

Ethnic Processes in Shida Kartli (The Ossetians in Georgia)

Roland Topchishvili

Short survey about the ethnic situation in Georgia

Georgia has never been a mono-ethnic state. Drastic changes in the ethnic situation occurred due to the annexation of Georgia by Russia (1801). It was the purposeful politics of Tsarism to colonize a 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 (Abkhazian and Georgian Muslims exiling to Turkey for instance). The percentage of Georgians diminished constantly when it became a constituent of the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the 19. century, 90 % of the whole population were Georgians; By 1939, it diminished to 61 %. In the 19. century, ethnic Armenians, Greeks were resettled from the Osman Empire to Georgia and Russians and Germans. Earlier, Armenians settled in Georgia, basically in towns. Two strata of Armenians were distinguished: a) migrants and b) Georgian monophysists, nominated as 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. A worthy man was warrior Khudia Borchaloeli, who actually became a national hero of Georgia.

The Abkhazian and Ossetian 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 Georgians and other ethnic groups. According to one of the folk poems, there was no difference between Georgians and Armenians; Tatars and Georgians were brothers. The Russian Empire created confrontation among different ethnic groups in Georgia, due to the politics it accomplished in the country. Conflicts firstly were revealed in the 20. 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 Ossetian resettlement to Georgia has been constantly and purposefully disfigured and that was surely provoked by

the particular imperialistic forces. Unfortunately, Ossetian “warriors” inspired with hatred from childhood towards Georgians, who quasi had colonized their ancestral homeland, South Ossetia, used to blame Georgian feudal for invading Ossetia. Later Georgian social- democrats (Mensheviks) were blamed again for putting down the Ossetian rebellion provoked by the Russian Bolsheviks.

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

1. For the last period, Ossetian historians give different dates about 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 13. and 14. centuries. The others suggest different chronological periods between these two very distant dates. Recently one of the Soviet historians, Mark Bliev, distinguished himself by ignoring the historical sources and creating mythologemes via interpreting his imaginary ideas on the topic. According to Mark Bliev, Medieval Karthli (Iberian Kingdom) was nothing but a 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 appalling to any historian.

2. Surely, history should have no importance in ethnic conflict resolution - people living on the territory of definite ethnos should be plenipotentiary members of the state (as Ossetian used to be in Georgia historically). It’s a fact that the 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. This was evidenced by introduction of extra historical themes that were 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. “South Ossetia” had never been a part of Georgia. The purpose is clear: the imperialistic forces try to legitimize the annexation of Georgian territories. In this case, Ossetians were exploited as instruments. 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 people 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 2. century 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 1. century A.D., since they had started nomadic life in the European part 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 Catalanian 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 4. century A.D. were annihilated by the Huns. Those who survived followed the Huns towards West. The others moved to the Caucasian valleys, where they settled down and formed a state. Since then onwards, Georgia had intensive relations 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 Alan-Ossetians to repulse attacks from different enemies.

The second stage of Alan –Ossetians miserable history started in the 13. century. After Mongolian invasion, in spite of long resistance, the defeated Alan-Ossetians lost not only their statehood, but their area of inhabitation. Between the 13. - 14. centuries from steppes they moved to mountains. It should be mentioned that some Alans moved to the 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 the 13. - 14. centuries, 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 20. century, the Ossetians had no common endo-ethnonime. Those who lived in the three East Ossetian gorges, called themselves "Irons", and others living in the West, in Digori gorge, called themselves "Digorons". Digorons are firstly mentioned in "Armenian Geography" of the 7. century, but nothing is said about the Irons till the 17. century. N. Volkova, an ethnologist, mentions that the term "Iron" denoting the Eastern group of Ossetians is rarely met in historical sources but gives no explanation to it. It's easy to explain, if we precisely study the area of Alan-Ossetian tribes' inhabitation and the migratory directions from the early Middle Age to late Middle Age. Till the 12. - 14. centuries 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 mountains of the North Caucasus, they lived in Digoria and in the Western territories of modern Balkaria and Karachay, since the early Middle Ages - 6.-7. centuries 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 River Kumi.

But this does not mean that neighboring peoples perceived these two Ossetian ethnic groups as different peoples. Despite not having a common name, these Iranian language speaking people, living in the central part of the North Caucasus, had a common self-identity. As for the ethnonime- "Ossetians", it was spread by Georgians and besides Georgians nobody named them this 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 20. century, Ossetian scientists described Dvaleti as "Central Ossetia".

In the 13. - 14. 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 from resettling in the North Caucasian valleys. Migration of Ossetians was attended by shifting of some toponymies. Since the 13. - 14. centuries onwards, up to the establishment of 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 foothills and valleys. As indicated in Russian scholarly literature, the Russian-Ossetian relations were strengthened in the 18. 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 taking over Ossetia, for its perfect strategic location, connecting the gorges of Ossetia with the South Caucasus. The process of joining Ossetia with Russia started with the Kuchuk-Kainarji treaty and ended with entering Kabardo, as a subject under protection, in the 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 one document referring to Ossetia as a state formation. Moreover, there is not even a single document proving the unification of both Ossetias or the conception of "North Ossetia" and "South Ossetia". The existence of two Ossetias as separate state units or of whole Ossetia as a state by the end of 18. 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? The 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, p.422-449; Bliev 1990, p.44-45). But Russian historiography considers 1774 as the year when Ossetia went under the rule of 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 an Ossetian delegation of twenty people to discuss the following issues: settlement of 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, affirmed themselves against Russian colonizers (Kaloiev 1999, p.268). The Ossetians aimed to their own lands in the foothill valleys of the North Caucasus. Since then, began an intensive migration of Ossetians to the North, particularly during the 20s of the 19. century. This actually stopped Ossetian 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 17. 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 18. century a few settlements appeared in the foothill valleys: Karajaevo, Kobani, Vastili, Vaseligo, 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 18. century the Ossetians extended borders to the East and in the 20s of the 18. 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 River Tergi, in the 16. - 17. centuries, was inhabited by Ingush people. The Ossetians had moved from Alagiri Ravine to the above mentioned villages (Volkova 1974, p.125-126). According to Klaprot, Ossetians living in Lars, Chmish and Balta had to pay tribute for land to the Ingush. According to the same author, the Ossetian Slonats (patronymic name) were joined by different patronymic groups from Taguri Ravine. The reinforced Ossetians stopped paying a tribute to the Ingush, notwithstanding nobility of minor Kabardo, the Mudarovs, to whom they had been paying tribute for 30 years. Due to several documents, it was confirmed that by 1774 the modern capital of Ossetia, Vladikavkaz, when the Russians built a fortress there, was an Ingush village. It was called Zauregui and was settled by Ingush with patronymic name Zaurov. The 19. century was a period of intensive Ossetian transmigration from mountains to valleys. In the 20s of the 19. century, new Ossetian settlements appeared in the valleys of Vladikavkaz, which was inhabited by Iron Ossetians (Berozov, 1980).

About Ossetians migration to Georgia

There are no weighty arguments or facts corroborating Ossetians inhabitation on Georgian territory from old times. None of the historical sources or documents corroborates Ossetian migration to Georgia during different periods B.C. and Alan-Ossetian resettlement in the 4. century A.D. when the Huns invaded Georgia. As it was mentioned above, then Ossetians then moved forward from the Don and the Azov valleys to the Southern part of the North Caucasian foothill valleys.

The Ossetians inhabited Georgia neither in the 7. nor in the 13. centuries, as some of the authors desire to imagine. In the 13. century, 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 15. century. In the

second half of the 12. century, only one Ossetian group, entering via Darubandi, tried to settle in Shida Karthli. Their military force acted under the command of the Ilkhan Mongolian Empire. "In 1292 the Ossetians conquered Shida Karthli and overtook Gory" (as described by Chroniclers). Ossetians exploited the weakening of the Georgian State and with support of the Mongolians tried to get settled in Shida Karthli. 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 the 9. century, the Arab military leader Bugha Turkish led 100 Ossetian families through Dariali gateway and helped them settling in the city of Dmanisi, Kvemo Karthli, the Northern part of Georgia which is quite far from Shida Karthli. Nothing is known about what happened with those 100 Ossetian families. Supposedly they were either assimilated with Georgians or left Georgia soon. In the middle of the 13. century, due to the Order of Mongol Khan, King David VII let 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 Ossetians in the historical Georgian province of Dvaleti, located in the North part of the Caucasus, started at the end of the 15. century and proceeded mainly during the 16. century. In the 17. century, the process of assimilation of 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 the inhabitants of Zakha knew Georgian language well. According to Kaloev, this fact 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 the ethno-cultural links between the two different ethnoses, but the fact that the Dvals were Georgian mountaineers assimilated by exogenous Iran language speaking group. The existence of Georgian churches and servings 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 18. 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 Ossetian settlement in Dvaleti, owing to Ossetian raids and forays in the region, most of the Dvals moved to different parts of Georgia (Shida Karthli, Kvemo Karthli, Imereti, Racha). Those who remained in their habitat, within the Ossetian ethnic-linguistic environment, were quickly assimilated by the intensively growing 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 Parukhaulis and 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, 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 Ossetia and that 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, p.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, p.176-178). We can conclude that *this poem depicts Ossetian people's fight with the local Dvaleti population. 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. Both toponymes (geographical names) mentioned in the poem ("Upper Mountain" and "Zhgele") were fight places and are in Dvaleti. "The Upper Mountain" is the same as "Upper Dvaleti". The same geographical unit was mentioned by Ioane Bagrationi (Bagrationi, 1986, p.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 Ossetian people who came with a huge army to fight with local Dvaletian people. The poem makes obvious that the two different nations stood against each other: Ossetians, 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 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, Ossetians moved to the mountainous parts of Shida Kartli.

Ossetians families settled in Nar-Mamisoni cave (i.e. historical Dvaleti) by the 18. century, transmigrated mainly from 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 Alagiri Ravine should be considered their settling in 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, p.122). "The formation of Tualta (as the Ossetians called Dvaleti) occurred with the help of 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) and Urs-Tualta, from where some families (for example Abaevs) 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, p.124). The same author points out the massive migration of 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 a 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 Dvals are ethnic Georgians (Kaloev, 1999, p.5). Generally, Ossetian peoples' migration to Shida Kartli 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 annexation by Russia, Dvaleti was always an indivisible part of Georgia. Due to the order of April 3, 1858 of A. Bariatsky-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, p.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 Vakhushhti Bagrationi, Dvaleti was comprised in the territorial unity of Georgia (Kartlis Ckhovreba 1973, p.633) since the reign of king Parnavazi (4. - 3. centuries B.C). Similar to other mountainous parts of Georgia, Dvaleti was directly subordinated to royal court and 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 15. century, Dvaleti was an indivisible part of the kingdom of Kartli. 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 17. century. Similar to other mountainous people of Georgia, Ossetians of Dvaleti sometimes were disobedient. Such attempts were registered at the beginning of the 18. 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 the Tergi district and opening the Ossetian Military Way (60s of the 19. 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, p.270-271, p.276). 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 Ravine 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). Ossetian people moved from the mountains of the North Caucasus in the first half of the 17. 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 17. 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 the lowlands. Vakhushti Bagrationi used to underline that Ossetian people dwelt in the mountains of Dvaleti and Shida Karthli on the remains of the Georgians' habitat: "First Georgian peasants had dwelt on those territories. Then the Ossetian overtook and Georgians moved to the valleys, due to the decrease of population in the valleys" (Vakhushti Bagrationi).

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 17. century. According to records of the 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 17. century, Ossetians had not been settled in the village Zemo Java of 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, p.364). The local population died out as a result of Ossetians raids and piracy. Depopulated Zemo Java was bought and sold now and again by feudal. This document names the extinct Georgian surnames, but Ossetian historians translated it in a mangled way, as if 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 to 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 16. century, Java was inhabited with the patronymic of the Garakanidzes. It must be noted here also that Georgian kings and princes used to invite Ossetians 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 17. 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 17. century. Though, the Ossetian scientists still found a way out: they nominated those migrants as last second wave migrants and introduced the notion of "former Ossetian", who quasi had migrated to Georgia earlier and Georgians assimilated them. Therefore, about hundred Ossetians with Georgian family names were purposefully considered as native Ossetian - the "former Ossetian", as they refer to.

Ossetians gradually moved to the South and by the 30s of the 18. century, they had occupied totally the whole mountainous line of Didi Liakhvi and Parata Liakhvi Ravines. In the mentioned period, Ossetians lived in some mountainous villages together with the remaining local Georgians (Giuldenshtedt, 1961, p.277-279).

In fact, Ossetians didn't settle in the foothills of Shida Kartli in the 18. century. Their migration into the foothill villages of Shida Kartli (mostly on the remains) started in the late 18. and early 19. centuries.

At the beginning of the 18. century 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, p.50). They migrated into Kudaro mainly from Dvaleti. In the mountains of Shida Kartli, the Ossetians first occupied Didi Liakhvi then Patara Liakhvi Ravines and the upper reaches of the River Ksani (Zhamuri). At the beginning of the 18. century, a little group of 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 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 because of the lack of arable lands" (Volkova, 1974, p.134). The fact that in the middle of the 18. century the Ossetians only dwelt 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 number 8 on the atlas.

By the end of the 18. 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 on 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 18. century, i.e. as in times of Vakhushti Bagrationi. So at the end of the 18. 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 18. century and at the beginning of the 19. century, the Ossetians occupied an important mountainous part of Patara Liakhvi Gorge. From this period, and especially in the first decade of the 19. century, Ossetians started to move individually from the mountains of Shida Karthli to the villages on the foothills and valleys of Shida Karthli. By that time, such migration was accomplished from the mountainous part of Patara Liakhvi Gorge (the details of Ossetian movement from 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 at the end of the 18. 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 present Georgian territories almost for the entire 19. 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 Ossetian migration directly from the mountainous parts of the North Caucasus, especially at the early stage of migration.

The statement of some authors, concerning Ossetians settlement on the foothills and valleys of Shida Karthli in the 17. - 18. centuries, is not trustworthy. At the beginning of the 19. century, Ossetians started to migrate to Proneebi, Mejuda, Lekhura Ravines and the other inhabited parts of Ksani Ravine. Ossetians settling on 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, Ossetian settlement in Lekhura, Mejuda and Proneebi Gorges was not intensive in the first three decades of the 19. century. The intensive settling of Ossetians in those ravines proceeded basically from the middle till the 80s of the 19. century.

One or two Ossetian families appeared on the other side of Shida Kartli in the 80s of the 19. century. Since then and by the end of the 19. century Ossetians inhabited intensively the mentioned territory and also modern Borjomi (Gujareti Gorge).

Ossetians migrated from the mountainous parts of Shida Kartli to Kakheti and Kvemi Kartli regions at the beginning of the 20. century. According to Soviet records of the 20. century, 164 000 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 100 000 people inhabited 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 18. century, 2 130 Ossetian farmstead (15 000 people) lived on the present territory of Georgia. According to some Ossetian authors, the number of Ossetians in Georgia in the second half of the 18. century varied from 6 000 to 7 000 farmsteads. This figure is quite unreal and obviously, the authors ignore the historical data. Actually, as mentioned above, only 2 130 farmsteads were registered. On the whole, during the 19. and 20. 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 way by force, especially during the first period of their migration to Dvaleti, as well as to the mountains of Shida Kartli. According to 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 the valleys. The conditions in the valleys were more peaceful for them. Frequent attacks dramatically changed the demographic situation in foothill and lowland regions of Shida Kartli.

Ossetians found the critical social-political situation in Georgia propitious for them and started assimilation of the mountainous part of Dvaleti and Shida Kartli. Due to the frequent attacks, disintegrated and broken into pieces, Georgia could not control the blocking of passages to the North Caucasus: Kasris Kari and Dariali. By the way, Kasris Kari was situated 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, p.644-645).

By the 18. century, the economic and demographic situations in the country were so catastrophic in Shida Kartli, that the Georgian King, and nobility, Tavadebi, frequently invited them to settle in Georgia. For example, according to Ioane Bagrationi, Ossetians lived in Digomi village or nearby. Ossetians' provisional settlement near Digomi is confirmed by the registration document of Digomi village population, at the beginning of the 19. century, where none of the Ossetians farmsteads and the surnames of Ossetian origin are registered. One document dated from 1799 is worth mentioning, it was given by King Giorgi XII to the Tagaureli Ossetians. According to the document, Tagaureli Ossetians had appealed to the King with request to allow them to resettle in Georgia. The king sent a nobleman, Ninia Gabashvili, to Ossetia to let people know his conditions on the request. He suggested to the Ossetians to become 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, they would be helped in supplying themselves with food (document of the institute of manuscript N 1617). The temporal settlement of Ossetians near Digomi is also attested by ethnographic data. As it appeared, at the edge of the 18. - 19. centuries, 32-33 Ossetians farmsteads lived there. Owing to the ignominious behavior of thievery, which was Ossetians 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 Bebristsikhe.

No more than one Ossetian generation managed to live in the mountains of Shida Kartli in the second half of the 18. century and in different villages of the foothills in the first half of the 19. century. After short stays in different villages of mountains and foothills, the Ossetians moved mainly down to the South. This is evidenced by the population registration data of the 19. century. Settled in the foothill villages at the beginning of the 19. century, Ossetians intensively moved to the valley villages in the middle of the same century. Thus, the Ossetians' gradual, intensive movement from highlands to lowlands at the end of the 18. century and for the whole 19. century is obvious and was quite suitably termed the "dense settlement" in Georgian historiography. Ossetians were characterized by intensive movement, so since settled in valley villages in the second half of the 19. century, they used to change their habitat and moved to other villages of the same valley. According to the family lists dated from 1886, in the 60-70s of the 19. 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.

Ossetian migration to the mountains of Shida Kartli occurred not long ago, which is confirmed by their social status. The majority of Ossetians living in Didi Liakhvi Ravine were recorded in the population registration data of the 19. century as „Khizans" (migrants). The term „Khizans" (migrants) is known in Georgian historical sources and appropriate research works and which stands for the peasants banished from their own habitat and settled down somewhere else. „Khizan" was a category of peasants in feudal Georgia, but unlike them, they were personally free and their dependence on the feudal- landowner was defined by using their native land. „Khizan" was apart from the local population because he was a 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 Georgian language. It is enough to enumerate some names of the mountain villages: Satskhenisi, Edemkalaki, Beloti, Atseriskhevi, Inauri, Chabarukheti, Tsipori, Shambiani, Isroliskhevi, Koloti, Kvirkiri, 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 15. century, that Dvaleti was ethnically Georgian. The gospel appears to have been lost during the period of "Tatars". It was found by Ivane with the patronymic name Khorauli. After that, a man of Parukhauli 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 and 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 East Georgian mountain family names.

The facts that the territory of "South Ossetia" during the Soviet period was originally indivisible part of Georgia and that Georgians were the native population from ancient times are confirmed by several Georgian Christian architectural monuments, dated from the 5. - 18. centuries (Mepisashvili, Tsintsadze, 1975) and many epigraphs written only in 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, in the upper reaches of Ksani Gorge was not built by 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 on 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 Ossetian works of art in the upper reaches of Didi Liakhvi Gorge dated from the 18. century (Gvasalia, 1997, p.68). The family names of Ktitors – the Tbelebis, the Kanchavelis, the Pannelis, the Korintelis, the Machabelis, the Amirejibis, the Palavandishvilis, the Eristavis – mentioned in the inscriptions of 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 (Tapladze, Bavreli, Giorgidze, Kurdgelashvili...). All the inscriptions are made in Georgian and the mentioned anthroponymes reveal their ethnic Georgian origin (Lortkipanidze, Otkhmezuri, 2007, p.127-137). There are hundreds of historical documents of the 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 the 14. - 15. 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 in Niqozi Episcopacy. Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote: "The Ossetians of Dvaleti, Christians by name,... were baptized in Kartli and Racha". Vakhushti Bagrationi also pointed that Dvals used Ossetian language i.e. transformation of their language was finished. Though historical witnesses remarked that some Dvals, who used to go to Racha and Kartli, spoke 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.

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 Ossetian pupils studying at the Tbilisi Ecclesiastic Seminary. It was the period when 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 Kartli. The center of the autonomous region was Tskhinvali, a small city located in the foothill line of Shida Kartli. There are registration materials of the population carried out by the Russian authority in the 19. century. According to all the records of the 19. century none of the ethnic Ossetian lived in Tskhinvali. Now we think that 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 of 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 Georgians, Georgian Armenians and Georgian Jews (according to the author Aikhvaldi living in the first three decades of the 19. 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 Georgians, living in Tskhinvali to baptize them"). The Ossetians, 613 men in total, living in Tskhinvali were first mentioned in the data of 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 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 Ossetians who 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 18. century, when 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". At that time, 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 Davitishvili-Bagratiunis, 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 19. century (this term was mentioned only three times in the press of that century). In the 19. century, the Russian Empire created several maps of the Caucasus, but one cannot find indication of "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 18. 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" meaning "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 19. 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 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, it is only in 1843 that Tsarist Russia established on 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, p.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 (Qartli-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 an 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. The term "Karthli" was addressed to the territory, which in the soviet period was called "South Ossetia".

In 1918-1921, Georgia shortly relieved from Russian colonial oppression and restored its state system. In that period, started the Ossetian separatist movement, which was inspired by Bolshevik Russia. In 1921, the Communist regime was established forcibly in Georgia and it became part of the Russian Empire again. The communist power created the administrative unit of Autonomous District for Ossetians in the main province of Georgia in the 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 densely populated Georgian villages were also comprised within the limits of the Autonomous District of South Ossetia. That fact generated protest in the Georgian villages. 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 part of the Autonomy of South Ossetia and we got in a 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 to us. The majority of the population in the whole Northern part of Tskhinvali region, with a small exception, is Georgians" (Bochoridze, 1996).

The Ossetians, who immigrated in the 17. - 18. centuries, became plenipotentiary citizens of the Georgian state. A majority of them was bilingual and spoke the official Georgian language. Reality made them know Georgian. Ossetians, settled in the mountains, needed to have links with the Georgian lowlands. Here are implied historically recognized husbandry - economic relationships. Therefore, Ossetians aspired to learn Georgian language. There were also some Georgians, living on the contact line with Ossetians, who knew Ossetian as well. According to some ethnographic data, on the contact line of Georgian Ossetian settlement, there were many cases of sending Ossetian children to Georgian villages (families) for studying the Georgian language. This 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 Georgian territory had to receive Christianity. Ossetians themselves were interested in the Christian religion. 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 frequently send their children to their Georgian Godmothers and Godfathers living in the valleys. According to historical-ethnological data, there were many cases of marriages between Ossetians and Georgians. This also was one of the supporting factors for making the two nations related.

Settlement of Ossetians in the mountains of Georgia caused the ethnical-linguistic assimilation of a little group of Georgians. Even nowadays, the Iluridzes (about 40 families) living in Doretkari and the tributary of Churti and Ksani ravines, are bilingual. Bilingualism was mainly caused by mixed marriages. At the end of the 18. century, Ossetians settled on the remains of Georgians who 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 by Georgians, but no women from the valley wanted to get married in the mountainous Doretkari. However, men living in Doretkari had to marry the neighboring Ossetian women. Ossetians women made their sons marry Ossetian. Such marriages from the middle of the 19. century, as well as the Ossetian ethnic surroundings made the Iluridzes bilingual. However, it must be underlined that 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 of 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, Ossetians migrated there in the 30-80s of the 19. century. The last big Georgian village of Mejuda Ravine is Mejriskhevi. Mejriskhevi is bordered by Gromi village, inhabited by Ossetians. Gromi was comprised in the autonomous district. By 1886, Gromi was still inhabited by Georgians and only after their translocation to Mejriskhevi, 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 Georgia: 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 Georgian language, acknowledged by the constitution as an official language, was not included in school programs of the Autonomous District of South Ossetia. There were Ossetian-Russian schools, organized in the following way: primary education (1-4 classes) was taught in Ossetian language, secondary education in Russian language, to which only the Ossetian language and literature was added. In spite of this, Ossetians could speak and write in Georgian. They studied Georgian alphabet independently, because, as they had explained, they had economic relations 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 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 ethnic Ossetians, who had relatively less contact with Georgian population. The opening of Ossetian-Russian schools in the Soviet period and ignoring 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 Ossetian language well. They are in marriage relations with the Ossetian population. We had a chance to visit one of the families: the Gengiuris (Georgian patronymic name). The head of the family, sixty years old man, identified himself as being an ethnic Georgian. He spoke perfectly Georgian. His mother and wife were Ossetians. Though, his five children had dual consciousness. It was noticeable, that the five of them spoke Georgian with an Ossetian accent. Besides, they argued about their ethnicity and couldn't say whether they were Georgians or Ossetians. The daughters tended to identify themselves with ethnic Ossetians. Neither the sons had any aspiration for being Georgians. One of the sons had decided to go to Russia for studying. 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 used to send their children to the Ossetian-Russian school in Tskhinvali. Thus, knowledge of language was a decisive factor in identifying to a certain ethnicity.

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

As for 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 Georgians.

Before summarizing the present linguistic situation of the Ossetians living in Georgia, we must return to the 19. century. At that time, Georgian press paid much attention to 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 Ossetian villages. They tried to persuade the parents to give education to their children. Russian authorities sent Russian teachers to Ossetian villages. Ossetian children did not know 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 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 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 in Georgian. The more the over-mountain Ossetians tend to lose ethnic identity, the more in Georgia Ossetians are proud to read and write in Georgian. There are cases of inter-marriage between neighboring villages. Thus, mixed families are characteristic of their life". S. Mgaloblishvili wrote that, Georgians must have taken appropriate measures not to let Ossetians lose their language and nationality. He insisted on opening schools for Ossetians for this reason. Another author (Grigol Liakhveli, the same as Sadzaglishvili) appealed to everybody in the same newspaper, in order to help protect the Ossetians and their language. He considered it was necessary for Ossetians to create their own alphabet.

The newspaper "Tsnobis Purtseli" expressed also great interest towards Ossetian language. It was stated in one of the edition of 1903 that all Ossetians living in Kudaro knew Georgian language, owing to close neighboring relationships with Rachvelians and Imeretians (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 knowledgeable people to submit books in order to provide teaching of Ossetian language in every Ossetian school in the nearest future".

The same disposition of Georgian educated people and Georgian authorities towards Ossetian language continued in the 20. century too. Ossetians had all the conditions to develop their language and culture, in 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 in Russian language. The author of this article participated in the Union student-ethnographers' conference held in Leningrad in 1972. There were also students from North Ossetia, who could not help expressing their own amazement that we Georgians, students of Tbilisi State University, were able to communicate in Georgian with each other and write in Georgian.

In Tskhinvali Pedagogical Institute and Tskhinvali Scientific-Research Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, special attention was paid to the teaching of Ossetian language and literature. The "Explanatory Dictionary of 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 Ossetian 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 and Borjomi. In 1980, the Georgian government started opening Ossetian schools in other regions that were compactly populated by Ossetians.

It's worth of mentioning that according to the description of the population in 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 a 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 studying Ossetian language was carried out in 97 schools, while in North Ossetia, which is a 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 from its own mother tongue. Till 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 Russian language, via ignoring Georgian. The linguistic situation in the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia in the 1920s was described by historian, G. Bochoridze. He wrote: "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 court but earlier, in 1928 in Akhalkori, even statements were to be written in Ossetian or at least in Russian. Only few exceptions were made to accept statements in Georgian". "Schools are opened for Ossetians, but for 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 wish, 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 20. century, Georgian scientists did their bit in investigation of Ossetian language. For example, academician G. Akhvlediani edited „The Academic Grammar of Ossetian Language“, in two volumes.

So, after Ossetian 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 19. century, when Georgia became a Russian colony, the linguistic situation in Georgia started to change, that was stipulated though active interfering of Russian authorities. Russia forcibly distributed Russian language in its colonies and made different ethnic groups be in opposition with each other. Russia tried to replace Georgian with Russian for Ossetians. The 19. century, and particularly the second half of it, for many Ossetians was the period of initial transition to Russian language. Georgian society did everything to preserve Ossetian language and its ethnic origin. Still, in the 19. century, many Ossetians spoke Georgian 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 Ossetians forgot Georgian language. Thus, there was another tendency: the educated part of Ossetians could speak and write Georgian but deliberately did not.

In the mountains, 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 narrow paths wide enough for walkers and riders. The center of social life was the village square, which was called "Nikhas" in Ossetian language. All the important issues of the community were discussed on 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 to the entire village. The ploughshare in the mountain and in the plain was different. The one that was used in the plain was called "guton" (the term is assimilated from the Georgian –"gutani"). The name of a harvester tool "lamgal" originates from the 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 nomadic people. According to Ossetian folklore, the Alans were perfect horsemen who owned huge herds of horses. Till the second half of the 19. century, horse was the only means of transportation in the mountains.

Similar to other North Caucasian people, Ossetians had a great variety of weapons: sword, bow, arrow, shield, chain gown and helmet. According to Klaprot, 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 even if some Ossetian scientists insist that West Georgian people learned making cheese "Sulguni" from Ossetians, it is wrong. On the contrary, Ossetians had never known the method of of "sulguni".

An important issue:

In the first half of the 19. 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. Ossetians, migrating from the mountains to the valleys, could not manage to settle down, due to their patronymic kinship. The legends say that many fights broke out among Ossetians living in Shida Kartli. The fights especially 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 the break down of the villages, which were initially settled by Georgians.

In mountainous Ossetia, before the beginning of the 19. century, the deceased were buried in tombs, mostly in over ground tombs. This tradition was also spread in Ingushia, Chechnia, Karachai and Balkar. Over ground tombs were 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 were shifted inside. There were wooden or stone couches, where the deceased were 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 Ossetian transmigration. The majority of builders were Ingush. They were hired also to build towers. It is significant that some over ground tombs belonged to the Nogaels, who lived together with Ossetians. The Nogael origin of the deceased was proved according to the anthropological type, dressing and different vessels found in the tombs. Due to the materials obtained in the 1920s, in the ravines of Kurtati, Taguri and Digori, the Nogaels lived together with Ossetians. Nogaels and Ossetians had migrated from valleys in the 14. - 15. 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 the 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. Ossetians possessed different towers: watch, battle and living ones. Battle towers generally were not very high and their quadrangular walls had flat covering. Ossetians considered that the towers were not built by Ossetians. According to legend, the builders were the former inhabitants of the settlement. B. Kaloev considers that those were 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 Ossetians lived in stone houses. There were pagan sacred places almost in every village, which they called "Dzuar". This word originates from the Georgian word "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 were situated close to each other, represented territorial-neighboring unions and were linked to each other with an oath. It was done at a 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.

Ossetian food was similar to that of other North Caucasian mountaineers. They prepared 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, beer was made by one of the characters of the epos, Satana. Habitually, it was prepared in a big copper pot during great festivals of a family or community. Earlier the Ossetians used to make a heady drink from honey called "Rong".

Ossetian society was divided into several social groups. Ossetians were organized due to their patronymic kinship. Their family names were patronymic. Each patronymic („Miggar“) represented the union of some patronymics („Fidifirt“). Ossetian scientists suppose that the 16. 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 ancestors. Up to now, exogamy is strictly controlled within the blood related groups. Those who abrogated exogamy were punished and were exiled from 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: Kokoev and Gaciev, Sanakoev and Gagloev. Marriage was forbidden among related or fraternized groups. Marriage was forbidden 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 Ossetian legends about strict punishment of incest. Each Ossetian patronymic group had its own cemetery and sacred place for praying ("Dzuar"). In Ossetia, monogamy was the dominant practice. Polygamy was very rare and was allowed in case of barrenness of the first wife. In that case, the permission of the first wife and her relatives was needed. It is mentioned in the scientific literature that it

was necessary to receive the consent of a bride, of her mother, brothers and 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 reconciliation, the offender part had to give a lot of cattle, valuables (weapons, pots for beer preparation) and arrange a 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. Fathers never used to carry their child in his arms and never addressed their 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 to eighteen and for females fourteen to sixteen. Those who got married had to pay bride-money, which sometimes was the 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 a 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 played a major 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.

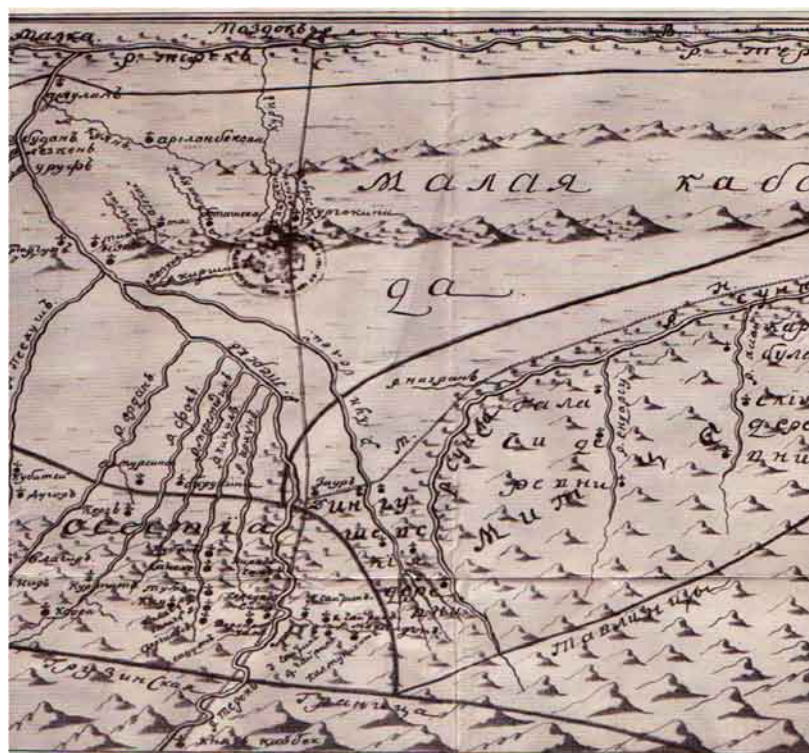
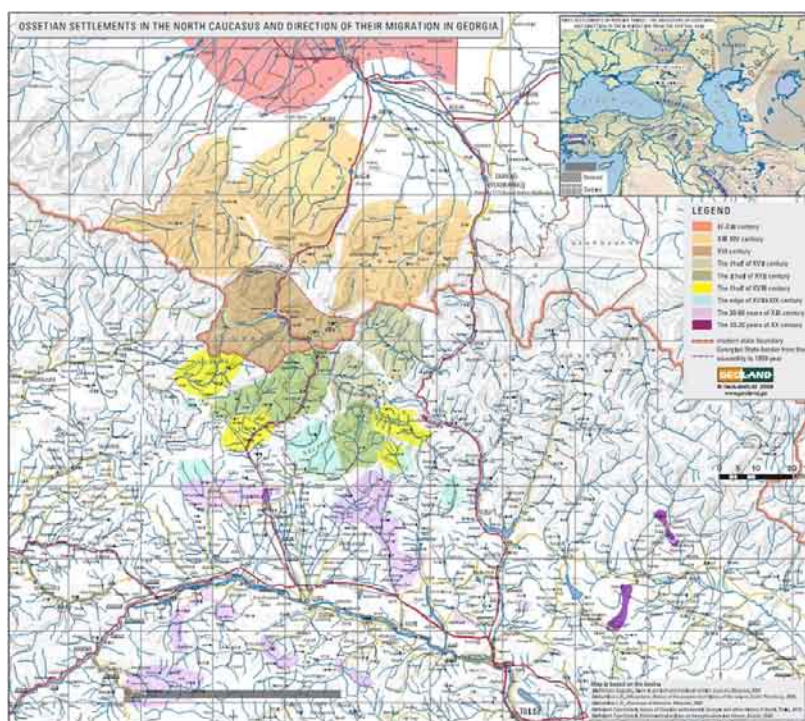
Nowadays, Ossetians are mainly Christians and a small amount are Muslims. Islam was basically spread within Ossetians of Digori. Christianity was introduced here in the 6. - 7. centuries by Byzantium and later by Georgia but wasn't engrained among population. In the late Middle Ages, Ossetians residing in the mountain gorges were the followers of pre-Christian faith and ideas. The Georgian government tried to introduce Christianity through the migrating Ossetians. Islam was spread in West Ossetia from Kabardo in the 17. - 18. centuries. 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 was a bell with ancient Georgian inscriptions on it. In prayers, 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 Saint George. Ossetians, similar to Georgians used to sacrifice land to the sacred places (when 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 worth 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 points out the fact that Ossetians initially inhabited the steppes not the mountains. In the Narths' epos, nothing is mentioned

about Alans settlements 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 an indivisible part of nomadic people. The fact that Ossetian ancestors were inhabitants of the steppes is evidenced by their agricultural calendar. 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 19. 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 Georgian historical sources appear to be of key importance when studying the history of Ossetia and other important issues. In his work Vakhushti Bagrationi wrote the following about Ossetians: "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 were 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 no Georgian government will ever agree with it, as it means the destruction of the territorial integrity. Those who want peace between Georgians and 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 this Ossetian scientist. The falsified history and perfidious plans, created by the Russian Government, misled Ossetian people. Historians cannot foresee the future. One thing is clear, the prognosis in this situation does not seem to be hopeful.



Literature:

- Abaev, 1949 – Ossetian language and folk.
- Aleman, 2003 - The Allans in the sources of ancient and Middle Ages.
- Bagrationi, 1986 - Description of Kartl-Kakheti. T. Enukidze and G. Bedoshvili's edition.
- Berozov, 1980 – The Ossetian People Migration from the Mountains in the 18. – 20. centuries.
- Bliev, 1990 – The history of South Ossetia, Part 1, 1990.
- Bochoridze, 1996 - South Ossetia from Giorgi Bochoridze's point of view "The issue of the Ossetians", Gori-Tbilisi, 1996.
- Gamkrelidze, 1996 - About the Ossetians' Settlement in Georgia "The Issue of the Ossetians", Gori-Tbilisi, 1996.
- Gamrekeli, 1961 - Dvaleti and the Dvaletians in the First-Fifteenth centuries, Tbilisi, 1961.
- Gachechiladze, 1986 - Samachablo Ossetian Mode of Life, Customs and Culture (1857-1905. according to the Georgian press), Tbilisi, 1986.
- Gvasalia, 1991 – Historical Geography of Eastern Georgia - Shida Kartli, Tbilisi, 1991.
- Gvasalia, 1997 – Shida Kartli and Issue of Ossetia, Tbilisi, 1997.
- Giuldenshtedt, 1961 - Giuldenshtedt's Travel in Georgia, Volume 1, G Gelashvili edition, Tbilisi, 1961.
- Document, 1940 - Documents from Social History of Georgia, book I, N Berdzenishvili edition, Tbilisi, 1940.
- Vaneev 1936 - Scientific Research Institution News, the 3rd edition, 1936.
- Vakhushti Bagrationi, 1973 - Description of Karthli Kingdom, Kartlis Tskhovreba, Volume IV, 1973.
- Volkova, 1974 - Ethnic Composition of the North Caucasus in the Eighteenth Century and at the Beginning of the Twentieth Centuries, 1974.
- Topchishvili 1989 – Family Lists of Tiflisi Provinces in 1886, as an Ethnographical Source #6, 1989.
- Topchishvili 1997 – Ossetians Migration to Georgia and the Issues of Ethno-history of Shida Karthli, Tbilisi, 1997.
- Tophishvili 2006 – Georgian-Ossetian ethno-historical Review, Kutaisi, 2006.
- Ivanenko 1873 – Civil administration in the Trans-Caucasus, Tbilisi, 1873.
- Kaloev, 1999 - Historical-Ethnographical Esseys of Ossetia, V. 1999.
- Collection, 1893 - Statistic Data on Trans-Caucasian Population, Tbilisi 1893.
- Lazarashvili 1966 – About the Ossetians' Migration to Georgia, SE. #2 1966.

- Lortkifanidze, Otkhmezuri, 2007 - Ossetians in Georgia - Globalization and the Caucasus, Volume 1 (4), 2007.
- Lortkipanidze, Muskhelishvili 2008 - The letter to the Prime Minister V. Putin – Analebi #3, 2008.
- Mephisashvili, Tsintsadze 1975 - The Architect of the Mountainous Part of the Historical Province of Georgia- Shida Kartli, Tbilisi, 1975.
- Otkhmezuri, 1994 - The Epigraphic of North Part of Shida Kartli - The Ossetian edition, Tbilisi, 1994.
- Kurdiani, 1997 – About Common Georgian Epic (narrative) Poem's One Metric Scheme "Giorgi Rogava", Tbilisi, 1997.
- North Caucasus, 1988 - The history of the North Caucasian Peoples from Ancient times till the End of the Eighteenth Century, M. 1988.
- Ancient..., 1911 – "Ancient Georgia" II. Tbilisi, 1911-1913.
- Javakhishvili, 1919 - Georgian Frontiers from Historical and Modern Points of View, 1919.

Regarding the Political-Legal Status Of a Certain Part (Tskhinvali region) of Shida Kartli

Bimurza Dadeshkeliani-Aprasidze

Since the 19. century, the Russian government provided the "absorption" of the entire Caucasus and first of all of the Black Sea front by means of genocide, ethnic cleansing, deportation and demographic expansion of the Caucasian peoples. According to the "project" of the Tsarist Russian government and the Decembrists (Pestel, 1991), the issue of resettlement of the Caucasian "mutinous" nations (Georgians, Chechens, Daghestans, Adygheans, Circassians, Kabardinians, Apsua/ Abkhazians...) was principally posed. Only those obeying to Russia, "placid" nations together with the settled Russians, were to be left in the Caucasus. This process lasted while the existence of the entire Soviet Empire and still continues up to present in form of the Georgian, Chechen, Ingushian peoples genocide and ethnic cleansing.

During the history of Georgian statehood, its legitimate authorities (Pharnavazian Dynasty, Bagrationi Dynasty, the Georgian Democratic Republic and the Georgian Republic Authority) have never recognized the existence of any form of autonomous entity in the midst of the country, meaning in Shida Kartli.

In February-March of 1921 and in 1991-1993, following the occupation of independent Georgia, the armed forces of the Russian empire (the 8th, 9th, 11th Armies, the Trans-Caucasian Military Regional Forces, the Special military services, the Black Sea Navy, Rostov special troops, Dzerzhinsk Division and the 345th Air -Landing Regiment) and the local renegades established unconstitutionally, the so- called South Ossetian Autonomous District (which was later renamed South Ossetian Republic).

From 1921 to 1990 and since 1992 up to the present days, the author of the autonomous formations in both cases was the illegal regime ruled by Russia, – as was the occupation administration of the Republic of Georgia.

In 1918-1921 and in 1990-1991, the legitimate government of Georgia based on the Georgian constitution and international law suppressed the attempts to separate the territory of Shida Kartli from Georgia.

In 1989-1991, as a result of the Russian (Kremlin) propaganda there was disseminated false information as if the ethnic minorities were oppressed by Georgians. As an example of such disinformation serves the photo-video material on burning alive a Georgian patriot, Mindiashvili, by Ossetians, which was presented abroad as the confirming material of Ossetians' burning alive. Besides, at the international conference of dissidents in Prague, members of the so-called National Congress accused the Georgian nation the Ossetian people's genocide and in discrimination of ethnic minorities.

Moreover, on the account of protecting of ethnic minorities living in Georgia, the Russian authority established military-political organizations in 1989-1991 as were

"Aidgilara", "Adamon-Nikhas", "KrunK", "Soyuz", "Kazaks' Union", "Slavic House", "Mountaineer Peoples' Union", "Mashtoz" and others.

In 1921-1922 and in 1991-1993 as result of the aggression committed against the sovereign Georgian Republic, via violating the UN Charter, the UN Declarations of 1965 and 1974 and the OSCE Conferences and elementary norms of international law, there was perpetrated the occupation of Abkhazia and Shida Kartli.

On April 20, 1922, the Russian occupation regime created the South Ossetian Autonomous District. This fact was harshly opposed by 20,000 Georgians and 1,100 ethnic Ossetians (i.e. majority of the Ossetians) living on this territory.

In 1988-1990, the communist regime of Georgia that was forcedly included within the frames of the Soviet Union, factually lost its control over the so- called Autonomous District of South Ossetia – jurisdiction of Soviet Georgia was almost not extended over this region.

In August of 1990, the Georgian Communist Government (Occupation Administration of Russia) declared the self-liquidation by means of admitting the Georgian occupation by Soviet Russia in 1921. As a consequence, all the adopted legal acts during 70 years (amongst them were the resolutions about the establishment of autonomies), were invalidated (regulation, 20.08.1990).

From October 28, 1990, since the very first days of coming into power of the democratically elected legitimate national government of Georgia, the authorities of the Russian empire have been attempting to stop the building process of Georgian statehood with the help of the Ossetian separatists and its military-occupation forces. On December 9, 1990, according to the instruction of the Russian government and with their immediate guidance the Ossetian separatists held elections of the Supreme Council of the so- called "Soviet Republic of South Ossetia" and thus, caused a serious threat to the territorial integrity of the Georgian Republic.

On December 11, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia adopted the 363th law "Regarding Abolishing the Autonomous District of the South Ossetia" (law, 12.12.1990). It was mentioned in the law that, "the separatist forces in the Autonomous District of South Ossetia try to commit usurpation of the state authority by means of creating the so called "Soviet Republic of South Ossetia", as well as to infringe upon a historical, indivisible part of Georgia, that vividly opposes not only the Georgian Constitution, but also the USSR constitution and the elementary norms of the international...". According to article 104, paragraphs 3 and 11 of the constitution of the Georgian Republic, the Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic stated:

1. to abolish the South Ossetian Autonomous District;
2. ...
3. to declare invalid 2 decrees of the Georgian Central Executive Committee and the Georgian Public Commissariat Council issued on April 20, 1922 regarding the structure of the "South Ossetian Autonomy" and the Georgian SSR law of November 12, 1980 about the "South Ossetian Autonomous District";

4. "...to render null the results of elections on the so-called South Ossetian Soviet Republic held by the Supreme Council on December 9, 1990...".

On March 23, 1991, in Kazbegi there was signed a document by the leader of the Georgian Republic Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the head of RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) Boris Eltsin, in which a term "a former South Ossetia Autonomous District" was stated. Besides, Russia recognized that the issue about the status of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District as indivisible part of Georgia was the internal affair of Georgia. Russia also agreed to withdraw the USSR military forces from this zone ("Sakartvelos Respublika", Republic of Georgia, 24.03.1991).

In May 1991, the Higher Council of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic together with the representatives of the Higher Council of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic, in attendance of the Ossetian side as supervisor, initialed a treaty on the basis of which the resolution of the problem of Tskhinvali Region was stated as a prerogative of the Georgian Republic. On this ground, the Presidium of the Higher Council of the USSR adopted a statement of similar essence.

In public referendum held on May 31, 1991, about 99.68% of electorate in Tskhinvali region and 99.44% in Akhlagori region voted for restoration of the Georgian state independence. Great majority of ethnic Ossetians, living on the entire territory of the Georgian Republic, voted in three elections held on October 29, 1990, March 31, 1991 and May 26, 1991 for independence of Georgia, territorial integrity, the program of the "Round Table – Independent Georgia" and the state policy of Zviad Gamsakhurdia ("Khma Erisa" (Nation's Voice, 1995, p.94-98, p.470-475).

Based on the results of the Referendum of March 31, 1991, on the ground of restoration of the Georgian state independence on April 9, 1991, proceeding from the Constitution of the Georgian Republic and the international legal norms, the Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic adopted the 657th Regulation (on September 15, 1991) regarding the armed forces of the Soviet Union located in Georgia in which there was stated:

"1.To declare the USSR armed forces located on the Georgian territory as the occupation military forces;

2. The government of the Georgian Republic shall start negotiations regarding withdrawal of the USSR armed forces from the Georgian territory; 3. Before final withdrawal of the USSR armed forces from the Georgian territory, to bring up the issue before the USSR of immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the Abkhazian ASR and the former South Ossetian Autonomous District, as their presence and activity on these territories hinder the stabilization of the situation in the region" (Resolution, 16. 09.1991).

The occupation regime of Shevardnadze ignored the constitution of the Georgian Republic, the results of the Referendum of March 31, 1991, the act of April 9, 1991 on restoration of the state independence, the UN Charter, the OSCE Vienna 1986 summarizing document and the Regulations of the Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic of September 15 and March 13, 1992. It signed a treaty with Russia in Dagomis, in force of which the Russian military forces were given the right to deploy

in Tskhinvali region the “peacekeepers” status. As far as the Russian empire military forces located on the Georgian territory were declared as the occupation troops by the Georgian legitimate authority since 1991, the “obligation” undertaken, following, to the Dagomis Treaty, was now admitted as a state crime before Georgia. Adding to that, it should be considered void as the document was signed by the illegal regime. It’s worth noting that, at that period, the still existing and functioning legitimate government of Georgia had been expelled from the country by Russia (the President of Georgia, legislative body – Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic, the Georgian government and the local self-governance bodies).¹

In parallel, the occupation regime of Shevardnadze supported the parliamentary elections of so-called South Ossetia and announced the South Ossetia state formation in Shida Kartli at the meetings that were held in Borjomi, Tskhinvali, Moscow and Vladikavkaz. Meantime, together with the Russian government and the Ossetian separatists, this regime attempted to accuse the Georgian legitimate authority in Tskhinvali region conflict which was in fact provoked by Russia.

Besides, Shevardnadze’s illegitimate regime illegally rendered the occupation troops the role of “peacekeepers” in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic.²

Nowadays, Putin-Medvedev’s regime, after committing genocide of Georgians in Tskhinvali region, attempts to legalize this factual situation and by means of declaring “two Ossetian” Republics create the legal-political grounds for formation of one Ossetia in composition of the Russian Empire.

Russia, since August 7, 2008, besides of its own and also Georgian constitution (Constitution of Georgia, 1995) has violated the major principles of international law³, namely:

1. principle of territorial integrity;
2. principle of state sovereignty and equality;
3. principle of non-use of force in international relations;
4. principle of inviolability of frontiers;
5. principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs of other states;
6. principle to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms;
7. principle of equity and right on national self-determination;
8. principle of peaceful settlement of disputes;
9. implementation of obligations and agreements determined by international law and others.

1 It’s paradox but yet a fact: the “Treaty” of Dagomis among Russia and Georgia from the Georgian side was signed by the Russian citizen Eduard Shevardnadze, who was a representative of the Russian Occupation Administration in Georgia.

2 Compare: earlier before, by the time of turning Georgia into the Soviet country, the Russian Bolshevik Empire with the support of Sergo Ordjonikidze’s occupation administration created the so called South Ossetia Autonomous District by means of neglecting the Georgian legitimate authority.

3 The UN Charter; the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1990

At this time, Russia occupies Ksani Gorge – Akhargori region. This act represents a fact of violence and cynicism, as the South Ossetia autonomous entity had not existed since December 11, 1990. It should be mentioned that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Akhargori Region was always controlled legally by Tbilisi and the jurisdiction of the Georgian government on the mentioned territory is spread up today.

Annexation of Shida Kartli to Russia has neither legal nor political or geographical grounds.

Literature:

1. The Georgian State Independence Restoration Act, Tbilisi, 1991.
2. Treaty on the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Regulation, Tbilisi, 1992.
3. Resolution of the Georgian SSR Higher Council; newspaper "Komunisti" (the Communist), August 20, 1990.
4. Law of the Georgian Republic Regarding Abolishing the South Ossetia Autonomous District; newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" (Republic of Georgia), December 12, 1990.
5. Newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" (Republic of Georgia), March 24, 1991.
6. 657th Regulation of the Supreme Council of the Georgian Republic; newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" (Republic of Georgia), September 16, 1991.
7. Results of Referendum of the Georgian Republic; newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika" (Republic of Georgia), April 8, 1991.
8. Constitution of the Republic of Georgia, Tbilisi, 1991.
9. The Georgian Constitution, Tbilisi, 1995.
10. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Tbilisi, 1990.
11. For the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Tbilisi, 1991.
12. Pestel P.I., Russkaia Pravda, Saint-Petersburg, 1906.
13. "Khma Erisa" (Nation's Voice), Editor G. Saluashvili, Tbilisi. 1995.