Georgia at the origins of the European Orientation

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Abstract

In the article, "Georgia at the origins of the European Orientation", is discussed the relationships of the Kartvelian tribes with the Greek world both – in ancient and pre-antique (Crete-Mycenaean or Aegean culture) period and their role in the formation of Greek civilization.

According to the work, the ancient period is considered as a genesis of the European orientation of Georgia, though the Kartvelian tribes actively participated in the formation of the Greek culture from the Crete-Mycenaean period.

Correspondingly, since the ancient period Georgian ancestry people represent the recipient of the European culture, whereas, in the pre-antique period, they are regarded as the donor of the Greek culture, together with other peoples. In spite of these viewpoints are based upon the works of different Georgian and foreign scientists, the complete answer to the question should be given after the thorough study of new archeological materials and Minoan script.

The goal of the represented research is to study the genesis of the European orientation of Georgia widely, in the political, historical, and economic frames, through the whole history. The result of the research will help Georgian and foreign scientists to understand the European orientation of Georgia better, to perceive the European identity of Georgia, which will be something of a novelty for the Georgian and European historiography.

Keywords: Georgia, Europe, European integration, Georgian identity.

1. Introduction

Research of the process of genesis of Georgia's European orientation is an urgent task for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, because the study of historical relations with the

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Western world and the new understanding is of great importance for further development of the country. This increases the topicality of the proposed issue greatly, as the study of Georgia-European multilateral relations is very important for Georgian historiography. In addition, Georgia has signed the Association Agreement with the European Union, which has clearly identified the issue of the country's orientation and finally determined political and cultural choice. That is why, our country, as well as Europeans earlier – is facing the issue: “What is Europe: Geographical area or civilization model? Economic welfare or political project? New historical reality or philosophic orientation?”

“How was created European identity from different nations and what can be said about the essence of this unity? Can Georgia succeed at the way of European integration, which is based on ancient Georgian cultural traditions? What universal values have Europe and how can these values be discussed in the context of national identity”? As it is known, country's development vector is determined by many factors, including cultural, historical and geopolitical factors.

However, in the modern stage of historical development, under occupation and annexation of the country, priority of Georgia's foreign policy should be Europe and it has no alternative. Therefore, the opinion about the EU as an important foreign policy vector in Georgia, needs legitimation both in government and society, especially in young people, as the political factors react to demands of society. Therefore, research on the orientation of Georgia has special importance for the development of the country and creates a new reality for the fundamental reconstruction of its social, political, economic and cultural sphere. Despite many works, written about Georgian-European relations, no work has been written about the genesis of European orientation of Georgia, which carries generalized character. In the work, the research about the genesis and evolution of European orientation of Georgia all over the history would be done. It should be definitely a novelty for Georgian historiography. We should focus on historical, cultural and political contexts.

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1.1 Georgia at the origins of the European Orientation

A large number of scholars, writers and philosophers believe that the origins of European identity emerged in the bosom of ancient civilization and the cornerstone of the cultural heritage of the Europe was considered: Mind, justice and mercy.¹

In spite of the fact that the identity of Europe as a cultural space is associated with a rather distant past, it is possible that this goes beyond antiquity. Since, as noted above, value indicator the priorities, based on its internal logic, are changing epically, while colliding with various imperatives, the formation of European identity, should be studied not only in synchronous but also in the diachronic context.

Therefore, it would be great for the cultural identity of the ancient era to find out which cultural components were based on the earlier stage of history. And here it is natural that we cannot ignore those people who have participated in the processes of the Mediterranean from ancient times and those people who were in touch with Greeks and who were living at the territory before they came. It is noteworthy that among the others there inhabited Kartvelian tribes well. In Georgian and foreign historiography, there are many interesting documents about this.

At this point especially interesting is Data of Herodotus, where the Aegean autochthons are regarded as Pelasgians. There are other Greek and Roman authors, including Thucydides, Strabo, Stephan Byzantine, Nikoloz from Damascus, according to which the aborigines of different parties of the Hellas are Pelasgians.²

European scholars **Krechmer and Blumenbach**, as well as Georgian scholars, believe that the proto-Georgians are linked to ethnic indigenous, linguistically and culturally European

¹ authors: (Nadareishvili et al., 2014)

² Author: (Urushadze 1964)

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Aborigines –to Pre-Indo-Europeans, Pre-Aryans, Pre-Celts, Etruscans, Pelasgians and Proto-Basques. The Romans called these first Europeans - Iberians.³

The first president of Georgia **Zviad Gamsakhurdia** talks about the ethno genesis of Georgians in the work "Georgia's Spiritual Missions", where he is certified by a number of Georgian and foreign scientists.

First of all, he refers to Wilhelm Humboldt, who thinks that, the Southern Europe: the primary autochthonic population of the Pyrenees, the Italian and the Mediterranean Islands was Iberian. This population is called proto-Iberians, and the latter name comes from the late European population, who inhabited the from Pyrenees peninsula to the Mediterranean basin, modern Balkan countries, modern Greece, the Caucasus, and also in Asia Minor and Palestine. This is the spread area of the proto-Iberian generation, which had many branches according to the researches of Wilhelm Humboldt.⁴

The German philosopher Schelling described the Pelasgian epoch in the development of Greece as the saizm e.i. Era of prophecy wisdom. In the later Greek mythology, Perseus and other heroes took a prophetic, pelasgian culture into a culture of thought, namely into intellectual Hellene culture.⁵

Furnee who has a significant research on the ancient Greek - Pelasgian and Kartvelian, believed that the Trojan was a more ancient cultural world than the Hellenic world. Hellenes used to crusade for the sacral, mysterious wisdom - the Palladium. The Trojan is the same Kolkhian world, as the Trojans explain Helen's abduction as a revenge for them for Medeas' abduction.⁶

³ Author: (Anchabadze 2015)

⁴ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

⁵ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

⁶ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

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As for the ancient Greek myths, Gamsakhurdia believes that it is created by the Pelasgians and is interpreted by the Hellenes. Homer and Hesiod are not the creators of the ancient Greek myths, they only define them. The names of the Mythos' creators, mythographs of the Pelasgian era, did not reach us, but reached us the Deities, the characters of myths. The main characters of the ancient Greek pantheon are of the Pelasgian origin. Among them is Zeus. There is a pelasagictonic Zeus, whose cult is related to the oak; Hera of Haera who is the oldest Pelasgian-Iberian goddess; also Demetre. While explaining the root, Academician Ivane Javakhishvili indicated that "de" root is quite unfamiliar to the ancient Greek language. "Meter" – means mother, it is true, but the root "de" i.e. "deda" has definitely Iberian origins. "De" should be denoting mother-goddess. So, Demetre is the image, where the ancient Kolkhian, Pelasgian mother merged with the ancient Greek goddess. We can say, that it is the ancient Greek pantheon merged with proto-Kartvelian, proto-Iberian or Pelasgian pantheon.⁷

The myth of Prometheus, according to Gamsakhurdia, is of utmost importance as the evolution of humanity and the ethno genesis of Georgians, because these main moments of Greek mythos are not accidentally connected to the Caucasus. "Pro-Methel" in the old Greek means prophetic thinking, Prejudice, Epimetheus – his brother, is the equivalent and convincing mind. Who is Prometheus? Prometheus is a representative of the humanity who has to develop a prophetic or intuitive thinking. Who is Epimetheus? He is the one who has to develop intellectual and analytical thinking. Whose son is Prometheus? He is the son of Iapetus.⁸

According to the version of Niko Marr the Georgian tribe was the descendant of the son of Noah's son Japheth, and is an indigenous population of Iberia in Europe, which later joined

⁷ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

⁸ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

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the Celts. As a result, they became the Celt-Iberians and later merged with the Goths and German tribes [12-9]. As for the myth about the Argonauts, in ancient Greek mysteries, it was conveyed as a search for the Golden Fleece and the Golden Fleece was in Colchis. Initially, the Golden Fleece is gone from Greece to Colchis, reckons Gamsakhurdia and concludes that this is Greece where Pelasgian culture blossoms by that time, namely Pelasgian Argos culture. It is not a coincidence that the ship is called “Argo”. Argo with its roots comes from Colchis, Argo-Argveti, Argveti, Egrisi, “gr” – root. Crusade in Colchis is an imaginative crusade for the spiritual, mysterious wisdom which only existed in Colchis by that time.⁹

Thus, according to Gamsakhurdia, Kolkhian, Pelasgian, Trojan Minos worlds represent the relative worlds.

At this point, the works of Rismag Gordeziani are very interesting. He says: “One very important factor determines the attraction towards common European heritage in our country. Our country has been participating in the Mediterranean processes from ancient times. Apparently, Kartvelian tribes could have genetic relations with pre-Greek civilization peoples (Pelasgians, Lelegians, Minos...) besides, with the Etruscans. The Greek-Georgian relationships begin with Mykonos era. It was reflected in the myths about Prometheus and Argonauts. The ancient Colchis became one of the most important countries. Medea, Ayt, Kirke, Aphsyrtos and other Colchis mythological characters played quite a role in Greek literature.

Moreover, according to the modern researchers, Medea became one of the most popular images of the world literature and many works all over the world are “devoted” to her... Numerous Kartvelian tribes, geographical areas often appear in literature as well as in antique Historiography and scientific works. We can say that Greek and Roman written

⁹ Author: Gamsakhurdia (1991)

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sources about Georgia are of the main importance and are considered to give an opportunity to our country to reconstruct its ancient history, together with archeological data. This determined that antique literature monuments ... are the texts which contain important information about our country.”¹⁰

We can often meet indirect indications about the identity of the Pelasgian and Caucasian tribes with Roman and Greek authors, who used to rely on the ancient narrating. Pelasgian Thessallians, Minor Asian Trojans, Lemnos Island Pelasgian inhabitants are considered to be the Colchis relative tribes.¹¹

Thus, Asia Minor, Crete Island and many other places of the Mediterranean was the homeland of Pre-Hellene-Pelasgian people. Colchis tribes should have played important role in so called “Minos Population” of the ancient Crete.¹² The people of their ancestry have created great cultural centers in Eastern Asia and Southern Europe.¹³

As for the ethno genesis of the Pelasgians, the scientist’s opinions vary. Part of them reckons that their genesis is not Indo-European and part of them thinks contrary. Head of the Archeological Expedition at Knos (Crete) Evans said that all three Minos scripts – Hieroglyphic, A and B Linear, was created by the ancient inhabitants of the Crete Island and the language of this script does not belong to Indo-European but – Greek.¹⁴

The other scientists together with V. Georgiev considered Pelasgians as the pure Indo-European tribes and the ancestors of the Greek.¹⁵

¹⁰ Author: (Gordeziani 2007)

¹¹ Author: (Urushadze 1964)

¹² Author: (Janashia 1959)

¹³ Author: (Urushadze 1964)

¹⁴ Author: (Urushadze 1964)

¹⁵ Author: (Urushadze 1964)

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It is notable that Mediterranean Sea culture, known as Hellene culture has been arouse at the basis of the Pre-Hellene-Pelasgian-Anatolian culture.¹⁶

What concerns to antique period, Georgian-Greek relations gradually became more and more intensive (VIII-VI cc. B.C.).

From VI c. B.C. Greeks have founded many settlements to the East of the Black Sea. For example, Phasis (near Poti), Gienos (near Ochamchire), Dioskuria (near Sokhimi), Pitianti (near Bitchvinta). Settlement promoting was facilitated by “Great Silk” trade road, which was spread from India to the Black Sea (Phasis) and headed towards the Greek world.

The Greeks were mainly engaged in trade relations with Colchis. Textiles, jewelry, vessels and luxury items were brought from Greece. The oil was also brought from Greece. On the other hand, Georgia exported linen, fur, leather, various precious types of wood, gold and iron.

The foundation of Greek settlements played an important role in the acceleration of the cultural and economic relations of the Black Sea coastal area population with the antique world and in general, facilitated the promotion of trade-economic life in these areas and accelerated the process of social-economic development among the local population.¹⁷

Seemingly, Colchis has been very well developed country by VI-IV cc. B.C. Iron processing was at the high level. Many wine-jars were found, which indicate to the promotion of winemaking. Goldsmith’s work was excellent by that time. The existence of local money indicates to the high development of Colchis. In the 6th-3rd centuries BC, silver money was minted to Colchis, called "Colchian Tetri". Colchian Tetri is also found outside Georgia (in the Crimea, near Trabzon, in Central Asia-Ferghan Valley), which says about its circulation in international trading.

¹⁶ Author: (Urushadze 1964)

¹⁷ Author: (Essays of Georgian history 1970)

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Interesting information about the Georgian tribes inhabiting South-East coastal area of the Black Sea is given in "Anabasis" by Xenophon. Xenophon writes: "At this time there was a reign of Ayet's descendant".

Thus, the Kingdom of Colchis, or Egrisi, was a politically and economically advanced and developed country. It had an active economic, cultural and political relationship with the civilized world and especially with Greece.

The settlement foundation was followed by Hellenization of the Mediterranean and its influence on the population from religious, cultural, political and social-economic viewpoint was enormous.

Despite the fact that at the first stage of relations with the antique world only Colchis was involved, (Iberia joined little further), it should be said that this interaction was organic - without alienation and confrontation, which was more likely due to the deep historical memory and coexistence over centuries. Therefore, the European orientation of the country, located at the Europe-Asia border seems natural.

Thus, in addition to the multilateral relations with the antique world, for Georgia it was of great importance to adopt Christianity, which resulted to the ultimate civilizational separation of Georgia from the Asian world. It was a decisive stage in the history of Georgia and it finally determined country's European identity. This decision was so important that despite many conquests and invasions by the enemies, despite relationship intermittence with Europe, Georgia has maintained its own identity and statehood.

Conclusion

In the end, since the Georgian tribes have been participating in the Mediterranean processes from ancient times, the genesis of the European orientation of Georgia should be started from antique period, because it is considered, that modern European values begin from that time.

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