

Essays on the History of Georgia

Georgia (in Georgian, Sakartvelo) is a state in the South Caucasus, on the Black Sea coast, on the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Range (Transcaucasia).

Georgians (self-designation Kartvelebi) are a people of the Kartvelian language family, the indigenous population of the South Caucasus. Most of them are concentrated in Georgia; they also reside in Turkey, Iran, Greece, and Russia. The majority of Georgians practice Christianity (Orthodoxy).

Ancient Persians called Georgia Gurgan (land of wolves). The names of Georgians in Turkish (Gürcüler) and Russian (Gurjiny, then Gurziny, and later Gruziny) come from this word.

The ethnic groups of Georgians include Adjarians, Gurians, Kartlians, Kakhetians, Imeretians, Mingrelians, Svans, Laz, Meskhetians, Javakhs, Lechkhumians, Khevsurs, Pshavs, Mtiuls, Rachians, Tushins, and Ingiloys.

The Old Georgian language emerged in the 5th century. Currently, it is used as the liturgical language of the Georgian Orthodox Church and is mutually intelligible for Georgian language speakers. The Old Georgian language later evolved into Medieval Georgian in the 11th century, and then into modern Georgian in the 18th century. The Mingrelian, Svan, and Laz languages differ significantly from Georgian but belong to the Kartvelian family. The Laz language is related to Mingrelian.

Unlike Georgians, the Armenian language speakers hardly understand Old Armenian.

The exact origin of the Georgian script has not been established. Most Georgian historians hold the view that the Georgian alphabet emerged before Mesrop Mashtots. The Georgian alphabet resembles the Armenian one. The church played a key role in the creation of the alphabet. At that time, the Armenian and Georgian churches were very close.

For several centuries, the Roman Empire and Parthia, and then, the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanids fell over each other for dominance in the Caucasus. The marzpanates (regions) of Armenia, Colchis, and Iberia were drawn into these long-lasting wars. A prolonged and exhausting struggle took place between Christians and Zoroastrians.

The adoption of Christianity by Georgia, as well as Armenia, is tightly related to the Martyrdom of the Holy Hripsimian Virgins.

In 303, Roman Emperor Diocletian began persecutions against Christians, ordered the closure of churches, and the destruction of Christian religious books.

According to Georgian legend, Hripsime and 35 virgins first fled to Jerusalem, where they met Saint Nino. From there, they went to Armenia and settled in Vagharshapat (a city in the Armavir region of today's Republic of Armenia, also known as Etchmiadzin), in a monastery near a vineyard.

Nino's uncle, who was the Patriarch of Jerusalem, raised her in the spirit of Christianity and sent her away to Rome. Most likely, Nino joined the virgins in Rome.

A small basilica was built at the place of St. Paul's disposition in 324. The Great Temple of St. Paul was built in 386-389. No St. Paul Convent then existed.

There were not many Christians in Jerusalem. The only region where Christianity had real power was Caesarea (Kayseri, Turkey). It would be logical to assume that the virgins settled in Caesarea.

The baptizer of Georgia, Nino, according to her hagiography, like Hripsime, descended from a noble and respected family. She was born in the city of Kolastra in Cappadocia (now the Gokyurt village in the province of Konya, Turkey). Her father, Zabulon, was a relative of the Great Martyr George, and her mother, Sosana, was the sister of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Nino's parents were also Christians.

Even before joining Hripsime, Saint Nino foresaw that she was destined to baptize Iberia (Georgia). She managed to escape death when Hripsime was executed, and fulfill her mission of bringing Christianity to Georgia.

In those years, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem were Hymeneus (260-298), Zambdas (298-300), and Hermon (300-314). If Nino's father's name was Zabulon, most likely, the patriarch Zambdas was her uncle.

Around the year 303, Gayane, Hripsime, and other virgins from the Roman Convent ran away from Rome and hid in the province of Armenia, where they could not arrive earlier than 306. The virgins were raped and killed since they were Christians while the ruler of the province of Armenia, Trdat, was a pagan.

In 312, Constantine I the Great came to power and made Christianity the official religion. After him, Christianity became the main and then the only legitimate religion in the Roman Empire, and later in Byzantium. Emperor Constantine placed a premium on Christians, believing that faith in a single God would calm the country.

According to legend, Nino managed to escape, and she went north. It was the year 319 or 320, when the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste lost their lives near the city of Sebaste (now Sivas, Turkey).

Reference:

The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste were Christian soldiers who were martyred under Emperor Licinius in 320 for the faith of Christ in Sebaste. The Orthodox Church commemorates them on March 9 (22).

Since then, the Georgian and Armenian churches acted together. In 451, to ensure church unity, the Fourth Ecumenical Council was convened in the suburb of Constantinople, Chalcedon (now the Kadıkoy district in Istanbul). After the Council, the Roman emperor issued strict decrees regarding the Monophysites. It was ordered to exile or expel Monophysites, burn their writings, and execute those who disseminated them.

The Orthodox Church professes one person (hypostasis) and two natures – divine and human in Christ.

Nestorianism preaches two persons, two hypostases, and two natures.

Monophysites recognize one person, one hypostasis, and one nature in Christ.

The Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian (Caucasian) churches did not participate in and refused to recognize the outcomes of the Council of Chalcedon. The local council of 491 in the city of Vagharshapat, the province of Armenia, with the participation of these three churches, rejected the Chalcedonian decrees. In 604, the Georgian Church switched to the side of the Council of Chalcedon, leaving the ranks of the Monophysites. The Georgian and Armenian churches split.

According to Georgian historiography, the formation of the Georgian ethnicity started in the early centuries of the first millennium BCE and was completed in the 6th–10th centuries, whereas according to Russian historiography, it was at the turn of the 10th–11th centuries.

The emergence of great states in the Middle East became possible due to two innovations that appeared there in the second half of the second millennium BCE. First, the Indo-European tribes who came from the north brought domesticated horses with them, allowing large armies to move quickly over long distances. Chariots drawn by horses became an effective means of warfare. Second, people improved their ability to manufacture various products, including iron weapons.

The creators of the first great state were the Hittites. Their empire was conquered by the great states of Mesopotamia (the Tigris and Euphrates river

valley) – Assyria, and later Babylon. Then, in the territory of the former Hittite kingdom, directly in Asia Minor, the states of Urartu (in the east) and Phrygia (in the west) emerged.

In the area of Lake Van (Turkey) and the Transcaucasia, tribes lived that the Assyrians called Urartians. In 860 BCE, the union of Urartian tribes transformed into the Kingdom of Urartu. In 714 BCE, the Neo-Assyrian King Sargon II defeated Urartu. From that time on, none of the sources mentions Urartu.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–609 BCE) dominated the ancient Middle East for most of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE since it was the largest empire in history at that time. At its peak, the empire ruled all of Mesopotamia (Iraq, northeastern Syria, eastern Turkey, and part of western Iran), the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, southeastern Turkey, and Cyprus), and Egypt, as well as parts of Anatolia, Arabia, and modern Iran and Armenia. From 626 BCE, brutal internal wars began within the empire.

As a result of migration processes, various groups of Arameans were settled throughout the Middle East.

After the fall of Assyria in 605 BCE, two new states emerged—the Median and Neo-Babylonian kingdoms.

Media was inhabited by Iranian-speaking tribes. Another name for the Median tribes is the Aryans; it is assumed that this was their self-designation.

In 550–549 BCE, the Persian King Cyrus II freed himself from Median rule, which led to the formation of the Median-Persian state. In the east, the Persians reached Central Asia and India; in the west, they subjugated all of Asia Minor. Thus, the Achaemenid Empire emerged, created by the Persian Achaemenid dynasty (550–329 BCE).

In the 6th century BCE, the Achaemenid Empire conquered the South Caucasus, and Greek colonization of the Black Sea coast took place.

According to Georgian historiography, in the 5th century BCE, the Kingdom of Colchis (Egrisi) was formed on the territory of present-day western Georgia, which existed until the 4th century BCE. In the 4th–3rd centuries BCE, the Kingdom of Iberia (Kartli) emerged on the territory of present-day eastern Georgia, which existed until the 6th century CE.

Colchis (in Georgian, Egrisi) is a historical region in the Eastern Black Sea area, occupying the Colchian Lowland. In ancient times, the Colchians were the main population of the region.

The Colchians were a collective name for tribes that inhabited the southeastern and eastern Black Sea region. Starting from the first millennium BCE, the ancient Greeks called this region Colchis after the Colchians.

It is believed that the Colchians were a Kartvelian people and were among the ancestors of modern Georgians, playing a significant role in the formation of the Georgian nation and state.

Colchis started forming during the era of the Great Greek Colonization (the large-scale settlement of ancient Greeks along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas in the 8th–6th centuries BCE). The Greeks settled compactly in those territories, creating colonies that became centers of trade and culture. The most developed settlements were Pitiunt (Pitsunda, Abkhazia), Dioscurias (Sukhumi, Abkhazia), Gyenos (Ochamchira, Abkhazia), Phasis (Poti, Georgia), Bathys (Batumi, Georgia), Apsaros (Gonio, Georgia), and Rhizus (Rize, Turkey).

On the eastern coast of the Black Sea, the Chalybes also lived, renowned for their ironworking skills. They also contributed to the ethnogenesis of the Georgian people.

According to official Georgian historiography, “the population of Colchis in the mid-first millennium BCE was highly developed; the cities were founded by not the Greeks but the local population while the Greeks engaged in importing local products.”

However, archaeologists in the Eastern Black Sea region have not found evidence of a state's existence. The Achaemenids dominated the South Caucasus from 546 to 331 BCE. Various Colchian tribes, Chalybes, Greeks, and other groups lived in Colchis, which was an Achaemenid province. At the end of the second century BCE, Colchis was part of the Kingdom of Pontus (302 BCE – 62 CE), and in the first century BCE, it became a province of the Roman Empire known as Lazica.

The capital of the Kingdom of Colchis was Aia (now Kutaisi). It was ruled by the Aetid dynasty of ancient Greek origin.

The Kingdom of Pontus existed from 302 BCE to 62 CE on the southern coast of the Black Sea. Its capitals were the cities of Amasya and Sinope, now in Turkey. It was ruled by the Mithridatic dynasty, which was of ancient Persian (Parthian) origin.

Lazica (Egrisi) was a western Georgian kingdom on the Black Sea coast in the 4th–6th centuries CE. It is considered the successor of the Kingdom of Colchis. In 697, it was captured by the Arabs. There was no kingdom. It was the province of

Lazica with its center in Archaeopolis (now Nokalakevi) as part of the Byzantine Empire. It was ruled by descendants of the Pharnavazid dynasty from the ancient Persian (Parthian) House of Mihran, one of the seven noble houses of Parthia.

In western Georgia, on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, after the collapse of Lazica, the Kingdom of Abkhazia emerged with its center in Anakopia (a fortress located in the city of New Athos, Abkhazia). It existed from 786 to 1008. In 786, with the support of the Khazar Khaganate, its independence from the Byzantine Empire was declared. The ruling dynasty was the Anosids, later known as Anchabadze, who had Greek origins.

The ancient Greeks called the territories of southern and eastern present-day Georgia Iberia. In antiquity, several related tribes originating from the Kura-Araxes culture lived there, collectively referred to as Iberians in Greco-Roman ethnography.

The term ‘Kura-Araxes culture’ emerged in Soviet archaeological science, primarily in the works by Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani archaeologists. It was widespread throughout the South Caucasus, northwestern Iran, eastern Anatolia, and the northeastern Caucasus.

According to Georgian historiography, united Georgian tribes created a ‘state’ with its center in Almatsi, 2 km from the city of Mtskheta. Among the Byzantines, eastern Iberia was known as Georgia.

According to Georgian mythology, the city was founded by Mtskhetos, son of Kartlos, who was considered the ancestor of the Georgian people, the founder of Kartli, and a descendant of Phagarma. He was the younger brother of Hayk, the ancestor of the Armenians.

Georgian historian Simon Janashia (1900–1947) claimed that the Hittites and Subarians were the ancestors of the Georgians. They formed the Kingdom of Urartu, and after its fall, Iberia and Colchis emerged in the territory of present-day Georgia.

Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili (1876–1940) argued that the Georgians and Caucasian peoples were related. He believed that the Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Megrelian-Zan, Svan) were genetically linked to other Caucasian languages (Abkhaz-Adyghe and Vainakh-Dagestani). This viewpoint is widely accepted and well-known.

It is generally accepted that the Abkhaz-Adyghe (Abkhazians, Abazins, Kabardians, Circassians) and Zan (Mingrelians and Laz) peoples, the Turkic-speaking Karachays and Balkars (descendants of Kipchaks), as well as

Armenians, are genetically close to Georgians. For many centuries, tribes interacted, mixed, and assimilated, which led to the formation of a unified culture, language, and self-awareness.

Eastern and Southern Georgia – the Marzpanate of Iberia (Iberian Kingdom, Kartli, or Eastern Georgia) was under the suzerainty of the Parthian Kingdom and was ruled by marzpanas (governors) appointed by the Parthian king.

Then, new state formations emerged in Asia Minor, which played a huge role in shaping the new world order. These were the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate.

In 395, as a result of the division of the Roman Empire into western and eastern parts, the Byzantine Empire emerged (395-1453).

At the beginning of the 7th century, in Hejaz (Western Arabia), as a result of the creation of the Muslim community, the Islamic state – the Arab Caliphate (632-945) was formed.

At the beginning of the 11th century, the Oghuz-Turkmens founded the Seljuk State (1037-1194). The Chinggisid Hulagu established the kingdom of Iran-Zamin or the Ilkhanate (1256-1335).

In the western part of Asia Minor, the Turkic Ottoman Empire was formed (1299-1922).

In the eastern part of Asia Minor, the Turkic states of Qara Qoyunlu (1375-1468), Aq Qoyunlu (1467-1501), and the Safavid, Afsharid, and Qajar states (1500-1925) were established. These states are directly related to modern Azerbaijanis.

In historical science, the Safavid, Afsharid, and Qajar states are called Persian. This opinion is erroneous. These states are Turkic (Azerbaijani).

The Georgian Kingdom (1008-1490) was created by the Bagrationi dynasty as a result of the unification of Georgian principalities.

The Kingdom of Kartli (1490-1762) with its capital in Tiflis emerged as a result of the collapse of the Georgian Kingdom, which became an arena of struggle between the Safavids and Afsharids on one side and the Ottoman Empire on the other. The rulers were representatives of the Bagrationi dynasty, who were descendants of the Eruandids. They had ancient Persian roots.

The Georgian kingdoms were contested by the Roman Empire (27 BC - 395 AD) and Byzantium (395-1453) on one side, and by the Parthian Kingdom (250 BC - 227 AD) and the Sassanian Empire (224-651 AD) on the other. As a result,

before the arrival of the Arabs in the mid-7th century, the marzpanates of Armenia and Iberia were under the rule of the Persian Parthian kingdom and the Persian Sassanian state. Under the Parthians, the population of these regions practiced Zoroastrianism; then, under the influence of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, they converted to Christianity, and until 604, their churches were united.

Parthian was the official language of both the Parthian kingdom and the provinces of Armenia and Iberia. The Parthian script was developed from the Aramaic one. Moreover, it contained many Aramaic words. Among spoken languages, besides Parthian, there were Syriac-Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and a lot of their different dialects.

Before the creation of Georgian script, Christian worship in the province of Georgia was conducted in two languages: Greek and Syriac-Aramaic. The existence of several dozen pagan tribes and clans speaking different languages and dialects hindered the spread of Christianity and made it difficult for ordinary people to understand the fundamentals of the faith.

Christianity turned out to be the only force that contributed to the self-affirmation of Parthian culture. With the help of Christianity, the Parthians could resist the Sassanians. To do this, the remnants of the Parthians needed to create a new people and a new language, and to strengthen the faith, they needed to have the Holy Scriptures in their language.

Armenian theologians, having distanced themselves from the Greeks, lost the ability to understand the Greek language. In 491, the Council of Vagharshapat became a historic watershed between the Greek and Armenian-Gregorian confessions for all time.

The remnants of the Parthians first tried to use the Aramaic language for the Christianization of all the tribes and clans in the province of Armenia, but then they changed their minds and decided to create a new alphabet and a new language. The new language was essentially a mixture of Persian-Parthian and Syriac-Aramaic. Based on that language, the new Armenian people were formed.

The Georgian Church, like the Church of Caucasian Albania, developed in tight connection to the Armenian Church, which had long been in fraternal relations with it. The Armenian Church dominated in Transcaucasia.

The Roman and Byzantine Empires on one side, and the Parthian and Sassanian Empires on the other, fought for centuries for dominance over Asia Minor, as well as Transcaucasia. Georgia, like Armenia, was a vassal of the victors. They, especially the Armenians, sympathized more with the Parthians. The situation started changing after the propagation of Christianity in the region.

The remnants of the Parthians adopted Christianity. In both Georgia and Armenia, the feudal lords (princes or nakharars) were also divided into supporters of Christianity and Zoroastrianism. This nature of relations between the two peoples at that time naturally affected the Georgian language, especially its script.

The Georgian alphabet is very similar to the Armenian one, created based on the ancient Aramaic and ancient Greek alphabets, and at approximately the same time, in the early 5th century. There are many Parthian (ancient Persian) words in the Georgian and especially the Armenian language. Later, Arabic and Turkic words also penetrated their languages. The ancient Georgian and Armenian families were descendants of Parthian (ancient Persian) tribes.

The break occurred between Armenian Catholicos Abraham I and the head of the Georgian Church Kirion I. In 595, Catholicos Bartholomew died, and the Georgians asked the Armenians to send them a bishop since the Georgian Church originally recognized the supremacy of the Armenian Church. Kirion was sent from Dvin and became Catholicos. After 15 years of study in Byzantium, the Armenian Catholicos appointed him a catechist (a person engaged in religious and educational activity), and later a bishop. He spent five years in Dvin. In 607, he recognized the Council of Chalcedon and severed relations with the Armenian Church. The Georgians began to be geared toward Orthodox Byzantium.

In Georgian historiography, the ancient historical figures include the ancient kings of Iberia Pharnavaz I (299 BC - 234 BC) and Pharsman II (120-160) from the Pharnavazid dynasty, who had ancient Persian roots.

The next historical figure is King Mirian III (265-360), who came from a branch of the ancient Persian Mihranid dynasty, known as the Khosroids. In 327, Mirian proclaimed Christianity as the religion of Iberia.

According to Georgian historiography, one of the founders of Georgian statehood is the king of Iberia Vakhtang I Gorgasali (440-502), son of Mirdat V from the Khosroid dynasty. In Persian, his nickname 'Gorgasali' means 'wolf's head.'

The Khosroid dynasty (whose possessions passed to the Bagrationi family in 807) and their predecessors, the Pharnavazids, had Persian origins. Gorgasali was a relative and tributary of the Sassanians, participated in all wars against Byzantium, and sought autocephaly (independence from other churches) for the Georgian Church.

In alliance with the Armenian Mamikonians, in 482, he rebelled against Persian rule. He was defeated and hid in the kingdom of Egrisi. After promising

submission to the Sassanians, he returned to Iberia. Then he refused to participate in Persian wars against Byzantium.

In 502, he was wounded and died while resisting a punitive Sassanian detachment. According to another version, he was killed by an assassin sent by the Sassanians. According to folk mythology, his murder was arranged by his wife, who was unfaithful to him.

Gorgasali was a semi-legendary figure. According to one legend, he had a helmet with the image of a wolf's head, and according to another, he wore a wolf's skin. According to yet another legend, he was the founder of the city of Tbilisi.

There is only one source about Gorgasali – ‘The Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali,’ written by a certain Juansher Juansheriani in the 11th century. In the early 20th century, Georgian historians began to suspect that all of this might be a myth. According to the Georgian scholar Pavle Ingorokva (1893-1983), the entire story of Gorgasali resembles the cycle of Persian legends about Bahram Gur (a Sassanian king in 420-440).

Moreover, Byzantine authors do not mention him, and the Armenian scholar Ghazar Parpetsi (441-515) refers to Iberian king Vakhtang without the Gorgasal nickname. He is also not mentioned in the literary monument of Georgian literature, ‘The Martyrdom of Saint Queen Shushanik’ (considered to have been created in 476 or 483).

Ghazar Parpetsi was a 5th-century Armenian historian and monk who wrote the continuation of Faustus of Byzantium's ‘History of Armenia’ at the request of his relative, Vahan Mamikonian (440-505), who led the Christian uprising in Transcaucasia against the imposition of Zoroastrianism by the Sassanians. If Gorgasali and Mamikonian led the Christian uprising, then why was the former not mentioned?

The author of ‘The Martyrdom of Saint Queen Shushanik,’ the Georgian priest Jacob Tsuraveli, was a contemporary and participant in the events described. The work describes the suffering and death of the daughter of the Armenian military commander, Vardan Mamikonian, at the hands of her husband Varsken, the ruler of Southern Kartli, who tried to force Shushanik to renounce Christianity.

Shushanik is venerated as a martyr by the Georgian Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Churches. In 466, her husband, opposing Gorgasali's policy, went to the Sasanians to seek support from Shah Peroz, married his daughter, and renounced Christianity by adopting Zoroastrianism.

One of the most revered figures in Georgian history is Demetre II (1259-1289) from the Bagrationi dynasty. He participated in a conspiracy against Ilkhan Arghun (grandson of Hulagu). Power in the Ilkhanate was then concentrated in the hands of Emir Buqa, who became the first vizier and arranged a conspiracy against Arghun when he felt he was losing Arghun's favor. The conspirators included Buqa, Arghun's cousin Jushkab, and Demetre. Buqa and Demetre were friends. Buqa's son was married to Demetre's daughter. Jushkab's father, Jumkur, was the son of Hulagu. Jushkab informed Arghun of the conspiracy. Buqa was executed, and Demetre chose death and went to Arghun. In 1289, he arrived at Arghun's court, was arrested, and beheaded.

According to Georgian historiography, George V (1286-1346) was a farsighted politician who "liberated Georgia from centuries-long Mongol rule, restoring the country's former power and Christian culture." He belonged to the Bagrationi dynasty.

In 1316, King George V went to the capital of the Ilkhanate, the city of Soltaniyeh (now a city in Zanjan Province, Iran), to be presented to the Ilkhan, recognize his authority, and obtain permission to rule since after the death of Oljeitu, Abu Sa'id became the new Ilkhan.

Throughout history, Georgian kings and feudal lords, like the governors and feudal lords of the province of Armenia, retained their lands and local self-government under the condition of recognizing the ruling power and obtaining the respective authority.

George was loyal to Choban, and they were friends. Choban granted him all of Georgia and all the mtavars of Georgia. At that time, Choban, who was the husband of the Ilkhan's sister and the guardian of the 11-year-old Ilkhan, held the position of Emir.

In 1323, Choban gave his daughter Baghdad Khatun in marriage to Emir Hasan Buzurg. In 1325, Abu Sa'id fell in love with Baghdad Khatun and demanded that she divorce and marry him. Choban refused, and Bahadur Khan sent an army against him. In 1327, Choban and his son fled east to Emir Ghiyas ad-Din of Herat, who arrested them and turned them over to Abu Sa'id, who married Baghdad Khatun that same year (she was forced to divorce her husband Hasan Buzurg). Choban was executed by Abu Sa'id's order in 1327.

Ilkhan Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan divorced Baghdad Khatun in 1333 and married Dilshad Khatun, the niece of Baghdad Khatun and granddaughter of Choban. Abu Sa'id and his sons died of the plague in 1335 in Azerbaijan during a war with the Golden Horde. From that moment, the Hulaguid State ceased to

exist. It was replaced by the Chobanid state (1338-1357) and the Jalayirid state (1335-1431). The latter was founded by Hasan Buzurg – former husband of Baghdad Khatun, cousin of Abu Sa'id, and nephew of Choban. Hasan Buzurg married Dilshad Khatun.

King George V died of the plague in 1346.

Georgian historiography asserts that the Georgian people owe their survival to George Saakadze (1570-1629). Being at the head of Armenian and Georgian troops, he defeated the Crimean Khan. He is known in history as the Great Mouravi (a royal official who had a jurisdiction over particular town or district), who repeatedly reached the heights of power and each time failed, a man whose actions led to several Safavid invasions of Georgia.

The Saakadze family was of Arab origin and descended from the Tbilisi Emir Ishaq ibn-Isma'il ibn-Shu'aba, who converted to Christianity and therefore, was executed by the Arabs and crucified in 853.

In 1620, the Safavid Shah Abbas I appointed Saakadze vakil (guardian) of the minor ruler of Kartli, Simon II, making him the de facto ruler of Kartli. Saakadze led a rebellion of the Kartli and Kakheti population but was defeated. The Safavids appointed Teimuraz I the ruler of Kartli-Kakheti. This time, Saakadze rebelled against Teimuraz, was defeated, and fled to Turkey, where he was killed in 1629.

No less an intriguer was Teimuraz I (1589-1663) himself, who was a ruler of Kakheti in 1606-1648 and Kartli in 1625-1632. He repeatedly rebelled against the Safavids and was imprisoned in Astrabad (now Gorgan, Iran), where he took monastic vows and died at the end of 1663. He was a poet and admirer of Persian poetry. He belonged to the Bagrationi family. There was turmoil and internal strife within the Bagrationi family. He sought support from the Safavid Shah, the Ottoman Sultan, and the Russian Tsar.

The period of ancient Persian rule had a profound influence on the history and culture of Georgia. For centuries, from the 6th-4th centuries BC to the mid-7th century, Georgian lands were under the Persian Achaemenid Empire, the Parthian Kingdom, and the Sassanian state. At times, parts of the territory were occupied first by the Roman Empire and later by the Byzantine Empire.

The Turks had a huge influence on the history and culture of the Caucasus, including Georgia. In the 5th century, the first Turks – Huns, specifically the Sabir Turks, appeared in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, followed in the 7th century by the Khazars, who captured Tbilisi in 627. The Byzantine-Sassanian war was then ongoing. The Khazars fought on the side of Byzantium while the

ruler of Kartli, Stephanos from the Bagrationi family, sided with the Persians and defended the city of Tbilisi.

Then, in 685, the Khazars re-entered Transcaucasia, reaching Mosul (a city in Iraq). In a battle with them, the rulers of Georgia, Armenia, and Albania, as well as one of the Arab emirs, were killed. The Khazars appeared in Georgia in 762-764 and 799. In the 780s, they assisted the Abkhazian ruler in the struggle against Byzantium.

In western Georgia, there was Byzantine rule (536-1205). In 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, the Crusaders captured Constantinople. Queen Tamar seized the Byzantine provinces in western Georgia, which then formed the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1461) on the territory of present-day Turkey.

In eastern Georgia, there was an Arab period of rule in Georgia (645-1122). This period is called Araboba in Georgian. The political structure and culture of Georgia were virtually unaffected, the people preserved their faith, and the nobility retained their hereditary estates.

By 950, the princes and kingdoms on the territory of present-day Georgia were united ecclesiastically. The definition of Georgia was introduced by the priest and writer Giorgi Merchule in 951 in his book, 'The Life of Gregory of Khandzta.' The author's birth and death years are unknown. The book was found in 1902 in Jerusalem. The writing tells about the life of the Reverend Gregory (a holy monk), who was born, lived, and died in the monastic center of Khandzta (Artvin, Turkey). The author most likely based it on the Arabic 'djurdji,' the Turkish 'gurdju' (Georgian), 'Gurdjistan' (Georgia), which was adopted by Russians and Europeans.

By the end of the 9th century, the Arab Caliphate was in decline. In different regions of the Caliphate, governors and military leaders created their semi-independent formations, similar to principalities or counties. In Georgia, local wars took place between minor rulers, and there were occasional small-scale Arab invasions.

Bagrat III put an end to internal strife and in 1008, united Abkhazia, Kakheti, Kartli, Imereti, and western and central Georgia. Eastern Georgia was part of the Tbilisi Emirate (736-1122). Georgian rulers retained their holdings and were internally autonomous but were vassals of the Arabs. The Emir of the Tbilisi Emirate was appointed by the Caliph. Bagrat III belonged to the Bagrationi dynasty. The unified Georgian kingdom existed from 1008 to 1245.

The last emirs patronized Christianity, and in 1112, the Sioni Cathedral was built in honor of Mount Zion in Israel. Until the construction of the Holy Trinity

Cathedral in 2004, the Sioni Cathedral housed the main Tbilisi seat of the Georgian Catholicos. The foundation of the Cathedral is attributed to Gorgasali, Kuropalates Guaram I (grandson of Gorgasali), and even Bagrat IV. It is well known that Bagrat IV took Tbilisi in 1122.

In 582, the Byzantine emperor began a war with the Sasanians, and in 588, appointed Gurgen the ruler of Kartli, who was granted the Byzantine noble title of Kuropalates. In Georgia, he was called Guaram I Eristavi. According to the Byzantine-Sasanian treaty of 590, the western part of Kartli remained with the Byzantines while the eastern part, including the city of Tbilisi, remained with the Persians. With Gurgen's arrival in Iberia, a new dynasty, the Guaramids, was established, ruling until 786. Some scholars attribute them to the Bagrationis while others do not. The Tao-Klarjeti principality was then formed, where in 789, Kuropalates Ashot I ruled. His father, Adarnase I Bagrationi, was the prince of Tao and was considered the founder of the Georgian Bagrationi dynasty.

Adarnase's father was Vasak II Bagratuni, the ruler of Taron (province of Mush, Turkey), who moved to the Tao-Klarjeti region (territories around the cities of Artvin and Batumi) with his family in the 770s. He was the father of the founder of the Georgian branch of the Bagratids.

The origin of the Bagrationi dynasty is an old subject of dispute between Georgian and Armenian historians. Armenian researchers consider the Bagrationi dynasty a junior branch of the Armenian Bagratid dynasty.

The earliest Georgian forms of the dynastic name are Bagratoniani, Bagrauniani, and Bagrotovani, later modified to Bagrationi. These names, as well as the Armenian Bagratuni and the modern Bagratid, mean 'children of Bagrat' or 'house founded by Bagrat.' The surname's root has a Persian origin.

Bagratuni, Bagratids – a feudal family that was a major dynasty in the region of Kars (Turkey) and Lake Sevan (Armenia) from the early 4th century to 1045. According to the Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi, the Bagratuni are attributed with Jewish origins from a certain prince Shambot (Shmbat, Armenian Smbat), one of the Jewish captives brought to Armenia by Hayk II, an ally of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II. Some modern historians call this version a genealogical legend, i.e., a lineage tale and myth. Initially, the Bagratuni claimed descent from the Sun god, and then, after adopting Christianity, from the mythical Hayk. Later, the version of Jewish ancestry emerged. There are also theories of Urartian and Median origins. Nevertheless, the Persian version prevails, but disputes continue.

The Georgian noble titles were aznauri, tavadi, eristavi, mtavari, and mepe. Aznauri were free feudal lords possessing lands. Larger feudal lords were called tavadi. Eristavi denoted a government position, like a governor of a district or province. The mtavari title corresponded to the title of prince or duke. In the 11th-14th centuries, the 'mtavari' and 'tavadi' terms were synonyms for eristavi. From the 15th century, during the Turkic period, the mtavari title was applied to the five rulers of western Georgia - Samtskhe, Mingrelia, Guria, Svaneti, and Abkhazia, who had autonomous powers and were later abolished by the Russian Empire.

The highest title in Georgia is mepe – monarch, king. Under David IV, the official title became Mepet Mepe (king of kings). The word originates from Georgian 'meupe,' which means sovereign and lord.

In the history of Georgia, there was a golden age (1086-1213) under David the Builder and Queen Tamar. Georgian monarchs then recruited tens of thousands of Turkic Kipchaks (Polovtsians), who were settled in Georgia with their families. The Kipchaks played an important role in the history of Georgia, i.e., they were successfully used in military operations against neighboring Muslim countries. The Kipchaks (Polovtsians) were one of the Turkic peoples. They occupied territories from Eastern Europe to Central Asia.

In 1118, the Georgian king David IV the Builder (1073-1125) sent envoys to Atrak, the son of the Kipchak Khan Sharukan, with a proposal to resettle in Georgia. Georgians were friendly with the Kipchaks; David's second wife was the daughter of Atrak, whose wife, in turn, was the daughter of one of the Georgian princes.

David IV allocated land, horses, and weapons to the Kipchaks. He encouraged their transition to a sedentary lifestyle, adaptation to the Georgian way of life, and assimilation with the local population. David's army included 40,000 Kipchak horsemen. He was also guarded by 5,000 elite Kipchaks. David settled the Kipchaks down on his southern borders.

In the Seljuk state, weakened by the Crusades, vassal uprisings, struggles for the throne, and long-lasting Byzantine-Seljuk wars (1060-1180), after the death of Sultan Muhammad Tapar in 1118, his sons started fighting for the throne. David refused to pay tribute to the Seljuk Sultan. In 1121, David's Kipchak Turks defeated the Seljuk Turks in the Battle of Didgori (15 km to Tbilisi). In 1125, Atrak and part of the Kipchaks returned to the Don steppes.

Demetre I (1093-1156), the son of David, launched a campaign against the Ganja Emirate, a part of the Shaddadid state (951-1199), which had formed during the decline of the Arab Caliphate. He captured Ganja, which had been

destroyed by an earthquake, and took the Ganja city gates to Georgia (they are kept in the Gelati Monastery, Kutaisi). An earthquake of 11 magnitude struck Ganja in 1139. Mount Kyapaz collapsed, blocking the course of the Aghsu River, which led to the formation of Goygol Lake. 230,000 people died, and the city was almost completely destroyed. Just during that period, under the pressure of the Seljuks, the Shaddadids ceased their existence in Azerbaijan, and the Turkic state of the Eldigizids (1136-1225) emerged, which restored the city of Ganja and made it their capital.

Demetre's daughter was one of the wives of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar. During his reign in Tbilisi, Muslims were in favor. Every Friday, he went to the mosque and listened to prayers.

George III (1156-1184), the son of Demetre and grandson of David, waged wars with the neighboring Shaddadid state (present-day Armenia), often attacking them. In 1177, his courtiers revolted. George suppressed the uprising with the support of Shirvanshah Akhsitan I. The Shirvanshah state (861-1538) existed on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. Akhsitan was friends with the Georgians; his wife was a Georgian princess.

George had no sons, so in 1178, he crowned his daughter Tamar as his co-ruler. Father and daughter ruled the country together.

Georgian sources report that Georgian rulers continued to invite Kipchaks to Georgia. There are documents indicating that George III settled thousands of Kipchaks in Georgia.

Georgian chroniclers divided Georgia into Kartveloba (Land of the Georgians) and Didi Turkoba (Great Land of the Turks). There was a special tax collector for the maintenance of Kipchak warriors. However, in Georgian historiography, the Didi Turkoba term refers to a series of large-scale Seljuk Turk invasions of Georgia at the end of the 11th century, which is completely incorrect and distorts history.

Georgian scholar Tinatin Enukidze claims that in a charter of the Georgian King David VIII, dated 1297, the 'mesakivchake' term – a collector of a special tax for the maintenance of the Kipchak army – is mentioned.

The Kipchaks led a semi-nomadic lifestyle, wintering in Kartli in central Georgia and spending summers in the foothills of the Caucasus. Later, some Kipchaks left Georgia, but the majority remained, converted to Orthodoxy, and integrated with the local population. Christianized and Georgianized Kipchaks were called nakivchakari (de-Kipchakized).

Queen Tamar (1166-1213) and her successor George IV (1213-1223) continued the legend of recruiting warlike Kipchaks into state service. The Georgians called them 'narakipchaks' or 'kivchakni akhalni,' meaning 'new Kipchaks.' According to some sources, about 400,000 Kipchaks resettled in Georgia, mainly in areas where Azerbaijanis now live, and the Ahıska Turks lived until 1944. During the same period, dozens of thousands of Oghuz settled in the south and east of Georgia. The Christianized Kipchaks became a new military aristocracy, which displeased the Georgian feudal lords. Therefore, Queen Tamar was forced to dismiss all high-ranking Kipchaks. Despite this, at Tamar's court, both Georgian and Turkic languages were spoken, and Kipchaks were treated with respect. Tamar's mother was the Alanian princess Burdukhan. Her first husband was the son of the Vladimir-Suzdal prince for a while, and her second husband was the Alanian prince David Soslan. Her daughter from David, Queen Rusudan (1194-1245), was married to Ghiyas ad-Din, the grandson of the Seljuk Sultan and son of the Emir of Erzurum, Tughril Shah. Their son David VI (1225-1293), as a member of the Bagrationi dynasty, ruled the Kingdom of Georgia in 1246-1256 and then, the Kingdom of Western Georgia in 1259-1293 under the name David I.

The ancestors of the Alans were the Sarmatians. Many researchers considered them an Iranian-speaking people. Some historians consider them the ancestors of the Slavic people. The question of the ethnic affiliation of the Sarmatians has not been definitively resolved in science. Nevertheless, the latest convincing studies tend to consider the Sarmatians to be Turkic-speaking. This is evidenced by words remaining from the Sarmatians, most of which are Turkic.

In many Turkic languages, 'Alan' means 'plain,' 'valley.' The Alans were one of the Turkic-speaking tribes of the Khazar Khaganate (650-969). Even during the existence of the Turkic (552-603) and the Western Turkic (603-794) Khaganates, the Khazars occupied territories in the northern Caucasus. Under the Khazars, the Alans occupied territories in the northwest Caucasus, and after the collapse of the Khazar Khaganate, they formed their feudal entity, where Turkic-speaking and Caucasian tribes lived. Alania is the geographical name of that territory.

Currently, these lands are inhabited by Karachays, Circassians, Kabardians, Ingush, Chechens, and Ossetians. The Mingrelians of Georgia still call the Karachays Alans. Moreover, the 'Alan' term is used by the Karachays and Balkars when addressing someone in the sense of kin, tribesman. The Alans converted to Christianity in 916. After the fall of the Khazar Khaganate, they had their principality and were friends with the Georgians until the arrival of the Chingizids. The Alans were Kipchaks, and after adopting Christianity, they

assimilated and merged with neighboring peoples. The Iranian-speaking Ossetians appropriated the 'Alania' term.

According to Georgian sources, the King of Iberia, Mirian I or Mirvan (159 BC-109 BC), was the founder of the first fortress in the Darial Gorge, and the structures were further built by Vakhtang I Gorgasali and David IV the Builder.

The Darial Gorge is a 12 km long river gorge on the border between Georgia and Russia – between the urban-type settlement of Stepantsminda (the former Kazbegi) and the Verkhni Lars village (with the cognominal border checkpoint). The 208 km long Georgian Military Road, which is the only road from the North Caucasus to Georgia, passes from there.

Throughout the entire length of the Main Caucasus Range from the Caspian to the Black Sea (about 1000 km), two automobile roads from the North Caucasus to Transcaucasia officially exist. The first road leads to Azerbaijan through Derbent along the Caspian. The second one is the Georgian Military Road from Vladikavkaz to Tbilisi through the Darial Gorge.

The 'Derbent' term originates from the 'Dar-i band,' which in Persian means 'Narrow gates.' It was also known as the Albanian Gates.

The 'Darial' term comes from 'Dar-i Alan,' which in Persian means 'Alan Gates.' It was also known as the Caucasian Gates.

The Devdorak Glacier, which periodically causes landslides, is located on the slopes of Mount Kazbek. Large amounts of ice and rocks fall onto the Georgian Military Road and the Darial Gorge.

In the early centuries, the gorge was fortified by both the Romans and the Persians. The Darial Gorge passed under the control of the Sasanians in 252, when they took power from Parthia and annexed Iberia. Then, in 628, control passed to the Western Turkic Khaganate according to an agreement with the Byzantine Empire. In 644, power in the region and control over the gorge passed to the Arabs. From 1008 to 1222, control was exercised by the Georgian Kingdom. Battles between the Hulaguid State and the Golden Horde took place in the Darial Gorge. Later, it was controlled by the Safavid and Qajar states, and since 1801, by Russia.

In the 1220s, Georgia was conquered by the Chingizids, and then ruled by the Hulaguid State until 1335. By 1490, Georgia was fragmented into several small kingdoms that sought to maintain their autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid, Afsharid, and Qajar states until Georgia was annexed by Russia in 1801.

According to Georgian historiography, the 'Tbilisi' name comes from the ancient Georgian 'tpili,' which means 'warm.' Thus, the 'Tbili' or 'Tbilisi' (warm place) name was given to the city due to its numerous sulfur hot springs. In 1845, the Russians changed the 'Tbilisi' name to 'Tiflis.' In 1936, its old name was returned to the city.

The capital of modern Georgia, Tbilisi, is located on the banks of the Kura River, which originates in Turkey, flows through the territories of Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, and debouches into the Caspian Sea. It is believed that the city was founded in the 5th century by Vakhtang Gorgasali.

In fact, in 363-365, in the place of the city, a fortress was built by the ruler of Iberia, Varaz-Bakur III, from the Persian dynasty of the Khosroids. Later, Vakhtang and the rulers before and after him expanded the fortress. Tbilisi was founded by the Sasanians 25 km from Mtskheta, which was the residence of the Persian governor (marzpan). First, the Narikala Fortress emerged, around which the city developed.

In the 6th century, the Khazars captured Tbilisi and destroyed Narikala. In the 8th century, under the Arabs, the fortress was restored, and the city became the center of the Tiflis Emirate.

At different times, Georgians called the Narikala Fortress Dedatsikhe (Mother Fortress in Georgian), Tbilisitsikhe (Tbilisi Fortress in Georgian), and Shuristsikhe (Fortress of Envy in Georgian). Currently, Georgians call it Mtkvari. In Persian and Turkish, 'narin' means 'fragile,' 'thin,' 'small,' and 'kala' means 'fortress.'

Describing the city of Teflis (as he called Tbilisi) in his 'Book on the Diversity of the World,' the traveler Marco Polo (1254-1324) noted that "The inhabitants, Georgians and Armenians, are Christians, also a few Muslims and Jews, but not many of the latter. Silk and many other fabrics are manufactured there. The inhabitants are subject to the great Khan of the Tatars."

In the maritime port map by Angelino Dulcert, dated 1339, the city is called Tifilis. The map by Brother Mauro, dated 1459, also specifies Tiflis. The traveler Jean Chardin (1643-1713), who visited the city in 1672, also used the 'Tiflis' name. A pedestrian street in the center of Tbilisi – Shardeni Street – which is one of the main tourist routes, is named in his honor.

The 'Tbilisi' name did not exist at all. Georgians called the city 'kala' ('fortress' in Persian) or 'Tpili Kala.'

The same Chardin reported that in 1672, 14,000 of 20,000 city residents were Armenians. In 1803, Armenians made up 92.6% of nearly 35,000 Tiflis residents.

In 1844, Tiflis became the center of the newly established Caucasian Viceroyalty. According to the Caucasian Calendar annual almanac (published from 1848 to 1916), in 1848, the city's population was 27,000 people, of whom 16,890 were Armenians.

From 1803 to 1917 (as part of the Russian Empire), Armenians not only made up the majority of the city's population but also governed it – 45 of 47 Tbilisi mayors were Armenians.

Georgians only took the lead in 1926. The Georgian population of Tiflis was 112,206, while the Armenian one was 100,148.

Reference.

Ajars are Georgian Muslims.

Ossetians are Iranian-speaking people whose ethnogenesis involves Kipchaks and Caucasian tribes.

Abkhazians are a Caucasian people whose language belongs to the Abkhaz-Adyghe language family. Abkhazians are related to the Abazins, Adyghe, Kabardians, and Circassians. In Turkey, all these ethnoses are collectively called Abaza. The majority of Abkhazians are Orthodox Christians. Both Georgians and Abkhazians claim the region of Colchis. The Abkhazians had their principality from 1431 to 1864. In 1810, Abkhazia passed under the control of the Russian Empire. Abkhazians actively participated in Shamil's mountaineers' uprising and supported the Turks in the Russo-Turkish wars. The Abkhazian principality was abolished only in 1864. In 1921, the independent Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia was proclaimed, which was abolished in 1931, and Abkhazia became part of the Georgian SSR as an autonomous republic. In 1990, Abkhazia was proclaimed the sovereign Abkhazian Soviet Socialist Republic again.

Shota Rustaveli (circa 1160 or 1172 – circa 1216 or after 1220) was a Georgian poet, the author of the greatest poem, 'The Knight in the Panther's Skin.'

There are still no exact data on his birth and death dates, origins, or any information on his father and mother. It is only known that he signed his surname as Rustveli. He studied in Greece and was the treasurer of Queen Tamar (his signature was found on a document from 1190).

Some researchers consider Shota's homeland to be the village of Rustav, near Tskhinvali. Others consider the poet's birthplace to be the city of Rustavi, near

Tbilisi. According to another version, when Shota left royal service, he received the Rustavisi estate, which had previously been confiscated from Abulasan, the Eristavi of Kartli and Emir of Tbilisi. Abulasan was one of the initiators of Tamar's marriage to Yuri. He supported Yuri's rebellion against Tamar after their divorce.

According to one legend, hopelessly in love with his sovereign, he ended his life in a monastery cell (a separate room in a monastery). According to another version, Rustaveli, in love with the Queen, married a certain Nina. After the wedding, he received an order from Tamar to translate a literary gift into Georgian. After completing the task, he refused a reward for his work. A week later, his decapitated body was found. There are many legends about Rustaveli and his relationship with Tamar.

The legend that Rustaveli was in love with Tamar originated from his poem, 'The Knight in the Panther's Skin.' One of the main storylines tells of how the king's daughter Tinatin fell in love with the commander Avtandil. From this arose the assumption that the work was dedicated to Tamar.

Some researchers claim that 'The Knight in the Panther's Skin' was created based on plots from Persian literature, which Rustaveli adapted to Georgian reality. The poem was later recognized by the church as heretical. Several centuries later, the manuscripts of his work were burned.

There are doubts about the existence of Shota Rustaveli. The main source about the poet is the prologue of his poem, dedicated to Queen Tamar and her co-ruler husband David Soslan, where he identifies himself as a Meskhetian.

The 'Shota' name did not exist in Georgia before Rustaveli. The 'Soslan' name is still pronounced as Shota in North Ossetia today. Therefore, Ossetian researchers believe that it is a pseudonym composed of the first syllables of the names Shoshlan and Tamar – Sho+ta. Ossetians claim that the poem's author was David Soslan.

Armenians claim that Shota Rustaveli was not Shota at all but Ashot, and he brought Armenian cultural traditions to Georgia.

He was not famous. Historical chronicles do not mention his name. Fame came to him several centuries after his death.

There is a version that Rustaveli had an older brother, Chakhrukhadze, now recognized as the second most significant Georgian poet of Tamar's era. Shota became interested in poetry under the influence of his older brother. Their father

was Moheva (a court rank responsible for military defense) Chakhrukh. The older brother took his surname from his father while Shota took the surname Rustaveli.

Grigol Chakhrukhadze (12th-13th centuries) was a scrivener at Tamar's court and the author of the 'Tamariani' collection, where the poet praises Tamar and her husband David Soslan.

Kutlu Arslan was the treasurer from 1177 to 1185, Abulasan – from 1185 to 1188, and Shalva Akhaltsikheli – from 1212 to 1222.

David Soslan was raised together with Tamar in the home of his aunt Rusudan. As early as 1118, David the Builder went to Alania to request passage through the Darial Gorge for the Kipchaks. In the mid-12th century, the King of Alania Khuddan gave his daughter, Burdukhan, in marriage to George III.

Tamar and David sincerely loved each other. They got married in 1188. David was described as an educated man, a handsome warrior of athletic build, a brave soldier and military leader, and a loving husband and father. Moreover, David's military victories brought him well-deserved fame. The union of Tamar and David was a happy one; it was based on a long-standing deep love and mutual understanding. On the throne, Tamar and David represented a majestic pair of rulers, and in their private life, they were an example of people who truly loved each other. Tamar and David devoted much time to philosophers, poets, and enlightened people in general. They regularly arranged poetry parties and competitions at the royal court. In the 11th-13th centuries, secular court art in Georgia experienced a period of flourishing thanks to the works of Persian poets. The princes, kings, and queens themselves were often poets.

'The Knight in the Panther's Skin' is a poem about the love of Tamar and David Soslan. Some researchers claim that David Soslan wrote and published books. The exact date of its creation is unknown. Most likely, it was written between 1289 and 1212. Just during that period, Rustaveli was the treasurer at the court.

Around the same period, in the 12th century, the world discovered the works by Khaghani Shirvani, Nizami Ganjavi, and Mehseti Ganjavi. The popular themes of the time included equitable society, wise rulers, love, and the meaning of life.

The Shah of Shirvan, Akhsitan, ordered Nizami Ganjavi to write a poem about love, 'Layla and Majnun.' Akhsitan dedicated several verses to his wife. In 1188, Nizami wrote an epic poem based on an Arab legend in the Persian language. Akhsitan's mother was Tamar (the grandmother of Queen Tamar and the

daughter of David the Builder). Akhsitan married Ismataddin, the daughter of the ruler of Derbent, Muzaffar Seyf ad-Din. Tamar was Ismataddin's aunt.

There is no doubt that Nizami's 'Layla and Majnun' poem was read in Georgia. Similarly, David Soslan ordered the poet-treasurer to write a poem about love, and he took the love of Tamar and Soslan as the basis. Rustaveli writes in his poem that he took the plot from a Persian story, or rather, was inspired by Nizami's poem.

Meskhети is the general name for a historical region. Currently, part of Meskhети is part of Georgia (Samtskhe-Javakheti) while another part is located in northeastern Turkey (Artvin, Ardahan). The historical center of the region was considered to be the city of Akhaltsikhe.

Meskhეთians are considered an ethnographic group of Georgians. However, they are related to the Svans, Laz, and Mingrelians. In ancient times, they had their language, currently extinct. Some Meskhეთians became Georgians and Adjarians. Another part became Meskhეთian Turks (Ahiska Turks).

There are three opinions on the origin of the Meskhეთian Turks. According to Georgian historical sources, where the 'Mesh' or 'Meskhეთials' terms were used instead of 'Meskhეთian Turks,' the Meskhეთian Turks were a community who 'renounced their Georgianness,' were in fact ethnic Georgians, previously practiced Christianity, but were later Islamized/Turkified. According to this claim, the ancestors of the Ahiska Turks, who spoke Turkish with the Kars dialect and practiced Hanafi Sunni Islam, were converted to Islam during Ottoman rule in Meskhეთi-Javakheti. It is even asserted that these Islamized Georgians are descendants of the Mesh people, who settled in this region two thousand years ago.

Russian sources associate the origin of the Meskhეთian Turks with the mixing of the Caucasian Bulgars and other Turkic tribes, primarily Orthodox Kipchaks. This point of view suggests that the Meskhეთian Turks emerged as a result of the intermingling of Turks and Turkified Georgians.

The Turkish point of view acknowledges that the Kipchaks are among the ancestors of the Ahiska Turks but also asserts that the long-term stable presence of the Ottomans in Meskhეთi-Javakheti united all Turkish elements there into a new form, and the Ahiska Turks were one of the elements of that form.

Considering all these different viewpoints, it is perhaps most accurate to say that the Ahiska Turks are an ethnic group consisting of Kipchaks, Turkmen-Oghuz (Karakapak/Terekeme), Turks who came from Anatolia, and Georgian Muslims, united by a single culture.

In 1048-1049, the Seljuk Turks made their first invasion into the Byzantine border region of Iberia. In 1068, the Meskheti-Javakheti region was annexed to the Seljuk state. Historically, the area was inhabited by Meskhs and Georgian tribes, who adopted Christianity in the 4th century. During the Seljuk period, Turkic tribes such as the Karapapaks, Terekeme, and Ayrums appeared in the region. After 1118, David IV the Builder resettled Kipchaks in the region. The Kipchaks adopted Christianity and eventually took strong positions in the administration of the Georgian Kingdom. Growing stronger politically and militarily, they declared their independence and founded the Principality of the Atabegs in Meskheti in 1267. Under the patronage of the Turkic states of Aq Qoyunlu, Qara Qoyunlu, and the Safavids, the Jaqeli family ruled for 310 years. In 1576, Meskheti became part of the Ottoman Empire. A member of the Jaqeli family converted to Islam and held the title of Pasha until the abolition of the Akhaltsikhe Pashalik in 1829 by the Russian Empire.

Muslim Meskhs referred to themselves as 'Gurjis' rather than 'Kartvelians.' Muslim Georgians generally considered themselves Turks. Today, Meskhetian ethnographic groups, mainly the Ahiska Turks, are dispersed across Samtskhe-Javakheti, northeastern Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and several other countries. Adjarians are considered part of the Meskhs. Meskhetians became Georgians and Adjarians.

In 1829, under the order of General Paskevich, Armenians fleeing from Turkey (from Erzurum) were settled in southern Georgia. They were forced to speak Turkish with the local population since the majority of them knew only two languages – Armenian and Turkish. Turkish became the language of interethnic communication in the Meskheti region.

Prince Pyotr Ivanovich Bagration (1765-1812) was a Russian general, an apprentice of Suvorov, commander-in-chief of the 2nd Western Army at the beginning of the Patriotic War of 1812, and a hero of the Patriotic War. He was one of the principal characters in the famous film 'War and Peace' (1967) by the renowned director and actor Sergey Bondarchuk. The film won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1969.

In 1800, Emperor Paul I arranged Bagration's marriage to his relative, the 18-year-old Countess Yekaterina Skavronskaya.

The Kartli branch of the Bagration princes was included in the list of Russian princely families in 1803.

The grandfather of the aforementioned Bagration, Isaac Bey (1705-1773), was the illegitimate son of the King of Kartli, Jesse Leonovich (1680-1727). Isaac Bey

was born in the Safavid state and was a Muslim. In 1750, he converted to Christianity, took the name Aleksandr, and was granted an estate in Kvemo-Kartli. The Bagration family declared him an impostor, and in 1758 he fled to Russia, where he joined the Russian army as a lieutenant colonel.

His son, **Ivan Aleksandrovich Bagration** (1730-1795), was a major in the Russian army.

His son, **Kirill Aleksandrovich Bagration** (1750-1828), was a major general in the Russian army and a member of the Senate.

The son of Ivan Bagration and the younger brother of the hero Peter Bagration, **Roman Ivanovich Bagration** (1778–1834), was a lieutenant general in the Russian army.

His son, **Pyotr Romanovich Bagration** (1818–1876), was a lieutenant general.

His son, **Ivan Romanovich Bagration** (1824–1860), was a colonel.

The lineage of the Russian Bagration princes ceased in 1920.