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**Georgian-Ossetian
ethno-historical review**

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Introduction

Reviews presented in the book had been published in Georgian, at different periods. The author has dedicated monograph to the issues of Ossetian migrations, principal conclusions of which had been included in the first review of the given book.

The history of Georgian-Ossetian relations stretches over the centuries. The Georgians gave the opportunity to the Ossetians, trapped in the North Caucasus mountains, to settle on their territory.

Today, the Georgian monarchs and rulers, who encouraged the settlement of Ossetians within the Georgian territories, are declared feudal aggressors. To enormous disappointment, as an answer to Georgian hospitality they took to misappropriation of Georgian lands. The so called South Ossetian District, created artificially and illegally during the Soviet Dictate, as well as the territories lying in the neighbourhood, were declared historical Ossetian territories.

Deception of the Ossetian people, shall be put down to the credit of Ossetian historians, who encouraged the beginning of the conflict, and helped it to gain momentum gradually. In this respect, a book by Mark Blyev, "South Ossetia and Collisions of Russian – Georgian Relations", published in Moscow, in 2006, had topped all the expectations. Mark Blyev, presents himself as a true forger of history, teller of tales and creator of myths. He, by the way, is the author of a bulky volume, published in Moscow and dedicated to the invasion of the Caucasus by Russia (Russia and the Greater Caucasus highlanders on their way to civilization). M "Mysl", 2004, which states that - the Vainakhs (Nakhs), happen to be the arrivals, while Ossetians are the oldest settlers, not only in the North Caucasus but in Georgia as well, and Kartli (Iberian) kingdom is nothing more but a tribal union of Georgians and Ossetians; The battle led by Vakhtang Gorgasali with the forefather of Ossetians Os-Bagatar, allegedly took place, not in the planes of North Caucasus, but on the territory of the so called South Ossetia. The aim of the commanding officer Pavel Tsitsianov, russified Georgian, conducting Tsarist imperial policy in Georgia, was allegedly, the revival of "Great Georgia". M. Blyev does not limit himself to forging of sources and introduces new scientific - historical term "new sources" – sort of a literary confusion (literally), of Seka Gadyev, the so called classicist of Ossetian literature. The abovementioned author accuses Georgians, known for their ethnic and confessional tolerance, of Russo phobia and Ossetia phobia

The intentions are more than clear – an attempt had been made to gain predisposition of, not only Georgians, Russians and Ossetians, but the World's democratic society as well.

Blyev's thesis could only be challenged by the work , as voluminous as his own book (470 pages). Similar task shall be left for realization in future. While the historical thesis, based upon the true historical facts, presented in the given book, are an attempt at unbiased description of Georgian Ossetian relations.

Issues of Ossetian Migration to Georgia. Ethnic History of Shida Kartli (Inner Kartli) (Principal Conclusions)

Georgian links with the Ossetians, residing in the North Caucasus date back to the old times. The relations used to vary in nature, being friendly or hostile at different periods of history. Similar to Alan forefathers, Ossetians, had no fixed places of residence for a considerable period in history.

For the absence of permanent residence, until settling in the Caucasus Mountains, the Ossetians had changed the places of habitation several times. The ancestors of Ossetians were Iran spoken tribes, who originated from the steppes of Middle Asia. By the beginning of A.D. Allans – Ossetians establish themselves in the steppes of Azov area and banks of Don River, where, in IV c. A.D. were subjected to devastating assaults of Huns. A major part of Alans, having survived through the invasion, starts migration to the South, organizing first settlements in the foothills of the North Caucasus. On the territory, the Alan-Ossetians established an early class state formation, destroyed some time later by the Mongols (XIII c). XIII-XIV cc are marked with the new migrations of Alan-Ossetians. With the settlement in North Caucasus, their integration with the North Caucasian tribes began. As for the claims of early settlement of Ossetians in the Caucasus – the mentioned locations had been occupied by Kabardin, where they used to erect secure fortifications along the borderlines in the mountains and planes; These fortifications were meant to hinder the movement of Ossetians, who were forced up into the mountains, and prevent their penetration into the planes of North Caucasus.

Before XIII – XIV cc the Ossetians had never dwelt in the mountains of North Ossetia (For the objectivity's sake, it should be mentioned that from the early medieval period Alans had dwelt in the estuary of Kuban river, on the territory of contemporary Karachai. Here they co-existed in the neighbourhood of Abkhazians. The information is proved by the fact that in spoken language of West Georgian population, Karachai are referred to as Alans.). Only from the particular period, mentioned above, they become immediate neighbours of Georgians.

Thus, Ossetians – transform from plane dwellers into highlanders. Settlement of mountain regions by Ossetians used to be massive, and had found reflection in toponyms, after their introduction from planes to the mountains.

The final exile of Ossetians from the planes into the mountain gorges is a result of two devastating assaults of Tamerlane, which occurred in the beginning of XV century.

Thus the thesis of ancient residences on Georgian territory has no backing. There does not exist a single historical source, document or archaeological proof pointing to the fact of Ossetian migration or facts of permanent residence on Georgian territory in different periods of B.C. or IV c. A.D.

No migration of Alan – Ossetians to the Georgian territories had occurred after the Hun invasions. Within this particular period Alan – Ossetians migrated from the Don River neighbourhood to the Azov Sea locations, which spread to the South up to North Caucasus foothills.

Contrary to the views of several authors the Settlement of Ossetians in Georgia could not be proved, neither in VII century nor in XII c. Ossetians begin to settle in mountain gorges of North Caucasus only by XIII c. The given process of migration had been rather lengthy and ended in XV century. In the given period only a small group of Ossetians had attempted to stay on the territory of Shida Kartli.

Taking advantage of Georgia's weakening and with the support of the Mongols, Ossetians made an effort at seizing lands in Shida Kartli for the settlements. Ossetians had actually become police forces of the Mongols.

They, however were driven out by King Giorgi the Brilliant. Thus the Georgian rulers had slammed the gates leading from Ossetia to Georgia for a very long time. (Dariali and Kasris Kari).

From XV c. settlement of Ossetians starts in Dvaleti province, located in the Northern part of the main Caucasus Range.

The mentioned process continued throughout XVI century, while in XVII century, assimilation of the local Georgian ethnic group of Dvalians draws to its end. It should be mentioned that before the settlement of Ossetians in Dvaleti, a major part of Dvalians had migrated to different parts of Georgia (Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Imereti, Racha), as a result of violent offensive conducted by the Ossetians. A part of remaining Dvalians at the location, who were compelled to live within the Ossetian ethnic-linguistic environment, after mass settlement and rapid reproduction of the newly arrived tribes, were assimilated into their environment. Despite the ethnic changes separation of the territory from Georgia had never been achieved. Throughout the entire history of the Georgian statehood, even after its inclusion into the Russian Empire, (up to 1858), Dvaleti had always been considered integral part of Georgia.

First Ossetian settlers on the modern territory of Georgia, appear in Truso gorge (source of Terek River), and Magran - Dvaleti (estuary of Didi Liakhvi - Greater Liakhvi River). Migration of Ossetians to these parts occurred in XVII century. At the time major part of mountainous Shida Kartli was beyond Ossetian control. They had infiltrated only into the location of Didi Liakhvi estuary (Magran – Dvaleti). According to the evidences provided by several historical sources, the mountainous part of Shida kartli, at the time (gorges of Didi and Patara Liakhvi).was full of plundered villages. The Georgian population, dislodged from the area was compelled to move to the planes.

From the second part of the XVII century, migration of Ossetians to mountainous parts of Shida Kartli begins, namely, to upper parts of Didi Liakhvi and Patara Liakhvi rivers: they move gradually to the South and by the 30ies of XVIII , cover fully the mountainous strip above the mentioned gorges. In the given period Ossetians co-exist with the limited Georgian population in the mountain villages.

Throughout XVIII century the spread of Ossetians to the foothills of Shida Kartli mountains is observed. Distribution of Ossetians on the given territory (mostly in the looted and deserted villages) begins from the end of XVIII century and the beginning of XIX century.

By the end of XVII century the Ossetians grasp the territories in the upper parts of Jejori (Kurado) and Ksani (Zhamuri) gorges. In Zhamuri Ossetian migration occurred both from mountainous areas of North Caucasus and mountainous strip of Didi Liakhvi. While to Kudaro, they mostly migrated from Dvaleti. In Mountainous areas of Shida Kartli they initially settled in Didi Liakhvi ravine, time later they move to Patara Liakhvi, by the estuary of Ksani (Zhamuri) River. In the beginning of XVIII century a small number of Ossetian settlers appears in Isroliskhevi, also in the upper parts of Medjuda gorge, where mostly, Ossetians, that had formerly resided in Patara Liakhvi gorge settled..

By the XVIII the furthest points of Ossetian settling (from West to East) were Kudaro (Djejori River estuary) – Gutta (Bigger Liakhvi gorge) – the place above the Atseriskhevi village (Smaller Liakhvi gorge) – two villages in Medjuda-Zhamuri gorge (Ksani gorge) – Guda (White Aragvi estuary) – Truso (Terek River estuary). There does not exist a single proof of the presence of Ossetian settlers in Lekhura gorge, Medjuda (with the exception of estuaries), bigger mountainous area of Ksani, Pronne gorges, by the end of XVIII century; i.e. Ossetians, whether in the period of Vakhushti Bagrationi or by the end of XVIII century, dwelt only in the “mountainous nooks”, the lands which bore no vine or fruit bearing plants.

By the end of XVIII c and the beginning of XIX century Ossetians hold a major part of the lands in the foothills of Patara Liakhvi. Beginning from the period, particularly the first years of XIX century, an individual settlement (“infiltration”) of Ossetians occurs from Shida Kartli mountainous areas into the foothills and planes of the same region. The process of given resettlement was most intensively conducted from the Mountainous strip of Patara Liakhvi gorge.

From the end of XVIII century migration of Ossetians from mountain gorges of North Caucasus towards Georgia factually stops. The reason lies in the fact that Russia’s official government provided living permits for the settlement in the lowlands of North Caucasus. Ossetian population of Dvaletti, which never ceased active migration process into Georgian territory throughout the XIX century, was an only exception.

Ossetian settlement was mostly accomplished from Dvaleti. Ossetian residents – migrants from North Caucasus gorges, that had settled in Dvaleti, used to move further, to Shida Kartli for permanent residence. However, there do exist evidences of Ossetian migration from North Caucasian mountainous areas; the latter is characteristic mainly for the early, initial stage of migration of the Ossetian population.

Claims made by certain authors regarding the spread of Ossetians throughout the foothills of Shida Kartli, as well as planes in XVII – XVIII centuries, seem to be erroneous. In the beginning of XIX century the migration of Ossetians to the gorges of Pronne, Medjuda and Lekhura rivers as well as other populated areas of Ksani gorge begins. Penetration of Ossetians into the old Georgian villages and Pronne River gorge occurred mainly from the gorge of Didi

Liakhvi River. Although, the fact that the first Ossetian migrants – Ossetians in Georgian villages in Pronne gorge, were arrivals from Dvaleti - should be given particular attention. From the gorges of Didi and Patara Liakhvi rivers the population moves to Medjuda gorge. Migrations of Ossetians to Lekhura gorge took place from Ksani gorge (Zhamuri, Churta) mostly. However, in the first quarter of XIX century the process of Ossetian settlement in the areas of Lekhuri, Medjuda and Pronne was not intensive. The intensity grew mostly from the middle of XIX century and lasted up to 1880.

From the 30s of XIX century separate Ossetian families begin to appear on the right bank of Mtkvari River (Gagmamkhari) on the territory of Shida Kartli, where their migration basically occurred in the second part of XIX century. At this time Ossetians settle in the region of modern Borjomi (Gujareti gorge).

In the beginning of XX century Ossetians moved from mountainous Shida Kartli to Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli.

Entrance and settlement of Ossetians on the Georgian territories have never been peaceful. Restrained in North Caucasus mountain gorges, Ossetians forced their way into Dvaleti and mountainous parts of Shida Kartli. In accordance with historical documents, the local population in Georgian villages, driven to despair as a result of Ossetian assaults, used to desert ancestral homes and lands and settled in the planes, where conditions were favourable, as due to the ferocious attacks of the enemy, foothills of Shida Kartli, along with the planes were facing a real threat of demographic catastrophe.

Existing socio – political conditions in Georgia of the period, helped, in a certain way, the process of Ossetian migration to Dvaleti and mountainous Shida Kartly regions. Georgia, broken up as a result of permanent enemy offences failed to exert control over the main North Caucasus gateway, which led into our country – Kasris Kari and Dariali.

In the following periods (XVIII c), economic conditions in the country deteriorated and demographic situation in Shida Kartli got even worse and the Georgian authorities (Kings, noblemen) encourage and often invited Ossetians to settle on Georgian territories.

In the second part of XVIII and first part of XIX centuries, presence of Ossetian settlers, in the foothills of Shida Kartli, above the first generation, had not been recorded. After spending brief period in the mountainous areas or the foothills, they used to move further to the South; the fact is confirmed by the results of XIX century, population census.

Ossetians having settled in the villages on foothills by the beginning of XIX century undertake a ruthless surge towards the planes, and throughout XIX c. permanent Ossetian migration from Georgian highland villages towards the planes continues. The process found reflection in Georgian historiography and had been referred to as “Chamotsola” – “forceful descent”. Swift movement forward was characteristic feature of Ossetian migrants. Having established in the villages in the planes, in the second part of XIX century, they were soon to move to other settlements in the planes.

Social status of the Ossetian Migrants from Shida Kartli highlands does not speak in the favour of their long time existence in this particular region. According to the XIX century census papers, major part of Didi Liakhvi dwellers had a status of KhiZanian (according to the Georgian historical sources and special studies, they were considered as the people, driven forcefully from their places of residence, having found refuge in another place as peasants. Part of Ossetian KhiZanianans, having migrated to mountainous area of Shida Kartli had became the serfs of Prince Machabeli, while the other remained under the status of khiZanian. KhiZanian status had been maintained by migrant – Ossetians, that arrived from North Caucasus relatively late (second part of XVIII).

Erroneous view in regards to the long term relations between Ossetia and Georgia (Ossetians and Georgians) is based on misleading historical facts, thus, it should be seriously revised and subjected to further thorough study. Statements presented by certain Ossetian authors on the existence of 6.000 – 7.000 families in Georgia by the second part of XVII century, could be used as an example of this misleading information, as the abovementioned fact, is far from reality and points to an artificial increase of the number of Ossetian settlers on Georgian territory. The reality, however is entirely different:: By the end of XVIII century, 2.130 Ossetian families (about 15.000 persons) dwelt on the modern territory of Georgia

Dvaleti is the first place of Ossetian settlement on the historical territory of Georgia. Issues of habitat and ethnic origin of Dvalians are given special attention in the given thesis. Dvalians used to occupy uplands, the territory similar to Pkhovi, Tusheti, Khada, Ckhavati, Gudamakari, Ckhrazma....Dvaleti lay on northern slopes of the main Caucasus Range, although the dividing ridge was situated lower than the uplands, situated to the North from Dvaleti. Dvaleti used to have contacts with the rest of the Georgian territory all around the year through eleven crossings. (Shida Kartli, Racha); As for the link between Dvaleti and North Caucasus, only one crossing - Kasris Kar, was used, and only in Summer period.

Dvaleti was actively included into the system of Georgian statehood whether in Political – economic or cultural – religious spheres. Georgia lost control over Dvaleti only in 1858, as a result of subjection the Terek district to the rule of Metropolis, being under the control of Russia.

It is wrong to refer to Shida Kartli (gorges of Didi and Patara Liakhvi, Ksani and Terek Rrivers) as the territory of Dvaleti and it could be explained by the influence of erroneous comprehension of historical sources and documents. Only the region of Magran – Dvaleti located at the end point of Didi Liakhvi River estuary, is located in Shida Kartli uplands, and includes nine highland settlements. The named formation dates back to the considerably late period (X-XI cc) and represents a result of Dvalian migration from Dvaleti.

Dvaleti is the first region on the Georgian territory that had suffered Ossetian depredations, conducted from the mountains of North Caucasus. The mentioned factor urged Dvalians to migrate to different parts of Georgia (Shida and Kvemo Kartli, Racha, Imereti). First infiltration of Ossetians into Dvaleti is date back to the end of XV century, Migration continued all through XVI –XVII centuries, from the North Caucasus gorge Alagyr. Being caught up in ethnic linguistic environment of migrant Ossetians, the remaining Dvalians had

gone through the process of Ossetinization. The process was gradual and involved several generations. By the end of XVII century the Ossetinization process came to an end, although by the first quarter of XVIII century smaller part of Dvalians, still managed to preserve national identity. Following historical tradition the Ossetian intruders adopted self name of Dvalians.

On the basis of complex study of historical documents, sources, toponimic and anthropological data, it becomes possible to conclude that Dvaleti had always been a Georgian – Kartvelian formation in a political, religious – cultural and ethnic way. Dvalians were the tribes closely related to Zanians, without being exactly similar. Being Kartvelian tribes, they represented an intermediary link between Zanians and Svanis, speaking one of Kartvelian languages (presently non existent) which was similar to Zanian Language (Megrelian). Therefore Dvalians were not Vainakhs nor Ossetians. It should be noted that the close neighbourhood with Vainakhs led to the mutual integration of Dvalians and Vainakhs. Similar processes were characteristic for the major part of Caucasian peoples.

Georgian – Ossetian Linguistic – Ethnic relationships and Linguistic Situation of Ossetians Based in Georgia

Caucasus is a classical geographic region known for the linguistic and ethnic diversity. Apart from the local Ibero – Caucasian language group, other different representatives of language world could be encountered here. Caucasus is populated by the people speaking mountain languages. Ossetian language, as well as Armenian, belongs to the Indo-European group, falling into the subdivision of Iranian language family. .

The Georgian people had long-term relations with Ossetians, residing in North Caucasus before their migration to Georgian territory. The relationship used to be both hostile and friendly at different times.

From XIII – XIV centuries Ossetians become immediate neighbours of Georgians.

In XIV century a separate group of Ossetians made an attempt at settling in Georgia, namely Shida Kartli. Ossetians took advantage of Georgia's weakened state and, supported by Mongols tried to seize the territory. Joint Ossetian – Mongol squads, similar to the police force, were crushed and forced out of Georgia some time later by the King Giorgi V, the Brilliant (1314 – 1346). As the squads were driven out, the Georgian rulers slammed shut both exits from Ossetia to Georgia (Dariali gorge, Kasris kari), putting an end of Ossetian migration for a long period.

Separate cases of Ossetian migration to Dvaleti – historical province of Georgia, located on the Northern slope of Caucasian Range, begins from the end of XV century. The process was

further activated in XVI century and ended in XVII century, with the assimilation of the local Kartvelian tribe of Dvalians by Ossetians. Linguistic – ethnic changes for Dvaleti population had not resulted in separation of the given province from Georgia. Throughout the existence of Georgian Statehood and even after Georgia's colonization by Russia, Dvaleti had remained an integral part of Georgia. (Up to 1858)

The first Ossetian settlements on the modern territory of Georgia appeared in Truso gorge (head reach of Terek River) and Magran – Dvaleti (Didi Liakhvi estuary). Ossetian crossing to the mentioned areas from North Caucasus gorges took place in the middle of XVII century. An impressive number of historical sources prove that in the first part of XVII century there was an abundance of villages in the mountainous parts of Shida Kartli (gorges of Didi and Patara Liakhvi Rivers). Local population moved to the planes leaving behind the area.

In the mountainous areas of Shida Kartli, namely in the head reaches of Didi and Patara Liakhvi, Ossetian migration began from the second part of XVII century. They gradually moved southwards and by the 30s of XVIII century occupied fully the mountainous part of the two abovementioned gorges. Here, in the stated period, Ossetians, resided by the side of remaining Georgian population that had decreased in number considerably.

Ossetians had never lived on Shida Kartli foothills at any period of XVIII century. Their settlements, in the villages of Shida Kartli foot hills began by the end of XVIII century and the beginning of XIX century.

By the end of XVIII century the ultimate sites of Ossetian settlement were (from West to East): Kudaro (Djerjora river estuary), - Gupta (Didi Liakhvi gorge) – upper Atseriskhevi (in the gorge of Patara Liakhvi) – two villages in the upper part of Mudjada gorge) – Zhamura (Ksani River gorge) – Guda (Tetri Aragvi estuary) – Truso (Terek estuary). By the end of XVIII century there were no traces of Ossetians in Lekhura, Medjuda gorges (with the exception of estuaries), major part of Ksani plateau and Pronne River gorges.

By the end of XVIII century and the beginning of XIX century Ossetians penetrate into the major section on the foothills of Patara Liakhvi gorge. From that very period and the first decade of XIX century in particular, an infiltration, i.e. individual settlement of Ossetians began from Shida Kartli plateau into foothills and villages of Shida Kartli planes.

From the first part of XIX century, Ossetian migrants begin to penetrate into the Pronne River gorges (known as Znauri region in the Soviet Era), Medjuda, Lekhura and other settlements of Ksani gorge uplands. Intensive assimilation of these gorges by the ethnic Ossetian individuals mostly took place in the mid XIX century up to 1880ies.

From the 30ies of XIX century, separate Ossetian families appear beyond the Shida Kartli area, mostly Ossetian migration to these regions starts from the second part of XIX century, when the Ossetians settle in Gujareti gorge (Borjomi region). Ossetians from Shida Kartli uplands moved to Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli in the beginning of XX century.

In XVIII century 2180 Ossetian families (about 15 000 persons) lived on the modern territory of Georgia.

About two centuries later, in 1979, as a result of natural increase of population, the number of Ossetians residing in Georgia reached 160 000.

Between 1918 – 1921 Georgia managed to shake of colonial yoke of Russia and reestablished its statehood. In that period, Bolshevist Russian - inspired separatist movement of Ossetians was launched. As a result of the movement, after the establishment of Communist dictatorship in Georgia, and Georgia's reunion with Russian Empire, the Communist Government created Autonomous District, Administrative Unit for Ossetia, on the territory of Georgia's central province – Shida Kartli. For the demarcation of borders with the territorial Unit of Ossetians residing in North Caucasus, the newly formed autonomy was named South Ossetian Autonomous District. The city of Ckhinvali, in which there was not a single Ossetian dweller at the time, was named the capital of the autonomous district. Ckhinvali was populated only by Georgians, Georgian speaking Armenians and the Georgian Jews, for whom the Georgian language was not only the means of communication, but a native language as well. Besides, densely populated Georgian villages had been included into the territory of South Ossetian District. The fact triggered strong protests of the residents of the Georgian villages at the period, however the language issue had become the basis for the protests of the residents. Nedlati village residents, for example, wrote: "We, Nedlati residents, used to be attached to Okona. Presently Okona is subjected to South Ossetia, as a result of which, we are experiencing enormous difficulties, the situation is further aggravated by the fact that official paperwork is conducted in Russian and Ossetian languages, incomprehensible for us." Locals of Georgian origin, from the Dzarcebi village wrote: "Why should we be considered to be within Ossetian borders for the selfdetermination of Nationality." Taking into account the fact that their language is alien and absolutely incomprehensible to us. As for the national majority, the entire part of the region (referring to Tskhinvali region – R.T.), with a minor exception, is populated by the Georgian speaking native Georgians. "

Considering the archive materials, it becomes absolutely clear that the officials of the so called South Ossetia supported the position of Russian language vehemently – on the expense of the state language – Georgian.

From the very day of the formation of South Ossetian Autonomous District the ethnic Ossetians resided outside the Autonomous district. According to the 1989 census 164, 000 Ossetians resided in Georgia, which constituted 3% of the total population. Besides, only 65 000 Ossetians dwelt within the territory of the Autonomous district (66% of the district population), while the remaining 100 000 ethnic Ossetians lived in various parts of Georgia, part of them resided compactly and others were mixed with the Georgian population. A considerable part of ethnic Ossetians resided in Tbilisi, Gori, Kareli, Rustavi....

It is evident that the Ossetians, who migrated to Georgia in XVII – XVIII cc. used to become legal citizens of the country, and a major part of them spoke Georgian – the official state language. Sometimes, Ossetians, having settled sporadically in Georgian villages used to forget their native language, and in similar cases they ascribed themselves to Georgian ethnos. It

should not be forgotten that in that period, everyone, having adopted Christianity, were considered to be ethnic Georgians. As for the Ossetians living compactly, a major part of them used to be bilingual. They, along with their native language, mastered Georgian, under the influence of real circumstances.

For Ossetians, residing in mountainous areas of Georgia, it was essential to maintain contact with the plains, as all the gorges in Georgia were an integral part of the territorial - industrial unit (namely, the highlander was in a vital need for the pastures located in the plains.). As, locally, agricultural products were not produced in sufficient quantity to satisfy the needs of the people throughout the whole year, the highlanders often experienced shortage, thus, they had to keep constant contact with the plain dwellers. Bilateral agricultural relationships determined the need of Ossetians to master the state – Georgian language. The Georgians residing in the areas densely populated by Ossetians, often knew Ossetian language. Ethnographic materials collected in the Georgian – Ossetian contact zone, also prove the fact that quite often, Ossetian children were sent to Georgian villages to master Georgian, which was done on the basis of family ties or baptism. (According to the old Caucasian tradition, a major part of the Georgians residing in bordering villages could speak Ossetian language). Ossetians from uplands were mostly syncretic pagans. As for the Ossetian migrants, scattered throughout the Georgian territory, they were to adopt Christianity upon the demand of the Royal government. Ossetians were eager to do so finding it beneficial. The Royal law restricted marriage between the Georgians and non Christians. Adoption of Christianity made study of Georgians much easier for the Ossetians, as Church services were conducted in Georgian. The Ossetians dwelling in the mountains often sent their children to the families of Georgian Godparents residing in the plains to learn Georgian.

According to the ethnographic data Georgian Ossetian marriages were quite common, particularly in the contact zones, which triggered the establishment of closer links between the two ethnicities and helped to acquire better knowledge of each others languages.

After the migration of Ossetians to the Georgian uplands, the Georgian residents of those areas acquired knowledge of the Ossetian language, while the other part had undergone the linguistic-ethnic assimilation. Up today, the Iluridze Georgians (about 40 families) from the village Doretkari, near Churtis Khevi, Ksani gorge tributary, are bilingual. By the end of XVIIIc and the beginning of XIX c. the Georgians migrated to the plains. The Georgian population remained only in one village. The abandoned dwellings in the mountains, above Doreultkari, were occupied by Ossetians. Here the people used to observe a certain, verbal, marriage law. Georgian men were not allowed to marry the women of the same village, especially those bearing the same family name. The Georgian women, residing below Doretkari, nearer to the plains, refused to marry the men of this particular village as the women of the plains were rarely allowed to marry highlanders. The Iluridze Georgians, having found themselves within the linguistic – ethnic environment of Ossetians were compelled to marry Ossetian women from highland villages, situated above their village. The Ossetian women used to choose Ossetian brides for their sons. Compelled to live under the influence of similar linguistic – ethnic environment, the Iluridze Georgians became bilingual. Apart from the language, Ossetian women introduced their own traditions. The Georgians had

not forgotten native language, they all speak Georgian and consider themselves Georgians, however the family members communicate in Ossetian.

During our visit to the village, the villagers – ethnic Georgians, communicated in Ossetian language (In the 80s of XX century, there was only one Georgian daughter in law, in a village of forty families). Ossetian language, having become almost native for Iluridze, had failed to change their ethnic identity. They all consider themselves Georgians. The fact that the village children attended the Georgian school had probably played an important role in this particular case. Their permanent contacts and relationships with the Georgian population in the planes had also been quite important.

Similar cases are commonly observed in other villages of Ksani gorge. In Nakhidi village, for instance, according to the information, supplied by the witness, “a big number of Psuturi have undergone assimilation – they mostly speak Ossetian” The same could be said about several locals from Odishvili family.

In 1987, the author of these observations made a walking tour around the Ossetian villages in Medjuda gorge. Ossetians settled in the area between the 30 – 80s of XIX century, with the exception of two small Ossetian villages, located in the uppermost part of the gorge. The village located on the verge of the plane in Medjuda gorge is Mejriskhevi. Mejriskhevi village borders with Gromi village, populated by Ossetians. Gromi was located within the territory of the Autonomous district. Back in 1886, Gromi was still populated by Georgians, however, after the migration of Georgians to Mejriskhevi the village was taken over by Ossetians. There are many mixed Ossetian – Georgian families. Most of the residents, residing further up the gorge are Ossetians, with the exception of Isroliskhevi, in which several Georgian families could still be encountered. We had come into contact with many ethnic Ossetians. During our one month trip we had encountered a single, aged Ossetian woman, who could not speak Georgian. All the others had perfect knowledge of Georgian. It should be pointed out, that that Georgian language, recognized by the constitution, has not been taught in any of the schools in the gorge, just as any other school on the entire territory of the South Ossetian Autonomous District. Only the so called Russian – Ossetian schools existed in the area, in which the subjects used to be taught in Ossetian, during the first four years of the education, while after the fourth class all the subjects were taught in Russian, with a couple of additional subjects – Ossetian language and literature. Despite the existing situation, the Ossetians, residing in the gorge, not only spoke Georgian, but could read and write in Georgian. They used to learn Georgian alphabet independently, which was explained by the simple fact that they had to keep up active agricultural - industrial relations mostly with the Georgian population of the planes and not with the residents of South Ossetian Autonomous District.

The situation we encountered within the Ossetian population in Lekhura gorge was very much similar. In general the described situation was common for the entire population of the Autonomous District, with the exception of Java region. Java region used to encompass the mountainous part of Didi Liakhvi gorge. The residents of the area, densely populated by Ossetians, had weaker contacts with the Georgian population. The so called Ossetian – Russian schools, introduced during the Soviet Era, and total disregard to the Georgian language, had triggered the alienation of the area residents towards the Georgian linguistic – ethnic world,

becoming the major reason for the beginning of the Ossetian Separatist movement on the territory of the district, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

As it had been mentioned above, Georgian population was preserved in the uppermost part of Medjuda gorge, although the number of Georgians had decreased during the Soviet Rule. The remaining Georgians, living within the Ossetian linguistic – ethnic environment, are fluent in Ossetian language. Mixed Ossetian – Georgian marriages are common. We had a chance to pay a visit to one of such families. The family name of the hosts was Gengiuri. Head of the family, a man in his sixties, considers himself Georgian and speaks flawless Georgian. The wife and the mother of the host are Ossetians. However his five children have a confused self-comprehension. The first thing that caught our attention was the Ossetian accent in the speech of the children. They pondered over the issue as to which ethnic group they belonged to – Georgian or Ossetian. The daughters tended to think they were Ossetians, as for the young men, neither they felt enthusiastic to claim Georgian origin. One of the young men was about to leave for Russia, to continue his studies. When asked why had he made up his mind to travel that far, he answered that he was not fond of Tbilisi. Later we discovered that his disregard to Tbilisi was based on the fact that he spoke poor Georgian and his writing was just as poor. We learnt that the children went to Ckhinvali Ossetian – Russian school and it affected their ethnic orientation.

Gengiuri family example is not uncommon in the mountainous areas of the Autonomous District..

As for the Ossetians, having found residences in different parts of Georgia, they had always had and still have a good knowledge of Georgian, along with their native Ossetian. The cases when the representatives of Ossetian ethnos consider themselves Georgian are not rare.

Before we close subject on the linguistic situation among the Ossetians residing in Georgia, it would be expedient to cast a glance back to XIX century, in order to review the situation briefly. At the time, the Georgian Press displayed a live interest towards the Ossetian language. From this particular point of view the articles written by S. Mgaloblishvili represent a major interest. Ossetians had never had particular drive for education. While the Georgian society, was interested in opening schools in Ossetian villages. They tried their best to convince the parents in the benefits of education for their children. Russian government used to send Russian teachers to the Ossetian villages. Ossetian children spoke no Russian, they could only speak Georgian and Ossetian. S. Mgaloblishvili noted: “The teachers here shall be either Ossetians or Georgians, as for the Russian teachers they shall be sent the other side of the Range, where Russian and Ossetian are spoken.” Georgian publicists often wrote that the Ossetians living in North Caucasus were subjected to Russification, losing their true identity as a result. While, in Georgia, particular efforts used to be made to preserve the native language of Ossetians and their nationality. N. Tadeozishvili wrote in one of the issues of “Droeba” in 1884 - “On the inner side of the Range, Georgians have enormous influence over Ossetians. Male Ossetians all speak Georgian and among the Ossetians, residing near the Georgian villages, the women and the children also speak Georgian. They not only speak Georgian, but can write and read as well. Ossetians have adopted the Georgian way of life on this side of the mountains to the same extent as the Ossetians follow the Russian way of life beyond the

mountains. They are really proud to be capable of reading and writing in Georgian, the residents of the neighbouring villages readily allow their daughters to marry the neighbours, as mixed marriages are common for them. S. Mgaloblishvili wrote about the relevant arrangements the Georgians had to see to, in order to help the Ossetians to preserve their language and national identity. For this reason he offered to set up Ossetian schools (the other author Grigori Liakhveli, idem Sadzaglishvili) appealed to the readers to protect the Ossetians and their language, believing in the necessity of creating an alphabet for the Ossetian language.

The paper "Cnobis Purceli" also displayed interest towards the Ossetian language. In one of the issues of the paper of 1903, it was noted that nearly all Ossetians in Kudaro knew Georgian due to the common residency and close relationships with Racha and Imereti dwellers. The same paper wrote in 1901: "There does exist a plan to teach the Ossetian children at schools with the Ossetian text books. For which reason, the knowledgeable people have been approached with the request to provide the required manuals. In a short period Ossetian language shall be taught in education centres."

Thus, a brief glance through the XIX century Georgian press is sufficient to become aware of the attention, paid to the issues of Ossetian national identity and the language by the learned circles of the Georgian society. The society made enormous efforts to protect and secure national identity and native language of the migrants.

Attitude of the society and the Georgian government towards the Ossetian language remained similar in the XX century. Ossetians were offered favourable conditions for the development of their language and culture, whether within the borders of the territory of the Autonomous District or outside it. During the last decade, many comparisons had been made in the Press and scientific literature regarding the linguistic – ethnic situation, existing in the South Ossetian Autonomous District, within the territory of Georgia, and North Ossetian Autonomous Republic, within the borders of the Russian Federation. Official paper work and education activities, in North Ossetia were conducted in Russian. What more could be added to the effect: in 1972, the author of the article, participated in conference of student – ethnographers of the Soviet Union, held in the city of Leningrad. North Ossetian students, who also attended the conference could not hide their amazement over the fact that the Georgians, students of Tbilisi University, led conversations, wrote and read in Georgian.

There was and still exists a Pedagogical Institute, in the city of Ckhinvali, Ckhinvali Scientific Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, which pays enormous attention to the study of Ossetian language and literature. Here, along with other important studies conducted by the institute, a dictionary of Ossetian language had been created. Ossetian theatre functions to this day. The Ossetian newspapers and magazines were and still are being published. Radio transmissions are conducted in Ossetian. Between 1990 – 1991 there were 90 Ossetian schools on the territory of South Ossetian Autonomous District. Seven Ossetian schools functioned outside the territory of South Autonomous District, namely: in Lagodekhi, Kareli, Borjomi. In the early 80s the Georgian Government began to open Ossetian schools in the places, densely populated with Ossetians.

It should be also noticed that, in accordance with the data of 1989 census, Ossetian language was recognized official by 64.257 persons out of 65.000 Ossetians residing in South Ossetian Autonomous District. Ossetian language was not regarded native by only 820 ethnic Ossetians (i.e. 1.2 %). The Georgians, at the same time, residing on the territory of the Autonomous District were deprived of the possibility to use freely the state language of Georgia, the Georgian language – in all the spheres of life. During the Soviet Era Ossetians employed great efforts to replace old Georgian toponyms with Ossetian translations of the terms. Ossetians had distorted or replaced many of old Georgian toponyms. They mostly tried to introduce the names of Bolsheviks or Ossetian terrorists.

As it has been mentioned above, in 97 schools in Georgia, education activities were conducted in Ossetian language, while there had never ever existed a single Ossetian school in North Ossetia, part of Russian Federation, from where Ossetians used to migrate to Georgia. Ossetians could only attend Russian schools. Former President Of North Ossetia, A. Galazov, referred to the fact in “Pravda” newspaper (1983, 11/XI): “I feel truly sorry for the youth of my nationality....as they, residing in their own country, feel awkward for being fully ignorant of Ossetian culture. The national youth is deprived of its native language. Until the last year, there existed no school in North Ossetia, that could teach Ossetian language” As for South Ossetian Autonomous District, located within the Georgian territory, its officials had always supported the strengthening of the position of Russian language at the expense of Georgian language. The linguistic situation on the territory of South Ossetian Autonomous District in the 20s of XX century was described by the historian G. Bochoridze. He says: “Georgian language is being suppressed in Georgian villages: written communication used to be conducted in Russian, nowadays it is being conducted in Ossetian – Georgian is fully disregarded. “From 1929, official activities in the courts, presenting evidence and the trial were to be conducted in Ossetian. Earlier, in Akhmagori, in 1928, under Tadeev’s administration, even an appeal or address had to be written either in Ossetian or Russian. Appeals drafted in Georgian were accepted on rare occasions. “Schools for Ossetians and Georgians are seldom opened.” In 1921 – 1924 the Georgian teachers were not paid salaries for six-seven months. Due to the fact many of the teachers were compelled to leave the schools and depart. Soon after, the schools were closed. The population demanded schools, but they were told: “take the children to Ossetian schools, we have no possibility to open schools for you.” “Ossetian language was a compulsory subject in Georgian schools (secondary schools) but Georgian language was banned from Ossetian schools.” “Some Ossetians asked the officials to introduce Georgian language studies in Ossetian schools, as the subject considered necessary, but they used to be refused flatly.”

Finally, we should refer briefly to the contribution of Georgian scientists of XX century, into the study of Ossetian language. It would suffice to mention the scientific works of academician G. Akhvlediani. Under his supervision and editorship, an academic grammar of Ossetian language was published in two volumes.

Thus, the situation in linguistics, after the migration and settlement of Ossetians on Georgian territories, could be divided into three periods.

The first period covers the conditions of the life of Ossetians under the Georgian statehood. Ossetians considered themselves Georgian citizens, similarly to the representatives of other

ethnic groups and they respected the state language of Georgia. The major part of Ossetians had the knowledge of Georgian language. In contact zones of co-existence with Ossetians a major part of Georgians were also fluent in Ossetian. The given situation was a result of industrial-economic and family ties between the Georgians and Ossetians.

From XIX century, after Georgia was turned into a Russian colony, the linguistic situation began to change, due to the active interference of the Russian government. Russia used to impose Russian upon every colony, triggering hostility between the ethnic groups. Russian government managed to turn Russian into the second language for the Ossetians, replacing Georgian.

The XIX century, its second part in particular, had become the beginning of transition to Russian language for the major part of Ossetians. Georgian statesmen made titanic efforts to help the Ossetians, the native Ossetian language and ethnic identity. However, despite the obstacles, many Ossetians knew Georgian language in XIX century which was determined by practical requirements.

The third period – includes the Soviet Era, when the Bolshevik government had a final victory over the alienation of Ossetians and Georgians. Under the totalitarian conditions of Russian based education, a major part of Ossetian ethnos had no knowledge of Georgian language any more. However, a part of Ossetians, mostly the learned people, still knew and read in Georgian, although stopped to use it intentionally.

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Interview given to radio “Imedi” correspondent (13.07.2004)

Question: the first question addresses the resolution adopted recently by the Russian Duma, The resolution points to the fact that, back in 1773 Ossetia made an appeal to Russian Empire to allow its integration into the Russian state. Which Ossetia they refer to? Could they be referring to modern Ckhinvali region?

Answer: It could be said definitely that the Resolution or Decree adopted by Duma is absolutely incompetent and is a consequence of total ignorance, in every possible meaning of the word; The given statement is made on the grounds of general falsification and distortion of historical documents and sources. The resolution point to the fact that allegedly, Ossetia, both South and the North, had always been a whole country, which back in 1774, undivided, North and South – Ossetias, was integrated into the Russian Empire. While in reality, an entirely different had occurred. In 1774, Kuchuk – Kainarji Treaty was signed between Russia and Turkey. In accordance with the agreement Kabardin neutrality was declared. In the North Caucasus, Ossetians occupied the four gorges (Tagauri, Alagiri, Kurtauli, Digori). The abovementioned Ossetian gorges were subjected to Kabardin . There is no reference to Ossetians in the Agreement. There could not have been any reference to Ossetia, as similar territorial- political entity had never ever existed. Due to the declaration of Kabardin neutrality, the Ossetian communities, i.e. the gorges where their residences had been located, were formally subjected to Russia, but only formally. In reality Ossetian communities had become part of the Russian empire several years later. In October 1774, after the adoption of Kuchuk – Kainarji Treaty. Ossetians sent ambassadors, a group, consisting of the representatives of about twenty men, to the Astrakhan Governor, with an appeal to subject them to the Russian protectorate. Having secured the status of Russia’s subjects, the single objective Ossetians were anxious to attain was to get an easy access to the planes of Caucasus, occupied by the Kabardin, who kept Ossetians off from their territories. However, it was not an entire, modern North Caucasus that was accepted into the Russian Empire (we have particularly mentioned the four mountainous gorges of North Ossetia, as at the time, Ossetians were not residing in foothills and planes, they were located, or more accurately trapped, in mountain gorges of Digori, Alagiri, Tagauri and Kurtauly) but only three gorges , i.e. an Eastern part. As for the Western, mountainous part of North Ossetia – Digori gorge, it had not been included within the borders of Russian empire at the time. It was only natural, as Digori Ossetians were followers of Islam. Nor was included the southern part of present day North Ossetia, historic – ethnographic region of Georgia Dvaleti, being indispensable part of Georgia throughout its history (approximately 3.581 sq. kilometers). However, as the territory belonging to Kartli and Kakheti kingdom, Dvaleti had also been attached to Russia in 1801.

As for the so called South Ossetia, it had always been Northern part of Shida Kartli, were Georgian princedoms used to be located. The present term did not exist at the time, or any other name to denote the territory. At that particular period Ossetians resided only in the extreme Northern, mountainous areas of Shida Kartli, by the estuaries the Rivers Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, Ksani and Terek. Whilst, in Pronne (the so called Znauri region)

Medjuda and Ksani gorges, with the exception of Zhamuri, there was no trace of Ossetians, up to the late XVIII century. By the late XVIII century Ossetian migration to mountainous areas and certain parts of Shida Kartli planes begins. Ossetian migration to Pronne River gorges (Znauri region in Soviet period) begins in the 30s of XIX century and continues up to the 80s of the same century. The same could be said about the Medjuda gorge. The village of Gromi, adjacent to Mejvriskhevi, and situated right in uppermost part of the gorge (used to be a part of Ckhinvali region) was totally populated by Georgians by 1886. The Georgians began to move down to the planes by the end of XVIII century, mostly to mejvriskhevi village. Ossetians began to replace Georgians in the places of their places of habitation. They arrived at the territories from the upper parts of Patara Liakhvi gorges, between the 30 – 60s of XIX century. As for Lekhura gorge, only a small Ossetian village (Qvitkiri) was situated in its ultimate upper part, by the late XVIII century. In the 30 – 80s of XIX century, Ossetian migration from the mountains to the given place gained momentum. Migration of Georgians from the places of their former locations to the planes usually was a result of frequent raids carried out by the mountain dwelling Ossetians. They plundered the villages and took hostages. It should also be mentioned here that, all the oykonoms (names of the villages) of the abovementioned gorge, are purely Georgian toponyms, intentionally altered during the Soviet Era, namely “Gromi” was changed into “Grom”, etc.

Question: When did the term “South Ossetia” appeared first?

Answer: There is no reference to the term in Georgian historical sources and documents. There just could not have been, as Ossetians, in the so called South Ossetia of Soviet Era, resided only in uppermost Northern part from late XVIII century, and the Georgians would least likely had called the territory Ossetia, and even more unlikely South Ossetia. When in XVIII century, the Georgian Rulers, made descriptions of multiple historic – ethnographic regions of Georgia, such as Pshavi, Khevsureti, Mtiuleti, Gudamakari etc, the territory, populated by Ossetians was never denoted as “Ossetia” or “South Ossetia”, they were simply referred to as “Our Ossetians” (“Osni Chvenni”). It would have been absurd to call the abovementioned territory “South Ossetia” as it had always been an integral part of Shida Kartli. Historically, the territory of the so called South Ossetia, used to be a domain of several Georgian princely families, namely, the Machabeli, Ksani Eristavis, Amilahvaris, Kherkheulidze, Davitashvili, Bagrationis. As for Dvaleti and Magran – Dvaleti (Magran Dvaleti included the entity of the nine highland villages, located in the upper part of the Bigger Liakhvi gorge), initially they used to be owned by the treasury (owned by the King), later certain areas had been passed over as a possession to Ksani Eristavis, the Machabeli, Racha Eristavis. Dvaleti, similarly to Pshavi, Khevsureti, and Tusheti was ruled by the King’s officials – Mouravis (Giorgi Saakadze was a Dvalian Mouravi). During the Soviet Era certain historic – ethnographic parts of Upper Imereti (Zemo Imereti) and Racha were ceded to the so called South Ossetia. In Kudaro, which had always been and still is an integral part of Racha, every village has transparent Georgian names.

“South Ossetia” as a term was first used in the Russian Press in 1830s. After an impressive gap, the term was used again twice in 1840s. Since then, the term had been secured in the Russian documents. Thus, it surely will become a disappointment for the Russian MPs. They shall have to consult the books printed in Moscow, Leningrad and even Orjonikidze (instead

of feeding themselves on myths, created by Ossetians. From the books they will learn that South Ossetia, does not exist as an entity, and the term had been artificially coined. Neither North Ossetian Administrative (political) entity had ever existed, even after 1774, when they got themselves subjected to Russia. They had never had a king or principal, and they had always led an isolated life in northern gorges.

Question: When did Ossetians appear on the Georgian territory? What kind of relations we've had historically?

Answer: Before answering your question I would like to inform you that modern International Law, trying to solve the problem of Georgian - Ossetian conflict, is not particularly concerned about history. However, as Russian legislators put forward the given issue, submitting, in support of the theory falsified historical data and myths, we believe that their assault should not be left unanswered. Otherwise, there would not have been much talks about history. But, when the history, the past of your country, is rudely twisted and the historical territories are being misappropriated, keeping silence and stay indifferent equals treachery.

Now let's get back to the question – when did Ossetians appeared first in Georgia. Ossetian Ethnos, Ossetian language belongs to North Iranian group of languages. Historians assume that Alans were the ancestors of Ossetians (Ossetians had never been familiar with ethnonym “Alan” neither as exo-ethnonym nor as endo – ethnonym. Ossetians had always assumed the names of the gorges they had resided in.) Some historians believe that Sarmatians are the ancestors of Ossetians. However, Ossetians, consider themselves the descendants of Scythians. (The assumption is made by historians, but Ossetians have no memories regarding the issue). The initial place of the spread of this Iran spoken people, tribes, was modern territory of Central Asia, i.e. territories east to Caspian Sea. On the verge of Old and New Eras they migrated to Volga River delta and led nomadic life in the steppes of modern South Russia, between the Northern section of Volga – Caspian plane and Azov Sea. They'd never been landowners, they lived in steppes, as nomads. Ammianus Marcellus confirms that Alans lived in carts, as they had no houses. In the IV century A.D. Allans, migrating through South Russian steppes were assaulted by the Huns from Mongolia and neighbouring territory China. The Huns exterminated major part of Alans, i.e. linguistic ancestors of Ossetians and took a number of them to Europe as they had used to lead similar life style. Alans, along with the Huns, mixed with the different peoples populating Europe. However, a part of surviving Alans moved further to the South, to the planes of North Caucasus and centuries later in V-VI cc. formed an Early Class State. (According to the data provided by Procopius, Byzantine historian, in V-Vi centuries Dariali gorge is still free of Alanian domination, (see A.V.Gadlo, Ethnic History of North Caucasus IV – X cc. 1979, p.98) which lasted up to XIII century, up to the Mongol invasion. This was the state and the Ossetians the people Georgia used to have relations with in Middle Ages. As for the four Ossetian gorges mentioned above (Tagauri, Alagiri, Kurtauli and Digori), where Ossetians settled by 1774, they migrated to the North Caucasus planes after the Mongol assaults. Migration of Ossetians to the planes and mountains of North Caucasus was accomplished in waves, i.e. several advances. Here they got mixed with the local Caucasians, which in “Kartlis Ckhovrebs” (“Life of Kartli”) are referred to as Kavkasianni – the Caucasians.

Factually a new ethnos had been formed, a new ethnic unit of Ossetians. They are not an absolutely identical ethnic unit of Alans, they are a mixture of local Caucasians and North Iranian migrants. Migration of North Iranian ancestors of the Ossetians to the mountains of North Caucasus took place in the period of Tamerlane invasions. Ossetians were trapped in the mountains first by Tamerlane and then Kabardin feudals, who gave them no opportunity to occupy their residential areas in the plains. Their number increased naturally. Being unable to procure enough food for themselves in the mountains, and deprived of the possibility to return to the North Caucasus plains, where centuries before, they used to have a state formation, Ossetians made a move in the direction of Georgia. The first, serious attempt at migration was undertaken by late XIII century. At the time Ossetians seized Gori. Their military units served as Police squads of Mongols. Gori remained in the hands of occupants for three months, but Giorgi the Brilliant crushed their forces, drove them out of North Caucasus and slammed and secured all the passages leading to Georgia, including Dariali gorge and Kasris Kari..

The next intrusion of Ossetians into the historical territory of Georgia, namely Dvaleti province, occurred in XVI century. Presently Dvaleti is not a part of Georgian territory. In 1858 the government of Russian ceded the territory, belonging to Gori region of Tbilisi Province, to Terek Province. Consequently, the historical territory of Georgia - Dvaleti was missappropriated by the Russian state. Thus, when our Russian friends put forward any their claims, they should keep in mind a simple fact that it is our side that has every right to file claims. The first Ossetian migration to the present day historical territory occurred in the middle of XVII century. From the documents of the 40s of XVII century, it becomes evident that Georgians still lived in Upper Java at the time. The document reads that, Upper Java was "depopulated by Ossetians", which points to the fact that Upper Java was left desolate due to the Ossetian raids. Among the victims of those raids the reference is made to someone, bearing Dzagnidze name. (Georgian family name). The document is drafted by the clergyman Epeniashvili Simon, and is verified by a Loma Gudjashvili etc. Thus the Liakhvi gorge was a historic territory of Georgia, and Ossetian migration to the area occurs in XVII century, from XVIII century, they establish themselves also in foothills and planes of Kartli.

Question: To what extent Ossetians were integrated into the Georgian state? As far as we know from the Georgian history, Ossetians had often participated in the battles led by our country, i. e. Ossetian squads had often been in the military service of the Georgian Kings.

Answer: The Georgian Kings commanded the services of Ossetian warbands, even back in early Middle Ages and also in later periods. They, as a rule, used to be mercenaries, recruited by the Kings. As for the Ossetians settlers, distributed on Georgian territory from mid XVII century, they had all been integrated within the Georgian ethnic world. They all spoke Georgian and considered themselves an integral part of the state. These relations were undermined only under the baleful influence of Russian Empire. Not long ago there used to be quite a big number of mixed families. Baptismal ties were of greatest importance. Highland Ossetians often asked the Georgians residing in the plains to become baptize their children. Pragmatic interest also used to become the basis of relationships sometimes. Georgians had never discriminated against Ossetians. Confrontation had been provoked recently. Certain instances of hostility towards the Ossetian population, living outside the so called South Ossetian Autonomous District had occurred, unfortunately. Prejudice made them seek refuge elsewhere. Simultaneously several thousand Georgians were compelled to leave the territory

of the so called South Ossetia. Ossetians, from various parts of Georgia had moved to Ckhinvali and occupied the homes of Georgians. I should like to mention one particular interview I've watched on one of the Georgian TV channels recently. The program addressed the issues of elections to the Parliament of the so called South Ossetia, A good looking young woman, who as it turned out, had Georgian mother, said in perfect Georgian: "I must be grateful to Georgians, as they made me understand that I was Ossetian." My feelings were deeply hurt. By the way, Georgian learned society had made enormous efforts for the preservation of Ossetian language and culture back in XIX century. They tried to open Ossetian schools. Articles published by Sophrom Mgaloblishvili could be presented as a good example to this. Those articles, documents and materials from the Georgian Press had been compiled in a separate book. The book clearly points to the attention the Georgians displayed towards Ossetians, to protect their language and ethnic identity.

Question: Thank you very much indeed batono Roland. I would like to express the hope that co- existence with Ossetians shall be possible in future.

Answer: By all means. There is no other way. If we want to form the Georgian State and a civil society in Georgia, discrimination between the Georgians and representatives of other ethnic groups residing in Georgia is unacceptable. Georgians had always been famous for their tolerant attitude towards others and we must hope that there shall be no confrontations in future. Peaceful co-existence and development of cultures of all the peoples living in our country is absolutely necessary for the creation of a strong state. As for the Ossetians they must remember the time when they co-existed with Georgians in peace and total understanding. They should decide for themselves who shall guarantee better opportunities for further development of their language and culture – Georgia or Russia.

Once Again On Ethnic Identity of Dvalians

The author of the given monograph on issues of Dvalians and Dvaleti ("On ethnic origin of Dvalians") dedicates the first part to the issues of Ossetian migrations to Georgia. We shall not refer to the detailed view on Dvalians and Dvaleti, existing in Georgian historiography. We shall mention briefly that one of the mountainous regions of Georgia – Dvaleti, used to be an integral part of the country, whether from the political, economic or social points of view. It used to be a mountainous province of Georgia, similar to Pkhovi, Tusheti, Mtiuleti, Gudamakari or Khevi. Dvalians, like others, took active part in public, cultural and religious life of the Georgian state. It should be pointed out that Russia annexed Georgia in 1801 along with Dvaleti. In 1858, the metropolis detached Dvaleti from Georgia in an administrative way (from Tbilisi Province), and attached it to Tersky district of Russia. Similar to other Georgian areas, ethnic replacement of population had occurred in Dvaleti in late Middle Ages. The places of residence of the Georgian – Kartvelian ethnic unity, driven out of Dvaleti, was assumed by Iran spoken Osetians from North Caucasus. Forcible ejection of Dvalians from the ancestral lands began in the second part of XV century. As a result of incursions and violence of Ossetians, this province of highland Georgia was totally abandoned. Dvalians would settle in Racha, Imereti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe. Remaining part of Dvalians, having chosen to stay in the province was gradually assimilated into the environment of

migrant Ossetians. Settlement of Ossetians in Dvaleti began from late XV century and ended in XVI century. In XVII century ethnic replacement of Dvaleti population had already been realized, but as it seems, a part of Dvalians, by the time, still managed to keep their ethnic identity, as in mountains, unlike the planes, cultural ethnic assimilation is rather difficult to realize. Ossetians moved to Dvaleti from Alagiri gorge (as well as Shida Kartli highlands) and their migration lasted up to 70 – 80s of XVIII century. It should not be forgotten that Ossetian ethnos, misappropriated the ethnonym of the local population – Dvali (“tuali” in Ossetian), having turned it into their own. Similar cases are not rare in the world of Ethnohistory.

Several observations have been made by scientists regarding the ethnic origin of Dvalians, but before acquainting you with these observations, we would like to refer to the well familiar assertion by Vakhushti Bagrationi, pointing out that – “the language they speak is old, Dvalian, but presently they use Ossetian as if it were their native tongue”. V. Gamrrekeli regarded Dvalians Vainakhs, Kartvelian Vainakhs to be more exact. V. Gamrrekeli believed that Kartization of Dvalians had to have occurred in VII century, when Kartlian population, fatigued by the Arab rule had migrated to different direction. The author later, changed his views, and in the article published in Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, recognized Dvalians as Kartvelian tribes, namely Zanians. V. Abaev and N. Volkova, considered Dvalians the representatives of Ibero - Caucasian language group. At the same the Russian ethnographer dated the Iranization of Dvalians by VI – VII centuries. According to one of the hypothesis Dvalians were regarde to be Svanians, speaking Svanian language. Much earlier, we also supported the mentioned point of view, expressing our assumptions in private talks with the colleagues. But while dealing with the problem, and having done further research of the existing materials, we reached the conclusion that the views, expressed by V. Gamrrekeli in his encyclopedia article, regarding the Zanian origin of Dvalians, was well grounded. Although, we arrived at the conclusion, that the origin of Dvalians and Zanians was not exactly identical. They represented one of the Kartvelian languages, which occupied the place between Zanian and Svani languages. However Dvalian language was nearer to Zanian language. An article, written by D. Gvritshvili, which was the first work in Georgian scientific literature that deflated the Ossetian origin of Dvalians. As for

Ossetian authors, with the exception of B. Abaev and G. Gogoshvili, they of course make sweeping statements regarding the sameness of Dvalians and Ossetians. Although, in accordance with every Ossetian chronicles, the Ossetian migration occurred much later. After a thorough study of Ossetian language and toponyms, V. Abaev places Dvalians among the Ibero – Caucasian tribes. From Georgian authors, the last to address the issue of Dvalian origin was B. Gamkrelidze, who arrived at the conclusion that “Dvaleti, from the ancient times, culturally, and administratively had always been an integral part of the Georgian world. Certain materials presented by the author prove our assumptions. The most important is the fact that the given author, at particular time, had recorded ethnographic material of major importance, dealing with Ossetian migration their settlement and local family names. Here is one of the written notes: “Earlier the Greek used to live here (in Dvalet. R.T.), then the Georgians. Georgians drove out the Greek, when the Ossetians subjected themselves to Georgians. After that Ossetians from Mizuri arrived, when the Mongols forced entry into the Caucasus. They fled from the places of their residence and found refuge in these parts.” It is logical to assume that under the Greek, the author infers bears in mind the West – Georgian element, as it is an acknowledged fact that from the religious point of view, West Georgia and

a part of Dvaleti, bordering with Racha were subjected to Greece up to IX century. It is evident that Dvaleti, together with West Georgia, got rid of the Greek (Byzantine) Church yoke and the Georgian Church, due to natural tendency had paved its way to the area. It is the most logical explanation of the given narrative.

Drawing attention to extra important source for scientific deliberation, proving that Dvaleti used to be a Georgian state whether culturally or historically, is another objective of the given article. It could be possible that Dvalians, used Dvalian language as a convenience language, similar to Svanian, Megrelian or Tsova-Tushi languages, but from cultural – historical point of view, they were Georgians and the Georgian language and script used to be considered principal. The matter involves written messages on the Gospel of XIV – XV century, made in Nuskha – Khucur (Ecclesiastical scrypt, meant for use by priests), kept in 1920s in the Saint George Church, Sojanis Kari in Oni. The written notes belong to the same late period. E. Takaishvili wrote about the Gospel under the question: “It is written on a parchment, in two columns, in Nuskah – Khucuri of XIV – XV centuries. Title and the capital letters are printed in cinnabar. The book cover is wooden and covered with leather, the wood is broken. The manuscript is appended by the table of the contents. There is an inscription, made in red ink in one of the places of the context list, which reads: “Have a mercy upon the humble Giorgi, interpreter of the Gospel”. Thus the Gospel is edited by Giorgi Mtatsmindeli”. There are several inscriptions on the Gospel. One of them is regarded most important. Before bringing it to your attention we would like to demonstrate two other inscriptions. In the end of the Gospel of Luke, the scribe had written: “May the God bestow all the heavenly mercy upon Nikoloz, scribe of the book). That who utters (forgiveness(shall be forgiven by the God! God knows that there is no other similar Gospel in Kartli, and there is no other, as whole as this”. For the good of the (book) I toiled for two years and verified and scribed for the good of the Georgian Gospels”. In the end of Gospel of Mathew, also in Khucuri, the following inscription had been made: “The gospel of Mathew had been taken by Tsulukidze, when Eristavi took hold of the Tsemi Fortress, I, Lela daughter of Jibriashvili saved it. “ All the abovesaid speaks for the value of the Gospel. The inscription made in the end of Gospel of Mark, in Khucuri, is most important to us and it reads: “X. During the Tatar invasion, Guda icons of St, Mary and the books were lost in Bercikhe; The gospel was uncovered by Khorauli. May he be blessed by God, and his mother and father too. Parukhauri sent it (the book) to his mother in Dvaleti, to be sold, but Gvichishvili took it away. My Lord! Have mercy upon the soul of Gvichishvili Kvirikai (and also) upon the soul of his mother and father, Amen! And those who dare to take it away from the Church of Holly Virgin, may be cursed by The Father and the Son and the Holly Spirit and the Saint Mother of God and the Blessed Gospel, and may their soul be castigated! Those who dare to misuse it (for ulterior motives) shall be cursed.

Thus, we possess an important historic source, which proves the fact that Dvaleti was a Georgian territory, with the Georgian Ecclesiastic language, where the Georgian Gospel was in demand and were there was someone who was eager to get hold of a Georgian Gospel. Before getting back to the given issue below, we find it necessary to mention that Guda (Juda), cited in the inscriptions is not the Mtiuleti Guda, and in this particular case, the reference is made to the Racha village of Guda, which in the following period and up to present is called Gunda (Junda). Vakhushti Bagrationi, in his atlas, placed Gunda in Djedjori gorge, to the South from Pipiletti. In 1886, Guda (Gunda) was included into the community of Bajiskhevi villages (the villages Bajiskhevi, Psori, Tskhmori and Chordi were also included into the same community),

where 23 families resided (242 persons). According to the data of 1904, only two families (family names).resided in Guda (Gunda): the Gociridze (ten families) and Sabanadze (11 families). According to the confessional book of 1843 the Gotsiridze and Sabanadze are mentioned among the congregation members of Tskhimori Archangel Church. The mentioned Gospel belonged to the Church of Holly Mother of God of Racha village of Guda (Gunda). It becomes clear from the inscription that the Gospel, due to the external reasons, such as “Tatroba” (Tatar invasion), was kept in Bercikhe, along with other books and the icons. However they were not well secured. The items had been stolen and scattered. It has to be established to which Bercikhe the reference is made to. Where was it located? It also has to be established which of the Moslem invasions is “Tatroba” implied, whether it occurred in West Georgia or Racha? In accordance with the present data, we failed to locate Bercikhe in Racha. It could be assumed that Bercikhe used to be located somewhere in the upper area of Pronne River gorges. It is proved by the fact that the Gospel was found by the Khorauli family representative. Khorauli (or Kharauli) resided in the Pronne river gorge in the village of Beqmari. Gorges of Pronne and Djedjora Rivers are separated only by a narrow ravine of Kvirila River. Historiographically, we know of the two Bercikhes, one in the upper part of Ksani River gorge – in Zhamuri and the other – in Imereti, in Qvevruli gorge. Vakhushti confirms that: Qvevrula gorge falls into Dzevrula above the hollow. It flows to the South between Okriba – Mukhuri. This is where Bercikhe is located, solid construction on the rock. Tkibuli gorge also merges with Dzevrula in the upper part of the same gorge. Zhamura Bercikhe located in Ksani gorge is also mentioned in folk poetry. One of Mtiuletian verses or sayings, titled “Khoreshnuli” refers to it: “While marching through Khoreshani we heard the toll of Zhamuri Bercikhe...”

If fortress, bearing the name of Bercikhe had not been located in Racha or Pronne River gorge, the fortress, mentioned in inscriptions, is Bercikhe, located in Kvevrula, as it used to control the crossings leading to Racha. As for “Tatroba”, it has to be the reference to devastating raids of Tamerlane. It is known that during his eighth invasion of 1403, he marched into West Georgia and ravaged it, plundering 700 populated areas, destroying crops and monasteries.

After being in the possession of the Khorauli (Kharauliands) the Gospel changed hands and became owned by a member of Parkhauri family, who later sends it to his mother in Dvaleti with the intention to trade it. However the Gospel had been recovered by Kvirika Gvichishvili (resident of Racha or Shida Kartli highlans). He recovers the Gospel from the messenger and returns it to the owner. We find the fact of sending the Gospel to Dvaleti, where it had to be sold most interesting. It is clear that there was a great demand for the Georgian Gospel in Dvaleti, where in XV century, Church services were conducted in Georgian; Dvalians used to read the Gospel in Georgian, and ecclesiastic studies were also conducted in Georgian. It points to the fact that Ossetian migrants had not been there yet in XV century and that their raids had not yet begun, as there would have been no time for the purchase of the Gospel during the war. Thus, in XV century, Dvaleti still remained a Georgian territory, whether culturally or historically, with deep rooted Christian traditions. Presumably, the buyer had to be a local nobleman or a clergyman.

The inscription is also important to prove that the mentioned Anthroponym Parukhauri, is a Georgian family name. The Parukhauri were Dvalians. The Parukhauri family representatives,

on a temporary or permanent basis, migrated from Dvaleti to Racha, or Pronne river gorge in Shida Kartli. The family name is formed by adding ur (ul) suffix, characteristic for Highland family names. Bearers of family names like Khaduri, Chipchiuri, Biguli, Tvauro, Chochouri (same Chochishvili), Begheluri, Gudiauri, Baghauri, Gergauli, Tabauri, Kherkheulidze, Kesauri, also: Bigani (Biganishvili), Khabareli, Khetereli, Khachidze (former Khachiuri) were all of Dvalian origin. The descendants of Khetagis, migrants from Kabardin also form their name by adding – ur suffix (Khetaguri), as it could not have been formed otherwise. Within the Georgian linguistic - ethnic environment, the family name is formed only with the adding of Georgian suffix. As for the root of the mentioned family name (Parukha –ul –i), it is an old Jewish name Baruk (Barukh) meaning - the blessed, particularly widespread in Georgian Christian world. Parukh is a phonetic version of Barukh, Barukha. In Georgian “b” (b) is often transformed into into “p” (f) and vice versa. In Svaneti the form Baruk is most common. Parukh (Parukhia) is more common for Megrelia – it is a common, frequently used male name (which also points to the closeness of Dvaleti with Zanian world). For instance, an inscription of 1611, existing on Illori icon of St. George reads: “In Zugdidi, during the hunt, the horses of noblemen (Manuchar) and Goshadze Parukhia clashed into each other at a high speed, the horse collapsed and died on the spot.” It should be mentioned that Parukhashvili resided in Kartli and Kakheti in XVII – XVIII centuries. The fact that they were descendants of Dvalian Parukhauri shall not be ruled out. Presently the names Parukhauri and Parukhashvili are no more encountered..

Thus, Dvaleti, in XV century is still a Georgian region. Ossetian ethnos had not yet occupied the area and de-ethnization of the place had not begun yet. We shall repeat the abovesaid and state that migration of Ossetians to Dvaleti had occurred mostly in XVI century. By the XVII century, Dvaleti was totally occupied by the Ossetian ethnos, although several Dvalian settlements still remained in the area. In one of the documents dated by 1601, Dvaleti is already being identified as Ossetia. In addition, from XVII century, the Georgian rulers were compelled to aim their swords at Dvaleti, as a result of the change of the Ethnos. “In 1601, Imereti King Rostom, subjected entire Dvaleti, Ossetia to his rule, taking hold of the fortresses and settlements.” We also know about the raid, carried out by Dvaletian Mouravi Giorgi Saakadze, against Dvaleti.: “Dvalians failed to pay duty, Mouravi arrived with the soldiers and castigated the defiants, after which they reassumed paying duties and he returned to Kartli”. Vakhtang V also intended to assault Dvaleti: “Dvalians refused to pay the duty to the King again. He approached Ckhinvali with his soldiers and was ready to attack Ossetia. Dvalians became aware of the King’s intentions and got frightened. Their leader arrived to Ckhinvali and paid the duty so they complied as before.” Nevertheless, from XVIII century, the Georgian documents and sources made a strict differentiation between Dvaleti and Ossetia. It should also pointed out, that having settled in Dvaleti, Ossetians, among whom resided assimilated Dvalians, still were regarded Dvalians by the Georgians.

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Regarding the Ethnic History of Central Caucasus

The Caucasus is noted for ethnic and linguistic diversity. The situation had been similar during each period of its history. However, linguistic – Ethnic composition of the Caucasus had not been invariable. It used to change in the plains, foothills or highlands. Demographic processes, taking place in the world, had an effect upon the Caucasus as well. The arriving ethnic

communities had always co-existed and still reside side by side with the local Caucasian population. There is quite a number of local ethnoses, that had not lived up to present period. Part of them had been assimilated by the migrant Turkish speaking and Iran speaking ethnic elements, while the others had blended into each other.

In this particular case, Central Caucasus and the Dvalians, residing here within a certain period and having stopped their existence, as a result of assimilation with the Iran speaking migrants – Ossetians, represent a matter of our interest (Gamrekeli, 1961; Topchishvili, 1997; Gamkrelidze, 1998).

Dvalians, similar to other highlanders of Georgia, participated in the creation of all Georgian culture throughout the centuries. From the early days of the creation of Georgian Statehood, Dvaleti had always been an integral part of Georgia. The question of Dvalian origin and their link with other, non- Georgian, ethnic world had never been raised by the Georgian scientists. However, non-Georgian scientists, namely Ossetians, link them with the Ossetian ethnic element, with an attempt to increase the date of their presence in the Caucasus, and Georgia. The issue had stretched to the extent of baptizing this particular area of mountainous Georgia and bordering Georgian lands as Central Ossetgia, as claimed by Ossetian ethnographer B. Kaloev. Georgian scientists, D. Gvritishvili, V. Gamrekeli, R. Topchishvili, V.V. Itonishvili, B. Gamkrelidze had dedicated their works to the study of issue of Dvalian origin. We shall not go over the facts and observations put forward by the mentioned authors, as those who are interested in the issue, can always get acquainted with the analysis in the relevant works. From Ossetian V. Abayev and G. Togoshvili are the authors who do not consider Dvalians Ossetians. In our opinion Dvalians were one of the Georgian tribes, and spoke presently extinct Kartvelian language, which lay between the Zanian and Svani languages, though it used to be closer to Zanian language. We believe that the not all the sources and documents proving Georgian origin of Dvalians had been uncovered yet. At present, the historical source that had been discovered recently (an inscription made on the XV Gospel, at the same period), clearly points to the fact that Dvaleti, ethnically, culturally and historically used to be a Georgian region; The Dvalians were an integral part of public culture, political, religious and spiritual life of the country; The names and family names of Dvalians were similar to those residing in highlands of East Georgia (R. Topchishvili, 1999).

Lately, our attention had been drawn to the monuments of material culture of North Caucasus, which are closely connected with spiritual culture. The matter of our interest lies in the crypts, above ground burial constructions. Apart from the crypts, located above the ground, there also could be encountered semi above ground and sub-terranean crypts. Above ground crypts were mostly characteristic for Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ossetia, Balkaria and Karachai. Thus above ground burial constructions belong to the three ethnic-linguistic communities, native Caucasian speaking population – Chechens and Ingushs, Iran speaking Ossetians and Turkish speaking Karachai and Balkarians. The abovementioned monuments of material culture, naturally had belonged to one of these ethnic-linguistic communities, and later became characteristic for other peoples as well.

It should be pointed out that the area of the distribution of the above ground crypts is restricted to mountainous part of the North Caucasus. In the planes and foothills similar crypts

are not encountered. They could not have been characteristic for the planes, as the body, under the natural geographic conditions of the mountains, becomes mummified. While the mummification under the conditions existing in the planes, is impossible. It should also be made clear that the scientists set apart three types of crypts: a) prolonged construction with double sloped roofing; b) square constructions with a pyramidal roof and c) circular constructions with the conic roofing. Above ground constructions of the first two types had been covered with slates. Besides the prolonged double sloped construction of the crypts, remind us the Christian chapels of early feudal era, while the square ones, also covered with slate – similar to military fortresses with the cut off tops, are characteristic for Chechnya and Ingushetia. All the crypts have two or three creep-holes, through which the dead were carried into the crypt. Inside the crypts there were arranged wooden or stone ledges, where the dead used to be placed. (Kokyev, 1928; Mizyev, 1970; Markovin, 1978).

Above ground burial constructions in North Caucasus, were mostly family crypts. Chechens and the Ingush regarded the absence of a crypt a sign of low origin. When the girls and the young men were intended to be married, in the first place, the families used to find out whether the family of the future relatives possessed the family crypt, and in case of its non-existence the wedding was to take place. The Ingush even had a saying: A man needs a fortress while alive and a crypt after the death. The Vainakhs referred to the above ground crypts as “Kash”, which means – “Sunny grave”. We shall not draw your attention to the attitudes expressed in the scientific – literary works, regarding the reasons that determined the existence of above ground crypts, mentioning only that they contradict Christian norms, and that the Christian Church contested the custom. Part of the scientists considers the crypts a local, Caucasian phenomenon. However, the others connect their appearance with the Iran speaking Ossetians, which does not hold water. Certain scientists claim that above ground and semi above ground crypts had emerged before the era of the construction of Christian temples and residential towers. V. Markovin and E. Alekseeva date the crypt construction phenomenon, in the Caucasus, to the pre-Alanian period. It is pointed out in the scientific literature that the crypts of pre-Mongol period bear the similarity, both from the construction point of view and typologically, which proves the fact that the representatives of a single ethnic community or related ethnoses resided on the territories of existence of the mentioned monuments of material culture.

Russian author L. Nechayeva, connects the custom of burial in the burial constructions with Alans. She considers Caucasian catacomb crypts and above ground burial constructions characteristic of Alan ethnicity. According to L. Nechayeva, burial in catacombs and above ground tombs of pre - Mongol period, coincide with the territory of the spread of Alans and in author’s opinion, prove the existence of multitudinous population and ethnic homogeneity of Alans, residing in Alania in pre – Mongol period (Nechayeva, 1972, p. 288). In the opinion of the same author, the end of the tradition of crypt burials on the territory of Balkaria, some time later in VIII – IX cc and in Karachai in XII – XIII cc was a result of banishment of Alans by the nomads (Bulgarians, Kipchaks, Mongols). Thus the abovementioned author attributes the existing crypts of North Caucasus to the Ossetian ethnos, which allegedly used to be widespread in the mountains of North Caucasus.

The statement made by Nechayeva shall be regarded as total nonsense. It is widely known that before settlement in North Caucasus, the ancestors of Ossetians, had made a long and complex migration journey from Central Asia. They led nomadic life, first on the vast territory between Volga and Azov Sea, and later, in the 70s of IV century A.D. descended to the planes and foothills of North Caucasus: ...Small number of the complexes of V century, proves that the Huns, more likely, encouraged the Alans to follow them up to the mountains, during their movement to the West, than pushed them up into the mountains. It was the Caucasian population that was forced up onto the mountains” (Eurasian 1981, p. 85). Ossetians headed up towards the mountains only as a result of Mongol invasion (Topchishvili, 1997). Some time earlier, in IX – X centuries A.D., the ancestors of the Ossetians settled on the territories of modern Karachai and Balkaria, having taken by force the lands of the local Caucasians.

A question arises: how could the monuments of material culture (catacombs and crypts) be attributed to Alans – Ossetians? They were “Steppe dwellers” and up to V century A.D. had never led a settled life. Catacombs and the crypts are the elements of local Caucasian ethnic community. Could it have happened that Chechens and the Ingush copied the custom of crypt construction and semi catacomb burials from the alien Iran speaking Ossetians? The question is how?! Aren’t the crypts monuments of material culture, characteristic of the mountains?

The above mentioned view of L. Nechayeva was justly rejected by V. Markovin, who stated that the idea of crypt constructions was not determined by the ideas alone, but also building skills of the highlanders. The same author underscores that the catacombs and the crypts shall never be interrelated. The crypt can not be a result of the development of catacombs, as catacombs had been dug into the ground (Markovin, 1978, pp 123 – 124). “Allan catacombs are beyond doubt, not related to the origin of crypts. Crypt constructions emerged in North Caucasus, long before the arrival of Alans, and by the time of their settlement, had been gone through the lengthy period of development – from primitive constructions to tombs, with creep holes and ledges. The other author points out that: “It could only be said that we have no grounds for the consideration of Pre –Caucasian catacomb tombs of the Iran speaking Sarmatian – Alans” (Abramova, 1987, p 177).

The fact that Ossetian folklore attributes the construction of crypts to other group of people, that resided here before their migration, shall also be taken into account (Kokiyev, 1928, pp 10, 34). It is true that the Ossetians also used to build crypts (catacombs and semi-underground), but it is commonly known that it was the Ingush that were renowned crypt builders, and they, as the most skillful builders were usually invited for the construction of crypts and military fortresses (Kokiyev, 1928, p. 41). According to Ossetian legends, before their arrival, all the gorges were populated by the people they’d never known, who died out, mostly as a result of epidemics. Dvalians were the first to settle in Digori village Galiati, after the demise of the local people (Kokiyev, 1928, p. 43). Here attention should be paid to the fact that in accordance with the Ossetian legends Dvalians had not been recognized by the Ossetians, i.e. distinction is drawn between the Ossetians and Dvalians. Regarding the crypts of Kurtati gorge, scientific literature points out that “there are two types of crypts, as it had been mentioned above, and despite the fact that they are spread all over the Ossetian uplands, they are not claimed by Ossetians and the crypts are regarded abandoned“. Scientific literature also draws attention to the following: “Various monuments of mountainous Caucasus, stone boxes,

crypts, ground pits, rock tombs – are attributed to the “Mountainous Caucasian version” of the same Alan culture, although, they have nothing to do with Alan culture.” (Miziyev, 1986, p. 147).

It is also important that according to Ossetian legends, some of the crypts, in Ossetian uplands, had belonged to Nogaians, who, in a certain period, used to reside in the neighbourhood of Ossetians. Anthropological type, preserved clothes of a number of the buried bodies, and household items stored in the crypts, point to their ethnic link to Nogaians. Legends of co-existence of Nogaians and Ossetians in Kurta, Tagauri and Digori gorges found confirmation in the 20s of XX century (Kokiyev, 1928, pp. 46, 50 – 56). It should be noted that Nogaians, before migrating to Mountainous Ossetia, resided in the planes of modern Ossetia, though had later moved to the mountains after the invasion of Golden Horde. (XV c.) The scientific literature points to the fact that Nogaians migrated from the planes to the mountains along with Ossetians in XIV – XV centuries (Kokiyev, 1928, p. 54). Having settled in the mountains, Ossetians (along with Nogaians), Karachai and Balkarians, adopted the culture of crypt burials, as the “Culture of crypt constructions – is not a culture attributed to Steppe, but a specific culture of mountainous regions...” (Kokiyev, 1928, p. 56).

Thus, North Caucasian Crypts (and semi catacomb) constructions belonged to the local Caucasians. Newly arrived Caucasian, Iranian and Turkish speaking groups, had just adopted the tradition when they began burying their dead in the crypts.

Now let us get back to Dvalians and Dvaleti. As stated in the scientific literature “The total absence of the crypts on entire territory of Central Ossetia and Nari hollw, Mamisoni, Erugi, Turtikomi, Jinati and Truso gorges, attracts attention” (Kaloiev, 1984, p. 95; Kaloiev, 1999, p. 206.). Territorial entities, gorges to which Ossetian scientist make references is historical Dvaleti. Dvaleti presently is named Central Ossetia. Thus the following question arises, if Dvaleti had always been Ossetia and the Dvalians had always been Ossetians, why there are no crypts on the given territory, just as in any other part of Ossetia? There can be only one relevant answer to the given question. Dvalians had never been Ossetians and consequently had not been familiar with the abovementioned monuments of material culture. The statement also points to the fact that Ossetians settled on Dvalian territory rather late (as it has been proved by us, mostly in XVI century). Here they never encountered crypts that could have been used, unlike the other four gorges of North Caucasus, where they came upon the ready crypts and turned them to their advantage. If Ossetians had ever been true craftsmen, crypt builders, it would have been really easy for them to construct the crypts after having migrated to Dvaleti. Dvalians were Georgian highlanders (one of the Georgian tribes), whose Christian faith was deep and strong and according to the custom of all Christian Georgians, they buried their dead in the earth.

Absence of crypts in Dvaleti allows us to draw one more important conclusion. In accordance with one of the scientific opinions, Dvalians were Vainakhs, but were Georgianized later (in VII c) (Gamrekeli, 1961). We shall not discuss here that the author of the assumption, having rejected it identified Dvalians as Zanians. Absence of the crypts in Dvaleti, separates Dvalians from Vainakhs totally. As it had been mentioned before, crypts were encountered only in Chechnya and Ingushetia, while Chechens and the Ingush were recognized as skillful builders

and used to build the crypts not only in their native lands but in neighbouring Ossetia as well. There is no doubt that if Dvalians had been related to Vainakhs, the culture of crypt building would have existed among them as well.

Some scientists explain the absence of crypts on the territory of Dvaleti by the fact that the local population, until XVIII century, kept migrating to southern slopes of the Caucasus Range, Georgia and later, from the end of XVIII century to the planes of North Ossetia. (Kaloiev, 1984, p. 95). The given point of view, is widely open to criticism, of course. Dvalians, naturally, as other Georgian highlanders, migrated to other parts of mountainous Georgia or its planes, but the local population of Dvalians resided there permanently up to the end of XVI century and their traditions, customs and the way of life persisted. One thing is absolutely clear, Ossetians, having migrated from Mountainous Ossetia, failed to introduce the culture of crypt building in Dvaleti, as it had never been their own creation. They simply came to use the crypt constructions left behind by the people that had resided on the territory before their arrival. It is known from the literature that Ossetians built only semi catacomb crypts, and used to invite the Ingush builders to build the crypts (above ground). For the sake of objectivity it should be mentioned that in Dvaleti, in one of the villages of Zakh gorge, catacombs and crypts had been found, built by the Ossetians that had settled on the territory somewhat later (in XVII – XVIII cc).

Thus the crypts (above ground constructions) encountered in North Caucasus, allow us to draw serious conclusions:

1. The crypts in Ossetian uplands are not a result of Ossetian constructive skills. The crypts were built by the local Caucasian population, mostly Vainakhs and other tribes related to them. “Steppe dweller” Ossetians, having established themselves in Caucasian gorges later, in XVIII century, had made use of already existing, desolate crypts, left behind by the Caucasian tribes residing on the territory before the arrival of Ossetians. The migrant, Iran speaking community adopted the given elements of traditional culture, assimilating the remaining Caucasian population on the territory.
2. It is absolutely evident that Dvaleti, initially, had not been populated by Ossetians, and Dvalians were not Ossetians. Dvalians had never been familiar with the abovementioned elements of culture, and later (XVI c), Ossetians, having migrated to Dvaleti, took to bury their dead in accordance with the local tradition – in the earth. If Dvalians had belonged to Ossetian ethnos, the crypts would have existed there as well.
3. The absence of crypts in Dvaleti, also rules out the link between Dvalians and Vainakhs, as, as it had been mentioned above, above ground burial chambers, crypts, were familiar for Chechens and the Ingush from ancient times and were part of their traditional culture. The Vakh peoples were regarded skillful builders of burial chambers.
4. All the abovementioned proves and strengthens our opinion regarding the fact that Dvalians had been one of the Georgian tribes and ethnically, culturally and historically constituted an integral part of the Georgian Nation.

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Georgian - Ossetian History Mythologeme

Georgians had always had longstanding relationships with a great number of peoples throughout their multi century history. Ossetians, to whom Georgians had rendered frequent help, allowing them to settle on their lands, are among those people.

However, Ossetians, regardless the fraternal relationship and friendship offered to them by the Georgians, began the misappropriation of their historical lands. Gradually they had created pseudo history and tarnished Georgian Ossetian relationships.

From the given point of view, the voluminous book, published in Sankt Peterburg in 1999, represents the most vivid example of distortion of genuine issues, an eloquent testimony to perjury, to the consideration of which the work presented below is dedicated

We had been contemplating for quite a long time, whether the abovementioned book deserved a written answer. After the lengthy deliberation and considerations we made a decision to write a review, not only for the fact that Georgia’s history and Georgian – Ossetian relations had been twisted, but also because our “Friends” of yesterday, commit libel against the Georgian people, humiliating our culture and defaming the history of

Georgia. Ossetians fake the history of their country and ethnos, at the cost of Georgian history and culture. It should also be added that Ossetian authors have little, if any concern towards other neighbours, namely the Ingush. .

It should be mentioned that the book about Ossetia and Ossetians could not be attributed to any particular genre. The given compilation includes extracts from newspaper and magazine articles, reminiscences, travelers' notes and scientific works. But it definitely should be mentioned, that the book does not contain entire materials on Ossetians and Ossetia. The author, has much to conceal from the readers, in this regard, and publishes only the facts that, duly create erroneous impressions upon his people. The author, deliberately avoids scientific and historical sources and documents which elucidate true history of Ossetian People. He treats Georgian sources with particular bias, and labels them faked. However those are the only sources that allow to review any particular fragment of Ossetian history.

Now, let us follow the sequence of the book.

The book has a substantial introduction, titled - "by the author", with an epigraph: "I thank the fate for the chance of being born Ossetian!" The nature of the compilation we deal with, becomes clear from the first moment, as similar statement, in a civilized world might be qualified as fascism. But the more we read, the better we can see that the context of the book is even worse than the fascism.

To boost Ossetian national self esteem, by means of the given compilation, is obviously the author's chief objective. Unfortunately, claims the author, a number of articles, printed by the newspapers and magazines lately, caused discontent of the society, for being biased and incompetent, i. e, the author promises that the materials he'd brewed in the given compilation would be both competent and unbiased. Below, we'd be given opportunity to evaluate the degree of competence and objectivity of the author and editors of this voluminous work. Unfortunately the book continues and even intensifies the tendencies, the basis of which had been laid by several Ossetian authors, back in the Soviet Era. It is an intentional misrepresentation of history, an attempt to create a piece of fiction, aimed at the confusion of the Ossetian people feeding them on an illusory history and as a result shall lead to the total destruction of national psychic or give rise to the emergence of fascist tendencies.

The book, from the beginning to the end, carries an idea that, North Ossetian Autonomous formation, forming part of the Russian Federation and South Ossetian Autonomous district, being a part of Georgia, in the Soviet period, having, presently become a piece of history, represent a unique country, Ossetia or Iriston. The back page of the book's jacket shows a map, intended to "prove" the given fact. The map, had been printed previously in a book "Ossetia" written by Kaloyev, and since then springs up frequently in various publications. This anti-scientific and anti Georgian map had also been unwisely reprinted by the Georgian authors for the collection "Ossettian issues". Unfortunately it becomes clear that some of our qualified specialists have difficulties in reading maps. Throughout the long historical route, the so called North Ossetia and the so called South Ossetia had

never been a complete, whole country, unique Osseia. Moreover, even separately they had never been a political formation and never possessed Statehood. Even without taking into account South Ossetia, created artificially by the Soviet regime, North Ossetia had never existed as a state, in reality, within its present borders. Between the XVIII – XIX centuries, Ossetians lived as a closed community in four mountainous gorges of North Caucasus, being isolated from each other. At the same time, in the second part of XVI century Ossetians migrated and by the XVIII – XIX centuries, resided only in a remote mountainous strip in Shida Kartli. It is also known that by the time, Ossetians living in North Caucasus Mountains had never before had a single self – name (see N. G. Volkova, *Ethnonyms and Tribal Names of North Caucasus*, M, 1973, pp. 100 – 121). Only from the end of XVIII – XIX centuries, Russian government allowed them to migrate from the narrow gorges of their confinement in North Caucasus, to the foot hills and the planes of North Caucasus. That was were, after the establishment of the Soviet Regime, they were permitted to create a state, or to be more exact, an administrative formation named “North Ossetia”. As for the Allans, they are regarded to be the ancestors of Ossetians, and their early class state formation, existing between VI – XIII centuries, existed on a territory that is quite remote from North Ossetia. – as it was located in the Steppes of North Caucasus.

Let us get back to the abovementioned map. Even if certain aspects of the map are disregarded, the intentional distortion of oykonyms and hydronyms, draws attention immediately. It is being done with the purpose of misleading the readers from any trace of the Georgian language, in which all the toponyms had been created in Shida Kartli. Ossetians, either translate the toponyms or change them phonetically in such a way that inexperienced readers come to believe they had been created by Ossetian people. Let us consider several examples: Didi (Greater) Liakhvi River has been renamed into “Sryr Leuakhi”, Patara (Smaller) Liakhvi into “Chesyl Leuakhi”, Ksani River is called “Chsan”, Kemerti – “Chemert”, Gromi – “Grom”, Balanta – “Balan”, icy peak of “Kazbegi mount is called “m. Kazbek” (Khokh Sona), as few are familiar with the fact that some of North Caucasian peoples (Kabardin for instance) and some late Russian sources referred to Georgians as “Sone” – “Sona. Ossetians find it unbearable to bid good bye to Lenin and Akhlagori village, located in Ksani River gorge, is being obstinately called Leningori.

The referred book contains quite a number of maps and it would be more expedient to end the discussion on the issue. One on of the chapters of the book is titled “Allans and Allania” (pp. 81-81). Here we encounter the map “Growth of the Roman State”(III c B.C. – II c A. D.)”. It is noteworthy that, according to the map, Armenia lies in the south to Georgia, and Alania occupies the Steppes of North Caucasus. There is no trace of Kolkhi or Iberian (Kartli) Kingdoms. There are white spots on the map in the place of their location. It is easy to understand the impression the authors of the book are willing to evoke. The map is reprinted from the book printed in 1959, “ History of North Ossetia”, which is named “Territory of Allans according to Procopius Caesarian (VI c) and Armenian Geography (VII c). According to the map, Georgia, at the time, still had no Statehood at the period. And in the view of the authors, Georgians had not yet arrived at the Georgian territory at all. “Allans” is written across the entire East Georgian territory. Besides, judging from the map, the same Allans had lived also in two, detached, separate regions of North Caucasus. Similar nonsense is not worth of paying any attention.

K. Chelekhsatyi, kindly gets us informed with what he meant under the word - homeland ("Iriston"): 1) homeland – means familiar mountain paths, where I used to run, as a boy, and a spring from which I drank; 2) homeland - is burial places of the ancestors and the neighbourhood of school #5, in the city of Ckhinvali, the resting place of the heroes – defenders of the city from Georgian neo-fascists; 3) Homeland – is a mountain village of Nara, where great Kosta was born and the chapel of Reckom.

We would not have paid particular attention to these words, if the Ossetians had not declared true Georgian territory of Shida Kartli their homeland, where they believe their forbearers are buried. Genuine history reveals an entirely different reality. In Nara village (which happens to be the centre of one of the important mountain provinces of Georgia – Dvaleti) is a resting place of the ancestors of Georgians. Permanent Ossetian raids of XV – XVI centuries, forced the Georgian highlanders – Dvalians to abandon the land of their ancestors and spread in the various parts of East and West Georgia. Dvaleti, had been one of the provinces of Georgia from the days of the formation of Georgian Statehood up to 1858, which is clearly proved not only by the old historical documents but also by the Georgian documents of later period. The most significant settling of the Ossetians in Dvaleti dates back to XVI century, and the region became ethnically Ossetian in this particular period. As for the bones of forefathers, they should be sought in the Steppes of North Caucasus, and earlier to that - in Central Asia. We would not have abstained from similar remarks, if one of the oldest towns of Shida Kartli had not been declared Ossetian. Not only historians but many of our contemporaries know that the town had become Ossetian during the Soviet period as a result of suppression of the Georgian population by local party officials and deliberate resettlement of Ossetians from mountainous villages. As for the "Reckom" chapel – every Ossetian is free to bend head before it, as their ancestors did before them, but feeling proud of a chapel in the mountains is a display of provincial fascism. "Reckom" does not represent an impressive cultural and architectural monument, for the creation of which the nation may feel proud. An unsuspecting reader may think that "Reckom" – represents a masterpiece of architecture , but there is a great number of similar, ordinary, simple chapels in the mountains of North Caucasus and Georgia.

K. Chelekhsatyi, is filled with pride by the fact that when Ossetians went to war, their mothers used to order them "not to return without scoring a victory". I feel it impossible to retort that Ossetians and their ancestors were nomadic tribes and lived on wars, raids, and pillage, and they never descended from their horses. Successful raids earned them food. Thus, it explains the meaning of the mothers' words, with which they used to send them away. In the countries with developed agriculture, similar words could not have been uttered. The people, occupied by artistic work, could not have issued similar orders, as it is a slogan for those who think of taking away whatever had been created by others.

The creator of the book, Chelekhsatyi is also proud of his homeland because it had given the world the great philosopher of antiquity, the wise man Anacharis and the great historian of VI century Iordan, invincible commander David Soslan and the great poet Kosta Khetagurov. World known contemporary scientist Vaso Abbayev and legendary hero of civil war Hadjimurat Dzarakhokhov. It is known that not a single work of

Philosopher Anacharis had been preserved to our days, and it is rather difficult to judge the importance of his assumptions or his place in the history of mankind, at the same time it is also known that Anacharis was Scythian, not Ossetian. Ossetian nation had not existed at the time. Their ancestors led nomadic lifestyle in the Steppes of Central Asia. Does it mean that as Ossetian language belongs to the Iranian group of languages, similar to Scythian, Anacharis should be regarded Ossetian? According to similar logic he may have been Russian as well. We'd like to repeat once again that Ossetian ethnos had been formed relatively late, later than XIII – XIV centuries, after the assimilation of Ossetians, forced up into the mountain gorges of North Caucasus, with the local Caucasian tribes. As for historian Jordan, he was of Goth origin (see, "Soviet Historical Encyclopedia", Vol. 6, M, 1965)

It is hard to say what was Davit Soslan's contribution to the history of mankind but when it comes to Great "Kosta Khetagurov", a writer of average talent of II part of XIX century, it could only be said that he had been great only for Ossetian people, as the founder of Ossetian literature, but not for the mankind. Is it possible for the people to be proud of the "Heroes" of Civil War, declared as such by the Bolshevik government?

The author of compilation is proud of being a representative and descendant of the people who created the prominent Koban culture and Scythian art. The book addresses the given subject more thoroughly and we shall get back to the subject below. Here we shall just mention that Koban archaeological culture has nothing to do with public culture. The fact that "Koban Culture" was first discovered in Ossetian village of Koba in the North Caucasus, does not prove that Ossetians were its creators. Before the Appearance of Ossetians in the gorges of North Caucasus, a recurrent change of ethnoses had taken place there. It is a common case of misappropriation of history and culture of other people. Nor are the Ossetians representatives of Scythian culture, which originated, not in the North Caucasus but, in the northern strip of the Black Sea. The only link between Scythian tribes and the ancestors of Ossetians is the fact that both are the bearers of the languages, that are different but belong to the group of North Iranian language group. It is commonly known that while conducting the studies of ethnic history it is quite dangerous to rely upon archaeological culture, if the studies are not supported by historical sources. If Ossetians happen to be the descendants of Scythians, why are not they heirs to the traditional Scythian culture?

K. Chelekhsatyi is proud of the people who, despite the difficulties and hardships, created a magnificent Allann language. What kind of a comment could be made here? We could only make a single comment, that it is a typical example of provincial fascism. Does there exist a single language that is not unique?

Chelekhsatyi, feels proud of his people, as they are the creators of Nart Epos, masterpiece of world civilization, and a magnificent, heavenly dance Simdi. Nart Epos is not regarded a masterpiece of world civilization by any of major encyclopedic editions, and besides Nart Epos, does not belong solely to Ossetian people. Other peoples of North Caucasus, and the Abkhaz are also among the creators of Nart Epos. As for Simdi, it truly is a magnificent example of a folk dance, but definitely of Caucasian, and not Iranian origin. Simdi was adopted by Ossetians from local Caucasians, namely the Ingush, It is natural that the dance is also

performed by the Kabardin. However, the modern interpretation of the dance is the creation of Georgian choreographers.

Chelekhsaty, regards the struggle of Georgia against extremist Ossetians, which assault Georgia's statehood, molded many centuries ago, and misappropriate Georgian lands, aggression against Ossetia and Ossetians. The Ossetians, in his opinion defended Southern and Eastern borders from the Georgian and Ingush aggressors.

One of the chapters of the book is titled "General Information" The statistical and demographic data presented in it is biased. The number of population of the city of Ckhinvali and other areas of the so called South Ossetia is given in accordance with the data of 1939. As for the national composition of "South Ossetia", the book shows the data of only 1979 and 1989, which is done, beyond doubt, intentionally, as the statistical data of XIX century and the first two decades of XX century would have shown a different picture; In the mentioned period, there were no Ossetians at all in many of the populated areas of the so called South Ossetia (namely, in Ckhinvali, in Prone and Medjuda and Lekhuri gorges...), while in other areas the number of Georgian population acceded considerably the number of Ossetians. It is noteworthy that the book failed to conceal certain amount of objectivity. Thus, according to the statistical data, overall number of Ossetians in Georgia in 1833, never exceeded 19. 324 people. The figures deprive certain Ossetian authors of the possibility to increase artificially the number of Ossetians in XVIII century Georgia. N. Togoshvili claimed, for instance, that in the II part of XVIII century only 6000 – 7000 Ossetians resided in Georgia. In reality, there were 2130 Ossetian families in Georgia by the end of XVIII century. (it amounts to 15 000 persons, roughly). By 1833 the number increased to 2700 (approx. 19324 persons).

The author of the book claims that in I c. A.D. the Arshakid dynasty ruled not only in Armenia but Allania as well (p. 19), and the Arshakid of Armenia and Allania were the representatives of the same clan, and, what is more important, we are led to believe in the Scythian (i.e. Ossetian origin of the Arshakid dynasty. It is known that the Armenian Arshakid are of Persian (Parthian) descent and have nothing to do with Scythians. As for the Arshakid – Allan rulers of I and following centuries, they are just a fruit of imagination. In the early centuries of A. D. Allans had no state formations and used to lead a nomadic life throughout the Steppes between Volga River and Azov Sea. The Allans created a state formation later, after the Hun invasion (70s of the IV century of A. D.), when they moved from the North to South, the Steppes of North Caucasus. Proceeding from the abovesaid, there are no grounds for the consideration of Allan Arshakid kings in the I c. A.D.

The referred book includes articles by G. Togoshvili (from "Fidiaut" magazine) on the nature of Ossetians (pp. 19-21). In the article it is pointed out that, snow leopard is a state symbol of Ossetian state. The author says: "the symbol points to the nature of Ossetian people, as brave and self sacrificing in the battle against the enemy as a snow leopard, considering retreat unworthy." We shall not tackle an issue of how the snow leopard had become the symbol of Ossetia, we intend to find out since when the Ossetians had come to possess a state seal. Snow leopard used to be depicted only on the Ossetian flag. It is noteworthy to mention that G. Togoshvili and K. Chelekhsaty, deliberately conceal from the readers the source, which shows the image of the Ossetian flag. It is a work created by the famous scientist Vakhushti

Bagrationi. If it had not been for him, Ossetians would not have known what their flag looked like. There simply do not exist other sources. Ossetian flag, with the image of snow leopard is not included into the ethnographic lifestyle of the latest period and there are no legends regarding it.

The major idea the book carries through is the fact that Ossetia consists of two parts – North and South, and we had referred to the fact above. The book also underlines the fact that the estuary of Aragvi River is located in Ossetia. Thus, the upper part of White Aragvi River Guda – happens to be Ossetia (?!). It implies that, as a couple of Ossetian families migrated to this particular part of the country from Magran – Dvaleti (upper part of Bigger Liakhvi River), in the second part of XVIII century, the area could be regarded Ossetian? We are familiar with the Georgian family names, bearers of which resided in the area, namely Guda, before the migration of Ossetians – namely, the Butkhuzi, Sisvelauri and others.

The book points to the fact that the two dialects could be traced in Ossetian language: Ironian and Digori dialects. Both dialects are encountered in North Caucasus. South Ossetians speak in Ironian dialect, no any other, third dialect, which once again proves the version of Ossetian migration to Shida Kartli from the territory of North Caucasus, where Ironian dialect is spoken.

There are no limits for the fantastic ideas of Ossetians, when they start the topic of the two Ossetian State formations of VI – VII centuries. One of them happens to be in the West with its centre in the upper part of Kuban River the other in the East, near Dariali. Although, they find it difficult to conceal the fact that up to V century, the ancestors of Ossetians, Alans were nomads and turned to the settled life somewhat later between VI – VII centuries, after becoming closer to the Caucasian ethnic cultural world.

Certain confusing passages could also be encountered in the book: As it happened to be the ancestors of Ossetians, Allans, were so dignified that their migration in the mountains was had a specific nature: it never caused total extinction of the aborigines, or their assimilation. The authors adapt the terms accepted by the Soviet ethnography to the events of ancient history with much ease; As we are led to believe, wherever the Allans appeared, including the Caucasus, the process of mutual assimilation used to occur between the Allans and the local population, which allegedly is proved by the appearance of new shapes of burial constructions in IX – X centuries.

The authors underline that in X – XI centuries Alania used to be a mighty state, conducting extremely active military policy (p. 24). It is pointed out that the Mongols, failed to invade mountainous Allania. What could be said regarding the fact? Did the so called “Mountainous Allania” really exist? The answer is short: it had never existed. “Mountainous Allania” is one of the fictions of Ossetian authors, who invented similar stories in generous quantities. By the XVIII century Ossetians resided only in four mountain gorges of North Caucasus: In Digori, Kurta, Tagauri and Alagiri gorges. It could be asserted, without any hesitation, that before the appearance of Mongols, there was no trace of Ossetians in the mentioned gorges. A part of Ossetians, salvaged from Mongols, settled in the gorges; The event took place in XIII century, and, as Vakhushti Bagrationi explains, Ossetians, forced up into the mountains from the

Steppes, brought along their toponyms. Some time earlier Allans appeared in Digori gorge (X – XI centuries and the territories populated presently by the Balkar and Karachai. Having got there the Turk tribes (Balkars and Karachai) assimilated Ossetian tribes. This is the truth, not the assumption that Mongols failed to invade “Mountainous Allania” ...Before Mongol assaults Ossetians were “Steppe dwellers”, they had never lived in the mountains, and due to forceful efforts of Mongols, those Steppe dwellers were turned into highlanders.

We have already mentioned above and would like to come back to the fact that the author pays particular attention to the Koban archaeological culture. One of the vast chapters is titled: “The population of old Kobans”. As it becomes known the Koban culture is one of the glorious periods of Allania’s ancient history...He believes that probably, the local Koban tribes had contacts with the Steppe dwellers – Scythians. The collection includes an article by archaeologist B. Tekhov, which had been published in “Fidiaute” magazine. His idea of Allans ethnic development is following: Koban culture reached the peak of development by the II – I millenniums, and what is more important, it developed on both sides of the Caucasus – North and South. Its creators were Indo – Iranian tribes, which, without leaving Central Caucasus, had passed cultural traditions to generation after generation throughout millenniums. For this reason, writes B. Tekhov, we should not state that the ancestors of Ossetians arrived at Central Caucasus only in the I century. The author’s fiction does not end here: He claims that in the I century the ancestors of Ossetians –Allans, had come to Central Caucasus and those Allans – the migrant ones, joined their brothers, descendants of Koban culture, also Iran speaking. Thus, both migrants and locals, spoke Iranian and naturally, the aborigines easily adopted the language of migrants. Proceeding from his theory B. Tekhov draws the conclusion that, if any of the Caucasian peoples could be considered ancient, Ossetians are certainly among them. Ossetians are heirs and follower of the Koban culture. At the same time B. Tekhov, claims that not only North Caucasus is the old domain of Iran speaking people, but also regards the territories lying to the South of Caucasus Range (Ossetian authors avoid mentioning Georgia at all costs and try to introduce the term “South to the Main Caucasus Range”, “Trans -Caucasus”). B. Tekhov ends his considerations in the following way: “Ossetian People – continuators of Koban traditions architects of the culture, successors and beneficiaries of spiritual – cultural and linguistic traditions.

Ossetians are generously assisted in misappropriation of the local, Koban culture and forgery of their history, by Russians in particular. They often refer to V. Kuznecov. The collection includes the quotation of the author, where he claims that in the I millennium B. C., on both sides of the Caucasus Range, in North and South Ossetia, there existed a single culture, the creator and bearer of which was the ancient nation, residing on both sides of the Range, and it, of course, was only the Ossetian nation.

What could our comment be? It is highly doubtful to determine ethnic origin of archaeological culture on the basis of archaeological materials. The archaeological data has to be reinforced by the written sources. Though, according to the written monuments, Iranian speaking tribes had never resided in mountain gorges of North Caucasus and furthermore to the South from the Range. At the same time, it is widely known that the Koban culture, is almost analogous to the Colchi culture, regarding which not a single reference is made in this voluminous book, as it would have deprived the story created by the fantasies of Ossetian

authors of any plausible grounds. It is also noteworthy that Ossetian – Allanian tribes appeared in mountain gorges of North Caucasus not in the I century A.D. It is a hoax of Ossetian authors. It has been mentioned above, and we find it necessary to repeat that, Ossetian ancestors used to be nomads at the period, and moved between the Volga River and Azov Sea. They moved about and had never before led a settled life. Only after the Huns destruction, in IV century A. D., the smaller groups of the escaped nomads moved further to the South, but remained still Stepp dwellers and formed, within the period of IV – VII centuries an early class Allan state formation. As for the Koban archaeological culture, discovered in Shida Kartli (the so called “South Ossetia”), it is almost completely identified with Kolkhi culture. A natural conclusion is being drawn regarding the fact that at the given period those territories (as well as North Caucasus) were populated by Kartvelian tribes.

The articles, kicking the ground out of the faked history of Ossetians, had also been miraculously included into the book. For instance, page 34 contains a magazine article by Smyrnova, who writes that in accordance with the Greek, Armenian and Georgian sources, Ossetians, residing presently in the North and Central Caucasus, are direct descendants of Scythian tribes, who used to reside in Ciscaucasia and were pushed out of the territory during the Great Migration of Peoples. The article does not confirm “thesis” on the fact that Ossetians had, from the ancient times, lived on both sides of Caucasus Range. It is also said, in the given article, that the Scythians – Sarmatians – Allan tribes, populating Southern Russian, between VII century B.C. and III century A. D., were ancestors of Ossetians.

Quotation from the work by V. abaev’s reflects the situation more or less objectively, reporting that in the period of the Great Migration of the Peoples, in IV – V centuries A.D., part of Allans walked across the entire Europe, up to France and Spain. Personal names Allen (French) and Allan (English) are inherited from that particular period. The Allans having remained in Eastern Europe, stopped before the Caucasian Range and formed a big feudal state. Tamerlane and Mongol invasions had a catastrophic effect upon Ossetians, part of the people were exterminated due to never-ending battles, the other part migrated to Hungary, where under the name of the “Yas” managed to maintain national identity for a couple of centuries. Some of them were involved in the occupational campaigns of the Mongols and settled on various lands. Those remaining in the Caucasus were trapped into isolation in the mountain gorges.

One of the chapters is titled “Monuments of Scythian Culture in the Caucasus. It offers a reprint of M. Pogrebova article, informing tells that: “Monuments of Scythian culture are also encountered in abundance in Tran Caucasus.....The number of Scythian artefacts is particularly large in places like Abkhazia and South of Ossetia...”. “Beginning from the second part of VII century B.C., elements of Scythian material culture, along with the Elements of Koban – Kolkhi culture, or simultaneously, to be more precise, start to penetrate into western and central Ttran Caucasus. It could be presumed that the fact is connected with the appearance of Scythian ethnos in the given regions.” (p.48). It should be added here, that the penetration of the elements of material culture of one geographical area into another does not necessarily point to the migration of the ethnos. We find it important to refer to Pogrebova quotations, as according to them, Kolkhi and Koban cultures are presented as one culture. The

authors of the collection apparently failed to notice this: it is known that the given, widely recognized by the scientists view, is being thoroughly withheld by them.

The collection presents an extract from Pfaf, printed in 1871, which reports that the Allanian nation ruled over entire Caucasus during many centuries, whether North or south. It does not point to the exact period of the Allanian rule over the Georgians and Armenians, and what was the expression of the rule.

An extract from a Goldstein book is also presented.: “Two thousand years ago Allans, residing then by the Don River, stood out among the Sarmatians. The Greek referred to them as Allans, as well as the Byzantine, some time later. The Allans called themselves Assa, that’s how the term “Asia” had derived from (p. 56). Before commenting upon the quotation, we find it expedient to refer once again to the abovesaid. The Ossetians who penetrated into the Caucasus in XIX century had no self name, and it was the Georgians who named them The “Ossi” (Ossetians). Their claim over the name of the continent, allegedly derived from the name of Ossetian tribes, leading to the “conclusion” that Ossetians were scattered all over the Asian continent and it wholly belonged to them, may only evoke a smile. Their claims go further and according to their theory the Osis (Asis) gave the name to the Azov Sea and Caucasus. Besides, they densely populated not only Russia’s Southern Steppes but the Western Europe as well, where they, as it appears, had left multiple Ossetian ethnic toponyms.

Thus, up to V century A.D. Allans had no fixed place of residence. This is proved even by the referred book and there is no need to produce other accurate sources. Ancestors of the Ossetians, appearing here and there, had never led a settled way of life, carried out agricultural activities, nor had they ever been residents at any particular, fixed territory. They lived on assaults, pilage and used to be hired as mercenaries by other states (Georgia among them). The abovementioned factors had become a major handicap for the people, (claimed to be “quite numerous” by certain Ossetian authors) in preserving uniform ethnic - socio - ethnic – political organism. They spread and merged with other peoples. As for the assumption that Ossetians inhabited the Caucasus Mountains from olden times (conjectures of Ossetian authors), it is not proved by any of the sources. The absence of relevant scientific approaches in the book, reduce the scientific value of the presented assertions and succeed only in confusing the reader. It has to be pointed out that almost all Ossetian authors (except V. Abayev), while referring to the history of their “country” or the ethnos, express theories, which in the concluding part of the work are declared axioms, and these “freshly created” axioms are immediately put into scientific use. In this respect, G. Togoshvili and Kaloyev are particularly prominent.

The book, as it happens, is laden with other gems as well, beginning with the article by Farvarovskyi, reprinted from “Terek” newspaper, which leads us to believe that Ossetians (i.e. Yasy or Assas) are older than Germans and Slavs, as they had been among the first Christians”.. On our part we shall add, that today the nations are not classified in accordance with the age, but in accordance with the volume of their contribution to the history of culture. It is not crucial which peoples were the first to adopt Christianity and how early they had done so. We are, but well, aware of the truly Christian nature of Ossetians. Their perception of Christian faith was rather superficial. However, Ossetians migrating to Georgia from Northern Caucasus

had not been Christians at all. One of the written monuments of Law, dated by 1782, disallows the Georgians to give away their women to Ossetians, as they were not Christians. “If a Christian allows his daughter to marry Ossetian and they become related, we shall regard it treachery and he would have to pay a high price for similar behaviour; but if an Ossetian gives away his daughter to a Christian man, he shall be allowed to marry her, however, she has to be baptized first, otherwise the marriage shall be forbidden.” (CGIAL, II, 451)..

An extract from the article from “Novoe Obozrenye” newspaper of 1891 is presented on page 63, which reads that, Ossetians had been a very powerful nation from the olden times. It also reads that the Ossetians were divided into four categories: 1) Uazdalogs (nobility); 2) Kavsadors (subjects); 3) Farsags (freemen); 4) Gurziaks (slaves), i.e. Georgian. We shall dwell upon the latter. “Gurziak”. i.e. Georgian in Ossetian was a synonym of a slave. It may seem to an unaware reader that The Georgians used to be slaves of the Ossetians. But the matter here is entirely different. An article, reprinted from 1889 issue of “Terkskye Vedomosti” provides a partial answer to the issue: The mentioned classified category used to be consisting of the prisoners taken from Georgia. The latter has no realistic grounds, although Ossetian raids and capture of the people used to be a common practice.

One of the chapters is titled “Allans” in West Europe. Allanian ethnonyms in West Europe”, in which the following assumptions could be found: “For France and Italy above 70 Allan ethnonyms had been set (forming a list of 90 names) – it is an amazingly large number, as, if we consider the fact, that in North Caucasus, where Allan-Ossys reside to this day, only one toponym had been preserved, containing “alan” as the base (namely urochishche (common) Allanboz....). ... Besides, they tutor the readers that, “London” in Ossetian means harbour. “Do you know What does “London” mean in Ossetian? Harbour, that’s the meaning of the word in Ossetian. It is also being pointed out that a great number of British toponyms could be explained through Ossetian language and the “pearls” (British toponyms explained through Ossetian language) had been reprinted from one of the 1981 issues of “Moskovsi komsomolec” The same article also points to the fact that the Brits used to speak Allan language. Similar assumptions are also presented by V. Abayev. For example the name of one of the Spanish provinces “Catalonia” is explained as “Goth-Allania”. The name of the town Yasy on Prut River is certainly interpreted as Yas (Yas) – Allans, and etc. If we believe the information, published by “Daryal” magazine, 1970 issue of, we shall learn that, throughout its multi century history these militant people (Allan – Ossetians), actively participated in the Great Migration of the Peoples from East to West and from West to East, leaving behind the trail of ethnonyms not only in Asia and Europe but also in North Africa. This, of course is confirmed by the names of the cities and historical regions.

Special importance is given to the chapter, titled “Georgian – Ossetian relationships” Here, vast extracts are presented from the book by G. Togoshvili. There is a quotation from a 1902 newspaper, referring to the fact that Ksani and Ara-ganian Eristavis (princes), originate from Ossetian nobles Rostom and Sidamon. It also points out to the fact that Georgia, without Ossetian help, would have lost all the battles. There is no use to comment upon the historical objectivity of the statement, although it is clear that the author is trying to lay emphasis on the weakness of Georgians, their inability to fight the wars independently.

“From the history of North Ossetia”: Ossetia used to be a shelter for the Georgian political leaders, who stood up against the Iranian and Turkish rulers. For example, Georgian Prince Giorgi, was hosted by the acknowledged public figure of XVIII c. Ossetia, nobleman Zurab Elikhanov in Zaramati. He was also buried there after his death.” (p. 98). To be more concrete, the Ossetian village of Zaramati, had not been Ossetian at all. Zaramati was a gorge and a village located in Dvaleti, and Dvaleti was populated by one of the Georgian tribes – Dvalians. Up to 1858 it used to be an integral part of Georgia.

A major part of the book is dedicated to the noblemen Tsereteli. It has been reprinted from “The book of Russian Nobility” (V. III, 1856.) that: “The given family name is of Ossetian origin, and their ancestors owned Cadary district” (p. 99). The legend has nothing to do with reality. The Tsereteli belong to the type of Georgian family names, which bear the name of the locality, where it had derived from. The family name is formed through the – el – suffix from the toponym Cereti – the village in Ateni gorge, in Shida Kartli. That is where the family name of Tsereteli derives and not from Ossetian Cedary.

The creators of the book had not forgotten the last of Os – Bagatars. It is known that they had several Os-Bagatars. The last of them lived in XIII – XIV centuries and his life is preserved in the Georgian Zhamtaghrickhveli (chronicler). An article by V. Kuznecov, had been reprinted from newspaper “Socialist Ossetia” (1991), which reads: “Military policy lead by Os – Bagatar by the end of XIII c. and beginning of XIV c. extended the territories occupied by Ossetians and strengthened their position in Kartli....” In reality, narrative from zhamtaghrickhveli (chronicler) clarifies that Os – Bagatar headed Ossetian squad of the Mongol police. Part of Ossetians, driven from North Caucasian Steppes, found themselves in Georgia. They accepted the pay of the Mongol conquerors and through the services rendered to the Mongols attempted to occupy (not secure) places of residence in Georgia. They succeeded in taking over Gori for quite a long time. Kartli population suffered much from the raids of Ossetian police squads – Mongol mercenaries – and only after considerable period of time (30 years), Giorgi the Brilliant succeeded in defeating the plunderers of Georgia and drive them out of the territory, up into the gorges of North Caucasus. Thus, Os- Bagatar had never extended, or secured the territories or his influence in Shida kartli in XIII-XIV cc. Quite the contrary, Ossetians tried to occupy (with the help of alien forces) our populated territories, in which they failed to succeed. Presently the history repeats. Today Ossetians, aided by Russians, make efforts at invading the Georgian territory. With similar injustice they misappropriate the lands of the Ingush.

The Os – Bagatar theme does not end with this particular episode. In the brilliant sample of faked history, reprinted from the newspaper “Terksie Vedomost” of 1891, we read that: “In the beginning of XIII century, in Alagir gorge, Os - Bagatar was born...Observing the suffering and oppression of his compatriots, under the oppressive rule of Georgian nobility in the South and Tatarian Khan Timur – in the North, Os – Bagatar made a vow to liberate his compatriots of both parts and unify North and South Ossetians into a unique State. “(p. 102). These assumption have no grounds and represent a true example of falsification of history. None of the historical sources or the documents dated by XIII-XIV centuries confirm the fact of Ossetian migration and their settlement in Georgia. By the way, at that particular period they had just begun to establish themselves in the gorges of North Caucasus. Apart from the

abovementioned assumptions they claim to have lived under the oppressive rule of an alien state – Georgia. At the same time, there is a major inconsistency in the mentioned reference. How could Os-Bagatar, born in the beginning of XIII century, fight Mongolian Tymur Khan (Tamerlane), if the latter lived in the second part of XIV century and beginning of XV century. We have mentioned above and intend to repeat once again that the book consists of contradicting “considerations”. Such is the case of Os-Bagatar, which points clearly to the fact that this particular “History” of Ossetians is not based on historical sources and it is written, and had always been written on the basis of legends and represents a piece of pure fantasy. Georgian sources could have been used, but Ossetian authors avoid them, having no desire to acknowledge true history, as it would deprive their efforts, directed at misappropriation of other peoples lands, any real grounds. While the true history lies in the simple fact that Ossetians began to settle down, strictly in mountain gorges, only from the mid XVII century.

Ossetian authors – are capable fable tellers. Let’s refer to one more fairy tale from a book under the question. As we’re led to believe the micro-ethnonym “Shida Kartli” is a neologism of Georgian historians, and that, as they put it, “Shida Kartli”, back in IV century B.C. used to be populated by Sarmatians (i.e. ancestors of Ossetians), thus in order to restore historical justice, Georgians, should rename it into “Sarmatia”. The book is simply brimming with similar fairy tales and invented stories. Here’s yet another example, in which historian Gagloiti claims that the borderline between Kartli and Ossetia used to be drawn near Mtskheta and Toponym [Mtskheta], may allegedly be explained with the help of an Ossetian word “Sikhatcha”, meaning neighbour. It is impossible to produce a comment for each of similar nonsenses at the scientific level. It would suffice to say that soon Ossetians shall connect “Samtskhe” with Ossetian language as well.

The following book of fairy tales includes a chapter “Soslan David” and “Man in a Panther’s Skin”. Interested reader may wonder what possible connection there could be between Soslan – David and “Man in a Panther’s Skin”. Two letters are provided for observation. One of them is – reminiscences of S. Shanshiashvili, who it is said, along with P. Yashvili, T. Tabidze, K. Yesenin and others spoke about the “Man” and proved that “David Soslan”, was the author of the poem, that the poem is an auto-biography, and Shota Rustaveli is David Soslan’s pen name. T. Tabidze put an end to the argument, saying that it was an issue to be solved by the scientists.

Still, the amount of resentment, envy and bile, we encounter in an article by V. Alazonov (“Daryal” magazine, 1991) is unimaginable. The article, a vivid example of provincial fascism, is had been reprinted. The contents of the article reads: David – Soslan, having inherited the striving and inclination for the acquisition of knowledge, from his ancestors, began to develop cultural traditions of his country upon his arrival in Georgia. He used to send highly inert Georgians abroad to get acquire knowledge. The author refers to the quotation from the article by M. Brosse published in “Caucasus” newspaper (№ 85, 1852), which says: “According to the information supplied by the Armenian historian of XII century, Vardan the Great, the king sent 40 young men to Greece to study sciences and fine arts” (While M. Brosse refers to David the Builder, the author chooses to ascribe the fact to David Soslan. Alazonov, goes even further and tries to create an impression that “The Man in a Panther’s Skin”, a literary monument – is the creation of David – Soslan, Ossetian by birth: “Thus, the French scientist

has no doubts regarding the Ossetian descent of David, who is also the author of the “Man in the Panther’s Skin” – a literary work of auto-biographical character (p. 104).

Alazanov claims that Ukrainians, Navrockyi and Gulak also adhere to the same assumption. Gulak, who used to teach Latin, Greek and a course of comparative linguistics in Tbilisi and Kutaisi, found certain elements of Iranian origin in the poem and a whole number of passages, intentionally omitted by the scribes. The author of the article, puts forth a new presumption: As it seems, parts of the poem, unacceptable for Georgians, had been intentionally omitted, namely, the passages which referred to the homeland of the author, national traditions and devotion to pagan deities. Proceeding with the insulting quotation we read: “The Georgians displayed no interest whatsoever, towards the culture of Iran, which exerted rule over them, while the same can not be said about Ossetians, who in their aesthetic development, are close to their linguistic relatives. So, if the Ossetians had imprinted their literary tastes as being analogous to Iranian in “The Knight...., the Georgians never mention their cultural contacts with Iran even in their faked scientific source of “Kartlis Ckhovreba” (Life of Kartli).....

Below we read: “A logical question arises: what induced the world scientists to expose the Georgian phony? Why not let the Georgians have it their own way, just to keep them happy? But, in this case, it is not a matter of interfering into internal affairs of Georgia, but idle talk, unfounded information provided by “Kartlis Ckhovreba”, misrepresenting the history of neighbouring peoples and anachronism, which confuse many of the scholars. It becomes even more unfortunate, when the modern Georgian nationalists resort to them, displaying their appetites for the truly, historical lands of Ossetians, and cultural jewels. For this very reason it becomes necessary to remind the aggressive neighbours of the peace loving Ossetian people, and make them see that a fierce heart of the Allanian knight palpitates under the panther’s skin, and who illuminated with his splendor the grim Iberia.” (pp. 104-105).

The given assumptions deserve no comment whatever, but for the less sophisticated reader we shall state that David Soslan had never been the King of Georgia, he happened to be Queen Tamar’s husband We know from the Georgian historic sources that he belonged to the Bagrationi branch, descending from Giorgi I, having settled in Ossetia, and Demetre the son of the daughter of Allanian tribe, queen Alde. In accordance with the information provided by Vakhushti Bagrationi, Demetre left the son, who, with his grandmother Alde escaped to Ossetia, where he got married to the daughter of the princely family and was regarded the King of Ossetia. David - Soslan is his descendant. The chronicler, contemporary of Lasha Giorgi also considered him Bagrationi descendant. Certain scholars, believed that David – Soslan belonged to the family of Ossetian Carazons, but the fact finds no confirmation in historical sources (N. Shoshiashvili, GSE. Vol.3). As for the information provided by Vardan the Great, it could be stated with certainty that he refers to David the Builder, not David Soslan. Every Ossetian is free to get familiar with the book “The World history of Vardan the Great”, translated by N. Emin, M, 1861, p. 147 and find out that their compatriot Alazanov is a liar and a forger of history. In his book, Vardan the Great, calls attention to the fact that King David, having sent 40 young men to Greece for scholarly activities, had a father, whose name was Giorgi, also the sons Demetre, i.e. Demetre I, who ascended to the throne in 1125 after the death of David the Builder, and Giorgi II, who was on the throne until 1089, before the enthroning of David the Builder.

As for the assumption, which ascribes the authorship of “The Knight” to David – Soslan, it shall never convince anyone. One may wonder how the Ossetian author created, similar monument of world culture in a foreign language? In this case, they have to admit that David Soslan was Georgian (Bagrationi) from the maternal side, and Georgian was his native language. Ossetian authors create similar myths, with the sole purpose of fooling ordinary Ossetians and instigate obsession which shall intensify their struggle for the occupation of the territories of other (in this particular case Georgian) lands.

There is no limit to the insults and hatred directed against the Georgians by the creators of the book. Georgians, as we find out, are regarded as inert, Iberia – grim, our forefathers forged history and displayed no interest, whatever, in Iranian culture. Is it possible to describe the people, having made enormous contribution into the World culture and created unique folk culture as inert? Are Ossetian authors unaware of the fact that among 14 original scripts in the world one is Georgian, and that the first samples of the preserved written sources are dated by IV century? Are they also unaware of the fact that Christianity was officially adopted by the nation in the beginning of the IV century? Does the fact that the “The Knight” had not appeared out of nowhere and the first Georgian literary monument, preserved to our days, was created in V century, have any particular meaning for them? Rustaveli relied upon the rich literary foundation, generated during seven centuries. The Georgians had translated the bible from the moment of the adoption of Christianity and created the original Church architecture. Matters of education had not been alien to them either: the Academies of Ikalto and Gelati had been in their prime. Even earlier, back in I century, Phasisi (Poti) Academy functioned successfully. Could a similar nation be called inert? The Georgians have no need to pocket something that does not belong to them. They never display envy or dislike towards other peoples and their culture, which are the features, characteristic rather of Ossetians. They declare the monuments of Georgian architecture, located on the territory of the so called South Ossetia, non-Georgian. However, there is nothing that could be done to Georgian inscriptions, Georgian frescos and ornaments? Statement regarding Georgia’s disregard and lack of interest towards the neighbouring cultures is an absolute nonsense, considering that they used to display enormous interest towards the Greek, with whom they shared the same orthodox faith and even permanently hostile Iranians. However blind imitation had never been characteristic of Georgian art, on the contrary, it used to develop further artistically. How could Georgian historical works, having adopted the bible as a common conceptual base, be called fakes and pseudo scientific?. Christian authors had never been liars. It is regrettable that Ossetian authors display disrespect towards “Kartlis Ckhovreba”, as it is an only historical source of Ossetian history. But Ossetian authors regard “Kartlis Ckhovreba” a fake, as it nullifies the history faked by them. That is the truth.

We have no intention to review the fact that allegedly, a big number of Ossetian settlers, residing in the Caucasus mountains, were the first migrants in the area, and that their number acceded two millions, the Ossetian language, being the principal, dominated over seven languages of Caucasian tribes; they were tougher and stronger than the descendants of Kartlos and Chaos and outnumbered them greatly. Had there not been Ossetians, the Georgian kings

would never have achieved military victories; Georgian alphabet had at the time been allegedly Ossetian, and they had been using it for 2200 years ago and many other similar suppositions.

Ossetian authors emphasize the fact that friendly relationship with Russia and Russians had been maintained only by Ossetians, allegedly for the reason of considerable role, Ossetians and Sarmatians played in Slavonic ethno genesis. Quotation is added from the reviewed book: “The time when we used to sing in a choir, under the music of Vano Muradeli, about the “eternal friendship”, between Russian, Georgians, Ukrainians and Ossetians”. “Georgians, Ukrainians, similar to the rest of others, are not with us anymore. They’re against us. Only Ossetians remain by the side of the Russian nation” (p. 123, reprinted from “Ruskyi Vestnik” (Russian Herald), # 22, 1992).

Neighbouring Ingush People, whose land had been appropriated by Ossetians, during the Second World War are also being assaulted by the book. The Georgians, unwilling to give away the land of ancestors, are regarded neo-fascists by the Ossetian extremists, the Ingush are considered to be nationalists. Their historical facts are twisted again against the Ingush people. Statements made by Ossetian authors, claiming that the Ingush settled in the region after Ossetians, could only be regarded a fairy tale, as the period of their own migration to the Caucasus mountains and foothills is ascribed to the local peoples of the Caucasus. “Mongolian pogrom had finally shaken the Allan positions in the North Caucasus. Depopulated lands in the planes of the West were taken over by Kabardinians, and Vainakhs in the East, who made home of the lower foothills, prior to Terek and Armakh River valleys.” Here it should be noted that the right bank of Terek River had always been populated by the Ingush, whether in the beginning of XX century, or remote past. Georgian historical sources refer to them as “Galgayans”. It is widely known fact that the Ossetians residing on the right bank of Terek River used to pay land rent to the Ingush even in the 20s of XX century.

Separate chapter is dedicated in the book to Vladikavkaz. It is a common knowledge that Vladikavkaz is a sore point of Ossetians, as it had been built on a foreign, historical Ingush land. The authors, misinform the readers and claim that Vladikavkaz was built in the place of Ossetian mountain village Kafkai in 1764 and that is the reason Ossetians call it Vladikavkaz. While in fact Vladikavkaz was built in the place of the Ingush village Zaureg (Zaurovo, Zaur yurt). Ossetian refugees from mountainous gorges also reside in this Aul (Mountainous village). As for Kafkai, being former name of Vladikavkaz, it also is a piece of fiction. The truth is that the Russians renamed Zaureg into Vladikavkaz. Georgian highlanders shortened the name into Kavkavi.

Judging from the book, the Georgians should also be filled with respect and gratitude towards Ossetian language for its beneficial influence upon the Georgian language. The number of Ossetian words in the language was allegedly so big that it determined its gradual isolation from other Caucasian languages and increased closeness with the Ossetian language. These bright remarks are made by V. Kuznetsov. He gives a list of words that allegedly were introduced into Georgian language from Ossetian, namely, cavi, bevri, kudi, ludi, ormo, khidi. He even claims that a female name Tamar had also been borrowed from Ossetian.

Special attention in the book is paid to I. Yaglugidze, as the illuminator. It is noteworthy that he was the first to elaborate Ossetian alphabet in 1802, but the readers are kept unaware regarding the fact that the alphabet elaborated by I. Yaglugidze was based upon the Georgian alphabet.

The title of one of the chapters happens to be – “The sources on the past history of conflicting parties”. And just as many other chapters, it starts with the article by Kuznetsov, according to which “in the III year, B.C. there existed a unique culture on the territory of North and South Ossetia, and its originators and bearers represented the unique ancient nation”. V. Kuznetsov – is evidently a remarkably active author of Ossetian - Russian language press. In one of the issues of “Socialist Ossetia” of 1991, he “stated” that Ossetians had already been established in Liakhvi gorge from VII century, and fortifies his assumptions by the new interpretation of C. Yeremyanovski’s “Armenian Geography”. In the given book, as on former occasions, the time of Ossetian migration to Georgia, called stubbornly Transcaucasia, had not been coordinated, between the Ossetian and friendly Russian authors. Above, we were told that the Ossetian ancestors had allegedly lived in Georgia, the archaeological culture discovered on the territory of the so-called South Ossetia (I millennium B.C.), happens to be the creation of Ossetian forefathers. Above we could see that Kuznetsov sets the exact period, believing it had to be VII century B.C. Article by Yasenko, reprinted from “North Ossetia” newspaper of 1993, and presented in the same book, tells us that Sarmatians occupied the slopes of the Caucasus in IV B. C. . This particular author claims that the Georgian authors persistently call the country of Sarmats “Shida Kartli”, which is a political neologism. According to Yasenko, “Shida Kartli” is a composed name that appeared in Georgian language recently, and if we refer to the Territory as Sarmatia, historical justice shall be restored. As our readers can see, manufacture of mythology has no boundaries.

The city of Ckhinvali is also a sore point for Ossetians. They are but well aware of the fact that none of Ossetians dwelt in Ckhinvali, at the time of its declaration as the centre of the so called South Ossetia. Apart from statistical data, there also exist live witnesses to the fact. An article by certain A. Alaznispireli, published in 1897, in a “Cnobis Purceli” newspaper, had also been reprinted in the book: “Site of Ckhinvali is a city of the Jews and Ossetians, while Georgians and Armenians represent only one fourth of the population”

Fortunately, beginning from Vakhushti Bagrationi, we possess accurate data on Tskhinvali. Vakhushti wrote: “Here, North to Nikozi village, on the banks of Didi Lakhvi River a small town of Ckhinvali is situated, with favourable climatic conditions, where, Georgians, Armenians and the Jews reside.” (KC, IV, p 370). No Ossetians are registered in Ckhinvali in census documents. Proceeding from family lists of 1886 census, for instance, not a single Ossetian resident had been registered (accurate description of each family is given, with family names, patronymic and the fist names) (see R.Topchishvili, “Mnatobi” Magazine, #12, 1987, and “Soviet Ethnography” #6, 1989, p 113). There was no trace of Ossetians in Ckhinvali in the early 20s of XX century. According to the “Caucasian Calendar” of 1910, Georgians represented the major part of residents. Most important is the fact that, Ckhinvali, as other oykonims of “South Ossetia”, is a Georgian toponym. “Ckhinvali” (Krkhinvali), derives from the name of the tree Rchila (Georgian, Krchila) – Hornbeam. . . .

Above, we have already referred to the fact that Ossetians are inclined to declare the representatives of other nations. Ossetians. Such is the case with the philosopher of antiquity Anacharsis and VI c historian Jordan. Tsereteli, also regarded of Ossetian origin, had been mentioned as well. Stalin, in accordance with his family name, had also been listed as Ossetian, along with the sportsmen and public figures, representatives of other nations. Stalin, Jughashvili, is considered Ossetian, with an attempt to glorify the nation, despite the fact that there exists no historical source or a document, to support the aspiration of Ossetian authors. Even if his Ossetian origin is considered to be established, it can not become a proof of Stalin's belonging to Ossetian nation. As it is widely known in ethno-historic science, the nationality is not established by means of origin, but by self consideration. If the principle, put forward by Ossetians is applied, the renowned "Great and outstanding" poet Kosta Khetagurov or Olympic champion Soslan Andyeu, shall not fall into the category of Ossetians. It is a common knowledge that the Khetagurov have Kabardin origin, and they migrated to Dvaleti in the end of XVI and the beginning of XVII centuries. While the ancestors of Andyeu, migrated to Ossetia from Ingushetia. As for the family name Jugashvili, it originates from Matani village located in Kakheti, where over hundred families bear the same name. Although, the moved to Kakheti from Pshavi village of Akhadi back in XVI – XVII centuries. Besides, in the same Kakheti, in Georgia there is a village Jughaani and a village of Jughisi in Aragvi gorge. Modern science does not establish the origin of a family name by the fact of simple resemblance of family names Jughashvili and Dzukayev.

Ossetians accuse Georgians of genocide and even "double genocide". However, the true meaning of the word escapes them. They call the Georgians, struggling against the disintegration of historic Georgian territories, in 1918 and beginning of 1990s, fascists. How could possibly Ossetians, fallen in a war, led by Georgia for the preservation of territorial integrity, be regarded victims of genocide? Georgian side had suffered similar, or greater, losses. While speaking of refugees, they never mention Georgian refugees, driven out from their homeland by Ossetian separatists. We, on our side, can state that the fact of the existence of victims, on both sides, is a result of Ossetian separatism, pursuing the goal of braking away true Georgian territories and creation of Ossetian state. It should also be mentioned, that Russian Imperial forces, with their support and instructions, had rendered great aid to Ossetian separatists in the escalation of the conflict (both official and unofficial). Using Ossetians, Russians had been laying a trap for Georgia, for over a century.

Proving wrong the tide of misinformation flowing from the book shall require a voluminous edition. In general, the book is a brilliant example of provincial fascism, in this particular case, an Ossetian one. It had been molded throughout the centuries by Ossetian authors, in order to keep their compatriots, ordinary Ossetian population, misinformed and unaware of the truth.

1995.

On the book by Schnirelmann

In 2003, In Moscow IKC “Akademkniga”, published a book by V.A Schnirelamnn titled “Wars of Memories: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia” (592 pages). The last section of the book s dedicated to the Georgian - Ossetian relationships. The ideas expressed by the author are mostly accurate. They point out that the Georgian Ossetian conflicts had resulted from the myths and falsification of historical facts by the Ossetians. He particularly stresses Ossetian fascination for Scythomania. Some Ossetian “historians” had ended up claiming that “As-Alanians” were the founders of Kiev and Moscow and actual founders of the Russian State (p.496). According to the author’s mythologeme, Georgians adopted Christianity 400 years later than Ossetians, and it was Ossetians, not Georgians, who used to be the apologists of Christianity in the Caucasus, within the Muslim surroundings. Moreover, Jesus was buried in accordance with the “Ossetian” tradition and there is a great number of Ossetian names among Palestine toponyms.

We shall not burden you with the complete list of similar pearls. Neither has the author complete opinion of the Georgian history (especially regarding Abkhazia). According to V. A. Schnirelmann, the territory of South ossetia includes Northern part of Kartlian province, entire Dvaleti and Ksani regions (p. 461). The author is totally ignorant of the elementary historic Geography of Georgia. He is ignorant of the fact that Ksani gorge is an integral part of historical ethnographic region of Shida Kartli. While historical ethnographic part of Georgia, Dvaleti is presently outside the borders of Georgia and is misappropriated by Russia (North Ossetia). Only a small part, Magran Dvaleti was located within the Georgian territory, located in mountainous part of Shida Kartli, in upper parts of Didi Liakhvi, and it included nine highland villages.

According to V. A. Schnirelamn, in Georgia , it was possible to get higher education only in Georgian and the elite society of South Ossetia was undergoing Georgianization (p. 463). Could a desire to ensure the knowledge of Georgian, State language for all the citizens, and becoming fully legitimate citizens of the country, be considered Georgianization? Besides, the author possesses no information regarding the fact that there were faculties in all Georgian higher education centres where teaching was conducted in Russian language. The author could have learnt from Ossetians that the main language in Ckhinvali Pedagogical Institute was Russian. Still, one may only wonder why education in the Russian Federation was not provided in Tatar, Bashkirian, Chechen, Chuvash, Udmurtian and other languages?

V.A. Schnirelman expresses doubts regarding the intentional persecution of Georgian language and culture, abuse of historical monuments, on the territory of the so called South Ossetia (p. 464). Instead, visiting Abkhazia, the author could have gone to Ckhinvali region and witness the facts of discrimination, oppression and banishment of the Georgian population, observe them becoming ethnic minority in their own country. V.A Schnirelman writes “Instead, Georgian authors point to the early medieval churches located in South Ossetia, with Georgian inscriptions; The relations between the Allans and Iberian Kings were also mentioned, **but there was no reference to their Allanian origin** (highlighted by us R.T.); Instead much was said

about beneficial effect of the Georgian Church upon Allans (p. 485). Cynicism towards Georgia and the Georgian people is evident. Had the author been more attentive and persistent, while traveling in South Ossetia, he would have discovered the monuments of Medieval Georgian Church architecture with Georgian epigraphic inscriptions. As for concealing the Allanian origin of the Georgian (Kartlian) kings, it is a true revelation for us. Several Kartlian (Iberian) kings were related to Iranians, but we fail to see what the Iranians have in common with nomad tribes of Allan – Ossetians, coming from Northern parts of Iran? There can't be put a sign of equality, identity, between the two. It is impossible to compare Iranians, creators of powerful state, culture and civilization with nomadic Alans, living on raids in Eurasian Steppes. These are entirely different ethnoses. Iranian culture is based upon a fixed life style, highly developed agriculture. While Allanian life style (similar to Sarmats), wandering first through the territories of Central Asia and later in Southern parts of Modern Russia, was characterized with permanent movement from place to place, cattle breeding and raids for the preservation of existence. Thus it becomes clear that V.A. Scnirelmann had also been trapped in a web of Ossetian myths.

However, it is noteworthy, that Schnirelman's petulancy on Georgian Ossetian relations would seem a piece of candy if compared to the Georgian Abkhazian relations presented in author's interpretation. Here, Georgian history and Georgian – Abkhazian relations are being falsified deliberately. Could an author, unfamiliar with the Georgian scientific literature and Georgian and foreign sources on Georgia, act as a mediator and evaluator? Schnirelman claims to be one, in order to turn Georgian – Abkhazian relations upside down and create a myth, supporting Abkhazians in an attempt to disintegrate unique Georgian state and push the conflict to into deadlock.

Ethnic Processes in Shida Kartli (The Ossetians in Georgia)

Short survey of ethnic situation in Georgia

Georgia has never been a mono-ethnic state. Drastic changes of ethnic situation in the country occurred due to annexing of Georgia by Russia (1801). It was the purposeful politics of Tsarism to colonize the state with different ethnic groups, usually notwithstanding the will of the peoples, who had to transmigrate from their native lands. Besides Tsarist Russia did not allow local population to exile to another place and did everything to force them leave their native lands (the fact of Abkhazian and Georgian Muslims exile to Turkey). The percentage of Georgians diminished constantly, when it became the constituent of the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a 90 percent of the whole population was Georgians; by 1939 it diminished to 61 percent. In the nineteenth century ethnic Armenians, Greeks were resettled from Osman Empire to Georgia, also Russian and German.Earlier the Armenians settled in Georgia, basically in towns. Two strata of the Armenians were distinguished: a) migrants and b) Georgian monophysists, nominated as the Armenians. Georgian language was the mother tongue of both strata. They created books and documents in Georgian. The Jews living in Georgia called themselves "Georgian Jews", and differed from

Georgians by religion. The Tatars – (ancestors of modern Azeri) from Borchalo were respectful citizens of Georgia. They were devoted to the Georgian Kings and especially showed themselves under the reign of King Erekle II. The worthy man was the warrior Khudia Borchaloeli, who actually became the national hero of Georgia. The Abkhazian and Ossetians peoples.

Before dealing with the principle issue – the migration of the Ossetians to Georgia and Georgian-Ossetians interrelations, it should be mentioned, that Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetians relations (notwithstanding the facts of former forays from the north Caucasus) were friendly and neighborly, before their purposeful transmigration from the north Caucasus by the Russian empire. On the whole, historically in Georgia, there had never been any facts of ethnic conflicts or confrontations between the Georgians and other ethnic groups. According to one of the folk poems, there was no difference between the Georgians and the Armenians; the Tatars and the Georgians were brothers. Russian empire created space of confrontation among different ethnic groups in Georgia, due to the politics it accomplished in the country. Conflicts firstly were revealed only in the twentieth century. It must be highlighted that, Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian nuptial relations, characteristic of these peoples, were well manifested especially in the contact area of these ethnoses.

Precise information on the Ossetian migration to Georgia

For the last two or three decades the history of the Ossetian resettlement to Georgia had been constantly and purposefully disfigured, that was surely provoked by the particular imperialistic forces. Unfortunately, Ossetian “warriors” inspired with hatred from childhood toward the Georgians, who quasi had colonized their ancestral homeland- the South Ossetia, used to blame Georgian feudal for invading Ossetia, later Georgian social- democrats (Mensheviks), for putting down the Ossetian rebellion provoked by the Russian Bolsheviks.

Before naming the real date of the Ossetian migration to Georgia, should be marked the following:

1. For the last period, the Ossetian historians give different dates about the Ossetian resettlement in Georgia. Some assert that it happened five thousand years ago (Nafi Jusoit), but more moderate social scholars think that, it happened between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The others suggest different chronological periods between these two very distant dates. Recently one of the Soviet historians, Mark Blied showed himself by ignoring the historical sources and creating mythologemes via interpreting his imaginary ideas on the topic. According to Mark Blied, Medieval Karthli (Iberian kingdom) was nothing but the Georgian-Ossetian confederation. Some of the odious scholars go further and denominate the territory of the so-called “South Ossetian”, as Sarmatia. Such an odious statement is a shock for any historian.

2. Surely, the history should have no importance in ethnic conflict resolution - the people living on the territory of definite ethnoses should be plenipotentiary members of the state (as Ossetian used to be in Georgia historically). It's a fact, that Georgian- Ossetian conflict was

evoked in the post Soviet period. It was not a classical ethnic conflict, but provoked and controlled by the imperialistic forces, which was evidenced by introduction of extra historical themes, that was crowned by the statements made by the Russian Duma in 2004 and later by the Authorities. The essence of those statements is: Russia annexed North and South Ossetia simultaneously in 1774. i.e. the “South Ossetia” had never been a part of Georgia. The purpose is clear: the imperialistic forces try to create basis for legitimization of annexing the Georgian territories. In this case the Ossetians were exploited as instrument. Actually Russia violated interests of ethnic Ossetians and ethnic Georgians. This problem will be touched again, but now, the real history is offered to the reader.

Historians have no doubt that, the Ossetians are descendants of the Iranian Alans, though the final formation of the nation occurred after mixing with the local Caucasians in the Caucasian mountains. Earlier the Alans had had similar contacts with other ethnos, for example, with peoples of Turkish and Mongolian origin. The ethno genesis of Iranian language speaking Alans proceeded in Middle Asia. From this point of view, the Alans are mentioned firstly in Chinese sources of II c. B.C. (Aleman, 2003), the horizon of which reached the eastern part of the Caspian Sea. According to other classical authors the Alans appeared in the first century A.D., since they had started nomadic life in European section of Eurasia and had isolated from the Asian Alans. All the data existing in the world historical sources about the Alans- the ancestors of the Ossetians, are gathered in the work of the Catalonian author August Aleman, where the interested reader can find, that the Alans (Ossetians) did not inhabit nearby territories of Georgia within the early Medieval Ages. Different sources distinguish the Asian and the European Alans. Those who led a nomadic life in the area of the river Volga and the Azov Sea in the fourth century A.D. were annihilated by the Huns. Those who survived followed the Huns to the west; the others moved to the Caucasian valleys, where they settled down and formed the state. Since then onwards, Georgia had intensive relation with the Alans (Ossetians). The relations were neighborly and even dynasty marriages were made between them. More important was that the Georgian kings often hired the Alan- Ossetians to repulse attacks from different enemies.

The second stage of the Alan –Ossetians miserable history started in the thirteenth century. After Mongolian invasion, in spite of long resistance, the defeated Alan-Ossetians lost not only their Statehood, but the area of inhabitation. Between the XIII-XIV c.c. from steppes they moved to mountains. It should be mentioned that part of Alans moved to mountains after early medieval period. After the Huns invasions, they inhabited not only the North Caucasian valleys, but also the West part of the Caucasus, in modern Karachay and the Balkan territories. The Digorian Ossetians of the late Middle Age are the descendents of those old resettled Ossetians. (The Ossetians who inhabited the North Caucasian Mountains lived in four communities: Digori, Alagiri, Kurtauli and Tagauri). Since XIII-XIV c.c. the Alan-Ossetians settled down exactly in those three gorges - Alagiri, Kurtauli and Tagauri. The geographers called these territories the central Caucasus. Modern Ossetian language has two dialects: Digorian, which is archaic and Ironian.

Up to the twentieth century the Ossetians had no common endo-ethnonime. Those, who lived in three gorges of east Ossetians, called themselves “Irons”, and others living in the West, in Digori gorge, called themselves “Digorons”. Digorons are firstly mentioned in “Armenian Geography” of the seventh century, but nothing is said about the Irons till the seventeenth

century. N. Volkova, the ethnologist mentions that, the term “Iron” denoting the Eastern group of the Ossetian is rarely met in historical sources, but gives no explanation to it. It’s easy to explain, if we precisely study the area of Allan-Ossetian tribes’ inhabitation and the migratory directions from the early Middle Age to late Middle Age. Till the XII-XIV c.c. i.e. before Mongolian invasions, the Ossetians, more rightly, their ancestor Alans never inhabited the three above-mentioned gorges (Alagiri, Kurtauli, Tagauri). They formed their state in the valleys of the North Caucasus. As for the Mountain of the North Caucasus, they lived in Digoria and in western territories of modern Balkaria and Karachay, since early Middle Ages-VI-VII cc. That is the basic reason why the Digorians are mentioned in early sources and not the Irons. According to one Balkarian legend, the ancestors of Digorian and Balkarian feudal, Badeliats and Basiats were resettled from the North, Majari- the middle part of the River Kumi.

But this does not mean that, neighboring peoples perceived these two Ossetian ethnic groups as different peoples. Despite not having the common name, that Iranian language speaking people, living in the central part of the North Caucasus, had common self-identity. As for the ethnonime- “Ossetians”, it was spread by Georgians and besides Georgians, nobody named them that way.

Nowadays the Ossetian scientists mark out “Tuals”, i.e. those living in Tualta. Tualta is the historical-ethnographical part of Georgia - Dvaleti, where the Georgian mountaineers (Dvalians) used to live. They were settled in six communities situated in the gorges of Zhgeli, Zramagi, Nara, Zrogo, Zakha and Kasri. In the second half of the twentieth century the Ossetian scientists called Dvaleti, as the “Central Ossetia”.

In the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries the Allan-Ossetians changed their place of settlement and intermingled with local Caucasian tribes. In Georgian sources those were “Caucasians” and ancestors of Ingush tribes. Ossetians former habitats in the North Caucasian valleys were occupied by Kabardians. They had built solid fortresses in passages, from mountain to lowland, to block the Ossetians resettling to the North Caucasian valleys. Migration of Ossetians was attended by shifting of some toponymies. Since the XIII-XIV c.c. onwards, up to establishment of the Soviet authority, the Ossetians did not have any statehood or a common governor. As the majority of the Caucasian ethnic groups, the Ossetians used to live separately, in territorial communities.

We shall deal with the Ossetians migration to the South, later. But now will be discussed Ossetians relation with Russia and their migration to the North Caucasian foothill and valleys. As indicated in Russian scholarly literature, the Russian-Ossetian relations were strengthened in the eighteenth century. The major part of the Ossetians was Russian-oriented and had appealed several times to the Russian government to take Ossetians, as subject nation under subordination. At the beginning of 1770, the Elders of East Ossetia applied to Kizlar commandant with this request. Russia was interested in joining Ossetia, for its perfect strategic location, connecting the gorges of Ossetia with the South Caucasus. The process of joining Ossetia with Russia started after Kuchuk-Kainarji treaty and ended by entering Kabardo, as a subject under protection, in Russian Empire. In this treaty document nothing was said about Ossetia, because by that time such state or unit did not exist at all. But Russian authorities

declare the opposite. There is not any document referring Ossetia as a state formation; moreover, there is not even a single document proving the unification of two Ossetia, or the conception of “North Ossetia” and “South Ossetia”. Existence of two Ossetias as separate state units or of whole Ossetia as a state by the end of XVIII century is a complete nonsense. If the state of Ossetia really existed why did the Ossetian “Chenils” (elected representatives of people), not the state leader or the ambassador of the country, visit the Astrakhan governor with the request to join Russia in 1774? Kuchuk-Kainarji truce refers to Kabardo and nothing is said about Ossetia. At that time, the Ossetians were under the formal dependence of Kabardo. In historical researches of the Soviet period it was mentioned, that out of the four Ossetian gorges (communities) only three of them went under the dependence of Russia (North Caucasus1988; 422-449; Bliiev 1990; 44-45). But Russian historiography considers 1774 to be the year of joining Ossetia with Russia. In October of 1774 in Mozdok fortress, due to the will of the Ossetians, negotiations were carried out between the governor of Astrakhan and the Ossetian delegation of twenty people to discuss the following issues: settlement of the Ossetians into the Central Caucasian foothill valleys; joining of the territories populated by the Ossetians to the Russian Empire; building of fortresses to protect them from the attacks of the neighboring feudal. Both sides reached the agreement on all of the issues. It should be highlighted, that the Moslem western Ossetians (Digorian Ossetians) did not participate in those negotiations and in 1774 they maintained independence from Russia. As for the Ossetians of Georgia, living in Dvaleti and Shida Kartli (After annexation of Kartli-Kakheti, they resisted the Russian government for a long time. For example, in 1830 they rose in rebellion against Russia. Especially the Thomaevs, who lived in the village of Roki, showed themselves against Russian colonizers (Kaloiev 1999:268). The Ossetians aimed to own lands in the foothill valleys of the North Caucasus. Since then, began Ossetians’ intensive migration to the North, particularly in 20s of the XIX century. This actually stopped Ossetians migration to the South i.e. to Georgia, notwithstanding Ossetians of Dvaleti, residing geographically closer to Georgia than to the North Caucasus.

By the end of the seventeenth century before moving to North, the verges of passages of Digori, Kurta and Taguri ravines of Ossetians settlements were bordering Kabardo. In the late 70-80s of the XVIII c. a few settlements appeared in the foothill valleys: Karajaevo, Kobani, Vastili, Vaseligo and Tuma on the river Urukhi and Kubati in the ravine of the river Dur-Dur. The new settlers were the Karajaevs, Kupataevs and Tuganovs, who had moved with their subordinates. A bit earlier, at the beginning of the XVIII century the Ossetians extended borders to the East and in 20s of the XVIII century settled down on the left bank of the river Tergi in Larsi, Chmish and Balta (all are in Dariali ravine). According to Russian sources, the left bank of the river Tergi in XVI-XVII centuries was inhabited by Ingush people. The Ossetians had moved from Alagiri ravine to the above mentioned villages (Volkova 1974; 125-126). According to Klaprot, Ossetians living in Lars, Chmish and Balta, had to pay tribute for land to Ingush. According to the same author, the Ossetian Slonats (patronymic name) were joined by different patronymic groups from Taguri ravine. The reinforced Ossetians stopped giving the tribute to the Ingush, notwithstanding nobility of minor Kabardo- the Mudarovs to whom for thirty years, they had been paying tribute. Due to several documents it was confirmed, that the modern capital of Ossetia- Vladikavkaz by 1774, when the Russians built a fortress there, was an Ingush village and was called Zauregui, settled by Ingush with patronymic name - Zaurov. The XIX century was the period of Ossetians intensive

transmigration from mountains to valleys. In 20s of the XIX century new Ossetian settlements appeared in the valleys of Vladikavkaz, which was inhabited by the Iron Ossetians (Berozov; 1980).

About Ossetians migration to Georgia

There are no weighty arguments or facts corroborating Ossetians inhabitation on the Georgian territory from old times. None of the historical sources or documents corroborates the Ossetians migration to Georgia during different periods B.C. and Alan-Ossetian resettlement in the IV century A.D. when the Huns invaded Georgia. As it was mentioned above, then Ossetians moved forward from the Don and the Azov valleys to southern part of the North Caucasian foothill valleys.

The Ossetians inhabited Georgia neither in the VII nor in the XIII centuries, as some of the authors desire to imagine. In the XIII century the Ossetians started migrating exceptionally through the mountainous ravines of the North Caucasus. The migration process was prolonged and ended only at the beginning of the XV c. In the second half of the XII c. only one Ossetian group, entering via Darubandi, tried to settle in Shida Kartli. Their military force acted under the command of the Ilkhan Mongolian Empire. "In 1292 the Ossetians conquered Shida Kartli and overtook Gory" (as described by Chroniclers). Ossetians exploited the weakening of the state of Georgia and with the support of Mongolians tried to get settled in Shida Kartli. The Ossetians serving actually as Mongolian "police forces", lately were destroyed and fought off the country by George V (the Brilliant). The mountaineers of Aragvi ravine and the Army of Ksani "Saeristavo" (Principality) led by Virshel Eristavi fought for the central government in that war. After exile of Ossetian forces from the country, Georgia firmly blocked both gateways of Georgia to Ossetia (Dariali and Kasris-Kari) and stopped for long the Ossetian migration to Georgia. It should be mentioned that Ossetians had attempted to settle, via the help of foreign forces, in Georgia before. For example, in the middle of IX century the Arab military leader Bugha Turkish, led 100 Ossetian families through Dariali gateway and helped them settle in the city of Dmanisi, Kvemo Kartli, the Northern part of Georgia which is quite far from Shida Kartli. Nothing is known what happened with those 100 Ossetian families. Supposedly, they were either assimilated with Georgians or left Georgia soon. In the middle of the XIII century, due to the Order of Mongol Khan, King David VII received Ossetian military forces into Georgia and let them settle in Dmanisi and Zhinvani. Nothing is known about the fate of those military forces. In any case, no Georgian source reveals any Ossetian ethnic enclave in those cities.

Settlement of the Ossetians in the historical Georgian province of Dvaleti, located in the North part of the Caucasus – started in the end of the 15th century, proceeded mainly in the XVI century. In the XVII century, the process of assimilation of the local Georgian ethnographic group (territorial unit) - the Dvales with Ossetians was finished in Dvaleti. However, as known from B. Kaloev's ethnographic records, bilingualism was characteristic of some Dvaleti ravines for a long time, for example in Zakha (Kaloev 1999). Most of inhabitants of Zakha knew Georgian Language well. This fact due to Kaloev must be explained by long ethno-cultural links with Georgia. Besides, ecclesiastics used Georgian language while serving in churches in Zakha. This record directly indicates not to ethno-cultural links between the two

different ethnoses, but to the fact that, the Dvals were Georgian mountaineers assimilated by exogenous, Iran language speaking group. The existence of Georgian churches, services of Georgian priests in Georgian language corroborate that, Dvaleti was Georgian land with its powerful Christian Religion. B. Kaloev in his records also brings some other proof that, even at the end of the XVIII century in case of need, the inhabitants of Dvaleti fought for the Georgian army, similar to other representatives of other parts of the country. Before Ossetians settlement in Dvaleti, owing to Ossetian raids and forays in the region, most of the Dvals moved to different parts of Georgia (Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Imereti, Racha). Those who remained in their habitat, within the Ossetian ethnic-linguistic environment, were quickly assimilated by intensively grouping Ossetian ethnic groups. The Georgian patronymic names of Dvaleti were: the Khadurs, the Chipchiurs, the Bigulis, the Tvauris, the Chochouris (the same as Chochishvilis), the Begeluris, the Gudiauris, the Bagauris, the Gergaulis, the Tabauris, the Kherkheulidzes, the Qesauris, the Parukhauris; also: the Biganis (the Biganishvilis), the Khabarelis, the Kheterelis, the Khachidzes (who were known as the Khachiuris before). As for the most popular Ossetian patronymic name- Khetaguri (khetagurebi) living in Nar-Mamisoni cave i.e. Dvaleti, their ancestor came from Kabardo. Thus, it's natural that, in Georgian ethnic-linguistic surrounding, their surnames were registered with the suffix "-ur" and afterwards, in the Ossetian ethnic surrounding the surname took Ossetian ending.

The fact, that Ossetians forcibly found their way through many attacks and assaults to settle down in Dvaleti – the historic territory of Georgia, was expressed in folk too. We implicate the folk poem-“Unknown Bird Flew over the Mountain”, which was composed in Racha-one of the historical-ethnographical provinces of Georgia, bordering Dvaleti. Therefore, the importance of the poem, as a historical source is great. It must be indicated, that this folk poem well elucidates, that one of the historical provinces of Georgia- Dvaleti had never been a constituent part of the Ossetia and that the Ossetians managed forcibly to settle down in Dvaleti: “An unknown bird with white wings flew high over the mountains. The army of Ossetians and Dvals moved to Zhgali. The war began in the morning. They were drawing the swords and beating the spear. The swords were all in blood. Japhar ran away like a partridge, the Ossetian chased him like an eagle. Japhar, you can't run away to your wife, you will not tell her about this war, you will not give her the red dress. Japhar, the golden pole, fell down and so the war was over...” (Ancient; 1911-1913: 115).

There are more than 15 versions of this folk poem, even more perfected. It is possible to restore the first version. Scientists consider this poem to be quite old due to its structure (Qurdiani 1997: 176-178). We can conclude that *this poem depicts the Ossetian people's fight with the local Dvaleti population. The Ossetian people invaded the territories in Dvaleti by force. They won victory in this struggle. Lots of Dvaleti population died. Those, who had survived, left their ancestors' dwellings (and they settled in Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Racha, Zemo Imereti). One of the leaders of Dvaleti people Japari was defeated in that unequal fight and he run away “as a partridge”. Japari, who personifies Dvaleti people, was cut up by the Ossetian people.* The truthfulness of that fight is very well depicted in this folk poem. The both toponymes (geographical names) mentioned in the poem (“Upper Mountain” and “Zhgele”, were the fight places) are in Dvaleti. “The Upper Mountain” is the same as “Upper Dvaleti”. The same geographical unit was mentioned by Ioane Bagrationi (Bagrationi 1986: 79). “Zhgele” is one of the six ravines of Dvaleti, which geographically is near to the

mountainous Racha (there is an exit from mountainous Racha to Zhgele ravine in Dvaleti). There is one toponyme “KalaKa” mentioned in some versions of the poem. “Kalaka” was also one of the inhabited areas in Dvaleti. The phrase- “white-plumed strange bird “-in the poem stands for the Ossetian people, who came with a huge army to fight with local Dvaletian people. It is obvious from the poem that, the two different nations stood against each other: the Ossetian, who came by force and the local Georgian- Dvals. This poem annihilates the Ossetian authors’ “assertion” that, Dvals were Ossetians. The drastic ethnic changes in one of the oldest mountainous provinces- Dvaleti, took place exactly after the fight that is illustrated in the poem.

Ossetian legends confirm too, that the Ossetian ethnos settled in Dvaleti by force. They fought with the local population, defeated them and occupied their dwellings. According to such legends we can fix the local and foreign surnames. After settling in Dvaleti, the Ossetians moved to the mountainous parts of Shida Karthli.

The Ossetians families settled in Nar-Mamisoni cave (i.e. historical Dvaleti) by the XVIII century, transmigrated mainly from the Alagiri ravine. The ethnographic corroborative data on this fact is given by the Russian ethnologist Natalia Volkova: “The more massive and ancient movement of the people from the Alagiri ravine should be considered their settling in the Central (as Ossetians called Dvaleti; the term was first used by B. Kaloev) and South Ossetia. The national tradition brings the population of Didi Liakhvi and Ardoni out of the Alagiri settlement, Tsamat, Dagom, Luar, Ursdon, Tsei and so on.” (Volkova, 1974: 122). “The formation of Tualta (as the Ossetians called Dvaleti) occurred with the help of the exiled Alagirians. The ancestors of Kozaevs, Khozaevs, Biragovs were settled in the Zrogo ravine, the ancestors of Kaloevs -in the Zakha ravine, and the ancestors of Kuchievs from Mizuri- in the Gib ravine. Tuals transmigrated from Tualta to the region of Georgian-military road (Kobi, Ukhate), Urs-Tualta, from where some families (for example, Abaevs) have moved to Kobi, to the Truso ravine, (out of the six ravines of Dvaleti, one of them is the Nara ravine), also to the Java and Kudari ravines” (Volkova, 1974: 124). The same author points to the massive migration of the Tagaurian Ossetians to the gate of the Tergi ravine (Truso) and to the region of the Georgian military road. The scientists mark out, that the Alagirians’ massive migration was conditioned by lack of fertile lands in Alagiri ravine, in comparison with other Ossetian ravines. B. Kaloev couldn’t avoid the trustworthy materials which prove that Ossetians of Dvaleti were formed by assimilation of Dvals- the local Caucasian tribes with the Alans. But it is difficult for him to admit that the Dvals are the ethnic Georgians (Kaloevi, 1999:5). Generally, the Ossetian peoples’ migration to Shida Karthli occurred mainly through Dvaleti. This province was not removed from Georgia, even after ethnic changes in Dvaleti. During the statehood of Georgia, even after it’s annexing by Russia, Dvaleti was always the indivisible part of Georgia. Due to the order of April 3, 1858 of A. Bariatinsky-the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Dvaleti, (Nara District), modern Piagdoni and Ardoni sources, (consisted in the province of Gori) (total square 3. 581km), was joined to the “Ossetian Military District” of Tergi District of the North Caucasus (Ivanenko 1873: 450-451). As mentioned in one of the documents dated by 1858, the Abaevs living in Zakha ravine of Dvaleti indicated that, their ancestors devotedly served Georgian Kings and defended them from violent Lezghins and Persians. This statement given by B. Kaloev directly indicates that Dvaleti, despite ethnic changes, was always the indivisible part of Georgia. Georgian sources also corroborate the

same. According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, Dvaleti was comprised into the territorial unity of Georgia (Kartlis Ckhovreba 1973: 633) from the reign of king Parnavazi (IV-III B.C). Similar to other mountainous parts of Georgia, Dvaleti was directly subordinated to royal court; a feudal unit – “Satavado” never existed there (the same situation was in neighboring mountainous parts: Pshavi, Khevsureti, Tusheti...). Generally, the mountaineers had comparative freedom. Their responsibility was mainly to defend the borders. Since the break down of the united kingdom of Georgia, in the second half of the XV century Dvaleti was the indivisible part of the kingdom of Karthli. It was governed by “Mouravs”, who were assigned by the King. Representative of such authorities was Giorgi Saakadze, the head of Dvaleti at the beginning of the XVII century. Similar to other mountainous people of Georgia, Ossetians of Dvaleti sometimes were disobedient. Such attempts were registered at the beginning of the XVIII century. King Vakhtang VI had to organize a special expedition and the Ossetians of Dvaleti had to acknowledge again the supremacy of the king of Karthli.

Dvaleti was related to Georgia not only politically but economically too. B kaloev writes about Zakha ravine (community) that, the harvested crop was three-four months supply and until joining to the Tergi district and opening the Ossetian military way (60s of the XIX century), they used to buy food in Georgian cities: Tskhinvali, Oni, Gori, Kutaisi, etc. They changed here mainly cattle-rearing products into husbandry and industrial products. According to ethnographic data, wine was also mentioned among those products taken from Shida Karthli (Kaloev 1999: 270-271, 276). The Ossetian people of Dvaleti generally never got related with North Caucasian Ossetian, due to geographically inaccessible pathways connecting Dvaleti to the North Caucasus; while they through eleven passages were easily connected to Didi Liakhvi and Rioni ravines even in winter.

The first dwellings of Ossetian people nowadays can be seen on the Georgian territory in Truso (upper reaches of the river Tergi) and in Magran-Dvaleti (upper reaches of the river Didi Liakhvi). The Ossetian people moved from the mountains of the North Caucasus in the first half of the XVII century, but yet hadn't occupied the most of the mountainous part of Shida Karthli. They had migrated only into the upper reaches of Didi Liakhvi (Magran-Dvaleti), which was the unity of nine “mountainous villages”. According to historical data, in the first half of the XVII century, many remains of dwellings could be seen in the mountainous parts of Shida Karthli (ravines of Didi and Patara Liakhvi). The local Georgian population had migrated to lowland. Vakhushti Bagrationi used to underline that the Ossetian people dwelt in the mountains of Dvaleti and Shida Karthli on the remains of the Georgians' habitat: “First the Georgian peasants had dwelt on those territories. Then the Ossetian overtook and the Georgians moved to valley, due to the decrease of population in valleys” (Vakhushti Bagrationi).

The Ossetian migration to the mountains of Shida Karthli, namely to the upper part of the rivers Didi and Patara Liakhvi, proceeded in the second half of the XVII century. According to the records of Russian ambassador M.I. Tatischev (1604-1615), there was only one settlement of 200 Ossetians between Circass and Georgia. One of the documents proves that in the middle of the XVII century, the Ossetians had not been settled in the village Zemo Java of the Didi Liakhvi ravine yet. It is written in the document that “no man survived in Zemo Java, no dwelling remained in the area” (documents 1940: 364); the local population died out as a result

of the Ossetians raids and piracy. Depopulated Zemo Java was bought and sold now and again by feudal. This document names the extinct Georgian surnames. But the Ossetian historians translated it in a mangled way, as if the Ossetians died out in Zemo Java, which is not true.

According to this document, the inhabitants of Zemo Java were the Dziganidzes, the Epeniashvilis and the Gurjishvilis. *According to the document dated 1634-1658, king Rostom ordered his subordinates not to do any harm to those Ossetians who moved from their own country to Zemo Java and not hinder any who would try to move in future* (Georgian Central Historical Archive. Fund 1448, document N 10326). According to the earlier document, dated the second half of the XVI century, Java was inhabited with the patronymic of the Garakanidzes. It must be noted here also that, Georgian kings and princes used to invite the Ossetian to settle in the remains of Georgian dwellings and villages. There are many documents confirming this. The Ossetians' migration to Georgia, in the middle of the XVII century, was well elucidated in their records; each patronymic had its own legend about the history of its ancestors' (embracing 10-12 generation) migration from the North Caucasus to Georgia (Vaneev 1936). If we consider the age of marriageable Ossetian only four generations lived in a century. Factually, these legends are consistent with the sources and documents: Ossetians migration took place in the middle of the XVII century. Though, the Ossetian scientists still found a way out – they nominated those migrants as last – second wave migrants and introduced a notion of “the former Ossetian”, who quasi had migrated to Georgia earlier and the Georgians assimilated them. Therefore, about hundred Ossetians with Georgian family names were purposefully considered as native Ossetian – “the former Ossetian”, as they refer to.

The Ossetians gradually moved to the South and by 30s of the XVIII century they had occupied totally the whole mountainous line of Didi Liakhvi and Parata Liakhvi ravines. In the mentioned period, the Ossetians lived in some mountainous villages together with the remaining local Georgians (Giuldenshtedt 1961: 277-279).

In fact, the Ossetians didn't settle in the foothill of Shida Karthli in the XVIII century. Their migration into the foothill villages of Shida Karthli (mostly on the remains) started in the late XVIII and early XIX centuries.

At the beginning of the XVIII c. Ossetians adopted the upper reaches of Jejori - (Kudaro) and Ksani ravines (Zhamuri). The Ossetian migration into Zhamuri proceeded from mountainous ravines of the North Caucasus and the mountainous line of Didi Liakhvi ravine. However, famous Ossetian scientist Vasil Abaev stated also, that the Ossetians had inhabited Ksani ravine for two hundred years (Abaev 1949:50). They migrated into Kudaro mainly from Dvaleti. In the mountains of Shida Karthli the Ossetians first occupied Didi Liakhvi then Patara Liakhvi ravines and the upper reaches of the river Ksani (Zhamuri). At the beginning of the XVIII century little group of the Ossetians appeared in the upper reaches of Mejuda ravine and Isrolikhevi. They came to the upper reaches of Mejuda ravine via the upper reaches of Patara Liakhvi ravine. We must use the citations from the monograph of the Russian ethnologist N. Volkova: “Many historical sources prove the fact of the Ossetian migration to the south. The facts, given by these sources show that this kind of migration, which was even the second wave of migration for some regions, touches 3-5 generations. According to some

materials, most of the Ossetian families living in the Kudaro gorge are the descendants of the people living in the Alagiri gorge (the settlement of Tsei, Bud and so on) and Tualta (the settlement of Tib, Nar, also the Dzakhian and the Mamisonian gorges), which formed the following settlements: Let (formed by the Kaloevs), Gulianta (formed by the Gularovs), Stirmasig (formed by the Gagievs), Kobet (formed by the Jajievs), Sagilzas (formed by the Nanievs and Nartikoevs). The 4th generation of Khugaevs, settled in the upper part of Jojori near Chasavali (near the modern Kvaisi), formed the settlement of Kiozita. Ancestors of this family, according to the legend, had left Mamisoni for the lack of the arable lands” (Volkova, 1974: 134). The fact that in the middle of the XVIII century the Ossetians dwelt only in the mountainous extinct areas of Shida Karthli is very well depicted on the Georgian atlas composed by Vakhushti Bagrationi. The Ossetian’ dwellings are marked by the number 8 on the atlas.

By the end of the XVIII century, Ossetians main populated area embraced the extreme South edges (from West to East): Kudaro (the source of the river Jejori in Racha), Gupta (the river Didi Liakhvi gorge), upwards the Atseriskhevi gorge (in Patara Liakhvi gorge), two villages in the upper reaches of Mejuda gorge, Zhamuri (the source of Qsani gorge), Guda (the upper reaches of the river Tetri Aragvi gorge, in Mtiuleti), Truso (the source of the river Tergi). There were no Ossetian dwellings in Lekhura and Mejuda gorges (except the upper reaches), the most mountainous parts of Ksani and Proneebi gorges, by the end of the XVIII century, i.e. as in times of Vakhushti Bagrationi so in the end of the XVIII century, the Ossetians lived only in the “barren (fruitless) areas” of different gorges of Georgia, i.e. in “the mountainous parts” of Georgia.

At the end of the XVIII century and at the beginning of the XIX century, the Ossetians occupied an important mountainous part in Patara Liakhvi gorge. From this period and especially, in the first decade of the XIX century, the Ossetians started to move individually from the mountains of Shida Karthli to the villages of foothill and valleys of Shida Karthli. By that time, such migration was accomplished from the mountainous part of Patara Liakhvi gorge (the details of the Ossetian movement from the mountains to foothills and valleys, are well depicted in the population register books, dated 1818, 1830, 1840, 1860, 1873, 1886 and family lists, which are protected in the fund 254 of the Central State Historical Archive of Georgia).

The Ossetian migration from the North Caucasian Mountain to Georgia had stopped actually in the end of the XVIII century, because the official government of Russia allowed Ossetian to settle down in the North Caucasian Valleys. The special exception was only the Ossetian population of Dvaleti, who did not stop migration to the present Georgian territory almost for the whole of the XIX century. Generally, the Ossetians migrated to Georgia through Dvaleti. After settling down in Dvaleti for a while, the Ossetian people used to move to the mountainous parts of Shida Karthli. However, there are many facts confirming the Ossetian migration directly from the mountainous parts of the North Caucasus, especially at the early stage of migration.

The statement of some authors, concerning the Ossetians settlement in the foothills and valleys of Shida Karthli in the XVII-XVIII centuries, is not trustworthy. At the beginning of the XIX century, the Ossetians started to migrate to Proneebi, Mejuda, Lekhura ravines and

the other inhabited parts of Ksani ravine. The Ossetians settling in the remains of Georgians in Proneebi ravine occurred mainly from Didi Liakhvi valley. Though, it is noticeable that, the first Ossetian migrants in the Proneebi ravine were from Dvaleti. The population of Patara and Didi Liakhvi moved to Mejuda gorge. The Ossetians from Ksani gorge (Zhamuri, Churta) migrated basically to Lekhura gorge. Despite of this fact, the Ossetian settlement in Lekhura, Mejuda and Proneebi gorges was not intensive in the first three decades of the XIX century. The intensive settling of Ossetians in those ravines proceeded basically from the middle till 80s of the XIX century.

One or two Ossetian families appeared on the other side of Shida Karthli region in 80s of the XIX century. Since then by the end of the XIX c. Ossetians inhabited intensively the mentioned territory and also modern Borjomi (Gujareti gorge) region.

The Ossetians migrated from the mountainous parts of Shida Karthli to Kakheti and Kvemi Karthli regions at the beginning of the XX century. According to the Soviet records of the XX century, 164 thousand Ossetians lived in Georgia. Only sixty five thousand ethnic Ossetians, out of this number, lived on the territory of the “Autonomous Region of South Ossetia”. Almost one hundred thousand people inhabited in other parts of Georgia. They lived compactly in some parts, or mixed with Georgian population in other parts. The number of ethnic Ossetians in 1886 was 72 000. At the end of the XVIII century, 2.130 Ossetian farmstead (15 000) lived on the present territory Georgia. Due to some Ossetian authors, the number of Ossetians in Georgia in the second half of the XVIII century varied from 6 000 to 7 000 farmsteads. This figure is quite unreal and obviously, the authors ignore the data of the historical sources. Actually, as mentioned above, about 2 130 farmsteads were registered only. On the whole, within XIX and XX centuries the percentage of Ossetians in Georgia varied between 3- 4%.

The process of migration and settlement of Ossetians in Georgia was not a quite peaceful process. Sometimes they made their ways by force, especially during the first period of their migration to Dvaleti, as well as to the mountains of Shida Karthli. According to the historical data, legends and folklore, it is obvious that bored by the attacks of Ossetians, the local Georgian mountaineers had to leave their habitat and migrate to valleys. The conditions in valleys were more peaceful for them. Frequent attacks dramatically changed the demographic situation in foothill and lowland regions of Shida Karthli.

Ossetians found the critical social-political situation in Georgia propitious for them and started assimilation of the mountainous part of Dvaleti and Shida Karthli. Due to the frequent attacks, disintegrated and broken into pieces Georgia could not control the blocking gateways of passages to the North Caucasus – Kasris Kari and Dariali. By the way, Kasris kari was situated in the North of Dvaleti and served as a passage to Ossetia. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote about this: “there is a gate of rock and stones, big-vaulted, on the river, made by the kings purposefully, not to allow Ossetians cross it by their own wish” (Vakhushti 1973: 644-645).

By the XVIII century, the economic and demographic situations in the country were so catastrophic in Shida Karthli, that the Georgian king, and nobility- Tavadebi, frequently invited them to settle in Georgia. For example, according to Ioane Bagrationi, the Ossetians

lived in Digomi Village or nearby it. Ossetians' provisional settlement near Digomi is confirmed by the registration document of Digomi Village population, at the beginning of the XIX century, where none of the Ossetians farmsteads and the surnames of Ossetian origin are registered. Also one document dated 1799 is worthy of mentioning; It was given by the king Giorgi XII to Tagaureli Ossetians. According to the document, Tagaureli Ossetians had appealed to the King, with request, to allow them resettle in Georgia. The king sent a nobleman Ninia Gabashvili to Ossetia to let them know his conditions on the request. He proposed Ossetians to be his paramour peasants and promised to take them under his protection. At first, they would have to stay in Digomi, and then would be chosen a suitable place for living. Before starting arable works on the land, they would be helped in supplying themselves with food (document of the institute of manuscript N 1617). The temporal settlement of the Ossetians near Digomi is also attested by the ethnographic data. As it appeared, at the edge of the XVIII-XIX centuries, the 32-33 Ossetians farmsteads lived there. Owing to the ignominious behavior- thievery, which was Ossetian's characteristic feature (they did not even leave tugs and thongs to Digomi peasants), the Digomi peasants banished them with switches and cudgels and followed them to the Bebristsikhe.

No more than one Ossetian generation managed to live in the mountains of Shida Kartli in the second half of the XVIII century and in different villages of the foothills in the first half of the XIX century. After short stay in different villages of mountains and foothills, the Ossetians moved mainly down to the South. It is evidenced by the population registration data of the XIX century. Settled in the foothill villages at the beginning of the XIX century, the Ossetians intensively moved to the valley villages in the middle of the same century. Thus, the Ossetians' gradual, intensive movement from highlands to lowlands in the end of the XVIII century and for the whole XIX century is obvious, which was quite suitably termed the "dense settlement" in Georgian historiography. The Ossetians were characterized by intensive movement, so since settled in valley villages in the second half of the XIX century, they used to change their habitat and moved to other villages of the same valley. According to the family lists dated 1886, in the 60-70s of the XIX century, more than 1 340 Ossetian farmstead moved from more than 76 mountainous villages of the Didi and Patara Liakhvi gorges and settled in different villages of the valleys.

Ossetians migration to the mountains of Shida Kartli occurred not long ago, which is confirmed by their social status. The majority of the Ossetians living in Didi Liakhvi ravine were recorded in the population registration data of the XIX century as Khizans (migrants). The term- Khizans (migrants) is known in Georgian historical sources and appropriate research works, which stand for the peasants, banished from their own habitat and settled down somewhere else. Khizan was a category of peasants in feudal Georgia, but unlike from them, he was personally free and his dependence on the feudal- landowner was defined by using his native land. Khizan was apart from the local population because he was the migrated peasant.

The fact that Dvaleti and the North part of Shida Kartli was not the land of the Ossetians' dwelling, but of the Georgians, was very obviously confirmed by such data as Oikonims (village names). None of the toponymes dated here are Ossetian. The villages had Georgian transparent names, the roots of toponymes and their formative suffixes were typical of the

Georgian language. It is enough to enumerate some names of the mountain villages: Satskhenisi, Edemkalaki, Beloti, Atseriskhevi, Inauri, Chabarukheti, Tsipori, Shambiani, Isroliskhevi, Koloti, Kvitkiri, Mokhisi, Bieti, Andoreti, Gupta, Patara Java, Zemo Java, etc. It is obvious from the postscript on the Gudi (Gundi) gospel dated at the beginning of the XV century that Dvaleti was ethnically Georgian. The gospel appears to have been lost during the period of “the Tatars”. It was found by Ivane with patronymic name- Khorauli. After that, a man of Parukhauri name sent it to his relative in Dvaleti for sale. It is confirmed by the postscript that, Dvaleti was Georgian land; theological language in Dvaleti was Georgian; there was a demand on Georgian gospel which was bought by the Georgians. The postscript is important, because the anthroponyme – Parukhauri mentioned there is a Georgian family name, formed by the suffix –ur (-ul) characteristic of the East Georgian mountain family names.

The fact that, the territory of “South Ossetia” of the Soviet period was originally indivisible part of Georgia and that Georgians were the native population from ancient times are confirmed by several tens of Georgian Christian architectural monuments, dated at the V-XVIII centuries (Mepisashvili, Tsintsadze 1975) and many epigraphs written only into Georgian language, depicting different periods of the Georgian history (Otkhmezuri 1994). The territory of Shida Kartli, inhabited by Ossetians is full of fortresses and towers. Can anyone substantiate that the fortress “Bertsikhe,” which is situated in Zhamuri community, in the upper reaches of Ksani gorge, was not built by the Georgians? There are also towers with a horse-shoe shape, the so-called “towers with backs” characteristic only of the mountains of Shida Kartli. The back of those towers were facing the mountains and had a round shape. There is no evidence of similar towers in the Ossetian motherland– the North Caucasus. They are characteristic only of the Georgian architecture (it is stated by the specialists that, some ancestral towers of square forms were works of art of the Ossetian in the upper reaches of Didi Liakhvi gorge dated at the XVIII century – Gvasalia 1997: 68). The family names of Ktitors – the Tbelebis, the Kanchavelis, the Pavelis, the Korintelis, the Machabelis, the Amirejibis, the Palavandishvilis, the Eristavis – mentioned in the inscriptions of material cultural monuments, on the South Ossetian territory of the Soviet period, are Georgians. There are also representatives of the Georgian royal families mentioned in the inscriptions, including Tamari, the daughter of David the IV Agmashenebeli (1089-1125), Ketevan Tsereteli, the daughter-in-law of Giorgi XII (1798-1880), also the representatives of administration at court, bishops (Niqozeli, Mroveli...) and other servants of the church. Along with Ktitors are mentioned also architects (Taplaidze, Bavreli, Giorgidze, Kurdgelashvili...). All the inscriptions are made in the Georgian language and the mentioned anthroponymes point to their ethnic Georgian origin (Lortkipanidze, Otkhmezuri 2007: 127-137). There are hundreds of historical documents of middle ages related to the north part of Shida Kartli, the “South Ossetian” territory of the Soviet period. In those documents only ethnic Georgians of high, as well as low social class are mentioned. One of the important Georgian historic masterpieces of XIV-XV centuries, the ancestral chronicle of Ksani feudal (called as Eristavi) – “The Monument of Eristavs” (authors are Avgaroz and Grigol Bandaisdzes, father and the son) was written on that territory, in Largvisi monastery.

Ecclesiastically Dvaleti and Shida Kartli were both comprised into Niqozi Episcopacy. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote: “The Ossetians of Dvaleti, - christians by name...were baptized

in Karthli and Racha”. Vakhushti Bagrationi also pointed that, Dvals used Ossetian language i.e. transformation of their language was finished. Though the witness –historian remarked that some Dvals, who used to go to Racha and Karthli, spoke in Georgian. There were many Christian cultural monuments in Dvaleti along with the pagan worship places, characteristic of mountains, which were called in Ossetian language “dzuar”-(jvari). (The term “jvari” was used for pagan worship places, in different historic-ethnographic mountain regions of East Georgia too). The Ossetians living in Dvaleti maintained those “jvars” from the native mountaineer Dvals. “Atinagis Jvari” can serve as a good example. “Atengenoba” was a widespread holiday in historic-ethnographic provinces of East Georgia, especially in Khevsureti and Tusheti.

The Ossetians had no written language. Nowadays, their written language appeared on the basis of the Russian diagram. However, the first Ossetian alphabet appeared on the basis of the Georgian diagram. The author of it was Ioane Iagluzidze (Gabarati) (1775-1830), a man brought up on the basis of Georgian culture. From 1820 he taught Georgian and Ossetian languages to the Ossetian pupils studying at Tbilisi Ecclesiastic Seminary. It was the period he created the Ossetian written language. The Ossetian alphabet, based on the Russian alphabet was first created by the Russian scientist Andria Shegren who was aware of Ossetian language.

In 1922 the Bolshevik authority established the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. For the first time, notwithstanding the Georgians will, an administrative unit was created for the Ossetians on the territory of Georgia. The Autonomous Region of the South Ossetia embraced the historical feudal provinces of Shida Karthli. The center of the autonomous region was announced Tskhinvali, a small city located in the foothill line of Shida Karthli. There are registration materials of the population, carried out by the Russian authority in the XIX century. According to all the records of the XIX century none of the ethnic Ossetian lived in Tskhinvali. Now we think indicating of only archive materials of 1818, 1830, 1860, 1873 and 1886 will be sufficient. There is a single example mentioned in the records of 1830, in Tskhinvali, that only one ethnic Ossetian family (consisting 5 members) appears to have moved there from the mountains in 1828, but they seem to have left the place very soon (see: Georgian State Historical Archive. Fund 254; extract 1, affair N 1244, p.170-191. Different records are also kept in the same fund, for example: 254-1-1243, 254-1-541, 254-1-252). In the scientific literature are often referred the family lists of 1886 about the ethnic composition of Tskhinvali, the statistic data of which were printed by the Russian authorities (collection...1893). The interested reader can also see the case N 1717 of the 3rd extract of the fund 254 in the Georgian Central Archive about the fact that none of the Ossetians lived at that time in Tskhinvali. The city, as in the Middle Ages, was settled by the Georgians, Georgian Armenians and the Georgian Jews (according to the author Aikhvaldi living in the first three decades of the XIX century, “the Ossetians lived on the other side of Tskhinvali, in the mountains. Previously, they continuously robbed and killed people in Tskhinvali. Now, they make the Georgians, living in Tskhinvali to baptize them). The Ossetians, 613man in total, living in Tskhinvali were first mentioned in the data of the 1922. In 1926 – the number of Ossetians residing there topped 1152 (the city population in 1926 on the whole was 5 352). Such increase surely occurred due to the mechanical raise. The Ossetian population exceeded the Georgian population in Tskhinvali only when the local Georgian Jews, at the end of the

Soviet period left for Israel and their houses were occupied by the Ossetians migrated from Java region.

A few words must be said about the term “South Ossetia”. None of the Georgian historic sources or documents acknowledge this term. In the XVIII century, when the Georgian statesmen used to enumerate the territorial units (historic-ethnographic provinces, feudal units), they never used to mention “Ossetia” (especially the term “South Ossetia”), because such a unit did not exist in nature. They only used to mention the term –“our Ossetians”. That time the ethnic Ossetians inhabited the Northern mountainous part of the historic-ethnographic, historic-geographic region of Shida Kartli. There were different Georgian feudal units (Samachablo, Qsani Saeristavo, Saamilakhvro, relatively small feudal units of prince Davitshvili-Bagrationis, Taqtaqishvilis and Kherkheulidzes) on the territory of the Soviet “South Ossetia”. The term “South Ossetia” was introduced only by the officials of the Russian empire in the XIX century (this term was mentioned only three times in the press of that century). In the XIX century the Russian empire created several maps of the Caucasus, but one cannot find indication “South Ossetia” in them. Ossetia, without attribution “North,” is mapped in the North Caucasus. For example, in Natalia Volkova’s book we can see the map of the parts of Kabardo, Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya of the second part of XVIII century, created by the Russian officials, where the conformable territory of the north Caucasus is called Ossetia. The main watershed mountain range of the Caucasus is called “Gruzinskaya Granitsa” –“Georgian border” (Volkova, 1974). (By the way, on the same map, the capital of the modern North Ossetia, Vladikavkaz, which was called “Zaur”, is on the territory of Ingushetia). Thus, it is a good illustration of falseness and even cynics, when one of the leaders of Russia declares that “the decision of handing South Ossetia over to Tbilisi province was made only in the middle of the XIX century”. They say, the Russian Soviet “emperor”, ethnic Georgian- Stalin decided finally to hand South Ossetia over to Georgia. Nobody can show any archive document, depicting that Soviet South Ossetia was not the part of Tbilisi province from 1801 till 1917 and onwards, in 1918-1921, when the Republic of Georgia existed and in the Soviet period too. In fact, only in 1843 the Tsarist Russia established on the Georgian territory the Region of Ossetia which was divided into three districts (Java, Patara Liakhvi and Nara). The police districts of Java and Patara Liakhvi of “Ossetia Region”, opened in 1922, composed only one third of the territory of the autonomous district of South Ossetia (Gvasalia 1997: 58). The Bolshevik authorities also comprised the part of the Georgian historic-ethnographic regions of Racha (Kudaro) and Zemo Imereti in the territory of the South Ossetian Autonomous District.

It is known that a treaty was signed between East Georgia (Qartl-Kakheti) and Russia in 1783 known as Georgievski Treaty. At the time of signing the treaty and in 1801, when Russia broke the agreement and annexed Georgia, Dvaleti and the whole northern part of Shida Kartli (the Soviet “South Ossetia”) was the indivisible part of Georgia. The mentioned territory was never referred to as Ossetia. Every Russian source confirms the same. For example, very soon after signing the treaty – in 1784 S. Burnashov, who was sent from Russia on a mission to Georgia, mapped out the Georgian kingdoms and principalities with their adjacent boundary regions. The term- Ossetia was indicated on the map on its real place– in the North Caucasus, and the term –“Karthli was addressed to the territory, which in the soviet period was called the “South Ossetia”.

In 1918-1921 Georgia relieved for a short time from the Russian colonial oppression and restored its state system. In that period, in the independent state of Georgia started the Ossetian separatist movement, which was inspired by Bolshevik Russia. In 1921 the Communist regime was established forcibly in Georgia and it became the part of the Russian empire again; the communist power, created administrative unit of Autonomous District for Ossetians in the main province of Georgia – Northern part of Shida Kartli. In order to differentiate it from the territorial unit of Ossetia in the North Caucasus, it was called “the Autonomous District of South Ossetia”. Tskhinvali was announced the center of the autonomy. By that time, as mentioned above, ethnic Ossetians didn't live in Tskhinvali. Besides, some of densely populated Georgian villages were also comprised within the limits of the Autonomous District of South Ossetia. That fact evoked protest of the Georgian villages and the main reason for that protest was the language factor. For example, the inhabitants of Nedlati village complained: “our village Nedlati was connected to Ikona. Nowadays, Ikona became the part of the Autonomy of South Ossetia and we got in bad situation, because everything, the social activities are conducted in Russian and Ossetian languages, which are not understandable for us”. The inhabitants of Dzartsemi wrote: “Why do we have to be within South Ossetia? Moreover, their language is foreign and obscure for us. The majority of the population in the whole Northern part of Tskhinvali region, with a small exception is the Georgians” (Bochoridze 1996).

The Ossetians, who immigrated in the XVII-XVIII centuries, became the plenipotentiary citizens of the Georgian state. Majority of them were bilingual, they knew official Georgian language. The reality made them know the Georgian language. The Ossetians, settled in the mountains, needed to have links with the Georgian lowlands; here are implied historically recognized husbandry- economic relationships. Therefore, the Ossetians aspired to learn the Georgian language. There were also some Georgians, living in the contact line of the Ossetians, who knew the Ossetian language as well. According to some ethnographic data, in the contact line of Georgian Ossetian settlement, there were many cases of sending Ossetian children to the Georgian villages (families) for studying the Georgian language, which was accomplished via Christianizing and making relations with them (however, it's the oldest Caucasian tradition). Due to the demand of Georgian Kings, the Ossetians, living on the Georgian territory had to receive Christianity. The Ossetians themselves were interested in the Christian religion too. Conversion to Christianity also pushed them to learn Georgian language, as the language of divinity was Georgian. The Christened Ossetians, living in the mountains used to send their children frequently to their Georgian Godmothers and Godfathers living in the valleys. According to historical-ethnological data, there were many cases of marriages between the Ossetians and the Georgians, which also was one of the supporting factors for making the two nations related.

Settlement of the Ossetians in mountains of Georgia caused the ethical-linguistic assimilation of a little group of Georgians. Even nowadays, the Iluridzes (about 40 families) living in Doretkari, the tributary of Churti and Ksani ravines, are bilingual. The bilingualism was mainly caused by mixed marriages. At the end of the XVIII century, Ossetians settled on the remains of the Georgians migrated from Churti ravine to the valleys. The Iluridzes actually turned out to be in the Ossetian ethno-linguistic surrounding. It is true, that the nearby territories of valleys were inhabited with Georgians, but no women from the valley wanted to

be married in the mountainous Doretkari. However, the men living in Doretkari had to marry the neighboring Ossetian women. The Ossetian women made their sons marry the Ossetian. Such marriages from the middle of the XIX century as well as the Ossetian ethnic surroundings made the Iluridzes bilingual. However, it must be underlined that, the Georgians living in Doretkari didn't change their ethnic identification. The similar situation is evident in other parts of Ksani gorge too. According to one teller, for example, the Psuturis in Nakhidi village identified themselves as Ossetians, because their language for communication was mainly Ossetian.

The author of these lines traveled all over the Ossetian villages of Mejuda ravine in 1987. With exception of two small Ossetian villages, in the extreme upper part of the ravine, the Ossetians migrated there in 30-80s of the XIX century. The last big Georgian village of Mejuda ravine is Mejriskhevi. Mejriskhevi is bordered by the Gromi village, inhabited by the Ossetians. Gromi was comprised into the autonomous district. By 1886 Gromi was still inhabited by the Georgians and only after their translocation to Mejriskhevi, the Ossetians settled there. There are many mixed Georgian-Ossetian families in Mejriskhevi. The upper gorge is mostly settled with Ossetians, except Isroliskhevi village, which is still inhabited by Georgian families. We communicated with many ethnic Ossetians during a month expedition in Georgian; the only exception was an old woman, who didn't know Georgian language. All the rest spoke Georgian quite well. It is essential to notice that, the Georgian language acknowledged by the constitution as an official language, was not included in school program of the autonomous district of South Ossetia. There were Ossetian-Russian schools, organized in the following way: the primary education (1-4 classes) was received in the Ossetian language, the secondary education in the Russian language, to which only the Ossetian language and literature was added. In spite of this, the Ossetians could speak and write in Georgian. They studied the Georgian alphabet independently, because as they had explained, they had economic relation not only with the population of the autonomous district, but also with Georgians living in the valley of the ravine. The same situation was with the Ossetians living in Lekhura ravine. Generally, this condition was characteristic of the whole Ossetian population of the Autonomous District, except Java region. Java region comprised the mountainous part of Didi Liakhvi gorge. This region was densely populated by the ethnic Ossetians, who had relatively less contacts with Georgian population. The opening of the Ossetian-Russian schools in the Soviet period and ignoring of the Georgian language caused Ossetians alienation from the Georgian ethnic-linguistic surrounding, which became one of the reasons for the Ossetian separatist movement on the territory of the Autonomous region, after the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

As mentioned above, old Georgian inhabitants still live in the extreme upper mountainous part of Mejuda gorge. However, their number decreased substantially in the Soviet period. Those who had remained in the ethnic Ossetian surrounding, speak a good Ossetian language. They are in marriage relations with the Ossetian population. We had a chance to visit one of the families. They are the Gengiuris (Georgian patronymic name). The head of the family, sixty years old man identified himself as ethnic Georgian. He spoke perfectly the Georgian language. His mother and wife were Ossetians. Though, his five children had dual consciousness. It was noticeable, that the five of them spoke Georgian language with an Ossetian accent. Besides, they argued about their ethnicity, and couldn't identify, they were

Georgians or Ossetians. The daughters tended to belong themselves to ethnic Ossetians. Neither the sons had any aspiration for being the Georgians. One of the sons had decided to go to Russia for study. When we got interested why he wanted to go so far, to Russia, he said he didn't like Tbilisi. Such disposition towards Tbilisi was caused by the lack of knowledge in Georgian language. Moreover, he did not know written and spoken language at all. As it was found out, the Gengiurs (patronymic name) used to send their children to the Ossetian-Russian school in Tskhinvali. Thus, knowledge of language was a decisive factor in identifying of ethnicity.

The example of the Gengiurs was not the only exception in the mountainous part of the Autonomous District.

As for the other Ossetians, living in other parts of the Georgian territory, i.e. out of the autonomy, they speak Georgian fluently, along with their national Ossetian language. There are cases when the representatives of the Ossetian ethnos consider themselves as the Georgians.

Before summarizing the present linguistic situation of the Ossetians living in Georgia, we must return to the XIX century. That time, the Georgian press paid much attention to the Ossetian language. The articles of S. Mgaloblishvili (a writer) are especially important from this point of view. The Ossetians did not have any aspiration for receiving education, while the Georgian society tried to open schools in the Ossetian villages. They tried to persuade the parents to give education to their children. The Russian authorities sent Russian teachers to the Ossetian villages. The Ossetian children did not know the Russian language. They knew only Ossetian and Georgian languages. S. Mgaloblishvili stated: "the teachers must be either Ossetian or Georgian. The Russian teachers should be sent to the over-mountain Ossetia, the North Caucasus, where Ossetian and Russian languages are spoken". The Georgian publicists wrote that, the Ossetians in the North Caucasus were gradually losing their ethnicity due to the process of Russification. While the Georgians worried about Ossetians and tried to support them in protecting their native language and nationality. N. Tadeozishvili touched this problem in one of the edition of the newspaper "Droeba" in 1884: "the Georgians have a huge influence on those Ossetians, who live in Georgia. All the men speak Georgian language, and inhabitants of nearby territories of Georgian villages, even women and children speak Georgian. Besides speaking, they can read and write into Georgian. The more the over-mountain Ossetian tends to lose ethnic identity, the more in Georgia Ossetian is proud to read and write into Georgian; there are cases of inter-marriage between the neighboring villages. Thus, mixed families are characteristic of their life". S. Mgaloblishvili wrote that, the Georgians must have taken appropriate measures not to let the Ossetians lose their language and nationality. He insisted to open schools for the Ossetians for this reason. Another author (Grigol Liakhveli, the same as Sadzaglishvili) appealed to everybody in the same newspaper, to help protect the Ossetians and their language. He considered it was necessary for the Ossetians to create their own alphabet.

The newspaper "Tsnobis Purtseli" expressed also great interest towards the Ossetian language. It was stated in one of the edition of 1903 that, all the Ossetians living in Kudaro knew Georgian language, owing to close neighboring relationships with Rachvelians and Imeretians-

the Georgian ethnographic (territorial) groups. The same newspaper wrote in 1901: “Georgian society intends to provide Ossetians, living in Georgia, with Ossetian books. Therefore we are appealing the knowledgeable people to submit books in order to provide teaching of the Ossetian language in every Ossetian school in the nearest future”.

The same disposition of the Georgian educated people and the Georgian authorities towards the Ossetian language continued in the XX century too. The Ossetians had all the conditions to develop their language and culture, on and out of the territory of the Autonomous District. The press and scientific literature, for the last ten years, often compared ethno-linguistic situations in South Ossetia comprised in Georgia, with North Ossetia, comprised in the Russian Federation. Everything in North Ossetia, be it social work, study at the educational institutions was conducted into Russian language. The author of this article participated in all Union student-ethnographers’ conference held in Leningrad in 1972. There were also students from the North Ossetia, who could not help expressing their own amazement that, we Georgians, the students of Tbilisi State University were able to commune in Georgian with each other and write in Georgian.

In Tskhinvali Pedagogical Institute and Tskhinvali Scientific-Research Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, the special attention was paid to teaching of the Ossetian language and literature. The “Explanatory Dictionary of the Ossetian Language “was prepared there, along with other important research-works. There was the state Ossetian theatre in Tskhinvali. The magazines and newspapers were issued in Ossetian language. The radio broadcasted in the Ossetian language as well. There were 97 Ossetian schools in 1990-1991 in Georgia. 90 schools in The South Ossetian Autonomous Region and seven in other regions of Georgia: Lagodekhi, Kareli, Borjomi. In 1980 the Georgian government started opening Ossetian schools in other regions, compactly populated by Ossetians.

It’s worthy of mentioning, that according to the description of the population of 1989, from sixty five thousand inhabitants of the Autonomous Region of Ossetia, 64.257 considered Ossetian language as their mother tongue, and only 820 ethnic Ossetians had different idea (that is 1,3%). Georgians who lived in this region were not able to use Georgian in public and social life. During Soviet period Ossetians tried to change primary Georgian toponymes with those translated into Ossetian, or loan translation. A lot of ancient Georgian toponymes have been violently disfigured.

As we have already mentioned, in Georgia the study in Ossetian language was carried out in 97 schools, while in north Ossetia, which is the constituent part of the Russian Federation, there are no Ossetian schools. The Ossetians study only at Russian schools. The ex-president of North Ossetia A. Galazov commented about it, in the newspaper “Pravda” (1983, 11/XI): “I sincerely feel pity for Ossetian young generation... when they are embarrassed through unawareness of their own Ossetian ethnic culture in their homeland. For example, national youth is deprived its own mother tongue. Till the last year, there was not any school where Ossetian language was taught”.

As for the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia in Georgia, the local authorities did everything to raise the rate of the Russian language, via ignoring the Georgian. The linguistic situation in the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia in 20s of XX century was described by

one of the historians, G. Bochoridze. He wrote: “The Georgian language is banished from Georgian villages; correspondence was done in Russian, now Ossetian is used; Georgian is banished”. “Since 1929, Ossetian language has been introduced at courts, but earlier in 1928 in Akhagori, even statements were to be written in Ossetian or at least in Russian. Only few exceptions were made to accept the statements in Georgian”. “Schools are opened for the Ossetians, but for the Georgians, very rarely. In 1921-1924 Georgian teachers were not paid for six-seven months’ salaries and were made to quit the job and the schools were closed down. People needed schools, but they were told: If you desire, your children can study at Ossetian schools, otherwise no school will be opened for you. Ossetian language is obligatory at Georgian schools, but Georgian language is not. “Some Ossetians wanted their children to learn Georgian language as an applicable subject, but they received flat refusal”.

Finally, we should mention that in the XX century, Georgian scientists did their bit in investigation of Ossetian language. For example, Academician G. Akhvlediani edited Academic Grammar of Ossetian language, in two volumes.

So, after the Ossetians migration and settlement in Georgia, three periods can be distinguished in the linguistic situation. The first period is Ossetians being within the Georgian state system. When Ossetians identified themselves as the citizens of Georgia, similar to other ethnic groups, they also respected Georgian as the official language of Georgia. Their majority spoke Georgian language perfectly. In the contact line area, many Georgians spoke Ossetian language fluently. It was conditioned due to social-economic and kin relationships.

After the nineteenth century, when Georgia became Russian colony, the linguistic situation in Georgia started to change, that was stipulated with active interfering of Russian authorities. Russia forcibly distributed the Russian language in his colonies and made different ethnic groups be in opposition with each other. Russia tried to replace Georgian with the Russian language for Ossetians. The XIX century and particularly the second half of it, for many Ossetians was the period of initial transition to Russian language. The Georgian society did everything to preserve Ossetian language and their ethnic origin. Still in the nineteenth century many Ossetians spoke Georgian language because of practical need. The third is- the Soviet period, when the Bolshevik authorities managed Ossetians alienation from Georgians. Due to intensive introduction of Russian language, the majority of the Ossetians had forgotten the Georgian language. Thus, there was another tendency: the educated part of the Ossetians could speak and write Georgian but, deliberately did not.

In the mountains, the Ossetians used to settle down according to their patronymic names. One patronymic inhabited one village, or several villages. The villages did not have any streets, only the narrow paths, wide enough for walkers and riders. The center of the social life was the village square, which was called “Nikhas” in Ossetian language. All the important issues of the community were discussed in Nikhas. Ossetians traditional activity in the plain was agriculture (wheat, corn, barley, millet...), in the mountains agriculture and live stock farming (sheep, goats, cattle,). The lands for mowing and plough, that they owned, were hereditary. Only the forest and pasture was common for the village. The ploughshare in the mountain and in the plain was different. The one that was used in plain was called “Guton”- the term is assimilated from Georgian –“Gutani”. The name of a harvester tool- “lamgal” is originated

from Georgian “namgali”, which is bigger in radius and has sharp cogged side. Georgian harvester (namgali) was popular not only in North Ossetia but among other Caucasian peoples.

Before their transmigration to the plain lands, live stock farming was not prevalent for Ossetians, owing to the lack of winter pastures. For the migrated Ossetians sheep-breeding was very important and in the valleys, they had more possibility for its development. They kept goats together with sheep, but in some villages of Alagir and Digori, the goat-breeding was more promoted than sheep-breeding. Cattle-breeding also, played an important role in their economics. Cattle produced milk and meat. It was exploited as draught animal. The traditional farming for Ossetians was horse-breeding, which had key importance for them as descendants of the nomadic people. According to the Ossetians folklore, the Alans were perfect horsemen, who owned huge herds of horses. Till the second half of the nineteenth century, horse was the only means of transporting in the mountains.

Similar to other north Caucasian peoples, the Ossetians had variety of weapon: sword, bow, arrow, shield, chain gown and helmet. According to Klaprot, the Ossetians of Trusso ravine still used oval iron edged shields made of firm skin and wood.

Cheese-making, out of the milk of cow and sheep, is their ancient activity. But it is a wrong idea, when some Ossetian scientists insist that, west Georgian people learned making of special variety of cheese “Sulguni” from Ossetians. On the contrary, Ossetians had never known the method of of “sulguni”.

An important issue:

In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were villages settled basically due to the same patronymic name. Often in different neighboring villages, people of one and the same patronymic name were settled. The Ossetians, migrated from the mountains to the valleys, could not manage to settle down due to their patronymic kinship. The legends say that, many fights were often broken out among the Ossetians living in Shida Kartli. Especially the fights proceeded among the villages, which often ended up with total annihilation of the families or their escape from their habitat. M. Kosven supposed that, those fights led to break down of the villages, which were initially settled by Georgians.

In mountainous Ossetians, before the beginning of the nineteenth century, the deceased were buried in tombs, mostly in over ground tombs. This tradition was distributed in Ingushia, Chechnia, Karachai and Balkar. Over ground tomb was typical only for the mountain. In the plain region and foothills such tombs were not characteristic. The deceased, kept in the tomb, owing to natural-geographical conditions, were mummified. All of the tombs had two or three holes, through which the deceased was shifted inside. There were wooden or stone couches, where the deceased was placed. The tombs of Ossetians were patrimonial. The burial ceremony contradicted the Christian standards and the Christian church fought against it. The tombs were of Caucasian origin. According to some Ossetian legends, the over ground tombs were built by other people, inhabiting the territory, before the Ossetians transmigration. The majority of builders were the Ingush. They were hired also to build towers. It is significant that, some over ground tombs belonged to the Nogaels, who lived together with the Ossetians.

The Nogael origin of the deceased, were proved according to the anthropological type, dressing and different vessels found in the tombs. Due to the materials obtained in 20s of the XX century, in the ravines of Kurtati, Taguri and Digori, the Nogaels lived together with Ossetians. Nogaels and Ossetians had migrated from valleys in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. After settling in the mountains the Ossetians (and Nogaels) mastered in local tomb culture. Ossetian over ground burial constructions reminded Ingush towers with pyramidal-stepped cover. Tombs were unfamiliar to Dvaleti region (Kaloiev 1999), which points directly to the fact, that Dvaleti was not Ossetian territory in ethnic-cultural terms.

There were perfect architectural models of towers in mountainous Ossetia. The Ossetians possessed different towers: watch, battle and living ones. Battle towers generally were not very high and their quadrangular walls had flat covering. The Ossetians considered that, the towers were not built by Ossetians. According to legend the builders were the former inhabitants of the settlement. B. Kaloiev considers that, those were the Alans and that supposition is beneath criticism. The builders were local Caucasians, and Alan-Ossetians transmigrated and settled down in their remains. The majority of the Ossetians lived in stone houses. There were pagan sacred places almost in every village, which they called "Dzuar". This word was originated from Georgian- "Jvari"-(cross), from times when Georgians spread Christianity.

During weddings and funerals, the people of the whole gorge gathered to support and encourage each other. The villages that situated close to each other, represented territorial-neighboring unions and were linked to each other with an oath. It was done at the sacred place by the elders. To consolidate their vow, they made some cutting on the stick which was kept in the common sacred place.

The community members had private and collective lands: the arable and mowing lands were private and pastures and woods –common.

The Ossetian food was similar to that of other north Caucasian Mountaineers'. They could prepare pies stuffed with meat or cheese, which they called (Khabizjins"). Also beer ("Bagan") was very popular among Ossetians, which was made of barley in the mountain region and wheat and corn in the valley region. According to the Narts Epos, the beer was made by one of the characters of the epos, Satana. Habitually, it was prepared during great festivals of a family or community, in a big copper pot. Earlier the Ossetians used to make heady drink of honey called "Rong".

The Ossetians society was divided into several social groups. The Ossetians were organized due to their patronymic kinship. Their family names were patronymic. Each patronymic ("Miggar") represented the union of some patronymics ("Fidifirt"). The Ossetian scientists suppose that, the sixteenth century is the time of Ossetian patronymics formation. In Georgia, Ossetian patronymic names descended from the first migrants. Several names originated from neighboring people (the Ingush, the Balkans, the Georgians). It has been confirmed that the names of the second line, uniting four-five or more patronymics, descended from common ancient ancestor. Up to now, exogamy is strictly controlled within the blood related groups. Those, who abrogated exogamy were punished and were exiled from the society. This custom was so severe, that people of different kinship, who had heard about their common descent,

did not make marriages. In Georgia, such names were: the Kokoevs and the Gacievs, the Sanakoevs and the Gagloevs. The marriage was forbidden among related- fraternized groups. The marriage was interdicted not only within the bounds of one section, but within the whole village. It was initially conditioned by the fact that villages, for a long time, were populated with one patronymic group, which then became a tradition. There are cases in the Ossetian legends, about strict punishment of incest. Each Ossetian patronymic group had its own cemetery and sacred place for praying (“Dzuar”). In Ossetians, monogamy was the dominant practice. Polygamy was very rare and was allowed in case of barrenness of the first wife. In that case, the permissions of the first wife and her relations were needed. It is mentioned in the scientific literature that, it was necessary to receive the consent of a bride, of her mother, brothers, and finally the uncle (mother’s brothers).

There were many old institutions that were maintained in Ossetia, among which could be named revenge (vendetta), which involved not only close but far relatives also. Vendetta was the respond to humiliation of dignity, abduction, quarrels about lands and so on. As a reconciliation offender part had to give a lot of cattle, valuables (weapons, pot for beer preparation) and arrange feast. According to M. Kosven in old times wives could share bed publicly in November and December. Generally husband and wife used to meet each other secretly. Father never used to carry his child in his arms and father never addresses his children with their names.

The customs and traditions of assistance, hospitality and brotherhood of Ossetians were similar to other peoples of the Caucasus. Large families still existed at the beginning of the Soviet period. Nuptial age for males was seventeen-eighteen and for females fourteen-sixteen. Those who got married had to pay bride-money, which sometimes was main reason of abduction. Weddings generally were held in autumn after harvesting. Those Ossetians who lived in Georgia often married Georgians, but they had to take Christianity. The village ruling was done by council (“Nikhasi”), which was also the name of the place where councils were held. The members were all adult males of the community, but the elders had principle role.

All relatives were informed about death. Funeral and a funeral repast were held the other day. A horse was sacrificed to the deceased and horse-race and target shoot was held in his respect. The plate of a widow was cut and hung over the grave.

Nowadays, the Ossetians are mainly Christians and small amount are Muslims. Islam was basically spread within Ossetians of Digori. Christianity was introduced here in the sixth-seventh centuries from Byzantium and later from Georgia, but wasn’t engrained among population. In the late Middle Ages Ossetians residing in the mountain gorges were the followers of pre- Christian faith and ideas. The Georgian government tried to introduce Christianity through the migrant Ossetians. Islam was spread in west Ossetia from Kabardo in the seventeenth- eighteenth centuries. The Ossetians had Christianized deities: Uats-Giorgi, Uastirji, (St. George), Uatsila- St. Ilia; Uatsnikola- St. Nickolas, Uatstotur- St. Theodor and others. There were common sacred places (“Zuars”) and worships of family and the village in Ossetia. The Allaguirs’ sacred place was “Rekom”. In that warship place there was a bell with ancient Georgian inscription on it. In prayers, the Ossetians often used to mention “Miqalgabrit” and “Taranjeloz”, which corresponded to Georgian Mickael-Gabryel and Archangel. As for the Kurtati and Taguri gorges, there were no common gorge worships, but

village sacred places, like ‘Dzigvisi Dzuar’ of the Scent George. The Ossetians, similar the Georgians used to sacrifice land to the sacred places, (when the childless parents finally bore a baby, or when one did not have the heir or they had to abandon their homeland).

Ossetian folklore is very rich. It’s worthy of mentioning that, V. Miler considered that, the Narths’ epos was created in the steppes of the north Caucasus, as the names of large rivers, seas and steppes are often mentioned there. The Narths used to fish in the large rivers and seas. This material directly point to the fact that, the Ossetians initially inhabited the steppes not the mountains. In the Narths’ epos nothing is mentioned about the Alans settlement in the mountains. The Narths used to hunt deer, but the wild beasts of Ossetia are not mentioned in the epos at all. Horse was Narths’ favorite domestic animal, as indivisible part of the nomadic people. The fact that, the Ossetian ancestors were inhabitants of the steppes is evidenced by their agricultural calendar. The scientists concluded that, the calendar had been created in valleys not in mountains. Also the historical songs prove it. One of the songs depicts the Tamer-Lam marches in Digori gorge. The birth of the national literature in the nineteenth century was a very important event in the Ossetian people’s cultural life. The initiator was Kosta Khetagurov (1850-1906).

At the end, it should be mentioned that the Georgian historical sources appear to be of key importance in studying the history of Ossetia and other important issues. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote about Ossetians in his work the following: “Men are handsome and women slim, well built up, beautiful, with dark complexion and good appearance. At home eating little, satisfied with bread, water and whey, and greedy outside; coward at fight, but brave when acting stealthily at night; free and proud at home and in other countries modest, good talkers, revengeful ...”

We must finish this article with Vasil Abaev’s words, which was published in the “Nezavisimaia Gazeta” (independent newspaper) in 1992 (January 22): The main mountain range of the Caucasus is the natural border between Georgia and Ossetia. Every trial to remove these borders will cause permanent conflict situation.... First of all, the discussion about breaking off Ossetia from Georgia must be stopped, because none of the Georgian government will ever agree with it, as it means destruction of the territorial integrity. Those who want peace between the Georgians and the Ossetians should throw away the idea of south Ossetia’s and north Ossetia’s integration. Also those who wish peace between Georgia and Russia must withdraw this idea. That is the reality.” Unfortunately, nobody listened to the Ossetian scientist. The falsified history and perfidious plans, created by the Russian Government, misled the Ossetian people. The historian cannot foresee the future. One thing is clear, the prognosis in this situation does not seem to be hopeful.

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