

K. WAKIZAKA

LIVING AS “NORTH CAUCASIANS” IN GEORGIA:
IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION IN GEORGIA AMONG
THE OSSETIAN AND THE CHECHEN-KIST
COMMUNITIES

KEISUKE WAKIZAKA

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LIVING AS “NORTH CAUCASIANS” IN GEORGIA: IDENTITY AND
INTEGRATION IN GEORGIA AMONG THE OSSETIAN AND THE CHECHEN-
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Prof. Dr. Tülin Gençöz
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Derya Göçer Akder
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Işık Kuşçu Bonnenfant
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Pınar Köksal (METU, ADM) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Işık Kuşçu Bonnenfant (METU, IR) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zana Çıtak Aytürk (METU, IR) _____

Prof. Dr. Toğrul İsmayıl (Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Uni., SBUİB) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Asker (Karabük Uni., ULS) _____

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Name, Last name : KEISUKE WAKIZAKA

Signature :

ABSTRACT

LIVING AS “NORTH CAUCASIANS” IN GEORGIA: IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION IN GEORGIA AMONG THE OSSETIAN AND THE CHECHEN- KIST COMMUNITIES

Wakizaka, Keisuke

Ph.D., Department of Area Studies

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Işık Kuşçu Bonnenfant

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This dissertation aims to contribute to Rogers Brubaker’s “diaspora-homeland-host state relations” theory by analyzing the cases in which diaspora’s homelands are de facto independent states and deal with the identity strategies of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia. The fieldworks conducted in Georgia proved these facts: Georgia’s Ossetians are developing their identity in the framework of the Georgian state and do not act with South Ossetia on the topics of preserving boundaries with the Georgian society and their relations with North and South Ossetia. Thus, their identity is developing as a “cultural diaspora”, whose identity is mainly based on Ossetian language, culture, and tradition. On the other hand, the political issues such as anti-Russian attitude, the two Chechen Wars and the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 as well as Chechen culture and traditions play an

important role in Georgia's Chechen-Kists' identity. Besides, the fact that the Georgian state, Chechens in Chechnya and Georgia's Chechen-Kists share anti-Russian attitude caused Georgia's Chechen-Kists' identity to develop as "cultural-political diaspora identity".

Keywords: diaspora-homeland-host state relations, Georgia, Ossetians, Chechen-Kists, identity

ÖZ

GÜRCİSTAN’DA “KUZEY KAFKASYALI” OLARAK YAŞAMAK: GÜRCİSTAN’DAKİ OSET VE ÇEÇEN-KİST TOPLULUKLARINDA KİMLİK VE GÜRCİSTAN’A ENTEGRASYON

Wakizaka, Keisuke

Doktora, Bölge Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez, diasporanın anayurtlarının de facto devleti olduğu durumunu inceleyerek Rogers Brubaker’in ortaya koyduğu “diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileri” teorisine katkı sağlamayı amaçlamakta ve Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistlerin kimlik stratejilerini ele almaktadır. Gürcistan’da gerçekleştirilen saha araştırmaları sonucunda şunlar tespit edilmiştir: hem Gürcüler ve Osetler arasındaki kültürel sınırları konusunda hem de anayurtle ilişkiler konusunda Gürcistan’daki Osetler Gürcistan devleti çerçevesi içinde kendi kimliğini geliştirmeye çalışmakta ve Güney Osetya’nın yanında yer almamaktadır. Böylece onlar kendi kimliğini ağırlıklı olarak Osetçe, Oset kültürü ve geleneklerine dayanan “kültürel diaspora kimliği” olarak geliştirmeye yönelmektedir. Diğer yandan, Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistlere baktığımızda, kültür ve adetlerin yanı sıra Rusya karşıtlığı, iki Çeçen Savaşı ve 1994

yılı Çeçen-İnguş Sürgünü gibi siyasi meseleler kendi kimliğinde önemli rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca hem Gürcistan'ın hem Çeçenistan'daki Çeçenlerin hem de Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistlerin Rusya karşıtlığını benimsemeleri de Gürcistan Çeçen-Kistlerin kimliğinin “kültürel-siyasi diaspora kimliği” olarak gelişmesine yol açmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileri, Gürcistan, Osetler, Çeçen-Kistler, kimlik

**To Our Dear Comrade Yalkhoroy Umar Idigov, who devoted himself to the
Peace, Rights, and Freedom of all the North Caucasian People...**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xvi
LIST OF MAPS.....	xvii
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.....	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xx
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	
1-1. Research Question.....	1
1-2. The Significance of the Study.....	5
1-3. Research Methodology.....	14
1-4. Plan of the Dissertation.....	16
2. DIASPORA STUDIES: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2-1. The Development of the Arguments on the Definition of Diaspora.....	22
2-2. The Hybridity of Diaspora Identity.....	35
2-3. “Diaspora”-“Host Country”-“Homeland” Relations and the Example	

of Russian Communities in the Post-Soviet Area.....	39
2-4. The Different Process in Diaspora-“Host Country”-“Homeland” Relations and Minority Issue: the Cases of South Ossetia and Chechnya.....	46
2-4-1. South Ossetia.....	47
2-4-2. Chechnya.....	53
3. OSSETIANS AND CHECHEN-KISTS IN GEORGIA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	
3-1. Ossetians.....	60
3-1-1. The Formation of Ossetian Communities in Georgia.....	60
3-1-2. Ossetians’ Settlements in Georgia Today.....	64
3-1-3. Current Ossetian Communities in Georgia.....	66
3-2. Chechen-Kists.....	78
3-2-1. The Formation of Chechen-Kist Communities in Georgia.....	78
3-2-2. Islam in Pankisi by the Soviet Era.....	84
3-2-3. Chechen-Kist Communities in Georgia in the Post-Soviet Era.....	88
4. GEORGIA’S NATION-STATE BUILDING POLICY AND MINORITY GROUPS SINCE THE SOVIET ERA	
4-1. Ethnicity Policy in Georgia in the Soviet Era.....	102
4-1-1. Nation-Building in the Former Soviet Socialist Republics: The Legacy of the Soviet Nationalities Policy.....	102
4-1-2. The Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Union Affecting the Current Nation-Building Policy: Territorial Nationhood and Ethnic Nationality.....	104
4-1-3. The Language Policy of the Soviet Union.....	111
4-1-4. The Soviet Union’s Policy toward Religion: General Explanation.....	114
4-1-5. The Development of Modern Georgian Nationalism: the Synthesis of Traditional Georgian Nationalism and the Soviet Titular Nationalism.....	118
4-2. Ethnicity Policy in Gamsakhurdia’s and Shevardnadze’s Era.....	127

4-2-1. Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s Era: Nation-State Building Based on Ethnic Georgian Nationalism.....	127
4-2-2. Eduard Shevardnadze’s Era: Moderation and Keeping the Status-Quo in Minority Policy.....	132
4-2-3. The Rise of the Georgian Orthodox Church after Georgia’s Independence.....	141
4-3. Nation-State Building and Minority Policy since the Rose Revolution in 2003.....	148
4-3-1. The Transformation of Georgia from Ethnic to Civic Nation-State since the Rose Revolution.....	148
4-3-2. The Integration of Minority Groups and Protecting Minorities’ Rights.....	162
5. DIASPORA IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND RELATIONS WITH THE GEORGIAN SOCIETY	
5-1. Georgia’s Ossetians’ Attitude towards the Georgian State and Society.....	175
5-1-1. The Ossetian-Georgian Relations in Daily Life.....	175
5-1-2. The Position of the Issue of South Ossetia in the Relations between the Georgian State and Society and Ossetians in Georgia.....	181
5-1-3. The View of Georgia’s Ossetian Communities on the History of Georgian-Ossetian Relations.....	189
5-1-4. Georgia’s Ossetians’ Perspective on the Situation of Ossetian Culture and Their Strategy of Keeping Their Boundary with the Georgian Society.....	205
5-1-5. The Importance of “Kostaoba” Festival for Emphasizing Friendship and Boundary with the Georgian Society.....	223
5-2. Georgia’s Chechen-Kists’ Attitude towards the Georgian State and Society.....	232
5-2-1. the Relations between Chechen-Kists and Georgians in Daily Life.....	232
5-2-2. The Influence of the Issue of Chechnya and the Spread of Salafism on Chechen-Kists’ Relations with the Georgian Society and State.....	239

5-2-3. Chechen-Kists' Efforts of Integration to the Georgian Society.....	251
5-2-4. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Perspective on the Situation of Chechen-Kist Culture and Stheir trategy of Keeping Their Boundary with the Georgian Society.....	263
6. DIASPORA-“HOMELANDS” RELATIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNITIES	
6-1. Georgia's Ossetians' Attitude towards North and South Ossetia.....	273
6-1-1. Georgia's Ossetians' View on Russssian-Georgian Relations as a Critical Element on the Issue of South Ossetia.....	273
6-1-2. The Issue of Dual Citizenship and the Problems of Communication between Georgia and Ossetia.....	280
6-1-3. The Current Diaspora Policy of North and South Ossetia and the View of Georgia's Ossetians on This Policy.....	286
6-2. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Attitude towards Chechnya.....	291
6-2-1. The Impact of the Chechen Wars on Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Relations with Chechnya.....	291
6-2-2. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' View on the Current Situation in Chechnya.....	297
6-2-3. Georgia's Chechen-Kists and the “Painful History” of Their Homeland.....	309
7. CONCLUSION.....	317
REFERENCES.....	328
APPENDICES	
A: MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM.....	356
B: MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	358
C: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES.....	359
D: THE ETHNIC MAP OF GEORGIA.....	363
E: CURRICULUM VITAE.....	364

F: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	369
G: TEZ İZİN FORMU/THESIS PERMISSION FORM.....	390

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Model of Diaspora-Host State-Homeland Relations Suggested by Rogers Brubaker.....	41
Figure 2: The Position of Ossetians in Georgia (outside South Ossetia) on the Issue of South Ossetia.....	57
Figure 3: The Position of Chechen-Kists in Georgia on the Issue of Chechnya.....	58
Figure 4: The Georgian and Ossetian “Traditional” Historiographies.....	194
Figure 5: Georgia’s Ossetians’ View on Georgian-Ossetian Relations.....	199
Figure 6: Georgia’s Current Historiography on its Ethnic Problems.....	204

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: The Map of South Ossetia.....	49
Map 2: The Map of Chechnya-Ingushetia.....	54

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1: Kosta Khetagrov's Statue after it was Exploded at the Beginning of the 1990s.....	73
Photograph 2: the Opening Ceremony of Kosta Khetagrov's Statue on October 2005.....	73
Photograph 3: Kosta Khetagrov's Statue in Areshperani Today.....	74
Photograph 4: Mikhail Saakashvili in the Ossetian Sunday School in Tbilisi.....	75
Photographs 5-6: The Textbook of the Ossetian Language Used in Areshperani, Lagodekhi.....	78
Photograph 7: The Old Church in Joqolo.....	85
Photograph 8: The Sufi Mosque in Duisi.....	88
Photograph 9: The New Mosque in Duisi.....	90
Photograph 10: Roddy Scott Foundation's English Course in the Joqolo Village....	96
Photographs 11-12: The Textbooks of the Chechen Language used in the Schools in Pankisi.....	100
Photograph 13: A Training Course of the Ossetian Language Education in the Tbilisi State University.....	218
Photograph 14: Ossetian Dance "Simd" in Kostaoba in 2016.....	228
Photograph 15: Georgian Dance in Kostaoba in 2016.....	229
Photograph 16: Dmitry Sanakoyev, the President of the Administration of South Ossetia, in Kostaoba in 2016.....	229
Photograph 17: A Course of Handicrafts for Chechen-Kists in Pankisi.....	256
Photograph 28: The Felt Craft School in Joqolo.....	257
Photograph 19: Women's Zikr in the Old Mosque in Duisi.....	258

Photograph 20: Pictures Drawn by the Students of the Areshperani Public School.....	277
Photograph 21: Anatoly Bibilov (the President of South Ossetia) Meets with the Participants of the Project “Alansky Sled” (Alanian Trail) in Tskhinvali in 2018...	287
Photograph 22: The Memorial Day of Dzhokhar Dudayev’s Martyrdom on the 21 st of April 1996, in Tbilisi in 2013.....	303
Photograph 23: The Memorial Day of Aslan Maskhadov’s Martyrdom on the 8 th of March 2005, in Tbilisi in 2013.....	304
Photographs 24-25: The Memorial Day of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide by the Soviet Union on the 23 rd of February 1944, in Tbilisi in 2015.....	314

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU- the European Union

ISIL- the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant

KGB- the Committee of National Security)

Komsomol- the Communist Union of Youth

NATO- the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UN- the United Nations

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1-1. Research Question

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the process of nation-state building in the post-Soviet states after 1991 transformed many ethnic minorities into diaspora groups. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, it was reported that 70 million people, who were registered as Soviet citizens before, lived outside their “homelands.”¹ The emergence of a new political situation in the former Soviet regions brought the relations among the diaspora, host states, and homeland to academic agenda.²

This was the case in Georgia too. In this country, which is in the process of nation-state building, there are many ethnic minority groups and they have their “homeland” outside Georgia in many cases. The two important questions for Georgia’s minority groups are how “diaspora groups” preserve their identity and how they develop their

¹ Rogers Brubaker, “Political Dimensions of Migration from and among Soviet Successor States,” in *International Migration and Security*, ed. Myron Weiner (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 42.

² Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55. “Host state” can be defined as any state where ethnic community keeps a different identity from the titular nation resides. On the other hand, “homeland” can be defined as a territory from which “diaspora groups” come or which they claim so. As such, “homeland” has a symbolic connection with “diaspora groups” in “host states” and plays a very important role in the formation of their identity. Cf. William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return”, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no.1 (1991): 83-99.

relations with “homelands” in the process of integration into Georgia while “diaspora-homeland-host country” relations are unstable.

In particular, the Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia were quite affected by ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and by unstable “diaspora-host state-homeland” relations.

Ossetians are one of the mountain inhabitant groups in the Caucasus. They mainly live in North Ossetia, which belongs to the Russian Federation, and in South Ossetia, which is generally recognized as a part of the Georgian territory.³ Besides, about 14,400 Ossetians live also in Georgia (excluding South Ossetia).⁴ Their language is Ossetian, one of the Iranian languages of the Indo-European language family and completely different from Georgian.

When we consider Chechen-Kists,⁵ both Chechens and Ingushs are the Caucasian ethnic groups of Vainakh peoples and mainly live in Chechnya and Ingushetia, which belong to the Russian Federation and are located in the North Caucasus. They generally use the Chechen and Ingush languages, which belong to Northeast Caucasian language group and are different from Georgian. A part of Muslim Vainakh peoples migrated from Chechnya and Ingushetia to Georgia in the 19th century and are called (Chechen-) Kist in Georgian. About 5,700 Chechen-Kists

³ After the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru recognized South Ossetia as an independent state.

⁴ *2014 General Population Census Main Results*, (Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016), 8.

⁵ The Vainakh people are divided into Chechens, Kists, Ingushs and Bats-Tushetians and there are cultural differences between Chechens and Kists. While Kists share the same language and traditions with Chechens, they were more influenced by Georgian culture than those in Chechnya-Ingushetia. However, the differences between Kists and Chechens are decreasing due to the increase of interactions such as interethnic marriage between these two groups and these two groups began to be regarded as if they belonged to the same ethnic group. Therefore, the term of “Chechen-Kists” will be used in this thesis.

live in Georgia today.⁶ Therefore, Chechnya and Ingushetia can be defined as their homelands. In this way, Chechen-Kist communities can be defined as “diaspora” like Ossetian communities in Georgia.

In the process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Ossetians in South Ossetia harshly struggled against the Georgian state and Chechens in Chechnya revolted against the Russian Federation for independence. These issues became more complex due to the intervention of Russia and Western states and have not been resolved yet. These conflicts affected Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia very much and they were forced to take cognizance of Georgia’s nation-state building policy when they make strategies to preserve their identity and revise their relations with their “homelands”.

The research questions of this dissertation are how Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia are preserving and developing their identity, in other words, their boundaries with the Georgian society and how they are building their relations with their “homelands” in the process of integration to Georgia.

Though both Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia accelerate the process of integration into the Georgian states, it should be noted that scholars did not focus on their efforts of preserving their identity very much. In fact, while Georgia’s Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities were integrated better into the Georgian state than other minority groups, they face the danger of cultural assimilation and are shaping strategies in order to protect their identity against assimilation. Besides, the existence of Chechnya and North and South Ossetia has a great effect on their identity strategies and their relations with these regions also have to be discussed when we analyze their identity strategies.

Considering this reality, “how do Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia preserve and develop their identity?” and “how do they build their relations with their

⁶ 2014 General Population Census Main Results, 8.

“homelands”?” are the main points on which I focus in this study. The purpose of my thesis is to contribute Rogers Brubaker’s theory of “diaspora-host state-homeland relations” and to research the case in which diaspora’s homelands are not de jure independent states, but de facto independent states. The hypothesis of my thesis is that if the relations between the homeland supported by Russia which is the ex-hegemonic state over host state and the anti-Russian host state are negative, diaspora emphasizes the cultural dimension of their identity and develop their identity and relations with the homeland in harmony with the nation-building process of their host state. As a result, their identity develops differently from those who live in their homeland. As for Ossetians in Georgia, an important part of them migrated to North Ossetia, their “homeland”, in the first half of the 1990s.⁷ But those who continue to live in Georgia were integrated to an important degree and are not politically active. The Ossetian communities in Georgia have built their identity and relations with their homeland in harmony with Georgia’s policies and do not clearly support South Ossetia’s position. Therefore, their diaspora identity is comparably moderate and developed as a cultural identity. In this way, they form a different identity from those in North and South Ossetia. On the other hand, Chechen-Kists in Georgia, the Georgian state and society and many of the Chechens in Chechnya have an anti-Russian identity. Tension exists between Georgia as a “host state” and Russia, which controls Chechnya. That is, Chechen-Kists in Georgia, the Georgian state and Chechens in Chechnya share anti-Russian attitude in the process of making a national identity. Under these circumstances, they were able to develop boundaries with the Georgian society and build their relations with homeland more freely than Ossetians. In this way, Chechen-Kists’ diaspora identity developed not only as a cultural but also as a political identity.

⁷ Giorgi Sordia, “Ossetians in Georgia: In the Wake of the 2008 War”, *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 45 (2009), 3.

1-2. The Significance of the Study

This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on the following subject: diaspora studies, the research on the issues of South and North Ossetia and Chechnya and Georgia's minority policies. At first, the definition of diaspora and the diaspora-homeland-host state relations will be discussed in a theoretical framework in the second chapter in detail. The research on diaspora studies has developed to an important degree since the 1990s because the importance of diaspora communities has increased in world politics since the second half of the 20th century. Especially, as globalization advanced and the migration of people to other states increased, the aspects of diaspora societies diversified and the notion of diaspora became more blurred and it became necessary for scholars to define a diaspora. Along with this situation, scholars such as Robin Cohen and William Safran suggested theoretical frameworks for the definition of diaspora and the case studies related to this definition also developed to a considerable extent.⁸ They emphasized that diaspora communities have the important elements of history of migration, the intention of doing back to "homelands" and the sense of excludedness. In the 1990s, diaspora studies mainly focused on the population movements among the non-Soviet geopolitical areas or between the former-Soviet geopolitical areas and the non-Soviet geopolitical areas.⁹

⁸ Robin Cohen, "Rethinking 'Babylon': Iconoclastic Conceptions of the Diasporic Experience," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 21, no. 1 (1995): 5-18; Cohen, "Diasporas and the Nation-State: from Victims to Challengers," *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 507-520; Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008); Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies"; James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302-338. About their definition of diaspora, look at the Chapter Two in my thesis.

⁹ Cf. ed. Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1993); Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1995); Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation", *Diaspora* 9, no. 1 (2000): 107-136; Yossi Shain, "American Jews and the Construction of Israel's Jewish Identity", *Diaspora* 9, no. 2 (2000): 163-201; eds. Colin Clarke et al., *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Eric Richards, "How Did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?", *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 3 (1993): 250-279; eds. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1992); Gungwu Wang, *China and the Chinese overseas*,

After the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991 many minority groups were left outside their "homelands". Scholars began to be interested in the population movements inside the former Soviet geopolitical area. Analyzing the situation of minority groups and the population movements, Rogers Brubaker discussed the "diaspora-homeland-host state relations". He analyzed the interaction among the diaspora, nationalizing host-state and homeland, comparing the cases of the former Soviet, German, Austrian and Ottoman geopolitical areas with each other.¹⁰ In this way, the theoretical frameworks of the population movements and of the diaspora identity of minority groups inside the former Soviet area were gradually formed. Moreover, Brubaker's studies about diaspora groups of the former Soviet era affected the controversy on the definition of diaspora. In fact, he emphasized that diaspora-host state and society relations and diaspora-homeland relations makes a certain community diaspora¹¹ and showed that the definitions of diaspora which regards the historical trauma, migration, excludedness and the intention of going back to "homeland" as preconditions were not appropriate in order to explain the situation of many diaspora groups inside the former Soviet states.

However, when Brubaker discussed these relations in the former Soviet geopolitical area, he mainly focused on the case of the Russian population outside the Russian Federation and the detailed discussion of the other cases did not exist. In fact, there are many forms of the development of these relationships. Indeed, the cases of the Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia followed a very different process from that

(Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991); Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1990), 222-237 .

¹⁰ Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account", *Theory and Society*, no. 23 (1994): 47-78; Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States and External National Homelands in the New Europe", *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

¹¹ Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-19.

of the Russians in terms of “diaspora-homeland-host state” relations, there is no literature focusing on them.

Secondly, this dissertation is a contribution to the literature on ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus, especially North and South Ossetia and Chechnya. Concerning the Soviet era, the studies on Ossetians and Vainakhs were based on the disciplines of history and ethnology/anthropology, because in this era Georgia, North and South Ossetia, and Chechnya-Ingushetia were under the single framework of the Soviet Union and the issues of South and North Ossetia and Chechnya did not exist as topics of international relations. In fact, the Soviet Union declared that there are no ethnic conflicts inside it and encouraged every ethnic group to develop their identity and culture. Therefore the studies about Ossetians and Vainakhs reflected this situation and most of these studies in this era is based on the disciplines of history, linguistics and anthropology/ethnology. They generally focused on topics such as popular history, myths, toponyms, ethnonyms, social structures and are far from politics.¹² In the field of history, scholars such as Mark Bliyev wrote books about comparative political topics such as the relations between Russia and the Caucasian peoples, relations among Caucasian peoples and the historiography of Caucasian peoples. But these books focus on the pre-Soviet era, which was not regarded as a taboo and those which deal with the Soviet policies did not exist in the Soviet era.¹³ When we look at the situation in Turkey and the Western states, the Caucasian people were generally

¹² For example, cf: Natalya Volkova, *Etnonimy i Plemennye Nazvaniya Severnogo Kavkaza* [The Ethnonyms and the Names of Tribes of the North Caucasus] (Moskow: Nauka, 1973); Georgiy Togoshvili and Vakhushti Bagrationi, *Ob Osetii i Osetinakh* [On Ossetia and Ossetians] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1977); Yuriy Gagloyti, *Alany i Voprosy Etnogeneza Osetin* [Alans and the Issues of Ethnogenesis of Ossetians] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1966); Zamira Tskhovrebova, *Toponymy Yujnoy Osetii v Zapadnykh Istochnikakh* [The Toponyms South Ossetia in the Western Sources] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1979); Magomed Mamakayev, *Chechenskiy Teyp v Period ego Razlojenia* [The Chechen Teyps in the Era of Expansion] (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoye Knizhnoye Izdatel'stvo, 1973); Mirkasym Usmanov, “K Voprosu ob Obschestvennom Stroye Vainakhov [On the Question of the Social System of the Vainakh]”, *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*, no. 6 (1978): 99-110.

¹³ Cf. Mark Bliyev, *Russko-Osetinskie Otnosheniya* (Ordjonikidze: Izdatel'stvo “Ir”, 1970); Lilia Vasil'yeva, *Problemy Istorii Osetii v Russkoy Nauke XIX Veka* [The Problems of Ossetian History in Russian Science in the 19th Century] (Ordjonikidze: Izdatel'stvo “Ir”, 1975).

researched in the framework of “the Soviet studies”.¹⁴ Many of the works on the Caucasus published in the Western countries in this era also focused on the pre-Soviet era,¹⁵ although some scholars such as Alexandre Bennigsen researched the Caucasian people in the Soviet era.¹⁶

On the other hand, the situation over the research of Ossetians and Chechens drastically changed after the Soviet Union’s disintegration in 1991. In both the Western states and Russia, the number of works on Ossetians and Chechens skyrocketed because of the emergence of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Chechnya. Scholars came to research these issues on the basis of the discipline of international relations as well as history and anthropology. Generally speaking, there are two main stream approaches in the literature concerning these issues in the post-Soviet era. One part of the literature discusses these issues from the perspective of security, the Georgian-Russian relations, the Russian-Western relations, and regional peace.¹⁷ Furthermore, the issue of Chechnya began to be researched in relation to

¹⁴ For example, cf. Alexander Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War*, (New York: Norton, 1978); Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, (London: Routledge, 1986).

¹⁵ For example, cf. Muhiddin Quandour, “Muridism: A Study of the Caucasian Wars of Independence, 1819–1859” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1964); Paul Henze, “Fire and Sword in the Caucasus: The 19th-Century Resistance of the North Caucasian Mountaineers”, *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 1 (1983): 5-44.

¹⁶ Alexandre Bennigsen’s important works on the Caucasian Muslims in the Soviet era are these: Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967); Alexandre Bennigsen, “The Problem of Bilingualism and Assimilation in the North Caucasus”, *Central Asian Review* 15, no. 3 (1967): 205-211; Bennigsen, “‘L’Islam Parallèle’ en Union Soviétique: Les Organisations Soufies dans la République Tchétchéno-Ingouche [The Parallel Islam in the Soviet Union: the Sufi Organizations in the Republic of Chechnya-Ingushetia]”, *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 21, no. 1 (1980): 49-63; Bennigsen, “Muslim Guerrilla Warfare in the Caucasus (1918–28)”, *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 1 (1983): 45-56; Bennigsen, “Sufism in the USSR: A Bibliography of Soviet Sources”, *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 4 (1983): 81-107; Bennigsen, “The Qadiriyyah (Kunta Hajji) Tariqah in North-East Caucasus, 1850–1987”, *Islamic Culture* 62, no. 2-3 (1988): 63-78.

¹⁷ Cf. Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon, 2001); Stephen Blank, “Security in and Around Black Sea: Is a Virtuous Circle Now Possible?”, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, no. 3, (2005): 44-66;

terrorism and radical Islamism after the September 11 attacks by Al-Qaeda in 2001.¹⁸ Another part of the literature deals with these issues in terms of international law. When scholars examine the issues of South Ossetia and Chechnya in the field of international law, they generally discuss it in the framework of the right of self-determination and human rights.¹⁹ Recently, the literature which deals with refugees and internally displaced people also began to be seen.²⁰ Because ethnic conflicts in these regions forced many people to leave their lands and the issue of refugees and internally displaced people created social problems in both homestates and host states.

Especially, the works on the socio-political structures of South Ossetia and Chechnya have also been published since the late 1990s. For example, Seiichi Kitagawa explored the influence of Chechens' tribal identity on the Chechen political life in

Ivars Indans, "Relations of Russia and Georgia: Developments and Future Prospects", *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 9 (2007): 131-149; Arthur Bonner, "Georgian Losses and Russia's Gain", *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 4 (2008): 81-90; ed. Richard Sakwa, *Chechnya: From Past to Future* (London: Anthem Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Cf. Lorenzo Vidino, "How Chechnya Became a Breeding Ground for Terror", *The Middle East Quarterly* 12, no.3 (2005): 57-66; Sergey Markedonov, *Radical Islam in the North Caucasus Evolving Threats, Challenges, and Prospects*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010); Ali Alp Alanyalı, "The Radicalization in Chechnya from Nationalist Insurgency to Islamic Terrorism" (Unpublished Master Thesis, Koç University, 2014).

¹⁹ For example, cf. Rein Mullerson, "Precedents in the Mountains: On the Parallels and Uniqueness of the Cases of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia", *Chinese Journal of International Law* 8, no. 1 (2009): 2-25; Vladimir Zakharov and Andrey Areshev, *Priznanie Nezavimosti Yujnoy Osetii i Abkhazii: Istoriya, Politia, Pravo* [The Recognition of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's Independence: History, Politics and Law] (Moscow, MGIMO, 2008); Tim Potier, *Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia: A Legal Appraisal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Jonathan Carmey, "Self-Determination: Chechnya, Kosovo, and East Timor", *Journal of Transnational Law and Policy* 34 (2001) 455-466; Philip Leach, "The Chechen Conflict: Analysing the Oversight of the European Court of Human Rights", *European Human Rights Law Review*, no. 6 (2008): 732-761.

²⁰ Cf. Alex Mundt and Elizabeth Ferris, "Durable Solutions for IDPs in Protracted Situations: Three Case Studies", (*ARC/Austcare Symposium "Enhancing Protection of Civilians in Protracted Conflicts"*, Canberra, Australia, 28 October 2008); Dennis Sammut, "Population Displacement in the Caucasus-an Overview", *Central Asian Survey* 20, no. 1, (2001): 55-62; Güler Güneş, "Çocuk Hakları Açısından Türkiye'deki Sığınmacı Çocuklar: Çeçen Çocukları Örneği [Defector Children in Turkey in terms of Children's Rights: the Case of Chechen Children]" (Unpublished Master Thesis, Yalova University, 2012).

2000.²¹ Afterward, he analyzed the process of transformation of Chechen militant leaders in 2009.²² Furthermore, Valery Tishkov explored the transformation of Chechens' identity in the period of the War in Chechnya in 2004.²³ As for the current socio-political situation in Chechnya, Khasan Dzutsev explains the process of the transformation of the current Chechen society in 2011.²⁴ Among the works on the socio-political structure and nation-building process of South and North Ossetia, Valery Dzidzoyev's book and the article written by Gerard Toal and John O'Loughlin analyzed these topics on the basis of quantitative and qualitative researches.²⁵ In this way, Ossetians' and Chechens' socio-political structure and its influence on political life began to be known gradually. However, the works on the issues of Chechnya and South Ossetia prepared in the past mainly focus on Ossetians and Chechens inside North and South Ossetia and Chechnya. The works on South Ossetia and Chechnya related to the topic of migration mainly focus on Georgians from South Ossetia and Chechens who migrated to foreign countries in the 1990s and

²¹ Seiichi Kitagawa, "Chechen-Seijino Tairitsuteki Youso [the Confrontation Axes of the Chechen Political life]", *Roshia-Kenkyuu*, no. 30 (2000): 58-72

²² Seiichi Kitagawa, "Chechen Hunsouno Genzai: Yasengun Shireikankara Jemaat Amiiruhe [The Current Situation of the Chechen War: From Militant Leaders to the Chiefs of *Jamaats*]," in *Tayouseito Kanouseino Kokasasu: Minzokuhunsouwo Koete*, ed. Hirotake Maeda (Sapporo: Hokkaido-Daigaku Shuppankai, 2009), 97-120.

²³ Valery Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

²⁴ Khasan Dzutsev, *Sovremennaya Chechnya: Protsessy Sotsiokul'turnoy Transformatsii Etnosotsiologichskoye Issledovanie* [Current Chechnya: Socio-Cultural Transformations, Ethnosociological Study] (Moscow: ISPI RAN, 2011).

²⁵ Valery Dzidzoyev, *Etapy Natsional'no-Gosudarstvennogo Stroytel'stva v Osetii i Problemy Sovremennoy Etnopolitiki* [The Stages of Nation-State Construction in Ossetia and the Problems of Modern Ethnopolitics], (Vladikavkaz: Izdatel'stvo "Ir", 2014); Gerard Toal and John O'Loughlin, "Inside South Ossetia: a Survey of Attitudes in a De Facto State", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 29, no. 2, (2013): 136-172.

Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia were discussed much less in relation with the ethnic conflicts in South Ossetia and Chechnya.

Besides, this dissertation which focuses on Georgia's Ossetians' and Chechen-Kists' identity contributes to the literature on Georgia's minority policies. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, scholars began to be interested in Georgia's minority policies, because Georgia entered the process of new independent nation-state building and experienced two large-scale ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Thus, in order to integrate minority groups for nation-state building, especially after the Rose Revolution in 2003, more scholars came to be interested in Georgia's policies for the integration of minority groups and in the socio-political structure of minorities. Today, these communities in Georgia are under-researched ethnic groups. However, when we see the academic studies on minority groups in Georgia, they generally focus on Turks (Azeris) in Kvemo-Kartli, Armenians in Javakheti and Muslim Georgians in Adjara and the issue of Meskhetian Turks' returning.²⁶ In comparison with these groups, the North Caucasian people such as Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia are less mentioned because their number is smaller than that of Armenians, Turks (Azeris) and Muslim Georgians and they are generally integrated better than the other groups.

When we look at the situation of the studies on Georgia's Ossetians and Chechen-Kists, most of them deal with the Soviet era and the post-Soviet period before 2004. As for the works about Ossetians in Georgia, Boris Kaloyev's "book published in 2012"²⁷ and Zamira Tskhovrebova's book published in 2007²⁸ focus on the social

²⁶ For example, cf: Laurence Broers, "Filling the Void: Ethnic Politics and Nationalities Policy in Post-Conflict Georgia", *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 2 (2008): 275-304; Christopher Berglund, "Borders and Belonging: Nation-Building in Georgia's Armenian and Azerbaijani Ethno-Regions, 2004–2012" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Uppsala University, 2016); eds. Ayşegül Aydingün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir, *Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset* (Ankara: AVİM, 2016); Monica Duffy Toft, "Two-Way Mirror Nationalism: The Case of Ajara," *The Caspian Region: The Caucasus*, vol. 2, ed. Moshe Gammer (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-20.

²⁷ Boris Kaloyev, *Osetiny Vostochnoy Osetii i Rayonov Gruzii* [Ossetians of Eastern Ossetia and the Regions of Georgia] (Vladikavkaz: Izdatel'stvo "Ir", 2012).

situation of Ossetians in Georgia in the Soviet era, based on historical resources and fieldwork. Although Roland Topchishvili published the books about Ossetians in Georgia in 2009 and in 2015,²⁹ it deals only with the historical topics of the issue of South Ossetia and argues Georgia's rightfulness in this issue. It is only Giorgi Sordia's report "Ossetians in Georgia: in the Wake of the 2008 War"³⁰ that discusses the current socio-political and cultural situation of Ossetians in Georgia. But even in this report, there is only a general explanation on it and there are no works discussing the structure of Georgia's Ossetians' identity in the world. In this way, it can be said that the comprehensive works on the current situation of the identity of Ossetians in Georgia do not exist.

Although there are more works on the socio-political structure of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge than those about Georgia's Ossetians, almost all of them deal with the period before 2004³¹ and have already been outdated. As for the studies on the

²⁸ Zamira Tskhovrebova, *Osetiny Yujnoy Osetii i Gruzii v XIX-XX vv.* [Ossetians in South Ossetia and Georgia between the 19th and the 20th Centuries] (Tskhinval: Izdatel'stvo "Iryston", 2007).

²⁹ Roland Topchishvili, *Osetiny v Gruzii: Mif I Real'nost'* [Ossetians in Georgia: Myth and Reality] (Tbilisi: Universal, 2009); ed. Mariam Lortkipanidze, *Osetiny v Gruzii: Sbornik* [Ossetians in Georgia: the Collection of Articles] (Tbilisi: Universal, 2015).

³⁰ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia."

³¹ For example, cf. Abram Shavkhelishvili, *Iz Istorii Gortsev Vostochnoj Gruzii* [On the History of the Mountaineers of Eastern Georgia] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1983); Topchishvili, *Aghmosavlet Sakartvelos Mtielta Migratsia XVII-XX ss.* [The Migration of the Mountaineers of Eastern Georgia between the 17th and the 20th Century] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1984); Leyla Margoshvili, *Kul'turno-Etnicheskie Vzaimootnoshenie mezhdru Gruziej i Chechno-Ingushetie* [The Cultural-Ethnic Relations between Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1990); Shorena Kurtsikidze and Vakhtang Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: An Ethnographic Survey* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 2002), http://iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002_03-kurt.pdf; Jaba Devdariani and Blanka Hancilova, "Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: Russian, US and European Connections", *CEPS Policy Brief*, no. 23, 2002; Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino Shuzoku, Shinkoutekihaikei [Ethnic and Confessional Backgrounds of the Pankisi Valley Issue]", *Kokusai-Seiji*, no. 138 (2004): 142-156; George Sanikidze, "Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Caucasian Region: 'Global' and 'Local' Islam in the Pankisi Gorge", in *Regional and Transregional Dynamism in Central Eurasia: Empires, Islam and Politics*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Hokkaido-Daigaku Shuppankai, 2007), 263-280.

current situation of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists, Nino Siplashvili,³² Ia Tsulaia,³³ Ali Asker, Ayşegül Aydıngün and Anıl Üner³⁴ deal with the transformation of the identity of the current Chechen-Kist society. However, most of them focus on the current situation of Islam in Pankisi. Tsulaia's article focuses on the transformation of Chechen-Kists' identity in the post-Soviet era, but it deals with Chechen-Kists in Georgia in the framework of "Muslim minority in Georgia" and discusses the process of Chechen-Kists' exclusion in Georgia. But these works discuss this issue, assuming the tensions between the Georgian state and society and minority groups and the discussions in these works do not answer the question of how Chechen-Kists develop their diaspora identity in the process of integration to Georgia.

Therefore, it is possible to say that there are not enough works on Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia either in the topics of the issues of South and North Ossetia and Chechnya or Georgia's minority policy. Especially it can be said that Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia have not been researched in the field of diaspora studies at all. Thus, I argue that the literature on these topics should be supported by more case studies that explore how Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia keep their diaspora identity and develop relations with Ossetia and Chechnya while being integrated into Georgia. This dissertation aims to provide a case study of diaspora communities which is under-researched and it will be the first work on Ossetians and Chechen-Kists as a case study of diaspora studies.

³² Nino Siplashvili, "Islamic Revival in Georgian-Chechen Border Area" (Unpublished Master Thesis, University of Bergen, 2014).

³³ Ia Tsulaia, "To be Kist: Between Georgian and Chechen", in *Changing Identities: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. Victor Voronkov (Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Stiftung South Caucasus, 2011), 126-147.

³⁴ Ayşegül Aydıngün, Ali Asker, and Anıl Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde Kistler: Selefilik, Gelenekçilik, Kimlik ve Siyaset [Kists in Pankisi Gorge: Salafism, Traditionalism, Identity, and Politics]," in *Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir (Ankara: AVİM, 2016), 347-370.

Amplification of the case studies of these diaspora communities will develop our understanding of diaspora communities' experience, condition, and strategies as well as general diaspora theories.

At the same time, this dissertation provides a new point of view for studies on ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus, especially in Chechnya and South Ossetia, introducing the attitude of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia toward their "homelands". These communities developed on the basis of different historical processes and socio-political conditions and have a different structure of identity. Therefore their attitude toward the conflicts in South Ossetia and Chechnya is naturally different from that of the people in "homelands". While we examine the South and North Ossetia and Chechnya issues, analyzing Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia enables us to understand these ethnic conflicts with broader and pluralist view and analyze them more objectively.

1-3. Research Methodology

This dissertation is based on qualitative research methods such as surveys with structured open questions and semi-structured interviews with Ossetians and Chechen-Kists as well as ethnographic research and printed materials. The number of interviews conducted for this research is determined by the "theoretical saturation". In qualitative research methods, interview research continues until new interviews confirm earlier insights.³⁵ In this study, the process of interview is defined as the process of co-production of knowledge by the interviewee and the interviewer. Thus, I produce this dissertation with the interviewees of this research together. Moreover, the responses obtained through interview are used as both empirical data and material for analysis of subjective meaning.³⁶ In order to collect information, five

³⁵ Kathleen Gerson and Roberto Horowitz, "Observation and Interviewing: Options and Choices in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. Tim May (London: Sage, 2002), 211.

³⁶ Jennifer Mason, "Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening and Interpreting", in *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. Tim May (London: Sage, 2002), 227.

months long field works in total were conducted in Georgia from October 2016 to November 2017. The field research was conducted in Tbilisi, the Pankisi Gorge, the Areshperani village in the municipality of Lagodekhi, Kakheti and the Nigoza village, in the municipality of Kaspi, Shida-Kartli. I conducted interviews with 30 Ossetians and 27 Chechen-Kists in total. While all of my Chechen-Kist interviewees are from the Pankisi Valley, 10 of my Ossetian interviewees are from Lagodekhi, 10 are from Kaspi and the others are from Tbilisi.

Interviewees are mainly the elites who worked at the Ministry of National Integration, in the diaspora associations and non-governmental organizations, because they play a very important role in shaping identity strategies in harmony with Georgia's nation-state building policies and have relations with both the Georgian state and people in "homelands". On the other hand, I also made interviews also with teachers, imams as well as villagers, because while it is worth making interviews with villagers to explore the constant structure of the identity of the community, imams and teachers have an important effect on people's behavior and play an important role in forming an identity. The places where interviews took place are offices, cafes, North-Caucasian organizations and homes of the interviewees.

Ossetians/Chechen-Kists in Georgia also display a huge amount of heterogeneity in terms of their identities along with their attitudes towards "homeland" and Georgian society. In terms of Ossetians in Georgia, it is necessary to apply ethnographic research and to conduct interviews within Kakheti, Shida-Kartli and Tbilisi. Many of Ossetians in Shida-Kartli and Kaheti settled before the Soviet era,³⁷ while those in Tbilisi settled generally after the Soviet Union was established. Besides, Shida-Kartli and Kaheti are far from each other. Therefore Ossetians who live in Shida-Kartli and Kaheti have different backgrounds socially and politically.

³⁷ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 19-30.

In terms of the Chechen-Kists, most of them live in Pankisi Gorge in Akhmeta region and their migration to other places is relatively less than the other ethnic groups. Therefore their historical background, social structure and attitude to the state are more similar to each other.

1-4. Plan of the Dissertation

This study consists of seven chapters including an introduction and a conclusion. In the second chapter, the controversy over the definition of diaspora and the diaspora-homeland-host state relations will be explained in detail in order to explain why I explore Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia on the basis of Brubaker's diaspora theory. Besides I discussed the examples of "diaspora-homeland-homeland relations": one is Russians in post-Soviet states, especially in Kazakhstan and Baltic states as a typical example. Through explaining the example of the Russian diaspora, I will emphasize that Ossetian and Chechen-Kists in Georgia and Russian diaspora resemble each other to a certain point in terms of the formation of communities and it is appropriate to explain Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia on the basis of Brubaker's discussion. At the same time, I will refer to the issues of South Ossetia and Chechnya, in which "diaspora-homeland-host state relations" followed a different process in order to emphasize the difference between them and the Russian diaspora.

The third chapter explains the historical background of Ossetians and Chechens living in Georgia. At first, the information about the process of the formation of Georgia's Ossetian communities and their current situation will be given. After that, the historical process of the formation of the Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia will be explained. Then, I will discuss Chechen-Kists' religious situation. Afterward, the transformation of their socio-cultural and religious identity in the post-Soviet Georgia will be examined.

The fourth chapter will give information about Georgia's nation-state building process and minority policies since the Soviet era. This chapter will include ethnic

policies and various debates on country's new national identity whether it should be based on civic or ethnic one. At first, I will explain the process of the formation of exclusive modern Georgian nationalism, examining the nationalities policies in the Soviet era. In the next part, Zviad Gamsakhurdia's nation-state building policy will be explained. Afterward, I will discuss Eduard Shevardnadze's nation-state building policy and the rise of the Georgian Church after Georgia's independence. Then, I will discuss the nation-state building policy and minority policies of Georgia after the Rose Revolution in 2003. In this part, I will analyze Georgia's efforts of the secularization and the formation of civic identity since Mikhail Saakashvili's era. Then I will examine Georgia's policies for the integration of minority groups and its cooperation with international organizations for minorities.

In the fifth chapter, I will examine the question of how Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities are preserving their boundaries with the Georgian state and society in the process of integration. At first, I will debate the social relations between Georgians and Ossetians inside Georgia. Then I will explore the influence of the issue of South Ossetia on Georgia's Ossetians' relations with the Georgian society and state. Afterward, the question of how Ossetians in Georgia evaluate the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations will be examined. At the same time, I will explore the situation of the Ossetian culture and how they are making a strategy of preserving their culture as a boundary with the Georgian society. Furthermore, I will refer to the importance of "Kostaoba" Festival as a chance of emphasizing Ossetians' unity with and differences from Georgians. Next, I will analyze Chechen-Kists' relations with the Georgian society. In the beginning, I will analyze the social relations between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and Islam as an element of the boundary with Georgia. Then, I will discuss the influence of the issue of Chechnya on Chechen-Kists' relations with the Georgian society/state. Afterward, the question of how Chechen-Kists make efforts of integration to the Georgian society will be examined. On the other hand, I will explore the situation of the Chechen culture and how they try to preserve their culture as a boundary with the Georgian society.

In the sixth chapter, I will explore the question of how Ossetian and Chechen (Kist) communities develop relations with their “homelands” in the process of integration. At first, I will analyze the perspective of Ossetians in Georgia toward the existence of South/North Ossetia and the Georgian-Russian relations. Besides, the current developments of the relations between the North and South Ossetia will also be debated. In the next part, I will explore the perspective of Chechen-Kists toward Chechnya. This part analyzes also the perception of Chechens on historical events such as the Chechen-Ingush exile in 1944 and their efforts to inform their next generation and the Georgian public opinion.

In the conclusion chapter, I will review all the chapters and complete the study by discussing the research questions of this dissertation, the hypotheses and findings obtained from each chapter. It concludes the study with the comparison of the development strategy of the Ossetian identity in Georgia with that of Chechen-Kists and the effects of diaspora-host state-homeland relations on the identity strategy of diaspora communities.

CHAPTER 2

DIASPORA STUDIES: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the introduction part, I explained that this thesis focuses on “diaspora communities” in Georgia and on the development of their identity within the framework of “diaspora-homeland-host society relations”. However, the notion of “diaspora” has been changing as time goes by and discussion over it still continues in the academic world. In fact, the diversification of communities of migrants due to globalization, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the chaos over the definition of the concept led the notion of “diaspora” to be more theorized. At first, Robin Cohen defined Jewish, African and Armenian diasporas as the prototype of diaspora societies and argued that the diaspora identity is based on the memory of pain outside homelands and intention of returning there. William Safran systemized the theory of the definition of “diaspora” more. He explained that diaspora societies are migrant societies without state and that some preconditions such as the intention of returning homelands and the feeling of excludedness in host societies are needed to be defined as diaspora.

However, as globalization progressed and the migrant societies are diversified, the cases which cannot be explained with the classic diaspora theories began to appear. James Clifford criticized Cohen’s and Safran’s suggestions and simplified the conditions so that a certain society could be defined as diaspora.

Furthermore, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the nation-state building in the former Soviet states shaped the new-type of diaspora societies

while classic definitions of diaspora are based on the migration from a certain state to other states. Therefore the classic theories on the definition of “diaspora” came not to be capable of explaining these diaspora communities in the former Soviet geopolitical area. Under this situation, Rogers Brubaker simplified the criteria to be defined as a “diaspora community” and suggested two important conditions for it. According to him, diaspora communities have the trends of homeland orientation and boundary maintenance.

On the other hand, some academic persons such as Stuart Hall and Arjun Appadurai refer to hybridity as an important feature of the diaspora community. Especially, Appadurai emphasizes that diaspora identity is only a dimension of complex identity.

Besides, as Brubaker refers also to “diaspora-homeland-host state” relations in the former Soviet area, comprehending these relations is important in order to understand Brubaker’s theory on the definition of “diaspora”. According to him, nationalizing host states exclude diaspora communities and diaspora communities demand public rights and status which they had in the Soviet era. Their homelands support their activities and a tension between homeland and host states emerges. In this way, this unstable triangular relationship makes the hybridity of diaspora identity difficult. Brubaker refers to the case of the Russians in the former Soviet geopolitical area as the most evident examples of “diaspora-host state-homeland” relations.

As for many ethnic minority groups such as Abkhazians, Ossetians, Chechen-Kists, and Daghestanis in Georgia, these communities became “diaspora” due to the formation of new state borderlines and the new nation-state building process of their “homelands” and “host state”. At the same time, they had problems with the Georgian state in the process of Georgia’s nation-state building. Therefore it can be said that the cases of Abkhazians, Ossetians, Chechen-Kists, and Daghestanis in Georgia resemble those of the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan and Baltic countries in terms of the process of the formation of diaspora society and minorities’ situation.

However, “diaspora-homeland-host states” relations followed a very different process in these cases and Brubaker’s suggestion on these relations is not valid. In Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, Russia has been supporting Ossetians in South Ossetia and Abkhazians in Abkhazia. Those in Georgia (outside Abkhazia and South Ossetia) were left outside the process of these ethnic conflicts. The case of Chechen-Kists in Georgia is also different. While serious problems did not exist between Georgians and Chechen-Kists by the first half of the 1990s, Chechens in Chechnya as the “homeland” of Chechen-Kists in Georgia began to struggle against Russia in 1994 and many Chechens fled into Pankisi Gorge in the process of this conflict. The identity of Chechen-Kists was affected to an important degree by the interaction between Chechen-Kists in Georgia and Chechens in Chechnya. The Chechen-Kists’ identity strengthened relations with Chechnya as their “homeland” and this situation began to form problems with the Georgian society. While Chechen-Kists in Georgia have been excluded from the Georgian society, Georgian state did not interfere with the situation of Pankisi until the beginning of the 2000s in order to oppose Russia. After the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, Georgia accelerated the process of Georgia’s transformation from an ethnic nation-state to a civic nation-state and strengthened the relations with Western countries under the initiative of Mikhail Saakashvili. Russia increased its support for South Ossetia and Abkhazia in order to consolidate its dominance over the Caucasus. In this way, it has become very important for minority groups such as Abkhazians, Ossetians, and Chechen-Kists in Georgia to save and develop their identity in Georgia’s civic nation-state building process while there is a tension between Georgia and Russia.

This chapter focuses on the discussion over the notion of “diaspora” which has been continuing, in order to understand diaspora identity and the “diaspora-homeland-host state” relations suggested by Brubaker. Furthermore, the issue of “hybridity” will also be explained as a criticism against “boundary maintenance”, referring to the suggestions of Stuart Hall and Arjun Appadurai and Brubaker’s explanation on “boundary maintenance”. Afterward, I will explain Brubaker’s theory of “diaspora-

homeland-host state relations” and the case of Russian diaspora as the most evident case of this theory. Then I will focus on the case of South Ossetia and Chechnya, which are defined as the homelands of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia, as the exceptional cases of Brubaker’s suggestion.

2-1. The Development of the Arguments on the Definition of Diaspora

The range of the definition of the word “diaspora” has expanded to an important degree today. Originally, the word “diaspora” is rooted in Greek and means ‘dispersion all over the world’.³⁸ This word expressed dispersion and colonization in other countries by way of migration and settlement.³⁹ Thus, forced migration was originally not a necessary element so that a certain society could be defined as “diaspora”. The word was used to describe the Jews who were deported to foreign countries by the Roman Empire. Later, the word “diaspora” was used as a general term in order to define Jewish people who were kicked out from their homeland and exiled in foreign countries. This tendency continued by the second half of the 20th century and the research about “diaspora” had not existed until that period.

Since the 1980s, as globalization advanced and the studies on minority groups and migrant societies such as Jewish people, Armenians, African-rooted societies and Palestinians advanced, the word diaspora has also been used to define those who were forced to live outside their homelands due to economic and political problems as well as violence and various disasters. The word has gotten more popular with its use for defining Armenians, Africans and Palestinians living in foreign countries.⁴⁰

In the literature, the discussion over “diaspora” in early days tended to focus on the

³⁸ Mithat Çelikpala, “Türkiye’de Kafkas Diasporası ve TDP’ye Etkileri [Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey and Their Effects on Turkish Foreign Policy]”, in *Türkiye’nin Avrasya Macerası 1989-2006*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtımı, 2007), 36.

³⁹ Cf. Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Çelikpala, “Türkiye’de Kafkas Diasporası,” 36.

concept of “homeland”. At the same time more and more, the other groups such as Chinese, Indian and Lebanese were also defined as diaspora.

As for this topic, Robin Cohen’s classification on diaspora communities and comparison between classical diasporas and modern diasporas are very meaningful. Cohen’s classification is based on the transformation of the global economic system. According to this, he separates diaspora communities to “classical diaspora” and “modern diaspora”. “Classical diaspora” can further be separated into three different groups:⁴¹

- a) Victim Diasporas: Jewish people, Armenians, and Africans enter this category. They were largely dispersed owing to forced reasons such as conflicts, slave trades, massacre and so on. Many contemporary refugee groups can be counted as victim diasporas, but time must pass to see whether these groups go back to their homelands, are assimilated in their host societies, creolized or mobilized as a diaspora.
- b) Labor Diasporas: communities such as indentured Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, Turks, Italians, and North Africans. Especially, Indians began to settle in Southeast Asia, Oceania, South Africa, East Africa and such in order to work in plantations. These groups can be defined also as “proletariat diaspora” and many other groups can be included.
- c) Imperial Diasporas: communities like British communities enter this group. They were mainly dispersed due to colonization or labor in colonies in the world. Especially in the 19th century, many European countries such as the United Kingdom and France made effort to expand and manage their colonies. In this process, many people from the British Empire migrated to North America, Oceania, Rhodesia, and South Africa.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 18.

On the other hand, when Cohen discussed modern diaspora he added two categories as well as groups mentioned above:

- a) Trade and Business Diasporas: the most appropriate examples are Jewish, Lebanese and Chinese communities.
- b) Deterritorialized-cultural Diaspora: Caribbean peoples, religious diaspora groups such as Sikhs and Parsis (those who believe Zoroastrianism) are included in this group.

Cohen refers to Jewish people as the prototype of the classical diaspora. He explains the following about the tragic history of the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon by Babylonians and the term “Babylon”:⁴²

‘Babylon’ is subsequently a codeword among Jews (and later, Africans) for the afflictions, isolation, and insecurity of living in a foreign place, set adrift, cut off from their roots and then a sense of identity, oppressed by an alien ruling class. Since the Babylonian exile ‘the homelessness of Jews has been a leitmotiv in Jewish literature, art, culture and of course, prayer’. Jewish folklore and its strong oral tradition retold stories of the perceived, or actual, the trauma of their historical experiences. The word Babylon alone was enough to evoke the sense of captivity, exile, alienation, and isolation.

That is, according to Cohen, the word “Babylon” is the symbol of oppression, alienation, and isolation by the host state for Jewish people. Jewish people as a diaspora community have developed their identity and have been keeping their socio-cultural structure on the basis of this historical pain and trauma outside Israel as their “homeland” and against oppression by “host states-societies”.

At the same time, he refers also to the development of Jewish communities in foreign countries and discusses the creativity of “Babylon”:⁴³

⁴² Ibid., 22-23.

⁴³ Ibid., 24.

A rereading of the Babylonian period of exile can be shown to demonstrate the development of a new creative energy in a challenging, pluralistic context outside the natal homeland. When the Romans destroyed the second Temple in A.D. 70, it was Babylon that remained as the nerve- and brain-center for Jewish life and thought. [...] Despite occasional outbursts of hostility, philo-Semitism was the normal experience of the many Jewish communities scattered around the Greco-Roman world. By the fourth century B.C., there were already more Jews living outside than inside the land of Israel.

Cohen says that it was Jewish people's struggle to continue living in foreign states that developed Jewish communities and contributed to host states' structure. This situation continued even in the modern era. While many Jews succeeded economically in the world, Jewish communities suffered from vehement oppression such as Pogrom, Dreyfus Trial and Holocaust, especially in Christian societies and states. The word "Babylon", that is, the history of oppression and isolation in foreign societies led the Zionist ideologues and many Jewish people to adopt the idea of creating Israel as their new national homeland and "returning" there instead of being integrated and assimilated into host societies.⁴⁴ In this way, "Babylon" as a symbol of Jewish people's pain plays a role of the source of the intention of returning "homeland" and resisting against assimilation. Furthermore, he refers to the cases of the other victim diasporas such as Armenian and African societies and emphasizes that their painful memories such as slave trade from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century and the history of discrimination and exploitation (African diasporas) and so-called "Armenian Genocide" in 1915 (Armenian diasporas) plays a very important role in preserving their identity against assimilation. Furthermore, these memories led many African/Armenian diaspora to adopt the idea of liberating and returning to Africa/Armenia as their national homelands such as Pan-Africanism and the vision of "Greater Armenia". Thus African/Armenian diaspora intensified their national movements for these purposes.⁴⁵ In these cases, as "Zion" and "Israel" are imagined as a symbol of Jewishness, "Ethiopia" was the symbol of resistance against white

⁴⁴ Ibid., 32-34.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., 45-48; 54-55.

society and the intention of repatriation for African diaspora and this term meant “Africanity”, “African culture” and “blackness” rather than Ethiopia itself.⁴⁶ As also for Armenian diaspora, “Greater Armenia”, which included Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia, North-Western Iran, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and Javakhetia in Georgia, and Mount Ararat was the symbol of Armenianness and Armenian culture.⁴⁷

As we saw before, scholars like Cohen focused on conceptual “homelands” and dealt with classical diaspora groups such as Jewish, African and Armenian diasporas. According to Cohen, the important elements of diaspora identity are the intention of returning or restoration of conceptual “homelands” and the collective memory of pain. Cohen adopted these groups as the model of diaspora communities and tried to apply this model to other migrant societies.

However, how did Cohen try to define migrant societies, which are not victim diaspora, as diaspora society based on the model of “victim diaspora”? According to Cohen, the formation of modern diasporas was caused by global capitalism and this global capitalism created migrations from edges to center (labor diasporas) and from center to edges (capitalist diasporas).⁴⁸ For example, Indian communities were brought to Africa, Caribbean region and Fiji as plantation workers for Great Britain’s management of colonies⁴⁹ and they settled in these areas due to neither exile and massacre nor slave trade. British, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese and Russian colonists also fanned out to all over the world. When we consider the case of British colonists, England sent those who do not bring benefits to the state to the American

⁴⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 47-48.

⁴⁸ Cohen, “Rethinking ‘Babylon’,” 5-18; Cohen, “Diasporas and the Nation-State,” 507-520.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 63.

continent, Oceania and South Africa in order to solve the problem of overpopulation and make use of them in these regions. Afterward the Scottish and the Irish and dissident soldiers also came to be shipped out of Great Britain.⁵⁰ At this point, Indian and British migrants are different from the Armenian, Jewish and African migrants.

However, Cohen refers to the intention of returning to the ideal or real “homelands” as the reason why labor and imperial diaspora can be defined as “diaspora”. According to him, the poems of Ramayana as the key religious text of Hinduism played an important role among Indian communities as well as Hinduism itself. The main theme of this literature is exile, pain, struggle and final return to “homeland”. This text contributed to Indians’ making their world and supplied the source of preserving their identity.⁵¹ Furthermore, tensions between Indian communities and indigenous people have risen in Fiji, Uganda, Guyana, South Africa and so on and Indian communities in foreign states have got themselves organized politically in this process.⁵² This condition made the situation of Indian communities similar to those of Jewish people, Africans and Armenians and created peculiarities of diaspora society.

British communities in foreign states cemented relations with their “homeland” Great Britain on the basis of economic interdependence, kinship and preferential trade arrangement and exchanges through sports, tourism, and visits. Moreover, British communities in foreign states and Great Britain shared arms with each other in two World Wars and other conflicts. Until recently, many British people in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and Zimbabwe had British passports to affirm their British identity and young British people in foreign states often visit England to

⁵⁰ Ibid., 69-73.

⁵¹ Ibid., 66-67.

⁵² Ibid., 68

spend a rite de passage year.⁵³ Great Britain developed education, certification and legal training programs like the Rhodes Scholarship program and these programs also contributed to the Great Britain-British migrants relations.⁵⁴ Thus, the identity of British communities in foreign states developed on the basis of their strong relations with Great Britain as their “homeland”, though the painful memory does not play an important role in their identity.

Similar trends are seen also among trading diaspora such as Chinese and Lebanese societies. Especially in the 19th century when European countries expanded their colonies and intensified the management of these areas, many Chinese traders settled in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore and raised their economic power. Many Lebanese migrants have also migrated to Egypt, France, American continents, West Africa and Gulf states since the 17th century for trade between these areas and the Middle East and have been playing an important role in these trades.⁵⁵

Chinese migrants’ support played an important role in the 1911 revolution in China, which is defined as their “homeland” and made efforts to maintain relations with China. However, their cultural localization advanced gradually and in Mao Zedong’s era, China-Chinese diaspora relations were limited to an important degree.⁵⁶ Besides, Chinese diaspora faced exclusion or pressure of host states/societies toward cultural assimilation in the places where they settled. In this process, Chinese diaspora has defined themselves as a minority group.⁵⁷ Besides, Chinese communities in foreign

⁵³ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 75-76.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 86; 92-93.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 88.

countries established Chinatowns in order to both keep their identity with solidarity and to continue relations with China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.⁵⁸ This kind of trend exists also in Lebanese communities. In fact, any Lebanese people overseas often visit Lebanon for cultural nostalgia and Lebanese cultural movements were organized. Besides, many newspapers, magazines, and Lebanese socio-cultural and quasi-political organization exist in Lebanese communities.⁵⁹

As we see before, all the diaspora groups have a definite attitude toward their “homelands” in common. The relation with “homelands” and the orientation toward them make migrant groups diaspora and not victim diasporas. Cohen tried to explain the term “diaspora”, focusing on the relations of the communities of migrants with their “homelands” and communities’ dynamism toward them.

William Safran argued that the term “diaspora” and “diaspora community” have begun to include also expellees, expatriates, political-economic refugees, immigrants, alien residents, and minority groups and that this term means “segment of a people living outside the homeland”⁶⁰ and emphasized that six prerequisites were needed so that a certain society could be defined as diaspora, showing Jewish communities as the ideal type of diaspora:⁶¹

- a) Community’s dispersion from a certain original “center” to two or more “peripheral”, or foreign regions.
- b) Maintenance of collective memory, vision, or myth about community’s original homeland.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 88-90.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 96-97.

⁶⁰ Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies,” 83.

⁶¹ Ibid., 83-84.

- c) The feel that community is not or cannot be fully accepted by their host society.
- d) Community's regarding its ancestral homeland as its true and ideal home and its intention to return when conditions are appropriate.
- e) Community's intention to be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their "original" homeland.
- f) Community's efforts to relate itself to its homeland and community's ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity defined by diaspora-homeland relations.

Societies defined as diaspora are generally forced to leave their homeland due to certain reasons and settled in other societies with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore the efforts to preserve diasporas' cultures and identities against assimilation are emphasized in the literature. Diaspora's effort against assimilation created disagreements and conflicts between the host society and diaspora. Indeed, one of the important peculiarities of diaspora is the prerequisite of "having an intention of going back to homeland when appropriate condition is prepared". In this prerequisite, it is important that diasporas maintain their cultures in host societies until the time when appropriate condition is prepared.⁶² "The time when appropriate condition is prepared" means that the time when homeland gains independence, or liberated from the influence of foreign countries and returning to the condition before the exile. Safran makes efforts for proving this theory on the definition of diaspora, comparing migrant communities such as Armenian, Polish, North-African, Portuguese, Turkish, Indian, Palestinian and Hispanic communities in foreign states with Jewish communities.⁶³ According to him, "the intention of return" of diasporas

⁶² Çelikpala, "Türkiye'de Kafkas Diasporası," 37.

⁶³ Cf. Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 84-90.

is very important in order to be able to protect themselves against discrimination and assimilation by host states/societies and “homelands” can be an imaginary utopia.⁶⁴

But it is certainly unclear when “the time when appropriate conditions are ready” comes. As long as this prerequisite is not met, the period of staying in the host society increases and preserving diaspora’s culture gets more and more difficult. Diaspora’s life in host society becomes more permanent as time goes by and the situation gets more complex. In this situation, diaspora’s “intention of return” becomes more difficult to be realized.⁶⁵ Thus, while Safran’s definition of diaspora is sufficient in order to explain traditional diasporas, this definition becomes insufficient to explain modern diasporas.

Besides, the definition of “diaspora” is expanded much in the last decades as this definition came to include migrants, refugees, foreign workers, exiled communities, communities in foreign countries, religious communities and so on. In this way, when the definition of “diaspora” is applied universally over communities who experienced some kind of spatial dispersion, the distinctive function, which this word had originally carried, may become meaningless.⁶⁶ That is, it became difficult to debate “diaspora identity” based on Cohen’s and Safran’s theories as migrants’ communities diversified.

Especially, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the birth of new states in the former Soviet geopolitical area made the arguments on the definition of diaspora more complex, because the premise of the classical theories on the definition of diasporas such as Cohen’s and Safran’s was the migration from certain states to other states. For example, the North Caucasian (Circassian, Abkhazian, Ossetian,

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

⁶⁵ Çelikpala, “Türkiye’de Kafkas Diasporası,” 37.

⁶⁶ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 1-4.

Chechen-Ingush, Daghestani) communities outside the former Soviet geopolitical area such as Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Germany, the United States can be explained with these classical theories because these communities were shaped due to the large-scale migration forced by the Russian Empire in the 19th century.⁶⁷ However, Russian and North-Caucasian diasporas in the former Soviet geopolitical area were formed because of the emergence of new state borderlines and the process of nation-state building in the former Soviet states after 1991, rather than migration to other states. All the nations in the former Soviet geopolitical area had lived under the only state structure of the Soviet Union until 1991 and the migrations from a certain Soviet republic to other Soviet republics were regarded as migrations inside one state. Therefore, the appearance of these communities as new kind of diasporas reduced the validity of the classic theories on the definition of diaspora.

Concerning this situation, James Clifford criticized the trend of expanding the definition of diaspora in his work “Diasporas” and emphasized that the example of Jewish diaspora should not be a conceptional model. According to him, the Jewish model is not sufficient enough to describe the concept “diaspora”.⁶⁸ Clifford suggests the concept of “half-diaspora” in order to explain new diasporas.⁶⁹ Today, it is very difficult to explain diasporas’, especially labor diasporas’ existence with “the intention of return”, as there is usually no such intention. Clifford emphasized that common consciousness formed by common suffering and problems in the process of adaptation were also important elements for the formation of diaspora communities.

⁶⁷ Ayhan Kaya, *Türkiye’de Çerkesler: Diasporada Geleneğin Yeniden İcadı* [Circassians in Turkey: Re-establishment of Tradition] (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011) 26.

⁶⁸ Cf. Clifford, “Diasporas.”

⁶⁹ Kaya, *Türkiye’de Çerkesler*, 28.

Clifford says that it is enough to have only two or three of the 6 prerequisites to which Safran refers in order to define a migrant group as diaspora:⁷⁰

I have already stressed, for example, that the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland—at least not to the degree that Safran implies. Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin.

That is to say, according to Clifford, the intention of return is not necessarily a qualification for being defined as diaspora today. He counted common consciousness as a prerequisite, which is formed by common suffering that occurred in a certain migrant group as well as the problems with which a certain migrant group confronts in the host society. In fact, despite many aspects of the experience of Jewish people, many Jewish people in foreign countries do not have the intention of going back to Israel as their “homeland”. This situation is valid also for dispersed African, Caribbean, or Indian (South Asian) people; when we consider African diaspora’s concrete relations with Africa, many of them did not return to Africa in spite of Marcus Garvey’s call and Rastafarianism.⁷¹ They were not so much interested in returning to Africa as in keeping and developing their cultural identity. As a result, African communities in Brazil, the Caribbean region and America developed unique styles of music such as samba, reggae, calypso, jazz, blues, and rock.⁷² As for the Armenian diaspora, the so-called “Armenian Genocide in 1915” and the idea of “Greater Armenia” play an important role in the structure of the identity of the Armenian diaspora. But only 22 percent of the Armenian diaspora often participate in the Armenian diaspora social activities and 66 percent of them do not often go to

⁷⁰ Clifford, “Diasporas,” 306.

⁷¹ The movement which defines Haile Selassie as the God and has a great influence on Jamaicans.

⁷² Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 48.

Armenian Church.⁷³ The so-called “Armenian Genocide” forms common consciousness in Armenian diaspora, yet it is known that only a very small number of Armenians want to return to the homeland Armenia.⁷⁴

In recent years, Rogers Brubaker suggested simpler criteria so that a certain society could be defined as diaspora. According to him, three conditions are necessary to be counted as diaspora:⁷⁵

The first condition is spatial dispersion. This is today the most basic and straight forward criterion. It is not necessary that the reason for dispersion is compulsory or traumatic. “Spatial dispersion” generally means the cases of dispersions occurring across borders, but this term tends to be applied also over dispersions inside the borders. However, this term began to be used in order to explain diasporas as “ethnic communities divided by state borderline” or as “the segment of a certain ethnic community existing outside the homeland”. In other words, exile or migration is not necessary for the formation of diaspora communities. When we adopt this theory, compactly settled part of a certain population living as a minority group outside its “homeland” is counted as diaspora community even if it were due not formed to exile or migration.

The second condition is homeland Orientation. It is the orientation towards a real or imagined homeland” as a basis of ethnic loyalty, value, and identity. Earlier discussions strongly emphasized especially cultural unity with “homeland” and the intention of “repatriation” to the real or ideal “homeland”. But this trend has been criticized recently and “decentered, lateral connections with the homelands” are regarded as a more important criterion than the real intention of returning.

⁷³ 2007, *Armenian-American Diaspora Survey: February 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey*. (Suitland: US Census Bureau, 2007).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 551-552.

⁷⁵ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 5-7.

The third condition is boundary-Maintenance. It is namely to keep a distinctive collective identity different from a host society/societies. Boundaries can be kept as a result of resistance, that is, the effort for self-segregation against assimilation by host societies or social exclusion by them.

Brubaker said that a certain society can be counted as diaspora if only, the above three conditions of dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance are met. Especially, he emphasized that we need to focus on “homeland orientation” and “boundary-maintenance” when we research diaspora communities. The prerequisite of “boundary-maintenance” is the most important one according to Brubaker, as diaspora preserves itself from mixing with the host society and has sound solidarity as well as dense, specific social relations beyond state borders as not to be assimilated. These relations link members of the diaspora communities to each other and change those apart from each other into a united ‘transnational community’. In fact, many scholars such as William Safran, Khachig Tölölyan and Robin Cohen regard these elements as essential conditions for communities to be diaspora. Besides, these elements enable us to explain diaspora groups as individual communities, which have social relations of high-density and united with unique common sense. It is this kind of social relations and common sense, which connects diaspora members who live in various countries as a “transnational community”.

2-2. The Hybridity of Diaspora Identity

However, on the element of “boundary maintenance” there are different opinions. For example, Stuart Hall refers to “hybridity”, “creolization”, “syncretism” and “fluidity”. He explains hybrid diaspora identity, referring to the case of Afro-Caribbean:⁷⁶

The diaspora experience as I intend here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference;

⁷⁶ Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 235-236.

by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. One can only think here of what is uniquely –‘essentially’- Caribbean: precisely the mixes of color, pigmentation, physiognomic type; the ‘blends’ of tastes that is Caribbean Cuisine; the aesthetics of the ‘cross-overs’ of ‘cut-and-mix’, to borrow Dick Hebdige’s telling phrase, which is the heart and soul of black music.

According to Hall, they sometimes think about the real roots, essence, and purity of diaspora culture and identity. However, the identity of diaspora communities develops differently from those in “homelands”, introducing also the socio-cultural and political structure of “hosting society/state”. Therefore it is not right to discuss the purity of diaspora identity and the boundary between diaspora communities and hosting society/state is not sharp.

At the same time, Arjun Appadurai also underlined the hybrid structure of human beings’ social identity and discusses the relations among each element of identity. According to him, the current global cultural society is a complex, disjunctive and overlapping, order, which consists of different interrelated and transformative, yet disjunctive flows. He emphasized that this society is composed of 5 scapes: ethnoscares (the migration of people across ethnic, national and cultural borders), mediascares (use of media which shapes the way of understanding of our imagined world), technoscares (cultural interactions because of the development of technology), financescares (the capital flow across borders) and ideoscares (the worldwide flow of ideologies).⁷⁷ Besides, Appadurai discusses a view of cultural activity and defines it as a social imaginary, which is composed of these five scapes. He describes the following about social imaginary:⁷⁸

The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a

⁷⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

Appadurai emphasizes that the current global society has plural and multi-layered structure with the concept of “scape” and explains the process of multi-layered configuration of social imaginary in accordance with the positions of actors such as global companies, states, diaspora communities, ethnic groups, tribes, families, and individuals. In this way, he argued that the identity of diaspora communities is hybrid and that national identity and diaspora identity live together.

On the other hand, social imaginaries such as diaspora identity and national identity continuously interact with each other at the same time and there can be certain competitions, and sometimes can be conflicts among these elements.

In this way, there is tension between boundary maintenance and erosion of boundary according to those who emphasize the hybridity of diaspora identity such as Hall and Appadurai. That is, there are rivalry and conflict between the dynamism toward developing a unique diaspora identity and that toward the assimilation into host society/state in diaspora communities. Therefore, in their discussions, the precondition of “boundary maintenance” itself is broken down and “boundary maintenance” is realized as an intergenerational process for a long time.⁷⁹

The discussion over diaspora is related to the relations with nation-state at this point. According to Brubaker, when keeping border and individual identity are emphasized,

⁷⁹ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 5-7.

issue related to “groupism” occurs.⁸⁰ Although the principle of the territorial community seems to have been overcome, the principles of “community” and “identity” remain. While the term of diaspora can be regarded as an alternative to essentializing belonging, it can represent a non-territorial form of this belonging at the same time.⁸¹

According to Brubaker, the term of diaspora should not be regarded as an entity whose boundary has been determined from the substantialist perspective, but as an idiom, stance, rhetoric, and claim in order to overcome the problem of “groupism”.⁸²

Therefore, I will examine how Ossetians and Chechen-Kists approach to reality in their daily lives and how they evaluate the past. Because these communities in Georgia make efforts to develop boundaries and relations with homelands while being integrated to Georgian society/state as a host state to an important degree, the argument of “the hybridity of diaspora identity” has an important meaning and we need to define the concept “diaspora” as rhetoric. Thus, I will discuss how they try to form boundary and relations with homeland and host-society instead of discussing whether these communities can be defined as “diaspora” or not.

Furthermore, we can understand that “boundary keeping” and “homeland orientation” interact with each other and sometimes the will of “boundary keeping” orients community to the “homeland” and vice versa. In the cases of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia, the question of how they developed their boundary in relation to their “homelands” is very important. I will discuss this issue, connecting with the issue of diaspora-homeland-host state relations.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 11-12.

⁸¹ Ibid., 12.

⁸² Ibid., 13.

2-3. “Diaspora”-“Host Country”-“Homeland” Relations and the Example of Russian Communities in the Post-Soviet Area

Brubaker emphasizes that the relations between diaspora and “host states/societies” and those between diaspora and “homeland” make certain societies diaspora. His theory on the definition of diaspora is based on the theory on “diaspora-homeland-host state relations”, which he suggested before. Furthermore, when we discuss the hybridity of diaspora identity, on the hand, the tension between maintenance and erosion of boundaries, it is very important to refer to this theory because these relations directly affect the balance of power between maintenance and erosion of boundaries and the process of developing diaspora identity. Brubaker identifies close linkages among the diaspora, host country and “homeland” and discusses mutual influence among them.

According to Brubaker, the relations among these three elements can be explained as such: The tension exists between a more inclusive vision of civic nation-state and a more exclusive conception of the ethnic nation-state in which titular nation has political, economic, cultural and demographic hegemony in “nationalizing host states” in the post-Soviet area.⁸³ The leaders of newly nationalizing host states which are ethnically heterogeneous promote nationalism culturally, politically and economically in order to obtain political hegemony of the state. The discourses and policies of nationalizing host states alienate diaspora communities in those states. That is to say, they face the actual or perceived pressure of political and socio-cultural assimilation or discrimination and exclusion.⁸⁴ The leaders and elites of diaspora communities organize their communities and demand socio-cultural rights and/or territorial autonomy against these attitudes of host states and societies.

⁸³ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 63.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

While tension between nationalizing host states and diaspora communities is rising, new political environment emerged after 1991 and the concept of external national “homeland” began to have a new meaning. Brubaker says that homelands are constructed by means of political actions and it is also possible that these actions are not based on the facts of ethnic demography.⁸⁵ The political and cultural elites of a certain state construct a tie between the homeland and its diaspora community in a host state so that a state could be a “homeland”. In this way, actual or ideal homelands claim a responsibility for both their own citizens and diaspora community abroad; they see themselves responsible for monitoring and protecting diaspora communities’ rights and interests.⁸⁶ In fact, generally, in the post-Soviet era elites of “homelands” monitor the situation of diaspora communities closely, which is their co-ethnic groups, and demand the rights of diaspora communities against their violation.⁸⁷ The “homelands” often provide their diaspora communities with moral and material support directly in this process.⁸⁸ The nationalizing host states and societies react back against the attitudes of the “homelands” of diaspora communities. In this way, tension occurs also between nationalizing host states/societies and external “homelands”.

In short, Brubaker emphasizes that when a nationalizing “host state” oppresses diaspora communities “homelands” interfere to the politics of host states on the pretext of supporting diaspora communities and the relations between “host state” and “homelands” worsen.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁷ Brubaker, “National Minorities,” 110.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 110.

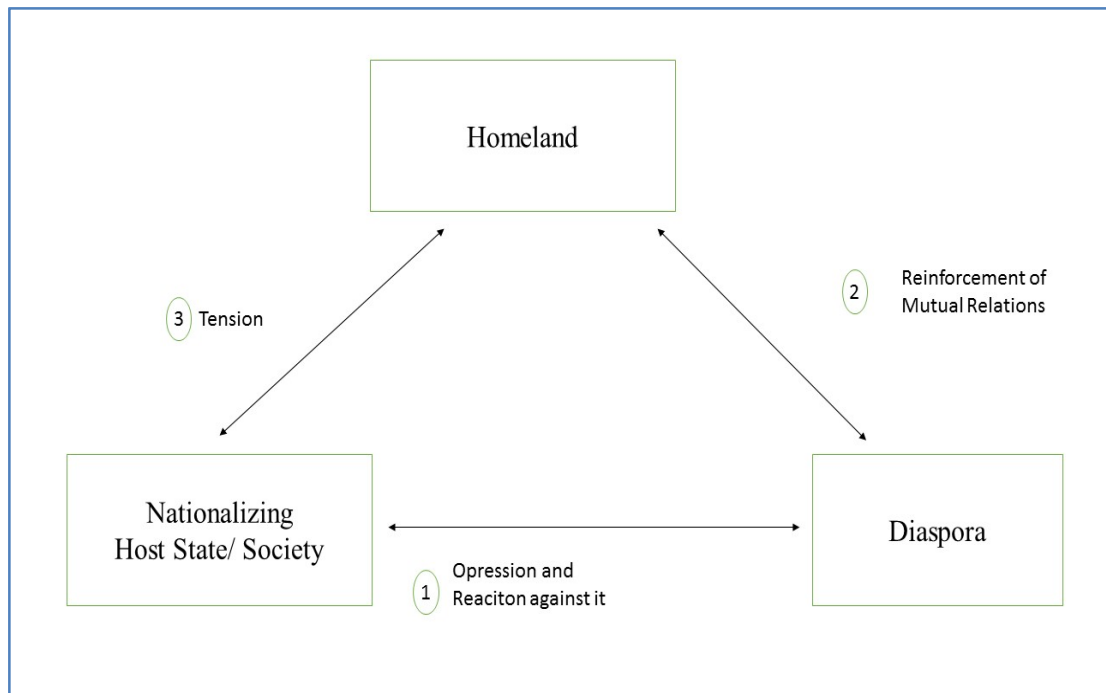


Figure 1: The Model of Diaspora-Host State-Homeland Relations Suggested by Rogers Brubaker

While arguing this “diaspora-homeland-host state relations”, he refers to the Russian communities in the former Soviet states as well as minority groups in the former German, Ottoman, Austrian-Hungarian and Yugoslavian geopolitical areas in order to strengthen this theory. At the same time, Russian communities in the former Soviet states and Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia resemble each other in terms of the process of the formation of diaspora community and the process followed after the Soviet Union disintegrated. Therefore, it is worth referring to the case of Russian communities in the former Soviet states in order to analyze the Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia in the framework of “diaspora-homeland-host state relations” theory.

The process of the spread of the Russian population to the border area such as Ukraine, South Caucasus, and Central Asia has strong relations with that of the territorial expansion of Russia. After the Russian Empire occupied Volga-Ural, Siberia, Far-East, Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasus, and Central Asia by the 19th

century, it became necessary for Russia to settle Russian colonists to these areas in order to manage colonies and strengthen the security of border areas. Thus, Russian population began to migrate to these areas with the order or support of Russian government.⁸⁹ Besides, Russian religious sectarian communities such as Dukhobors and Molokans also headed for South Caucasus, Moldova, Baltics, Northern Russia and so on, escaping from the oppression of the Russian government.⁹⁰ In this way, Russian communities developed in Russia's border areas and the roots of Russian diaspora were shaped.

After the Soviet Union was established, more Russian population flew to the other Soviet republics, especially Estonia, Latvia, and Kazakhstan. Besides, many mixed families registered their nationalities as "Russian" in their passports when a system of internal passport was introduced in 1932.⁹¹ Therefore, the Russian population in the other Soviet republics increased to an important degree. In 1989, the Russian population formed 22.1 percent of the total population in Ukraine, 34.0 percent in Latvia, 30.3 percent in Estonia and 37.8 percent in Kazakhstan.⁹²

However, after the Soviet Union was disintegrated, massive Russian population remained in the successor states of the former Soviet republics. In this way, Russian diaspora in the former-Soviet geographical area was formed. On the other hand, these successor states entered the process of new nation-state building and faced questions of who is defined as the formal citizen of the state or what the ethnocultural or national criteria of citizenship of the state are. In the process of making a new nation-state, many post-Soviet republics chose to build an exclusive

⁸⁹ Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 18-24.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 66.

ethnic nation-state instead of a civic nation-state and began to limit the rights of minority groups like Russians. Thus, Russian communities in the post-Soviet countries often face problems related to citizenship and the right of minorities.

For example, the Baltic States, especially Estonia and Latvia applied radical policies against the Russian population living in these states. In the Soviet era, the population ratio of Russians was more than 30 percent in Estonia and Latvia and Estonians and Latvians were facing the danger of socio-cultural assimilation by the Russian society and oppression by the Soviet government. After the independence of these two states, they introduced laws which restrict the definition of citizenship, according to these laws, it is necessary to pass the exams of Estonian/Latvian language in order to obtain the citizenship of Estonia/Latvia and the rights of non-citizens are more limited. Besides, the former personnel of KGB and the Soviet Army and their families lost the citizenship of Estonia/Latvia by these laws.⁹³

These laws and their application created the political and economic discrimination of Estonia/Latvia against the Russian population and many Russians have migrated from Estonia and Latvia to Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.⁹⁴ In Estonia, the council of Narva city, the majority of which is Russian, organized a referendum over the autonomy of the city as a protest against the citizenship law on July 1993. At the same time, in both of these two states minority groups came to be established in order to preserve their rights.⁹⁵

Russia reacted harshly to the laws of citizenship of Estonia and Latvia. Russia criticized that Russian communities faced socio-political and economic discrimination due to these laws and that these laws are contradictory with the

⁹³ Sevinç Alkan Özcan, *Bir Sovyet Mirası Rus Azınlıklar* [The Russian Minorities as a Soviet Legacy] (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2005), 135-137.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

international law.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Russia applied economic pressure such as stopping the exporting of natural gas over Estonia and Latvia. At last, these two states were forced not to apply some articles of the laws of citizenship and admit the participation of non-Estonian/Latvian population to elections.⁹⁷

As for Kazakhstan, the Russian population was more than 35 percent of the total population of the country. Especially, the majority of Northern Kazakhstan was Russian. Therefore Kazakhstan's nation-state building policies were built on Russian diaspora-Kazakhstan-Russian Federation relations after independence. In the law on language adopted in 1989 and the constitution adopted in 1993, Kazakh is defined as the language of state and Russians as a "social language" or "lingua-franca".⁹⁸ At the same time, Kazakhstan decided that the Kazakh language was written with the Latin alphabet in order to strengthen the relations with Western states after independence.⁹⁹ As for Kazakhstan's constitution, it does not recognize Russians' right of having dual citizenship.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Kazakhstan prohibited Russians' declaration of separatism and closed some Russian organizations and mass-media companies.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Ibid., 138-139.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁸ Ingvar Svanberg, "Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs", in *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, ed. Graham Smith (London: Longman, 1992), 327.

⁹⁹ Özcan, *Bir Sovyet Mirası*, 63. However, this decision had not been implemented by 2017 and alphabet has not switched yet completely to Latin because the government of Kazakhstan was afraid of the repelling of non-Kazakh communities and the pressure from Russia.

¹⁰⁰ Gülден Ayman, "Eski Sovyet Topraklarında Ruslar ve Etnik Çatışma Dinamikleri [Russians and the Dynamisms of Ethnic Conflict in the Former Soviet Lands]", *Sosyal Demokrat Değişim*, no. 10 (1998): 82.

¹⁰¹ Özcan, *Bir Sovyet Mirası*, 69.

Due to Kazakhstan's nation-state building and Kazakhization policies, Russian communities in Kazakhstan have lost their advantageous status and their circumstance worsened. From 1993 to 1998, 1,652,700 Russians migrated from Kazakhstan to Russia.¹⁰² Russians inside Kazakhstan organized protests against Kazakhization policies and demanded that Russian also should be the official language of Kazakhstan as well as Kazakh.¹⁰³

Russia also criticized Kazakhstan's Kazakhization policies. Russia was putting pressure over Kazakhstan, demanding Russians' right of dual citizenship. This tendency became more evident after Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia. After this time, the number of articles which justifies the autonomy of northern Kazakhstan by Russian population increased in Russian mass-media.¹⁰⁴ When Putin visited Kazakhstan in 2000, he met the representatives of the Russian diaspora and stated that the agreement of cooperation in the areas of education and science would be signed between Kazakhstan and Russia.¹⁰⁵ Thus, he began to use the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan as a strategic card toward Kazakhstan and to interfere in Kazakhstan's political life more actively. Under this condition, Kazakhstan decided to review some articles of the law on language and Russia and Kazakhstan agreed on the resolution of problems related to Russians' right of dual citizenship while Kazakhization policies continue to advance.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid., 69.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 74.

As we have seen before, in the cases of both Baltic states and Kazakhstan, the newly formed states began to build titular-nation centered nation-state and Russians in “host states” were often excluded from this process by means of education, the law of citizenship, language policies and so on. Against this situation, many Russians in these states headed to keeping or reconstituting the public status which they had in the Soviet era and demanded public rights and territorial autonomy.¹⁰⁷ The government, various public associations, institutions, non-government organizations and political parties of the Russian Federation as Russians’ “Homeland” supported Russian communities and diasporized them by way of launching a series of activities and pressured over the “host states”. In this way, tensions between “host states” and the Russian Federation emerged.

2-4. The Different Process of Diaspora-“Host State”-“Homeland” Relations and Minority Issue: the Cases of South Ossetia and Chechnya

Rogers Brubaker’s theory on “diaspora-homeland-host state relations” mainly deals with the case of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet states. However, there are some exceptional cases in which diaspora-homeland-host state relations have developed in different forms. Some of these cases are the issues of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Chechnya, which is defined as the “homelands” of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia and these regions attempted to become independent nation-states. These exceptional cases resulted from the tension between Georgia and Russia, which has the control over Ossetians’, Abkhazians’ and Kist-Chechens’ “homelands”, as well as the attempts of Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya¹⁰⁸ to build ethnic nation-state building. That is, Russia is

¹⁰⁷ Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question,” 68-69.

¹⁰⁸ Abkhazia and South Ossetia fought against Georgia in order to build independent ethnic nation states and have remained as de facto independent states since the beginning of 1990s. In 2008, some states such as Russia, Nicaragua and Venezuela recognized their independence. Chechnya also attempted to build an independent ethnic nation-state and fought against Russia by 2009. Although Chechnya officially belongs to Russia today, a wide-scale autonomy is recognized for it and Chechnya appears like a de facto independent state in Russia.

another important actor as well as diaspora, homeland and host state in these cases. In this part, I focus on the cases of South Ossetia and Chechnya and analyze the process of the development of diaspora-host state-homeland relations.

2-4-1. South Ossetia

While other Soviet republics such as Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan had an important ratio of the Russian population, Russians inside Georgia formed only 6.3 percent of Georgia's population in 1989¹⁰⁹ and Russian communities in Georgia were not perceived as a threat against Georgia. The anti-Russianness in Georgia was directed to the central government of Russia rather than the Russian population and Russian communities in Georgia have been integrated into Georgian society at a high level. For example, when the war in Abkhazia occurred in 1993, Russians in Georgia supported the Georgian government and criticized the intervention of the Russian Army harshly.¹¹⁰

On the other hand, the tension between Georgia and Russia and Georgian nationalism affected Ossetians in South Ossetia, which is defined as the part of the "homeland" of Ossetians in Georgia. In the Soviet era, South Ossetia Autonomous Region was established and the rights of education and publishing activities in the Ossetian language were recognized.¹¹¹ In daily life, Ossetian and Russian were used more frequently than Georgian¹¹² and Georgia and South Ossetia grew apart more and more. In spite of this situation, the close relations between Ossetians and

¹⁰⁹ Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, 202.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

¹¹¹ Yılmaz Konak, *Osetya ve Asetinler* [Ossetia ve Ossetians] (Ankara: without place, 2007), 670-671.

¹¹² Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 10.

Georgians continued and mixed marriages were frequently seen during the Soviet era.¹¹³

However, when Georgian nationalism began to rise in 1988, Ossetian-Georgian relations changed dramatically. Georgian nationalists defined Georgians as “the original owners of Georgia” and the other ethnic groups as “ungrateful guests, fifth columns of Russia, Iran or Turkey” and hate-discourses and campaigns against minorities increased to an important degree.¹¹⁴ Ossetians in South Ossetia also reacted harshly to these policies and began a national liberation movement under Alan Chochiev’s leadership.¹¹⁵ On November 10th, 1989, the Higher Soviet of South Ossetia confirmed the decision so that the status of the autonomous republic would be given to South Ossetia. When the Higher Soviet of Georgia refused this demand and tried to take autonomy away, Ossetians began to demand Ossetia’s independence and unification with North Ossetia and Russia. Furthermore, when Georgian nationalist groups tried to enter South Ossetia under Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s leadership on November 23rd, 1989, a harsh conflict between Georgians and Ossetians occurred.¹¹⁶ After Gamsakhurdia became the head of Georgia in 1990, Georgia’s attitude toward South Ossetia became more severe. For example, Georgian government abolished the autonomy of South Ossetia and announced a state of emergency in South Ossetia. Furthermore, it arrested Torez Kulumbekty, the head of the higher Soviet of South Ossetia and made pressure over Ossetians. Ossetians in

¹¹³ Konak, *Osetya ve Asetinler*, p. 672.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 673.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 673.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 674.

South Ossetia revolted against the Georgian government and the harsh conflict continued until 1992.¹¹⁷

After Eduard Shevardnadze became the president of Georgia, a peace-keeping force, whose majority consisted of Russians, entered South Ossetia on July 14th, 1992 and the conflict officially ended.¹¹⁸ That is, Russia actually interfered to the issue of South Ossetia and South Ossetia became a de facto independent state under Russian patronage.



Map 1: The Map of South Ossetia¹¹⁹

On the other hand, Lyudvig Chibirov, the first president of South Ossetia negotiated with Shevardnadze regularly for the resolution of the issue of South Ossetia, while strengthening relations with the Russian Federation. In 1997, Shevardnadze visited South Ossetia for the first time after the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.¹²⁰ In Chibirov's

¹¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., 674-682, Hasan Oktay and Ufuk Cerrah, *Uluslararası Politikada Kafkasya* [The Caucasus in International Politics] (Ankara: Hitabevi Yayınları, 2018), 154-155.

¹¹⁸ Felix Corley, "South Ossetia between Gamsakhurdia and Gorbachev: Three Documents", *Central Asian Survey* 16, no. 2 (1997): 270.

¹¹⁹ Stephen F. Jones, "South Ossetia's unwanted independence", *Opendemocracy.net*, accessed June 10, 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/stephen-f-jones/south-ossetia%E2%80%99s-unwanted-independence>.

¹²⁰ Konak, *Osetya ve Asetinler*, 683.

era, Ossetian-Georgian relations were comparatively good and people were freely able to pass between Georgia and South Ossetia at a certain level. Therefore, Ossetians in Georgia were able to visit and study in South Ossetia.

However, when Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia and Eduard Kokoyty became South Ossetia's counterpart in 2001, the relations between Georgia and South Ossetia began to worsen due to the tension between Russia and Georgia. Georgia was strengthening its relations with Western countries and making efforts to leave Russian hegemony while being a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. For example, Shevardnadze established relations with NATO and joined the Partnership for Peace program of NATO in 1994.¹²¹ Georgia's integration to the Western Block accelerated after Mikhail Saakashvili ascended to power in 2003. Western countries increased their support for Georgia in terms of anti-corruption and democratization and NATO leaders declared that they planned to accept Georgia as a member of NATO in the Bucharest Summit in April 2008.¹²² At the same time, Saakashvili's government increased its anti-Russian attitudes and intensified pressure over South Ossetia, supported politically and economically by Russia.¹²³

On the other hand, Russia strengthened political and economic pressure over Georgia while increasing political and economic supports to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, especially after Putin became the President of Russia. In the early 2000s, Russia continued to supply them with financial support, electric, natural gas, and

¹²¹ Jonathan Aves, "Post Soviet Transcaucasia", in *Challenges for the Soviet South*, ed. Roy Allison (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), 183.

¹²² Aslı Bora, "The South Ossetian-Georgian Conflict: 1990-2008" (Unpublished Master Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2009), 72.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

petroleum.¹²⁴ Russian companies were also doing business in these regions. In April 2008, Russian government officially abolished the economic embargo on Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which had been continuing since the official ceasefires.¹²⁵ Besides, while people in South Ossetia and Abkhazia had no recognized citizenship before, Russian government granted Russian citizenship to those in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹²⁶ That is to say, Russia gave a status similar to “Russian diaspora” to Ossetians in South Ossetia and Russia became capable of making pressure on Georgia in the context of diaspora-“homeland”-host state relations on the issue of South Ossetia.

While Russia strengthened its relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it has increased its pressure on Georgia, especially since Saakashvili’s era. In the spring of 2006, Russia’s consumer rights watchdog group boycotted the imports of Georgian wine and mineral water under the pretext of “health code violations”.¹²⁷ Furthermore, when four Russian military officers were accused of espionage in Georgia, the Russian government began to send Georgian illegal immigrants back to Georgia and cut off transport links between these countries.¹²⁸ These also measures seriously affected Ossetians in Georgia (outside South Ossetia). Their communication with their “homeland” was restricted to an important degree and they began to have difficulties on the relations with South/North Ossetia, defined as their “homeland”.

¹²⁴ Yoko Hirose, *Kyoukento Fuanno Choutaikoku Roshia: Kyu-Soren Shokokukaramita Hikarito Kage* [Russia; The Superpower between Dictatorship and Instability: Light and Shadow from the Perspectives of the Former Soviet States] (Tokyo: Kobun-Sha, 2008), 113.

¹²⁵ Scott Littlefield, “Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy: The Contradictions and Consequences of Russia’s Passport Distribution in the Separatist Regions of Georgia”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 8 (2009): 1469-1470.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1473.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1474.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1474-1475.

When the Georgian government sent the Georgian army to South Ossetia on August 2008 in order to recover Georgia's territorial integrity, Dmitry Medvedev, who was the President of Russia, announced the following:¹²⁹

In accordance with the Constitution and the federal laws, as President of the Russian Federation, it is my duty to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be.

It is these circumstances that dictate the steps we will take now. We will not allow the deaths of our fellow citizens to go unpunished. The perpetrators will receive the punishment they deserve.

As we can understand from this speech, people in South Ossetia and Abkhazia are regarded as "Russian diaspora in Georgia" and Medvedev says that the Russian state will protect their rights by all means because they have the Russian citizenship and rights same as the other Russian citizens. On the pretext of it, the Russian troops responded against Georgia with harsh military attacks. After Russia completely removed Georgian troops from these two regions, it officially recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. After that, it strengthened its economic dominance over Abkhazia and South Ossetia and its military presence in these regions. The diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia have been severed after this war and Georgian-South Ossetian border had also closed. Therefore, the visit of Ossetians in Georgia to North Ossetia became much more difficult and they became incapable of visiting South Ossetia.

In summary, Georgian government which was trying to build exclusive ethnic nation-state made a pressure over Ossetians and Ossetians in South Ossetia revolted against Georgia. They established South Ossetia as a de-facto independent state with intervention and support of Russia and obtained a status like "Russian diaspora in Georgia". Ossetians in Georgia (outside South Ossetia) remained outside this process and were exposed to both suspicion of the Georgian society and difficulties related to the relations with North and South Ossetia. In other words, tensions between the host

¹²⁹ Dmitry Medvedev, "Statement on the Situation in South Ossetia", *The Kremlin*, accessed August 8, 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553_type82912type82913_205032.shtml.

state and newly formed external “homeland” occurred before a split between diaspora and host state appeared.

2-4-2. Chechnya

Like the Ossetian-Georgian conflict had its effects on Ossetians in Georgia, the wars in Chechnya also affected the relations between Georgia and Russia and between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Georgian state and society. There have been economic, commercial and educational relations between Pankisi Gorge in Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia since the Soviet era¹³⁰ and Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a good friend of Djohar Dudayev, the first President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.¹³¹ Furthermore, many Chechen-Kists went to Chechnya in order to take part in the process of Chechnya’s state-building.¹³² But generally, the political relations between Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia had not much developed until 1997.

However, after the First Chechen War ended in 1996, the relations between Georgia and Chechnya entered a new stage. After this war, Georgia made close relations with the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which was its neighbor, in order to restrain Russia. For example, the representative Office of Chechen-Ichkeria was opened in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia and Hizir Aldamov was appointed as the representative of Chechen-Ichkeria. Besides, the export of Chechnya’s petroleum through Georgia was also planned.¹³³

On the other hand, as Georgian-Chechen relations developed, the war in Chechnya affected the circumstance of Pankisi Gorge. Due to the disorder inside Georgia and

¹³⁰ Tsulaia, “To be Kist”, 128.

¹³¹ Seiichi Kitagawa, *Zakafkas-no Minzokumondaito Rekishikijutsu* [Ethnic Issues and Historiography in Transcaucasia] (Hirosaki: Hirosaki University, 1998), 95.

¹³² Kitagawa, “Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino,” 144-145.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 143.

this war, Georgian-Russian border became the center of narcotic trade and narcotics used to be sold openly in Duisi village in Pankisi Gorge. Criminal organizations not only stole domestic animals but also kidnapped tourists, local residents and Georgian public officials. Georgian Ministry of Interior tried to establish a police station in Duisi, which is the center of Pankisi, in 1997. But because of local residents' objection, only a checkpoint of police was set at the entrance of Duisi with the mediation of A. Kutayev, who was an advisor of Aslan Maskhadov, the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in this year. Furthermore, Wahhabists-Salafists began to come to Pankisi after 1997 and 50 Salafists have already existed in Akhmeta Region at that time. For example, Salman Raduyev, who was the leader of “Dudayev’s Corps”, sent Aleksii Kavtarashvili in order to spread Salafism and unite Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechens in Daghestan.¹³⁴



Map 2: The Map of Chechnya-Ingushetia¹³⁵

Especially after the Second Chechen War in 1999, a great number of Chechen refugees came to Pankisi Gorge and the situation of this area became more disordered. While refugees come to Pankisi, many Chechen and foreign militants

¹³⁴ Ibid., 145.

¹³⁵ “East Prigorodny Conflict-Ingushetia North Ossetia”, *North Caucasus Land*, accessed June 16, 2014, <https://northcaucasusland.wordpress.com/2014/06/15/east-prigorodny-conflict-ingushetia-north-ossetia/>.

also came there at the same time. Illegal trades of arms, as well as narcotics, were made at Russian-Georgian border in eastern Georgia. Furthermore, Chechen and foreign militants used secret routes in this area in order to enter Russia illegally.¹³⁶ From 1999 to the beginning of the 2000s, Pankisi Gorge was the waiting point of Chechen warlords. For example, Amir Khattab established a command training school in this area. On October 2000, a Chechen warlord Ruslan (Hamzat) Gelayev came to Pankisi with about 150 soldiers of him. Besides, a Chechen-Kist Mamuka Arabuli kidnapped a Georgian public official in Pankisi and Luka Ramazashvili, who is the local Georgian leader of a self-defense organization, took 5 Chechen-Kists as hostages on June 2001 in order to take revenge on Arabuli's case.¹³⁷

Concerning this situation, Russia began military operations against Chechen militants inside Georgia and demanded that Georgia should extradite them. Shevardnadze denied the existence of Chechen militants and foreign soldiers inside Georgia and harshly condemned the violation of the Georgian border by the Russian army and its attacks beyond the state border. He denied also Russian-Georgian joint operation against Chechen militants in Pankisi. Besides, it was impossible for the Georgian Border Guard Corps to take Russian-Georgian border under complete control in terms of both the number of troops and financial capacity. At the same time, Georgia had problems with Russia in terms of the supply of energy and the Russian visa for Georgian citizens as well as Abkhazia and South Ossetia and made use of the issue of Chechnya in order to get advantages in negotiations with Russia.¹³⁸ In this way, great chaos was dominant in Pankisi due to the large-scale influx of Chechen refugees and militants while Georgia strengthened relations with

¹³⁶ Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino,"145.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

Chechnya and Chechen-Kists in this area have been alienated by the Georgian society.

However, after the September 11 attacks by Al-Qaeda in 2001, Western states and many Muslim countries came not to criticize Russia's attitudes on the issue of Chechnya. Therefore both Chechen-Ichkeria government and Salafist militants have lost support from the international society and weakened to an important degree. Russia killed many important warlords such as Shamil Basayev and Amir Khattab as well as many important persons of Chechen-Ichkeria government such as Aslan Maskhadov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. While military operation in Chechnya continued, a pro-Russian government was established under the leadership of Ahmad (tenure of office: 5 October 2003-9 May 2004) and his son Ramzan Kadyrov (tenure of office: 15 February 2007-). At last, the Second Chechen War officially ended in 2009.¹³⁹

On the other hand, the Georgian government accepted American troops for the struggle against terrorism in the Pankisi Gorge and realized joint operations with the United States in 2002.¹⁴⁰ The operation against the Chechen militants continued after the Rose Revolution in 2003. Due to this condition, many of the Chechen refugees in Pankisi began to go back to Chechnya or began to migrate to Turkey and European states after 2003.¹⁴¹ Therefore, public order has got better in Pankisi to a certain level. But many people in Georgia still have the image of the Pankisi Gorge as the place where armed conflict and chaos continue and the problem of Chechen-Kists' alienation exists.

¹³⁹ "Russia 'Ends Chechnya Operation'", *BBC News*, accessed April 16, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8001495.stm>.

¹⁴⁰ Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 146.

¹⁴¹ "Past to Present", *Nazy's Guest House*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://nazysguesthouse.com/kist-culture/>.

In summary, the Georgian government developed relations with Chechnya, which revolted against Russian domination, in order to restrain Russia after the First Chechen War ended in 1996. But war and chaos in Chechnya affected the circumstance of Chechen-Kists in the Pankisi Gorge (or Chechen-Vainakh diaspora in Georgia). In the process of interaction between Pankisi and Chechnya, Chechen-Kists in Georgia began to be alienated by the Georgian society. In other words, the development of relations between the host state and external “homeland” uprising against Russian domination affected the life of diaspora communities and caused the alienation of the diaspora population by host society.

The theory of “Diaspora-host state-homeland relations” in the former Soviet area has such exceptional cases as we see. But when they suggested and strengthened this theory, many scientists including Brubaker focused on larger communities such as Russian diaspora and ignored these exceptional cases such as Abkhazians, Ossetians, and Chechen-Kists in Georgia because of the relatively small size of these communities. Therefore the current situation of these communities is not known very much and these exceptional cases were little researched by today. My thesis debates the process of the development of Ossetian and Chechen-Kist identities in Georgia in this exceptional situation and has importance in its critical point of view on Brubaker’s theory of “Diaspora-host state-homeland relations”.

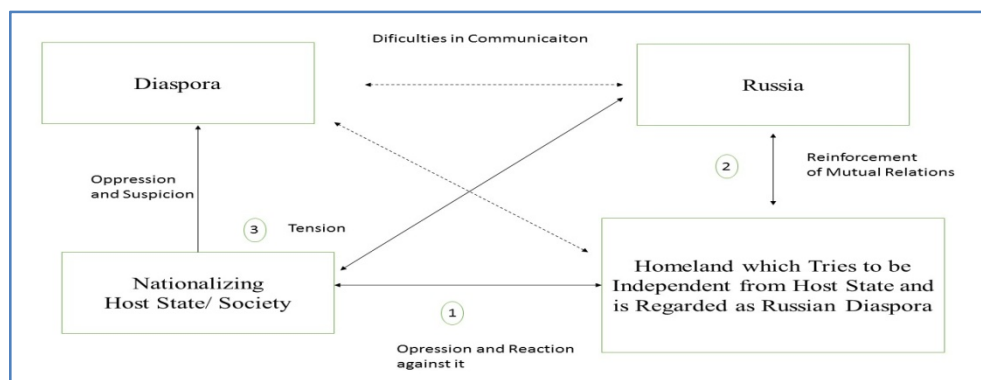


Figure 2: The Position of Ossetians in Georgia (outside South Ossetia) on the Issue of South Ossetia

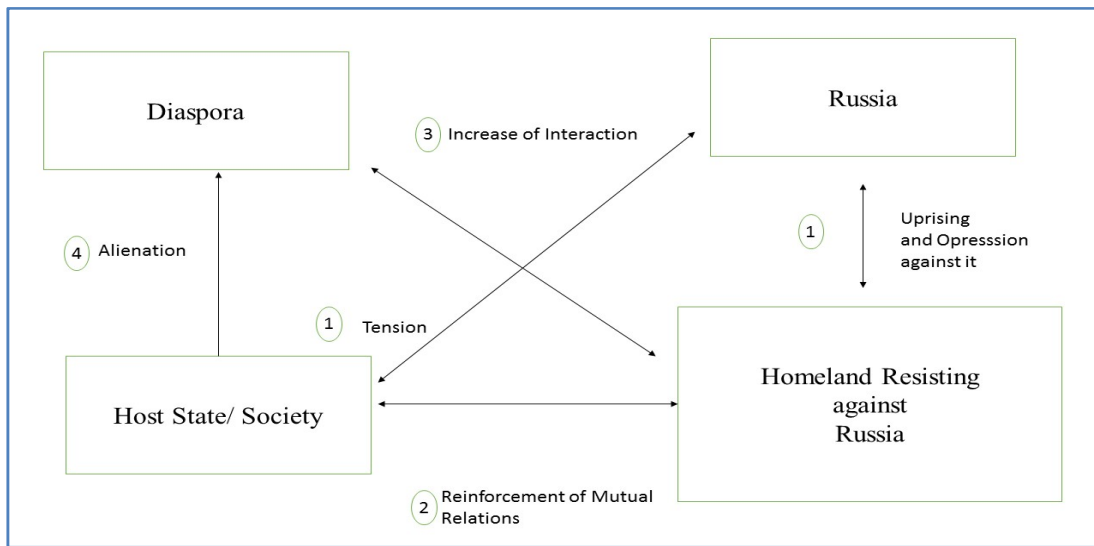


Figure 3: The Position of Chechen-Kists in Georgia in the Issue of Chechnya

CHAPTER 3

OSSETIANS AND CHECHEN-KISTS IN GEORGIA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ossetians and Chechen-Kists are the largest North-Caucasian diaspora communities in Georgia and were always affected by the political developments in North Caucasus, defined as their “homeland”. In the previous chapter, I referred to the political situation in South Ossetia and Chechnya, which are regarded as the “homelands” of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia and explained the formation of their identity as diaspora in the context of host state-homeland relations.

In this chapter, I will explain the historical process of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia in the context of diaspora-host society relations. At first, I will refer to the situation of Ossetians in Georgia. This part consists of three parts: the formation of Ossetian communities until the Rose Revolution in 2003, Ossetians’ settlements in Georgia today and the current Ossetian communities in Georgia.

Later, I will give brief information about the situation of Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia. When I explain the historical process of Chechen-Kists, I will refer to the following three points: the formation of Chechen-Kist communities and their situation by the Soviet era, the situation of Islam in Pankisi by the Soviet era and the developments in Chechen-Kist communities since the post-Soviet era.

3-1. Ossetians

3-1-1. The Formation of the Ossetian Communities in Georgia

The history of Ossetian-Georgian relations is an old one and Ossetians' migration to Georgia had been realized mostly by means of marriage, although the number of Ossetians who settled in Georgia in the Middle Ages was comparatively small. For example, Giorgi the First and Bagrat the Fourth, the Kings of Georgia married to the daughters of Ossetian Kings and Queen Tamar's mother was an Ossetian in the Middle Ages. Her husband Davit Soslan was also an Ossetian.¹⁴² The marriages between Ossetians and Georgians had been very frequent and the number of Ossetians in Georgia also increased along with this situation.

The first large-scale migration of Ossetians to Georgia began in the 13th-14th centuries while the Mongolian Empire and Tamerlane invaded and occupied Georgia. In this era, small Ossetian groups were brought by the Mongolian state and generally settled high in the mountains. While some of them were assimilated to the Georgian society in course of time, others returned to the North Caucasus.¹⁴³

Ossetians' second large-scale migration to Georgia began in the 18th century and continued until the 20th century.¹⁴⁴ Georgia was damaged very heavily owing to civil war and conflicts with foreign countries in the 18th century and the number of peasants in this state decreased to an important degree. Under this condition, the Georgian feudal lords needed labor force in order to cultivate their lands and

¹⁴² Trans. Marie Felicite Brosset, Trans. from French to Turkish by Hrand Andreasyan, *Gürcistan Tarihi (Eski Çağlardan 1212 Yılına Kadar)* [The Georgian History (from Ancient Times to 1212)], (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), 276; 342; 375.

¹⁴³ Mariam Lortkipanidze and Giorgi Otkhmezuri, "Osetiny v Gruzii [Ossetians in Georgia]", *Kavkaz i Globalizatsiya* 1, no. 4 (2007): 127-128.

¹⁴⁴ Anzor Totadze, *The Ossets in Georgia: Myth and Reality* (Tbilisi: Universal, 2008), 17.

Ossetians were brought from North Ossetia and some regions of South Ossetia.¹⁴⁵ In the 18th century, Ossetians from Akhagori in South Ossetia and North Ossetia settled in the villages of Mtskheta-Mtianeti Province.¹⁴⁶ In the 19th century, Ossetians' large-scale migration from Java and Akhagori to provinces such as Shida-Kartli Province (outside South Ossetia), Tetrtskaro in Kvemo-Kartli Province, Borjomi in Samtskhe-Javakheti Province occurred.¹⁴⁷ Ossetian communities in Kakheti Province were formed by those who came from Kazbegi and Akhagori at the beginning of the 20th century. Besides, Ossetians in Sakadagiano, Chobalauri, Tedotsminda, Akhali Khurvaleti and Patara Khurvaleti villages in Shida-Kartli Province also came from Java and Akhagori in this era.¹⁴⁸

The Ossetian community in Elbakiani village, which belongs to the Kareli region, is an exceptional community in Georgia. Those who live in this village are originally Georgians who came from Tsera village in Racha-Lechkhumi Province in the middle of the 19th century (the family name of almost all the villagers in this village is Elbakidze/Elbachity). They were under the intense effect of Ossetian culture and traditions, therefore they define themselves as Ossetian rather than Georgian.¹⁴⁹ In this village, Georgians were "integrated into Ossetian community and assimilated by Ossetians" and this situation can be seen in this region.

In the Soviet era, a great number of Ossetians from both North and South Ossetia settled in cities and villages for labor, education, marriage and so on. According to

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴⁶ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 31-34.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 19-35; Totadze, *The Ossets in Georgia*, 22.

¹⁴⁸ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 19-21.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.

the census in 1989, 15 percent of the population of Kareli, 11 percent in Akhmeta, 10 percent in Gori, 10 percent in Kaspi, 8 percent in Lagodekhi and 8 percent lived in Borjomi Regions. Ossetians' population in Tbilisi reached 33,000.¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, the cultural condition of Ossetians in Georgia was also improved. Tbilisi 11th Public school, which is the only Ossetian-Russian school in Tbilisi, began Ossetian language courses in 1921 and Ossetian sector was established in this school in 1924.¹⁵¹ Likewise, in the Soviet era, Ossetian-Russian schools were opened in the villages of Areshperani and Pona in Lagodekhi owing to the efforts of local Ossetian intellectuals and Ossetian language was taught as a compulsory lesson in these schools. These advantages continued till the Georgian-Ossetian conflict began in 1990 (But this lesson was introduced again unofficially after Gamsakhurdia resigned from the presidency of Georgia).¹⁵²

However, after Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who applied policies based on Georgian nationalism, ascended to power at the end of the 1980s, Georgian government began to exclude non-Georgian groups from the nation-state building process¹⁵³ and the Georgian-Ossetian conflict occurred in South Ossetia. From the end of the 1980s to the beginning of 1990s, aggressions toward Ossetian villages outside South Ossetia had also been practiced by Georgian nationalist militants. As a result, Ossetians inside Georgia migrated to Russia, especially to North Ossetia and their population

¹⁵⁰ Totadze, *The Ossets in Georgia*, 22.

¹⁵¹ "Ossetian Sunday School", *Caucasian Mosaic*, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://caucasianmosaic.com/index.php?action=1&id=4&lang=eng>.

¹⁵² Before 2015, Ossetian language were taught 4 hours a week from the 1st to the 4th grades and 3 hours a week from the 5th to the 11th grades in the schools of these two villages. Kaloyev, *Osetiny Vostochnoy Osetii*, 108; Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 12; Author's interview with Luiza on 3 November 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

¹⁵³ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Elite Transformation in Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Transcaucasia, or What Happens When the Ruling Class Can't Rule?", in *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, eds. Timothy J. Colton et. al. (London: Routledge, 1995), 154.

decreased to an important degree in this era because of the chaos in Georgia and strong oppression over Ossetians.¹⁵⁴ After Gamsakhurdia's era, dire economic situation and political chaos inside Georgia also accelerated the decrease of the Ossetian population in Georgia and the number of Ossetians living in Georgia (except for South Ossetia) in 2002 was only 38,028 according to the general population census, while it was 164,555 (including South Ossetia) in 1989.¹⁵⁵ Ossetians' population continued to decrease also after 2002 and it decreased to about 14,400 in 2014, which is less than half of the population in 2002.

Besides, since the time when Gamsakhurdia became president, Ossetians who decided to continue to live in Georgia began to be suspected by the Georgian state and society and their socio-cultural circumstance in this era reflected this situation clearly. For example, the education in the Ossetian language in Tbilisi and Lagodekhi were abolished, Ossetians lost many of the socio-cultural rights which existed in the Soviet era.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, although Georgia's Ossetian Association was established under the leadership of Tengiz Gagloyty in 1993 in order to protect Ossetians' cultural and political rights, this association failed to create any impact on Ossetians due to tension between Georgians and Ossetians and pressure from the Georgian society. In 1999 it organized a conference, but due to the financial difficulty, not many activities followed. Furthermore, it failed to develop relations with Ossetians in North and South Ossetia.¹⁵⁷ Therefore Georgia's Ossetian Association does not have sufficient influence over Ossetians in Georgia today. Except for this association, several

¹⁵⁴ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 6.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁶ Author's interview with Gia on 18 October 2017 in Tbilisi.

¹⁵⁷ Author's interview with Gia on 18 October 2017 in Tbilisi.

Ossetian organizations, like Maia Chigoeva-Tsaboshvili's Georgian-Ossetian Union "Iber-Ironi",¹⁵⁸ have existed since the beginning of the 2000s, but most of them focus on the relations between Georgia-South Ossetia rather than preserving Ossetian cultural distinctiveness. As for those which focus on preserving Ossetian identity, the number of such non-governmental organizations were very small¹⁵⁹ though there have been organizations such as the Ossetian Women Association led by Izolda Tigity and Mixed Families Association led by Marina Beppity. But these organizations were not able to do much effective work to affect Ossetians due to financial difficulties. Therefore, the rate of participation in civil society processes was extremely low among the Ossetian population in Tbilisi, Shida-Kartli and Kakheti¹⁶⁰ and their ways to make relations with civil society organizations were limited. In this way, Ossetians in Georgia still face many obstacles in preserving their culture and identity.

3-1-2. Ossetians' Settlements in Georgia Today

According to the census in 2002, Ossetians live in 59 villages in the Gori, Kaspi, and Kareli regions in the Shida-Kartli province.¹⁶¹ It is reported that Ossetians also live in 37 villages of the Kakheti Province.¹⁶² Many Ossetians live in cities and centers of regions such as Gori, Kaspi, Tbilisi, and Rustavi as well as rural areas.

¹⁵⁸ "Tbilisi-Based NGO Leader Wants to Run for S.Ossetia 'Presidency'", *Civil.ge*, accessed September 15, 2006, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=13557>.

¹⁵⁹ Author's interview with Gia on 18 October 2017, Tbilisi.

¹⁶⁰ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 15.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 8.

According to the research of the European Center of Minority Issues, villages where Ossetians form more than 60 percent of their populations are the following:

Shida-Kartli: Tsitelubani, Kvemo Shavshvebi, Natsreti and Didi Khurvaleti (the Gori region), Zadiantkari, Gamdlistskaro, Nigoza, Zemo Rene, Kvemo Rene, Goraka, Khviti, Vake, Karapila, Tvaurebi and Pantiani (the Kaspi region), Kintsvisi and Elbakiani (the Kareli region).¹⁶³

Kakheti: Jugaani (the Telavi region), Argokhi, Pichkhovani and Koreti (the Akhmeta region), Kitaani (the Gurjaani region), Areshperani, Zemo Bolkvi, Pona, Dona, Kvemo Khechili and Zemo Khechili (the Lagodekhi region) and Tsitsikaantseri (the Kvareli region).¹⁶⁴

Generally, while Ossetians' population in comparatively large Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli and Kakheti Provinces is about 200-250 people on average, in other Ossetian villages is generally 50-150 people.¹⁶⁵

However, there are many Ossetian villages which have been abandoned completely or half empty in both Shida-Kartli and Kakheti owing to migration to cities and foreign countries. Those who live in Sakadagiano village which belongs to the Kaspi region generally work in cities such as Kaspi, Mtskheta, and Tbilisi and come to the village only to spend holidays in the summer.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, other ethnic groups such as Georgians and Svans also live in many Ossetian villages and we can see many examples of mixed marriages. Especially in

¹⁶³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁶ Keisuke Wakizaka, "Gürcistan Osetlerinde Kimlik: Lagodekhi ve Kaspi Örneği [The Identity of Ossetians in Georgia: the Example of Lagodekhi and Kaspi]", *Vakanüvis*, Kafkasya Özel Sayısı. 2 (2017): 641.

1980s people from Svaneti and Adjara began to settle in the Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli and Kakheti because of natural disasters.¹⁶⁷ In Sakadagiano Village, migrants who are mainly people from Svaneti were settled by the Georgian government in the 1980s.¹⁶⁸ Some Meskhetian families and migrants from Adjara were settled in Tsitelubani village in the Gori region by the government. Furthermore, internally displaced people from Abkhazia and South Ossetia were also being settled in Shida-Kartli. A similar situation exists also in Kakheti. For example, in the Pichkhovani village in the Akhmeta region, 11 houses were sold by Ossetians to Adjarian migrants and 16 houses were sold to Svans in Argokhi village.¹⁶⁹ In fact, when I visited Areshperani village in Lagodekhi Region in 2016, I encountered many Adjarians and Svans who settled in the post-Soviet era as well as local Ossetians and Georgians. In this way, the current demographic structure of Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli and Kakheti changed to an important degree and became more complex.

3-1-3. Current Ossetian Communities in Georgia

Ossetians in Georgia generally belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church like Georgians and have many socio-cultural elements in common with Georgians. Therefore it is very difficult for us to distinguish Ossetians and Georgians and we can say that the only important feature dividing Ossetians and Georgians is the language. Besides, mixed marriages between Georgians and Ossetians are also more frequent than those between Georgians and other minority groups. For example,

¹⁶⁷ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 9.

¹⁶⁸ Wakizaka, "Gürcistan Osetlerinde," 642.

¹⁶⁹ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 9.

Naira Beppity, the director of a research center at the Tbilisi State University, points out the following about the social relations between Ossetians and Georgians:¹⁷⁰

The tradition of mixed families continues today. There are many such families. It is no exaggeration to say that in the region, which we call South Ossetia, I do not know a family that is not mixed either a son-in-law or a daughter in law, or a cousin's wife, or a cousin's husband, and so on. This means that the relations between Georgians and Ossetians were always very close and the royal marriages in the past showed that their nature, traditions, life and ethnopsychology were close although some conflicts occurred between them before. Hence they were compatible and easily formed such families.

As we can understand from this situation and Beppity's description, the Ossetian communities in Georgia have followed a long historical process. Therefore the level of Ossetians' integration to Georgian society is much higher than the other ethnic groups and those who were assimilated culturally are also seen.¹⁷¹

Especially, Ossetians in Shida-Kartli have been integrated into Georgian society at very high levels and some of them have lost Ossetian cultural and ethnic features while defining themselves as Ossetian. Although elders in this area have a good command of Ossetian which is their mother language, many of the youth there know the Ossetian language comparatively less or do not know it at all. They generally use the Georgian language in daily life.¹⁷² Therefore it is normal that the situation of Ossetian language in this region is not good. In many of the Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli, a number of Georgian families also live as well as Ossetians and we can often see many Ossetians who are married Georgians. There are very close relations between Ossetians and Georgians in this region. Under such conditions, Georgian is generally used as the lingua-franca and the importance of Ossetian

¹⁷⁰ "Multiethnic Georgia: Ossetians", *Georgian Public Broadcasting*, accessed April 22, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG9zXh3FBHY>.

¹⁷¹ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 10.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

language in daily life naturally decreases.¹⁷³ Furthermore special policies towards Ossetians in this region had not been applied since the Soviet era at all and education in the Ossetian language was not operative until 2015. Schools in Shida-Kartli generally teach only in Georgian.¹⁷⁴ In fact, when I visited the villages of Sakadagiano and Nigoza in Shida Kartli in 2014 and 2016, those who are older than 40 years old knew the Ossetian language at an advanced level while the youth knew comparatively less or did not know at all.¹⁷⁵

When we look at the family names of Ossetians in Shida-Kartli, almost all of them are registered like Georgian family names (many of the Georgian family names end with-shvili/-dze/-uri). Those who have family names which end with “-ov/-ova/-ty” are few in number and exist in the villages of Tsitelubani, Gamdlistskaro, Zadiantkari, Kintsvisi, Akhali Khurvaleti, Patara Khurvaleti, and Sakadagiano.¹⁷⁶ Most of them settled in this area in the Soviet era, especially after the 1980s and were not affected by the Georgian cultural environment very much.¹⁷⁷ While the Georgianization policies were applied more peacefully and non-coercively, the assimilation process accelerated after Gamsakhurdia’s era. In his era, more stringent methods were applied in order to make Ossetians register their family names like those of Georgians.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, because these villages are near South Ossetia, which has serious problems with the Georgian government, the residents of these

¹⁷³ Wakizaka, “Gürcistan Osetlerinde”, 643.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 643.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 643.

¹⁷⁶ Sordia, “Ossetians in Georgia,” 11.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

villages were exposed to the intense pressure of the nationalist Georgian governments.

Besides, many Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli are comparatively close to Tbilisi and these villages' access to Tbilisi is easy. Thus, many people in these villages go to Tbilisi for education and jobs.¹⁷⁹ It is natural that the Georgian language which is the official and more dominant language in Georgia should be preferred in large cities. Thus, the influence of the Ossetian language in this region diminishes.

The situation similar to the Ossetian villages in Shida-Kartli is observed also in those in Kakheti and Ossetians' assimilation to Georgian society in this region is also advancing gradually.¹⁸⁰ When we see the case of Ossetians in Kakheti, it is worth referring to the Ossetian communities in the Akhmeta region. In the Soviet era, there were many large-scale Ossetian villages such as Dumasturi, Koreti, Argokhi, Pichkhovani, Arashenda, Osiauri and Sabue in this region. However, the difficult living conditions and serious insufficiency of infrastructure in this region led to the migration of Ossetians and a significant decrease of the Ossetian population.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, due to insufficient capacity of the Georgian central government for security and the flow of Chechen refugees, whose number is as large as the population of Pankisi Gorge, into this region, the non-Chechen-Kist migrated out of this region. From 1998 to the spring of 2002, many Ossetians in the villages of Dumastri, Kvemo Kharatsani, and Tsinubani abandoned their properties and migrated to North Ossetia. The residences of the village of Koreti were also preparing for migration.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Wakizaka, "Gürcistan Osetlerinde," 643.

¹⁸⁰ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia," 12.

¹⁸¹ Kaloyev, *Osetiny Vostochnoy Osetii*, 106-107.

¹⁸² Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 153.

On the other hand, Ossetian language, culture, and identity are preserved very well in the Ossetian villages in Lagodekhi.¹⁸³ More than 80 percent of the population of these villages is generally Ossetian and both elders and youth use the Ossetian language in communication in these villages. Most of the family names of Ossetians in these villages end with “-ov/-ova/-ty” and especially in Areshperani and Pona, there are no Ossetians whose family names were registered like those of Georgians.

One of the reasons for this situation is the fact that these villages are far from cities and that the opportunities for using the Ossetian language are comparatively plentiful. The villages of Areshperani, Zemo-Bolkvi (Vallag Chysan), Pona, Dona, Kvemo Khechili (Dallag Khechyl) ve Zemo Khechili (Vallag Khechyl) are far from large cities like Tbilisi and they are not near even to the centrum of Lagodekhi. The means of transportation to these villages are also limited. Thus, the control of the central government over these villages is weaker and the pressure of Georgianization by the Georgian government was less than in Shida-Kartli. Such a condition of these villages contributed to the well-preservation of the Ossetian culture and identity.

Not only the existence of the lessons of Ossetian language in schools in Pona and Areshperani but also the close relations between these villages and North and South Ossetia caused the Ossetian identity in Lagodekhi to be well-preserved. In fact, the number of those who graduated from universities in North and South Ossetia is large.¹⁸⁴ In fact, according to Boris Kaloyev, 31 people of those who graduated from the school in Areshperani went to colleges in North and South Ossetia in 1960. Especially, four colleges in Vladikavkaz allocated a large amount of quota for Ossetian students from Kakheti. Furthermore, many Ossetian students from Kakheti

¹⁸³ Especially, This situation is observed evidently in the villages of Areshperani, Zemo Bolkvi (in Ossetian: Wallag Chysan), Pona, Dona, Kvemo Khechili (in Ossetian: Dallag Khechyl) and Zemo Kheçili (in Ossetian: Wallag Khechyl). Sordia, “Ossetians in Georgia,” 12.

¹⁸⁴ Author’s interview with Eliko on 3 November 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

studied in Tskhinvali Pedagogy Institute (now University).¹⁸⁵ This tendency continued by the beginning of the 2000s.

Furthermore, a cultural center with cinema and library was built in Areshperani in this era with the initiative of the Ossetian intellectuals. This library had 2,634 books: 2493 books in Georgian, 101 books in Ossetian and 40 books in Russian, many of which were sent from South Ossetia. In this cultural center not only were Soviet and foreign films shown but also reports and lectures over many kinds of themes were given and the programs of the chorus, dance, and drama, especially Ossetian dramas were organized.¹⁸⁶ These intensive cultural works and intellectuals' efforts which have continued since the Soviet era also contributed to the well-preservation of the Ossetian culture and identity in these villages by today.

Besides, it is also very important that Lagodekhi region is seen like a "cultural center" for Ossetians in Georgia, especially in Kakheti.¹⁸⁷ In 1959, the statue of Kosta Khetagurov, the Ossetian national poet, was erected in the village of Areshperani with the initiative of local intellectuals (but this statue was exploded in the early 1990s).¹⁸⁸ In 1956, Kostaoba Festival, which celebrates the anniversary of the Ossetian national poet Kosta Khetagurov's birth, began to be organized on every October as an annual program in order to make close relations with local people and Communist Party and continued by the 1990s as an official festival.¹⁸⁹ In this festival, many kinds of activities such as reading poems, singing, dances, concerts,

¹⁸⁵ Kaloyev, *Osetiny Vostochnoy Osetii*, 108.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 101-102.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁸⁹ Author's interview with Gia on 18 October 2017 in Tbilisi.

horseracing, and sports activities are realized and Ossetians from all over Georgia, especially from Kakheti visit here.¹⁹⁰ In the Soviet era, Kostaoba Festival was organized also in the Argokhi village in Akhmeta as well as in Areshperani. Due to this situation, Ossetians' cultural circumstance in this region is comparatively comfortable and their ethnic identity is preserved at a high level.¹⁹¹

But in spite of these conditions, the population of Ossetian villages in Lagodekhi is also decreasing quickly because of migration to cities and foreign states. Under this condition, the majority of Ossetians in Georgia is afraid of losing Ossetian culture and identity and demand special measures in order to preserve Ossetian language and culture.

However, after Mikhail Saakashvili became the President of Georgia in 2003 the socio-cultural rights of Ossetians in Georgia began to improve.

In 2004 the non-governmental organization "Caucasian Mosaic", which conducted many social, humanitarian, educational and cultural projects especially for Ossetian communities since 1990,¹⁹² prepared the project of reconstruction of Kosta Khetagurov's statue which was exploded in the early 1990s. The "Open Society-Georgia" Foundation supported this project and the statue of Kosta Khetagurov sculptured by Merab Gagloyty was reopened in October 2005.¹⁹³ At the same time, Kostaoba Festival also began as an official annual program again with the support of

¹⁹⁰ Kaloyev, *Osetiny Vostochnoy Osetii*, 109.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹² "About Us", *Caucasian Mosaic*, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://caucasianmosaic.com/index.php?action=1&id=1&lang=eng>.

¹⁹³ "Kosta Khetagurov-Monument Restoration", *Caucasian Mosaic*, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://caucasianmosaic.com/index.php?action=1&id=3&lang=eng>.

the Georgian government. In the same way, his bust was erected also in Tbilisi in 2007.¹⁹⁴



Photograph 1: Kosta Khetagrov’s Statue after it was Exploded at the Beginning of the 1990s¹⁹⁵

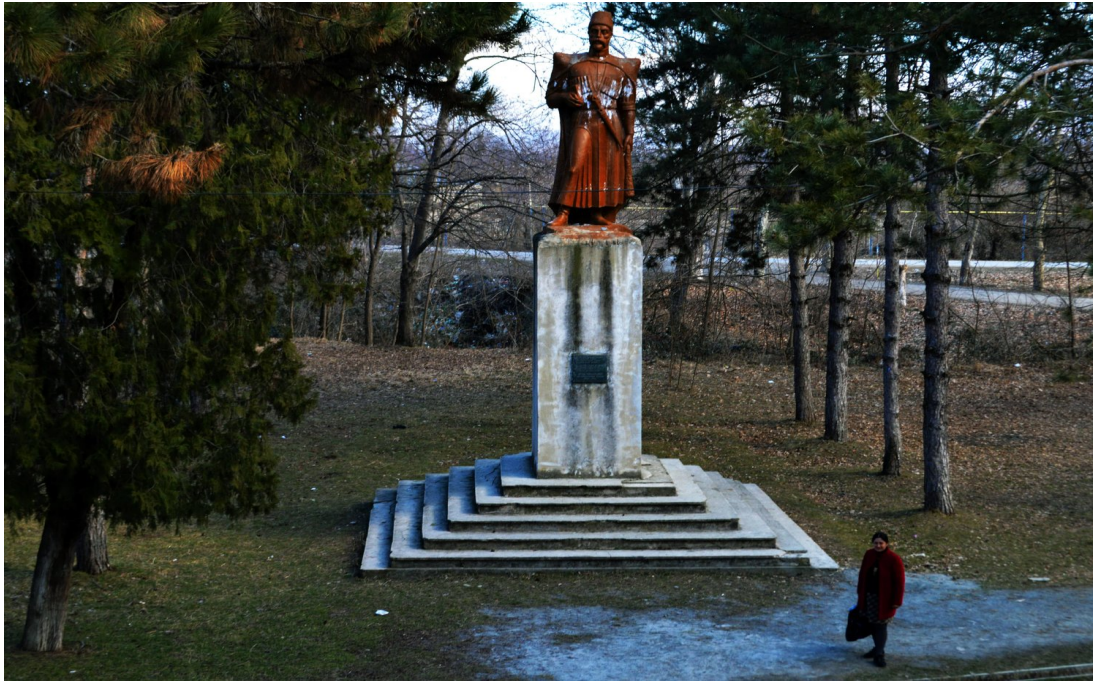


Photograph 2: The Opening Ceremony of Kosta Khetagrov’s Statue on October 2005¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ *Cultural Route of the Ossetian Minority in Georgia*, (Strasbourg: The Council of Europe, 2017), 12.

¹⁹⁵ “Kosta Khetagurov-Monument Restoration”.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*



Photograph 3: Kosta Khetagrov's Statue in Areshperani Today¹⁹⁷

When we analyze the situation of Ossetian language, education in this language was restarted as an elective lesson again in schools of Areshperani and Pona and Tbilisi 11th Public School. These schools changed from Ossetian-Russian school to Ossetian-Georgian school in 2005. In the new curriculum, Ossetian language classes are given for 2 hours a week.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, Ossetian Sunday school was opened in the Tbilisi 11th Public School in 2007-2008 with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science. In this era, the members of the non-governmental organization “the Caucasian Mosaic” were involved in giving lessons. At the same time, many Ossetian books were published with the initiative of Caucasian Mosaic and the support of “the Open Society Georgia”.¹⁹⁹ As for Georgian media, the Public

¹⁹⁷ Thoma Sukhashvili, “Georgia’s Last Ossetian Classes”, *Chai Khana*, accessed on November 23, 2017, <https://chai-khana.org/en/last-ossetian-classes>.

¹⁹⁸ Author’s interview with Gia on 18 October 2017 in Tbilisi.

¹⁹⁹ For example, cf. “Anthologies”, *Caucasian Mosaic*, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://caucasianmosaic.com/index.php?action=1&id=6&lang=eng>.

Broadcaster of Georgia has been broadcasting the information program “Moambe” also in the Ossetian language since 2004.²⁰⁰ Here scenes are being prepared about famous people, about Ossetian traditions, which have been preserved by those living in Georgia. Priority topics are those that reflect the Georgian-Ossetian relations.



Photograph 4: Mikhail Saakashvili in the Ossetian Sunday School in Tbilisi²⁰¹

Despite the fact that lessons in Ossetian language and Ossetian Sunday Schools were closed again as well as Russian schools in 2011 due to the effect of the Russo-Georgian War and decline in the cultural rights of Ossetians, Ossetians in Georgia continued to make efforts for the cooperation of the Ossetian non-governmental organizations and developing Ossetians’ socio-cultural rights. In 2014, Georgia’s Ossetian Association, Caucasian Mosaic and Georgian Lawyers’ Association established “Ossetian Forum” together and Ossetians in Georgia could focus on the problems of Ossetians’ political and socio-cultural rights with a more effective and efficient approach. Tengiz Gagloyty, the head of Georgia’s Ossetian Association also notes that the cooperation with the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia will contribute to the resolution of Ossetians’ problems related to the Ossetian-Georgian

²⁰⁰ Stephen F. Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 309.

²⁰¹ “Ossetian Sunday School”.

relations and Ossetian culture and evaluates their future positively.²⁰² Besides, this development was announced by the Administration of South Ossetia, which has started to be interested in the rights of the Ossetians in Georgia.

South Ossetian administration also began to support the Ossetian communities in Georgia in terms of education. It opened Ossetian unofficial courses held 2-3 times a week in some schools in Tserovani, Gori, Tbilisi and, Nigoza, where the residents are mainly ethnic Ossetians and teachers coming mainly from the Tskhinvali region. Furthermore, this administration met with Giorgi Margvelashvili when he was the Minister of Education and Science so that Ossetian lessons would be included in the National Curriculum and taught as a subject.²⁰³

The establishment of Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center inside Tbilisi State University in 2015 contributed to the development of the cooperation between the Ossetian society and the Georgian state and society to an important degree. This research center was opened on the basis of the memorandum signed between the Georgian government and the Tbilisi State University²⁰⁴ and enabled people to approach to Ossetian-Georgian relations and problems of Ossetians more scientifically. Besides, Ossetians' cooperation with Georgian state and society and international actors such as EU and UN for developing their identity became easier.

In fact, this research center published Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Georgian dictionary, a project that has been continuing since 2011 with the financial support of

²⁰² “‘Osuri Forumi’: Osebis Problemebis Mogvarebis Realuri Nabijebi [the Ossetian Forum: The Real Steps for the Solution of Ossetians’ Problems]”, *Samkhuret Osetis Administratsia*, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://soa.gov.ge/geo/osuri-forumi---osebis-problemebis-mogvarebis-realuri-nabijebi-2781/>.

²⁰³ “‘Isini Sts’avloben Osurs... Imedi Makvs, Rom Dabrundebian Sakhlsishi...[They are Learning Ossetian... I Hope that They Return Home...]”, *Samkhuret Osetis Administratsia*, accessed July 3, 2013, <http://soa.gov.ge/geo/administration-of-south-ossetia-80/>.

²⁰⁴ “Chven Shesakheb [About Us]”, *Kartul-Osur Urtiertobata Sametsniro-Kvleviti Tsentri*, accessed December 12, 2015, <http://gorc.tsu.ge/?lng=ge&cat=oRwr6d&tid=43>.

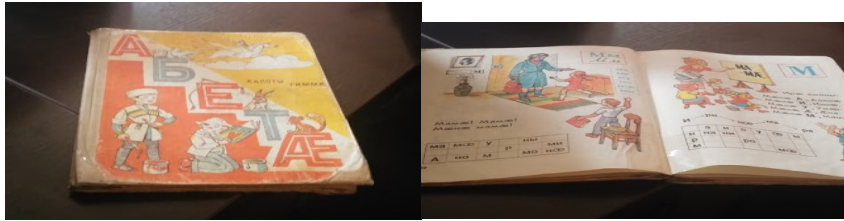
EU and UN. The institute issued Ossetian phrasebook and the textbook of Ossetian Grammar in 2017.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, the institute and the Administration of South Ossetia take part in the organization of Kostaoba festival. The Lagodekhi Municipality and the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection also organize the celebration of Ossetian language day in Shida-Kartli together. In 2017, the Ossetian section in the form of an Ossetian traditional house has been opened in the ethnographical museum in Tbilisi.²⁰⁶

Further progress was seen also in the area of education. Although Ossetian Sunday school in Tbilisi has not been reopened yet and Ossetian programs of Georgian Channel 1 continues only on internet, Ossetian language lessons are newly opened in the schools of Tsitelubani in Gori region, Nigoza in Kaspi region and Tsitsikaantseri in Kvareli region as well as Areshperani and Pona with the support of the Council of Europe in 2015 when the Ministry of Education and Science developed standards for teaching Ossetian language.²⁰⁷ Today, the Ossetian language is taught as a compulsory lesson for 2 hours a week in all grades of these schools. Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center also developed a training course and invited teachers of the Ossetian language who graduated from university in Tskhinvali in order to train teachers and experts of Ossetian language. In this way, the socio-cultural rights of Ossetians in Georgia are continuing to develop albeit slowly and the situation of their identity entered a new phase. But as for materials, still textbooks published in Vladikavkaz in the 1990s are used and there are difficulties in terms of renewing textbooks.

²⁰⁵ “The History of the Project”, *Caucasian Mosaic*, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://caucasianmosaic.com/index.php?action=1&id=13&lang=eng>.

²⁰⁶ *Cultural Route of the Ossetian Minority in Georgia*, p.13.

²⁰⁷ *Iron Aevzaeg Akhwyr Kaenyn aemae Iron Aevzaegyl NykhasKaenyn Gwyrdzystony*[Learning Ossetian and Speaking Ossetian in Georgia] (Strasbourg: The Council of Europe, 2016), 18.



Photographs 5-6: The Textbook of the Ossetian Language Used in Areshperani, Lagodekhi²⁰⁸

3-2. Chechen-Kists

3-2-1. The Formation of the Chechen-Kist Communities in Georgia

Like the Ossetian communities in Georgia, Vainakhs (Chechens, Ingushes, Kists and Bats people) had close relations with Georgians too. According to Kartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia) and works of the Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli in the 11th century, these relations began before Christ. In these sources, Vainakhs are called “Nachkhs”, “Ghlighvs”, “Dzurdzuks” and “Durdzuks”. At the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., Parnavaz, the king of Iberia, married a woman from a Vainakh tribe in order to get support from the Highlanders.²⁰⁹ They fought alongside the Georgian kings for centuries. Vainakhs loved Queen Tamar and named their daughters, bridges and other constructions after her. In this way, high-level interaction and fusion among Vainakhs, Georgians and other many highlander tribes existed in history.²¹⁰ In the process of Vainakhs’ settlement in Georgia, they were assimilated into Georgian society. In fact, there are tribes who insist that their origins are based on Chechnya and Ingushetia among Tushs, Khevsurs, Pshavs and Georgians in Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti. Some tribes in Chechnya and Ingushetia insist that they are Georgian-origin and that they emigrated to Chechnya

²⁰⁸ Taken by author on November 3rd, 2016 in the Aresperani village, Lagodekhi.

²⁰⁹ “Multiethnic Georgia: Kists”, *Georgian Public Broadcasting*, accessed July 30, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23jG30YFEvE>.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

and Ingushetia afterward.²¹¹ This situation shows that the peoples of this region were in high-level interaction and that Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge have a heterogeneous ethnic structure.

Furthermore, Vakhushti Bagrationi, a Georgian geographer and historian (1696-1770) explains the following about the situation of inhabitants of Tusheti and Pirikiti-Alazani Valley in the 18th century: “People living in Kisti and Gligvi generally speak their mother languages. The situation of both languages and religious beliefs of the peoples in Palsama Valley is mixed.”²¹² In the northern part of Tusheti Chechen, Ingush and Georgian languages were used and Chechen-Ingush language was spoken on the other side. We cannot understand from this article whether Tushes in Pirikiti-Alazani were Chechen-Ingushized or Chechen-Ingushs lived there. But it is clear that Kists lived in the southern part of Chechnya-Ingushetya next to Georgian border in the 18th century. According to Vahuşti Bagrationi’s list of toponyms, even in Pankisi two of the 19 villages had names of Kist-origin. Therefore it is probable that Kists lived in Tusheti, north of this area.

Ali Asker also argues that ethnic diversity in Chechen-Kist society does not cause a differentiation of identity and that common culture enables different ethnic groups to be united in his fieldworks in 2016. In fact, there are tribes which do not belong to any *tukhums* (unions of tribes of Chechens) in Pankisi and it is said that these tribes were Chechen-Kistized as a result of interaction and fusion. For example, a Chechen-Kist living in the village Duisi referred to both ethnic and religious dimensions of Kist identity and the importance of Islam in Chechen-Kist identity in an interview with Ali Asker in April 2016:²¹³

²¹¹ Ibragim Aliroyev and Leila Margoshvili, *Kistiny* [Kists] (Moscow: Kniga i Biznes, 2006), 6-7.

²¹² Shavkhelishvili, *Iz Istorii Gortsev Iz Istorii Gortsev*, 136-168.

²¹³ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, “Pankisi Vadisi’nde,” 348.

Originally, our family is not ethnically Chechen. We are Daghestan-origin and Avar. However, we can say that we were Chechen-Kistized in this community in the course of time. Personally, ethnic belonging is not very important for us. Important thing is to accept Islam, which is dominant in this society.

Another Chechen-Kist with whom Ali Asker conducted an interview explained the following about an opinion about Kist-Chechens' ethnic origin and identity:²¹⁴

Even though Kists are defined as a sub-ethnos of Chechen people, this group includes also Ingushs. We are originally the same people, but a different sub-identity was formed because of the geographical and demographic conditions in the historical process. 'Kist' is a different identity and Chechenness (Vainakhness) and Muslimness are included in this structure.

It can be said that Kists are a part of Vainakhs, but Vainakh people themselves include those whose origins are other ethnicities and the element which unites these people is Islam. At the same time, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were affected by the Georgian society due to geographical location and historical process and many different cultural features were added in the social and religious life.

Besides, it is necessary for us to refer to another element which caused ethnic diversity among Vainakh peoples. There is a system to adopt those who belong to other tribes among highlanders in the Caucasus. In order to be adopted by a tribe, one has to sacrifice a cow/bull and organize a banquet with a tribe whom he is going to be adopted. While there is discrimination to newcomers in Tusheti and highland of Chechnya, this kind of discrimination does not exist in Chechen-Kist society in Pankisi.²¹⁵ That is to say, there is a traditional system which integrates not only peoples of non-Vainakh origin but also Chechen refugees who came after the 1990s to local Chechen-Kist society.²¹⁶ Therefore, Chechen refugees, as well as many tribes

²¹⁴ Ibid., 348-349.

²¹⁵ Margoshvili, *Kul'turno-Etnicheskie*, 65.

²¹⁶ Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 150.

of non-Vainakh origin chose to settle in Pankisi instead of Tusheti, near their homelands and the ethnic structure of Chechen-Kist society in Pankisi became more complex.

It is known that Chechen-Kists' large-scale migration to Pankisi happened in the middle of the 19th century. After the beginning of the *Imamat* movement under Imam Shamil's leadership, 310 Chechen-Kist families from Chechnya-Ingushetia settled in Georgia in 1831. But it is registered that 155 families (775 persons) are Georgians.²¹⁷ We can understand that remaining of these 310 families are Chechen-Kists. Today, there are 32 families who immigrated in this era such as 3 families in the village of Sagirta and 4 families in the village Indurta. In all villages in Pirikiti, families of Chechen-origin such as Kukalaani, Dadiani, Bekhiaani, Bordjikiani, and Kelekhiani exist.²¹⁸

The first registered Chechen-Kist migrant group in Pankisi was those who came there under Dui's leadership. Dui was Imam Shamil's regent. But due to the conflict with Imam Shamil, he migrated to Georgia under Russian domination with those who belonged to Dzumoso tribe. Afterward, he established Duisi village (in Chechen: Duy-Yurt) in 1826. Furthermore, Jokola, who is from Maistoy tribe ran away from Imam Shamil's oppression and from financial difficulty in 1850s and migrated to Tianeti, located in the West of Pankisi. Later, he settled in Pankisi and established the Joqolo village (in Chechen: Joqal-Yurt).²¹⁹ After that, Omalo (in Chechen: Wamal), Birikiani (in Chechen: Birken), Dzibakhevi (in Chechen: Dzibaq) and Khalatsani (in Chechen: Khalatsan) were established. Chechen-Kists' migration

²¹⁷ Shavkhelishvili, *Iz Istorii Gortsev*, 166.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

²¹⁹ Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 150.

to Georgia appeared to be profitable also for Georgia because Chechen-Kists created a zone which protected Georgians from Lezgins.²²⁰

The facts of this migration can be learnt from the official documents of local authorities and oral histories narrated to the villagers. For example, they know that Gaurgashvili family in Duisi village is from Galashuki village in Ingushetia and have a common origin with the Gaurgiyevev family there. The ancestors of Khanukashvili family in Duisi village came from the Gezahoy village near Itum-Kale in Chechnya to Duisi, having passed through Tebelosmta.²²¹ As we see here, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi also know about the history of their families and tribes like their cognates in Chechnya-Ingushetia.²²² In Pankisi, Chechen tribes such as Khildeharoy, Hacharoy, Terloy, Maistoy, Nashkhoy, Akkiy, and Chinahoy exist and there are tribes of Ingush-origin in Pankisi such as Vyappi, Jerahoy, Galashki, and Ereti.²²³

Chechen-Kists who are from the same tribe settled in the same quarters (in Chechen: kup, in Georgian: ubani) together in the villages of Pankisi. They kept their previous lifestyle and traditions and lived compactly. Their tradition of living in the form of the extended family was preserved to a certain extent in spite of the geographical conditions.²²⁴

On the other hand, after Chechen-Kists settled in Pankisi, most of the Chechen-Kists quickly began to be integrated into the Georgian society and their family names also began to be Georgianized. Examples include Margoshvili, Tsatiashvili,

²²⁰ “Multiethnic Georgia: Kists”.

²²¹ Kitagawa, “Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino,” 150.

²²² Ibid., 150.

²²³ Ibid., 150-151.

²²⁴ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge*, 14-16.

Khangoshvili, Pareulidze, Bekauri and so on.²²⁵ Furthermore, the first school was founded in Joqolo, known as the School of Agriculture in 1891 in order to educate the local people. At that time, the students were educated in Georgian.²²⁶

In the Soviet era, schools were opened in almost all of the Chechen-Kist villages in Pankisi as well as that in Joqolo: one was opened in Duisi in 1922 and two others were opened in Omalo in 1928 and in Khorajo in 1938.²²⁷ In this way, the circumstance of education in Pankisi and the education level of local people improved. Furthermore, the lessons in Chechen language were given in the school in Duisi by 1944.²²⁸

However, when Chechens-Ingushs in the North Caucasus were exiled to Central Asia by Stalin, the circumstance of Pankisi changed to an important degree. In this process, the exile of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi Gorge was planned too, but the Georgian Communist government opposed to this plan and most of their family names were Georgianized.²²⁹ Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were regarded as a different group from the Chechen-Ingushs and their exile was prevented.²³⁰ After this year, the

²²⁵ Sanikidze, "Islamic Resurgence," 266.

²²⁶ "Joqolos Sajaro Skola [Joqolo Public School]", *Pankisi.ge*, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://pankisi.ge/%E1%83%AF%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A7%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%AF%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90/>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ali Asker and Alter Kahraman, "Gürcistan'da Devletleşme, Kimlik İnşası ve Müslüman Topluluklar [The Nationalization, Identity Building and Muslim Communities in Georgia]", in *Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir (Ankara: AVİM, 2016), 41.

²³⁰ Ibid., 41.

lessons in Chechen language in the school of Duisi village were abolished and all the lessons in the schools of Pankisi Gorge were given only in Georgian.

After 1970, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi began to go to Chechnya-Ingushetia for work and education, due to the economic situation of this area. Furthermore, marriages between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechen-Ingushs in the North Caucasus also became common. In this process, interactions between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechen-Ingushs in the “homeland” increased and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi began to recognize Chechen-Ingushs as the same group.²³¹ In the late Soviet era, the lesson of Chechen language began again in the school in Duisi with the initiative of the local intellectuals, but it was abolished when the Soviet Union was disintegrated in 1992.²³²

3-2-2. Islam in Pankisi by the Soviet Era

Before Vainakh people accepted Islam, most of them were pagan. Although Islam began to spread among them in the Middle Ages, it became dominant over all Vainakh people in the 19th century. Georgian Orthodox Church made efforts to spread Christianity and Georgian culture among Vainakh people since the Middle Ages. Therefore the dense influence of Christianity in their practices, culture, and language, and close ties observed between Georgians and Vainakh people in the 16th and 17th centuries.²³³ In Catherine the Second’s era, the government of the Russian Empire began to support financially and politically the efforts so that the Highlanders in the North Caucasus would be Christianized.²³⁴

²³¹ Tsulaia, “To be Kist”, 128.

²³² Author’s interview with Khaso on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

²³³ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge*, 26; Sanikidze, “Islamic Resurgence,” 266.

²³⁴ Sanikidze, “Islamic Resurgence,” 266-267.

Even after Chechen-Kists became Muslim, those in Pankisi were pressured by the Russian authorities and Georgian Orthodox Church to adopt Christianity in the 19th century.²³⁵ As a result of this pressure, many of the villagers of Joqolo and Omalo had converted to Christianity by 1866.²³⁶ Christian Kist-Chechens merged with the Christian Georgian society and Chechen-Kist society in Pankisi was divided into two.²³⁷ Owing to this situation, the influence of Islam was less prevalent in Pankisi Gorge than in Chechen-Ingush society in the North Caucasus by 1990s.²³⁸ Christian Kists in Pankisi generally define themselves Georgians like Tushetians and many of them were assimilated by Georgian society.



Photograph7: The Old Church in Joqolo²³⁹

In spite of this circumstance, the efforts for the revival of Islamic faith were also made in this era. For example, in 1891 the construction of the first mosque in Pankisi

²³⁵ Ibid., 267.

²³⁶ Ibid., 267.

²³⁷ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, “Pankisi Vadisi’nde,” 352.

²³⁸ Sanikidze, “Islamic Resurgence,” 267

²³⁹ Taken by author on August 28th, 2017 in the Joqolo village.

was planned in Duisi. Despite the rejection of local Muslim Kist-Chechens' project of building a mosque by the Russian imperial government in 1902, Abdullah Bakanoglu, an *imam* in Balakan got a permit from the mufti of the South Caucasus in Tbilisi. At last, the mosque was built with I. Kistishvili's support in 1905.²⁴⁰ This mosque was closed after the Soviet Union was established, and it was not opened again until 1969. Nevertheless, Islamic faith was preserved soundly among Chechen-Kists in the Soviet era and most of the Chechen-Kists in Pankisi reconverted to Islam by 1970s.²⁴¹

The element which contributed to the preservation of Muslim Chechen-Kist identity despite the pressure of the Russian Empire and Georgian Orthodox Church is *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri* Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqats*) similar to the Chechen-Ingushs in the North Caucasus. The *Naqshbandi tariqat* arrived in Pankisi when Isa Efendi, a *sheikh* of the *Naqshbandi tariqat* from Azerbaijan settled in 1909. He established a religious community in Duisi and made efforts to convince local people to join his *tariqat*.²⁴² Even after Isa Efendi died in 1920, disciples continued to gather in the house, where he had lived, every Friday.²⁴³

On the other hand, the *Qadiri tariqat* in Pankisi is under the strong influence of Sheikh Kunta Hajji from Chechnya. He moved to Pankisi due to Imam Shamil's forbidding of the rituals of the *Qadiri tariqat* such as dances and *zikh*.²⁴⁴ In 1927, Machig Machalikshvili, who was a *sheikh* of the *Qadiri tariqat* from Duisi and a

²⁴⁰ Margoshvili, *Kul'turno-Etnicheskie*, 15.

²⁴¹ Sanikidze, "Islamic Resurgence," 268-269.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

²⁴³ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge*, 29.

²⁴⁴ Sanikidze, "Islamic Resurgence," 272.

disciple of Kunta Hajji, returned from Ingushetia and established the basis of the *Qadiri tariqat* in Pankisi.²⁴⁵ Besides, Adu, a Chechen *sheykh* of the *Qadiri tariqat* opened a new branch of this *tariqat* in 1928. He used a drum in the rituals and male disciples began to grow a beard and wear a white cap. After Adu went back to Chechnya Imam Kerim Duishvili became the *sheikh* of the *tariqat* and continued rituals in Adu's house every Sunday. In 1969, the mosque in Duisi reopened and rituals came to be done also there. The old mosque in Duisi is now controlled by Kunta Hajji's *Qadiri tariqat*. After the 1960s, the branches of the Sufi *tariqats* were established in Omalo, Birikiani and Joqolo as well as Duisi and not only elders but also the young began to participate in this *tariqat*.²⁴⁶

Furthermore, in the system of Sufism among Chechen-Kists, unlike Islam in the Middle East in which mosques are necessary for worships and rituals, Muslims in Pankisi were able to continue religious activities in houses in villages even without mosques. The pressures by the Tsarist Russian and the Soviet administration did not affect their faith very much and their faith and ethnic-tribal unity have been preserved in the circumstance where rulers had difficulty to control.²⁴⁷

Like the other highlanders of the North Caucasus, Chechen-Kists' religious practices adopted elements from Christianity as well as pagan beliefs. *Nakshbandi* and *Qadiri tariqats* in Pankisi also developed quite differently from those of the other areas. In addition, the system of *Sharia* (Islamic law) in Pankisi is affected also by the customary law of Highlanders (*adat*) and ethnic traditions (*Nokhchalla*) and they are often superior to *Sharia*.²⁴⁸ Thus, the differences between the two Sufi *tariqats* have

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 272.

²⁴⁶ Margoshvili, *Kul'turno-Etnicheskie*, 231-239.

²⁴⁷ Sakai Tanaka, "Shinno Shuu-jin: Makenai Chechen-Jin [The Genuine Prisoners: Chechens, who not Surrender]", *Tanaka Sakaino Kokusai Nyuusu Kaisetsu*, accessed January 13, 2000, <http://tanakanews.com/a0113chechen.htm>.

²⁴⁸ Sanikidze, "Islamic Resurgence," 273.

not created problems and disputes in Pankisi's Muslim society. Almost all Chechen-Kists define themselves as Muslim. However, many of them were not able to learn Islamic teachings sufficiently because of the Soviet pressure over religion and Islamic faith and Sufism continued in the underground in the Soviet era. Therefore, many Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were secularized to an important degree and were not interested in Islamic religious life very much. For example, many would drink alcohol, marry Christians, give Christian names to their children and such until the revival of Islam in the post-Soviet era.²⁴⁹



Photograph 8: The Sufi Mosque in Duisi²⁵⁰

3-2-3. Chechen-Kist Communities in Georgia in the Post-Soviet Era

While Chechen-Kists in Georgia are Muslims unlike Georgians, they use the Georgian language as a lingua franca in their daily life. Besides, their socio-cultural structure was affected densely by the Georgian society/state. Therefore Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia were integrated to Georgian society at a high level and there are comparatively good relations between Chechen-Kists and Georgian society/state.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 273-274.

²⁵⁰ Tinatin Jvania and Giorgi Kupatadze, "Keeping Islamic State Out of Georgia", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, accessed June 22, 2015, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/keeping-islamic-state-out-georgia>.

Moreover, due to the influence of Paganism and Christianity and atheist policies of the Soviet Union, the difference between Chechen-Kists and Georgians reduced in spite of the efforts of the Sufi *tariqats*.

However, the socio-cultural, religious and political situation of Pankisi has dramatically changed since the time Georgia began to strengthen relations with the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria after the first Chechen War, especially after 1999. From 1996 to 2001, 4 mosques were newly built in Pankisi. The biggest one of them is the mosque made of bricks, which is located by the Duisi Public School.²⁵¹

At the same time, Arabic language schools and upper-level educational institutions existed in every village in Pankisi today. Since the 1990s, many students came to choose studying in universities in foreign countries, especially Arab countries due to the activities of these schools and non-governmental organizations.²⁵² On the other hand, some families are against education in Arabic and want these schools and institutes to be under the control of the Georgian government.²⁵³ After the September 11 attacks, the bank account of Benevolence International Foundation was frozen because it is thought to be related to al-Qaeda. The branch of this foundation existed in Duisi by 2001.²⁵⁴ It was thought that the money spent on the supports in order to build mosques and schools and educate students in foreign countries was provided by this foundation directly or indirectly. Especially, according to the information of the embassies of the European states, many Salafist Arabs were seen in Pankisi between 1999 and 2000.²⁵⁵ These Arab radical Islamic organizations defined local Islam-

²⁵¹ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge*, 34.

²⁵² Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 152.

²⁵³ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge*, 34.

²⁵⁴ Kitagawa, "Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino," 152.

²⁵⁵ Ian Traynor, "Georgia: US Opens New Front in War on Terror", *The Guardian*, accessed March 20, 2002, http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0%2c38%2c4377612_10368%2c200.html.

Sufism as polytheism and attacked it harshly. Salafists argue that they apply “real Islam” and criticize non-Islamic traditions. Because of these efforts, Salafism rapidly spread in Pankisi Gorge.



Photograph 9: The New Mosque in Duisi²⁵⁶

It is right that the spread of Salafism in Pankisi is attributed to a large-scale influx of refugees, Chechen militants, and foreign jihadists into this region during the Second Chechen War.²⁵⁷ But this trend, which included the establishment of a Sharia court in the Duisi village in spite of local opposition,²⁵⁸ can be comprehended also as a movement against the insecurity and crimes due to serious chaos in Pankisi in this era.²⁵⁹ According to Timur Tsadzikidze, who was an administrative officer of Pankisi sent by the Georgian government, the number of Salafists in Pankisi was about 500, that is, 5-10 percent of the local population in this period.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Taken by author on August 31st, 2017 in the Duisi village.

²⁵⁷ Even between 1996-1999, some local Chechen-Kist youth went to the Arab states in order to study Islam.

²⁵⁸ Kurtsikidze and Chikovani, *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge*, 40.

²⁵⁹ Kitagawa, “Gurujia Pankisi-Keikoumondaino,” 153.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

Although American-Georgian joint operation since 2002 resolved the problem of militants and chaos in Pankisi, Salafism has grown over the past 10 years to an important degree and has spread especially among the youth in Pankisi.

Salafi ideology was widely accepted by the young men who are unemployed, do not have enough opportunities and are dissatisfied with the current situation. The economic condition of Pankisi is very bad and almost all the youth are unemployed.²⁶¹ While local people used to go to Grozny in Chechnya for work before, it has already been impossible because Georgian-Chechen border is closed today. Therefore socio-economic condition worsened in Pankisi and many people are dissatisfied with this situation.²⁶² Those who accepted Salafism continue to increase in Pankisi and it is estimated that 60-80 percent of the youth in Pankisi has become Salafists by 2011 according to local observers.²⁶³ A local expert emphasizes that all of the population in Pankisi will become Salafists in 15 years unless the situation changes.²⁶⁴ We can see the change of the balance of power between Sufi groups and Salafi groups from the situation of mosques in Pankisi. For example, a local traditional place for prayer in Birikiani village in Pankisi was removed by Salafists on July 2010²⁶⁵ and a Salafi mosque was built instead.²⁶⁶ Also in other villages such as Joqolo and Omalo, new Salafi mosques were built.

²⁶¹Conor Prasad, "Georgia's Muslim Community: A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?", *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 58 (2012), 12.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶³ On the other hand, according to an ethnic-Kist government official, this figure is closer to 50%. *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶⁵ "Chechen Wahhabis Destroyed Prayer House in Pankisi Gorge", *Interfax Religion*, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://www.interfaxreligion.com/?act=news&div=7488>.

Besides, the large educational and economic gap between Salafi groups and Sufi groups is also an important reason for the rise of Salafists. Generally, there are also small *madrasahs* attached to Salafi mosques in Pankisi. Many children study Qur'an and Arabic there and these lessons are given in the evening. Many young Chechen-Kists continue their education mainly in religious institutes in Arab countries and the institutions in these countries provide scholarships, education, and accommodation for free.²⁶⁷ Therefore, imams of Salafi mosques have a good command of Arabic and dense knowledge about the doctrine of Islam. They give concrete information over Islamic life, ethics and how to understand Qur'an. That is, concrete education exists in Salafi mosques in Pankisi.

On the other hand, when we focus on Sufi groups in Pankisi, they do not get financial support from any other countries though having relations with the Georgian Muslim Administration. So they have financial difficulties in managing their groups. As for their mosques, they reflect the enclosed structure of Sufi *tariqats*, which have existed since the Soviet era. Generally, their mosques have existed by today to preserve their faith and Sufi groups have made keeping their faith through Sufi rituals more important than educating people about Islam inside mosques. Therefore there is no equipment or religious textbook for education and religious education is generally given in places such as *imams'* houses.²⁶⁸ Sufi *imams* in Pankisi generally graduated from the universities during the Soviet era and they are at a disadvantageous position against the Salafist *imams* who studied in Arabic countries in terms of Arabic and religious knowledge. When I took part in the Friday prayer in a Sufi mosque in Joqolo village in 2017, participants only read part of Qur'an for prayer before the Friday prayer and concrete information over Islamic life, ethics,

²⁶⁶ "Prayer House Destroyed in Pankissi Gorge, Residents Assert", *Caucasian Knot*, accessed July 21, 2011, <http://dagestan.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/13901/>.

²⁶⁷ Prasad, "Georgia's Muslim Community," 13.

²⁶⁸ Author's interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

and interpretation of Qur'an were not explained. In this way, many young people prefer to go to Salafi mosques.

As the number of Salafists has increased in recent years, tensions emerged between the Salafists and those who abide by the traditional North-Caucasian highlander forms of Islamic faith, that is, Sufism. Salafists generally do not welcome Chechen-Kists' traditional practices in Islam in Vainakh society while those who abide by Sufism regard Salafism as an alien, foreign system of belief. For example, while most of the people who pray in old Sufi mosques are elders, most of those who go to new Salafi mosques are the youth.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, Salafists sometimes denied to donate for elders and to sell them places for prayer. This situation shows the tension rising between Salafist groups and traditionalist Sufi groups in Pankisi.²⁷⁰ Sufi groups emphasize that Salafist deny Chechen-Kists' social rules and traditions and threaten their traditional family structure.²⁷¹

After the emergence and development of ISIL, some Chechen-Kists joined ISIL as foreign fighters and this situation raised anxiety not only among the Sufi groups but also most of the Salafists in Pankisi Gorge. But as ISIL lost its power and got out of the agenda, the number of those who joined ISIL has decreased and Chechen-Kist society no longer allows people to go to this "state" as foreign fighters.²⁷² While disagreement between Salafist groups and traditionalist Sufi groups continues at a

²⁶⁹ It is said that a large amount of financial support for this new mosque have come from an anonymous foreign individual. Prasad, "Georgia's Muslim Community," 12.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁷² Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 357-358.

certain level, relations between them were moderated to an important degree and both groups act in the framework of the Georgian law.²⁷³

This situation affected the demographic structure of the Pankisi Gorge dramatically. In 1989, while Chechen-Kists consisted 43 percent of the population in Pankisi, Georgians' ratio was 29 percent and Ossetians' ratio was 28 percent. However, the ratio of Chechen-Kists increased much because of the Chechen refugees' large-scale influx after the start of the Chechen Wars, Most of the population in Pankisi Gorge was Chechen-Kist population and the Chechen refugees regarded this region as a shelter due to their ethnic kinship. The increase in the number of the Vainakh people in this area caused the out-migration of the non-Vainakh population and the demographic structure of Pankisi has become nearly homogeneous.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, the rise and radicalization of Islam in Pankisi affected Chechen-Kists' identity to an important degree. Muslim Chechen-Kists in Pankisi came to define themselves as Chechen-Vainakh diaspora in Georgia rather than Kists as a different group from Chechen-Ingushes, despite the fact that they use Georgian as a lingua franca.²⁷⁵ At the same time, this tendency in Pankisi increased fear and created a negative image of Chechen-Kists among the Georgian society along with the participation of Chechens in the Georgian-Abkhazian War from 1992 to 1993.²⁷⁶ Tensions occurred between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and Chechen-Kist communities had been excluded from the Georgian political and economic life for a long time.

²⁷³ Author's interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Ali on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

²⁷⁴ Diana Tsurtskiridze, "Georgia's Pankisi Gorge", in *Region and Conflict: Radicalization on Violence in the Wider Black Sea Region*, eds. Chifu Iulian et. al. (Bucharest: Editura Ispri, 2012), 374.

²⁷⁵ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 357.

²⁷⁶ Tsulaia, "To be Kist", 142-143.

However, especially since the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgian government not only has increased its investment on the infrastructure of Pankisi but also has applied policies in order to strengthen the integration of minority groups. Georgian government has supported successful Chechen-Kist students to study in universities for free and allocated quotas for scholarship.²⁷⁷ As for policy towards Islam in Pankisi, the Agency of Religion began to pay the salary of 5 *imams* in Pankisi and support the repair and maintenance of mosques. It also plans to build madrasahs by Sufi mosques. At the same time, some Chechen-Kist youth began to receive religious education within the structure of the office of *mufti*.²⁷⁸ Besides, Georgian government granted Georgian citizenship to Chechen refugees who have remained in Pankisi on April 10th, 2009.²⁷⁹

Local Chechen-Kists in Pankisi also make efforts to change Pankisi's negative image and overcome the tension between Georgians and Chechen-Kists with the help of the European and American non-governmental organizations. In Akhmeta, Kakheti Regional Development Fund manages educational programs and gives lessons in English and computer basics. Furthermore, its "Women's Club" provides local women with vocational education and provide access to lawyers and psychologists. This fund supplies financial support also to those who want to do small-scale business such as managing a shop.²⁸⁰ A branch of the Roddy Scott Foundation exists

²⁷⁷ Aydıngün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 365.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 365.

²⁷⁹ "Gürcistan Çeçen Mültecilere Pasaport Veriyor", *Chveneburi.net*, accessed April 24, 2009, <http://www.chveneburri.net/tr/default.asp?bpgpid=1834&pg=1>.

²⁸⁰ Prasad, "Georgia's Muslim Community," 14.

in Duisi village and this foundation also gives English and computer classes in Pankisi likewise.²⁸¹



Photograph 10: Roddy Scott Foundation’s English Course in the Joqolo Village²⁸²

Chechen-Kists are actively making efforts for preventing the influence of Salafism from spreading in their society. For example, Leila Achishvili, an activist from the Joqolo Village, established a small culture and handicraft school for local children and youth with the support of Mtvarisa Joyce, a teacher of art from Tbilisi. In this school, about 140 children and youth are learning painting, ceramic and the other arts and crafts.²⁸³ Leila’s school provides many local children with rare chances for

²⁸¹ Roddy Scott was a British journalist who was killed in Ingushetia in 2002 during the Second Chechen war. He had been documenting the reality of the Russo-Chechen conflicts. He was killed while trying to enter Chechnya-Ingushetia from the Pankisi Gorge with guerilla fighters. The Roddy Scott Foundation was founded in 2008 by his parents. Cf. *The Roddy Scott Foundation*, accessed September 2, 2017, <https://roddyscottfoundation.org/home-page/>.

²⁸² Taken by author on September 3rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

²⁸³ According to Leila Achishvili, the number of children going to the school was decreasing because Wahhabi parents are against the drawing of living creatures. Prasad, “Georgia’s Muslim Community,” 14.

participation in vocational and social activities. It does not only teach useful skills for vocational life but also lets teachers show another dimension of life besides Salafism.

Furthermore, the efforts of encouraging agro-tourism also exist in Pankisi. For example, *Marsho Kavkaz* is a non-profit and non-governmental organization established under the leadership of Maqvala Margoshvili. It was registered with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia in 1999, manages projects for the development of agro-tourism.²⁸⁴ This organization aims at improving relations between Chechen-Kists and Georgians, promoting Pankisi and Chechen-Kist culture and overcoming poverty and difficulties as well as developing Chechen-Kist identity and preventing the youth from heading for Salafism, through developing farm tourism and interaction among people.²⁸⁵ It supports small-scale business such as managing guest-houses with Polish organizations and arranges accommodations for tourists at the same time. In fact, there are some guest-houses managed with the support of local and international organizations in Pankisi and some of them make use of their homepages and social network services in order to attract tourists. They are actively cooperating with each other so that public opinion inside and outside Georgia would know the reality of Pankisi and that this area would develop economically. Besides, Maqvala Margoshvili, the leader of this organization, founded the ethnic ensemble “Daimokhk” in 1996 and this ensemble has given many concerts both in and outside Georgia in order to promote Chechen-Kist culture and establish peace.²⁸⁶

Pankisi Community Radio “RadioWay” was established in January 2016 by the non-governmental organization “the Center for Civic Activities” with the support of the

²⁸⁴ Cf. *MarshoKavkaz*, accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.pankisi.org>.

²⁸⁵ “Marshua Kawkaz Foundation”, *Pankisi.org*, accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.pankisi.org/cgi-bin/blosxom.cgi/english/marshua>.

²⁸⁶ Author’s interview with Makvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Village of Duisi, Akhmeta; “Folk Band ‘Daimoakh’”, *Pankisi.org*, accessed January 14, 2016, <http://www.pankisi.org/cgi-bin/blosxom.cgi/english/band>.

United States through the initiative of the youth living in this area. This radio channel mainly focuses on topics related directly or indirectly to communities in Pankisi Gorge and proclaims that it publishes accurate news so that the public could understand Pankisi objectively. Every local resident who is interested in social issues and has journalistic skills can work in this radio station. Therefore this radio station can contribute to vocational education of the youth and reduce unemployment levels. At the same time, most of its programs are prepared by volunteers and everyone can present his/her opinion and analysis because it aims for the education of society, intensifying dialogue among different groups, forming an independent platform for interactive discussions.²⁸⁷ That is, this media outlet tries to integrate Chechen-Kists into Georgian society through enlightening local people and uniting them. “RadioWay” plans to broadcast also in Chechen, but it presents services only in Georgian at present.

Besides, there is some progress also in terms of preserving Chechen-Kists’ identity. For example, the Pankisi Ethnographic Museum was opened in the former building of Duisi Village Soviet through the initiative of the historian, Khaso Khangoshvili, who is a member of the Council of Elders.²⁸⁸

As for the education in Chechen language, official education used to be given only in Georgian and it was impossible for the Chechen-Kists to learn their mother language in schools because there was no legal regulation toward education in Chechen language. Therefore Chechen language used to be taught only in private courses. In order to improve the situation of Chechen language in Pankisi, local intellectuals began a signature campaign for education in the Chechen language in public schools.²⁸⁹ The Georgian government also began to apply policies to improve

²⁸⁷“Pankisis Satemo RadioWay-is Misi [The Mission of the Community RadioWay of Pankisi]”, *RadioWay*, accessed December 25, 2017, <http://radioway.ge/about-us/mission>.

²⁸⁸*Cultural Route of the Chechen minority in Georgia*, The Council of Europe, 2017, p. 14.

²⁸⁹ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, “Pankisi Vadisi’nde,” 364.

Chechen-Kists' educational condition. It began to implement "the coupon fund system" and the budget has been allocated also for Chechen-Kist students in the context of this system since 2006. According to this system, the Georgian government allocates about 110 American dollars for every student in order to support their education.²⁹⁰ In 2013, the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science announced that education in the Chechen language in public schools in Pankisi Gorge was authorized.²⁹¹ But the Chechen language classes did not start in Pankisi until 2016 owing to the lack of human and financial resources.²⁹² In 2016, Chechen language classes officially began in the 5th and the 6th grades with the support of the Council of Europe. These language courses are given two hours a week and textbooks are brought from Grozny, Chechnya. At the present time, the Georgian government is preparing new textbooks of minority languages and when they are ready, Chechen language lessons will be given to the other grades of public schools.²⁹³ Besides, Georgian government and the Council of Europe are preparing textbooks of Chechen language for pre-school children at present.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 364.

²⁹¹ "Gürcistan Çeçence Eđitimine İzin Verdi [Georgia Authorized the Education of Chechen Language]", *Waynakh Online*, accessed June 8, 2013, <http://www.waynakh.com/tr/2013/06/gurcistan-cecence-egitimine-izin-verdi/>.

²⁹² Aydınğün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde"364.

²⁹³ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

²⁹⁴ "New Bilingual Textbooks for Kindergartens in Georgia", *The Council of Europe*, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/civic-integration-of-national-minorities-in-georgia>.



Photographs 11-12: The Textbook of the Chechen Language used in the Schools in Pankisi²⁹⁵

Unlike Ossetians in Georgia, the important issue for Chechen-Kists in Georgia is the integration into Georgian society and state rather than preserving their culture, language, and identity against assimilation. While they are excluded from the Georgian political and economic life, their culture and identity are preserved better than Ossetians in Georgia, because important religious differences exist between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and most of the Chechen-Kists live compactly in Pankisi Gorge. In the 5th and 6th chapters, I will discuss Chechen-Kists' attitude and strategy related to the preservation of their culture and relations with the Georgian society, focusing also on their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia as their "homeland".

²⁹⁵ Taken by author on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

CHAPTER 4

GEORGIA'S NATION-STATE BUILDING POLICY AND MINORITY GROUPS SINCE THE SOVIET ERA

In the process of developing policies for the integration of minority groups, the titular nation's nationalism becomes very important. Because titular ethnic groups continuously claim the ownership of the territory and the state, they tend to try to purify demographic structure. Therefore, in multi-ethnic states which are in the process of nation-building, minority policies have intense effects on the process of determining the type of nation-state, either an exclusive ethnic or inclusive civic one. When Georgia became independent, it had a multi-ethnic population. Furthermore, Georgian nationalism became very exclusive and oppressive ethnic one, connected with both titular nationalism continuing from the Soviet era and the Georgian Orthodox Church. This situation made the nation-building process and the integration of minority groups very difficult.

In this chapter, I will discuss the nation-state building policies of Georgia since the Soviet era in order to understand and situate the discussions over minority policies into a more general framework. The first part of this chapter deals with the legacy of the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union, which continues to affect the nation-building policies of the former Soviet states. In this section, I will focus on the Soviet definitions of "ethnic citizenship" and "territorial nationhood" terms, which shapes the Georgian nation-building project and modern Georgian nationalism. After that, I will discuss the influences of Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet nationalities policy on the current Georgian nationalism and minority policies.

In the second part of the chapter, I will focus on Georgia's nation-building policy from Zviad Gamsakhurdia's era to that of Eduard Shevardnadze. In this section, I aim to explain the peculiarities of Georgia's nation-state building policy in that period and the transformation of its minority policy. After Georgia's independence, Georgian nationalism fused with Georgian Orthodox Christianity. Since then Georgian Orthodox Christianity has been playing a central role in Georgians' new national identity. This structure of Georgian identity made it difficult to change Georgian state and society from ethnic nation-state to civic one. I will analyze the policies of Georgia over Georgian nationalism and minority groups. Moreover, in this part, I will discuss the resurrection and rise of Christianity in Georgia's nation-state building policies.

In the third part of the chapter, I will analyze the nation-building policy since Mikhail Saakashvili's era. This part will focus on Georgia's policies toward the building of a civic nation-state based on geography and language and the efforts of Georgia's secularization. After that, I will discuss Georgia's minority policies in order to integrate minority groups into Georgian society and state, preserve their culture, language and identity and establish relations with domestic and international organizations in this process.

4-1. Ethnicity Policy in Georgia in the Soviet Era

4-1-1. Nation-Building in the Former Soviet Socialist Republics: The Legacy of the Soviet Nationalities Policy

By the time the Soviet Union disintegrated, each republic which belonged to the Soviet Union was named after titular nations who had the right of ownership of the national territory. After the former Soviet republics became independent, they took over the domination over their national territory.²⁹⁶ It became necessary for the elite

²⁹⁶ Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question," 46-47.

class of these states to build both the nation and the state. This nation-state building policy was affected intensely by the legacy of the Soviet nationality policy.

The process of nation-building in the post-Soviet states often faces difficulties because the political elites in these states adopt titular nationalism and try to exclude the other nations from their nation-building projects despite the fact that these states generally include various ethnic groups. The political elites justify these actions as the essential recovery of titular nation's rights, claiming that the Soviet state did not allow the titular nation to transform to the real nation-state and that it deprived them of political rights. Rogers Brubaker names this phenomenon as the "nationalizing state." According to him, because of the republics' institutional structure during the Soviet era, the political elites in these states perceive that national states are dominated by the nations after whom the states were named.²⁹⁷ Brubaker argues that these states head for becoming titular-nation-centered states in spite of not being complete nation-states. The titular nation's culture, religion, language, demographic superiority and the supremacy in economic and political life are promoted so that titular nation could obtain an absolute advantage in its nation-state.²⁹⁸

When we see the political discourses and policies of many of the post-Soviet states, it can be said that these states are "nationalizing states" in many ways. Almost all the former Soviet states regulate that the language of the titular nation is the national or official language and introduce titular nation's culture as that of the state.²⁹⁹ As the former Soviet states transform from ethnic nation states to civic ones, the extent of "nationalization" of the former Soviet states becomes different from each other.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁹⁸ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 63.

²⁹⁹ Paul Kolstoe, *Political Construction Sites: Nation-Building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States* (Boulder-Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 4.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 7.

However, the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union helps us to understand how post-Soviet titular elites perceive nationhood and nationality.

4-1-2. The Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Union Affecting the Current Nation-Building Policy: Territorial Nationhood and Ethnic Nationality

The legacy of the Soviet ethnic policy is still strong and this policy forms the basis of the nation-building projects of almost every former Soviet state. In the process of nationalities policy, the Soviet Communist Party invented a new term of nationhood and statehood and applied nationalities policies in all the Soviet republics.³⁰¹ In this system, territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality which are not related to national territory became an institutional political and social element of people in the Soviet Union.³⁰² The legacy of the Soviet nationhood and nationality has been continuing to be influential in the former Soviet states even today. Thus, we need to look at this policy in order to better understand the nation-state building policies of the post-Soviet states.

When they took power, the Bolsheviks' guideline on the nationalities question was not clear until the early 1920s. Originally, the Marxist ideology does not refer to ethnicity-nationality policies. The Marxist theory emphasizes that history continues to develop through class struggle and transformation of the mode of productions. Marx says that in the modern era the struggle between bourgeois and proletarians exists and that national-ethnic identity is dominant under the modern capitalist system instead of religious-local identities which were dominant in the Middle Ages. According to him, in a communist society without bourgeoisie, the importance of national-ethnic identity which divides proletariat would vanish and the solidarity of

³⁰¹Bhavna Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), 23.

³⁰² Brubaker, "Political Dimensions," 17-18.

proletariat would be stronger. Marx argued that the issue of occurrence and extinction of national questions is shaped spontaneously in the process of the development of history and the transformation of the system of economy and production. In fact, Marx estimated that revolution towards communism would happen in Germany, France, and Great Britain, where the modern capitalist system developed, rather than the Russian Empire and does not discuss policies on this issue.³⁰³

In the Russian Empire, while the national identity of the capitalist era was dominant over some groups, other groups adopted local or kinship identity which was predominant in primitive times, Ancient and Middle Ages. Their economic structures were based on agriculture, animal husbandry or hunting. That is, a proletariat which existed under the modern capitalist system did not exist. Therefore, the Bolsheviks brought forward the concept of self-determination right of people during the October Revolution in order to make non-Russian peoples' upper structure develop to one under modern capitalism and form proletariat.³⁰⁴ The Bolsheviks believed that non-Russian peoples would voluntarily join the Soviet Union spontaneously after a socialist revolution, even if their states became independent from the Russian Empire.³⁰⁵ However, when nationalists and social-democrats ascended to the power in non-Russian states, especially in the Caucasus and rejected joining to the Soviet socialist regime, Bolsheviks' optimistic assumption was broken down.³⁰⁶ When the Bolsheviks saw the independence of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan under the

³⁰³ Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Progres, 1969, pp. 98-137.

³⁰⁴ Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 417.

³⁰⁵ Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy towards the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: from Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 21.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

leadership of Mensheviks and nationalists at the end of the 1910s, they recognized the importance of nationalism in the Caucasus and the difficulty of establishing dominance over these states again.³⁰⁷

The Soviet nation-building policy in Vladimir Lenin's era was based on this condition. In order to resolve the issue of the development of the non-Russians' upper structure and substructure, Bolshevik elites fronted to developing national rights.³⁰⁸ Lenin thought that the liberation of nations and the development of national identities are necessary for the amalgamation of nations, which is a prerequisite of realizing of communist society.³⁰⁹ Therefore Bolshevik leaders of Lenin's era and the beginning of Stalin's era tended to create national identities of the non-existing groups and develop national identities and cultures in order to encourage suppressed nations to be liberated.³¹⁰

Bolsheviks including Lenin, who tried to realize circumstances of modern capitalist system necessary for the transition to communist system, regarded nation-building policy as a method to unite all nations under a Soviet state as a step toward communist society without national identities and argued that national identities are temporary and would be abolished after the communist society. Lenin assumed that while conflicts of interest would occur among bourgeois nations in the process of class struggles, revolution, and integration into the communist society, they would not occur among "socialist nations". They would be integrated without violence, there would be no conflict of interests and they would be integrated eventually into

³⁰⁷Ian Bremmer, "Reassessing Soviet Nationalities Theory", in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, eds. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9.

³⁰⁸ Simon, *Nationalism and Policy*, 23.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 22.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

the Soviet central state and communist society.³¹¹ However, he did not explain definitely when flourishing and merger of the nations would be realized.³¹²

The Bolsheviks created a supra-national federal structure as a step to communist society in which all national identities would vanish and all people would be united only as the proletariat. On the basis of this strategy, Bolsheviks created nations and national identities in Central Asia and strengthened them in other non-Russian areas.³¹³ According to Marxist-Leninist view, the Soviet Union as a supra-national structure would be like a melting-pot where all nations are assimilated and live only under a Soviet identity. While the Bolsheviks created and developed national identities, they actively encouraged the creation of a supra-national Soviet identity and the sense of belonging to the Soviet Union.³¹⁴

Bolsheviks hoped to be a pioneer and leader of the world communist revolution and assumed that the communist revolution would be realized also in European countries afterward. However, no European country followed the Soviet Union in the 1920s and Bolsheviks headed to uniting nations under a supra-national Soviet identity. That is to say, they tried to prevent real nationalisms through a new supra-national identity. The Bolshevik ideology of internationalism and the Soviet patriotism emphasized not only the principles of Marxism and its ideals towards a communist society but also solidarity of nations inside the Soviet Union.³¹⁵ All nations inside the

³¹¹ Ibid., 6.

³¹² Walker Connor, "Soviet Policy towards the non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historical Perspective: What Gorbachev Inherited", in *Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 32.

³¹³ Bremmer, "Reassessing Soviet Nationalities", 10.

³¹⁴ Simon, *Nationalism and Policy*, xv.

³¹⁵ Afrand Dashdamirov, "Soviet Patriotism", *The Soviet Multinational State: Readings and Documents*, ed. Martha B. Olcott (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 445.

Soviet Union shared “a common social system, common interests and goals towards a communist society without any nationalities, common history of oppression and joined labors”. Therefore they would be able to unite under a supra-national Soviet identity. In other words, Bolsheviks assumed that all nations in the Soviet Union would pledge allegiance to the Soviet Union as their common “socialist homeland” rather than their own republics eventually.³¹⁶

For a long time, the Soviet Communist Party used extensive methods so that peoples would adopt the supra-national Soviet identity. It made use of complex education system through schools and Party organizations, and political education towards the adult population.³¹⁷ The modern Soviet education system and “Komsomol” were used as places for the training of the youth.³¹⁸ In addition to them, Bolsheviks took advantage of public holidays, mass-media and Russian language as “a language of communist society” in order to create “Homo-Sovieticus (Soviet Person)”.

When the Soviet Union was disintegrated, almost all the people in the Soviet Union had had a common Soviet identity and an ethnic identity, which were formally recorded. Both of them were heavily informed by Bolsheviks’ nationalities policy. In order to analyze the influence of the Soviet legacy on the nation-building policies of the former Soviet states, I will focus on territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality, which are still affecting these policies. As I referred before, the Soviet Union tended to support the formation of the elements of national identity such as territory, the official language, culture and encouraged the formation of local elites to create the supra-national Soviet identity.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 445-446.

³¹⁷ Archie Brown, Michael Kaser and Gerald S. Smith, “The Soviet Man”, in *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 325.

³¹⁸ Bremmer, “Reassessing Soviet Nationalities,” 11.

In his book “*Marxism and the National Question*”, published in 1913, Joseph Stalin defined the term “nation” as “a historically evolved, stable community based on a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture”.³¹⁹ On the other hand, he did not refer to statehood as one of the elements, which composes a nation. That is to say, Stalin aimed at using national units to shape the united Soviet state instead of creating nation-states in the Western sense.³²⁰ Therefore, Bolsheviks regarded creating national identities as a tool of Sovietization and eventually realizing a communist society without national identities. The Soviet Communist Party seemed to have planned to eradicate the importance of nationality in the national-territorial units through not sponsoring statehood.³²¹

However, territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality introduced by the Soviet Union eventually led to the independence of the Soviet states rather than extinction of nationalities and the consolidation of Soviet unity. The connection between ethnic territory and population and the identification of a person by nationality have a very important influence on national mentalities of the nations in the former Soviet states.

As for the first aspect, Szporluk emphasizes that the concept of ethnic homeland introduced by Bolsheviks was forming the center of the conception of nationality.³²² According to the Soviet nationalities policy, each titular nation’s history is linked to

³¹⁹ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 415.

³²⁰ Simon, *Nationalism and Policy*, 23.

³²¹ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 25.

³²² Roman Szporluk, “Introduction: Statehood and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Space,” in *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Roman Szporluk (Armonk: New York: M.E Sharpe, 1994),5.

its territory.³²³ For the former Soviet states in the process of nation-building, the idea of Bolsheviks arguing that nationality has indispensable ties with ethnic homelands still has an important effect on minority policies and diaspora-homeland-host state relations.

Because the Soviet Union defined the frame of the nation and its territory politically,³²⁴ the notion of territorial nationhood introduced by Bolsheviks eventually led to the independence of Soviet states within these borderlines. This connection eased the titular nations inside the former Soviet states to assert their right to their territories.³²⁵ Since the late 1980s, political elites of the former Soviet republics have emphasized this link between the nation and ethnic territory in order to claim the historical legitimacy of the titular nation's existence in the territory.³²⁶

This nation-territory tie has close relations with the identification of every person with a "nationality." Although it seems that Bolsheviks has advocated "internationalism" and the supra-national Soviet identity, in fact, the Soviet Union divided the Soviet citizens by legally defined nationalities and there were differences between nationality and citizenship.³²⁷ While this nationality policy determined one's ethnic identity, it strengthened this identity by "connecting ethnicity with language and territory and linking ethnic status with the degree of ethnoterritorial autonomy"

³²³Annette Bohr, "The Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes", in *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, eds. Graham Smith et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 139.

³²⁴ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 59.

³²⁵ Kolstoe, *Political Construction Sites*, 229-230.

³²⁶ Robert Kaiser, "Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity", in *Ethno-Nationalism in Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi (London: Routledge, 2002), 230.

³²⁷ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 54.

at the same time.³²⁸ This identity had a great importance in all aspects of an individual's life and the Soviet Union gave a citizen an ethnic identity based on ancestry when he/she was born.³²⁹ In other words, while everyone has a common "Soviet citizenship", the state gave them a different "nationality" related to their territory and ancestry, which was important in social life.

After the Soviet Union's disintegration, the term "nationality" carried strong ties with ethnicity in almost all the former Soviet states. Not only the differentiation between common political "citizenship" and ethnicity-based "nationality" but also this legacy is still influential in the former Soviet states. Though their constitutions mention citizenship instead of nationality today, almost all the post-Soviet states still give special importance to ethnicity in their political and social life.³³⁰

4-1-3. The Language Policy of the Soviet Union

The Bolsheviks criticized the Russification policy of the Russian Empire and defined it as "the prison of nations". Therefore, Vladimir Lenin denied the conception of "state language" and especially criticized the enforcement of Russian language to minority groups. In this context, Lenin's government encouraged the languages of each nation. "The education in national language" was the basis of the early Soviet educational policy and the encouragement of national languages occupied an important position in the policy of *korenizatsiya* (nativization).³³¹ Under this

³²⁸ Anatoly Khazanov, *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the CIS* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 244.

³²⁹ Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," p.450.

³³⁰ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: Creation of Nations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 173-175.

³³¹ Nobuaki Shiokawa, *Minzokuto Gengo* [Nations and Languages], (Tokyo: Iwanami-Shoten, 2004), 139.

situation, Russian language did not have the status of official language, but it was unofficially regarded as a lingua-franca.³³²

In this process, the reform of letters was conducted in order to develop education in national language and new letters were created. In Lenin's period, the main stream of the reform of letters was latinization. The introduction Russian alphabets were not brought to agenda, because the Cyrillic alphabet reminded people of the memory of Russification policy by the Russian Empire. Besides, some intellectuals insisted that Russian language should be written with the Latin alphabets. In this way, the languages of nations in the Soviet Union generally began to be written with the Latin alphabets. But some exceptions also existed. For example, languages such as Georgian and Armenian continued to be written with their alphabets and Orthodox Christian nations such as Ossetians, Chuvash people and Mordvins continued to use the Cyrillic alphabets.³³³

However, the situation changed after Stalin ascended to power in the second half of 1920s. In this period, the centralization of power advanced and the purge of local leaders of the Communist Party and intellectuals was conducted. Besides, Stalin's government encouraged patriotism and tradition-culture of nations including Russian. In this way, the position of Russian language and culture improved considerably. At the same time, some "small-scale" nations began to be regarded as the parts of "larger-scale" nations and the policy of korenizatsiya continued only for "larger-scale" nations who had their Soviet Socialist or Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics. In the end of 1930s, some national rayon Sovets and village Sovets were abolished and many schools for minorities were closed.³³⁴ Furthermore, the Soviet

³³² Ibid., 140.

³³³ Ibid., 141-142.

³³⁴ Ibid., 145; Takeshi Tomita, *Sutalinizumuno Touchikouzou* [the Structure of Stalinism] (Tokyo: Iwanami-Shoten, 1996), 87-88.

government began to emphasize the importance of Russian language as a lingua-franca and Russian language class became compulsory in 1938.³³⁵ Under this situation, many national languages such as Turkic and Caucasian languages began to be written with the Cyrillic alphabets. On the other hand, some nations such as Georgians and Armenians continued to use their original letters. In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, intensive Georgianization policy was implemented until the middle of 1950s and their languages were written with the Georgian alphabets.³³⁶

After Khrushchev ascended to power, while extremely oppressive policies in Stalin's era and the enforcement of Russian language were abolished. However, due to Khrushchev's policy, neither education in Russian language nor education in titular languages became compulsory and russification policy advanced to an important degree as a result. Besides, the concept of "Russian language as an interethnic lingua franca" was often emphasized and Russian language was encouraged much more in this era.³³⁷ This situation eventually accelerated russification of peoples in the Soviet Union. This russification policy continued also until the end of 1980s.³³⁸ In fact, especially in the Central Asia, Moldova and Belarus as well as Russia, Russian language was much more dominant than titular languages in higher education in the end of 1980s.³³⁹

³³⁵ Shiokawa, *Minzokuto Gengo*, 145-146.

³³⁶ Darrell Slider, "Crisis and Response in Soviet Nationality Policy: the Case of Abkhazia", *Central Asian Survey* 4, no. 4 (1985): 53-54.

³³⁷ Shiokawa, *Minzokuto Gengo*, 147-148.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

On the other hand, In the Baltic states, Georgia and Armenia, titular languages were dominant than Russian and russification did not advanced very much.³⁴⁰ However, even in these countries, minority groups generally preferred Russian language school to titular language schools in the Soviet era.³⁴¹ Thus, minority groups were generally more russified than titular groups and Russian continued to be used as a lingua franca in these countries even after 1991.

4-1-4. The Soviet Union’s Policy toward Religion: General Explanation

The Soviet Union, established by the Bolsheviks in 1922, adopted state atheism as official ideology and aimed at eliminating existing religions.³⁴² In fact, Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, clearly expressed the Bolsheviks’ attitude against religion:³⁴³

Religion is the opium of the people: this saying of Marx is the cornerstone of the entire ideology of Marxism about religion. All modern religions and churches, all and of every kind of religious organizations are always considered by Marxism as the organs of bourgeois reaction, used for the protection of the exploitation and the stupefaction of the working class.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 159.

³⁴¹ For example, Turks (Azerbaijanis) and Armenians in Georgia preferred Russian or their titular language (Azerbaijani and Armenian respectively) schools to Georgian school. Ossetians in Lagodekhi generally preferred Russian-Ossetian school. However, Ossetians in Shida-Kartli (outside South Ossetia) and Kists in the Pankisi Valley were considered as Georgians and they generally took education in Georgian schools.

³⁴² John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.

³⁴³ Vladimir I. Lenin, “About the attitude of the working party toward the religion”, *Collected Works*, vol. 17 (Moscow: Progress, 1977), 41.

Under this doctrine, the Soviet Communist Party conducted “the program of conversion to atheism”.³⁴⁴ Atheism was propagated everywhere and efforts to spread negative image of religions were made on by the state institutes and mass media.

Especially, the Soviet Union’s suppression over the Ortodox Churches in Lenin’s era were very harsh. Lenin emphasized that the Orthodox Church should be completely destroyed because it had strong ties with the regime of the Russian Empire. Since 1920s, the Soviet government strengthened suppression over Churches in order to annihilate them. In this process, many Christian clergymen and believers were executed or exiled.³⁴⁵

However, the suppression over Churches was relieved when the World War II, because Stalin expected that the Orthodox Churches would “completely support the Soviet government on all issues related to the organizational reinforcement and development of the Soviet Union”.³⁴⁶ He met the three high-ranking clergymen who were the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church on September 1943. After this meeting, the Soviet government accepted the resurrection of Patriarchy and permitted publication of Church’s periodicals and establishment of seminaries.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, the establishment of the Council of Affairs on the Russian Orthodox Church, which was a state organization discussing religious issues, was

³⁴⁴ Christopher Marsh, *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 47.

³⁴⁵ Sanami Takahashi, “1960-1970nendaino Shuukyō, Bunkaseisakuto Ideologi: Roshia-Seikyōto Sono Bunkaisanwo Chuushinni [the Religious-Cultural Policies and Ideology between 1960s and 1970s: the Examples of the Russian Orthodox Church and its Cultural Heritage],” *21st Century COE Program Occasional Papers*, no. 23 (2008): 22.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

determined.³⁴⁸ Therefore, the revival of Christianity advanced to an important degree in the Soviet Union during and after the World War II.

Although Nikita Khrushchev strengthened suppression over Churches again from the end of 1959 to 1964, the Soviet government made use of Christianity and traditional culture based on the state interest and relieved suppression after 1965. In this period, most organized religions were not prohibited, the property of Churches was not confiscated, and believers were not harassed. That is, personal expressions of religious faith were not banned unless they damage the state interest. In this way, while the structure of Churches was damaged to an important degree, religious elements as a part of tradition remained in the Soviet culture.³⁴⁹

After Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to power in 1985, the Soviet government accepted the organizational reinstatement of Churches. Under this condition, people's passion towards "the protection of traditional culture" began to appear in the form of real religious mind.³⁵⁰

On the other hand, as for the situation of Islam in the Soviet era, the Bolsheviks treated Islam better than the Christianity and gave Muslims more religious autonomy until 1929. In the declaration "Ko Vsem Trudyashchimsya Musul'manam Rossii i Vostoka" (To All Muslim Labors in Russia and the East) on November 1917, Lenin declared that the Bolsheviks recognized the freedom to exercise Islam for Muslims, because "their beliefs and customs had been suppressed by the the Russian oppressors".³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 22-23.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

³⁵¹ Vladimir I. Lenin, "Ko Vsem Trudyashchimsya Musul'manam Rossii i Vostoka [To All Muslim Labors in Russia and the East]", *Izvestia*, No. 232, December 7, 1917, 1-2.

Muslims of Russia...all you whose mosques and prayer houses have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled upon by the tsars and oppressors of Russia: your beliefs and practices, your national and cultural institutions are forever free and inviolate. Know that your rights, like those of all the peoples of Russia, are under the mighty protection of the revolution.

Besides, in Lenin's era, some principles of *Sharia* (Islamic law) were adopted as well as the Soviet legal system.³⁵² Jadids and other "Islamic communists" obtained powerful positions in the government.³⁵³ The policy of "korenizatsiya" (nativisation), which aimed to develop local Muslim populations, was implemented. The Soviet government declared that Friday was a legal holiday in Muslim regions.³⁵⁴

However, after Joseph Stalin ascended to power in 1925, state suppression against Islam and other religions as well as Christianity increased. Mosques were closed or turned into other buildings throughout Central Asia, Volga-Ural and the Caucasus. Many religious leaders were executed or exiled and *madrasahs* were closed. The Soviet government emphasized that Muslim women's veil is the symbol of oppression and made efforts to stop the practice.³⁵⁵ Besides, due to Stalin's cult of personality, people had few chances to practice religious principles.³⁵⁶

After the World War II began, Stalin relieved the restrictions on religion somewhat. For example, the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and

³⁵² Dave Crouch, "The Bolsheviks and Islam." *International Socialism: A quarterly journal of Socialist Theory*, no: 110, accessed February 14, 2007, <http://isj.org.uk/the-bolsheviks-and-islam/>.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Kazakhstan was established in 1943. Afterwards, the Spiritual Directorate for the European Soviet Union and Siberia, the Spiritual Directorate for the Northern Caucasus and Dagestan and The Spiritual Directorate for Transcaucasia were established. They oversaw the religious life of Muslims in the Soviet Union. All mosques, *madrasahs* and Islamic publications were under the control of these “spiritual directorates”³⁵⁷ and the Soviet government regarded only “official Islam” as lawful one. The Soviet government banned Islamic religious activities outside authorized mosques and *madrasahs* and Islamic *tariqats* were excluded from the Soviet political and social life..

After Gorbachev ascended to power in 1985 and the political and social liberalization began, unofficial Muslim *tariqats* increased to an important degree. Besides, the influences of foreign states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia also increased on Muslims in the Soviet Union.

4-1-5. The Development of Modern Georgian Nationalism: the Synthesis of Traditional Georgian Nationalism and the Soviet Titular Nationalism

Unlike the former Soviet states in Central Asia, Georgia has the history of an independent United Georgian Kingdom from the 11th to the 15th century.³⁵⁸ In this era, Georgian culture such as literature, architecture, art and music developed under the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The basis of military, political and social structure of the Georgian nation was affected by the Persian, Turkic, Mongolian and Byzantine states.³⁵⁹ The Democratic Republic of Georgia existed as an independent state from 1918 to 1921, before being occupied by the Bolshevik

³⁵⁷ Svetlana M. Chervonnaya, *Iskusstvo i Religiya: Sovremennoe Islamskoe Iskusstvo Narodov Rossii* [Culture and Religion: the Modern Islamic Culture of Peoples in Russia] (Moscow: Progress, 2008), 118.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 113-118.

³⁵⁹ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 38-39.

army.³⁶⁰ Therefore, the basis of a united Georgian identity had existed and it was comparatively easier for the Soviet regime to develop a titular Georgian identity than Central Asia.

The Georgian Orthodox Church and Georgian language played a very important role in the formation of traditional Georgian identity and the development of Georgian nationalism. Orthodox Christianity began to be spread in Georgia in the 2nd century and was adopted as the state religion of the Kingdom of Iberia in 330s. Vakhtang Gorgasali, the King of Iberia, took the Georgian Orthodox Church under state control and Georgian Orthodox Church was recognized as an independent Church by the Patriarchate of Antioch in 486.³⁶¹ An important peculiarity of the Eastern Orthodox Church is that every patriarchate is independent of each other and rituals are done in vernacular languages instead of universal Latin.³⁶² Therefore these peculiarities caused the early development of national/state identity. In fact, the adoption of the Eastern Orthodox Church by the Georgian state and people and the use of Georgian language in Georgian Orthodox Church contributed to the unification of different groups under the single framework of the Georgian Patriarchate and these groups' adopting a common Georgian national identity. Moreover, the creation of a unique Georgian alphabet in order to translate and write the Holy Bible in Georgian formed the basis of unique Georgian culture³⁶³ and strengthened the Georgian national identity. Thus, the basis of Georgian identity based on religion and language had existed in the pre-Soviet era. The Georgian nationalist movement at the end of the

³⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid., 185-208.

³⁶¹ Nino Çipaşvili, "Gürcistan'da Din ve Devlet İlişkisi [The Religion-State Relationship in Georgia]" (Unpublished Master Thesis, Istanbul University, 2010), 24-25.

³⁶² Yasuyuki Takahashi, *Girisha-Seikyo* [The Orthodox Churches], (Tokyo: Kodan-sha, 1980), 94.

³⁶³ Hirotake Maeda, "Gurujia-Jin [Gürcüler]", in *Chuou-Yurashiawo Shiru Jiten*, eds. Hisao Komatsu, and Tomohiko Uyama, and et al. (Tokyo: Heibon-sha, 2005), 178-179.

19th century was based on traditional Georgian nationalism, the elements of which are Georgian Orthodox Church and Georgian language. The main subjects for traditional Georgian nationalists such as Ilia Chavchavadze and Iakob Gogebashvili were to regain the autonomy of the Georgian Patriarchate, which was abolished under the dominance of the Russian Patriarchate and to preserve the Georgian language.³⁶⁴

Also in the Soviet era, hundreds of churches were closed by the government in the context of atheism and hundreds of clergymen were killed due to Joseph Stalin's purges.³⁶⁵ But at last, the Russian Orthodox Church recognized the independence of the Georgian Orthodox Church on October 31st, 1943, due to Stalin's war-time tolerant policy towards Christianity.³⁶⁶ In spite of harsh suppression which had begun against the end of the World War II, Georgian Orthodox Church preserved its existence and the first signs of revival were seen in Leonid Brezhnev's era. In this era, Eduard Shevardnadze was the first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and he behaved tolerantly toward Christianity.³⁶⁷ In 1977, Ilia II became the Georgian Patriarch and built new churches.³⁶⁸ Therefore, the structure of traditional Georgian nationalism which is closely linked to Georgian Orthodox Christianity was preserved even in the Soviet era.

³⁶⁴ Çipaşvili, "Gürcistan'da Din," 60-62.

³⁶⁵ Tamara Grdzeldze, "Georgia, Patriarchal Orthodox Church of", in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 274.

³⁶⁶ Stephen H. Rapp Jr., "Georgian Christianity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, ed. Ken Parry (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 152.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

Moreover, territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality introduced by the Soviet Union and titular nationalism shaped a peculiar ethnic-identity-based hierarchy. Through developing titular nations' identity, the Soviet Union utilized ethnic identity as a tool in order to unite many ethnic groups politically, to increase its influence in the world politics, to develop its socio-economic structure and to integrate indigenous nations.³⁶⁹ The ascribed classification based on ethnic identity directly mediated every Soviet citizen's incorporation into the state structure and titular nations were advantageous in access to services and policies by the state such as education, economic benefits, and employment. This tendency continued even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and titular majorities such as Georgians in Georgia expected their states to promote their benefits and interests as they evaluate the Soviet era negatively and define the post-Soviet period as a "good post-colonial period".³⁷⁰ On the other hand, minorities think that titular-majority-dominated states have been marginalizing and excluding them since the Soviet era.³⁷¹

Ethnicity-dominant academic discourse in universities and semi-official structures such as the Georgian Academy of Sciences and the Georgian Writers' Union has been continuing since the Soviet era.³⁷² Many of the arguments which focus on ethnicity emphasize that Georgians are an autochthonous element of the Georgian state which has existed since the ancient era and that Georgian people have advantages inside Georgia.³⁷³ This discourse was reinforced by the Soviet nationalities policy, which reified titular status to a particular group on a certain

³⁶⁹ Broers, "Filling the Void," 281.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

³⁷¹ Broers, "Filling the Void," 281.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 285.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 285.

territory. The doctrine of autochthony which is widespread in the Georgian academic world since the Soviet era defines all groups except for Georgians as “foreign elements”, “immigrants” and “descendants of invaders” and emphasized that non-titular groups have their “own” homeland outside Georgia and practically lack rights inside Georgia.³⁷⁴ In fact, while “people’s struggles against the feudal and bourgeois class” were put forward by the Soviet Georgian historiography, this historiography emphasizes also hostility against Turks, Muslims and other groups frequently.³⁷⁵

For example, in their book about Georgian history used as the Georgian history textbook in the Soviet era, Nikoloz Berdzenishvili and Simon Janashia defined the Muslim Ottoman Empire as “the enemy, predator, barbarian and destroyer” under the title of “the situation of Western Georgia in the 17th century”. At the same time they focus on feudal-peasant struggles and the guilt of feudalism on tragedy in Georgia in the context of Marxism-Leninism.³⁷⁶ Moreover, Berdzenishvili and Janashia described Solomon the First, the King of Imereti, as the hero of the Georgian people who fought against the backwardness and colonialism of feudal class and the Muslim Ottoman Empire,³⁷⁷ while he was originally defined as “the enemy of peasants and people” according to the Marxist theory.

The hostility against Islam and the strength of Georgian culture and Christianity are emphasized in the part of the occupation of Samtskhe-Saatabago by the Ottoman Empire in Berdzenishvili and Janashia’s history textbook. According to the book, the

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 285.

³⁷⁵ Keisuke Wakizaka, “Sovyet Sonrası Gürcistan’daki Ulusal Kimliğin Oluşmasında Türk-İslâm İmajı [The Image of Turk-Islam in the Formation of Ppost-Soviet Georgia’s National Identity]”, *Yeni Türkiye*, no. 78 (2015): 64-65.

³⁷⁶ Nikoloz Berdzenişvili and Simon Janashia, *Gürcistan Tarihi*, trans. Hayri Hayrioğlu. (İstanbul: Sorun Yayınları, 1997), 259.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 280-282.

Ottoman Empire and Muslims did not accept the traditional Georgian system and Christianity and forced Georgians to adopt Islam. Therefore many Georgians were forced to abandon their land and Georgian socio-cultural structure was damaged to an important degree. In spite of this, Georgians preserved their culture and faith.³⁷⁸ In this context, being Muslim means being a barbarian Turk. According to Georgians, Ottoman Turks and Muslims are one of the biggest enemies of the Georgian people, because they forced Georgians to adopt Islam and attempted to remove Christianity from Georgia.³⁷⁹ The Soviet Georgian historiography emphasizes that Muslims are predators, warriors and barbarians like Turks and that they are the eternal enemies of Georgians and Christians. At the same time, it emphasizes the robustness of Georgian identity, culture, and Christianity against the pressure of “Muslim enemies”.³⁸⁰ While the cultural and religious elements of Georgians are admired, this historiography contradicts with Marxism, which denies national culture and religion.³⁸¹ In this way, Muslim minorities such as Turks and Chechen-Kists are marginalized as “foreigners, barbarians, and descendants of invaders” through the academic discourse while the advantage and superiority of Georgians against Muslims in Georgia are established.

The historical discourse based on Georgian titular nationalism can be seen in the discourses on Ossetians. The traditional Georgian intellectuals argue that Ossetians are “foreigners” who settled in native Georgian lands regardless of Georgian people’s will and that Ossetians do not have as many rights as Georgians in the state. For example, Mariam Lortkipanidze and Georgiy Othmezuri argue that Ossetians began to settle in Georgia with the support of Arabs in the 9th century and under the

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 234.

³⁷⁹ Wakizaka, “Sovyet Sonrası Gürcistan’daki,” 63.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 63.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

initiative of Mongolians in the 13th century. Besides, they emphasize that Ossetians' large-scale migration to Georgia and South Ossetia was realized as a result of the interest of the Georgian feudal class in the 17th and the 18th centuries³⁸² and that Ossetians did not originally exist in the current territory of South Ossetia. According to them, "South Ossetia" was established inside Georgian territory as a result of the Russian policies towards the Caucasus. The Georgian people were completely excluded from this process.³⁸³ That is, it is emphasized in the traditional Georgian academic discourse that Ossetians are originally "ungrateful migrants" who settled in Georgia without recognition by the autochthonous Georgian people and that it is natural that Ossetians should have less political rights than Georgians.

As we see before, the doctrine of autochthony existing since the Soviet era have played a central role in strengthening and legitimizing exclusive Georgian nationalism and struggle against other groups theoretically.³⁸⁴ Thus, the Soviet nationalities policy of fostering titular Georgian nationalism have prepared the basis of the formation of modern Georgian nationalism, the synthesis of traditional Georgian nationalism and Soviet titular nationalism.

Furthermore, the element of anti-Russian-Sovietness has also been added to the current ethnic Georgian nationalism. The narrative which defines ethnic Georgians as the only element which remains since the pre-colonial period argues that the process of multi-ethnicity in Georgia in history is the result of colonialist states' illegitimate politics.³⁸⁵ Thus in the states in South Caucasus, including Georgia, ethnic discrimination and chauvinism are indirectly legitimized in the form of the political

³⁸² Lortkipanidze and Otkhmezuri, "Osetiny v Gruzii," 131.

³⁸³ Ibid., 133-134.

³⁸⁴ Broers, "Filling the Void," 286.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 286.

and social superiority of titular nation's rights through the post-Soviet historiography which emphasizes ethnic singularity in the pre-Russian-Soviet past. Despite the attempts of the Georgian political elites to change Georgia from an ethnic nation-state to a civic one, the traditional academic approaches since the Soviet era obstruct this effort.³⁸⁶ Moreover, because Georgian ethnicity is based on biological origin, Georgian narratives on their autochthony gave the theoretical basis for the marginalization of minority groups as "ungrateful guests, outsiders."³⁸⁷ That is, modern ethnic Georgian nationalism, which is a blend of traditional Georgian nationalism, Soviet titular nationalism and post-colonial nationalism of ethnical singularity and anti-Russian-Sovietness, was strengthened through academic discourses. It still has a large influence on the current Georgian identity and prevents Georgian state from building a civic nation-state and applying effective minority policies.

In Georgian people's mentality, the myth of Georgian ethnic tolerance as well as the influence of modern Georgian nationalism are important. Tolerance and hospitality are regarded as important values of Georgian society and state and anti-Semitism did not originally exist in Georgia.³⁸⁸ This Georgian myth of tolerance and hospitality has also reinforced the legitimacy of Georgia's post-Soviet attitude towards the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, emphasizing that the Georgian state and society behaved generously to Abkhazians and Ossetians and preserved their

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 286.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 286.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 288.

political, social and cultural rights and autonomy.³⁸⁹ According to Georgian people, Georgia's ethnic diversity is attributed to their tolerance.³⁹⁰

On the other hand, in the context of modern Georgian nationalism, Georgian people think that their tolerance and hospitality are the reason why Georgia is powerless and in a difficult situation.³⁹¹ Their myth of tolerance as well as the Georgian exclusionary academic doctrines have an important effect on the Georgian public opinion and encourages them to perceive minority groups as "ungrateful guests".³⁹² While the other groups consider that they are subject to the hostility and discrimination by the Georgian society and state, Georgians themselves argue that they were oppressed by the colonial and imperialist states due to Georgian tolerance toward different groups. In this way, modern ethnic Georgian nationalism became widespread among Georgian public opinion and the exclusionary modern ethnic Georgian nationalism became even more exclusionary and aggressive.³⁹³ In the civic nation-building process of post-Soviet Georgia, the most important problem is moving beyond the wall of modern Georgian ethnic nationalism.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 288.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 288.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 288.

³⁹² Ibid., 288-289.

³⁹³ Ibid., 289.

4-2. Ethnicity Policy in Gamsakhurdia's and Shevardnadze's Era

4-2-1. Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Era: Nation-State Building Based on Ethnic Georgian Nationalism

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was born as the son of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia (1893–1975), who was one of the most important Georgian writers of the 20th century. Like his father Konstantine, Zviad was one of the most enthusiastic advocates of traditional Georgian nationalism.

Gamsakhurdia was an advocate of human rights and democracy during the Soviet rule. In 1955, he established *Gorgasliani* with Merab Kostava, an underground group of youths which distributed reports on human rights abuses. Since this period, he had been involved in anti-Soviet activities and was arrested many times by the Soviet government.³⁹⁴

In 1974, Gamsakhurdia and Kostava co-established the Human Rights Initiative Group with other activists and began to strengthen relations with the human rights activists in Moscow. They became the Georgian members of Amnesty International and the Human Rights Initiative Group changed its name later as the Georgian Helsinki Group in 1976.³⁹⁵ Gamsakhurdia and Kostava were active in anti-Soviet publishing activities, founding journals such as *Okros Satsmisi* (Golden Fleece), *Sakartvelos Moambe* (Georgian Herald).³⁹⁶ In this way, Gamsakhurdia and Kostava strengthened anti-Soviet activities for democratization toward Georgian people in spite of the persistent repression and arrests of the Soviet regime. In 1978,

³⁹⁴ *President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Memorial Page*, accessed June 9, 2008, http://geocities.com/z_g.geo/z_g.html.

³⁹⁵ Levan Ramishvili and Tamar Chergoleishvili, "March of the Goblins: Permanent Revolution in Georgia," in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: the First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (London: Routledge, 2014), 184.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

they were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the Congress of the United States due to their non-violent anti-Soviet movement for democracy and freedom.³⁹⁷

Furthermore, the condition of Georgian society in the Soviet period was also favorable for the development of Gamsakhurdia and Kostava's influence. By the 1970s, the educational level of Georgians was among the highest in the Soviet Union and about 150 persons per 1000 population graduated from universities. While many youths in rural areas completed their higher education, they had little connections with the government and had little chances of working in appropriate places.³⁹⁸ Therefore, they were bitter about the Soviet regime and influenced by the traditional Georgian nationalism, which emphasized the preservation of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Georgian language, cultural heritage, and environment.³⁹⁹ Under this situation, Gamsakhurdia asserted traditional Georgian nationalism and received the support of the Georgian people.

Especially after Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to power in the Soviet Union and began to apply his policy of *glasnost*, Gamsakhurdia played a central role in organizing a mass movement for Georgia's independence. In 1988, he became the co-founder of the Society of Ilia Chavchavadze, established by the Georgian politicians and clergymen.⁴⁰⁰ After the massacre in Tbilisi on April 9th, 1989 by the Soviet forces, the demands for the democratization and independence of Georgia were accelerated and Georgia's first democratic elections were finally held on October 28, 1990. In this process, Georgia's anti-Soviet groups formed the coalition of "Round Table-Free Georgia" and this coalition won this election. At last, Gamsakhurdia was elected as the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic

³⁹⁷ *President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Memorial Page.*

³⁹⁸ Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili, "March of the Goblins," 184.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

of Georgia on November 14th, 1990 and became the first President of Georgia in 1991. As we see here, in the Soviet era, Gamsakhurdia had the image of “reformist, democratic and anti-Soviet Georgian patriot” in foreign countries, particularly in the Western states. This image affected his political career positively in obtaining the support of both domestic and international public.

Gamsakhurdia was also influenced by the titular nationalism fostered by the Soviet regime. He adopted nationalism and practiced an isolationist policy officially. He continuously emphasized that “titular” Georgian people have superior political, economic and social rights within Georgia and regarded every foreign state such as Western states, Russia, Iran, and Turkey as Georgia’s enemies. In this context, he regarded ethnic minorities as “foreigners”, “immigrants”, “enemies” and “ungrateful guests”⁴⁰¹ and accused them of being Kremlin’s fifth column in Georgian domestic politics. This accusation sometimes targeted his allies. Actually, in an interview by Laura Starink, a Dutch journalist in 1990, he claimed the following about Armenians, Turks (Azerbaijanis), Ossetians and Abkhazians in Georgia:⁴⁰²

I do not like Azerbaijani Popular Front. They have malevolence toward Georgia and regard these lands as their own lands. According to Pan-Turkist theory, the states of Armenia and Georgia do not exist. This land belongs to Turks’ Lebensraum. There are three ways for Azeris to eliminate Armenians and Georgians: exterminating them wholesale, displacing them massively or Islamizing them. Because the third way is impossible, they are applying the other two ways. But Armenians also demand our lands. We are surrounded by enemies from all directions. Armenians claim that Tbilisi belongs to Armenians. Ossetians claim that the area between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi belongs to them. Abkhazians regard Kutaisi as their land. In this way, only the ridge of Suram Mountains is left for Georgia. It is impossible to get along with them because all of them are aggressive chauvinists who are interested only in their own interests.

⁴⁰¹ Suny, “Elite Transformation,” 154.

⁴⁰² Laura Starink, “De Georgische Nationalist Zviad Gamsachoerdia: Onze Weg is de Weg van de Burgeroorlog [The Georgian Nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia: Our way is the Way of the Civil War]”, *NRC Handelsblad*, February 3, 1990, p. 6.

Gamsakhurdia's such attitude toward national minorities was reflected on actual policies. He sometimes approached the national minority groups extremely harshly. The Georgian government in this era provoked Georgian nationalism-chauvinism and was hostile against minority groups and clearly applied discriminatory policies against them.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, his supporters often threatened minorities with violence. These policies caused ethnic conflicts and migrations, contributed to the harsh conflict in South Ossetia and the large-scale migration of Turkic and Ossetian people.⁴⁰⁴ Owing to Gamsakhurdia's ultra-nationalist discourses toward the building of ethnic nation-state such as "the titular nationality should have priorities over other nationalities", Georgia failed to give priority to develop policies toward ethnic minority groups.

After Gamsakhurdia ascended to power, he gradually headed to softening his policies based on the ethnic Georgian nationalism and started to refer to civic nationalism. For example, David Matsaberidze, an assistant professor in the Tbilisi State University, argues that an important purpose of Gamsakhurdia's ultra-nationalist discourse is to increase support from the Georgian public which was under the strong influence of the modern Georgian ethnic nationalism. In fact, Gamsakhurdia had once emphasized the friendship of ethnic Georgians and national minorities in Georgia in his speech when Georgia's independence was declared. Furthermore, he promised that "Abkhazia's political autonomy and the protection of Abkhazians' national rights would be guaranteed constitutionally".⁴⁰⁵ In fact, 28 of the 65 seats in the Higher Council of Abkhazia were reserved for Abkhazians, 26 seats for Georgians and 11 seats for the other ethnic groups in this era. This can be evaluated

⁴⁰³ Hasan Oktay, "Türkiye'nin Doğuya Açılan Kapısı Kafkasya'ya Stratejik Bakış [The Strategic Perspective towards the Caucasus, Turkey's Gate to the East]", *Yeni Türkiye*, no. 56 (2014): 434-435.

⁴⁰⁴ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia" 6; Oktay, "Türkiye'nin", 436.

⁴⁰⁵ Institute of Political Science, ed., *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia (1991-2004)* (Tbilisi: Akhali Azri, 2007), 20.

as a result of a compromise between Georgians and Abkhazians.⁴⁰⁶ At the same time, Gamsakhurdia was a friend of Dzhokhar Dudayev, the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in this era. In this context, though Gamsakhurdia continuously emphasized that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to Georgia, he aimed at establishing the structure of an anti-Russian “Caucasus Federation”, which would consist of the Caucasian nations such as Chechens, Dagestanis and Circassians and would be managed under Georgia’s leadership, while emphasizing the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism in the process of ascending to power.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, Gamsakhurdia gradually changed his attitude toward minority groups after becoming Georgia’s president. In fact, some of his speeches assume the possibility of Georgia’s transition to civic nationalism in Georgia. For example, in a speech in 1991 he said the following:⁴⁰⁸

We should not forget that as we were facing the most decisive and extremely important moment in our history, the great majority of the non-ethnic Georgian population supported us in the struggle for independence. The Georgian nation will not forget this. Each ethnic minority, residing on the Georgian territory, will have guarantees for development, promotion, and advancement through ensuring the cultural space they need for self-sustained development. Georgia is ready to join all international agreements in the sphere of peaceful development of nations.

This discourse proves the claim that Gamsakhurdia tried to build a new bridge between Georgians and national minority groups after he became Georgia’s president, while his rhetoric still was full of emotional references to Georgian nationalism.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Hirotake Maeda, *Gurujia Gendai-shi* [Modern Georgian History] (Tokyo: Toyo-shoten, 2009), 16-17.

⁴⁰⁷ Yalçın Karadaş, *Çerkes Kimliği: Türkiye’nin Sorunları* [The Circassian Identity: the Problems of Turkey], (Istanbul: Sorun Yayınları, 2009), 195-196.

⁴⁰⁸ “Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s Address to the Parliament on June 7, 1991”, *Sakartvelos Respublika* 114, no. 134 (1991): 3.

⁴⁰⁹ David Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism in Transformation of the Internal Ethnic Politics of Post-Soviet Georgia”, *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 83 (2014): 7-8.

Matsaberidze argues that Gamsakhurdia should be defined as an “emotional nationalist” or “nationalist of the mass rallies”. Gamsakhurdia seemed to have planned to change Georgia’s minority policy based on the exclusionist ethnic Georgian nationalism after he became the president.⁴¹⁰ This is shown in his speeches and in his statements on the civic integration of minorities. However, these moderate statements and approaches were not expressed institutionally during Gamsakhurdia’s presidency and they were not practiced as policies. Moreover, the situation of the autonomous provinces of Georgia, populated by national minorities such as Ossetians and Abkhazians, was aggravated in Gamsakhurdia’s era due to rising ethnic Georgian nationalism and Gamsakhurdia’s aggressive statements in the process of ascending to power.

But ironically, his policies caused the institutional development of ethnic nationalism among ethnic minorities who have autonomous provinces to avoid assimilation.⁴¹¹ While Gamsakhurdia, who appeared to adopt traditional Georgian nationalism which consists of the Georgian language, territory, Orthodox Christianity and democracy, headed to softening policies based on the exclusivist modern ethnic Georgian nationalism, he was also under the strong influence Georgian chauvinism based on Soviet titular nationalism and made use of it in the process of ascending to power. As a result, he was not able to liberate himself from the curse of exclusive post-independence ethnic Georgian nationalism.

4-2-2. Eduard Shevardnadze’s Era: Moderation and Keeping the Status-Quo in Minority Policy

As for Georgia’s independence, both Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze regarded it as the revival of the first Georgian Republic. In fact, though the 1978 Constitution of

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 8.

Soviet Georgia was valid when Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as the president, the alternate parliament of the Georgian National Congress, elected in 1990, tried to adopt the Constitution of the first Republic of Georgia.⁴¹² At last, the Georgian constitution of February 21st, 1921 was adopted officially as the valid constitution of Georgia in February 1992.⁴¹³ In February 1993, Shevardnadze suggested an extensive revision of the constitution of the first Republic of Georgia, proposing forming of a constitution commission to determine the new version of the 1921 Constitution.⁴¹⁴ Eventually, the revised constitution was approved by the Georgian Parliament and entered into force in 1995.⁴¹⁵ While territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality played a very important role in the social and political life in the Soviet era and minority policies had a special status in the Soviet political life, in the new constitution all the ethnic groups living in Georgia were defined equally as “Georgian citizens” and the articles related to minority groups did not exist in the new constitution.⁴¹⁶ Therefore, the Soviet hierarchy based on ethnicity appeared to have been abolished legally.

However, the revised version of the 1921 Constitution adopted in Shevardnadze’s period is less tolerant to minority groups than the original version and is less secular in terms of state-religion relationship due to the rising of ethnic Georgian nationalism

⁴¹² Darrell Slider, “Georgia”, in *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia: Country Studies*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1995), 218.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴¹⁵ Ayşegül Aydınğün and Ali Asker, “Gürcistan: De Jure Üniter, De Facto Parçalı [Georgia: De Jure Unified, De Facto Fragmented],” in *Bağımsızlıklarının Yirminci Yılında Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna: Türk Dilli Halklar-Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, eds. İsmail Aydınğün and Çiğdem Balım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2012), 164.

⁴¹⁶ ed. Stephen F. Jones, *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: the First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 350.

and the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁴¹⁷ For example, though the 1995 Constitution's main principle is non-discrimination and equality of people, it states that minority rights can be protected "as long as they do not contradict with Georgia's sovereignty, state structures, territorial integrity and political independence" in Article 38/2.⁴¹⁸ Besides, it highlights only Georgian as the state language at in Article 8 (but after a revision in 2002 Abkhazian was also recognized as Abkhazia's official language).

When Shevardnadze, who worked as the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union before, ascended to power in Georgia in 1993, Georgia was dealing with serious problems such as harsh ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, political chaos and the de facto independence of Adjara.⁴¹⁹ Besides, Georgia did not have sufficient political-financial power and capacity to resolve these problems by itself. Therefore Shevardnadze was forced to choose to keep the status-quo of Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia and did not interfere with the semi-independence of Adjara under Aslan Abashidze's leadership.⁴²⁰ He established relations with the government of South Ossetia under Lyudvig Chibirov's leadership and the commercial relations

⁴¹⁷ Asker and Kahraman, "Gürcistan'da Devletleşme," 39.

⁴¹⁸ The 14th chapter of the 1921 Constitution is about the rights of ethnic minorities. This chapter guaranteed the various cultural and socio-political rights of minority groups such as the rights of speaking, writing, teaching and publishing in minorities' mother languages and establishing national administration units. Besides, it protected these rights at higher level than the 1995 Constitution. Asker and Kahraman, "Gürcistan'da Devletleşme," 38.

⁴¹⁹ Suny, "Elite Transformation," 159-160.

⁴²⁰ Cüneyt Yenigün and Mehmet Ali Bolat, "Gürcistan: Yeni Dünyanın Doğu-Batı Sınırı [Georgia: the Border between East and West in the New World]", in *Dünya Çatışmaları: Çatışma Bölgeleri ve Konuları*, Vol 1, eds. Kemal İnat et al. (Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2010), 475.

were established between Georgia and South Ossetia. Moreover, Georgian-Russian trade was also often realized through South Ossetia.⁴²¹

Georgia's foreign policy toward Russia in Shevardnadze's era also reflected this situation. Shevardnadze was able to suppress Zviadists' rebellion in Western Georgia with the support of the Russian army.⁴²² Under this condition, he had to accept Russia's demands and decided to participate in the Community of Independent States (CIS) in October 1993.⁴²³ At the same time, he allowed Russia to continue using the military bases in Gudauta, Akhalkalaki, Batumi, and Vaziani in Georgia.⁴²⁴ Shevardnadze expressed the following about this situation: "the membership of the Community of Independent States is the ultimate way to preserve Georgia's territorial unity."⁴²⁵ In return, Georgia succeeded in receiving assurance from Russia for the resolution of the issue of its territorial unity. At the same time, Georgian-Russian economic and military relations developed in this era and Georgia began to obtain military support from Russia.⁴²⁶ In other words, it was necessary for

⁴²¹ For example, cf. *Yureru Taikoku: Putinno Roshia* [The Great Power Being Shaken: Putin's Russia] (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 2009), 181.

⁴²² Alexander Mikaberidze, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), 668.

⁴²³ Ali Faik Demir, "Türkiye'nin Güney Kafkasya'ya yönelik Dış Politikası [Turkish Foreign Policy towards the South Caucasus]", in *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 2004), 736.

⁴²⁴ Fatih M. Sayın and Valeri Modebadze, "Georgia's Pro-Western Path: Analysis of The Georgian Foreign Policy in The Post-Soviet Period," *AİBÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 14, no. 1 (2014): 344; Çelikpala, "Başarısız Devlet-Demokratik Model Ülke Sarmalında Gürcistan'ın 20 Yılı," in *Kafkasya'da Değişim Dönüşüm*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2012), 72.

⁴²⁵ "Tiflis'e Rus Askeri Üssü [The Russian Military Base in Tbilisi]", *Milliyet*, October 10, 1993, 20.

⁴²⁶ Selim Dursun, "İç Tehditler ve Dış Politika: Gürcistan Dış Politikası Örneği (1991-2003) [Internal Threats and Foreign Policy: Georgian Foreign Policy Case (1991-2003)]," *AÇÜ Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3, no. 2 (2017): 40-41.

Georgia to demand Russian support to solve the chaos and the issues of separatist regions due to the country's insufficiency of political and economic capacity. Therefore Shevardnadze's government softened attitudes toward Russia and was able to keep the status quo over the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with the Russian support.

Shevardnadze's attitudes towards keeping the status-quo were especially seen in his minority policies. Because he knew that Georgian nationalism caused harsh ethnic conflicts and chaos in Georgia and was afraid of Georgia's disintegration, Shevardnadze chose not to emphasize Georgian nationalism and did not apply coercive policies toward minority groups.⁴²⁷ He destroyed armed militant groups such as Mkhedrioni and ensured stability over minority regions.⁴²⁸ Shevardnadze gave up nationalist policies applied in Gamsakhurdia's era and did not enforce Georgian culture and language on minorities.⁴²⁹ In this era, the terms of "unity", "friendship" and "brotherhood" began to be used more widely in political discourses than the terms of "ungrateful guests", "migrants", "foreigners" and "stateless nations".⁴³⁰ Owing to his attitude, socio-cultural freedom was ensured for minority groups in Georgia to a certain level and the situation in Georgia's minority regions calmed down.

As for the education of minorities, Shevardnadze's government did not interfere with the education of minority groups in their languages very much. The Georgian language was not compulsory in the regions of minority groups such as Javakheti (in

⁴²⁷ Keisuke Wakizaka, "Borçalı'daki Türk Nüfusunun Gürcistan'a Entegrasyonunun Günümüzdeki Durumu [The Current Situation of the Integration of the Turkic Population in Kvemo-Kartli into Georgia]," *Yeni Türkiye*, no. 78 (2015): 202.

⁴²⁸ Jonathan Wheatley, "Obstacles Impeding the Regional Integration of the Kvemo Kartli Region of Georgia", *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 23 (2005): 14.

⁴²⁹ Broers, "Filling the Void," 294-295.

⁴³⁰ Şahismayıl Şəmmədoğlu, *Heydar Əliyev və Gürcüstan* [Heydar Aliyev and Georgia] (Baku: Etiket Nəşriyyatı, 2008), 39.

Armenian: Javakhk) and Kvemo-Kartli (in Azerbaijani or Turkish: Borchali) and almost all lessons were given in the languages of minorities. Since the Soviet era, the lingua-franca between Georgians and minority groups had been Russian.⁴³¹ Students in the Azerbaijani schools in Kvemo-Kartli and Javakheti's Armenian-language schools seldom learned the Georgian language. When we look at the textbooks used in these schools, they were imported from Armenia and Azerbaijan in Shevardnadze's era and textbooks published in Georgia were seldom used.⁴³² Therefore Armenians and Turks (Azeris) in Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli had closer relations with Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey than the Georgian central administration in terms of education.

On the other hand, Shevardnadze did not interfere with the structures of academic institutions. The Soviet-era Georgian intellectuals had kept their dominance over the Georgian mass-media and educational-research institutions.⁴³³ Thus, the discourses excluding minority groups in Georgia and negative image of minorities remained in the Georgian official historiography even in Shevardnadze's era.⁴³⁴ Due to this situation, the modern ethnic Georgian nationalism based on traditional Georgian nationalism which consists of the Georgian language, the Georgian Orthodox Christianity, and the Georgian territorial identity, Soviet titular nationalism and anti-Russianness remained in a firmly rooted way in the Georgian society. Minority groups, especially Armenians and Muslims, were excluded by the Georgian society. In terms of recruitment in government offices and political parties, priority was given

⁴³¹ Broers, "Filling the Void," 294.

⁴³² Broers, "Containing the Nation, Building the State: Coping with Nationalism, Minorities and Conflict in Post-Soviet Georgia" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, the University of London, the School of Oriental and African Studies, 2004) 195.

⁴³³ Broers, "Filling the Void," 285.

⁴³⁴ Wheatly, "Obstacles Impeding," 19-20.

to Georgians. Minority groups had insufficient chances of success in the Georgian state and society.⁴³⁵ Under such conditions, the relations between Georgians and minorities were not improved in Shevardnadze's era and the economic, social and political integration of minority groups into the Georgian state and society was obstructed for a long time.

Indeed, Georgia's policy of not interfering to minority groups' education and socio-political life resulted in the exclusion of minority groups in Georgia from the Georgian state and society. Turks (Azeris) in Kvemo-Kartli and Armenians in Javakheti do not know the Georgian language and culture well. Because of this situation, minorities' opportunities for working in government offices and private companies were completely limited and the ratio of unemployment among minority groups was much higher than that of Georgians. Therefore many Turks (Azeris) went abroad to states such as Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey for work while Armenians in Javakheti chose to go to Russia.⁴³⁶ In this way, Armenians in Javakheti and Turks (Azeris) in Kvemo-Kartli developed closer relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey, and lived in a very different system from Georgia.

While Ossetians in Kakheti and Chechen-Kists had similar problems like Armenians and Turks (Azeris), their exclusion from the Georgian socio-political life is attributed to the lack of state control over the regions where they live rather than Shevardnadze's minority policies. The Georgian language is used as the lingua-franca among Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia and the textbooks used in schools in Shida-Kartli and Pankisi Gorge are written in Georgian. Therefore they are linguistically and culturally more integrated to the Georgian state and society than other minority groups. However, Shevardnadze's government did not have sufficient capability to invest in infrastructure and to have control all over the

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁴³⁶ Wheatley, "The Integration of National Minorities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli Provinces of Georgia," *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 44 (2009), 52.

country. It was not capable of resolving the isolation of Pankisi and Lagodekhi, of controlling these regions and of applying effective policies of education, security and economy to people in these regions. Because of this situation, these regions were the poorest regions in Georgia and Ossetians in Kakheti and Chechen-Kists were excluded from the Georgian socio-political life. Due to political and economic hardship, they appeared to be abandoned by the Georgian state. For example, the schools in the Ossetian villages of Areshperani and Pona continued to exist as Ossetian-Russian schools and lessons were generally given in Russian. The lessons in Ossetian language abolished by Gamsakhurdia also began to be taught again.⁴³⁷ Therefore many Ossetians in Lagodekhi Region cannot read and write in Georgian well while understanding and speaking it fluently. Also in this era, Ossetians in Lagodekhi region often chose higher education in South Ossetia and Russia.⁴³⁸ In this way, they preserved close relations with North and South Ossetia as well as Tbilisi. Regarding Chechen-Kists, the foreign Islamic groups intensified their activities in Pankisi, making use of the chaos in Georgia and the Georgian government was not able to take measures to prevent such activities. Therefore the number of youth studying in the Arab countries instead of Georgia increased and they came to have closer relations with the Arab states than Georgia and gradually moved away from the Georgian socio-political structure.⁴³⁹ Besides, as mentioned earlier, the flow of Chechen refugees in Pankisi accelerated this tendency and a different system from Georgia was formed in Pankisi in this era. As we understand from this situation, minority groups in Georgia were able to preserve their cultures, languages, and identities easily due to the lack of state capacity and outreach. But at the same time, these minority groups had been excluded from the Georgian state and society for a long time.

⁴³⁷ Sordia, "Ossetians in Georgia" 12; Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁴³⁸ Author's interview with Eliko on 3 November 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁴³⁹ *Political Aspects of Islam in Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Strategiur Gamokvlevata Institutu, 2013), 67-68.

On the other hand, Shevardnadze had attempted to strengthen Georgia's relations with the Western states such as the United States and EU as well as Turkey especially since the second half of the 1990s in order to get away from Russia and to follow an independent foreign policy. In the second half of the 1990s, Georgia developed its military relations with the United States and applied for the official membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which Russia perceived as threatening.⁴⁴⁰

Together with strengthening relations with the Western states, Shevardnadze made efforts to develop civic elements in the Georgian political life. He decided to introduce a Western type of political system to manage ethnic diversity. The system proposed by him was federalism and wider political autonomy would be given to Abkhazia within Georgia. He claimed that the recognition of the rights of minorities was absolutely necessary for the nation-state building of the Georgian state and that Georgia needed to "take measures against the containment of extremist nationalism" in order to transform into a civic nation-state and to establish an open society.⁴⁴¹ When Shevardnadze established his new political party, its name was "The Union of Citizens" and this development implied that Georgia tried to resolve the issue of ethnic nationalism and to transform it into a civic nation-state with plans to integrate non-Georgian minorities.⁴⁴² During his second inauguration ceremony, he stressed the civic-patriotic element in Georgian national identity rather than the religious elements. For example, Shevardnadze visited the Holy Mount Mtatsminda in Tbilisi instead of Svetitskhoveli Church in Mtskheta which he visited after his first inauguration ceremony because Mtsatsminda have patriotic value and its feature is comparatively secular while Svetitskhoveli Church is a spiritual symbol for modern

⁴⁴⁰ Dursun, "İç Tehditler ve Dış Politika," 42.

⁴⁴¹ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 8.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

Georgian ethnic nationalism.⁴⁴³ Moreover, Shevardnadze emphasized that national rapprochement was ensured in Georgia after the Civil War's end in 1993⁴⁴⁴ and that it was important for Georgia to settle the experience of "The European Charter on the Local Self-Governance" in its legislative body when he made his second inauguration speech.⁴⁴⁵ It would encourage civil society in Georgia to be formed and would recognize rights of all religions and national minorities inside the Georgian state.⁴⁴⁶ The purpose of all these policies was changing Georgian national identity to a civic one. In short, the attempts for changing Georgia to a civic nation-state and integrate minority groups into the Georgian state and society had existed in Shevardnadze's era and the roadmap of this process had already planned before the Rose Revolution in 2003.

However, owing to the political and economic problems in Georgia, Shevardnadze was not able to apply concrete policies for civic nation-state building and for the integration of minorities during his presidency. Therefore he was forced to keep the status quo in terms of minority policies and their integration into Georgia was delayed to an important degree.

4-2-3. The Rise of the Georgian Orthodox Church after Georgia's Independence

Georgian Orthodox Church has played a very important role in Georgia throughout its history and continues to affect the identity of the Georgian state and society. Therefore, when we focus on Georgia's civic nation-state building and secularization policies, we must not ignore the process of the transformation of state-church relations.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

In fact, the ideology which was the basis of the struggle of Georgian nationalist intellectuals such as Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava against the Soviet communist regime was Christianity, especially Georgian Orthodox Church; thus they strengthened relations with its officials.⁴⁴⁷ Their efforts came to fruition in Mikhail Gorbachev's era, particularly after 1989. In fact, the Georgian Orthodox Church also participated actively in the Georgian national movement under the leadership of Ilia the Second, who has been its Patriarch since 1977, at the end of the 1980s. In early April 1989, Ilia the Second addressed directly to people during the protest of Georgians against Abkhazians' anti-Georgian national movement.⁴⁴⁸

On March 3rd, 1990, the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church was recognized and approved by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople again. This event and Georgia's independence in 1991 contributed to the revival and rise of the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁴⁴⁹

While the first Republic of Georgia dominated by Mensheviks between 1918 and 1921 was comparatively secular, Gamsakhurdia's regime had very close relations with the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁴⁵⁰ According to Gamsakhurdia, the Church is the symbol of the unity of Georgia and a crucial element of the Georgian national identity.⁴⁵¹ In fact, the Georgian government clearly supported the efforts of the Georgian Orthodox Church. For example, Gamsakhurdia appeared with Ilia the Second in front of people. Furthermore, he stressed that the Georgian people were in

⁴⁴⁷ Rapp Jr., "Georgian Christianity," 152-153.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

the process of awakening “religious ideology and national consciousness”⁴⁵² and that the historical and traditional unity between the Church and state in Georgia was expressed through the close ties between “the Georgian national movement and religious confession”.⁴⁵³ In this way, while Gamsakhurdia guaranteed “the freedom of confession and religious activities of all Georgian citizens”, he expressed that Georgians’ existing movement was both national and religious and that the Georgian Orthodox Church needed to act as the basis of Georgia’s socio-political life. Moreover, he referred to his goal to declare the Georgian Orthodox Church as Georgia’s state religion.⁴⁵⁴ He even mentioned that Georgia was the Holy Land of Virgin Mary, who followed Jesus Christ.⁴⁵⁵

The chaos which occurred in Georgia after Gamsakhurdia’s resignation in 1992 also strengthened the dominance of the Georgian Orthodox Church over Georgians’ spiritual values. The Church succeeded in resolving the anomie⁴⁵⁶ and filling the blank of religious sphere⁴⁵⁷ in Georgian society. In this success, the mechanism of “spiritual fatherhood” played a quite important role.⁴⁵⁸ The mechanism of “spiritual

⁴⁵² *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia*, 18.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁵⁵ Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism,” 11.

⁴⁵⁶ The term “anomie” means a condition in which society can provide little moral guidance to people. Under this condition, social ties between the community and an individual break down. About this term, cf. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. George Simpson (London: Rourledge, 1952).

⁴⁵⁷ About this term, cf. Pierre Bourdieu, “Genése et Structure du Champ Religieux [Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field]”, *Revue Française de Sociologie* 13, no. 2 (1971): 295-334.

⁴⁵⁸ Ayşegül Aydıngün, “Gürcistan’da Din, Kimlik ve Müslüman Azınlıklar [Religion, Identity and Muslim Minorities in Georgia],” in *Gürcistan’daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir (Ankara: AVİM, 2016), 7.

fatherhood” existing in Orthodox Christianity is based on the faith that the realization and liberation of the individual are possible only under the guidance of a clergyman.⁴⁵⁹ During the Georgian Civil War which continued until 1993, this mechanism came to take over social function, to control individuals’ lives and to direct them.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, the Church obtained the capability of manipulating an important part of the Georgian society and increased its effect, especially on the Georgian youth. In this way, the fact that the Church provided the Georgian people with the spiritual basis and ethical norms increased its importance in the Georgian society.

The good relationship between the Georgian government and the Georgian Orthodox Church had continued even after Shevardnadze ascension to power in 1993. Ilia the Second, the Patriarch of Georgian Orthodox Church took part in his two inauguration ceremonies as well as Gamsakhurdia’s. His participation in these ceremonies has a symbolic significance.⁴⁶¹ Shevardnadze made efforts to unite people under a secular civic national identity and to accelerate the separation of church and state. But he needed the support of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which is dominant over the spiritual structure of the Georgian society in order to strengthen his legitimacy. In his era, the Church increased its influence on Georgia’s political life while the Georgian government tried to abide by secularism and build a civic national identity. On the other hand, religious minorities such as Muslims in Georgia were excluded from the Georgian state and society to an important degree.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶¹ Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism,” 10.

At the same time, Shevardnadze was the president who established the custom of visiting Svetitskhoveli Church after his inauguration speech and this came to be regarded as an important element for starting a presidency.⁴⁶² He added a symbolic importance to this visit and characterized this visit as “the president’s coming close to God in the process of managing the state”.⁴⁶³ He even established some analogies between the stories in the Old Testament such as the Book of Job and the history of post-Soviet Georgia.⁴⁶⁴ Shevardnadze stressed not only the role of the Georgian state in the formation of civil society in Georgia but also the joint efforts of the state and Church in civic nation-state building and the role of Christianity in the future restoration of Georgia’s unity.⁴⁶⁵ Although Shevardnadze tried to make his second inauguration ceremony as secular as possible, it showed that the Georgian political life was under the strong influence of the Church. According to the Constitution of Georgia, his second inauguration ceremony would be realized on April 30th, 2000. This date was the Easter day in 2000 and this ceremony had a symbolic and religious importance at the same time.⁴⁶⁶ Shevardnadze emphasized that the period between 1993 and 2000 was the period of penance for Georgia and the Georgian people and that Georgia would not become an important bridge between Europe and Asia with the help of the God.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, he said the following: “it is most painful for the President and the Patriarch that the Georgian people have not been united yet and the

⁴⁶² Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶³ *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia (1991-2004)*, 30.

⁴⁶⁴ Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism,” 11.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶⁷ *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia (1991-2004)*, 55.

issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have not been resolved”.⁴⁶⁸ Shevardnadze thanked Ilia the Second for organizing liturgy in Svetitskhoveli for celebrating his inauguration.⁴⁶⁹ As for the Georgian society, after the independence of Georgia, a number of monasteries and churches have been rebuilt or restored, often with the financial support of the Georgian state or wealthy individuals. In this way, the Georgian Orthodox Church increased its social influence on the Georgian government and society.

The increasing power of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgia’s political life and the Georgian society was reflected also in the laws of the country. For example, Article 9 of the Constitution of Georgia emphasizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Georgian history.⁴⁷⁰ Due to this article, the superiority of the Georgian Orthodox Church to other religious groups was recognized legally. On October 14th, 2002, Shevardnadze and Ilia the Second signed the Constitutional Agreement (Concordat) in Mtskheta. This Concordat determined the status of the Georgian Orthodox Church and its relations with the Georgian state further.⁴⁷¹ It recognized the ownership of all churches and monasteries by the Georgian Orthodox Church, exempted its clergymen from military conscription and the Church from paying certain taxes. Additionally, the Concordat grants Georgian Orthodox Church the status of a special consultative organ in government and enables the Church to interfere with education.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁶⁹ Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism,” 11.

⁴⁷⁰ Prasad, “Georgia’s Muslim Community,” 18.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷² Thomas Liles, “Islam and Religious Transformation in Adjara”, *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 57 (2012): 8.

On the other hand, this document led the other religious groups to be excluded from the Georgian state. As of 2002, religious organizations could register only as a non-governmental organization, a non-profit one or a charity one. Therefore they did not have the legal status of a religious organization officially and no rights were given to them. A number of religious minorities, including the Muslim groups, denied registering as such.⁴⁷³ Besides, this concordat caused discrimination and intolerance against religious minorities to increase and due to this situation, the prejudice against religious minorities transformed into attacks against these groups.⁴⁷⁴ This was criticized by international public opinion as well. For example, the United States Helsinki Commission members argued that “it creates an unbalanced playing field against other religious groups”.⁴⁷⁵

However, Shevardnadze tried to express that he takes care of other religious minorities and secularism. It is noteworthy that his inauguration ceremonies were organized in front of the building of the parliament of Georgia instead of Svetitskhoveli, the main cathedral of the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁴⁷⁶ Avtandil Demetrashvili, who is the ex-chairman of the Constitutional Commission, argued the following: “If a person with Muslim origins would win the presidential elections, the presidential oath could not be delivered in the church.”⁴⁷⁷ That is, the president of Georgia expressed that he respected the secularity and Georgia’s all religious confessions and that he intended to build Georgia as a civic nation-state. Furthermore, the purpose of Shevardnadze’s visit to Svetitskhoveli Cathedral after his first

⁴⁷³ Prasad, “Georgia’s Muslim Community,” 18.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Matsaberidze, “The Role of Civic Nationalism,” 10.

⁴⁷⁷ *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia (1991-2004)*, 8.

inauguration speech evoked Georgia's patriotic heroes and honorable history and strengthened patriotism rather than religious activities.⁴⁷⁸ Shevardnadze's not visiting Svetitskhoveli during his second inauguration ceremony was an important sign showing the roadmap of the new state-church relations in Georgia.⁴⁷⁹ Since that time, no president of Georgia took part in religious ceremonies while the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church participated in all inauguration ceremonies of the President of Georgia. This development can be evaluated as an important step towards the construction of a Georgian civic national culture and identity which include various ethnic and religious groups.⁴⁸⁰ In this way, Shevardnadze tried to draw a roadmap so that Georgia could be a secular civic nation-state. However, it was necessary for him to obtain the support of the Georgian Orthodox Church, having a great influence on the Georgian society, in order to strengthen his legitimacy. Therefore Shevardnadze made close relations with the Church. In this way, the Church increased its influence to an important degree on Georgia's politics in his era, while the Georgian government tried to build a secular civic nation-state. In this process, the religious minorities in Georgia were excluded from the Georgian socio-political life.

4-3. Nation-State Building and Minority Policy since the Rose Revolution in 2003

4-3-1. The Transformation of Georgia from Ethnic to Civic Nation-State since the Rose Revolution

The Rose Revolution in 2003 brought a new dynamism to Georgia's nation-state building policies and to its relations with the Church and its minority policies. The most important mission of Mikhail Saakashvili, who became the new President of

⁴⁷⁸ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 10.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

Georgia after the revolution, was restoring Georgia's territorial integrity. In the process of ascending to power, he used the ethnic Georgian nationalism in order to obtain support from the nationalists against Shevardnadze. Before the parliamentary election in 2003, Saakashvili called people to join the demonstration from Zugdidi to Tbilisi. Zugdidi was Zviad Gamsakhurdia's hometown and the ethnic Georgian nationalism had a great influence especially on this city. Besides, many inner displaced people from Abkhazia still live there. Therefore, the demonstration from Zugdidi was a political performance which emphasized Shevardnadze's failure and inspired the ethnic Georgian nationalism.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, November 23rd, the date of the Rose Revolution had an important meaning. This day was the day of *Giorgoba*, the anniversary of Saint Giorgi, who is defined as Georgia's patron. On November 23rd, 1988, Gamsakhurdia held a large-scale demonstration in order to show Georgian nationalists' power.⁴⁸² In 2004, Saakashvili succeeded in connecting the Autonomous Republic of Adjara directly to the Georgian central government and this situation led the intensification of the Georgian Orthodox Church's activities in the region.

Even after Saakashvili became the president in 2004, he often used the ethnic Georgian nationalism. For example, he and Viktor Yushchenko, who was the president of Ukraine at that time, held the joint camp of Georgian and Ukrainian youth and Saakashvili named it "the camp of young Crusaders".⁴⁸³ In particular, his attitude against Abkhazia and South Ossetia showed that Saakashvili's government continued to use the ethnic Georgian nationalism in order to strengthen its position. In the beginning of 2004, Saakashvili visited South Ossetia's region dominated by Georgia. On July 2004, an armed conflict occurred near Tskhinvali between Georgia

⁴⁸¹ Maeda, *Gurujia Gendai-shi*, 35.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 43.

and South Ossetia.⁴⁸⁴ In 2006, Saakashvili sent the Georgian police force to the Kodor Valley in Abkhazia and the Georgian government recovered its dominance over the region. He named this region “Upper Abkhazia” and put the exiled government of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic in the Kodor Valley.⁴⁸⁵ In the beginning of 2008, Saakashvili send a message to Abkhazia from the Chkharta village in the Kodor Valley: “We look down on destroyed empty Sukhumi from the shining Chkharta village”.⁴⁸⁶ The governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia reacted very harshly against Georgia and tension between Georgia and Russia escalated. This situation finally caused the Georgian-Russian War in 2008. In this way, Saakashvili actively used the ethnic Georgian nationalism and anti-Russian attitude in order to obtain the support of Georgian public.

On the other hand, Saakashvili, who studied in the United States before, knew the United States’ social and political structure as a multiethnic civic nation-state. Thus, he considered that the nation-state building based on ethnic Georgian nationalism is ineffective in Georgia, where various ethnic and religious groups live like the United States. In other words, Saakashvili planned to define those who live inside the Georgian territory as “the citizens of Georgia” instead of ethnic “Georgian”. In order to bring stability to Georgia and advance the nation-state building process, it was important for him to get support from the minority groups.⁴⁸⁷

Due to this fact, ethnicity policies were planned in Saakashvili’s era in a more detailed way and the symbolic importance of ethnic politics also increased. He was the first President of Georgia who officially declared that the Georgians were the oldest European people and that the Georgian state has an important role in the

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁸⁷ Wakizaka, “Borçalı’daki Türk,” 204.

European civilization. Thus, in his inaugural speech, he defined every Georgian citizen as equal members of the Georgian state and Georgia's children, not discriminating people by ethnicity such as Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Chechen-Kist, Armenian, Jewish, Turk (Azeri) and so on. His speech was based on the concept of the civil union which forms the European mentality.⁴⁸⁸ He often referred to the importance of the transformation of the Georgian national identity into a civic one during his presidency. Saakashvili stressed the following on another occasion:⁴⁸⁹ "It is our responsibility to maintain Georgia, our heritage from our fathers. Various ethnic and religious groups exist in this state." At the same time, he explained the following about the definition of the term "Georgian" in 2007:⁴⁹⁰ "the nation and the nationality are only one – Georgian, and it consists of Georgians, Azeri-Georgians, Abkhaz-Georgians, Ossetian-Georgians, Armenian-Georgians, and so on." That is, according to Saakashvili, the term "Georgian" means those who live inside the Georgian borders and this term includes various ethnic groups.

This tendency emphasizing the civic-patriotic elements of the Georgian national identity such as the Georgian history and language is seen in the visits after his inauguration ceremony. He visited the tomb of David the Builder at Gelati Monastery instead of Svetitskhoveli Church in 2004. In fact, this visit was the effort of substituting the spiritual-religious elements of the inauguration ceremony with the patriotic-civic ones.⁴⁹¹ Saakashvili's visit to David the Builder's grave and his frequent reference to him and liberal forbearers such as Ilia Chavchavadze shows

⁴⁸⁸ *Inauguration Speeches of the Presidents of Georgia (1991-2004)*, 5.

⁴⁸⁹ Christofer Berglund and Timothy Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation: From Ethnic Fragmentation to Civic Integration?," in *25 Years of Independent Georgia: Achievements and Unfinished Projects*, ed. Gia Nodia (Tbilisi: Ilia State University Press, 2016), 33.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁹¹ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 11.

that he tried to make Georgian national identity on the basis of Georgia's honored history and linguistics instead of ethnicity and religion.⁴⁹² His motto "Forward to David the Builder" reminded people to remember King David the Builder's deeds of uniting the Georgian lands and various people in spite of many difficulties.⁴⁹³ Through referring to them, Saakashvili tried to emphasize that the Georgian national identity is based on not ethnic origin but the Georgian language and all Georgian speakers are equal as Georgian citizens.⁴⁹⁴

We can also see the efforts to foster Georgian national identity as a civic one in the change of Georgia's state symbols. After the Rose Revolution in 2003, the state flag, state emblem and the national anthem of Georgia, which was used in the period of the first Republic as well as in Gamsakhurdia's and Shevardnadze's eras, were replaced with new ones. A five-cross red-white new flag of Georgia used by the Kingdom of Georgia in the Middle Ages was accepted as the country's new flag in order to emphasize civic patriotism as well as religious elements. Georgian national anthem was also changed from *Dideba* (Glory) to *Tavisupleba* (Liberty). Moreover, Georgia's state emblem was changed to the one featuring the state motto "*Dzala Ertobashia* (Strength is in unity)" with the portrait of Saint George.⁴⁹⁵

Together with the policy of emphasizing civic patriotism, Georgia's policy of stressing its close ties with European culture also continued. EU's flag and Georgia's new flag were erected in front of the parliament side by side. This situation reinforced that Georgia defines itself as part of Europe, one of the oldest European states and that it aspires to become a member of EU. In fact, the Georgian

⁴⁹² Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 32.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

government in Saakashvili's era planned and applied certain policies in order to develop civic nationalism and to be integrated into Western society along with the changes of discourses.⁴⁹⁶

In this context, large-scale reforms were realized during Saakashvili's era in order to develop Georgia's political, legal and administrative structure to the level of the Western states. Together with increase in public servants' salaries with the support of international donors, his regime fired or arrested corrupt officers and those who have relations with mafia bosses. A number of licenses and permits were abolished because state officers use them to accumulate bribes. The tax system was simplified and electronic payment systems were introduced to prevent officials from demanding or offering bribes. Furthermore, the state control over civil servants was tightened.⁴⁹⁷ Due to these efforts, crimes, bribery, and corruption decreased to an important degree, the education system was improved and large-scale projects for the development of infrastructure were also initiated.⁴⁹⁸ In this way, Georgia's situation has progressed so much that democratic elections could be organized and state projects could be realized smoothly.

Besides, the younger generation of intellectuals began to be dominant in Georgia's bureaucracy, education, science and politics in this era. They increased their effects on the private sector and the independent mass media.⁴⁹⁹ While the Soviet-era intelligentsia chooses to use Russian, these "younger" intellectuals tend to use English as their foreign language, adopt the theories of Western social science and in

⁴⁹⁶ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 9.

⁴⁹⁷ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 31-32.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁹⁹ Broers, "Filling the Void," 286.

some cases graduate from the universities in the West.⁵⁰⁰ Georgia's new intellectuals are generally skeptical against the Georgian exclusive ethnocentrism which the Georgian "traditional" intelligentsia defends.⁵⁰¹ They support the values of liberal democracy such as pluralism and equality, accept that modern ethnic identity is more comprehensive than the traditional one and criticize the mythicizing and justification of ethnic conflicts. Besides, they gained the experience of activism in non-governmental organizations and of mobilizing various groups in the Rose Revolution.⁵⁰² Unlike the Soviet-era intelligentsia, Georgia's new intellectuals were much more enthusiastic to work with the representatives of non-Georgian people.⁵⁰³ Under this circumstance, these "younger" intellectuals were capable of creating a dialogue between the representatives of various ethnic groups.⁵⁰⁴ In this way, Saakashvili's regime succeeded in getting support from the non-Georgian groups. This situation prepared a basis for the integration of minority groups into the Georgian state and accelerated the process of making the new inclusive civic Georgian national identity.

Although some self-serving and ethnocentric accounts of the Georgian history remained in the textbooks of the Georgian history, the progress of adopting the civic Georgian national identity is reflected on the historiography. In fact, officials began to substitute textbooks with more civic and less ethnocentric ones and regulations were adopted so that textbooks could not be written in a prejudiced way.⁵⁰⁵ For

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 286.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 286.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 287.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵⁰⁵ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 36.

example, the phrases which insult or humiliate Turks and Muslims were decreased in the textbooks of the Georgian history and the expressions on non-Georgian minorities generally got softer and more objective.⁵⁰⁶ When we conducted a survey in Tbilisi in 2013, though negative image against the Muslim states and Muslims still existed in the Georgian historiography, it was proved that this negative image became more objective and softened.⁵⁰⁷ In this way, the process of the new civic Georgian national identity building advanced to an important degree and the structure of the Georgian national identity gradually transformed.

Despite the fact that the opposition won the Georgian parliamentary elections in 2012 and Saakashvili was forced to resign from presidency in 2013, the ruling coalition “the Georgian Dream” under Bidzina Ivanishvili’s leadership continued the civic nation-state building project and had close relations with the Western states. Giorgi Margvelashvili also stressed that the process of the building of a European-style new political culture in Georgia would continue in his inauguration speech. He said that the Europeanization of Georgia’s political culture would not be difficult because Georgia is a European state in terms of individual consciousness and is a part of the Western civilization in terms of mentality.⁵⁰⁸ He also stressed that:⁵⁰⁹

The citizens of Georgia residing in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – which would be included in the building process of democratic Georgia and the state would ensure their ethnic and cultural identity, as well as political rights.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Keisuke Wakizaka, “Sovyet Sonrası Gürcistan’daki.”

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ “The Inaugural Speech of President Giorgi Margvelashvili of 17 November, 2013,” *Sakartvelos Prezidenti*, accessed February 21, 2014, <https://www.president.gov.ge/ge/President/Inauguration>.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

According to him, all people residing in Georgia are the member of the democratic civic Georgian state and their identity and rights are guaranteed under the constitutional system of Georgia. Therefore, Georgia will obtain the position of the bridge and midpoint between Europe and Asia. Margvelashvili stressed that Georgia's pro-Western tendency and civic nation-state building policy would continue after Saakashvili's era and these policies still continue.

Because the ruling coalition "the Georgian Dream" is based on criticism against Saakashvili's party, this coalition includes also some ethnic-nationalist elements such as the Conservative Party of Georgia, which support the ethnic Georgian nationalism and are critical against Saakashvili's nation-state building policy, although their influence is comparatively weak. These nationalists' existence inside the ruling party made minority groups uneasy. The report of the Council of Europe about the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities explains the situation of minorities in Georgia as such:⁵¹⁰ "there is an increase in hate speech against religious and national minorities". At the same time, these cases have not been disclosed or have been registered biasedly by the police. Due to this situation, minority groups' trust in the Georgian state decreased to an important degree.⁵¹¹ After "the Georgian Dream" ascended to power in 2012, it is observed that the Georgian ethnocentrism rose again in a social dimension.

Nevertheless, "the Georgian Dream" also stresses that the full membership of EU is Georgia's long-term project and is continuing to strengthen relations with the Western states and developing a civil society which encourages the Georgian national identity to transform into a more inclusive civic one. In this context, the Georgian government has been continuing to develop policies depending on the rules of civic integration based on European standards. And the Georgian language has

⁵¹⁰ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 42.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 42.

been often used as the main instrument for the development of the Georgian civic national identity and for the civic integration of minority groups in Georgia, especially since the Rose Revolution in 2003. Civic nation-state building project contributed to the civic integration of minorities and the circumstances of Georgia's all citizens were improved to an important degree.

Another important topic in Georgia's civic nation-state building is the transformation of state-church relations, that is, the secularization of the Georgian state. Although the Georgian government tries to transform the Georgian national identity from an ethnic-religious one to a secular civic one, it is not deniable that the Georgian Orthodox Church is counted as one of the most important elements of the Georgian national identity. In fact, the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church on the Georgian socio-political life continued to increase also after the Rose Revolution and both Saakashvili and Margvelashvili emphasized the importance of Christianity in the integration of Georgia.⁵¹²

Besides, we can see the practical effects of the Georgian Orthodox Church from the fact that there are unconstitutional relations between the Georgian state and the Church continuing also in Saakashvili's era. Particularly, despite the 9th article of the Constitution of Georgia's prohibition, the financial support of the state to the Church has reached serious levels recently. The amount of this support was about \$15 million in 2009. In this year, the Georgian government gave ten luxury cars to the Georgian Orthodox Church as gifts.⁵¹³ The financial support to the Georgian Orthodox Church given by the Georgian government is still continuing⁵¹⁴ and such

⁵¹² Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 10.

⁵¹³ Molly Corso, "Georgia: Church-State Separation Becomes an Issue Amid Government Financial Support for Georgian Orthodox Church", *EurasiaNet*, accessed April 7, 2009 http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav_040609b.shtml.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. "State Budget Assigned Sums for Spending Organizations", *Parliamentary Budget Office of Georgia*, accessed December 14, 2011, http://www.pbo.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=59.

unofficial relations bring the state some benefits. Because the Georgian society recognizes the moral authority of the Georgian Orthodox Church, the good relations of the state with the Church strengthen the legitimacy of the state.⁵¹⁵ The opposition parties in Georgia also try to keep good relations with the Church⁵¹⁶. On the other hand, if the Georgian Orthodox Church can mobilize its supporters against the Georgian government, the state-church relations can harm the state itself to an important degree. Therefore officials hesitate to criticize the Georgian Orthodox Church and to change its legal status. The support for the repair of disputed properties such as Armenian churches is not given due to the pressure of the Georgian Orthodox Church. And, teachers still continue to proselytize in public schools.⁵¹⁷ Besides, radical religious groups such as *the Union of Orthodox Parents* and *the Society of Saint David the Builder* engage in actions in order to oppose the separation of religion from the state and threaten the freedom of confession.⁵¹⁸ Thus, Georgia's civic nation-state building project and secularization initiated by Saakashvili did not advance as he planned.

However, after the Rose Revolution, some progress was still seen in terms of the secularization of Georgia. For example, Saakashvili arrested those who realized illegal attacks against "anti-traditional" denominations and made efforts in order to enable religious associations to be registered as legal entities of public law.⁵¹⁹ In April 2005, the General Education Law was prepared and compulsory religious

⁵¹⁵ Liles, "Islam and Religious Transformation," 8.

⁵¹⁶ "Opposition Parties Condemn Religious Groups' Legal Status Law," *Civil.ge*, accessed July 6, 2011, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23708>.

⁵¹⁷ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 35.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

education in schools was abolished on the basis of article 13/3, which prohibits the proselytization of teachers.⁵²⁰ Besides, the 18th article of this law prohibits religious symbols in primary educational institutions and stresses that the lessons of religion can be given privately when students demand religious education and that only volunteer clergymen are able to teach these lessons.⁵²¹

In 2011, other religious institutes such as the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Administration of Georgian Muslims and the Union of Georgian Muslims were recognized as legal entities in public law and these institutions legally obtained the rights which the Georgian Orthodox Church had since 2002.⁵²² In this way, while the Georgian Orthodox Church keeps its advantage in the Georgian socio-political life, the legal status of religious minority groups was improved to an important degree.

Giorgi Margvelashvili generally followed the secularization policy continuing since 2003 and emphasized that the confessions and religious activities of everyone living in Georgia would be guaranteed under the Constitution of Georgia while arguing that the Concordat between the state and the Church needed to be preserved.⁵²³

Especially, the establishment of the State Agency on Religious Affairs is the most important step for Georgia's secularization and the freedom of the confessions of minority groups. It was established on February 19th, 2014 as a consultative institution under the Prime Minister's Office. While this agency has the authority of

⁵²⁰ Hazar Ege Gürsoy and Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, "Post-Sovyet Gürcistan'da Azınlık Hakları: Ulusal ve Uluslararası Mevzuat, Devlet Politikası ve Resmi Görüş [Minorities' Rights in Post-Soviet Georgia: Internal and International Legislation, State Policy and Official Opinion]," in *Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset*, eds. Ayşegül Aydınğün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir (Ankara: AVİM, 2016), 93-94.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 94.

⁵²² Ibid., 93.

⁵²³ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 11.

recommending legislation and policy, it is not in charge of enforcing them.⁵²⁴ The main mission of this agency is to spend money allocated from the state budget in order to recoup the loss of religious groups. At the same time, this agency manages religious education and resolves property issues.⁵²⁵ With the establishment of this agency, religious groups only apply to one institution and process of the resolution of problems of religious groups was facilitated.⁵²⁶ Besides, this agency published a report “The Strategy of the Development of Religious Policy of the Georgian State” on February 2015, which emphasizes that the State Agency on Religious Affairs will work together with the Georgian government on the issues of preparing a general law on religion, preventing the radicalization of Islam, improving religious education, determining the principles on the ownership and construction of places of worship.⁵²⁷ In this way, the status of Islam was improved to an important degree in this era and the distance between the Georgian state and religious minority groups has been minimized, at least in legal and political dimensions.

But as for the implementation of laws, the disadvantage of religious minorities against the Georgian Orthodox Church still exists. In fact, after the Georgian Dream ascended to power, it is reported that efforts of promoting the Georgian Orthodox Church and attempts of stigmatizing those who do not follow it accelerated.⁵²⁸ At the same time, incidents related to discrimination such as hate speech and violence against ethnic and religious minority groups have increased after 2012 and the

⁵²⁴ Gürsoy and Tulum, “Post-Sovyet Gürcistan’da Azınlık Hakları,” 96.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

⁵²⁷ *Cf. Ibid.*, 97-99.

⁵²⁸ Berglund and Blauvelt, “Redefining the Nation,” 42.

integration of minority groups did not advance as quickly as the Georgian government had planned.⁵²⁹

As for the State Agency on Religious Affairs, some non-governmental organizations criticize that the state agency on religious affairs follows security-oriented (anti-terrorism) policy and that it views religious topics as security issues and aims to get the religious groups under the control of the Georgian government.⁵³⁰ Tolerance and Diversity Institute, a Georgian non-governmental organization, also published a report and emphasized that the security-oriented policy of this agency can cause the restriction of the autonomy of the religious institutions of religious minorities, and the breach of impartiality on religious affairs by state.⁵³¹

However, due to efforts to create a civic Georgian national identity and to include religious minorities into the Georgian socio-political structure continuing since the Saakashvili's period, the situation of minority groups in Georgia became much more relaxed than the period before the Rose Revolution in spite of the unwillingness of some parts of the Georgian society. It is certain that there are many obstacles and difficulties against the civic nation-state building and secularization in the current Georgian state. But Georgia's civic-nation state building policy has been continuing as of today in spite of the critical position of Georgia's current ruling party against

⁵²⁹ "In Georgia, Soccer Fun Leads To Probe After Attack On Black Students", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-african-soccer-players-racist-attack/29154993.html>.

⁵³⁰ Alter Kahraman and Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, "Post-Sovyet Gürcistan'da Azınlık Hakları: Uluslararası Örgütler ile Uluslararası ve Ulusal Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Bakışı [The Minorities' Rights in Post-Soviet Georgia: the Views of International Organizations and International and Domestic Non-Governmental Organizations]," in *Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Toplulukları: Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset*, eds. Ayşegül Aydıngün, Ali Asker and Aslan Yavuz Şir (Ankara: AVİM, 2016), 145.

⁵³¹ "Joint Statement of the Council of Religions Under the Public Defender of Georgia and Non-Governmental Organizations about the State Agency of Religious Issues", *Tolerance and Diversity Institute*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.tdi.ge/en/statement/joint-statement-council-religions-under-public-defender-georgia-and-non-governmental>.

Saakashvili. The circumstances of minorities are transforming in a positive direction gradually.

4-3-2. The Integration of Minority Groups and Protecting Minorities' Rights

Since Georgia became independent in 1991, the Georgian state has signed many international agreements related to human rights and minorities' rights and strengthened its relations with international organizations.⁵³² It became a member of the Council of Europe in 1999 and Georgia's minority policies have been implemented on the basis of international agreements and treaties. Especially, after the Rose Revolution in 2003, the policies for the integration of minority groups have been developed with the support of the Western states and more systematic policies began to be implemented.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was approved in 2005.⁵³³ Furthermore, Saakashvili established some institutions connected to the Georgian government in order to implement more comprehensive nation-building policies. At first, he appointed Guram Absandze as the State Minister for National Accord Issues. Absandze's mission was to persuade the Zviadist militants remaining in Samegrelo to disarm.⁵³⁴ After this mission was completed in the second half of 2004, Zina Bestauty was appointed as the State Minister for Civil Integration and began to deal with the issue of South Ossetia.⁵³⁵ In 2005, the Council for National Minorities and Council of Religions were established under the Public Defender's

⁵³² About international contracts which Georgia signed, cf. Gürsoy and Tulun, "Post-Sovyet Gürcistan'da Azınlık Hakları," 84-115.

⁵³³ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 33.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

Tolerance Center.⁵³⁶ Afterward, Saakashvili appointed Anna Zhvania as the Presidential Advisor on Civil Integration in 2006.⁵³⁷ However, there was little coordination among these institutions in the beginning and this problem prevented Georgia's minority policies from advancing.⁵³⁸

In order to resolve this problem, Saakashvili appointed Temur Yakobashvili as the State Minister for Reintegration, dealing with the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Armenians in Javakheti and Turks in Kvemo-Kartli.⁵³⁹ At the same time, Tamar Kintsurashvili, who was Saakashvili's advisor responsible for civil integration, was appointed as the chairperson of the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council under the President's Office.⁵⁴⁰ As a result of the efforts of this council, "the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration" was adopted in May 2009.⁵⁴¹ This document describes the master plan of Georgia's nation-state building policy and consists of six domains. These domains are strengthening the rule of law, developing education and strengthening the Georgian language; increasing minorities' access to information; encouraging minorities to be integrated politically; deepening their integration to the Georgian society, and preserving minorities' culture and identity.⁵⁴² On the basis of this plan, the government agencies of Georgia were to prepare programs with the state budget and to increase

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Sordia, "Institutions of Georgia for Governance on National Minorities: An Overview", *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 43 (2009).

⁵³⁸ Ekaterine Metreveli, Niklas Nilsson, Johanna Popjanevski and Temuri Yakobashvili, "State Approaches to National Integration in Georgia," *Silk Road Paper*, no. 10 (2009): 25.

⁵³⁹ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 34.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 34.

cooperation between the State Ministry for Reintegration, the government agencies, and the President Office.⁵⁴³ These elements emphasized the importance of tolerance against diversity and Georgian language as a tool for easing social life and integration.⁵⁴⁴

The most important issue for the integration of minority groups is the Georgian language. The Georgian government since Saakashvili's era has been dealing with it through reforming Georgia's education system rather than adopting a general language law.⁵⁴⁵ In 2004, the Georgian government suggested that Georgia's national school system should be reformed and this proposal caused new debates on the topic of teaching Georgian language to minority groups. The Georgian government took the Baltic States as the model for the reform in education in Georgian language and focused on strengthening the bilingual secondary education system for national minority groups.⁵⁴⁶ While the draft of general education law specifies that "Georgian is the language of instruction in Georgia," its article 4.2 suggests the Georgian government should allow that the public and private school management boards for other classes in minority languages and to create minority language sectors which teach some subjects if local people demand. According to the law, the Georgian language would be compulsory in all of these sectors.⁵⁴⁷ But the Georgian policymakers emphasize that teaching important subjects such as mathematics, Georgian history, science, Georgian language-literature, and civics should also be taught in Georgian so that minority students could live in an environment in which

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴⁵ Broers, "Filling the Void," 296.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 296.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 296.

Georgian is spoken and be well-integrated to the Georgian socio-political life.⁵⁴⁸ Therefore this draft proposes increasing the use of Georgian language in core subjects in the curriculum of the secondary education while it allows non-Georgian schools to give lessons in minority languages.⁵⁴⁹

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities approved in 2005 and the National Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration adopted in 2009 play a very important role in determining Georgia's language education policy and supporting minorities' cultural life through various activities.⁵⁵⁰ Especially, the National Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration make these topics important in the education of minority groups: improving access to pre-school, general, higher and vocational-adult education for ethnic minorities; improving minorities' command of Georgian language and protection of minority languages.⁵⁵¹

In the reform process of education, the Georgian government reduced the number of both Georgian schools and non-Georgian schools and many non-Georgian schools became Georgian schools.⁵⁵² The government began to raise the quality of remained schools. Moreover, maintenance and repair were done to these schools with the support from the Western states.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 296.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 296.

⁵⁵⁰ *Policy Analysis of Civil Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia*, (Tbilisi: BTKK-Policy Research Group, 2008), 13.

⁵⁵¹ Matsaberidze, "The Role of Civic Nationalism," 12.

⁵⁵² Salome Mekhuzla and Aideen Roche, "National Minorities and Educational Reform in Georgia", *ECMI Working Paper*, no. 46 (2009), 9.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 10.

As for the education in the Georgian language, the Ministry of Education and Sciences not only increased the hours of Georgian language classes but also prepares textbooks for the Georgian language for non-Georgian population, especially for Armenians in Javakheti and Turks in Kvemo-Kartli.⁵⁵⁴ At the same time, an important change is seen in the education of Georgian language for minority groups. In 2009, the Georgian government began a new program called “Qualified Georgian Language Experts in the Schools of Minority Regions”.⁵⁵⁵ In this program, the Georgian government adopted anthropological-ethnological approaches in order to resolve the issue of Georgian language education in minority regions and began to send successful teachers who know minorities’ languages and cultures.⁵⁵⁶

The Georgian government reformed also the system of university admission exam and tried to resolve the gap between Georgians and minorities. The Georgian government began the Unified National Exam and initiated preparatory courses in the Georgian language in local universities for minorities who do not know the Georgian language enough. Since 2008, minority groups take university admission exam in their mother languages. The exam in the Georgian language which minorities have to take became easier than that for Georgians.⁵⁵⁷ At the same time, it became necessary for minorities to pass the Georgian proficiency exam in order to work in state institutions.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁵⁵ About the process of the development of the education of Georgian language for minorities, cf. *ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 40; Keiko Seki, *Kokasasuto Chuou Ajiano Ningenkeisei: Hattastubunkano Hikaku-Kyouiku Kenkyuu* [Training People in the Caucasus and Central Asia: the Comparative Education Researches on the Culture of Development], (Tokyo: Akashi-Shoten, 2012), 73.

⁵⁵⁸ Wakizaka, “Borçalı’daki Türk,” 207.

As for the support for students from ethnic minority groups, the Georgian government has introduced “the coupon fund system” in 2006 and allocated the state budget also for minority students. Furthermore, it began to determine the quota of higher education without tuition fee for minority students and gave a scholarship to them.⁵⁵⁹

Besides, the Georgian government not only increased investment for developing infrastructure in Georgia but also allowed various activities of international organizations and domestic and international non-governmental organizations after 1991.⁵⁶⁰ It sometimes takes their suggestions and criticisms into consideration in the process of implementing policies and works with them. In particular, the number of these organizations dramatically increased after the Rose Revolution in 2003 and their role in the Georgian political life became more important. These organizations are active in various fields such as human rights, the rights of women, civil society, education, anti-corruption, tolerance and freedom of religion. Besides, they observe and report discrimination and oppression against religious/ethnic minorities and advise on policies about them.⁵⁶¹ The Public Defender’s Office, which is a state institution, also works like a non-governmental organization and offers critical opinions and objective evaluations on domestic minority issues.⁵⁶² In this way, Georgia’s institutional, educational and legal structure for minorities’ integration developed to an important degree and the system for minorities’ rights was gradually improved.

⁵⁵⁹ Aydınğün, Asker and Üner, “Pankisi Vadisi’nde”, 365.

⁵⁶⁰ Kahraman and Tulun, “Post-Sovyet Gürcistan’da Azınlık Hakları: Uluslararası Öggütler,” 123.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 123.

On the other hand, Georgia's minority policies such as those in the education of Georgian language for minorities were often criticized by minorities as a tool of their assimilation. Moreover, the situation related to the rights of minorities, especially religious minorities was not markedly improved in spite of the efforts of non-governmental organizations. Considering these criticisms, officials began to implement policies which consider minorities' rights, cultures and identity important. Punishment against discrimination was toughened in Georgia's legislation.⁵⁶³ The 13th article of the Law on General Education approved in 2005 emphasizes "neutrality and non-discrimination". At the same time, the 3rd article of the Law on Higher Education adopted in 2004 and the 2nd article of the Labor Code approved in 2006 also advocate this idea.⁵⁶⁴ Furthermore, branches of the Office of the Public Defender were established in Marneuli and Akhalkalaki, which are the centers of Armenians and Turks in Georgia, to support minorities' seeking remedy if minorities are treated badly.⁵⁶⁵ The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration were translated into minorities' languages and distributed in minorities' regions.⁵⁶⁶

The Georgian Public Broadcasting also began to air 10-minute news program on radio and television in Abkhazian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Ossetian everyday.⁵⁶⁷ The state TV channel, *Perviy Kavkaz*, broadcasting in Russian was established in

⁵⁶³ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 34-35.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 35; Broers, "Filling the Void," 296-297.

2010.⁵⁶⁸ The exam for driving license also can be taken in Russian, Azerbaijani, Turkish, Armenian, Abkhazian and Ossetian as well as in Georgian and English.⁵⁶⁹ Together with this, Georgian Public Broadcasting produced television programs such as *Our Georgia*, *Multiethnic Georgia*, and *Our Yard* in order to introduce minorities' cultures to Georgian public. And last but not least, the Georgian government came to allocate budget to theatres, museums and cultural festivals which inform the society about minority groups.⁵⁷⁰

Even after the ascending of the coalition “the Georgian Dream” to power, Georgia’s minority policies since the Rose Revolution still continues. Although the TV channel *Perviy Kavkaz* was abolished in 2012 and the State Ministry for Reintegration (now it works as the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality) softened its attitude towards the *de facto* governments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2014,⁵⁷¹ the Georgian government led by “the Georgian Dream” kept other institutions from Saakashvili’s period. In 2015, the Georgian government announced the “Civic Equality and Integration Strategy 2015-2020”, as the continuation of “the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration (2008-2013)” prepared in Saakashvili’s era.⁵⁷² Along with it, a bill which comprehensively prohibits discrimination was adopted and the Department of Equality was established within the Public Defender’s Office.⁵⁷³ In addition, the Georgian parliament approved the

⁵⁶⁸ Berglund and Blauvelt, “Redefining the Nation,” 35.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 41.

Law on Official Language in this year. It prepared the ground for the establishment of the Department of the Official Language and declared that the Georgian language is the element connecting citizens with each other and that it is “an essential element for Georgia’s statehood.”⁵⁷⁴ In fact, according to the recent research, the younger Georgians today think that they can accept minorities when minorities mastered the Georgian language and that ethnic origin is not very important as far as minorities know Georgian.⁵⁷⁵ In this way, the Georgian society came to be able to accept minorities’ integration and dramatic changes can be seen in the state system and in the mentality of the Georgian society.

As also for policies to preserve minorities’ culture and identity, the Georgian government continues cooperation with international organizations and important developments can be seen especially in the education of minorities’ mother languages. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science began to implement new standards for teaching minority languages such as Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Chechen-Kist, Ukrainian, Avar, Assyrian, Greek, German, Kurmanji/Kurdish and Udi.⁵⁷⁶ The Council of Europe plays an important role in this issue and cooperates with the Georgian central government, local administrations, academic institutions, and domestic non-governmental organizations. For example, it organizes workshops related to policies toward minority languages in recent years with the participation of state/local officials, teachers, academicians and experts on

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁷⁵ Arshaluis Mghdesyan, “Armenians in Georgia Want Secure Residence Rights,” *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, accessed April 3, 2015, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/armenians-georgia-want-secure-residence-rights>.

⁵⁷⁶ Tamara Mearakishvili and Mariam Dzagoeva, “Gruzinskiy Yazyk v Osetii, i Osetinskiy v Gruzii: Kak Obstoyatdela? [Georgian Language in Ossetia and Ossetian in Georgia: How do Matters Stand?]”, *Women Connecting for Peace*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://women-peace.net/gruzinskij-yazyk-v-osetii-i-osetinskij-v-gruzii-kak-obstayat-dela/>.

these topics.⁵⁷⁷ Besides, the Georgian government is strengthening its cooperation with the Council of Europe in the process of developing textbooks of minority languages. New textbooks in 13 minority languages for kindergartens were prepared with the support of the Council of Europe.⁵⁷⁸ As we see here, the minority policies which began in Saakashvili's era still continue to a large extent under the government of "the Georgian Dream" Party and some important developments are seen today.

On the other hand, the Georgian government led by "the Georgian Dream" is seen to be more reluctant to deal with other topics related to the integration of minority groups. For example, we can refer to its attitude towards the issues of residence permit and dual citizenship. The Georgian parliament, where "the Georgian Dream" forms the majority, approved a law about EU in September 2014.⁵⁷⁹ But this law negatively affected minority groups, especially Armenians in Javakheti, and to a lesser extent, Turks in Kvemo Kartli as well as Ossetians and Chechen-Kists who migrated from Georgia to Russia. In Javakheti, some local Armenians who worked at the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki had Russian citizenship at the same time, because it was necessary to be a Russian citizen in order to work there. Other Armenians and Turks in Georgia obtained Armenian or Azerbaijani citizenships after 2006. Because the Russian-Georgian relations got worse, Georgian citizens have to

⁵⁷⁷ For example, cf. "Workshop on European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)", *Council of Europe Office in Georgia*, accessed July 8, 2015, https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/programme-news-civic-integration-of-minorities/-/asset_publisher/CD6TJ1WvTAZo/content/workshop-on-european-charter-for-regional-or-minority-languages-ecrml; "Regional Promotion Meetings on Bilingualism and Minority Language Education in Kakheti Region", *Council of Europe Office in Georgia*, accessed November 10, 2016, https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/programme-news-civic-integration-of-minorities/-/asset_publisher/CD6TJ1WvTAZo/content/regional-promotion-meetings-on-bilingualism-and-minority-language-education-in-kakheti-region.

⁵⁷⁸ "New Bilingual Textbooks for Kindergartens in Georgia".

⁵⁷⁹ Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 42.

get a visa from this year in order to go to Russia. Due to this situation, it became difficult for Georgian citizens to visit their family members working in Russia.⁵⁸⁰ Furthermore, some Ossetians migrated to the Russian Federation, especially to North Ossetia, having abandoned their properties in Georgia. Most of them have Russian citizenship instead of a Georgian one and need to obtain also Georgian citizenship in order to retrieve properties which they abandoned.⁵⁸¹ But in all of these cases, dual citizenship was forbidden by the existing law in Georgia unless the presidential administration approved.⁵⁸² The Georgian government was not interested in this issue very much before. However, after the approval of this new law, these minorities holding dual citizenship lost Georgian citizenship and now they need to pass through a complex process to get a residence permit in order to continue staying in Georgia.⁵⁸³

The problem of benefits which higher education institutions in Georgia can offer also has not been resolved. As the number of higher education institutions dramatically increased in Georgia after 1992, the quality of higher education decreased to an important degree owing to corruption and bribery within universities. The inflated number of university students caused a decrease in the quality of teachers and students.⁵⁸⁴ Moreover, an important part of unemployed people in Georgia is university graduates. This shows that the education offered by Georgian universities

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁸¹ *Migration and Citizenship Issues Facing Georgia's Ossetian Community* (Tbilisi: Public Defender of Georgia, 2015), 31-34.

⁵⁸² Berglund and Blauvelt, "Redefining the Nation," 42.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁸⁴ Laurence Broers, "Filling the Void," 296.

and colleges does not meet the requirements of the market.⁵⁸⁵ This situation prevents the attractiveness of Georgian universities for minorities and causes minority students to go to foreign states such as Russia, Turkey, and the European states. This issue is also one of the reasons, why the integration of minority groups in Georgia does not progress quickly along with a lack of suitable educational materials and qualified teachers.

Even today, Georgia has many problems in integrating minority groups and preserving minorities' identity because of difficulties which the country has in education, economy and political life as well as the exclusivist ethnic Georgian nationalism. After "the Georgian Dream", which includes some ethnic Georgian nationalist elements, ascended to power in 2012, Georgia's reform toward minorities' integration, multiculturalism, and transformation to civic nation-state was decelerated. However, these efforts since the Rose Revolution is basically still continuing even today and the formation of the identity of diaspora groups such as Ossetians and Chechen-Kists is also being affected by this process of Georgia's nation-state building. In the 5th and 6th chapter, I will analyze and discuss the influence of these policies on the formation of Georgia's Ossetian and Chechen-Kist identities.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 296.

CHAPTER 5

DIASPORA IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND RELATIONS WITH THE GEORGIAN SOCIETY

The relationship between diaspora and host state and society is one of the important elements which shape diaspora identity. Georgia's Ossetians' and Chechen-Kists' relations with the Georgian state and society have also become important in the process of their integration and in preserving their ethnic identity.

Preserving the boundary of these two communities is mainly related to their relations with the Georgian state and society and their attitude toward their own culture and identity. There is an interaction between these two and the balance between them is very important for their integration to the host state and society and protecting themselves against assimilation.

Since the independence of Georgia, especially after the Rose Revolution in 2003, the relations of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists with the Georgian state and society have changed to an important degree and their efforts for preserving their culture and identity have intensified. In this chapter, I will compare the process of Ossetians' preserving the boundary with that of Chechen-Kists', with a focus on their relations with the Georgian society and state and the attitude towards their culture. While doing this, I will provide a broader context through the analysis of structured and semi-structured interviews that I conducted with villagers, intellectuals, and *imams* during my fieldworks in Georgia as well as the media printed in Georgian and Russian. Through exploring their political and socio-cultural situation in Georgia, I aim to highlight the ways of preserving Ossetians' and Chechen-Kists' socio-cultural

boundary in the process of their integration into the Georgian socio-political structure.

I will begin with an analysis of the social relations between the Georgian and Ossetian societies. In this part, I will focus on the relations between these two groups in daily life and their perspective on mixed marriage. Then I will focus on the position of the issue of South Ossetia in the relations between the Georgian state and society and Ossetian communities in Georgia. Afterward, Georgia's Ossetian community's views regarding the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations will be analyzed. At the same time, I will focus on the questions of how Georgia's Ossetian communities evaluate the status of the Ossetian culture and their strategy of keeping their cultural boundary with the Georgian society while keeping good relations with them. In addition, I will discuss the importance of "Kostaoba" Festival to emphasize the Ossetian-Georgian friendship and their boundaries with Georgians.

In the second part, I will focus on Chechen-Kists' relations with the Georgian society. Firstly, I will analyze the social relations between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and Islam as an element of the boundary maintenance. Then, I will discuss the influence of the issue of Chechnya and the rise of Salafism among Chechen-Kists in their relations with the Georgian society and state. Afterward, I will examine Chechen-Kists' integration efforts to the Georgian society. At the same time, I will explore the status of the Chechen culture and how Chechen-Kists attempt to preserve their culture as a boundary within the Georgian society.

5-1. Georgia's Ossetians' Attitude towards the Georgian State and Society

5-1-1. The Ossetian-Georgian Relations in Daily Life

A strong animosity exists between the Georgian and Ossetian communities in South Ossetia and the relations between these two groups actually worsened to an important degree after the issue of South Ossetia broke out at the end of the 1980s. Inside South Ossetia, the Russian language has already been dominant in political,

economic and socio-cultural life and the number of those who speak Georgian language is decreasing, while elders have a good command of Georgian.

On the other hand, in terms of the relations between Georgian society and Ossetian communities inside Georgia (outside South Ossetia), no serious problem has occurred so far and close relations are still continuing between these two groups. In fact, the demographic structure of almost all the villages known as “Ossetian village” in Georgia generally consists of not only Ossetians but also Georgians. Even in the villages heavily populated by Ossetians such as Nigoza, Tsitelubani, Areshperani, Pona, and Zemo Bolkvi, where the Ossetian culture, traditions, and identity are well preserved, many Georgian families also live.⁵⁸⁶ Today, Ossetians in Georgia (outside South Ossetia) encounter and interact with Georgians on a regular basis. Therefore, while the communication between Georgians and Ossetians lessened to an important degree in South Ossetia after the 1990s and reduced to almost none after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, the intensive communication between these two groups still continues in Georgia.

During my fieldworks in Areshperani, Nigoza, and Tbilisi, negative evaluations of social relations between Ossetians and Georgians were not expressed. In fact, people generally consider one’s ethnicity unimportant when they make friends and do not ask Ossetians questions about political issues today.⁵⁸⁷ For example, when I asked interviewees what kind of questions Georgians ask about Ossetians, Mari, a Tbilisi-based Ossetian journalist, answered as such:⁵⁸⁸

My Georgian friends do not generally ask me questions about Ossetians. I think that they are not interested in Ossetians very much. Young people do not differentiate between Georgians and Ossetians at all and make friends

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. Sordia, “Ossetians in Georgia,” 19-36.

⁵⁸⁷ Author’s interview with Nana and Tamaz on October 29th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁵⁸⁸ Author’s interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

with us regardless of ethnicity. Besides, Many Georgians around me do not know about Ossetians. They think that Ossetians are Muslims and confuse Ossetian surnames with Turkish/Azerbaijani ones. In fact, one of my colleagues thought of me as an Azeri/Turk before.

According to her, young Georgians do not consider one's ethnicity important in daily life and are not interested in other minority groups very much. Even in the cases in which Georgians speak about Ossetians with their Ossetian friends, neighbors and acquaintances, they generally ask questions on Ossetian culture, traditions, and lineages.⁵⁸⁹

Regarding interethnic relations in Georgia, as I explained in the previous chapters, ethnic nationality registered on every Soviet citizen's passport was very important as well as the Soviet nationality. However, after the Georgian state became independent from the Soviet Union, all the people permanently living in Georgia were defined as "Georgian citizens" and ethnic nationality has no longer been registered on Georgian passport. Besides, Georgian government has been working on changing Georgian identity from a religious-ethnic-linguistic one to a geographical-linguistic one since 2003. Thus, the importance of ethnic nationality in Georgia's socio-political life decreased to an important degree, particularly among the youth in urban areas. Boundaries between Georgians and the other groups are not seen clearly today, particularly in cities.

On the other hand, relations and interactions among people are more intense in rural areas than in urban areas such as Tbilisi, those who live in villages know about Ossetians better than those in cities. For example, Temur, Ketevan and Zurab, who are Ossetian villagers living in Nigoza in Kaspi region, explained that Georgians in the village know Ossetians well. Particularly, Temur explained the following about the Georgian-Ossetian relations in daily life in their village:⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Author's interview with Dato, Murman and Vitali on November 20th, 2016 in Tbilisi; Author's interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁵⁹⁰ Author's interview with Temur on November 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

Many of Georgians in this village know Ossetian culture and tradition very well and are interested in these topics. They obtain information about Ossetians from not only books, television programs, newspapers, and journals but also from the families of themselves.

In fact, many Georgian families also live in villages known as “Ossetian villages” in Shida-Kartli and mixed families are commonly seen in these villages. Besides, because the relations between people are much closer in villages than in the cities, the communication between Georgians and Ossetians is naturally intense. In this way, Georgians living in Ossetian villages have more chance to learn about Ossetians, Ossetian culture and traditions directly than those in the cities and in non-Ossetian villages. Such a situation exists also in Areshperani in Lagodekhi Region and Georgian inhabitants generally ask Ossetians questions about non-political topics such as culture, traditions, historical heritage and Ossetian cuisine.⁵⁹¹

At the same time, due to the fact that the quality of life in the rural area is generally lower than that of the cities, villagers have to deal with daily life and are not interested very much in topics not related to it, such as politics and identity. Besides, the interest of people in traditions and culture has decreased even in villages as globalization and modernization advance. In fact, both in Areshperani and Nigoza, an important part of my interviewees said that Georgians around them do not ask questions about Ossetians and that they are not interested in the Ossetian society very much.⁵⁹² As we can understand from these remarks, there are still ongoing encounters between the Georgian and Ossetian societies and there are not many tensions between these two groups.

⁵⁹¹ Author’s interview with Luiza, Roza, Yamzia and Lali on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi; Author’s interview with Feliks and Taymuraz on November 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

⁵⁹² Author’s interview with Eliko on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi; Author’s interview with Stella, Mzia and Maya on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi; Author’s interview with Levan, Nodar, Inga, Irakli and Robert on November 16th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

Considering Georgia's Ossetians' opinion over interethnic marriage, one can see more clearly that the boundary between the Georgian society and Ossetian communities in Georgia is not sharp. It is common that a great number of Ossetians in Georgia are married to Georgians and in fact, many of 30 Ossetians whom I conducted interviews were married to Georgians. Even those who are unmarried do not view interethnic marriage negatively. For example, when I conducted interviews in Tbilisi Areshperani and Nigoza in 2016 and 2017, all interviewees emphasized that their spouses' ethnicity is not important for marriage and that the important thing for marriage are only love, humanity and relations between the couple. That is, they said that inter-ethnic marriage is not a sensitive issue for them. Moreover, while I was conducting fieldworks in Tbilisi on October 2016, Tengiz, the head of Georgia's Ossetian Association, expressed his opinion on inter-ethnic marriage by making a joke as such:⁵⁹³

My spouse is a Russian. It is not important for me whether Ossetians marry Ossetians, Georgians, Russians, Turks or others. Only humanity and love are important. God created such Ossetian women that they often beat you (laughs while speaking).

While he is proud of Ossetian women and insists that Ossetians' marriage with their co-ethnic groups should be encouraged, he is not against inter-ethnic marriage essentially and emphasizes the difficulty of living with an Ossetian spouse. The fact that even those who make most efforts for Ossetians' identity and rights such as Tengiz and Gia are not against marriage between different ethnic groups reflects the general view of Georgia's Ossetians on inter-ethnic marriage. The boundary between Ossetians and Georgians is blurred on the topic of interethnic marriage.

In fact, almost all Ossetians in Georgia belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church like the Georgians, while the South Ossetian Exarchia makes efforts to break away from

⁵⁹³ Author's interview with Tengiz on October 25th, 2016 in Tbilisi.

the Georgian Orthodox Church and be subject to the Russian Orthodox Church.⁵⁹⁴ In this way, the fact that Ossetians and Georgians share common religion and culture is one of the most important reasons why Ossetians in Georgia generally do not view marriage with other ethnic groups, especially Georgians as a problem.

In addition, it is also undeniable that the policies of the Soviet Union, which encouraged friendship and fusion of various groups, also affected the attitude of Ossetians in Georgia to an important degree. Because the Soviet Union defined itself as a superstructure for the realization of a communist society without ethnicity, its government put the friendship between nations forward while the development of national identities of every ethnic group was encouraged. The secularization of peoples' lifestyle and the intensification of communication among people also encouraged the increase of inter-ethnic marriages and the hybridization of Georgia's Ossetian communities more accelerated.

As for Georgia's Ossetians' relations with the Georgian state today, no serious problem exists between them. When I asked interviewees a question about the attitude of the current Georgian government towards Ossetians, negative evaluation of the ethnic policies continuing since the Rose Revolution in 2003 was not heard very much. Actually, in Tbilisi, Nigoza, and Areshperani, all interviewees said that the attitude of the current Georgian government towards Ossetians is normal and has gotten better than the beginning of the 1990s. Mari explained the following about the current situation of the relations between Georgia's Ossetians and the Georgian government as follows:⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Kimitaka Matsuzato, "Orthodox Churches in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lucian N. Leustean (London: Routledge, 2014), 391.

⁵⁹⁵ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

The attitude of the Georgian government towards us is normal. It treats us as ordinary citizens like the other groups and no negative practice such as discrimination exists.

In fact, the Georgian state legally defines all ethnic-religious groups in Georgia as “Georgian citizens” and recognizes the civil rights equally of all groups in Georgia. That is, the Georgian government applies the same laws to minorities as Georgians in the process of political participation. Besides, since the Rose Revolution in 2003, the Georgian government has been making efforts to build a nation-state based on multiculturalism and civic national identity and the status of minorities in Georgia has improved to an important degree. Therefore, negative treatments such as exclusion and discrimination towards Ossetians are not seen in the current relations between Georgia’s Ossetian communities and the Georgian government. At the same time, because Ossetians have many socio-cultural and religious features in common with Georgians, Ossetians in Georgia have fewer problems with the Georgian state than Armenians or Muslim minorities in Georgia. Thus, Ossetians in Georgia do not generally feel discriminated by the current Georgian government in daily life and a clear boundary does not exist in the relations between the Georgian state and Georgia’s Ossetians today.

As we can understand from these, Ossetians do not have serious problems and difficulties with the Georgian state and society today and boundaries between these two groups are not seen clearly in daily life.

5-1-2. The Issue of South Ossetia and the Relations between the Georgian State and Society and Ossetians in Georgia

Although serious problems such as discrimination and exclusion are not seen between Georgia’s Ossetian communities and the Georgian state and society today, it is undeniable that the relations between the Georgian society and Ossetian communities in Georgia are also fragile and unstable. Especially, oppression over minority groups in Gamsakhurdia’s era and the issue of South Ossetia affected the relations between the Georgian society and Georgia’s Ossetian communities

negatively and caused the formation of invisible boundaries between these two groups. The problems between Georgians and Ossetians broke out due to the negative attitude of the ethnic Georgian nationalism towards Ossetians and the tensions between Russia and Georgia. This part will focus on the view of Ossetians in Georgia on ethnic Georgian nationalism.

In order to understand the view of Ossetians in Georgia on the modern ethnic Georgian nationalism, it is worth exploring their opinions about Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Georgian nationalist policies. In fact, while I was conducting fieldworks in Tbilisi, Nigoza, and Areshperani, many of my interviewees evaluated Gamsakhurdia's policies very negatively and explained painful memories which belong to his era to me.

For example, when I conducted interviews in Nigoza, Taymuraz explained the following about Gamsakhurdia's nationalist policies:⁵⁹⁶

Gamsakhurdia's policies affected us very negatively and many families were damaged to an important degree. Our economic situation also worsened very much. We do not want to remember this era and never want such a situation to occur again.

In other words, they said that Gamsakhurdia's regime discriminated and oppressed Ossetians harshly in Georgia and many Ossetian families were killed or forced to migrate to foreign states, especially North Ossetia, which belongs to Russia. Besides, many people fell into serious poverty due to his policies and the chaos which had occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. Therefore Gamsakhurdia's era remains as a serious trauma for them.

In addition to this, more concrete evaluations and testimonies about the modern ethnic Georgian nationalism and Gamsakhurdia's regime were expressed during my fieldwork findings in Georgia. For example, Stella, a teacher in the Areshperani

⁵⁹⁶ Author's interview with Taymuraz on November 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

Public School, clearly criticized the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism and Gamsakhurdia's policies and related them to the Russo-Georgian War in 2008:⁵⁹⁷

The policies of Gamsakhurdia when he was Georgia's president lead the situation of South Ossetia to be out of Georgia's control. I want to emphasize this fact; the conflict between Georgians and Ossetians did not begin with the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 but has been going on since Gamsakhurdia's era. It is not Saakashvili but Gamsakhurdia who is originally responsible for the war in 2008.

Eliko, a teacher in the Areshperani Public School, spoke about the damage by Gamsakhurdia's policies to Georgian-Ossetian relations during my interview:⁵⁹⁸

Incidents which occurred in Gamsakhurdia's era were tragedies, not only for me, but also for all Georgia. He completely tore up the peoples of Georgia, displaced them and exiled them. Gamsakhurdia tried to destroy traditions, languages, civilizations, and customs of the peoples of Georgia.

Lali, a teacher in the Areshperani Public School, explained the situation under Gamsakhurdia's regime in more detail:⁵⁹⁹

Gamsakhurdia's period was very bad for us and affected us very negatively. Many people in this village were forced to migrate to North Ossetia. While some lineages existed in this village since the Soviet era, these lineages no longer exist here. (While Lali pointed out empty houses) [...] In the Soviet era, Ossetian families had lived in these houses. But they migrated to North Ossetia and abandoned these properties due to the oppression of Gamsakhurdia's regime and the attacks of the militants supporting him.

Izolda, the head of the Association of Georgia's Ossetian Women, also explained the trouble which she experienced during the early 1990s:⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Author's interview with Stella on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁵⁹⁸ Author's interview with Eliko on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁵⁹⁹ Author's interview with Lali on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁶⁰⁰ Author's interview with Izolda on November 1st, 2017 in Tbilisi.

During this era, Gamsakhurdia applied irregular and illogical policies and committed major offenses against us. He clearly discriminated and oppressed Ossetians. His regime fired me from my previous workplace, confiscated my car and placed armed militants across my house just because I am an Ossetian.

Nana, who is a member of the Association of Georgia's Ossetians in Tbilisi, spoke about the harm at the beginning of the 1990s and influence of the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism continuing as of today:⁶⁰¹

Gamsakhurdia's era created a very negative influence on us. A number of my relatives were killed due to his policies and the conflict in South Ossetia. During his regime, both political and social discrimination existed against us and unfortunately, its influence still continues.

When Mari explained the social situation in Gamsakhurdia's era, she referred to social discrimination caused by Gamsakhurdia's nationalist policies and Georgian-Ossetian conflict:⁶⁰²

The Ossetian-Georgian conflict in Gamsakhurdia's regime was very negative and a harrowing incident for me. This conflict dramatically changed Ossetian-Georgian relations. The discord between Ossetians and Georgians which began at the beginning of the 1990s caused personal disagreements even among ordinary people. The Georgian society was taking a dim view of those whose family names were Ossetian.

Valentina, who is a member of the Association of Georgia's Ossetians in Tbilisi, also spoke about the discrimination which she experienced during the early 1990s more concretely:⁶⁰³

Gamsakhurdia's regime was very bad. I was avoiding making contacts with other people during this period. I stayed away from even my old acquaintances and classmates unless I know their thoughts about us. People

⁶⁰¹ Author's interview with Nana on October 29th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁰² Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁰³ Author's interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

often used to insult us at the beginning of the 1990s and I had to be patient to hear them.

When we summarize these remarks, according to interviewees, Gamsakhurdia's policies did not only damage Georgia's economy and caused many Ossetians' death but also destroyed Georgian-Ossetian relations to an important degree and tried to exterminate Ossetian culture and existence. In his era, Ossetians were exposed to serious discrimination and danger of assimilation. We can see that the socio-political boundary between the Georgian society and Georgia's Ossetian communities was built due to the exclusion, discrimination, oppression, and efforts towards Ossetians assimilation by the ethnic modern Georgian nationalism.

Even after the time when Gamsakhurdia was forced to take refuge in Chechnya under Dzhokhar Dudayev's leadership in 1992 due to coup d'etat, as Nana said, the influence of the modern ethnic Georgian nationalism, which does not accept the other ethnic/religious groups as "people of themselves" still exists and often creates uneasiness over Ossetians. About this problem, Tengiz, who is the president of Georgia's Ossetian Association, criticized a journalist's article about Ossetians in the meeting in the Public Defender's Office of Georgia:⁶⁰⁴

The world is full of bad people. Nationality does not matter here. In the process of writing and publishing this article, some money was paid to the journalist. In this article, Ossetians were negatively characterized as robbers, barbarians, backward, poor and evil people. No one reacted to this article. Instead of supporting the politics of the Georgian government, which is seeking to resolve problems between Ossetians and Georgians, the author of this article offends and insults Ossetian people.

On the other hand, Mari explained that Ossetian image in Georgia is changing although negative Ossetian image still exists in Georgian mass media:⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ "'Osuri Forumi'".

⁶⁰⁵ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

I am preparing a master's thesis on Ossetian image in the Georgian mass-media and am following 'Radio Tavisupleba', 'Rezonans' and 'NetGazeti'. When we analyze these sources, we can see that negative Ossetian image still exists in Georgian media. However, when we view recent articles about Georgian-Ossetian relations and the war in 2008, negative discourses on 'war' itself are generally seen but I did not find expressions which directly insult Ossetians.

According to my two informants, while discourses, which directly insult Ossetian people, decreased to an important degree, negative expressions toward Ossetians are still used in some places and the influence of exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism has not vanished yet. As for information about Ossetians which Georgians have, I explained that Georgians generally learn about Ossetians through books, television programs, journals and newspapers. However, it means that Ossetian image among Georgians is easily affected by correct or incorrect information given through mass-media and ordinary Georgians' attitudes can change by the attitudes of the Georgian government and mass media. Therefore, despite the current Georgian state's efforts to build inclusive civic nation-state and to improve relations between Georgians and minorities, fragility still exist in Georgian-Ossetian relations and these relations can be disrupted by the direction of the Georgian nationalism and of Georgia's nation-state building policy.

Moreover, in the previous part, I emphasized that Georgians mainly ask Ossetians questions about their culture and traditions. But we need to pay attention to the fact that Georgians and Ossetians do not discuss political topics, with each other especially on the issue of South Ossetia. This situation clearly shows that uneasiness is still dominant and that there is a certain socio-political boundary between the Georgian society and Georgia's Ossetian communities. Actually, when Mamuka Areshidze, a Georgian expert in political science, suggested that Georgia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia should be discussed in 2011, the Georgian public opinion reacted harshly against him.⁶⁰⁶ This incident shows that

⁶⁰⁶ "Paata Zakareishvili: Georgia should Meet Abkhazia Halfway", *Vestnik Kavkaza*, accessed August 19, 2011, <http://vestnikkavkaza.net/amp/17011>.

political problems such as the issues of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are still sensitive subjects and that strong social pressure exists over speaking about these topics, while the Georgian state does not forbid expressing opinions on supporting the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

This social pressure on discussing political topics such as Georgian-Ossetian relations was felt also when I conducted interviews with Roza and Luiza in Areshperani Public School, on November 2016. Actually, when I asked them questions about Georgian-Ossetian relations, they answered that they feel comfortable and can say everything next to Georgians but chose discourse which does not anger Georgians.⁶⁰⁷ Besides, the important part of interviewees refrained from answering some questions or gave answers which are not related to the questions. At the same time, when I asked the question “Do you want the establishment of new Ossetian channels or the development of Ossetian ‘Moambe’ program?”, Feliks and Eliko said that programs should not be political and critical.⁶⁰⁸ Thus, we can see that Georgia’s Ossetians behave sensitively towards Georgians and that they are afraid of social pressure on Georgian-Ossetian relations and political topics.

In contrast to their negative evaluation on Gamsakhurdia’s policies and modern ethnic Georgian nationalism, the nostalgia of the Soviet era is often heard in Georgia’s Ossetian communities, particularly among elders. For example, interviewees in Nigoza said that the number of Georgian-Ossetian mixed families was larger in the Soviet era than today, that communication between Georgians and Ossetians was more frequent and that the attitude of the Soviet government towards

⁶⁰⁷ Author’s interview with Roza and Luiza, on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁶⁰⁸ Author’s interview with Eliko, on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi; Author’s interview with Feliks on November 16th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

Ossetians was better than that of the Georgian state and society.⁶⁰⁹ Answers similar to this were also heard from interviewees while I conducted fieldworks in Areshperani and Tbilisi. At this point, Valentina referred to interethnic relations in the Soviet era in a more detailed manner:⁶¹⁰

The tension and conflict between people (ethnic/religious groups) and underestimating the other nations were legally forbidden during the Soviet era. Therefore, everyone avoided conflicts with others and insulting other peoples in daily life at least. As for Georgian-Ossetian relations in the Soviet era, the closest relations existed between Ossetians and Georgians during the Soviet era. Most Georgians used to see Ossetians as Georgians due to the common tradition, custom and culture.

According to her, this is because the Soviet Union officially adopted internationalism and encouraged interethnic friendship. Actions provoking hostility between different groups were prohibited by the Soviet government. Besides, discrimination between Georgians and Ossetians did not exist at all due to the common culture. Therefore people lived in harmony with each other in the Soviet era and still miss that period.

On the other hand, criticism against the Soviet ethnic policies also exists. Mari criticized the Soviet ethnic policies as such:⁶¹¹

In my opinion, the problem of discrimination was more serious before. Even in the Soviet era, the government used to demand Ossetians to change their family names into Georgian. But youth does not take ethnicity important today and ethnicity is not written in official documents, passports and identity cards.

The Soviet government fostered national identities of every ethnic group inside the country and titular nationalism developed to an important degree while it officially adopted interethnic friendship. As a result, in Georgia, Georgians, a “titular” group

⁶⁰⁹ Author’s interview with Levan, Taymuraz, Robert and Feliks on November 16th and 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

⁶¹⁰ Author’s interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶¹¹ Author’s interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

of Georgia headed to exclude, discriminate and assimilate other ethnic groups, arguing for their predominance and autochthony in Georgia. Thus, the Soviet nationalities policy established the basis of the exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism and interethnic discrimination.

As we see this situation, the modern Georgian ethnic nationalism and the issue of South Ossetia caused the formation of an invisible boundary between the Georgian state and society and Georgia's Ossetian communities. This boundary was unilaterally formed by the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism, which developed in the Soviet era and blazed up in the post-Soviet period. At this point, Georgia's Ossetians' main matter of concern is advocating the legitimacy of their existence in Georgia, overcoming the issue of the wall of the modern ethnic Georgian nationalism as well as preserving their identity. I will discuss the question of how Ossetians in Georgia evaluate the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations in order to make the Georgian society accept the legitimacy of their existence in Georgia.

5-1-3. The View of Georgia's Ossetian Communities on the History of Georgian-Ossetian Relations

As I explained in the previous parts, fragility exists between Georgia's Ossetians and the Georgian society and state, and the issue of South Ossetia is one of the most important reason for this fragility. It is well known that serious controversy exists between Georgia and South Ossetia over the evaluation of history. While the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia continues, it is impossible for Ossetians in Georgia to support South Ossetia's discourse. However, they are not able to support Georgia's traditional historiography completely either, because Ossetians in Georgia were damaged politically and socially by the exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism. Therefore, here emerges the question of how Ossetians in Georgia evaluate their history and the Georgian-Ossetian relations while their "homeland" and "host state" struggle with each other. In this part, I will focus on this topic after comparing the Georgian traditional historiography with the Ossetian one. Moreover, Georgia's current historiography will be analyzed.

First, I will compare the Georgian and Ossetian traditional historiographies with each other. As I referred in Chapter Four, Georgian traditional historiography emphasizes that Ossetians have less political rights than Georgians because they are “migrants, foreigners” who settled in Georgia (includes South Ossetia) later and that the establishment of “South Ossetia” inside Georgian territory is completely based on Russia’s interests despite Georgians’ harsh opposition.⁶¹² In addition, Nugzar Apkhazava, a Georgian historian, also emphasizes that the cultural and ethnic process in South Ossetia since the ancient times basically belongs to Georgians although the materials which belong to Scythians in the ancient times were found in South Ossetia and that Ossetians’ demand of the independence of South Ossetia is illegitimate.⁶¹³

Moreover, Lortkipanidze and Otkhmezuri, who adopt the Georgian traditional historiography, legitimize Georgia’s military operations against Ossetians’ uprisings by the end of the 1910s as a forced way to defend Georgia’s territorial unity and emphasize that “genocide” against Ossetians did not occur. According to him, Ossetians, especially Ossetian Bolshevik members revolted against Georgia, cooperating with Russia and many Georgians and Ossetians were killed in this process.⁶¹⁴ That is, Ossetians are defined as Russia’s fifth columns who made a large-scale chaos and caused the death of a great number of people in the Georgian traditional historiography.

⁶¹² Solomon Lekishvili, “Kogda Voznik Termin “Yuzhnaya Osetiya”? [When did the Term “South Ossetia” Appear?],” in *Osetiny v Gruzii: Sbornik*, ed. Mariam Lortkipanidze (Tbilisi: Universal, 2005), 222-224.

⁶¹³ Nugzar Apkhazava, “Kul’turno-Etnicheskiye Protsessy v Severo-Zapadnoy Chasti Shida Kartli s Drevneyshikh Vremen do Pozdnego Srednevekov’ya [the Cultural and Ethnic Processes in the Northwest Part of Shida Kartli from the Ancient Times to the Late Middle Ages],” in *Osetiny v Gruzii: Sbornik*, ed. Mariam Lortkipanidze (Tbilisi: Universal, 2015), 111-112.

⁶¹⁴ Lortkipanidze and Otkhmezuri, “Osetiny v Gruzii,” 134-135. Moreover, cf. Lekishvili, “Kogda Voznik,” 226.

According to Lortkipanidze and Otkhmezuri, the Georgian state and society recognized every right for Ossetians despite they ere “foreigners” inside the Georgian territory and Georgia was originally not for the establishment of “South Ossetia”.⁶¹⁵ Ossetians “betrayed” Georgians and acted with Russia. In this context, the demand of the independence of South Ossetia and uprising against Georgia is evaluated as “betrayal of Ossetians” and as Russia’s political game by the Georgian traditional historiography.

When we examine the historiography of South Ossetia about Georgian-Ossetian relations and marginalization of other ethnic groups, especially Georgians, is a frequent theme in Ossetian traditional historiography. For example, Mark Bliyev, who is one of the most important Ossetian historians, argues that Ossetians have existed in South Ossetia since the era before the birth of Christ. Bliyev emphasizes that Ossetians’ ancestors belong to the Indo-European family and that they founded Kuban culture in the Caucasus between the 16th-9th centuries B.C. The fact that Bagrat Tekhov and Ruslan Dzattiaty, who are Ossetian archaeologists in the Soviet era, discovered 5000-year archaeological finds which belong to Kuban culture in South Ossetia proves the existence of Ossetians in this area.⁶¹⁶

Furthermore, Bliyev refers to the report which Tbilisi *Guberniya* prepared about the history of the Gori region, where the current territory of South Ossetia exists, in 1865. This report separates the population of this area as “natives” and “migrants” and defines Georgians, Armenians, and Ossetians as “natives”.⁶¹⁷ He refers to the

⁶¹⁵ Furthermore, about the situation of Education in South Ossetia, cf. Levan Toidze, “Obrazovaniye Osetinskoy Avtonomii v Gruzii [the Education in the South Ossetian Autonomous *Oblast'*],” in *Osetiny v Gruzii: Sbornik*, ed. Mariam Lortkipanidze (Tbilisi: Universal, 2015), 231-260.

⁶¹⁶ Mark Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya v Kolliziyah Rossiysko-Gruzinskikh Otnosheniy* [South Ossetia in the Collision of Russian-Georgian Relations] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Yevropa”, 2006), 15-16; Ruslan Dzattiaty, “Rannesrednevekovyy Mogil'nik v Selenii Yedys (Yuzhnaya Osetiya) [Early Medieval Burial Ground in the Village of Edys (South Ossetia)],” *Sovetskaya Arkheologia*, no. 2, 1986, pp. 26-28; Bagrat Tekhov, *Ocherki drevney istorii i arkheologii Yugo-Osetii* [the Sketches of the Ancient History and Archeology of South Ossetia] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1971). 87.

⁶¹⁷ Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya*, 18-19.

information presented by Diodorus Siculus who lived between B.C. 90-21 in order to prove the authenticity of the report. According to this information, “Ossetians”, who had lived in the area, extending from Armenia and the Persian Gulf to the east, settled in South Ossetia in the 5th century B.C.⁶¹⁸ Regarding Georgia’s dominance over South Ossetia, Kosta Dzugayev, an Ossetian historian at the State University of South Ossetia, and Bliyev emphasize that Georgians were able to establish feudal domination over South Ossetia in the 16th-17th centuries under Giorgi Saakadze’s leadership.⁶¹⁹ At the beginning of the 18th century, South Ossetia was exposed to the systematic attacks from the Kingdoms of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti.⁶²⁰

Ossetian historiography argues that Ossetians are native elements of current South Ossetia and the Georgian state is “an ungrateful foreigner” for Ossetians. Georgians invaded South Ossetia, Ossetians’ motherland, and dominated the Ossetian people. Therefore it is natural and legitimate that South Ossetia should be independent of Georgia.

Moreover, according to the Ossetian historiography, Georgia continued its dominance and oppression over Ossetians with the support of Russia. Following Georgia’s annexation by Russia in 1801,⁶²¹ Georgian aristocrats strengthened their dominance over Ossetians with Russia’s support.⁶²² Ossetians continued revolting

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 27; Kosta Dzugayev, “Respublika Yuzhnaya Osetia: Istorია i Sovremennost’ [the Republic of South Ossetia: History and Modernity]”, in *Istoriograficheskiy Dialog Vokrug Nepriznannykh Gosudarstv: Pridnestrov’ye, Nagornyy Karabakh, Armeniya, Yuzhnaya Osetiya i Gruziya*, ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato (Sapporo: the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University, 2007), 75.

⁶²⁰ Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya*, p. 30; Dzugayev, “Respublika Yuzhnaya Osetia”, 76.

⁶²¹ Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya*, 30-31. Zakhariy Vaneev, *Krest’yanskiy Vopros i Krest’yanskoye Dvizheniye v Yugo-Osetii v XIX Veke* [The Peasant Question and the Peasants’ Movement in South Ossetia in the 19th Century] (Staliniri: Gosizdat Yugo-Osetii, 1956), 201-204.

⁶²² Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya*, 39-40.

against their oppression by the end of the 19th century. Georgia and Russia suppressed these rebellions together and these attacks sometimes changed to “genocide”. Zakhariy Vaneev, an Ossetian historian, and Bliyev argues that Russia used Georgia in order to strengthen its dominance over the Caucasus and that Russia inflamed the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in this direction.⁶²³ According to Bliyev, this situation continued even after the October Revolution in 1917 and Bolsheviks gave special authority to Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic in order to resolve the issue of South Ossetia despite Ossetians’ harsh opposition. Bliyev says that this decision shows the fact that Russia continued to view Georgia’s interests more important than Ossetians in its policies towards the Caucasus and that South Ossetia remained as Georgia’s colony until the disintegration of the Soviet Union.⁶²⁴ At this point, the Ossetian historiography emphasizes that Russia and Georgians cooperated for their interests and that Georgia continued to oppress Ossetians with Russia’s support. In short, Ossetian historiography defines Georgia as “utilitarian, collaborator and Russia’s fifth column”.

As for the political developments in the Caucasus from the end of 1980s to the beginning of 1990s, Bliyev explains that Georgian nationalists such as Zviad Gamsakhurdia defined minorities as “enemies of Georgians” in order to ensure the legitimacy of the ideology of the Georgian state and that they demanded the abolishment of rights given to minorities.⁶²⁵ According to him, the Georgian nationalists tried to remove South Ossetia’s status of “autonomous region” in this direction. He advocates the efforts of South Ossetia’s independence and legitimizes

⁶²³ Vaneev, *Krest'yanskiy Vopros*, 322-328, Bliyev, *Yujnaya Osetiya*, 43-44.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, 379-380; 383.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 393.

the acceptance of the declaration of South Ossetia's independence in 1991 as a reaction against Georgia's oppression over Ossetians.⁶²⁶

In addition to this, other Ossetian resources such as "Uroki Igry na Boyne [the Lesson of Slaughter Game]" by Alan Chochiyev, argues that Georgians carried out a genocide against Ossetians and exiled them between 1917-1920 and 1989-1992, claiming for Georgians' rights over South Ossetia in the process of Georgia's independence. In short, the Ossetian historiography emphasizes that Georgians are genocidal and ungrateful foreigners and continued oppressing Ossetian people with Russia's support. Besides, it carried out genocide against Ossetian people and tried to exterminate them. Therefore Ossetians have the right of independence from Georgia.⁶²⁷

Both the Georgian and Ossetian traditional historiography emphasize their respective autochthony, defining each other as "ungrateful foreigners" and that they criticize each other as "Russia's collaborator", "betrayed (from Georgians to Ossetians)" and "genocidal (from Ossetians to Georgians)" on the topic of Georgian-Ossetian relations. Thus, Ossetians and Georgians marginalize each other in the history of the Georgian-Ossetian relations while they are building their nation-states.

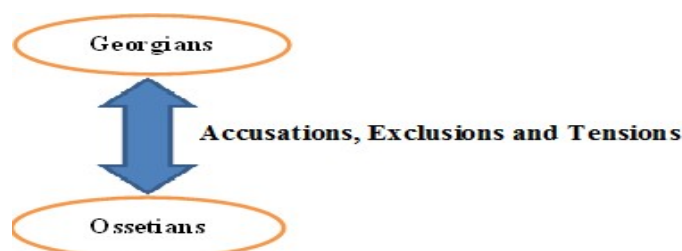


Figure 4: The Georgian and Ossetian "Traditional" Historiographies

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 394.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 445; Alan Chochiyev, *Uroki Igry na Boyne* [the Lesson of Slaughter Game] (Tskhinval: without place, 1993).

When we concern the view of Ossetians in Georgia on Georgian-Ossetian relations, it is impossible for them to adopt the historiography of South Ossetia because for Ossetians in Georgia, it is important to advocate the legitimacy of their existence in Georgia. On the other hand, they are not able to adopt the Georgian traditional historiography completely either, because it excludes the other ethnic and religious groups and regards Ossetians as “ungrateful migrants and foreigners”.

As for the evaluation of the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations, Ossetian communities in Georgia focus on the different side of this history instead of the question of “whom South Ossetia originally belongs to?” For a good discussion of the issue, the evaluation of Naira Beppity, the director of the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center at the Tbilisi State University, is worth analyzing. Naira spoke about the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations in the television program “Mravaletnikuri Sakartvelo (Multiethnic Georgia)” and said the following:⁶²⁸

In general, the history of Georgians and Ossetians has developed in such a way that it is difficult to say where the beginning is because it started very long ago. Georgians and Ossetians are connected with brotherhood and friendship that are centuries old. If we speak about royal marriages, Pharnavaz gave his sister through marriage to the Ossetian king in the third century B.C. [...] It is known that Georgians always took care of Ossetians' education. In “Dvali's Life”, it is described how Georgians took care of Ossetian children. Giorgi Mtatsmindeli took some children and Ossetians were among them, too. Also at the court of King Archil, there were some Ossetians, whom he taught typography. Tbilisi was the cultural and educational center of the entire Caucasus. And I clearly remember how Ossetians from North and South Ossetia were coming to Tbilisi to upgrade their skills. Moreover, they mainly got higher education facilities in Tbilisi. [...] We had many prominent Ossetian sportsmen in Georgia because they were children of Georgia and Georgian citizens. Of course, they always defended the honor of Georgia. For example, footballers Kaloyev, Gutsayev, Tskhovrebov and so on. Many Ossetian sportsmen brought glory to Georgia. [...] Our great ancestors set a good example of friendship between people from different ethnic backgrounds: Kosta Khetagurov and prominent Georgians such as Mikhail Kipiani, Alexandre Kazbegi, Dmitry Arakishvili,

⁶²⁸ “Multiethnic Georgia: Ossetians”, *Georgian Public Broadcasting*, accessed April 22, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG9zXh3FBHY>.

and others set this example. Kosta Khetagurov wrote to the Caucasus Society that it was unacceptable that Alexandre Kazbegi, who was loved by readers, was in such poor condition and that there was nobody to help him. Kosta called Mikhail Kipiani, his father and educator to whom he dedicated poems in Ossetian and Russian. [...] Georgian and Ossetian actors cooperated in the film “Chermen” and this was one of the best examples of friendship and love towards each other.

In short according to this narrative, Ossetians and Georgians have lived together since ancient times and have developed good relations with each other for a long time. Throughout history, Georgians often contributed to Ossetians and vice versa. Also in the social level, Ossetians and Georgians have cooperated with and have helped each other. When Naira evaluates the history of the Georgian-Ossetian relations she focuses on “historical unity and friendship between Ossetians and Georgians” and emphasizes that Ossetians are also titular and native people of Georgia and that therefore Ossetians naturally have a legitimate right to live in Georgia.

Such a view is expressed by many Ossetians during my interviews with them. For example, Tengiz explained that even ancient Greeks referred to Georgian-Ossetian relations:⁶²⁹

According to “Geographica” written by Strabo, the ancient Greek historian, Ossetians had lived in Georgia even in the ancient era and they mainly earned a living by agriculture. We have lived with Georgians together for 5,000 years and have been fighting with Georgians together. As Turks argue that they have existed in the Caucasus for more than 5000 years, we have a history as long as the history of the Turks in the Caucasus.

According to Tengiz, Ossetians have existed in Georgia since the prehistoric era and have lived with Georgians for a long time. Besides, Ossetians always helped Georgians and contributed to the Georgian state and society. Therefore, Ossetians are also one of Georgia’s peoples and are not “foreigners, migrants” at all.

⁶²⁹ Author’s interview with Tengiz on October 25th, 2016 in Tbilisi.

Mzia, a teacher in Areshperani Public School, described the following about historical and social relations between Georgians and Ossetians:⁶³⁰

Georgians and Ossetians always lived together as friends. There are no interethnic marriages in Georgia more than ours (marriages between Georgian and Ossetians). Ossetians used to fight together with Georgians in order to defend Georgia from enemies. Therefore, Ossetians never became enemies of the Georgian state and peoples. But unfortunately, many Georgians do not know this fact and this history was forgotten among people. I want also Georgians to know these historical relations.

In fact, many marriages between Ossetians and Georgians are recorded in historical resources and the marriages between the Georgian and Ossetian royal families were also seen. The most famous example of these marriages is the one between the Georgian Queen Tamar and the Ossetian Prince David Soslan. The number of Georgian-Ossetian marriages is high even today and the interactions between Ossetians and Georgians advanced to an important degree. Besides, the cases in which Ossetian soldiers participated in the Georgian army can often be seen in history. Therefore, it is almost impossible to separate the Ossetian and Georgian societies from each other and Ossetians are absolutely an important part of the Georgian state, according to Mzia. However, the history of close amicable relations between Georgians and Ossetians was forgotten while exclusive ethnic nationalism was rising in Georgia and Ossetia. Therefore, she emphasized that Georgians should learn the history of amicable relations between Georgians and Ossetians so that Georgians would know the legitimacy of Ossetians' existence in Georgia. This opinion was heard also in Nigoza and Tbilisi. Ketevan, Zurab and Robert in Nigoza and Mari in Tbilisi said that Georgians should know how Georgians and Ossetians lived together as friends in history and the fact that Ossetians also contributed to the development of the Georgian state and people.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ Author's interview with Mzia on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁶³¹ Author's interview with Ketevan, Zurab and Robert on November 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi; Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

Gia, who is the chairman of the Union of Youth of Georgia and the Vice-President of the Association of Georgia's Ossetians, also explained the historically amicable relations between Ossetians and Georgians and the long history of Ossetians' existence in Georgia. In addition, when he referred to the issue of South Ossetia, he emphasized that Georgians and Ossetians became hostile to each other due to foreign powers such as Russia and Jews.⁶³² In fact, the development of exclusive ethnic "titular" nationalism among Georgians and Ossetians, which finally caused a harsh conflict between them, was essentially encouraged by the Soviet Russia. Today, Russia obstructs the resolution of the issue of South Ossetia and uses the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. That is, according to him, Ossetians and Georgians are originally friends, have lived together in history and helped each other. The recent conflict between these two groups is completely artificial created by foreign states for their interests.

Albert, a villager in Areshperani, stated a different view on Georgian-Ossetian conflict and the issue of South Ossetia during my interview.⁶³³

People say that Georgian-Ossetian relations were broken after armed conflict began in South Ossetia at the beginning of the 1990s. However, while serious tensions exist between Ossetians and Georgians, we still live in this village with Georgians together. The important thing about this issue is this: we understood that Ossetian-Georgian friendship and unity was preserved and Georgian and Ossetian peoples did not change their thoughts towards each other.

According to him, Georgian-Ossetian amicable relations and unity were not broken even after the time when the issue of South Ossetia broke out in 1990. In other words, Georgian-Ossetian relations were so strong that even the issue of South Ossetia could not destroy this friendship.

⁶³² Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶³³ Author's interview with Albert on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

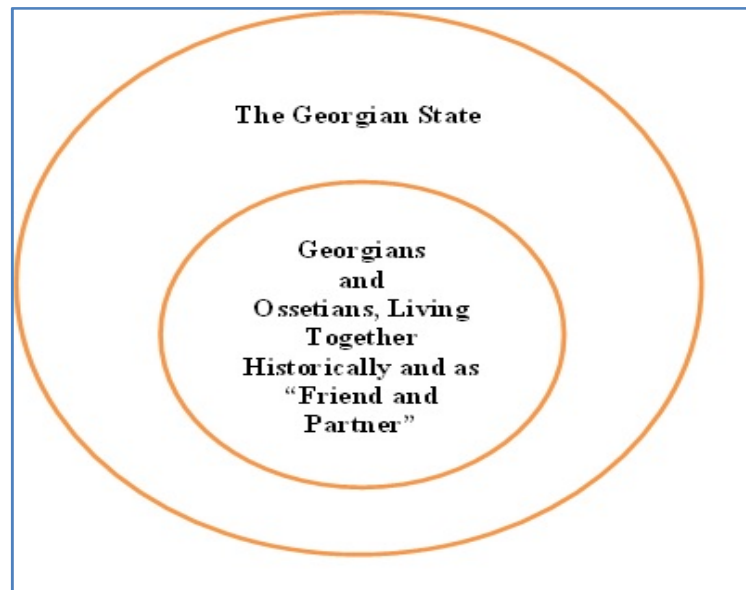


Figure 5: Georgia’s Ossetians’ View on the Georgian-Ossetian Relations

Ossetians did not leave Georgia despite the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism and it is important for them to advocate their existence in Georgia. Therefore Georgia’s Ossetians can adopt neither South Ossetia’s historiography nor Georgia’s traditional one. In order to advocate their existence in Georgia, Ossetians in Georgia focus on the Georgian-Ossetian historical amicable relations and unity and emphasize that Ossetians are also Georgia’s important members and that Georgian-Ossetian conflict is created artificially by foreign states. In this way, Georgia’s Ossetians adopt “the third way”, which supports neither the Ossetian nor the Georgian traditional historiography, evaluating Georgian-Ossetian relations differently.

On the other hand, changes are seen also in the Georgian historiography after the Rose Revolution in 2003. In fact, exclusive, insulting and negative expressions about minorities are being removed from the Georgian historiography due to Georgian state’s efforts to adopt an inclusive civic nation-state. The Georgian historiography about Ossetians is also changing and discourses about them are becoming more moderate. Besides, it focuses more on “close relations between Georgians and Ossetians” resembling Georgia’s Ossetians’ view on the Georgian-Ossetian relations.

For example, “*Sakartvelos Istorია: IX Klasi (Georgian History: the 9th Grade)*”, which is used as the textbook of Georgian history in schools in Georgia and was published in 2008, describes Ossetians’ history under the title of “the Ossetian-Georgian Relations” as such:⁶³⁴

Georgian-Ossetian relations have a very long history. It started with the appearance of Alan warrior groups in the North Caucasus in the first century B.C. In the course of time, Alans settled in the central part of the North Caucasus, united with local peoples and developed their own language. Alan culture became a Caucasian type. Thus, the people who were traditionally called “Alans” in Byzantine sources in the Middle Ages and “Ossetians” in Georgian sources were formed. From the 7th century, Christianity spread from Byzantium and Georgia and they established the strong Ossetian Kingdom in the North Caucasus during the 10th century. Ossetians basically had good amicable relations with Georgia though military conflicts occurred between them. Ossetian soldiers took part in the Georgian army. The Georgian and Ossetian royal families became relatives; Ossetian kings’ daughters married Giorgi I, Bagrat II, Giorgi III, and Ulu-Davit. Ossetian Prince Davit Soslan, who was the representative of Bagrat dynasty in Ossetia became Queen Tamar’s husband.

From Davit Agmashenebeli’s era to the time of the Mongolian invasion, Ossetia was independent of the Kingdom of Georgia. Ossetians continued to be in the Kingdom of Georgia. In the War of Didgori, 500 Ossetians fought to support Georgians.

The Ossetian state was destroyed due to the Mongol invasions of the North Caucasus. Some Ossetians, who survived, settled in the mountains and others settled in foreign states. Between the 13th and 14th centuries, Ossetian soldiers appeared also in Georgia. They dominated Shida-Kartli with the support of Mongolia, but Giorgi the 5th defeated and expelled them. After that Ossetians did not invade Georgia. They left the Georgian territory or mixed with Georgians. Ossetians who settled in mountains failed to return to the basin of the North Caucasus between the 14th-17th centuries. After the Golden Horde broke down, Circassians-Kabardians, who had the strongest military organization at that time, dominated the foothills of the North Caucasus. They did not only interfere with Ossetians in the basin but also collected tribute from them every year. Therefore, some Ossetians settled in Georgia. This settlement was peaceful. They settled in Georgia with feudal lords’ support.

⁶³⁴ Giorgi Anchabadze, Gela Gamqvelidze, Zurab Kiknadze, Mzia Surguladze and Dimitri Shvelize, *Sakartvelos Istorია: IX Klasi* [Georgian History: the 9th Grade] (Tbilisi: Logos Presi, 2008), 247-248.

Georgian kings were interested in the acquisition of landlords because the local population decreased as a result of the Ossetian settlement.

According to written sources, Ossetians' first noticeable settlement was realized in the origin of Didi Liakhvi River in the South Caucasus during the 17th century. Later, Ossetians gradually spread also to the Patara Liakhvi, Ksani and Aragvi Gorges. Especially many Ossetians lived in Ksani, Aragvi and lord Machabeli's land. Ossetians' number in the Kingdom of Kartli grew up, especially in the 18th century. In 1771 their population was 6,000.

Ossetians who settled accepted Christianity and actively contributed to the Georgian socio-political life. Ossetians' sons gradually flourished in Georgian socio-cultural arena. Those who are famous among them are Ioane Ialghuzidze (1775-1830), poet, teacher, and social activist.

According to this text, although Ossetians in Georgia are "foreigners, migrants", Ossetians and Georgians had amicable and good relations for a long time and had been helping each other in history. Besides Ossetian and Georgian royal families were relatives to each other. Ossetians who settled in Georgia later also contributed to Georgian politics, society, and culture to an important degree. Therefore, Ossetians are not "ungrateful" at all.

Although this textbook refers to Ossetian separatist movement between 1917 and 1920, it avoids defining all Ossetians as "utilitarian betrayers":⁶³⁵

Between 1917 and 1920, separatist groups became strong among Ossetians. Armed separatist militants took part in the White Army before, but they supported Soviet Russia after the time when the White Army retreated from Georgia and Bolsheviks declared their dominance over the Georgian territory. Separatist groups declared that they accepted the Russian dominance.

In this part, the discourse avoids marginalizing all Ossetians, saying that betrayers and Russia's fifth columns are only some Ossetians. Many Ossetians did not support the separatist movement and acted with Georgians.

The testimony of an Ossetian living in Georgia with the title "the End of the 20th Century: Multiethnic Georgia"⁶³⁶ shows that the current Georgian state is gradually

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 384.

changing its attitude towards the inclusive civic modern Georgian nationalism and that the distance between Georgia's Ossetians in Georgia and the current Georgian historiography is getting gradually closer.

Another textbook of Georgian history for the 9th graders tends not to use the term "South Ossetia", when discussing the issue of South Ossetia. For example, this textbook describes the following about the chaos in South-Ossetia from 1917 to 1920 as such:⁶³⁷

A more complex problem occurred in Shida-Kartli (the Seigniory of Machabeli), which Russians called "South Ossetia". Russians, who were gradually moving forward from the North Caucasus to Georgia, was attacking Democratic Georgia's wide cultural-national autonomy. Soviet Russia promised political-territorial autonomy to them in case they rebelled against Georgia. The Red Army was also often sent with the mask of "the Workers' Soldiers". The Separatists who were involved in this incident demanded that Machabeli Seigniory should be separated from Georgia and should be united with the Soviet Russia. On March 1920, 'the Committee of Revolution' was created, which announced Georgia's indigenous region as Russia's 'integral part'.

According to this interpretation, the separatist movement in South Ossetia was completely planned and realized by Russia and many Ossetians did not support Russia and acted together with Georgia. Therefore, Russia is completely responsible for the conflict between separatists and Georgia. In this way, while this textbook marginalizes the Russian state as "an imperialist state, a threat, and an enemy", it avoids labeling minority groups such as Ossetians as "the enemy and Russia's fifth column" breaking the unity of ethnic and religious groups in Georgia.

This textbook explains the creation of the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia as such:⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 461.

⁶³⁷ Nodar Asatiani, Mariam Lortkipanidze, Parnaoz Lomashvili, Roin Metreveli and Giorgi Otkhmezuri, *Sakartvelos Istoria 9* [Georgian History 9] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri, 2012), 371.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 381-382.

In Shida-Kartli, the difficult problem on the autonomy of 'South Ossetia' occurred. Ossetians were regarded as unimportant national minorities in Georgia. Therefore, only cultural autonomy should have been recognized, according to international law. They demanded political-territorial autonomy.

From September 6th to 8th 1921, the extended session of the Commissars of Revolution and the Commissars of Party took the resolution of creating 'the Soviet Socialist Republic of South Ossetia'. This project was very absurd; therefore, even the Communist Party of Republic supporting and agitating Ossetian separatists denied it. At last, 'the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia' was created on Georgian territory. [...] the Separatist forces complained about this decision, encouraged by the imperial center. They especially became active from 1924, when 'the Autonomous Region of North Ossetia' was established in Russian territory. At the Congress of the North Ossetian Soviet on January 1925, the issue of the unification of two Ossetian regions was discussed. The 5th Congress of the South Ossetian Soviet dealt with this opinion so that united Ossetia would be completely annexed to Georgia. The Georgian and Transcaucasus Central Executive Committee unanimously approved this plan.

However, as soon as it was approved, the position of the center of the empire, which supported the establishment of united Ossetia in Georgia's territory, radically changed. Thus, this plan was canceled.

In the part explaining the independence of Georgia in 1991 and its new nation-state building process, the conflict in South Ossetia in 1990 is described as such:⁶³⁹

At the end of the Soviet era, although the Georgian government also made mistakes, separatists gained power in South Ossetia and Abkhazia mostly due to Russia's invasion.

In the autumn of 1990, the Highest Soviet of the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia took the decision of connecting South Ossetia to the Soviet Union, violating Georgia's constitution. The Georgian Highest Soviet abolished the status of the autonomous region against this decision. Armed conflict in Shida-Kartli began. In 1992, Russia and Georgia reached the agreement in Dagomis, which stopped military actions in South Ossetia. However, Russia continued to support the separatist policy of the region (South Ossetia).

The textbook refers to the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 as such:⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 418.

On August 2008, the Russo-Georgian War occurred. As a result of it, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region (South Ossetia), which are Georgia's constituent parts, have been occupied by the Russian army and Georgian populations were displaced from there. On August 26th, 2008, Russia recognized these regions as 'independent states', but international society commonly rejects to recognize their independence.

Similar discourses on the issue of South Ossetia are seen on the history textbook for the 12th grade in Georgian schools. The book generally only explains the process of the issue of South Ossetia chronologically and emphasizes that Russia plays a leading role in the issue, not Ossetians.⁶⁴¹ According to the book, the issue of South Ossetia was created completely by the Russian Soviet Communists. Since the time when armed conflict occurred in South Ossetia in 1990, Russia has prevented the resolution of this issue for its interests and was hostile against Georgia. At the same time, the current Georgian historiography admits that the exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism is also responsible for the armed conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and criticizes the exclusive ethnic Georgian nationalism. Thus, the current Georgian historiography avoids marginalizing minority groups in Georgia and emphasizes the unity of Georgia's ethnic and religious groups as "Georgian citizens", marginalizing the Russian state as "a threat and enemy for the national unity of Georgia" in order to overcome the problem of exclusive titular nationalism.

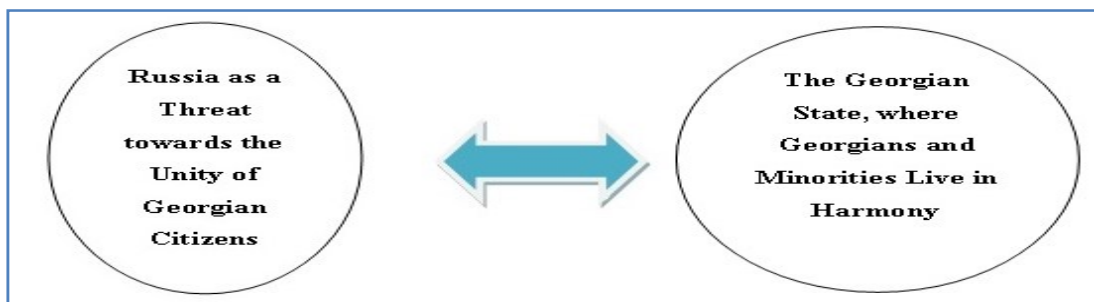


Figure 6: Georgia's Current Historiography on its Ethnic Problems

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 424.

⁶⁴¹ Nino Kighladze, Revaz Gachechiladze and George Sanikidze, *Istoria 12* [History 12] (Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri, 2012), 115; 240; 277.

Both the Georgian and Ossetian traditional historiography marginalized each other in order to prove their autochthony, because the Soviet government encouraged nations to develop their national identity and nationalism and conflicts appeared among every nation in the process of detending their identity. This process caused the rise of exclusionist ethnic nationalism among Georgians and the conflict in South Ossetia at the end of 1980s. This situation led the Georgian state and society and Ossetians in South Ossetia to exclude other ethnic groups as the “enemy, ungrateful foreigners, Russian fifth column”. On the other hand, Ossetians in Georgia focused on the topics such as “the historical amicable relations between Ossetians and Georgians” and “the mutual contribution of Ossetians and Georgians” in order to advocate the legitimacy of their existence in Georgia. The Georgian state after 2003 is heading to an inclusive civic nation-state building and thus needs to overcome the exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism. The current Georgian historiography is changing in this direction and came to emphasize the friendship and national unity between Georgians and Ossetians, marginalizing the Russian state as “enemy, threat”. At this point, Ossetians in Georgia interpret the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations differently from the Georgian and Ossetian traditional historiography and the current Georgian historiography came to resemble the view of Ossetians in Georgia.

In the next part, I will discuss the current socio-cultural situation of Ossetian communities in Georgia and their strategies of preserving their identity and of developing their rights.

5-1-4. Georgia’s Ossetians’ Perspective on the Situation of Ossetian Culture and Their Strategy of Keeping Their Boundary with the Georgian Society

When we observe the socio-cultural situation of Ossetians in Georgia, a complex linguistic situation can be seen among Georgia’s Ossetians.

In Tbilisi, the opportunities of conversing only in Ossetian among family members as well as with friends and neighbors are rare, because of the mixed demographic structure of Tbilisi, as well as the dominance of Georgian and Russian languages.

Also, mixed marriages between Ossetians and non-Ossetian peoples (especially Georgians and Russians) are seen very often and non-Ossetian languages, especially Georgian and Russian, have become more dominant over mixed families. In fact, although 5 of the 11 interviewees in Tbilisi answered that they speak Ossetian among the family members, even those who know Ossetian well often use Georgian and Russian expressions and this shows the strong influence of these languages on them in daily life. This situation is also valid in the rural areas in Georgia, especially in Shida-Kartli. Though 9 out of 10 interviewees in Nigoza answered that they speak the Ossetian language among the family members, half of 10 interviewees prefer the Georgian language when they talk to their neighbors and friends. Georgian language is more dominant among the youth. As for mass media which Ossetians in these regions follow, they generally follow Georgian and Russian mass media and the number of those who follow North and South Ossetian mass media is extremely low. Also in the Soviet era, when communication between Georgia and North and South Ossetia was more intense, the number of those who followed mass-media in the Ossetian language was low and only 5 of the 21 interviewees in Tbilisi and Nigoza answered that they followed mass-media in the Ossetian language in the Soviet era.

Although a similar situation exists in Ossetian villages in the Lagodekhi Region, the linguistic situation in these villages is somewhat different from the other regions because of the use of Ossetian language in schools and close relations between these villages and North and South Ossetia. Though in some cases Georgian language is spoken among family members in these villages, Ossetian language is used widely not only at home but also when villagers converse with their friends and neighbors. In fact, more than a half of 9 interviewees in Areshperani answered that they speak Ossetian both at home and among friends and neighbors when I conducted interviews in 2016. Besides, the ratio of those who follow mass media in the Ossetian language in the Ossetian villages in Lagodekhi region is comparatively higher than the other regions even today. Almost all of those who received education in Areshperani and Pona in the Soviet era followed mass media in the Ossetian language before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. During my fieldwork

in Areshperani in 2016, 7 out of 9 interviewees in Areshperani answered that they frequently followed mass media in the Ossetian language in the Soviet era and 5 of these 9 interviewees still follow today.

Although linguistic situation differs by regions, many Ossetians in Georgia follow television-radio programs, newspapers, journals, books and internet pages in Ossetian language such as “Moambe”. Actually, 28 of the total 30 interviewees said that they follow or try to follow them such as Ossetian “Moambe” and this situation shows that Georgia’s Ossetians’ interest in Ossetian language is not low at all.

Besides, many Ossetians know about Ossetian traditions, mythology, and literature as well as Ossetian language and focus on especially traditions when teaching their history and culture. In fact, Ossetians’ traditions and customs are almost the same as those of Circassians and are different from Georgians’.⁶⁴² The influence of traditions and customs on Ossetians is generally much stronger than on Georgians and this creates important differences between the two. For example, Inga and Feliks, living in Nigoza, answered the questions of “what kind of information do you have about Ossetian culture?” and “Which topics do you focus when you teach Ossetian history and culture to the youth?” as the following:⁶⁴³

We know Ossetian traditions, customs, and etiquettes and it is necessary for everyone to know them. We also mainly learned these topics in our families. It is very important for us to preserve our traditions and custom because learning our traditions and customs contribute to knowing the history of our people, Ossetians.

Besides, Tengiz also emphasized the importance of tradition in Ossetian identity:⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴² About the traditions and custom of North Caucasians, especially Circassians, cf. Rahmi Tuna, *Adige Xabze: Adige Etiği ve Etiketi* [Adyge Khabze: Circassian Ethics and Etiquette] (Istanbul: Asyayın, 2009).

⁶⁴³ Author’s interview with Inga and Feliks on November 16th and 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

⁶⁴⁴ Author’s interview with Tengiz on October 25th, 2016 in Tbilisi.

Scythians, who are our ancestors said that it is not a problem for us even if all the gold which we own is lost, but if we forgot our traditions, custom and etiquettes inherited from generation to generation, our people will disappear.

That is, Ossetian traditions are one of the indispensable elements which form the basis of Ossetian identity and they are inherited from generation to generation through education by family. Adopting Ossetian tradition lead Ossetians to have the sense of Ossetianness and to know their Ossetian ancestry. In fact, even in Tbilisi and Shida-Kartli, where the lessons of the Ossetian language and culture were not taught at schools before; Ossetian traditions, custom, and etiquettes were taught within the family. Therefore many Ossetians in Georgia know their traditions, custom, and etiquettes and are aware of the fact that their ancestors are Ossetians despite an important part of them do not know the Ossetian language well.⁶⁴⁵

Along with the Ossetian traditions, interviewees referred also to Nart Saga,⁶⁴⁶ Ossetian literature, dance, songs and history of Alans as the topics, which they teach to the youth.⁶⁴⁷ Especially in Areshperani, because Ossetian language and literature are taught at school and “Kostaoba” Festival is held every year, Ossetians in Areshperani and Pona have opportunities to learn Ossetian mythology, literature, dance, songs, music and the history of Alans not only in their families but also at school. Therefore, Ossetian traditions, history, and culture are known better and more widely in this village and Ossetian identity is preserved more soundly there. Also in other regions of Georgia, Ossetian mythology and literature are often taught at home.

⁶⁴⁵ Sordia, “Ossetians in Georgia,” 11.

⁶⁴⁶ A series of tales originating from the North Caucasus. They form the basis of mythology of North Caucasian ethnic groups, especially Ossetians, Karachay-Balkars, Circassians and Abkhazians. Cf. John Colarusso, *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus: Myths and Legends from the Circassians, Abazas, Abkhaz, and Ubykhs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁶⁴⁷ Author’s interview with Eliko, Stella and Albert on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

Ossetian traditions, literature, and mythology are widely known and Ossetian identity still remains strong among Ossetians in Georgia despite the Georgian language is spoken more and more among Ossetians and the Ossetian language is being gradually forgotten.

However, it is also true that the number of Ossetians who do not know their mother language and culture is high and that many Ossetians in Georgia are anxious about their increasing cultural assimilation. For example, Nato Gutsaeva, a graduate student of the Tbilisi State University, expressed the cultural difficulties of Ossetians in Georgia as such:⁶⁴⁸

I can perfectly speak Georgian language from both grammatical and lexical points of view. Along with it, I can speak English and Russian well. But unfortunately, although I understand everything in Ossetian, I am not able to speak Ossetian correctly. The level at which I know the Ossetian language is not as high as my grandparents. I always had a desire to study the Ossetian language fully, but, I think, this opportunity is not enough. As far as I know, Tbilisi does not have any schools where the Ossetian language is taught. In the Tbilisi State University, Ossetian is taught as an elective subject, but I think the course is insufficient in order to fully learn the language.

At the same time, she emphasized that the language provides an opportunity to get acquainted with the nation's culture, custom, and values: "if the native language is lost, the nation itself is also lost. The Ossetian people have such a great story that this language has to be preserved."⁶⁴⁹

Naira also pointed out the linguistical problem of Ossetians in Georgia similarly:⁶⁵⁰

It is a pity that an important part of the Ossetians in Georgia does not know their native language. Moreover, the number of specialists of the Ossetian language is also very small today.

⁶⁴⁸ Mearakishvili and Dzagoeva, "Gruzinskiy Yazyk v Osetii".

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

According to Nato and Naira, many Ossetians in Georgia do not know their mother language well while almost all Ossetians in Georgia have a very good command of Georgian and Russian. Despite their interest in learning the Ossetian language, the opportunity to learn the language is scarce in Georgia and the number of facilities and of those who can teach the Ossetian language is not sufficient at all. In fact, there are no schools in Tbilisi in which Ossetian language is taught and the Ossetian Sunday School is not active. Even at the Tbilisi State University and schools in Areshperani, Pona, Nigoza, Tsitsikaantseri and Tsitelubani, the total hours of the Ossetian language lessons are limited and problems related to the lack of teaching material exist. Furthermore, salary paid to teachers in schools and teaching staffs in universities is very low in Georgia and their quality decreased to an important degree after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. In this way, the anxiety of cultural assimilation into Georgians and the dissatisfaction with the current situation related to the education in Ossetians' language and culture exist among Georgia's Ossetian communities.

During my fieldworks between 2016 and 2017, anxiety about the danger of assimilation and the demand for an increase in Ossetian language education and the Ossetian language media were expressed by many of the interviewees. However they described the policies of the current Georgian government towards Ossetian culture as improved in comparison with the period before 2003. For example, Lali and Albert, living in Areshperani, referred to these topics as such:⁶⁵¹

Unfortunately, assimilation is advancing even in our village. Because close relations and intense interaction have been continuing between Ossetians and Georgians for a long time, Ossetians' cultural assimilation into the Georgian society is an unavoidable process and we have no remedies against this situation. We want the extension and development of media in the Ossetian language very much, so that our people would not forget our mother language. Although the news program 'Moambe' provides news in the

⁶⁵¹ Author's interview with Lali and Albert on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

Ossetian language, it is insufficient and we are not able to learn about Ossetian culture sufficiently after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Mzia said that the cultural policies of the Georgian government are insufficient for preserving Ossetian culture and identity, compared with the Soviet cultural policies towards Ossetians:⁶⁵²

We lived much more comfortably in Georgia in the Soviet era than today. At first, Ossetians in Georgia were able to receive education in their mother language, Ossetian. We used to take Ossetian newspapers and journals in hand and read them. There used to be books written in Ossetian. Even graduate education could be taken in Ossetian and we were able to work in government offices. However, it has already become rare even to encounter an ethnic Ossetian teacher today.

These interviews suggest that Ossetians' assimilation into the Georgian society is unavoidable and people cannot deal with this process only with their capability. While Ossetian culture was protected more soundly by the Soviet government and the process of assimilation was prevented to an important degree in the Soviet era, the measures taken by the current Georgian government against Ossetians' cultural assimilation is not sufficient and Ossetians cannot learn much about their culture today. Actually, there was more comprehensive education in Ossetian language and the socio-cultural condition of Ossetians in Lagodekhi Region was much better in the Soviet era. That is, Ossetians in Lagodekhi Region are accustomed to convenient cultural circumstances and therefore the complaint against the lack of cultural policies of the Georgian state is frequently heard especially in this region.

On the other hand, when I conducted interviews in Nigoza, interviewees generally evaluate the cultural policies of the Georgian state positively while insisting that classes in Ossetian language and Ossetian language media should be extended and developed. Especially, Robert, a villager in Nigoza, emphasized that Georgia's pro-

⁶⁵² Author's interview with Mzia on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

Western policy would positively affect the process of preserving Ossetian culture and identity:⁶⁵³

Of course we want the variety of mass media in the Ossetian language to be increased and the time of the broadcasting of ‘Moambe’ in Ossetian should be extended. But the Georgian state chose strengthening relations with Europe and the international public will pay more attention to Ossetians in Georgia and our rights will be extended and improved.

According to him, if Georgia strengthens relations with Western states, the international society, especially the Western society pays more attention to Georgia’s issues on minorities such as Ossetians, Turks, Abkhazians, and Chechen-Kists. Therefore Georgia is compelled to improve the socio-cultural situation of its minorities in order to avoid the criticism of the international society. That is, he thinks that Georgia’s continuing pro-Western policy will cause the extension of Ossetians’ socio-cultural rights and the improvement of their socio-cultural circumstances.

Unlike the Lagodekhi region, education in Ossetian language did not exist in Shida-Kartli during the Soviet era. These policies were applied after the Rose Revolution in 2003 for the first time. Thus, there are clear differences between before and after 2003. Ossetians in Shida-Kartli generally view the socio-cultural policies of the current Georgian government more positively than those in the Lagodekhi region.

However, when I conducted interviews in Tbilisi, those who are interested in Ossetian identity and their socio-cultural situation explained Ossetians’ difficult socio-cultural situation more clearly. For example, Nana evaluated the current situation of Ossetians’ socio-cultural rights negatively:⁶⁵⁴

Of course, I want channels and programs in the Ossetian language to increase and do not want our language and literature to become extinct. Unfortunately,

⁶⁵³ Author’s interview with Robert on November 17th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

⁶⁵⁴ Author’s interview with Nana on October 29th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

I am not able to speak Ossetian, my mother language very well and I am sad about this situation. As for our socio-cultural rights, the Georgian government is not making efforts for Ossetian culture and identity very much. The situation seems to be positive, but everything is only for display. Although I personally say that Ossetians have sufficient chances to express themselves, people are afraid of expressing their opinions and Ossetians' rights are still limited. There are many things to be corrected in our situation and I see many violations of our rights.

Valentina described that Georgians' hostility against Ossetians and their pressure on Ossetians still exist:⁶⁵⁵

In my opinion, the Georgian government does not make efforts for the Ossetian identity and socio-cultural rights very much. Moreover, the tensions between Georgians and Ossetians and hostility against Ossetians still exist in Georgia. Especially, this hostility is shared widely among those whose education level is low. [...] Ossetians who want to live in Georgia cannot avoid assimilation into the Georgian society; otherwise, the young Ossetians are not able to occupy higher positions. Only those who belong to the lower classes are able to preserve Ossetian identity.

Mari explained that the influence of the cultural policies of the Georgian government on Ossetians is limited and that these policies are insufficient to preserve Ossetian identity while evaluating Georgia's pro-Western policy positively in terms of its effect in reducing of discrimination:⁶⁵⁶

If the time of broadcasting in Ossetian were extended and channels in Ossetian increase it would be good for us. More people would have chance to watch and listen and would obtain more information about the Georgian-Ossetian relations, the Ossetian language, and culture. Of course, the existence of the Ossetian translation of the program 'Moambe' is very good for us, but this program is broadcasted at early morning hour and in a very short time and presents information only about political developments. Therefore, few people watch it. [...] the Georgian government does not allocate money or other resources to preserve Ossetian culture. I know only the activities of the non-governmental organization 'the Caucasian House', but even these activities are insufficient for all Ossetians in Georgia.

⁶⁵⁵ Author's interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁵⁶ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

Moreover, few activities and projects are realized. As far as I know, there was a school teaching the Ossetian language, but it was also closed. What we see in this situation is that, Ossetians in Georgia are losing their cultural values. There are no Ossetian schools in Tbilisi and neither the Ossetian language nor Ossetian culture is taught in Georgian schools. Informative activities, projects, and festivals are not carried out and I refer to only 'Kostaoba' festival.

According to them, the Georgian government does not apply effective cultural policies towards Georgia's Ossetians and Ossetians cannot express themselves enough because the hostility against Ossetians still exist among Georgians although Georgia's legal system guarantees freedom of expression. Therefore Ossetians' socio-cultural rights are still limited and the Georgian could not prevent Ossetians' assimilation. While Ossetians are well-integrated into the Georgian society and often emphasize the Georgian-Ossetian historical and social friendship, they are anxious about their socio-cultural assimilation and consider the cultural policies of the Georgian government insufficient.

Georgia's Ossetians' strategy for preserving and developing their identity focuses on the issues of the extension of socio-cultural rights as well as the elimination of discrimination against Ossetians.

We can see one of the most appropriate examples of Georgians' strategy in the establishment of "the Ossetian Forum" in 2014. While the Council of National Minorities is still functioning under the Public Defender of Georgia, this new organization, in which the Union of Georgian Bar Associations and Ossetian organizations participate, is engaged in solving problems in more efficient and more effective ways. Tengiz, Chairman of the Georgian Association of Ossetians, described the following about the purpose of the establishment of "the Ossetian Forum":⁶⁵⁷

We are interested in educational and cultural issues such as the restoration of the Ossetian house in the Ethnographic Museum in Tbilisi as well as the

⁶⁵⁷ "Osuri Forumi".

rights of Ossetians residing in Georgia. We will definitely discuss all of them with the Public Defender of Georgia. This is a new stage for solving existing problems. Accordingly, we hope that the problems will not be heard anymore. Two people whose property has been confiscated illegally have already consulted with us. Their problems will also be discussed and I hope that they will be resolved.

Moreover, Tengiz referred to the lack of a unified standard of studying the Ossetian language as one of the problems faced by ethnic Ossetians:⁶⁵⁸

The Public Defender of Georgia signed a memorandum with the Ministry of Education and Science. So, I think this problem will be solved. This issue will also be dealt with by ‘the Ossetian Forum’.

According to Tengiz, “the Ossetian Forum” has no political goals and focuses on issues on Georgia’s Ossetians’ socio-cultural rights and their legal issues such as the the unified standard of studying the Ossetian language, the restoration of the Ossetian house in the Ethnographic Museum and the illegally deprived property of Georgia’s Ossetians. “The Ossetian Forum” deals with these problems, cooperating not only with Ossetians in Georgia but also with the Georgian state and society and other minority groups.

After “the Ossetian Forum” was established, it realized a meeting in the Parliament of Georgia in February 2015. In this meeting, the social problems of ethnic Ossetians were discussed and the fact that that it was not possible to teach the Ossetian language as a subject in schools because of the lack of the official standard for the Ossetian language was referred. In this regard, determining the standard for the Ossetian language education immediately was recommended so that the Ossetian language could be taught in schools as a subject.⁶⁵⁹ At the same time, the issue of training of teachers who teach Ossetian language and literature was also

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁹ “Skhdomis Okmi No: 32 [the Protocol Meeting No: 32]”, *Sakartvelos Parlamenti*, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.parliament.ge/ge/saparlamento-saqmianoba/komisiebi-da-sabchoebi-8/teritoriuli-mtlianobis-agdgenis-sakitxta-droebiti-komisia/komisiis-sxdomebi-2041/sxdomis-oqmin32teritoriuli13022015.page>.

discussed. Related to this issue, the necessity to introduce tests in Ossetian for admission to higher education institutions was pointed out.⁶⁶⁰

After this meeting, the Ministry of Education and Science responded positively for the resolution of these problems. It emphasized that it practically decided to restart the Ossetian language as a separate subject in schools starting with the new academic year in 2015 and that the standard of the Ossetian language education would be developed. Besides, it was also decided that the Ministry of Education and Science would strengthen cooperation with “the Ossetian Forum” on developing educational programs and materials, training the specialists of the Ossetian language, carrying out measures to conduct the proficiency tests in the Ossetian language and restoring “the Ossetian House” in the Ethnographic Museum in Tbilisi.⁶⁶¹

Even after these resolutions were carried out, “the Ossetian Forum” continues its cooperation with the Georgian government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other minority groups to deal with Georgia’s Ossetians’ social issues.

Such a tendency is also seen in the establishment of the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center and its activities. For example, Naira, the director of this research center at the Tbilisi State University, give information about this center as such.⁶⁶²

The purpose of our research center is to restore the relations between Georgians and Ossetians which had been continuing for many years. Our activities are based on communication between professionals from different scientific areas. Our center is engaged in various activities: we conduct ethnographic researches on folklore and go to regions where Ossetians live compactly and where there are many materials reflecting their culture and tradition. This material is recorded and processed by the staffs of our center.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Mearakishvili and Dzagoeva, “Gruzinskiy Yazyk v Osetii”.

We are engaged also in publishing. In our center, anyone can learn the Ossetian language. Moreover, we developed a training course and invited Raziat Kumarittaty, a teacher and specialist of the Ossetian language, who is a graduate of the faculty of Ossetian language of Tskhinvali University.

At the same time, she referred to the publishing activities of the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center:⁶⁶³

The Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Georgian phrasebook is a great contribution to people who are interested in these languages. This unique book will promote the popularization of both of these languages and contribute to the restoration of Georgian-Ossetian relations.

According to her, the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center works in order to intensify the mutual understanding between Georgians and Ossetians and is based on cooperation between them. Their works focus on transferring Ossetians' traditions and cultural heritages to the next generation and introducing them to the Georgian society. Georgians and other ethnic groups, as well as Ossetians, can participate in the Ossetian language classes. This center published textbooks and a dictionary of the Ossetian language so that both Ossetians and Georgians could learn Ossetian and Georgian. Besides, the center concentrates also on the training of the teachers of the Ossetian language. A specialist of the Ossetian language is involved in this mission.

In fact, as I explained in Chapter Three, Naira has been involved in publishing materials in Ossetian language related to Ossetian literature and folklore and cultural projects such as the restoration of Kosta Khetagurov's statue and the preparation of Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Georgian dictionary, even before the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center was established. After it was established, it published the textbook of Ossetian grammar as well as the Ossetian-Georgian phrasebook.

Moreover, this center organizes activities such as "the day of the Ossetian language" and "Kostaoba" Festival with the state agencies, and domestic and international non-

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

governmental organizations. In other words, the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center also strengthens cooperation with the Georgian state and society and non-governmental organizations in the process of preserving the Ossetian culture, language, and identity.



Photograph 13: A Training Course of the Ossetian Language Education in the Tbilisi State University⁶⁶⁴

Gia, who is the chairman of the Union of Youth of Georgia and the Vice-President of the Association of Georgia's Ossetians, described the situation of the Ossetian language education in Georgia's rural area as follows:⁶⁶⁵

Ossetian language classes at schools stopped in the 1990s. There was a long break until the beginning of the 2000s, then they restarted, but this process was interrupted again until 2013 when the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia decided to resume the Ossetian language classes in primary schools. The entire population of this area is eager to learn the Ossetian language, but the lack of textbooks creates a problem. It is noteworthy that Georgian children also want to study the Ossetian language and literature in order to communicate with Ossetians better.

⁶⁶⁴Taken by Zarina Gigolaeva on June 6th, 2016 in the Tbilisi.

⁶⁶⁵ Zhanna Tarkhanova, "Napominanie ob IstoricheskikhKornyakh, iliKostaoba po-Kakhetinski [The Reminder of Historical Roots, or Kostaoba in Kakhetian]", *Ekho Kavkaza*, accessed October 19, 2017, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/28798335.html>.

He underlined that Georgians living in villages with Ossetians are also eager to learn the Ossetian language, culture, and traditions in order to establish better relations with Ossetians and that Ossetians also want to cooperate with Georgians in the process of preserving socio-cultural boundaries with Georgians.

Actually, Ossetians' strategy to preserve their socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgian society was also mentioned in my interview with Gia in 2017. Gia emphasized the necessity of a new organizational structure for Ossetians in Georgia, referring to the insufficiency of existing organizations such as "the Ossetian Forum" and "the Caucasian Mosaic":⁶⁶⁶

I say that we need to set up a new Ossetian youth organization and this organization should be like Kaf-Fed (The Federation of the Caucasian Associations) in Turkey. Both Georgians and Ossetians will participate. [...] In my opinion, a thing like the council of *aksakal* (the council of elders) should exist and lawyers would also participate in this council. This council will work in order to resolve social problems and to raise the interest of children in traditions and customs of our people. Everyone in this council has his/her own mission. [...] We live in Georgia with other minorities and experience the same social difficulties together. Now I am saying that we set up a program so that minorities could defend their rights. This program will be held next summer with other minorities. Today, everyone including Georgians has difficulties in education and opportunities of employment. These are the common problems which minorities and Georgians have.

Moreover, he referred to the necessity of teaching in Ossetian language and culture, with Georgians' participation:⁶⁶⁷

Now we want to establish a weekend school and Georgian, Russian and Ossetian language will be taught there. Georgians will also take part in this school and learn Ossetian in order to have closer relations with us. Moreover, an online course in Ossetian language has already been established. Today, 350 students are studying in this program and more than 50 percent of them are Georgians, not Ossetians. And we privately provide lectures in Ossetian language, traditions, and culture on Saturdays and Sundays.

⁶⁶⁶ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁶⁷ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

At the same time, Gia evaluated the future of the relations between the Georgian state and Georgia's Ossetians as such:⁶⁶⁸

The Georgian government guarantees the freedom of expression more extensively than other states such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Armenia, and Russia. For example, we, Turks and other minorities can do their own business. The government hears their complaints and this attitude complies with the European standards. In the future, the Prime Minister of Georgia may be an Ossetian or from any other minority group. Actually, Sergeenko, an ethnic Ukrainian is the minister of national defense in Georgia. This is a very important development. In addition, the young people in Georgia adopt European liberal ideas. The Georgian state will rise to the level of European states and ethnic-nationalism should not exist. [...] We have to develop this state together and thus, our situation will be improved.

His talk clearly shows the direction of the development of Ossetian identity in Georgia. According to him, Ossetians in Georgia are developing their identity as a cultural identity in the framework of the existing Georgian state, not through opposition to the Georgian state and society. If Ossetians in Georgia tried to develop their identity as a political one, they would tend to support South Ossetia in the conflict of Georgia-South Ossetia and would directly oppose the Georgian state and society. In this situation, Georgia's Ossetians would lose the legitimacy of living not only in North and South Ossetia but also in Georgia. That is, while political separatism is contradictory with the principle of the Georgian state, multiculturalism is promoted by both the current Georgian government and Western states. Therefore, Ossetians in Georgia focus on the extension of their socio-cultural rights in the framework of Georgian state and do not share the same opinion with Ossetians in North and South Ossetia on the independence of South Ossetia.

Moreover, Ossetians in Georgia are cooperating with the Georgian state and society and other minority groups in the process of preserving their socio-cultural boundaries in order not to be regarded as "the adherents of separatists". If Georgia's Ossetians excluded Georgians and other groups, they would not be able to build

⁶⁶⁸ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

relations with the Georgian state and to create effective identity strategies because the current population of Ossetians in Georgia is scarce and cannot be effective on the Georgian government alone. In addition, because South Ossetia excludes other groups, especially Georgians from the process of developing its national identity, their exclusion of Georgians in the process of preserving Ossetian identity would cause Georgians' negative evaluation of Ossetians as "separatists". Therefore, Georgia's Ossetians tend to emphasize the differences between themselves and those in South Ossetia, cooperating with Georgians in their identity strategies.

On the other hand, because Ossetians in Georgia consider preserving their identity against assimilation as crucial, they are strengthening their relations with Ossetians in foreign countries and are heading to establish a transnational network of Ossetians in the world. In fact, Gia, Izolda, and Zina referred to the relations between Ossetians in Georgia and those living abroad in my interviews in 2017. Especially, Gia said that Ossetians in Georgia hope to develop their cooperation with those in foreign states:⁶⁶⁹

We want to develop relations with Ossetians elsewhere and teach the Ossetian language. I am making efforts to intensify communication with Ossetians in Turkey over the internet. I tell Ossetians in Istanbul that I would establish an Ossetian youth association with them. Moreover, I am planning to prepare an online course of the Ossetian language for Ossetians in Turkey. We have already made relations with *Alan Vakfi* (the Alan Foundation) and *Oset-Alan Derneği* (the Ossetian-Alan Association) in Istanbul. And Fabriissi, an Ossetian activist in Europe visited us and we exchanged information with him.

Actually, the internet has benefited Ossetians in Georgia in establishing relations with those in foreign countries such as Europe, Russia, and Turkey. Many Ossetians in Georgia, especially the part of elites are establishing relations with Ossetians abroad on the internet. Especially, as various social networking services such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram are popular, making relations with Ossetians abroad became easier and the relations between Ossetians in Georgia and those

⁶⁶⁹ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

abroad are being intensified. Moreover, there are many groups in social networking services such as Facebook and these groups share information about the Ossetian history, language, culture, and traditions and discuss these topics.⁶⁷⁰ The cyberspace contributes to the sharing of the Ossetian history, language, traditions and culture by Ossetians all over the world and to the preservation and strengthening Ossetian identity. Thus, Ossetians in Georgia are strengthening relations with those abroad as well as the Georgian state and society and other minority groups in Georgia in order to preserve their identity.

In sum, the strategy of Georgia's Ossetians to preserve their boundaries with Georgians can be outlined as such:

Ossetians in Georgia aim to develop their identity as a cultural identity rather than a political identity. Developing Ossetian identity as a political one can bring about a direct confrontation with the Georgian state and society on the issue of South Ossetia and Ossetians may lose the legitimacy of their living in Georgia. Multiculturalism is not contradictory with Georgia's principle while separatism is so.

Secondly, Georgia's Ossetians tend to cooperate with the Georgian society and state in the process of preserving their boundaries with Georgians and of eliminating discrimination against Ossetians so that they would not be regarded as "separatists". Therefore, the process of developing Ossetian identity in Georgia is very different from that of the Ossetians in North and South Ossetia.

On the other hand, because Ossetians in Georgia consider preserving their identity against assimilation more important than integration, they are intensifying their

⁶⁷⁰ For example, cf. *Alantae* [Alans], accessed December 12, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/915305361890007/>; *Mnogonatsional'noe Dvijenie Sokhranim Nasledie Predkov* [Multinational Movement for Saving Ancestors' Heritage], accessed December 24, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/624005821062263/>; *World Union of Alans*, accessed December 24, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wualans/>; *Global Osetya-Alania*, accessed on December 24, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/globalosetyaalania/>.

relations with those in foreign states and trying to preserve their cultural identity, sharing their language, traditions, history and culture with Ossetians abroad.

5-1-5. The Importance of “Kostaoba” Festival for Emphasizing Friendship and Boundary with the Georgian Society

In the previous parts, I analyzed the relations between the Georgian state and society and Georgia’s Ossetian communities, the view of Georgia’s Ossetians on Georgian-Ossetian relations and their view on strategies for preserving Ossetian culture and identity.

Along with these, “Kostaoba” Festival is important for both the Georgian society and Georgia’s Ossetian communities in terms of the Georgian-Ossetian relations and Ossetians’ socio-cultural boundary with the Georgian society. As I referred in Chapter Three, “Kostaoba” Festival is held in Areshperani on every October to celebrate the anniversary of an Ossetian national poet Kosta Khetagurov’s birth and this festival includes reading poems, singing songs, dances, concerts, and sports activities. Georgians and Azeris (Turks) from Kakheti as well as Ossetians take part in “Kostaoba” Festival. This festival plays a very important role for the relations between the Georgian society and state and Georgia’s Ossetian communities and in preserving Ossetian culture and identity.

Firstly, when we concern the role of “Kostaoba” festival for the relations between the Georgian society and Georgia’s Ossetian communities, it presents opportunities for emphasizing the Georgian-Ossetian unity and showing close relations between the Georgian society and Ossetians in Georgia. For example, Lyudmila Laliyeva, a villager of Areshperani, explained the following about the importance of Georgians for Ossetians in Georgia during an interview with Mzia Paresishvili, a journalist of “Radio Tavisupleba” in 2009:⁶⁷¹

⁶⁷¹ Mzia Paresishvili, “Kostaoba-2009”, *Ekho Kavkaza*, accessed November 24, 2009, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/1885894.html>.

For 68 years I have always waited for this holiday, Kostaoba. I love the Georgian people and Georgians love Ossetians. Bad people exist among both Georgians and Ossetians. I do not have anywhere to go. I was born, grew up and live here. This is my land. Georgians and Ossetians celebrate holidays together. We sit at a table together and we joy and sorrow together.

Naira referred to her memories related to “Kostaoba” during the same interview:⁶⁷²

I remember very well the time when Kosta Khetagurov’s monument was blown up in the 1990s. Despite this incident, people gathered at the ruined pedestal of his statue and this holiday was celebrated. Then we restored the monument and the school. It is interesting that Kostaoba is celebrated by not only Ossetians but also Georgians, Azeris and representatives of other nationalities.

Soso, a native of Tskhinvali described Kosta’s life and the importance of “Kostaoba” at the interview with Zhanna Tarkhanova, a journalist of “Ekho Kavkaza”, in 2014.⁶⁷³

Georgians and Ossetians have so much in common that it is hard to say that Kosta Khetagurov is one of the only figures in our history. But Kosta is the most powerful factor binding us and Georgians to each other. Both Ossetians and Georgians love him. Today is another example of the friendship of our peoples and we must live together and be friends.

Besides, Zurab, a villager in Nigoza, evaluated “Kostaoba” in my interview as such:⁶⁷⁴

Kosta Khetagurov had a great number of Georgian friends and many Georgians believed him. Therefore, it is a positive step that ‘Kostaoba’ Festival is held and that people celebrate the anniversary of his birth and celebrating his anniversary of birth is necessary. “Kostaoba’ is the symbol of the unity between Ossetians and Georgians and everyone has to know who he is.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Zhanna Tarkhanova, “Kostaoba, kak Svyazuyushchiy Faktor [Kostaoba as a Binding Factor]”, *Ekho Kavkaza*, accessed October 17, 2014, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/26643046.html>.

⁶⁷⁴ Author’s interview with Zurab on November 17th, 2016 in the Villlage of Nigoza, Kaspi.

Mari mentioned the role of “Kostaoba” Festival more concretely:⁶⁷⁵

We do not have any noteworthy cultural activities except for ‘Kostaoba’ Festival. I consider this festival very important for us because politics and conflicts are never resolved by only speaking. However, when people actually come together and peaceful meetings are held, these activities become more effective and play a more important role in the resolution of conflicts.

According to my informants during the interviews, Georgians and Ossetians have celebrated holidays such as “Kostaoba” Festival for a long time together and this activity was held even when Kosta’s statue was exploded in the early 1990s and Ossetian-Georgian relations were mostly tense. Because Kosta Khetagurov is one of the most important persons in Georgian-Ossetian friendship, this festival is the symbol of the unity between Georgians and Ossetians. Moreover, there are few opportunities for Georgians and Ossetians to come actually together and these activities will contribute to the resolution of conflicts between Georgians and Ossetians. Such evaluations were heard also when I conducted interviews in Areshperani in 2016. Lali and Yamzia said that this festival is very important for relations and friendship between peoples such as Georgians and Ossetians and that it is an opportunity for them to enjoy with Georgians together and built their future at that time.⁶⁷⁶

Ossetians in Georgia evaluate “Kostaoba”, the anniversary of Kosta Khetagurov’s birth as the opportunity to strengthen the friendship and unity between Georgians and Ossetians. According to them, “Kostaoba” Festival is the opportunity to show the Georgian and international public opinion Georgian-Ossetian unity and that Ossetians are not “foreigners”, “betrayers” and “Georgians’ enemies” but “Georgian people and citizens”.

⁶⁷⁵ Author’s interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁷⁶ Author’s interview with Yamzia and Lali on November 3rd, 2016 in the Village Areshperani, Lagodekhi.

As for another role of “Kostaoba,” some interviewees in Tbilisi and Areshperani emphasized that the function of “Kostaoba” Festival is to preserve socio-cultural boundaries between the Georgian society and Georgia’s Ossetian communities, acquainting the socio-cultural differences between Georgians and Ossetians to other people. For example, Stella, a teacher in the Areshperani Public School, described the following about the function of “Kostaoba” Festival:⁶⁷⁷

Kostaoba is important for strengthening Georgian-Ossetian relations. But at the same time, we take pride in the fact that our mother language, culture, and traditions have not been forgotten yet. Kostaoba reminds us of the fact that Kosta’s works in the Ossetian language play a very important role in Ossetian people’s identity and that we need to read them. This is very important so that Georgian-Ossetian mixed families would not forget their culture. Georgians also should learn our mother language and culture and should know the differences between our culture and Georgian culture.

Zurab Makity, a villager in Areshperani, also referred to the importance of “Kostaoba” Festival in preserving Ossetian identity shortly: “Kostaoba is a tradition and very important for us. If we do not have Kostaoba, then we will simply disappear here. We would no longer be here.”⁶⁷⁸

Besides, when Valentina, who is a member of the Association of Georgia’s Ossetians in Tbilisi, spoke about the function of “Kostaoba” on Ossetian identity and Georgian-Ossetian relation in my interview, she emphasized that “Kostaoba” Festival is a way of developing Ossetian identity and of preserving cultural heritage and that culture and traditions make peoples closer in spite of the difference of national-ethnic identity.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ Author’s interview with Stella on November 4th, 2016 in the Areshperani, village, Lagodekhi.

⁶⁷⁸ Tarkhanova, ““Napominanie””.

⁶⁷⁹ Author’s interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

According to them, “Kostaoba” Festival is very important to preserve the socio-cultural boundaries between Ossetians and Georgians to emphasize the socio-cultural differences between these two groups, and to introduce Ossetian culture and traditions to Georgians. Georgians and Ossetians get closer by learning the culture, traditions and identity of each other. In fact, the performances of Georgian and Ossetian dances, songs and concerts together emphasize not only Georgian-Ossetian friendship and unity but also evident differences between Georgians and Ossetians. These differences form a basis of strengthening Ossetian socio-cultural identity and this festival provides a place to express a very different Ossetian socio-cultural identity from the Georgian one. Thus, while “Kostaoba” Festival provides an opportunity to underline Georgian-Ossetian unity and friendship and the legitimacy of Ossetian’s living in Georgia, it emphasizes the socio-cultural boundaries between Ossetians and Georgians and provides a place to express Ossetian socio-cultural identity.

It is also worth analyzing the role of “Kostaoba” in bringing the distance between the Georgian government and Georgia’s Ossetian communities closer. In fact, this festival used to be held in the Soviet era originally in order to strengthen the relations between local people and the local Communist Party. That is, one of the most important purposes of this festival was originally to keep the relations between local people and the central government close.

Ezetkhan Tedety, who is from Areshperani and live in Vladikavkaz, spoke in an interview with Zhanna Tarkhanova in 2014 as such:⁶⁸⁰

It is very pleasant for me that they remember the name of my favorite poet, Kosta Khetagurov today. I know that his birthday is celebrated every year in Georgia, and this is especially joyful for me. Creative collective works, dances, and songs pleased us very much. Everything is organized well. However, I cannot be silent about one problem. As I see, Ossetian language is not taught now. No such opportunities are given to Ossetians living in other villages of the Lagodekhi Region. It really upsets me very much. As I

⁶⁸⁰ Tarkhanova, ““Kostaoba, kak Svyazuyushchiy Faktor”.

understand, there are no Ossetian books and journals here and there are no teachers of Ossetian language. Local Ossetians asked the guests from Tbilisi to pay attention to these problems and to help to preserve the Ossetian language in Georgia.

At this interview, Ezetkhan refers to the fact that Ossetian residents in Lagodekhi region told the problems of preserving and teaching the Ossetian language to government officials and academicians from Tbilisi. In fact, “Kostaoba” is co-organized by the Administration of South Ossetia, “Caucasian Mosaic” and the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center of Tbilisi State University, as well as the government of Lagodekhi region. The government officials such as Dmitry Sanakoyev, the President of the Administration of South Ossetia, come from Tbilisi. These officials and academicians can directly communicate with local people in this festival and local people have opportunities to transmit their socio-cultural problems to the Georgian central government through these visitors there. Thus, “Kostaoba” functions as a place of direct communication between the Georgian central government in Tbilisi and the local Ossetian people and makes the relations between local people and the Georgian government closer.



Photograph 14: Ossetian Dance “Simd” in Kostaoba in 2016⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹ Taken by author on October 15th, 2016 the Areshperani, village, Lagodekhi.



Photograph 15: Georgian Dance in Kostaoba in 2016⁶⁸²



Photograph 16: Dmitry Sanakoyev, the President of the Administration of South Ossetia, in Kostaoba in 2016⁶⁸³

⁶⁸² Taken by author on October 15th, 2016 the Areshperani, village, Lagodekhi.

⁶⁸³ “Sostoyalsya Narodny Prazdnik, Posvyashchenny 157-Letnemu Yubileyu, so dlya Rojdeniya Kosta Khetagurova-‘Kostaoba 2016’ [An Ethnic Holiday Dedicated to the 157th Anniversary of the Birth of Kosta Khetagurov – ‘Kostaoba 2016’], *Shita-Kartli Sainphormatsio Tsentri*, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.qartli.ge/ru/2016-02-09-09-20-15/article/3865-2016-11-04-11-58-44> .

However, some persons point out the insufficiencies of “Kostaoba”. For example, Gia described the following:⁶⁸⁴

Although ‘Kostaoba’ Festival is held once a year in order not to forget Ossetians’ culture and traditions which have been preserved since the past, actually, Ossetians in Georgia have many problems and difficulties today and are not able to show interest in this festival very much. They have difficulties in terms of education in Ossetian language and their life is difficult both economically and socio-culturally. The number of books written in the Ossetian language is very limited in Georgia. Therefore, the Georgian society and government are interested in “Kostaoba” rather than Ossetians in Georgia. The Administration of South Ossetia, ombudsmen and the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center administrated by Naira Beppity co-organize ‘Kostaoba’. But it is only for display.

Zina, who was the State Minister for Civil Integration in Saakashvili’s era, also suspects the functions of “Kostaoba” Festival:⁶⁸⁵

The Georgian government holds ‘Kostaoba’ Festival together with the Administration of South Ossetia, ombudsmen and the Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center administrated by Naira Beppity every year. It tries to show as if the socio-cultural situation of Ossetians in Georgia were very good and Ossetians lived in Georgia comfortably. But European states know better than us how minority groups in Georgia live.

According to them, Ossetians in Georgia have many economic and socio-cultural difficulties in daily life and are not capable of enjoying the “Kostaoba” Festival very much while the Georgian government tries to show as if Ossetians’ socio-cultural situation is good. Therefore “Kostaoba” Festival is the “propaganda” of the Georgian government towards international public opinion. In fact, many of the population of Georgia suffer from poverty and can deal with only daily life problems. Therefore it is natural that people are not able to show interest in cultural activities very much. Although “Kostaoba” Festival provides opportunities to emphasize Georgian-Ossetian friendship, to express socio-cultural boundaries between Ossetians and

⁶⁸⁴ Author’s interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁶⁸⁵ Author’s interview with Zina on November 1st, 2017 in Tbilisi.

Georgians and to make the relations of Georgia's Ossetians and the Georgian government closer, the influence of this festival on Georgia's Ossetians is limited and this festival remains like "the propaganda of the Georgian government" owing to economic and socio-cultural difficulties which Ossetians in Georgia experience today.

While Ossetians in Georgia seem to have no serious problem with the Georgian state and society in daily life and the boundaries between Georgians and Ossetians are not seen clearly, the exclusive modern ethnic Georgian nationalism and the issue of South Ossetia created invisible boundaries between Georgians and Ossetians. Under such conditions, the most important tasks of Ossetians in Georgia are to advocate the legitimacy of Ossetians' existence in Georgia and to protect their culture, traditions, and identity from assimilation. Therefore, Ossetians in Georgia support neither the Georgian nor Ossetian traditional historiographies marginalizing each other on Georgian-Ossetian relations and focus on "the friendship and unity between Ossetians and Georgians" and "Ossetians' contributions to the Georgian state and society". The current Georgian historiography since 2003 is also getting close to Georgia's Ossetians' view on Georgian-Ossetian relations. Georgia's Ossetians' strategies for preserving and developing their identity focus on the development of their socio-cultural rights and the struggle against social discrimination. Their diaspora identity appears as a cultural identity rather than a political one. Besides, they make efforts to preserve the socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgians and underline that they are not "supporters of separatists". We can see this tendency from the activities of "Ossetian Forum" and Georgian-Ossetian Relations Research Center. Besides, Kostaoba Festival has important functions for Ossetians, although its effects on Ossetian communities are limited due to economic and socio-cultural difficulties, which Ossetians in Georgia encounter in daily lives.

5-2. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Attitude towards the Georgian State and Society

5-2-1. The Relations between Chechen-Kists and Georgians in Daily Life

An important number of minority groups in Georgia have been using Russian as a lingua-franca for a long time and that they are not well integrated to the Georgian state and society because of their insufficient ability to speak in Georgian language. Particularly the situation of the Armenians in Javakheti and Turks in Kvemo-Kartli has been problematic in this respect because their religions are different from the Georgians' (Armenians generally belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church and Turks are generally Muslims) and many of them did not know the Georgian language when the Soviet Union was disintegrated in 1991. Therefore they had been often exposed to the attacks of Georgian nationalists since the end of the Soviet era and had been excluded from the Georgian socio-political life for a long time. Although Georgian language gradually has become dominant among the Armenian and Turkish youth in Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, Russian language is still being used as a lingua-franca especially among elders and they have not been completely integrated to the Georgian state yet.

On the other hand, regarding the relations between the Georgian society and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia, the Georgian language is used as lingua-franca unlike Armenians in Javakheti and Turks in Kvemo-Kartli and their culture and traditions are under the strong influence of Georgian culture like Ossetians in Georgia. In fact, Georgia's Chechen-Kists often emphasize their Georgianness when they compare themselves with Chechen-Ingushs in Chechnya-Ingushetia, their "homeland". According to them, Chechen-Kists in Georgia are civilized, enlightened and well-mannered than Chechen-Ingushs in their "homeland" and they resemble Georgians at this point. Chechen-Kists in Georgia often explain that they became educated and civilized through the Georgian society.⁶⁸⁶ When Chechen-Kists describe that they became civilized through Georgians, they often refer to the

⁶⁸⁶ Saprashvili, "Islamic Revival," 14.

Georgian table etiquettes and explain that this tradition is Georgian-rooted. At the same time, they believe that they have the similar values of hospitality like Georgians.⁶⁸⁷

Moreover, in the Soviet era, the Soviet government applied certain policies in Pankisi in order to realize the equality and fusion of all people and to secularize them. Especially after the World War II, this policy was accelerated. Leila Margoshvili, a scientist in Soviet Georgia, states that libraries and schools were established in every village and that local people worked as teachers in Pankisi. Moreover, she underlines that Chechen-Kists, Ossetians and Georgians were working together in the *kolkhoz* (collective farm).⁶⁸⁸ In this way, mutual interactions between Chechen-Kists and Georgians advanced even more and the close relations between them are continuing today.

As for Georgia's Chechen-Kists' relations with the Georgian state, an important part of Chechen-Kists believe that the deportation of Chechen-Ingushs realized by Joseph Stalin in 1944 created difficulties for Chechens and made them move away from civilization, while Chechen-Kists in Georgia were protected by the Georgian state and society from this deportation.⁶⁸⁹ Chechen-Kists in Georgia often express gratitude towards the Georgian society for preventing them from being exiled. Actually, when Nino Siphashvili, a Georgian researcher, conducted interviews in Pankisi, a Chechen-Kist old man told her that the Georgian state and people described Chechen-Kists in Georgia as their brothers-sisters while the Soviet government wanted to deport them. Another interviewee said that Georgia protected them like its family members.⁶⁹⁰ Even today, there are no serious problems between

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 14-15

⁶⁸⁹ Siphashvili, "Islamic Revival," 15.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

the Georgian state and Georgia's Chechen-Kist communities. When I asked my interviewees a question on the attitude of the current Georgian government towards Chechen-Kists, they generally answered that the attitude of the current Georgian government towards them is positive or neutral by today. In fact, Chechen-Kists are citizens of the state and discrimination against them does not legally exist. Furthermore, the Georgian government is strengthening policies for the integration of minorities and protecting their socio-cultural rights. Chechen language classes were actually included in the official curriculum of schools in Pankisi in 2016. Chechen-Kists in Georgia have generally kept good relations with the Georgian state so far and no serious problems are observed.

While no clear linguistic boundary exists between the Georgian society and Chechen-Kist communities due to common language, intense interactions between these two groups, interethnic marriage and the sound dominance of *Nokhchalla-Adat*⁶⁹¹ among Chechen-Kists, we can see that clearly visible boundaries between the Georgian society and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia exist. Actually, some Chechen-Kists in Georgia claim that while Chechen-Kists still consider *Nokhchalla-Adat* very important, such traditions no longer remained among Georgians and that Georgians do not have enough respect to people who have different identity.⁶⁹² The existence of *Nokhchalla-Adat* clearly differentiates Chechen-Kists in Georgia from the Georgian society and Chechen-Kists' contacts with other ethnic groups is strictly controlled by their relatives and society.⁶⁹³

The influence of *Nokhchalla-Adat* and religion on Georgia's Chechen-Kist communities remained vigorous in spite of the Soviet policies of secularization and

⁶⁹¹ Like Circassians' *Khabze* and Abkhazians' *Aleishwa* and the term of *Nokhchalla-Adat* usually prescribes following tribal law and solidarity among the member of the clans.

⁶⁹² Sipurashvili, "Islamic Revival," 14-15.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

fusion of various groups. This situation is reflected also on Chechen-Kists' view on interethnic marriage. For example, when I conducted interviews in Pankisi in 2017, an important part of the total 27 interviewees answered that they are strongly against interethnic marriage or do not evaluate it very positively.

Ia Tsulaia, a Georgian researcher, also conducted fieldworks in Pankisi. During her interview with Tariel, a Chechen-Kist villager in Pankisi, he explained marriage as such:⁶⁹⁴

Man can choose freely; he is able to marry whoever he wants. Although his wishes and his parents' advice play an important role, his decision is sufficient... On the other hand, the woman cannot choose freely at all in essence: though there are some cases in which women go back home (after being abducted for marriage), some women fear the exacerbation of problem and stay with husband's family. They seldom try to return home. Girls continue to stay with the men who kidnapped them in general.

He underlines especially Chechen-Kist women's sacrifices for the sake of *Nokhchalla-Adat* here.

Moreover, marrying a man from other ethnic/religious groups is often evaluated as problematic for Chechen-Kist society. For example, Nana, a Chechen-Kist who is married to a Georgian man, said that her other relatives were strongly against her marrying him.⁶⁹⁵

In my house, my grandfather and the elders did not want us to be together. At the same time, they treated my husband very negatively. My mother and sisters loved him and had good relations. [...] My relatives were against our marriage rather than my parents. They said that we should divorce. Sometimes they spoke very irreverently to my husband: although you're our son-in-law and a good man, you have to leave.

As for another woman's case, her family was against her marriage with a Georgian man. Her family conspired with a Kist man's relatives in order to make her give up marriage with the Georgian man and to make this Kist man kidnap her. As a result,

⁶⁹⁴ Tsulaia, "To be Kist", 144.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 144.

she was compelled to part from her lover. Maqvala described the following about this event:⁶⁹⁶

My family knew, but the problem was the fact that I was a Chechen-Kist and the man whom I loved was a Georgian. [...] I did not begin to scream and cry, because it did not make any sense. I realized that I might have been taken away from my house with my parents' permission because my parents were at home. To summarize the long story, the deal was done between two families and they knew that I would have to accept it. Even if I had refused this deal, they would have married me nonetheless. However, a month after our marriage, when I tried to return to my home, my mother told to me: 'daughter, do not disgrace me and do not do it to me!'

We can understand that mixed marriage, especially Chechen-Kist women's marriage with other ethnic or religious groups are not traditionally and religiously favored. However, we have to note that such a strict limit is applied only when Chechen-Kists choose their marriage partner and that it is not applied to other relationship forms such as friendship and neighborhood.

Furthermore, Tariel refers to the important role of religion in Chechen-Kists' choice of their marriage partner:⁶⁹⁷ "While I am for the marriage of a Georgian girl with a Kist man, I am against the marriage of a Kist girl with a Georgian man. Such an attitude stems from religion."

When I conducted fieldworks in Pankisi in 2017, many Chechen-Kists consider their marriage partners' being Muslim very important even if they are not against interethnic marriage. At the same time, while Chechen-Kist men who are married to Christians such as Georgians and Armenians are sometimes seen, almost all the non-Chechen-Kist men who are married to Chechen-Kist women accepted Islam before their marriage.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 144.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 145.

In order to explain this situation, it is necessary to refer not only to *Nokhchalla-Adat* but also to the feature of Islam as a reason for such view of Chechen-Kists on inter-ethnic marriage. Islam has percepts, which clearly regulates who Muslim men/women are able to get married to. Therefore the view of Muslims including Chechen-Kists on marriage with the person from different ethnic/religious groups is generally critical and this situation often causes the formation of socio-cultural boundaries with Muslims and non-Muslims. In fact, Makka, working in the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia as a head consultant, narrated about a Chechen-Kist woman who married a Christian Georgian as such:⁶⁹⁸

Once, a Chechen-Kist woman got married to a non-Muslim Georgian man in the Duisi village. People talk behind her back: ‘Look at this woman, she is a bad person and you should not make contacts with her, because she got married to a *Gavur* (non-Muslim)!’.

According to Makka, Muslim Chechen-Kists’ marriage with other groups, especially Chechen-Kist women’s marriage with those from different religious groups is regarded traditional and in particular religiously as a “serious taboo” and those who violated this taboo are excluded by the Chechen-Kist society.

In fact, the 5th verse of Surah al-Maidah (the 5th Surah) of Qur’an emphasizes the following about the marriage of Muslim men with non-Muslim women:⁶⁹⁹

In this day [all] good food has been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers. And whoever denies the faith—his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

⁶⁹⁸ Author’s interview with Makka on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁶⁹⁹ *The Noble Quran*, Surah al-Maidah, 5/5, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://quran.com/5/5>.

We can understand that Muslim men are allowed to marry Jew and Christian women as well as Muslim women, defined as “People of the Book”, from this verse and that it is forbidden for Muslim men to marry polytheists such as Buddhists and Hinduists.

On the other hand, the description of the marriage of Muslim women with men from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) does not exist in Qur’an. However, almost all Muslim scholars of Islam argue that it is forbidden for Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men, while Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women.⁷⁰⁰ In this way, Islam determines principles clearly on the topic of marriage and interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. Chechen-Kists’ belief of Islam and *Nokhchalla-Adat* have been preserved well in spite of the Soviet atheist and internationalist policies. The principles of Islam, as well as *Nokhchalla-Adat*, contribute to preserving the socio-cultural boundary between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and purity of Georgia’s Chechen-Kist communities.

Chechen-Kists in Georgia are linguistically integrated to the Georgian society and state at a high level and were strongly affected by the Georgian culture. Besides, they have generally been making efforts to keep good relations with the Georgian state and serious tensions do not exist between the Georgian state and Chechen-Kist communities. Therefore, it seems that the boundaries between the Georgian state and society and Chechen-Kist communities are less clear than those between Georgians and Armenians/Turks. However, Islam and *Nokhchalla-Adat* of Chechen-Kists communities strictly control their contacts and marriages with other ethnic/religious groups and limit their interactions with other groups to an important degree. That is, unlike Ossetians in Georgia, clear socio-cultural boundaries exist between Georgians and Chechen-Kists and Chechen-Kists in Georgia have one of the preconditions to be defined as “diaspora”, to which Brubaker referred.

⁷⁰⁰ “Fatwa: on Christian Men Marrying Muslim Women”, *The Search for Beauty: on Beauty and Reason in Islam*, accessed May 2, 2016, <https://www.searchforbeauty.org/2016/05/01/on-christian-men-marrying-muslim-women-updated/>.

5-2-2. The Influence of the Issue of Chechnya and the Spread of Salafism on Chechen-Kists' Relations with the Georgian Society and State

The participation of Chechen militants in the war in Abkhazia affected Georgians' view on Chechen-Kists negatively to a certain level. But unlike the case of Ossetian communities in Georgia, no serious issues such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which directly affect diaspora-host state and society relations, exists between the Georgian state and society and Georgia's Chechen-Kist communities, while Islam exists as a clear boundary between them.

However, after Georgia's independence in 1991, Georgia defined itself as "the state of Orthodox Christianity" in the process of its nation-state building and thus Muslim Chechen-Kists were excluded from this process.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, the end of the Soviet rule created favorable conditions for Chechen-Kists to practice Islam. Under this condition, Chechen-Kists in Georgia began to look for spiritual homes and to be keen on Islamic belief.

When Chechen-Kists in Pankisi looked back to Islam, they regarded Salafism or "new understanding of Islam" as their spiritual home rather than Sufi Islam, because Sufism was considered outdated by many people in Pankisi and did not attract them. While almost all the middle-aged people are secular, most of the youth and a part of the middle-aged people viewed "Qur'an-centered Islam" or "Salafism" as their spiritual basis. Later, they came to be often called "Wahhabis" by Georgians, the Georgian mass-media and Chechen-Kists who evaluate them negatively.⁷⁰²

In fact, the spread of Salafi Islam in Pankisi had already begun before the time when Chechen-Kists working in Chechnya began to return to Pankisi in 1994. About this

⁷⁰¹ Siprashvili, "Islamic Revival," 22.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 22.

process, Islam, who worked in the local radio channel “RadioWay”, expressed the following:⁷⁰³

Salafists did not come from foreign states. Oppression over religion was heavy in the Soviet era and Islam was affected strongly by *Nokhchalla-Adat*. After the Soviet Union’s disintegration, some people learned Islam and Arabic in Saudi Arabia and read Qur’an in Arabic. Afterwards, they realized that they did not practice Islam correctly and began to label others unbelievers, saying that they do not worship as Qur’an dictates. They are saying that traditions and religion have to be separated. Some people began to obey them in spite of the fact that traditions and what elders say is very important for us.

According to them, the spread of Salafism in Pankisi was not started by Chechen refugees and those who returned to Pankisi from Chechnya-Ingushetia. It is by those who went to Saudi Arabia and learned Qur’an-centered Islam. Afterward, they began to criticize Pankisi’s Chechen-Kists’ “secularized-Georgianized” way of life. We can understand that the massive spread of Salafism in the region began as a reaction against assimilation into the Christian Georgian society and appeared as an attempt of making social boundaries with the Georgian society.

Nevertheless, it is also undeniable that former Chechen-Kist migrants who had worked in Chechnya-Ingushetia contributed to the spread of Qur’an-centered or Salafi Islam. According to them, they never had a chance to learn about Islam sufficiently during the Soviet era. After the Soviet Union’s disintegration in 1991, when they were in Chechnya-Ingushetia, they had the chance to read Qur’an in Russian for the first time and joined Islamic groups. Thus, they began to learn about the Qur’an-centered “correct” Islam and contributed to preaching Qur’an-centered or Salafi Islam in Pankisi after their return together with Chechen refugees.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰³ Author’s interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁰⁴ Saprashvili, “Islamic Revival,” 24.

The flow of refugees from Chechnya after 1999 accelerated the revival of Islam in Pankisi. Chechen refugees were under the stronger influence of Salafism than Chechen-Kists in Pankisi. As a result, the influence of Islam on Chechen-Kists increased even more and the difference between Chechen-Kists and Georgians became more distinctive. For example, in an interview by Tsulaia, Taniel explained the increasing effect of Islam in Pankisi: “It has been almost 3-4 years since the effect of Islam has increased among people. A person must be religious.”⁷⁰⁵

Nodar, a Chechen-Kist villager in Pankisi, also spoke about the influence of Chechen refugees on the increasing influence of religion in her interview:⁷⁰⁶

60-70 percent of the total population in Pankisi is pious. When the Russo-Chechen War began in 1999, Chechens came here and the Chechen-Kists living in Chechnya-Ingushetia also came back. After that people started to be pious and began to practice religion. Both Islam and Chechens played an important role. Until 2000 I did not know what “being pious” meant. I only knew that I was a Muslim... Since 2000 I have been praying. Nobody used to pray in my family, but today, all of us pray. [...] In 2000, one important thing has occurred—religion became an important part of my life. When I was young I did not know what Islam was; I was only thinking about democracy.

Besides, he referred to the contribution of Qur’an-centered Islam to the recovery of the social order of Chechen-Kist communities in Pankisi:⁷⁰⁷

It is so good that Islam has entered our society. The faith of Islam contributed to the eradication of many addictions. Thanks to it, they succeeded in quitting drugs. They came to shut themselves in the mosque and to worship. While many people in Pankisi had behaved badly before, they became better after being pious. [...] Young people were believers; they are known as ‘Wahhabis’ now. Polite guys, who are pious, do not smoke and drink and behave decently in Pankisi. Half of the young people came together and decided to clear drugs off from Pankisi...In Pankisi, there are people like me,

⁷⁰⁵ Tsulaia, “To be Kist,” 139.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 139-140.

those who are praying a lot. 20-30 percent of people do not pray at all and are against these polite young people. [...] Real Sunnis have faith, do not drink, do not smoke, do not use drugs and do not distribute them. But they define them as Wahhabis. While real Sunnis prohibit selling drugs, Sunnis who want to promote drug trade and criminals also exist. And an intense confrontation occurred between them. [...] Now almost all the young people pray, while elders are non-believers and do not pray.

According to Nodar, while Pankisi was in a serious chaos due to the flow of Chechen refugees after 1999, Salafism brought social order to Pankisi and introduced a new life style to Chechen-Kists. Therefore Salafism attracted the young people in Pankisi very much and many people in this area have become religious. In this way, many of the young people in Pankisi have been affected by Salafism and their identity moved away from Georgian one. Besides, the dramatic change of the demographical structure in Pankisi also reduced interactions between Georgians and Chechen-Kists to an important degree and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were isolated from the Georgian society even more.

On the other hand, this situation created intense disagreement between the traditional Sufi Muslims and Qur'an-centered Salafi Muslims on the topic of how Chechen-Kists' identity and faith have to be preserved against assimilation.

A Salafi Chechen-Kist defined Salafism as Islamic traditions and as the basis of Chechen-Kists' identity in Ali Asker's interview in 2016.⁷⁰⁸

The controversy between 'traditionalists' and 'reformists' originally exists not only in the Chechen-Kist communities but also in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan... Although foreigners call us reformists, we are not 'reformists' and are loyal to Islamic traditions.

Another Salafi Chechen-Kist evaluated Salafism as necessary way not to be assimilated into the Christian Georgian society:⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde", 359.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 360.

We live in the state in which Christians are majority. Therefore, it is difficult for us to know what is religiously right. There are rules preserved in our society. They have been keeping us together by today. [...] but these rules which we know and obey contradict with Islam.

According to them, Salafism is an Islamic and clean tradition which is not affected by other cultures and religions. Chechen-Kists' pure traditions and customs have been affected by Georgian culture and Christianity and have moved away from the original Islamic traditions. Therefore people chose Salafism in order to protect their identity from assimilation. That is, those who are in favor of Salafism view religion as a way of preserving socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgian society against assimilation.

On the other hand, a prominent traditionalist Chechen-Kist intellectual in Tbilisi explained the following about the rise of Salafism:⁷¹⁰

I think that this process was started by Russia. Russia opened a field for the spread of Salafism. It considered Wahhabism as a tool to destroy the structure of the traditional Chechen family and society... *Nokhchalla-Adat* is dominant over Chechen families. It is the tradition that has been keeping Chechens together for centuries. In the Soviet era, many institutes made efforts to destroy this structure but failed. Today, Wahhabists are doing this. Therefore, I think that this success is derived from ideological reason rather than an economic one... The youth are scared. They say 'we live in a Christian society and will be assimilated'. This situation appeared because we did not have the capability to preserve our religious structure.

Moreover, a traditionalist Chechen-Kist intellectual evaluated this process as Chechen-Kists' "Arabization" and their socio-cultural assimilation into Arab society.⁷¹¹

We are Muslims and Allah created us as Chechens. We used to not to roam the streets wearing short sleeve clothes and used to wear a scarf. When Salafists came to Pankisi we saw their different clothes. But we thought that

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 355-356.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 357.

these clothes were peculiar to them. Later, I saw them explaining these clothes as Islamic ones. We do not want to be Arabized.

Another traditionalist Chechen-Kist also emphasized that the spread of Salafism accelerates socio-cultural assimilation:⁷¹²

‘Reformists (Salafists)’ are destroying our traditional social structure with propaganda. After a while, the values of the Chechen-Kist society which have been preserved for centuries will be upset and thus this society will be lost.

According to these traditionalist Sufi Muslims, while young people in Pankisi were afraid of being assimilated into the Georgian society and were seeking a way of preserving their identity; foreign states paid attention to this anxiety and are making use of Salafism to disrupt the Chechen-Kist communities. Their attempts will exterminate the features of the Chechen-Kist society and will cause their assimilation into Arabs. That is, while Salafists emphasize that they implement Islamic tradition in order not to be assimilated and criticize that traditionalist Sufi Muslims are “Georgianized” and “influenced by infidels”, traditionalist Sufi Muslims criticize that Salafists try to disrupt Chechen-Kists’ traditional social structure to assimilate Chechen-Kists into an Arabic society.

However, even those who support Salafism in Pankisi do not reject *Nokhchalla-Adat* completely. For example, In Asker’s interview, a Salafi Chechen-Kist in Tbilisi said that only the part of *Nokhchalla-Adat*, which contradicts with Qur’an, was not accepted:⁷¹³

We are not Wahhabists, but Salafists. Our principles are Qur’an and *Hadis-i Sharif*. We accept traditions which do not contradict with them. Our disagreement with elders occurs because they give priority to traditions. We make efforts to harmonize *Nokhchalla-Adat* with Islam. We do not believe in Islamic state, but some people believe.

⁷¹² Ibid., 359.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 359.

Moreover, another Salafi Chechen-Kist in Duisi emphasized this point more evidently in his interview:⁷¹⁴

Outsiders call us Salafists and label us as Wahhabists. These definitions have negative meanings. We define ourselves as the real practitioners of the doctrines of Islam. We only do not accept the traditions which have been kept in history and contradict with the doctrine of Allah. Radical elements absolutely will be in every society and every community. But all of us are not in support of radicalism. Most of those who oppress people in the name of religion and are called militants do not pray today. We do not have any relations with them.

According to them, those who support Salafism reject only the part of *Nokhchalla-Adat* which contradicts with Qur'an and *Hadis-i Sharif* and they generally accept *Nokhchalla-Adat*. That is, a complete confrontation does not exist between traditionalists and Salafists and both consider *Nokhchalla-Adat* and preserving socio-cultural boundaries with other societies important.

When we look at the attitude of the Georgian society towards Chechen-Kists, the chaos which continued by 2000s in Pankisi and the rise of “radical Islam” in this area negatively affected the view of the Georgian state and society. National and international media began to focus on this area due to violent conflict in the North Caucasus and chaos in Pankisi.⁷¹⁵ The media institutions announced Pankisi as “the center of crimes and terrorism” and “lawless dangerous area”. The disorder in Pankisi and its negative image created by the mass media led the Georgians’ attitude towards Chechen-Kists to be negative to an important degree. This negative image widespread among Georgians has formed the basis of the discriminatory practices of the Georgian society.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 362.

⁷¹⁵ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia: Policy and Integration* (Tbilisi: Caucasian House, 2016), 62.

⁷¹⁶ Tsulaia, “To be Kist,” 143.

For example, when Tsulaia conducted interviews in Pankisi, Nodar, a Chechen-Kist villager in Pankisi, responded to her question about the negative attitude of the Georgian society as such:⁷¹⁷

No sooner did they learn that you are a Chechen-Kist, people look at you as if you were a criminal, terrorist or a kidnapper not only in Georgia but also everywhere in the world. Our rights are infringed most in the Akhmeta region. If you are a Chechen-Kist, you are a criminal. [...] A senior government official said that the terrorists who belong to their own religion live in the Pankisi Gorge and that they have to be cured.

In interviews by Tsulaia, many of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi also stressed the negative attitude of the Georgian law enforcement agencies and senior officials towards them. Because of disorder in Pankisi in the past and the attitude of the Georgian mass-media, the Georgian government officials, as well as the ordinary Georgian citizens, consider Chechen-Kists as “criminals, terrorists, and horrible people”.

Another Chechen-Kist informant also mentioned that the Chechen-Kist image among Georgians is potential criminals:⁷¹⁸

One thing which I do not like about Georgians is the fact that Georgians say it is because he or she is a Chechen-Kist if a Chechen-Kist does something bad. That is, according to them, all of us are bad people. Georgians perceive all of us in the same way. Maybe a Chechen-Kist has done something bad of course, but does its responsibility fall also on me?

On the other hand, her interviewees did not deny that the situation in Pankisi was uneasy. Jamlet said the following:⁷¹⁹

Of course, the incidents of stealing, fighting and conflicts sometimes happen. It is meaningless to pay attention to them. Georgians sometimes complain

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 143.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 143.

that we, Chechen-Kists, bother them. But these problems ended in the 2000s. Everything has already calmed a little.

In spite of the fact that the situation calmed down in the Pankisi Gorge, the negative perception of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists has not changed yet. The consequences of the “Pankisi crisis” settled the image of Muslim Chechen-Kists as “cruel barbarians, criminals, terrorists” among Georgians. In Tsulaia’s interview, Nana, who got married to a Georgian, talked about the behavior of her mother-in-law towards her and other Georgians as if she is a “barbarian” and “cruel person”:⁷²⁰

By the way, my family views my husband more positively while my husband’s family looked at me negatively. My mother-in-law called me ‘bloodsucker’ and had not spoken with me for two months. I was very much upset and I was very hurt at that time. I would rather be stabbed.

Due to this situation, the general attitude of the Chechen-Kist communities in Pankisi to mass media is very negative. When a Georgian non-governmental organization “Caucasian House” conducted interviews in Pankisi, most informants said that they were very dissatisfied with media reports and referred to three tendencies.

Firstly, regional mass media presents both positive and negative news reports, central mass media generally presents negative news reports about Pankisi. For example, some recent local and international news reports generally view Pankisi only in the contexts of terrorism and “radical Islam”, despite the fact that convincing evidence proving the existence of active terrorist groups or cells in Pankisi do not exist.⁷²¹ Moreover, when I conducted interviews in Pankisi, Islam said that “continuing Sufi-Salafi conflict even today” is a product of mass media:⁷²²

Today, only mass-media says that Sufi-Salafi conflict is still continuing in Pankisi. Salafists are not terrorists as mass media explains. They live in

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 143.

⁷²¹ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia*, 62.

⁷²² Author’s interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

Pankisi without problems. Elders also began to call them Salafists. Today, every bearded person is regarded as a Salafist.

If I summarize it, despite the fact that Sufi-Salafi conflict does not exist today, mass-media shows as if this conflict is still continuing and all bearded Muslims are radical Islamist terrorists. In this way, mass-media provides information about Salafist Chechen-Kists contradicting with reality and accelerates the exclusion of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists. Of course, such attitude of mass-media towards Pankisi is inconsistent with Georgia's national policy and regional context.

Secondly, information obtained in Pankisi is often disregarded or distorted by mass-media and the real voices of people in Pankisi are not reflected on news reports very much. Chechen-Kist communities in Pankisi believe that when the mass-media institutions visit this area they already have a prepared scenario, and search for only materials supporting their story. Even when they find materials which do not support their narrative, they often distort them.⁷²³

Thirdly, very important local issues and processes are often ignored by the massmedia. For example, although mass-media does not pay attention, crimes drastically decreased in Pankisi and any cases of murders have not occurred in Pankisi for the last 10 years. Crimes related to narcotics also occur very rarely and the situation in Pankisi has dramatically improved today.⁷²⁴

When I conducted interviews in Pankisi in 2017, many interviewees pointed out that many of Georgians did not have the correct information and that the information which they have is biased and influenced by the mass media. An important part of the interviewees answered that Georgians generally have insufficient information about Chechen-Kists and that they had to explain about Pankisi and Chechen-Kists to

⁷²³ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia*, 62.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

Georgians so that they could learn about them correctly.⁷²⁵ For example, Tea, working in the Public school in Joqolo, told me that Georgians did not have sufficient information about Chechen-Kists and that they were surprised after learning realities about them in my interview:⁷²⁶

I do not think that my Georgian friends have sufficient knowledge about Chechen-Kists. They generally obtain information from me, although there are sufficient resources... Here I want to say to you that everything is real, not fabricated by others. Georgians are very astonished after being closely acquainted with Chechen-Kists, saying that they had a completely different image of us and that we are actually very different from what they imagined. And they generally ask me about Islam.

Nazi said that Georgians consider Chechen-Kists as warriors due to the attitude of mass-media:⁷²⁷

Unfortunately, almost all Georgians have insufficient knowledge about us, because negative information about us is spreading through mass-media. My close friends obtain information directly from us. I want all Georgians to know the truth about us that we are not terrorists but are pacifists and people who make efforts to defend freedom and independence. Chechens fought for their land and did not endure Russian oppression.

Makka also described similar things to what Nazi and Tea said:⁷²⁸

In my opinion, Georgians generally do not have sufficient knowledge about us. They obtain some information through mass-media and direct communication with us. After being acquainted with us, they are very astonished and impressed by our culture. It would be good if Georgians knew our culture, history, traditions, and custom. They knew only that we fought for independence and saving ourselves.

⁷²⁵ For example, Author's interview with Lalika, Sultan and Lia on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Eter on September 3rd, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Marsel and Nata on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷²⁶ Author's interview with Tea on September 1st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁷²⁷ Author's interview with Nazi on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷²⁸ Author's interview with Makka on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

Nanuli, a villager in Duisi, explained that Georgians' image on Chechen-Kists as "warriors", "backward" and "ignorant":⁷²⁹

Georgians generally obtain information about Chechen-Kists from us. I want Georgians to know that all Chechen-Kists are not wrestlers and warriors, that Chechen-Kists can be highly-educated and that they can carve out a career for themselves. Besides, they should know the fact that Chechen-Kist men generally do not violate women's freedom and rights.

These four persons emphasized that Georgians generally know Chechen-Kists as "warriors" and "backward" and that they do not have sufficient knowledge or have incorrect information because mass media speak of Chechen-Kists, reconciling again them with terrorism, the Chechen Wars and "the backwardness of Islam".

In fact, informants who participated in the interviews of "Caucasian House" could refer only to the television program of Imedi TV as a case in which central mass-media managed to show Pankisi objectively and focused on the traditions and life in Chechen-Kist communities in Pankisi.⁷³⁰ Informants said that they want this type of reports to increase and that such programs support Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state and society, contributing to destroying the negative image of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists.⁷³¹

That is, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi perceive the attitude of the Georgian mass-media towards Pankisi quite negatively. Most of the mass media institutions tend to collect and broadcast scandalous and negative information. Their attitude increases the gap between Pankisi and the other regions of Georgia and prevents Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state and society.

⁷²⁹ Author's interview with Nanuli on September 3rd, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷³⁰ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia*, 62-63.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

In conclusion, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi sought a spiritual home in Islam and Salafism was massively spread in this area after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991 due to the Christianity-centered policy of the Georgian state, the reduction of pressure on Islam in Pankisi and the flow of Chechen refugees after 1999. This tendency encouraged Chechen-Kists in Pankisi to strengthen socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgian society while the controversy between traditionalists and Salafists on the topic of how the Chechen-Kists' identity should be preserved continued. At the same time, the attitude of the Georgian society towards Chechen-Kists became negative owing to the deterioration of public order in Pankisi which continued until the 2000s and to the attitude of mass media. In this way, both the Chechen-Kist society and the Georgian society solidified boundaries with each other and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were excluded from the socio-political life of the Georgian society/state to an important degree.

5-2-3. Chechen-Kists' Efforts of Integration to the Georgian Society

In the previous part, I argued that the socio-cultural boundaries between Chechen-Kists and Georgians were formed and solidified both by Chechen-Kists and Georgians and that Chechen-Kists in Georgia were excluded from the socio-political life of the Georgian state and society to an important degree. However, Chechen-Kists would like to be socially, politically and economically integrated to the Georgian state and society and to reduce the information gaps between Georgians and Chechen-Kists. I will now discuss the features of Chechen-Kists strategies on these issues.

Both the Georgian state and foreign states consider Pankisi very important from the viewpoints of the fight against terrorism and regional security. The Georgian government applies policies in order to integrate the Chechen-Kists in Pankisi to the Georgian state and society. For example, ministers in the Georgian government often visit the Pankisi Gorge in order to show that this area is safe.⁷³² In addition, as I

⁷³² Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 363.

explained in Chapter Three, the Georgian government began to support schools and successful Chechen-Kist students in the region to study in universities for free.

These developments are evaluated very positively by many of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and considered as an important step for integrating Chechen-Kists socio-economically to the Georgian state. For example, a Chechen-Kist referred to such policies of the Georgian government in Ali Asker's interview:⁷³³

The government also began to pay attention to us. The ministry allocated 14 quotas in order to enable Chechen-Kists to take higher education for free. In Georgia, money is necessary for education. These 14 students will study for free. This is a very important development for us.

Besides, Nazo, the principal of the Joqolo Public School, also referred to the support of the Georgian government for school and the improvement in the situation of education in Pankisi:⁷³⁴

The Georgian government has already given support financially for the lessons in school. It is doing many things for our integration. For example, class time was increased and additional courses were introduced. [...] I think that our future will be very good. This year, 9 students out of 13 who graduated from our school began going to universities. 2 students out of these 9 students are studying in the Tbilisi Branch of San Diego State University with a scholarship. These 2 students out of the total 6 scholarship holders are from our school.

According to Chechen-Kists' interviews, the Georgian government is increasing financial support for the education in Pankisi and the situation in this area was so much improved that some students succeeded in studying in one of Georgia's best universities for free. Besides, many successful Chechen-Kist students will be able to study in the universities for free and Chechen-Kists' socio-economical integration will be accelerated. Thus, the policies of the Georgian government towards Chchen-

⁷³³ Ibid., 365.

⁷³⁴ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

Kists' integration are evaluated positively by the local people and the Georgian government is gradually increasing their influence on Chechen-Kists.

Moreover, the Georgian government is concentrating more on religious issues, since before many people in Pankisi have complained about the lack of a systematic religious education. When Ali Asker conducted an interview, a Chechen-Kist intellectual in Tbilisi explained the following about this situation:⁷³⁵

Since the 1990s, there have been no systematic state policies over Pankisi. This area has been forgotten. Different specialists can say different things about this area. In Pankisi, the structure in which traditions are dominant exists. People in Pankisi generally have poor information about religion. The Georgian state did not open *madrassahs* (Islamic theological schools) so that Chechen-Kists in Pankisi could learn Islam correctly. Such policies were not applied. The young people feared the danger of their Georgianization and losing their identity.

According to my informant, *Nokhchalla-Adat* is dominant in Pankisi and people seldom had the chance to obtain the correct knowledge of Islam based on Qur'an and *Hadis-i Sharif*. Moreover, neither the Soviet nor the Georgian state had applied religious policies which promote Islamic belief. Therefore this situation made Chechen-Kists in Pankisi more ignorant about Islam and their identity was confronted with the danger of Georgianization. The young people fear of socio-cultural assimilation and adopt Salafism, so the lack of systematic state policies on Islam caused the radicalization of an important part of people in Pankisi.

Recently, the Georgian government has come to apply concrete religious policies in the context of the struggle against terrorism and radicalism and of minorities' integration into the Georgian state. As I explained in Chapter Three, the Georgian government connected *imams* and mosques with the Agency of Religion and is intensifying its involvement in the religious education and management in Pankisi. It promotes traditional Islam-Sufism and is making efforts to integrate Chechen-Kists into the Georgian state through traditional Islam-Sufism. In fact, Suleiman, the *imam*

⁷³⁵ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 365.

of the Sufi mosque in Joqolo, explained this policy clearly in my interview in 2017:⁷³⁶

Our relations with the Georgian government are very good. It shows respect to us very much and did many things. Now the Georgian government gives financial support to our mosque. [...] *Imam* is selected by villagers. If those who know Islam very well exist among us, those who are from elsewhere are not necessary for us. The elected *imam* receives approval from the Administration of Muslims of Georgia in Tbilisi. We go to Tbilisi and meet *mufti* of this administration.

In summary, a system in which the Georgian government manages Muslims in Pankisi through the Administration of Muslims of Georgia has already been constructed and foreign *imams* are excluded. It aims Chechen-Kists' integration to the Georgian state through promoting traditional Islam (Sufism). Furthermore, my informant said that serious conflict no longer exists between traditionalists (Sufists) and Salafists and that the communication between them exists in daily life.⁷³⁷

As for the current situation of Salafists in Pankisi, they no longer head to Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Salafists in Pankisi do not have problems with the Georgian state. Ali, the *imam* of the new mosque in Joqolo, told me that the pressure does not exist on Salafists today and that they continue their activities in the framework of the Georgian legal system.⁷³⁸ In this way, the integration of Islam in Pankisi into the structure of the Georgian state has advanced to an important degree today and the serious confrontation between traditionalists and Salafists does not exist.

Some non-governmental organizations such as the Kakheti Regional Development Center and Civil Activism Center are also actively involved in the socio-cultural life of the Chechen-Kist community in Pankisi, cooperating with the Georgian

⁷³⁶ Author's interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Author's interview with Ali on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

government. These organizations are coordinating educational projects in Pankisi in order to integrate local people into the Georgian socio-economic structure. Furthermore, these organizations provide some vocational training programs for local people. For example, the Civil Activism Center has been implementing programs so that Chechen-Kist people can get a better employment opportunity, cooperating with the Presidential Office of Georgia. The Pankisi branch of the Civil Activism Center opens several educational programs such as the courses on computer programs, driving, and accounting. This organization plans to train 200 young local people.⁷³⁹ Although certain activities of non-governmental organizations encountered with complaints of some local Salafists, serious confrontations have not occurred between these organizations and Salafists except for few arguments by 2017.⁷⁴⁰

In this way, domestic and international non-governmental organizations working in Pankisi are generally engaged in greater civic integration into the Georgian state via vocational education and by supporting the promotion of traditional culture as well as conducting various programs for the resolution of socio-economic problems. As of 2016, there are not any organizations focusing on religion in Pankisi⁷⁴¹ while the Georgian state agencies are currently working on religious issues in Pankisi.

When we compare the strategy of Chechen-Kists with that of the Ossetians in Georgia, there are some differences in the purposes of strategy. While Ossetians in Georgia consider preserving their identity against assimilation and elimination of discrimination against them more important, Chechen-Kists in Georgia consider their socio-economic integration and erasing their negative image among the Georgian society more important. In this context, local Chechen-Kists also began to receive

⁷³⁹ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia*, 57.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

vocational education and to work towards familiarizing the Georgian and international societies with Chechen-Kists' real lifestyle.

For example, the Council of Elders and the Council of Elder Women are officially registered as non-profit organizations by the Georgian government. The Council of Elders aims at preserving and promoting Chechen-Kists' traditions, as well as strengthening solidarity among women and bringing changes to certain traditional social relations.⁷⁴² In this way, these two traditional structures of Chechen-Kists came to function as the bridge which connects Chechen-Kists in Pankisi with the Georgian state as well as the mechanism to preserve and promote Chechen-Kists' traditions and solidarity.

Moreover, as I explained in Chapter Three, some local Chechen-Kists are trying to encourage small entrepreneurship through establishing workshops of handicrafts, and arts and giving vocational education for Chechen-Kist youth and women.



Photograph 17: A Course of Handicrafts for Chechen-Kists in Pankisi⁷⁴³

⁷⁴² Ibid., 57-58.

⁷⁴³ “Women’s Groups”, *The Kakheti Regional Development Foundation*, accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.krdf.ge/projects/womens-groups>.



Photograph 18: The Felt Craft School in Joqolo⁷⁴⁴

At the same time, fulfilling the gap between Chechen-Kist and Georgian communities which has increased over the last 20 years is also one of the important topics for Chechen-Kists. Marsho Kavkaz, established under the leadership of Maqvala Margoshvili, can be characterized as the forerunner of these efforts.⁷⁴⁵ Maqvala established it as a women's ensemble in 1996, which continues to attract the attention of tourists, ethnologists, ethnomusicologists and journalists who visit Pankisi. This ensemble consists of women from Sufi *Tariqats* and they chant *zikrs* from both *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri* orders. In addition, it performs non-religious songs from Chechen-Ingush and Georgian folklore.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ Taken by Nazi on March 5th, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁴⁵ Saprashvili, "Islamic Revival," 33.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.



Photograph 19: Women’s Zikr in the Old Mosque in Duisi⁷⁴⁷

In fact, Maqvala herself explained the following about the establishment of this ensemble:⁷⁴⁸

I established this ensemble in 1995 myself. And we became very famous now. Many people come from all over the world, listen to our rituals and see them. Later, they advertise us after they return to their homes. I want to say that I did create this ensemble and I cannot be patient with the tragedies of wars continuing in the world. We are continuing our activities for peace in the Caucasus and the world.

Moreover, she claims that she had the idea of establishing this ensemble when the relations between Chechen-Kists and Georgians began to change into a negative direction due to the second Chechen War and the chaos in Pankisi.⁷⁴⁹ In fact, the name of her ensemble “Marsho Kavkaz” means “peace and freedom of Caucasus” in Chechen. As this name shows, her desire is “drawing a bridge” between Chechen-Kists and the Georgian society through acquainting Chechen-Kists’ socio-cultural life.

The ensemble “Marsho Kavkaz” traveled to several countries such as Poland, Belgium, Germany, and Turkey after 2000 to chant to the world their *zikrs* and perform Georgian and Chechen-Kist songs for world peace. It declared that

⁷⁴⁷ Taken by Nazi on January 16th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁴⁸ Author’s interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁴⁹ Saprashvili, “Islamic Revival,” 34.

Chechen-Kists' stereotype as "violent people and terrorists" is not valid.⁷⁵⁰ Besides, the international mass-media institutions such as the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) and Al-Jazeera also visited Pankisi and met her ensemble.⁷⁵¹ Actually, Maqvala described the results of this ensemble positively in my interview in 2017:⁷⁵²

They (the European mass-media institutions) say that terrorism belongs to Muslims. European journalists came to me. While they were in Europe, they learned many things about Pankisi and heard that our ensemble was established. When they came here, one of them said that Europeans know Muslims as terrorists and surprised at the fact that they are not. This journalist realized that Muslims are very peaceful people and learned that they created an ensemble for peace.

We can understand from her talks and activities that her strategy for Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state focuses on acquainting Muslims' and Chechen-Kists' real socio-cultural life to the Georgian society, emphasizing that Muslims and Chechen-Kists are peaceful people and that they are working for the peace of the Caucasus and the world.

Maqvala has also been managing a guesthouse in Duisi since the end of the 1990s and she has welcomed tourists and researchers visiting Pankisi in her guesthouse for a long time. She is eager to gather her ensemble and to chant *zikrs* and other folk songs for those who visit her. Those who visit Pankisi also become interested in the rituals of *zikr* and *ziyarat*. Their rituals have been recorded by many visitors in Pankisi and especially the woman *murids* are happy with the fact that they contributed to acquainting the international public with their style of Islam.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵⁰Ibid., p. 34.

⁷⁵¹ Author's interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁵² Author's interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁵³ Saprashvili, "Islamic Revival," 34.

In this context, she developed this ensemble as a fund in order to develop agro-tourism in Pankisi and began to cooperate with the Polish Foundation of Intercultural Education in Warsaw later. Maqvala described the following about the process of the development of her organization:⁷⁵⁴

Poles helped us very much in order to develop our project. We went to Poland twice for education. Our members visited there 7 times in 2006 and 15 times in 2007 with the financial support of the organization in Poland. They taught us the way how we should serve tourists. Now we have 15 certificates given in these programs. We are very grateful for their extensive support.

That is, she developed cooperation for agro-tourism with foreign organizations so that more people in Georgia and foreign states could know the real socio-cultural life of Chechen-Kists and understand Chechen-Kists and Pankisi objectively. In fact, Nazi also refers to the function of making different people closer as well as the income generating opportunities and the contribution of the gradual regeneration of Chechen-Kist community, as the benefits of agro-tourism.⁷⁵⁵

Moreover, as attention paid to Pankisi as the point of departure to Tusheti⁷⁵⁶ increased, the importance of agro-tourism also increased in Pankisi. And, in the process of Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state, the importance of agro-tourism as a way of introducing the Chechen-Kist communities in Pankisi to the Georgian society has increased even more. Under this condition, the number of those who are involved in agro-tourism and eco-tourism has recently increased in Pankisi and there are one or two guesthouses in almost every Chechen-Kist village in Pankisi today.

⁷⁵⁴ Author's interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁵⁵ "Agrotourism", *Nazy's Guest House*, accessed November 12, 2017, <http://nazysguesthouse.com/agrotourism/>.

⁷⁵⁶ Georgia's mountainous area located around the border between Georgia and Chechnya.

Some of these guesthouses have their own homepages on the internet and are making efforts to spread information about the real socio-cultural life of Chechen-Kists and to encourage agro-tourism themselves. And these guesthouses organize introductory tour programs in Pankisi accompanied by a local Chechen-Kist guide. The aim of such tours is to explore the traditional Kist rural life, culture and traditions as well as to visit important attractions in Pankisi. In addition, these programs provide opportunities to develop foreign language skills for the young, unemployed Chechen-Kist people and to provide an income to them as a tourist guide. In this way, this initiative contributes to the improvement of the economic situation of Pankisi at a certain level and to the objective evaluation by the domestic and international public of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists.⁷⁵⁷ These guesthouses organize also mid-range eco-tour programs and long-distance tours to Tusheti. Such programs are used as an opportunity for young unemployed people to gain an income.

In March 2018, Pankisi Valley Tourism and Development Association was established in Pankisi by Kist women in order to develop local tourism. This association was created to cooperate with each other on the businesses of local tourism under a common vision and goals. The founding members of this association are guest house owners in Pankisi and those who are involved in tourism. Its main goal is to contribute to improving the local economic situation and promote good relations and peace by supporting the development of sustainable tourism in Pankisi. In this context, this association is actively strengthening networks with other non-governmental organizations. Besides, it advances its cooperation with the National Tourism Administration of Georgia and works closely to show Chechen-Kists'

⁷⁵⁷ "Discover", *Nazy's Guest House*, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://nazysguesthouse.com/discover/>.

socio-cultural life and to improve the economic situation of Pankisi through tourism.⁷⁵⁸

Also in terms of media and communication, the efforts to connect the image of Pankisi and Chechen-Kists are also improving. The establishment of the bilingual community radio “RadioWay” in collaboration with the United States can be evaluated as the most appropriate example of these efforts. Due to the establishment of this radio station, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi came to be able to directly provide correct and objective information about Pankisi and Chechen-Kists on the internet and radio.⁷⁵⁹ Various educational projects in cooperation with non-governmental organizations also increase the chances of Chechen-Kist and Georgian youth’s coming together⁷⁶⁰ and we can see the features of Chechen-Kists’ strategy for integration in these developments.

As we can understand from the above discussion, because Chechen-Kists in Pankisi have been already integrated linguistically, their efforts for their integration to the Georgian state mainly focus on gaining skills so that Chechen-Kists could preserve their life in the socio-economic structure of Georgia and eliminating Georgians’ negative image on Pankisi and Chechen-Kists, familiarizing public opinion with themselves through tourism and local media. In this direction, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi are making efforts to develop agro-tourism and eco-tourism sector and transmit information directly, cooperating with the Georgian government and domestic and international non-governmental organizations.

⁷⁵⁸ *Pankisi Valley Tourism and Development Association*, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/Pankisi-Valley-Tourism-and-Development-Association-186834715452403/>.

⁷⁵⁹ Caucasian House, *Islam in Georgia*, 57.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

5-2-4. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Perspective on the Situation of Chechen-Kist Culture and their Strategy of Keeping Their Boundary with the Georgian Society

Although Chechen-Kists in Pankisi focus on their integration into the Georgian state rather than preserving their identity against assimilation, they also consider activities for preserving of identity as important. Such activities to promote their traditions, culture and lifestyle contribute not only to their integration into the Georgian state but also to the preservation of their socio-cultural heritage for the next generation. Besides, their efforts to promote the Chechen language also exist. In this part, I will discuss Chechen-Kists' linguistic situation and their efforts to promote their mother tongue.

The linguistic situation of Chechen-Kists in Georgia is generally better than that of the Ossetians in Georgia. Although Chechen-Kists in Georgia speak in Georgian and Russian as well as Chechen when they communicate with their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, they generally speak only in Chechen at home and the opportunities to speak other languages such as Georgian are rare. Therefore, the Georgian language is less dominant among the Chechen-Kists in Georgia than Ossetians. In fact, when I conducted interviews in Pankisi in 2017, almost all of the 28 interviewees in Pankisi answered that they generally speak Chechen language at home while they also use Georgian and Russian languages in order to communicate with other people. When we see Chechen-Kists' socio-cultural life in Pankisi, interethnic marriages in Pankisi are rare and almost all Chechen-Kists live in Pankisi compactly. Besides, the Pankisi Gorge itself is geographically isolated from other parts of Georgia by mountains and this area was not much affected by other ethnic groups. Therefore Chechen-Kists' culture, traditions, and language have been preserved better than those of Ossetians and the danger of cultural-linguistic assimilation among Chechen-Kists in Pankisi is much less than that of Ossetians in Georgia.

However, because school education had been given only in Georgian for a long time and Chechen-Kists had limited chances of following the mass media in Chechen-Ingush in the past, they often use Georgian/Russian expressions even when they speak in Chechen and those who are able to read and write in Chechen correctly are scarce. This shows that the influence of these languages on their daily life is strong. In the Soviet era, when communication between Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia was less than today, the number of those who followed mass-media in Chechen-Ingush language was smaller. Even today, they generally follow Georgian and Russian mass-media and the number of those who follow Chechen-Ingush mass media is still low although it increased to some degree. When I conducted fieldworks in Pankisi in 2007, only 10 of the total 28 interviewees said that they follow mass media in Chechen-Ingush as well as Georgian and Russian. Besides, the variety and broadcast time of programs in Chechen-Ingush are limited and this situation is also one of the reasons why the number of Chechen-Kists who continuously follow mass media in Chechen-Ingush language is low.⁷⁶¹

Despite this situation, 18 of the total 28 interviewees told me that they are trying to follow programs in Chechen-Ingush and their interest in the mass-media in Chechen-Ingush language and in the education of their mother language is not low at all. Khatuna, Tea, Lalika and Maga, who are Chechen-Kist villagers in Pankisi, said that the education in Chechen language and the establishment of mass-media in Chechen were needed in order to preserve Chechen-Kist identity. Especially, Lalika emphasized the following:⁷⁶²

If the education in Chechen language and mass-media in Chechen existed our situation would be better because we and our next generation could be acquainted with Chechen history, language and culture more closely.

⁷⁶¹ Author's interview with Marsel on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁶² Author's interview with Lalika on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

While Maqvala, Nata, and Melsi similarly referred to the demand for education and mass-media in Chechen, Nata said as such:⁷⁶³

If the education in Chechen language and mass-media in Chechen will contribute to the development and rectification of Chechen language in Pankisi so that our next generation would not lose our mother language. [...] Besides, through education and media in Chechen language, we can obtain more information. Our next generation will be educated better and will be acquainted with social works more closely. Although there is only one television channel in Chechen, the existence of educational programs in Chechen would be better for us, because it is important for all of us to learn our national history and culture.

Makka said that the education and mass-media in Chechen were needed in order not only to preserve Chechen-Kist identity but also to develop cultural relations with those in Chechnya-Ingushetia:⁷⁶⁴

Of course I want the education and mass media in Chechen language to be more developed. If these are realized our cultural relations with our kins in Chechnya-Ingushetia will develop and we will be able to preserve and develop our identity.

Bela referred to the importance of knowing the developments in Chechnya:⁷⁶⁵

We want the education and mass-media in Chechen language to be more developed because our language, culture, and traditions must not be forgotten. I still have many relatives living in Chechnya and I want to get news from them.

Marsel emphasized the necessity of independent mass-media in Chechen in order to learn different opinions and evaluate incidents more objectively:⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶³ Author's interview with Nata on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁶⁴ Author's interview with Makka on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁶⁵ Author's interview with Bela on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁶⁶ Author's interview with Marsel on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

There are no independent channels in Chechnya. We can understand that all the mass-media is under the strong influence of Moscow. Therefore, I do not watch these programs. If television programs are produced in our mother languages, it will be very good for us and I will watch them.

Chechen-Kists in Pankisi want the development of education and mass media in Chechen because it will contribute to the preservation of Chechen-Ingush language and to the development of their relations with Chechens and Ingushes in Chechnya-Ingushetia. Besides, this development will provide Chechen-Kists with different views on society and politics and enables them to evaluate society more objectively. So the demand for the education and mass-media in Chechen has been increasing.

In this context, local Chechen-Kist intellectuals have been making efforts to realize them. They had been managing private courses in Chechen language in Pankisi before the official Chechen language classes were opened in the school in Pankisi in 2016.⁷⁶⁷ Besides, they formed a signature spelling campaign in order to demand that the Chechen language classes should be added to Georgia's official school curriculum.⁷⁶⁸ As a result of the high demand from local intellectuals and the support of the Council of Europe, the Georgian government decided to add the Chechen language class for the 5th and 6th grades in the official school curriculum in 2016 and the textbooks for Chechen language class for other grades are also being prepared by the Georgian government.

When I asked the process of the opening of Chechen language classes in the schools in Pankisi and plans for developing mass media in Chechen, Nazo, the principal of the Public School of Joqolo, evaluated the current cultural policies of the Georgian government toward Chechen-Kists in Pankisi positively and explained that EU and the Georgian government supported the Chechen language classes as follows:⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁷ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 364.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 364.

⁷⁶⁹ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

Now the Georgian government gives financial support for the Chechen-language classes. We are using books from Chechnya as auxiliary teaching material for the 5th and 6th grades. The textbooks for the other grades are also being prepared by the Georgian government and the Chechen-language classes will also be available for the other grades when this process is finished. Moreover, EU also supported this process on a large scale. Everyone has to be able to live in Georgia freely so that Georgia could be a member of EU.

Many of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi evaluate this process positively; some people point out the insufficiency of Chechen language course hours, teachers and teaching materials. Nazo described the following about the current situation of Chechen language classes:⁷⁷⁰

Lida gives lessons of Chechen language in our school now. She was a teacher of the Russian language but has been in charge of the Chechen language classes since these classes began. She got her education in Grozny as a specialist of Russian and Chechen languages. If the Chechen language course hours increase, teachers will be brought from here, because teachers of Chechen language also have to know Georgian well. Today, there are students who will begin the Master's program in the department of Caucasus studies of the Tbilisi State University. We can appoint them as teachers.

Moreover, she referred to the insufficiency of Chechen language class hours: "Of course, total Chechen language course hours in our school are not enough. But it is sufficient at the present stage because the Chechen language has not developed yet as a literary language."⁷⁷¹

According to her, the number of teachers of the Chechen language is sufficient today and human resources exist enough to cover the demand if the Chechen language course hours are extended. Moreover, books written in Chechen are very scarce, because the Chechen language has been used mainly as a speaking language.

⁷⁷⁰ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁷¹ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

Therefore, the insufficiency of Chechen language course hours does not create many difficulties at present.

In fact, Chechen language was used solely as a speaking language although it was rarely written with the Arabic letters by the early 20th century. Later the Chechen language began to be written with the Latin alphabet in 1925 and it was written in the Cyrillic alphabet from 1938-1991. Therefore, the history of the Chechen language as a literary language is less than a century and the number of academic books and articles published in Chechen since the Soviet era is very few.⁷⁷² In fact, almost all academic terms of the Chechen language are in Russian and almost all Chechens have been writing books and articles in Russian, while most of the books written in Chechen are poetries and novels. A new Latin alphabet was introduced for the Chechen language in 1992 by Dzhokhar Dudayev's regime, but the Cyrillic alphabet was reintroduced after the secessionist government was defeated. Even today, while the Cyrillic alphabet is used in Chechnya, anti-Russian Chechens tend to use the Latin alphabet.⁷⁷³ Although the Cyrillic alphabet is preferred, the correct orthography of the Chechen language has not been established in the world and the unstable situation of the Chechen language as a literary language still continues.

While the Chechen language in Pankisi has been affected by Georgian and is not pure, the situation of the Chechen language as a speaking language in Pankisi is better-preserved than other languages such as Ossetian and Abkhazian and the danger of Chechen-Kists' linguistic assimilation is comparatively low. Therefore, teachers in Pankisi think that the Chechen language course hours in the schools in Pankisi are sufficient at present.

⁷⁷² "Chechen Language", *Chechen Republic Ichkeria*, accessed November 22, 2017, <http://www.waynakh.com/eng/chechen-language/>.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

As for the plan of establishing mass media in Chechen, “RadioWay” plans to broadcast in Chechen. However, there are many difficulties which have to be overcome in order to realize this plan. In fact, Islam, a journalist working in “RadioWay”, referred to the plan of broadcasting programs in Chechen: “we present programs only in Georgian, but there are many demands for broadcasting also in Chechen. However, we do not have sufficient facility to present programs in Chechen today.”⁷⁷⁴

Moreover, when I asked a question about the possibility of broadcasting at the Georgian state channel in Chechen, Nazi evaluated its possibility negatively and said that many difficulties exist:⁷⁷⁵

Today, the Georgian state channel does not broadcast in Chechen. It does not have any staff who can present programs in Chechen and such demand does not exist either. I do not think that the educated Chechen-Kist youth can broadcast in Chechen, because they do not know Chechen language correctly in terms of grammar and have studied only in Georgian until now. They are able to speak Chechen of course, but they do not know the correct grammar of the Chechen language. It takes much time to train people who know the correct grammar of the Chechen language.

To summarize, despite the high demand of broadcasting in Chechen, it is not an option for the time being as almost no Chechen-Kists in Georgia know the correct grammar of the Chechen language and it takes much time for staff to learn it. Therefore, if broadcasting in Chechen is realized, it will be after a long time. In fact, the number of those who know Chechen language correctly is small even in Pankisi because the official Chechen language classes were not opened from 1944 to 2016 and most of the Chechen-Kists in Georgia received their education only in Georgian and Russian. Therefore, although the Chechen language classes were officially opened in the schools in Pankisi in 2016, those who know the grammar of Chechen language are extremely low and the broadcasting in Chechen has not begun yet.

⁷⁷⁴ Author’s interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁷⁷⁵ Author’s interview with Nazi on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

Moreover, all Chechen-Kists in Georgia know Georgian very well and they generally follow mass media in Georgian and Russian. At the same time, even if broadcasting in Chechen begin, the number of its followers will be limited and a large economic profit is not expected. These economic conditions also make broadcasting in Chechen difficult.

In conclusion, while Chechen-Kists are linguistically well-integrated to the Georgian state and their culture was affected by the Georgian society to an important degree, the strong dominance of *Nokhchalla-Adat* over Chechen-Kists and the religious difference between Chechen-Kists and Georgians built sturdy socio-cultural boundaries between them. Chechen-Kists' identity has been preserved well unlike Ossetians in Georgia.

Due to the large-scale flow of the Chechen refugees after 1999, the chaos which continued in Pankisi until the 2000s and the spread of Salafism, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were gradually excluded from Georgia's socio-political life and the negative attitude of domestic and international mass-media also accelerated this exclusion. On the other hand, serious disagreements occurred between traditionalist Sufi Muslims and Salafists in that period on the issue of how the Chechen-Kist identity should be preserved against socio-cultural assimilation. However, Salafists also generally consider *Nokhchalla-Adat* very important for themselves and they also think about the importance of preserving their identity in the same way as traditionalists (Sufists). Therefore traditionalist Sufi Muslims and Salafists are not in complete disagreement towards each other and normal communication between them exists in daily life.

The Georgian government has been advancing the policies for Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state especially since the Rose Revolution in 2003. It has been providing financial support for improving the situation of education in Pankisi and encouraging their integration through promoting traditional Islam (Sufism). Salafists in Pankisi are also continuing their activities in the framework of the Georgian legal system and the tension between traditionalist Sufi Muslims and

Salafists is relaxing today. Domestic and international non-governmental organizations are also acting for Chechen-Kists' integration to Georgia and hold various vocational educational programs.

When I compare Chechen-Kists' identity strategies with those of Ossetians, while Ossetians mainly focus on preserving their identity against assimilation and eliminating discrimination against them, Chechen-Kists focus on their socio-economic integration into the Georgian state and erasing their negative image on Georgian society. In this context, they are making efforts to develop agro-tourism and independent mass media in Pankisi as well as to provide vocational education. These all aim that Georgian society could know Chechen-Kists' real socio-cultural life and could understand them objectively.

On the other hand, the efforts to improve Chechen-Kists' linguistic situation are also continuing and the Chechen language classes were officially opened in the schools in Pankisi in 2016. However, the situation of Chechen language itself is unstable and those who know the language correctly are insufficient today. Therefore, there are many difficulties for developing education and establishing mass media in Chechen.

CHAPTER 6

DIASPORA- “HOMELAND” RELATIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNITIES

In the previous chapter, I discussed the relations between the Georgian state and society and Georgia’s Ossetians and Chechen-Kists. Another important element composing diaspora identity is the relations between diaspora and their homelands, because diaspora’s physical and spiritual ties with their homelands contribute to the construction of critical boundaries against host state and society and to preserving of culture and identity of these communities. In this chapter, I will explore the attitudes of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia towards South and North Ossetia and Chechnya, which are considered as their “homelands” respectively.

Since the Soviet Union was disintegrated in 1991 and ethnic conflicts blazed up in the Caucasus at the beginning of the 1990s, the relations with “homelands” have been one of the most important agendas for Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia and have been affecting the formation of their identity. In this chapter, I will analyze the question of how Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia try to evaluate and develop relations with their “homelands”. As I did in Chapter Five, I will use the analysis of interviews during my fieldwork as well as printed resources to provide a broader context for discussing the strategies of developing relations with “homelands” in the process of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists’ integration into the Georgian state and society.

I will begin with an analysis of the relations between Georgia's Ossetian communities and North and South Ossetia. In this part, I will focus on Georgia's Ossetians' view on Russo-Georgian relations as an important element on the issue of South Ossetia. Then I will discuss the issue of dual citizenship and the difficulties of communication which exist between Georgia and Ossetia. Afterward, I will explore the current diaspora policy of North Ossetia and the view of Georgia's Ossetians on this policy.

In the next part, I will discuss Chechen-Kists' relations with Chechnya. At first, I will analyze the influence of the Chechen Wars on Georgia's Chechen-Kists' relations with Chechnya. Afterward, I will discuss Georgia's Chechen-Kists' view on the current situation in Chechnya. Then, I will explore the question of how Georgia's Chechen-Kists evaluate the "painful history" of their "homelands".

6-1. Georgia's Ossetians' Attitude towards North and South Ossetia

6-1-1. Georgia's Ossetians' View on Russian-Georgian Relations as an Element on the Issue of South Ossetia

Ossetians in Georgia had viewed North and South Ossetia as their "homeland" and intense human interactions existed in the Soviet era. Soviet passports clearly indicated their ethnic identity as "Ossetian" like their kins in North and South Ossetia and other parts of the Soviet Union, though the concealed assimilation policies were applied over Ossetians in Georgia.

In fact, state borders did not exist within the Soviet Union and Ossetians, especially those in the Lagodekhi region and a part of those in Tbilisi experienced some significant geographic mobility in the Soviet era. During that period, an important part of the Ossetians went to North and South Ossetia to study. Moreover, many Ossetians in North and South Ossetia also settled in Georgia for education, work, and marriage. Thus, Ossetians in Georgia have been generally familiar with North and South Ossetia since the Soviet era.

After Zviad Gamsakhurdia ascended to power in 1991 and the armed conflict occurred in South Ossetia, an important part of Ossetians in Georgia migrated to Russia, especially to North Ossetia mainly due to the political oppression over them, as I explained in the third chapter. Even after Gamsakhurdia's resignation, many Ossetians left for Russia, especially for North Ossetia, to seek for better living conditions. Moreover, the borders between Georgia and South Ossetia were opened until the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. Therefore the close relations between Georgia's Ossetians and their homeland continued until that year. But the Georgian-Russian diplomatic relations was disconnected and the Georgian-South Ossetian borders were closed in 2008. This situation has been an important obstacle for the relations between Georgia's Ossetians and their homeland as of today.

In fact, when I asked my interviewees questions such as: "Where is your homeland?" and "What importance does the existence of North and South Ossetia have?", many of them responded that North and South Ossetia is their homeland or the homeland of their ancestors while adding that Georgia is also their homeland. For example, Levan, Nodar, Robert, Taymuraz and Irakli, living in the Nigoza village, emphasized the importance of both Georgia and Ossetia. Especially, Levan answered the above questions as such:⁷⁷⁶

Georgia is our motherland because we were born, grew up and still live here and we see this state like our home. But North and South Ossetia is as important as Georgia. Ossetia is the motherland of our culture and history and forms the basis of our civilization. Our ancestors also came here from Ossetia. As Georgia is important for Georgians, Ossetia is important for us.

While my informants in the Areshperani village also answered similarly to my questions, they have stronger identity ties with North and South Ossetia than that of Ossetians in Shida-Kartli, because this village has had intense relations with North and South Ossetia since the Soviet era. For example, Albert, Roza, and Luiza defied

⁷⁷⁶ Author's interview with Levan on November 16th, 2016 in the Nigoza village, Kaspi.

both Georgia and Ossetia as their motherland and Luiza answered as such in particular:⁷⁷⁷

In our opinion, the homeland is the place where we were born, grew up and learned our mother language. Therefore, both Georgia and Ossetia are our motherlands and the existence of Ossetia is very important for us. My relatives also live there and we received our education in Ossetia. Ossetia plays an important role in our identity as our second homeland.

Also in Tbilisi, especially among Ossetians who settled in Georgia after the Soviet Union's establishment and those who were highly educated, Ossetia plays a very important role in their identity. For example, Nana emphasized the tie between her identity and Ossetia while she defined Georgia as her motherland.⁷⁷⁸ Tengiz and Gia clearly emphasized that both Georgia and North and South Ossetia are their homelands.⁷⁷⁹

Valentina defined Ossetia as her "historical homeland" while saying that her homeand is Georgia:⁷⁸⁰

My homeland is Georgia, because my father, mother, other family members, relatives live here. But Ossetia is my historical homeland. The phrase 'historical homeland' is adopted widely among people. The existence of my strong, peaceful and humanist historical motherland makes me happy. When a good thing happens there I also rejoice and when a bad thing happens I also grieve. I cannot forget the tragedy of Beslan in 2005.

Mari defined both Georgia and Ossetia as her homelands and voiced her hope of visiting Ossetia:⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁷ Author's interview with Luiza on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁷⁷⁸ Author's interview with Nana on October 29th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁷⁷⁹ Author's interview with Tengiz on October 25th, 2016 in Tbilisi; Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁷⁸⁰ Author's interview with Valentina on October 30th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

In my opinion, the motherland is the place where I was born and grew up and the place from which my ancestors came. Therefore, my homelands are both Georgia and the Tskhiloni village in the Akhalkgori region (South Ossetia). We were not able to go to our village after the war in 2008 and I miss it.

Zina expressed that she opposed Saakashvili's decision of attacking South Ossetia in 2008, defining that both Georgia and Ossetia are her homelands:⁷⁸²

Both Georgia and North and South Ossetia are my homelands. I resigned from the State Ministry for Civil Integration in 2008 in order to protest Saakashvili's decision to attack South Ossetia and lived in Norway until 2013. I no longer wanted our kins in South Ossetia to be killed.

The number of Georgia's Ossetians who define both Georgia and North and South Ossetia as their "homelands" is not small and this tendency is remarkably seen among Georgia's Ossetian elites. Even those who define only Georgia as their "homeland" consider North and South Ossetia as the "homeland of our culture, history, and civilization" and "the place of origin of our ancestors". North and South Ossetia occupies an important place in their identity.

When I asked interviewees whether they have been to North and South Ossetia or not, almost all of my total 30 informants answered that they have been to North and South Ossetia and that their relatives from there have visited them in Georgia. Moreover, many of my interviewees expressed the intention to visit North and South Ossetia though they said that they would not settle in North Ossetia, because many Ossetians in Georgia are not able to settle there economically and physically because of their advanced age and Georgia's economic situation is gradually improving. At the same time, they still communicate with their kins in North and South Ossetia with telephone, e-mail, and social networking sites even after the borders between

⁷⁸¹ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁷⁸² Author's interview with Zina on November 1st, 2017 in Tbilisi.

Georgia and South Ossetia were closed.⁷⁸³ In this way, Georgia's Ossetians generally have both spiritual and physical ties with North and South Ossetia.

As for the issue of South Ossetia, it has the dimension of the problem of Georgia's relations with Russia as well as that of the problem of the relations between Ossetians and ethnic Georgian nationalism. Ossetians in Georgia do not directly support the "independence" of South Ossetia. However, they want peaceful relations between Georgia and Russia for their free travel between Georgia and their homeland, as it is difficult for Ossetians in Georgia to visit North and South Ossetia because of the Russian-Georgian troubled relations and Russia's strict visa regulations towards Georgian citizens. Therefore they are able to communicate with Ossetians in North and South Ossetia only with telephone, e-mail and social networking services. We can understand Georgia's Ossetians' such attitude through the photograph below. Many pictures drawn by Ossetian children in the Areshperani village in the following photograph imply that they hope peaceful relations between Georgia and Russia for their easier communications with North and South Ossetia.



Photograph 20: Pictures Drawn by the Students of the Areshperani Public School⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸³ Author's interview with Izolda on November 1st, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁷⁸⁴ Taken by Zarina Gigolaeva on October 25th, 2016 in the Areshperanivillage, Lagodekhi.

Such an opinion was also heard in my interviews in Nigoza, Areshperani, and Tbilisi. For example, Eliko argued that the peaceful Russian-Georgian relations are necessary so that Ossetians could travel between Georgia and their homeland freely:⁷⁸⁵

The relations between Russia and Georgia are problematic. I hope everything would improve and the Russian-Georgian relations become peaceful like in the Soviet era. My mother is from Dzau (Java) in South Ossetia and my sister's family also live in South Ossetia. I want to visit there, but it has already been difficult for us to go...

Roza expressed similarly:⁷⁸⁶

I want the good and friendly Russian-Georgian relations so that travel between Russia and Georgia without a visa would be possible. My relatives live in Ossetia and I want to visit them.

Tengiz clearly emphasized that Georgia's Ossetians are under more difficult conditions than Ossetians in their homeland and that he wants free travel between Georgia and homeland, expressing nostalgia towards the Soviet era:⁷⁸⁷

“During the Soviet era, Ossetians were under one root and were able to communicate with each other freely. We were able to visit our families, friends, and relatives in Ossetia without a passport. However, Ossetians have been separated into three parts today: North Ossetia, South Ossetia, and Georgia. And we, Ossetians in Georgia, are under the most difficult conditions now. I want friendly and peaceful Georgian-Russian relations and hope the issue of South Ossetia to be resolved in a peaceful way. We want to visit our homeland freely.

Albert emphasized that Georgia should be a member of the Customs Union like Russia and Belarus so that Ossetians could visit their homeland freely:⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ Author's interview with Eliko on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁷⁸⁶ Author's interview with Roza on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁷⁸⁷ Author's interview with Tengiz on October 25th, 2016 in Tbilisi.

I think that Georgia should take part in the Customs Union like Russia and Belarus and should make peace with Russia so that our people could travel between Georgia and our homeland without visa and passport. I received higher education in South Ossetia and my relatives, friends, and classmates live in North and South Ossetia. I am eager to visit our homeland to see them.

Mari claimed that it is mainly Russia that creates the obstacles between Georgia's Ossetians and their homeland while hoping peaceful Georgian-Russian relations are reestablished so that Ossetians in Georgia could visit their homeland easily:⁷⁸⁹

I think that Russia must not interfere with the Georgian-Ossetian relations. There should be diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia and both of them have to abide by all the articles of the agreements which Russia and Georgia accepted. Russia has to recognize Georgia's territorial integrity because everyone knows that the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) is a historical part of Georgia. My house is in South Ossetia, occupied by Russia. I want to continue to live in Tbilisi, but at the same time, I want to visit North and South Ossetia freely. I want to visit my village because the tombs of my grandfather and grandmother are there.

According to these interviewees, the tensions between Georgia and Russia are the most important obstacle in the relations between Georgia's Ossetians and North and South Ossetia. In many cases, Ossetians in Georgia have their relatives and friends in North and South Ossetia and they are eager to visit their homeland to see them. Therefore, the improvement of the relations between Georgia and Russia and the resolution of the issue of South Ossetia are extremely important for Georgia's Ossetians so that they could travel between Georgia and their homeland freely, while they do not support South Ossetia's independence. While Georgia's Ossetians are loyal citizens of the Georgian state, they want the improvement of Georgian-Russian relations and free travel between Georgia and their homeland.

As I described above, Georgia's Ossetians have been familiar with their homeland since the Soviet era and were able to visit there easily until 2008. Even today, mutual

⁷⁸⁸ Author's interview with Albert on November 3rd, 2016 in the Areshperani village, Lagodekhi.

⁷⁸⁹ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

visits between Ossetians in Georgia and those in North Ossetia continue and Georgia's Ossetians still have intense communication with those in North and South Ossetia with telephone, e-mail, and social networking services. Therefore, North and South Ossetia, defined as their homeland, plays a very important role in their identity and Ossetians in Georgia have strong ties with North and South Ossetia both spiritually and physically today. In this context, while Ossetians in Georgia respect Georgia's territorial integrity and do not directly support the independence of South Ossetia, they want the improvement of Russian-Georgian relations and their free travel between Georgia and their homeland.

6-1-2. The Issue of Dual Citizenship and the Problems of Communication between Georgia and Ossetia

In the previous part, I explained that Ossetians in Georgia want the improvement of relations between Georgia and Russia and to travel freely between Georgia and North and South Ossetia. In fact, they are not able to visit South Ossetia. As for North Ossetia, although they can visit there with a Russian visa, visa application process for them is strict. Therefore their visit to homeland is still difficult though their relations with North Ossetia are comparatively more developed than those with South Ossetia. Moreover, there are problems between the Georgian state and Georgia's Ossetians such as the issue of dual citizenship and the issue of abandoned properties of Ossetians who migrated to North Ossetia in the 1990s.

After Gamsakhurdia resigned from presidency and the situation of Ossetians began to improve, some Ossetians who left Georgia returned permanently. These people living in Georgia permanently want to hold both Russian and Georgian citizenships.⁷⁹⁰

The Georgian government promised to restore the rights of Ossetians who left Georgia due to the ethnic conflict, but these attempts brought no results. For

⁷⁹⁰ *Migration and Citizenship Issues Facing Georgia's Ossetian Community*, p. 29.

example, though the Law on Property Restitution and Compensation for the Victims of Conflict in the Former South Ossetian Autonomous District in the Territory of Georgia was made in 2006, it had not been implemented for a long time.⁷⁹¹

One of the obstacles was related to the Constitution of Georgia. Article 12 of the constitution of Georgia determines that the Georgian state prohibits citizens of Georgia from having dual citizenship except for certain cases. Thus, acquiring another citizenship is a reason for the cancellation of Georgian citizenship.⁷⁹² As a result, Ossetians from Georgia who have Russian citizenship lost Georgian one. Thus, they were no longer able to take part in political elections and to work in public service and lost access to public assistance programs. Moreover, their ownership of arable land might be restricted if they lose Georgian citizenship.⁷⁹³

Therefore, the Ossetian residents in Georgia have to choose between Russian and Georgian citizenships and they would lose the rights recognized for Georgian citizens if they choose Russian citizenship. Although the Constitution of Georgia determines that the President of Georgia can grant a dual citizenship to a person if he or she is “within the state’s best interest” or “has merit before the Georgian state”, the Counter-Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Interior rejected Ossetians’ application for the Georgian citizenship in most cases.⁷⁹⁴

On the other hand, if one chooses Georgian citizenship, he/she will no longer be able to receive public assistance from the Russian state. Besides, his/her visit to family members in Russia (especially North Ossetia) would be much more difficult because visa regulations between Russia and Georgia are strict. In fact, many Ossetians in

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁹² Ibid., 31-32.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

Georgia are elderly and their family members and relatives live in North Ossetia in many cases.⁷⁹⁵ Therefore, it is very important for them to travel between Georgia and Russia without a visa.

Moreover, Georgia's new migration regulations which came into force on September 1st, 2014 made the situation of Georgia's Ossetians more difficult. According to the new regulation, foreign citizens of some states, including Russian citizens, can stay legally in Georgia without a visa for 90 days.⁷⁹⁶ If one wants to stay longer than 90 days during a 180-day period, he or she has to take a visa from the Embassy of Georgia and to obtain a temporary or permanent residence permit. Although taking a residence permit is not a problem for Ossetians, the new regulations do not recognize rights and privileges given to citizens of Georgia.⁷⁹⁷

The negative evaluation of this new policy and the problem of dual citizenship is highlighted by Ossetians in Georgia. For example, Rusudan Pukhashvili, a member of the Georgian Association of Ossetians, informed the Georgian Parliament about the problems related to the citizenship of Georgia's Ossetians in 2015. According to Pukhashvili, new visa regulations which came into force on September 1st, 2014 will cause a new migration problem. She explained that the number of travelers who entered Georgia without a visa decreased to an important degree and that these restrictions would have a particularly negative effect on Ossetians residing in Georgia who have another citizenship, especially Russian one.⁷⁹⁸

Besides, there were many cases in which Ossetians' properties in Georgia were deprived illegally after they left Georgia for Russia, especially for North Ossetia in

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹⁸ "Skhdomis Okmi No: 32".

the 1990s. Thus, granting of dual citizenship by the Georgian government was an extremely important issue for Ossetians in Georgia in order to reclaim their properties and to travel between Russia (especially North Ossetia) and Georgia freely.

In the process of resolving this problem, Ossetians in Georgia cooperate with Georgia's state institutions and international, especially Western organizations. The "Ossetian Forum" strengthened lobbying activities towards the Georgian government on the basis of its sound fieldwork. Ossetians in Georgia cooperate with the state institutes and non-governmental organizations such as the Georgian Public Defender's Office in the process of resolving this issue. At the same time, they did not directly oppose the Georgian government through Ossetian nationalism but rather referred to universal concepts such as "human rights" and "freedom of movement".

Besides, international, especially Western organizations suggested that the Georgian government should grant dual citizenship for conflict-affected people and supported the efforts of Ossetians in Georgia. For example, the Venice Commission recommended making changes to the Constitution of Georgia in 2006 so that dual citizenship would be permitted. This commission also suggested that the Georgian government should simplify procedures for granting Georgian citizenship for conflict-affected persons such as Ossetians as a temporary measure. Thus, it encouraged the Georgian state to declare that dual citizenship is granted because it is appropriate for the interest of Georgia.⁷⁹⁹

The report of the International Crisis Group in 2004 also included a similar recommendation. The recommendation emphasizes that the Georgian government should make every effort to make legal changes to allow conflict-affected people to apply for dual citizenship.⁸⁰⁰ Such support of international, especially Western

⁷⁹⁹ *Migration and Citizenship Issues Facing Georgia's Ossetian Community*, 34.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

community affected the process of the resolution of this problem positively to an important degree.

As a result of this process, the Georgian government decided to approve the applications of Ossetians for dual citizenship in 2017. Gia explained the following about this decision by the Georgian government:⁸⁰¹

Now there is no problem in Ossetians' application for dual citizenship. Those who left Georgia for Russia have already been able to take Georgian passports, but this decision is valid for those who were born in Georgia. The Georgian government decided this 2 months ago, so that Ossetians who left Georgia could apply for dual citizenship. There is a political and economic background behind this decision. Georgian government wants them to settle and spend money in Georgia after they are retired because the Georgian economy is weaker than the Russian one.

As mentioned above, according to the Constitution of Georgia, the President of Georgia can grant dual citizenship to an individual if he or she has a special merit for Georgia or is appropriate for Georgia's interests. Ossetians in Georgia focused on this point so that they could apply for dual citizenship more easily, cooperating with the state institutions and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the Georgian government expected that Ossetians who returned to Georgia after their retirement would settle and spend money in Georgia and this situation will be appropriate for Georgia's interests. In this way, the demands of Ossetians in Georgia and the expectation of the Georgian government matched with each other. As a result, Ossetians who were born in Georgia are able to apply for dual citizenship.

A recent development where the Georgian border guards rejected the entry of Russian citizens from North Ossetia is important. These citizens are originally from the Kobi village in Georgia and intended to participate in the religious holiday in their native village in Georgia; however, Georgian police prohibited their entrance

⁸⁰¹ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

into Georgia for five years on July 23rd, 2017.⁸⁰² South and North Ossetia criticized this treatment very harshly and the government of South Ossetia stated the following:⁸⁰³

This illegal action of the Georgian authorities towards Ossetians who are Russian citizens is regarded as a rude and cynical violation of fundamental human rights. If this practice by the Georgian side continues, the government of South Ossetia will react to it on the basis of the unity of the Ossetian people, their history, culture, and national territory. We can close all our borders with Georgia.

At the same time, the government of South Ossetia stressed the following:⁸⁰⁴

Such a case is not the first. It is a continuation of Georgia's state policy towards ethnic Ossetians, natives of Ossetian villages of the Kazbegi region of Georgia. Georgia officially expels Ossetians from their own homes, deprives Ossetians' property and refuses their return to the historic homeland.

At last, the government of South Ossetia evaluated this incident as Georgia's unchanging provocative chauvinistic discrimination policy towards national minorities, particularly Ossetians.⁸⁰⁵

Thus, according to the government of South Ossetia, this incident is a violation of fundamental human rights and is the continuation of Georgia's chauvinistic policies against Ossetians. Therefore the government of South Ossetia can give the necessary response against Georgia. In fact, this incident raised antipathy towards Georgia

⁸⁰² "Gruziya Deportirovala Osetin, Ekhavshikh v Kobinskoe Svyatilishche [Georgia Deported Ossetians, who were Going to Visit the Sanctuary in Kobi]," *Sputnik Yuzhnaya Osetiya*, accessed August 30, 2017, https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/North_Ossetia/20170822/4719007.html.

⁸⁰³ "Yuzhnaya Osetia Zayavilao Vozmozhnom Peresmotre Rezhimana Granitse s Gruziey [South Ossetia Announced a Possible Revision of the Regime on the State Borders with Georgia]," *Sputnik Yuzhnaya Osetiya*, accessed September 1, 2017, https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20170828/4755374.html.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

among Ossetians in North and South Ossetia and the government of South Ossetia hardened its attitude against Georgia.

However, this case was brought to the European Commission and resolved in the framework of the European legal system. The decision of the Georgian border guards was canceled and the Georgian government allowed the people who had been denied entry before to enter into Georgia. Gia explained this incident as such:⁸⁰⁶

The case of the rejection of the entrance of Ossetians with Russian citizenship into Georgia in July 2017 was brought to the European Commission and was finally resolved. Now they can enter Georgia freely. Ossetians in Georgia who reacted against this incident were not many, but they rejoiced when this case was resolved, of course. The Georgian government resolves all such issues through the influence and pressure of EU.

That is, Georgia's Ossetians are able to resolve issues on the relations between them and their homeland. While doing so, they choose to negotiate with the Georgian government and cooperate with the state institutions, international organizations and domestic and international non-governmental organizations, instead of acting with South Ossetia and Russia.

6-1-3. The Current Diaspora Policy of North and South Ossetia and the View of Georgia's Ossetians on this Policy

As I explained in the previous parts, the obstacles which prevent the development of relations between Georgia's Ossetians and North Ossetia are gradually being removed. Under these conditions, Georgia's Ossetians' conditions to preserve their identity on the basis of their relations with North Ossetia is improving.

Moreover, the governments of North and South Ossetia are also interested in strengthening their relations with Ossetians abroad, including those in Georgia and hold programs for them every year. The government of North Ossetia has held the program "Alansky Sled" (Alanian Trail) since 2015 in order to bring Ossetians in

⁸⁰⁶ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

North and South Ossetia together with those abroad. The government of South Ossetia also supports this program. In this program, participants communicate with politicians, journalists, educators, and community organizations in North and South Ossetia and a meeting is held with representatives of the authorities of North and South Ossetia. In addition, the program includes excursions to museums and famous sights of North Ossetia. Furthermore, there are workshops on baking Ossetian pies, vocals and national dance in the program “Alansky Sled” and the participants of this program also visit South Ossetia.⁸⁰⁷



Photograph 21: Anatoly Bibilov (the President of South Ossetia) Meets with the Participants of the Project “Alansky Sled” (Alanian Trail) in Tskhinvali in 2018⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁷ “V Severnoy Osetiy Startuet Mezhdunarodny Proekt “Alansky Sled” [The International Project “Alansky Sled” Starts in North Ossetia],” *Ekho Kavkaza*, accessed August 1, 2016, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/27891296.html>.

⁸⁰⁸ “Yuzhnyyu Osetiyu Posetili Uchastniki Etnolagerya “Alansky Sled” [The Participants of “Alansky Sled” Visited South Ossetia],” *Sputnik Yuzhnaya Osetiya*, accessed July 30, 2018, https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20180729/6841595.html.

Georgia's Ossetians have also been participating in this program since 2017. Zarina, a resident of the Areshperani village, said that Ossetians continue to preserve their traditions in compact Ossetian villages in Kakheti and evaluated this program positively:⁸⁰⁹

In the Ossetian villages, we preserve the Ossetian language and Ossetian culture. However, of course, here in North Ossetia people know their mother language, culture, and traditions better. We learned a lot about the customs of the Ossetian people, and this was very interesting for us.

Mari also evaluated North Ossetia's diaspora policy positively and emphasized that this policy encourages people to know Ossetia better:⁸¹⁰

I evaluate the program 'Alansky Sled' (the Alanian Trail), held by the government of North Ossetia very positively and want to take part in this program in the future because this program takes us to Vladikavkaz and other places of North Ossetia and encourages more people to know Ossetia. The increase in such travels will be very good for us to learn about our homeland better and to preserve our identity.

Georgia's Ossetians think that the existence of Ossetia as their homeland is important to preserve their language, culture, and tradition and that the diaspora policy of North Ossetia contribute to Georgia's Ossetians' knowing their homeland and developing their identity.

However, those who came to this program from Georgia do not take part in the tour to South Ossetia in order not to face problems upon their return to Georgia.⁸¹¹ That is, Ossetians in Georgia tend to develop their relations with their homeland, abiding by Georgia's laws and territorial integrity. In the process of preserving their identity Ossetians try not to oppose Georgian state and society as much as possible.

⁸⁰⁹ Tarkhanova, " 'Alanskiy Sled' Ob'edinyayet Osetin ["Alansky Sled" Unites Ossetians]," *Ekho Kavkaza*, accessed August 10, 2017, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/28669886.html>.

⁸¹⁰ Author's interview with Mari on October 20th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁸¹¹ Tarkhanova, " 'Alanskiy Sled'".

Moreover, Gia explained how Georgia's Ossetians should develop their relationship with South Ossetia:⁸¹²

Those who live in South Ossetia say that Ossetians in Georgia should come to them. However, they do not understand who originally began the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Of course, I can understand their hatred against the Georgian state and society very well. But 8 years have already passed since the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. People in South Ossetia have to realize that this war was started by foreign states. We have to live in harmony here. Otherwise, Georgia will be disintegrated and be dominated by other states such as Russia. Gamsakhurdia and Russia are responsible for this conflict. [...] At first, Ossetians in Georgia have to succeed in preserving their language, identity, and culture against assimilation here. Later, they have to develop their relations with North Ossetia.

According to him, people in South Ossetia do not realize who is originally responsible for the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and act according to Russia. Therefore Georgia's Ossetians' accepting the call of those in South Ossetia is not right and may cause the disintegration and colonization of Georgia. It is necessary for Georgia's Ossetians to preserve Ossetian identity soundly in Georgia before making their relations with South Ossetia so that Ossetians would not fall into the game of foreign states.

Moreover, he referred to the shortcomings of North Ossetia's diaspora policy:⁸¹³

The program of 'Alansky Sled' (the Alanian Trail) became a project which brings Ossetian diasporas in Turkey, Central Asia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Hungary together and show the Ossetian culture and traditions. A page about this project was also established on Facebook. But there were some inappropriate things in the project and therefore this program was finished in a short time. During the program, people did not make intense contacts with each other. I estimated the program differently and it had to be held on other purposes.

This project was organized by the government of North Ossetia. But there was an important shortcoming: it did not cooperate with the youth. The only

⁸¹² Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁸¹³ Author's interview with Gia on October 18th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

result was that Ossetians in Turkey met their relatives in Ossetia. Others took part in this program only for entertainment and Ossetians saw them negatively.

I receive similar answers from Ossetians in Georgia and in Turkey. They are satisfied with the promotion in Georgia. Negative things were that the number of people was small and that their relations did not continue. Accordingly, their relations have to continue and communication has to be frequent in order to display culture.

The government of North Ossetia did not pay much attention to the opinion of the youth in the process of planning the project “Alansky Sled”. Only the government was involved in it. Therefore the communication among the Ossetian diasporas and between the Ossetian diasporas and those in the homeland was not established as much as the government expected. In this way, while Georgia’s Ossetians generally evaluate North Ossetia’s diaspora policy positively, there are also criticisms against the contents of North and South Ossetia’s diaspora policy.

In conclusion, Ossetians in Georgia generally have both spiritual and physical ties with North and South Ossetia defined as their homeland and continue to communicate with those living there. While they do not directly support South Ossetia and Russia in the issue of South Ossetia, Ossetians in Georgia want the improvement of the Georgian-Russian relations and free travel between Georgia and their homeland.

In this context, Ossetians in Georgia tend to resolve the obstacles between them and North and South Ossetia as the problem of the Georgian-Russian dual citizenship through cooperating with Georgia’s state institutes and international organizations instead of acting with Russia and South Ossetia.

As for their view on North and South Ossetia’s diaspora policy, while Georgia’s Ossetians generally evaluate North and South Ossetia’s diaspora policy positively, they abide by Georgia’s territorial integrity and do not oppose the Georgian state and society directly. Thus, as we see before, Georgia’s Ossetians tend to preserve themselves as “cultural diaspora” whose identity is mainly based on Ossetian language, culture, and tradition in the process of both preserving their boundaries

with Georgians and developing their relations with their homelands and do not always support their homeland on political issues.

6-2. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Attitude towards Chechnya

6-2-1. The Impact of the Chechen Wars on Georgia's Chechen-Kists' Relations with Chechnya

Since the 19th century, the Chechen-Kist people in Georgia have lived in the isolated territory of the Pankisi Gorge. Therefore, they succeeded in maintaining their traditions and custom well. On the other hand, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi did not generally experience large-scale geographic mobility in the Soviet era and their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia as their homeland, was not strong until the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. Soviet passports indicated their ethnicity only as "Kist" and their family names were Georgianized.⁸¹⁴ While some of the youth in Pankisi went to Chechnya-Ingushetia (after the repatriation of Chechens in 1957) to study, many of them came back to Pankisi later.⁸¹⁵ In 1970, when Pankisi's economic situation worsened, both Georgians and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi come to migrate to Chechnya-Ingushetia for work, because there were more well-paid job opportunities in that area at that time. But Chechen-Kists' labor migration was rather low in the Soviet era.⁸¹⁶

In the Soviet era, Georgia's Chechen-Kists were not very familiar with Chechens-Ingushs and Chechnya-Ingushetia, while Ossetians in Georgia were generally familiar with North and South Ossetia. For example, a 39-years-old Chechen-Kist woman explains that Chechnya-Ingushetia was not an interesting topic to speak.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁴ Tsulaia, "To be Kist," 128.

⁸¹⁵ Sipurashvili, "Islamic Revival," 17.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

Another middle-aged woman claimed that Chechnya-Ingushetia for her was like any other country such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey and did not have any special meaning.⁸¹⁸ Svetlana, a middle-aged, Chechen-Kist woman emphasized that before the Soviet Union's disintegration she didn't think she was Georgian, not Chechen-Ingush.⁸¹⁹ According to another Chechen-Kist, Chechnya-Ingushetia was "out of the hearts of Kists".⁸²⁰ In short, because people had never been out of Georgia, especially in Pankisi in the Soviet era, people did not need to think about Chechnya-Ingushetia.

When Ia Tsulaia conducted interviews in Pankisi, most of her interviewees said that they have been to Chechnya-Ingushetia for work. For example, Tariel said that Chechen-Kists in Pankisi had not generally known about Chechnya-Ingushetia by the time when some of them brought new information about Chechnya-Ingushetia into Pankisi:⁸²¹

I learnt [the fact that Kists are Chechen-rooted] from my father. My father worked in a shop and often visited Chechnya. As he returned from Chechnya, he told me about Chechens. He explained who they are and how they live. We were sharing more features with Georgians than with Chechens-Ingushs. Therefore, I was not very interested in them. I have heard about Chechen-Ingushs in detail, but I have never seen them with my own eyes.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁸²¹ Tsulaia, "To be Kist," 128.

During the Soviet era, even after Chechen-Kists in Pankisi learnt about the “common origin”, the information about it did not affect the Kist identity very much. Like Tariel, Nana, a 37-year-old Chechen-Kist, who said the following:⁸²²

We recognized ourselves just as ‘Kists’. We knew that we believe in Islam and that Chechens lived somewhere and so did the elders. However, no one knew where Chechnya-Ingushetia was. There were people who went over there and returned. About 200 people lived there. But what they said about Chechnya-Ingushetia was like rumors for us.

However, the situation of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi dramatically changed after the Soviet Union’s disintegration in 1991. Because of the economic difficulties in Georgia, many Chechen-Kists migrated to Russia, especially to Chechnya-Ingushetia. Though some Chechen-Kists came back to Pankisi after the First Chechen War began in 1994, some of them went to Chechnya-Ingushetia again.⁸²³ Chechen-Kists who migrated to Chechnya-Ingushetia easily integrated into the Chechen-Ingush society, they shared many similarities to the Chechen-Ingush society.⁸²⁴

Of course, as the number of those who migrated from Pankisi to Chechnya-Ingushetia increased and information about their kins in Chechnya-Ingushetia was shared in Pankisi more widely, the situation of Chechen-Kists’ identity has also changed dramatically. As Nana describes:⁸²⁵

Today everyone knows that Kists are Chechens and that Chechnya is their homeland. Previously, the situation was not like that. After they migrated to Chechnya-Ingushetia and lived there, people realized that those who live there were really Chechens. People in Pankisi have known it for

⁸²² Ibid., 128-129.

⁸²³ Saprashvili, “Islamic Revival,” 18.

⁸²⁴ Tsulaia, “To be Kist,” 128.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., 129.

approximately 15-20 years. For example, while I did not know that fact before, I am aware of it now.

The massive return of Chechen-Kist migrants and the flow of Chechen refugees to Pankisi after the beginning of the Second Chechen War in 1999 accelerated the transformation of Chechen-Kists' identity in Pankisi. This mobility familiarized Chechen-Kists in Pankisi with Chechens in their homeland. Among Chechen-Kists in Pankisi, sympathy to Chechens in their homeland, and a sense of a shared belonging with Chechens-Ingushs in their homeland began to grow. Moreover, many young Chechen-Kists in Pankisi came to regard Chechen warriors as the symbol of prowess and to think that they fought for the freedom and independence of Chechnya, their homeland. For the important part of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi, Chechens in their homeland were being "exploited, oppressed and enslaved" by Russia.⁸²⁶

For example, Nodar stated the following: "if the Chechen refugees had not come here, we would have already lost our religion and identity. 90 percent of us would have already become Georgians"⁸²⁷

Jamlet clearly said that the Chechen-Kist society in Pankisi began to change after the flow of the Chechen refugees: "When Chechens came here, everyone in Pankisi looked at them and things began to change in our society."⁸²⁸

Nana described the complex structure of Chechen-Kists' identity after 1999 as follows:⁸²⁹

⁸²⁶ Saprashvili, "Islamic Revival," 24.

⁸²⁷ Tsulaia, "To be Kist," 129.

⁸²⁸ Ibid., 129.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., 129.

We, Kists and Chechens-Ingushs, are one nation. My origin is from Chechnya-Ingushetia, but I was born and grew up in Georgia. I know that I am a Chechen, sometimes I think that I am a Georgian.

Tariel explained similarly.⁸³⁰

I knew that I was Kist. But I thought that Kists were like Mingrelians and Svans in Georgia and that I was like them. After I grew up, I learnt that our origin was Chechen. I was disappointed a little because I thought that I was not Chechen but Georgian. And when I learned that I am the son of a nation different than the Georgians, I felt this situation to be strange... Later I gradually accepted this reality.

However, he soon came to evaluate his Chechen identity positively: “Today, at first I am a Chechen and I am proud of it. Chechens still fight for the independence and liberty of their homeland.”⁸³¹

According to Tariel, while Kists were regarded as Georgians, they are part of Chechens today. That is, they began to define themselves as “Chechens in Georgia” or “Vainakh diaspora in Georgia” after 1999. In this way, these developments since the Soviet Union’s disintegration in 1991 made the spiritual distance between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their homeland, close to an important degree. Especially, the Chechen-Kist youth in Pankisi have been influenced very much by this development and they came to define themselves as “Chechen-Vainakh diaspora in Georgia” while elders defend Chechen-Kists’ old identity comparatively better.

On the other hand, the interaction of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi with Chechens from their homeland reminded Chechen-Kists in Pankisi of the differences between them and Chechens from their homeland, even if both preserve the same *Nokhchalla-Adat*.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁸³¹ Ibid., 129.

In fact, many Chechen-Kists in Pankisi said that Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia, especially those in cities forgot their traditions and Russianized. For example, a Chechen-Kist woman claimed that Chechens, supposedly the kins of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi, were stranger than Russians for her:⁸³²

You are not surprised at the differences between us and Russians, because you know that Russians are different people. But Chechens? We share the same language and the same religion and we and Chechens are supposed to belong to the same ethnic group. However, they are very different from us.

At the same time, many Chechen-Kists in Pankisi emphasize differences between them and Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia. For example, Jamlet described the following in Tsulaia's interview:⁸³³

While there are similarities between us and Chechens, differences also exist in many respects. As we grew up in different circumstances, Chechens also grew up in a very different atmosphere. Among us, there are fewer cases of betrayal than among Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia. Of course, there are many good people among Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia. Our society is small; we are closer to each other and we have solidarity with each other. [...] Our similarity to them is that we have the common language, religion, rules, and traditions. But Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia have fewer features transferred by our ancestors than us here.

According to the Chechen-Kist people in Pankisi, while they preserve their traditions and culture well, Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia were Russianized and forgot some of their traditions, though both of them share the same language, religion, and traditions. In this way, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi often emphasize that they maintain Vainakh's values and traditions in the purest way. That is, they try to define themselves as "the purest Vainakh diaspora, different from those in their homeland".

The relations of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi with Chechnya-Ingushetia, their homeland, were weak in the Soviet era and many Chechen-Kists did not consider themselves

⁸³² Sipurashvili, "Islamic Revival," 19.

⁸³³ Tsulaia, "To be Kist," 134-135.

Vainakh-Chechen origin. However, after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi strengthened their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia and Chechen-Vainakh identity gradually settled among them. The Second Chechen War in 1999 accelerated this tendency and the identity of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi became closer to Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia. On the other hand, Chechen-Kists' interaction with their homeland showed Kists the difference between them and their kins in their homeland. In this way, since the Soviet Union's disintegration, the identity of "Chechen-Vainakh diaspora in Georgia, different from those in their homeland" has grown among Chechen-Kists in Pankisi.

6-2-2. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' View on Current Situation in Chechnya

In the previous part, I explained the process of the development of the "Vainakh diaspora" identity among Chechen-Kists in Pankisi after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. In this part, I concern the perception of "homeland" among Chechen-Kists today.

In fact, when I asked interviewees questions of "Where is your homeland?" and "What importance does the existence of Chechnya-Ingushetia have?", 23 of total 28 interviewees said that both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia are their homelands and consider the existence of Chechnya-Ingushetia important. Moreover, when Ia Tsulaia asked her interviewees their perception on Georgia, they clearly defined Georgia as their homeland. Despite the fact that many Chechen-Kists moved to Chechnya, almost all of their homes have been kept in Georgia. For example, Tariel emphasized that Georgia is his homeland, saying that the environment of Pankisi is most comfortable for him and that he wanted to live there in the future.⁸³⁴

I was born and grew up in Dzhokolo. Georgia is my homeland. I graduated from the school here. Many things connect me to Georgia. Later, I went to Chechnya-Ingushetia in 1997, before the Second Chechen War started. After the war, I came back... If our living conditions had been normal, who would

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 132.

have left? Everyone wants to be close to his or her family. [...] Even if our conditions are very difficult, I will live here.

Like Taniel, another informant says the following: “I still continue to live here, where I was born and grew up. Only for my children I moved to Chechnya.”⁸³⁵

Ilia, an old Chechen-Kist villager states:⁸³⁶

I will not leave this place, because this is where I was born, grew up and got used to everything. Georgia is my homeland. I may go to Chechnya, but will not settle there even if the conditions in Chechnya are better. You can stay there for a long time and can buy 10 houses but I do not want anyone to leave their place of origin. Actually, Georgia is the place where our ancestors were born and grew up and where we enjoyed a wonderful childhood.

According to them, their homeland is Georgia. It is not only the place to live but also the place which connects Chechen-Kists to many things. Therefore, they do not want to leave Georgia. In this way, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi tend to keep strong relations with the Georgian state and society and to express that Georgia is their motherland.

On the other hand, when I asked my interviewees their view on Chechnya-Ingushetia, for example, Sultan and Lia, living in the Joqolo village, said that both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia are their homelands. In particular, Lia described the following:⁸³⁷

For us, the homeland is the place where my ancestors lived and where I was born and grew up. Our Fathers are Chechens and Ingushs. Therefore, both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia are our homelands and the liberty and independence of our nation are very important.

Vano, the ex-principal of the Joqolo Public School stated similarly:⁸³⁸

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 132.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., 132-133.

⁸³⁷ Author's interview with Lia on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸³⁸ Author's interview with Vano on September 3rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

Homeland for me is the place where I was born, grew up, received education and learnt our culture. Chechnya-Ingushetia is also my homeland, because my ancestors lived there and Chechnya-Ingushetia is the origin of our culture, language, and traditions.

Suleiman referred to the importance of the fact that Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechens in Chechnya have common origin and ethnicity:⁸³⁹

Although my homeland is the place where I was born and raised, Chechnya-Ingushetia is very important for us and also can be said to be our homeland because those who live there are our people and share common origin with us.

Maga defined Chechnya-Ingushetia as an important part of his body and spirit, although he was not born there.⁸⁴⁰

Homeland is the part of our spirit and bodies. Of course, Georgia is our homeland. But the independence of Chechnya-Ingushetia is very important for us and it is also our second homeland.

Marsel and Melsi also stated like Maga. Especially, Marsel said as such:⁸⁴¹

Homeland is the place where you can feel as if you were at home and which created your identity. Therefore, both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia are our homelands. We have never been to Chechnya-Ingushetia, but we can be martyrs for it. Its independence is our dream.

Arbi referred to the importance of the existence of kins, similar culture, and traditions so that a place could be defined as “homeland”:⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Author’s interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴⁰ Author’s interview with Maga on September 3rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴¹ Author’s interview with Marsel on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴² Author’s interview with Arbi on September 1st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

I think that homeland is the place where your kins live and where your culture and traditions are preserved soundly. Although I was not born and raised in Chechnya-Ingushetia, my kins exist there and our traditions and culture have strong connections with Chechnya-Ingushetia.

Tea emphasized that homeland is the place one's origin exists rather than the place where one was born and grew up:⁸⁴³

In my opinion, the homeland is the place where your origin, fathers, and ancestor lived and where your kins continue to live. Where you were born and raised is not important. The independence of Chechnya-Ingushetia is important and I always hope for it.

Nata emphasized the status of Chechnya-Ingushetia and Georgia for her differently:⁸⁴⁴

Homeland is originally a term like this: it captures you and you cannot escape from it spiritually. Although I love Georgia very much, know it well and feel it good, my homeland is Chechnya-Ingushetia in spite of the fact that I do not know it and its people well.

If I summarize them, the existence of Chechnya-Ingushetia is very important for Chechen-Kists in Georgia and it is defined as their "other homeland", because Chechen-Kists' kins, traditions, and culture live there, their ancestors came from there and Chechnya-Ingushetia forms an important part of the basis of their identity.

Many of Georgia's Chechen-Kists define both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia as their "homelands" and the existence of Chechnya-Ingushetia occupies an important place in their identity.

When I asked interviewees whether they have been to Chechnya-Ingushetia or not, almost all of my total 28 informants responded positively and said that their relatives have also visited them in Georgia. At the same time, they still communicate with their kins in Chechnya-Ingushetia with telephone, e-mail, and social networking

⁸⁴³ Author's interview with Tea on September 1st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴⁴ Author's interview with Nata on August 29th, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

sites. And many of my interviewees expressed the intention of visiting Chechnya-Ingushetia and improved Russian-Georgian relations like Ossetians.⁸⁴⁵

Moreover, an important part of my interviewees stated that they wanted to settle in Chechnya-Ingushetia if the opportunity arises. Some of them referred to the fact that Chechnya-Ingushetia is Chechen-Kists' homeland as the reason for their intention of living in Chechnya.⁸⁴⁶ For example, Melsi expressed the following:⁸⁴⁷

I have never been to Chechnya, but I regard it as my homeland because of our historical ties. It would be interesting for me to live in a place where the majority is my kins.

Nata referred to her spiritual ties with Chechnya-Ingushetia as the reason for her intention to move to Chechnya.⁸⁴⁸

It is true that living in Chechnya will be difficult both for me and my children. Despite this fact, I would live there, because while my grandchildren have already come to feel Georgia their homeland, living in Chechnya would fill the void of statelessness for me. But I would not lose my ties with Georgia.

At the same time, the number of my interviewees who think of moving to Chechnya-Ingushetia because of economic reasons was not insignificant. Also when Ia Tsulaia asked interviewees in Pankisi whether they intend to go to Chechnya or not, her informants said that they thought of moving to Chechnya, their homeland, because of economic difficulties while many of them wanted to continue to stay in Georgia. For

⁸⁴⁵ For example, Author's interview with Larisa, Lida and Bela on August 31st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Eter on September 3rd, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Sultan on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Nazi on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴⁶ Author's interview with Lia on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Vano on September 3rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; Author's interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁴⁷ Author's interview with Melsi on October 25th, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta;

⁸⁴⁸ Author's interview with Nata on August 29th, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

example, 54-year-old Jamlet said the following: “Now my future is not clear and I do not have a home in Georgia.”⁸⁴⁹

Another Chechen-Kist woman expressed that unemployment and insufficient income orient people to leave Georgia:⁸⁵⁰

I think about moving to Chechnya because my children have to study. We need to improve our conditions for them. I wish there were something good for us here, but there isn't... nobody has time for us. If you move to Chechnya, you can live in a better way, your children can study normally and they may get a job. If there were jobs here, I would work in Georgia. But where? There is nothing here. People in Georgia are unemployed; how can I find a job? The Georgian state provides us with some social aid but it is insufficient for us. I cannot imagine my future here.

Leila said that her family may move to Chechnya-Ingushetia for her children's future:⁸⁵¹

I want my children to be well raised. If the situation improves in Chechnya, then we move there. Our economic situation was better there than here. We obtain social aid every two months here, but it is not sufficient for us at all. It is not important for us where we live. The important thing for us is to do everything to raise our children normally.

According to them, the living standard in Chechnya-Ingushetia is better than in Georgia and those who live there are their kins and share the same language, culture, and traditions. Therefore, they think of moving to Chechnya-Ingushetia, not to the other regions of Russia. Almost all Chechen-Kists in Pankisi have strong spiritual and physical ties with Chechnya-Ingushetia today.

When we see Chechen-Kists' views on the political situation in Chechnya-Ingushetia, their view on Dzhokhar Dudayev and Aslan Maskhadov is generally

⁸⁴⁹ Tsulaia, “To be Kist,” 141.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid., 141.

positive and they are regarded as their heroes. For example, Islam described the following about them:⁸⁵²

People in Pankisi know Dudayev and Maskhadov as their great leaders, brave men, and patriots. Also for me, they were our heroes who fought against Russia bravely for our homeland and were real manly men.

Kerim, a Chechen-Kist university student, also explained that Dudayev and Maskhadov fought bravely for the liberty and independence of his homeland and that he also respects them as his national heroes.⁸⁵³

Moreover, Melsi referred to the fact that Maskhadov considers Chechnya's relation with Chechen-Kists in Pankisi important.⁸⁵⁴

They fought against Russia bravely for the independence and liberty of our homeland and thus they are our great leaders and patriots. Besides, Maskhadov considered the relations between Chechnya and us and really loved us. In fact, when Eduard Shevardnadze was the president of Georgia, Maskhadov came here with him and conversed with people here.

In this way, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi evaluate Dudayev and Maskhadov positively as their “national heroes who struggled against Russia for the independence of homeland”. The memorial events of their martyrdom have also been held in Georgia recently.



Photograph 22: The Memorial Day of Dzhokhar Dudayev's Martyrdom on the 21st of April 1996, in Tbilisi in 2013⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵² Author's interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁵³ Author's interview with Kerim on October 28th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁸⁵⁴ Author's interview with Melsi on October 25th, 2017 in the Omalo village, Akhmeta.



Photograph 23: The Memorial Day of Aslan Maskhadov’s Martyrdom on the 8th of March 2005, in Tbilisi in 2013⁸⁵⁶

While their view on the current Chechen government today is varied, people generally referred to Chechnya as “homeland” when they evaluate it in my interviews. For example, Maqvala emphasized the fact that the existing Chechen government brought order to Chechnya despite the criticism on its non-democratic system:⁸⁵⁷

Many people criticize the non-democratic situation of current Chechnya-Ingushetia. But at least, after the current Chechen government ascended to power, the war in Chechnya ended, order was brought about and our traditions, culture, and religion were preserved. Moreover, it develops its relations with Muslim states.

⁸⁵⁵ Taken by Sul Khan Bordzikashvili on April 21st, 2013 in Tbilisi.

⁸⁵⁶ Taken by Sul Khan Bordzikashvili on March 8th, 2013 in Tbilisi.

⁸⁵⁷ Author’s interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

Bela described the current Chechen government similarly:⁸⁵⁸

At least, the current Chechen government brought peace and order to our homeland. We can see this everyday. It tries to win the independence of our homeland in a peaceful way and I evaluate this point positively. If the war continued today, our homeland would be completely destroyed and our culture, religion, and traditions would not remain.

Suleiman and Giorgi, a Chechen-Kist university student, referred to the fact that the improvement of people's living standards in Chechnya. Especially, Giorgi said as such:⁸⁵⁹

At this moment, we evaluate the existing Chechen government positively. It contributed to the end of the Chechen War and brought order to Chechnya, our homeland. Today, the current Chechen government makes efforts for the improvement of Chechens' religious environment and life standard and give support to our kins. It also built the biggest and the most beautiful mosque in Grozny.

Nata referred to the improvement of Chechens' living standards in Chechnya:⁸⁶⁰

It is difficult for us to believe in what we really saw rather than to believe in what we saw through television. When I ask questions to those in Chechnya, everyone is satisfied with their lives in Chechnya today. This is surprising situation. We know that democracy does not always bring peace, but a comfortable life without democracy is also possible.

They emphasized that peace and order come to Chechnya, after the current Chechen government ascended to power. Also the religious and cultural conditions and life standards of Chechens in Chechnya were improved to an important degree under the current Chechen government. These contributions to the Chechen people are expressed even by many of those who do not support it.

⁸⁵⁸ Author's interview with Bela on August 31st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁵⁹ Author's interview with Giorgi on October 28th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁸⁶⁰ Author's interview with Nata on August 29th, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

On the other hand, an important part of Salafists in Pankisi accuses the current Chechen government of its “betrayal”⁸⁶¹ and collaboration with Russia. Furthermore, even among non-Salafists, those who negatively evaluate the current Chechen government refer to the deterioration of the situation of human rights and the restriction of freedom of expression in Chechnya as well as its pro-Russian attitude. They positively evaluate the fact that the current Chechen government brought peace and order to Chechnya and that it improved the living standard of Chechens in Chechnya.⁸⁶²

For example, Islam explained the following about Georgia’s Chechen-Kists’ view on the existing Chechen government:⁸⁶³

Many of the people here (in Pankisi) do not support the current Chechen government because of its non-democratic attitude and infringement of human rights as well as its attitude like Russia’s fifth column, while some people like it. Before, the current Chechen government clearly emphasized that it would support us, but it does not behave very amiably toward us now. Dudayev and Maskhadov’s attitudes were friendlier to us. In their era, the representative of Chechnya-Ichkeria (Khizri Aldamov) was sent, but the current one has not done anything.

Melsi described that those who work in Chechnya are afraid of criticizing the current Chechen government while many people in Pankisi evaluate it negatively:⁸⁶⁴

Generally, people in Pankisi evaluate the current Chechen government very negatively. But those who work in Chechnya are afraid of criticizing

⁸⁶¹ Akhmad Kadyrov, who was the President of the pro-Russian Chechen government, was the *mufti* of Chechnya-Ichkeria in Dzhokhar Dudayev’s era and fought against Russia in the First Chechen War, but he supported Russia and fought against Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basayev in the Second Chechen War.

⁸⁶² Author’s interview with Makka on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta; Author’s interview with Nazi on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁶³ Author’s interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁶⁴ Author’s interview with Melsi on October 25th, 2017 in the Omalo village, Akhmeta.

(Akhmad and Ramzan) Kadyrov's regime in order not to lose their jobs and not to be arrested. The current Chechen government's relations with Pankisi also are not good, because people in Pankisi supported Dudayev, Maskhadov and the government of Chechnya-Ichkeria (the separatist government). Therefore, the current Chechen government keeps its distance from here.

Many people in Pankisi evaluate the current Chechen government negatively for its non-democratic attitude and its closeness to Russia. Also the current Chechen government does not behave towards Chechen-Kists in Pankisi amiably and no diaspora policy of the current Chechen government exists unlike the case of North and South Ossetia. Therefore the ties between the current Chechen government and the Chechen-Kists in Pankisi are not strong.

But even among those who evaluate the existing regime in Chechnya-Ingushetia negatively, anti-Russianness and the sentiment towards the liberation of Chechnya-Ingushetia from Russia is often the basis which connects Chechen-Kists in Pankisi with Chechens-Ingushs in Chechnya-Ingushetia. When Ali Asker conducted interviews in Tbilisi and Pankisi, a Salafist Chechen-Kist emphasized that the purpose of their propaganda is the liberation and independence of Chechnya-Ingushetia as their homeland from Russia. And those who went to Syria was planning to go to Chechnya on the purpose of the liberation of their homeland, expressing that his motherland is Chechnya and the existing regime in Chechnya is infidel:⁸⁶⁵

In our opinion, ISIL is a global instigation. Those who went there were planning to fight in Chechnya afterward. Our propaganda is not made in order to send people to Syria.

A traditionalist Chechen-Kist intellectual emphasized the following:⁸⁶⁶

ISIL has no relations with Islam. It is a structure which appeared as a result of the joint works by many foreign actors such as Russia and the United States. Chechens went to Syria to fight against Russia and Bashar al-Assad's regime.

⁸⁶⁵ Aydingün, Asker and Üner, "Pankisi Vadisi'nde," 357.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 358.

I see what ISIL did was different from what Tarkhan Batirashvili (Abu Omar al-Shishani) wanted. The North Caucasian people live in Latakia. Russia's purpose is to exterminate the people living there and to take that region under control. Tarkhan is certainly in the Islamic State, but Chechens are originally in the Free Syrian Army and the other groups... Today, people call only Chechens who live in Pankisi Kists.

According to him, ISIL is the instigation created by foreign states and has no relations with Islam and of course, their homeland. Chechen-Kists in Pankisi went to Syria originally in order to save their cognates in Syria from Russia's oppression and massacre and did not foresee the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant. In fact, another traditionalist interviewee clearly expressed that he intends to go to fight for his homeland while the Islamic State of Iraq and Levantis related to Arabs, not his kins in the North Caucasus.⁸⁶⁷

The negative sense towards the existing Chechen government is not an obstacle between Georgia's Chechen-Kists (or Vainakh diaspora in Georgia) and Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their homeland. On the contrary, the resistance against Russia and the idea of "free independent Chechnya-Ingushetia" play a very important role in their identity and contribute to the strengthening of the relations between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechens-Ingushs in their homeland.

As we see above, many of Georgia's Chechen-Kists define both Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia as their "homeland" and have their strong spiritual and physical relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their homeland. Although the relations between the current Chechen government and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi are not always good, this fact is not an obstacle between Georgia's Chechen-Kists (or Vainakh diaspora) and their homeland. The resistance against Russia and the idea of "free independent Chechnya-Ingushetia" as well as Chechen language, traditions and culture exist as elements which connect Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia. Georgia's Chechen-Kists' diaspora identity includes also many such political elements unlike Ossetians in Georgia.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., 358

6-2-3. Georgia's Chechen-Kists and the "Painful History" of Their Homeland

I explained that diaspora identity developed among Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and that their identity includes not only Chechen language, culture, religion, and traditions but also political elements such as the idea of "free and independent Chechnya" and resistance against Russia in the previous parts. As Chechen-Kists in Georgia realize that they are Chechen-Ingush origin and the identity of "Vainakh diaspora" was spread among them, their view on the history of Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their "homeland" is also naturally changing.

In fact, while many Chechen-Kists emphasize that the Georgian state and society protected Chechen-Kists from the deportation in 1944, they had few chances to learn about this deportation itself in the Soviet era. But as the interactions between Georgia's Chechen-Kists and Chechen-Ingushs in Chechnya-Ingushetia increase, the historical trauma of Chechens and Ingushs in Chechnya-Ingushetia was accepted also as Chechen-Kists' historical trauma⁸⁶⁸ and became an important part of their identity.

When I conducted interviews in Pankisi in 2017, 18 of total 27 interviewees defined that the Chechen-Ingush Deportation on February 23rd, 1944 by the Soviet Union as a "genocide" or "ethnic cleansing" and said that the two Chechen Wars were the attempts of genocides. For example, Lalika and Sultan referred to the Chechen-Ingush Departure and the two Chechen Wars and Sultan described the following:⁸⁶⁹

We lost our relatives in the two Chechen Wars in the 1990s and these wars affected us very much. We understood very well what war is and realized that war is unacceptable. The Chechen-Ingush Departure in 1944 was genocide itself and the two Chechen Wars were attempts of genocide against us.

⁸⁶⁸ Author's interview with Khaso on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁶⁹ Author's interview with Sultan on September 2nd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

Arbi also emphasized that the departure in 1994 and the Chechen Wars were the product of Russia's aggressive policies and remain as severe traumas in their memories.⁸⁷⁰

Bela also mentioned these tragedies similarly:⁸⁷¹

These (Chechen) Wars left many of my relatives and acquaintances in a difficult situation. Of course, it was difficult for me to witness these wars unperturbedly. These wars influenced all of us psychologically because Chechnya-Ingushetia is my second motherland and its pain is our pain. Of course, the deportation in 1994 is spoken among us negatively like these two wars. In the first place, killing and exterminating people and genocide are never spoken positively anyway.

Kerim said the following:⁸⁷²

Especially in the Second Chechen War, Russians treated us very badly and carried out genocide against us. In this war, much blood of our people was shed. Therefore, negative views against Russians are widespread among us. Of course, the Chechen-Ingush Deportation in 1994 is spoken very negatively among us. We and Chechens in Chechnya are one nation and their pain is also ours.

Suleiman defined the deportation in 1944 as the Vainakh nation's greatest tragedy:⁸⁷³

The Chechen-Ingush Deportation on 23 February 1944 by the Soviet Union is memorialized here among us. Our people were exiled from Chechnya-Ingushetia and so were some people even from here. It is our greatest tragedy in history and was genocide itself. The two Chechen Wars were planned by Russia in order to exterminate our nation.

Nazi emphasized that the deportation in 1944 could be defined as genocide also in terms of international law:⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷⁰ Author's interview with Arbi on September 1st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁷¹ Author's interview with Bela on August 31st, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁷² Author's interview with Kerim on October 28th, 2017 in Tbilisi.

⁸⁷³ Author's interview with Suleiman on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta.

The deportation in 1944 was genocide against our people and it is remembered as cruel genocide by every Vainakh. It can be defined as genocide or ethnic cleansing also in terms of international law. In the two Chechen Wars, our only demand was independence and freedom, because our people never want to be dominated by anyone.

If I summarize them, my interviewees argue that the Chechen-Ingush deportation in 1944 is genocide and ethnic cleansing against all Vainakh people (including Chechen-Kists in Georgia) and Vainakh people's greatest tragedy in history. The two Chechen Wars were the attempts of genocide by Russians against a small nation such as Vainakh people. At the same time, the songs sung by Maqvala's ensemble include those which are dedicated to the victims of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 and this historical trauma.⁸⁷⁵ As we can understand from these talks, the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 and the two Chechen Wars, which are the historical trauma of Chechen-Ingushs in Chechnya-Ingushetia, are also shared as their historical trauma and this trauma plays a very important role as the element which connects Georgia's Chechen-Kists to Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their homeland today.

Moreover, because the current Georgian state also adopts anti-Russianness as one of the elements of national identity, it allows the topics such as "the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide on February 23rd by the Soviet Union" and "the Two Chechen Wars" to be taught at schools in Pankisi. For example, Nazo explained that the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 is taught in history classes in Pankisi:⁸⁷⁶

We teach about the Chechen-Ingush Deportation in 1994 and the two Chechen Wars in the 1990s in the history classes along with the Georgian

⁸⁷⁴ Author's interview with Nazi on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁷⁵ Author's interview with Maqvala on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁷⁶ Author's interview with Nazo on October 23rd, 2017 in the Joqolo village, Akhmeta; "Folk Band 'Daimoakh'".

history. Especially, the deportation in 1944 is taught under the theme of “War and Terror in Stalin’s era”. We perceive this deportation as genocide against us and it was the greatest tragedy in our history. The two Chechen Wars can be called the second Chechen genocide because half of the total 1,200,000 Chechens lost their homes.

In fact, the current Georgian history textbook describes Stalin’s era negatively as “the era of terror and massacre” and generally adopts an anti-Russian attitude.⁸⁷⁷ Therefore teaching about the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide on February 23rd by the Soviet Union does not contradict with Georgia’s state policy and this attitude of Georgia contributes to the development of “the Vainakh diaspora nationalism” among Georgia’s Chechen-Kists to an important degree.

At the same time, Islam described that RadioWay, the local Radio in Pankisi organize special programs about the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide and it held memorial activities in Pankisi:⁸⁷⁸

Our radio (RadioWay) deals with the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944. Khaso’s program is broadcasted in our Radio channel and he speaks about it. Moreover, the memorial activity of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 was held last year (in 2016) for the first time.

Since the Georgian state, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechens in Chechnya-Ingushetia share to a certain degree anti-Russian views, the Georgian state allow the Chechen-Vainakh diaspora nationalism of Chechen-Kists in Pankisi based on anti-Russianness and the common historical trauma as well as the Chechen culture while it considers the spread of Islamic fundamentalism very dangerous.

Besides, the Chechen-Kist intellectuals intensify their activities in order to inform about the Chechen-Ingush Deportation Genocide in 1944 and carry lobbying activities so that the Georgian Parliament would recognize the Chechen-Ingush

⁸⁷⁷ For example, cf. Kighladze et al., *Istoria 12*, 143-148;

⁸⁷⁸ Author’s interview with Islam on October 24th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta.

Deportation in 1944 as genocide/ethnic cleansing. In fact, Melsi described the recent situation of the activities on the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944:⁸⁷⁹

[...] Today, activities such as memorial activities and academic conferences are held by university students in Tbilisi in order to inform people about the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 to the Georgian public. I also contributed to these kinds of activities when I was a university student and we held protests in front of the Embassy of Russia. Although the current Georgian government highlights the Georgian civilization and do not support any ethnic and religious groups actively because of ethnic issues inside Georgia, it allows us to hold such activities.

Moreover, as the photographs below show, an academic meeting on the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 and a memorial activity were held in Tbilisi on 23 February 2015.

Also on February 23rd, 2018, a memorial activity to remember the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 was held in Tbilisi by Amiran Arabuli and Eter Tataraidze under the supervisorship of Makka, who is the chairman of the “Caucasus Women’s Congress” and one of my interviewees.⁸⁸⁰ In addition, many articles and discussions on the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 are published on Chechen-Kists’ webpages, and articles and social networking services.⁸⁸¹ They are

⁸⁷⁹ Author’s interview with Melsi on October 25th, 2017 in the Omalo village, Akhmeta.

⁸⁸⁰ “Chechnebis da Ingushebis Deportatsiis 74-e Tslis Tbilisshi Aghinishneba [the 74th Anniversary of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation is Commemorated in Tbilisi]”, *RadioWay*, accessed February 24, 2018, <https://radioway.ge/news/people/item/731-chechnebis-da-ingushebis-deportatsiis-74-e-xlistavi-tbilisshi-aghinishneba>.

⁸⁸¹ For example, cf. “23 Tebervali Sabchota Rezhimis mier Checheni da Ingushi Kahlkhis Deportatsiis Dghea [the February 23rd is the day of the Chechen-Ingush people’s Deportation by the Soviet Regime]”, *RadioWay*, accessed February 25, 2017, <https://radioway.ge/news/people/item/346-23-tebervali-sabchota-rezhimis-mier-checheni-da-ingushi-xalxis-deportatsiis-dgea>; “87 Tslis Eter Gumashvili’s Dghiuli Pankisidan: Sakhlis Iqris Simdzime [87-Year-Old Eter Gumashvili’s Diary from Pankisi: Heaviness from Home]”, *RadioWay*, accessed March 19, 2018 <https://radioway.ge/news/people/item/381-87-xlis-eter-gumashvilis-dgiuri-pankisidan-saxlidan-aybris-simwime>; “Gzashi ‘Dakarguli’ Vainakhebi [Vainakhs ‘Lost’ on the Road]”, *Pankisi.ge*, accessed on April 4th, 2018, <https://pankisi.ge/%E1%83%92%E1%83%96%E1%83%90%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%92%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98->

actively acquainting the Georgian public with this historical trauma also through the internet.



Photographs 24-25: The Memorial Day of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide by the Soviet Union on the 23rd of February 1944, in Tbilisi in 2015⁸⁸²

Thus, Georgia’s Chechen-Kists aim to strengthen their diaspora identity on the basis of anti-Russianness and the common historical trauma such as the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 and the two Chechen Wars in the 1990s. That is, their identity tends to develop not only as a cultural diaspora identity but also as a political diaspora identity which includes not only cultural elements but also political ones such as historical traumas, unlike that of Ossetians in Georgia.

In this context, the fact that the Georgian parliament recognized the “Circassian Genocide in 1864 by Russia” on May 21st, 2011 is viewed by many Chechen-Kists in Georgia. When I conducted fieldworks in Pankisi in 2017, an important part of the

%E1%83%95%E1%83%90%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%90%E1%83%AE/; “As Tselitsadshi Ertkhel!? [Once a Year!?!”, *Pankisi.ge*, accessed April 4, 2018, <https://pankisi.ge/%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%AC%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%AC%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98-%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%AE%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A/>.

⁸⁸² Taken by Sul Khan Bordzikashvili on February 23rd, 2015 in Tbilisi.

people in Pankisi knew Georgia's recognition of the "Circassian Genocide in 1864 by Russia". The Chechen-Kist intellectuals supported this decision of the Georgian government actively.⁸⁸³ Many people in Pankisi hoped that this decision of the Georgian government would also lead to the recognition of Chechen-Ingush Deportation in 1944 as genocide; but they were disappointed at the fact that the Georgian government has not recognized "the Chechen-Ingush Genocide in 1944". About this situation, Melsi explained the following:⁸⁸⁴

The recognition of "the Circassian Genocide by Russia in 1864" by the Georgian government created the hope that the Georgian government would recognize also 'the Chechen-Ingush Genocide by the Soviet Union in 1944' for us. But this decision was a political step. It was made because Circassians are Abkhazians' relatives. The Georgian government planned to change Georgia's relations with Abkhazians through making good relations with Circassians. It was a strategy planned by Saakashvili for several years.

According to her, Chechen-Kists viewed the Georgian government's recognition of "the Circassian Genocide in 1864" as a sign of solidarity with all the North Caucasian people, who became the victim of the Russian aggressive policies. And therefore they expected that it would recognize "the Chechen-Ingush Genocide in 1944". But the Georgian government made this decision for other political interests, not for solidarity with the Vainakh people. Thus, Chechen-Kists in Georgia were disappointed. All of these show the important position of the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 in Chechen-Kists' identity.

In conclusion, while Chechen-Kists in Georgia were not familiar with Chechnya-Ingushetia in the Soviet era and thought that they were a branch of the Georgian

⁸⁸³ Author's interview with Makka on August 29th, 2017 in the Duisi village, Akhmeta; "Cherkesta Genotsidis 152 Tslitavi, Tbilisi-Anaklia Avto-Msvleloba [the 152nd Anniversary of the Circassian Genocide, the Tbilisi-Anaklia Auto-March]", *Pankisi.ge*, accessed July 20, 2016, <https://pankisi.ge/%E1%83%A9%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A5%E1%83%94%E1%83%96%E1%83%97%E1%83%90-%E1%83%92%E1%83%94%E1%83%9C%E1%83%9D%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%93%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-152-%E1%83%AC%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1/>.

⁸⁸⁴ Author's interview with Melsi on 25 October 2017 in the Omalo village, Akhmeta.

people, they strengthened their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia and “the Vainakh diaspora” identity developed among them after the Soviet Union’s disintegration, especially after the Second Chechen War in 1999.

Although the relations between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and the current Chechen governments are not always good, the idea of “free independent Chechnya”, Chechens’ resistance against Russia and the common historical trauma such as the Chechen-Ingush Deportation (Genocide) in 1944 and the two Chechen Wars, as well as the Chechen language, traditions, and culture, occupy an important position in Chechen-Kists’ identity and are important elements which link Chechen-Kists with Chechnya-Ingushetia, their homeland. The fact that the Georgian state, Chechens in Chechnya and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi share anti-Russianness with each other also contributes to the development of the political Vainakh diaspora nationalism as a result.

That is, the issue of South Ossetia does not play an important role as an element which strengthens the relations between North and South Ossetia and Georgia’s Ossetians and their relations with their homeland are based mainly on the Ossetian language and culture. On the other hand, political topics such as the historical trauma of Chechen-Ingushs in Chechnya and their resistance against Russia play a very important role in connecting Chechen-Kists in Georgia to Chechnya-Ingushetia, defined as their homeland. In this way, especially when we look at Georgia’s Ossetians’ and Chechen-Kists’ relations with their homelands, while Ossetians tend to preserve their identity as a cultural diaspora identity, Chechen-Kists in Georgia preserve their identity as both cultural and political diaspora identity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to analyze the diasporic identity of the Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia and different strategies for preserving this identity. I have specifically focused on the question of how diasporas develop their identity in relation to host state-homeland relations if the issue of de-facto independent states is added and compared the cases of Georgia's Ossetians and Chechen-Kists. This topic is related to diaspora studies, especially to diaspora-homeland-host state relations, to the issue of de facto independent states and Georgia's nation-state building policy and minority issues. However, the cases of Georgia's Ossetians and Chechen-Kists are exceptional in all these areas and the resources about these cases are extremely scarce because the number of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia is small. Therefore researchers have seldom been interested in these communities in Georgia despite the fact that the research on Georgia's Ossetians and Chechen-Kists would contribute to the studies on Georgia's minority policies, the issue of South Ossetia and the Chechen issue. This dissertation aimed to introduce a new debate on the process of the development of the diaspora-homeland-host state relations and on Georgia's nation-state building policy. The fieldwork for the dissertation was conducted in Georgia between 2016 and 2017.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the literature on diaspora identity has increased to an important degree in recent years with the progress of globalization and the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. However, most of this literature covered the societies formed by migrations from a certain state to other states. The cases in which diaspora

communities were formed because of the establishment of new nation-states not through migrations were not discussed until 1991. Although Rogers Brubaker dealt with these cases after the Soviet Union's disintegration and suggested the theory of diaspora-homeland-host state relations, he focused only on the cases of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet states. Other studies also deal with similar cases such as that of Kazakh diasporas. That is, while these studies deal with the cases of de jure independent states' diasporas, they do not cover the cases of the diasporas of de facto independent states such as Abkhazia, Chechnya and South Ossetia in the former Soviet states. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by analyzing the exceptional cases of Brubaker's diaspora-homeland-host state relations theory, exploring the identity preservation strategies of the Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities in Georgia.

Before analyzing the cases of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia, I briefly discussed the case of Russians in the former Soviet geopolitical area, especially those in Kazakhstan and the Baltic states, explaining these states' nation-state building policy and their relations with Russia. Russians settled in these states during the Soviet era and earlier and they formed an important part of these states' total population. Moreover, Russians kept political and social predominance until the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. Besides, there were no state borders in the Soviet Union and the issue of diaspora in the former Soviet territory was not discussed in the Soviet era.

However, after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991, the Russian communities of the former Soviet states have remained outside their homeland Russia. Moreover, the Russian diaspora in many of the former Soviet states lost their socio-political advantages which they had in the Soviet era and was affected by these states' nation-state building policies. In the Baltic states and Kazakhstan, Russians were excluded from the nation-state building process and they remained devoid of certain civil rights. Russians in these states demanded public rights and territorial autonomy.

The relations between Russian diasporas, Russia and their host states in the former Soviet geopolitical area provided a framework to situate the cases of Georgia's Ossetian and Chechen-Kist communities because these communities also followed the similar process of the formation of the diaspora society like the Russians in the former Soviet states. However, the development process of these cases after the disintegration of the Soviet Union is very different from that of the Russians, because these cases are related not only to the diaspora-homeland-host state relations but also the issue of de facto independent states. That is, while Russian diaspora's homeland is Russia, a de jure independent state, the homelands of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists are North and South Ossetia and Chechnya-Ingushetia respectively. In the case of South Ossetia, because Russia supported Ossetians in South Ossetia against Georgia, Ossetians in Georgia could not receive support from Russia. Besides, Ossetians in Georgia faced discrimination by the Georgian society. On the other hand, in Chechnya-Ingushetia's case, Georgia supported Chechens in Chechnya, who revolted against Russia and the Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were gradually excluded from the Georgian political and socio-economical life in the process of the interactions between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechnya-Ingushetia.

Chapter Three presents the historical contexts of Ossetians and Chechen-Kists in Georgia. Although the migrations of Ossetians to Georgia had been ongoing since the Middle Ages, the current Ossetian communities in Georgia were mainly formed in Shida-Kartli, Kakheti, and Tbilisi between the 18th century and the 20th century. But due to Gamsakhurdia's oppression of minorities and the economic and political difficulties in Georgia, an important part of them migrated to foreign states, especially to North Ossetia. While Ossetians in Georgia are well-integrated into the Georgian state and society, their cultural assimilation is gradually advancing today. Therefore, the important issues for Georgia's Ossetians are "to preserve their identity against assimilation" and "to overcome the suspicion of the Georgian state and society as their host state and society."

On the other hand, Georgia's Chechen-Kist communities today were formed mainly by the migration of Chechens-Ingushs in the 19th century and they were quickly integrated into the Georgian society. Although Russians and Georgians tried to convert them into Christianity, most Chechen-Kists preserved their faith of Islam through the Sufi *tariqats*. Due to the spread of Salafism and the flow of Chechen refugees from Chechnya at the end of the 1990s, Georgia's Chechen-Kists' identity began to transform dramatically through the interaction between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and Chechen refugees from Chechnya. At the same time, Chechen-Kists in Pankisi were excluded from the Georgian socio-political life in this process. Therefore the important issue of Chechen-Kists is their integration into the Georgian political and economic life, unlike Ossetians in Georgia.

Chapter Four explains the Georgian government's nation-state building policies since the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991. Unlike the former Soviet states in Central Asia, the basis of a united Georgian identity existed because Georgia existed as an independent state in the Middle Ages. The traditional Georgian nationality was based on the Georgian territory, the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Georgian language. Georgian nationalists in the 19th century such as Ilia Chavchavadze and Iakob Gogebashvili demanded the autonomy of the Georgian Orthodox Church and preservation of the Georgian language. In the Soviet era, territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality introduced by the Soviet government and the titular Georgian nationalism were added to the Georgian national identity. Thus, the very exclusionist modern ethnic Georgian nationalism was formed and became dominant in universities, mass media, and semi-official structures. At the end of the 1980s, anti-Russianness also became an element of the exclusionist modern ethnic Georgian national identity. This structure of the ethnic Georgian national identity caused ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the exclusion of minorities from the Georgian state and society. Therefore, the important issue of Georgia's nation-state building policy is to change the exclusionist ethnic Georgian national identity to an inclusive civic one.

As for Georgia's nation-state building process since 1991, after Zviad Gamsakhurdia ascended to power, he advocated exclusionist ethnic Georgian nationalism and excluded minorities from the Georgian political, economic and social life. His ideology based on the ethnic Georgian nationalism caused ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that were very violent. Although he tried to soften Georgia's minority policies later and to change the Georgian national identity to a civic one, these plans were not implemented when he was the president. The actual effort to change Georgia to an inclusive civic nation-state began in Eduard Shevardnadze's era. He softened Georgia's nationality policies and did not interfere with minorities' education and kept the status quo on ethnic conflicts. On the other hand, he strengthened the relations between Georgia and Western states and decided to introduce a Western type of political system and secularism. The Georgian Orthodox Church quickly increased its influence on the Georgian political and social life after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991 and the religious minorities in Georgia were excluded by the Georgian state and society. After Mikhail Saakashvili ascended to power, the process of Georgia's transformation from an ethnic nation-state to a civic one was accelerated even more. In this context, the Georgian government strengthened the rule of law and began to implement more concrete policies for minorities' integration into the Georgian state with Western states' support. On the other hand, the policies in order to preserve minorities' identities also began to be implemented. This tendency continues today and the current Georgian government often emphasizes that Georgia continues to make efforts for the integration with the West and several important advances were registered on the topic of minorities' rights.

Chapter Five analyzes and discusses the current relations between Georgia's Ossetians and the Georgian state and society and Ossetians' identity strategy to preserve their culture against assimilation and to eliminate social discrimination against them. Later this chapter deals with the identity strategy of Georgia's Chechen-Kists in Georgia for their integration into the Georgian socio-economic structure and for preserving their boundaries with the Georgian society. Because

Ossetians in Georgia share common religion and a similar culture with the Georgian society, the socio-cultural boundaries between Georgia's Ossetians and the Georgian society are not seen clearly and there are intense interactions between them in daily life. However, because of the rising ethnic Georgian nationalism and the occurrence of the violent conflict in South Ossetia, the social boundaries between Ossetians in Georgia and the Georgian state and society were formed by the Georgian state and society one-sidedly. At the same time, Ossetians in Georgia are anxious about their socio-cultural assimilation into the Georgian society and think that their socio-cultural rights are still limited. This tendency was proved during my fieldworks and many of my 30 Ossetian interviewees expressed uneasiness about this situation. In this way, Georgia's Ossetians' identity strategy focuses on eliminating social discrimination against them and on extending their socio-cultural rights.

When I analyze Ossetians' identity strategies, Ossetians in Georgia adopt neither the Georgian nor Ossetian traditional historiographies marginalizing each other on the topic of Georgian-Ossetian relations. In fact, during my fieldworks, my Ossetian interviewees often emphasized "the friendship and unity between Ossetians and Georgians", "Ossetians' contributions to the Georgian state and society" and "the indivisibility of Georgians and Ossetians". This discourse of Ossetians in Georgia does not contradict with the current Georgian historiography which also emphasizes "the Georgian-Ossetian historical friendship" and removed marginalizing expressions against Ossetians. Under these conditions, Georgia's Ossetians focus on sociocultural issues such as the determination of the standard of the Ossetian language education and the problems of Ossetians' properties which were illegally deprived in the framework of the Georgian legal system. They do not deal with political topics such as the demand for autonomy. Besides, they tend to cooperate with Georgians and the Georgian government in the process of preserving their socio-cultural boundaries with Georgians in order to be considered as "supporters of separatists". In this context, according to my interviews and ethnographic research, Kostaoba Festival has functions of showing both friendship and unity between Ossetians and Georgians and the socio-cultural boundaries between them to the

Georgian and international public, although its influence on Ossetians in Georgia is still limited. On the other hand, Ossetians in Georgia are strengthening their relations with Ossetians in foreign states to preserve their identity.

As for the relations between Georgia's Chechen-Kists in Georgia, while they are linguistically well-integrated to the Georgian state and society and their culture as influenced by the Georgian culture to an important degree, there are solid socio-cultural boundaries between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and the Georgian society because of the difference of religion and the strong dominance of *Nokhchalla-Adat* among Chechen-Kists. After the Soviet Union's disintegration and the occurrence of the Second Chechen War in 1999, Chechen-Kists' identity became different from the Georgian society even more. While the spread of Salafism and the flow of Chechen refugees to Pankisi, Chechen-Kists solidified their socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgian society against assimilation, Georgia's Chechen-Kists were excluded from the Georgian social, political and economic structure. Moreover, the disorder in Pankisi which continued by the beginning of the 2000s and the negative attitude of international and domestic mass media has spread the negative Chechen-Kist image of "barbarians", "criminals" and "kidnappers" among Georgians. In this way, both Georgia's Chechen-Kists and the Georgian society solidified the socio-cultural boundaries between them, unlike Ossetians in Georgia. At the same time, the disagreement between traditionalists (Sufists) and Salafists occurred on the topic of how the Chechen-Kist identity and religious belief should be protected against socio-cultural assimilation. But during my fieldworks, it was proved that both traditionalists/Sufists and Salafists accept the importance of *Nokhchalla-Adat* and of preserving their identity and are not entirely in conflict with each other. Under these conditions, Chechen-Kists' identity strategy focuses on their integration into the Georgian socioeconomic structure and on improving their image among Georgians as well as preserving their identity against assimilation.

While the Georgian government has been strengthening the policies for Chechen-Kists' integration into the Georgian state especially since the Rose Revolution in

2003, domestic and international non-governmental organizations are also making efforts for Chechen-Kists' integration to Georgia and holding many educational programs. Moreover, Chechen-Kists in Georgia try to show their real lifestyle to the Georgian and international public in order to make Georgians accept Chechen-Kists and to integrate themselves into the Georgian socio-economic structure. In this context, they focus on developing agro-tourism and an independent mass-media in Pankisi as well as to give vocational education so that the Georgian society could be familiar with Chechen-Kists' real socio-cultural life and these efforts was often referred by my Chechen-Kist interviewees.

On the other hand, the efforts to improve Chechen-Kists' linguistic situation also exist and the Chechen language classes were opened in the schools in Pankisi in 2016 by the Georgian government. However, the current situation of Chechen language itself is difficult and those who know the Chechen language correctly are insufficient today. Therefore, there are many difficulties for developing education and mass media in the Chechen language.

This study has also examined the relations between Georgia's Ossetians and North and South Ossetia and those between Chechen-Kists in Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia. As for Georgia's Ossetians' relations with North and South Ossetia, during my fieldworks, many Ossetian interviewees expressed that they generally have both spiritual and physical ties with North and South Ossetia defined as their homeland and that they are communicating with Ossetians living there with telephone, e-mail, and social networking services. While they do not directly support South Ossetia and Russia in the issue of South Ossetia, Ossetians in Georgia want the improvement of the Georgian-Russian relations and free travel between Georgia and their homeland. In this context, Ossetians in Georgia aimed to resolve the problems between them and North and South Ossetia such as the issue of the Georgian-Russian dual citizenship through cooperating with Georgia's state institutes and international organizations. They do not directly oppose the Georgian government, or act with Russia and South Ossetia. On the other hand, Ossetians in Georgia generally evaluate

North and South Ossetia's diaspora policy positively, but they abide by Georgia's legal system and territorial integrity and try not to directly confront with the Georgian state and society. My fieldworks proved this tendency clearly.

When we look at the relations between Chechen-Kists in Georgia and Chechnya-Ingushetia, they did not know Chechnya-Ingushetia very well in the Soviet era and thought that they were a branch of the Georgian people, not Chechens-Ingushes. However, after the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991, especially after the Second Chechen War began in 1999, they strengthened their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia and "the Vainakh diaspora" identity developed among them, although they realized also the differences between Chechens in Chechnya and Chechen-Kists in Georgia. As for Chechen-Kists' current view on their homeland, though the relations between Chechen-Kists in Pankisi and the current Chechen governments are not always good, the idea of "free independent Chechnya", anti-Russianness and the common historical trauma such as the Chechen-Ingush Deportation/Genocide in 1944 and the two Chechen Wars, as well as the Chechen language, culture and *Nokhchalla-Adat*, play an important role in Chechen-Kists' identity and are important elements which link Georgia's Chechen-Kists with their homeland. Besides, the Georgian government passively allows the development of the Vainakh diaspora nationalism among Chechen-Kists in Georgia and this situation accelerates the rise of their Vainakh diaspora nationalism.

In conclusion, when we compare Ossetians in Georgia with Chechen-Kists in Georgia, Georgia's Ossetians tend to develop their identity as "cultural diaspora identity", whose identity is mainly based on Ossetian language, culture, and tradition, in the process of both preserving their boundaries with the Georgian society and strengthening their relations with their homeland. That is, political issues such as the issue of South Ossetia are not always the elements which connect Georgia's Ossetians to North and South Ossetia. Georgia's Ossetians' relations with their homeland are based mainly on cultural elements such as the Ossetian language and culture and traditions because there are problems between Georgia and South Ossetia

and Ossetians in Georgia have to advocate the legitimacy of their existence in Georgia in spite of this situation.

On the other hand, Georgia's Chechen-Kists' identity has developed both as a "cultural political diaspora identity" and the Chechen-Vainakh diaspora nationalism rose among them. In their identity, political topics such as the issue of Chechnya as well as the Chechen-Ingush language, culture, Islam and *Nokhchalla-Adat* play a very important role and are very important elements in the process of both keeping their socio-cultural boundaries with the Georgian society and strengthening their relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia. The political topics such as the common historical trauma of Chechen-Ingushs in Chechnya such as the Chechen-Ingush Departure (Genocide) in 1944 and the two Chechen Wars in the 1990s, the idea of "freedom and independent Chechnya" and anti-Russianness play very important roles in strengthening Georgia's Chechen-Kists' relations with Chechnya-Ingushetia, their homeland. Because the Georgian state, Chechens in Chechnya and Chechen-Kists in Pankisi share anti-Russianness with each other, Chechen-Kists in Georgia are able to direct the development of their identity comparatively freely and this situation contributed to the development of Vainakh diaspora nationalism among Chechen-Kists in the Pankisi Gorge. In fact, the historical trauma and anti-Russian feeling were often expressed by many of my Chechen-Kist interviewees.

Finally, my fieldworks from 2016 to 2017 proved these facts: if the diaspora's homeland is a de facto independent state which demands its independence from the diaspora's host-state and there are problems between homeland and host state because of Russia's intervention, diaspora's identity develops as a cultural diaspora identity and political issues such as the topics related to the diasporas' homeland do not always connect the diaspora to their homeland. Their relations with their homeland are mainly based on cultural elements such as language and traditions and their movement in their host states generally focus on socio-cultural issues rather than political issues because the diaspora has to advocate the legitimacy of their existence in their host state.

On the other hand, if the diaspora's host state supports the de facto independent homeland of the diaspora against the state which dominates the diaspora's homeland, their identity develops as a cultural and political diaspora identity and political issues such as the common historical trauma can play a very important role in the process of both forming social boundaries with the host society and developing the relations between them and their homeland because the diaspora can determine the direction of the development of diaspora identity to a certain level.

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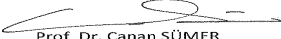






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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM

<p>UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER</p> <p>DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800 ÇANKAYA ANKARA, TURKEY T: +90 312 210 22 91 SAYI: 2016-SOS-145 www.usam.metu.edu.tr Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu</p>	<p> ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 07 EKİM 2016</p>
<p>Gönderilen: Yrd.Doç.Dr. Işık KUŞÇU Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü</p> <p>Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (IAEK)</p> <p>İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu</p>	
<p>Sayın : Yrd.Doç.Dr. Işık KUŞÇU</p> <p>Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Keisuke WAKIZAKA'nın "Living as "North Caucasians" in Georgia: Identity, Nationalism and Integration among Abkhazian, Ossetian and Chechen Communities" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay 2016-SOS-145 protokol numarası ve 10.10.2016-20.06.2017 tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir</p> <p>Bilgilerinize saygılarımızla sunarız.</p>	
<p> Prof. Dr. Canan SÜMER İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başkanı</p>	
<p> Prof. Dr. Mehmet ALTUNIŞIK IAEK Üyesi</p>	<p> Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL IAEK Üyesi</p>
<p> Prof. Dr. Mehmet UTKU IAEK Üyesi</p>	<p> Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR IAEK Üyesi</p>
<p> Yrd. Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN IAEK Üyesi</p>	<p> Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK IAEK Üyesi</p>

HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

EVALUATION OUTCOME

Dear Reviewer, 2016-525-665

Please indicate the result of your review by first marking one of the following three choices. If you mark option two ("Revision is Needed") or option three ("Reject"), please provide explanations for your decision.

Date of evaluation:

Signature:

1.	No revision is required. Data collection can be started <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	<p>Revision is needed _____</p> <p>a. The informed consent form has not been provided _____</p> <p>b. The informed consent form is incomplete _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>c. The debriefing form has not been provided _____</p> <p>d. The debriefing form is incomplete _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>e. Questions/items or procedures that can cause discomfort are involved _____</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>f. Other _____</p> <p>Comments:</p>
3.	<p>Rejected _____</p> <p>Comments:</p>

**APPENDIX B: MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN
SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I, Keisuke Wakizaka, who is a PhD Student at the Department of Area Studies, METU will conduct the study “Living as “North Caucasians” in Georgia: Identity, Nationalism and Integration among Abkhazian, Ossetian and Chechen Communities” on the purpose of exploring the formation of identity of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Kist-Chechens in Georgia and the situation of their integration to Georgia. This work offers a new perspective in the dispute over the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and can contribute to the efforts of the integration of ethnic groups in Georgia.

I expect you to answer the questions of the survey (participate in my interview) and this program will continue for 1-2 hours.

Your participation is on a voluntary basis and participants are free to withdraw at any time. The responses collected are confidential and will not be used only on the purpose of research.

In case the participants have questions about the study, please don't mind making contacts with me.

Keisuke Wakizaka

Pınarbaşı Mah. Atlas Sok. No. 12 / 20 Keçiören, Ankara, Turkey

Tel: (+90) 537 923 6186

e-mail: kafkaslikeisuke85@gmail.com

I read the explanation of the aim of the research and agreed to take part in this program voluntarily:

Name-Surname

Signature

APPENDIX C: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

1) Ossetians

Name	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Duration of Interview (Hours)	Place of Residence
Tengiz	October 25 th , 2016	Home, Tbilisi	3: 17	Tbilisi
Gia	October 18 th , 2017	Home, Tbilisi	5: 25	Tbilisi
Ketevan	November 17 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2:09	Nigoza, Kaspi
Irakli	November 16 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 10	Nigoza, Kaspi
Robert	November 16 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 11	Nigoza, Kaspi
Inga	November 16 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	1: 43	Nigoza, Kaspi
Mzia	November 4 th , 2016	School, Areshperani	2: 37	Areshperani, Lagodekhi
Lali	November 3 rd , 2016	Home, Areshperani	2: 48	Areshperani, Lagodekhi
Albert	November 3 rd , 2016	Home, Areshperani	2: 41	Zemo Bolkvi, Lagodekhi
Stella	November 4 th , 2016	School, Areshperani	2: 20	Areshperani, Lagodekhi
Yamzia	November 3 rd , 2016	School, Areshperani	2: 33	Areshperani, Lagodekhi
Eliko	November 3 rd , 2016	School, Areshperani	2: 11	Areshperani, Lagodekhi
Roza	November 3 rd , 2016	School, Areshperani	1: 40	Zemo Bolkvi, Lagodekhi
Luiza	November 3 rd , 2016	School, Areshperani	1: 40	Areshperani, Lagodekhi

Maya	November 4 th , 2016	School, Areshperani	1: 38	Leliani, Lagodekhi
Zurab	November 17 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 14	Nigoza, Kaspi
Temur	November 17 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 13	Nigoza, Kaspi
Taymuraz	November 17 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 11	Nigoza, Kaspi
Dato	November 20 th , 2016	Cafe, Tbilisi	1: 34	Tbilisi
Murman	November 20 th , 2016	Cafe, Tbilisi	1: 44	Tbilisi
Vitali	November 20 th , 2016	Cafe, Tbilisi	1: 32	Tbilisi
Zina	November 1 st , 2017	Restaurant, Tbilisi	2: 20	Tbilisi
Izolda	November 1 st , 2017	Restaurant, Tbilisi	2: 20	Tbilisi
Nana	October 29 th , 2017	Home, Tbilisi	2: 23	Tbilisi
Mari	October 20 th , 2017	Cafe, Tbilisi	3: 11	Tbilisi
Tamaz	October 29 th , 2017	Cafe, Tbilisi	2: 05	Tbilisi
Valentina	October 30 th , 2017	Cafe, Tbilisi	2: 36	Tbilisi
Feliks	November 17 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 11	Nigoza, Kaspi
Levan	November 16 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 21	Nigoza, Kaspi
Nodar	November 16 th , 2016	Home, Nigoza	2: 15	Nigoza, Kaspi

2) Chechen-Kists

Name	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Duration of Interview (Hours)	Place of Residence
Makka	August 29 th , 2017	Home, Duisi	2: 52	Tbilisi
Marsel	August 29 th , 2017	Home, Duisi	3: 10	Duisi, Akhmeta
Melsi	October 25 th , 2017	Home, Omalo	3: 26	Omalo, Akhmeta
Maqvala	October 24 th , 2017	Home, Duisi	3: 38	Duisi, Akhmeta
Islam	October 24 th , 2017	Office, Duisi	2: 35	Omalo, Akhmeta
Nazi	October 24 th , 2017	Office, Duisi	3: 42	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Suleiman	October 23 rd , 2017	Mosque, Joqolo	3: 15	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Ali	October 23 rd , 2017	Home, Joqolo	1: 55	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Nazo	October 23 rd , 2017	School, Joqolo	2: 49	Birikiani, Akhmeta
Lida	August 31 st , 2017	Home, Joqolo	1: 41	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Khatuna	September 3 rd , 2017	Home, Duisi	2: 01	Duisi, Akhmeta
Giorgi	October 28 th , 2017	Cafe, Tbilisi	2: 22	Tbilisi
Kerim	October 28 th , 2017	Cafe, Tbilisi	2: 22	Tbilisi
Khaso	August 29 th , 2017	Home, Duisi	2: 10	Duisi, Akhmeta
Tea	September 1 st , 2017	Home, Joqolo	2: 55	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Eter	September 3 rd , 2017	Home, Duisi	2: 01	Duisi, Akhmeta
Nanuli	September 3 rd , 2017	Home, Duisi	1: 44	Duisi, Akhmeta
Maga	September 3 rd , 2017	Home, Duisi	1: 58	Duisi, Akhmeta
Nata	August 29 th , 2017	Home, Duisi	3: 10	Duisi, Akhmeta

Lalika	September 2 nd , 2017	Home Joqolo	2: 02	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Sultan	September 2 nd , 2017	Home, Joqolo	2: 05	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Lia	September 2 nd , 2017	Home, Joqolo	2: 03	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Vano	September 3 rd , 2017	Home, Joqolo	2: 58	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Arbi	September 1 st , 2017	Home, Joqolo	1: 58	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Larisa	August 31 st , 2017	Home, Joqolo	1:55	Joqolo, Akhmeta
Bela	August 31 st , 2017	Home, Joqolo	1:55	Joqolo, Akhmeta

APPENDIX E: CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Wakizaka, Keisuke
Nationality: Japanese (JP)
Date and Place of Birth: July 29th, 1985, Shiogama/Miyagi/Japan
Marital Status: Single
Phone: +90 537 923 6186
email: kafkaslikeisuke85@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
PhD	Middle East Technical University, the Department of Area Studies, Ankara/Turkey	2019
MS	Yildiz Technical University, the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul / Turkey	2012
BS	Tohoku Gakuin University, the Department of Law, Sendai/Japan	2008
High School	Tohoku Gakuin High School, Sendai/Japan	2004

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2017- 2018	Antalya AKEV University, the Department of International Relations	Research Assistant

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Fluent Turkish and Azerbaijani, Advanced English, and Ottoman Turkish, Mid-Level Georgian, Ossetian and Russian, Elementary Level Abkhazian, Circassian and Armenian.

PUBLICATIONS

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Organizations of Conferences

1. Uluslararası Konferans “146. Yılında 1864 Kafkas Göçü: Savaş ve Sürgün”, December 6th-7th, 2010, Istanbul, Turkey. (with Assoc. Prof.. Dr. Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, Yaprak Has and Emin Uzun)
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Editorship and Reviewership

Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies (2018-, Editorship)

APPENDIX F: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

1991’de Sovyetler Birliği’nin dağılması ile eski SSCB devletlerindeki ulus-devlet inşası sürecinin başlaması birçok etnik azınlığı diaspora konumuna düşürmüştür. Sovyetler Birliği dağıldığında, Sovyetler Birliği vatandaşı olarak kaydedilen 70 milyon kişi “anayurtlarının” dışında yaşamaktaydı. Eski Sovyet coğrafyasında yeni bir siyasi durumun ortaya çıkması diaspora-anayurtları-konuk eden ülkeler ilişkilerini gündeme getirmiştir.

Bu mesele Gürcistan’da da Gündeme getirilmiştir. Ulus-devlet inşası sürecindeki bu ülkede SSCB’den kalan birçok etnik azınlık grup mevcuttur. Ayrıca onların Gürcistan’ın dışında “anayurtları” akrabaları vardı. Diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileri genelde istikrarsız ve düzensizdir. Gürcistan’daki azınlıklar için iki önemli konu “diaspora grupları”nın kendi kimliklerini korumak ve Gürcistan’a entegrasyon sürecinde onların “anayurtları” ile ilişkilerini geliştirmek idi.

Özellikle, Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler Kafkasya’daki etnik çatışmalar ve istikrarsız diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkilerinden son derece olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Üstelik onların anayurtlarının de facto bağımsız devlet olması durumu daha karmaşık hale getirmiştir. Sovyetler Birliği’nin dağılma sürecinde, Güney Osetya’daki Osetler Gürcistan’a karşı şiddetli şekilde savaşmış ve Çeçenistan’daki Çeçenler ise Rusya’ya karşı bağımsızlık için isyan etmiştir. Bu meseleler Rusya ve Batı ülkelerinin müdahalesinden dolayı daha karmaşık hale gelmiş ve henüz çözülmemiştir. Bu çatışmalar Gürcistan’daki Osetleri ve Çeçenleri çok etkilemiş ve onlar kendi kimliklerini koruma stratejisini oluştururken ve onların “anayurtları” ile ilişkilerini değerlendirirken Gürcistan’ın ulus-devlet inşası politikasını göz önünde bulundurmaya mecbur bırakılmıştır.

Bu tezin temel sorusu şudur: Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler kendi kimliklerini, başka deyişle Gürcü toplumuyla olan sosyo-kültürel sınırlarını nasıl koruyup geliştiriyor? Başka soru ise şudur: onlar Gürcistan'a entegrasyon süreci içinde kendi "anayurtları" ile ilişkilerini nasıl geliştiriyorlar? Yani bu tez Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin ve Çeçen-Kistlerin kimlik stratejilerini ele almakta ve diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkilerine de facto bağımsız devletler sorunu karıştırdığında diasporaların bu ilişkiler içinde kendi kimliğini nasıl geliştirdiğini tartışmaktadır. Bunun için Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler arasında karşılaştırmalar yapılmıştır.

Gürcistan'daki hem Osetler hem de Çeçen-Kistler Gürcistan devletine entegrasyon sürecini hızlandırmaktadır. Ama sadece onların Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuna entegrasyonuna odaklanmak onların kendi kimliklerini koruma çabalarını ihmal etmeye yol açar. Gerçekten de, Gürcistan'daki Oset ve Çeçen-Kist toplulukları diğer azınlıklara göre daha iyi şekilde Gürcistan devletine entegre olurken, onlar kültürel asimilasyon tehlikesiyle karşı karşıyadır ve asimilasyona karşı kendi kimliklerini korumak için stratejileri oluşturmaktadır. Ayrıca, Çeçenistan'ın ve Kuzey ve Güney Osetya'nın mevcudiyeti onların kimlik stratejilerini önemli derecede etkilemekte ve Osetlerin ve Çeçen-Kistlerin kimlik stratejilerini incelerken onların bu bölgelerle ilişkilerini de tartışmamız gerekir.

Bu gerçeği göz önüne alarak, "Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçenler kendi kimliklerini nasıl koruyup geliştirmekte?" ve "onlar kendi "anayurtları" ile ilişkilerini nasıl oluşturmakta?" sorularına bu çalışmada ağırlıklı olarak odaklandık. Bu tezin varsayımı şudur: anayurt ve konuk eden ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin iyi olmadığı takdirde diaspora kendi kimliğinin kültürel boyutunu ön plana koyar ve konuk eden ülkenin ulus-devlet inşası süreciyle uyumlu şekilde kendi kimliğini ve anayurdu ile ilişkilerini geliştirir. Sonuç olarak, onların kimliği anayurdundakilerden farklı şekilde gelişir. Gürcistan'daki Osetlere baktığımızda onların önemli kısmı 1990'lı yılların birinci yarısında anayurdu olarak tanımlanan Kuzey Osetya'ya göç etmiştir. Ama Gürcistan'da kalmaya devam edenler ise Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuna önemli

derecede entegre olmuş ve anayurdu ile ilgili onların siyasi faaliyetleri aktif olmaz. Gürcistan'daki Oset toplulukları Gürcistan'ın politikalarına uyumlu şekilde kendi kimliğini ve anayurduyla ilişkilerini inşa etmeye çalışır ve Güney Osetya'nın tutumunu açıkça desteklemez. Dolayısıyla onların diaspora kimliği nispeten ılımlı olur ve kültürel kimlik olarak gelişir. Böylece onlar Kuzey ve Güney Osetya'dakilerinden farklı kimliği oluşturur. Diğer yandan, Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistler, Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu ve Çeçenistan'daki Çeçenlerin çoğu Rusya karşıtlığını benimsemekte ve Çeçenistan'ı hükmeden Rusya ve Gürcistan arasında gerginlik mevcuttur. Dolayısıyla Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistler, Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu ve Çeçenistan'daki Çeçenler aralarında gerginlik yoktur. Bu koşullar altında, onlar Gürcü toplumuyla var olan sosyo-kültürel sınırları ve "anayurdu" ile ilişkilerini Osetlere göre daha serbest şekilde geliştirebilir ve onların etnik kimliği daha aktif olur. Böylece Çeçen-Kistlerin diaspora kimliği kültürel kimlikten başka siyasal kimliği olarak da gelişmektedir.

Tez çalışması boyunca yapılan literatür taramasında ise bu durum göze çarpmaktadır. Bu çalışma hem diaspora çalışmalarıyla, özellikle diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileriyle, hem de facto bağımsız devletler meselesine hem de Gürcistan'ın ulus-devlet inşası politikası ve azınlık sorunlarıyla ilgilidir. Fakat Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler örneği bu konuların hepsinin istisnai örneğidir. Konu ile ilgili kaynaklar oldukça azdır, çünkü Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin ve Çeçen-Kistlerin sayısı nispeten küçüktür. Bu yüzden araştırmacılar Gürcistan'daki bu toplulukları çok nadiren ele almışlardır. Ama Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistleri araştırmak Güney Osetya ve Çeçenistan meseleleri ve Gürcistan'ın azınlık politikaları üzerindeki araştırmalara yeni bir bakış açısı sağlayacaktır.

Bu tez yapılandırılmış ve yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar gibi nitel araştırma yöntemlere dayanan nitel araştırma yöntemlerine dayanmaktadır. Tez çalışmasında konu ile ilgili yazılı kaynaklar ve internet kaynaklarının dışında, 2016-2017 yılları arasında Gürcistan'da Tiflis, Pankisi Vadisi, Kaspi rayonu ve Lagodehi rayonundaki gözlemlerim ve 30 kişi Oset ve 27 kişi Çeçen-Kist ile gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar

birincil kaynakları oluşturmaktadır. Mülakatlar yaptığım kişiler Gürcistan Ulusal Entegrasyon Bakanlığı gibi devlet kurumlarında çalışanlar, Sivil toplum kuruluşları üyeleri ve gazeteciler gibi elitlerle yapılmıştır, çünkü onlar Gürcistan'ın ulus-devlet inşası politikasıyla uyumlu şekilde kimlik stratejilerini oluşturmakta çok önemli rol oynamakta ve hem Gürcistan ile hem de “anayurtları”ndaki insanlarla ilişkilere sahiptir. Diğer yandan, köylülerden başka imamlar ve öğretmenlerle de mülakatlar yapılmıştır, çünkü topluluğun kimlik yapısını öğrenmek için köylülerle mülakat yapmak önemlidir ve imamlar ve öğretmenler insanların davranışlarını belirleyip kimliği oluşturmakta önemli rol oynamaktadır. Mülakatların yapıldığı yerler ofisler, kafeler, okullar ve mülakat yaptığım kişilerin evleri gibi yerlerdir. Mülakatlarda, tezin kapsamı ve konusu dikkate alınarak hem Gürcü toplumu/Gürcistan devletiyle ilişkileri hem de onların kültürel durumu üzerinde sorular sorulmuştur. Ayrıca, Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler için önemli konular Güney Osetya Meselesi ve Çeçen Savaşları hakkında sorular yöneltilmiştir. Üstelik Gürcistan'ın Rusya ile olan ilişkileri hakkında sorular sorulmuştur. Bununla beraber, özellikle Çeçen-Kistlerin kimliğinde önemli bir konuma sahip olan İslamiyet ve 1944 Yılı Çeçen-İnguş Sürgünü hakkında da sorular yöneltilmiştir.

İkinci bölümde tartışıldığı gibi, küreselleşme ilerledikçe diaspora kimliğiyle ilgili kaynaklar yakın zamanlarda önemli derecede artmıştır. Özellikle 1991 yılındaki Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra bu durum daha belirginleşmiştir. Fakat bu kaynakların çoğubelli bir ülkeden başka ülkelere göç ile oluşturulan toplumları ele almakta ve yeni ulus-devletlerin yönlendirmesi ile oluşturulan diaspora topluluğu ise 1991 yılına kadar kayda değer bir şekilde ele alınmamıştır. Rogers Brubaker Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla oluşan diaspora toplumlarını ele almış ve diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileri teorisini kurmuştur. Ama o, sadece eski Sovyet devletlerindeki Rus diasporaları örneğini incelemiş ve diğer çalışmalarında Kazak diasporası gibi benzer vakaları ele almaktadırlar. Yani, bu çalışmalar de jure bağımsız devletlerin diasporalarını ele alırken, Abhazya, Çeçenistan ve Güney Osetya gibi de facto bağımsız ülkelerin eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki diasporalarını göz ardı etmektedir. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma

Brubaker'indiaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkileri teorisinin istisnai örneği olan Gürcistan'daki Oset ve Çeçen-Kist topluluklarının kimlik stratejilerini keşfederek mevcut literatüre katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Gürcistan'daki Osetleri ve Çeçen-Kistleri analiz etmeden önce, eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki, özellikle Kazakistan ve Baltık ülkelerindeki Ruslar örneğinden bahsetmiştik ve bu ülkelerin ulus-devlet inşası politikaları ve Rusya ile ilişkilerini anlatmıştık. Birçok Rus Sovyet dönemine kadar bu ülkelere yerleşmiş ve bu ülkelerin toplam nüfuslarının önemli bir kısmını oluşturmuştur. Ayrıca, Ruslar 1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliği dağılına kadar toplumsal ve siyasal üstünlüğüne sahipti, çünkü Sovyetler Birliği'nin resmi dili Rusça idi ve Sovyetler Birliği içindeki yükseköğretim de genel olarak Rusça verilmekteydi. Üstelik, Sovyetler Birliği içinde devlet sınırları yoktu ve eski Sovyet bölgesindeki diaspora ile alakalı mesele Sovyet döneminde tartışılmamıştır.

Fakat 1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonra eski Sovyet ülkelerindeki Rus toplulukları onların "anayurdu" olarak tanımlanan Rusya'nın dışında kalmıştır. Ayrıca, eski Sovyet ülkelerinin çoğunda Rus diasporaları Sovyet döneminde sahip olduğu sosyal ve siyasal avantajı kaybetmiş ve bu ülkelerin ulus-devlet inşası politikalarından etkilenmiştir. Baltık ülkeler ve Kazakistan'da Ruslar bu ülkelerin ulus-devlet inşası sürecinden dışlanmış ve sivil haklardan yoksun bırakılmıştır. Bu ülkelerdeki Ruslar kamu hakları ve bölgesel özerkliği talep etmiş ve Rusya da onları diasporalaştırarak Rus diasporalarının "konuk eden ülkeleri" üzerindeki baskıyı artırmıştır.

Eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki Rus diasporası-Rusya-konuk eden ülkeler ilişkileri Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler örneğine teorik çerçeveyi sağlamıştır, çünkü diaspora topluluğunun oluşumu konusunda bu topluluklar da eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki Rus diasporasına benzer süreci izlemiştir. Fakat bu örnek Diaspora-anayurt-konuk eden ülke ilişkilerinden başka de facto bağımsız devletler sorunuyla da alakalı olduğundan dolayı Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonraki gelişme süreci ise Ruslarınkinden oldukça farklıdır. Yani, Rus diasporasının anayurdu de jure olarak

bağımsız devlet olan Rusya iken, Osetlerin ve Çeçen-Kistlerin anayurtları ise de facto bağımsız devlet (veya özerk bölgesi) olan Kuzey/Güney Osetya ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'dır. Güney Osetya vakasında, Rusya Gürcistan'a karşı sadece Güney Osetya'daki Osetleri desteklediğinden dolayı Güney Osetya'dakiler "Gürcistan'daki hukuki Rus diasporası" gibi görülürken Gürcistan'daki Osetler ise hem Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu tarafından şüphyle karşılanmış ve Rusya'nın desteğinin kapsamının dışında kalmıştır. Bu yüzden Gürcistan ve Gürcistan'daki Osetler arasında sıkıntı çıkmadan önce Gürcistan-Kuzey/Güney Osetya ilişkileri kötüleşmiştir. Diğer yandan, Çeçenistan-İnguşetya vakasında ise, Gürcistan Rusya'ya karşı ayaklanan Çeçenistan'daki Çeçenleri desteklemiş ve bu süreçte Çeçenistan ve Çeçen-Kistler arasında yoğun etkileşim başlamıştır. Fakat bu süreçte Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler gittikçe Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu tarafından dışlanmıştır.

Üçüncü bölüm Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistlerin tarihsel arka planı hakkında bilgi vermektedir. Gerçi Osetlerin Gürcistan'a göçü Ortaçağ'dan beri görülüyordu da, Gürcistan'daki bugünkü Oset toplulukları ağırlıklı olarak 18. ve 20. yüzyılların arasında Şida-Kartli, Kakheti ve Tiflis'te oluşturulmuştur. Fakat Zviad Gamsakhurdia'nın azınlıklara baskısı ve Gürcistan'daki siyasi ve ekonomik zorluklardan dolayı onların önemli kısmı yurtdışına, özellikle Kuzey Osetya'ya göç etmiştir. Gürcistan'daki Osetler Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuna önemli derecede entegre olurken, günümüzde onların kültürel asimilasyonu da gitgide ilerlemektedir. Bu yüzden, Gürcistan'daki Osetler için önemli meseleler kendi sosyo-kültürel kimliğini asimilasyondan korumak ve Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumunun Osetlere karşı olan şüpheli çözmektir.

Diğer yandan, Gürcistan'daki bugünkü Çeçen-Kist toplulukları ise ağırlıklı olarak Çeçen-İnguşların 19. yüzyıldaki göçüyle oluşturulmuş ve onlar Gürcü toplumuna hızlı şekilde entegre olmuştur. Ruslar ve Gürcüler Çeçen-Kistler arasında Hıristiyanlığı yaymaya çalışırken, onların hemen hemen hepsi Sufi tarikatlar vasıtasıyla kendi dini inancını korumuştur. Bölgedeki Selefilik'in yayılmasından ve

1990'lı yılların sonunda Çeçen mültecilerin Pankisi'ye akmalarından dolayı, Çeçen mültecileri ve Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki etkileşim yoluyla Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kist kimliğidramatik şekilde dönüşmeye başlamıştır. Aynı zamanda, Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler bu süreçte Gürcistan'ın sosyal ve siyasal hayatından dışlanmışlardır. Bu yüzdenÇeçen-Kistler için önemli konular kendi kimliğini korumanın yanı sıra Gürcistan'ın siyasal ve ekonomik hayatına entegre olmaktır ve bu noktada Gürcistan'daki Osetlerden farklıdır.

Dördüncü bölüm 1991 yılında Sovyet Birliği dağıldığından beri devam eden Gürcistan'ın ulus-devlet inşası politikasını ele almaktadır. Orta Asya'daki eski Sovyet ülkelerinden farklı olarak, Gürcistan Ortaçağ'da bağımsız devlet olarak kendi tarihine sahip olduğundan dolayı birleşik Gürcü kimliğinin temeli mevcuttu. Geleneksel Gürcü milli kimliği Gürcü toprağına, Gürcü Ortodoks Kilisesi'ne ve Gürcü diline dayanmaktaydı ve İlia Çavçavadze ve İakob Gogebaşvili gibi 19. yüzyıldaki Gürcü milliyetçi aydınlar Gürcü Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin özerkliğine ve Gürcü dilinin korunmasına yönelik talepleri öne çıkarmıştır. Sovyet döneminde ise, bölgeselkimliğive etnik kimliği Sovyet hükümeti tarafından devreye sokulmuş ve titular Gürcü milliyetçiliğı Gürcü milli kimliğinin unsuru olarak eklenmiştir. Böyleceçok dışlayıcı modern etnik Gürcü milliyetçiliğı oluşturulmuş vebu milliyetçilik üniversiteler gibi akademik kuruluşlarda, medyada ve yarı-resmi yapılarda hâkim olmuştur. 1980'lı yılların sonunda Rus karşıtlığıda dışlayıcı modern etnik Gürcü milli kimliğinin unsurlarından biri olmuştur. Etnik Gürcü milli kimliğinin bu yapısı Abhazya ve Güney Osetya'daki etnik çatışmalara ve azınlıkların Gürcistan'ın sosyal, siyasal ve ekonomik hayatından dışlanmalarına yol açmıştır. Dolayısıyla, Gürcistan'ın ulus-devlet inşası politikasının önemli meselesi Gürcü milli kimliğini dışlayıcı etnik kimlikten kapsayıcı sivil kimliğe dönüştürmekti.

1991 yılından beri devam eden Gürcistan'ın ulus-devlet inşası sürecine baktığımızda, Zviad Gamsakhurdia dışlayıcı etnik Gürcü milliyetçiliğini savunarak iktidara gelmiş ve azınlıkları Gürcistan'ın siyasal, ekonomik ve toplumsal hayatından dışlamıştır. Etnik Gürcü milliyetçiliğine dayalı onun ideolojisi etnik çatışmalara sebep olmuş ve

özellikle Abhazya ve Güney Osetya'dakiler oldukça şiddetli olmuştur. Gürcistan Cumhurbaşkanı olduktan sonra Gamsakhurdia Gürcistan'ın azınlık politikasını yumuşatmaya ve Gürcü milli kimliğini sivil kimliğe dönüşmeye çalışmışsa da bu planlar uygulanmamıştır. Gürcistan'ı kapsayıcı sivil ulus-devletine dönüştürme çabaları Eduard Şevardnadze döneminde başlamıştır. O, Gürcistan'ın etnik politikalarını yumuşatmış ve azınlıkların eğitimine müdahale etmemiştir. Şevardnadze etnik çatışmalar konusunda statükoyu sürdürmeye yönelmiştir. Diğer yandan, Şevardnadze Gürcistan ve Batı ülkeleri arasındaki ilişkileri güçlendirmeye başlamış ve Batı tarzlı siyasal sistemi ve laikliği benimsemeye karar vermiştir. Fakat Gürcü Ortodoks Kilisesi 1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonra Gürcistan'ın siyasal ve toplumsal hayatı üzerinde hızlı şekilde kendi etkisini artırmış ve Şevardnadze bile kendi hükümetini sağlam tutmak için Gürcü Ortodoks Kilisesi'ni kendi arkasına almıştır. Bu süreçte Gürcistan'daki dini azınlıklar Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu tarafından dışlanmıştır. Mikhail Saakashvili 2003 yılındaki Gül Devrimi ile iktidara geldikten sonra Gürcistan'ın etnik ulus-devletinden sivil ulus-devletine dönüşümü süreci daha da hızlandırılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Gürcistan hükümeti hukukun üstünlüğünü güçlendirmiş ve Batı ülkelerinin desteğiyle azınlıkların Gürcistan devletine entegrasyonuna yönelik daha somut politikaları uygulamaya başlamıştır. Diğer yandan, azınlıkların kimliğini ve kültürünü korumaya yönelik politikalar da aynı zamanda uygulamaya başlamıştır. Bu eğilim günümüze kadar devam etmekte ve günümüzdeki Gürcistan hükümeti de Gürcistan'ın Batı sistemine entegrasyon için çaba harcamaya devam etmesi gerektiğini sıkça vurgulamakta ve Gürcistan Diyanet İşleri'nin Ajansı ve Gürcistan Müslümanların İdaresi'nin kurulması gibi bazı önemli ilerlemeler azınlıkların hakları konusunda kaydedilmiştir.

Beşinci bölüm başlangıçta Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Gürcistan Devleti/Gürcü toplumu ile ilişkilerini ve kendi kimliğini korumaya ve toplumsal ayrımcılıkların kaldırılmasına yönelik onların stratejisini analiz etmektedir. Daha sonra bu bölüm Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistlerin Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuyla ilişkileri ve

onların Gürcistan devletine entegrasyonuna ve kimliğini korumaya yönelik kimlik stratejisini incelemektedir.

Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Gürcü toplumuyla günlük hayattaki ilişkilerine baktığımızda, 1980'li yılların sonundan beri Güney Osetya'da devam eden çatışmadan dolayı Gürcü-Oset ilişkilerinin önemli derecede kötüleşmesi ve bu iki toplum arasında şiddetli düşmanlığın olması yaygın bir şekilde bilinmektedir. Güney Osetya içinde artık Rusça toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal hayatta hâkimdir ve yaşlılar Gürcüceyi iyi bilirken Gürcüceyi bilenlerin sayısı gitgide azalmaktadır.

Bu duruma rağmen, Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Gürcü toplumu arasında, ciddi sorunlar günümüze kadar yaşanmamış ve bu iki grup arasındaki yakın ilişkiler halen devam etmektedir. Gerçekten de, Gürcistan'daki Oset köylerinin çoğunun nüfusunun önemli kısmını Gürcüler oluşturmakta ve bu köylerin demografik yapısı genellikle the karışıktır. Oset kültürünün, geleneklerinin ve kimliğinin iyi bir şekilde korunduğu Nigoza, Tsitelubani, Aresperani, Pona,ve ZemoBolkvi gibi köylerde bile birçok Gürcü aileleri günümüzde yaşamakta ve Gürcistan'daki (Güney Osetya'nın dışındaki) Osetler artık Gürcülerle iletişim kurmaksızın yaşamını sürdürememektedir. Bu yüzden, Güney Osetya'da Gürcüler ve Osetler arasındaki iletişim 1990'lı yıllardan sonra önemli derecede azalıp 2008 yılındaki Rus-Gürcü Savaşı'ndan sonra neredeyse sifira düşerken, Gürcistan içinde ise bu iki grup arasındaki yoğun etkileşim ve iletişim devam etmektedir. Ayrıca, Gürcistan'daki Osetler genellikle Gürcüler gibi Gürcü Ortodoks Kilisesi'ne bağlıdır ve kültür konusunda da Gürcülere benzer birçok noktalara sahiptir. Yani Osetler ve Gürcüleri birbirlerinden ayıran tek belirgin nokta dil denebilir. Milletlerarası evlilik konusunda da Osetler başka millerlerle evliliğe fazla soğuk bakmamakta ve gerçekten de Osetlerin oldukça önemli kısmı Gürcülerle evlidir. Dolayısıyla Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Gürcü toplumu arasında toplumsal ve kültürel sınırlar belirgin şekilde görülmemektedir. Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve Gürcistan devleti arasındaki ilişkilere baktığımızda da Gürcistan devleti azınlıklara karşı hukuken ayrımcılık yapmamakta ve onların Gürcistan devleti arasındaki sıkıntıları günümüzde görülüyor.

Fakat dışlayıcı etnik Gürcü milliyetçiliğinin yükselmesive Güney Osetya’da şiddetli çatışmanın meydana gelmesi Gürcistan’daki Oset-Gürcü ilişkilerini olumsuz şekilde etkilemiş ve Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu arasındaki görülmeyen toplumsal sınırın Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu tarafından tek taraflı olarak çizilmesine sebep olmuştur. Bu durum Gamsakhurdia döneminden sonra da devam etmiş ve Gürcüler arasında Osetlere karşı olumsuz imaj halen kalmaktadır. Üstelik Gürcüler ve Osetler bir araya geldiklerinde kültürel konular konuşulurken Güney Osetya Meselesi gibi siyasi konuların konuşulması ise ayıp sayılmakta ve bu tür konularda Osetler üzerindeki toplumsal baskı mevcuttur. Dolayısıyla, günümüzdeki Gürcistan devleti kapsayıcı sivil ulus-devleti inşa etmek için çaba harcarken Gürcü-Oset ilişkilerinde kırılğanlık halen mevcuttur ve bu ilişkiler Gürcü milliyetçiliğinin ve Gürcistan’ın ulus-devlet inşası politikasının yönüne göre bozulabilir.

Aynı zamanda, Gürcistan’daki Osetçenin durumuna baktığımızda, bölgeye göre farklı olsa da yaşlılar hem Osetçe, hem Gürcüce hem de Rusçayı iyi bilirken, gençler ise Gürcüce ve Rusçayı tercih etmektedir. Medya konusunda da onlar genellikle Gürcüce ve Rusça medyalarını takip ederken Kuzey ve Güney Osetya’nın medyasını takip edenler ise oldukça azdır. Fakat Gürcistan’daki Osetlerin çoğu “Moambe”nin Osetçe programı gibi Osetçe medyasını takip ediyor ve onların Osetçeye merakı hiç de az değildir. Bir de Gürcistan’daki Osetlerde Gürcü toplumuna asimile olma korkusu var ve kendilerinin toplumsal ve kültürel haklarının halen kısıtlamış olduğunu düşünmektedir. Onlara göre, Gürcistan hükümeti Gürcistan’daki Osetlere yönelik etkili kültür politikalarını uygulamamakta ve Osetler kendilerini yeterince ifade edememekte, çünkü Gürcistan’ın hukuk sistemi ifade özgürlüğünü güvence altına aldığı halde Gürcüler arasında Osetlere karşı nefret halen mevcuttur. Bu yüzden Osetlerin toplumsal ve kültürel hakları günümüzde de fiilen kısıtlanmış durumda ve Gürcistan devleti Osetlerin asimilasyonuna karşı engel olamamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Gürcistan’daki Osetlerin kimlik stratejilerine karşı yapılan toplumsal ayrımcılığı kaldırma ve onların toplumsal ve kültürel haklarını genişletmeye odaklanmaktadır.

Sovyet döneminden beri devam eden geleneksel Gürcü-Oset tarih yazımları arasındaki ilişkiye baktığımızda, hem geleneksel Gürcü hem de Oset tarih yazımları kendi otoktonluğunu ve titularlığını savunmak için birbirlerini “Rusya’nın beşinci kolu”, “çıkarıcı hain”, “nankör yabancılar-göçmenler” ve “zalim soykırımcı” gibi ifadelerle ötekileştirmektedir. Bunun sebebi Sovyet hükümeti milletlerin kendi ulusal kimliklerinin ve milliyetçiliklerinin geliştirilmesine teşvik etmesidir ve bu süreçte her millet kendi titularlığını savunmaya yönelirken milletler arasında çatışmalar çıkmıştır. Bu durum Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumu ve Güney Osetya’daki Osetlerin birbirlerini “düşman”, “Rusya’ya hizmet eden” ve “nankör yabancı” olarak dışlamasına sebep olmuştur. Diğer yandan, Gürcistan’daki Osetler ise Gürcistan’daki kendilerinin kalmalarının meşruiyetini savunmak için “tarihi Oset-Gürcü dostluğu”, “Osetlerin ve Gürcülerin birbirlerine karşılıklı katkıları”ve “Osetlerin ve Gürcülerin birbirlerinden ayrılmazlığı” gibi konulara odaklanmakta ve ne Gürcü ne de Oset geleneksel tarih yazımları desteklemektedir. Diğer yandan, 2003 yılından sonra Gürcistan hükümetidaha kapsayıcı sivil ulus-devlet inşasını hızlandırmış ve bunun için dışlayıcı modern etnik Gürcü milliyetçiliği meselesinin halledilmesi gerekirdi. Günümüzdeki Gürcistan’ın tarihyazımıbu yönde değiştirilmekte ve “milletlerarası dostluğu” ve “ulusal birlikteliği” gibi konulara odaklanmaya başlamıştır. Aynı zamanda yeni Gürcistan tarihyazımı Rusya’yı “Gürcistan’ın ulusal birlikteliğini tehdit eden düşman” olarak nitelendirmektedir. Buna bağlı olarak, yeni Gürcistan tarih yazımında Gürcüler ve Osetler arasındaki tarihi dostluk ve karşılıklı katkıları gibi konularla ilgili yazılar yer almaya başlamış ve Güney Osetya Meselesini de “Rusya’nın işi” olarak nitelendirerek Gürcüler ve Osetler arasında nefreti yaratmamaya çalışılmaktadır. Bu noktadatarih anlayışı ile ilgili Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Gürcistan arasındaki mesafeler azalmaktadır.

Bu şartlar altında, Gürcistan’daki Osetler kendilerine karşı yapılan toplumsal ayrımcılığı kaldırmak için ve kendilerinin toplumsal ve kültürel haklarını genişletmek için çeşitli faaliyetlerde bulunmaktadır. Mesela 2014 yılında “Oset Forumu” Gürcistan Osetleri Derneği, Kafkas Mozaik Derneği, Gürcistan Barolar Birliği’nin katılımıyla kurulmuş ve Osetlerin kültürel ve toplumsal sorunları daha

etkili yolla çözmek için Gürcistan Kamu Savunucusu Bürosu ile işbirliği yapmaktadır. “Oset Forumu” Osetçe eğitimi standardın belirlenmesi ve Gürcistan’daki Osetlerin 1980’li yılların sonundan 1990’lı yılların başına kadar yasadışı olarak mahrum edilen malvarlıkları gibi meseleler üzerinde çalışmaları yoğunlaştırmakta ve bu meselelerin çözümü için sürekli Gürcistan hükümeti ile irtibattadır. Aynı zamanda Gürcistan’ın devlet kurumları, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve diğer azınlıklarla işbirliğini güçlendirmektedir. 2015 yılında kurulan Gürcü-Oset İlişkileri Araştırma Merkezi de ona benzer yönde faaliyet göstermektedir. Bu araştırma merkezi Osetlerin geleneklerini ve kültürel miraslarını gelecek nesillere aktarmayı ve onları Gürcü toplumuna tanıtarak Gürcüler ve Osetler arasındaki karşılıklı anlayışı derinleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaca göre Gürcü-Oset İlişkileri Araştırma Merkezi herkese açık olan Osetçe kursu açmakta ve edebi eserlerden başka Osetçe ders kitabı, konuşma kılavuzunu ve sözlüğünü yayınlamıştır. Ayrıca, bu araştırma merkezi Osetçe öğretmenlerini yetiştirmek için bir programı da sunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, bu araştırma merkezi devlet kurumları ve başka sivil toplum kuruluşlarıyla birlikte “Osetçe günü” ve “Kostaoba” Festivali gibi etkinlikleri düzenlemektedir. Böylece, Gürcistan’daki Osetler kendilerinin kültürel ve toplumsal meselelerini çözüp Gürcü-Oset sosyo-kültürel sınırlarını sürdürmek için kendilerini konuk eden Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuyla işbirliğini pekiştirmektedir.

Bu gerçeklerden anladığımız gibi, Gürcistan’daki Osetler Gürcistan’ın mevcut kendi hukuk sistemi içinde kendi kimliğini kültürel kimlik olarak geliştirmeye yönelmekte ve Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumunu doğrudan kendi karşısına almamaktadır. çünkü siyasal ayrılıkçılık Gürcistan’ın ilkesine aykırıyken çokkültürlülük ise hem Gürcistan hükümeti hem de Batı ülkeleri tarafından desteklenmektedir. Ayrıca, Gürcistan’daki Osetler Gürcü-Osetsosyo-kültürel sınırlarını oluşturma sürecine Gürcistan devleti ve Gürcü toplumunu sokmaktadır. Eğer onlar Gürcüleri ve diğer grupları dışlasa Gürcistan devletiyle ilişkileri kuramaz ve Osetlerin sayısı az olduğundan dolayı etkili kimlik stratejisini oluşturamaz. Bundan başka, Güney Osetya ulus-devlet inşası sürecinde başka etnik grupları, özellikle Gürcüleri dışladığından dolayı Oset kimliğini koruma sürecinden Gürcüleri dışladığı takdirde

Gürcüler arasındaki “ayrılıkçı Osetler” imajı güçlenebilir. Dolayısıyla Gürcistan’daki Osetler “ayrılıkçı” olarak nitelendirilmekten kaçınmak için Gürcüleri kendi kimlik stratejisine sokarak kendilerinin Güney Osetya’dakilerden farklı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Osetlerin kimlik stratejisi bağlamında, “Kostaoba” Festivali’nin Gürcistan’daki Osetler üzerindeki etkisi henüz sınırlı olsa da, bu festival hem Gürcü-Oset dostluğunu hem de bu iki grup arasındaki sosyo-kültürel sınırları kamuoyuna tanıtmaya sahiptir. Diğer yandan, Gürcistan’daki Osetler internet gibi araçlar vasıtasıyla yurtdışındaki Oset topluluklarıyla ilişkileri kurmakta ve onlarla Oset dili, tarihi, kültürü ve gelenekleri hakkında bilgiyi paylaşarak kendi kimliğini güçlendirmeye çalışmaktadır.

Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistlerin Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuyla ilişkilerine baktığımızda, onlar da Gürcistan’daki Osetler gibi Rusçanın yerine Gürcüceyi ortak dil olarak kullanmakta ve gelenekleri ve kültürü de Gürcülerin yoğun bir şekilde etkilenmiştir. Ayrıca Sovyet döneminde hükümet Pankiside Gürcüler ve Çeçen-Kistlerin birbirleriyle kaynaşmalarını ve toplumun sekülerleşmesini teşvik etmiştir. Bu yüzden Borçalı (Kvemo-Kartli) bölgesindeki Türklere ve Cavahetya’daki Ermenilere göre Pankisi’deki Çeçen-Kistler Gürcü toplumuna nispeten iyi bir şekilde entegre olmuştur. Çeçen-Kistlerin Gürcistan devletine bakışı konusunda da, onların önemli kısmı Gürcistan devletinin Çeçen-Kistlerinin 1944 yılı Çeçen-İnguşlar ile birlikte sürgün edilmesini engellediğine inanmakta ve sıkça Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuna şükranları ifade etmektedir. Böylece Çeçen-Kistler genellikle Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü topluma olumlu bakışa sahiptir ve dil konusunda bu iki grup arasındaki sınırlar çok belirgin değildir.

Fakat *Nokhchalla-Adat*’ın (Çeçenlere ait adetler ve gelenekler) ve İslamiyet’in Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistler üzerinde oldukça etkili olması Gürcü toplumu ve Çeçen-Kistler arasında belirgin toplumsal ve kültürel sınırları çizmektedir. Özellikle bu durum Çeçen-Kistlerin karma evliliğe bakışında gözlemlenebilir. Pankisi’deki Çeçen-Kistlerin çoğu karma evliliğe şiddetle karşı çıkmakta veya çok hoş bakmamaktadır. Karma evliliğe karşı olmayanlar bile genellikle evlenecekleri kişinin

Müslüman olması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. İslamiyet'in ve *Nokhchalla-Adat*'ın etkisi Sovyet dönemindeki baskılara rağmen günümüze kadar devam etmekte ve bu iki unsur Çeçen-Kistlerin Gürcü toplumuyla etkileşimi önemli derecede kısıtlamaktadır. Yani, Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistler Brubaker'in bahsettiği unsurlardan biri olan "konuk eden ülke/toplum ile var olan toplumsal-kültürel sınırlarını sürdürmekte ve diaspora olarak tanımlanmak için gereken unsurlardan birini taşımaktadır. Bu noktada onlar Gürcistan'daki Osetlerden farklıdır.

1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonraki gelişmeler Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplum ve Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki mesafeyi daha da açmıştır. 1991 yılından sonra Gürcistan ulus-devlet inşası sürecinde kendisini bir "Ortodoks Hıristiyan devlet" olarak tanımlamış ve Müslüman Çeçen-Kistlerbu süreçten dışlanmıştır. Ayrıca, Çeçen-Kistler üzerindeki devlet baskısının azalması onların dini ortamını önemli derecede rahatlatmış ve Çeçen-Kistler kendi manevi evini İslamiyet'te aramaya başlamıştır. Pankisi'de halk İslamiyet'e yönelirken, geleneksel İslamiyet/tasavvuftan daha çok -Selefilik halkın ilgisini çekmiştir. Özellikle bölgedeki gençler arasında Selefilik yaygın bir şekilde benimsenmiştir.

Çeçen mültecileri Pankisi'dekilere göre "Kur'an merkezli İslamiyet"/Selefililiğin daha yoğun etkisi altında kaldıklarından dolayı 1999 yılından sonra Çeçenistan'dan mültecilerin Pankisi'ye akması bu süreci daha da hızlandırmıştır. Bu akımdan sonra Pankisi'de İslamiyet'in etkisi önemli derecede artmış ve Çeçen-Kistler ve Gürcüler arasındaki sınırlar daha da belirginleşmiştir. Aynı zamanda, Selefililiğin Pankisi'ye toplumsal düzen sağlaması da halkın Selefililiğe yönelmesine neden olmuştur. Fakat bu koşullar altında Çeçen-Kistler ve Gürcüler arasındaki etkileşim önemli derecede azalmış ve Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler Gürcistan'ın siyasal, toplumsal ve ekonomik hayatından dışlanmıştır.

Ayrıca Gürcü toplumu da ulusal/uluslararası medyadan etkilenerek Çeçen-Kistleri dışlamaya yönelmiştir. Ulusal/uluslararası medya Pankisi'yi genellikle "düzensiz tehlikeli yer" ve "teröristlerin ve suçluların yuvası" olarak kamuoyuna tanıtmıştır. Bu yüzden Gürcüler arasında "suçlular, teröristler, korkunç acımasız barbarlar" olarak

Pankisi Vadisi'ndeki Çeçen-Kistlerin oldukça olumsuz imajı yaygınlaşmış vebu durum Gürcü toplumunun Çeçen-Kistlere karşı ayrımcı davranışlara sebep olmuştur. Gürcü medyası ve toplumunun bu tutumu Pankisi'nin durumunun artık sakinleştiği günümüzde bile değişmemiş ve Gürcüler ve Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki uçurumu büyötmektedir. Yani Gürcüler ve Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki toplumsal-költürel sınırlar hem Çeçen-Kistler tarafından hem de Gürcü toplumu tarafından iki taraflı olarak oluşturulmuş ve sürdürölmüştür.

Diğer yandan,1990'lı yıllardan beri Pankisi'de devam eden gelişmeler geleneksel Sufi Müslömanlar ve "Kur'an merkezli Müslömanlar"/Selefiler arasında Çeçen-Kist kimliğini nasıl korumakla ilgili konu üzerindeki ciddi anlaşmazlığı yaratmıştır. Selefiler *Nokhchalla-Adat*'a verilmesine karşı çıkarak gelenekçi Sufi Müslömanları "Gürcöleştirilmiş olanlar, kâfirlerden etkilenmiş ve asıl İslamiyet'ten uzaklaşmış olanlar" olarak eleştirirken, Gelenekçi Sufi Müslömanlar ise Selefileri "Araplaşmaya doğru gidenler, yabancı güçlerin desteğiyle eskiden beri devam eden Çeçen-Kist toplumunu bozmaya çalışanlar" olarak eleştirmektedir.

Fakat hem geleneksel Sufi Müslömanlar hem de Selefiler genel itibariyle *Nokhchalla-Adat*'ın önemini kabul etmekte ve Kist-Çeçen kimliğinin asimilasyona karşı korunması gerekmesi konusunda hemfikirdir. Bu yüzden gelenekçi Sufi Müslömanlar ve Selefiler arasında tam kopukluk yoktur ve günlük hayatta iletişim devam etmektedir.

Terörizme karşı mücadele ve bölge güvenliği bağlamında hem Gürcistan hükümeti hem yabancı devletler Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistlere çok önem vermekte ve onları Gürcistan devleti/Gürcü toplumuna entegre etmek için çeşitli politikaları uygulamaktadır. Mesela hükümet Pankisi'deki eğitim için maddi desteği artırmakta ve başarılı öğrencilere üniversitelerde bedava okuma imkânını sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, Gürcistan hükümetidini meseleler konusunda da çalışmaları yoğunlaştırmaktadır. Hükümet Pankisi'deki imamları ve mescitleri Devlet Diyanet İşleri Ajansı ve Gürcistan Müslömanlar İdaresi'ne bağlamış ve geleneksel Sufi İslamiyet'i destekleyerek Pankisi'deki dini eğitimi güçlendirmeye başlamıştır. Selefiler de

Gürcistan'ın hukuk sistemi çerçevesinde kendi faaliyetlerine devam etmekte ve Gürcistan hükümetiyle de sıkıntıları çıkartmamaya çalışmaktadır. Böylece, Pankisi'dekilerin Gürcistan'a entegrasyonu süreci önemli derecede ilerlemekte ve gelenekçi-Selefi ilişkileri da belli bir seviyede yumuşamış durumdadır. Ayrıca Gürcistan'daki bazı sivil toplum kuruluşları Gürcistan hükümetiyle işbirliği yaparak Çeçen-Kistleri Gürcistan'ın toplumsal-ekonomik yapısına entegrasyonunu teşvik etmek için bölgedeki halka mesleki eğitim programlarını sunmaktadır.

Diğer yandan, Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler de Gürcistan'ın toplumsal, siyasal ve ekonomik yapısına entegrasyon için stratejiyi oluşturmaktadır. Çeçen-Kistler ortak dil olarak Gürcüceyi kullandığından dolayı onların stratejisi kadınlara ve gençlere mesleki eğitimi vermekten başka Gürcü toplumundaki olumsuz Çeçen-Kist imajını değiştirmeye odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Çeçen-Kistler kendilerinin gerçek yaşam tarzı, gelenekleri ve kültürünü Gürcistan/dünya kamuoyuna tanıtmak için agro-turizmi geliştirmeye yönelmektedir. Ayrıca Çeçen-Kistler kendi radyo kanalı "RadioWay"ı kurmuş ve Pankisi hakkındaki doğru ve objektif bilgiyi kamuoyuna doğrudan vermeye çaba harcamaktadır. Bu süreçte Çeçen-Kistler hükümet, devlet kurumları ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarıyla işbirliğini güçlendirmektedir.

Aynı zamanda, Çeçen-Kistlerin kültürel durumunu iyileştirmek için çalışmalar da elbette mevcuttur. 2016 yılında Pankisi'deki okullarda Gürcistan hükümeti tarafından Çeçence dersleri açılmış ve Çeçence ders kitapları da Gürcistan hükümeti tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Fakat günümüzde Çeçence kendisinin durumu sıkıntılıdır ve Pankisi'de doğru ve düzgün şekilde Çeçenceyi bilenlerin sayısı yetersizdir. Dolayısıyla Pankisi'deki Çeçencenin durumu önemli derecede iyileşirken Çeçence eğitimi ve yayınlarının gelişmesi için halen zorluklar mevcuttur.

Altıncı bölümde ise Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Kuzey/Güney Osetya ile ilişkileri ve Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistlerin Çeçenistan-İnguşetya ile ilişkileri tartışılmaktadır. Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Kuzey ve Güney Osetya ile ilişkilerine baktığımızda, onlar genellikle Sovyet döneminde Kuzey ve Güney Osetya ile ilgili bilgiye sahipti ve onlar ve Kuzey ve Güney Osetya arasında yoğun etkileşim vardı. Gerçekten de

onların öneli kısmı 2000'lı yılların başına kadar Kuzey/Güney Osetya'ya eğitim için gitmiş ve Kuzey ve Güney Osetya'dan da evlilik, iş ve eğitim için birçok Osetler Gürcistan'a yerleşmiştir. Ayrıca 1991 yılından sonra da de onlar genellikle "anayurdu" olarak tanımlanan Kuzey Osetya'ya yerleşmiştir. Böylece Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve anayurdu arasında 2008 yılında Gürcü-Rus Savaşı çıkana kadar yoğun etkileşim mevcuttu. Günümüzde de Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin çoğu için Kuzey/Güney Osetya kimlik açısından önemli konumasahiptir ve onların telefon ve internet aracılığıyla Kuzey/Güney Osetya'daki soydaşlarıyla iletişimi halen devam etmektedir. Bundan anladığımız gibi, Gürcistan'daki Osetler genellikle Kuzey ve Güney Osetya ile manevi ve fiziksel bağları günümüze kadar korumaktadır.

Güney Osetya Meselesi konusunda Gürcistan'daki Osetler Güney Osetya'nın bağımsızlığını doğrudan desteklememektedir. Fakat Gürcistan ve anayurdu arasındaki serbest dolaşım için onlar iyi ve huzurlu Rus-Gürcü ilişkilerini istemektedir, çünkü Rusya ve Gürcistan arasındaki sıkıntılardan ve Rusya'nın Gürcistan vatandaşlarına yönelik sıkı vize uygulamalarından dolayı Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Kuzey/Güney Osetya'yı ziyaret etmesi zordur ve onların anayurduyla iletişimi önemli derecede kısıtlanmış durumdadır. Bu yüzden, Gürcistan'daki Osetler Gürcistan'ın toprak bütünlüğünü savunuyorsa da, Rus-Gürcü ilişkilerinin iyileşmesi, Güney Osetya Meselesi'nin çözülmesi ve Osetya ve Gürcistan arasında serbest dolaşımın gerçekleşmesi Gürcistan'daki Osetler için son derece önemli konudur.

Bu bağlamda, çifte vatandaşlık meselesi ve Osetlerin Gürcistan'daki mahrum edilmiş mülkleri sorunu gibi Gürcistan ve anayurdu arasındaki engelleri çözmek için Gürcistan'daki Osetler Rusya ve Güney Osetya'nın yanında yer almak yerine devlet kurumlar ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarla işbirliği yaparak Gürcistan hükümetiyle müzakere etmeye yönelmektedir.

Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin Kuzey ve Güney Osetya'nın diaspora politikasına bakarsak, Gürcistan'daki Osetler genellikle Kuzey ve Güney Osetya'nın diaspora politikasını olumlu değerlendirmekte ve kendi anayurdunu tanımaya ve kimliğini pekiştirmeye katkı sağlayacağını düşünmektedir. Fakat onlar anayurduyla ilişkileri kurarken de

Gürcistan'ın toprak bütünlüğünü savunmakta ve Güney Osetya Meselesi Gürcistan'daki Osetler ve anayurdu arasındaki ilişkileri güçlendirmekte her zaman önemli rol oynamamaktadır. Bu durumdan anladığımız gibi, Gürcistan'daki Osetlerin anayurduyla ilişkileri genellikle kültürel unsurlara dayanmakta ve bu ilişkilerde siyasal konular geri planda kalmaktadır.

Diğer yandan, Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistler ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya arasındaki ilişkilere baktığımızda, 1970'lı yıllardan sonra Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'yı tanımaya başladıysa da, Sovyet döneminde onlar ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya arasındaki ilişkiler güçlü değildi ve Çeçen-Kistler arasında Çeçen-Vaynah kökenli olma bilinci zayıftı. Bu yüzden Sovyet döneminde Çeçen-Kistler “anayurdu” olan Çeçenistan-İnguşetya hakkında fazla bilgiye sahip değildi. Fakat Sovyetler Birliği 1991 yılında dağıldıktan sonra birçok Çeçen-Kistler Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'ya göç etmiş ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'daki soydaşları hakkındaki bilgi daha yaygın şekilde Pankisi'de paylaşılmıştır. 1999 yılında İkinci Çeçen Savaşı başlayınca Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'ya çalışmaya giden Çeçen-Kistlerle birlikte birçok Çeçen mültecileri de Pankisi'ye gelmiştir. Bu süreç Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistlerin kimlik dönüşümünü hızlandırmış ve onlar kendilerini “Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Vaynakh diasporası” olarak tanımlamaya başlamıştır.

Günümüzde Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler Gürcistan'dan başka Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'yı “kendi anayurdu, vatanı” olarak tanımlamakta ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya onların kimliğinde oldukça önemli konumu kazanmıştır. Aynı zamanda onlar ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'daki soydaşlar arasında yoğun iletişim mevcuttur. Günümüzdeki Çeçenistan hükümeti ve Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki ilişkilerin iyi olmaması Gürcistan'daki Çeçen-Kistler ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'daki Çeçen-İnguşlar arasında engel değildir. Çeçence, Çeçen kültürü ve geleneklerinden başka “özgür bağımsız Çeçenistan-İnguşetya” hayali ve Rusya karşıtlığı Çeçen-Kistleri kendi anayurduyla bağlamaya büyük katkı sağlamaktadır.

Ayrıca Çeçen-Kistler ve Çeçenistan-İnguşetya arasındaki ilişkiler güçlendikçe Çeçenistan-İnguşetya'dakilerin acıları da Pankisi'deki Çeçen-Kistlerin “ortak tarihi

travması” olarak kabul edilmeye başlamıştır. Günümüzde 1944 yılı Çeçen-İnguş Sürgünü ve 1990’lı yıllardaki iki Çeçen Savaşı Pankisi’deki Çeçen-Kistler arasında “Sovyetler Birliği’nin/Rusya’nın Çeçen-Vaynahlara yönelik soykırım” olarak algılanmakta ve bu olayları kamuoyuna tanıtmak için çeşitli faaliyetler düzenlenmektedir. Bu bağlamda “1864 yılı Çerkes Soykırımı”nın Gürcistan tarafından 2011 yılında tanınması Çeçen-Kistler tarafından hoş karşılanmıştır. Ayrıca Gürcistan hükümeti okullarda “1944 yılı Çeçen-İnguş Sürgünü/Soykırımı” hakkındaki bilgilerin aktarılmasına müsaade etmekte ve Çeçen-Kistler arasında diaspora milliyetçiliğinin yükselmesine göz yummaktadır, çünkü hem Gürcistan devleti, hem Çeçen-Kistler hem de Çeçenistan-İnguşetya’dakiler Rusya karşıtlığını benimsemiştir. Böylece Çeçence, Çeçen kültürü ve *Nokhchalla-Adat* gibi kültürel konulardan başka Çeçenistan-İnguşetya’daki tarihi travma da Çeçen-Kistlerin kimliğini anayurduna bağlamakta oldukça önemli rol oynamaktadır. Buradan anladığımız gibi, Gürcistan’daki Osetlerden farklı olarak, Çeçen-Kistlerin diaspora kimliği yapısında siyasi konular da önemli yer almakta ve onlar arasında diaspora milliyetçiliğinin yükselmesi görülmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, Gürcistan’daki Osetleri Çeçen-Kistlerle karşılaştırdığımızda, Gürcistan’daki Osetler kendi kimliğini “kültürel diaspora kimliği” olarak geliştirmeye yönelmiştir. Onların kimliği ağırlıklı olarak Osetçe, Oset kültürü ve geleneklerine dayanmakta ve onlar Oset-Gürcü sosyo-kültürel sınırları pekiştirmek için ve anayurduyla ilişkileri güçlendirmek için bu unsurları öne çıkarmaktadır. Yani, Güney Osetya sorunu gibi siyasi meseleler Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Kuzey/Güney Osetya arasındaki ilişkilerin güçlendirilmesinde her zaman önemli rol oynamamaktadır. Bu ilişkiler ağırlıklı olarak Osetçe, Oset kültürü ve gelenekleri gibi kültürel unsurlara dayalıdır, çünkü Gürcistan ve Güney Osetya arasında sorunlar mevcut ve Gürcistan’daki Osetler bu durumda kendilerinin Gürcistan’da kalmaya devam etmesinin meşruiyetini savunmak zorundadır.

Diğer yandan, Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistlerin kimliği hem kültürel hem de siyasal diaspora kimliği olarak gelişmiş ve Vaynakh diaspora milliyetçiliğide onlar arasında

yükselmiştir. Onların kimliğinde Çeçence, Çeçen kültürü, İslamiyet ve *Nokhchalla-Adat* gibi kültürel unsurlardan başka Çeçenistan sorunu gibi siyasi konular da çok önemli rol oynamakta ve hem Gürcü toplum ve Çeçen-Kistler arasındaki sosyo-kültürel sınırların sürdürülmesinde hem de onların Çeçenistan-İnguşetya ile ilişkilerinin pekiştirilmesinde çok önemli unsurlardandır. “1944 Yılı Çeçen-İnguş Sürgünü/Soykırımı” ve 1990’lı yıllarındaki iki Çeçen Savaşı gibi ortak tarihsel travmalar, “özgür bağımsız Çeçenistan” hayali ve Rusya karşıtlığı gibi siyasi konular Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistlerin Çeçenistan-İnguşetya ile ilişkilerinin gelişmesinde oldukça önemli rol oynamaktadır. Bu şartlar altında, hem Gürcistan devleti, hem Çeçenistan’daki Çeçenler hem de Pankisi’deki Çeçen-Kistler Rusya karşıtlığını birbirleriyle paylaştığından dolayı, Gürcistan’daki Çeçen-Kistler kendi kimliğinin gelişme yönünü nispeten serbest bir şekilde belirleyebilir ve bu durum Pankisi Vadisi’ndeki Çeçen-Kistlerin arasında Vaynah diaspora milliyetçiliğinin yükselmesine katkı sağlamıştır.

Gürcistan’daki Osetler ve Çeçen-Kistler örneğinden anladığımız gibi, diasporanın anayurdu diasporayı konuk eden ülkeden bağımsızlığı talep eden de facto bağımsız ülke olup diasporanın anayurdu ve konuk eden ülke/toplum arasında sıkıntı varsa, diaspora kimliği kültürel diaspora kimliği olarak gelişir ve diasporanın anayurduyla alakalı konular gibi siyasi meseleler diaspora-anayurt ilişkilerinde her zaman önemli rol oynamaz. Diasporanın anayurduyla ilişkileri genellikle dil ve gelenekler gibi kültürel unsurlara dayalı olur ve diasporanın konuk eden ülkedeki faaliyetler genellikle siyasi meselelerden daha çok toplumsal ve kültürel konulara odaklanır, çünkü bu koşullar altında diaspora kendilerini konuk eden ülkede kalmaya devam etmesinin meşruiyetini savunmak zorunda kalır.

Diğer yandan, diasporayı konuk eden ülkedeki diasporanın anayurdunu hükmeden devlete karşı de facto bağımsız anayurdunu desteklerse, diaspora kimliği hem kültürel hem de siyasal diaspora kimliği olarak gelişir ve ortak tarihsel travma gibi siyasi meseleler hem konuk eden toplum ve diaspora arasındaki sınırların gelişmesinde hem de diaspora-anayurt ilişkilerinin güçlendirilmesinde çok önemli rol oynar, çünkü

diaspora belli bir seviyeye kadar serbest bir şekilde kendi kimliđinin gelişme yönünü belirleyebilir.

APPENDIX G: TEZ İZİN FORMU/THESES PERMISSION FORM

ENSTİTÜ/INSTITUTE

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü/Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences

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Enformatik Enstitüsü/Graduate School of Informatics

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü/Graduate School of Marine Sciences

YAZARIN/AUTHOR

Soyadı/Surname : WAKIZAKA

Adı /Name : KEISUKE

Bölümü/Department : Bölge Çalışmaları (Area Studies)

TEZİN ADI/TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce): Living as “North Caucasians” in Georgia: Identity and Integration into Georgia Among the Ossetian and the Chechen-Kist Communities

TEZİN TÜRÜ/DEGREE : Yüksek Lisans Doktora

1. Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. /Release the entire work immediately for Access worldwide.
2. Tez **iki yıl** süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of **two year**. *
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