

G. MAGALASHVILI

Armenian - Georgian Relations

Reprint from «United Caucasus» No. 10 (27)

Munich 1953



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Mr. Kurdian ¹⁾, in a reply to Mr. A. Tsomaia's ²⁾ article entitled "The Georgian Question", touches on past Armenian-Georgian relations. He shows affection for the Georgian nation, calling it the twin sister of the Armenian nation. He finds some words of praise for the outstanding personalities of Georgian history like King David the Builder and Queen Tamar. He emphasizes the steadfastness of the Georgians in their struggle for their independence, etc.

But at the same time, in dealing with fundamental questions of Georgian culture and the Georgian state, he throws a light on "facts" which — we hope through the ignorance of historical materials — are mostly diametrically opposed to historical reality.

It is hard to answer Mr. Kurdian exhaustively within the confines of a newspaper article, because many of the questions on which he has touched superficially have a most extensive bibliography, the study of which has led researchers to arrive at completely opposite deductions.

We also of course look upon the Armenian people as the brothers of the Georgian people. The brotherhood of our two peoples does not only arise because they have been neighbours for two and a half thousand years and from the political, cultural, economic, and traditional relations which living side by side has entailed. This brotherhood has a deeper foundation: about 700 B. C. the Armenian tribe, related to the Phrygians, settled in the country which later received the name of Ar-

menia. The territory where the Armenians settled, had already been inhabited, thousands of years earlier, by people with their own specific high culture.

The ancient Armenians, in occupying the country, settled among various tribes and peoples and, gradually mingling with them, armenianised the numerically superior natives. This process continued for several centuries.

Who were these native peoples and to which language group did they belong? There is no doubt that these peoples, or their greater part, belonged to the Georgian (Karthvelian) family of nations. The best proof of this assertion — historical data and archeological information apart — lies in the modern Armenian language itself.

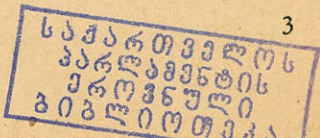
The Armenian language, according to known grammatical and lexicographical signs, is considered to be an Indo-European language.

But like most cultured languages, it is a mixed language. Phonetically it is almost identical with the Georgian language, and both are sharply distinct from the Indo-European languages and considerably distinct from the other Caucasian languages.

The Armenian language has no genders, which are characteristic of European languages, and has come nearer in this connection to the Georgian lang-

1) H. Kurdian, "Armeno-Georgian Cultural Relations of the past", "The Armenian Review", Vol. 6, No. 62-22, Boston, 1953.

2) Tsomaia, "The Georgian Question", "The Voice of Free Georgia", New-York, January 1953.



uage which also lacks grammatical genders.

G. Deeters³⁾, in his work on the Georgian and Armenian languages, adduces several other grammatical examples which remove the Armenian language from Indo-European languages and bring it closer to the Georgian (Karthvelian) group of languages⁴⁾. Deeters finds that modern Armenian more than classic Armenian is like Georgian. Rejecting the subsequent influence of the spoken or written Georgian language on Armenian, he says that the people, in appropriating a new language, continues to think, so to speak from internal inertia, in the manner of its primitive language. He assumes that the same influence came into play with the Armenian language.

In the Armenian language there exists a great number of roots which cannot be explained by either Indo-European, Semitic, or Turanian philology. N. Marr considers these roots to be of Georgian origin⁵⁾. Deeters, in his above-mentioned work, without essentially denying this, suggests a more thorough study of Karthvelian roots in order to find a better explanation.

Besides the two above-mentioned works there exist numerous works on this subject by philologists, historians, and archeologists of various nationality with which we cannot deal for lack of space.

There exists an old legend, recorded by Georgian chroniclers of the VIII and IX centuries and later adopted by the Armenians, that the Armenian and Georgian peoples descend from two brothers — Haos and Karhtlos. Further on in the same legend the fraternal origin of all the Caucasian peoples is mentioned.

Having confirmed Mr. Kurdian's opinion regarding the kinship of the Georgian and Armenian peoples, we shall turn to his other assertions.

Mr. Kurdian writes that the Georgian alphabet was compiled by Saint Mesrop-Mashtots, who also compiled the Armenian alphabet. He also promoted the spread of Christianity in Georgia and was even allegedly the founder of Christian teaching there. Further on, Mr. Kurdian claims that Shotha Rusthaveli was of Armenian origin, that the princes Orbeliani were Curopalates of Tayk and Mkhargrdzeli were also Armenians, and that Armenian architecture had a great influence on Georgian architecture.

We are compelled to go into these claims more or less thoroughly.

Koriun's life of Saint Mesrop is universally known. But it is equally well known that church and other legends, traditions, and myths have ceased long ago to serve as the basic sources of historiography. Legends and myths are only taken into account by historians to this extent that they not infrequently show a correct tendency, tell of the archaic experiences of peoples, and echo true events. Today, however, historians rely on more real data for their deductions.

³⁾ G. Deeters, "Armenisch und Südkaukasisch", "Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Sprachmischung", "Caucasia", Fasc. 3 und 4., Leipzig, 1926 und 1927.

⁴⁾ The Georgian or Karthvelian language is divided into three dialects or closely related languages: Georgian proper; Lazo-Megrelian; and Svanian. The written Georgian language, based on the Karthvelian dialect, subsequently assimilated the elements of all Georgian dialects and became the sole national, church, and literary language of the entire Georgian people.

⁵⁾ N. Marr. "Jafetic elements in the languages of Armenia", I.A.N., 1914, 5—8, 10, 12, 13, etc.

In the legend about Saint Mesrop it is said that he saw "a vision", according to which he wrote the Armenian alphabet. In the **present** text of this legend it is furthermore stated that with the help of an interpreter Saint Mesrop compiled Georgian alphabet as well.

"If, however, Mesrop was, as the Armenians claim, the creator of the Georgian alphabet, it remains quite inexplicable, **why he created a script of its own for the Georgian alphabet, and did not introduce among Georgians the Armenian alphabet he had created, more particularly as the sound system of both languages is absolutely identical**", wrote Friedrich Müller of the Vienna Academy of Sciences ⁶⁾.

Indeed, at the time there could not have been that much national sensitivity, which developed later. The Georgians of those days, who had adopted Christianity, an alien religion by origin, are hardly likely to have protested against the introduction of the Armenian alphabet either.

In reply to Mr. Kurdian's conviction that the legend about Saint Mesrop is true, we would venture to say: not a single alphabet in the world has ever come ready-made in a dream to anyone. The compilation of alphabets is a lengthy collective labour, mostly by unknown paleographers. Thus, for example, the gradual transitional forms of the Greek alphabet as it changed to the Latin are known from the history of paleography.

Recently the opinion of V. Gardthausen was advanced that the Georgian and Armenian alphabets are derived, independently of each other, from the Greek alphabet ⁷⁾.

The most thorough and detailed work on this subject was presented by

the Georgian scholar I. Djavakhishvili ⁸⁾ who, contrary to the opinion of N. Marr ⁹⁾, proved that the "Khutsuri" (church) alphabet is older than the "Mkhedruli" (military or secular) alphabet. He cites several transitional forms from the first alphabet to the second. Further on, he analyzes the opinions of Armenian and other authors who, quoting Koriun and Moses of Khorene, considered the Georgian alphabet to have been derived from the Armenian.

Djavakhishvili proved that the part of Koriun's work where the common origin of the Georgian and Armenian alphabets is mentioned is an insertion by subsequent transcribers of Koriun's work. It is quite permissible to doubt the accuracy of Moses of Khorene. The Armenian scholar, N. Adonts, says that you can use the works of Moses of Khorene as a literary example, but not as a historical source.

Djavakhishvili points out that the most ancient form of the Georgian alphabet does not coincide with the Armenian alphabet either in sequence or in outline. By means of a detailed and comparative study of the individual letters in ancient Georgian manuscripts and signs, Djavakhishvili arrives at the conviction that the Georgian alphabet

⁶⁾ Friedrich Müller, "Über den Ursprung der Gruzinischen Schrift", Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Band CXXVII, Wien, 1897 (The underlining is by source).

⁷⁾ V. Gardthausen, "Griechische Paläographie", II, 47, "Der große Brockhaus", Band 17, Schrift, Tafel II, Leipzig 1934.

⁸⁾ I. Djavakhishvili, "Aims, sources, and methods of history before and now", vol. 3, part. 1, Georgian paleography (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1926.

⁹⁾ N. Marr, "Grammar of the ancient Georgian language", Leningrad, 1925 (in Russian).

is derived from the Phoenician alphabet or one of its most ancient branches.

According to the almost unanimous opinion of all scholars, the Phoenician and other ancient Semitic alphabets — irrespective of whether these scripts are written from left to right or from right to left — are the bases of nearly all the alphabets in Europe and Asia. The Greek alphabet, in which European alphabets originate, is also derived from the Phoenician alphabet.

That Mesrop was allegedly the enlightener of Georgia, who “purged the Georgian children of the dross and the rust of the pus-infected demons” (we quote the source from Mr. Kurdian’s article), also calls for a few words.

Before Christianity Georgia had a rich national religion mingled with the teachings of Zarathushtra¹⁰) from Persia. According to Georgian ecclesiastical tradition, Saint Nino of Cappadocia was the enlightener of Georgia, in the same way as Saint Gregory the Parthe according to Armenian traditions, was the enlightener of Armenia.

In fact, Christianity gained admission to Georgia before Saint Nino. In all the countries of the ancient world, the Jewish diaspora served as the starting point for Christianity. In Athens, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and so on, wherever there were Jewish communities, Jewish proselytes became the first missionaries of Christianity. This picture is particularly clear to us from the life of Apostle Paul and his travels as a missionary in Mediterranean countries. It was the same in Georgia. Already before our era there were, in the capital Mtskhetha and other towns, Jewish communities in touch with

Jerusalem. The first Christians in Georgia were likewise Jewish proselytes.

Georgia became Christian gradually, but judging by Georgian, Greek, Roman, and other sources, it was considered to be a Christian state as early as the IVth century with a Christian King and Christian clergy. The Contribution of Mesrop to the cause of spreading the teaching of Christ in Georgia — if there was any at all—cannot be as great as it is claimed to be by the chronicler of his life.

Unfounded also — not to express it more forcibly — is the following assertion in Mr. Kurdian’s article: “Likewise we cannot forget the contribution of the Armenians to Georgian literature, whose most shining star, Shotha Rustaveli, was an Armenian, called Ashot, from the little village of Rustav between Akhaltsikhe and Kherthvisi.”

Apparently the only evidence to support this assertion is the name of the great Georgian poet — Shotha. Assuming that Shotha is derived from Ashot and that Ashot is an Armenian name — although there is also another etymology for this name — what does this prove? According to this reasoning it could be claimed that if Rustaveli had been called George, Alexander, or Nicholas — he was a Greek; or if his name had been David or Ioan — he was a Jew; or Constantine or Julius — a Roman; or Taniel, Zurab, or Nodar — a Persian; and so on.

Rustaveli came from Rusthavi. There are two places with this name in Georgia — one near Tbilisi and another near Akhaltsikhe. “Rusthavi” comes

¹⁰) I. Djavakhishvili, “History of the Georgian People” (in Georgian), part 1, Tbilisi, 1929.

O. G. v. Wesendonk, “Über georgisches Heidentum”, Leipzig, 1924.



from the Georgian words "ru" — canal and "thavi" — head or beginning — and "Rusthavi" literally means "canal's beginning". "Akhaltzikhe" means "akhali" — new in Georgian and "tsikhe" — fortress, in the same way as "Akhalkalaki" comes from the Georgian "akhali" — new and "kalaki" — town. The geographical name of Kherthvisi has likewise a purely Georgian etymology, like Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and so on, and means "the place of the confluence of waters".

Akhaltzikhe lies in the ancient Georgian province of Meskhethi or, as it was called in the middle ages, Samtskhe-Saathabago. The inhabitants of Meskhethi are the Georgian tribe of Meskhi (Rusthaveli calls himself a Meskhi in his poem). Meskhis are mentioned in Assyrian chronicles several centuries before the Armenians' appearance in history.

Rusthaveli is not only not an Armenian, but there is not the slightest cause to think that he is of Armenian origin. But even if one were to grant that this great master of the Georgian language is of Armenian origin it would not prove in any way that Armenian literature influenced Georgian literature. The Georgians in the XI-XIII century developed their own independent lay poetry, which in form and content resembled, on the one hand Persian poetry and on the other the poetry of the troubadours and "Minnesängers" of Europe.¹¹⁾ In Georgian poetry Rusthaveli had predecessors, contemporaries, and heirs, while the Armenians had no chivalrous secular poetry. We invite Mr. Kurdian to cite examples which could show the influence of non-existent XII century Armenian secular poetry on the poem of

Rusthaveli — "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin".

Let us again assume that Rusthaveli was of Armenian origin. All who have had Russian schooling are well aware that Pushkin's mother was the granddaughter of Peter the Great's famous "Arab", the Abyssinian Abraham Hannibal. What is less well known is that the Pushkins themselves, Boyars of Moscow, came, according to their family tree, of "an honest German husbandman called Ratsch". Lermontov's ancestor was a Scot called George Learmonth who came to Russia at the beginning of the XVII century. If one follows Mr. Kurdian's reasoning Pushkin and Lermontov were not Russian and — using their origin as an argument — you could speak of a German, Abyssinian, or Scottish influence on Russian poetry!

Mr. Kurdian, incidentally, mentions the Curopalates of Tayk, who, together with other personalities whom he lists, became the pride and glory of Georgia. We do not know which Curopalates¹²⁾ the author had in mind. If he means the best known of the Curopalates, David the Great Curopalate (+1001), ruler of the Georgian province of Tao, this was a Georgian by origin, religion, and political tendencies. As this Curopalate also owned Armenian lands, Armenian historians called him the King of both Armenia and Georgia (Iberia). Georgian sources invariably call David Curopalate King and Great Curopalate of Tao. Curopalate David

¹¹⁾ Z. Avalishvili, "Questions of Vepkhis-Tkaosani" (in Georgian), Paris 1931, and relevant literature therein.

¹²⁾ Kuropalat (in Greek Kuropalates) — highest dignity at the byzantine court, which was also bestowed on befriended kings and princes.

was not only a Georgian, but a Georgian patriot in the modern meaning of the word. In putting into force the political plan of the eristhavi (Duke) of Karthli Ivane Marushidze, he, being childless, adopted Prince Bagrat, the son of the King Gurgen II of Karthli and upheld the hereditary rights of this Prince (who later became King Bagrat III of Georgia) to the Abkhazian kingdom, which then included the whole of Western Georgia. Incidentally, he is the builder of the famous monastery of Khakhoul.

Whoever is interested in the personality of David the Great Curopalate and his attitude towards other Georgian and Armenian rulers and the Byzantine Emperors, and in the political and cultural situation in Tao itself, can learn all this from the comparatively short, but extremely comprehensive work of Z. Avalishvili.¹³⁾

The commander in chief of this ruler, Tornike (Ioan, as a monk), was also a Georgian, an eristhavi¹⁴⁾ of the Georgian family of Chordvani. He was one of the builders of the Orthodox Iberian monastery on mount Athos where, having laid down his arms, he died as a monk.

The Princes Orbeliani are also Georgians. Their origin goes back deep into antiquity. According to the, of course legendary, geneology of this family, it comes from an eminent Chinese, who came to Georgia in the VI century B. C.¹⁵⁾

N. Adonts mistakenly presumes that the Orbeliani, like the Bagratids, come from the Chorokh territory. The full family name of this princely line is Djam-Bakur-Orbeliani. Adonts, examining the first part of this name, thinks that Djam comes from Chan, the real

name of the Lazs, the native inhabitants of Chorokh territory, and that Djam-Bakur must be Chan-Bakur or the Chan (Laz) ruler. The legend of the Chinese origin of the Orbeliani family Adonts likewise connects with the name Chan. He assumes that after leaving Chorokh territory, the Orbeliani, in later centuries, not understanding the word Djam or Chan, erroneously created, because of its similarity to "Chin" (China), the legend about their Chinese origin.¹⁶⁾

Professor M. Tseretheli writes as follows on the origin of the Orbeliani family:

"... 1. The name Orbeliani is purely Svanian, as the suffix 'iani' indicates. All other names with this ending, which may be encountered in Georgia, are of Svanian origin. Not a single name of non-Svanian origin has this suffix.

2. Evidence that the Orbeliani come indeed from Svanethi is provided by the name of the village Orbeli, which exists to this day and lies on the border between Lechkhumi and Svanethi (In antiquity Lechkhumi and Racha¹⁷⁾ were inhabited by Svanians).

3. In the middle ages we see the Orbeliani as the rulers or eristhavis of Argvethi (upper Imerethi). Lechkhumi and Racha of course belonged to them and Svanethi itself probably belonged to them. In Argvethi they had their ancestral estate and in the Katskhi mona-

¹³⁾ Z. Avalichvili, "La succession du Curopalate David d'Ibérie, Dynaste de Tao", "Byzantion", t. VIII, Fasc. I, Bruxelles, 1933.

¹⁴⁾ "Eristhavi", in Georgian, is a military leader, duc, or appanaged prince.

¹⁵⁾ M. Brosset, "Additions et éclaircissements à l'histoire de la Géorgie".

¹⁶⁾ N. Adonts, "Armenia in the times of Justinian" (in Russian), I.A.N.

¹⁷⁾ Lechkhumi and Racha — districts of West Georgia.



stery their family mausoleum. In the XI century Georgian Kings gave them extensive possessions in South East Georgia, where their residence and strong-point was the fortress Klde-Kari.¹⁸⁾

The Orbeliani revolted against the Kings on several occasions. Whenever the Kings emerged victorious over the Orbeliani they seized that family's estates until the Orbeliani pleaded for mercy and asked the Kings to leave them their estate of Katskhi, to which the Kings invariably agreed. The Orbeliani were always buried in the Katskhi mausoleum, no matter where they died.

4. There is no evidence whatsoever that they come from the Chans or from Tao-Klardjethi. Whereas the Bagratids do indeed come from there and are to be met with for the first time there, the Orbeliani are nowhere and never apparent there. The interpretation of Djam-Bakur as allegedly meaning "Chan ruler" is quite erroneous. Djam-Bakur (Djan-Bakur) is simply a Persian epithet, meaning "ruler of country" and has nothing in common with the origin of the Orbeliani...¹⁹⁾ We invite Mr. Kurdian to make a choice between the Chans of the Armenian historian and the Svanians of the Georgian historian!

The best-known representatives of this family — Liparit I, Liparit II, Ioan Orbeliani (the father-in-law of Prince Demna), Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, David Orbeliani son-in-law of King Herakles II, Commander in chief of Georgian troupes and later Vakhtang and Gregory Orbeliani were outstanding Georgian politicians, soldiers, writers, and poets. One of the Orbeliani family, Stefanos Orbeliani, was an Armenian historian. He comes from that part of the family which, after the

suppression by King George III (father of Queen Tamar) of Prince Demna's revolt, left Georgia, changed to the Gregorian faith, and became Armenianised.

Talking of the Orbeliani, we might say incidentally that Armenians, when they see a Georgian family name with the ending "iani", think that they have to do with a Georgianised Armenian. As already stated above by Professor M. Tseretheli, this ending is characteristic of Georgian families of Svanian origin. For instance Dadeshkeliani, Kipiani, Asathiani, Akhvlediani, Avaliani, Gabliani, Ioseliani, Kuraspediani, Khvedeliani, and hundreds of other family names with this ending are by origin Georgian-Svanians or families which originate in Svanethi. The Armenian suffix "ean" has nothing in common with the Svanian suffix "iani".

Among individual personalities and families of allegedly Armenian origin which brought great benefit to the Georgian state, Mr. Kurdian mentions the Mkhargrdzeli family. This is the only one of all the above-cited cases where Mr. Kurdian may have proof for this assertion. But, unfortunately, here also it is not so simple a matter. According to the Armenian historian of the XIII century Kirakos, the sons of the ruler Sargis (Mkhargrdzeli) — Zakariya and Ivane — came from the Kurds of Babirakan-Khele. Another Armenian historian of the same period, Vardan the Great, confirms this version of the Kurd origin of this family and examines this question in even greater detail.

¹⁸⁾ Klde-Kari, from the Georgian "klde" = rock and "kari" = gate.

¹⁹⁾ From Professor M. Tseretheli's letter to the author of this article.

The Georgian historian of the XII-XIII century who described the epoch of Queen Tamar, records a version of the origin of the Mkhargrdzeli family from the Persian king Artaxerxes I — Longimanus. According to noteworthy proof provided by the Georgian scholar Sargis Kakabadze, Mkhargrdzeli comes from the ancient Georgian family of Toreli, which went in the X century to Armenia, where it adopted Gregorianism.²⁰⁾

This shows how risky it is to draw tendentious conclusions based on as yet unclarified historical details. There is no doubt about one thing, that the Mkhargrdzeli, serving the Georgian Kings truly and faithfully, did indeed render an enormous service to the Georgian state and enjoyed the great love of the Georgian people.²¹⁾ At the same time, all of them, with the exception of Ioan Mkhargrdzeli, who adopted Orthodoxy, were zealous Gregorians, who richly endowed the Armenian Sanain monastery and other churches, and carried on a correspondence with the Armenian Kings of Cilicia and with the Cilician clergy on church and state affairs.

Let it be noted that the name of Mkhargrdzeli, under which they became famous, was not known to their contemporary Armenian historians. The word "Mkhargrdzeli" comes from "mkhari", which is shoulder or arm in Georgian, and "grdzeli" which is long in Georgian.

The descendants of the ancient Mkhargrdzeli, before whom Georgia's enemies quaked, who dealt with foreign kings and sultans as one equal with another and conducted a direct correspondence with Popes in Rome, were already in Russian days "permitted"

to bear the family name of Princes Argutinskiy-Dolgorukiys. *) From Ioan Mkhargrdzeli, who changed to Orthodoxy, are descended — according to some sources — the Georgian Princes Pavlenishvili.

If we wanted to start a controversy with Mr. Kurdian, we could adduce proof, according to which there is reason to suppose that the above-mentioned Armenian historian Koriun of the V century was a Georgian. There are also data in various historical sources, according to which it is permissible to assert that certain Nakharar families²²⁾ were of Georgian (Karthvelian) origin. But is it worth while indulging in such arguments, particularly if this does not present any purely scientific interest? If we were to succeed in proving that a few well known Armenian personalities or families were of Georgian origin, the Georgian people would not be any better or worse off for it. It would not prove any Georgian political or cultural influence on the Armenians, and it would be wrong to make any political capital out of it and claim the superiority of one people over the other or the influence of one people on the other.

The Armenians and Georgians are two peoples which grew to maturity long ago, and we think that he who considered himself or considers himself to be a Georgian is a Georgian, and he who thought of himself or thinks of himself as an Armenian is an Armenian.

²⁰⁾ S. Kakabadze, preface to his edition of "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" (in Georgian).

²¹⁾ I. Djavakhishvili, "History of the Georgian People", part 2.

*) Translated from Georgian "Arghuthashvili-Mkhargrdzeli".

²²⁾ "Nakharar" are ancient Armenian military leaders or princes.

Among the peoples of two neighbouring countries there can be found individuals or whole families who move from one country to the other. Let us take a simple example — many Germans bear French names and vice versa.

Armenians and Georgians are two peoples fighting hard for their survival. They must unite in order to preserve their national characters out of respect for the national traditions which grew up through the centuries, and should not try to filch from each other the remnants of their spiritual and material heritage.

Mr. Kurdian's assertion regarding the great dependence of Georgian architecture on Armenian architecture is apparently based on the well known work of the Viennese scholar Joseph Strzygowski, called "The Architecture of the Armenians and Europe".²³⁾

In this form this opinion was not voiced by anyone before Strzygowski. Later, if was voiced at all, it took the form of a reference to Strzygowski.

In his comprehensive work of two volumes, J. Strzygowski has collected some most valuable material about Armenian architecture and described its details with great love. Unfortunately, some parts of this work, regarding Georgian history and art, provoke the astonishment of anyone who knows Georgia's past. For this reason the forthright assertion by O. G. von Wesendonk to the effect that it is absolutely wrong to speak of the dependence of Georgian architecture on Armenian architecture, may be taken as an answer to Strzygowski.²⁴⁾

Strzygowski describes, together with Armenian examples of architecture, Georgian memorials of art, but he often

omits to mention their Georgian origin. Thus, for instance, he does this in describing the Georgian church of Bana in the ancient Georgian province of Tao, about which the traveller Karl Koch wrote more than one hundred years ago that this church was more beautiful than any he had seen in the East with the exception of Constantinople.²⁵⁾

T. Kluge asserts that even a layman can distinguish at a glance Georgian architecture from the Armenian, although sometimes they are structurally similar.²⁶⁾

Even Strzygowski himself, who give preeminence to the Armenian architecture, notes the difference in the expression of art between Georgians and Armenians, and writes:

"But to the ornamental wealth of Georgia, Armenian flatness takes second place. The lighter, upward-tending architecture in Georgia, with its great variety and playful inventiveness, may be contrasted in Armenia with closed-in massiveness, so that the spirit of the landscape with its occasional mighty volcano is reflected in the building."²⁷⁾

We would like to say a few words about the chronology of the Armenian examples of architecture cited by Strzygowski and the priority of Armenian architecture over the Georgian.

²³⁾ J. Strzygowski, „Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa“, Wien, 1918.

²⁴⁾ O. G. Wesendonk, „Archäologisches aus dem Kaukasus“, Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Band XL, 1925, Heft I u. II.

²⁵⁾ Karl Koch, „Reise im pontischen Gebirge“, Weimar, 1846.

²⁶⁾ Theodor Kluge, „Versuch einer systematischen Darstellung der alt-georgischen (grusinischen) Kirchenbauten, Berlin, 1918.

²⁷⁾ J. Strzygowski, „Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa“, Band I, Wien, 1918, p. 346.

In 1924, an expedition of archaeologists and art historians went from Tbilisi to Armenia. It included the well-known Armenian archeologist Melikset-bek. This expedition came to the conclusion from the inscriptions on memorials of architecture, the study of building styles, archeological realities, and corresponding historical documents, that no Armenian church can be dated earlier than the VII century. Similarly, the development of the construction of cupolas, which Strzygowski considers to be the decisive deed of ancient Christian Armenian architects and which in his opinion served as an example, not only for Georgian, but for all European architecture, did not appear in Armenia before the VII century. In Georgia, however, it has been established that cupolas were already being built in the second half of the VI century. ²⁸⁾

Mr. Kurdian, saying that the Georgian state had greater vitality than the Armenian, continues:

“But when it comes to culture and economics, it is an entirely different question. Georgia has greatly benefited from the indisputable Armenian superiority in creative genius, in the arts, and in economic and cultural activity.”

From these words of Mr. Kurdian there is apparent an assurance or conviction in the national or racial superiority of the Armenians over the Georgians. We have encountered this opinion in other Armenian sources and in the works of European writers who accept Armenian arguments uncritically. In this connection, an old anecdote involuntarily comes to mind: the mother of the well known Georgian writer and politician, Ilya Chavchavadze, was of Armenian origin. She

was a kind and very well educated lady. She taught her son the Georgian language, which she knew perfectly and imbued him from childhood with a love for Georgian literature. Once, at a party, an Armenian friend said to Chavchavadze: “You know, Ilya, you are clever because your mother was Armenian”. Chavchavadze burst out laughing and answered: “My friend, in that case I do not understand one thing: both your mother and your father are Armenian, so why is it then that you are not famous for your intellect?”

Further on, Mr. Kurdian writes that Mr. Tsomaia, in his article about Georgia, had forgotten the “lion’s share” which the Armenians had in the political, military, economic, and cultural life of Georgia. We also regret that the Georgian author did not find a place in his work in which to mention the collaboration between Georgians and Armenians and relations in general with other Caucasian neighbours during the period when the Georgian state flourished most. But Mr. Kurdian himself obscures this collaboration, which indeed existed, by using — to prove its existence — evidence which distorts the true situation. At the same time he forgets that great and real service which the Georgians rendered to the Armenian people.

In 1043—4 and in 1064, through an unhappy turn of historical destiny, the last two Armenian states in the Caucasus — Ani and Kars — ceased to exist. The Georgians, on the other hand, maybe because of force of arms, or “flexibility” (to use Mr. Kurdian’s expression), or thanks to their more

²⁸⁾ O. G. Wesendonk, “Archäologisches aus dem Kaukasus”, Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Band XL, 1925, Heft I u. II.



favourable geographical situation, succeeded in preserving their independence for the next 750 years until the beginning of the XIX century. In the course of this time, many thousands of Armenians gradually resettled in Georgia, where they found a second home for themselves. This movement of Armenians into Georgia increased during the reign of David II the Builder and continued until the end of the independent Georgian state or states.

In their days, Armenian historians gave their due to the Georgian Kings. Thus the Armenian historians — Vardan the Great and Matthew of Edessa, say that when King David, at the request of the inhabitants of Ani themselves, captured this fortress, the entry of King David into the ancient capital of Armenia in 1123 was solemnly celebrated by its dwellers and that through this action King David freed Ani from "sixty years of bondage". Matthew of Edessa writes about King David, who was his contemporary, as follows:

"He was a saintly and virtuous King, filled with faith and justice, who was good to the Armenians and useful to them. The remnants of the Armenian people gathered around him: he built for them in Georgia a town, in which he erected several churches and monasteries, and called it Gorha".²⁹⁾

All the Georgian Kings, to the last of them — Heracles II and George XII — showed the same kindness to the Armenians. The Armenians enjoyed equal rights in Georgia, had their own churches, their own clergy, church schools, etc. State service was open to them, despite religious and national differences, as national and religious fanaticism was alien to the Georgians, so that we meet Armenians at all levels

in the government service. We are unaware of a single case deserving of attention of the Armenian minority being oppressed in the history of independent Georgia. A more brotherly attitude than that which the Georgians had for the Armenians is unknown to us in the history of other peoples.

The Armenians took part in the cultural life of Georgia and we know of Armenian writers (but not Rustaveli!), who wrote in Georgian. For instance, Peshangi Bertkadze or, as he was also called, Pashvibertkishvili, was of Armenian origin. He wrote the historical poem called "Shakhnaziani", largely devoted to the life and work of King Vakhtang V (1658—1675), whom the Persians called Shah Navaz.³⁰⁾ The well known ashug³¹⁾ of Tbilisi, Sayat-Nova, was also Armenian. His father was an Armenian from Aleppo and his mother an Armenian from Tbilisi. Sayat-Nova, whose real name was Arutyun, sang and wrote in Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaidjani. At one time he was the court singer of King Heracles II, whom he called "the soul and heart of all Georgia".³²⁾

Basically, Armenians, like Georgians, are farmers. Uprooted from their own lands, the Armenians took to industry and trade when they resettled in foreign parts. In Georgia, most of the Armenians continued to farm. Through-

²⁹⁾ We quote from M. Brosset, "Additions et éclaircissements a l'histoire de la Géorgie", St. Pétersbourg, 1851, p. 230.

In M. Brosset's opinion "Gorha" should be taken for "Gori", where many Armenians live to this day.

³⁰⁾ K. Kekelidze, "History of Georgian Literature", Vol. 2 (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1924.

³¹⁾ Ashug is a popular singer.

³²⁾ A. Baramidze, Sh. Radiani, V. Zgenti, "History of Georgian Literature" (in Russian), Moscow, 1952.

129/4

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out Eastern Georgia there was hardly a village without a few Armenian households.

In Georgian towns the Armenians engaged in the crafts and commerce and were the wealthiest among the inhabitants. Many Armenians living in Georgia, when they adopted Orthodoxy, or even if they remained Gregorians, became georgianised.

In the history of national minorities, it is known that they become assimilated most rapidly where such minorities are not persecuted. On the other hand, any pressure on the minorities intensifies their insistence on maintaining their identity.

Mr. Kurdian regrets that there is no comprehensive work in the field of Armenian-Georgian relations and in this he is to some extent right. But if he knew modern Georgian historiography, he would become convinced how seriously many Georgian scholars had worked on this subject. Professor I. Djavakhishvili, one of the founders of Tbilisi University, has devoted his whole life to the study of historical documents in all languages about Georgia. Being one of the greatest experts on Armenian historical memorials, he has studied them most conscientiously and critically and appraised them at their true value. Chauvinism is absent from his work of many volumes.

The same may be said of the universal scholar Zurab Avalishvili. In his two works, in the above-mentioned study "David the Great Curoplate" and

particularly in his authoritative book "In the days of the Crusades",³³⁾ he often touches on Armenian-Georgian relations and examines them with complete objectivity, showing a visible sympathy for the Armenians. We could quote many other examples of a similar approach to Armenian-Georgian relations.

Neither the old, nor the new, Georgian historians and other scholars ever concealed or passed over in silence the services of Armenians to Georgia. When these services were in fact rendered, they were always mentioned.

From early days we can observe among the Georgians a wish to establish friendly relations, not only with the Armenians, but with all their Caucasian neighbours.

One of the main reasons for the success and prosperity of the Georgian state in the middle ages is that the Georgian Kings of that period knew how to coordinate the ambitions of the Georgian people with the interests of their Caucasian neighbours. Already in 1885, the Georgian historian D. Bakradze wrote that the Georgian state, beginning with the reign of King David II the Builder to the death of Queen Tamar, resembled a federative union of the Caucasian peoples.³⁴⁾

³³⁾ Z. Avalishvili, "In the days of the Crusades" (in Georgian), Paris, 1929.

³⁴⁾ D. Bakradze in commentaries on the history of the Georgia of Prince Vakhushst (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1885.

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