Eastern Christianity

Medieval Georgian Projection of Religious Historiography of Late Antiquity

Mapping of Biblical peoples (Tabula linguarum et populorum)

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Abstract

The article analyses the historical concepts of the medieval Georgian history by Leonti Mroveli, as the projection of religious historiography in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Introductions to two redactions of The Georgian Chronicles have been considered. It has been shown that both versions have the same aim: to reconstruct the ethnic origin of the Georgians (our kin) from the onset of the world history and to legitimate our kin as an immediate partaker in the initial (Biblical) history. For this purpose, Leonti Mroveli uses diamerisms, a scheme of universal history (Διαμερισμός τῆς γῆς) employed in religious historiography from the 1st century AD. Fragments of diamerisms found in medieval Georgian historical narratives reveal that Georgian historiographers were familiar with them via Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian and Armenian versions and successfully used them to highlight the unity between the universal and their national (local) histories – the life of our kin.

Keywords

medieval studies – medieval historiography – religious historiography – Georgian medieval narratives

1 Introduction¹

The article discusses historical concepts that shaped the history of the Georgians (*our kin*²) as reconstructed by Leonti Mroveli in the 11th century. These concepts are considered against the underlying diamerisms, the scheme of universal history employed in religious historiography of late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Διαμερισμός τῆς γῆς εἰς τοὺς τρεῖς υἱοὺς τοῦ Νῶε; *Divisio terrae tribus filiis Noe*). They served as a basis for peoples of Eastern Christian countries including Georgians to legitimate in their historical narratives their past, ethnic origin and the literary functions of their language.³ By analysing the topoi, trends and concepts the historical writings of Eastern Christian peoples have in common, the paper attempts to discuss Leonti Mroveli's historical narrative as a text legitimating the "sacral origin" of the Georgian people mentioned in one of the rubrics of diamerisms, the common Caucasian concept of our history and an important role of Georgian language as a marker of identity of 'our kin'. It dwells on the historical stages distinguished by Leonti Mroveli from the start of the human history, more specifically, from the destruction of the Tower of Babel till the period when the history of *our kin* began.

2 The Scheme of Religious Historiography in Late Antiquity: Biblical Peoples and Languages

Tabula linguarum et populorum, one of the most popular rubrics of diamerisms, follows the sacralised Biblical frame to describe the dispersion of Noah's descendents (Gen., x, Chron., I, 4-24).⁴ Recensions of diamerisms emerging

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2 (*Our*) *kin* as used by Leonti Mroveli can be considered an equivalent of *gens* used in medieval Europe. See W. Boeder, "Sprache und Identität in der Geschichte der Georgier," in: *Georgien im Spiegel seiner Kultur und Geschichte. Zweites Deutsch-Georgisches Symposium: Vortragstexte*, hrsg. B. Schrader, Th. Ahbe Berlin, 1998, p. 74.

3 On the discussions in medieval historical narratives of the Eastern peoples, including Georgians, see ნ. დობორჯგინიძე, ენა, იდენტობა და საისტორიო კონცეპტები. რელიგიური ისტორიოგრაფიის წყაროთა ინტერპრეტაციის ცდა [N. Doborjginidze, *Language, Identity and historical concepts. An Attempt to Interpret Sources of Religious Historiography*], Tbilisi, 2010, pp. 11-62.

4 As known, religious historiography distinguished between two groups of peoples based on the Biblical interpretation of the Babel story: on the one hand, the true children of history, i.e. the seventy two (in some sources, seventy) peoples partaking in the 'sacred history' and on the other hand, the "stepchildren of history" – the rest of the peoples (A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*, Bd. 1., Stuttgart, 1957; repr.: 1995, p. 292).

between the 3rd and 18th centuries in the Jewish and Christian traditions were inspired by Chapters 8 and 9 of an apocrypha known as the Jubilees (οἱ Ἰωβηλαῖοι) or the Little Genesis (ἡ λεπτὴ Γένεσις).⁵ The version preserved in Flavius Josephus' Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία (94 AD) is believed to be the earliest recension.⁶ A new rubric was added to diamerisms from the 3rd century:⁷ the division of languages and peoples according to their literary traditions. Hippolytus of Rome's *Chronicle* dated to 235-238 singles out 15 peoples with literary traditions out of 72 descendants of Noah (cf. Οἱ ἐπιστάμενοι αὐτῶν γράμματα, Qui litterati sunt). It reflects the Georgian language, or more precisely Iberian, as one of the languages with ancient literary traditions.⁸

Rubrics of diamerisms as the universal (Biblical) history of mankind spread in medieval historical narratives as independent *topoi*.⁹ The comparative anal-

5 This apocrypha, presumably composed in Hebrew in the 1st century AD, was translated into Greek in the 2nd century and from Greek into Ethiopian. Only one badly damaged Ethiopian manuscript survives. It was first translated into Latin in the 16th century and then into European languages. See A. Dillmann, *Das Buch der Jubileen oder die kleine Genesis*, Tübingen, 1874.

6 Flavius Josephus, *Übersetzung und mit einer Einleitung und Anmerkungen versehen von H. Clementz*, Wiesbaden, 2011, I, 6, 1-4. Flavius Josephus' Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία was translated into Georgian in the 12th century. For its old Georgian versions see ოსებ ფლავიოსი, მოთხრობანი იუდაებრივისა ძუელსიტყუაობისანი, ქართული თარგმანის ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, გამოკვლევა, ლექსიკონი და საკუთარ სახელთა საძიებელი დაურთო: ნ. მელიქიშვილმა [Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Old Georgian Translation, ed. N. Melikishvili], I, Tbilisi, 1987.

7 The diamerisms are more or less similar in structure and content. Eight main rubrics are distinguished: a. introduction, the building and destruction of the Tower of Babel, b. division of peoples and languages, c. a list of seventy two languages, d. stories of dispersion of peoples, e. less known peoples and their territories, f. a list of mountains, g. a list of rivers, h. cities of different climatic zones. For the classification of the numerous versions of diamerisms, see A. Gutschmid, "Untersuchungen über den Διαμερισμὸν τῆς γῆς und andere Bearbeitungen der Mosaischen Völkertafel," in: *idem*, *Kleine Schriften*, Bd. 5., *Schriften zur Römischen und mittelalterlichen Geschichte*, Leipzig, 1894, pp. 585-717.

8 Cf. Οἱ δὲ ἐπιστάμενοι αὐτῶν γράμματα εἰσιν Ἰβηρες, Λατῖνοι, οἷς χρῶνται οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι, Σπανοί, Ἑλληγες, Μήδοι, Ἀρμένιοι. Φοίνικες, Αἰγύπτιοι, Παμφύλιοι, Φρύγες. Ἑβραῖοι οἱ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, Πέρσαι, Μήδοι, Ἰνδοί, Χαλδαῖοι, Ἀσσυριοί (of those who have a script are: [from Japheth]: Iberians, Latins, called Romans, Spaniards, Greeks, Medes, Armenians; [from Cham]: Phenicians, Egyptians, Pamphylians, Phrygians. [from Sem] Hebrews, Persians, Medes, Indiers, Chaldeans, Assyrians (Hippolytus, *Chronicon* (= Hippolytus, *Werke*, Bd. IV), hrsg. A. Bauer, R. Helm (GCS, 46), Berlin, 1955).

9 Old Georgian sources do not present a full version of diamerisms, with all the eight rubrics (Cf. N. Doborjginidze, "Christian Historiography and the Topos of Fifteen Literary Languages (Evidence on the Iberian Script)," *The Kartvelologist. Journal of Georgian Studies* 13 (2006), pp. 89-99). Fragments or versions preserved in certain traditions are scattered across different texts. They are: 1. Flavius Josephus' version (ოსებ ფლავიოსი, pp. 101-105); 2. Euthymius Athonite's (Ektvime Atoneli's) compilatory translation of Maximus the Confessor's *Questiones ad Thallasium* (see ჯ. კეკელიძე, ბალხთა

ysis shows that the *topoi* acquired a legitimating function in vernacular narratives of various peoples.¹⁰ In this paper I will dwell on two narratives popular in old Georgian historical writing that served the same purpose: 1) *The Cave of Treasures*, identified as a Syriac redaction, which is the fullest surviving text containing diamerisms.¹¹ It is used as a conceptual introduction to Queen Mariam's redaction of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (the Georgian Chronicles) and 2) a content-wise different but functionally similar apocryphal text introducing Machabeli's version of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.

კლასიფიკაციისა და გეოგრაფიული განრიგების საკითხები ძველს ქართულ მწერლობაში [K. Kekelidze, "Questions on the Classification and Geographical Distribution of Peoples in Old Georgian Writing"], in: *idem*, ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან [Studies from the History of Old Georgian Literature], 1, Tbilisi, 1956, pp. 168-182); 3. Arsen of Ikalto's translation of George Hamartolos' version (ს. ყაუხჩიშვილი, ხრონოგრაფი გიორგი მონაზონისაჲ / *Georgii Monachi Chronikon* [S. Kaukhchishvili, *Chronography* by George the Monk] (Monumenta Georgica, vol. III. Historici, Nr. 1) Tbilisi, 1920); 4. Fragments from Hippolytus of Rome's *Chronicle*, a fragment of the royal lineage (ი. აბულაძე, "იპოლიტე რომელის ქრონიკონის ძველი ქართული ვერსია" [I. Abuladze, "Old Georgian Version of Hippolytus of Rome's *Chronicon*"], ხელნაწერთა ინსტიტუტის მოამბე [Bulletin of the Institute of Manuscripts], 3 (1961), pp. 223-243); 5. An episode about the tower of Babel and the division of languages preserved in Juansher's chronicle (ქართლის ცხოვრება. კრიტიკული ტექსტი დადგენილი ყველა მნიშვნელოვანი ხელნაწერის მიხედვით ს. ყაუხჩიშვილის მიერ [The Life of Kartli, ed. S. Kaukhchishvili], Tbilisi, 1955, pp. 162-164); 6. An apocryphal version of diamerisms preserved in Machabeli's redaction of the Georgian Chronicles (ე. თაყაიშვილი, "აპოკრიფული თხზულება, რომელიც წინ უძღვის „ქართლის ცხოვრების“ მაჩაბლისეულ ხელნაწერს" [E. Takaishvili, "An Apocryphal Work Preceding the Machabeli Manuscript of the Georgian Chronicles"], აკადემიკოს ს. ჯანაშიას სახელობის საქართველოს სახელმწიფო მუზეუმის მოამბე [Bulletin of S. Janashia State Museum of Georgia] 8 (1953), pp. 25-47); 7. Leonti Mroveli's version of diamerisms introducing Queen Mariam's redaction of the Georgian Chronicles (განძთა ქვაბი, ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, გამოკვლევა, ლექსიკონი და საძიებლები დაურთო ც. ქურციკიძემ) [The Cave of Treasures, ed. Ts. Kurtisidze] (ძველი ქართული აპოკრიფული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები [Old Georgian Apocryphal Texts], 2), Tbilisi, 2007; *La Caverne des trésors: version géorgienne*, trad. J.-P. Mahé (CSCO, 527; Iber., 24), Lovanii, 1992). Later in this paper I will closely consider the last two redactions.

- 10 Texts representing various Eastern and Western traditions of Late Antiquity and Christianity are discussed in A. Borst's fundamental work Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel*, pp. 158-325.
- 11 See Syriac and Arabic versions of *The Cave of Treasures* with the German translation in C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle. Eine Sammlung biblischer Geschichten aus dem sechsten Jahrhundert jemals Ephraem Syrus zugeschrieben, syrischer Text und arabische Version herausgegeben nach mehreren Handschriften zu Berlin, London Oxford, Paris und Rom mit deutscher Übersetzung und Anmerkungen*, Leipzig, 1883-1888; repr.: Amsterdam, 1981.

The beginning of Queen Mariam's and Machabeli's redactions with the stories of creation is justly believed to be a conceptual intent of Leonti Mroveli, the systemiser of the history of Georgians.¹² "It is no mere coincidence that both Queen Mariam's and Machabeli's redactions of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* start with the story of creation and not with Leonti Mroveli's narrative. The stories introducing these two narratives convey the history of the world, in which the editor of this history book relates about the creation of the world, followed by the history of first fathers, the story of Jerusalem, etc. The inclusion of these narratives is not incidental but must have been an introduction to *Kartlis Tskhovreba* from the very start."¹³

Thus, Introductions of both versions have the same function: to reconstruct the ethnic origin of *our kin* from the onset of the world history and to legitimate *our kin* as an immediate partaker in the initial (Biblical) history.

Foregrounding these connections was a common trend in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: early historians started the reconstruction of the historical past of their ancestors with a lineage evidencing kinship with Christ "according to the flesh" and direct participation in the Sacred History.

Both texts mentioned above add new perspectives to this trend of linking local history with universal history: the Introduction to Queen Mariam's redaction is focused on the unity of universal history and the history of *our kin*, the continuity of these two histories – that the story of the Kartvelian peoples directly flows out of the Babel story. This perspective is emphasised in the title: "Exposition of the creation of heaven and the earth and man, as his body was killed and buried at Golgotha; and the succession of generations, as we traced our kinship with Christ according to the flesh, as it is written in the Gospel of Luke, from Adam, the father of all, to Christ, our Lord and God."¹⁴

12 These versions of diamerisms as texts linking the history of Georgians with universal history were first considered by Korneli Kekelidze, Ekvtime Takaishvili and Simon Kaukhchishvili. See ე. თაყაიშვილი, ქართლის ცხოვრება. მარიამ დედოფლის ვარიანტი [E. Takaishvili, *The Georgian Chronicles, Queen Mariam's Version*], Tbilisi, 1906; თაყაიშვილი, "აპოკრიფული თხზულება," pp. 25-47; კეკელიძე, ხალხთა კლასიფიკაციისა და გეოგრაფიული განრიგების, pp. 168-182; ს. ყაუხჩიშვილი, "ქართლის ცხოვრება" და მსოფლიო ისტორია" [S. Kaukhchishvili, "The Life of Kartli and a World History"], in: ქუთაისის პედაგოგიკური ინსტიტუტის შრომები [*Proceedings of the Kutaisi Pedagogical Institute*] 7 (1947), pp. 1-7.

13 ქართლის ცხოვრება (ed. Kaukhchishvili), p. 111.

14 განმთა ქვაბი (ed. Kurtsikidze), p. 11; „თარგმანებად დაბადებისათჳს ცისა და ქუეყანისა, და ადამისთჳს, ვითარ მიცვალეს გუამი მისი და დამარხეს გოლგოთას; და ცვალებად ნათესავთად, ვითარ ვპოვეთ ნათესავობად ქრისტესი ჳორცითა, ვითარცა წერილ არს სახარებასა ლუკას თავსა, ადამისითჳს, ყოველთა მამისა, ვიდრე ქრისტესამდე, უფლისა და ღმრთისა წყენისა.“

As concerns the Introduction to Machabeli's redaction, apart from its main objective, the text is focused on the common ethnic origin of the Caucasians, the *legitimation of the Common Caucasian idea*. The author of the Introduction emphasises that Targamos was "the father of the Armenians and Georgians, Ransians and Movkanians, Hers and Leks, Megrelians and Caucasians."¹⁵ I will briefly discuss the perspectives highlighted in the Introductions to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.

3 Perspective of the Unity of Universal History and the History of Our Kin (*Kin According to the Flesh*)

As I noted above, the topos that links local history with universal history found reflection on the historiographies of almost all regions with varied intensity. Beginning from the chronicles by Flavius Josephus and later those by Hippolytus of Rome and Sextus Julius Africanus,¹⁶ diamerisms functioned as a sacralised scheme of history, serving as a pattern for the reconstruction of the history of ethnic and religious groups in later periods. The presence on the family tree of the Bible, i.e. partaking in 'sacralised history', became canonical for both Jewish and Christian historical narratives and were commonly rendered through introductions. The latter contained stories of how a genetic ancestor of a particular ethnos emerged from the ruins of Babylon, i.e. the first layer of history.

This must have been the purpose of why Leonti Mroveli used *The Cave of Treasures*, a concise compendium concerning the beginning of the history of mankind, as introduction to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*. The origin, relationship between the versions and the tentative date of the Georgian translation remain

¹⁵ თაყაიშვილი, "აპოკრიფული თხზულება," p. 47.

¹⁶ For the historiographical trends of sacral and speculative justifications of universal and local histories in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see B. Croke, "The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle," in: *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. B. Croke and A.M. Emmett, Sydney 1983, pp. 116-131; repr. in: *idem, Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History, 5th-6th Centuries* (Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 386), Aldershot, 1992, 111, pp. 116-131; U. Roberto, "Julius Africanus und die Tradition der hellenistischen Universalgeschichte," in: *Julius Africanus und die christliche Weltchronistik*, ed. M. Wallraff (TU, 157), Berlin, 2006, pp. 3-16; G. Staab, "Chronographie als Philosophie. Die Uhrwahrheit der mosaïschen Überlieferung nach dem Begründungsmodell des Mittelplatonismus bei Julius Africanus (Edition und Kommentierung von Africanus Chron. fr. 1)," in: *Julius Africanus und die christliche Weltchronistik*, ed. M. Wallraff (TU, 157), Berlin, 2006, pp. 61-81.

controversial among scholars.¹⁷ Yet its purpose and function raise no doubts. It is commonly agreed that the Introduction links *Kartlis Tskhovreba* as a local historical narrative with universal history to ensure its religious legitimacy.¹⁸

Lela Pataridze thoroughly examined the Introduction to *Kartlis Tskhovreba* in the light of political and cultural identity formation. The scholar saw it as a text with a purpose of embedding the history of Georgian kings in the Christian chronotope.¹⁹ Drawing on the findings of literary and historical studies, she analysed the conceptual provisions given in the Introduction from the perspective of ethnocultural identity studies²⁰ and compared them with the ty-

17 For different opinions concerning these issues see Korneli Kekelidze (კ. კეკელიძე, ლეონტი მროველის ლიტერატურული წყაროები [K. Kekelidze, "Literary Sources of Leonti Mroveli"], in: *idem*, ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან [Studies from the History of Old Georgian Literature], xii, Tbilisi, 1979, pp. 10-31), Simon Kaukhchishvili (ყაუხჩიშვილი, "ქართლის ცხოვრება" და მსოფლიო ისტორია, pp. 1-7), Jean Pierre Maché (*La Caverne des trésors: version géorgienne*) and Tsiala Kurtsikidze (ც. ქურციკიძე, "ქართლის ცხოვრების" მარია-მისეული ხელნაწერის შესახებ [Ts. Kurtsikidze, "On the Manuscript of Life of Kartli from Queen Mariam"], საქართველოს მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის მაცნე: საზოგადოებრივ მეცნიერებათა განყოფილება [Messenger of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences: Humanities and Social Sciences] 3-4 (1993), pp. 109-122).

18 Tsiala Kurtsikidze suggests a different opinion. Cf. "It is difficult to agree with Korneli Kekelidze as regards the identity of the translator and the time of translation of *The Cave of Treasures* and consider it a text translated by the 11th century historian Leonti Mroveli especially for *Kartlis Tskhovreba* since Leonti Mroveli as a historian must have known that *The Cave of Treasures* was not a historical text but an apocrypha lacking truthfulness and that it would not suite the purpose of linking Georgian history with the world history" (განმთა ქვაბი, p. 24). However, the study of diamerisms and concepts of religious historiography in general proves just the opposite: it was the texts representing apocryphal, exegetic and other genres and the topoi developed within a religious context that would enable to establish a connection with universal history or Biblical provenance; the quoted viewpoint rather seems to be a result of the application of contemporary historical concept to medieval religious historiography.

19 Cf. "The section from the beginning to the *Life of Parnavaz* I call the Introduction to *Kartlis Tskhovreba* since in terms of both function and content it is the *Life of Kings*, i.e. a 'pre-historical, geographical and ethnological picture of the history of the Kingdom of Kartli proper, which the medieval author preceded to the written tradition of the kings as per the literary and conceptual requirements of his time' (ლ. პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი IV-VIII საუკუნეების ქართულ ერთობაში: "ქართლის ცხოვრების" სამყარო [L. Pataridze, *Political and Cultural Identities in 4th-8th cc. Georgian Community: the World of Life of Kartli*] (ქართული ერთობა და მისი იდენტობა: იდეები, სიმბოლოები, პერცეფციები [Georgian Community and its Identity: Ideas, Symbols, Perceptions], 1), Tbilisi, 2009, p. 132)

20 Cf. "The Introduction reflects the knowledge the author had concerning the provenance and dispersion of the peoples, yet he created an original conception using this very knowledge and facts from the *Life of Kings* proper. It was a truly ambitious project that

pology of the historical compendia of the medieval Christian East and their underlying paradigm of the Biblical-Christian history. Pataridze explained how “Leonti Mroveli outlined spatial and chronological context and foregrounded sequential continuity of events from the genesis of the mankind to the emergence of the Kingdom of Kartli.”²¹ It was this unity and succession that legitimised the history of *our kin*.

4 Perspective of the Common-Caucasian Unity (Targamos, Father of the Caucasians)

The common-Caucasian idea, or more specifically, the idea of a common Caucasian ancestor proposed by Leonti Mroveli is an important motif of the historical conception of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* and has invited a diverse array of opinions worthy of consideration. Geographical, ethnogenealogical, social and religious concepts of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* have been studied from different viewpoints.²² Despite a divide in opinion among scholars as to the structural unity of the Introduction and the main body of the text, it is commonly agreed that the conception of the Introduction is of the ‘Caucasian scale’ and that it serves the purpose of establishing the idea of the genetic unity of the Caucasian peoples.²³

aimed at the creation of a myth of the provenance of the Georgian people and through this establishing a solid foundation for Georgian self-consciousness (identity)” (პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი, p. 133).

²¹ პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი, p. 136.

²² See ზ. ალექსიძე, “ამზავი ქართლისა და ნათესავისა მათისა” [Z. Aleksidze, “The Story of Kartli and of Its People”], in: ამიერკავკასიის ისტორიის პრობლემები, რედ. ა. აფაქიძე [Problems of the History of the Trans-Caucasus, ed. A. Apakidze], Tbilisi, 1991, pp. 79-83; დ. მუსხელიშვილი, საქართველოს ისტორიული გეოგრაფიის ძირითადი საკითხები [D. Muskhelishvili, Main Questions of Historical Geography of Georgia], vol. II, Tbilisi, 1999; რ. გორდეზიანი, ქართული თვითშეგნების ჩამოყალიბების პრობლემა [The Problem of Building Georgian Self-Consciousness], Tbilisi, 1993; ზ. კიკნაძე, ქართლი გაქრისტიანების გზაზე: ადამიანები და სიწმინდეები [Z. Kiknadze, Georgia on its way to Christianisation: Humans and Relics] (ქართული ერთობა და მისი იდენტობა: იდეები, სიმბოლოები, პერცეფციები [Georgian Community and its Identity: Ideas, Symbols, Perceptions], II), Tbilisi, 2009; მ. ჩხარტიშვილი, ქართული ეთნიკ რელიგიური მოქცევის ეპოქაში [M. Chkhartishvili, Georgian Ethnic in the Epoch of Religious Conversion] (ქართული ერთობა და მისი იდენტობა: იდეები, სიმბოლოები, პერცეფციები [Georgian Community and Its Identity: Ideas, Symbols, Perceptions], 3), Tbilisi, 2009; პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი.

²³ Cf. “It is Targamos, father of the Caucasian peoples, not Haos that Leonti Mroveli’s list of the peoples is oriented at; [...] *Kartlis Tskhovreba* aims at demonstrating the original ge-

Historians are to trace the origins of the ethnogenetic conception introduced by Leonti Mroveli, as well as to identify the motivation of the age order of Targamos' descendants and establish the actual (functional) or symbolic implication of this scheme;²⁴ it is their task to determine whether Mroveli's reconstruction of the ancient period of Georgian history was shaped by the trends of 'Biblisation' of Targamos and his association with the 'representer' of legendary Urartu;²⁵ whether Leonti Mroveli's attempt for determining the ethnic origin of Georgians and establishing their place in the world community of ethnoses marked a new stage in the process of a 'ethnocultural identity' formation and if so, when the transition was to happen.²⁶

These issues, although debatable to some extent, do not question the common-Caucasian conception of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, they rather specify the way Leonti Mroveli understood them (or as he wanted to present them) within the unity of 'all Caucasians'. It is therefore that he 'changed' the location of Caucasian ethnoses on the ethnogenetic map of Late Antiquity linking them to Targamos, their common ancestor.

It is known that ethnogenetic maps developed in the religious historiography of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages assign Kartvelian ethnoses to different ethnarchs. *The Jubilees* and Judaistic tradition, and Flavius Josephus in particular, regarded Iberians to be the offspring of the Japhethian branch identifying them with the descendants of Tubal;²⁷ yet Hippolytus of Rome, Julius Africanus and the lists they provided did not associate Iberians with Tubal but with Tarshish and assigned them to a different geographical domain.²⁸ Such genealogical shifts were more commonly applied to little-known ethnoses

netic kinship of ethnoses living in the Caucasus" (გორდეზიანი, ქართული თვითშეგნების ჩამოყალიბების პრობლემა, p. 9).

24 According to this section of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, Z. Aleksidze produced a thorough analysis of the cosmographic picture presented by Leonti Mroveli highlighting its coherence manifested in the inheritance of the father's property by the eldest son: hence the largest and the best parts of the patrimony are assigned to the eldest sons: Haos, the eldest son of Targamos, Mtskhetos, the eldest son of Kartlos and Uplos, the eldest son of Mtskhetos (აღუესიძე, "ამბავი ქართლისა და ნათესავისა მათისა," p. 81).

25 გორდეზიანი, ქართული თვითშეგნების ჩამოყალიბების პრობლემა, pp. 6-10.

26 პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი, p. 162.

27 Cf. Flavius Josephus Θάβηλος τὸς Ἰβήρας (P. Müllenhoff, "Über die römische Weltkarte und Chronographie," in: *idem, Deutsche Altertumskunde*, III, Berlin, 1892, pp. 266) and its old Georgian translation: 'Tubal gives origin to Tubalians, now called Iberians' (ქართული თარგმანის ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, გამოკვეთვა, p. 103).

28 For the interpretations of different versions of diamerisms, and a different ethnogenetic tree as per the versions provided by Flavius Josephus, Julius Africanus and by Hippolytus of Rome and Sextus, see Müllenhoff, "Über die römische Weltkarte und Chronographie"; Gutschmid, "Untersuchungen über den Διαμερισμὸν τῆς γῆς," pp. 585-717; S. Krauß, "Zur

when the historiography of the later periods often provided a different interpretation of the source.²⁹

It appears that with the aim of establishing the common-Caucasian idea, Leonti Mroveli used a method commonly used in religious historiography, which implied a shift of the place of an ethnos on the family tree of the Bible or its subjective interpretation offering his own vision of the Caucasian ethnogenetic map. Despite being aware of the previous versions present in religious historiography, he refused to copy any of them but rather created a new version consistent with his own historical conception and presented Caucasian eponyms, including Kartlos and Haos, as brothers. Apart from that, he identified their father Targamos not as the son of Gomer as was accepted in various versions of religious historiography, but as the son of Tarshish, the latter being associated with the Iberians in some of the versions of diamerisms.³⁰

It seems probable that Leonti Mroveli had to make such connection or shift to enable a sequential description of the adventure of his ancestor from the Tower of Babel to his time (11th century). He needed it to demonstrate how the genetic ancestor of the Georgians first emerged from the ruins of Babel and what stages he had to go through before the sacralised history of Noah's offspring developed into the history of *our kin*.

Zahl der biblischen Völker," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 16 (1906), pp. 33-48.

29 According to S. Krauß ("Zur Zahl der biblischen Völker," pp. 43-46), Iberians lack of a permanent place on the Biblical tree due to Jerome. In his work *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (CCL 72: 1-56), Jerome largely follows Africanus' version, yet for the naming of certain ethnoses he prefers a list provided by Flavius Josephus. Jerome commented certain texts especially those containing lists of little known ethnoses and geographical place names. To him assigns Krauß a comment that later caused controversy regarding the identification of Iberians mentioned in diamerisms. This change applies to one phrase from the list of the descendants of Japheth: Tubal, a quo Iberi (Tubal from whom [descend] Iberians). That the Iberians of Tubal descent meant the Caucasian Iberians was without doubt even for the authors before Jerome; it is evident from the geographical or historical contexts in which Flavius Josephus, Julius Africanus, Eustathius of Antioch and others placed Tubal and Iberians. Jerome misunderstood the text associating the Iberians descending from Tubal with the Iberians of the Pyrenees and provided the following comment: Tubal, a quo Iberi, qui vocantur Hispani (Tubal from whom descend Iberians called the Spanish).

30 For the possible shift Leonti Mroveli made on the ethnogenetic map according to the versions of religious historiography see პატარიძე, პოლიტიკური და კულტურული იდენტობანი, pp. 136-143.

5 Main Historical Stages According to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*

The above-offered interpretation of the conceptual Introduction to *Kartlis Tskhovreba* naturally raises the following question: how did Leonti Mroveli see the connection and relationship between universal and local histories in the light of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*? To my mind, not only the Introduction but the main body of the text allows for the identification of three conceptual stages of history, the unity and continuity of which ensures the conceptualisation of the history of Georgians in a Christian chronotope and the connection between universal and local histories.

5.1 *Stage of Universal History*

In the opening passages of the main text of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, Leonti Mroveli reconstructs a broad context of the beginnings of the history of Georgians, i.e. the 'images' reflecting the life of the ancestor at the stage of universal unity. According to him, Georgian history is an indispensable part of universal history: Targamos, son of Tarshish, a nephew of Japheth and grandson of Noah was a witness of the Babylonian events; following the destruction of the tower and division of languages Targamos left Babylon and settled in the Caucasus: "First let us recall that for the Armenians and Georgians, Ransians and Movkanians, Hers and Leks, Megrelians and Caucasians, there was a single father named T'argamos. This T'argamos was the son of T'arši, grandson of Iap'et', son of Noah. Now this T'argamos was a giant. After the division of tongues – when they built the tower at Babylon, and the tongues were divided there and they were scattered from there over the whole world. This T'argamos set out with his family, and he settled between the two inaccessible mountains, Ararat and Masis."³¹

The above ethnogenetic conception offered by Leonti Mroveli perfectly fits in the general frame of religious historiography: the provenance of Targamos guarantees that the order of universal history applies to local history, i.e. its establishment between Ararat and Masis and thus legitimates the offspring of Targamos.

Such connection between universal and local histories is a conceptual idea that unites texts representing different traditions of medieval religious historiography. Despite this unity each tradition attempts to bring forth different accents.

³¹ *Rewriting Caucasian History. The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles*. The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation translated with introd. and comm. by R.W. Thomson, Oxford, 1996, p. 2.

Historical narratives representing Georgian and Armenian neighbouring traditions of Christian East share the trend of embedding local history in the context of a Christian chronotope, yet each of them displays a specific purpose: Armenian historians are more interested in the earliest stage of history coinciding with the time of Babylon, while Georgian historiography is more concerned with a later stage of the Caucasian unity.

In his work, Moses Khorenat'si, referred to as the father of history, begins the narration about the ancestor from the deepest layers of universal history thus creating a solid sacral foundation for legitimising the history of his people. It is with the construction of the Tower of Babel rather than with the ruins of Babel that he associates the forefather of the Armenians. He claims that the forefather of the Armenians, giant Hayk, son of Biblical T'orgom showed an exceptional vigour during the construction of the Tower of Babel. Hayk liberated his people from Nimrod's slavery and led them to their true homeland.³² Being 'partakers' of universal history, Hayk and his son, Aramaneak, the Armenians' eponymous ancestor, guarantee that Armenia, the place where he and his descendants settled, is sacralised not only by ethnic origin and language, but also by all the other attributes, the division of which is featured in the diamerisms. It is the family tree of Hayk that connects local (Armenian) history with universal history. Cf. "This Hayk, son of T'orgom, son of T'iras, son of Gomer, son of Yaphet, was the ancestor of the Armenians; and these were his families and offspring and their land of habitation. And afterward they began, he says, to multiply and fill the land."³³

5.2 *Stage of Regional History*

After reconstructing universal history, Leonti Mroveli continues with the reconstruction of a regional context, which is smaller in scale. He describes the dispersion of the descendants (his children and grandchildren) of the common genetic ancestor across the Caucasus. Thus the common Caucasian idea and the 'lifestyle' of the people carrying this idea seem to be the main subject of interest for Leonti Mroveli and the Georgian historiography, in general. Hence a more detailed and diligent rendering of the dispersion of the descendants of Targamos across the Caucasian region highlighting ethnic, territorial and common linguistic characteristics by the systemiser of the history of *our kin*.

32 Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, ed. R.W. Thomson, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 65-92.

33 Ibid., p. 92.

"His family was large and innumerable because from his many wives he had sons and daughters, and children and grandchildren of his sons and of his daughters. For he lived for 600 years. And the land of Ararat and Masis was no longer sufficient. Now the land which fell to him by lot – this is the border of his land: to the east, the sea of Gurgin; to the west, the Pontus sea; to the south, the sea of Oret'i; and to the north, the Caucasus mountain."³⁴

Leonti Mroveli singles out the following eight most illustrious characters among the descendants of Targamos: Haos, K'art'los, Bardos, Movakan, Lek, Heros, Kavkas and Egros. The brothers settle in the Caucasus by acknowledging the age order, more specifically the hegemony of Hayk, the eldest son.³⁵ Each of them, including Kartlos, inherits land from the father, multiplies and starts his own genealogical branch.³⁶ Yet, at that stage, the descendants of Kartlos, the Georgians' eponym, were not *our kin* in the sense of Leonti Mroveli. Kartlos continues a sacral ethnogenetic line of Targamos through his children and later his grandchildren dividing their patrimony according to Targamos' 'principle of heredity,'³⁷ yet his offspring from Kartlos represents not

34 *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 3.

35 According to this section of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, Z. Aleksidze produced a thorough analysis of Leonti Mroveli's 'principle of heredity' highlighting its coherence manifested in the inheritance of the father's property by the eldest son: hence the largest and best parts of the patrimony are assigned to the eldest sons: Haos, the eldest son of Targamos; Mtskhetos, the eldest son of Kartlos and Uplos, the eldest son of Mtskhetos (ალექსიძე, "ამბავი ქართლისა და წათესავისა მათისა," pp. 79-83).

36 "Among his sons eight men became renowned, powerful and famous giants. Their names are these: the first was called Haos, the second K'art'los, the third Bardos, the fourth Movakan, the fifth Lek, the sixth Heros, the seventh Kavkas, the eighth Egros. These eight were giants. But the biggest giant of them all was Haos; for there had never been such a one, neither before the flood nor after, in stature, power, and courage. The land of Ararat and Masis was no longer sufficient, so T'argamos divided the country and his family between these eight giants. Half of his family and the better half of his land he gave to Haos; and to the (other) seven he gave their portion according to their merit. He led the seven northwards and shared out the lands according to their worth. To K'art'los he gave and appointed as boundary: from the east Heret'i and the river Berduji; from the west the Pontus sea; from the south the mountain which runs along that same river Berduji and the mountain which runs to the west, whose source passes towards the north and joins the Mtkuari, and the mountain which runs between K'laqet'i and Tao as far as the sea. From the north the boundary (was) Gado, a small mountain which goes down as a branch from the Caucasus and whose point reaches the end of Gado, which they now call Lixi. And all (the land) between their boundaries he gave to K'art'los. [...] Now Hayk inherited his entire patrimony with its boundaries as described. He was lord of the seven brothers, and they remained subject to the giant Nebrot', who was the first to reign over the whole world" (*Rewriting Caucasian History*, pp. 3-4, 6).

37 Cf. "Now Mc'xet'os, who was the most gigantic of his brothers, stayed in the domains of his father K'art'los, which they now call Armazi. He built a city between the junction of the

the land of Kartli, but the land of Targamosians, to whom the common ancestor of the Caucasians allotted a domain within distinct historical boundaries.

During the lifetime of their father, the descendants of Mtskhetos, the eldest son of Kartlos, lived peacefully together as they shared common defence interests,³⁸ but with the death of the father they became driven by an endless enmity and rivalry. Despite recognising Mtskheta as their capital, they had neither a king nor any other attribute that would identify their unity and single them out from other ethnoses. Their ethnic and territorial unity at that stage was of the Caucasian scale.³⁹

This phase of common Caucasian dimension lasted for long with Targamosians having to jointly resist the Khazars, Persians and other foreign ethnoses or make deals letting peoples of other ethnic backgrounds, e.g. the Jews persecuted by King Nebuchadnezzar inhabit Kartli, etc.⁴⁰ This is how peoples of different ethnic origins ended up together in the land assigned to Kartlos, which 'naturally' resulted in the variety of languages spoken in Kartli. The diverse population inhabiting Kartli displayed a surprising ability of communication, each person mastering at least six languages. Cf.: "Now all these peoples in K'art'li became so mixed that six languages were spoken in K'art'li: Arme-

Mtkuari and the Aragvi, and named it Mc'xet'a. Furthermore he held the land from Tp'ilisi and from the Aragvi as far as the sea of Sper on the west. He was governor and lord over his four brothers, and the four were subject to him" (*Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 11).

38 Cf. "Until the death of Mc'xet'os all these families descended from T'argamos were on friendly terms with each other. They were possessed by fear of the descendants of Nebrot', and thought that the latter would seek (vengeance) for the blood of Nebrot'. So they hastened to defend their fortified cities out of fear of the descendants of Nebrot'" (*Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 12).

39 Cf. "Now when Mc'xet'os, the son of K'art'los, died, jealousy fell between the sons of K'art'los. They began to fight and quarrel with each other. For they did not obey Up'los, son of Mc'xet'os, nor did they call him lord who had been left on the throne of K'art'los – because the lordship of the descendants of K'art'los had been given him by his father. They began to fight and quarrel with each other, and they prolonged their mutual antagonism. At one time two families from among them would rise up against one, and some of the others would give the latter aid. Or again some would oppose each other and different ones would lend help. At another time peace would be made between them, and then they would again fall into disorder and strife. Such a state of affairs continued for a long time between them. None among them became pre-eminent or most famous, but from place to place (different) leaders appeared. Whoever was at Mc'xet'a, he became leader over all the others. They did not name him king or *erist'avi*, but called him *mamasaxlisi*. And he was peace-maker and judge of the other descendants of K'art'los. For the city of Mc'xet'a had become the greatest of all, and they called it the capital city" (*Rewriting Caucasian History*, pp. 12-13).

40 Cf. *Rewriting Caucasian History*, pp. 13-21.

nian, Georgian, Xazar, Syrian, Hebrew, and Greek. All the kings of Georgia, (and) the men and the women, knew these languages.”⁴¹

5.3 *Local (National) Stage*

After a long period of intraregional, ‘fraternal’ strife over hegemony on the one hand and dynamic foreign relations (with Greeks, Persians, Khazars and Jews) on the other, a new phase starts in the history of the Kartlosians: they separate from the common Caucasian domain of the Targamosians. Leonti Mroveli reconstructs the history of *our kin*, i.e. the immediate ancestors of the Georgians from the reign of King Parnavaz. This period marks the onset of the national history of the Georgians, its new structuring element being the common Georgian language.⁴² Unlike the previous stage, now Kartli, inhabited by Targamos’ descendants and other peoples, has acquired linguistically determined distinct boundaries. According to Leonti Mroveli, the Kartlosians abandoned Armenian, the language of their hegemonic elder brother, which was the first among the six languages spoken in Kartli at the stage of common regional identity⁴³ and spread the Georgian language. The latter developed not only from the tongue of the Kartlosians, but from [the languages of] all peoples inhabiting Kartli in those times. Cf. “Up to this time the language of the descendants of K’art’los in which they conversed had been Armenian. But when these innumerable nations had come together in K’art’li, then the Georgians abandoned the Armenian tongue. From all these nations was created the Georgian language.”⁴⁴

Leonti Mroveli’s narrative about the origin and function of the Georgian language is justly considered a puzzle. Moreover, it has so far escaped close attention from scholars. In this regard, Winfried Boeder’s arguments prove to be an exception. The German scholar was the first to point out the important role of Georgian as ‘the symbol of national sovereignty’ in Mroveli’s complex scheme. He distinguished between several stages in this language myth and

41 *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 23.

42 Cf. “Die Sprache bekommt also nach Leonti Mroveli Geschichtsverständnis erst jetzt eine eigene, identitätsstiftende Funktion” (Boeder, “Sprache und Identität,” p. 74).

43 Cf. “Then King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. The Jews who fled from there came to Georgia, and requested from the *mamasaxlisi* of Mc’xet’a territory in return for tribute. He gave (a place) and settled them on the Aragvi, at a spring which was called Zanavi. They held the land under tribute, and because of the tribute it is now called Xerk. Up to this time the language of the descendants of K’art’los in which they conversed had been Armenian. But when these innumerable nations had come together in K’art’li, then the Georgians abandoned the Armenian tongue. From all these nations was created the Georgian language” (*Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 12).

44 *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 21.

described them by drawing precise typological parallels.⁴⁵ Boeder initiated the conceptualisation of Georgian as an identity marker of *our kin*, the latter being refilled with a new meaning.⁴⁶ The legitimisation of this status of Georgian is associated, first of all, with King Parnavaz. Cf. “This P’arnavaz was the first king in K’art’li from among the descendants of K’art’los. He extended the Georgian language, and no more was a different language spoken in K’art’li except Georgian. And he created the Georgian script.”⁴⁷

6 Conclusion

This paper does not aim to analyse the stories of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* by applying historical methodology, but attempts to bring to light the concept underlying Leonti Mroveli’s work. I believe the study of Mroveli’s narrative against the religious historiographical model of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as reflected in ‘canonical’ (paradigmatic) texts about the division of Biblical peoples and languages may lead us to distinguish between the following three stages at which the history of Georgia was conceptualised as an integral part of the sacralised Biblical history – i.e. the life of *our kin* was ‘established’, and hence legitimated:

- a. The universal unity of mankind – the stage of universal history;
- b. Ethnic and territorial unity – the stage of the regional history;
- c. Ethnic, territorial and linguistic unity – the stage of local (national) history.

45 “Er (sc. Mroveli) spricht in seinem Bericht über die Anfänge Georgiens einen wichtigen Grundzug der georgischen Geschichte an, nämlich die wesentliche Rolle der Sprache als Merkmal nationaler Eigenständigkeit. Der georgische Einheitsstaat ist in ethnischer und sprachlicher Hinsicht das Ergebnis eines historischen Prozesses der sich in drei Stufen vollzieht: zuerst stammesmäßige, räumliche und sprachliche Einheit; dann stammesmäßige, räumliche und sprachliche Trennung; und schließlich Bildung einer neuen räumlichen und sprachlichen Einheit, nämlich Kartli und seine Sprache” (Boeder, “Sprache und Identität,” p. 75).

46 When analysing Leonti Mroveli’s narrative of King Myrian (Cf. *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 77 “He loved the Georgians, forgot the Persian tongue, and learned the Georgian language), Boeder writes: “Daß die Sprache von nun an ein Zeichen der Verbundenheit mit den Georgiern ist, geht aus daraus hervor, daß ein späterer König sc. Mirian, der halb persischer, halb georgischer Abstammung ist, die Kontinuität georgischen Königtums durch die Ehrung des Gedächtnisses an Parnawas, den ersten König Georgiens und “Schöpfer” der georgischen Schriftsprache, symbolisiert und ebenso seine Liebe zu den Georgiern durch Sprachwechsel symbolisch zum Ausdruck bringt” (Boeder, “Sprache und Identität,” p. 75).

47 *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 37.

Revealing links between local (national) and universal histories, or more importantly, highlighting the underlying sequential continuity appears to be a common historical trend among peoples of the Medieval Christian East. As mentioned, from the 1st century AD (Favius Josephus' Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία) this continuity became a central concept, a fundamental topos structuring the identity of an ethnos. It was important in all traditions to fit in this universal scheme and substantiate the immediate participation of their eponymous ancestor in the initial layer of history – the events sacralised in the Bible (“the succession of generations”).

Fragments of diamerisms found in medieval Georgian historical narratives reveal that Georgian historiographers were familiar with them via Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian and Armenian versions and successfully used them to highlight the unity between the universal and their national (local) histories – the life of *our kin*.