executive committee with the team of Arzakan (Dimitri) Emkhvari, Dimitri Gulia, M. Tsaava, M. Tsaguria, V. Esvanjia, K. Dzidzaria and others.

In April of 1918, Turkey took Achara and the large part of south – west Georgia. At the same time, Bolsheviks who intruded to Abkhazia from Russia took the territory. They “had forgot” about their own slogan about the right of the nation of self-definition, about autonomy. In documents of so - called revolutionary committee under the leadership of E. Eshba, instead of the term “Abkhazia” was mentioned “Sokhumi district”. Abkhazian national council was dissolved and most of its members were taken into custody. According to the decision of Transcaucasian Seim and government, Georgian National Guard under

21 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 402.

22 In January of 1918 Town of Sukhumi and the whole Abkhazia was turned into the arena for robbery and violence. Only introduction of the state of siege regulated the matter in the town and neutralized the criminals (Sakartvelo, 1918, 18 January. In Georgian), being the main support of the Bolsheviks.

23 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia*.

24 *Ibid*, p. 409.

the leadership of V. Jugeli had freed Sokhumi from Bolsheviks²⁵ and then drove them out from Abkhazia. On May 29 of the same year, in the report to the national council of Georgia V. Jugeli was marking about the events in Abkhazia, that the Bolsheviks were planting and intensifying the international difference, mainly between Georgians and Abkhazians, Georgians and Armenians, but they had never achieved their desirable results. “there is no other place where the population was greeting us, so rapturously as in Ochamchire, so much applause, so much flowers and so much joy” – said V. Jugeli – The Abkhazians from Kodori were with us, the Abkhazians from Gudauta supported the Bolsheviks”²⁶ It also has to be marked, that Abkhazian population had really not taken part in Bolsheviks risky venture, in spite of the fact that the chairman of the revolutionary committee was assigned Abkhazian E. Eshba. The main organizers of the pro-Soviet mutiny (rebellion) in Abkhazia were Russian and mainly Georgian traitor Bolsheviks, who were sent from North. Groundless affirmations of the separatists about the Brest agreement between soviet Russia and Germany (March 3 of 1918) supposedly was not letting Russia to help Abkhazia.²⁷ The separatists’ historiography is not mentioning the unimaginable violence of Bolsheviks in Abkhazia in spring of 1918, about the robberies, raid of Abkhazian national council, imprisoning of the most of its members, including the chairman of the council S. Basaria, but it is concentrating on the “imperial” plans of Georgians, the organization of “military diktat” in the region by Georgian social- democrats (Mensheviks) and so on.²⁸ In fact, after the release of “Sokhumi district” (this was the name given to Abkhazia by the Bolsheviks authorities) from the Bolsheviks tyranny the process of the political unit – Abkhazia, formulation and the passing of the whole authority to the renewed Abkhazian national council was speeded up.

Modern separatist, with unknown reasons have sympathetic relations with the soviet authority, which was appointed in spring of 1918 and which is absolutely ignoring the national interests of Abkhazians. May 11 of 1918 (when Sokhumi was still in the hands of Bolsheviks) was announced the day of renewal of the statehood of Abkhazia, under the pretence that on the same day at the Batumi peace conference Turkey had recognized the republic of highlanders, as if including Abkhazia. . Such affirmations have no ground at all. Before the banishment of the Bolsheviks from Sokhumi and Abkhazia – before May 17 of 1918, Sokhumi district could not restore its state system, being included in the union of anti – Bolshevik - highland republic. The latter is recognized by Turkey on June 8 of 1918, the day when the delegation of the Abkhazian national council was signing the project of the agreement with the government of Georgia and not on May 11 of 1918 (on that day the republic of highland is just announced). We also have to foresee the decision of Abkhazian national council too, which was made on May 20 of 1918 about

²⁵ The entry of the National Guard to Abkhazia was preceded by appeal of the head of the government of the Trans Caucasus – A. Chkhenkeli to the Abkhazian and Samurzakanians to immediately take all the measures and stop the anarchy, call the people’s assembly and send to Tbilisi its representatives together with us and the highlanders from the North Caucasus, work out the Constitution, state the right borders, in order for the Abkhazians and Samurzakanians to see the fulfillment of their efforts (Ertoba, 1918, 10 May. In Georgian).

²⁶ Sakartvelo, 1918, 1 June. In the Struggle against the Bolsheviks T. Marshania was ready to take part with his array, but V. Jugeli, as Social-democrat did not accept the offer of the Prince (D. Chitaia. Abkhazian Problem..., p. 160).

²⁷ O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 294.

²⁸ S. Basaria. Abkhazia, p. 91, 92; O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia. 295.

the affirmation of the resolution of the second peasantry meeting (March 4-10 of 1918) about the entrance of Abkhazia in united family of Transcaucasian nations, about which the members of Batumi peace conference²⁹ were informed. As to the announcement made by Abkhazians, about the desire to be included in highland republic, which was made in Batumi by private persons (Abkhazians), under the leadership of A. Sharvashidze, which had no relation either to the peace conference, or to the delegation of Abkhazian national council, had no legal outcome.³⁰ In the independence declaration of the highland republic (May 11 of 1918) Abkhazia is not mentioned in its composition. There is only marked, that the south border of the republic will be defined according to the agreement with the government of Transcaucasia.³¹

Disagreement inside Trans Caucasian delegation, shown at the Batumi conference, brought them to its breakdown, destruction of Trans Caucasian federation, and to the formation of the three independent States. On May 26 of 1918, the national council of Georgia took the act of independence, as the result of which there started existence Georgian democratic republic. In its composition there were territories of historic Georgia, including Abkhazia. The representative of Germany (main guarantee of Georgia's independence) general von-Losov, had his own opinion about the problem of the borders. Considering the results of Batumi peace conference on May 28 of 1918 he wrote a secret letter to the government of Georgia, where he was recognizing its borders and he was marking: "Sokhumi district (including Gagra) will be part of Georgia till Georgia is a separate state in borders of Caucasus. In case of establishing of the confederation of Caucasian nations including Georgia – the population of Sokhumi district will have to decide about their status among Caucasian countries."³² It was not "the plan of Germany", as it seems to the separatists; it was just the opinion of von – Losov, who was conceding independent role of Abkhazia in the confederation of Caucasian nations, only in case of Georgia being the member of this union. This is that "important" detail which is not considered in the separatist's historiography.³³

The territory of Transcaucasia, the part of which was Abkhazia, was relocated on three independent states – Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. In such circumstances like when between them were left several unfinished issues considering to the arguable territories, the authors of the act of Georgia's independence were not able to mark the state borders. Abkhazia was not the arguable territory, so the jurisdiction of Georgian State was spread there from the beginning. There is also very important condition that on May 28 of 1918 the Sokhumi district court had specially analyzed the issue of the announcement of Georgia's independence and of the further relations between Georgia and Abkhazia. According to the fact, that in legal way Abkhazia was included in Kutaisi province, the court decided that from then on it would be the part of Georgia.³⁴ The separate members of Abkhazian national council, who had different political views and were semi-literate in legal issues, were not always considering the decisions of the district court in their decisions.

29 Sakartvelo, 1918, 23 May (In Georgian).

30 See: A. Chochua. Selected Works. Tb., 1978, p. 69 – 70.

31 Eri, 1992, 14 February (In Georgian).

32 A. Menteshashvili. Historical Premises..., p. 18.

33 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 300-301.

34 D. Chitaia. The Abkhazian Problem, p. 169.

2. Abkhazia – Autonomous unit of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. June of 1918 - March of 1919

Situation in Abkhazia, being created after the restoration of the state independence of Georgia was considered at the meeting of Abkhazian national council on June 2 of 1918. It had marked, that the dislocated transcaucasian Red Guard in Abkhazia, which at the present moment is was part of Georgian army, from May 26 of 191 appeared out of the borders of its State, but whole authority became concentrated in its hands. Due to the situation, the council resolved, “to take all authority within the borders of Abkhazia” and with foreseeing the inevitability of “the most tight and solidary work” they had to appeal with request to the national council of Georgia, to give them hand “in case about organizing the strong state authority in Abkhazia and with that, leaving under the control of the council the Georgian Red Army, which was then in Sokhumi”.³⁵ The decision of the national council made on June 2 of 1918 and then sending the delegation to Tbilisi, and as a result of negotiations with the government of Georgia making an agreement, which was signed on June 11 of 1918 by both sides, flatly disapprove inventions of the separatist’s historiography about Abkhazia being part of highland republic. One of the active separatistically disposed member of national council M. Tarnava was recalling the fact, that by the beginning of June of 1918, the members of the council, due to the real circumstances, made common cause with “orientation to the Mensheviks Georgia” and “sent the delegation to Tiflis for the negotiations with the Georgian Mensheviks authority, about the bases of Abkhazia’s including in the composition of Georgian Mensheviks State”.³⁶

The delegation of Abkhazian national council, under the leadership of R. Kakuba on June 6 of 1918, met the delegation of Georgian government under the leadership of the military minister G. Giorgadze. R. Kakuba was defending the decision of the national council made on June 2. His argument about the political courses and corresponding orientations in Abkhazia is also interesting. “The manor class, - he reported, - has clear Turkish orientation; there also is a little part with Bolshevik orientation. The part of population is sympathizing with the highlanders of the North Caucasus”.³⁷ There was meant, that the delegation of national council which had arrived to Tbilisi, had Georgian orientation.

The project of the agreement, signed by the sides on June 8 of 1918, was sent to Sokhumi by Abkhazian delegation and the delegation was asking for the mandate for signing the last version of the document. With that there was told, that in case of the announcement of Abkhazia’s independence, Georgia would not be able to satisfy the petition of the national council made on June 2 of 1918.

Tbilisi was insisting for the certain relations before the calling of Abkhazian parliament. On June 10 of 1918 the widened session of the national council offered the own project of agreement and gave the mandate for signing to the delegation which was in Tbilisi by that time. The final version of the document was signed on June 11 of 1918. It was different in some ways from the draft project of the national council and also the project being sent from Tbilisi to Sukhumi on June 8th, but it cannot be the reason for the

35 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 413.

36 *Ibid*, p. 748 – 749.

37 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 21.

declaration of the forgery of the document or about the fact of signing it without the corresponding mandate³⁸ and so on.

The agreement between the government of Georgia and Abkhazian national council made on June 11 of 1918, as continuing and development of the agreement made on February 9th of the same year was the important political – legal act. It was considering the invitation of the minister of Abkhazian Affairs to the government of republic. Abkhazia's local governing and self-governing belonged to the council of Abkhazia. Credits and money given to Abkhazia by Tbilisi were used by the national council. The government of Georgia under the order of the national council was sending the armed force, was giving a hand to the council with the formation of the local international force for introducing the proper order. The social reforms had to be done by the national council on bases of the republic legislations, concerning to the local conditions. To resolve the issue about the political status of Abkhazia was considered the calling of the democratically elected Parliament.³⁹ With the agreement, Georgia made the important step to the way of the peaceful joining of its own important historic territory. In real, Abkhazia had become the autonomic unit of Georgia. The minister of Abkhazian Affairs R. Chkhotua, who had been assigned to this post by the representation made by the national council and who knew the real status of the modern Abkhazia, better then the separatists did, was writing to the chairman of the national council V. Sharvashidze, on September 20 of 1918: “If Abkhazian nation had connected its destiny with Georgian nation on the autonomic bases, that for the intercourse with the Georgian government it is necessary to work out such terms, which would have been clear and direct”. The Sokhumi Russian national council (founded on August 25 of 1918) also regarded Abkhazia as the autonomic unit of Georgia. After the negotiations in Tbilisi with the representatives of Abkhazian nation “Abkhazia had gained the autonomy”- wrote S. Danilov in the article which was published in Munich in 1951⁴⁰. All this is confirmed, that on June 11 of 1918 Abkhazia entered the composition of Georgia on the autonomic bases. But this was preliminary document. There were no paragraphs, which would have been demarcating authorities between the republic and autonomy, and this fact was inducing misunderstanding.

The chauvinists did not want to regulate the situation in Abkhazia. By the middle of June of 1918 the situation was worsened again – the armed Bolshevik forces, which intruded from the direction of Sochi had reached New Atoni. On June 16 of 1918 the members of Abkhazian national council asked for help to the general G. Mazniashvili and the government of Georgia. On June 18 the general got the telegram sent by the military minister about his assignment as the general – governor of Abkhazia and about the immediate leaving to the point of destination. On June 19, G. Mazniashvili was already in Sokhumi. Georgian armies with the support of Abkhazian horsemen (300 men), on June 27 started attack and cleared Abkhazia from Bolsheviks. During the execution of the order made by Abkhazian national council on June 24 of 1918, about the inevitability of taking the port Tuapse, Georgian armies continued to attack and on July 26 they took

38 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 304-306.

39 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 414, 748-753, 759; A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 21-22.

40 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 752-753.

Tuapse.⁴¹ The final aim was to take Tuapse – Maikopi railway line. In August of 1918 the activation of White Guard forces, which were acting against Bolsheviks, made general G. Mazniashvili withdraw to Sochi.⁴²

Separatists, who used the hard military-political situation, on June 27 of 1918, the day when the attack against Bolsheviks was started, they brought the Turkish landing force in Kodori district, which was composed mainly from the descendants of Mukhajirs. It is not known how far this action was coordinated with Bolsheviks, but the fact is – Russian Bolsheviks and Turkish askers came to Abkhazia at the same time. Georgian military formations and Russian Cossack forces who had run away from Bolshevik hell and then came for military service in Georgia, destroyed the Turkish landing force too. The military operation was attended by excessive cruelty and by repressive measures against peaceful population. The Cossacks were different with most cruelty, they were robbing and burning down the houses of all who were thought to be loyal to Turkey.⁴³ But, the responsibility for these crimes was left on Georgian commandment. By the beginning of September of 1918, Chkondidi metropolitan Ambrosi (Khelaia) who was in Sokhumi by that time, with the request of the chairman of national council V. Sharvashidze and the member of the council J. Sharvashidze, took measures to restrain the servicemen. On September 3, his Eminence was speaking about this with the head of headquarters staff located in Abkhazia - colonel Tukhareli. With the petition of metropolitan Ambrosi, colonel ordered to release 8 imprisoned Abkhazians and sent the urgent order to Ochamchire: “stop burning down the houses, take the army forces from those villages, where there being is burdensome for the peaceful population”⁴⁴. Abkazan national council and the government of Georgia⁴⁵ also took some measures about that.

The separatist’s historiography gives peculiar estimation to the fact of bringing the Turkish landing army. It is trying to prove, that this action was being the responding measure to the “occupation” of Abkhazia by the military forces of G. Mazniashvili. The landing force was not Turkish, it was Abkhazian and it seemed to appear as the armed forces of the highland republic.⁴⁶ Such arguments are groundless. First of all, it has to be marked that the reason of bringing the landing force could not be the actions of general G. Mazniashvili. Reliable historic sources indicate that bringing the subdivisions of Turkish army to Abkhazia had been planned since the end of 1917 and beginning of 1918.⁴⁷ “Bringing the Turkish landing force under pretence of the struggle with the Bolsheviks, was stopped by the banishment of the Red Army by Georgian military forces from Abkhazia in May of 1918, which influenced the Turkish - A. Chkhenkeli was writing on May 15 of the same year to the national council of Georgia, -it was like thunderclap during the

41 *Ibid*, p. 415, 753-756.

42 G. Mazniashvili. *Reminiscences*. Batumi, 1990, p. 59-79 (In Georgian); *Sakartvelos Respublica*, 1918, 30 July (In Georgian); *Borba (Struggle)*, 1918 22 August etc.

43 S. Basaria. *Abkhazia*, p. 95.

44 *Sakartvelos Respublica*, 1918 2 October (In Georgian).

45 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 424, 766-767. 17 December of 1918. The Government of Georgia decided to hand to the Ministry of Justice materials on the study of the losses being inflicted to the population of Abkhazia during the battles against the Turkish askers and the Bolsheviks (J. Gamakharia. *Form the History of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations*. Tb., 1991, p. 73 (In Georgian).

46 O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 312-313; V. Shnirelman. *Wars of the Memory*, p. 263.

47 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia- Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 78-81.

clear sky, they never thought that it would happen that way and they had to refuse their own aims⁷⁴⁸. A. Chkhenkeli, who was in Batumi at the peace conference at that time was trying to stop the attack of Turkish on Abkhazia. ⁴⁹The chairman of the national guard of Georgia B. Jugeli, who was the head of the operation for the release of Abkhazia from Bolsheviks in May, was reporting to the national council of Georgia on May 29 of 1918, that before he arrived to Sokhumi (May 10) the Turkish had already brought their landing forces at the coasts of Abkhazia, 200-300 men to make bases for receiving the main landing forces. ⁵⁰ All these, points to the fact, that bringing the landing forces has no any connection with the actions of general G. Mazniashvili. It was beforehand planned military adventure of separatists concerted with the authorities of Turkey.

Were the landing forces Abkhazian or not? As it already has been mentioned, it was really composed by the descendants of Mukhajirs, but it doesn't mean that the landing forces were Abkhazian. At the meeting of national council on July 30 of 1918, V. Emukhvari, concerning to the given issue, said, that the members of the landing force arrived "as the part of the regular Turkish army and they are staying the same. The soldiers could not desert during the war from Turkey till the demobilization is announced. If Turkish government could let this happen, it means that this is being done intentionally". ⁵¹The absolute right estimation is – the subdivision of the Turkish army had arrived to Abkhazia.

It is hard to understand, why the landing forces were the armed force of Highland republic. Abkhazia had never admitted itself as a part of this republic. The highland republic itself, which had friendly relations with Georgia had no official claims about Abkhazia. After signing the agreement of June 11 of 1918, Abkhazia in fact was the autonomic unit of Georgia. We have to suppose, Turkey was trying to take on Abkhazia, using highland republic as a cover. Later, E. Eshba was quite logically connecting the facts of signing the agreement in the beginning of June of 1918 between Turkey and Highland Republic and the fact of bringing the landing forces of Turkey to Abkhazia. ⁵² The establishment of the Turkish governing in Abkhazia was the aim of separatist disposed members of the national council, was recalling M. Tarnava. The national council – he was writing, - "as the one, which was used as the national organ for the expression of disinclination of the Turkish authority in Abkhazia, it was just that. As to the part of the delegates, which were directed to the Turkish authority in Abkhazia, were hidden during the war with the Turkish landing forces, not to stick their necks out". ⁵³

Thus, the suppression of the Bolsheviks venture in summer of 1918 had to be considered the great merit of G. Mazniashvili, as well as the renewal of the historic borders of Georgia and of Abkhazia itself and suppression of the Turkish aggression. All this, naturally could cause discontent and protest from the side of the Abkhazians, being the representatives of different orientations – Russian – bolshevik, Russian – White Guard, Turkish – Highland. Even Highland Republic which had friendly relations with Georgia, as it seems by the order of Turkish, in summer of 1918, made an announcement about

48 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 19.

49 D. Chitaia. *Abkhazian Problem...*, p. 18.

50 *Sakartvelo, 1918, 1 June (In Georgian)*.

51 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia -Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 423.

52 E. Eshba. *Aslanbek Sheripov*, p. 161.

53 *Literaturnaia Abkhazia, 1991, N1, p. 201-202.*

taking out Georgian landing forces from Abkhazia.⁵⁴ Separatists started sensation about the “occupation” of Abkhazia by Georgia, which is being repeated by the Abkhazian historiography.⁵⁵ The thesis about “occupation” with the legal and factual point of view is absolutely non - justifiable. It is also interesting to mark that it has Bolshevik origin. When onslaught of the national guard of Georgia under the commandment of native B. Jugeli (from Sokhumi), when Bolshevik aggressors were running away from Abkhazia, they resorted to the used chauvinistic method - intensification of the international contradiction, with spreading rumors that the Georgian forces are coming to occupy Abkhazia.⁵⁶

Modern separatist are reanimating Bolshevik rumors about the “occupation” and with that they mean the assignment of G. Mazniashvili as the general – governor of Abkhazia and as if the usurpation of the whole authority by him. Such statements are not close to the reality. In Georgian democratic republic general – governors, who were assigned in the places of the military actions or in the front- line regions, had no highest political authority. “In political and administrative life of Abkhazia I was never interfering, - was writing G. Mazniashvili – because, first of all, at the meeting of the national council there was the representative of Georgia and second of all I was not ready for the political activity at all so I directed all my attention to the military affairs”.⁵⁷ The Separatists historiography has no facts which prove the usurpation of the political authority in Abkhazia made by him. General’s mistake (“politically unskilled”) was the fact, that he had not informed beforehand the administration of national council, and on June 23 of 1918 he made an order N1, which announced Abkhazia as the Sokhumi general – governorship. And it is natural, that it caused bewilderment and discontent of the chairman and also of the members of the council. On July 4 of 1918 V. Sharvashidze was writing to the chairman of Georgian government N. Zhordania: “Please, point to the general that the source of the authority and extreme plenary on the territory of Abkhazia is only Abkhazian national council”.⁵⁸ In spite of the appeared misunderstanding General did not encroach upon the authority of the national council and did not put pressure on it. On July 18 of 1918, when G. Mazniashvili appealed to the council with request or demand to assign the representative of the military headquarter with him, but he got the denial. By that time, due to the request of V. Sharvashidze the representative of Georgian government was already assigned with Abkhazian national council. With mutual agreement, as representative there was assigned well - known political figure, the member of the first State Duma (1906) and also the member of the Russian constitutive meeting (1917) I. Ramishvili.⁵⁹ His arrival in Sokhumi was at the same time with the discussion of the issue about the relation with the Georgian army in the national council. On July 17 of 1918, the council decided “indignantly reject the offer of the armed landing force of Bolshevik “Kiaraz” (under the leadership of the priest – Bolshevik V. Agrba) about taking out Georgian military forces from Abkhazia, about stopping disarming the population, about starting the negotiations with Abkhazian Bolsheviks (N. Lakoba, E. Eshba) who were hiding in Ekaterinodar. On

54 O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 310-311.

55 *Ibid*, p. 307-308.

56 *Sakartvelo, 1918, 1 June (In Georgian)*.

57 G. Mazniashvili. *Reminiscences*, p. 97.

58 J. Gamakharja, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 415-418.

59 *Ibid*, p. 77, 760.

the same day at the voting of the members of the council was raised an issue about the trust to the military headquarters of G. Mazniashvili. Unanimously (with two abstentions) there was made the decision “to confirm again their repeated resolutions and express for the inevitable need of Georgian forces presence here”.⁶⁰

On July 18 of 1918 year at the meeting of the national council I. Ramishvili made a sharp statement. After assessing the political situation he was speaking about the inevitability of the fight jointly with Abkhazians for the democracy, which was under the threat from the side of narrow- nationalistic and chauvinistic elements, which, united with the so called “Bolsheviks”, together can go against the democracy. According to the situation in Abkhazia, I. Ramishvili said: “minds of Abkhazian nation are geared against Georgian democracy and its representatives, against which there was spread a rumor that they seem to bring slavery and enthrallment to Abkhazian nation. There is a strong agitation going on against the aims of Georgian, against all that the free democratic republic is bringing. ... the situation is like this, that it is for sure that the Georgian army must be taken out, due to this he is coming to Tiflis to make the report concerning this, so it will be better to take the armed forces as soon as possible, than to wait for the blood spilling”. None of the Abkhazian deputies validated I. Ramishvili. R. Kakuba marked, that I. Ramishvili had presented everything “in excessively gloomy colors and the situation is not that bad and it can be improved and there is no need to take out the armed forces from the borders of Abkhazia and to throw Abkhazia down to the abyss of anarchy”. D. Marshania was saying “about unreasonable worries of I. Ramishvili. According to his opinion “the armed forces should not be taken out of Abkhazia”.⁶¹ On the next meeting of the council (July 19) I. Ramishvili showed his satisfaction “yesterdays assurance of this high meeting, because he had understood that the issue about the Turkish orientation no longer existed». He refused to go to Tbilisi to make the report to the government about what he had mentioned the day before. The chairman of the national council, V. Sharvashidze on behalf of the deputies assured the representative of the Government of Georgia, “that the present composition of Abkhazian national council is standing on the same platform with Georgian government and is not going to betray it and that the council making the agreement with Georgian democratic republic can not let the concentration of the Turkish division here”. The member of the council D. Marshania, who spoke after the chairman, added: “that the betrayal steps from there side are impossible due to the fact that the Georgian divisions are invited to give us a hand in hard moment and generally we always had friendly relations with Georgians... there are people who want to provoke our fight with Georgians, but we do not want that and it is time to found the commission, which will establish the guilt of such people – middleman... we want to meet and work with I. Ramishvili without any middleman”.⁶²

On July 20 of 1918, Deputy G. Tumanov once again raised the issue about taking out the Georgian armed forces from Abkhazia. He had just I. Ramishvili’s support among of the members of the council, who said: “if they think that they (armed forces) had finished their mission then they will leave...as soon as the military divisions will be free here as better it is for Georgia”. At the same meeting the firm position was held by V. Sharvashid-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 418, 760-761.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 418-419.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 420-421.

ze, who marked: “all who will be busy with the agitation against the council and republic will be considered as low-breakers”.⁶³

The given facts neglect the affirmation about the “occupation” and “annexation”.⁶⁴ The national council, which as if was deprived of the political power by G. Mazniashvili, in spite of the certain misunderstandings, was supporting the existence of Georgian armed forces in Abkhazia, which appeared to be the main guarantee of peace, stability, order, territorial integrity and the autonomy of the region. With the arrival of the Georgian armed forces, the national council had not only maintained its power, as it happened in the period of Bolshevik occupation, but it had become the real patron and owner of Abkhazia.

The separatist historiography is not able to explain the up told facts. That “the occupants” wanted to leave Abkhazia and “the occupied ones” were against this is the reason, why they say nothing about those facts.

In July – August of 1918 there was the reorganization of the national council. It was elected on November 8 of 1917 at the first meeting of Abkhazian nation, so it wasn't the legitimated body of the power. Besides that, the council expressed the interests of Abkhazian nation. By that time, in Abkhazia there were functioning national councils of Georgian (chairman I. Gogelashvili), Armenian (Chairman Kh. Avdalbekian), and Greeks (Chairman I. Pashalidi). The Russian national council was also founded on August 25. There also existed national organizations of Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Estonians and others.⁶⁵ In these conditions there appeared necessity of founding the political body, which would have been expressing the interests of multiethnic Abkhazia. In July of 1918 there were held pre elections (at the rallies and meetings) of the members of national council. On July 27 of 1918 it decided to invite to the council the representatives of other nationalities. The members of the national council became I. Gogelashvili, I. Pashalidi, Kh. Avdalbekian, a little later – also Mikhelson (Estonian) and others. On July 31 the national council accepted the authority of 35 deputies. Among them there were not A. Sharvashidze, T. Marshania, and others, the ones which had criminal cases for bringing the Turkish landing forces in Abkhazia⁶⁶. On August 8 of 1918, the national council founded the committee (R. Kakuba, N. Khasaia, V. Gurjua, A. Inal-Ipa) for the preparation for the constitutive meeting of Abkhazia. On August 15 the reorganization of the council was finished. The large part of members of the present council had saved their mandates. They were for the reorganization, formation of the council with the participation of the members of other nations and condemned Turcophiles.⁶⁷ A. Sharvashidze⁶⁸, who was in Batumi (with the Turks), and then in Krasnodar

⁶³ J. Gamakharia. from the History of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations, p. 63.

⁶⁴ The so-called theory on the “occupation” and “annexation” by Georgia the territory of Abkhazia in 1918 - 1921 was called by S. Chervonnaia. The most absurd myth (S. Chervonnaia. Abkhazia, 1992; Post Communist Vandea of Georgia. M., 1993, p. 39, 40), though she does not deny, that in those extreme conditions the complex and hard process of restoring of the Georgian – Abkhazian State was accompanied with the mistakes, faults, provocations, crime. Nevertheless, she writes: “We cannot even speak about the “annexation” and “occupation” of Abkhazia by the “Georgian Mensheviks” in face of those historical facts (agreement from the 9 February of 1918; treaty from 11 June of 1918 – author). (Ibid, p. 42).

⁶⁵ G. Dzidzaria. Formation..., p. 294 – 295; J. Gamakharia. From the History of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations, p. 67-70.

⁶⁶ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 763 -766. The statement about predominance of the Georgian delegates in the Council, as was groundlessly written by V. Shnirelman is not true (See his: Wars of the Memroy, p. 263).

⁶⁷ D. Chitaia. the Abkhazian Problem..., p. 226-227.

⁶⁸ The diplomatic representative of Germany in Georgia - Von Kress in his letter from 9 September of 1918

(with White Guard) called the reorganization of the council, which had saved the large part of members from the previous composition, the dispersal of the council. This obvious lie is being repeated by the separatist historiography.⁶⁹

The suppression of the Turkish venture, the victory of Georgian orientation in national council, the reorganization of the council, starting the preparations for the democratic elections and other positive events had perplexed chauvinists and separatists which were for any anti Georgian orientation. This time the most attractive subject, becomes the “voluntary army” of General M. Alekseev, which was fighting against the Soviet Power. On September 15 of 1918, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, E. Gegechkori, who was in Sochi, reported N. Zhordania, that Abkhazian delegation had visited M. Alekseev and had asked him for the protection from Georgian “violators”⁷⁰ of Abkhazian nation, which was devoted “with all its heart” to Russia. It was clear, that the “request” of Abkhazians would have been used by M. Alekseev at the soon coming negotiations with the Georgian delegation, to put pressure on them (it is possible that this “request” was inspired and interpreted by M. Alekseev himself for this purpose). E. Gegechkori was reporting the head of the government that the functional socialistic parties in Sochi think, that annexation of the district of Sochi to Georgia is possible and inevitable. “It was unforgivable mistake from our side – Minister was writing – that we have not used the conjuncture, which was favorable for us, when the whole population was greeting our armies with excitement. Now there relation with us has changed to worse. In my opinion, we have to use our only ace in hands, which is the empathy from local social-democrats and Esers and we should decree the joining of the district. It will be the shame to loose this moment too”.⁷¹ With this, E. Gegechkori was trying to put M. Alekseev in front of the fact, before the beginning of the negotiations and also A. Denikin, who had placed under the commandment of voluntary army, the Province of the Black Sea (where the Sochi district was also included). The result of E. Gegechkori’s works in Sochi appeared to be the affirmation of the resolution of united council of local socialistic parties from September 18 of 1918 about the joining of Sochi district to Georgia. On September 20 of the same year, in spite of the fact that relations had changed to the worse (E. Gegechkori), the general meeting of Sochi population⁷² made the same decision.

The government of Georgia was not hurrying about the decree of Sochi joining, but the struggle for the district was still on. On September 25 of 1918 this issue was being discussed in Ekaterinodar at the meeting of the representatives of the voluntary army and the government of Kubani with Georgian delegation. The initiator of the meeting was M. Alekseev. On the 16th of August he sent a “friendly” letter to General G. Mazniashvili

informed the minister on the Abkhazian Affairs in the government of Georgia – R. Chkhotua that he met N. Zhordania and discussed with him the problem of possible return of A. Sharvashidze to Abkhazia. The head of the government of Georgia answered, that in such case the Abkhazian People’s Council will solicit the government for A. Sharvashidze’s return to his mother-land and that latter will inform the Council on his activities, and then the government is ready to meet the petition of the People’s Council. On the 18th of September of 1918 R. Chkhotua sent the letter of the German diplomat to Sukhumi addressed to V. Sharvashidze (D. Chitaia. Abkhazian Problem..., p. 476).

⁶⁹ S. Lacoba. *Essays on the Political History of Abkhazia*, p. 68; O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 314.

⁷⁰ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia*, p. 84.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 756.

⁷² A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 25-26.

concerning the “alliance”, provision of Georgia with the food and wide cooperation. For the negotiations on this and other matters Alekseev invited to Krasnodar the delegation of the Georgian government. As back as on September 25 of 1918 such meeting was already held. From Georgian side there were taking part E. Gegechkori and G. Mazniashvili, from the voluntary army – General M. Alekseev, A. Denikin, I. Romanovsky, A. Dragomirov, A. Lukomsky and also V. Shulgin and V. Stepanov. The government of Kubani was represented by Bich and N. Vorobiev. Russians made the categorical demand about the cleaning out of Sochi district and Gagra area. They often were playing part of “defenders” of Abkhazians. In this was mainly was noticed N. Vorobiev. He was the first one who directed his attention to Gagra, which was up built by Prince Oldenburgski, who had spent “10 million rubles of old currency” for that. As to the borders of Georgia, - said N. Vorobiev, - “it has to be made only till Abkhazia, because we have got the information that Abkhazians are going to do everything to be the part of Russia again. It is true, that lately there is marked the desire of Georgian government to Georgianize cities, they assign commissars there, and so on, but that is far not enough for this cities to be considered as Georgian”.⁷³ E. Gegechkori considered that it was impossible to discuss already affirmed issues about Abkhazia and Gagra with “private organization”, such as “volunteers”. He demanded the continuation of the negotiations only concerning the Sochi district. It is necessary to act, regardless - said E. Gegechkori, - with the resolutions of the local democratic organizations and population about leaving Sochi district in borders of Georgia. “Sochi, with the complete consents of the population has to be left in the borders of Georgia temporarily, and I insist upon that”⁷⁴ – said the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. The position of Georgian delegation concerning to Sochi was firm and unshakeable. On September 26th, E. Gegechkori reaffirmed once again that considers that “formula – the temporary leaving of Sochi district inside the borders of Georgian Republic”⁷⁵ is quite acceptable. After this, the negotiations reached the deadlock and the meeting was finished without any results. It has become absolutely clear, that the “volunteers” would have been using unprincipled separatists against Georgia.

Misgivings were proved. On October 9 of 1918 a little group of the separatists, which was connected with the “volunteers” tried to make political coup. The head of the conspiracy was the minister of Abkhazian affairs R. Chkhotua and the district commissar I. Margania. According to their order, armed persons from the police landing forces and “Abkhazian 100” burst into the meeting hall of national council and made its presidium to resign. The chairman of the council V. Sharvashidze did not lose his head in such conditions – M. Tarnava⁷⁶ recalls. He did not obey the rebels and reported about the fact to the military army Headquarters. The order was restored immediately. The national council had blamed the opposition for the high treason. On the same day (October 9) V. Sharvashidze, D. Emukhvari, I. Gogelashvili, I. Pahsalidi and P. Gelovani reported to the government of Georgia about the attempt of the upheaval in Sokhumi. According to their opinion, neither of the groups in the national council had no right to speak on behalf

⁷³ G. Dolidze. *How Should we talk with the Russian Generals and Politicians or What Happened in Ekaterinodar 89 year's ago*. Tb., 2007, p64-65.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 80, 81.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 82-83.

⁷⁶ *Literaturnaia Abkhazia*, 1991, N1, p. 202-203.

of the nation after what had happened, so they were offering the government to dissolve the council “before the meeting of the real national representatives, who will be called on the bases of the common elective rights», to take the initiative about the organization of the democratic elections. To prevent their selves from the more blood spilling venture of “Alekseevians” in the future, the representatives of the national council were asking inspirers and the organizers of the rebel to isolate R. Chkhotua, I. Margania, S. Ashkhatsava, G. Ajamov, A. Inal-Ipa, G. Tumanov, N. Marshania and others, to abolish the post of the minister of Abkhazian affairs, assign immediately “district commissar, the solid one, who will have to start the settlement of the State order in the area of administrative authority”, give the order to the governmental army headquarters about drastic measures to prevent them from the new venture.⁷⁷

On the bases of the information and recommendation got from Sokhumi the government of Georgia took adequate measures. 6 members of the national council and also the chairman of Russian national council⁷⁸ who were involved in the upheaval were taken under arrest. According to the resolution made on October 19 of 1918, the national council was being dissolved with the present membership and the new elections were assigned “on the bases of the common elective rights” For the elections there was founded the central elections commission composed with V. Sharvashidze, I. Ramishvili, V. Gurjua, I. Pashalidi and G. Shanshiev who had the right to elect the chairman and co-optation of the useful figures. Before the elections of the new national council V. Chkikvishvili was assigned as the commissar of Sokhumi district. Due to the fact of dissolving the national council, the authority of the minister of Abkhazian affairs was finished, his functions were temporary given to the minister of the interior N. Ramishvili.⁷⁹ Strict but fair measures taken by the government are assessed by the separatists as “Georgian occupation”, coarse breach of the agreement made on June 11 of 1918,⁸⁰ but they say nothing about the invitation of Turkish askers to Abkhazia, connection with White Guard Generals, the trial of the political upheaval and about other treasons and how they were correspondent with the above - mentioned agreement.

The central election commission of Abkhazia (Chairman V. Sharvashidze) with participation of the representatives of regional party organization, and also of all four zones had worked out the project of elections. On December 17 of 1918 the project was proved by Georgian government and afterwards was given for the ratification to the parliament of the republic. The government also had ordered to publish the message, where would had been marked, that Abkhazia was given the right to elect the national representatives and the right to settle its domestic life on Autonomic bases.⁸¹

On December 27 of 1918, parliament of Georgia ratified the law on the elections for the National Council of Abkhazia. The right of taking part in the elections had not only Georgians, but also all the inhabitants of Abkhazia older then 20 year and who had the settled way of life before July 19 of 1914 (before the first World War) because the future

⁷⁷ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 85-86.

⁷⁸ There were arrested S. Ashkhatsava (Candidate on the post of the chair from the opposition), I. Margania, D. Alania, G. Ajamov, G. Tumanov, M. Shlatter etc.

⁷⁹ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 424-425.

⁸⁰ O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 323.

⁸¹ J. Gamakharia. from the History of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations, p. 73.

council would had to solve the issues of the political order of the region and Georgian – Abkhazian relations. This was the decision, which had already been made by the national council on October 2 of 1918. The right to be elected in council had the persons, who were the residents also after July 19 of 1914 and also the Georgian citizens, even they who did not live in Abkhazia.⁸²

The period of the preparation for the elections for the national council was at the same time as the pre election period of the constitutive meeting of Georgia, when the country had to struggle against the enemy attacks at the same time on two coordinated with each other fronts. Armenia was attacking from south – east, from north – west the voluntary army of Russian white guards under the leadership of A. Denikin was attacking. In December of 1918, after getting the assurance from the English (after the end of the First World War they have replaced Germans), that the Sochi district would have been announced as the neutral zone, Georgia started to take its armed forces out of there. General Koniashvili, who was the commander of the Black Sea Coastal Front, gave an explanation according to this on December 16: “The Sochi district is announced as the neutral zone according to the agreement with the English. Due to this agreement, the income of any army (voluntary – auth.) or of any state (Georgia – auth.) on the territory of the district can not be done. . . The authority in the district remains Georgian”.⁸³ A. Denikin also got the appropriate order from the English. Then he resorted to the tested method – “volunteers” had organize the uprising of Armenians in Sochi district, who supposedly were oppressed by Georgians, they made up the “petition” of Sochi Armenians to the voluntary army, asking them to defend “Armenian population of Sokhumi district, namely the settlements of Gudauta, from the violence of Georgian armies”.⁸⁴ It was a sheer provocation for sure, which let think, that the war between Armenia and Georgia, which started in December of 1918 and the simultaneous attack of A. Denikin under the pretence to “defense” of the Armenians, both at the same time, were interactive military actions. With that it is also necessary to be marked that the Armenian population of Sokhumi district (as Greeks, Estonians and others) were actively for the Georgian democratic republic.⁸⁵ That’s why, A.

82 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 426.

83 A. I. Denikin. *Essays on Russian Turmoil. Armed Forces of the South of Russia. Collapse of the Russian Empire. October of 1918 -January of 1919*. Minsk, Harvest, 2002, p. 282.

84 Denikin – Judenich – Vrangeli, II edition. - M., - L., 1931, p. 100.

85 Separatist Historiography deliberately distorts the reality, blaming the government of Georgia in persecution of the Armenians, Greeks and other nationalities. (O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 335-336). The valid facts prove the opposite. F. E. The residents of the village Armenian Atara being displeased with the actions of the Georgian soldiers wrote to the Commissar of the Sukhumi district - B. Ckhikvishvili at the beginning of 1919: “We always were in friendly terms with the democratic brotherly nation. During the Bolshevik anarchy in the district we worked and struggled together with the heroic National Guard (of Georgia - author). In days of the Turkish landing troops we helped the army divisions acting in our region. In the war of the Georgians and Armenians we proved our benevolent attitude towards the democratic authorities. We strongly believe and trust and continue to believe and trust the democratic authorities of the republic and its representatives the district, with whom we always have solidarity during the elections in the Armenian national district council of Sukhumi “ (J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia: Problems of history and politics*. Tb., 2000, p. 1160. In March of 1919 the head of the Armenian national council of the district and a member of the Abkhazian national council – Kh. Avdalbekian wrote to N. Zhordania about the same matters:” The Armenian population of the Sukhumi district from the very first day of declaring the independence of the Republic of Georgia had the strong sympathies towards the young democratic State. It fixed its attitude with the mass participation in the elections to the Abkhazian national council giving its votes to the social-democratic party” (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 91). The same can be said about the Greek population, the national council of which under the chairmanship of doctor I. Pashalidi supported Democratic Republic of Georgia. Even S. Basaria writes

Denikin had to make up the “petition” of Armenians of Sochi district about the “defense” of their Gudautian brothers (it was impossible for him to get such “petition” from the Armenians of Abkhazia). Under the pretence of “defense” of uprising and “oppressed” Armenians, on January 24 (February 6) of 1918 A. Denikin took on Sochi, and during next four days he took on Gagra and all the territory till the river Bzip.⁸⁶

The pre election company was under way during these events. On February 13 of 1919 were multiparty democratic elections for the first time in the history of Abkhazia. The elections were so free that even the leaders of the rebel of October 9-10 of 1918, who were set free from prison by the request of the English, took part in it and it doesn't matter what the separatists write about it, as it was an absolutely democratic elections. In the national council there were elected 40 deputies – 27 social - democrats, 4 - independent socialists, 3 – Esers, 3 – Right -wing, social federals, national democrats and colonists⁸⁷ each got one mandate.

At the same time there were the elections of the Georgian constitutive meeting (February 14-16 of 1919). According to the list of social democratic party of Georgia which had won the elections, in the highest legislative body of the country, from Abkhazian district organizations, were included V. Sharvashidze, D. Emukhvari, V. Gurjua, D. Zakharov and I. Pashalidi.⁸⁸ On March 12 of 1919 at the first session of the constitutive meeting, together with other colleagues they signed the act about the ratification of the act on the State independence of Georgia of May 26 of 1918.

The first session of the newly elected Abkhazian national council was held on March 18 of 1919. D. Emukhvari was elected as the chairman of the council, the deputy – M. Berulava, the first secretary – G. Korolev. On March 20 the national council approved the historic document – “Act about the Autonomy of Abkhazia” with the next content:

“The first Abkhazian national council, elected on the bases of the common, straight, equal and secret suffrage at its meeting on March 20 of 1919, from the name of Abkhazian nation has affirmed:

Abkhazia is in the composition of the democratic republic of Georgia, as its autonomic unit, this fact has to be informed to the government of Georgian republic and its constitutive meeting.

about it (S. Basaria. Abkhazia, p. 95). The Greek society was persecuted not by the Georgians, but by the Abkhazian bandit Bolshevik organization “Kiaraz”. It was discussed at the national council on the 20th of July of 1918. The obvious support of Georgia by the Armenians and Greeks being the subjects of Turkey then, can be explained with the state policy of leveling them in the social-economical aspect (giving the land to the Armenians and Greeks, which was earlier allowed for them only to rent and political aspect (the right of elect and be elected) with the Abkhazians and Georgians causing the discontent of the separatists. The Armenians and Greeks were alarmed with the pro Turkish attitudes among the Abkhazian population and this was the reason of their gradual closeness with the Georgians. Other national groups of Abkhazia were also friendly with the Georgians. Loyalty to the Georgian State from the side of the German population appeared the ground for the trial of the separatists to punish them. In connection with this matter the diplomatic representative of Germany in Georgia and Caucasus asked Minister on the Affairs of Abkhazia to take necessary measures for defending of the German colonists from the possible danger (D. Chitaia. Abkhazian Problem, p. 255-256).

86 A. Denikin. Essays on the Russian Turmoil. October 1918 – January 1919, p. 283.

87 J. Gamakharia. from the History of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations, p. 73.

88 The statement, that the Abkhazian people put under boycott the elections of the Organizational Assembly of Georgia is not true (O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhaiza, p. 335). Failure of the Assembly of the national council from the 25th of November of 1919 cannot be the ground for such statement. The Council was discussing the issue of the additional elections into the Organizational Assembly (constituent meeting) (D. Chitaia. Abkhazian Problem, p. 315-317).

For the scheduling of the Constitution of autonomic Abkhazia and to determine the relations between the central and autonomic authorities, there is elected the mixed commission with the equal number of the members of the constitutive meeting of Georgia and the national council of Abkhazia and the decisions made by them will have to be included in the Constitution of Georgian Democratic Republic”.⁸⁹

The process of self-definition of the region was finished with the approval of the “Act about the Autonomy of Abkhazia”. Of the population will which was lot more, this ancient region of Georgia, in spite of countless attempts of the enemies to appropriate it, was again de jure back to the bosom of the Georgian statehood. With that the most important and hardest part of the struggle for Abkhazia was victoriously ended.

The session of the national council on March 20 also discussed other issues of vital importance, first of all, the one which was concerning to the liberation of Gagra. On behalf of the national council, D. Emukhvari turned to N. Zhordania with request to inform the Allied European States about the great protest of the council according the usurpation of the parts of Abkhazian territories by the army of A. Denikin and he was asking the government of Georgia to take measures for the immediate emptying of the territory till the river Mzimta. The national council also made the petition for the Head of Georgian government and to the Minister of Justice about the amnesty of the ones, who were arrested for taking part in Bolshevik ventures.⁹⁰

The new stage of history of Abkhazia, as autonomic unit of Georgia was started.

3. The Political Situation in Autonomic Abkhazia its Occupation by Soviet Russia. March of 1919 – March of 1921

In new conditions, when in front of Abkhazia there was mission of the real accomplishment of autonomy, it was important to organize firm democratic and powerful structure and raise its effectiveness. The national council as the representative body was embracing the whole political spectrum of Abkhazia. The ruling social – democratic majority had strong opposition which was ruled from the outside. With it radicalism the fraction of the independent socialist were different from others (D. Alania, M. Tsaguria, S. Chanba, I. Margania, R. Kakuba, A. Demianov, R. Chkhotua) , the part of them was cooperating with Bolsheviks and the other part with the White Guard. Their common platform appeared to be the destabilization of the situation in Abkhazia, the discreditation and dethronement of the Georgian democratic republic. Later, (November of 1919) the fraction of internationalist (K. Bartsits D. Dzkua, M. Tarnava), separated from the social – democrats, who linked up with independent socialists and were taking active part in all anti - Georgian actions.

The national council was under the leadership of the presidium (chairman, deputy, secretary) and “Senjeren Convent” (the council of the elder). They were holding common meetings discussing preliminary agenda for the meeting of national council and also domestic and other internal issues. On May 20 of 1919 the post of the council’s chairman was taken by V. Sharvashidze, His deputy was M. Berulava till February of 1920 and after he was replaced by T. Kvaratskhelia (in future the member of agricultural academy

⁸⁹ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 435.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 433-435, 772, 774.

of sciences of USSR). The post of the secretary was taken by K. Akirtava. In “Senjeren Convent” there were included S. Chanba, V. Anchabadze, M. Tarnava, D. Alania, D. Emukhvari. The national council was often holding the meetings with little composition of the members (“little national council of Abkhazia”) for the preliminary organization of different issues of the day agenda. Its sessions there were attended by V. Sharvashidze, D. Alania, M. Berulava, D. Emukhvari, I. Lordkipanidze, G. Korolev, T. Kvaratskhelia, G. Zukhbaia.

On April 8-10 of 1919 Abkhazian national council was discussing the issue about the formation of the executive authority. There was made a decision to found the administrative body – Commissariat, which would have included three members: the commissar of the internal affairs, the commissar of the justice, the health and education and the commissar of the national economy. The national council was electing only one commissar, who would have been responsible for the elections of the council. The board was being affirmed by the national council and was under the leadership of its instructions before the ratifying of the Abkhazian constitution. On May 13 of 1919 the national council founded the commissariat (government) under the leadership of Dimitri (Arzakan) Emukhvari. At the same session, the Abkhazian National Council was renamed and called the National Council of Abkhazia, Sokhumi district – in Abkhazia, zones- in district.⁹¹

The most important task for the government of Georgia and Abkhazia was the returning of Gagra and restoring the State borders, which were violated by the voluntary army of A. Denikin. The separatists’ authorities were having close connections with the occupants’ staff, which were trying all the time to destabilize the situation in Abkhazia. Some of them were in the headquarters of A. Denikin in Ekaterinodar. One of them – A. Sharvashidze, due to the order of the headquarters of A. Denikin, made the appeal to the commandment of the voluntary army about the banishment of Georgians and annexation of the Sokhumi district to Russia. Concerning this, A. Denikine, before taking of on Gagra, on February 1 of 1919 sent the memorandum to the head commander of the English armies at the Near East, General Miln and to the commander of the 27th division, general Forest Walker, which was dislocated in Transcaucasia. In the memorandum he was offering, on the bases of the appeal of “the official representatives” of Abkhazian nation, “with the purpose of the peace” of Abkhazia the next measures: “1) to announce Sokhumi district as the neutral zone; 2) To take out Georgian military forces immediately from there; 3) Put the work of order maintaining on Abkhazian authorities, freely or chosen by their selves, and on the military divisions, which are formed with Abkhazians”.

⁹² According to the plan Georgian military forces had to retreat till the river Enguri. The national council heard about so - called memorandum a little later. On April 15 of 1919, after hearing the report of I. Ramishvili, the council approved the sharp resolution: 1) the only authorized, plenipotentiary and rightful representative of Abkhazia is Abkhazian national council, which is elected on the most democratic bases; 2) Through this council Abkhazia had made specific and tight alliance with the democratic republic of Georgia, joined it as the Autonomic part and with that it had determined the State borders which are common with Georgia. 3) all kinds of “official representatives” of Abkhazian na-

91 J. Gamakharia. *From the History of Georgian-Abkhazian relations*, p. 82

92 A. I. Denikin. *Essays on the Russian Turmoil. October 1918 – January 1919*, p. 284.

tion, which are mentioned in the memorandum, are just impostors and nothing else, the enemies of the democracy of Abkhazia and Georgia, the ones who are interested in the creation of the good circumstances for the counterrevolution, restoration of the old orders and annihilation of the democratic order. 4) Abkhazian democracy with the union with the democracy of Georgia will be able to restrain the “representatives” of Abkhazian nation, win over the counterrevolution and its agents and give the triumph to the great slogans of the revolution. 5) Abkhazian national council wants to know, who are those “official representatives”? Who appeal to the voluntary army, in the name of Abkhazian nation? The national council of Abkhazia gives those impostor representatives the name of betrayers of the nation and they consider all the statements of the memorandum as the unreal thing to be done. 6) European Union States must be informed about this resolution through the democratic republic of Georgia”.⁹³

All fractions of the national council were condemning the memorandum and the imposters, who came to A. Denikin. Soon it was cleared out that the imposters were A. Sharvashidze and A. Khasaia. On June 21 of 1919, the newspaper of Abkhazian district organizations of the Georgian social - democratic party – “Our word” (editor – D. Gulia) published the letter “Judah of Abkhazia”, where was written: “the representative of Abkhazia, who came to Denikin with the request about taking on Abkhazia by Denikin’s Armies, is found. This is Alexander Sharvashidze, the one, who in the past was trying to bring the Turkish landing forces to Abkhazia; this is that Russian “patriot”, who wanted to give to the Turkish the former part of Russia. Denikin was using his name for the excuse in front of the Europe about the fact of attacking Abkhazia and Georgia”. It is hard to understand the fact that the modern separatist historiography praises A. Denikin and the “Judah of Abkhazia” who came to him, but holds back about the decision of the national council on April 15 of 1919 and about the publication of the newspaper which was the base of Abkhazian script, literature and the historiography of Dimitri Gulia.

The English, who knew well the real situation around Abkhazia, did not pay much attention to the memorandum of A. Denikin. More than that, they were continuing to demand about the announcement of not Abkhazia, but Sochi district and Gagra as neutral zone and bringing the divisions of the voluntary army out of those territories, but the white guard was not making any compromises. In February of 1919 the English headquarter located their division of 100 men across the river Bzipi. This was not the interception for the Georgian armies under the leadership of General Gedevanishvili, who passed the river Bzipi on April 4 of 1919 and took the territory till the river Mzimta. Soon they retreated and strengthened their positions across the river Mekhadiri.⁹⁴ A. Denikin before his complete failure and escape from Russia was trying to extrude Georgians from Gagra and from the whole Abkhazia. The issue about the borders was being discussed on May 23 of 1919 at the meeting of the minister of the internal affairs N. Ramishvili with the English General Brigs, who was expressing the position of the “volunteers”. The Georgian side had rejected the offer of Brigs about leaving the territory till the river Bzip.⁹⁵ According to of A. Denikin, on April 9 of 1919 general Miln was also demanding the same from

93 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 436-437, 774, 775.

94 A. I. Denikin. *Essays on Russian Turmoil. October 1918 – January 1919*, p. 288-293.

95 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 36-41.

Georgians. The same was done by the English mission on June 12 of 1919, but “it seems, - A. Denikin wrote, - The British authority was not enough neither for the warning, nor for the liquidation of the conflict. To be more exact, London did not want to show more forcible argument, than a note written on the paper. Georgians stayed at Mekhadiri... the border was closed, the armed forces of the two sides were located at the coast in front of each other in combat readiness, risking each minute, that due to any unforeseen case the guns and cannons “will talk on their own”.⁹⁶ The conflicts were happening very often at Mekhadiri, which were cause by distrust and suspicion. Unwarrantable situation, according to A. Denikin, “neither war nor peace”⁹⁷ was continued till the end.

The actions of General A. Denikin against Georgia were becoming more and more dangerous, mainly due to his perfect successes in the fight against Bolsheviks. In May of 1919 the volunteers destroyed the highland republic. Abkhazian separatist with the purpose of deception of north Caucasians and their involvement to take their side, maintain all the time that Abkhazia was the part of the highland republic.⁹⁸ However, when A. Denikin destroyed it, the separatists were silent. They are silent now too, they blame Georgia for everything, and Azerbaijan which has done everything possible to help highlanders including arms and manpower. N. Zhordania was marking in his Memoires, that helping highlanders with all was being dictated by the interests of Georgia’s North border safety. Strong, independent highland republic, he was writing, - “was our castle, raised against Moscow. Its existence was the interest of all and it was dictating our relation to them”.⁹⁹

The evacuation of Majlis of Highland republic to Tbilisi also indicates about the existence of the friendly relations between two republics and the assignment of the head commander of armed forces of highland republic general Kereselidze and so on. Till September of 1919 Georgian General was in Chechnya and was leading the military operations, which was the reason for A. Denikin to announce the economic blockade to Georgia.¹⁰⁰

To draw the attention of the international publicity to the aggressive actions of the white guards, on June 14 of 1919, at the Paris peace conference, the leader of the Georgian delegation, N. Chkheidze informed the delegations of the United States of America, Great Britain, Italy and Japan about the plans of A. Denikin which included the cutting the part of Abkhazia off Georgia, “the annexation of which was sanctioned by the voting of its nation and the ruling of which is guaranteed by the national council of Abkhazia within the borders of Georgian republic, which is chosen by the general elections”. N. Chkheidze was asking the governments of the great states to “Order the Russian voluntary army the respect of the borders, the ones which had been Georgian owning between Caucasian range and the Black Sea, according to its rights and wish of the population and with the

96 A. I. Denikin. *Essays on Russian Turmoil. October 1918 – January 1919*, p. 296

97 A. I. Denikin. *Essays on Russian Turmoil. January 1919 – March 1920*. Minsk, Harvest, 2002, p. 237, 18 June 1919. E. Gegechkori appealed to the Italian mission with the request on the mediation and declared: “The Government of Georgia will accept the borders offered by Denikin, if between the river Bzip and Mekhadir in the neutral zone the Italians will be dislocated”. (D. Jojua. *Georgian-Italian Relations in 1919 - 1920*. Tb., 1997, p. 10. In Georgian). Later, when it became clear, that the Italian army would not come to Georgia and would not replace the English, the government appealed to the latter on the neutralization of the Gagra zone. In spite of this, The Georgian army stayed on the Mekhadir till the compulsory Sovietization of Georgia.

98 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 320 etc.

99 N. Zhordania. *My Past (Reminiscences)*. Tb., 1990, p. 110-111.

100 A. Denikin. *Essays on the Russian Turmoil. January 1919 – March 1920*, p. 266-271.

agreement of union's commandment".¹⁰¹ By the beginning of June of 1919, the representatives of Estonia, Latvia, North Caucasian republic, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania and Poland appealed to the representatives of Great States with the note of protest against the aggressive actions of A. Denikin against Georgia.¹⁰²

The boundary issues were solved with the agreement, which was done between Georgia and Russia on May 7 of 1920, Bolshevik Russia recognized the Sokhumi district, including Gagra, as indisputable territory of Georgia ("undoubtedly included in Republic of Georgia"). The border between states was fixed across the river Psou.¹⁰³ On May 18 of 1920 the national council of Abkhazia, after hearing the information from D. Emukhvari about the agreement with Russia, was very glad and sent the special resolution to the constitutive meeting of Georgia.

The plans of the chauvinist and unprincipled separatists according to the borders were failed. At the same time, it is also important to mark that Georgia was not fond of the border across the river Psou. In March and July of 1919 at the Paris peace conference Georgia had announced its demands. In the historic foundation, made by I. Javakhishvili, was marked that the ethnic and state border of Georgia was till river Kubani since ancient times, and after the 15th century came to the river Makopse. Georgia was demanding to fix the State border with Russia on that river exactly. In case of the highlanders return to the homeland, that were taken to Turkey forcibly or in case of joining of the part of the Black sea coast to the republic of the North Caucasus, Georgia was accepting the fact of fixing the new line of the border between rivers Mzimta and Makopse.¹⁰⁴ The separatists' historiography remains silent about all of these and speaks about the imperialistic goals of Georgian democratic republic.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, it doesn't "notices" in the Georgian efforts the aims of and care about the reestablishment of the historic borders of Georgia and also of Abkhazia, aims for the foundation of North Caucasian country, which will have a pass to the sea and aim to bring back Mukhadjirs to homeland.

The separatists historiography is trying hard to hide from its readers the fact, that the Georgian government in April of 1920 made serious steps at the international arena for bringing back Georgian and Abkhazian Mukhadjirs¹⁰⁶ to their homeland, which was intervened by the compulsory Sovietisation of Georgia. It is known, that this problem was worrying Abkhazians, mainly Abkhazian intelligentsia¹⁰⁷.

The antistate activities of Sokhumi Bishop Sergei (Petrov) and off the whole Russian priesthood were a great problem for Abkhazian authorities. After restoration of autocephaly of Georgian church, Sokhumi eparchy appeared under the leadership of the so - called Caucasian Exarchate (founded in July of 1917 instead of Georgian Exarchate). The first

101 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 46.

102 The same source, p. 46-49.

103 *Occupation and Factual Annexation of Georgia. Documents and Materials. Tb., 1990, p. 75-76.*

104 *Ibid*, p. 64-68.

105 O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 316-321.

106 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical premises...*, p. 47-49.

107 In February of 1920 the assembly of the Abkhazian Intelligentsia accepted a special resolution on the return of the Mukhadjirs and for the support appealed to the Government of Georgia. In spite of the fact, that the problem of the Muhadjirs was posed on the 7th of April of 1920 by N. Chkheidze before the chairman of the Supreme Council of the European Union States, V. Shnirelman deceiving the readers writes, that the address of the Abkhazians to the Government of Georgia was directed to the bureaucratic channels. (V. Shnirelman. *Wars of the Memory*, p. 265).

inter Georgian church meeting (September 8-17 of 1917) founded Tskhum – Bedia eparchy. Before the spread of Georgian church jurisdiction on the whole Abkhazia it was temporarily attached to Chkondidi eparchy, under the leadership of metropolitan Ambrosi (Khelaia). By the end of 1917, to the bosom of their mother - church were returned all the parish of Samurzakano, and also other Georgian parish of Abkhazia, which were the majority in Sokhumi eparchy.

Russian priests were in close relationship with white guard and were acting according to their directions. Bishop Sergei refused to cooperate with Georgian church, including metropolitan Ambrosi. This was the order that he received on June 21 of 1919 from the temporary highest church administration of south-east Russia, which was functioning at the headquarters of Denikin.¹⁰⁸

The acceptance of the historic “act about autonomy of Abkhazia” on March 20 of 1919, and stabilization of the region’s situation which was afterwards that, the departure of bishop Sergei from Sukhumi, who was reassigned to another post, made the agenda of the day the issue about the reorganization of Sokhumi eparchy. On September 1 of 1919 commissariat of Abkhazia accepted the decree about the administration of the orthodox churches. Sokhumi cathedral church with the parish and archbishop houses, the building of the former school council, was declared the national property of autonomic Abkhazia. The Bishop chair was announced vacant. Temporarily, before the elections of the new archpriest there was assigned the temporary administrator of the eparchy. From September 3-11 this post was given to archimandrite Ioane Margishvili, from September 11 - metropolitan Ambrosi. After the corresponding preparation works, on October 7 of 1919 there was held an extraordinary meeting of priesthood of Abkhazia. It heard the report of metropolitan Ambrosi and made the historic decision. From then on the Sokhumi eparchy was called Tskhum-Abkhazian eparchy and it became the organic part of Georgian church once again. Ambrosi Khelaia was unanimously elected at the post of the metropolitan by the meeting. On October 28 of 1919 the decision of Abkhazia priesthood meeting approved the All Georgian council of Catholicos¹⁰⁹.

It has to be marked, that the union of Georgian church was made according to the church and secular rules. The anti - canonical practice of the division of the church according to the national signs (filetism) and the use of the priesthood for anti-state aims was ended. So the chauvinists and separatists did not like the church reform made in Abkhazia and they made an attempt to make this issue the subject of discussion at the session of Abkhazian national council¹¹⁰(November 18 of 1919) and even at the Paris peace conference,¹¹¹ but they never reached their goal.

Separatists sin against the truth when they allege that the government of Georgia was intruding Georgian language¹¹² to the government institutions and schools in Abkhazia. In reality it did not happen, even when the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on July 20 of 1918 approved the situation of the nationalization (transferring into Georgian language)

¹⁰⁸ **Holly Confessor Ambrosi (Khelaia) and Abkhazia, p. 240 – 241.**

¹⁰⁹ **Ibid, p. 101-102, 258-281.**

¹¹⁰ **J. Gamakharia. Abkhazia and Orthodox Religion, p. 816 -821.**

¹¹¹ **Ibid, p. 812 – 814; Holly Confessor Ambrosi and Abkhaiza, p. 291-295.**

¹¹² **O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 336.**

of postal – telegraph organizations. ¹¹³ As for the issue about the bringing of Georgian language in Abkhazian schools from 1919, at the session of the national council (November 18 of 1919) the opponent of this decision V. Anchabadze explained: “I know very well, that the alphabet of the state legislation is the learning of the state language, if not the whole process of learning conducted in it”. ¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, even the modern separatists did not understand this alphabet and they do not want to understand it. The government of Georgia, really had never forced the nationalization of the state organizations in Abkhazia (the records management was made in the Russian language, the correspondence with the central authorities should have been done in the Georgian language, but this demand was also often violated, bringing of the learning process in the Georgian language, for which it was strongly criticized by the political opposition at the constitutive meeting.

The government of Georgia, which is constantly blamed by the separatists’ historiography and Denikinians in chauvinism, ¹¹⁵ was just caring for Abkhazians cultural development. Publishing of the first in their history newspaper in their native language appears to be the important event in the lives of any nation. Abkhazians, only during the time of “supremacy” of Georgian “chauvinists” vouchsafed to publish the newspaper in their native language – February 27 of 1919 in City of Sokhumi was published the first issue of the newspaper “Apsni” Abkhazian print was made in Tbilisi. ¹¹⁶ The first Abkhazian newspaper “Apsni”-’s editor was the member of so hated by separatists “chauvinistic” social – democratic party of Georgia, the greatest son of the Abkhazian nation D. Gulia, who had been working (from September 1 of 1918) as the first in the history staff teacher of the Abkhazian language in Sokhumi teachers’ seminary. The important event in the cultural life of Abkhazians appeared to be the opening of the drama school by well - known painter A. K. . Sharvashidze in 1918. In 1919 in the city of Sokhumi was founded literal – drama study group and so on. ¹¹⁷

The government of Georgia was drawing great attention to any requests or appeals from Abkhazia, according mainly to the interests of the Abkhazian nation. For example, on November 1 of 1919, N. Ramishvili was making the report to the government about the petition of chairman of Abkhazian commissariat D. Emukhvari according the release of all Abkhazians of the military duty

Regardless of the religion (till then only Abkhazian – Christians were recruited in

¹¹³ The Abkhazian National Council, having discussed at the assembly from 25 July of 1918 thesis on the nationalization of the state institutions being sanctioned by the Ministry of the Inner Affairs of Georgia, did not consider necessary to apply it to Abkhazia due to the multinationality of the region. The Council resolved, “To leave temporarily on the territory of Abkhazia, as the common language of the state institutions the Russian language” (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia, p. 422). On the 30th of July of 1918 Ministry of the Inner Affairs of Georgia informed the chairman of the Abkhazian national council, that the government never gave any orders concerning the nationalization of the institution in the Sukhumi district and further also the nationalization of the institutions of Abkhazia is not meant. Postal-Telegraph institution of Abkhazia (As in Tbilisi, Zakatala and Borchalo districts) functioned in the Russian and Georgian languages (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia – Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia, p. 761 – 762).

¹¹⁴ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 454-456.

¹¹⁵ O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 336.

¹¹⁶ Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., part II, p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 66; S. Lacoba. The days in Sukhum-Kala were winged, 1988, p. 53-55, 63; O. Zhordania. Dimitry Gulia: Materials form the Pedagogical activities. – Bulletin of the centre for the spirituality and culture of Abkhazia, 2008, N3, p. 6 (In Georgian).

army). On November 4 of the same year the government affirmed: “do not spread the article of the first legislation about the military duty and the joining of the military forces and for that give them right to volunteer in military service”.¹¹⁸

The debates which were conducted thanks to the initiative of the national – Democratic Party of Georgia at the constitutive session of the country on August 2 of 1919, make quite easy to imagine the difficult political situation in Abkhazia. The initiators of the debates were interested in the information about the political directions in Abkhazia, which were made by the opposition who were against - Georgia, about the function of the official language and so on. The minister of Inner Affairs of Georgia N. Ramishvili answered the question of national democrats. “The situation in Abkhazia, with the point of view of the collision of as internal as outward forces is quite difficult and it is clear itself that the policy of the government in such hard conditions has to be vigilant and there should not be any hurrying – said the minister, Undoubtedly in Abkhazia there are the elements fighting against our statehood. These elements are first of all the Rights, who have been trying from the beginning to leave Abkhazia with no any connections with Georgia, mainly after the fact of the foundation of the certain autonomic administration there”.

¹¹⁹According to the words of N. Ramishvili, the government was purposefully following the democratic policy of the levelling of the population in agrarian, social and political rights in the region. Anti - Georgian powers aimed to use this policy to stir up dissatisfaction among Abkhazians. N. Ramishvili marked, that even in such difficult conditions, the national council, the majority of Abkhazian population are for the autonomic administration in the borders of Georgia guaranteed by the Constitution. The speech of the minister was supported and spread by V. Gurjua and V. Chkhikvishvili. Abkhazia, the interests of which are closely connected with the interests of Georgia, will obey the national legislation, - marked V. Gurjua, - but it needs independence according to the interior issues. He said – Georgian democratic authorities never was against that and will never be. “Long live Georgia and Georgian democratic republic! Long live autonomic Abkhazia united in democratic way! – integral part of Georgia”,¹²⁰ - declared V. Gurjua.

The member of the socialist – revolutionary party Leo Shengelaia thought that the existence of constitutive body and the government would not be reasonable in Abkhazia, but, - he was saying, - “Abkhazia has to get the wide autonomy”.¹²¹ The representative of social – federalists S. Mdivani who had much more loyal relation to the policy of the government, he assumed that the signing of the agreements in 1918 with the people, who knew nothing about the legal issues was the common mistake which had created the illusions to the separatists. He considered a mistake formation of the Abkhazian national council and not the National Council of Abkhazia. In S. Mdivani’s opinion the struggle against the nobility and the chauvinists having been arrived from Russia¹²² should be strengthened.

¹¹⁸ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 453 – 454, 781. *Status of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South –Ossetia within Georgia*, p. 248.

¹¹⁹ *Organizational Assembly of Georgia. Stenographic report. 45th assembly, 2 August of 1919.*, p. 12-16 (In Georgian).

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 16-17.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 25-27.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 28 (As it was said above, the Abkhazian national council on the 13th of May of 1919 was renamed into the National Council of Abkhazia).

The leader of the national democrats S. Kedia had the speech full of the sharp critic. The situation in Abkhazia he called dangerous. According to his opinion the dissatisfaction of Abkhazians due to the governmental policy can be used by the enemies (A. Denikin and others) in case of war and turn its dissatisfaction against Georgia. The one of the reasons of Abkhazians dissatisfaction according to the speaker was the giving of the lands to the Turkish subjects who lived in Abkhazia (Armenians and Greeks). "In general, the ground in Abkhazia is not stable. There is a great anti - Georgian movement, which is led and deepened by Russian – Armenian Bolsheviks, Denikinians and the part of Abkhazian intelligentsia¹²³", - declared S. Kedia and called the political parties for the mutual work for the correction of the situation in Abkhazia with mutual efforts.

The political parties, which were presented at the constitutive meeting of Georgia, first of all were interested in the course of the work on the constitution of Abkhazia. This issue had the central place in the political struggle inside of Abkhazian national council itself. The Constitutional commission, founded by them on March 30 of 1919, unanimously approved the first article of the future Constitution at the very first session; the article was taken from "Act about the Autonomy of Abkhazia": "Abkhazia is included in the composition of the democratic republic of Georgia, as its Autonomic Unit".¹²⁴ With that the unanimity among the members of the Constitutional commission was over. On May 23 of 1919 it divided it into two subcommittees and each of them had prepared its own project of the Constitution. The third – conciliatory variety of the Constitution (project) was prepared by the commissariat of Abkhazia.¹²⁵ Neither of these projects got in the national council competent majority, but the conciliation project got the most of the approval (20 votes). On July 21 of 1919 the national council elected the delegation (D. Emukhvari, G. Korolev, M. Ubiria, V. Gurjua, M. Tsaava, and M. Grigolia) for the discussion of the Constitution issues with the central authorities. In September of 1919 the delegation was in Tbilisi. On October 4th it presented the report letter to the government, where was written about the delimitation of the authority between republic and autonomy, about the inevitability of the Constitution approval, about land reform and about the social – economic problems. After hearing the report of Abkhazian national council and also the opinion of the constitutive commission of the founding meeting, the government, before the formulation of the common constitution of the republic, admitted desirable that: "The Constitution commission must be given the special committee from its composition, where, on the equal bases will be included the Constitutional commission of Abkhazian national council (the same delegation). The result of the work of the Commission, which was founded with such mixed way - was the presentation to the Constitution commission of the constituent meeting and then the latter had to present it (with the help of this commission) – to the Constituent Meeting".¹²⁶

As for the work about the Constitution issues, the presidium of the constituent meeting soon founded the special commission (P. Sakvarelidze, S. Dadiani, G. Gvazava, M. Khocholava, Naneishvili). The mutual work of the members of the commission and the

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 29-35.

¹²⁴ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – The Historical region of Georgia*, p. 97.

¹²⁵ All the three projects of Constitution of Abkhazia were published in the book. : A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 80-94.

¹²⁶ *Status of the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within Georgia*, p. 46, 248.

delegation from Abkhazia appeared to be profitable. By October 14 of 1919 there was made and approved at the same day by the government the project of the agreement between Tbilisi and Sokhumi about the main statements of Abkhazian administration, which was in fact reflecting the factually existing relations between the center and the region. Afterwards it became the fundament of “the statement about the administration of autonomic Abkhazia”, approved by the constitutive meeting of Georgia on February 21 of 1921. The National council, according to the project of the agreement, had “right to write legislations concerning all issues accept the ones according to the foreign policy, armies, administration of ports, financial, tax and custom systems, common judicial ascertainments and Senate (Supreme Court), civil, criminal and common national legislation, post, telegraph, railways and highways, which had the all national State meaning”.¹²⁷

On the bases of the report letter of the delegation members from October 4 of 1919, the government of Georgia on December 20 of the same year approved “the temporary statement concerning the agrarian reform and the administration of the State property of Abkhazia”.¹²⁸ According to the temporary statement, establishment of agrarian reform and the administration of State culturally valuable estates in Abkhazia were the obligation of the Abkhazian commissariat and of its department of agriculture, which was under the commandment of the member of the national council, great scientist in future, academician T. K. Kvaratskhelia. Because of the invitation of the government of Georgia one more Abkhazian delegation was in Tbilisi (I. Margania, D. Alania, M. Tsaguria, M. Tarnava) which held the opposition – separatist opinion in the national council. The government aimed to have the dialogue about the agreement with all kinds of political directions. It listened to the opposition delegation at the specially called meeting. By the request of N. Zhordania, the report of the delegation afterwards was executed in the written way and on September 29 of 1919 it was presented to the government. In the report, with the tendentiousness that was characteristic for the separatists, was told about the situation in Abkhazia. The members of the delegation were seeing the way out of the situation with approval of the project about the Constitution of Abkhazia, which was worked out by them.

On November 15 of 1919 the national council of Abkhazia heard the report of the official delegation about the work that they had done in Tbilisi. M. Ubiria, who spoke in the report marked that during the work on the Constitution in the National Council there had appeared two directions from the very beginning, which had different points of view in the assessment and understanding of the historic moment, mainly “concerning the political and economical tasks of Abkhazia”. In view of the need at that moment, one group thought necessary the annexation of Abkhazia to Georgia as soon as possible and also thought that for that very moment such decision in the real objective conditions appeared to be the guarantee of its defense from the consequences of the heavy epoch, in future – the guarantee of the regions normal development.

The other political course or the second group, which admitted the annexation of Abkhazia to Georgia, - continued M. Ubiria, - With the point of view of the future of the historic perspective “they thought more right the solution of issue through the possibly weak connections with the Republic, more rights, more independence, they said this with-

¹²⁷ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 452.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 100.

out taking into consideration of the objective and subjective abilities of Abkhazia”. These differences of opinions, - was saying the reporter, - are the red line for all activities of the national council made in past. The two projects of the Constitution were the reflection of those differences of the opinions. As to the third project, prepared by the commissariat, “it was showing the attempt of the third line creation” between of the two extremely different projects. M. Ubiria reported to the members of the council, that Tbilisi did not force the process of the Abkhazian (the part of the State) Constitution approval before the creation of the nationwide Constitution, with that giving the opportunity to the process of the real building of the young State to be finished”, to “fix it in its corresponding form afterwards”. It means that the authorities of the republic had aim to bring the legal normalization and their reconciliation with the interests of the government and with the interests of the region as well. The government has right, - said M. Ubiria, - to make Statewide kind demands to our Autonomy, as well as we have the right to make demands of local character to them”.¹²⁹ In spite of all these difficulties, as it has already been mentioned above, the project about the main statement of administering of Abkhazia was worked out in Tbilisi.¹³⁰

At the same meeting of the national council on November 15 of 1919 also spoke the members of the other delegation, which was invited to Tbilisi. M. Tarnava showed his doubts about the possibility of the agreement between the government of Georgia and the national council. I. Margania added that according to N. Zhordania’s words the agreement will be possible, in case of the mutual understanding with the issue about “the relation to Denikin”.¹³¹ The answer of the members of the delegation was positive.

N. Ramishvili, who arrived in Sokhumi on February 6 of 1920, and who made the report at the national council, explained the position of Georgian government concerning Abkhazia. When Georgia is already recognized by the Countries of the West our aim is to deepen the democracy and widen the part of the population, - he said. The reporter rejected the rumors that the government seems to be trying to cut the autonomous rights of Abkhazia, limit the people’s council on behalf of the government of Georgia N. Ramishvili said that: “The only way for the social - political construction building here in Abkhazia, is the way of strengthening of the Autonomy of Abkhazia”.¹³² Quite large and interesting report of N. Ramishvili at the session of the National Council soon was printed as the proclamation stick in all Abkhazian inhabited areas.¹³³

¹²⁹ Central State Archive of Abkhazia, Fund I -39, inventory 1, act 12, pages 3 – 4.

¹³⁰ Political opposition in the National council was not interested in the real constitutional rights of Abkhazia. In the declaration of the parliamentary party (fraction) of social-democrat-internationalists being declared in the National Council on the 25th of November of 1919 was said, that in the conditions of the modern conjuncture democratic republic of Georgia is recognized and defended from the inner and outer enemies; For the parliamentary party of the independency of Georgia was the means of achieving the goal; in the future, with the change of the political situation, the “internationalists” would support joining of Georgia and Abkhazia to the “common family of the Russian peoples” without the preliminary terms concerning the form of the political structure of Georgia and Abkhazia in the “common family” (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 111). The sensation around the constitutional rights being made by the separatists aimed not the winning of the real autonomy, but the failure of any agreement on the given matter and criticism of the government. “Acting in this way, we simultaneously were looking for the chance of establishing contacts with the RSFSR and joining it”, - openly wrote M. Tarnava (L. Toidze. On the Problem of the Political Status of Abkhazia. Tb., 1996, p. 6).

¹³¹ Central State Archive of Abkhazia, fund I-39, inventory1, act 12, pages 5 -7.

¹³² J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 101-102.

¹³³ Stating, that N. Ramishvili threatened the members National Council is a fake of the separatists (O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 334).

On 22-23 February of 1920, in Sokhumi was held the congress of Abkhazian intelligentsia (chairman G. Zukhbaia, deputy - V. Anchabidze and D. Gulia). In the work of the congress chairman of the National Council and the members of the national council were taking part and this had made the congress look like arena of the political struggle between the different course and orientations. The position of the separatist was expressed by the renegade I. Margania, who spoke: "We, Abkhazians, are accustomed to the Russian culture; this culture and language are taken away from us, and we are forced to use the Georgian language. Georgians had come here and taken our culture away from us, Georgians intruded in Abkhazia".¹³⁴ The worthy reproof was given to him by the representatives of hereditary Abkhazian aristocracy V. Sharvashidze, V. Anchabadze, D. Emukhvari and others. The speeches at the congress, on the one side, had shown the contradiction concerning the constitutive issues inside the Abkhazian public itself and on the other side – they proved the necessity of the urgent development and approval of the Constitution of Autonomic Abkhazian republic.

The National council intensively continued to work on the Constitution project. On may 21 of 1920 the council elected the commission (V. Sharvashidze, D. Emukhvari, D. Zakharov, G. Zukhbaia, M. Tarnava and V. Anchabadze) to negotiate with Tbilisi concerning Constitutional questions. On first of July of 1920 the commission presented the report at constitutive session (Parliament) of Georgia. For "mind's quieting" the delegation was asking the higher legislator of the country to recognize Abkhazia, as an autonomous element of Georgia and to begin discussing powers of representative bodies and government of Autonomous Abkhazia. "We're informing that in the constitutional commission of Georgia these questions are affirmed¹³⁵" - as mentioned in the report of July 1 of 1920.

When the delegation went back from Tbilisi, they presented the report to the National Council about two projects of Abkhazia's Constitution, being worked out in Tbilisi. On the basis of these two projects the Constitutional Commission of National Council (G. Zukhbaia, D. Zakharov, M. Tsulukidze, G. Korolev, M. Tarnava) issued one project. After detailed working on this project at the meetings of the national council on October 16 of 1920 the National Council had approved its own version of Abkhazia's project of Constitution. The first article declares - Abkhazia, beginning from frontiers of north - west and south - east of the river of Mekhadir to the end of river Inguri , beginning from the South to North from the coasts of the Black Sea until Caucasian mountain range that is bordering upon Kuban and Ter regions are included in composition of Democratic Republic of Georgia, as its own autonomous unit . The project was setting difference between powers of Center and Region.¹³⁶

On November 4 of 1922, in Tbilisi arrives again the delegation of national council (V. Sharvashidze, V. Gurdjua, D. Zakharov, M. Ubiria, I. Pashalidi, M. Tsaguria, D. Alania, M. Tarnava, M. Berulava) . On November 16 they met with N. Zhordania. The head of the government confirmed, that the principle of the Autonomy of Abkhazia is doubtless, but the prerogative of elaboration of the Constitution belongs to the constituent meeting. Abkhazia must be given its own autonomy-said N. Zhordania- or after accepting of the

¹³⁴ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 103.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 105.

¹³⁶ *The Status of the Autonomous Regions of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia within Georgia*, p. 257-261.

Constitution of Georgia, or in case of promulgation of it according to the separate law, which after the approval of the Constitution of Georgia will become one of its chapters. Such position of the head of the government of Georgia was approved by the members of the delegation of the National Council of Abkhazians.

But the agreement was not reached because the Constitutive Meeting refused the initiation of parity commission of Constitution,¹³⁷ which would be including equal members of commission itself, that was provided by “act of Autonomy of Abkhazia” and by mandate of the delegation (the Constitution session, that was the only powerful organ for the elaboration of Constitutions, accepted only terms that the members of national meeting would participate in Making essential act of Abkhazia with deliberative functions). When National Council got the information about that, on December 5 of 1920 it recalled the delegation from Tbilisi to make a report. On December 6 the presidium of Constitutive Meeting considered the report of oppositional party of Abkhazian delegation (M. Tsaguria, D. Alania and M. Tarnava) about the refusal in participation of Abkhazian constitution evaluation, because of inadmissibility of its examination procedure. (Not by parity commission, but only by the participation Constitutive Meeting, including the members of national assembly).¹³⁸ The report was taken into consideration.

With the return of the delegation from Tbilisi the situation became strained. On December 24 of 1920 V. Sharvashidze put on vote the question of resign of the Presidium of the National Council, but it was refused. On January 4 of 1921 the national council approved the work made by delegation in Tbilisi.

On December 21 of 1920 Constitutive meeting’s minor constitutional commission approved the project on “autonomous governing of Abkhazia”, that was based on another similar document, with similar name elaborated on October 1919 by Parity Commission of the Constitutive meeting and National Council (page 481) and also approved the project of Abkhazia’s Constitution that was approved by National Council on October 16 of 1920.

On February 21 of 1921 the Constitutive session affirmed it. Exclusive Autonomous bodies were the following: 1. Local finances, budget, pay-offices, taxes, loans 2. Public education: elementary, intermediate and higher education and all cultural system. 3. Local elective district council (zemstvo) and local municipal self-government 4) world judicial ascertainment 5) defense of personal and public security and order 6) administration 7) public health, medicine and veterinary 8) budget approval, review of report about local amount expenses 9) expropriation of local real property for public and cultural needs, in terms of the Republic legislation 10) cases, which were handed to Abkhazian national council.”

The official language of Abkhazia was Georgian, but National Council was able to input local languages at schools and institutions. At the elections in legislative bodies of Georgia, Abkhazia had its own voting district. The executive body of Abkhazia was Commissariat, members of which were assigned by National Council. Its laws were published by Senate of Republic (Supreme Court of Judicature). Civil liberties in the territory of

¹³⁷ By the decision of the Government of Georgia from the 4th of November of 1919, as it was said above, the Constitutive Meeting formulated the parity committee working fruitfully. That’s why the refusal to form the parity committee repeatedly cannot be excused.

¹³⁸ Status of the Autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia within Georgia, p. 261.

Abkhazia were guaranteed by Constitution and acts of Georgia. ¹³⁹

Autonomous status of Abkhazia was fixed by 107 article of Georgian Constitution, which was adopted on February 21, 1921. But it was too late. “11th army “of Russian Bolsheviks, invaded Georgia from the side compulsorily sovietized Azerbaijan and on February 25, 1921 took possession of Tbilisi, and 9th army of soviet Russia invaded Georgia from the side of Sochi and took control over the city of Sokhumi on the 4th of March.

It’s necessary to remark that in Georgia and in Abkhazia the movement of Bolsheviks was very weak. After crashing of pro-Russian riot in first half of 1918 it disappeared in Abkhazia. But resurrection of Bolshevism began in spring of 1919, when the Bolsheviks escaping from the territories being occupied by Denikin found shelter in Abkhazia. It was the case, when as a result of amnesty with the National Council’s intercession from Georgian prisons were released many participants of the riot of February-May and June 1918. Bolshevik movement was revived by the agreement between Georgia and Russia on May 7, 1920, one of the points of which considered legalization of the Communist Party. The real headquarters of the Communist party of Georgia were the Embassy of Russia in Tbilisi and the Ambassador S. Kirov. By the order of the latter in Sokhumi was functioning a special commission (V. Ivanov, V. Sverdlov, V. Volkhovski, Musikantski). They used to deliver to the Embassy of Russia in Tbilisi the data of intelligence service. .

Temporary Bolshevik Committee in Abkhazia, being restored in 1919 was strengthened (A. Beliakov, S. Kukhaleishvili, M. Mgeladze, I. Zhvania, I. Khiot). In 1920 the district organization of Abkhazia of the Communist party was led by: V. Vigryanov, N. Svanidze, A. Akirtava, S. Kukhaleishvili. The national Council members had close connections with them: M. Tsaguria, D. Alania, I. Margania, etc. In October of 1920 Ministry of the Inner Affairs of Georgia had arrested group of Bolsheviks preparing for coup d’état. (The arrested were N. Svanidze and S. Kukhaleishvili). The heads of this riot used to keep communication with Sochi based Russian army. They used to get money, weapons and instructions from the mentioned place. Bolsheviks of Gagra had their own military unit, in case of invasion of the Soviet army to Georgia they had to attack the rear of Georgian front with the aim of elimination of Georgian Gagra front. The preparation of the Coup d’état was along with ideological influence over the population. The Bolsheviks used to “spread rumors about breaking away of Abkhazia from Georgia and recommended Abkhazians to join Russia and were preparing an armed rebellion”¹⁴⁰. As the result of measures implemented by the government, the Bolshevik armed forces in Abkhazia were eliminated.

By the end of 1920, part of Abkhazian nationality Bolsheviks E. Eshba, N. Lakoba, M. Lakoba, K. Inal-Ipa, M. Tarnava were sent to Turkey by the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Russia for providing propaganda assistance among Muhajir descendants for helping the newly formed Communist Party of Turkey. There were no Bolsheviks in Abkhazia, but from the beginning of 1921 the communist groups in Abkhazia started to emerge again. On January 2 of 1921, G. Orjonikidze and S. Kirov convinced Russia for compulsory Sovietization of Georgia. They wrote that there was no need to attack it straight, the only thing needed was “ starting of the movements

¹³⁹ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 466-469.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 465.

in Abkhazia, Acharia and Borchalo regions of Georgia. ”¹⁴¹ January 25 of the same year, the Military Attaché P. Sytin of Russia in Tbilisi also reported to Moscow: “Our work in Abkhazia is going forward. There is a group of active Party workers in Abkhazia; in the garrison of Sokhumi we organized the committee of the three”. As Sytin wrote “the break of work of the National Council in December of 1920 causes disturbance among masses in Abkhazia and this is a good basis for us”. ¹⁴²

On February 14 of 1921, by the decision of the Caucasian Bureau is founded the Abkhazian Regional Committee: I. Zhvania (Head), M. Kargarodskaja and E. Sverdlov. On February 18, a temporary revolutionary committee was found consisting of: I. Zhvania (Chairman), E. Sverdlov, M. Tsaguria. ¹⁴³The aim of the committee was to organize mutiny groups in the rear. In those days Tsaguria received a letter from Sajaia, a representative of the Caucasian Bureau, which informed about the soon fall of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, which would give basis for Abkhazia for self-determination. The author wrote: “Taking into consideration the fall of Menshevik government of Georgia, Independent fraction of the National Council will take measures for setting free the working masses in Abkhazia. In advance I can declare, that Abkhazia has the same right for the free development, as was given by the Soviet Russia to all the small nations of the former Russian Empire”. ¹⁴⁴

The given materials prove that the so - called “revolutionary movements” were inspired from abroad and led by the Bolsheviks of non - Abkhazian nationality. Communist ideas were not popular among Abkhazians, that was the reason why the Bolsheviks tried to wrap into the red garments the separatist - anti - Georgian spirit that was seed by Tsarists in the past. As the result of Soviet occupation, Abkhazian government was filled with the not ideological communists, but separatists. March 6 of 1921 the temporary revolutionary committee (Revcom) stopped existence and the power was delegated to the Caucasian Bureau: E. Eshba, N. Lakoba, N. Akirtava. In March of 1921 the occupation of Georgia was finished and among them of Abkhazia with its following annexation. In the history of Georgia begun a new stage of the Georgian-Abkhazian relations.

141 *Sakartvelos Respublica*, 1991, 6 June (In Georgian).

142 *Struggle for October in Abkhazia*. Collection of the Document and Materials. 1917 – 1921. Sukhumi, 1967, p. 172 – 173.

143 *Ibid*, p. 175 – 176. Stating, that the revolutionary committee, being formed in the middle of February of 1921 consisted of E. Eshba, N. Lacoba and I. Akirtava is not in compliance with the reality (O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 340).

144 *Struggle for October in Abkhazia*, p. 175.

Chapter XVIII. Political Status of Abkhazia within the Soviet Georgia. 1921-1937

The compulsorily sovietized Abkhazia appeared under the control and ruling of the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia (Caucasian bureau of the CC RCP), being led by the Georgian Bolshevik - G. Orjonikidze. The members of the so-called Revolutionary committee of Abkhazia being appointed by the Caucasian Bureau did not have a definite position concerning the future status of the region. The leadership of the Caucasian bureau did not have it either, though before the sovietization Georgian and Abkhazian Bolsheviks came to the agreement in Moscow, that Abkhazia as an autonomous republic would be the part of Soviet Georgia. This fact was confirmed by E. Eshba¹. After the occupation of Georgia and establishing of the Soviet power other decisions were made. At the beginning of the 21st of March Revolution Committee of Abkhazia appealed the Caucasian Bureau with the request to clarify and explain to it the following issues: a) about Turkey 2) on the relations with the Highland autonomous republics (and among them Abkhazia) c) on the relations of Abkhazia and Georgia². Putting forward the problems of relations of Turkey and Highland Republics must have seriously perplex the occupants, especially considering the events of the XIXth century and the summer of 1918 (landing in Abkhazia of the Turkish paratroopers). New suggestions were worked out at the two meetings of the executives of Abkhazia, being in charge of the authorized person of the Caucasian Bureau - Liak, representative of the Caucasian Bureau Ivanitski and the member of the military council of the 9th occupation army - Epshtein. At the bidding of those persons on the 26th of March of 1921 the revolution committee of Abkhazia sent a letter to V. Lenin and I. Stalin in which the accent was at that time made on Russia. The revolution committee posed a question to the Kremlin: "Soviet Abkhazia will be the Independent Republic or the administrative Unit and what kind of common policy will be carried out in Abkhazia"³. The authors of the letter considered expedient to declare Abkhazia the Soviet Republic, to include Abkhazia into the Russian Federation, though they have nothing against declaring the region the administrative unit. The letter did not contain the information about Turkey, North Caucasus and Georgia, being the result of the influence made on the participants of the above mentioned meeting by the representatives of the Caucasian Bureau and the 9th army. It is obvious from the letter that under the "independency" "the members of the revolution committee of Abkhazia meant not the state sovereignty, but interpreted that term in the Soviet meaning - they meant joining, directly without a mediator and becoming the part of Russia. The letters of the analogical contents were sent to Rostov, where the Caucasian Bureau was located and to Tbilisi to G. Orjonikidze. On the 27th of March of 1921 this latter agreed with the idea of declaring the independency of Abkhazia, but refused to federate it with Russia using as an argument that, this kind of decision would be understood in the West as the annexation of Abkhazia by Russia.⁴

1 A. Menteshsavili. *Historical Premise...*, p. 59.

2 B. Sagaria. *Formation and Strengthening of the Soviet Statehood in Abkhazia (1921 – 1938)*. Sukhumi, 1981, p. 41.

3 *Workers of Abkhazia to V. I. Lenin (1918-1921-1924)*. Collection of the documents. Compiled by G. Dzidzaria. Sukhumi, 1970, p. 31.

4 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 50-60. See also: G. K. Orjonikidze. *Articles and Speeches*,

In Batumi, on the 28th of March of 1921 was held the meeting of the leaders and representatives of the occupation organs - Caucasian Bureau, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia (CC CPG) and Revolution Committee of Abkhazia with the participation of G. Orjonikidze, Sh. Eliava, S. Kavtaradze, M. Toroshelidze, E. Eshba and N. Lacoba. Having discussed the matter of the structure of the Soviet Power and Communist Party of Abkhazia the meeting resolved: “ Before the assembly of the council of Abkhazia the issue of the federation of the Soviet Abkhazia with RSFSR or the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia (SSRG) stays unsolved and Abkhazia consequently is the Socialist Soviet Republic.

The Party organization before the conference carries the name of the organization bureau RCP in Abkhazia and works according to the directives of the Caucasian Bureau of the CC RCP.

The decrees of the revolution committee of Georgia must be for the revolution committee (Abkhazia) material for avoiding the contradictions and opposition in the activities of the both revolution committees”⁵.

The decision of the Batumi meeting became the basis for declaring the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (SSR of Abkhazia) on the 31st of March of 1921. It should be stressed, that the problem of Abkhazia had never been a matter of discussion of the Russian central party or state organs. Judging by V. Lenin’s letters and his biographical chronics the leader of the Soviet Russia had no relations with Abkhazia, Bolsheviks of Abkhazia and especially with the problem of defining the status of the region⁶. All the problems concerning Abkhazia were decided in Tbilisi at the meeting of Caucasian Bureau on the basis of the personal conversation between G. Ordjinikidze and I. Stalin having the position of the National Commissar (minister) on the nationality affairs in the government of V. Lenin.

The independence of Abkhazia was merely a fiction. Moscow did not recognize it. The so-called “sovereignty” of Abkhazia was invented for soothing Georgia and suppressing in it the desire of restoring the sovereignty. The former military attaché of Russia in Georgia - P. Sitin carrying out in Tbilisi the reconnoitering activities and on the 22nd of April in 1921 presented to the Soviet Government in Moscow an original plan of struggle against the “Georgian Chauvinism”, i. e. the state independency of Georgia. Among the other measures (leaving the parts of the Red Army standing within Georgia, especially on the border with Turkey, autonomization of Megrelia, support of the local Russian population, passing the South Caucasian railway to Moscow), it meant the expansion of the borders of Russia to the river Bzip, annexing the rest of Abkhazia to Russia through the referendum. In P. Sitin’s opinion that could appear to be “the measure of reducing of the Georgian chauvinism territorially and materially”. “Delaying of separation of Abkhazia from Georgia – he wrote – “can cause the undesirable consequences. Abkhazia may decide to join the republic of Highlanders ... and then in case of complications, RSFR will have an obstacle from the sea to the sea”⁷.

volume I. M. 1956, p. 200-201.

⁵ J. Gamajharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia -Historical Region of Georgia, p. 469.

⁶ Declaration of the SSR of Abkhazia is associated without any basis with the name of V. Lenin by the separatist historiography. (O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 430-431). In reality, not a single letter, address or greeting being sent from Abkhazia by the revolution committee or separate persons to the “leader” (see. Workers of Abkhazia to V. Lenin...), was not received, analyzed and answered personally by him.

⁷ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia –historical region of Georgia, p. 470-472. The plan of separation of

The Russian occupational organ of power in Georgia, the so-called revolution committee, recognized the SSR of Abkhazia on the 21 of May of 1921 expressing its hope, that “the problem of relations between the SSR of Abkhazia and the SSR of Georgia will be finally decided at the I Congress of the Council of Worker and Peasant deputies of Abkhazia and Georgia”⁸. That declaration was only formal. The revolution committee of Georgia, the full protocols of which exist, never discussed the above mentioned problem and never made a decision (even on the 21st of May) on the recognition of the SSR of Abkhazia. Precisely, on the 21st of May of 1921 the CC of the CPG examined the problem of making the Bzip concession, but not recognition of Abkhazia and resolved: “not to object signing of the concession by the Authorities of Georgia if it is serious and useful”⁹.

The leadership of the revolution committee of Abkhazia E. Eshba and especially N. Lacoba permanently stressed, that the “sovereignty” was declared only for a short time, “for one minute” and it was only an “advertisement” etc. The party leader of Abkhazia N. Svanidze also emphasized, that (in the letter to Caucasian Bureau from the 10th of September of 1921), that only “according to the formal reasoning Abkhazia is independent”¹⁰. The first congress of the representatives of the workers of Abkhazia (28th of May of 1921) adopted the resolution approving the “independency” and the establishing of the most close contacts with the workers “of all the Soviet Republics and first of all with those being similar according to the culture, economic and geographic conditions and everyday life, workers and peasants of the Soviet Georgia”. The assembly expressed its hope, that the future first congress of the councils of the both republics “would define the final forms of the brotherly partnership of Abkhazia and Georgia”¹¹.

Abkhazia in fact never, not even for a minute was an independent political unit. Appointing the leaders of the party and state structures of the region had place in Tbilisi at the meeting of the Caucasian Bureau under the chairmanship of G. Orjonikidze. The state organs of the Soviet Georgia and more frequently the National Commissariat of the Inner Affairs (NCIA) and its separate offices used to sent to Sukhumi their instructions in the Georgian Language “for informing and guidance”, “for the leadership and immediate

Georgia and Abkhazia and division of Abkhazia itself (separation of Gagra) was managed to fulfill only partially. The territory from the Cold River to Psou - Pilenkovo (Leselidze) volost remained within the Black Sea district of the North-Caucasian region. From the 27th of April of 1922 the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of Abkhazia was unsuccessfully trying to make the All Russia Central Executive Committee (ARCEC) to declare the border of Abkhazia with Russia the river Psou. The authorities of Russia not only refused to meet the appeal of the CEC of Abkhazia, but even did not obey the decree of the Presidium of the CEC of the USSR from the 31st of October of 1924 on joining the Pilenkovo volost to Abkhazia. After the interference of the leadership of the Trans Caucasian Federation (Sh. Eliava, S. Ter-Gabrielian) of the CEC of the USSR on the 25th of April of 1925 ratified for the second time the decree, obliging the authorities of the Russian Federation to put into practice the decree from the 31st of October of 1924. The Russian side agreed to form a special commission with the participation of all the interested sides. On the basis of the commission’s conclusion working from August of 1925. The Presidium of the CEC of the USSR on the 31st of August of 1928 made the final decision on the joining of the Pilenkovo volost to Abkhazia. It was carried out according to the decision of the same Presidium of the CEC of the USSR from the 12th of April of 1929 (B. E. Sagaria. From the history of restoration of the state borders of Abkhazia – *Izvestia* (information) of the D. Gulia Abkhazian Institute of Language, Literature and History. XIII. Tb., 1985, p. 16-20).

8 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia - the Historical Region of Georgia, p. 473-474.

9 *Ibid*, p. 118.

10 *Ibid*, p. 480-481.

11 Strengthening of the Soviet Power in Abkhazia. Collection of Documents and Material (1921-1925). Sukhumi, 1957, p. 44-51.

execution”, “for precise execution” etc. ¹²For example, the head office on the refugees of the NCIA of Georgia on the 3rd of August, 1921 sent the circular letter to the “chairmen of the revolution committees of the uyezds and towns of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic and autonomous republics of Achara and Abkhazia “and demanded “not to allow even a single refugee to pass into the Soviet Georgia”¹³. N. Sokolovski having signed the circular knew sufficiently well, that the “sovereign” Abkhazia in reality was the autonomous republic within Georgia.

The highest temporary occupational organ of power – the Revolution Committee of Georgia and after recognition of the SSR of Abkhazia considered it as its own territory, discussing at its meetings and making the decision on giving Abkhazia the credit, on the Tkvatsheli mines, conclusion of the Bzip concession (many times) and etc. ¹⁴

Even CC of Georgia did not consider Abkhazia the “Sovereign” republic. In the thesis of the CC of Georgia was marked, that “joint attempts of the Transcaucasian Sovereign Republics (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), on the basis of the Union Agreement is dictated by the course of events from the international and inner relations point of view”¹⁵. Among the independent republics, as we can see Abkhazia is not mentioned.

Conductor of the Moscow policy in the Caucasus – Caucasian Bureau of the CC of Communist Party of Russia also did not consider Abkhazia a “sovereign republic. ” At the meetings of the Caucasian Bureau the representatives of Abkhazia equally with the Highlanders and Dagestan autonomous republics participated only with the right of the consultative vote. On the 2-3rd of July of 1921 Plenum of the Caucasian Bureau resolved to “recognize to be of a paramount importance taking into practice the sovereignty of the Caucasian Republics (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan)”¹⁶. The “Independent” Abkhazia was not in the agenda. Its real status sometimes seemed lower, that of the autonomous republics of Dagestan, Highland, Nakhichevan and Kabarda. Unlike them, Abkhazia was not the member of the economic union of the Caucasus (was formed in August, 1921). The “independent” Abkhazia was not included into the economical bureau, being formed by the Caucasian Bureau on the 16th of August of 1921 and uniting Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia¹⁷. The indicator of the low political status of Abkhazia is the letter of V. Lenin to the Communist party organizations of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Dagestan and Highland Republics. Abkhazia is not even mentioned in that letter. V. Lenin did not mention Abkhazia in the project - decree of the Political Bureau of the CC Communist Party of Russia - on the federation of the Republics of the Trans Caucasus, on the 28 November of 1918. In the project only Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are mentioned. V. I. Lenin “forgot” Abkhazia two times, because official Moscow, as it has been already mentioned above, did not recognize the “sovereignty” of Abkhazia and meant it a part of Georgia. This fact was “confirmed” by the “leader” once more on the 1st of September of 1921, when the text of the Bzip concession being signed by the governments of Georgia and Abkhazia¹⁸ was presented to him.

12 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical region of Georgia, p. 118-119.

13 Ibid, p. 480.

14 Ibid, p. 117.

15 Pravda Gruzii (The truth of Georgia), 1921, 22nd of November.

16 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia – Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 475.

17 V. Lenin. Full Collection of the Works, vol. 43, p. 198-200.

18 V. Lenin. Biographic Chronicles, vol. XI. M., 1980, p. 270.

The Soviet Russia, though formally, but anyway recognized the sovereignty of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, with which it signed the ally's agreement (with Georgia such kind of agreement was signed on the 21st of May of 1921)¹⁹, exchanged the representations. Abkhazia was not done such an honor. The "sovereignty of Abkhazia" is not even mentioned in any document of the CC of the Communist Party of Russia, Council of the People's Commissars (governments), Assemblies of the Council of the Workers, Army and Peasant deputies (the Supreme Soviet Legislative Organ), All Russia Central Executive Committee – ARCEC – (the legislative organ, functioning between the assemblies of the councils). As, for such a specific organ, as the People's Commissariat on the national affairs, arising out of the common state policy, regarded Abkhazia as the autonomous unit of Georgia. The leader of that organization I. Stalin on the 1st of September of 1921 wrote to the secretary of the ARCEC – A. Enukidze "Abkhazia is an autonomous part of the sovereign Georgia and thus, does not have the independent representative RSFSR and must not have. Thus, it has no rights to obtain the credit for RSFSR"²⁰. I. Stalin, being the Head of the Workers and Peasants' Inspection (he occupied the position of the head of the two ministries), informed the same A. Enukidze on the 13th of September of 1921, that financing Abkhazia without the consent of People's commissariat of the finances of Georgia is not permissible²¹.

The independent" Abkhazia never was the subject of the international law, when that status though formally, was used by Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. On the 13th of October of 1921 they signed the Kars agreement with Turkey.

Thus, it is absolutely clear, that Abkhazia did not have the "sovereignty" even in the Soviet meaning, i. e. it was not a republic being directly subjugated to Moscow. In 1921 having the special temporary status it remained the part of Georgia and was only formally the Soviet Socialist Republic. In the same year the practical steps towards eliminating of the formalities, for filling up the legislative void having emerged in its turn, as a result of the soviet occupation between the centre (Tbilisi) and the region (Sukhumi).

On the 5th of July of 1921 the Caucasian Bureau made the decision to conduct the party work "For uniting Abkhazia and Georgia through forming the autonomy of Abkhazia being the part of Georgia"²². On the 23rd of July of the same year at the meeting of the executive officials of Abkhazia, N. Lacoba said: "The Soviet Georgia or Abkhazia are independent in the agricultural and economic aspects, but politically they are subjugated to the centre through the Russian communist party (RCP) in person of the CC of Party of Georgia and Caucasian Bureau of the CC RCP and thus, it makes no difference with what republic federates Abkhazia, as the main thing is to maintain the idea of the Soviet power". N. Lacoba spoke about the necessity of "making the federation of Soviet Abkhazia and Soviet Georgia, because of their ethnographic, historic and everyday life conditions"²³, pointing at the same time to the impossibility of making federation with Russia. In the de-

19 M. Vachnadze, M. Guruli. *Together with Russia or without it*. Tb., 2007, p. 59-60 (in Georgian).

20 A. Menteshashvili. *Historical Premises...*, p. 67.

21 Ibid. Abkhazia was financed by the revolution committee of Georgia and the revolution committee of Abkhazia was obliged to inform it on the expenses and give the appropriate reports. In replenishment of the budget of Georgia the "sovereign" Abkhazia participated even in 1921. (J. Gamakharia. *From the history of the Georgian – Abkhazian relations*, p. 118-120).

22 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 118.

23 Ibid, p. 475.

cree of the meeting it is noted, that the declaration of the revolution committee of Georgia on recognition of the Abkhazian SSR (21st of May, 1921) gives the Abkhazian people the maximal guarantee of the autonomous rights, as the complete independence is unrealizable. Taking into account this fact, the meeting hoped to conclude in the nearest future the federal union with Georgia. The similar decision was made by the regular meeting of the executive officials on the 15th of October of 1921, considering “necessary the immediate legalization of the mentioned Federal Union of Georgia and Abkhazia, through the official agreement of the two allied equal republics”²⁴.

On the 21st of October of 1921 E. Eshba appeals in his letter to the Caucasian Bureau to decide immediately the problem of the relations of Georgia and Abkhazia. On the 1st of November the Caucasian Bureau formed a commission for working out of the project of the agreement between the two republics; The representatives of Russia in Georgia: Legran (the chairman), Sh. Eliava (the member of the government of Georgia) and head of the revolution committee of Abkhazia E. Eshba were the members of the commission. On the 14th of November of 1921 E. Eshba proposed to include Abkhazia into the forming Transcaucasian Federation directly and not through Georgia.²⁵

On the 16th of November of 1921 the Caucasian Bureau of the CC of the CP of Russia considered the national composition of Abkhazia²⁶ and the other factors and resolved: “1. to consider existence of the independent Abkhazia, economically and politically inexpedient. 2. To offer comrade E. Eshba to give his final conclusion on the inclusion of Abkhazia into the federation of Georgia on the contractual basis or on the basis of the autonomous district into the RSFR”²⁷.

The present decree of the Caucasian Bureau is important, as in it is defined the status of Abkhazia according to the criteria of the Soviet Russia – the autonomous district (non-government formation). The higher status was given to Abkhazia within Georgia, for playing the role of the effective gear for limiting the inspiration of Georgia to being independent.

For fully disseminating of the jurisdiction of Georgia in Abkhazia the decisions of the Caucasian Bureau from the 21st of November of 1921 on subjugating of the Abkhazian party organization to the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia was of a paramount importance. Into the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia was included E. Eshba²⁸. On the 16th of December of 1921 Georgia and Abkhazia signed the allied agreement²⁹. The fourth

24 Ibid, p. 481.

25 On the 14th of November of 1921 the plenum of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia approved the decision of the Caucasian Bureau on formation of the Trans Caucasian Federation (Essays on history of the communist party of Georgia, part. II Tb., 1983, p. 28). But a group of the leading Georgian executives headed by B. Mdivani and being well-known as “national-uklonists” was against that idea. It seems that E. Eshba decided to use the contradictions in the Georgian government for his benefit. It is probable, that for making an impact on the “national- uklonists’ he was given a task to make such kind of proposal.

26 On the 29th of October of 1921 the Caucasian Bureau requested from Sukhumi the data on the national composition of Abkhazia. The leading party organ – the organizational bureau RCP in Abkhazia sent to the Caucasian party bureau the following statistic data: Georgians – 70, 114 (38 ½ %) Highlanders and Abkhazians – 45, 705 (25%), the various Asian people - 20, 196 (11. 1 %), Russians - 18, 97, (9. 9 %) , other European people – 13, 784 (7. 6%), Armenians - 13, 038 (7. 5%), Jews – 448 (0. 3%). See. J. Gamakharia. From the History of the Georgian –Abkhazian Relations, p. 124.

27 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 481-482.

28 Ibid, p. 482.

29 On Georgia’s behalf the agreement was signed by the vice-chairman of the revolution committee S.

point of the agreement pointed to the fact, that Abkhazia became the part of Georgia, through which it was included into all the regional unions and namely, the federation of the Transcaucasian Republics. At the same time, Georgia gave it “the one third of its seats”³⁰.

On the 17th of February, 1922 the first of the assembly of the Abkhazian Councils approved the agreement with Georgia. The inclusion of Abkhazia within Georgia was constitutionally confirmed by the first assembly of the council of Georgia (25th of February – 3rd of March, 1922). In the Constitution of Georgia being adopted at that assembly constitution is said: “Within the socialist soviet republic of Georgia on the basis of the volunteer self-determination are accepted the autonomous socialist republic of Achara, autonomous district of the South Ossetia and the socialist soviet Republic of Abkhazia, which is united with the socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia on the basis of the special allied agreement between those republics”³¹.

In spite of clear record of the constitution of Georgia, the separatist’s historiography insists without any ground, that Abkhazia never was the consisting part of the Georgian SSR³², but does not say the part of which country Abkhazia was in that period. As we can see, Abkhazia was not the direct member of the Transcaucasian Federation. It is not mentioned in the allied agreement of the Transcaucasian republics. (12th of March of 1922), as well as in the

Constitution of the Transcaucasian Federation (13th of December of 1922)³³. As far as Abkhazia was not event the subject of the Transcaucasian Federation it could not directly participate in making the agreement on formation of the Soviet Union. (30th of December of 1922)³⁴. The statement, that the document was signed by the representative of Abkhazia N. Akirtava is not true³⁵. In reality, the agreement on the formation of the USSR was signed only by the representatives of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belorussia and Transcaucasian Federation. On behalf of the Transcaucasian Federation the document was signed by 22 persons and among them N. Lacoba (and not N. Akirtava)³⁶.

Factually and legally the Abkhazian SSR was an autonomous republic. Under that status it is mentioned in the decree of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia form the 27th of February of 1922 on the “distribution of seats in the central executive committee (CEC) of Georgia. It says: “To give the centre the 35 seats, autonomous of Abkhazia, Achara... 3 seats each”.³⁷ The party and State structure of Abkhazia became accountable to the appropriate structure of Georgia³⁸.

Soon, started the preliminary discussion of the problem on removal from the Constitution of Georgia of the notion the “contractual republic.” The secretary of the CC of Communist Party of Georgia - B. Lominadze discussed that matter with the head of the

Kavtaradze, on behalf of Abkhazia - the representatives of Abkhazia in the government of Georgia – N. Akirtava and vice-chairman of the people’s council - S. Kartoza (an Abkhazian).

30 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 483-484.

31 Formation of the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics. Collection of the documents. M., 1972, p. 237-238.

32 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 342.

33 Formation of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, p. 257 -259, 349-359.

34 Ibid, p. 381-386.

35 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia. P. 342.

36 Pravda, 1922, 31st of December.

37 Z. Papaskiri. Essay. Part II, P. 98.

38 Ibid, p. 98-99.

Government of Abkhazia – N. Lacoba. On the 8th of May, 1924 at the third Congress of the Communist Party of Georgia N. Lacoba said: ” When we – Sergo (G. Orjonikidze) and I talked, that we wanted the sovereign republic, he said: let it be so. After a while, we came and declared that now we tend towards Georgia. - “Then do it” – said G. Orjonikidze - “it is a good job.” Now I am being said by B. Lominadze, that in a year the word “contractual republic” will be crossed out... We simply say that we are a contractual republic, but I dare say, that in two years even these words will be crossed out by the peasants of Abkhazia. “Contradicting against the declaration of the Abkhazians a special nationality and verifying that the Tsar’s government deliberately opposed the Georgian cultural nationality with the Abkhazian ethnicity”, N. Lacoba further said: ”If we regard the Abkhazians from the historical point it is natural, that Abkhazia could not play any important role in the history of mankind, as this nationality has got neither its own history nor its own written language and literature”. In his report N. Lacoba talked on “the tendency of Abkhazia towards Georgia and desire of the Abkhazians to be attached to the culture of the working masses of Georgia”.³⁹

G. Orjonikidze considered Abkhazia an autonomous republic, when he was the person, who sanctioned proclaiming of the Abkhazian SSR. On the 21st of December, 1923 at the II Congress of the councils of Abkhazia he said:” The Abkhazians should know that Abkhazia is the autonomous republic and equal among our union”⁴⁰ and Only the separatist’s historiography has not been “informed” about this till the present day. On the 5th of September, 1924 G. Orjonikidze in his speech at the meeting of the Tbilisi City Council called Abkhazia the autonomous republic. At the plenum of the CC of the All Union Communist Party (October of 1924) he announced :”Our autonomous republics and regions (Achara, Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and the districts of the non-Georgian population did not use the rebellion (against the Soviet Power in 1924 – author) for the separatist purposes”⁴¹. This was the real status (autonomy) of Abkhazia. It is confirmed not only by the above given facts, but by the first main law of the USSR - Constitution functioning in 1924-1936 and in which was written:” The autonomous republics - Achara and Abkhazia and the autonomous district of the South Ossetia, the Nagorno - Karabakh and Nakhichevan are sending to the Council of the Nationalities (the chamber of the Supreme Council of the USSR – author) 1 representative each”⁴². As we can see, the “sovereign” Abkhazia is represented in the Parliament of the USSR on a level with the autonomous regions.⁴³ The modern separatist historiography says nothing about the real status of Abkhazia, being fixed in the first Constitution of the USSR.

On the 1st of April of 1925 the III Congress of the Council of Abkhazia ratified the Constitution, factually repeating the main regulations of the Constitution of Georgia of

39 L. Toidze. On the Problem of the political Status of Abkhazia. P. 20-21. The author points out to the original: Archive of the political parties (Tbilisi), Fund 14, inventory 2, act 1, p. 230-235.

40 Assembly of the councils of Abkhazia. Collections of the documents and material. 1922-1023. Sukhumi, 1959. p. 153; Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., part II, p. 99.

41 Sakartvelos Respublica, 1991, 19th of February (publication of the protocol of the plenum with the introduction of president Z. Gamsakhurdia).

42 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia - Historical Region of Abkhazia, p. 489.

43 According to the Constitution of 1924 9 IV. 15), autonomous republics of Russia used to send to the Council of the Nationalities of the Supreme Council of the USSR 5 representatives each (i. e. 5 times more that the “sovereign” Abkhazia) and the autonomous districts 1 representative each (as Abkhazia).

1922 without even discussing it. Its fourth point stated:” SSR of Abkhazia being united on the basis of the special contractual agreement with the Soviet Georgia through that latter enters the Transcaucasian Socialist Federation Republic and within that latter - the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. This was contradicted by the fifth point, according to which Abkhazia was a sovereign country, executing the “state power on its territory independently and regardless of any other power. Sovereignty of the SSR of Abkhazia, because of its volunteer entering Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic and USSR in limited within and according to the points being mentioned in the Constitutions of those unions... The SSR of Abkhazia maintains its right of leaving the TCSFSR and the USSR”. The 44th point of the Constitution defined the staff of the national commissars (government). It consisted of the following national commissars: of Inner Affairs, Justice, Education, Health, Agriculture and Social security. The other spheres of the state management were under the control of Georgia, Trans Caucasus and the USSR. ⁴⁴

The given points of the Constitution of Abkhazia of 1925 contradicted the Constitutions of GSSR, TSFSR and USSR. They contradicted even each other. In fact, if Abkhazia was united with Georgia it naturally could not be the sovereign republic. If Abkhazia was the member of the TSFSR only through Georgia and via that latter of the USSR, then how it could leave the TSFSR and USSR the subject of which it never was. If under the authority of the government of Abkhazia were not included the main spheres of the state management (The supreme council of the agriculture, finances, workers and peasants inspection, labour, internal trade, special commission, foreign affairs, defense, external trade, communications, post and telegraph), then the question is - how it managed to conducted the state power on its territory independently and regardless of any other power. Taking into consideration all these contradictions and other mistakes (declaring the state language only the Russian language etc.), N. Lacoba called the adption of the Constitution of 1925 the “Constitution foolishness”⁴⁵ and the Constitution itself being written “stupidly”. ⁴⁶

The Constitution of Abkhazia of 1925 was not published⁴⁷ and consequently did not come into force. Even the more, in the “Bulletin of the III All Abkhazian Congress of the Councils” being published by the Central Executive Committee of Abkhazia is said: “The Congress decided to elaborate and finish the project being presented to the congress, coordinating it with the Constitutions of the Georgian SSR and TSFSR”⁴⁸. Thus, the CEC of Abkhazia, the Constitution of 1925, which never and nowhere was discussed and published, recognized to be only a project. The separatists’ historiography says nothing about this fact.

The Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the all Union Communist Party, CC of Communist Party of Georgia, and Abkhazian regional Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia examined the matter of Abkhazian Constitution several times. On the 6th of September of 1925 the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the Communist Party listened and approved the suggestion of the Commission of the Transcaucasian CEC and resolved:

44 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 489-491.

45 N. Lacoba. Articles and Speeches. Sukhumi, 1987, p. 176-178.

46 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 491.

47 It was published for the first time as an historical document in 1964. See. Assemblies of the union and autonomous republics of the Trans Caucasus. Collection of the documents (1923-1937), vol. I. M., 1964, p. 686-700.

48 Assemblies of the Unions..., Vol. 6, p. 673. As a source is named:”Bulletin of the III All Abkhazian assembly of the Unions. Edition ABCEC, p. 10-11.

Consider necessary to word in the constitutional order the relations between the SSR of Abkhazia and the SSR of Georgia and revise the Constitution of Abkhazia being adopted at the III Congress of the Councils of Abkhazia:

To offer the regional Committee of the Party and Council of the People's Commissars of Abkhazia in order to regulate of the national matter, work out on the basis of the existing directives of the Transcaucasian CEC and the Georgian CEC the project on using the languages and present to the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia.

At the elections of the soviet and professional organs to take into consideration the national composition of the concrete district and region.⁴⁹

On the 6th and 31st of July of 1925 the matter of the Constitution of Abkhazia was examined in the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia.⁵⁰ On the 11th of September of the same year the Presidium of the Abkhazian regional committee of the communist party of Georgia offered the Government and CEC of Abkhazia revise the Constitution of Abkhazia concerning the problem of relations of Georgia and Abkhazia and present a new project of the Constitution to be adopted at the regional committee of party. The Constitutional commission headed by N. Lacoba prepared a project of amendments to make in the Constitution of Abkhazia. On the 27th of October of 1925 it was ratified by the secretariat of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia, instructing the CEC of Abkhazia to “hold in the Soviet style”, i. e. to ratify at the session of CEC and the Congress of the Councils of Abkhazia. According to the new project, the SSR of Abkhazia was executing” independently the state power on its own territory, within the frames, that power was not limited with the agreement relations with the SSR of Georgia and Constitutions of the TSFSR and USSR”. The State languages were declared the three languages: Abkhazian, Georgian and Russian”⁵¹.

These latter and other amendments were reflected in the Constitution of Abkhazia of 1926. Its ratification was preceded by the visiting III session of the CEC of Georgia in Sukhumi (11-16 June of 1921), ratifying the amendments in the Constitution of Georgia. Sh. Eliava presented the Report of the government of Georgia. Convicting the “chauvinism” of the Mensheviks, he stressed the achievements of the national policy of the Bolsheviks.⁵²

At the III session of the CEC of Georgia N. Lacoba presented the report of the government of Abkhazia. He spoke about defending of the rights of other nationalities living in Abkhazia and the union with Georgia. “We are called the Abkhazian republic - said S. Lacoba – The Abkhazian Republic was understood by some people, as if the Abkhazian Republic means republic for the Abkhazians. It does not reflect the reality, as though we are called Abkhazia, but in Abkhazia we deal not only with the Abkhazians. In Abkhazia the main people according to their quantity are: Abkhazians, Georgians, Armenians, and Greeks...

It is necessary, that they felt themselves in Abkhazia equal among the equals or equal with Abkhazians and Georgians”. The speaker concentrated his attention on the political oppositionists, basing their tactics on the following matter: In case Abkhazia wants to leave Georgia it can do it, in case it wants to stay with Georgia it will stay...

49 L. Toidze. on the Problem of the Political Status of ABkhaiza, p. 25.

50 History of the Abkhazian ASSR, 1983, p. 197.

51 L. Toidze. On the Political Status of Abkhazia, p. 25.

52 Komunisti, 1926, 13th of June (in Georgian).

Does it have any basis? In order to avoid the misunderstanding, we have to admit, that Abkhazia cannot leave Georgia, is not going to and even does not want it. The Soviet Abkhazia is not going to part the Soviet Georgia, but with the Soviet Georgia and within Soviet Georgia - Abkhazia will go if it is necessary to the other world".⁵³

At the sessions of the CEC of Georgia in Sukhumi on the 14th of June spoke the first secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the Party M. Orakhelashvili. He also accused the Mensheviks "oppressing" Abkhazia and declared: "The Republic of Abkhazia mostly if it impossible to say so, has the industrial character. It is called to create, level and refine the culture of the workers of Abkhazia (i. e. to establish the factual equality between the nationalities, as the communist party used to preach⁵⁴). M. Orakhelashvili criticized the opponents of formation of the SSR of Abkhazia and also those having come to terms with the fact of formation of such republic, but demanded providing for the Georgian majority the dominant position⁵⁵. Abkhazians being in minority is not significant – said M. Orakhelashvili. 'If we wanted to have in Abkhazia the second edition of Georgian republic - he said – it would be ridiculous. We never thought of forming the duplicate of the Georgian Republic and never wanted to create... thus, the republic of Abkhazia is the organic consisting part of the unified whole of the Georgian Republic, but within this unified whole is the independent, separate state organism having its own independent cultural and economic tasks. That's why we cannot pose the question like this... that all the power of the being first, all the advantages of the political authority has to belong to the Georgian part of the population"⁵⁶. The similar Bolshevik policy in Abkhazia, being built on the inequality (in Abkhazia the Georgians demanded not the "dominion or supremacy", but the equality) of the people living there caused even more straining in the Georgian-Abkhazian relations.

In the speeches of Sh. Eliava, N. Lacoba and M. Orakelashvili the main requirements of the so-called national policy of the Communist Party of the 20-30-ies of the 20th century on the necessity of the struggle with the great power chauvinism and the petty – bourgeois nationalism⁵⁷ were strictly maintained. In accordance with the Pharisee policy, the Georgian Bolsheviks, as the representatives of the "big" (in comparison with the Abkhazians) nation, were obliged to blame the Georgian chauvinism and defended the Abkhazians⁵⁸. As for the Abkhazian Bolsheviks, they as the representatives of the small nation had to struggle with the nationalist tendencies in Abkhazia and talk about the necessity of the union with Georgia. The speakers of the III session of the CEC of Georgia, being held in Sukhumi did exactly what was required from them, but the like Pharisee speeches cannot help to solve the problem.

53 *Comminsti*, 1926, 15th of June (in Georgian); *Working Abkhazia*, 1926, 19th of June.

54 I. Stalin. *The Essay*, vol. 5. M. 1953, p. 24, 35036, 38, 188-189 etc.

55 According to the census of the population of 1926 all the population of Abkhazia comprised 212 000 persons and among them the Georgians – 68 000, Abkhazians – 55, 9 Armenians – 34, 7, Russians - 20, 4, Greeks – 27 000, others – 6 000. (A. Lezava. *Alteration of the class-national structure of the population of Abkhazia (end of the 19th century - 70-ies of the 20th century)*. Sukhumi, 1989, p. 26.

56 *Comunisti*, 1926, 16th of June (in Georgian.); *Working Abkhazia*, 1926, 16th of June.

57 I. Stalin. *Essays*, vol. 5. M., 1953, p. 27-28, 40, 187-190 etc.

58 In March of 1923 I. Stalin being especially strict in respect of the Georgian people, wrote about the mythical Georgian chauvinism, being directed towards the Armenians, Ossetians and Abkhazians. (I. Stalin. *Essays*, vol. 5, p. 189). In spite of the falseness of that statement, the Georgian Bolsheviks had to struggle against that invented chauvinism.

The III session of the CEC of Georgia made an amendment to the Constitution of Georgia; its new 5th chapter “ on the contractual Socialist Republic of Abkhazia” defined the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia⁵⁹ . It fully was included into the Constitution, being adopted on the 27th of October 1926 at the III session of Abkhazia and finally was confirmed by the 4th Congress of the Councils of Abkhazia (5-10th of March 1927), as the 2nd chapter. It is two times fixed in the Constitution of Abkhazia (items 2 and 17), that in the SSR of Abkhazia “ due to the special agreement is the part of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Georgia and through it is the member of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic”. Georgian, Abkhazian and Russian were declared to be the State Languages (Item 8). The item 21 delimited the power of Tbilisi and Sukhumi. According to the Constitution of 1926 (similarly as according to the Constitution of 1925) , the Council of the People’s commissars of Abkhazia included the commissariats of the Internal Affairs, Justice, Education, Health, Agriculture and Social Security functioning independently from the corresponding commissariats of Georgia. The Supreme Council of the National Economy had a double control of the Soviets of Abkhazia and Supreme Council of the National Economy of Georgia. The government of Abkhazia included also the directly subjugated to Tbilisi the executive officials of the National Commissariats of Finances, labor and workers and peasant’s inspections, which reported about their activities only CEC and Government of Abkhazia. ⁶⁰ Codes, decrees and resolutions of the CEC of Georgia with spreading of its functioning throughout the whole territory had the authority on the territory of Abkhazia as well (Item 22). The right of abolishment of the decrees and decisions of the congress of the councils of Abkhazia, CEC and the government of Abkhazia, being in contradiction with the regulations of the 2 chapter of the given Constitution (item 24) had the Congress of the Councils of Georgia and CEC of Georgia. The budget of Abkhazia was the consisting part of the budget of Georgia (items 25 and 92). Abkhazia till 1937 had its own flag and national emblem. ⁶¹

Thus, the Constitutions of Georgia and Abkhazia of 1926 clearly and obviously fixed inclusion and existence of the Abkhazian SSR into the Georgian SSR. ⁶² With their ratification was made the attempt of regulation and concretization of the legal relations between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. If we do not take into the consideration the formal character of the Soviet Constitutions, then it is possible to say, that the Constitution of 1926 quite strictly delimits the authority and jurisdiction between the center and the region. But, in the conditions of the strict centralization of the power in its main and leading branch – party line, those delimitations had only the formal character. Any resolution of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia was compulsory for the Abkhazian regional party organization and the government of Abkhazia. Besides, all the decisions of the state and party

⁵⁹ Collection of the Constitutional acts of Georgian SSR, p. 117-120 (in Georgian).

⁶⁰ According to the agreement being made between Georgia and Abkhazia on the 16th of December of 1921 was defined only the unified commissariats (the same ministries): Military, Finance, People’s Farming, Post and Telegraph, Special Commission (CHEKA), Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, Justice, Maritime Transport. The problems of the Foreign affairs were handed over to Georgia. The railway stations and the international trade were passed over to the Federation of the Trans Caucasus, being in the stage of formation.

⁶¹ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 497-502, 508.

⁶² Statement of B. Sagaria on the matter, that the Constitutions of 1926 consolidated “ equal federal state-legislative relations of Georgia and Abkhazia (Unity, 1990, N3), are far from the reality.

organizations of the Trans Caucasus and USSR were necessary to follow for Abkhazia. People's six Commissariats functioning independently from Tbilisi was completely dependent on the appropriate people's Commissariats of the Trans Caucasus and the USSR. In the exclusive authority of the SSR of Abkhazia in reality did not remain even a single sphere of the state authority, when before the sovietization the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia within the Georgia Democratic Republic, as it was shown above controlled the issues of the national education, culture, health, social security etc.

Then a natural question arises: What was the purpose of sanctioned declaration of Abkhazia the Soviet Socialist Republic, when according to the Soviet criteria it met only the requirements of the autonomous region? According to the official version being fixed in the materials of the local party and soviet organs, speeches of the leading official's temporary and formal declaration of Abkhazia the "sovereign" Republic aimed the strengthening of the soviet power in Abkhazia and the eradication of the national discord, being supposedly sewn by the Mensheviks between the Georgians and Abkhazians. It must be said, that declaration of Abkhazia the Soviet Socialist Republic resulted in strengthening of the previously unpopular among the Abkhazians of the idea of the Soviet Power. For that time, the defense of the Bolshevik regime in Abkhazia was associated with the defense of the independent Abkhazia. This factor works even nowadays. Separatist historiography continues to praise one of the most inhuman regimes in the history of Mankind - the Soviet Power⁶³, which "liberated" Abkhazia, giving it higher status, than it was done by the Georgian Democratic Republic. In fact, the Soviet Power never gave anybody the real independence. Vice versa, it made the governments of the Sovereign States to resign and used to compulsorily annex them to the Soviet Empire.

The temporary independence of Abkhazia obliged Georgia to be more cooperative and prudent in order not to lose completely the territory being only "temporarily" seized. As for the Abkhazians, they have to win the right of the same formal and temporary "sovereignty" with the more devotedness and loyalty to the Soviet Power, Soviet Empire and Bolshevik regime.

Declaring sovereignty of Abkhazia can be explained with the external political capturing aims of the Soviet Power. The Soviet Russia, being for the "world proletarian revolution" scrutinized the ethnically non-homogeneous East and on Abkhazia's example wanted to show all the people, how caring it is about the small nations. In the resolution of the secretaries of the party organizations and representatives of the professional unions of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Dagestan, Highland Republic and Abkhazia being held at the Caucasian Bureau of the CC of the RCP was said: "Sovereignty of the Soviet Republics of the Caucasus is for us the fact of the international struggle, the fact of the struggle with the national narrow-mindedness and backwardness"⁶⁴.

As for the uprooting of the national discord between the Georgians and Abkhazians the Soviet Regime never had such an aim. Vice versa, after declaring of the SSR of Abkhazia the national discord being sewn by the autocratic regime at the verge of the 19th and 20th centuries (and not by the Mensheviks of Georgia) worsened even more. That fact

⁶³ The separatists don't like the single representatives of the Soviet Regime, especially the persons of the Georgian nationality (I. Stalin, L. Beria etc.), blaming them in all the sins (See the details on this matter: Z. Papaskiri. Essays..., II, p. 120-131.

⁶⁴ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 121.

was spotlighted in the Georgian newspaper “Socialist-Federalists” through several hot articles⁶⁵ in June-July of 1921. In the “sovereign” Abkhazia the anti-Georgian propaganda, persecution and oppression of the Georgians increased similarly as it was in the times of autocracy. The Georgian population of Abkhazia was offended with that fact and openly expressed its dissatisfaction. The leading Georgian public also raised its voice. On the 26th of July of 1921 Vakhtang Kotetishvili wrote indignantly how everything Georgian was forbidden in the “sovereign” Abkhazia on the “ancestral lands of Eshba-Lacoba” and how the majority of the population was oppressed. The similar policy in his opinion was of no help for the national revival of the Abkhazians, but on the contrary the process of Russianization of the region was under way. V. Kotetishvili appealed to the revolution committee of Georgia to stop the anti-Georgian policy, to abolish the declaration “sovereignty” of Abkhazia, being passed somewhere in the cabinets and restore the territorial integrity of Georgia.⁶⁶

The purposeful policy of oppression of the Georgians was reflected in persecution of the Tskhum- Abkhazian eparchy and clergy headed by the Metropolitan Ambrosi (Khe-laia). The Soviet Power from the very first days of its existence gave the Sukhumi cathedral church to the Russian clergy, which had not recognized yet the autocephaly of the Georgian Church; The house of the bishop and the homes of the clergy were confiscated and even the Metropolitan himself and priests were deprived of their dwellings. The Bishop church was ruined and the significant part of the eparchy archive was destroyed. “All this happened in the first months of coming into power of a new (Soviet- author) government”⁶⁷. - used to say the Saint Confessor Ambrosi (Khelaia).

Opposition of the national ground was aggravating more and more and taking the dangerous scale. At the Plenum of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia on the 1st of June of 1926 was presented the report of the Abkhazians regional committee and were mentioned the facts of oppression of the Georgians. It was said, that the unequal situation of the nationalities, the privileges frequently unfairly given to the Abkhazians (exempting from the military service, immediate granting with the lands, privileges in appointing to the leading positions etc.) caused the compulsory assimilation (Abkhazianization) of the part of the population⁶⁸. N. Lacoba recognized the gravity of the situation in his speech at the above mentioned III session of the CEC of Georgia being held in Sukhumi June of 1926. According to his words the Georgians, Armenians and Greeks did not agree to give all the power to the Abkhazians.⁶⁹

It seems that the “sovereignty” of Abkhazia was invented for aggravating of the national discord and gradual separation of Abkhazia from Georgia, being confirmed by the policy of the Bolsheviks even before the sovietization of Georgia, when they appealed to the Abkhazians to join Russia. The above mentioned report of P. Sitin is also a proof of the plan of division of Georgia. The “sovereignty” of Abkhazia was the first step towards

65 Ibid, p. 474-480.

66 Ibid, p. 478-480.

67 The Saint Confessor Ambrosias and Abkhazia, p. 351.

68 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 122.

69 Trudovaia Abkhazia, 1926 9th of June. From the all 14 leading authorities of the central organs of the power in 1927 were 9 Abkhazians, 3 Georgians, 1 Armenian, 1 Russian and 1 Greek. By 1929 the situation was somewhat changed: 7 Abkhazians, 5 Georgians, 1 Russian, and 1 Greek. (J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. Abkhazia – Historical Region of Georgia, p. 801).

the realization of those calls and plans, the transitional form of the political system, when the Russian occupational authorities formally fixed Abkhazia outside the jurisdiction of Georgia and left the problem on its future fate unsolved (to be with Georgia or Russia)⁷⁰.

The plan of separation Abkhazia from Georgia was failed due to the Georgian community. In order to avoid the further complications I. Stalin and G. Orjonikidze supposedly refrained from the regular criminal act towards their own people, but they used the Abkhazian card against Georgia, trying to make it refuse the independency and subdue to the Soviet System for keeping Abkhazia.

In the course of strengthening of the Soviet Power in Georgia the danger of the restoration of its sovereignty was escaped and the containing role of the SSR of Abkhazia exhausted itself. Besides, in 20-30-ies of the 20th century the process of the reorganization of the autonomous formations covered the whole empire. More numerous nations, than the Abkhazians got or kept the status of the autonomous regions and at best of the autonomous republics. According to the first Constitution of the USSR, as it has already been mentioned, that Abkhazia was the autonomous republic. Thus, Constitutions of Abkhazia and Georgia declaring Abkhazia the Soviet Socialist Republic contradicted with the supreme main law – the Constitution of the USSR. In such cases, as we know the supreme law is to be functioned. It is necessary to maintain the circumstance, that the agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia from 16th of December, 1921 at the end of the 20-ies had not corresponded with the real relations being regulated by the Constitutions.

In such conditions bringing into correspondence of the legislative of the Status of Abkhazia with the Constitution of the USSR was completely legitimate. At the IVth Congress of the Communist Party of Georgia being held on the 4th of July, 1929 N. Lacoba preliminary talked about the expected constitutional changes. “I have to admit, that the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia was decided long time ago. Constitutional relations of Abkhazia and Georgia were formed in such a way, that Abkhazia will have to amend some items in its Constitution. The information about Abkhazia discontent with Georgia is an absolute nonsense.”⁷¹ According to N. Lacoba’s words the political equality of the workers of Abkhazia and Georgia had long been guaranteed and for the abolishing of the hereditary economical, cultural inequality Georgia takes all the necessary measures. It meant that the SSR of Abkhazia fulfilled its mission. On the 17th of April, 1920 the III session of the CEC of Abkhazia of the fifth call discussed the matter on revising of the contractor relations with Georgia. In the information note of the government of Abkhazia being prepared for the session of the CEC was said: “As the agreement from the 16th of December of 1921 lost its real significance and thus it can be regarded, only as an agreement about the unification of the SSR of Abkhazia with the SSR of Georgia, as for the real relations of that republics were strictly defined in their Constitutions. It must be admitted, that the name of the contractor Abkhazia has no real meaning”.⁷² In fact, the USSR and Trans Caucasian Federation took in their charge some affairs (defense, post and telegraph, maritime transport, foreign affairs, railways etc.), being determined in the agreement of

⁷⁰ Almost in the same situation appeared to be Nakhichevan, which was claimed Azerbaijan and Armenia. In July of 1920 the Nakhichevan SSR was announced. In 1923 it was included in Azerbaijan with the status of the Autonomous district and from 1924 – as an Autonomous Republic.

⁷¹ L. Toidze. For the Problem of the Political Status of Abkhazia, p. 26.

⁷² Ibid, p. 27.

Georgia and Abkhazia. The Constitutions of Georgia and Abkhazia delimited their authorities absolutely differently from the agreement of the 16th of December of 1921. This was the reason, why that Agreement lost its meaning. Taking into consideration of this and mentioned above other circumstances, the session of the CEC of Abkhazia took out from the Constitution the notion “the contractor Republic” and changed it with the notion “Autonomous Republic”. At the same time, we have to stress the fact, that the authority of Abkhazia being determined by its Constitution of 1926 (and by the Constitution not being published in 1925) was not revised.

One amendment was included into the Constitution of Abkhazia and namely: the merging of the Central Executive Committee (legislative organ in the period between the Congresses of the Unions) and the Council of the People’s Commissars (government) had place. The united organ was called the Central Executive Committee. All those amendments were ratified by the IVth congress of the council of Abkhazia under the chairmanship of Bagapsh⁷³ on the 11th of February of 1931. From that time the agreement from the 16th of December of 1921 lost its power. N. Lacoba said at the congress: “The problem of the relations between the workers of Georgia and Abkhazia is completely solved... we can say, that the problem of relations between the workers of Georgia and Abkhazia can be considered fully removed from the agenda of the day”. He criticized the Abkhazian Institute of the Language, Literature and History, which without considering the abilities of the Abkhazian language tried to “translate untranslatable” and also prove, that “the Abkhazian literature existed even before Adam. But it never existed in the History and let us finishes with it”⁷⁴. This was the official position of N. Lacoba.

On the 14th of February of 1931 the VIth congress of the Councils of Georgia listened to the report of the secretary of the CEC of Georgia and the Transcaucasian Federation - S. Todria on the amendments being made in the Constitution of Georgia and confirmed the decision of the VIth congress of the Councils of the Soviet Abkhazia⁷⁵. Henceforth, Abkhazia is the autonomous republic, not only according to the Constitution of the USSR, but the Constitutions of Georgia and Abkhazia as well.

About the problem of the status of Abkhazia in the 20-ies of the 20th century S. Chervonnaia wrote: “The thing was, that in spite of the changes in names, words used in Constitutions and Declarations, being unanimously ratified by the regular congresses of the USSR (by the way, the word “ autonomy “ if we pay serious attention to the meaning of the word is more attractive, than the ambiguous “ contractor”), but behind all those “agreements”, “autonomies”, ‘ unions” and declared civil rights the complete arbitrariness and cruel treatment of the personality, ethnos, civil communities, population of any republic, sovereign or autonomous republic, federal or “contractor” within the system of the totalitarian regime”⁷⁶. It is quite a fair and just conclusion.

According to the separatist historiography, the decisions of the VIth congress of the Councils of Abkhazia and Georgia resulted in offence of the population and caused the mass meetings in the Gudauta region, behind which supposedly stood N. Lacoba him-

73 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia –Historical region of Georgia*, p. 125, 503-504.

74 *Ibid*, p. 503.

75 *Comunisti*, 1931, 20th of February (in Georgian); *Congresses of the Councils... Tb.*, p. 557-561.

76 O. Bgaghba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 347.

self⁷⁷, the words and deeds of the latter stood apart from each other. The resident of Abkhazia, the contemporary of those events S. Danilov, in his tendentious, anti-Georgian article, being published in Munich (1951) the mass meetings of the Abkhazians associates with the process of the compulsory collectivization and not the amendments being made in the Constitution of 1931. Due to those meetings the methods of collectivization in the autonomous republic changed a bit. As S. Danilov witnesses:

“There were no kulaks, thus nobody was dispossessed and exiled. The racing horses were not expropriated”⁷⁸. Softening of the policy of the collectivization process in Abkhazia (the similar policy was conducted in other economic and cultural backward regions with the undeveloped private sector) does not give the basis for the statement that I. Stalin supposedly, offered, that would annihilate the collectivization of Abkhazia, if that latter would join Georgia with the status of the Autonomous Republic. ⁷⁹ At the beginning of the 30-ies I. Stalin could hardly need the political bargain with N. Lacoba for solving of the formal problem. One more statement of the separatist historiography on the limiting of the “Sovereign rights of Abkhazia”⁸⁰ in 1931 is far from the reality. Not a single word is said neither in the agreement of 1921, nor in the functioning then the Constitution of 1926, on the sovereignty of Abkhazia, being the member of the USSR through the Transcaucasian Federation and of the Trans Caucasus through Georgia; it was represented in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the level of the non-government formations – the autonomous region. The separatists shut their eyes on the fact, that in 1931 Abkhazia was only renamed and the Constitution of Georgia and Abkhazia were adapted to the functioning in 1924 - 1936 the Constitution of the USSR.

The amendments being made in the Constitution of Georgia and Abkhazia reflected the policy of the State system being conducted by the Soviet regime in the 30-ies of the 20th century. In fact, it was the process of the centralization of the power and unitarisation of the USSR, as well as the unification of the legislation (including the Constitution) of the Union republics and Autonomous republics. The Soviet regime could not make an exclusion for Abkhazia. That process needed elaboration and new edition of the Constitution of Abkhazia. The VIIth congress of the Soviets of Abkhazia (2-7 January of 1935) ratified it on the 7th of January of 1935. ⁸¹ A new edition of the Constitution determined the legislative position of Abkhazia in new conditions of the strict centralized power in the USSR. The Constitution of 1926 formally delimited the authority between Sukhumi and Tbilisi, but the new edition fixed the full centralization of the management – all the people’s commissariats of the autonomous republic were to conduct “in their own activities directives and tasks of the corresponding people’s commissariats” of Georgia (item 42). The analogous changes being ratified by the VIIth congress of the unions of Georgia (10-14 January of 1935) were included in the Constitution of Georgia as well (item 78)⁸².

The VIIth congress of the Unions of Abkhazia, according to the report being made by

77 In details about this problem See: Z. Papaskiri. *Essays...*, part II, p. 110-113, 117, 121-123. J. Anchabadze. *from the History of Georgia-Abkhazian Relations*. Tb., 2005, p. 76.

78 *Materials on History of Abkhazia*, I Edition. Sukhumi, 1990, p. 12.

79 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 343.

80 *Ibid*, p. 344.

81 *Congresses of the Councils...*, Tb., p. 766-787.

82 *The VIIth all Georgian Congress of the Councils (stenographic report)*. Tb., 1935, p. 284.

the chair of the CEC N. Lacoba, ratified the resolution denoting, that the constitutional norm on the three State Languages has not been put into practice⁸³. The congress demanded to process of the documents in villages in the native language. ⁸⁴

The process of unitarisation of the USSR and formation of the totalitarian political system was finalized by the ratification at the VIIIth All Union special Congress of the Councils (5th December of 1936) of the “Stalin Constitution”, supposedly marking the building process of the basics of Socialism. The Transcaucasian Federation was abolished (1936) and Georgia was directly included into the USSR. On the basis of the Constitution of the USSR the VIIIth special congress of the Unions of Georgia (15th of November of 1936. 10-13 February of 1937) ratified a new Constitution of the GSSR on the 13th of February of 1937⁸⁵. It became the basics for the Constitution of Abkhazia; On the 2nd of August of 1937 it was ratified by the special VIIIth congress of the Unions of Abkhazia (12-13th of November of 1936. , 30th of July – 2nd of August of 1937) having listened to the report of the chair of the CEC A. Agrba. ⁸⁶ Not a single sphere of the State life was left within the authority of Georgia and especially Abkhazia. The items of their own symbols – National Emblem and Flag disappeared from the Constitution of Abkhazia.

According to the Constitution of 1937 the initially weak Statehood of Georgia and Abkhazia (Like the other Union and Autonomous republics of the USSR) practically lost its real meaning. The Union and Autonomous republics became the unlawful addition of the strictly centralized totalitarian State – of the USSR.

83 In his report N. Lacoba remarked, that the document processing was performed in the native Georgian language only in Gali region (Soviet Abkhazia, 1935, 16th of January).

84 Soviet Abkhazia, 1935, 14th January; Congress of the Councils..., Tb., p. 764-765.

85 The Status of the Autonomous Regions of Abkhazia and South - Ossetia within Georgia, p. 337-343.

86 Ibid, p. 343-348; Soviet Abkhazia, 1937, 4th of August.

Chapter XIX. Abkhazia during the Epoch of the Soviet Socialism 1938-1990.

On the basis of the Constitution of 1937 conditioning the political and social-economic system of the autonomous republic started formation of the organs of power and administering. On the 12th of June of 1938 was held the election of the Supreme Council. On the 12-14 July of 1938 the first session of the supreme presentation organ elected the new members of the Presidium of the Supreme Council (chairman – M. Delba, vice-chairman – I. Zarandia) and the Council of the Peoples' Commissars of Abkhazia (Chairman – A. Rapava, vice-chairman – I. Tania).¹

Genesis of the Soviet Socialist system and formation of the basics of the socialism were under way within the common imperial regulations and regional projection of the all Union general directions (industrialization, collectivization, cultural revolution, formation of the new socialist management and dissemination system, formation of the intellectual elite of the Communist orientation).

Completing of the formation of the basics of the socialism in Abkhazia and declaring about the shift on to the new stage of development, like in all the Soviet Union had the doctrinal character. At the same time, it had to be noted, that a new policy was based on the completely objective foundation. They are: formation of the foundation of the light and heavy industry and total agrarian reform, radical change of the social structure of Abkhazia (the specific number of the layers of population, being considered the fulcrum of the socialism were more than 80% and among them – the workers – 21%, peasants – 60-61%) formation of the new socialist intelligentsia and cultural-education net. The significant changes occurred in the social psychology of the population. The generation being brought up in the 20-30-ies came to the arena, for whom the before socialist period (among them the positive practice in 1918-1921 in the Democratic Republic of Georgia) of Abkhazia was the possession of history. Thus, the objective possibility of the progressive - conservative anti-socialist movement was practically excluded.

The Socialist regime in Abkhazia approached the phase of the political stabilization. This was the period, when the region was overwhelmed by the mass state terror and political repressions taking away the lives of hundreds of the citizens: Abkhazians, Georgians and other nationalities. A significant part of the scientific and artistic intelligentsia became the victims of the groundless repressions. According to the official data, from July of 1937 to October of 1938 2186 persons were repressed and out of them were shot – 794 persons.² Especially wide resonance was given to the processes on the matters of “On the anti-soviet nationalistic organizations in Abkhazia” and “On the counterrevolutionary, sabotage, spy and Trotskyite – terroristic organizations in Abkhazia”. Earlier, in 1936 the victims of the political repression appeared the veterans of the communist movement and famous ideologists of the separatist socialism – N. Lacoba and N. Akirtava.

The political repressions in Abkhazia were the part of the general process of the State terror being under way in the USSR and Georgia. That common tragedy being incorporated to all the nations, without any exception in the Soviet empire was brought by the com-

¹ Soviet Abkhazia, 1938, 14-16th July.

² History of Abkhazia. Sukhumi, 1991, p. 348.

munist system being based on the bolshevist – radical and Marxist – Leninist ideological principles and repressing institute of the totalitarian State. This was the universal strategy of blocking of the development of the society and among them culture of the separate ethnic groups via political dictate, State terror and sanctioned violence. In that process the Abkhazian ethnos experienced the same repressive pressure, as the Georgian people, but in a bigger scale and other people, being included into the USSR.

Thus, within the frames of a problem of the political repressions of the second part of the 30-ies stressing the matter of giving the “privileges” to the separate people (F. E. to the Georgians) equally groundlessly, as the theoretical version on the special violation of the rights of the Abkhazian people or the specific anti-Abkhazian direction of the repressions, as the Abkhazian historiography tries to prove. The repressions greatly damaged the “mother-land of Stalin”, as well via the physical extinction and moving to Siberia a part of the population, liquidation of the Georgian aristocracy and the intellectual elite.

Abkhazia was the organic part of the totalitarian State structure and commanding –administrative system of Georgia and all the Soviet Union - its regional variant. Thus, the political, social-economic and cultural development of the autonomous republic had place within the universal process of rooting the totalitarian ideology of the USSR, strengthening of the communist dictatorship in conditions of absence of democracy and mechanisms of defense of the human rights and the social cultural formation was under way (“national by its format and socialist by its contents”).

Besides, the development of the universal line, from the second part of the 40-ies the parallel tendency appeared in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, significantly influencing the social-political development of the regions and mostly conditioning the destructive processes of the end of the 20th century. The inner structure of that parallel process is in the strategic contradiction between the three coexisting and developed basic ideological systems and the social- political structure being based on them: of the Georgian idea of the State independence, Russian imperialism and Abkhazian separatism. From the 40-ies of the 20th century Abkhazia became the field of conflict of those three ideological, world-outlook systems. The social-cultural environment of Abkhazia, its political space was full of the different stages of permanent clash of the Georgian idea of the State independency, Russian imperialism and Abkhazian separatism. Each of them had specific interests, aims, historical-cultural concepts and what is the main thing, the personal models of the territorial-political and legal identification of Abkhazia.

We have to stress, that that three member pluralism of the political-ideological space of Abkhazia was mostly conditional and had the format of bipolarism, as far as the Russian-Soviet imperialism and Abkhazian separatism formed the solid front against Georgian and in Abkhazian reality were creating the alternative to the Georgian idea of independence.

The serious structural crisis inside the ideological “triangle” was connected with the policy of reforms, being implemented in the 30-40-ies of the 20th century in the cultural-educational sphere. Ideologists of separatism and Abkhazian historiography critically analyzing those reforms (reforms of the Abkhazian written culture and comprehensive school) develop the categorical thesis on the Tbilisian origin and anti-Abkhazian Georgian-Imperial tendency of those reforms. Without the appropriate argumentation and ob-

jective estimation they review the reforms without maintaining of the analogous reforms being conducted in the USSR, within the locked abstract model, as the local initiative of Georgia and tend to blame the Georgians in the attempt of originality of the Abkhazians. The analyses of the appropriate course studying materials and maintaining of the separate specific aspects of the common policy in the sphere of the cultural construction in the scale of the USSR gives a possibility not only of the constructive criticism of the above mentioned concept, but of its full annihilation.

In the second part of the 30-ies within the frames of the “cultural revolution” and “Lenin Nationalistic cultural policy” in the USSR, the Kremlin made a specific decision on the acquiring by the “small nations” of the autonomous formations the graphic system of the written language of the State language of the corresponding union republic”³. From July of 1938 the Institute of Language and the Written Language of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR started to create the alphabets on the basis of the Russian graphics for the 35 languages of the peoples living in the RSFSR and other republics. ⁴ Formally, the graphic reform did not seem to be the arrangement of the imperial assimilatory tendency, the cultural-civilization blow hitting the “small nations”. Their written language was to acquire the graphics of those union republics within which were included the autonomous formations of those “small nations”. Consequently, the system was harmonized with the territorial – administrative system and common political model of subjugation of the autonomous republics to the union republics. Besides, the reform was officially carried out within the Constitution and organic legislation.

The latent side of the reform has to be regarded from the quite different angle, in fact having the assimilatory character within the context of russification. Out of the Union Republics being the members of the USSR- only four of them – RSFSR, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Georgia had the territorial-administrative structure of the autonomy and among them only the State Language of the Georgian SSR – the Georgian – had its own original written language. As for the other republics their written language was based on the Slavic Russian graphics, the so-called “Cyrillic Alphabet”.

Thus, It is clear, that the main aim of the “written language revolution” of the second part of the 30-ies was the transfer of the “small nations” to the Slavic - Russian graphics and within that model (in the process of which in 1938 – 1941 the mass upheaval of the written language from the Latin graphics to the “Cyrillic Alphabet”) preparation of the foundation for their cultural-institutional russification. The reform of the Abkhazian written language or to be more precise, transformation of the written language form the Latin Alphabet⁵ to the Georgian graphical system was realized beyond the frames of the imperial model of the “written language revolution” within the context of its alteration. i. e. as its alternative. The cause of this phenomenon should be seen not in the Georgian origin of I. Stalin and L. Beria, not in the cult of the personality or the special anti-Abkhazian

³ Z. Papaskiri. The myth on the crash of the ethno I culture of the Abkhazians from Georgia’s side at the end of the 30-40ies of the 20th century. Historic researches, VI. Tb., 2003, p. 134.

⁴ Teachers’ Newspaper, 1938, 3rd of August.

⁵ In 1862 – 1865 the Abkhazian written language being formed by general I. Bartolomei and especially by P. Uslar on the basis of the Russian graphical image, being modified in 1892 by K. Machavariani and D. Gulia underwent two stages of Latinization. In 1926 N. Marr composed a Latin font and in 1928 N. Jakovlev created the Latin graphical images for the Abkhazian language; it was in use till 1938.

tendency of the totalitarian-repressive policy of the Soviet regime and especially not in ignoring of the Abkhazian ethno-cultural originality from the side of the Georgians, but in the historical linguistic circumstances, that out of the languages of the republics of the Union, only the Georgian language has different from the Cyrillic Alphabet graphical image. It is clear, that the imperial centre could not neutralize that Georgian specificity and made separate conclusion for Georgia. ⁶

The Procedure of the reform of the Abkhazian written language arises great interest. The preparation for the reform was started in May of 1937, when the XVth conference of the Abkhazian organization of the Communist Party of Georgia made decision on expediency of transformation of the Abkhazian written language from the Latin font to the Georgian. After this, was formed the commission headed by the secretary of the CC of Communist Party of Georgia – P. Sharia on preparation for the reform. The members of the commission were the well-known representatives of the Abkhazian intelligentsia: D. Gulia, A. Chochua, M. Delba, A. Khashba, and D. Chagava. M. Khashba. ⁷ It was the Abkhazian intelligentsia and party nomenclature that took part in the campaign on the formation of public opinion for carrying out the reform. Especially important is the opinion of the patriarch of the Abkhazian literature – D. Gulia on the expediency of transforming the Abkhazian written language to the Georgian graphical images. He wrote the following about that matter: “This step will by all means strengthen and widen the Abkhazian culture, as the Georgian Alphabet is the most acceptable for the full and perfect sounding and expression of the sounds of the Abkhazian language”. ⁸

This estimation is the classical example of the ethno cultural and ethno linguistic optimization of the reform and free from the political pressure argumentation and besides it belongs to the classic of the Abkhazian literature. In fact, there is no need of proving, that for the Abkhazian language within the macro family frames and other Iberian –Caucasian languages the graphic system of the related to it Georgian language is more optimal, as the Russian-Slavic “Cyrillic” or even Latin. The Russian linguists of the 19th century also pointed to this fact and among them the creator of the “Abkhazian Cyrillic” – P. Uslar.

On the 4-5th of December of 1937 in Sukhumi in the Research Institute of I. Marr was held the first special meeting with the participation of the Georgian, Abkhazian and Russian scientists. Four projects were presented at the meeting (A. Shanidze, S. Janashia, D. Gulia and the joint project of D. Gulia – A. Chochua – M. Khashba) concerning the reform of the Abkhazian written language. On the basis of studying and comparing of the presented projects a special commission⁹ at the final meeting being held on the 5th of December accepted the integrated project. ¹⁰

According to the protocol records of the meeting of the commission the problem of transformation of the Abkhazian written language to the Georgian graphics was considered without any serious discussion. Even the more, the Abkhazian scientists and public

⁶ In this context is worth attention the fact, that in Armenia which was not responsible for the autonomous formation, the Kurd written language was transformed to the Armenian graphical images.

⁷ History of Abkhazia, 1991, p. 348.

⁸ Soviet Abkhazia, 1937, 11th of July.

⁹ Out of the 7 members of the commission (chairman – D. Gulia) 5 were Abkhazians.

¹⁰ T. Gvantseladze. on the History of the Transformation of the Abkhazian graphical Images to the Georgian. – Bedia, N6-7. Tb., 2000, p. 89.

figures did not say a single words about the transformation of the Abkhazian written language to the Georgian graphical images.¹¹ The Abkhazian scientists Kh. Bgazhba estimating the new written language wrote: “This Alphabet fully expressed the integral and whole, sound composition of the Abkhazian literature language”.¹² The process of the reform of the Abkhazian written language was completed in February of 1938, when on the basis of the joint conclusion of the commission of P. Sharia and the regular meeting being held on the 4-5th of December of 1937 the Central Executive Committee of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic passed the resolution on the transformation of the Abkhazian written language to the Georgian graphical system.

The statement of the separatists, that transformation of the Abkhazian written language to the Georgian graphics in 1937 – 1938 was the pro – Georgian political action, directed against the Abkhazian culture and ethno identity absolutely groundlessly. Analyses of the different aspects of that process gives us the basis for the following conclusions:

The reform of the 1937 - 1938 was a definite stage of the evolution of the Abkhazian written language (the consequent stages of the “Uslar alphabet”, alphabets of the commissions of Bartlomeev, K. Machavariani – D. Gulia, Latin graphics of N. Marr and N. Jakovlev) and beginning of the Georgian cycle of its graphical typology. We know that cycle appeared short-timed and existed only till 1954.

Reform of the 1937-1938 was not a local initiative of the Georgian Party and intellectual elite. It was an organic part of the All Union process of the unification of the written language of the “autonomous nationalities” with the State written languages of the corresponding Union Republics.

Form the processing aspect the reform was prepared and conducted in the format of the dialogue and consensus in the regime of solidarity and scientific consultations with the intellectual elite of Abkhazia.

The reform could not abolish the Abkhazian written language arising out of the elementary truth, that the Abkhazian language (like the languages of many other nationalities of the all over the world) did not have its own original graphical system and needed “borrowing” of the graphics of the written language. The reform abolished not the Abkhazian alphabet, which had never existed, but as it has been mentioned above, replaced the Latin graphics with the Georgian “donor”. Thus, the opinion and discussions about the liquidation of the ethno identity, in case of non-existence of the graphical self-identity of the written language have no scientific ground. All the more, the widely-known fact of the great similarity of the Georgian graphical system with the sound system of the Abkhazian language goes without saying. We say nothing about the fact, that on the modern territory of Abkhazia at least from the early medieval centuries the Georgian written language was dominant, as well as the Georgian office administration and literature.

In 1945 the school reform took place in Abkhazia. The most optimal way of creating its impartial analytical scheme is the considering of the problem within the context of all union education policy. In creating of that global macro pedagogical background, the decision of the organizational bureau of the CC of the Communist Party of the USSR from the 24th of January of 1938 is very important, as it is the imperative recommendation for

11 T. Gvantseledze. on the History ...p. 88-89; Z. Papaskiri. The Myth on the Crash... p. 9.

12 Kh. Bgazhba. Works, Book I. Sukhumi, 1987, p. 28.

the transformation of the school sector in the USSR. The decree reads:

To reorganize the special national schools (German, Estonian, Greek, Ijor etc.), into the Soviet schools of the common type and also to liquidate existing special national departments functioning at the ordinary soviet schools; b) . . It is necessary to reorganize the special national schools through transforming them to the education programs of the ordinary soviet schools **with the teaching process in the language of the corresponding republic or the Russian language** (emphasized by the author); c) The people's commissars of education of the soviet republics are to state personally the dates and the order of the reorganization of each, special national school completing the work for the beginning of the academic school year. ”¹³

As we see, the school reform in Abkhazia being initiated from 1945- 1946 of the school year (its organization with the seven year delay points to the cautious attitude and approach to the given problem by that time authorities of Georgia) was the result of the directives from Moscow and was conducted in all the Soviet Union. The school system of Abkhazia due to its specificity was the object of realization of the imperative decree from the 24th of January of 1938. The specificity was in relativeness of the so-called “ Abkhazian School”, as teaching in the Abkhazian language was conducted in the Abkhazian language only in I –IV grades and in the following grades in Russian; In fact, it was a Russian school and represented the institution of the Russification of the Abkhazians (unfortunately, today we have the same situation). Because of the binary structure, the “Abkhazian school” met the status of the “ special national schools” , as well as the status of the “ special national departments existing at the ordinary Soviet schools” being denoted in the item “a” of the decree from the 24th of January of 1938. The teaching process in the Abkhazian language in only the I-IV grades turned the Abkhazian sector into the special department of the school. It was the reason of falling the “Abkhazian School” under the directives of the Kremlin.

For clarifying of the essence of the school reform of 1945, the analyses of the item “b” of the decree from the 24th of January of 1938 is very significant. The formal procedure of the planned reform was presented in such a way that in case of Abkhazia the teaching process had to be conducted in the Russian or Georgian languages. Herewith, there was no other alternative. Schooling in the Georgian language aimed the derussification of the people and their reintegration into the Georgian cultural - education area.

Needless to say, that absence of the national school was and even today is the tragedy of the Abkhazian people caused by the Russian imperial chauvinism. In the perception of a civilized person and especially of the civilized Georgian people the fact, that the Abkhazian people having their own traditions and spiritual and cultural institutions did not create a national school - fundamental means of the cultural and education socialization - would naturally result in discontent and moral solidarity. But fact is the fact and its reason lays within the ideology and practice of the Soviet - Russian Imperialism.

The initiative of the school reform of 1945 was initiated by the Abkhazian pedagogical corpus. The famous Abkhazian pedagogue, the director of the Moqvi secondary school B. Katsia in the letter to the Abkhazian regional committee of the Communist Party of Georgia from the 28th of August of 1944 on the basis of the corresponding arguments wrote: “I

¹³ G. Lezhava. *between Georgia and Russia*. M. 1997, p. 121-122.

suppose, that at the Abkhazian schools the schooling should be conducted in Georgia and as, for the Abkhazian language it should be an ordinary subject”.¹⁴

The analogues initiatory appeals to the supreme party and soviet organs of Georgia, as well as Abkhazia, were made by the vice commissar of the people’s education of Abkhazian SSR N. Geria, the head of the regional department of the national education of the Ochamchire region – A. Margania and pedagogue – S. Ashvanba (3rd of October of 1944), director of the 1st school of Bedia – M. Buava (30th of December of 1944)¹⁵ and other representatives of the Abkhazian intelligentsia. Assurance of the Abkhazian historian - B. Sagaria, that the above mentioned pedagogues were preliminary and beforehand “ manipulated” at the meeting of the regional committee of the Party are groundless¹⁶, as he was not able to present neither a protocol record about that meeting, nor any other representative material.

For preparing of the school reform of the Abkhazian regional committee of the Communist Party of Georgia on the 9th of January of 1945 formed a special commission headed by the chairman of the government of Abkhazia - M. Delba. The commission tried to give the reform, being planned in Moscow with the imperial purpose¹⁷ – the national significance. After the two months of intense work the commission put in its conclusion¹⁸. In the document a special attention was given to the causative factors conditioning the reform, as existence of the common alphabet, knowledge of the Georgian language by the major part of the Abkhazian population, lexical similarity of the Georgian and Abkhazian languages of the community of the material and spiritual cultures of both related people.

It is clear, that it was impossible to openly fix the argument on the intolerability of the institutional and objectionable Russification of the Abkhazian School, though it was the real anonymous goal of the reform.

On the basis of the resolution of the commission of M. Delba Bureau of the regional committee of the Communist Party of Georgia on the 13th of March of 1945 ratified the decree on the “Measures directed to the improvement of the quality of pedagogical tutoring work at the schools of Abkhazian SSR”, planning the process of education at the “Abkhazian Schools” from the school year of 1945-1946 in the Georgian language.¹⁹ The reform was implemented at the beginning of 1945-1946. One part of the Abkhazian intelligentsia (K. Shakril, G. Dzidzaria and B. Shinkuba) in February of 1947 sent to Moscow a protest letter (to the Secretary of the CC of the Soviet Union Communist Party – A. Kuznetsov) against the school reform.²⁰ But, the facts being given in the letter, as well as

14 V. Pachulia. *Councils of the Abkhazian SSR in the period of the great world war (1945 -1945)*. Sukhumi, 1990, p. 15.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Apsni Kapsh*, 1989, 2nd of August.

17 The real purpose of the school reform was the accelerated Russification. An extra, joint decree of the Council of the People’s Commissars of the USSR and CC of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union being ratified after the first one (24th of January of 1938) on the 13th of March of 1938. The decree was on the compulsory study of the Russian language in the national schools of the Soviet Socialist and Autonomous Republics and also in the Autonomous Regions. According to one of its articles, the teaching process of the Russian language at the lesson ought to be conducted only in the Russian language (Directives of SCP (B) and decree of the Soviet Government on the National Education from 1917-1947. I issue. M. - L. , 1947, p. 183).

18 *History of Abkhazia*. 1991, p. 360.

19 *Ibid*, p. 361.

20 *Abkhazian Labyrinth*. Tb., 1999, p. 25-26.

the general tendency did not coincide with the reality.

Changeover of the education process from Russian into Georgian helped development of the Abkhazian language, learning of which was compulsory in Georgian schools as well.

B. Shinkuba wrote in one of his works: "This was the year (1945 – author) of my arrival in Sukhumi. I started to work at the Abkhazian Institute. I studied the problem of the structure of the Abkhazian language, was making the notes about the stresses in the Abkhazian language. I started to put down systematically of the Abkhazian lore and took part in compiling of the Chrestomathy of the Abkhazian literature. I made up the manual of the Grammar of the Abkhazian language for the II and III grades, which is being publishing even today²¹". During the II World War were edited the following poetical collections in the Abkhazian language: "For the Mother-Land" (1941), "Ahead, to the West" (1942), "Song about the Mother-Land" (1943). In 1938 -1954 the collections of poems of B. Shinkuba, A. Lasuria, A. Jonua, Ch. Jonua and other Abkhazian poets were published.²²

The given materials are the valid proof of the simple truth that the Abkhazian language and literature were not persecuted, but vice versa, because of the support and help from the authorities were experiencing an obvious rise.

The changes in onomastics are the sphere of the separate analyses and namely in the toponymics of Abkhazia in the 40-ies of the 20th century. That problem was the issue of speculation from the separatists' side in the Soviet period; those speculations are under way even today.

On the 14th of December of 1941 at the Presidium of the Council of the Abkhazian ASSR was formed a commission on the transcription of the names of the settled places under the chairmanship of M. Khashba²³. The representatives of the prominent Abkhazian intelligentsia - D. Gulia and A. Chochua (Director of the Institute of Language, Literature and History of Abkhazia) were included in the commission and were actively participating. On the basis of the recommendations of the commission of 1940-1944 the Supreme Council of Abkhazia held a wide-scale action on the change of the names of the populated places.

The main chronological and onomastic list of the transcriptions was the following (the first is the old name and after it the new): 10th of May of 1943 – Instead of Volodarovka, Gradenberg, Neidorf – Akhali Sopeli (Sukhumi district)²⁴. 8th of September of 1943 – instead of Anastasievka, Vladimirovka and Olginsk – consequently – Ganakhleba, Kodori and Oktomberi (Gulripshi district); on the 21st of October of 1943 – instead of Pilenkovo-Gantiadi (Gagra zone); On the 23rd of December of 1943 – instead of Beshkardash, Ekaterinovka and Mikhailovsk – consequently – Mtis-Ubani, Kelasuri and Shroma (Sukhumi district), on the 12th of June of 1944 – instead of Khristophorovo – Bagnari (Gagra zone)– instead of Constantinovka and Andreevka – consequently Odishi and Akhalsheni (Sukhumi district), instead of Zakhariyevka - Khevi (Gulripshi district) , 12th of June of 1944 - Ermolovka and Salme – Leselidze (Gagra zone)²⁵.

21 B. Shinkuba. Collection of works in four volumes, v. III. Sukhumi, 1989, p. 540 (in Abkhazian). Here and further is given the translation of the material in the Abkhazian language belongs to professor T. Gvantse-ladze for what we are expressing our gratitude.

22 History of the Abkhazian Literature, book I. Sukhumi, 1986 (In Abkhazian).

23 V. Pachulia. Councils of the Abkhazian ASSR..., p. 15.

24 V. Kvarchia. Oikonyms of Abkhazia in the written sources. Sukhumi, 1985, p. 45.

25 V. Pachulia. Council of the Abkhazian ASSR..., p. 16-17.

We can see, that only the Russian and Turkish (and not the Abkhazian) toponymes underwent the changes. It is not understandable, how the changes in the Russian and Turkish toponymics foreign for the region, could cause the derogation of the dignity, history and culture of the Abkhazian people. All the more so, as they did not belong to the ancient historical – geographical names, but were the outcome of the colonization and ethno-demographic infiltration.

The idea of separation of Abkhazia from Georgia and its juridical, economical and political grounding was sounded for the first time in the second half of the 40-ies of the XX century, when in the Supreme authorities of the USSR was worked out a project on unifying of the resorts of Abkhazia and Sochi district and establishing on their bases integral of the resort district, being directly subordinated to Moscow. It was a plan of the territorial deconstruction of Georgia.

The net of the resort infrastructure of Abkhazia covered the Black sea coast line from the river Psou to the river Kidori. Its integration with the Sochi resort net would form a special resort district under the jurisdiction of the Union centre. In Georgia's respect the project was a different new form of the Russian-Soviet imperialism, as the motivation of split of the integral Georgian space was named the idea of development of the resorts industry. The so-called "resort ideology" was in reality a new and original phenomenon in the ideological arsenal of the Soviet colonialism. At the same time, the project had an anti-Abkhazian character, as its realization would lead to the abolishment of the autonomous institute of power in the region, formation of the Soviet resort administration, being subordinated to the Union centre and consequently it would lead to the liquidation of the autonomy of Abkhazia.

The imperial plan of forming of the "Resort Republic", as remembers that time first secretary of the district committee of Abkhazia and Sukhumi committee of the Communist Party of Georgia (1943-1951) A. Mgeladze was for the first time sounded in 1945 by the secretary of the CC of the All Union Communist Party M. Suslov²⁶. Apparently, the real venturous idea of M. Suslov had a function of the posing of the question and preliminary examination of the situation.

A problem of forming of the integral resort district of more massively was posed in 1948. The initiative of its consideration belonged to the close circle of I. Stalin and namely his personal secretary and head of the special department of the CC of the Communist Party of the USSR – A. Poskrebishev. In autumn of 1948 during I. Stalin's rest in Abkhazia during one of the unofficial dinners in presence of the first secretaries of CC of the Communist party of Georgian and Abkhazian regional committee – K. Charkviani and A. Mgeladze and the minister of State Security of Georgia - D. Rapava, the same A. Poskrebishev posed again the same problem. "What do the Georgian and Abkhazian comrades think, if we unify the resorts of Sukhumi, Novi Afon, Gudauta and Gagra with Sochi and form an integral resort district. In our opinion the supply would be improved"²⁷. K. Charkviani and A. Mgeladze answered, that it meant abolishment of the Autonomy of Abkhazia and its separation from Georgia.²⁸

26 A. Mgeladze. Stalin, as I know him. The pages of the nearest past . Tb., 2001, p. 108.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

If we do not take into consideration, the characteristic for the party functionary extreme cynicism, when a man, being beyond the legal and moral frames using as a motivation basis improvement of the material supply was posing a question of separation from the country a part of its original, historical territory, then the idea of formation of the resort district contained a serious risk factor; The fact, that the project was worked out in the highest Party and State instances and probably on the level of I. Stalin became apparent.

The project of formation of single resort district did not come to life. Memoirs of A. Mgeladze are one accessible source on this topic. The issue of the causes of failure of the project is not clear and not a single conceptual construction can help analyses those causes. The hints about the feasibility of starting of the protest marches in Georgia made by A. Mgeladze cannot be named the cause of failure of the project, if we consider the essence of Soviet totalitarianism and mechanisms of decision making and also a new wave of repressions being started in 1948.

The main factors conditioning the failure of the huge resort project could be its costliness in the situation of restoring of the destroyed by the war economy, radical discrepancy with the Constitution system of the Soviet federalism, that did not made any provisions against the territorial-administrative structuring on the basis of the principles of the resort medicine(?). Considering the logics of the events, strong impulse hampering first and then breaking up the fulfillment of the project on the resort district could be the influence of the clan of the native of Abkhazia - L. Beria. In spite of the just criticism of the deeds of the Soviet totalitarian regime and repression policy of L. Beria, we have to stress the fact, that in the concrete historical situation of the 40-ies and beginning of the 50-ies of the 20th century, the factual dominance of the political clan of L. Beria in the highest hierarchy of the Soviet empire was the guarantee of the regulating of the lawful interest of Georgia within its own autonomy, which in its turn prevented the separation of Abkhazia.

In the political figure of L. Beria, being the typical Soviet executioner and organizer of the repressive structure are simultaneously seen the features of the Georgian regional – local egocentrism. The policy being conducted in 1938 – 1953 by his political clan in Abkhazia in parallel with the official Soviet constituent elements contained the latent strategy of programming the cultural and demographic processes in accordance with the absolutely legitimate Georgian interests. In relation with it, we cannot forget about the organized migration to Abkhazia in the 40-ies of the 20th century of the residents of West Georgia, being left without shelter due to the earthquake. It was an important State measure guaranteeing national –cultural development of the aboriginal population (the Georgians and Abkhazians), economical rise of the autonomous republic and not the purposeful action for the assimilation of the Abkhazians, as the separatists historiography ²⁹ asserts.

After the death of I. Stalin in March of 1953 the sharpening of the struggle for the power resulted in the political crises influencing the political condition and situation in Abkhazia and essentially determining the further direction of the destructive processes. In autumn of the same year, followed the change in the regional nomenclature. By Moscow's order and recommendation of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia, plenum of the **29 O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 357-358. Migration of the residents of West Georgia to Abkhazia, where, as it has been shown above, only in the 16-17th centuries the Apsua-Abkhazians gained a footing, driving out the Georgian population or assimilating it - is the fully legitimate action (see, in the same source, chapter IX).**

Abkhazian regional Communist Party on the 2nd of October of 1953 elected G. Gegeshidze on the position of the first secretary instead of I. Karchava. On the same day, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia exonerated from the office the Chairman of the Council of the Ministers of Abkhazia - M. Delba and appointed A. Labakhua.³⁰ In the second part of the 1953 the Russian and Armenian language schools were restored. In March-April of 1954 the Abkhazian written language was put from the Georgian graphics not into the Latin, like it was till 1938 and not into the Russian-Slavic Cyrillics, which created the powerful mechanism for Russianization.

On the 4th of January of 1954 the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia ratified the decree on the conditions of learning of the Russian language and literature and the measures of its refinement in the schools of the republic (in Abkhazia as well). According to the decree was maintained the establishing of the Russian pedagogical institute and extending of the learning program of teaching of the Russian language in the schools of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia regions³¹. It is remarkable, that did not mean restoration of education in the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages; it only meant that education on those languages was never forbidden.

At the same time we have to mention some positive cultural – educational innovations being directed to the satisfaction of the cultural and spiritual needs of the Abkhazian people. For Example, from 1953 at the M. Gorki Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute was opened the Department of the Abkhazian language and literature and the Abkhazian sector of the philological faculty was formed.³²

The Empire centre chose the strategy of the permanent clash of the separatist interests of the Georgian and Abkhazian people and their mediatory regulation, i. e. Keeping the tension being controlled from Moscow. The separatists “National” idea and Communist variant of the ethno socialism were in need of the carrier of the separatist in the social clan. The Abkhazian ethnocracy was the privileged ethno political class, being in some extent organized according to the caste principle into a closed ethno corporation. The ethnocracy was a form of realization of the political power of the Abkhazian ethnos through formation of the nomenclature consisting only of the ethnical Abkhazians

. Starting from the middle of the 50-ies to the end of the 80-ies of the 20th century, due to the ethnocratic policy, being conducted in Abkhazia within the process being controlled from the Kremlin, the stabile ethnic nomenclature was formed with the diversified on all the levels structure – ethnical partocracy, ethnical bureaucracy, ethnical farming corporation, ethnical scientific-creative bureaucracy and other social-hierarchical layers.

The Abkhazian ethnocracy by its institutionalized design and internal political anthropology was distinguished by its heterogeneity, which was reflected in the coexistence of the so-called

“Gudauta” and “Ochamchire” sectors, though it always had its historical roots. In the given case, the historical factors determining this heterogeneity and the inner dualism make no difference. The fact is, that the Abkhazian ethnos is divided into the two sub ethnos - the North-West i. e. Gudautian sub-ethnic group and South-East, i. e. the Ocham-

30 Sabchota Abkhazeti, 1953, 4th October (In Georgian).

31 Zaria Vostoka, 1954, 5th of January; Apsni Kapsh, 1954, 8th of January (in Abkhazian).

32 History of Abkhazia, 1991, p. 368-369.

chirian sub-ethnic group. It is the manifestation of the eternal historical dualism of the Bzipian and Abzhuan Abkhazians. In the dialects and the cultural- everyday life sphere even today are preserved the signs of that differences.

The Abkhazian ethnocracy was the guarantee of the realization of the three imperial functions:

Ethnocracy guaranteed the privileges status and political dominance in the Autonomous Republic of the small numbered Abkhazian ethnos. As far as, the ethnocratic status of the Abkhazians was not equivalent to their quantity and quality cultural characteristics and a priori existed the basis for the discontent of the Georgians and representatives of the other nations. It meant, that the Abkhazian ethnocracy contained in itself the immanent sources of the conflicting situation with escalating of which, the Kremlin triggered the imperial mechanism “divide and empire”.

Abkhazian ethnocracy was the locked cast system. Its corporative non-transparency, definite distancing forms the Georgian elite and the common Georgian problematic stimulated the political autarchy of the ethnocracy. From the autarchy to separatism is only one step left.

Abkhazian ethnocracy was the main source for the separatism, its ideological and organizational nuclear, a certain matrix of the separatist political conjuncture. It was the main power of the separatists movement and the direct link connecting this movement to Moscow. This function of the Abkhazian ethnocracy can be theoretically estimated as the inner colonialism and in such form regional micro variant of the Soviet colonialism. Afterwards, the main separatist parties and unions emerged from the bosom of the different groupings of the Abkhazian ethnocracy.

That functional trialism quite logically and unambiguously points to the Kremlin aims, why it chose the course of establishing in Abkhazia of the privileged ethno corporative elite through conducting the deliberately and preliminary planned and programmed operated policy. It is clear, that it was purposely done in order to use Abkhazian ethnocracy for satisfying its own imperiocratic ambitions and in the appropriate situation of triggering the traditional imperial mechanism “divide and empire”, restraining and stabile neutralizing of the national-liberating movement of Georgia.

As it has been mentioned above, the process of formation of the Abkhazian ethnocracy started form coming to power of N. S. Khrushchev and as a result of emerging of the pro Abkhazian lobby in the post Stalin generation of the party-political elite. Namely, from that starts the gradual process of formation in the Autonomous Republic - of the Party-State, administrative, economical and education structures of the ethnocratic model.

Each stage of the formation of ethnocracy and separatist political conjuncture was preliminary planned and had the form of the “compulsory” operative reaction to the inspired by the imperial centre to the Abkhazian actions. So it was in 1957, 1967, 1977-1978 and 1988-1989. All this in total, is the stadial chronology of the genesis of the Abkhazian separatism in the form of inspired by Moscow in the separate waves of the separatist demands and initiatives. As a result of those actions the Abkhazian minority would get definite regular privileges and ethnic preferences in different spheres of the social-political life. The first such destructive action had place in 1957. The cause of emerging of the

critical situation became the edition in 1954 of the book of the well-known scientist – P. Ingorokva ‘Giorgi Merchule’ and discussing of it (in 1956) in the academic circles on the conditions on the cardinal problems of history of Abkhazia. In connection with this, definite powers provoked the anti-Georgian protest actions with attraction of the part of the Abkhazian population of the Autonomous Republic. The activator for those actions was the decree of the Presidium of the CC of the CPSS from the 10th of July of 1956 (see, *ibid* the pages).

On the 11-13th of April of 1957 in Sukhumi before the House (edifice) of the regional committee of the party was held protest action with the participation of 200 persons. Riots had place in the Sukhumi pedagogical institute as well. The separate representatives of the Abkhazian intelligentsia went to the villages for formation of the mass base of movement and arranging of the organized protest. Emerged political slogans. Different groups of the creative and scientific intelligentsia of Abkhazia directed the letters to the CC of CPSS and personally to N. Khrushchev. They demanded accomplishment of the decision of the Presidium of the CC CPSS from the 10th of July 1956, termination of the inner Republican migration and transition of Abkhazia under the jurisdiction of Russian Federation³³. The situation normalized after the interference of the authorities of Georgia. The decision of the Bureau of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia from the 12th of April of 1957 and Abkhazian regional committee from the 15-16th of April temporarily discharged the social-political situation in the Autonomous Republic.

It is absolutely mistaken and needs a serious correction the assumption, according to which the precondition for the separatist action of 1957 and its main cause appeared P. Ingorokva’s book supposedly published aiming the scientific-ideological policy for the assimilation of the Abkhazians. In reality, the protest action of 1957 were the first organized effort of marching of the Abkhazian ethnocraty against the territorial integrity of Georgia and official demonstration of the political project of the Abkhazian separatism, during which that destructive phenomenon showed its pro - imperial and anti-Georgian self-identity. It is clearly seen in the purposeful political actions: claims on the entry into the structure of the Russian Federation, as an Autonomous Republic, sending of the petitions to the central structures of the power of the Soviet Union for the realization of that political slogan, the attempt of the calling of the meetings in Likhni and Mokvi for giving to the separatists slogans the all national plebiscite origin.

In 1964 in the top echelons of the power and in the nearest inner circle of N. Khrushchev the plan on separation of Abkhazia from Georgia was being elaborated and its incorporation into the structure of the Russian Federation, as an Autonomous republic. The first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia - V. Mzhavanadze was informed about it from that time first secretary of the Regional Committee (Obkom) of Abkhazia – M. Bgazhba. The planned territorial-administrative change was lobbied by N. Khrushchev himself. As D. Sturua (The secretary of the CC of the Communist Party in ideology) wrote in his Memories, M. Bgazhba, who arrived in August of 1964 in Tbilisi, told V. Mzhavanadze, that he was called to Pitsunda by vacationing there N. Khrushchev and ordered him to make a report with the appeal on accepting Abkhazia into the structure

³³ G. Lezhava. *Abkhazia: Autonomy of the Intra National Tension*. M., 1999, p. 127.

of the Russian Federation³⁴. Apparently, such a plan really existed. However, we have to consider, at least two moments: firstly, was the encouragement of the Abkhazian separatism and desire of secession of Abkhazia from Georgia always were used in the imperial strategy of the elite groups of the Soviet Union, beginning from 1921 (P. Sitin's plan – see: chap. XVIII), secondly in 1954 N. Khrushchev absolutely effortlessly through the monopolistic decision so characteristic for the partocratic system took the Crimea from the Russian Federation and included it into the structure of the Ukraine. Thus, the Soviet authorities had the precedent of changes from the “top” of the territorial-administrative structure without any protest from the side of the society.

Why was not fulfilled, the regular plan (of Khrushchev) of splitting Abkhazia from Georgia? We have to do justice to the courage and patriotism of M. Bgazhba, deeply comprehending the inevitability of the tragic consequences in the first place for the Abkhazian nation and its culture in case of realization of the imperial plan. This was the reason of his immediate reaction and informing of the Georgian government about the oncoming danger. This fact characterizes M. Bgazhba, as the genuine Abkhazian patriot, sensible functionary of the progressive orientation. At the same time, neither refusal of M. Bgazhba to initiate the separation of Abkhazia from Georgia, nor the local protest of the party-political elite of Georgia could block the fulfillment of the plan of Georgia's split. The authorities of the USSR could any moment paralyze the protest movement through various resources.

The insidious plan of annexing Abkhazia to the Russian Federation failed, supposedly, because of the “palace revolution” in the Kremlin in October of 1964 and removal from office of N. Khrushchov.

The inner elite crisis influenced the situation in Abkhazia – contradiction between the ethno centric “Moscow” wings and moderately- centric “pro Georgian – pro –Abkhazian” wing of the Abkhazian national bureaucracy. The concrete manifestation of the inner elite crisis in the Abkhazian nomenclature in the form of the contradictions between the Georgian centrism and separatism, can be considered the events in the sphere of the staff policy of 1964-1965. In December of 1964 the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia received an anonymous letter from Abkhazia with the negative characteristics of M. Bgazhba and the implication of his release from the occupied position. He was blamed in the weakening of the State discipline, wrong selection of the staff, bribe taking, moral corruption and protection of the criminals etc. ³⁵

This fact obviously points to the existence of the inner elite crisis in the ruling echelons of the Autonomous Republic in the format of dichotomy - Elite – Counter Elite. In this case, Elite was composed of pro Georgian and pro Abkhazian groups of M. Bgazhba and counter Elite - ultra nationalistic ‘pro Moscow’ group led by the vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers of Abkhazia – Aslan Otirba. “Underground Committee” of A. Otirba had a secret support in the circles of the Abkhazian intelligentsia, in the leadership of the party and social organizations of the Autonomous Republic. The psychological portrait of A. Otirba is characterized with the extreme anti-Georgian pathos; he was also distinguished with his separatist and radical – ethno national disposition.

³⁴ D. Sturua. *Separatist Movement in Abkhazia in 60-70-ies of the 20th century.*

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 21.

The balanced policy of M. Bgaghba caused the discontent of the separatists. It was the reason of their efforts of resigning him and O. Otirba's appointing on his position. Besides, the careerist interests, we can trace in it the separatist-corporationalism and it was the most important in case of replacing of the group of M. Bgaghba with the group of A. Otirba, then the fragile balance existing in the Autonomous Republic would for sure be broken and the strategic political advantage would pass into the hands of the separatist-revanchist coalition and it from its side would change the political structure of the political process from the point of view of anti-Georgian and pro-Moscow direction. The anonymous letter aimed discrediting of M. Bgaghba before the authorities of Georgia and replacing it with the group of A. Otirba. The latter, as D. Sturua writes did not hide his goal³⁶.

The contents of the anonymous letter from the 24th of December of 1964 was considered by the Presidium of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia and decided to leave on the position of the first secretary of the regional communist party with the condition of improving of the mentioned in the letter mistakes and faults.³⁷ By that, authorities of Georgia managed to temporarily block the separatists "staff revolution" and maintain in the regional elite the pro Georgian – pro Abkhazian group of M. Bgaghba. But, in 1965 under the pressure of the CC of the CPSU - M. Bgaghba is acquitted from the position of the first secretary of the regional communist party of Abkhazia. Nevertheless, V. Mzhavanadze managed then to put off the rise in office of the group of A. Otirba and reached appointment of V. Kobakhia. He was not notable for his strongly pronounced pro - Georgian disposition and at the same time was not standing on the ultra national platform. (At least, then). He and also the secretary of the regional communist party on ideology - M. Khvartskia had the image of the communist internationalists, holding the intermediate position and used the moderate - centrist tactics between the "pro Georgian - - pro Abkhazian" and "pro Moscow" orientations.

Not reaching its goal the separatist revanchist coalition brought into action in 1967 the model of 1957 and initiated large-scale social-political conflict on the historiographic ground. That time the reason appeared the letter written by academician N. Berdzenishvili in 1950 (published in 1966) under the title of "Small Note on the Big Issue". In the letter was expressed an opinion about the kinship of the historical Abkhazians with the Ibero-Lazians. They were actively involved and participating in the construction of the Georgian State (see: chap. IV, 1). In the Abkhazian ethnocracy and the circles close to it, that concept was comprehended as an attempt of belonging the ancient Abkhazians to the Georgian nation and accepting of the theory of P. Ingorokva on the problem of ethno - genesis of the Abkhazians. All the layers of the population of Abkhazia got into the polemic around that theory, which afterwards grew into the protest movement.

At the gathering of the Abkhazians in the Sukhumi summer theater held on the 7-9 April of 1967 was elected a delegation consisting of seven persons (T. Shakril, J. Akhuba, A. Agrba, Kh. Charagua, O. Shamba, O. Damenia and A. Zukhba), which was commissioned to officially inform the Governance of the USSR about the demands of the Abkha-

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

zian population³⁸. The document being presented to the Supreme Party and Government Structures with its pathos, contents and aim had obviously separatist tendency. In the preamble was told about the quasi oppressions of the Abkhazians, inadmissibility of the Abkhazians to the governing positions, assimilation and artificial slowdown of the economical, political and cultural development of Abkhazia. A Special attention deserve the demand of the authors of the document on repatriation of the 200 000 mukhajirs from Turkey, conducting of the anti-Georgian toponymical changes and rising of the status of the Autonomous Republic to the level of the Union Republic (this meant the secession from Georgia)³⁹.

The political anthropology of the anti-Georgian movement of 1967 is worth mentioning. In the alliance with the members of the delegation and representatives of the intelligentsia comprising the non-institutional segment of the movement being sent to Moscow, was the separatist wing of the Abkhazian ethnocracy headed by A. Otirba and minister of Culture R. Kvarchelia. Thus, the protest movement of 1967 was the attempt of organized on the basis of alliance of ethnocracy and separatists intelligentsia of the civil coup aiming the separation of Abkhazia from Georgia.

On the 14th of April of 1967 Bureau of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia ratified a decree maintaining the practical arrangements for discharging of the explosion-prone situation in Abkhazia. It was marked, that during the edition of the third volume of academician N. Berdzenishvili certain faults were made and some formulations needed definite corrections; ⁴⁰ Renaming of some places were though expedient (village – Nakaduli of Gagra zone was renamed into Mekhadir, village Nedzoan of Gulripsh region into Khizarukha, the villages of Gudauta region – Bambukovani, Gogirdtskali and Shuamta into Akalamra, Arsauli and Chirgosta). ⁴¹ The secretariat of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia was commissioned to plan and fulfill definite arrangements, connected with the development of economy and culture of Abkhazia.

On the 18th of April of 1967 was held the enlarged meeting of the party-soviet core-group of Abkhazia. In the ratified resolution the events of the 7-9 April were qualified as provocation, blocking the normalization of the relations of the two brotherly nations. ⁴²

The situation was regulated in June-July of 1967. The attempt of the civil coup failed, though it left its imprints. The negative outcome of those actions influenced the changes in nomenclature having the anti-Georgian character. The Plenum of the regional committee of the party of Abkhazia on the 21st of April of 1967 were blatantly removed from the bureau of the regional committee –the second secretary - D. Gogokhia and a Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Abkhazia – M. Chikovani. ⁴³

The pretext for the regular anti-Georgian action in 1977-1978 appeared the process of the formal-juridical changes of the Constitution system in the Soviet Union used by the Abkhazian ethnocracy. Ratification of the new edition of the Constitution of the USSR resulted in changes in the Constitution of Georgia and the Autonomous Republics within

38 G. Lezhava. *Abkhazia: Anatomy of the intra national tension*, p. 133.

39 *Ibid.*

40 D. Sturua. *Separatists Movement in Abkhazia...*, p. 44.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

42 L. Lezhava. *Abkhazia: Anatomy of the Intra National Tesion*, p. 150.

43 Z. Papaskiri. *Essays...*, part II, p. 173.

it. On the basis of the decision of the CC CPCU from the 3rd of June of 1977 Bureau of the CC of Communist Party of Georgia on the 13th of June ratified the decree on the organization of the works on preparation of the project, for the new edition of the Constitution of Georgia and its Autonomous Republics⁴⁴.

Therefore, 130 representatives of the Abkhazian elite on the 10th of December of 1977 made a written appeal to the Political Bureau of the CC CPCU, personally to L. Brezhnev and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of RSFSR – M. Iasnov. The letter was tendentious, the Georgian people and governance of Georgia were blamed in conducting of the policy of assimilation, social-economical and cultural oppression of Abkhazia. The demand of the separatists for splitting of Abkhazia from Georgia within the frames of the current Constitutional changes and transfer of the Autonomous Republic under the jurisdiction of RSFSR, within the Krasnodar region - occupied the central place. The authors of the letter asked for formation of the special governmental commission on the Union level.⁴⁵

The letter was sent to the Regional Committee of Party of Abkhazia from the CC CPCU for the adequate response. The first response appeared very operative and objective, both as from the Abkhazian regional committee side, so from the side of the authorities of Georgia. At the meetings of the 22 and 24 February of 1978 bureau of the regional committee of party and Bureau of CC of the Communist Party of Georgia criticized the position of the authors of the letter⁴⁶. But, that radical- anti - separatists line was not approved by the imperial centre. On the 3rd of May of 1978 the secretariat of CC CPCU studied the existing situation Abkhazia.⁴⁷ The decision on the replacing of the party governance of the Autonomous Republic was made. On the position of the first secretary of the regional committee of the party instead of V. Khintba was appointed B. Adleiba. For studying of the situation at the spot and making an adequate decision the secretariat of the CC CPCU sent to Abkhazia a special group headed by the secretary of the CC CPCU – I. Kapitonov. The first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia – E. Shevardnadze and I. Kapitonov arrived in Sukhumi non the 19th of May. The arrival of I. Kapitonov inspired the activation of the separatist's coup, radicalization of anti-constitutional demands, and enlargement of its scale. In the separate cases the situation became uncontrolled. In Sukhumi, Gagra and Gudauta the mass violation of the social order and State discipline had place. The separatists used the tactics of sabotage, arranged the mass strikes of the transport and objects of the trade net.

On the 21st of May of 1978 at the meeting of the party-Soviet core group of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia - I. Kapitonov definitely fixed a position of the imperial centre. Demands and protest movements are anti-constitutional and separation Abkhazia from Georgia is impossible at this stage. He said: "we are ready to discuss the problems concerning the University and TV Station, but including Abkhazia into the structure of RSFSR is not discussed. Introduction into the new Constitution of a special article on the transition is also out of the question"⁴⁸.

44 D. Sturua. *Separatists Movement in Abkhazia...*, p. 47.

45 G. Lezhava. *Abkhazia: Anatomy of the Intra National Tension*, p. 151.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

48 *Ibid.*

The highest peak of the escalation of the tension is the separatist obstruction at the massed meeting, being organized on the 22nd of May in front of the Government House. The speech of I. Kapitonov in the main repeated the statements being made at the meeting of the core group caused a discontent of the protestors. As for E. Shevardnadze he was not even allowed to make a speech and they had to hastily retreat.

In the existing situation the party nomenclature and personally E. Shevardnadze did not show commitment to principles, ignored National-State interests of Georgia and chose absolutely unjustified tactics of compromises concerning the separatists when, unlike from 1957 and 1967 the imperial centre was not interested in upset of the existing balance and stimulation of the centrifugal movement of the Abkhazian ethnocracy. What is more, as we understand from the unofficial sources of information, on the 22nd of May of 1978- I. Kapitonov offered to demand from Moscow a forced blocking of the separatists meeting, but E. Shevardnadze was categorically against it.

The imperative basis for E. Shevardnadze's compromising tactics was the decision of the CC of the Communist Party of Georgia from the 24th of May of 1978 "On the Measures of the Further Development of Economy and Culture of Abkhazian ASSR, strengthening of the organizational and ideological - educational work among the Workers of the Autonomous Republic".⁴⁹ Abkhazian TV Station was opened within the frames of the above mentioned Decree and the Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute was reorganized into the State University of Abkhazia etc.

E. Shevardnadze in compliance with the interests of the Abkhazian ethnocracy conducted the nomenclature changes in the party-government elite of Abkhazia. The Chairman of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia was appointed – V. Kobakhia. This act was capitulation before the Gudauta clan of the Abkhazian ethnocracy. G. Nachkebia - Georgian in origin was appointed the first secretary of the city party committee of Gagra, but was at once replaced by the Abkhazian – A. Gvaramia and after that E. Shevardnadze said he "improved his mistake".⁵⁰ In general, the staff policy of E. Shevardnadze had very sad outcome from the point of view of promotion into the regional elite of the separatistically minded elements and their clan-corporative self - affirmation. Formation of the ethnocratic model and elitist political class – the Abkhazian ethnocracy was ended through the changes of the staff.

In spite of the ethnocratic discrete structure (party elite, government officials, ministers, economic elite and corpus of directors, a part of the integrated in the government structures scientific and creative intelligentsia), ethnocracy acquired the function of the one whole governing class and anti –Georgian separatist ideology platform. That time evidential statistics of ethnocracy given by L. Marshania attracts out attention: "Out of 15 national deputies of the Supreme Council of the USSR being elected from the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia 8 were Abkhazians; out of 140 deputies of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia 57 (40. 7%) were Abkhazians, - 53 (37. 9%) were Georgians and 30 (21. 4%) were representatives of other nationalities. Abkhazians comprise one third of the leaders of the town and village councils, a half of the apparatus of the Council of Ministers and regional committee of Party. Out of 12 ministers - 8 and out of 8 chairmen of the

⁴⁹ Zaria Vostoka, 1978, 7th of May (In Georgian).

⁵⁰ G. Lezhava. Abkhazia: Anatomy of the Intra National Tension, p. 159.

government committees – 5 were Abkhazians, out of 8 prosecutors of towns and districts of Abkhazia 5 were of the Abkhazian origin”.⁵¹

In March of 1985 the structure of the supreme authorities of the Soviet Union underwent formal and regular, but by its contents and degree of the political transformation radical changes. The “Team of M. Gorbachev” came into power. The team proposed the speeded up course of the social-economic development of the country and Perestroika. The first two and a half years showed, that the totalitarian system without its full dismantling was not subject to the reforms. From October of 1987 M. Gorbachev had to announce the shift to the second stage of Perestroika – policy of democracy and publicity. It encouraged the oppositional in the context of the Soviet system movements, thoroughly having destabilized and blasted the Communist regime. It was the stage, when the legalization of dissident and national-liberating movement had place, which officially put into agenda the problem of the restoration of the Stately sovereignty of Georgia. We have to stress, that not a single political power, being included into the structure of the Georgian national-liberating movement, did not put in doubt the expediency of existence of the Autonomy of Abkhazia. As for the mythical program of infringement of the rights of the Abkhazians, it is essential to advert to the matter of one conceptual moment: in the theoretical-conceptual constructions of the Georgian national - liberating movement, the requirement of ignoring of the rights of the Abkhazians was never put forward. On the contrary, as far as, that movement regarded the Abkhazian separatism in the context of regional mechanism of the imperial policy of Russia, it was sure, that guaranteeing of the historical and cultural rights of the Abkhazians in the integral Georgian space and in this way “Abkhazification of Abkhazia” coincided with the interests of Georgian national – strategic interests. “Abkhazification of the Abkhazians” implied parallel deRussianization or at least minimization of the ideological and cultural influence of Russia. Therefore, “Nationalization” of Abkhazia would knock Abkhazia out of the imperial vertical and guarantee the moving of the Abkhazian ethnocracy away from the central establishment of the Russian empire. Thus, independence of Georgia and realization of the Georgian national project a priori eliminated the possibility of discrimination of the right of the Abkhazians and their denationalization.

In conditions of the Perestroika, pluralism and publicity, the first official manifestation of the Abkhazian separatism was the so-called “Letter of Sixty” – appeal of sixty famous representatives of science and culture of Abkhazia to the XIX conference of CPSU on the 17th of June of 1988. This so-called “Abkhazian letter” had a radical anti-Georgian, pathos, gross distortion of the historical facts; it contained the anti-Constitutional demand of separation of Abkhazia form Georgia. The letter did not turn into the subject of presentation, consideration and scrutiny by the All Union party conference , but its publication in Abkhazia made the social – political atmosphere in the Autonomous Republic extremely red- hot.

On the 18th of March of 1989 in the village of Likhni of the Gudauta district a mass gathering of the Abkhazian population had place. They assumed the so-called “Likhni Declaration” - appeal to the governing bodies of the Soviet Empire on the separation of Abkhazia from Georgia and its joining the USSR in the quality of Union Republic. The appeal was signed by the official persons of the Autonomous Republic and among them

⁵¹ L. Marshania. *Tragedy of Abkhazia*. Tb., 1995, p. 11-12.

the First Secretary of the Regional Communist Party of Abkhazia – B. Adleiba.

The non-objective and non-academic conception of the Abkhazian historiography and political essays qualifying the Likhni meeting as the “ common Abkhazian plebiscite” (?) and the adopted by them the appeal to the central imperial hierarchy – “the Act of the National Movement of the Abkhazian people”⁵² is surprising. From the legislative aspect there is not known a single precedent of acknowledging of the plebiscite of the organized meeting without an official act(?). Evidently, The Likhni gathering was in no respect an official meeting having the plebiscite – referendum basics. It can be qualified, as a non-formal meeting of a part of the population, being organized without keeping to the necessary formal-juridical procedures within the frames of the Constitutional system. The appeal being made by them cannot be recognized, as the expression of will of the multi-national population of Abkhazia and consequently it was not an expression of the national sovereignty. That declaration of the Abkhazian ethnical nationalism and separatism was anti - Constitutional, unlawful and radically – confrontational. It stimulated escalation of the tension in Tbilisi, as well as in Abkhazia.

The “Likhni Declaration” especially tensed the social-political situation in Abkhazia, stimulated the large - scale destabilization and activation of the Abkhazian sector of the Georgian national movement. The start of such kind of activation was the organized by the separate political parties of Georgia first mass anti-Soviet action- meeting in Sukhumi on the 3rd of October of 1988. The famous leaders of the Georgian national –liberating movement - M. Kostava, Z. Chavchavadze, also the leaders of the Abkhazian sector – V. Vekua, N. Mgaloblishvili, B. Kakubava and others fixed their readiness to build an independent Georgian State together with the Abkhazian people. On the 25th of March of 1989 in Sukhumi and Gali the colossal meeting of the Georgian population had place. On the 1st of April, the anti – imperialistic meeting was held in Leselidze; a part of the protesters was attacked by the exalted mass of the Abkhazians, as a result of which a lot of people got hurt and had wounds of different severity. In return, on the 2nd of April in Sukhumi were held meetings and manifestations of the Georgian population and it created a danger of the extreme escalation and runaway of the situation out of control.

In that situation the Georgian national –liberating movement considered expedient to move the protest actions to the capital of Georgia - Tbilisi from Sukhumi. It was the beginning of the large scale action being held in Tbilisi on the 4 – 9th of April of 1989, the participants of which fixed the absolutely natural and regular response to the Abkhazian crisis. The action soon grew into the protest movement with the demands of the political independence. By the decision of the highest political governance of the Soviet empire, the peaceful action being held in front of the Government house of Georgia was cruelly suppressed on the 9th of April of 1989 by the special division of the ministers of defense and inner affairs of the USSR by means of the heavy technique, entrenching shovels and poisoning substance. As a result of that barbaric, violent action 19 persons died and several thousands of the peaceful population were wounded and poisoned.

The Core zone of the destabilization of Abkhazia, became the cultural-education space and more precisely State University of Abkhazia. Its Georgian sector was the hearth of the Georgian culture and education and the nuclear of resistance against the Abkhazian separat-

⁵² O. Bgzhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 414.

ism. It is quite natural, that the Likhni destructive, parapolitical declaration was painful for the University and particularly, as among those having signed the declaration was the rector of the University - A. Gvaramia. Anyway, the policy being conducted by him in University was the cause of discontent from the Georgian professors and students. All this led to the separation of the Georgian sector from the University and formation of the Sukhumi branch of the Tbilisi State University, on the basis of the decree of the Council of the Ministers of Georgia from the 14th of May of 1989. Opening of the branch of the University appeared to be a specific occasion for growing of the civil strife and disturbances into the armed conflict on the 15-16th of July of 1989, when the agitated crowd of the Abkhazians attacked the examination commission of the University Branch being located in the 1 Sukhumi Georgian high schools. It also attacked the assaulted the representatives of the Georgian society in the town park of Shota Rustaveli. Due to the aggression on the 15-16th of July 16 persons died and mainly of the Georgian nationality⁵³, and among them one of the well-known leaders of the Georgian national-liberating movement of Abkhazia – Vladimir Vekua. During those events 140 persons were wounded.

The Supreme Council of the Soviet Union being frightened with the growth of the national-liberating movements in the Republics, on the 3rd of April of 1990 passed a law⁵⁴, according to which, in case of denouncement of the Union Treaty of 1922 on the formation of the USSR and secession from the USSR of this or that Union Republic – the Autonomous Republics were given the right of holding of their own referendum and with account of those results to stay as part of the USSR within its system.

It is not difficult to guess, that this law created a juridical mechanism for the split of the Constitutional - Legal space and territorial integrity of the Union republics having expressed their wish to leave the structure of the USSR. The National -Liberating movement of the Union Republics under the fear of activating that mechanism, according to the plot of the Kremlin had to refuse the idea of the complete independence. The like policy of restraining of the independency of the Union Republics through sovereignization of the Autonomies was the strategic course of the Empire centre. As for the micro format of Abkhazia, the April law of 1990 created an atmosphere of the “war of the laws” between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, id est, the Constitutional - Legal imbalance.

On the 9th of March of 1990 under the positive pressure and initiative of the Georgian national – liberating movement, the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR at the 13th - special session adopted rather significant historical document - decree “On the Guarantees of Defense of the State Sovereignty of Georgia”⁵⁵. It officially proved the fact of breaching of the Georgian – Russian agreement from the 7th of May of 1920 ⁵⁶ from the side of Russia, the fact of occupation and annexation of Georgia due to the war of February – March of 1921.

53 **Armed Conflict in Abkhazia. 1992-1993.** www.wikipedia.org/utiki/.

54 **Izvestia, 1990, 10th of March (in Georgian).**

55 **Komunisti, 1990, 10th of March (In Georgian).**

56 **The Presidium of the Supreme Council of Georgia by the decree from the 20th of June 1989 formed a commission on the problems of political and legislative assessment of breaching of the agreement from the 7th of May of 1920. The Supreme Council of Georgia on the 18th of November of 1989 approved the conclusion of the commission and before the congress of the people’s deputies of the USSR put the question of legal and political assessment of the breach of the agreement between Georgia and Soviet Russian from the 7th of May of 1920 (L. Toidze. Intervention and Occupation..., p. 309 – 334).**

Arising out of this, all the following laws and acts of the Soviet power, including the agreement on formation of the USSR from the 30th of December 1922 was admitted invalid and ineffective and having no juridical rights.

Moscow responded the decision of the Supreme Council of Georgia with the help of the separatists. On the 25th of August of 1990 it was declared, that the Supreme Council of Abkhazian ASSR ratified two juridical acts: “Declaration on the State Sovereignty of Abkhazian ASSR” and decree on the: “ Legal Guarantees of the Defense of the State-manship of Abkhazia”.⁵⁷ Those documents contradicted the Constitution of Georgia and Constitution of the Autonomous Republic being adopted on the 6th of July of 1978. The Presidium of the Supreme Council of Georgian SSR in the decree from the 26th of August of 1990⁵⁸ annulled the above mentioned acts, as having no juridical rights and transgressing the territorial integrity of Georgia. Soon it became clear, that the session of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia from the 25th of August of 1990 was falsified and in reality it was a meeting of the part of the deputies (delegate) (68 deputies out 138 were present, i. e. less than a half). The special session of the Supreme Council of the Abkhazian ASSR was called on the 31st of August of 1990. It annulled the decrees from the 25th of August being ratified with the breeching of the Constitutional and procedure norms. The information concerning this fact spread throughout the Soviet Union and this was a significant political and moral blow for the separatist – falsifiers.⁵⁹

By Autumn of 1990 the course of actions brought emerging of the preconditions for the deep political and Constitutional conflict in Abkhazia. The obvious alliance of the imperial centre with the separatists was undertaking a regular attack directed to the territorial Sovereignty of Georgia. Blocking of such scenario of the political – situational format was guaranteed at that stage by the victory of the national - liberating movement at the multiparty (non Soviet) Parliament elections in Georgia, on the 28th of October of 1990.

⁵⁷ Soviet Abkhazia, 1990, 28th of August.

⁵⁸ *Komunisti*, 1990, 26th of August (In Georgian).

⁵⁹ J. Gamakharia. *Abkhazia...*, p. 8.

Chapter XX. Abkhazia in the first years of Restoration of the State Independence of Georgia (1990 – 1992)

At the non-Soviet pluralistic parliamentary elections on the 28th of October of 1990 the political block - : the round table - Independent Georgia” got 57% of votes and comprised the constitutional majority in the legislative organ of Georgia.

The first session of the newly elected Supreme Council on 14th November 1990 elected his President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and accepted the law on the transient period, maintaining the complex of measures for guaranteeing the independence of Georgia de-facto and de-jure.

After the October “Parliament Revolution” of 1990 the national-liberating movement of Georgia became the official State power, the highest subject of the constitutional system. Maintaining the fact of existence of the Soviet Union and that Georgia was de-facto its constituent, new authority of Georgia was at one and the same time - the coordinative structure for the liberating movement and institute of the national insubordination to the Empire Centre.

Arising out of the existing specific conditions the main thing is considering the institutional dualism of the authority of Georgia for objective estimation of its unordinary steps in the sphere of the practical politics.

The policy being conducted by Z. Gamskhurdia¹ wholly and completely was based on the fundamental concept of the territorial integrity of the country. The new political elite of Georgia realized at its best great and determining meaning of the positive solving of the Abkhazian conflict in the process of formation of the independent Georgian statehood. Herewith, taking into consideration the existing situation in Abkhazia and around it and the real perspective of supporting the separatism by the Kremlin and inspiration of the ethno crisis, the given policy was characterized with the tendency of the compulsory cooperation with the Abkhazian ethnocracy and usage of the so-called force majeure compromise tactics. This tactics being directed towards the satisfaction of the specific political rights of the Abkhazians within Georgia for the government of Z. Gamsakhurdia was purposeful polytograma: the compromise was not propagated and the territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as immunity of the space and sovereignty till the river Psou and the territorial-administrative unitarity was undisputable.

At the beginning of December 1990 the attempts of joining the political processes of Abkhazia by B. Adleiba and his “Ochamchire group” on the initial stage being supported even by Z. Gamsakhurdia² failed.

In 1992 the process of forming of the pro-Kremlin, separatist organizations, groups, movement and associations became very intense. This process resulted in the formation of the separatist-collaboration political space subdued to the Empire center or the same “reservoir of the war”³.

1 On the basis of the referendum from the 31st of March 1991 the Supreme Council of Georgia on the 9th of April of 1991 accepted the Act on the restoration of the State independence. ON 26th of May of the same year the first presidential elections were won by Z. Gamsakhurdia.

2 V. Chania. Conflict in Abkhazia: Historical Appropriateness or the Fatal Mistake. Tb., 2003, p. 145-156.

3 The detailed analyses of this process are interesting as the after-war military nomenclature was mainly formed on the basis of the “war party”.

The political nuclear of the Abkhazian ethnocrathy and the peculiar institutional basis for the separatism became the people's forum "Aidgilara" ("Solidarity") being established on the constitutive assembly of the 31st December 1988. The first chair of the assembly was the Abkhazian poet A. Gogua being substituted by S. Shamba, who was elected at the extraordinary assembly of "Aidgilara" on the 3rd of February 1990. Due to the eclectic nature of the political concept, qualification of this forum according to the normative scheme of politology is impossible. It cannot be ranked as the political "areopagus, right-winged, central or left-winged etc. The only one characteristic possible to be given to "Aidgilara" is its separatist and anti-Georgian attitude: Georgia is the small empire with the imperial mentality and the separation of Abkhazia from Georgia is the highest form of self-identification of the Abkhazian people and guarantee of its security.

"Aidgilara" from the very start of its existence demanded the sovereignty of Abkhazia. In the conditions of 1990-1991 the only means of obtaining of the desired status was the abolition of the four-stage structure of the national-state format of the Soviet Union and development of federation according to the principles of horizontality. ⁴ In case of Georgia the federal horizontality meant the extending of the status of the autonomy of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the status of alien republics and their subjection to Moscow. From 1992 the separatist activities of the "Aidgilara" was especially intensified and after the war in Abkhazia it performed the function of incubation of the political leaders and establishment of the separatist quasi-state.

In 1991 the left-winged "People's Party of Abkhazia" was being formed with the leadership of I. Lacoba. ⁵ This party is the factual branch of the Russian identical party. ⁶ From the day of its establishment it opposed the movement of "Aidgilara", but in the matters of relations with Georgia and the so-called Abkhazian independence it performed as the unified separatist platform.

In formation of the separatist political conjuncture the representatives of the Russian and Armenian ethnic communities and the parapolitical unions being formed by them played the major part. On the 23rd of April of 1991 "The Slavic House – the society of the Russian culture of Abkhazia" was formed (Chairman V. Loginov). In spite of the declared cultural project of the society, "The Slavic House" was strictly ideologized political organization having the aim of conducting the Russian Imperial policy in Abkhazia. It had to perform this function together with the special services consolidating on the anti-Georgian platform all the non-Abkhazian groups.

Within the context of the activities being performed by the "Slavic House" one significant moment is worth attention: In all the Soviet Union (especially in Baltic Countries and Muslim enclave of the Russian federation) the analogous organizations acted in the format of the defenders of the Slavic population rights and opposed on the spot the representatives of the "title nations" (Estonians, Lithuanians, Latvians). The like opposition towards the Abkhazians was never felt in Abkhazia. Vice versa, the "House" was implicitly supported by the separatists and had the "brain function" for them.

The "Slavic House" performed not only the cultural and ideological support, but it
⁴ "Solidarity" (Aidgilara), 1989, N1, 25th of October.

⁵ A. Krilova. Abkhazian Marathon. Crisis of UIS. www.novopol.ru/article1283.

⁶ I. Lacoba participated in the elections of 2003 to the State Council from the list of the Russia People's Party.

provided with the military aid by active functioning in the formation of the volunteer Cossack formations. At the assembly of the Cossacks of Abkhazia being called on the 14th of June of 1992 the military organization “Nation” the ataman of which became a V. Shmel⁷ was formed.

According to the ethno-political sign and for performing of the imperialistic interests of Russia the Armenian union “Krunk” was formed. This union was totally influenced by the Abkhazian ethnocracy and the “Slavic House”. The leader of that organization A. Topolian became the active representative of the separatist nomenclature and the battalion of named after Bagramian” was especially cruel towards the Georgian population and took an active part in the genocide of the Georgians and ethnic cleaning during the war of 1992-1993 and even after it.

So was formed the separatist segment of the political space of Abkhazia, being fully oriented towards the Kremlin and ready to perform any kind of order from Moscow.

After coming into power of Z. Gamsakhurdia in Georgia having the great support of the Georgian people temporarily blocked the conduct of the separatist policy by V. Ardzinba and his circle being forced to accept the “new rules of the game” and hold from the active secessionist course.

Before the state upheaval having place in Tbilisi not a single secession juridical act was accepted by the separatists, saving the referendum on the preserving the USSR, being held on 17th March of 1991 via mass falsifications and even excluding the Gali region from the voting system and the illegal participation of V. Ardzinbda in the initiated by M. Gorbachev the “Novo-Ogarev Process” aimed towards the rescue of the USSR. The rations of Tbilisi and Abkhazia were maintained within the conditions of the “war of the laws”, though within the system of the existing constitutional system. In Autumn of 1991, Z. Gamsakhurdia using the constitutional power of the president of the state abolished the decision of the supreme council of Abkhazia having no juridical force on the formation of the custom service of Abkhazia (27th September of 1991) , on the provision procuring of the basis for the economical sovereignty (27th of September of 1991) , on the measures of transition into the jurisdiction of Abkhazia of the manufactures and organizations of the Republican and Soviet –Republican subordination being located within the Autonomous Republic (22nd of October of 1991 etc.) and other acts.⁸

Being aware about the ideas and real abilities of imperial center concerning the encouragement of the separatism and organization of the “second front” after Tskhinvali, Z. Gamsakhurdia continued the compromising policy in respect of Abkhazia and after the referendum on the restoration of the state independence of Georgia on the 31st of March of 1991, accepting the Declaration on the restoration of state independence on 9th April and the presidential elections of the 26th May of the same year, being the serious coup for the separatist movement. The official statistics confirms this fact. In Abkhazia, in spite of the boycott from the side of the separatist organizations in the referendum on the independence of Georgia 61, 27% from the total number (347175 000) of the voters took part and 97, 73 out of them i. e. approximately 60% of the voters of the autonomous republic gave

⁷ S. Chervonnaia. *Abkhazia . . .*, p. 113.

⁸ *Regional Conflicts in Georgia (the Autonomous oblast of South Ossetia and the Autonomous SSR of Abkhazian (1989 – 2001). The collection of political – legal acts. Author T. Diasamidze. Tb., 2008, p. 50-56.*

their votes for the independence of Georgia. Almost the same results were fixed during the presidential elections.⁹

In his inauguration; speech from the 7th of July of 1991 President Z. Gamsakhurdia confirmed once more the immutable will of the independent Georgia - to defend the immunity of the national rights of the Abkhazian people on the basis of the constitutional guarantees of the political autonomy.¹⁰

In June-July of 1991 in the result of the intense consultations between the official Tbilisi and V. Ardzinba's circle the compromising variant of the constitutional agreement was achieved. It consisted of the new election law and package of the constitutional changes, the legal realization of which had place in July-August of 1991.

On the 9th of July the session of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia ratified a new election law on the "elections of the deputies of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia".¹¹ The Law provided the demarcation of the single mandate districts out of the equal quality of the voters according to the ethnic zones and formation of the autonomous parliament on the basis of the ethnic quotes principle. According to the decision of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia from the 27th of August of 1991 the Abkhazian ethnic zone (17, 3%) was represented with the 28 single mandate districts, the Georgian (45, 7% of the population) with the 26 districts and for the other ethnic groups 11 districts were provided. Thus, in the parliament of the autonomous republic out of the 26 mandates 28 were represented by the Abkhazians, 26 – by the Georgians and the others by 11. This kind of distribution of the mandates did not coincide with the ethno-demographic structure of the autonomous republic and the qualitative-percentage correlation of the ethnic communities.

The principle of the ethno quotation was non-traditional for the parliament practice and at the same time unpopular, as the ethnic composition of the parliament does not agree with the ethno demographic structure of the autonomous republic. Besides, the formula of ethno quotation (28+26+11) violated the principles of the international humanitarian rights concerning the political equality of the citizens, despite their ethnic belonging. From that point of view the compromise had the negative aspects being permanently stressed by Z. Gamsakhurdia. On the other hand the analyses of the given problem on the realistic political approach, within the political-technological consensus schemes and compromising dialogue are of a paramount importance. It was the force compromise being conditioned by the specificity of the global situation and factors being connected with the great resources of the imperial centre concerning the opening of the second front in Abkhazia (after Shida Kartli). It is clear, that in the given situation the compromise of the official Tbilisi pursued the aim of discharging the tension, defending the state from the inevitable war and State disintegration.

As for the "inner anatomy" of the documents of the compromising constitutional package, it consisted of a number of the counterbalancing mechanisms for the valid defense of the interests of the Georgian State. According to the Law "On the making of the Amendments in the Constitution of the Abkhazian SSR", being ratified by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic from the 27th of August of 1991 for the adoption of the

9 J. Gamakharia. *Policy of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Abkhazia (1990-1993)*. Tb., 2004, p. 7.

10 *Sakrtvelos Respublica (Republic of Georgia)*, 1991, June 8th.

11 *Apkhazetis Khma (Voice of Abkhazia)*, 1991, 18th July.

constitutional legal act the qualified majority (two third of the votes) was necessary.¹² On the same day the Supreme Council ratified a new edition of the Law on the nationwide referendum, according which the referendum on the issues of amendments for the Constitution was appointed by the parliament with two third of the votes.¹³ It was difficult for the Abkhazian ethnic deputation to gather such majority of votes without the Georgian deputation, even in case of joining to them of other ethnic fractions. Thus, without the mutual agreement of the Georgian and Abkhazian deputies the adoption of the constitutional amendments was a priori foreclosed. Besides, the territorial integrity of the State was protected by the amendment being made to the 98 article of the Constitution of Abkhazia, according to which the law on the legal status of the Autonomous Republic was coming into force from the very moment of its ratification by the Parliaments of Georgia and Abkhazia.

The compromising package maintained the Georgian –Abkhazian agreement in the issues of formation of the government structures. First of all, it must be remarked, that in the Constitution of Abkhazia the words “ Georgian SSR “ were replaced by the words “ Republic of Georgia”. It was a serious drawback from the Abkhazians side. After the abolition of the Soviet power and decision of the Supreme Council of Georgia form the 14th November of 1990 on the renaming of “ Georgian SSR” to “ Republic of Georgia”, especially after the restoration of State independence of Georgia on the 9th of April of 1991 the separatists by the Kremlin’s prompt were going to fix the fact of leaving Georgia on the pretext, that Constitutionally, Abkhazian ASSR was the part of the Georgian SSR, being itself the part of the USSR and not the Republic of Georgia having announced independence. As a result of the negotiations in Summer of 1991 the separatists refused to perform the planned provocation and having changed in the Constitution the words “ Georgian SSR” with the words “Republic of Georgia” recognized Abkhazian ASSR the part of the independent Georgia.¹⁴

The nomenclature preference of the Georgian sector was guaranteed, as the positions of the first vice speaker of the Parliament and the chairman of the Council of Ministers belonged to the ethnic Georgians. For appointing the members of the government (ministers) the two thirds of the votes of the Parliament members was necessary.

Thus, the main achievement of the compromising agreement was the fact, that the Georgian and Abkhazians without a discussion and dialogue and agreement had no possibilities to change the Constitution of Abkhazia and its status and appoint the government. It inspired the sides towards the dialogue and compromise and forced it to work according to the rules of the mutual consensus. The existing contradictions had to move from the streets to the power corridors and cabinets, being the factor of reducing the retention in the Autonomous Republic.

The main aims of the compromise of 1991 were the radical turning of the integration vector of the Abkhazian ethnocracy, neutralization of the Russian orientation and starting its reintegration into the Georgian space. The formula 28+26+11 introduced in Abkhazia the notions of aborigines (28+26) and non-aborigines (11) ethnic groups. The Abkha-

¹² **Regional Conflicts of Georgia...**, p. 73-74.

¹³ **Ibid.**

¹⁴ **J. Gamakharia. Policy of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Abkhazia, p. 11 (in Georgian).**

zian ethncrathy recognized the Georgians the aborigines with the appropriate state-legal guarantees and the Abkhazians also the aborigine's ethnos got the same guarantees.

The main thing was that the Abkhazian ethncracy recognized the territorial integrity of Georgia, without the mediatory missions and mediation of Moscow completed a political agreement with official Tbilisi on the indivisibility of the Georgian State area without claiming the federation or confederation. Thus, the Abkhazian ethncracy recognized the central power of independent Georgia, as the source of its political rights and the political process having place in Abkhazia. The Abkhazian side agreed and constitutionally confirmed the thesis, that the basis for the status of Abkhazia was not the process of self-determination of the Abkhazian ethnos, not the decision of only the autonomous power, especially any act of the imperial centre, but the political will of Georgia and the agreement being made with it.

Taking into consideration the fact, being mentioned above and especially from the standpoint of the present days, we can say, that the peaceful policy of Zviad Gamsakhurdia concerning Abkhazia appeared to be successful. We can say for sure, that the success belonged to both sides, as the ration and reasoning were used. Thus, position of those , who in the formula 28+26+11 sees only the signs of apartheid and does not notice the balancing constitutional changes and considers the new election law without any real basis the cause of the aggravating the conflict and launching the war¹⁵ is deprived of logic and is absolutely unacceptable.

It is necessary to remark, that the principle of ethno quotation always existed in Abkhazia. For example, in the first Parliament of Abkhazia of 1919 (i. e. in the people's council) out of 40 deputies 17 were the Abkhazians, 15 – the Georgians, 8 – of other nationalities. In the last Parliament of the Soviet epoch - in the Supreme Counsel of 1985-1990 convocation 54 place out of 130 belonged to the Abkhazians, 47 to the Georgians and 29 to the representatives of other nationalities.

As for the international practice the principle of the ethno political or ethno confessional quoting lies in the basis of the constitutional system of several states, as the means of the post-conflict regulation or pre-conflict prevention. For Instance, in Italy in the province of Trentino – Alto-Adidze the political and representative preferences of the German minority are guaranteed, in order to prevent their decision of joining Austria.

According to the “National Pact” of 1943 in Lebanon, where the majority of the population is Muslim, the president of the State must be Maronite-Christian. The positions of Prime-Minster, Parliament speaker, minister of foreign affairs and other positions are also quoted. The civil war in Lebanon in the 70-ies of the 20th century was the result of the breakdown of the quoted balance, because of the infiltration of the Palestinian structure.

The examples of the ethno political quotation can be considered the political system of Cyprus, before the crisis of 1974 and administrative structures of some Switzerland cantons.

The compromise of the July - August of 1991 created in Abkhazia the situation of ethno constitutional and political balance. The main aim of which was to avoid the military conflict, localization of the possible confrontation within the Parliament- constitutional frames.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 12-13.

On the basis of the new election law, the election in the Supreme Council of Abkhazia were held on the 29th of September of 1991 (in some voting districts the second tour had place on the 13th of October and the repeated elections on the 1st of December). But, the process of formation of the political balance system was interrupted by the military upheaval in Tbilisi in December-January of 1991-1992.

During the Moscow putsch on the 18-21th of August of 1991 Z. Gamsakhurdia chose the tactics of the positive neutrality, being more adequate and responding the national and State interests of Georgia in the existing conditions. It goes without saying, that the dismissal of the president M. Gorbachev from the power by a group of putschists and introduction of the state of emergency were the acts of the anti-constitutional State upheaval. Though, within the context of the anti-imperialistic interests of Georgia it is impossible to estimate the August Putsch to be the opposition of totalitarianism and democracy, as the opposed sides were almost equally negatively disposed towards the idea of independency of Georgia. Thus, from the point of view of the interests of Georgia the putsch can be regarded, as the attempt for the “palace upheaval”. The ultimate target of the putsch was not the transition to the democracy of the western type, but it simply was the regular nomenclature circulation in the highest hierarchy of the empire or the substitution of the “Gorbachev Centre” with the “Eltsin Centre” bringing Georgia a lot of misfortunes.

President Z. Gamsakhurdia objectively estimated the latent essence of the Moscow August putsch and chose the tactics of the positive neutrality, i. e. through not supporting any of the imperocratic grouping, he did not expose Georgia to the expected blow from the side of another imperocratic grouping. In spite of this, or to be more exact, because of this the Moscow events of August of 1991 stimulate the development of the destructive processes in Georgia. With the obvious support of from the new imperial centre the anti-state powers gained strength and the socio-political structure for the Georgian putsch was formed, in the person of part of the uncontrolled national guard, armed groups of the oppositional parties, a part of intelligentsia being oriented to the pseudo-liberal values, paramilitarist criminal groupings and former partocracy. The political, military and financial support for that coalition rendered by the Eltsin circle, was so impressive, that the events of 1991-1992 went beyond the frames of the civil opposition and obtained the charge of the Russian-Georgian war.

The military upheaval caused the overthrow of the power of the first democratically and unanimously elected first president of Georgia Z. Gamsakhurdia,¹⁶ dismissal of the Supreme Council and suspension of functioning of the Constitution. In the 2nd of January of 1992 the “Military Council” consisting of the members of Triumvirate – T. Sigua (Prime-Minister), J. Ioseliani (The leader of the paramilitaristic grouping “Mkhedrioni”) and T. Kitovani (Commander of the illegal part of the national guard) was formed. Modification of the unlawful regime occurred after arrival of the former minister of foreign affairs of the USSR E. Shevardnaze in Georgia on 7th March and on the 10th of March under his leadership started to function the State Council.

The upheaval in Tbilisi created in the political space of Abkhazian autonomous republic qualitatively new situation from the point of view of regrouping of the regional

¹⁶ The session of the newly elected Supreme Council of Abkhazia was open exactly on the day when president Z. Gamsakhurdia was forced to leave Georgia on the 6th of January of 1992.

political power and structures. The compromising model of 1991 and the balanced party-political system based on it also fell apart. The Abkhazian sector of this system chose the secessionist platform and the separatist direction. The upheaval destroyed the main political axes of blocking the secession of Abkhazia - the presidential institution of Georgia.

The upheaval destroyed the constitutional-legal mechanism of prevention secession of Abkhazia as well: the Military council of Georgia suspended the functioning of the Constitution on the 2nd of January of 1992 and on the 21st of February formally restored the Constitution of 1921. The legal vacuum being, formed as a result of the above mentioned events, gave the additional argumentation to the V. Ardzinba group, for starting from the zero variant the force major sovereignty. The Act on the Sovereignty of Abkhazia being ratified on the 23rd of July 1992 by the separatists is directly associated with the above mentioned situation.

During the presidency of Z. Gamsakhurdia the political situation of Abkhazia could be characterized as the “cold war” or the “cold peace”, after the upheaval in Tbilisi the political clan of V. Ardzinba took the final steps towards separation of Abkhazia form Georgia. It was the period, when the political, military and legal provision of the illegal sovrenization of the autonomous republic started. During the putsch in the capital of Georgia on the 29th of December of 1991 V. Ardzinba signed the decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Council on the transition of the military divisions and military institutions, being dislocated on the territory of the autonomous republic under the jurisdiction of the Chairman or the same V. Ardzinba. ¹⁷The so called temporary “Military Council”, being formed under the head of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia by its structure and destination had to be the coordinating body of the future military system of the separatist regime.

According to the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council from the 31st of March of 1992 “On the formation of the regiment of the inner army of Abkhazia”, monoethnic guard of the Abkhazians was being formed. According to the edict from the 30th of April of the same year, V. Ardzinba announced the recruiting of the population born in 1965-1974 for the military service. ¹⁸ It is significant, that the motive for formation of the monoethnic Abkhazian division was used the necessity of defense of Abkhazia from the Georgian military formations. It happened, when the military council of Georgia purposively dismissed four battalions of the national army and namely: the battalions of Gagra, Sukhumi, Gulripshi and Gali, being formed under president Z. Gamsakhurdia.

V. Ardzinba violated the conditions of the compromising package of 1991 and without the agreement of the Georgian deputation formed a new government of Abkhazia, which consisted of the separatistically dispositional Abkhazians. ¹⁹

These series of the secession activates the political clan of V. Ardzinba performed purposively, without any reaction from the side of official Tbilisi. Unfortunately, in the existing political situation moderate Georgian and Abkhazian circles were not able to form a block. Centrism, as well as strategy of balancing the extreme radical branches failed, when the centrist platform and restoring of the compromise of 1991, had to become the reasonable alternative to the war.

¹⁷ *Regional Conflicts in Georgia...*, p. 91.

¹⁸ *Abkhazetis Khma (Voice of Abkhazia)*, 1992, 12 May.

¹⁹ *As, for appointing the ministers two third of the votes were needed, the Supreme Council appointed the executives of the ministry duties with the simple majority of votes.*

On May the 5th of 1992 the Supreme Council of Abkhazia being left by the Georgian delegation, as a token of protest practically fell apart due to the ethno - political sign. The anti - Georgia and pro - imperial separatist Centre – Block “Union” being formed in March of 1991 on the base of “Aidgilara”, ”People’s party of Abkhazia”, “Slavic House” and Armenian “Krunk”, obtained the power and being the imperial pro-imperial coalition strengthened its activities. On 24th of June of 1992 during the meeting of Shevardnadze and Eltsin in Dagomis, besides the principles of regulating of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the whole complex of the Russian-Georgian relations was estimated. In the communiqué was said: “The Law-enforcement organs of Georgia and Russia will decidedly stop the activities of illegal military, half-military and the detachments and groups, being formed without permit on the territories under their jurisdiction”.²⁰ This agreement with B. Eltsin enabled E. Shevardnadze to carry out the military operation in Abkhazia in conditions of neutrality from the side of Russian federation.

On the 18th of July of 1992 in Sochi in the State cottage “Bocharev Ruchei” (Bocharev’s brook) a secret, confidential meeting of B. Eltsin and V. Ardzinba and other representatives of the Abkhazian political elite had place.²¹ At the meeting the separatists obtained the sanction of initialization of the war and they were also promised the help from the side of Russia.

In that period the State Council of Georgia in order to discharge the tensed situation made the compromising steps and offered the Abkhazian side to create the joint military formation. The project being brought to Sukhumi by the minister of defense T. Kitovani and his first deputy L. Sharashenidze intended creation on the base of the Georgian and Abkhazian battalions of the inner divisions of the unified subdivisions with the double subjection (to the Supreme Council of Abkhazia and ministry of defense of Georgia), but in Abkhazia this project was regarded by some pro -Shevardnadzian Georgian organizations, as the capitulation before the separatists and was rejected.²²

On the 26th of June of 1992 V. Ardzinba called the council of the military organizations of the Autonomous republic, at which was decided, that for preventing the possible tumult being quite real, in case of abolishment of the acts and decrees, as if ostensibly infringing the national rights of the Abkhazians, is necessary to accept the definite measures and namely: legalization of the Abkhazian guard, preparing the military and militia subdivisions for combat readiness, taking under the control the strategic objects etc.²³ It was the direct way of creating the war infrastructure.

On the 23rd of July of 1992 the simple majority of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia violating the procession norms and regulations ratified the decree on the abolition of the Constitution of 1978 (with the addition of 1991) and restoration of the still born Constitution of 1925.²⁴ The decrees was ratified bypassing and in counterbalance of the legislation of 1991. Annihilation of the Constitution of 1978 from the legislative point of view meant the self-annihilation of the Autonomous republic of Abkhazia and self-liquidation of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous republic.

²⁰ **Free Georgia, 1992 27th of June.**

²¹ **S. Lacoba. Abkhazia de-facto or Georgia de-jure? Khokkaido, 2001, p. 25.**

²² **Z. Papaskiri. Essay ..., part II, p. 355.**

²³ **Abkhazians Labyrinth. Tb., 1999, p. 32.**

²⁴ **O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. History of Abkhazia, p. 415. On the Constitution of 1925. See here: chap. XVIII.**

Through Restoration of the Constitution of 1925 sovereignty of Abkhazia was automatically declared. Thus, act of the 23rd of July can be estimated, as the regional political upheaval or the attempt of preparing the ground for the coming out of Abkhazia from the jurisdiction of Georgia via non- the constitutional way.

Because of the “Constitutional Revolution” of the 28-30 of July of 1992, the Georgian part of the Parliament of the Autonomous republic - the fraction “Democratic Abkhazia” held the contr -session and canceled the illegal act of the 23rd of July. It made a decision on the renaming of the Soviet Socialistic Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia into the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.

Chapter XXI. Abkhazia in 1992-2011

1. War in Abkhazia 1992-1993

On the basis of the decree of the State Council of Georgia from 10th of August of 1992 on the introduction of the state of emergency on the railway transport and the decision of the Presidium of the above mentioned State Council (E. Shevardnadze, J. Ioseliani, T. Sigua and T. Kitovani) from the 11th of August and in accordance with the special plan, being prepared by the operative department of the general quarters of the Ministry of Defense (code name “Sward”) on the 14th of August 1992 the redislocation of the divisions of the military forces took place on the territory of Abkhazia. Near the village Okhurei of the Ochamchire region the division of the Abkhazian formation fired the armored technique of the limited contingent of the Georgian army, causing people’s deaths. A serious battle took place near the village Agudzera of the Gulripsh district, where the so-called regiment of the special function of the inner forces of Abkhazia put up a resistance to the Georgian army and blew up the armored machine. ¹ This was the beginning of the war in Abkhazia.

In spite of everything, the decision of Tbilisi on the moving in Abkhazia of the limited contingent of the armed forces of State was not an intervention and all the more so the occupation action. Anyway, according to the formal-juridical aspect it must be qualified, as replacement or redislocation of the troops within the jurisdiction of one State. At the same time, from the point of view of the positive international law this measure was a definite inner state repression and the military action of the government of Georgia, as a response on the one side anti-constitutional activities of the authorities of the autonomous republic (the separatist decision of the 23rd of July of 1992 etc.), putting under threat the territorial integrity of the State.

Unfortunately, the official interpretation of the actions of the 14th of August was changed and turned into the necessity of defense of the Abkhazian sector of the railway turnpike, causing a priori the defeat of Georgia in the informational-psychological war. As for the “railway version” it occupies a definite place, as one of the triggering mechanisms for the war. In conditions of the global chaotic situation of the country after the State overturn, the railway trains travelling to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were used to rob. Thus, the railway version, as one of the causes for the war, has the right of existence. Among the causes of conflict the aspiration of the non-legitimate authorities of Georgia to crash in the egg (politically and physically) the constitutional movement of the allies of the forcibly overthrown President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the main centers of which were functioning in Abkhazia. Consequently, the dynamics of the conflict took an absolutely different direction, leading to the unification of the Georgian forces into the one front against the Russian aggression.

One of the causes of the war is the inner elite crisis - opposition in the State Council, where the civil sector of E. Shevardnadze was not able to control the militaristic initiatives (including the input of the army into Abkhazia) of the military – criminal grouping of J. Ioseliani and T. Sigua, which from its side was not absolutely solidary either. Apologists of E. Shevardnadze skillfully exploiting the fact of the inner elite crisis, responsibil-

¹ G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. *War in Abkhazia*. Tb., 2005, p. 161 (in Georgian).

ity for the input of the army into Abkhazia shifted on T. Kitovani. It is difficult to accept this version. Anyway, the full responsibility of initiating and catastrophic outcome of the military actions was incumbent on E. Shevardnadze and his that time circle, the separatist grouping of V. Ardzinba and the Supreme Political authorities of Russia.

The redislocation of the limited Georgian military contingent in Abkhazia was estimated by the Presidium of the separatist part of the Supreme Council, as the occupation of the territory of the “sovereign Abkhazia” by the army of the State Council of Georgia and declared the total military mobilization. The separatists created the so-called State committee of defense under command of V. Ardzinba, being the also the “Supreme Commander in Chief” of the illegal military formation of the separatists² from the 8th of January of 1993.

On the 15th of August of 1992 the Georgian troops landed in the village Gantiadi of the Gagra zone. The troops established the control on the Russian-Georgian State border along the river Psou. From the strategic point of view it was an extremely significant military operation, preventing the mass arbitrary flow into Abkhazia of the “volunteers from Russia and the fighters from the Confederation of the Highland People of the Caucasus. The Georgian troops drove the Abkhazian formations out from Gagra and established control on the Gagra zone and strategically significant Gagra range on the 19th of August.

On the 15th of August of 1992 prime-minister of Georgia T. Sigua and the member of the Presidium of the State Council J. Ioseliani arrived in Sukhumi. Together with the deputies of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia T. Nadareishvili, V. Kolbaia, N. Meskhia and the chair of the informational-reconnaissance service of Abkhazia I. Ioseliani met the delegation of the Abkhazian side with the leadership of S. Bagapsh. After the prolonged and hot discussions the sides worked out the preliminary project of the agreement stipulating demilitarization of Sukhumi, relocation of the Abkhazian formations to the river Gumista and of the Georgian divisions to the village Bagmarani, formation of the Georgian-Abkhazian division from 400 persons on the parity basis for defense of the communicational arterial roads from the river Psou to the river Inguri. Through the fault of the Abkhazian side refusing to sign the project of the agreement the opportunity of preventing the escalation of the conflict³ was missed. On the 18th of August of 1992, when it became clear, that the separatists used the negotiations not for achieving the agreement, but to delay the process, the Georgian military subunits entered Sukhumi. The separatist structures of the authorities moved to Gudauta and the Abkhazian formations occupied positions on the right bank of the river Gumista.

From the very start of the war E. Shevardnadze and the Georgian military commandment made the strategic mistakes and showed criminal infantilism. First of all, the Georgian military divisions during the three and four days waiting for the agreement, remained on the reaches of Sukhumi, when the other side prorogated the negotiations in order to guarantee the evacuation to Gudauta. On the second hand, after occupying Sukhumi and fortifying on the left bank of the river Gumista the Georgian formations could easily capture the Esher Heights, but they did not do it. By the move of the Georgian armed forces towards Gudauta, the Georgian side got an opportunity of isolating of the separatist clan,

² D. Japaridze. Tragedy in Abkhazia. www.abkhazeti.narod.ru./pages/2/161.htm.

³ Labyrinth of Abkhazia, p. 125.

interment of the small sized and poorly armed Abkhazian formations, as it is maintained by the war logics and situational format. Decision of E. Shevardnadze on the stoppage of the attack, as well as the general tendency of his policy - when the negotiations and peaceful policy were needed, he led the troops into Abkhazia and then, when it was time for the bold actions, he started to perform the false humanistic and pacifist policy. All this obviously points to the fact that the State authorities proved to be worthless and was realizing the Russian strategy of artificial delaying and immanent escalation of the war. Refusal to make an attack to the direction of Akhali Atoni - Gudauta enabled the Abkhazian side to consolidate their position on the right bank of the river Gumista and create more or less stabile line of the so-called western front.

From the very first days of the Confederation of the Highland People – the new player of the Russian empire - performed quite a negative part. On the 18th of August of 1992 the president of that organization M. Shanibov and the Parliament speaker Ju. Soslanbekov made a decree obliging all the headquarters of confederation to help with the transfer of the volunteers to Abkhazia for armed resistance of the “aggressor”. Tbilisi was declared the zone of disaster. All the citizens of Georgia, being on the territory of the Confederation were declared hostages. Georgian goods and cargo were not allowed to cross the border.⁴ After editing of the mentioned decree started the transfer of the volunteers to Abkhazia and their concentration in the Gudauta district, being controlled by the separatists.

With the purpose of formation on the basis of the volunteers of one integral military structure two special battalions were formed. The total number of their personal staff reached 1700-2100 persons. The main shock troop of the Confederates - the so-called “Abkhazian battalion” (commander – Sh. Basaev from Chechnya) consisted of 286 fighters – on the 22nd of August of 1992 started the militant actions on the strategic Gummite line.

Besides the Confederates of the Highland People of the Caucasus, the Cossacks and the Russian volunteers from the different regions of the post Soviet area and mainly from Russia took an active part in the pro - Abkhazian, pro - Kremlin, and volunteer movement. The organizing role of the central and regional authorities and the special services (KGB) of Russia in this process are obvious. Out of the volunteer divisions of the Cossacks and pre - Dnieper region was formed the so-called “Slavic Battalion” actively taking part in the battle.

The main factor of the war in Abkhazia appeared to be the direct participation in it of the Russian federation. That participation was so obvious and versatile, that the events having place in 1992-1993 can be qualified, as the Russian-Georgian war in Abkhazia. Russian participation was performed in two aspects – military-strategic and political-diplomatic. In the military-strategic field this participation covers the following spheres:

Direct participation in the military actions of the regular divisions of the armed force of Russia and among them the Pskov division of the special function, the N 345 air – landing troops, the N 643 anti-aircraft – missile regiment being, distributed on the Bombori (Gudauta district of Abkhazia) air – base, the N 529 aviation regiment of the air-forces, Black Sea Navy, the battalions being distributed in Abkhazia (Lower Esheri and Ochamchire) and the subdivisions of the special service;

Provision with the weapon, military technique, material-technical means of the armed

⁴ G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. *War in Abkhazia*, p. 172-173.

formations of the separatists and volunteers. According to the data given by M. Demianov the adviser of V. Ardzinba in the sphere of the special services. At the beginning of the war the N 643 anti-aircraft-missile regiment of Russia gave the separatists 984 rifles, 267 guns, 18 machine gun, 500 hand grenade, 600 signal missile, more than half a million of bullets, military trucks, military – engineering technique etc. ⁵

Providing the separatists with the military-expert help with the provision of the strategic management of the military units, planning of the important military operations by the Russian Generality (G. Kondratiev, P. Chindarov, A. Kvashnin, I. Sigutkin and others) and the officer corps.

Organizing of the volunteer groups on the territory of Russia and their moving into the conflict zone.

Mass bombarding of the position of the Georgian army and zones of dwelling of the Georgian peaceful population by the air-forces and navy of Russia.

Permanent threats expressed by the supreme authorities (F. E. vice-president A. Rutskoi, Speaker of Duma R. Khasbulatov) towards Georgia on the air attack of Tbilisi, other regions and consequently blockage of the important military operations of the Georgian army.

Political –Diplomatic format of Russia's participation in the Abkhazian war implied the crafty policy - through political pressure on the Georgian side and giving of the false guarantees in the course of negotiations, providing with the diplomatic-negotiating base the preliminary decided defeat of Georgia in the war (The permanent self-deception and capitulation - diplomatic game of E. Shevardnadze played its fatal role in this situation). In the initial stage of the war the strategic situation in Abkhazia was quite favorable for Georgia; the major part of the territory of Abkhazia was controlled by the Georgian civil administration and armed forces. The territories being controlled by the Gudauta group and consequently the centers for concentration of the armed forces – Gudauta –New Afo-ni line and Tkvatcheli zone appeared to be in the enclave position.

For performing of the State emergency power in Sukhumi and on the territory, being controlled by the by the Georgian troops on the 31st of August of 1992 was formed the temporary coordinating council under the chairmanship of G. Lominadze. ⁶ But soon the strategic conditions radically changed and on the 3rd of September, as a result of the negotiations being held on the highest level having place in Moscow, Russia and Georgia were signed the treaties on the cease fire and regulating of the conflict within the territorial integrity of Georgia. ⁷ Russian and Abkhazian sides took an advantage of weakening of attention from the Georgian side and through the violation of the Moscow agreement and prepared the operation of Gagra's seizure.

It started in the 1st of October 1992 with the mass attack of the Russians, Abkhazians and Confederates. We have to underline the fact, that before the attack the Russian peacemakers being located there in accordance with the Moscow agreement from the 3rd of September 1992, left there observation posts and returned to the places of their redislocation. On the 1st of October the enemy took on Colchida and on the 2nd – Gagra. Together with the separatists and confederates the N 643 anti-aircraft – missile division

⁵ **Abkhazian Labyrinth**, p. 208.

⁶ **Z. Papaskiri. Assays ..., part II**, p375.

⁷ **Abkhazian problem in the official documents, part. I. Tb., 2000, p. 81-84.**

of the armed forces of Russia took part in the above mentioned operation. The ships of the Russian navy according to the report of the captain of the I rank V. Fomin, the deputy minister of defense G. Kondratiev commanded to avoid the landing of the Georgian navy troops in the Pitsunda-Gagra district, realize the anti – aircraft defense of Gudauta etc. ⁸ The Gudauta military base in the course of the operation supplied its participants with the ammunition, fuel and provision. The general leadership of the operation was realized by the commander of the General Headquarters of the armed forces of Russia - the general-colonel M. Kolesnikov. This was the way how Moscow was “fulfilling” the agreement from the 3rd of September of 1992.

Several days before the Gagra operation the dislocated in the Eshera Russian military unit was involved into the military actions. The battle machine of the infantry shelled the Georgian positions on the 22nd of September of 1992, suppressed the fire positions and occupied the significant objects such as: oil house and mill plant.

After leaving Gagra the Georgian side could not manage to organize the effective defense of the Russian –Georgian border and bordering inhabited areas. The chaos and des-organization being caused by the violation of Moscow agreement and the loss of Gagra and also the incompetency of the chief - command with the leadership of E. Shevardnadze were obvious. In that conditions the enemy managed to occupy the village of Gantiadi, the village Leselidze and approach the Russian-Georgian State border on the 6th of October.

The defeat of the 1-6th of October of 1992 played an extremely negative role in course of the Abkhazian war. Georgia lost the control of the strategically important Gagra zone and the separatist grouping got the chance of establishing the direct connections with the main allies. The occupants brutally exterminated the peaceful Georgian population, they performed the process of the ethnic purge and other crime against the humanity in all the Gagra zone.

After the Gagra tragedy the Georgian side undertook certain changes in the political and military structure of the power. The temporary coordinating council was abolished, instead of which was established the institute of State minister on the Abkhazian affairs. G. Khaindrava was appointed the minister. On the 26th of November of 1992 in accordance with the resolution of the Parliament of Georgia, the government of Abkhazia - The cabinet of ministers headed by T. Nadareishvili⁹ was formed.

The public home guard of Sukhumi, Gulripshi, Ochamchire and Gali districts acquired the form of structurized military unit. The second army corps of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia (commander- General-Mayor P. Datuashvili, afterwards the General-Mayor Z. Uchadze) within the 23rd (commander - G. Adamia) and 24th (commander – Z. Uchadze, B. Tokhadze) mechanized brigades.

As a result of Gagra operation the enemy could not achieve the crucial superiority on other fronts. The Georgian armed forces stabilized the situation on different areas of the military actions, kept the strategic blockade of Tkvarcheli. On the 26th of October of 1992 the operation being undertaken by the enemy in order to capture Ochamchire ended in Abkhazians’ defeat. At that time, the political leadership of Georgia and the military command made a serious mistake, missing the chance of neutralization of the Tkvarcheli

⁸ Essays from the History of Georgia. Abkhazia. Tb., 2007, p. 357 (in Georgian).

⁹ Z. Papaskiri. Essays ..., Part II, p. 389.

grouping and liquidation of the 80 kilometer “Eastern Front”.¹⁰

On the 3rd of November of 1992 the Georgian troops successfully deflected the attack of the enemy on the Shroma area of the Gumista front.¹¹ In order to compensate the above mentioned failures the Russians activated the tactics of the “distance battle” and from November-December of 1992 started the intense bombarding of Sukhumi and other Georgian populated places via aviation and the reactive artillery salvo shelling. On the 9th of December the Russian aviation bombed the dwelling quarters of Sukhumi and crowded town market. As a result of that barbaric action 13 peaceful citizens were killed. On the 11th of December the Russian aviation attacked the village Akhaldaba of the Ochamchire region, as a result of which 11 peaceful citizens were killed and more than 60 persons were wounded.¹²

During the first stage of the war the main factor defining the strategic superiority of the Georgian side is the discrete character of the geostrategic area, being enveloped by the war. Under the control of the armed forces of Georgia and the Georgian civil power remained the main part of the territory of Abkhazia, including Sukhumi. The Tkvarcheli grouping of the enemy was in the blockade and the blockade chain was tied with the line of the Gumista front, as the Georgian Sukhumi-Gulripsh grouping provided the demarcation of the Bzip-Gudauta and Ochamchire-Tkvarcheli military centers of the separatists.

In the first months of 1993 the enemy tried two times to liquidate the blockade chain, to break through the Gumista front and occupy Sukhumi. On the 2nd of January of 1993 the Russians using the missiles of the “Grad” type massively shelled the dwelling quarters of Sukhumi in order to frighten and panic the population. On the 4-5th of January the enemy using the Russian armored technique attacked the Achadari area of the Gumista front, forced the river Gumista and created a small bridgehead on the left side of the river. But, as a result of the counter attack of the defenders of Sukhumi and the response of the Georgian artillery, the enemy having the great losses of the live forces and technique had to withdraw.¹³

The failure of the “Achadara operation”, being accompanied by the great losses of the live forces caused the serious contradictions in the supreme echelons of the Gudauta grouping, but V. Ardzinba this time managed to neutralize the inner elite crisis and avoid the destabilization of the separatist regime.

The regular more large scale offensive operation was tried to be fulfilled by the Russian on the 14-16th of March of 1993. After the serious artillery preparation and mass air bombing of Sukhumi and the Georgian position, the enemy launched an attack. Braking through of the Georgian units in the central and South parts of the Gumista front the enemy advanced and penetrated into the outskirts of the town, but appeared to be in the encirclement in the so-called “melting pot” being formed as a result of operatively and professionally mass fire of the Georgian heavy artillery. The enemy had the great losses of the live forces and technique.

The counter attack of the Georgian army ended on the 17th of March in the restoration of the strategic situation existing before the operation. Supreme political leadership and

¹⁰ O. Bgazhba, S. Lacoba. *History of Abkhazia*, p. 380.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. *War in Abkhazia*, p. 180.

¹³ *Abkhazetis Khma (Voice of Abkhazia)*, 1993, 14th of January (in Georgian).

military command of Georgia headed by E. Shevardnadze did not take an advantage of the favorable conditions for the counter attack and finalize the liquidation of the Gudauta-Akhali Atoni grouping of the demoralized enemy.

Thus, the military actions of January and March of 1993 did not significantly change the strategic format of the war in Abkhazia. The Georgian military forces through organization of the strong and reasonable defense, effective disorganization of the advanced groupings of the enemy and what is the main thing, the strong artillery counter blow towards the centre and flanks of the Gumista front ruined the trial of the Russians together with the separatists to occupy Sukhumi and achieve the strategic superiority.

The Parliament of Georgia demanded from the head of the State E. Shevardnadze to officially pose in the international organizations the issue on the annexation of the part of the territories of Georgia by Russia. In the Resolution of the 27th of April of 1993 of the Supreme Lawmaking organ of the State "On the withdrawal of the military divisions of the Russian federation from the zone of Abkhazian conflict" was underlined, that the main cause of the tragic development of the events was the attempt of Russia to annex the part of the territory of Georgia. In the resolution of the Parliament is said: "The Head of the State of Georgia has to demand from the president of the Russian federation to withdraw the troops from Abkhazia ... in case of violation or failure to keep that demand, the territory to the North-West of the river Gumista to the Russian-Georgian border has to be considered occupied by the Russian federation and the Head of the State of Georgia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the representative of Georgia in the UNO have to pose the problem in the Council of Security of UNO and other international organizations for triggering the mechanisms being maintained by the international law".¹⁴ The above mentioned very important resolution of the Parliament was not put into practice.

On the 29th of April of 1993 according to the decree of the Head of the State was formed the Council of Defense of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia - the unified military-political organ of which was headed by the leader of the government of Abkhazia - T. Nadareishvili.¹⁵ But, instead of the decisive military and political-diplomatic actions, operative and adequate response to the current processes, the course of the strategically losing capitulation - diplomatic game was continued. On the 14th of May of 1993 the agreement on the cease fire and peaceful regulation of the conflict was signed between Georgia and Russia in Moscow. That fact only weakened the attention and vigil of the Georgian side leading in the end to the tragic outcome.

The temporary removal of the Tkvarcheli blockade within the organization of the "Humanitarian Corridor", being maintained by the Moscow agreement of the 14th of May points to the weakening of the vigil. As a result of the "humanitarian" action of the Ministry Emergency of Russia of the 16th of June of 1993, the Tkvarcheli grouping of the enemy got the impressive help through live forces, weapon, provision and medicine. 30 Russian transport trailers delivered it to Tkvarcheli without any monitoring. That unprecedented action having no analogues in the world practice, gave the enemy the possibility to heal the wounds and better prepare for the regular offensive operation.

The operative-strategic situation being developed to the middle of 1993, the complete

¹⁴ Information of the Parliament of Georgia, 1993, N5-8, p. 135-136 (in Georgian).

¹⁵ Abkhazian Problem in the official documents, I. Tb., 2000, p. 171 (in Georgian).

failure of the offensive operations being undertaken in January and March, the great losses being experienced put the Russians before the necessity of changing the strategy of planning for the future operations. They understood that breaking through the Gumista line of the defense by means of attack in one strategic direction is practically impossible due to the self-sacrifice of the soldiers and in conditions of the impressive military-technical arsenal being in hands of Sukhumi-Gulripsh Georgian grouping.

The Russian military command worked out qualitatively new strategy, maintaining the combined tactical format - the simultaneous attack on all the stretches of both fronts using the preliminary, disorienting and tricky maneuver. The statement of the separatist historians, that the new strategy was planned by the Abkhazian military command was far from the truth. The new plan was worked out in the appropriate structures of the general headquarters of the armed forces of Russia and its practical realization in the military operations was performed with the operative-tactic and military – expert help from the side of the Russian generals and special groups of the officers.

Within the mentioned strategy the general headquarters of the armed forces of Russia worked out the special secret plan of capturing Sukhumi consisting of the four points: 1. Capture of the Ochamchire district motorway by the Tkvarcheli grouping; 2. Landing of the Navy troops to the village Tamish of the Ochamchire district and joining it with the Tkvarcheli grouping; 3. Simultaneous attack of the Gumista front and capture of the strategic heights around Sukhumi; 4. In the end, besiege and capture of Sukhumi ¹⁶. From the point of view of the strategic attribution is clear, that the plan foreseen the division of the theatre of the military actions into the two operational zones and to one of them was planned delivering of a crucial blow and the second zone was given the function of disorientation of the Georgian side.

On the 2nd of July of 1993 the landing ships of the Russian Navy near the village Tamish landed the Russian –Abkhazian paratroopers consisting of 300 persons being armed with one tank, one armored machine and one missile of “ grad” type¹⁷. The Georgian units being deployed near the village Labra and Tamish, in view of the fact of the sudden landing of the paratroopers failed to block it. The paratroopers captured the small bridgehead and joined the separatist formations, taking into control a definite area of the Ochamchire-Sukhumi motorway.

It looks like; the Tamish paratroopers had the function of distraction of the attention, as on the same day on the 2rd of July the enemy undertook the mass attack of the Gumista front. Taking the advantage of the capture of the significant part of the Ochamchire-Sukhumi motorway area and consequently blocking of the Sukhumi-Gulripsh grouping, the occupants together with the separatists forced the river Gumista and to the North of Sukhumi took on the villages Kamani, Akhalsheni and Guma. On the 9th of July they captured the village Shroma and occupied the strategically significant heights - Tsugurovka and Akhbiuk.

Georgian units and national home guard, as a result of accepting the coordinated operative-tactic measures, especially thanks to the flawless actions of the heavy artillery successfully completed the counter-operation on the ruin of the paratroopers and unified

¹⁶ Abkhazian Labyrinth, p. 150.

¹⁷ G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. War in Abkhazia, p. 191.

with them the separatist formations. Only the insignificant part of the paratroopers managed to join the Tkvarcheli grouping. In spite of this, the strategic situation being formed in July of 1993 was not favorable for the Georgian side. The enemy achieved the strategic superiority on the Gumista front, practically being divided into two parts. The enemy controlled the strategically important motorway Shroma-Sukhumi, and also Tsugurovka and Akhbiuk. On the so-called Eastern front as a result of establishing the control on several villages of the Ochamchire district, the separatists maximally reached to the central motorway creating thus the threat to the strategic communications on a quite big area from the village Labara to the Kodori Bridge.

Instead of taking the emergency measures of the military-strategic character and alteration of the unfavorable operative situation to one's personal benefit, having place after the July attack of the enemy, the political leadership of Georgia continued the capitulative-diplomatic game with Russia and controlled by Russia separatists. On the 27th of July of 1993 the three side agreement was signed in Sochi (Separatists on Russia's insistence became the side of the agreement for the first time) on cease fire¹⁸. Formally, this agreement is an ordinary peaceful act maintains the cease fire, separation of the hostile sides, demilitarization of Sukhumi and other zones of the conflict, creation of the effective control mechanism of ruling and monitoring of the peacemaking processes, returning of the separatist State power structures to Sukhumi etc. In reality, the agreement from the 27th of July cannot be regarded beyond the context of the existing in Abkhazia military – strategic and operative situation. Namely, Russian-Abkhazian attack on the 2 -9th of July of 1993 guaranteed the fulfillment of the three points of the above-mentioned operative plan of the General headquarters of the armed forces of Russia consisting of the four points. The last point was not fulfilled on the capture of Sukhumi. The insurmountable obstacle for the enemy was the strong Sukhumi-Gulripsh grouping of the Georgian troops and the strategic-technical arsenal belonging to them. For the full success of the enemy it was necessary to disband of that grouping, withdraw from Abkhazia of its main part and especially its heavy technique, being maintained by the Sochi agreement from the 27nd of July of 1993. Thus, the Sochi agreement was factually not an agreement of the ordinary peacemaking format, but the organic part of the operative plan of the Russian-Abkhazian coalition on the capture of Sukhumi.

In August and the first part of September of 1993 within the Sochi agreement the Georgian side performed a number of capitulative arrangements: disbandment of the Gumista and Ochamchire fronts, keeping on the Gumista line only two (?)Georgian watch points, disbandment of the Georgian military units and battalions and among them brigade N23 defending Sukhumi, removal of the heavy technique from Abkhazia (Georgia paid quite big sums to the Russian military – transport organizations having guaranteed removal of the heavy technique).

Thus, the Georgian side fulfilling the Sochi agreement performed the complete dismantlement of the military-defense infrastructure of Sukhumi, when the Russian-Abkhazian formations were not disbanded and were not disarmed. Even the more, in conditions of cease fire and the truce they were increasing their military potential and continued an intense preparation for the new operation.

¹⁸ Regional conflicts, p. 154-156.

On the 16th of September of 1993 the enemy violating the Sochi agreement attacked the Ochamchire front and captured the railway and motorway bridges on the river Kodori. Sukhumi, being previously disarmed was besieged. On the 17th of September aiming to capture Sukhumi the enemy echelonized attack on the Gumista front. The first echelon consisted of the special subdivisions of the Russian regular army and the detachments of the Confederation of the Caucasian Highlanders. The second echelon consisted of the Abkhazian formations. The third reserve echelon consisted of the well-armed regular divisions of the Russian army. Its involvement was planned in case of failure of the first two echelons. In the end, the depth of the operative attack comprised several kilometers. In order to deflect the attack the Georgian side managed to mobilized comparatively small live force, mainly from the local residents. But, it was not able to restore the echelonized tactic zone of the defense, because of lack of the heavy technique and the sufficient armament. The one side fulfillment of the Sochi agreement excluded this possibility.

On the very first day of the attack the enemy captures the both bridges of the river Gumista and the neighboring Sukhumi villages: Tavisufleba, Birtskha and Odishi.¹⁹ In Sukhumi besiege the main part belonged to the Russian Black Sea navy. From the 16-17th September the Russian ships permanently shelled the airport and the positions of the Georgian troops in the Sukhumi –Gulripsh water area, blocked of the Georgian communications. On the 21st of September of 1993 the meeting was held in Adler. The meeting was attended by the Head of the State E. Shevardnadze, minister of defense G. Karkarashvili and the head of the information-intelligence service I. Batiashvili with the minister of defense of Russia P. Grachov. The Georgian side demanded the fulfillment of the duties from the Russian side within the Sochi agreement: blocking the attack of the Abkhazian side and at least keeping the neutrality. P. Grachov, according to E. Shevardnadze's information demanded bringing in Abkhazia of the two divisions²⁰. Thus, the terms of the fulfilling of the duties from the Russian side appeared not the sanctioned help maintained by the Sochi agreement and for which he had enough military forces in Abkhazia, but making of a new agreement on the bringing into Abkhazia of the two additional divisions, which meant the occupation of the significant part of Georgia and prolonged freezing of the conflict on Gumista. Unfortunately, the sides could not manage to reach the agreement.

The Russian –Abkhazian confederate divisions continued their attack and on the 25th of September established control on the Sukhumi central railway station. In spite of the heroic resistance of the defenders of the town, being left without the artillery and the sufficient amount of the armored technique, Sukhumi fell on the 27th of September and on the 30th of September the occupants and separatists reached the river Inguri and took hold of almost the whole territory of Abkhazia. The military actions in Abkhazia ended in the defeat of Georgia and State catastrophe.

After evacuation from Abkhazia of the armed forces of Georgia, the occupants and separatists committed massacre of the peaceful population, barbarian executions and violence, destruction and theft of the houses and possessions of the Georgians. Violating the norms of the International Law, the violators killed the Head of the Supreme Council of Ministers of Abkhazia. Zh. Shartava, Mayer of the town Sukhumi G. Gabiskiria, minister

19 G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. *War in Abkhazia*. p. 198.

20 E. Shevardnadze. *Thought about the past and future*. Tbilisi, 2005, P. 177 (in Georgian).

of industry R. Eshba, other members of the government and the persons accompanying them. The large scale humanitarian catastrophe occurred during the evacuation of the peaceful citizens through the Kodori gorge. The majority of the refugees and among them 400 children froze and starved to death on the Chuberi Pass.

During the war, especially in the next period of the total ethnic cleaning and genocide, according to some sources died 30 000 ethnic Georgians, three fourth (approximately 400 000 persons) of the population turned into the refugees or the IDPs. The radical transformation of the ethno - demographic balance, being purposefully carried out by the Russian and separatists resulted in the compulsory removal of the majority of Georgians from the region (see. here, chapter XXII); the Georgians were the main guarantors of Sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and thus, their deportation from Abkhazia was the most tragic and dramatic result of the Abkhazian war. The Abkhazian ethnos suffered great losses as well. According to the official data 4 000 Abkhazians were killed and 40 000 became the refugees.

The war created a negative background and from the ethno - psychological point of view. The friendly and kindred relations between the Georgians and Abkhazians having been formed during the centuries were violated, the peaceful form of those two nations coexistence. At the same time, the Iberian-Caucasian self-consciousness - the idea of the common Caucasian integrity, being originated from the depth of the centuries - was also purposefully ruined.

2. Abkhazia in the Post War Period. 1993 – 2011.

As a result of defeat in the war the Georgian jurisdiction was suspended in Abkhazia. The post conflict Abkhazia from the point of view regional political process turned into the area being under the control of the separatist regime ignoring any trial of restoration of the jurisdiction of the central power.

The basis of Secession of Abkhazia from Georgia was not the international mechanism of the self-determination of the nation or plebiscite of inner-constitutional process of devolution²¹, but through anti - constitutional riots of the Abkhazian separatists against the central power of Georgia and military insubordination via participation in the Russian-Georgian war on the side Russia. Thus, the independency of Abkhazia is in reality the obvious international delict - or the transgression directed towards the Georgian State and due to it its statuting in the modern international system could not happen. The international law whatever they may say in Moscow would never recognize the fact of separation of Abkhazia form Georgia and the product of this separation – State of Abkhazia - the subject of the international law.

In spite of this fact, it is obvious that Georgia lost Abkhazia de-facto and it shifted under the control of Russia. Without solving the problem of the territorial integrity the global issue of the national-state formation of Georgia is doubtful.

Historical-Geopolitical results of the temporary loss of Abkhazia are the following:

13% (8. 7 000 square kilometers) of the territory of Georgia are lost.

65/67% of the Sea-border of Georgia is lost and consequently the pass to the global

²¹ As for example separation of Slovakia from Chekhoslovakia on the 1st of January 1992.

transit communications of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean basin is narrowed.

65-67% of the Black Sea shelf is lost from the resource – material point of view.

All the land communication with the Russian Federation and through it with Ukraine and all Europe are lost.

In respect with the decrease of the territories and shift of the factual border to the South-East the distance between the de-facto border and inner regions, towns and cities of the strategic significance and other important objects (having in mind Shida – Kartli – the so-called South Ossetia. Maintaining the events of the August of 2008 exist the real danger of blockage of the central communication arteries of the State).

In the North-West Georgia the void of the Georgian population was formed, that in case of filling of that void with the other ethnic mass will lead to the ethno-demographic catastrophe.

A part of the territory belonging to Georgian and being under the canonic jurisdiction of the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalic Church is lost.

The “cultural genocide” has place in Abkhazia against Georgia, through the purposeful destruction and trial of stealing the Georgian historical-cultural heritage.

The North-West sector of the area of the ethno genesis of the Georgian people and the space of its cultural-creative activities is lost.

Because of the crucial role of Russia in the temporary loss of Abkhazia, Georgia has to refuse the geopolitical, geostrategic neutrality and seek for the guarantees of the International Security within the Euro Atlantic military system with the prospect of turning into one of the bridgehead of this system in the South-West part of Eurasia.

The separatist regime existing de-facto in Abkhazia, being military supported by Russia, is controlling the 13% of the territory of Georgia. It is not recognized by the civilized International Community, though it possesses the inner, local sources of legitimating and features being characterized for the State attribute: The so-called Constitution, national emblem, anthem, flag, election law, small number of electorates, and system of the organs of power and administration, party-political spectrum, 18 year old political practice of the separatist quasi- State.

In conditions of the actual split from Georgia and on the basis for the military-political and also expert- politechnological support of Russia, the de-facto authorities performed the institutionalization of the separatist regime. A number of illegitimate acts were ratified, defining the style of ruling of the separatist Abkhazia, the de-facto State institutions were formed and this meant formation of the Quasi-State. Among the so-called illegitimate acts we can mention: The “Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia “ being ratified by the Parliament on the 26th of November of 1994 and election of the “president” : “Parliament elections” on the 23rd of November of 1996; elections” of the organs of the local self- administration on the 14th of March of 1998; ”Referendum” on the independency of Abkhazia on the 3rd of October of 1999; “Act on the State Independency of Abkhazia from the 12th of October of 1999’ Presidential Elections” on the 3rd of October of 2004 - 12th of January of 2005 etc.

Form the point of view of the politologic evaluation must be mentioned the following: the political infrastructure of the separatist regime unified in itself the features of the au-

thoritarianism, military dictatorship, of the Abkhazian ethnocracy, nomenclature restoration, actual protectorate of Russia and criminality.

The separatist regime undergoes the chronic, inner political crisis, the essential cause of which is the contradiction between the different inner elite groupings. The culmination of the crisis was the elections of the de-facto President in October of 2004 and January of 2005. The crisis showed itself in the form of opposition of the political clans of S. Bagapsh and R. Khajimba. Abkhazia then appeared to be at the verge of the civil war, but the obvious interference of Russia provided with the fragile balance.

The essential feature of the separatist conjuncture is the de-facto protectorate of Russia. The regime of the superficial ruling is obvious, when Moscow is in full control of the political events having place in Abkhazia. From the very start of the conflict in Abkhazia and especially after the completion of the military actions the protectorate ruling of Russia has the signs of the political colonization. The real part of the Kremlin was definitely revealed in the process of the Georgian –Abkhazian negotiations on the regulation of the conflict having place from November of 1993 under the egis of UNO and with “ the mediation” of Russia.

The “peacemaking mission” of the Commonwealth of the Independent States, was factually being carried out by Russia from 1994 and did not fulfill from the very start the functions being entrusted to it. In the declaration of the Council of the Heads of the States of UIS from the 15th of April of 1994 - leading into the zone of the conflict the peacemaking contingent was motivated by the desire of cease fire, the fastest resolution of the problem of the refugees, defense of the human rights and the national minority. In the main documents of the UIS concerning the usage of the peacemaking forces in the conflict zone (from the 22nd of August of 1994) , their mandate (from the 21st of October of 1994 and especially the elaboration of the mandate (from the 26th of May of 1995) is stressed that the main task of the peacemakers was creation of the conditions for the secure and dignified return of the refugees to Abkhazia. In reality, the “peacemaking” forces Russia supporting only the regime of non-usage of the force (but only partially and till the concrete time) they performed the function of the defenders of the separatists and maintaining and continuing of the regime of the ethnic purging. Only in the zone of the direct responsibility of the “Peacemakers” and namely in the Gali region of Abkhazia were killed more than three thousand peaceful citizens.

The Russian “Peacemaking” contingent was the geostrategic enclave and never supported the full scale resolving of the conflict. It was a mere guarantee of the prolongation for the strategic existence of Russia in the region, political and territorial guarantee for the separatists, through fixation of the de-facto border on the river Inguri. Even the more, Russia conducting the policy of appropriation of the territory of Abkhazia and the population left there by means of the illegal passport system, declared them to be the citizens of Russia and through violation of the International Legal Norms started to pretend to be their defenders. Thus, the Russian side lost the moral right of being called neutral, disinterested medium between its citizens and the Georgian side.

Step by step moving towards the aim, Russia was blocking fulfillment of the International Acts, being directed to the positive regulation of conflict in Abkhazia. OBSE with

the participation and agreement of Russia ratified the acts three times, recognizing and blaming the ethnic cleaning in Abkhazia (in Budapest on the 6th of December of 1994; In Lisbon on the 3rd of December of 1996; In Istanbul on the 17-18th of November of 1999)²². The Istanbul summit of OBSE made a decision on the calling out of the, military bases of Russia being located in Georgia, Vaziani (near Tbilisi) and from Gudauta (Abkhazia). The fact of the ethnic cleaning in Abkhazia was recognized by the General Assembly of UNO in the resolution N 62/249 from the 29th of May of 2008. All this and other decisions of the authoritative International Organizations due to the destructive position of Russia stayed on the paper.

Aggravation of the crisis around Abkhazia is logically associated with the activation of the imperialistic policy of Russia and absolutisation of the annexing tendencies of that policy. Recognition of the State independence of Kosovo in February of 2008 against the will of the Sovereign Serbia and the failure of at the Bucharest Summit of the countries of the North Atlantic Ocean alliance of accepting Georgia, as a candidate for the membership of NATO “untied Russia hands”. After that Summit the Kremlin leaders made the final decision about the realization of the long planned military intervention against the Sovereign Georgia, with the aim of its territorial disintegration, blockage of the global communication lines, being located throughout Georgia and restoration in the South Caucasus of the locked Geostrategic zone of the Russian influence.

On the 16th of April of 2008 President of Russia V. Putin signed the edict on the denouncement of the decision, being made by the Heads of the Countries of CIS from the 19th of January of 1996”. “On the Measures of Regulating of the Conflict on Abkhazia (Georgia)”²³, declaring guilty the destructive position of Abkhazian side and maintaining the complete military, political and economical isolation of the separatists regime. From then Russia was establishing with the separatist Abkhazia special financial, economical, transport and cultural relations. On the 1st of June 2008 Russia led in Abkhazia a part of the engineering troops. They restored the railway line creating at the same time the strategic transport communication of the planned war.

Within the general context of the preparation for the military aggression against Georgia , the Russian - Separatist alliance refrained and blocked the last chance of prevention of the military development of the events - the project of the stage by stage regulation of the Abkhazian conflict being offered by the minister of the foreign affairs of Germany Franc-Walter Shteinmayer.

During the military intervention of Russia and new Russian-Georgian war of the 8-12th of August of 2008 the Abkhazian separatists opened the second front against Georgia and appeared to be in the channel of the regular imperialistic project of the Kremlin. It is widely known, that after signing of the Commandment on the commencement of the military operation against Georgia by the president of Russia D. Medvedev, under the cynic title of “Operation on the Compulsory Peace”, the plan of the military operations were worked out by the operative commandment of the General Headquarters of the armed forces of Russia. The direct leadership of the military actions was fulfilled by the coordinating headquarters, being located in Vladicaucasus under the command of the general

22 **Abkhazian Problem in the official documents (1090 -1999), part I, p. 408-410; part 3, p. 126, 333.**

23 **Ibid, p. 39-40.**

V. Boldirev (commander of the land forces of Russia). The separatist military formations with their system of control being created and constructed by Russia obeyed him.

One of the main tasks of the Russian aggressors was the capture of the strategically significant region – the upper part of the Kodori Gorge. Permanent trials of taking over of the region even in 1993 and 1994 failed, due to the courage of the local population.²⁴ After conducting of the anti-criminal power operation in July of 2006 the Legitimate Authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia were located in the Kodori Gorge; the mountainous part of Abkhazia, being controlled by Georgia including the Kodori Gorge got the name of “Upper Abkhazia”. The great construction works on the development of the modern infrastructure, restoring of economics, system of the public education, health, transport (air and motorway) communications and touristic objects, being started there provoked the irritation of the Kremlin and the separatists. On the 9th of August of 2008 Russia started the operation of the Kodori Gorge capture through intense bombing of the latter. From the morning of the 10th of August the Gorge was under the violent distance artillery shelling. On the same day the battle ships of the Black Sea Navy entered the Ochamchire port and on the 11th of August at night the big tactic group of the Naval forces of Russia consisted of 10 000 paratroopers. On the 12th of August the united group of the Abkhazian separatists and Russian interveners occupied all the upper part of the Kodori Gorge, being deserted by the located there the small contingent of the inner army of Georgia and local Georgian population.

Pursuing the large scale military operation, Russia occupied not only the separatist enclaves, but the neighboring regions creating the so-called buffering zones. In the Western Georgia the enemy occupied practically all Megrelia, including Poti port and in the Eastern part of the country the enemy approached Tbilisi. In this critical for the country period, the occupants using the barbaric methods, encountered the courage and unity of the Georgian people, stability and heroism of its armed forces and what is the main thing, the strong reaction of the civilized world and most of all The European Union and USA. The principal position of the Euro Union and its Head, President of France Nicola Sarkozy played a significant part. The peacemaking mission of the President of France started on the 12th of August with his visit in Moscow. As a result of the negotiations with President D. Medvedev the so-called “document of Sarkozy” was compiled. On the same day, president N. Sarkozy arrived in Tbilisi, where the document was conformed to President - M. Saakashvili. The “Document of Sarkozy” consisted of the three acts: agreement on the cease fire and withdrawal of the Russian troops from Georgia to the positions being occupied by them till the 7th of August of 2008; Guarantee note of M. Saakashvili on the non-aggression and non-usage of violence; communiqué of N. Sarkozy in which clarifying, that in the “additional zones of security”, being maintained in the point V of the agreements on the cease fire, the Russians will patrol before the international monitors arrival. After N. Sarkozy’s second visit to Moscow and Georgia was performed the implementation of the “Document of Sarkozy” on the 8th of September of 2008. The signed document meant the dismantling of the so-called “zones of security” (buffer zones), arrival of the Euro Union watchers and calling of the “conference for stability and security in the conflict regions” (Geneva Process).

²⁴ G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani. *War in Abkhazia*, p. 215.

Under the international pressure the Kremlin had to reoccupy the “Buffering zones”. On the 15th of September the occupants left the Poti-Senaki line and on the 7-10th of October – adjoining to the administrative Abkhazian border – the so-called - “corridor of security”. But Russian did not fully fulfill the duties and continued to control the upper part of the Kodori Gorge, Akhagori district and the village Perevi of the Sachkhere region – altogether 115 inhabited areas being under the jurisdiction of the central power to the 7th of August of 2008.

On the 1st of October of 2008 the mission of monitoring of the Euro Union (EUMM) started its activities. It observes fulfilling of the Agreement on the truce (“Document of Sarkoz”).

The united efforts helped stopping the aggression, though Russia violated the International Law. On the basis of the unlawful decision of the State Duma of Russia from the 25th of August and the Decrees of President D. Medvedev from the 26th of August of 2008 it recognized the Sovereignty of Abkhazia and of the so-called South Ossetia. That absolutely unlawful act, as it was expected was not supported by the World Community, even by the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS). The Sovereignty of Abkhazia was recognized by President of Nicaragua D. Ortega, Terrorist organization of Palestina “Khamass” and later the President of Venezuela – Ugo Chaves, the Island State of Nauru and Tuvalu. They recognized the Sovereignty of Abkhazia after Russia bribed them. Thus, in this aspect Russia appeared practically alone. The issue of recognition of the Abkhazia and so-called the South Osetia received the comical character. The support of the territorial integrity of Georgia was simply fixed in the Resolution of the Security Council of UNO N1839 from the 9th of October of 2008, in the Declaration of the Euro Union from the 1st of September of 2008; Resolution of the Euro Parliament from the 3rd of September, Communiqué from the 16th of October of 2008; Declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly of UNO from the 18th of November of 2008, Communiqué of the UNO Council of the 4th of December of the same year and the Official Statement - the Acts of other International structures and separate States. The Declaration of the Euro Council from the 12th of October of 2008 strictly blaming Russia and demanding from Russia the annihilation of the decisions on recognizing the conflicting regions. The Resolution of the European Union from the 29th of January of 2009 towards the aggressor is no less categorical.

In 2009 -2011 Russia continued an extremely reactionary imperialistic course and the policy of hegemony, being oriented to the purposeful violation of the norms of the International Justice. Simultaneously with the ignoring of the cease fire agreement, the Kremlin significantly increased the military components on the occupied territories of Georgia and started its military annexation.

On the 30th April of 2009 the President Medvedev and the leader of the occupied Abkhazia signed together with the treaty on the “Joint defense of the borders”.²⁵ With this unlawful act the historical territory of Georgia - the organic area of the Georgian civilization - Abkhazia at one blow was declared the “State” having its own “borders”. The same year from May the Kremlin performs the so-called “demarcation” of the administrative border of Abkhazia – this means constructing of the border infrastructure and dislocation of the special divisions of the federal security service of Russia along the whole perimeter.

²⁵ www.documetn.kremlin.ru/doc.asp.ID=051405.

Russia deliberately attacked the Peace Mission of UN in Abkhazia. Using the veto of the Security Council of UN the Kremlin stopped the observatory mission activities in May of 2009.

The total incorporation strategy and blocking of the observatory mission of the conflict zone creates the serious danger to the peace and stability not only in Georgia, but in the whole region.

On the 27th of January 2010 the Government of Georgia accepted the – “State strategy on the occupied territories: Engagement through Cooperation” and also the “Action Plan for the Engagement” – in order to improve the conditions and solve the conflict on the humanitarian base along the demarcation line and the occupied territories.

The strategy and action plan were approved and received a wide support of the influential international organizations and separate partner countries.

On the 16th of November 2010, according to the resolution being ratified by the Warsaw session of the NATO parliament assembly on the “Present Conditions of Georgia”, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region were recognized the occupied territories.²⁶ The ethnic clearing of the Georgian population having place on the occupied territories and the unconditional support for the territorial integrity of Georgia were underlined in the resolution.

In the documents being ratified at the Lisbon summit of NATO (19-20 November of 2010) the “Georgian Issue” was fully reflected.²⁷ The decision being made in 2008 at the April summit in Bucharest on the accepting Georgia, as a member of the Alliance was repeated. In the declaration the permanent support from NATO on the territorial integrity of Georgia and Sovereignty within the internationally recognized borders was once more recorded in the declaration. The Alliance appealed to Russia once more to fulfill the agreement of the 12th August of 2008 on stopping fire. Russia was also demanded to annihilate the act of recognizing Abkhazia (and the so-called South Ossetia) and call off the army from the conflict regions. The General Assembly of the UN, being held on the 30th of June of 2011 in its resolution N11- 35767 once again supported the territorial integrity of Georgia and returning of the refugees to Abkhazia.

These declarations, resolutions and decisions, being adopted by the International organizations are very important and the “Georgian Issue” moved from stage of recognition - non- recognition of the “independency” of its conflict regions shifted to the phase of their recognition, as the occupied territories.

In the modern situation the peacemaking process is totally blocked in Abkhazia and the Moscow agreement from the 14th of May of 1994 “On the cease fire and disconnection of the forces”²⁸ is denounced. The administrative border with Abkhazia is the line dividing Georgia into the occupied (Russia) and non-occupied parts. In respect of Abkhazia operates the Law of Georgia from the 23rd of November of 2008 “On the Occupied Territories”.

On the 23rd of November of 2010 President M. Saakashvili during his speech in the Parliament posed principally new Peace initiative. Georgia unilaterally promised not to use violence and not to renew the fire, what means readiness for the peaceful resolution of the problem of the territorial integrity.

26 The newspaper “24 Hours”, 2010, 17th November.

27 The newspaper “24 Hours”, 2010, 22nd November.

28 The Abkhazian Problem in the official documents, part I, p. 339-341.

“Sovereignty” was not very beneficial for Abkhazia. The ruin of the economic system is obvious. Majority of the population is unemployed and socially insecure. The anti-Georgian apartheid psychoses are dominant. The ethnos being elevated to the unbelievable heights in the cultural development aspect is on the verge of disappearance in “Independent” Abkhazia. The Georgian language according to the de-facto “Constitution” is deprived of any juridical rights, but it did not improve the conditions the Abkhazian language is in, as the official clerical work is processed only in the Russian language. Mass-Media mostly uses the Russian language, it remains the language of education from the 5th to the 10th forms and consequently the ethnos runs the risk of denationalization.

Absolutely different problems and tasks are facing the refugees from Abkhazia and IDP comprises the majority of the legitimate population of Abkhazia. Among these problems the most significant is secure and unconditional return to their own homes, restoration of Georgian Jurisdiction, and reconciliation with the kindred Abkhazian people.

Chapter XXII. History of Ethnodemographic Development of the Population of Modern Abkhazia

The population of Abkhazia till the late medieval centuries, as it has been shown above, was ethnically homogeneous and consisted mainly of the Georgians. Starting from the 16th-17th centuries the quantity and ethnical composition of the population of Abkhazia, as a result of migration of the Apsua-Abazians and mass deportation of the Georgians (see in the same source Chapter IX), undergo serious changes. Unfortunately, the quantitative estimation of those phenomena is practically impossible, because of the absence of the appropriate sources. Information about the number and ethnical composition of the population of Abkhazia is known from the 19th century.

There are several data about the strength of the population of Abkhazia to the end of the 18th century. The estimation of V. Jaoshvili is considered to be more realistic. He claims that to 1770 the population of Abkhazia comprised 64 000 persons.¹ Taking into account the fact, that during the 17th-18th centuries throughout the whole Georgia and Abkhazia, the political situation being accompanied by the critical events in economics was very hard it seems less probable, that the quantity of the population of Abkhazia exceeded the given index, as some Abkhazian scientists assert².

By the 19th century the sources revealing the strength of the population of Abkhazia had already appeared. F. E. according to the estimation of Dubua de Monperet, who travelled in Abkhazia in 1833, 52, 3 thousands persons lived on the territory being located between the town Gagra and the river Galidzga. . . Among them, the Bzipians from Gagri till Anakopia comprised 18 700 persons, namely the Abkhazians from Anakopia to the river Kelasuri were 81 000 persons, Abjiuans between the rivers of the Kodori and Galidzga comprised 10 500 persons, Tsebdinians- 15 000 persons. Fr. Dubua de Monperet considered them the small part of the “population that was undoubtedly far more significant, but afterwards as a result of being sold into the slavery it melted with each year”.³ The author did not subdivide the quantity of the population according to the nationality. In P. Gugushvili’s opinion, the number of the Abkhazians in 1800 comprised 30000, in 1832 34, 8 000 persons⁴. Almost the same numbers as were given by Dubua de Monperet, were repeated by P. Zubov (the total population – 8 720 families, i. e. 52 320 persons) and gave the data about the regions and villages for the beginning of the 30-ies of the 19th century.⁵ On the basis of this and other data V. Jaoshvili concludes, that by the end of the 19th century on the territory of modern Abkhazia lived 7 500 families. The famous Georgian scientist – Sargis Kakabadze, state, that by that period a family in average consisted of 8 members. It gave all the reasons of saying that by the end of the 18th century the population of Abkhazia did not exceed 60 000 persons. The numerical strength of the population of Abkhazia for the beginning of the 19th century is still the subject of the scientific disputes. V. Jaoshvili summarizing the results given by other scientists, says, that

1 V. Jaoshvili. *the Population of Georgia*. Tb., 1996 (in Georgian).

2 B. Z. Ashuba. *On the History of Formation of the Modern Ethno demographic Situation in Abkhazia*. - *The Population of the USSR in the 20-ies*. M., 1991.

3 Dubua deMonperet. *Travel around the Caucasus*, vol. I. Sukhumi, 1937, p. 123.

4 P. Gugushvili. *Sociological Scetches*, vol. II. Tb., 1971, p. 351-352.

5 J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia the historical region of Georgia*, p. 309 – 311, 679.

the population of Abkhazia by 1800 comprised 77, 8 000 persons.⁶

More or less optimal conditions for stating the exact numerical strength of population of Abkhazia were achieved only in 30-ies of the 19th century. We are certain that the population of Abkhazia in 1832 was 82 000 persons.⁷

The second part of the 19th century is characterized by the tendency of decline of the numerical strength of the population of Abkhazia. F. E. in 1865 the population of Abkhazia comprised 79, 2 000 persons, in 1867 - 65 000 persons, out of them 22 000 lived in Samurzakano (see: chap. XV, 4), in 1886 - 69, 2 000 persons. If in 1800 the specific weight of the population of Abkhazia in the general numeric strength of Georgia comprised 9, 9 % , then in 1832 this index equaled 9, 2 % , for 1865 – 6, 1 % , for 1886 – 4, 2 %.

In that period the negative influence on the index of dynamics of the population had the compulsory deportation of the Abkhazians to Turkey, colonization of Abkhazia, artificial obstacles, being made by the authorities against return of the Georgians. In 1866 – 1878 from Abkhazia to Turkey were compulsorily deported tens of thousands of the Abkhazians (see: chap. XV, 5). Heterogeneous and sometimes disputable problems arise at stating the strength and national composition (quantity of Georgians and Abkhazians) of the population of Abkhazia by the end of the 19th century and among them during the analyses of the data of the family list of the year of 1886 and census of the year 1897.

For depicting the real picture it is absolutely necessary to maintain the data (being obtained from the official sources) of the German ethnographer N. Zeidlits, being given in his work “Ethnography of the Caucasus” concerning the year of 1880.⁸ According to those data after the muhajir process the numerical strength of the Abkhazians (South Caucasian highlanders) was reduced to 13 205 persons and comprised a half of the strength of the Georgians (Megrelians) - 26 475 persons in Abkhazia.

1. National Composition of the Population of the Sukhumi Region

Sokhumi Region	The Slavs	Megrelians (Georgians)	South Caucasian Highlanders	The Turks	Others	Total
Sokhumi					1500	1500
Ochamchire Region		26. 475	5700	4		32. 179
Pitsunda Region	138		6900	42		7. 080
Tsebelda			605			605
Total	138	26. 475	13. 205	46	1500	41. 364

According to the data of the family roll in 1886 in Abkhazia lived 68, 7 000 persons and among them 28 000 Abkhazians and 34 000 Georgians. We have to stress, that during comprising of the roll was separately maintained 30, 6 000 Georgians form Samurzakano.⁹

During the census of the population in the Russian empire of 1897 the Abkhazians

⁶ V. Jaoshvili. *the Population of Georgia*. Tb., 1996, p. 74.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 78.

⁸ J. Gamakharia, B. Gogia. *Abkhazia – the Historical Region of Georgia*, p. 352.

⁹ A. Totadze. *Population of Abkhazia*. Tb., 1994, p. 7.

and Samurzakanians are considered the “Caucasian Highlanders”, ”Circassians”.¹⁰ According to the Empire’s “politised” statistics is difficult to state the exact number of the Georgians and Abkhazians at the end of the 19th century. Considering the Samurzakanians to the Caucasian Highlanders and Circassians under which Abkhazians and other Caucasian Highlanders are meant, resulted in artificial lowering of number of the Georgians, but dramatically distorted the social picture of the Sukhumi district.¹¹

The following census of the year of 1920 more objectively reflected the real situation in Abkhazia. According to the data of that census, in Abkhazia lived 67, 000 Georgians and 56 000 Abkhazians. Arising out of the analyses of the above mentioned data, the growth of the Georgian and Abkhazian population during 40 years seems quite reasonable and conforming.

According to the data of the census from the 1926 the population of Abkhazia comprised 210, 4 000 persons. In 1939 the population equaled 311, 9 000 persons. In that period the part of the population of Abkhazia in total number of the population of Georgia increased to the 8, 8%. In the mentioned period the high speed of the growth of population of Abkhazia was also conditioned by the mechanical growth. The center of attraction gradually became the town Sukhumi – the transport and manufacturing and resort and cultural functions of the town was increasing.

The dynamics of the population of Abkhazia had its peculiarities in 1959-1989. In that period observed the mechanical growth of the population (from outside Georgia) of Abkhazia, due to which the tempo of growth of the population of Abkhazia exceeds the appropriate index of Georgia. In 1959 the population of Abkhazia comprised 404, 8 000 persons, in 1979 - 505, 4 000 persons, 1989 - 535, 6 000 persons.

The national composition of the population of Abkhazia during the last 100 years undertook serious alterations. The compulsory emigration of the Abkhazians to Turkey taking place in 60-70-ies of the 19th century, significantly dropped absolute the number of the Abkhazians. Afterwards, as a result of the colonization of Abkhazia the specific proportion of the Abkhazians permanently decreased, but the specific proportion of non-aboregenous population (Armenians, Russians, and Greeks) steadily increased. We can for sure say, that this process was premeditated. As a result by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the national composition of the population of Abkhazia was versatile. Unfortunately, the data of the census of 1897 concerning the main groups of the population (Georgians and Abkhazians), out of the political strategy were distorted, so we can give other more precise data about the national composition of the population in Abkhazia. According to the information of the Head of the district, at the beginning of the 1906 in the Sukhumi district – lived 53, 729 Georgians, (out of them Samurzakanians - 44, 623), Abkhazians – 40, 978, Armenians – 6, 313, Greeks – 4, 946, Russians – 3, 419, Turks – 935 persons, Estonians- 299 persons, Moldavians – 254 persons, Bulgarians – 230, Other – 113; Altogether – 114, 861 persons.¹² In 1921 according to the official data

¹⁰ The first census of the Russian empire of 1897, LXVI. Kutaisi. S-Pb., 1905, p. 3, 116.

¹¹ J. Gamakharja – Abkhazia and Orthodox Religion. Tb., 2005. P. 593-594

¹² Saint Martyr Kirion II and Abkhazia. Tb., 2006, p. 124.

the national compositions of Abkhazia was the following: Georgians – 70, 114 (38, 5%), Highlanders and Abkhazians – 45, 705 (25%), Other Asian people – 20, 196 (11, 1%), Russians – 18, 097 (9, 9%), other European people – 13, 784 (7, 6%), Armenians- 13, 038 (7, 5%), Jews – 448 persons (0, 3%).¹³

Alteration in the national compositions of Abkhazia from 1886 to 1989 is the following:

2. National Composition of the Population of Abkhazia. Graph. 2

Nationality	1886	1926	1959	1970	1979	1989
Abkhazians	28. 320	55. 918	61. 193	77 276	83 097	93 267
Georgians	34. 806	67. 494	158. 221	199 595	213 322	239 872
Armenians	1090	25. 677	64. 425	74 860	73 350	76 541
Russians	1216	12. 533	86. 715	92 889	79 730	74 914
Greeks	2149	14. 045	9101	13 114	13 642	14 664
Jews			4 810	4 372		1 752
Ossetians			1260	1214		1165
Azerbaijanians			410	443		517

Graph N2 evidently shows, that during the period from 1886 to 1989 the growth in number had place and subsequently increased the specific proportion of Abkhazians and Georgians in the total number of population of Abkhazia.

F. E. the specific proportion of the Abkhazians in 1959 comprised 15, 1% and at the same time in 1989 the same indicator increased to 17, 9%; for the Georgian population these indexes were subsequently: 39, 1% and 45, 7%. Simultaneously the specific proportion of the other nationalities has the tendency of decreasing (the exception is the Greek population – the specific proportion increased from 2, 2% to 2, 8%).

The representatives of different nations on the territory of Abkhazia were located unevenly. The specialists think that the study of this problem has a great practical significance. F. E. it is important, which population was dominant in the bordering districts and it is also interesting what kind of nation was dominant in the regions with the high economical potential.

According to the census of the population in 1989 in Sukhumi lived 119, 2 000 persons – out of them 12, 5% were the Abkhazians; 41, 5% were the Georgians, 21, 6% the Russians, 10, 3% the Armenians, 6, 2% the Greeks, 3, 3% the Ukrainians etc. According to the same census the number of the population in the town Gagra (town bordering with Russia) comprised 21, 1 000 persons. The Russian were 30, 5 % of the population. The specific proportion of the Georgian population was 28, 1%, the Armenians 19, 4%, the Abkhazians – 11, 2%. We have to mention, the fact that in the village Gantiadi (the village bordering with Russia) – the Armenians were 43, 1% of the population, the Georgians – 20%, the Russians – 25, 1% and only 2, 7% of the population were the Abkhazians.

¹³ J. Gamakharia. From the history of the Georgian-Abkhazian Relations, p.124

Analogous picture is in the resort Pitsunda, where the Abkhazians were 16%, the Georgians 23, 3%, the Russians 41% and the Armenians 5, 3%.

The population of the town Gudauta according to the census of 1989 was 14, 9 000 persons, out of them 48% were the ethnical Abkhazians, 21, 2 the Russians and 13, 1 the Georgians.

At the same time in the population of the village Novi Afon the Russians were dominant – 44%, the Abkhazians 23, 1%, the Georgians 7, 6%.

In the populated station Gulripsh lived approximately 11 000 persons. The Georgians were – 38, 4%, the Russians – 36, 4%, the Armenians – 9, 6% and the Abkhazians only – 4, 1%.

The population of the town Ochamchire comprised 20, 1 000 persons. The Georgians were 58, 2%, the Abkhazians 18, 2%, the Russian – 14, 7%, the Armenians 3, 3%.

The population of the town Tkvarcheli equaled 21, 7 000 persons. The Abkhazians were 42, 3%, the Georgians – 24, 4%, the Russians – 24, 5%, the Ukrainians – 3, 6 % etc.

According to the census of 1989 of the town Gali comprised 15, 8 000 persons. The Georgians dominated among the population of the town – 93, 3%, the Russians – 3, 2%, the Abkhazians only – 0, 6%.

Out of 482 villages on the territory of the modern Abkhazia – in the 140 villages the Abkhazian population is dominant, in 171 villages the Georgian population is dominant, and in 71 villages the Armenian population is dominant. In 6 villages the Russian population is dominant. In 4 villages the Greek population is dominant. Arising out of the given data we can conclude, that the population of Abkhazia on the whole, as the population of its separate regions is not homogeneous (but the town Gali and the villages of the Gali region). The given situation superimposes certain peculiarities on the social-economic and demographic development of the region.

The tragic events having place in Abkhazia at the beginning of the 90-ies of the 20th century seriously influenced the dynamic of the demographic situation. The population of the Autonomous republic of Abkhazia by the 1st of January of 1992 according to the current census comprised 535 061 persons. By the corresponding period of 1997 – 145, 986 persons. Thus, the population of Abkhazia depopulated to 388, 075 persons. i. e. 72, 7%, or 3, 67 times.

We have to stress the fact, that the process of the depopulation was common more or less to all the ethnic groups, but the Georgian population of Abkhazia suffered the most. If by the 1st January of 1992 the number of the ethnical Georgians was 244, 872 persons, i. d. 45, 76% out of the whole population, then by the corresponding period of 1997 - 43, 442 persons, i. e. 29, 76% out of the real population. The mentioned percent impresses from the first sight on the background of decrease of the number of population of the whole Abkhazia, but in fact, the number of the ethnic Georgians was decreased to 201, 430 persons, i. e. to 82, 2% or 5, 64 times. ¹⁴

We have to separately mention the situation in the Gali region, where the overwhelming majority of the population is ethnic Georgians. The number of the population in the region is not stable and the tendency to its decreasing is observed, what is conditioned by the persecution of the local population according to the nationality and the permanent

14 Conclusion of the State Committee of Georgia on stating the fact of genocide and ethnic cleaning on the territory of the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.

executive operations from the side of the Russian occupants and separatist regime.

By the 1st January of 1992 the Abkhazians comprised 17, 73% of the whole population, i. e. 94, 767 persons. By the corresponding period of 1997, their number comprised 53, 993 persons, i. e. 36, 98% of the existing population. In spite of the fact, that the percent share of the Abkhazians in comparison with the previous period doubled in number, their quantity decreased to 40 774 persons. If the decrease of the Georgian population occurs, because of the ethnic cleaning and compulsory deportation, decrease of the Abkhazian population is conditioned by both factors – the political motives (incompliance of the Russian occupation and separatist policy) and the natural migration processes, being caused the economic and political chaos, unbearable everyday life conditions and criminogenic situation existing today in Abkhazia. It is necessary to mention, that the overwhelming majority of the Abkhazia, left the territory from the very first days from the beginning of the conflict, because they did not want to participate in the fratricidal war. Nowadays they don't return to the native places, because, they are afraid of persecution from the separatists side. The same can be said about the part of the Russians, Armenians and the representatives of the other ethnic groups (Greeks, Estonians, Jews, Ukrainians, etc.).

Thus, at the beginning of the 90-ies of the 20th century, in the demographic situation of Abkhazia the cardinal changes took place, being current for today. They are conditioned by the planned genocide and ethnic cleaning performed by the Russian Federation and Separatist Regime being directed in the first instance to the aboriginal Georgian population.

Chapter XXIII. North-West Georgia on the Historical Maps

A great number of the ancient and especially medieval century historical-geographical and political maps reflecting the international political situation of the corresponding epochs have been preserved. Compilation of the maps was conditioned by the colonial policy of the European States, development of the international trade and necessity of search of the new markets.

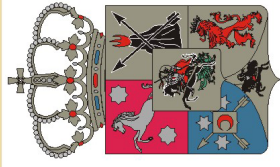
Because of its favourable geopolitical location Georgia became the sphere of interest of the European States and consequently of the cartographers. Its political borders have been fixed since the antique period. F. E. according to Herodotus (Vth century B. C.), the North-West border of the oldest Geogrian State - Colchis kingdom reaches the Meotian Sea. (see map N1).

On the medieval century Royal maps the North-West borders of Georgia in any case include Abkhazia and Jiketi, or only Abkhazia. Exactly this kind of Georgia was known for France, England, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Russia and other leading states of that epoch.

On the basis of the information given by the sailors and travelers or new portolans the European cartographers revised and verified the borders between the Countries. In the case of necessity they used to make appropriate changes in the maps.

On the separate political maps the intra - State borders are shown, on other maps the borders are not fixed, but is marked the geographical nomenclatura. In such cases it is easy to notice, that Abkhazia was always the part of Georgia. The main Caucasian Range originally served as the natural, and consequently North political border. F. E. the map of Diego Homem (1559) on which near the Black Sea coast modern town Gelenjik (Russia) is marked the inscription Mengrelia (Megrelia), proves the fact, that the Caucasian Range even then was considered to be the border of Georgia. According to the same map the toponimics of the region is presented in the form of translations of the geographical names from Geogrian (or from the Geogrian dialects) into Greek-Latin and other European languages. The European cartographers wrote down and owing to them numerous geographical names came to our times. Apsua and Turkish nomenclatura is met in the region from the late medieval centuries and the Russian one from the XIXth century.

The European, Russian and Georgian maps being presented here and also the “ names of the Georgian provinces. . . ” (1732) undoubtedly and simply prove, that not only Jiketi and Abkhazia, but all the East Black Sea coast to the river Kuban and Azov sea, starting the ancient times comprised the part of historical Georgia. This obvious for the disinterested reader and moreover the scientist fact is not recognized only by the falsifiers of history- Apsua (Abkhazian) separatists and their Moscovitan protectors. But, for proving their point of view the opponents cannot refer to the appropriate Historical Maps or other documents containing the information favourable for them, because of their non-existence.



GEORGIA

WITHIN RUSSIAN EMPIRE
(1916)



