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THE IMPORTANCE OF ROADS AND JOURNEYS IN MEDIEVAL GEORGIA¹

Georgians have been travelling since ancient times for various reasons: 1) trade, 2) seeking better conditions for life and professional career, 3) education, 4) establishing diplomatic relations, 5) participation in ecumenical councils, 6) visiting holy places, or because of 7) marriage, 8) confrontation with the official power, which in some cases expelled disobedient subjects out of the country, 9) slave-trading, which was spread in late medieval Georgia.

Georgians have been traveling inside and outside the country by land and sea routes. Despite the dangers that were always present on the roads, traveling never ceased.

Georgia was crossed by roads and bridges, which were a subject of special care. Evidence about it is preserved in the collection of laws (*dasturlamali*) (compiled in 1707-1709) (*Georgian Monuments of Law*, 1965, *Dasturlamali*, 1703-1724).

"The road of peace" - the most frequent expression in the sources, however, was a luxury and more exception in reality.

One reason for traveling can be traced to ancient times. This is establishing diplomatic relations with foreign countries. In the early 3rd c. BC, the king of Kartli Parnavaz "sent an envoy to the king Antiochus of Assyria with many gifts, promised him service and asked him for support against Greeks" (*Kartlis Tskhovreba*, 1996, p. 56).

Being located at a crossroads, Georgia established relations regardless of the religious affinity of the partners. Various sources confirm the alliance of Georgians with Turkic Huns as well as

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Khazars in the later period. It's supposed that the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali (5th-early 6th cc.) allied with Huns against Persians (Alasania, 2003). In the early 13th c., the Georgian king Tamar, considering herself "the king of the West and the East" (Alasania, 2003), says in her poem that she is "the owner of the territory between the north and the south" (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 354). As a result of such a balanced policy, in the 11th c. Georgians could enter Jerusalem with unfolded banners (Peradze, 1995, p. 30) (Jacques de Vitry). They were granted other privileges as well, which they preserved for a long time. According to the evidence of 1507, "Georgians, visiting Jerusalem pay neither tax nor tribute" (Peradze, 1995, p. 52).

Early evidence about traveling is connected with religion. Elios and Longinos were the people, who were sent from Georgia, witnessed crucifixion, and brought Jesus' tunic to Mtskheta (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, pp. 64-65). According to the legend, the first Christian king Mirian found a place for the Cross monastery during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Since the Christian religion was restricted and persecuted in Georgia for most of its history and conditions for religious activities were unfavorable, many religious figures preferred to live outside the country.

Religious and cultural centers were founded in Palestine, on Black Sea Mountain near Antioch, in Syria. The Petritsoni monastery in Bulgaria gathered the Georgian communities around and attracted pilgrims. One should mention the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali (5th-6th cc.) and his family members, who visited holy places - "mother and sister Khuaramze pleaded Vakhtang to bring them to Jerusalem to pray... together with his mother and sister Vakhtang went to Jerusalem. They visited all holy places" (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, pp. 168-169). The famous religious figure Grigol from Khandzta went to "the second Jerusalem", which was Constantinople, "worshiped the holy cross ... visited all holy churches"; he also "found his friend going to Jerusalem and asked

him to bring regulations of Saint Sabas" (monastery). Grigol was followed by Ilarion, another Georgian, who spent much of his time abroad, visited Palestine, Bithynia, Rome, and Byzantium, and achieved fame (Life of Grigol Khandzteli, 1982, p. 238).

In the mid-11th c., 60 Georgians lived in the monastery on the Black Mountain. In some cases, Georgians reached high positions outside the country. According to the Georgian source, metropolitan of Nicomedia, Giorgi was Georgian. Georgian Theophile became "Metropolitan in Tarsus" (Life of Grigol Khandzteli, 1982, p. 465). By the Georgian chronicler (12th c.), David the Builder "filled up the churches in Greece, on the saint mountain, Borghaleti, Asureti, Cyprus, Black Mountain, Palestine, the sepulcher of our lord, Jesus Christ, built a monastery on Sinai Mountain" (Life of Grigol Khandzteli, 1982, p. 270). Tamar told her envoys the following words: "start from Alexandria, Libya, Sinai Mountain... no need to mention Jerusalem" (Life of Grigol Khandzteli, 1982, p. 403; pp. 366-67). Georgian monks who lived abroad tried to help young Georgians who stayed in their homeland. Giorgi the Athonite, the public figure of the 11th c., brought 80 young people to the west for education (Life of Grigol Khandzteli, 1982, p. 479). For the same goal, David the Builder sent 40 people. However, the number of newcomers was modest, and Giorgi the Athonite complains: "Our country was far from this country and just a few educated people came. But even those who came soon left and abandoned this magnificent church" (Life of Giorgi the Athonite, p. 481).

The founding of monasteries abroad somehow encouraged the emigration of the best people. But since the level of communication was low, migration was not viewed as a threat to the nation. After a while, Georgia even benefitted since in those "centers intensive" scholarly and cultural work thrived (Metreveli, 1995, p. 57). The Georgian churches abroad were a bridge between the Georgian and world cultures.

Georgians had different reasons for leaving the country. According to the scarce information from various sources, some mi-

grants enjoyed splendid careers abroad. One should mention the commander-in-chief in Byzantium Pharasmanes of Iberia, and also the commander-in-chief, philosopher Bacurios, a member of the royal family who was forced to leave his homeland. Byzantine commander Pharasmanes of Colchis, descendants of Gurgen, members of the royal dynasty - Peran, his son Bacurius, nephew Phasa the Iberian (6th c.), who spent much time in Byzantium. Liparit Baghvashi, fighting on the Byzantine side, was seized by Turks and liberated later without any ransom (mid-11th c.). One can find evidence about the Byzantine Emperor Basil II, who took Grigol Bakurianis-dze, Tevdade, and Fers - brothers to Byzantium (11th c.) (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 224). The first, "the grand domestic of the West", was the founder of the Petritsoni Monastery.

A contemporary of Shota Rustaveli, the famous poet Chakhrukhadze undertook a wonderful travel. He visited Iran, India, China, Khazar Khaganate, and Russia and went to Constantinople by sea. From there, he visited "Maghreb countries", "visited cities, seashores, Egypt, went to Arabian Countries, and via Yemen and Baghdad (Chakhrukhadze, 1937, pp. 33-34)¹⁸ came to Bardah".

From there, he sent an envoy to Georgia.

Traveling became more frequent in the late Middle Ages. However, as a rule, it was combined with other goals (diplomatic, trade). In the late Middle Ages, travelers even described their travels. One, who did it, was Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani, the Georgian king Vakhtang's uncle, who was sent to France but also visited Italy and other European countries. Although his diplomatic mission was unsuccessful, he left the description of his travel in 1713-1716. By the way, that was not Georgians' first visit to Europe. In the 17th c., an envoy of king Teimuraz I could not go to Rome but founded a printing house where the first Georgian books were published.

In mid-18th c., the ecclesiastical figure and writer Timothy Gabashvili visited Constantinople, Athens, and Jerusalem, where he met high officials of the sultan and patriarchs.

In the late 18th c., the ecclesiastical figure and writer Jonah Gedevanishvili came to Istanbul, from where he went to the east and visited various places, moved to Europe, and stayed for a long time in Moldova, Kiev, and Moscow. He described Istanbul, the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Sinai Mountain, Vienna, cities of Poland, Moldova, and Russia, and traditions of the people.

Rafiel Danibegashvili, a merchant, and traveler, visited India 5 times. The description of his third travel is preserved in the Russian version. His travel was combined with a diplomatic mission.

The Georgian writer and diplomat Giorgi Avalishvili visited the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Palestine with a diplomatic mission in 1818-20. His route was Tbilisi – Crimea - Constantinople - Alexandria - Jerusalem - Cyprus - Tarsus - Kayseri - Erzurum - Kars - Shulaveri - Tbilisi.

Traitors of the King would be expelled from the country. David the Builder (12th c.) seized Ivane, the son of Liparit, "jailed him for two years, and sent him to Greece". Tamar's chronicler informs the reader about the members of the same family, who were expelled by the Georgian king "to Macedonia, which is in Greece" (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 250) since they had killed two brothers of Anthony, the bishop of Chkondidi. Later, they were killed in a battle against the Kipchaks (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 397).

Some oppositionists left the country voluntarily. When the Georgian king Bagrat IV was enthroned in 1027, "some nobles of Tao went to Greece: Vache, the son of Kariche and bishop of Bana - Jonah and great number of the nobles of Tao together with them" (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 226).

Women from the upper class left the country when they married foreigners. The daughter of the Georgian king Demetre (12th c.), who married the Kiev prince, traveled much of the way by sea. Tamar's granddaughter, also Tamar, known in Turkey as Gurji Khatun, was the beloved spouse of the Rum Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw II and had close contacts with Mevlana Jalāl al-Dīn

Muḥammad Rūmī. She initiated the creation of his portrait and the building of his green tomb. The list of ladies, who married foreigners, is rather long.

Since ancient times, Georgian merchants have been moving throughout the world. Trade never ceased in Georgia, even in the most challenging times. The merchant Zankan Zorababel was sent to the north to bring the Suzdal prince, the first consort of the Georgian king Tamar (12th c.) - "Head of the merchants Zankan Zorababel was summoned... changing horses he came there and brought fast the young man, handsome and good-looking..." (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 1996, p. 329).

The nobles were actively involved in trade activities. One can mention the head of treasury, Kakha Toreli (13th c.), who was "sent to Hulagu-khan... when Tatars took Baghdad" (Georgian historical documents of 9th-13th cc., 1984, p. 146). Alongside the diplomatic missions, he made some purchases because certain goods were cheaper to buy in that location for trading purposes. Georgians frequently visited Kaffa in the 13th-14th cc. Some people remained there. One could also meet Georgians in Genoese (Beradze, 1989, pp. 96, 104-105).

Since the 16th-17th cc, Georgia has had very active trade relations with the Near East. Georgians established contacts with world trade via Iran and the European market via the Ottoman Empire.

Georgian merchants brought to Iran raw silk, vine, fruits, meat, and horses known as "gürju"... They brought to the Ottoman state honey wax, rice, linen, raw silk, thread, hemp, bulls' leather, and slaves...

Although there was some reduction in customs duties in the 18th century to encourage trade along the Darial road to Russia, trade relations with the Middle East were still dominant. Georgian merchants visited the cities of Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, Iran, the Ottoman State, Iraq, and India (Katsitadze, 1992, pp. 75-79).

The Georgian army incessantly moved. However, its primary