ELITES AND "ELITES"

TRANSFORMATIONS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN POST-SOVIET ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

ASCN PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET
AN INITIATIVE OF GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

Edited by
Yulia Antonyan

ASCN PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET
AN INITIATIVE OF GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

Elites and "Elites": Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia

Edited by
Yulia Antonyan

YEREVAN
2016

UDC 316

Elites and "Elites": Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia

This volume is the result of a joint, Armenian-Georgian anthropological survey of the concept of "elites" in contemporary Georgia and Armenia. The survey has embraced a set of topics related to the process of the formation of new national elites in the course of the construction of the nation-states, genealogy and typology of new elites, mechanisms and principles of organization of power, old and new hierarchical structures, and their continuity with the cultural heritage of previous periods of history. Being both very much alike and very much distinctive from each other, Armenia and Georgia have developed social structures similar by form, yet discrepant through their inner interplay of meanings, interpretations and correlations of the parts of these structures. This study of elites, elitism and the elitist involves different social (and also ethnic and religious) groups, which have been affected by the process of reconfiguration of social structures.

The present study was conducted with the support of the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN). ASCN is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus (primarily Georgia and Armenia). Its different activities foster the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building training and scholarships. The programme emphasizes the advancement of individuals who, thanks to their ASCN experience, become better integrated in international academic networks. The ASCN programme is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). It was initiated and is supported by Gebert Rüf Stiftung.

Language editor: Nazareth Seferian
Cover photo: © Zaven Khachikyan

ISBN 978-9939-0-1950-5

Էլիտաներ և «էլիտաներ». Սոցիալական կառուցվածքի փոխակերպումները հետխորհրդային Հայաստանում և Վրաստանում

Ժողովածուն կազմվել է հայաստանյան-վրաստանյան համատեղ մարդաբանական հետազոտությունների արդյունքում և վերաբերում է արդի Հայաստանում և Վրաստանում «էլիտա» հասկացությանը: Հետազոտության շրջանակներում քննարկվում են թեմաներ, որոնք առնչվում են ազգային պետության կառուցման ընթացքում նոր ազգային էլիտաների ձևավորմանը, ծագումնաբանությանը և տիպաբանությանը, իշխանության գործածման մեխանիզմներին և սկզբունքներին, հին և նոր հիերարքիկ կառուցվածքներին, ինչպես նաև նրանց փոխկապակցվածությանը և շարունակականությունը պատմական անցյալում ձևավորված մշակութային ժառանգության համատեքստում: Հայաստանը և Վրաստանը, ունենալով բազմաթիվ նմանություններ և միաժամանակ առանձնահատկություններ, ձևավորել են արտաքուստ նման սոցիալական կառույցներ, որոնք այնուհանդերձ տարբերվում են միմյանցից ներհամակարգային իմաստների փոխհարաբերությամբ, կառույցների միջև փոխկապակցվածությամբ և մեկնաբանություններով:

Էլիտաների, էլիտաների տեսության և էլիտարության մասին այս հետազոտությունը ընդգրկում է տարբեր սոցիալական (ինչպես նաև էթնիկ և կրոնական) խմբեր, որոնք որևէ կերպ ազդեցություն են ունեցել արդի հայաստանյան և վրաստանյան սոցիալական կառուցվածքի կազմավորման գործընթացներին:

ელიტები და “ელიტები”: სოციალური სტრუქტურის ტრანსფორმაცია პოსტ-საბჭოთა სომხეთსა და საქართველოში

წინამდებარე გამოცემა არის თანამედროვე სომხეთსა და საქართველოში კონცეპტ “ელიტის” ერთობლივი სომხურ-ქართული ანთროპოლოგიური კვლევის შედეგი. კვლევა მოიცავს საკითხთა მთელ რიგს, რომლებიც უკავშირდება ერი-სახელმწიფოების ფორმირების პროცესში ახალი ნაციონალური ელიტების ფორმირებას, გენეალოგიასა და ტიპოლოგიას; ძალაუფლების ორგანიზაციის მექანიზმებსა და პრინციპებს, ძველ და ახალ იერარქიულ სტრუქტურებს შორის უწყვეტობას ისტორიის წინა პერიოდების კულტურულ მემკვიდრეობასთან. ერთდროულად ძალიან მსგავსმა და ძალიან განსხვავებულმა სომხეთმა და საქართველომ განავითარეს, ფორმის თვალსაზრისით, ერთგვაროვანი სოციალური სტრუქტურები, თუმცა აღნიშნული სტრუქტურების ნაწილებს შორის არსებული მნიშვნელობათა შიდა მიმართებები, ინტერპრეტაციები და კორელაციები ერთმანეთისგან განსხვავებულია. ელიტების, ელიტიზმისა და ელიტისტურის (წინამდებარე) კვლევა ეხება სხვადასხვა სოციალურ (ასევე ეთნიკურ და რელიგიურ) ჯგუფებს, რომლებიც გავლენას ახდენენ სოციალური სტრუქტურის განახლებაზე.

Contents

The masters of new life? (Foreword) **(Georgi Derluguian)** 7
Introduction: Elites or "Elites"? Towards the Anthropology of
the Concept in Armenia and Georgia **(Yulia Antonyan)** 16
Part 1. ***Elitist Groups and Networks***
1.1 Elitism among Refugees in the Rural Environment: Authority,
Kinship, Social Networks and Economic Survival
(Eviya Hovhannisyan) 49
1.2 Elitist Sub-Groups among the Non-Elite: Domestic Staff in Elitist
Families (**Haykuhi Muradyan**) 70
Part 2. ***New Economic Elites***
2.1 Fighting the Smell of Kebab: New Economic Elites and Intelligentsia
in the Georgian-Turkish Borderland **(Giorgi Cheishvili)** 91
2.2 Being an "Oligarch" in the Armenian Way **(Yulia Antonyan)** 110
Part 3. ***Religion, Nationalism, Identity and Elites***
3.1 "Elites" Between Nationalism and Tradition: The Modernization
Processes in the Yezidi Community of Armenia **(Hamlet Melkumyan)**. 175
3.2 Religion and the Establishment of the New Political Elite in Late
Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia **(Ketevan Khutsishvili)** 196
Part 4. ***Post-Soviet Transformation of Soviet Elitism***
4.1 Dimensions of the Intellectual Elite in the Georgian Cultural Context
(Nino Abakelia) 217
4.2 Playing with Titles: How to be the Elite in a Socialist Way
(Tea Kamushadze) 245
Contributors 274

The Masters of New Life?
Foreword

Georgi Derluguian[1]

The main question of this volume is big and contentious. Twenty five years after the dissolution of Soviet Union, in whose hands are the levers of social power in the newly independent republics of Armenia and Georgia? The contentious part may start with the analytical understanding of social power itself. The Marxists would posit the question in their demanding wholesale manner: Who became the new ruling class and what are its dependency ties to global capitalism? In the liberal perspective informing the worldview of Western democracy-promoting agencies and their local 'civil society' partners, the question would be arguably different although equally broad: Where is the new middle class located and how could it be helped to overcome the communist legacies on the road to consolidating liberal institutions?

The authors of this volume are anthropologists and sociologists whose ethnographic methods favor micro-processes, and therefore

[1] Professor Georgi Derluguian kindly agreed to be the mentor of this project in the process of its implementation. The advice, comments and thoughts which he generously shared with the project team were extremely helpful and the project would have been worse off without them. We express our greatest gratitude to Professor Derluguian for his much appreciated contribution to this volume.

their approach brings in considerably more nuance and fluidity. Such depiction should not deter or frustrate the diplomats and policy experts. We believe that attention to social fragmentation and the enduring cultural frames provides for a more adequate depiction of the contemporary societies in Armenia and Georgia, including both their sources of vulnerability and the bases of resilience. Perhaps paradoxically, our ethnographic micro-studies reflecting the local situations in the mid-2010s in their sum suggest something *longue durée* and rather longitudinal. To put it in simpler words, in our region the transitions from communist period are still going on. For all the epochal changes since 1991, the situation overall remains too fluid, the social structures appear too disjointed and unstable to speak of a new political order which could securely embed the elites of any variety.

The field research discovers glaring or downright surprising discontinuities with the erstwhile Soviet order of things. The USSR forcefully imposed a remarkable isomorphism on its institutions and social groups (Zaslavsky 1999). From Estonia to Uzbekistan and the Russian Far East, the same Party and KGB organs enforced political rule; the economic production and exchange were rigidly directed by a hierarchy of planning agencies, industrial enterprises, and collective farms; the state-financed education, science, and arts fostered in all the fifteen republics analogous groups of 'technical' and 'creative' intelligentsia. Even the Soviet-era criminal underworld, shaped by the centralized GULAG system of prison camps, acquired an astonishing degree of homogeneity in its norms of alternative sub-culture and the unique governance institution of 'thieves-at-law' (Varese 2001).

It comes almost as an afterthought how remarkably much was

missing in the late Soviet society when compared to the social structures of its own past or the neighboring countries unaffected by the draconian Stalinist modernization. To wit, the communist USSR long ago did away with the landlords and bourgeoisie. At the same time the clergy was violently reduced and the remainder kept under strict supervision. The military officer corps could never realistically aspire to professional autonomy beyond the tactical matters which precluded military coups. The internal political stability of the USSR lasting seven decades and which the outsiders tended to call 'totalitarian' in fact was largely due to the removal or incorporation of contending elites — propertied classes, clergy, military officers, nationalist intellectuals — that elsewhere in the world generated the bulk of political contention. Of course, still there were the workers and peasants, and also the students, the quintessential rebellious youths. But modern history supplies ample evidence that this 'social dynamite' tends to remain relatively static without the 'fuse' inserted by the elites (Goodwin 2001). Those among us who had read Vladimir Lenin might recall his Bolshevik call for the party of 'professional revolutionaries' (*i.e.* the political organization of radical intelligentsia) to bring in 'socialist consciousness into the masses'. With a crucial difference in the content of ideology, this is exactly what happened for a brief moment after 1988 in the USSR and ensured the totally unexpected and mostly peaceful collapse of a nuclear superpower.

The late Soviet society everywhere registered broadly the same contradictions of class position and sociopolitical aspiration. At the top of power hierarchy was the nomenklatura of elite bureaucratic executives. As members of a formally disciplined bureaucratic

corps, they could not advance a separate political agenda let alone public grievances except in the moments of acute collective threat such as in the months leading to the removal of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 and, overtly, in the endgame of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika after 1988. But the nomenklatura surely cherished in secret their aspirations for the lifelong tenure of office (achieved *de facto* during the Brezhnev decades and disrupted after 1985 by Gorbachev's 'rejuvenation of cadres' and democratization); the executive freedom to hire and fire their subordinates; and (a total taboo dream) the right to accumulate private inheritable wealth without the fear of corruption investigation. Very ironically, the secret wishes of communist nomenklatura pointed them in the direction of becoming capitalists who own their businesses under a legal bourgeois order. The nomenklatura's mutual enforcement of ideological conformity, all the way to General Secretary himself, prevented the Soviet bureaucratic elite from acknowledging their capitalist dream even among themselves. But without a shared ideological vision of some kind, no human groups can act collectively. The Soviet ruling elite during perestroika failed to recognize their true corporate interest and therefore failed to organize for collective action. This was the main factor derailing Gorbachev's bourgeois revolution from above (Kotkin 2008). For an instructive contrast to the ideological loss of nerve and the ensuing self-dissolution of Soviet nomenklatura, see how their Chinese comrades, admittedly in a different context, turned in a concerted fashion to 'economic modernization' encouraged by their aged leader Deng Xiao-ping.

The nomenklatura, constrained by their own ossified official ideology and the now leaderless totalitarian dictatorial organization,

fell with astonishing ease in the face of popular mobilizations led by the intelligentsia. In fact, the earliest and most tremendous of such mobilizations anywhere in the USSR occurred in Armenia after the enormous public rallies of February 1988 and in Georgia after April 1989. In both instances, however, the intelligentsia counter-elites proved equally blinded by their ideology of nationalism. The Soviet-era intelligentsia consisted of two largely unequal parts. There was a numerous but unprestigious 'technical' intelligentsia of engineers, teachers, and medical doctors who in Soviet reality were essentially the more skilled variety of workers earning relatively low wages and subjected to bureaucratic despotism. Their economic grievances and status aspirations would have been addressed most fully by turning into independent professionals not unlike their Western counterparts with the diplomas in medicine and engineering. And then there was the much smaller and far more prestigious 'creative' intelligentsia of writers, filmmakers, artists, top academics and journalists. They all published their work, one way or another, and they all or nearly all aspired to an independent public voice resonating with the whole nation. The whole Eastern Europe has long lived in a rather unusual situation when poets and historians, almost by definition, were expected to become the moral and political leaders of their nations (Wachtel 2006).

Eastern Europe is also peculiar in its geopolitics (Collins 1999). Arguably it is Europe yet it is a different, less lucky kind of Europe. What actually makes the difference? Since the beginning of modernity in the sixteenth century, this region had been long dominated by the once very successful gunpowder empires of Austria, Turkey, Russia, and Persia. In the meantime the rise of capitalism

in the Atlantic Europe gradually eroded the positions of these land empires making them look obsolete and oppressive by comparison. The proximate West served both as geopolitical threat and technological high standard for emulation to the succession of imperial reformers. The communists were but the latest ruthlessly succesful of such imperial modernizers. Modernization, however, also inevitably created the educated intelligentsia whose very origin and life mission was to help lead their countries to modernity. The empires were defeated and devastated in the First World War provoking a wave of intelligentsia-led rebellions to reconstruct nations on the ruins of empires. The rebellions succeeded in institutionalizing the national states now crowding the political map of Eastern Europe. But the very same processes also institutionalized the inter-ethnic conflicts over what and who would make part of new nations (Mann 2004). The extreme violence of these struggles was durably imprinted in popular memories. When in 1988 the increasingly disoriented Moscow began losing its control as ultimate arbiter and the source of political-economic decisions, the Transcaucasus republics erupted in the furious mobilizing for self-determination. The emotions flowing from the traumas of historical memory, in a vastly overdetermined causation, outpaced any political projects associated with economic or social reforms. The communist nomenklatura was swept away by popular indignation, and the same emotionally highly charged wave swept into power the nationalist intelligentsia — or, rather, the intelligentsia dropped all other issues and became nationalist in order to lead the wave.

Was this a revolution? The answer is certainly yes, on the count of elite change. These are substantially new ruling elites, in both

their personnel and especially in their sources of power. The elements of former nomenklatura are surely still found in many important positions in Georgia and Armenia, while in Azerbaijan the descendants, relatives, and clients of the former First Secretary constitute a quasi-monarchical dynasty. But, as the American political scientist Ken Jowitt once wryly remarked, Catholic priests without the Catholic Church aren't Catholic; the communist nomenklatura without Communist party aren't communist any more (Jowitt 1992). These are precisely the individual elements and their descendants who had survived, it appears, mainly by deploying their personal connections and cannibalizing on the resources to which they had immediate access. The communist bureaucratic elite seems to have largely perished as corporate body and the once coherent social corps. Curiously, the same seems the prevalent fate of the Soviet-era black-market entrepreneurs — the notorious *tsekhoviki*, or the underground industrialists. Systematic data is yet to be gathered, but our interviews impressionistically suggest that prominent figures in this group suffered during the 1990s extraordinarily high rates of death from disease if not direct assassination. Even the mafia-like 'thieves-at-law' have been decimated during the post-Soviet transition or fled to Russia or farther to the West.

The intelligentsia suffered massive losses, too. Perhaps fewer fell victim to the assassination epidemic during the 1990s, but this is simply because so few among the intelligentsia still mattered after the end of the USSR. The intelligentsia suffered a double disaster of losing both their official incomes once provided through the state institutions and the unofficial prestige oppositional public voices who dared speak the truth to authorities. The anticommunist

counter-elite lost relevance with the disappearance of communists. In Armenia, the emotional and political momentum gained in the extremely difficult but ultimately victorious Karabagh war allowed the perestroika-era nationalist intelligentsia to endure in power for nearly a decade — until being sidelined in 1997 by the veterans of the same Karabagh war. In Georgia the 2003 revolution against Eduard Shevardnadze’s personalistic regime of nomenklatura restoration promised to become the last hooray of the once so proud and numerous intelligentsia of Tbilisi. The exceedingly young and ultra-liberal technocrats headed by Mikheil Saakashvili promised to turn the Georgian society into something completely different — only to be undermined by their internal splits, miscalculations, and another peaceful uprising of Tbilisi’s intelligentsia. Still, the story does not seem over. Such endurance of intelligentsia certainly makes Georgia very unusual in the post-Soviet sociopolitical landscapes.

As the Soviet-era elites, counter-elites, and anti-elites of Georgia and Armenia have been declining, morphing, emigrating, and altogether disappearing, the new kinds of elite made their appearance. Many of them represent what was repressed and absent from Soviet society: clergy and the wealthy property-owners. The new rich have been rising from the lower strata of society, many of them rural in origin and outlook. Who are they? What constituted their opportunities? How durable will be their ascendancy, and what might be its results? The military officers surely gained in importance, especially in post-war Armenia but also in Georgia. But so far this remains just a potentiality. More recently students and Bohemian artists showed their political potential in the Yerevan ‘electrical protests’ of June-July 2015. Likewise, it remains to be seen what could these youths do

in politics and urban culture after their spectacular initial entrance. Diaspora could have provided a completely outsider and potentially very powerful injection of elites into the post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia. The first experiences looked exceedingly promising, even brilliant, but their aftermaths became bitter and alienating. Why so? What were the barriers to the entrance of new elites from the diaspora? These are the many questions which our research project only started to tackle. There is a lot to be gained from sociological surveys, economic statistics, political analysis, or, for that matter, the muck-racking journalism. Nonetheless certain insights can be obtained only through the careful employment of ethnographic methods. This is what suggests this preliminary collection of essays.

References

1. Collins R. 1999. "Balkanization" or "Americanization": A Geopolitical Theory of Ethnic Change". Pp. 70-109 in: Macrohistory: Essays in Sociology of the Long Run. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

2. Goodwin J. No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991. New York: NYU Press.

3. Jowitt K. 1992. New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction. Berkeley: University of California Press.

4. Kotkin S. 2008. Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000. New York: Oxford University Press; Updated ed.

5. Mann M. 2004. The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing. New York: Cambridge University Press.

6. Varese F. 2001. The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

7. Wachtel A. 2006. Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

8. Zaslavsky V. 1994. The Neo-Stalinist State: Class Ethnicity & Consensus in Soviet Society, Rev. ed. New York: Routledge.

Introduction: Elites or “Elites”? Towards the Anthropology of the Concept in Armenia and Georgia

Yulia Antonyan

Goals and methodology

This volume is the result of a joint, Armenian-Georgian anthropological survey of the concept of “elites” in contemporary Georgia and Armenia. The survey has embraced a set of topics related to the process of the formation of new national elites in the course of the construction of the nation-states, genealogy and typology of new elites, mechanisms and principles of organization of power, old and new hierarchical structures, and their continuity with the cultural heritage of previous periods of history. Particular attention has been paid to the degree with which the newly-formed or transformed elites correspond to popular perceptions of the concept of elites, and how they are changing in the course of transformation of elites and the elite culture. This study of elites, elitism and the elitist involves different social (and also ethnic and religious) groups, which have been affected by the process of reconfiguration of social structures.

The research outcome is organized as a set of individual case studies, based on common theoretical presuppositions and statements. This approach is justified because of the difference of research interests and specializations of the project participants, as well as by the variety of possible approaches to the study of elites.

Therefore, we decided not to limit ourselves to the traditional power elites (mostly economic and political), but tried to enlarge the field by including elites of ethnic and social minorities, sub-elite groups, the so-called moral elites, the lost elites of the past and the imagined elites of the present, and, importantly, relationships, conflicts and other ways of interlocking of elites.

Research methods included field studies with qualitative interviews, queries and observations, analysis of discursive fields reflected in daily conversations, mass media and social networks. Questionnaires have been developed separately for each of the studies. In more detail, the methodology for each case study will be addressed in the relevant chapters of the monograph, authored by the participants of the research project (Y. Antonyan, K. Khutsishvili, H. Melkumyan, T. Kamushadze, E. Hovhannisyan, N. Abakelia, G. Cheishvili, and H. Muradyan).

Discussing the concept of the elite sociologically and anthropologically. Main stages of the sociological and anthropological study of elites

Elites as a concept, as a social unit (group, class, stratum, caste) have been studied in a sociological and anthropological perspective for more than a century, starting from the fundamental and already classic works of Mosca, Pareto, Manheim[1], up to the modern studies of concepts and phenomena of power, the bourgeoisie, aristocracy, oligarchy, intellectuals, change and conflict of elites, etc. In general,

[1] See: Mosca 1994, Pareto 1961, 1961a, Manheim 2000. A comparative analysis of the works and theories of these authors is represented in many overviews (e.g. Mills 1956), so we did not find it necessary to address them in detail in this introduction, though we will refer to some of them later in the text.

as a further analysis will demonstrate, sociology has studied elites as a part of studies of social structures by addressing their historical and modern developments in terms of a change of political regimes, and economic and political transformations in a historical perspective, in local and global senses. As to the anthropological insight, the situation is more complicated here. The concept of the elite as a separate and self-sufficient topic for research has entered into the anthropological field quite recently, although even at the outset of the discipline, the archaic and indigenous institutes of power, leadership and prestige were the focus of the academic attention of classical anthropologists (L. H. Morgan, B. Malinovski, A. Radcliff-Brown, etc.). The specifics of the anthropological field led to the accumulation of very different data on elites which have barely been analyzed through general and comparative perspectives, by collating the anthropological theory with the sociological one. Several edited volumes published quite recently discuss the concept of the elite in the anthropological perspective (Shore, Nagent 2002; Salverda, Abbink, 2013) and state the main principles and approaches of the anthropological research of elites. It should be, first, based on the research of discursive frameworks within which elites are conceptualized and constituted in different cultural contexts (Shore, Nagent 2002: 3); second, on studying and understanding elites from within, by charting the cultural dynamics and the habitus formation that perpetuate their role, dominance or acceptance (Salverda, Abbink 2013: 2-3); and, third, concentrating on factors and processes that make elites culturally determined, that is practices of maintaining dominance over the subaltern groups, the legitimation of power and leadership and reproduction of elites over time (Salverda, Abbink 2013: 3).

However, it should be noted that unlike sociologists, who seemed

to be quite at ease with the initial coherency of the concept of elites, anthropologists have always problematized it. Chris Shore, mentioning the chapters in the volume he edited and for which he wrote the introduction (Spenser), indicated the indefiniteness and mobility of this concept depending on particular cultural contexts. Our research also proves this. However, on the other hand, as he notes with reference to George Marcus, the very concept of the elite suggests that the process and phenomenon of formation of groups of power and prestige, and cultural forms of organization and practicing of power may be mapped and described. And, finally, C. Shore suggests the working definition of elites as those who occupy the most influential positions or roles in the important spheres of social life (Shore, Nugent 2002: 4). This definition does not set the elite as a particular social group, or a class, or a stratum, but on the other hand, evokes a question about how to measure the cultural relativity of the important or unimportant spheres of life.

All the pieces of study of elites in Armenia and Georgia represented in this volume are of an anthropological nature. Therefore, particular attention was paid to the specific cultural and social contexts that actualized the investigated processes and phenomena. This is the main reason why we prioritize and rely in theoretical terms on those authors who contextualize the notion of elite, elite culture and elitism, and the related social processes in historical and cultural terms. We can find the historical aspects of this contextualization in the works of M. Mann and R. Lachmann who tried to demonstrate the historical mobility and temporal and spatial embeddedness of the elite (Mann 1986, Lachmann 2000).

M. Mann's study shows how the power and power networks were

organized in different historical periods and different political and cultural environments, including both stable and unstable ones, such as revolutions and wars. Mann's idea about societies as organized power networks happened to be useful for understanding how the power elites of contemporary Georgia and Armenia function, how different types of elites use various types of power, forming networks, conflicting, interacting and interlocking. Richard Lachmann studied interaction and the structures of elites in different historical and cultural contexts, and emphasized the concept of conflict of elites, meaning a conflict of their interests, collisions and fight of elites, which he believes were the main driving force for the changes and transformations of the social and political structures of a society. According to him, elites and not classes or individuals are the main agents of history. Lachmann points out that "elite conflict occurs when an elite attempts to undermine another elite's capacity to extract resources from non-elites" (Lachmann 2000: 11). His case study of social and economic processes in Florence of the Renaissance, which encompasses the analysis of oligarchic government and oligarchic power evokes a set of parallels with the current situation in Armenia and Georgia, despite the differences of epochs.

The other concepts of power elites are also very important for our research. Thus, M. Mann drew his concept of elites on four types of power, also identified by him: military, political, ideological and economic, each being attached to a particular type of elite. (Mann 1986: 2). C. Wright Mills in his study of the "Elites of Power" tried to answer the question: who is the power elite? Like Mann, he too identified three "higher circles" of society, i.e. economy, political order and military order. He emphasized the cumulative nature of

wealth, power and prestige as the main outcomes of the elitist status. As to the social nature of the elite, C. Wright Mills considers it to be a social and psychological entity, thus trying to avoid using the concepts of classes, social groups or estates. According to him, the unity of elites is not a simple unity of institutions; men and institutions are always related (Mills 1956: 19). However, elite institutes and structures are mobile and changeable; moreover, elites can transform the structures within which they function. For instance, "elites may smash one structure and set up another in which they enact different roles" (Mills 1956: 24). This not very flagrant correlation of elites as groups of individuals and elites as institutions brings about the mess and the oscillation of scholars studying elites between two extremes: the elite are omnipotent, and the elite are impotent (Mills 1956: 16). This is well represented by the transformation of elite institutes in the post-Soviet period and by "migrations" of elites from one social institute to another.

In the context of the anthropology of elites, a study by Abner Cohen, "The Politics of Elite Culture" may be considered as one of the most important (1981). His research may be characterized as explorations in the dramaturgy of power, based on modern African society. He discusses symbolic forms of elitism and techniques of the symbolization of power. He focuses his attention on the "dramaturgy" of power, meaning social mechanisms for the wielding and enactment of power. In the light of his findings, A. Cohen suggests a concept of "power mystique" – a cult of eliteness, understanding eliteness as a set of qualities that can be learned only informally, through social practices, which are attributed to this social group by origin.

Among those theoretical works that influenced our research, a

piece worth mentioning is the volume edited by M. Dogan entitled "Elites' Configuration at the Apex of Power" (2003), which is focused on problems of the linkage between the elites, the interconnections at the summit of power, and a concept of elite interlocking.

The concepts of elites and elitism, especially in the context of cultural values considered "elitist" usually encompass those social and cultural groups that are entitled or pretend to be entitled to represent a model for a highly moral and civilized mode of life, a kind of cultural and civilizational ideal of society. Norbert Elias in his "Court Society" tried to demonstrate how such a perception was formed and why (Elias 2002).

In Georgia and Armenia, those groups are represented by the intelligentsia and descendants of aristocracy (mostly in Georgia) who have still preserved social memories of their families or have reconstructed this memory in the post-Soviet period. There is an entire bunch of studies related to aristocracy, the big bourgeoisie (e.g. Lamont 1992; Pinçon, Pinçon-Charlot 2007) and intelligentsia. The latter is often categorized as the moral elite as well (Oushakin 2009) meaning that it is endowed with the capacity to set up, embody through itself and follow up the norms and criteria of morality. Articles by Gella 1971; Geiger 1955; N. Basov, G. Simet, J. Van Andel, et al. 2010; Eyerman 1992; Foucauld 2002 address such issues as the interactions of moral, intellectual and power elites and their role in the formation and transformation of political regimes.

One of the aspects of our research considers relationships of different types of elite with religion. Religion has always been a tool for and a source of the emergence, legitimation and sacralization of different types of power (intellectual, political, military, etc.). Moder-

nity seems to have changed little in this approach. Particular forms of religion, such as civil religion, may serve as a source of moral justification of power and prioritization of values that can be best explained and conceptualized by religion. However, in the post-Soviet space, re-institutionalized religion plays a more important role in the formation of institutes and networks of power than just a control over the boundaries and dimensions of morality and reliability. For instance, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church themselves come forward as power institutions and their support to or conflict with, power persons or institutions may affect the positions of the latter. In the light of interaction of religion and the elites, the issues of legitimation of power, the sacralization of charisma, interlocking of concepts of personal affluence and prosperity, political influence and religion are worthy of attention, especially in the context of the new economic elites of the region. In these terms, the works of E. Kantorowicz (1957), T. Koelner (2012), E. Wolf (1991) may provide a sound theoretical basis.

Study of elites in the post-socialist and post-Soviet academic discourse

The issue of old and new elites in the post-Soviet and post-socialist space as a topic for research emerged in the early stage of post-Soviet and post-socialist studies. Thus, it is addressed in the volume edited by G. Eval, I. Szelenyi, E. Townsley, entitled "Making capitalism without capitalists. The new ruling elites in Eastern Europe" (2000). The chapters of the volume discuss the process of transformation of the socialist elites into their post-socialist counterparts, with particular attention paid to the continuity of elites in the transi-

tional perspective. It was shown in particular, that "post-communist capitalism has been promoted by a broadly defined intelligentsia, committed to the cause of bourgeois society and capitalist economic conditions" (Eval, Szelenyi, Townsley 2000: 1). According to the authors, capitalism in the post-socialist space has resulted with two different forms. Firstly, it is "capitalism without capitalists" (countries of Eastern Europe), in which the representatives of the previous "nomenklatura" took on the roles of capitalists as they were those who had access to privatization of resources of power (as authors say, there was a transition from "plan" to "clan"). In fact, the nomenklatura has transformed into the big bourgeoisie, crushing down the Marxists' thesis stating that transition to capitalism is impossible without having a developed class of capitalists. The second form is "capitalists without capitalism", which is specific for Russia and, as the authors implicitly suggest, other post-Soviet countries. This form means that accumulation of wealth in private hands is far ahead of the establishment of market institutions (Eval, Szelenyi, Townsley 2000: 5). The absence of the legal and "civilized" institutes of market economy led to the formation of alternative, "violent" entrepreneurship institutes, as a Russian sociologist Vadim Volkov called them. Volkov defines violent entrepreneurship as a set of organizational decisions and action strategies enabling the conversion of organized force into money or other market resources (Volkov 2012: 10). This makes criminal circles the important players in, and agents of, the process of formation of new economic elites, and, therefore, criminal ways of thinking, behaving and institutionalizing business.

Another academic discourse that influenced our research mechanisms is that of the concept of neo-feudalism in the countries of the

post-Soviet space, which is, in particular, being developed in the post-socialism studies of K. Verdery (Verdery 1996). The concept of neo-feudalism seemed relevant to our study and it is developed in a chapter on the Armenian oligarchy.

Another conceptually meaningful book is a study on the culture of power in post-communist Russia by Michael Urban, where he suggests an analysis of elite political discourse (Urban 2010). In the context of continuity of elites, G. Derluguian's book "Bourdieu's admirer in the Caucasus" should be mentioned (2004). The author (who is also the adviser for this project) paid much attention to the shaping of Soviet and post-Soviet social structures and transformations of elites and individuals in the Caucasus. Also, the works of A. Bocharov (2006) and T. Schepanskaya (2006) on the origins and semiotics of power should be mentioned. The authors consider the practices and attributes of power in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods as a topic for analysis.

Studies of elites in post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia

The study of elites in Armenia and Georgia has not had a long history yet. Contemporary research seems to be limited mostly to the political elite. In particular, British sociologist H. Tschilingiryan explored the influence of the Karabakh elite on the advancement of the conflict (1999). He defined "elite" as members of three groups: intellectuals, top representatives of military-political institutions, and the economic elite, whose role he considered unimportant. More or less targeted research on contemporary political elites has been done by M. Margaryan (2006) and a group of sociologists coordinated by H. Danielyan (Danielyan et al. 2014). The latter was

aimed at a multifaceted study of the political elite of Armenia. The authors tried to identify the social specifics of the Armenian political elite, its social, gender and age characteristics, life strategies of becoming politicians, values and preferences. They also analyzed the social networks of which the Armenian political elite comprise a part, viewing them as a basic tool for the analysis of the political elite, according to their own definition (Danielyan et al 2014: 40). However, the research was mostly of a quantitative nature and its main problem was that all the findings were averaged, so it was not clear how they might be correlated with the social-age-gender variety of the Armenian political elite mentioned in the first part of the research. Nevertheless, some findings turned out to be very useful for us, in particular the observation on correlations between the degree to which elite representatives are involved in social networking, their position as networkers and the degree of personal power and political influence.

As far as other types of elite are concerned, we can mention the article of one of the participants of the research project, Y. Antonyan, in which she analyzes a post-Soviet discursive field developed around the concept of the Armenian intelligentsia (Antonyan 2012). In this article, a problem of "false" and "true" (genuine) elites is addressed, which is relevant for this particular research as well.

As for the situation in Georgia, the study of elites was triggered by the Rose Revolution of 2003, when a technical change in the political elites took place, due to the change of political regimes. Follow-up analyses of these changes have resulted in coining the concept of "old" and "new" elites, meaning the political and economic elites of the pre-Saakashvili and Saakashvili periods (see

Chiaberashvili, Tevzadze 2005, G. Gotua 2008, 2011; Gvalia, Lebanidze, Iashvili 2011). One more analysis of the pre-Saakashvili and Saakashvili elites is presented in the paper of Tukvadze et al. (2006) about the transformations in the Georgian political system in from a Soviet and post-Soviet perspective. The authors point out the continuity of the Georgian elites, and analyze the role of the image of a charismatic leader in the Georgian culture. The concept of "old" and "new" elites is also considered in this paper, again in the sense mentioned above.

However, the division of elites in the context of the Rose Revolution is too situational and the latest political developments (the dismissal of Saakashvili's regime) demonstrate the non-relevance of this approach.

Chapters addressing the interaction among political and economic power, elites and religion may be found in a volume called "Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus" A. Agadjanian, A. Jodicke, E. van Der Zveerde (eds.), 2015, chapters by A. Jodicke, B. Janelidze, Y. Antonyan, T. Kekelia, and S. Hovhannisyan)

Anthropological description of elites, cultures of elites and elite cultures

Prior to speaking about the anthropological description of elites, it would be logical to give a working definition of the elite, appropriate for this volume. There are several definitions and most of them agree that elites are power groups. Thus, Mosca characterized elites as a ruling class. R. Lachmann defines elites in a similar way: "An elite can be defined as a group of rulers with the capacity to appropriate resources from non-elites and who inhabit a distinct organi-

zational apparatus" (Lachmann 2000: 9). Besides, to define elites, Lachmann uses the concepts of social and cultural capital, though unlike Bourdieu, he thinks that cultural capital as the basis of the elite control may be related not to individuals or their families, but to the organizations creating the elite (Lachmann 2000: 9-10). The cultural capital of elites, among other things, is in the symbols and attributes of legitimate power.

Not only formal power, but also the cultural capital couched in the symbols and paraphernalia of legitimized power makes the elite what they are. This is demonstrated by our research which points out the differences between what the elite should be and what it is in reality. Those differences come out of certain symbolic models of cultural representation of the elite persisting in the cultural memory of society. This discrepancy between the real and the imagined elites in Armenian society produces an important discourse on "true" or "genuine" and "false" elites. The authenticity or falsehood of the elite, in fact, are believed to be defined by the presence of cultural symbolism and "innate" qualities which legitimize the elite in the framework of the so-called "high culture", a model of which is allegedly reproduced through generations and, because of this continuity, it has a right to dominate over other strata of the society. In case the elite does not meet these imagined characteristics, it is deprived the right of being called the elite. This corresponds to A. Cohen's writings about elitism and elite power. He defines "eliteness" as qualities that can be learned only informally through social practices. (Cohen 1981: 2) The elite, according to him, is an elaborate body of symbols and dramatic performances: manners, etiquette, styles of dress, accent, patterns of recreational activity, marriage rules etc.

(Cohen 1981: 3) He also points out that when symbols of their cult (of elite) lose their potency, when outside audiences cease to defer to them, such elites lose their legitimacy and are likely to lose power (Cohen 1981: 4). The Armenian power elites do not seem to lose their power, not only because they possess the main economic and military resources of power, but also because they follow the cultural codes of elite groups of the Soviet and post-Soviet times, i.e. the party nomenklatura and criminals, or the so-called thieves-at-law.

The discrepancy between power and legitimacy in post-Soviet Georgia and Armenia is directly or indirectly addressed in the present research and many of the chapters of this volume examine this particular problem. After all, this discrepancy is seen as the main and intriguing point of formation of the concept of elitism in Armenia and Georgia.

Other definitions like those of R. Lachmann and M. Mann referring to the elite as a certain social organization or a power network (and not a class, or a group, as Marx or Mosca thought) also seem to work out for Armenia and Georgia. However, inside this organization or network one can nevertheless identify different social and cultural groups, whose cultural and social capitals are shaped depending on the types of social connectivity and cultural heritage intrinsic to these groups. For instance, the current political elites may encompass different social and cultural groups whose values, habitus and social practices originate from a criminal, Soviet partocratic, post-imperial aristocratic, intelligentsia-related, or traditionalistic cultural milieu. Similarly, intellectual elites may also descend from different social and cultural milieus, e.g., unlike the old intelligentsia of imperial times that consisted of low and middle bourgeoisie, the

new Soviet intelligentsia was intentionally recruited from the lower parts of society, mostly workers and peasants.

Given the type of legitimation, there were two ways of building a social hierarchy in the Soviet Union. Members of the formal elites (nomenklatura, top officials of science, education and art spheres) used to be legitimized "from top to bottom". The alternative, informal elites (descendants of aristocracy, intelligentsia, criminals, informal economic elites) got their legitimation "from inside". A. Yurchak, in his analysis of the late Soviet period, wrote about the circles of informal intellectual elite, membership in which could be available only to those who were recognized as "insiders", that is those who shared the same values and spoke the same cultural language (Yurchak 2005:142). The same may be said about criminal elites or informal economic elites, the so called *tsekhoviks* who established closed, clan-based networks, involvement in which was possible only through the mediation of insiders. (see e.g. Mars, Altman 1983).

An analysis of frameworks and limits of access to resources and the power of formal elites has demonstrated how closely they were dependent upon their interactions with informal structures and practices. For instance, low or middle-level party functionaries formally did not get high salaries though they had some privileges and bonuses (like an office car with a personal driver, or access to some goods in deficit). But they were key knots in a network of acquaintances exchanging informal services.

The formal and informal segments of intellectual elites were intermingled and interdependent, too. Both might be members of the same institutions like universities, academic research institutes,

creative unions, etc., but their way of affecting the non-elites and their access to resources were diametrically opposed. Thus, the Soviet ethnologist V. Kabo wrote in his memoirs that some colleagues working in the same institutions, having the same positions and academic degrees were allowed to travel abroad and others were not, depending on their "dossier" that needed formal evidence of loyalty to the Soviet authorities such as the "right" social or ethnic origin, an impeccable biography, or even personal sympathies (Kabo 1995: 260-262). Intellectuals, who were not provided access to resources and privileges, however, tried to extend their influence in alternative ways, through involvement in closed intellectual circles or employment in provincial institutions where they had comparative freedom of activities, etc. Interestingly, this "interlocking" of formal and informal elites continued in the post-Soviet period as well.

Discussing informal elites, it is necessary to clarify how they are related to the concept of power, which is an irremovable quality of the elite. I am rephrasing some statements of C. Wright Mills about the specific types of power (Mills 1956: 3) in order to get some ideas on what kind of power the informal elites may exert without being directly engaged in political or business activities. Firstly, they can affect the lives, minds, goals and imagination of ordinary men through their intellectual and creative activities. Secondly, they create the demands and imperatives of the day (like ideologies, religions, morality norms, fashion, etc.).

Democratic regimes have a different way of becoming power elites, from "the bottom to the top", through elections. One also cannot declare himself president, unless he is elected by the people and recognized as such by presidents of other countries. During Soviet

times, such a "democratic" way of being elected and "crowned" as the "elite" was adopted by the criminal sphere (Glonti, Lobzhanidze 2004: 65-66). Being opposed to other types of Soviet formal and informal elites and respected for this, criminals offered specific values, a morality and mode of life that were later adopted (totally or partially) by the new economic elites in the post-Soviet period.

Membership among the elites can be also achieved by getting specific credentials like titles, diplomas, licenses etc., even though the credentials may be formal and, in reality, may not be convincing enough to be recognized by other members of the elite. In Armenia and Georgia this type of elite is illustrated, for example, by some representatives of the Academy, who have been awarded with different types of credentials (diplomas, academic degrees, titles), yet have no access to administrative or financial resources, nor are they capable of influencing society as intellectuals. Or, leaders of the so called "pocket" political parties can be mentioned, who fully possess all the symbols of a political leader, but have no impact, even a minor one, in the political field. During a recent (February 2015) conflict between the President of Armenia S. Sargsyan and one of the most prominent Armenian oligarchs, a head of the second biggest party of Armenia, both of them would duel by sending secondary politicians from both sides to the forefront, thus giving them illusory "credentials" of political leadership and influence. As soon as the conflict was exhausted, those politicians were immediately silenced.

General types of elites. Elites versus non-elites. Continuity of elites

Discussing the elites in Armenia and Georgia, we may preliminarily identify two basic types: power elites (political and economic), and moral-intellectual elites. The first are those who have access to resources that allow them to concentrate different types of power in their hands (ideological, political and administrative, military, and economic), according to M. Mann (Mann 1986: 2). The second are those who pretend or are thought to be producers and keepers of the cultural (meaning intellectual and behavioral) and moral values of society, i.e. the intelligentsia, aristocracy, clergy, and artists. Some binary oppositions of formal-informal, true-false, genuine–artificial generated by public discourse serve as indicators of negotiated patterns of morality, values, and behavioral norms for the newly-formed elites. In this context, the problem of continuity of the Soviet and post-Soviet elites becomes acute, though differently manifested in Armenia and Georgia.

A number of researchers indicate that, until 2004, the continuity of Soviet and post-Soviet elites in Georgia was interrupted only during the brief and tempestuous leadership of Gamsakhurdia. After that, the Soviet nomenklatura came to power once more, headed by the previous Soviet communist leader E. Shevardnadze. The previous party and Soviet administrative elite, couched this time in the form of family clans, took back all the important administrative and economic resources (Chiaberashvili, Tevzadze 2005: 187-207, Tukvadze et al, 2006: 109, Gotua 2008: 2018), as also occurred in most post-socialist countries (Eval, Szelenyi, Townsley 2000: 4-6). Old members of the Soviet nomenklatura were mostly removed by

M. Saakashvili after the Rose Revolution. The Rose Revolution was actually an attempt to change the power elite, even though new political leaders had been shaped in close contact with and under the patronage of the old nomenklatura.

In Armenia, the top members of the nomenklatura were dismissed during the Karabakh movement and shortly after that most of them left the country because of the war and blockade (1991-95). The only attempt at the reinstitution of power positions for the Soviet elite was a failed effort by a previous Soviet party leader, K. Demirchyan. K. Demirchyan himself was shot dead a while after the failed elections, during a terroristic act in the Parliament on October 27, 1999. The continuity of elites was however provided by low- and middle-level members of the nomenklatura who had just started their career before the collapse of the Communist party and easily switched to the new ideology.

However, the continuity of elites is not defined by just a physical inheritance of power, but rather by a transfer of the principles of organization of power, practices of power and moral and behavioral norms, accompanying the processes of coming to, and exerting, power.

It is impossible to avoid a mention of charisma when analyzing the elites. M. Weber distinguished a specific type of charismatic leader, who is believed to possess "exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character" as superhuman qualities that legitimate his power (Weber 1946: 79-80). A. Cohen thinks the power charisma, the "power mystique" or the "cult of eliteness" is an inherent peculiarity of power elites (Cohen 1981: 2-4). The Georgian and Armenian political cultures developed different attitudes towards the

concepts of charisma and charismatic leaders. Tukvadze, Jaonashvili and Tukvadze seriously addressed "a traditional specific characteristic of Georgians to worship a strong authoritarian and charismatic leader". They link public trust and strong unconventional loyalty and worship towards every upcoming leader (Tukvadze et al. 2006: 105) We do not think this can be strongly supported by academic arguments, but at least as an observation which makes a part of public discourse on leadership and charisma, this statement is worthy of being mentioned. Unlike Georgia, none of the leaders in Armenia has experienced a high level of trust and worship like their Georgian counterparts (including religious ones), and public humiliation and strong sometimes offensive criticism toward the ruling authorities have always been a part of public attitudes and opinion in Armenia. The discourses on charisma in Armenia usually end up with the statement that there has not been a leader who could be called charismatic. Some charismatic qualities sometimes are attributed to the first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, but even in his case the discussed charisma was colored in negative tones. This contrast may be related to differences in the traditional perceptions of elites and types of interaction and relationships of elites and non-elites in both countries.

Variety of elites and concepts of elitism in Armenia and Georgia: case studies

This volume embraces very different approaches to the problem of elites in Armenian and Georgian contexts. Being both very much alike and very much distinctive from each other, these two countries have developed social structures similar by form, yet discrepant

through their inner interplay of meanings, interpretations and correlations of the parts of these structures. The formal similarity is stipulated by a common pre-Soviet (imperial) and Soviet past, and the affinity of political, economic, cultural and social processes. The discrepancies may refer to the current political and cultural context with different ways and conditions for the continuity of elites. Individual studies fulfilled as parts of the joint project aimed to clarify the concepts and dimensions of elitism, the places of elites in the Armenian and Georgian social and cultural realities, and to analyze and find the roots of practices of power and elitism among old and new elites.

The volume consists of four parts each containing two chapters. Part one, *Elitist groups and networks* relates to social groups that are marginal and non-elitist by default, built into existing hierarchies and acquiring elitist statuses within their groups. It opens with a chapter by Eviya Hovhannisyan, where she explores the process of formation of new business elites among the refugees settled in the rural areas in the north of Armenia (the Gegharkunik region, after the Karabakh movement and subsequent war of 1988-1994. The author’s fieldwork reveals a complicated system of relationships between newcomers and the local population, resulting in the formation of kinship and social solidarity networks that lie in the basis of the new economy and social structure of the region. The chapter identifies the types of local elites and ways in which refugees have been integrated into them or the reasons why they could not be integrated.

An instrumental understanding of the concept of elites is pivotal for the chapter by Haykuhi Muradyan, where she views people who

are employed in elitist families such as domestic staff, assistants or bodyguards as a specific type of elite among those who do the same work for less elitist "masters". She operates a conventional notion of a "big family", meaning an association of the wealthy elite with their domestic and personal employees, who thus acquire elitist positions in their social group. In the context of the topic, a particular ethno-religious minority group of Russian Molokans is addressed as the most elitist among other ethnic and social groups involved in this type of employment.

The first chapter in part two, *New Economic Elites*, authored by Giorgi Cheishvili, addresses contemporary social interplays that have emerged as a result of the strong economic intervention of Turkish businessmen in the Ajara province of Georgia during the last decade. By attracting businessmen from Turkey, the former leader of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili hoped to bring to life his project of modernizing Batumi, the capital of Ajara. Wealthy newcomers quickly became the owners of most business enterprises in Batumi, occupied elitist economic niches and changed the image of the city. The chapter analyzes the protests of the intelligentsia, a formerly privileged layer of society, against the new economic elite with its non-elitist origin. The intelligentsia's movement was supported by Saakashvili's opposition, the Georgian Dream party. Thus, the confrontation of the old cultural elite (Soviet-type intelligentsia) with the new economic elite (Turkish businessmen) may be interpreted as a part of political clashes between Saakashvili's and Ivanishvili's regimes. In particular, it symbolizes shifts in the developmental paradigm - Saakashvili's economic modernization and cultural diversity project would be succeeded by traditionalism and cultural nationalism.

The topic of new economic elites continues in a chapter by Yulia Antonyan about the Armenian “oligarchs” - the new political and economic elite. Oligarchy as a cumulative term covers a number of extremely wealthy businessmen and politicians who have concentrated political and economic power in their hands, at a local or country-wide level. Although they have originated from different social and cultural backgrounds, nevertheless they form a particular social layer with some common specifics of everyday culture and a system of values. The chapter is an attempt to prepare an ethnography of oligarchs by identifying the most characteristic features of their behavioral and socio-cultural practices that would help understand what kind of elite they are. Those practices include the ways in which they build their “clans” and support networks, represent themselves, construct their reputation and authority, exert power and climb the social ladder, organize their everyday life and socialization, develop styles and preferences resulting in the emergence of a specific habitus compared to that of oligarchies and similar social structures throughout human history.

The chapters in part three, *Religion, nationalism, identity and elites*, contribute to understanding how religion and nationalism can shape elites. Thus, the contradiction between new and old national elites among the Yezidis, a Kurmanji-speaking ethnic and religious group of Armenia is described and analyzed in a chapter by Hamlet Melkumyan. This contradiction emerged as a result of the transformation of perceptions of power, elitism and prestige through the transitional period from the Soviet epoch to the post-Soviet one. The abolition of the Yezidi three-caste social system during the Soviet time led to drastic changes of social roles and positions for the caste

of laymen, *murids*, who were being granted educational opportunities and had input in the formation of a new stratum of Yezidi intellectuals. The restoration of the old elite, a caste of sheikhs, created tensions between nationalistic and modernizing intellectuals and noble traditionalists, both of whom claimed to be elite. The chapter discusses the specifics of their relationships and claims against the background of current political and social processes.

The chapter by Ketevan Khutsishvili examines the relationships between religion and the formation of the new political elite in post-Soviet Georgia. It is suggested that the correlation of religion and politics in Georgia has invested into the establishment of profitable ground for the permanent flows of leaders from the religious sphere to the political one and the influential part of the political elite in Georgia of the 1990s was created in this way. Along with this, religion played a serious part in the nationalistic and political discourses of that period. On the contrary, upon the arrival of Mikheil Saakashvili and the new political elite aiming at the modernization and democratization of Georgia, the Church became part of the opposition to the new authorities and, consequently, the new elites.

Chapter four, *Post-soviet transformations of Soviet elitism* deals with current changes in the social structures inherited from Soviet times. Nino Abakelia's chapter gives a panorama of the historical development of the concepts of "elite" and "intelligentsia" in Georgia during the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet times, and analyzes the correlation of these two concepts. This analysis is based on a case-study of life stories of the representatives of different generations of a family considered elitist during the different periods the Georgian history in Soviet and post-Soviet times. Through the

history of a family, the epochal transformation of the elitist strata of Georgian society and their specifics can be observed. During almost a century, members of different generations of this family have been subsequently transforming into all possible types of elite: intelligentsia, nomenklatura, and art/show business celebrities. This may serve as an illustration to the thesis of continuity of elites no matter what type of elitist layer they represent.

The last chapter of the volume, written by Tea Kamushadze, is about the construction of Soviet elitism in relation to the title of Hero of Socialist Labor and to the lifestyle associated with this title. In the Soviet system of values, labor was expected to play a crucial role in the formation of the socialist identity and social hierarchies. The title of Hero of Socialist Labor was granted along with a number of lifelong privileges and material awards that made the awardee a part of the Soviet nomenklatura. The chapter is based on the life stories of several Heroes living in the city of Rustavi, Georgia. It reveals how the concept of Heroism was integrated into the Georgian traditional system of values and folk culture to become a part of the new Soviet identity, and how the elitist position of Heroes transformed after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This volume does not claim to deeply and overwhelmingly encompass the topic of elites in Armenia and Georgia, but we hope that it may at least contribute to existing and further research in this field.

References

1. Abbink J., Salverda T. Eds. 2013. The anthropology of elites, Palgrave Macmillan: New-York.

2. Antonyan Yu. 2012. The Armenian Intelligentsia today: discourses of self-identification and self-perception, Laboratorium, vol. 4(1), pp. 76-100.

3. Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. 2015. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

4. Basov N. Simet G. Van Andel J. et al. Eds. 2010. The intellectual: a phenomenon in multidimensional perspectives, Inter-disciplinary Press: Oxford, OK.

5. Bocharov 2006: Бочаров В. В. 2006. Истоки власти, в: Бочаров В. В. Ред., Антропология власти, т. 1, Издательство Санкт-Петербургского Университета: СПб. (The Sources of Power, in: Bocharov V.V. (ed.) The Anthropology of Power, The Publishing House of the Saint Petersburg University).

6. Chiaberashvili Z., Tevzadze G. 2005. Power Elites in Georgia: Old and new, in: Fluri Ph., Cole E. From Revolution to Reform: Georgia's struggle with democratic institution building and security sector reform, Publication of Bureau for Security Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence; National Defence Academy, Vienna and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces in co-operation with PfP-Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vienna and Geneva, pp. 187-207.

7. Cohen A. 1981. The politics of Elite culture. Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.

8. Elias 2002: Элиас Н. Придворное общество, Языки славянской культуры: Москва. (The Court Society, Yazyki slavyanskoj kultury (The Languages of Slavic Culture): Moscow).

9. Glonti, Lobzhanidze 2004: Глонти Г., Лобжанидзе Г. Профессиональная преступность в Грузии (воры в законе), ООО "Полиграф": Тбилиси. (Professional Criminality in Georgia (thieves-at-law), Polygraph Ltd: Tbilisi).

10. Gvalia G., Lebanidze B., Iashvili Z. 2011. Political Elites, Ideas and Foreign Policy: Explaining and Understanding the International Behaviour of Small States in the Former Soviet Union, Ilia State University: Tbilisi.

11. Eyerman R. 1992. Intellectuals: A Framework for Analysis with Special Reference to the United States and Sweden, Acta Sociologica, Vol. 35, No 1

12. Eval G., Szelenyi I., Townsley E. 2000. Making capitalism without capitalists. The new ruling elites in Eastern Europe., Verso: London, New-York.

13. Foucault M. 2002: Фуко М. Интеллектуалы и власть, Праксис: Москва. (Intellectuals and Power, Praxis, Moscow).

14. Danielyan H. et al. 2014. The political elite of Post-independence Armenia, Edit-Print: Yerevan.

15. Derluguian G. 2004. Bourdieu’s secret admirer in the Caucasus, Verso: London, New-York.

16. Dogan M. (ed.) 2003. Elites configuration at the apex of power, Brill: Leiden, Boston.

17. Geiger T. 1955. Intelligentsia, Acta Sociologica, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 49-61

18. Gella A. 1971. The life and death of the Old polish Intelligentsia, Slavic Review, vol. 30, #1, March.

19. Gotua G. 2008: Г. Готуа, Изменения районной элиты в Грузии в 1990-2003 гг., в: Разгадать Южный Кавказ: общества и среда обитания, сборник статей стипендиатов Фонда Г. Белля, Издательство Фонда Г. Белля: Тбилиси. (Changes of the Local Elites in Georgia in 1990-2003, in: Figuring out the South Caucasus: Societies and the Environment: A Collection of Papers. Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tbilisi).

20. Gotua G. 2011. Different governments in Tbilisi, same people in region: local elites in the years of independence, in: Changing identities: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. eds. V. Voronkov, S. Khutsishvili, J. Horan, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Tbilisi.

21. Hovhannisyan S. Myths and politics: Old and new aspirations in independent Armenia, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

22. Janelidze B. 2015. Secularization and desecularization in Gerogia:

state and church under the Sahakashvili government (2003-2012), in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

23. Jodicke A. 2015. General trends in the interaction of religion and politics as applied to the South Caucasus, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

24. Кабо 1995: Кабо В. Р. Дорога в Австралию: Воспоминания. (The Road to Australia: Memoirs) Effect Publishing, New York. Can be retrieved at: http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=book&num=564

25. Kantorowicz E. 1957. The King's two bodies. Studies in mediaeval political theology, Prinston University Pres: Prinston, New Jersey.

26. Kekelia T. 2015. Building Georgian national Identity: a comparison of two turning points in history, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

27. Koelner T. 2012. Practicing without belonging. Entrepreneurship, morality and religion in contemporary Russia, LIT Verlag: Zurich, Berlin.

28. Lachmann R. 2000. Capitalists in spite of themselves. Elite conflict and Economic transtitions in Early Modern Europe, Oxford University Press: Oxford, New-York.

29. Lamont M. 1992. Money, Morals and Manners. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

30. Mann M. 1986. The Sources of Social Power. Vol. I. Cambridge University Press.

31. Mannheim 2000: Манхейм К. Проблема интеллигенции: исследование ее роли в прошлом и настоящем, в: Манхейм К. Избранное: социология культуры, Университетская книга: М., СПб. (The Problem of the Intelligentsia. An Enquiry into its Past and Present Role, in: Manheim K. The Selected: A Sociology of Culture, Universitetskaya Kniga, Saint Peterburg).

32. Margaryan M. 2006: Մարգարյան Մ. Քաղաքական ընտրանին և ժողովրդավարական անցման հիմնախնդիրները Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում, Պետական Ծառայություն: Ե. (Political elite and Problems of Democtratic Transition in the Republic of Armenia, Petakan tsarayutyun: Yerevan).

33. Mars G., Altman Y. 1983. The Cultural bases of Soviet Georgia’s Second Economy, Soviet Studies, vol. 35, #4 (Oct.), pp. 546-560.

34. Mills C. Wright 1956. The power elite, Oxford University Press.

35. Mosca 1994: Моска Г. Правящий класс, Социологические исследования, #10, сс. 187-198. (The Ruling Class, Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya (Sociological research), # 10).

36. Pareto W. 1961. The circulation of elites, in: Parsons T. (ed.), Theories of Society; Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, Vol. 2, The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.: New-York.

37. Pareto W. 1961a. The Use of force in Society, in Parsons T. (ed.), Theories of Society; Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, Vol. 2,The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.: New-York.

38. Pinçon M., Pinçon-Charlot M. 2007. Sociologie de la bourgeoisie, La decouverte: Paris.

39. Oushakine S. 2009. Introduction. Wither the intelligentsia: the end of the moral elite in Eastern Europe, Stud. East Eur. Thought, 61, pp. 243-248.

40. Tchilingiryan H. 1999. Nagorno Karabagh: transition and the elite, Central Asian Survey, 18 (4), pp. 435-461.

41. Tukvadze et al. 2006: Туквадзе А., Джаошвили Г., Туквадзе Р. Трансформация политической системы в современной Грузии, Центральная Азия и Кавказ, 2(4), с. 103-112. (The Transformation of the Political System in Contemporary Georgia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2 (4)).

42. Schepanskaya T. 2006: Щепанская Т. Символическая репрезентация власти, в: Бочаров В. В. Ред., Антропология власти, т. 1, Издательство Санкт-Петербургского Университета: СПб. (A Symbolic Representation of Power, in: Bocharov V.V. (ed.) The Anthropology of Power, The Publishing House of the Saint Petersburg University).

43. Shore C., Nugent S. Eds. 2002. Elite cultures. Anthropological perspectives, London and New-York.

44. Urban M. 2010. Cultures of Power in Post-Communist Russia, an analysis of Elite political discourse, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

45. Verdery K. 1996. What was socialism and what comes next?, Princeton University Press.

46. Volkov 2012: Волков В. Силовое предпринимательство XXI век, Европейский Университет в Санкт-Петербурге: СПб. (Violent Entrepreneurship, XXI Century, European University in Saint Petersburg, Saint Petersburg).

47. Weber M. 1946. Politics as a Vocation, in: Gerth H.H. and Mills C. Wright (Translated and edited). From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, pp. 77-128, Oxford University Press: New York.

48. Wolf E. 1991. Religious regimes and state formation: Perspectives from European Ethnology, State University of New-York Press.

49. Yurchak A. 2005. Everything was forever until it was no more: the last soviet generation, Princeton University Press.

Part 1.

Elitist Groups and Networks

1.1 Elitism among Refugees in the Rural Environment: Authority, Kinship, Social Networks and Economic Survival

Eviya Hovhannisyan

Transformations in the 1990s qualitatively changed the socio-structural relations in rural Armenia. These transformations deepened the process of property differentiation and polarized the interests and political preferences of social groups. This article argues that, in the post-Soviet period, the rural elite as a social class is in its formation process in Armenia. Organizational and managerial procedures in the rural areas of post-Soviet Armenia are concentrated in a certain social stratum (the rural wealthy), which, although impossible to identify as entirely elite, is at least capable of delimiting itself from other non-elite groups. The prerequisites for the new social system were the existence of formal and informal local rules acting as the dominant regulators of the new economic and political relations. The emergence of a new rural elite was economically important because such strata have provided the impetus for consequent socio-economic transformation in the whole country (Golenkova 2003).

This paper draws upon empirical research conducted in the Vardenis region of Armenia. The Vardenis region is located in Gegharkunik Province, eastern Armenia. The field materials were recorded in August 2014 and in January 2015 in the town of Vardenis

and the villages of Mets Masrik, Sotq, Avazan, and Areguni. I chose to use the research method of informal and in-depth interviews with the representatives of the local elites (former and current officials of the village administration, local "intelligentsia", large-scale landowners, representatives of criminal groups, etc.).

1. Rural elites of the Vardenis region

What are the criteria by which we can identify the elite status for the strata, that is, what socio-economic measurements are reasonable? For understanding the nature of rural elite groups, the specifics of the area should be taken into account, in particular its small size. It should be kept in mind that when talking about the elite of the village we are talking about relatively small groups that may consist of only a few people (Gotua 2012). The second specificity is that the region is populated by two socio-cultural groups of Armenians - local Armenians that populated the region for a relatively long period, and refugees from Azerbaijan, who settled in the region in 1988-1992. The article is based on the social and cultural dichotomy of these two groups. All issues of origin and functioning of the elites are considered in the light of this dichotomy. Thus, one of our research questions aims to understand whether an originally stigmatized group (refugees, in our case) can be integrated in the formation of the different types of elites in the region and, if so, how?

For the purposes of this article, rural elite has the following minimum characteristics: it must (1) own, possess or control a significant portion of rural land; (2) have influence in the formation of agrarian policies and (3) control a significant part of the socio-political relationship in the region.

Therefore, in my paper, I have outlined three basic groups of influence within the social structure of the population in the region:

1. The professional elite (village administration, the principals of the local schools, doctors, military personnel, representatives of the rural intelligentsia);

2. The business elite (large landowners);

3. The criminal elite (the case that will be considered in the paper, is a particular local criminal stratum, literally called "the bats" (*chghchik* in Armenian) - the robbers of Sotk's gold mines. The "prestige" layer of the internal hierarchy of that criminal group can be considered elite within the whole population in the region).

In particular, we can outline the emergence of two new rural elites after the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the one hand it is a business class, based upon a concentration of wealth and property ownership. This business elite consists mainly of large-scale landowners and rural entrepreneurs who benefited from the rapid privatization of former state enterprises (*kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes*) (Khahulina, et al. 1996). On the other hand, there are the new criminal elite.

As we already mentioned, the integration of a person in one of these elite groups is clearly different between the local population and the Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan who, after their resettlement, have compactly populated the Vardenis region. There are specific symbolic attributes that determine the boundaries between the self and neighboring socio-economic groups. Hence, the self-identity of the allocated two groups (refugees and local Armenians) concerns the characteristics and the rules attributed to them, under which a person is entitled to fit into a particular social stratum (Wegren 2000). Taking into account the above-mentioned, one of

the major objectives of the study is to identify those who could be termed as the elite in the region and to reveal if the rural regional-level elite represent a single coherent group or an amalgamation of several socio-economic groups.

1.1. The professional elite

The ethnic composition of the Vardenis region almost completely changed between 1988 and 1992, when large groups of Azerbaijanis fled the area. Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan were resettled in the villages they formerly populated. That greatly affected the transformation of the social structure in the areas densely populated by the refugees. In the Soviet period, the region was almost entirely populated by Azerbaijanis and most working positions were held by them. The few Armenians that populated the region mainly worked in the gold mines or went to seasonal work to other Soviet republics. After the resettlement of Armenians from Azerbaijan, a problem arose of the distribution of administrative and other working positions in the region.

Despite the fact that the number of refugees in many villages is almost twice the number of the local population today (2003), the locals are represented in much higher numbers in regional administrative bodies. According to official data, 36 villages in the Gegharkunik region are populated by refugees, and only 13 of them have village heads who are refugees. In the remaining 23 villages, the heads are locals, many of whom are not even the residents of these villages (2014). From the interviews with the refugees it is clear that, in the early years of the resettlement, they preferred to elect village heads from among the local residents, since the lat-

ter were more aware of the local governance system, "local laws" and had a closer relationship with the higher regional administrative structures. During subsequent elections for local administrative bodies, the refugees were unofficially barred from participation (with threats to life and property) (Kharatyan 2007). Only in a few villages, it was possible to manage the changing situation with the distribution of administrative positions in village councils due to the fact that the vast majority of the population consisted of refugees.

- During the last election, the refugees were forbidden to nominate their candidacy. The refugees are not given jobs anywhere. From the administrative staff of the village council, only the chairperson and the guard are refugees, all the other positions are occupied by the locals (Fieldwork,[1] Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 18.08.1999).[2]

- They don't have a head from their own people in their villages for now.

- How can you explain this fact?

- I think it is due to the lack of kinship networks in the region, and also with the educational level of the refugees. For example, the head of Kakhakn village is a resident of Mets Masrik village. In Kakhakn there are approximately 120-130 households. Can't they elect somebody from there? Do you think that somebody from the outside, from another village, is interested in the welfare of the Kakhakn refugee population? Of course not! Only the residents of Kakhakn would be interested in their water supply system, electricity, etc. (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 09.01.2015).

[1] Fieldwork - hereinafter FW.

[2] The field data has been provided by H. L. Petrosyan. The research project-workshop "Cultural dialogue for the sake of harmonious co-existence" conducted by the Hazarashen research center in 1988-1999.

A similar situation exists in the distribution of other posts: school principals, doctors, and teachers. Most workplaces in the state institutions of the district were occupied by the locals. All attempts of the refugees to set up their own business (a private ambulance, a dental clinic, a shop) were either "stifled" or taken under the authoritarian control of local Armenians. In one of my cases, the informant had not been allowed to have her own business because she was a refugee and therefore did not have enough social ties to deal with the informal racketeering.

- I subsequently privatized the ambulance station, but I was not allowed to operate it, they (the local authorities) *asked for a lot of money. They came to my house and demanded that I pay a large sum of money if I wanted to have my own business. This was a not legal claim, it was not a state tax, but non-formal permission for my business activity. Local Armenians do not like "the aliens from another planet"... Even if you are literate, you won't be given a job because you are not a relative of theirs. It is the same feeling that we had as strangers among strangers in Azerbaijan, but this is more insulting - you are a stranger among your compatriots in Armenia. Not only the local authorities, but even my colleagues were jealous of my success. When I got a qualification from the Red Cross of France, they began to hound me. They wrote complaints to the local administration, they broke my medical instruments and poured out my medicines when I was trying to distribute medicines to those in need in our village, and not to selling it illegally, as demanded by the local authorities. I was unable to work in these conditions* (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 05.08.2014).

As the refugees explain the situation, such a distribution of ad-

ministrative posts is associated with the early years of resettlement and a large flow of humanitarian aid to Armenia. The local Armenians occupied the most favorable positions in the village councils, the local hospitals and the schools. They defined who would receive humanitarian aid and medicine and how much. Quite often the aid was unofficially distributed among the locals.

- *International humanitarian assistance began to arrive back in 1989. It was distributed by the local executive committee in the village administration. The locals prohibited the participation of the refugee representatives in the executive committee. The locals extracted great financial benefit from this humanitarian assistance* (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 15.08.2014).

Quite often, the value of the work place (the hierarchy of jobs in the professional institutions of the region (administration, schools, hospitals, etc.) is related to its resource potential and having a client relationship with respect to the ruling class of the region. The head of the village has to balance three different interests: a) his/her personal interests that dictate the appointment to important positions of persons whom he/she personally trusts and with whom he/she is bound by personal commitments; b) the interests of the regional and the central government; c) the interests of local groups with their own stakes in the social and political life of the region (Gotua 2012). Mostly, those are people who can be trusted, or those who have proven their loyalty to the ruling authorities. In such cases, the professional qualities of these people are secondary. For example, the principal of the school can ensure the loyalty and "voices" of the parents of their pupils in local and state elections, so these posts are given to "relatives". According to the interviews, school prin-

cipals were appointed exclusively from among the locals (through acquaintances or "*blat*"). During the occupation of this working position, many of them were able not only to regain the "*blat*" sum that they paid, but also earn a large amount out property through the extortion of money from teachers, parents of pupils and the write-off of diesel oil, which was used in the heating system of schools during the war and the first post-war years in Armenia. Today, the sum of "*blat*" in the region ranges from 1,000 to 1,500 dollars depending on the social status of the person, the location of the school, and the profitability of the position.

We should note that many of the refugee families in their former places of residence (especially in the large cities of Azerbaijan - Baku, Kirovabad) had a high social status and education, employment, and property matching this status. They were mostly petroleum engineers, chemists, and shipbuilders who worked on the large industrial plants in the cities of Azerbaijan. After the resettlement, even given the successful transportation of almost their entire property, the refugees were unable to occupy a matching social niche in Armenian society. They were unable to find the application of their knowledge in the rural areas of Armenia. Partly for this reason and because of their lack of knowledge of Armenian (as the mother tongue or the language of communication for the refugees was Russian), and also because of the complex socio-cultural relations with the local Armenian population, a large number of refugees left Armenia in the first years of resettlement. The families who had no opportunity to emigrate (there were also those who refused to move again and live in a foreign country), gradually began to integrate into Armenian society, but already with a "defective" social status.

Only a small part of the refugees managed to adapt to the new social environment. They managed to use their level of education (doctors, teachers) and consolidate a medium social status within particular settlements, but not a higher elite status on the regional level.

- They are all kinsmen here - wife, brother, uncle, etc. They live in unity and loyalty to each other. I was a stranger among them. But I got accustomed to it. First of all, I have a good profession, I am a good specialist in my field. Somebody fell ill, somebody else had pressure, a third person's child fell sick, etc. (...) Gradually I gained recognition. I was lucky that we had moved to a region where there was a lack of qualified physicians. Thus, I was able to occupy this social niche (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 05.08.2014).

It was due mostly to the educational level of the refugees that they were able to find jobs in their new places of living. Because, as already mentioned, after the departure of the entirely Azerbaijani population, the whole working structure of the region had collapsed. The local Armenian population was too small and not appropriately educated to cover all the needed positions in the region, but they managed to involve themselves in the main administrative positions and take over the business resources in the early nineties.

Hence, the ruling and most profitable positions in the region were concentrated in the hands of the locals. The medium class positions (teachers, doctors, nurses, accountants), that require a certain level of education were occupied by the refugees. Such a distribution of the social positions allows the establishment of a balance of sorts in the region, when "the wolves are fed and the sheep are safe".

1.2. The business elite - large landowners

In the rural areas of Armenia, social stratification is primarily determined by the transmission of economic and social capital from generation to generation. In the early nineties, local residents of the Vardenis region were able to distribute the whole of the agricultural property left over from the *kolkhozes* (land, livestock, agricultural machinery), not allowing the refugees to access this source of capital. The locals privatized the most fertile lands, the highest-quality cattle, and almost all equipment (tractors, combines). This fact became the basis of the initial economic superiority of the locals with regard to the refugees. Thus, the refugees had very few opportunities to penetrate into the dominant social groups in their new place of residence.

During the Soviet period, the labor market in the region was clearly distributed among the dominant Azerbaijani population (approximately 23 thousand people) and the minority Armenian population (approximately 8 thousand people) (Vsesojuznaja perepis’ naselenja 1989). According to the unwritten rules of the allocation of resources, the Azerbaijanis were engaged in cattle breeding and agriculture. The Armenians were mainly engaged in seasonal work, in the local factories and mines. This is an important fact, which later determined the consequent distribution of social roles in the region between locals and refugees. After the outflow of Azerbaijanis, the niche of agriculture in Vardenis began to temporarily decline. This also meant that agricultural land had been subject to desolation at the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was at this time, when all the post-Soviet space was engulfed in a wave of legal and

illegal privatization.

- After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the refugees got as much land as it was intended by law. The locals got dozens of times more - 20 hectares, 30 hectares... At that time my uncle was the head of the village and, thanks to this, my family got 50 hectares of land for 25 years of use. Today, nobody can stake a claim to this land. Frequently, the locals illegally assign the land of refugees for cultivation. And all the inhabitants of the village turn a blind eye to this. The refugee owner can complain to the village council, but he won't be able to return his land. Kinship is very strong in the village and, in this sense, the locals in the region are much more influential than refugees (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 04.08.2014).

Many refugee families were not able to adapt to the living conditions (for economic, social and cultural reasons) in the rural areas of Armenia. They sold their lands for a paltry price to local residents and went abroad (mostly to the Russian Federation) in the first years of resettlement. These were mainly former urban dwellers who had neither the knowledge and skills in agriculture, nor did they speak Armenian or know the Armenian traditions.

Those refugees who decided to stay in the villages mostly returned the land plots received from the state to the village councils to receive social welfare (2003), or provided them for long-term lease to the local residents at minimal prices (1-1.5 quintals of crop a year per hectare). An interview with a large landowner (refugee) revealed an interesting discourse on the politics of privatization in the early 1990s:

- I didn't inherit my property from the Soviet Union. I started from nothing, I overcame great difficulties. Then I gradually began

*to buy up land, I didn't receive it as a gift. My family moved from Azerbaijan when I was fifteen years old. Eventually, I learned the local communication rules and made friends among the locals. Then I got a law degree and learned the whole system of privatization. No one can reproach me or hurt my feelings today by calling me a refugee (Armenian proverb "*Achkid verev unq ka*" which literally translates to "You have eyebrows above your eyes")* (FW, Vardenis region, Sotq, 17.08.2014).

Expressions such as "inherited from the Soviet Union" and "received as a gift" are equivalent in this context and represent a value judgment with respect to the privatization process, the unequal distribution of land, cattle and agricultural policies of the locals (in particular, by the heads of the villages). The refugees preferred to sell or lease their lands to the most successful refugee entrepreneurs, but such examples are rare. The fact that the refugees were able to get the highest social status in the region has its explanation. In the late nineties, there were refugee businessmen from abroad who financed the business initiatives of promising young refugees in the rural regions of Armenia. Such initial financial support has enabled some of them to achieve considerable success in agribusiness.

For over two decades, the locals have formed a social layer of large landowners (farmers) who began to use the peonage of refugees. These people formed a new local elite group that concentrated not only large-scale agriculture in its hands, but also considerably expanded its political and economic influence in the region. The refugees, in turn, became workers on these lands for a day-fee that now constitutes approximately 8-10 dollars in dram equivalent per day. But this work is seasonal, and in the winter season these people remain jobless.

- During harvest time, more than two hundred people from across the neighborhood work on my lands. It is almost like a small factory! Only refugees work on my lands, as I am also a refugee. It is much easier to work with people who are like you. I bought up their lands and suggested that they work for a wage on these lands. (...) Small land plots do not bring profit, large land plots do (FW, Vardenis region, Sotq, 17.08.2014).

Farm laborers in the region are mostly refugees, and in the locals' own words - "we would prefer to starve rather than be hired as farm laborers and deal with the indecent work".

*- My pride won't let me do that work. Do you know what the local residents claim? – "Here are our donkeys, who work on our lands (*literally - *"in our homes")". In Kirovabad, there was a special place allocated, which was called "*ishak-maidan*" (the market of day laborers), where the Armenians also worked". But here in Armenia each of them has their own land plot, why don't they work on their own land?!* (FW, Vardenis region, Mets Masrik, 14.08.2014).

In fact, the locals are also involved as farm laborers on the lands of large landowners, but the practice is simply less publicized. According to the interviews, approximately 30% of population in the region earns their daily bread through peonage. Consequently, almost 1/3 of the population is poor and finds itself at on one of the lowest levels in the social hierarchy. This unequal distribution of labor affects the further development of the social hierarchy and the emergence of a few groups of influence (the local administration, the local criminal elites), which consists exclusively of local residents.

1.3. “Bats” - the criminal elite

After the disorder of the Soviet Union, during a difficult economic situation in Armenia in the Vardenis region, a new socio-cultural layer called the “gold diggers of Sotk”, who were given the popular nickname “bats” was formed. Until 2002, a considerable part of the underground mines in Sotk was dismantled, the state had moved to open-cast mining. The “bats” are a group of “black market diggers” of gold mines who have wells that are under their own control (or illegally leased from other owners, frequently high-ranking officials), from which they illegally extract gold ore. Generally, these consist of the old wells in the mines that were cut down in the Soviet period, or even of newly drilled wells. The leaders of the “bats” consist of only locals, as this phenomenon is directly connected with the depth and durability of local social communications. The groups of unskilled workers also include refugees on rare occasions. It is necessary to notice that this is a rather narrow local elite group that doesn’t tolerate beginners and prefers the preservation of kinship communications within the group. In groups of trust, this capital of trust is most important in the shadow economy, and therefore these groups include only relatives, friends, and fellow countrymen, i.e. those who can be trusted. Social groups exist only as a result of contacts between people, and the social relations created by them (Voronkov, et al. 1998: 6-7). The local criminal, socially-facilitated groups and the borders between them and society in general are defined by the results of social practice; therefore, refugees can be included in the groups of unskilled workers, but not in the ranks of the group leaders.

- Each person is strong on his own land, do you understand!? Since they are refugees and they are not local, they have no such influence and social ties in Vardenis. None of them will have enough courage to independently make their way to the mines; the refugees are afraid of the locals (FW, Vardenis region, Sotq, 08.01.2015).

According to the data from the interviews with the residents of the region, the "bats" are generally those people who have no other source of the income. Perhaps for this reason, they are generally residents of the town of Vardenis. This is because all the factories in the small and medium towns of Armenia were shut down after the collapse of the Soviet Union and potential job opportunities were liquidated. Thus, people began to seek all possible ways of making an informal earning.

- Many of them are forced to do this business; they have no other earnings, no other choice. If I urgently need money, I go to the mine because it is possible to earn a considerable sum in one trip. There are people who officially work at the mine, but are also simultaneously included in the activity of the "bats". They know the map of the underground wells (FW, Vardenis region, town Vardenis, 06.01.2015).

The entrance to the mine is a severe test, they need a group of young men (about 5-7 people, the age range of unskilled workers ranges from approximately 14 to 40 years) which within a month can visit the mine several times. The gold diggers are often compelled to pass on all fours for hundreds of meters through tunnels filled with water and gas, with oxygen cylinders and backpacks with tools attached on their backs. Having reached a field, they manually extract gold ore, fill their backpacks, and return with a heavier load

(the weight of the backpacks reaches 40-50 kg) in the same manner, on all fours.

- I remember the first time when I came into a well, through a very narrow tunnel, we passed a few hundred meters and reached the appointed place and started digging. I was in a state of shock when we had to come back the same way, this time with bags full of ore on our backs. I felt like I would end up stuck there, that I wouldn't be able to get out any more (FW, Vardenis region, town Vardenis 06.01.2015).

The danger is that there are often collapses in old mines (especially during spring), and cases of death from drowning or suffocation (water and poisonous gases accumulate in mines) or because of murders in frequent fights for the gold mines.

The owner of the well provides the tools and all the necessary equipment (the electric wires, ropes, oxygen cylinders cutting tools, cards) for each trip. Unskilled workers-diggers receive a salary according to their arrangement with the owner of a well through a day payment (about 40-50 dollars for one visit), or an equal share in the extracted ore, calculated as a result of pure gold and distributed between members of the group and the owner of a well. It is also necessary to notice that, according to informants, only those locals who have the opportunity to acquire the special expensive equipment for processing the ore and extracting the gold can become the owners of wells.

- Not everyone can buy such melting copper, its price is about forty thousand dollars (FW, Vardenis region, Sotq, 06.01.2015).

Just as in any criminal group activity, there are strict laws of behavior among the "bats" and over time a unique local folklore[1] has

[1] From the folklore material characteristic of the "bats" the most popular names of

emerged. According to the unwritten code of the "Sotk bats", it is strictly forbidden to analyze and discuss intergroup and intragroup conflicts during the time spent in the mine. All disputed situations are resolved outside the mine. This is because the illegal activity of the "Sotk gold diggers" is closely interconnected with local administrative and law-enforcement structures, who receive a share from the extracted gold (every month, the owners of wells pay a certain sum to the local law enforcement agencies for "free" entrance to the mine). This activity has not received much publicity because all the parties involved in this shadow business take great pains to conceal the phenomenon, and there is a universal unwillingness among the inhabitants of the region to speak on this subject.

Difficult and dangerous working conditions assume mutual support both within the groups, and between different groups (often groups of gold diggers that cross paths in the labyrinth of wells or spend the night together in screen rooms in the mine; there are cases when groups remain in the mine for a week). It is natural that in working conditions of this kind, there are many superstitions that are popular among the "bats".

- *Every time before the next visit to a well we go to our local shrine, so that God's good fortune is with us. (...) In the mine it is forbidden to kill mice, because mice love gold, and a mouse is like our patron. If we see mice in a well, without doubt, there is also gold close by* (FW. Vardenis region, town Vardenis, 08.01.2015).

wells are worth noting: "Handsome man" (the walls of the well are covered with a layer of pyrite, which has a gloss similar to gold), "Treasury" (the richest section with gold ore, where the main artery of the mine passes), "The face filled with water" (a surface with minerals or rocks that move during the course of mining operations), etc.

One can wonder why certain social groups receive elite status in the local discourse. For each of the mentioned groups, we can distinguish several symbolic (metaphoric) and literal (political authority, proprietary dominance) markers that define their elite status at the regional level. For example, for the Sotk black diggers, these markers are: a) gold (a symbolic attribute of the ruling classes); b) the inaccessibility of the group that gives a certain mysteriousness to its symbolic representation (also a characteristic of the elite stratum); c) a direct relationship with the state government and the police (in the words of one of my informants - “the law is on their side”); d) this group owns the lands that generate significant revenues (on the regional level they have considerable income). In certain cases the sphere of this criminal activity crosses with the sphere of local religiousness. For example, in a family of one of the leaders of the “bats”, the mother is a clairvoyant healer who is famous in the region, and a local shrine has been constructed at his house. Therefore, the social influence of this family is defined by several factors - a dominance in the symbolic, economic and religious spheres.

Conclusion

Thus, having generalized the above material, it is possible to draw some conclusions. In the village, one can notice a process of transformation of both the former Soviet ruling elite and the current economic elite. With the development of property relations and the transformation of the former Soviet model of domination and subordination, one can observe changes in the rural power elite (Veliky 2000). Even if one cannot talk about the homogeneous elite strata in the Vardenis region, one can argue their emergence during the last quarter of a century.

The emergence of the rural elite in the Vardenis region should be observed in the light of the conflict between two socio-cultural groups - the refugees and the locals. On the level of the investigated region, the key administrative positions and the large-scale farming for the last quarter-century have been concentrated in the hands of the locals. The refugees generally occupy the medium and the lowest rung in the employment hierarchy. Some of them have managed to get higher social positions in the region thanks to their high level of education and initiative. But such practices are often negatively viewed by the other refugees. The so called "well settled refugees" are accused of being "one's own" among the locals, such that they were able to overcome the symbolic border that had been built during the whole period of resettlement. The socio-economic and cultural borders between the studied two groups are supported by the existing distribution of property and the labor positions in the region. The border between these groups is set through repetitive practices and the cognitive actions ascribed to particular situations (for example, a refugee can become a large landowner, but not a "bat"). The "socio-cultural exclusion" of refugees can be considered mainly as a lack of participation in social institutes during the course of adoption of political decisions, distribution of symbolical resources etc. as an exception of social structures, the isolation of individuals from the "moral resources" provided by concrete group that are criteria of "insider-ness" (Ban'kovskaya 2002: 6). Thus we can state that, in the Vardenis region, groups of influence and eliteness have mostly been formed based on the status of indigenousness of its members and on their knowledge of the socio-economic and cultural fields.

References

1. Ban’kovskaya S. 2002: Баньковская С. П. Чужаки и границы: к понятию социальной маргинальности. Отечественные записки. 2002. №6. сс. 457-467. (Strangers and Boundaries: The Notion of Social Marginality. *Otechestvennye Zapiski,* 6, pp. 457-467).

2. Golenkova Z. (eds.) 2003: Социальная стратификация российского общества / под ред., предисл. Голенковой З.Т. М. Летний сад: М. (*Social Stratification of Russian Society*. Let.sad: Moscow)

3. Gotua, G. 2012. Different governments in Tbilisi, same people in regions: local elites in the years of independence (the case of Gurjaani district, Georgia). *Changing identities: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia.* pp. 202-221.

4. Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Armenia Social Trends 2003. Marzes (regions) of the Republic of Armenia. (2003). Retrieved March 12, 2015, at www.un.am.

5. Khakhulina, L. and Tuchek, M. 1996: Хахулина Л., Тучек М. Имущественное расслоение в переходный период // Мониторинг. 1996. №3. (Property differentiation during the transitional period. Public Opinion Monitoring: the economic and social changes 3, 19-23), URL: http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/imuschestvennoe-rassloenie-v-perehodnyy-period, (Last retrieved: 25.08.2015).

6. Kharatyan, L. (2008): Освоение “чужого” пространства: армяне-беженцы в “азербайджанских” селах Армении, в: Разгадать Южный Кавказ: общества и среда обитания. Сборник статей. Фонд Генриха Белля, Тбилиси. (Appropriation of “alien” space: Armenian refugees in the former “azeri” villages of Armenia, in: Figuring out the South Caucasus: Societies and environment. Collection of papers. Heinrich Boell Foundation, Tbilisi).

7. Regional government of Gegharkunik. 2011: Գեղարքունիքի մարզպետարան.URL: http://gegharkunik.mtaes.am/about-communities/ (retrieved 11.2014).

8. Velikiy, P., Elutina M., Steinberg I. & Bakhturina L. 2000: Великий П. П., Елютина М. Э., Штейнберг И. Е., Бахтурина Л. В. Старики российской деревни. Саратов: Степные просторы (The Old People of

the Russian Village. Saratov, Stepnie Prostori).

9. All-Union Population Census, 1989. 2013.: Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 г. URL: http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng89_reg1.php, Retrieved December, 2015.

10. Wegren, S. 2000. Socioeconomic Transformation in Russia: Where is the Rural Elite? *Europe-Asia Studies, 52,* pp. 237-271.

1.2 Elitist Sub-Groups among the Non-Elite: Domestic Staff in Elitist Families

Haykuhi Muradyan

Introduction

According to W. Pareto's definition of elites, the elite is a class of people who have the highest indices in their branch of activity (Hartman 2006: 45): "By elite, we mean the small number of individuals who, in each sphere of activity, have succeeded and have arrived at a higher echelon in the professional hierarchy" (Hartman 2006: 43). Examples are successful businessmen, artists, writers, professors, and, as in our case, even representatives of other, less privileged and apparently "non-elitist" groups, such as domestic staff and security personnel, who have managed to occupy elitist positions in their social group, etc.

The definition of another sociologist Dreitzel suggests that all those who have top positions as a result of a performance-based selection process are included in the elite group. It relates to every sphere of personal achievement, although ultimately it includes only those areas which are of interest and significance for society (Hartman 2006: 30):

"An elite is made up of the holders of top positions in a group, organization, or institution who have acceded to these positions on the basis of a selection process geared primarily to their (personal)

performance-based knowledge and who have, thanks to their role in this position, the power or the influence needed to contribute directly, and beyond the immediate interests of their own group, to maintaining or changing the social structure or the norms that sustain it, or those whose prestige places them in a position to play an exemplary role that has a normative function in determining the behavior of other persons over and above their own group".

These two definitions mark a functionalist approach to the theory of elite, one which is appropriate to the topic of our research related to certain sub-groups of non-elitist groups that have reached elitist positions due to association with elites and their reputation as the best professionals within their group. The subject of this research is a group of people employed as domestic and personal assistance staff in wealthy houses and families.

The relative cheapness and broad range of domestic services stipulated by the high rates of unemployment in Armenia have made them available not only to the upper, but also to the middle class. Having domestic assistants has become a very common thing, "fashionable" as many say, though it evidently is an indicator of relative welfare and prestige. It also marks changes in the social structure and perceptions since the collapse of the Soviet Union. During Soviet times, keeping domestic servants was not accepted practice. It was defined as "exploitation" and was mostly criticized by the socialist moral and ideology, and prohibited by law. However, this doesn't mean the phenomenon of domestic service did not exist in those times. It was disguised and mostly confined to the elite groups (party nomenklatura, high-ranking officials, professors, some privileged representatives of art and literature, well-known physicians, etc.).

As in the Soviet period, there had been no specialized enterprises providing home care services or care agencies to organize this type of labor market, the hiring of loyal and trustful domestic staff was made possible through closed social networks, including relatives, friends, and colleagues. Many of them shared one domestic assistant. Besides, there were other reasons why hiring domestic workers could not be a wide spread practice in Soviet society. Firstly, the range of services offered was not large, very few people would have agreed to work as a domestic assistant because in that case they wouldn't have had social benefits from the state such as the pension, paid vacations or maternity leave available to state employees, as no labor laws existed for self-employed people. That is why these positions were sought only by those who for one reason or another could not work for the state (like specific religious groups who were not encouraged to work for the state), those who wanted to move to cities from the village ("masters" potentially might provide this opportunity by registering them in their homes), or those who just needed additional money (like cleaners, nurses working in state enterprises, but getting small salaries). Secondly, according to the Soviet perception of human rights, keeping domestic assistants embodied a concept of social "inequality" in society, which was a concept hostile to Soviet ideology. Thirdly, some services like baby-sitting were not in demand, because the state provided citizens with many institutions for the early socialization of children, such as *msurs* (day care centers for babies below 3 years old) and kindergartens that functioned very well, and were free and accessible for everyone. Parents were encouraged to send their children there and those who did not were informally criticized for not trying to pro-

vide the proper socialization process for their kids. Only those who had grandparents available to take care of their children could afford not to send them to *msurs* or kindergartens. Also, there were developed mechanisms of mutual assistance among friends and close relatives for some domestic work such as apartment repairs, major cleaning, cooking for family events, etc., that partly continues to exist today, but has mostly been replaced with paid services. These changes are related to the modernization of life standards and new system of values. Above all, as it was already mentioned, the newly-emerged market of domestic services supplies job opportunities for many people who would otherwise have no other choice.

In contrast to most countries of the world where the market of domestic services is formed by migrants, Armenia, itself being a country of exported labor (Shahnazaryan 2008), practically does not import domestic servants from elsewhere. In Armenia, the labor market of domestic services is mostly filled with locals and religious and ethnic minorities (Yezidis/Kurds, Russians and Russian Molokans) who play an important role in the formation of an internal hierarchy in this sphere. Mechanisms of hierarchy formation in the sphere of domestic and personal assistance are discussed in this chapter.

The methodology of ethnographic research was applied for this chapter. I have conducted in-depth interviews with people employed as domestic and personal assistants to representatives of the power, economic and intellectual elite. During the interviews, I tried to find out the specifics of their relationships with their masters, perceptions of the elite or elitism, and specifics of self-perception. During the research, I faced some difficulties in interviewing, because many of respondents simply avoided responding to questions on private life,

attitudes, and manners of behavior that might affect their patrons and/or employers, etc., or they were trying to answer such questions in a way that would create a positive image of their patrons. To secure the positions of our informants, no names are mentioned in this presentation. The principle of loyalty and sympathy to the patrons was particularly obvious during the interviews with Russian Molokans.

Social and ethnic composition of domestic labor market in Armenia

According to a commonly accepted terminology, a domestic worker is a person who works within the employer's household. Domestic workers perform a variety of household services for an individual or a family, from providing care for children and elderly dependents to housekeeping, including cleaning and household maintenance[1]. Other responsibilities may include cooking, laundry and ironing, shopping for food and undertaking other household tasks.

As we mentioned above, in multinational countries the demand for domestic workers has been largely fulfilled by migrant domestic workers from other, so called "underdeveloped" countries who flock to wealthier nations to meet the demand of home assistance. This trend of domestic workers flowing from poorer nations to richer ones creates a relationship that on some levels encourages the liberation of one group of people at the expense of the exploitation of another[2].

[1] See: Domestic workers convention, 2011 (No: 189) // http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/2013ilo_dw_convention_brochure.pdf
[2] Ibid.

Armenia is a country exporting and not importing its labor force, and therefore a large part of the domestic service market is filled with locals. However, the sphere of domestic servants is multiethnic and multi-religious and the specifics of ethnicity and religion may play an important role in placing a person or a group on the hierarchical ladder.

According to statistical data from the 2011 population census, Armenia is largely ethnically homogenous with ethnic Armenians comprising 97.9% of the population. Yezidis make up 1.3%, Russians 0.5%, with other minorities including Assyrians, Molokans, Ukrainians, Greeks, Kurds, Georgians and Belarusians[1].

Besides ethnic Armenians, who constitute a majority in the labor market, there are ethnic and religious minorities largely involved in the sphere of domestic service. There are Russian Molokans, and Russians who take leading positions in the domestic labor market. The next minority in this scale consists of different groups of Armenian Protestants (Pentecostals, Jehovah's witnesses, etc.) who also prefer to be employed in the domestic sphere because of different reasons such as hidden discrimination by state employers (reported by some of the interviewees who were members of Protestant churches) or some inner religious restrictions regarding working for the state. One of the biggest ethnic minorities, the Yezidis[2] (and also some Kurds) are rarely employed by individuals or families for domestic work, but they are traditionally hired by municipalities for cleaning streets, yards, entries of yards, etc. Sometimes, they may

[1] Population by ethnicity, the results of 2011 population census of Armenia// http://armstat.am/file/doc/99486253.pdf

[2] A Kurmanji-speaking (ethnically Kurdish) ethno-religious group professing Yezidism.

be collectively employed by inhabitants of a multi-story building to clean the territories adjacent to their building, entrances and lobbies. There are some stereotypes about Yezidis presenting them as untidy and unclean that may be connected to the concept of religious impurity as a result of the very specific religion and beliefs of Yezidis. On the contrary, the Russians and especially Russian Molokans are widely sought after in this labor market because of reasons that will be explained later in this chapter. In fact, Molokans and Yezidis are at the opposite ends of the prestige scale for domestic labor.

"Big family": concepts of loyalty, trust, privacy and profit in the relationships of domestic staff and their elitist patrons

Some types of domestic work (baby-sitting, house maintenance, cleaning and cooking, for instance) are characterized by the development of rather intimate relationships between employees and employers. A nanny is entrusted to take care of employers' children, i.e. the most loved family members. At the same time, she is a witness to all the family's foibles and internal problems; sometimes she may even become a confidante to her employers. Though a housecleaner may make little verbal contact with her employers, they have few secrets from her too. She changes their sheets, dusts their desktops, scrubs their bathroom counters, and sometimes overhears their quarrels. The nurse who takes care of an elderly or disabled person often explicitly functions as a companion, closely communicating and providing emotional support, among other things. Bodyguard sand security staff is entrusted with securing their patrons' lives. Therefore, the concepts of trust and loyalty are central to relationships between the employer and his or her domestic workers. Very often,

they perceive themselves as one “big family” and develop ties and relationships close to those of a big family in the ethnographic sense of the word because of attitudes the employer and the employee develop toward each other. Assistance, mutual support, patronage and loyalty among its members are values specific for a “big family” or a *gerdastan* (a family form typical for the Armenian peasant society before the modernization period - up to the middle of the 20thcentury).The employer is seen as a resource for protection and promotion, to be repaid with absolute loyalty.

In turn, employers patronize their domestic employees, help them in the resolution of family problems, including material ones, and award them with additional money or gifts. Being hired as a domestic employee to members of the current Armenian political and economic elite gives these people a feeling of being privileged and this feeling is justified because high-ranking employers are a valuable part of their social capital. It includes various kinds of financial and social benefits such as social protection and patronization which often extends to the domestic staff, personal assistants and bodyguards. The other explicit benefit for those who serve a person in power is the possibility to “mediate” between the master and other people. This mediation function is usually not available to all of them, but to certain types of employees who develop more intimate relationships with the master than others and are aware of, or even involved in, some aspects of their personal life due to their professional functions or personal sympathies, or other type of liaisons. Thus, I was told of cases when the personal drivers of the economic and political elite (oligarchs, high-ranking politicians and state practitioners) mediated resolutions to some important issues such

as employment, support and protection in juridical, political, medical and other terms. Thanks to them, people gained employment, received financial help for medical treatment, protection in court, or another kind of support. The part those employees are playing in terms of accessibility to persons in power significantly increases their status and often makes them the "elite" among "non-elites". And after all, they often possess secret information about their masters and their milieu that also makes them important in the eyes of the "non-elites".In his famous interview to a correspondent of the French magazine *Nouvelles d'Armenie*, Ruben Hayrapetyan, one of the richest and the most influential Armenian oligarchs was asked questions about his bodyguards and his answer was: "I don't have bodyguards, they are my friends who permanently accompany me, my close friends and relatives"[1].

The major difference between the financial and social capitals is that the latter fosters positive relationships and thus enhances loyalty and confidence in exchange for patronization and support. Through patron-protégé relationships, the domestic workers become a part of the social networks and capacities of their masters and make use of that capital for their own benefit. For instance, one of my respondents working as a house-cleaner of a well-known physician told me that when her son injured his arm and needed to go to the hospital, he presented himself as a relative of this physician who was at the same time the director of the clinic (with the patron's own permission and approval) and as a result he got quick and quality service for very

[1] S. Mavyan's interview with R. Hayrapetyan, see at: http://www.lragir.am/print/arm/0/country/print/70929

little money[1].

Another respondent who worked as a personal driver to one of the top officials of the Republic of Armenia (RA) used his "connection" to resolve the problems of his student son: "My son was unable to get a passing grade during an exam and was about to be expelled from university. I let my "boss" know about my problems and he managed to resolve the issue with just a phone call. He (the 'boss' – H. M.) is an excellent person". ("Տղես չէր կարողանում քննությունը ստանար, արդեն պիտի համալսարանից դուրս մնար, շեֆիս հետ խոսացի, ինքը մի զանգով էտ հարցը լուծեց: Հոյակապ անձնավորություն ա")[2]:

There is a widespread stereotype in Armenia that the driver of a top official or a high-ranking person is more powerful and can solve more problems than his employer. In reality, personal drivers and other staff working for a person in power actively make use of the power and social connections of their employers. In another case, one of state officials working in the RA Passport and Visa Department managed to arrange visa matters for the brother of a private English teacher of his children. During my research, I faced a lot of cases demonstrating how the informal structures of power and social connectivity work and circulate in the Armenian elite society. These cases prove that social ties and networks are more important for climbing up the social ladder in Armenian society than a merit-based approach to personal achievements.

How long the boundaries of those "big families" can be stretched, and in particular what kinds of employees can be included into the

[1] I don't mention the names of the respondents for their personal security.
[2] Extract from the filed interview, 12.05.2015.

“extended family” and what kinds cannot? What kinds of characteristics should a domestic employee possess to become a “part” of the family, be trusted and confided in to the extent that he/she might be able to take advantage of it? In order to find the appropriate answers to these questions I had to seek, the detailed characteristics and description of the relationships between masters and their employees. The manner my respondents spoke about their employers was one of the indicators. All respondents spoke about their employers with deep respect and devotion. They avoided telling things which would somehow harm their employers. Interestingly, most of them had different ideas and a varying perception of the concept of loyalty. For some, loyalty was first of all a taboo on gossiping about their current masters, divulging family secrets, or criticizing them in any way. Some others understood loyalty as the need to praise their masters, their kindness, generosity, power, wealth, etc. One of my respondents who had worked in a family of representatives of the intellectual elite for 10 years described her masters as follows: “They are such nice people. I have been working for them for more than 10 years and I never heard them quarrelling, hurting each other. They are truly intelligent people. I cook for them, wash linen, iron; sometimes I make some minor purchases. My master’s wife is a wonderful woman. Can you imagine that she paid for the renovation of my apartment? She saw my living conditions and gave money to my son to renovate the apartment”. (‘’...они такие хорошие люди, я у них работаю уже больше 10 лет, каждый день кроме воскресенья, и еще никогда не видела, чтобы они ругались или оскорбляли друг друга при мне, они очень интеллигентные люди. Я для них готовлю, стираю, делаю глажку, иногда делаю небольшие

покупки. Моя хозяйка отличная женщина. Представляете, она сделала нам ремонт. Да, когда увидела что квартира не в хорошем состоянии, сказала, "как дети живут в этих условиях?". Она дала деньги и мой сын сделал ремонт[1]). She was obviously proud to work and be appreciated by such "highly intelligent people". I suggest that this type of loyalty may be triggered not only by sincere sympathies, fear or a desire to flatter. It may also be suggested that the practice of praising masters is not just a sign of loyalty. By ennobling and praising their masters, employees raise their own status and social positions as well.

However, I also faced cases when the domestic employees were not satisfied with their employers. That was mostly because of dissatisfaction with their social status, which might negatively affect their own status. This is very specific for the cases of those domestic employees who were previously part of the intelligentsia, gained a higher education in the Soviet or early post-Soviet times, but then lost their jobs after the collapse of the Soviet state or were unable to find employment that would correspond to their education, and were therefore forced to make a living by offering domestic services. Sometimes they feel uncomfortable and even humiliated working at houses of the nouveau-riche Armenians, who mostly come from non-intellectual layers. Thus, one of the respondents, who is currently employed as chief cook at a top state official's house, tried to compare her previous and current employers. She said that she had earlier worked for a very rich mixed Armenian-Russian family living in France for business purposes. She worked for them for six months, and as far as I understood from the interview, her satisfaction with the previous work was due to their level of education,

[1] Extract from the field interview, 28.08.2015.

intellectual development and civilization. In her words, they were "true" representatives of the elite class, as they were interested in art, culture, classical music, etc. "As for their family", she said, "I can definitely call them the true elite. During meals, they would listen to classical music. They loved art and 'high culture. 'The entire house was full of sculptures and paintings by famous artists"[1]. Coming back to the family she is currently working for, she said with a hint of disappointment: "They are good people, they respect each other, but the topics of their daily conversation don't go beyond brand name stores, good restaurants, and clothes. They are too far from art and culture"[2]. In the mind and perception of this woman, being the elite meant not only being wealthy, prosperous and powerful, but first of all being intellectually developed, civilized and educated.

Similarly, another respondent who worked as a housecleaner for a state official's daughter mentioned that her employer did not know any foreign languages: "People with such a high social status should speak at least five languages. As for me, I'd like to speak English but I work very hard and don't have time to learn foreign languages"[3].

These attitudes demonstrate that the perception of the elite is not founded only upon concepts of political and economic power but also includes possessing some cultural capital (according to P. Bourdieu's terminology4) meaning intellectual development, a refined mode of life, a love of arts and culture, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.

[1] Extract from the field interview, 15.09.2014.
[2] Extract from the field interview, 15.09.2014.
[3] Extract from the field interview, 16.01.2015.
[4] About the "cultural capital", see Bourdieu 1986.

Molokans as an elitist sub-group in the domestic labor market

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned a particular ethnic group of Russian Molokans who have managed to occupy high positions in the market of domestic services, turning into a kind of highly sought after and "prestigious" domestic workers. Molokans[1] are a religious group of ethnic Russians that were accused of being a sect and exiled to the Caucasus in 1839[2]. They have been living in Armenia for almost two centuries and have formed very specific relationships with the local population. Previously being predominantly an agricultural community, during the last decades they have been moving to the cities because of the consequent Soviet and post-Soviet politics of ruination of farmers' households and the sphere of agriculture as a whole. Their numbers have drastically decreased due to the high rates of emigration (from 12,000 to 5,000).

Since the late Soviet times, the urbanized Molokans have been engaged in domestic service because of the specifics of their faith and religious requirements, which do not encourage higher education and direct work for the state. Moreover, they even refuse to take pensions and social allowances, because, as some of my informants mentioned, their religion forbids them from taking "unearned" money from the state, though some other Molokan informants were not satisfied with these taboos, thinking that social allowances are earned through life-long work. During Soviet times, those who did

[1] About Molokans and Armenian Molokans, see: Young 1930; Moore 1973; Slyvkoff 2006; Dolzhenko 1992: 7-25; Dolzhenko 2004; Dolzhenko 2007.

[2] The name Molokane was officially coined in the mid-1700s by Russian Orthodox Church. They derived the name Molokan from the word Molokane meaning milk drinkers in Russian. Molokans explain the name Molokane saying that reading Holy Scripture was the same as drinking spiritual milk. See: Slivkoff 2006: 6.

not work in a *kolkhoz* lived on their private income; they farmed the land, cultivated cabbage and carrot and made so called *malakani ttu* (salted cabbage), which is one of specific products they feature in Yerevan food markets. After the process of urbanization began for the Molokans, and many villagers moved to the cities (mostly to Yerevan), they found and owned some specific niches of low-skilled labor such as domestic services (house-cleaning, baby-sitting) for women, and house-construction and apartment repair for men that did not clash with their religious norms. Currently, however, some of them explain this in terms of economic advantage: "Where else I can get so much money? Besides, I know my job well and my employer is pleased with my work. With higher education, a lot of clever young people work in offices and make only 60 to 80 thousand drams. I can earn that money working only 3-4 days"[1]. Since during Soviet times, working as a domestic assistant was not prestigious or popular work, Molokans had almost no competitors and had the opportunity to build a reputation and vast social networks that allowed them to find wealthy and kind clients in those times. They managed to keep up their positions in the post-Soviet period, when the market of domestic and construction services got satiated with the excessive offers of labor force. This was made possible partly because of old networks of employers created by the Molokan community, and partly because of their high professional reputation which included the commonly-shared stereotypic opinions about Molokans - honesty, loyalty, diligence and professionalism. These stereotypes may be linked to their religion (a Protestant type of charismatic or spiritual Christianity), that prohibits any cheating, theft, and dishonesty. Be-

[1] Extract from the field interview, 8.12.2014.

sides this, Molokans, as a highly cohesive community, have their inner mechanisms of taking control of their reputation. It is worth mentioning that representatives of some other protestant movements (Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, etc.) are also reputed for their honesty and hard-working nature, but there are some prejudices in their case that they would preach to the family members, trying to convert them to their faith. In the Molokans' case there is no such a fear, because Molokans are a rather closed and ethnicity-based community, although they have no interdictions against proselytizing.

I conducted interviews with the Molokan women working as domestic employees in families with various social statuses, despite the fact that I had a limited access to the Molokan community, because of their general mistrust of outsiders. The Molokans' native language is mostly Russian (except for some small groups of ethnic Mordovians), but most of them, especially the men, are fluent in colloquial Armenian or at least understand this language.

Molokan women living in Yerevan work as housecleaners, nannies, cooks, and perform such services as laundry, ironing, and other household-related works. As a rule, they work predominantly in "elitist" families, meaning families of the members of political, business and intellectual elite, due to various factors. Firstly, they kept and built on their old networks of wealthy and elitist employers since Soviet times. Secondly, because of their reputation, Molokans are in higher demand than any other candidates and as a result, they rate their services higher than others and the higher prices, in turn, make them available only to the affluent layers of society, which are ready to pay high salaries in exchange for the loyalty and honesty of their servants. Having a Molokan house-cleaner or baby-sitter is

turning prestigious and thus becoming a marker of elitism and affluence for their masters.

Molokan men as a rule are involved in construction work. Like the women, they enjoy a good reputation and have developed clientele networks. Both women and men of the Molokan community maintain mutual support and backup mechanisms. Thus, if a Molokan woman can’t go to work for some reason, she always sends someone from her family or kinship to replace her. One of my respondents said that, after she had worked for a certain family for three years, she got married, gave birth to a child and could not go to work for a while: “My mistress didn’t want to let me go. But I recommended my sister’s services to her and assured that she could trust her as much as she trusted me”.(Когда я вышла замуж и у меня родился сын, мне пришлось на какое-то время бросить работу. Моя хозяйка не хотела отпускать меня, но я рекомендовала мою сестру)[1]. Moreover, they are always looking for new clients to enlarge their network and to be able to provide their youth with a decent job. Within their group, they always try to keep up the high standards of their work, ethical norms and their good image in order to preserve their top positions in this labor market.

Conclusion

One of the markers of the elite groups in Armenia is having a certain number of personal or domestic support staff. The social relationships they develop between themselves are mutually beneficial in terms of establishing and maintaining a high status. They may be conceptualized as a “big family”, which is based not only on blood-

[1] Extract from the field interview, 8.12.2014.

ties or marriage connections, but also on social ties. The relationships between the employer and employee may vary from looking like master-servant attitudes to those of a "patron – protégé". But in all cases they are built on a scale of values such as loyalty, honesty, purity and so on. Social and kinship networks are perceived as the main mechanisms for finding and hiring domestic employees, as people are not prone to trust agencies, though there are some reputed agencies whose services are expensive. A good reputation and having a wealthy clientele in the "portfolio" are the main markers of one's place within the hierarchy of domestic employees. Therefore, this mechanism contributes to creating a new class of the "elitist" domestic workers who work mostly for the various types of elite. Due to their particular reputation, entire social, ethnic and religious groups such as the Molokans may reach elitist positions in their professional sphere, working as domestic support staff for elitist groups. Besides immediate material benefits, working in wealthy families of the elite becomes a valuable asset in terms of social capital that is often used for the benefits of the whole family and relations. In perspective, such employees may have the opportunity to seriously increase their social status and positions.

References

1. Hartman M. 2006. Sociology of Elite, London: Routledge.
2. Shahnazaryan N. 2008. Women's Migration: the Armenian Nannies and Elderly Caregivers in Los Angeles and Bay Area, presentation in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Yerevan.
3. Bourdieu P. 1986. The forms of capital, in Westport J. (ed.) Hand-

book of theory and research for the sociology of education, Greenwood: New York, pp. 214-258, see at: http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Bourdieu-Forms-of-Capital.pdf)

4. Mills C. Wright. 1949. The power elite, Oxford University Press: New York, London, 1956.

5. Murdock G. 1949. Social Structure, Los Angeles.

6. Slivkoff P. 2006. The formation and contestation of Molokan Identities and communities: The Australian experience, Master Thesis.

7. Anastasiu I. 1912. The social functions of the family, see at: http://euromentor.ucdc.ro/2012/vol3n22012/en/12_the-social-functions-of-the-family.pdf

8. Young P. 1930. Assimilation problems of Russian Molokans in Los Angeles, see at: http://www.russianaz.org/molokane/subbotniki/America/Prohibition.pdf

9. Moore W. 1973. Molokan Oral Tradition: Legends and Memorates of an Ethnic sect, University of California: Folklore studies, vol. 28.

10. Dolzhenko I. 1992: Долженко И. Религиозный и культурно-бытовой уклад русских крестьян-сектантов Восточной Армении (конец XIX – начало XX в.), в: Духоборы и молокане в Закавказье. Москва. (Religious and Everyday practices of the Russian Peasant-Sectarians of Eastern Armenia (end of XIX c. – beginning of XX c.), in: Dukhobors and Molokans in Transcaucasia. Moscow.).

11. Dolzhenko I. 2004: Долженко И. Этноконфессиональная общность молокан Армении: групповое самосознание, в: Археология, этнология и фольклористика Кавказа: Матер. междунар. науч. конф. Тбилиси. (The Ethnic and Confessional Community of Molokans of Armenia: Group Identity, in: Archeology, Ethnology and Folklore of the Caucasus, materials of the international conference, Tbilisi).

12. Dolzhenko I. 2007: Долженко И. Некоторые черты культовой практики молокан Армении: религиозные песнопения, в: Народная культура армян. XIV, Республ. науч. сессия: Кратк. содерж. докл. Ереван. (Some Features of the Ritual Practice of the Molokans of Armenia: Religious Chanting, in: Folk Culture of the Armenians, v. XIV, Republican conference, theses, Yerevan).

Part 2.

New Economic Elites

2.1 Fighting the Smell of Kebab: New Economic Elites and Intelligentsia in the Georgian-Turkish Borderland

Giorgi Cheishvili

Introduction

Borderlands, if we take them as separate regions consisting of two (or in some cases more) parts divided by an international border, are historically formed areas where the border on the one hand is a boundary between political, cultural and economic structures but on the other hand creates a unique environment for communication where these factors overlap. Constant face-to-face interaction between the members of borderland communities leads to the development of the local and unique social, economic and cultural dynamics of borderlands. Borderlands have been and are also arenas where neighboring states try to demonstrate their power and sometimes superiority over the other. In the past decades, borders have attracted a growing interest in the social sciences. Also, the number of monographs on post-Soviet borders has been increasing through the last decades (Pelkmans 2006; Reeves 2014; Berdahl 1999; Smith 1998; Megoran 2003 etc). The recent theory on borders has switched its focus from borders understood as dividing lines between social, economic, political and cultural spaces to the process of bordering and border-making. These processes have greater influence in border regions and on borderland communities. Borderlands, "as front-

line zones of contact" (Martinez in Ganster 1997), create an opportunity for transnational interaction. The role of elites has also been emphasized in the cross-border social processes of borderlands, or as Herzog calls it "transboundary social formations" (Herzog 1990). If we look at the history of borderlands, regional elites have played a crucial role in the dynamics of processes in borderlands, as they were facilitators of state power. Hence, it was an absolute necessity for the state to have good relations with local elites to control borderland communities (Baud and Schendel 1997).

However, if we look at an example of borders of former communist countries with the ones of the western bloc that were opened after many decades of separation, we will see that although the borderlands existed for a long time, the lack of a possibility of cross-border interactions for decades led to shared and common practices being forgotten. Neither were any kinds of elitist groups influential on both sides of the border, once again because of the above-mentioned inaccessibility. The fall of the "iron curtain" stimulated the process of the creation of new borderland communities, new cultural and economic practices, new conceptualizations of places and fellow borderlanders from the other side of the border, as well as new power relations. These processes will be the central focus of this article. More specifically, it will look at processes that have developed after the reopening of the Georgian-Turkish border, which was a part of the "iron curtain" and which had been hermetically sealed since its very creation in the 1920s. Until its opening, both sides of the borderland lived in total isolation from each other. The article will attempt to analyze the process of the formation of a certain kind of power relation in the Georgian-Turkish borderland, specifically in the Georgian

city of Batumi and the Artvin province of Turkey, which has taken place after the re-opening of the former Soviet-Turkish border. In this article, particular attention will be drawn to two groups, the intellectual elite of Batumi also known as the intelligentsia, which has been a powerful group in decision-making processes during the Soviet times and the group of businessmen of Turkish nationality, who have occupied a higher niche in the hierarchy that was created after the opening of the border. Particularly, it will look at the growing economic power and influence of Turkish nationals in the Georgian city of Batumi and the reaction of the Georgian intelligentsia to the growing number of Turkish businesses and increasing influence of Turkish businessmen in the border region. The period after the opening of the border was accompanied by major geopolitical changes such as, first of all, the breakup of the Soviet Union, which caused a period of huge economic stagnation in Georgia, while Turkey experienced rapid industrial development. This factor created a very visible economic asymmetry between the inhabitants on opposite sides of the border. On the other hand, the much more financially advantageous situation in Turkey enabled the not-so-wealthy, middle class inhabitants of Artvin to start businesses in Batumi or become job-givers to Georgian nationals crossing the border in search of a living, hence the lower niches were occupied by Georgian nationals and the hierarchy became very noticeable. This process and fighting against the Turkish "cultural and economical expansion" became the major niche of the intellectual elite of Batumi, which had significant power during the Soviet times but lost its influence after the fall of communism and especially after the Rose Revolution in Georgia.

History of the Border Region

Of the many changes associated with the breakup of the Soviet Union, one of the most significant has been the fall of the “iron curtain” that was an ideological and physical boundary, which detached the Soviet republics from non-Soviet-controlled states. These new geopolitical processes caused significant social and economic changes in the neighboring countries formerly separated by the “iron curtain”. Georgia (specifically its southwestern city of Batumi) was one of the Soviet republics that shared its borders with a non-Soviet State, NATO-member Turkey. One of the first borders, which opened between the Soviet Union and a NATO member country was the present-day border between Georgia and Turkey, a border that prior to its opening in 1988, three years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, had been hermetically sealed, militarized and strictly controlled. The reopening reconnected people living on different sides of the border after decades of separation and engaged people in the process of reestablishing cross-border social, economic and political networks.

What we call today the Georgian and Turkish parts of the borderland, or more specifically, the Batumi region of Georgia (officially the Autonomous Republic of Ajara) and the Artvin province of Turkey, have been parts of one political and administrative entity, one region with a centuries-old vibrant history. Prior to the 16th century, the above-mentioned region was included either in a united Georgian kingdom or in various feudal polities. In the 16th century, it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, resulting in drastic changes in the situation in the region, as it was under Ottoman control for three centuries, which caused the conversion of its population from

Christianity to Islam. Following the end of the Russo-Turkish War, it was decided to conclude a truce between the countries and the issue of reuniting it with Georgia was presented in the late 19th century, when in June 1878, the congress of European states convened in Berlin to discuss the transfer of some territories included in the Ottoman Empire to Russia as part of the truce. Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, was not happy with Russia's further strengthening and did its best to prevent the Ottomans from conceding their territories, especially a very significant Black Sea port like Batumi. However, an agreement was eventually reached, and Batumi, together with its hinterlands, went to Russia. Referred to as Batumi Oblast' (district), the Empire included it into Georgia, specifically, the Kutaisi Gubernia (governorate), which was under its control. In 1918, Georgia gained an independence that lasted only three years and ended with the occupation of the country by Soviet troops in 1921. The Soviet authorities reached a new agreement with Turkey, based on which the region was divided into two parts. The border divided many villages and valleys, and prevented family members and relatives from communicating with each other for seventy years; those who appeared on the Turkish side were totally distanced from the center with which the lives of each inhabitant had been closely connected. It was the well-known "iron curtain" hanging between a single people, in some cases, between family members, separated by the border.

In August 1988, the border between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey was officially opened, and this led to great celebrations among the region's population. According to eyewitnesses, elderly people were brought on stretchers to allow them to meet their

family members whom they had not seen for 70 years (Pelkmans 2006). Following the opening of the border, people started visiting each other's countries. Currently, a simplified border regime is in effect across the Georgia-Turkey border, and Georgian and Turkish nationals may cross it even without their passports. The opening of the border had an impact on the social and economic situation in the Georgian-Turkish borderland. Today, thousands of people cross the border at the Sarpi border checkpoint on a daily basis for different reasons. Many people have businesses or are employed on the other side of the border.

Batumi

During the Soviet period, the region of Ajara, of which Batumi is the capital, was given the status of autonomous republic. This meant that Ajara was a part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic with formal rights of self-governance. In the Soviet Union, such status was given to regions populated by ethnic and linguistic minorities such as the Ukrainian Russian-speaking region of Crimea, Transnistria region in Moldova, etc. Georgia had three autonomous republics: Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajara. The autonomous status of the first two was conditioned by the ethnic composition of these regions, where the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages had a special status. However, Ajara had always been populated by Georgians and a Georgian-speaking population. The autonomy of Ajara was somewhat paradoxical, as the specific characteristic of this area was its religion (as it was mentioned above, the local population had converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule), which officially could not be the basis for granting such status in the Soviet Union. After the

breakup of the Soviet Union, these autonomous republics became the main epicenters of conflicts in the former Soviet states. Most of the former Soviet socialist autonomous republics ended up being controlled de facto by the Russian Federation after their separation from the states they still belonged to de jure. This process started in the 1990s with the separation of Abkhazia, Ossetia (from Georgia), Transnistria (from Moldova) and the last occurrence was in 2014, when Russia officially declared Crimea as its region.

Perhaps because of the lack of any existing ethnic differences, Ajara was the only autonomous region that did not claim independence. However, the influence of the central government of Georgia had reduced to a minimum and the power of the former Soviet official Aslan Abashidze was established in the region, who ruled Ajara for 13 years, neglecting almost any possible command from the central government. In 2004, after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, when as a result of long rallies power was peacefully transferred to Mikheil Saakashvili and his National Movement Party, Abashidze did not recognize the legitimacy of the new government, which practically meant a declaration of independence by Ajara from Georgia. However, mass rallies by the local population, and especially students, started in Batumi against Abashidze and his separatist intentions, which forced him to resign and escape to Moscow. Abashidze's close relatives who controlled most of Ajara's economy had to escape as well, some of them were prosecuted for corruption.

Currently, with its location and economic importance, Batumi is one of the leading and most significant cities in Georgia. It is also Georgia's main sea resort attracting large numbers of tourists during summer. Its seaport and its proximity with the Georgia-Turkey land

border have always conditioned its economic importance. This is the boundary connecting European and Asian countries and allowing a trade turnover between and among them; in particular, it connects European countries to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Central Asian states. Recently, the city grew in significance after former President Mikheil Saakashvili, whose government was in office until October 1st, 2012, declared Batumi his personal project or "his own daughter", as the president referred to it (*Georgian Journal* 2015). Millions were invested in the development of the city's infrastructure and architecture in order to increase its touristic potential. The President himself promoted Batumi; in summer, most state-organized events were held in the city and were broadcast live. Video commercials were created. Numerous new buildings were built and the older part of the city was reconstructed. Architects agreed their draft projects for streets and buildings personally with the President. New places of interest, for instance, the Piazza, appeared in the city; it was arranged like the center of a Western European city and soon became an attraction for tourists and a place visited by newlywed couples to take photos.

To attract foreign investors for the successful implementation of the Batumi development project, the Georgian government created special profitable conditions for them. The liberal tax policy was successful; many businessmen invested their capital and started businesses in Georgia.

A significant majority of investors were businessmen from neighboring Turkey. They became major employers in Batumi. The material ability of the newcomers and the employee-employer subordinated relationship between them and the local residents hired by

them, gave the businessmen certain power over the old residents and caused the formation of a new social group of wealthy inhabitants in the city. This group of people became the economic elite of Batumi, and it consists of predominantly Turkish citizens.

This hierarchy is very palpable in the city and the topic is widely discussed. Almost every conversation with the natives of Batumi ends with the topic of the high positions that Turkish nationals have gained and complaints about the existence of many places in the city where locals simply cannot go as only Turks could afford to pay such prices.

Turkish Quarter

Such places are mainly located in the so-called Turkish Quarter. Despite the fact that one can see places owned by Turks, decorated with Turkish and Georgian or just Turkish flags and names on them like "İstanbul Lokantası", "Balık Restoran", "Köfteci Süleyman" everywhere in Batumi, the Turkish Quarter is the area where all the businesses belong to the Turks. This is a street in the old part of Batumi referred to by local residents as *Turkebis Ubani* (თურქების უბანი in Georgian), the "Turks' Quarter", which, for Batumi residents, symbolizes the presence of rich people from the neighboring country in the city. The Turkish Quarter, officially named Kutaisi Street, is situated in the central part of Batumi. The street is within view of a white mosque, one of the few buildings from the Ottoman period that survived Soviet rule. The first cafe here was opened about thirteen years ago by a man from Artvin, Arhavi District (Arhavi Ilçesi); later, others joined him gradually and currently almost all the businesses belong to people from the Turkish side of the bor-

der. While the owners of big businesses are not visible to the general public, many people know the owners of shops, restaurants and bars here personally.

The place is always crowded and along it there are cafes, faced with tiles and marbles, having eye-shaped talismans hanging in the entrances of most of them, protecting them from the evil eye. In front of the cafes, there are tables laid with small teacups and sweets. The place is mainly visited by people from Turkey and everything is organized to fulfill the expectations of Turkish customers. Besides many cafes and teashops, there are Turkish candy shops, barber's shops, car rentals, butcher shops that sell only *halal* meat, casinos and even sex workers.

The staff here is mainly Georgian and they are hired once they can demonstrate good knowledge of Turkish. Turkish has become the most useful foreign language here, in terms of finding employment. Although it is not taught in school, there are a lot of people who master it and achieve fluency. This knowledge is required not only on Kutaisi Street and not only by Turkish employers; for most job seekers, it is one of the major prerequisites to get a job.

Who are the businessmen from Turkey?

In general, the business people from neighboring Turkey run enterprises in Batumi that are different in terms of variety and size. While some of them are owners of big international chains of hotels and fancy casinos, and accordingly, their annual revenues amount to tens of millions of Euros, most of them run relatively small grocery shops or Turkish restaurants. The owners of big businesses do not reside in Batumi and administer their businesses from Turkey. The

permanent residents of Batumi are usually the ones who own relatively small businesses. Hence, the economic status of most of them is not very high. However, Turkishness has become conceptualized as, and associated with, wealth and high economic capabilities and power. Turkish businessmen are considered (by Batumi residents) to be members of a big powerful group, which has also been given special privileges by the state.

On the other hand, it is hard to say that the Turks living in Batumi have an elitist identity or consider themselves as such. They have not formed any groups where they hold meetings. As mentioned above, most of the businessmen are middle class rural people and the overwhelming majority of them are from the province of Artvin – ethnic Georgians and Lazs. Most of them are fluent in Georgian, speaking the same dialect that is spoken in villages around Batumi (in literature known as the Ajara dialect), or very similar to it, depending on the part of Artvin from which they originate. Language is not a problem for Lazs either. As they say, they usually start speaking Georgian in a couple of months because of the similarity of the Georgian and Laz languages and all my informants were fluent. The only difference is that, unlike other Georgians who speak this language from their childhood, the Lazs do not speak a particular dialect, but the so-called literary/urban Georgian, as they have learned it outside of a family environment, through interaction with the urban population of Batumi. Obviously, the primary interest of investors from Turkey is economic; however, many of them emphasize the role of the memory of the recent past of the region in making the choice to move to Batumi. For them, it does not feel like being in a foreign country, as they were quite familiar with Batumi from the

family narrative, based on how their family members recalled "their city" across the border, which was no longer accessible because of the "iron curtain". Their ethnic origin has helped many businessmen from Artvin to apply for and obtain[1] dual citizenship in Georgia.

At the same time, Turkish businessmen understand their role and the importance of their presence in Batumi for the local economy. "If we were not here, many people would die of hunger. In my restaurant, I have hired more than 15 women and the salary I pay them is the only income for most of their families", I was told by the owner of one of the Turkish restaurants.

"Smell of Kebab in Batumi's streets": the Intelligentsia against the Turkification of the city

This current position of the Turkish nationals has caused negative attitudes towards them in the city, especially among the intelligentsia – local writers, artists, actors and different representatives of the intellectual Elite of the city. The biggest wave of protest started during the pre-election period before the change of the government in Georgia in 2012. Members of the Batumi Writers' Union published a petition against the "Turkification" of the city and the entire region ("One More Letter against Building of a New Mosque in Batumi (კიდევ ერთი წერილი ბათუმში მეჩეთის მშენებლობაზე)" 2015). In this letter addressed to the head of the Autonomous Republic of Aja-

[1] According to the Georgian law about citizenship, dual citizenship can be granted only with the approval of the president. It was particularly easy for ethnic Georgians holding foreign passports to get Georgian citizenship during last months of Saakashvili's presidency, as he himself announced that he would approve such applications with simplified procedures ("Saakashvili Grants Citizenship to Georgian Turks" 2013).

ra, writers who called themselves the intelligentsia demanded that the government stop the "Turkish cultural, economic and religious expansion" in the region. This fact was of significant importance, as during Saakashvili's period the intelligentsia was marginalized and often attacked by the President himself, who referred to it as the "red intelligentsia"[1] in order to emphasize the Soviet roots of this institution.

Here it is important to mention that the intelligentsia has played a very important role in the Soviet times throughout the whole country. However, its power and influence significantly decreased after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is revealed well in the following part of an interview I held with a representative of the Batumi intelligentsia: "In Soviet times, even small municipal meetings were not held without representatives of the intelligentsia. It was necessary to listen to members of different unions such as writers, composers, architects... Their opinions were highly valued and taken into account. The situation today is completely different. Of course, I am not nostalgic about the Soviet Union but in this part, their policy was absolutely correct".

Unlike the former ruling party, the Georgian Dream (the party that replaced Saakashvili's government after the elections) gave the floor to representatives of the intelligentsia. During the pre-election public gatherings organized by Bidzina Ivanishvili in Batumi, they had the possibility to address the assembled people, which perhaps was the first case of the intelligentsia being used by a political group to affect the situation in the borderland. The main message of their speeches was the "problem of Turkification and Islamization" of the

[1] For more on the "red Intelligentsia", see also Mühlfried 2005.

city. "Batumi, I miss your boulevard, not that boulevard, which is permeated with the smell of chorba[1] and doner kebab", said artist Kako Dzneladze, in his speech at a Georgian Dream rally in Batumi ("Pre-Election Turkophobia" 2015). After nearly a decade, it was the first chance for this elitist group to show its power. In interviews, the organizers of the gatherings particularly emphasized the occupation and expressed a radically negative attitude towards the Turkish Quarter and the presence of businessmen from Turkey at large, being well manifested in the words and epithets by means of which they describe the existing situation. "Turks are concentrated around the mosque" (meaning Kutaisi Street); "Before Misha[2], they were few in number; later, they gradually took over/occupied territories;" "they are occupying Batumi economically", etc. "Turkey ruled Batumi for 300 years, now they want to conquer Batumi, but not with weapons and an army - they do it with their money. Batumi is full of Turks now. Go and see Kutaisi Street, the Turks have set up camp there. They have already occupied Ajara economically, they have bought the city and our people have become their servants… But our impious state is agreeing to everything. They have let so many Turks in to Batumi and turned our city into a big supermarket", I was told by an aged native of Batumi, who had been one of the organizers of the anti-Turkish demonstrations. Our conversation took place in front of an institution established by the City Hall of Batumi for pensioners' leisure, where the pensioners and aged natives of Batumi play backgammon and dominoes. This club has frequently been a venue for political debates and, as it appeared, the "intellectual leaders"

[1] Turkish stly soup.
[2] Misha: Mikheil Saakashvili, former President of Georgia.

of Batumi have often organized various large-scale rallies there. As soon as the people around learnt about the topic of our conversation, they found it so interesting that up to thirty people gathered around us. Everybody agreed with my interlocutor and tried to add something of his or her own which almost turned my interview into a rally. Adults and elderly men asked me to listen to them carefully in order to disseminate the story about their problem to as many people as possible.

Fighting against the "Turkish reoccupation" has become the new niche of Batumi's intellectual elite. Another example of the rise of the intelligentsia and its rivalry with this newly emerged power was seen in the tensions around the project of building a new mosque in the city[1]. A symbol that demonstrates well the antipathy of the Batumi intelligentsia towards the Turkish presence in the city is the memorial recently erected in one of the central squares of Batumi with the following inscription on it: "Here lie 50 Georgian patriots who fell for the unity of Georgia in March 1921".

The idea of building/rebuilding the Ottoman mosque, which was destroyed by the Soviet government, was received very negatively.

[1] The history of this monument is connected with a recent occurrence: As a matter of fact, during the recent decade, the issue of Georgian monuments, specifically, churches and monasteries in Artvin have become crucial in Georgia. The situation of the monuments attracted particular attention after the winter of 2010 when the dome of one of the 9th century churches collapsed. That occurrence provoked great discontent on the part of Georgian community against the state of Turkey. Soon, the Georgian government got involved as well and negotiations started between Turkish and Georgian high-ranking officials. The Georgian party wanted the monuments to be rehabilitated immediately with the involvement of Georgian professionals. Turkey responded with reciprocal requests regarding historical mosques in Georgia. One request was to reconstruct the mosque in Batumi that had been destroyed by the Soviet government.

Protest demonstrations were organized at the site where the mosque was to be constructed. The intelligentsia managed to mobilize thousands of people; they occupied the site for months in order not to allow any construction. It is important to mention that in the rhetoric and debates around the topic of a new mosque, the emphasis was made on the social aspects and the dominance of Turks in the city and not religious ones.

Along with the emergence of a new "Turkish threat", new narratives occurred about the Aziziye Mosque itself and the site where it was to be built. As already noted above, the Sovietization of Georgia in 1921 was preceded by the Turkish occupation of Batumi, followed by the fact that the Democratic Republic of Georgia declared war on Turkey. The Georgian army started to liberate Batumi. Most of its soldiers were the so called Junkers, students of the military school, aged 18-21. They managed to liberate Batumi from the Turks; however, many Junkers died on the battlefield. According to the newly emerged narrative, ten days before the erection of the memorial cross, human bones were discovered. The site, where Turks want to build a mosque, was the Junkers' cemetery and the new narrative held that, by pushing their demands to build a mosque there, Turkey was 'offending the souls of the warriors' who had fought against them in 1921.

In this paper, I do not attempt to reconstruct historical facts or find out what the historical truth is, I am not going to answer the question about whether young warriors are buried there. However, I would like to draw attention to the sudden manifestation of the new narrative, which was successfully used by the intelligentsia to prevent the building of the Mosque.

Conclusion

Borderlands are usually described as geographical areas with their own historically shaped tradition of interaction. A history of border areas shows that regional elites whose power was equally influential on both sides of different borders have played an important role in the social dynamics of borderlands. The Georgian-Turkish border, despite the fact that it existed for many decades, did not have any experience of interaction, when the border opened in 1988, as it had been completely impermeable since its very establishment. The fall of the "iron curtain" and re-opening of the Georgian-Turkish border stimulated the process of reestablishing relations between the inhabitants of Batumi and Artvin, as well as creating new cross-border social, economic and cultural networks, but also power relations. The businessmen from Turkey did not belong to any kind of elitist groups in their permanent places of residence, but most of them could afford to open businesses in Batumi because of the big economic difference between the two countries and low prices in Georgia. They became major employers in Batumi and occupied high social niches, while many natives of Batumi became their employees. As a result of this factor, Turkish nationals became conceptualized as a privileged and powerful elitist group in the city, despite the fact that it is hard to say that Turkish businessmen consider themselves, or have an ambition to be considered, members of the elite.

The presence of Turks and the high social status they occupied in the city became the most discussed topic in Batumi and the local intelligentsia made this topic its major niche. The campaign against the "Turkish economic and cultural expansion" gave the opportunity to the intelligentsia to remind the city about its existence and to

demonstrate its power, which was further strengthened during the pre-election period, when they were given the possibility to participate in meetings of the Georgian Dream party with the electorate. The public debate around the project of building a new mosque reflects the emergence of a new powerful social group in the city, which itself does not have an elitist identity but is considered to be so by the residents of Batumi.

References

1. Baud M. and Van Schendel W. 1997. Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands, in: Journal of World History, 8 (2), pp. 211–42.

2. Berdahl D. 1999. Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland, University of California Press.

3. Ganster P. 1997. Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America. SCERP and IRSC publications.

4. Georgian Journal. 2015. “‘I Adopted Batumi” - Mikheil Saakashvili. Accessed August 16, at: http://www.georgianjournal.ge/component/content/article/9-news/1351-i-adopted-batumi-mikheil-saakashvili-.html.

5. Herzog L. A. 1990. Where North Meets South: Cities, Space, and Politics on the United States-Mexico Border, University of Texas Press.

6. Megoran N. W. 2003. The Borders of Eternal Friendship? : The Politics and Pain of Nationalism and Identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary, 1999-2000, Ph.D., University of Cambridge, at: http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.619736.

7. “One More Letter against Building a New Mosque in Batumi (კიდევ ერთი წერილი ბათუმში მეჩეთის მშენებლობაზე)”. 2015. Netgazeti.ge. Accessed August 16. http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/18278/.

8. Mulfried, F. 2005. Banquets, Grant-eaters and Red Intelligentsia in Post-soviet Georgia, in: Central Eurasian Studies Review, vol. 4, N1, pp. 16-19.

9. Pelkmans M. 2006. Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia. Cornell University Press.

10. “Pre-Election Turkophobia”. 2015. Tabula. Accessed January 27. http://www.tabula.ge/en/story/70462-pre-election-turkophobia.

11. Reeves M. 2014. Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia. 1 edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

12. “Saakashvili Grants Citizenship to Georgian Turks”. 2013. Democracy & Freedom Watch. September 13. http://dfwatch.net/saakashvili-grants-citizenship-to-georgian-turks-72445-22716.

13. Smith G. 1998. Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities. Cambridge University Press.

2.2 Being an "Oligarch" in the Armenian Way

Yulia Antonyan

Oligarchs and oligarchy result from extreme concentrations of wealth (and wealth's power) in private hands. This implies that where such stratification is absent, oligarchs and oligarchy are also absent.
J. A. Winters, *Oligarchy*

Introduction

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the new post-Soviet elite of Armenia, which is still in the process of social and cultural crystallization and which is known under the cumulative and integrative name of "oligarchy" in Armenia. This term is applied largely, without any particular limitations. One can find this term in the mass media, daily conversations of ordinary people, posted in social networks. It is quite understandable to everyone, and for this reason no one makes an effort to explain what he/she means when using it. Thus, the article discussing the levels of education of the "oligarch members of the Armenian Parliament" lists very different people (businessmen, politicians, military persons) as oligarchs.[1] In other

[1] "Օլիգարխ-պատգամավորներից ո՞վ ինչ կրթություն է ստացել" (What education have oligarch members of Parliament received?), at: http://newsbook.am/?p=16931&l=am/oligarx-patgamavornericvov+inch+krtutyun+e+stacel

mass media articles, this term is expanded to regional governors (*marzpets*), mayors, members of local city councils and more or less big businessmen who have some power in a region, a city or even a village. If we tried to define criteria, we would end up with a mess. What makes a person an "oligarch" in Armenia? Money? Definitely, one of the basic characteristics of oligarchy is its enormous wealth. But does unhþu wealth have limits? The fortunes of some of those called "oligarchs" are rather modest compared to the others, whereas others possess almost inexhaustible cash resources. D. Petrosyan in his article on Armenian oligarchs suggests the following definition: "Oligarchs in Armenia are individuals who live in the country and hold exceptional financial power (in comparison with the majority of inhabitants) and quite often a monopoly of power over a particular economic sphere" (Petrosyan 2013: 11). The author of another piece of research on oligarchs interprets them as "Armenian big businessmen" (Shahnazaryan 2003: 2). What else may be characteristic for the Armenian oligarchs? Personal power and political influence? The personal power held by some of them does not go beyond the borders of their district, town or region; however, others have created empires in the territories occupied or influenced by their businesses, personal authority and power. In pursue of wealth and power, some of them have evolved from politicians to businessmen, while others have transitioned in the opposite direction: from businessmen to politicians. There is however a feature that unites all those who are called "oligarchs" in Armenia. It is an ability to exert a combination of economic, political, social mobilization and coercion power for personal and clan benefits that makes one an "oligarch" in Armenia. I suggest this as a working definition that

will be refined and explained further in the text.

A few comments should be made regarding the specifics of the usage of this term in Armenia. Firstly, the term "oligarch" has rather negative connotations and usually evokes negative meanings and images. It is often combined with the adjective "criminal" and the mass media has applied it mostly in a critical, pejorative and even derisive manner. Because of the behavioral characteristics of most representatives of this group, the term "oligarch" is associated with a low level of education, uncivilized manners, and a lust for luxury and vaunting. My interlocutors divided oligarchs onto "typical oligarchs" and "those who do not look like oligarchs" because of their modesty, education and good manners.

And secondly, this does not appear as the self-definition of persons known as "oligarchs". "Oligarchs" usually avoid defining themselves like this. For example, one of them, a businessmen and Member of Parliament Samvel Aleksanyan, also known as (hereinafter "aka") "Lfik Samo" has widely claimed that he is not an oligarch. This claim was mocked in the mass media, since even the Wikipedia article on him characterizes him as one. Another oligarch, Ruben Hayrapetyan aka "Nemets Rubo" said in the interview that he is not an oligarch and he does not even know what this word means.[1] The term "oligarch" appears rather as an etic definition of a limited group of people, very different by their social descent and cultural characteristics (that is why many refuse to call them "elite")[2], but who have

[1] Interview of Ruben Hayrapetyan given to a journalist Seda Mavyan (*Nouvelles d'Armenie*), see: http://www.lragir.am/print/arm/0/country/print/70929

[2] J.A. Winters, referred further in this article, insists on a differentiation between elites and oligarchs. His argumentation is based on the different forms of power these two categories exert, nonmaterial and material corresponding-

one thing in common – power and control over the resources that put them on top of others.

Sociologist G. Derluguian has made a brief sketch of groups of those whom he called the "new capitalists" in the post-Soviet space. He divided them into three groups according to their class descent described "in terms of social space or class dispositions or habitus:" the nomenklatura capitalists, the successful intelligentsia, and the "smuggling tycoons" or criminals who made use of the political and economic situation (Derluguian 2004: 155). I would stick to this scheme in the characteristics of Armenian oligarchs with a few changes and clarifications.

The material for this chapter was extracted from various sources. I have to confess that I failed to interview any of the oligarchs mentioned here. I couldn't find ways to reach them, as they do not provide interviews or give them in very rare cases. Some acquaintances of mine boasted their familiarity with some oligarchs, but when I asked them to mediate the possibility of meeting those oligarchs, my acquaintances invented millions of reasons for not doing so. In some cases, their familiarity with oligarchs proved to be exaggerated, in other cases they were afraid I would ask the wrong questions, and none of them wanted to make enemies with such powerful persons. Instead, I managed to interview people who had known oligarchs in some periods of their lives. I also spoke to some journalists and politicians who have first-hand information on oligarchs and oligarchic clans, I conversed with people who serve them or might observe

ly. (Winters 2008: 12-13). This idea is very close to the opinion expressed by many Armenian intellectuals. I argue that oligarchs are elites because of being the true "ruling class" in Armenia, by Mosca's definition of elites (Mosca 1994: 187-197).

them during feasts or leisure time, I gathered rumors, stories, anecdotal cases, jokes about oligarchs through personal communication, mass media[1] and online social spaces (Facebook, Livejournal, etc.). I followed tabloids that feature photos and news related to oligarchs' private lives. And, in addition, I used official sources of information such as official biographies, official reports of incomes, recordings of official interviews and press conferences, speeches and media coverage of electoral campaigns, Parliamentary sessions, etc. All this allowed me to construct a more or less integrated picture of what can be called the "ethnography and sociology of oligarchic life".

But before being enmeshed into the details of the ethnographic description of the Armenian oligarchy, I feel that it is important to make some theoretical references concerning the term "oligarch" and its use in the sociological and anthropological context.

The term "oligarchy" comes from Ancient Greece. Originally, its meaning ("the rule of a few") was not any different from that of nowadays. But it needs more detailed definition in the sociological context of different historical epochs and cultural backgrounds. In this respect, J. A. Winters made an excellent analysis of the forms and cases of the application of this term. He attempted to make a definition of oligarchs as "actors who command and control massive resources that can be deployed to defend or enhance their personal wealth and exclusive social position" (Winters 2011: 6). Pondering the sources of oligarchy, Winters pays much attention to material power that is based on wealth. In general, he identifies five resourc-

[1] I want to mention the website of the Association of Investigative Journalists *Hetq* ("Trace") at www.hetq.am, which was very helpful with their highly qualified and informative publications.

es of power: power based on political rights, the power of official positions in government or at the helm of organizations, coercive power, mobilization power and material power. He argues that first four power resources produce elites and only the last one produces oligarchs (Winters 2011: 12-13).

M. Mann when identifying the four main sources of power (ideological, economic, military and political relationships) (Mann 1986: 2) mentions that societies "consist of the multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power" (Mann 1986: 1). Such an intersection of the different types of power in social and economic spaces allows us to match elites and oligarchy. Metaphorically, following this approach, we may say that Armenian society (in a very conditional dimension of this term) is covered by multiple networks of power, and those junctions or knots where threads of almost all types of power intersect can be marked by the names of "oligarchs", no matter how big these knots are.

Based upon these classifications, I would suggest my own version of the four types of power, characteristic of the Armenian oligarchs: economic, that is power of money, property and industrial or trade monopolies, political that is power of representation in governmental structures, social mobilization power as the possession of the strong social capital in a form of kinship and other types of social relations network, and coercion power as the ability to protect oneself, enforce one's interests, fight competitors or punish offenders by means of armed semi-criminal bands of so called "bodyguards". Through political and social mobilization forms of power, oligarchs establish themselves as elites, and political elites develop into oligarchs by accumulating material resources acquired together

with their high positions in the government. Thus, being promoted to the top-managerial positions in ministries or gaining membership in parliament or municipal councils, a politician "inherits" shares in businesses formally belonging to or run by (if this is related to municipal services), mediating persons (it can be e.g. a monthly income from several mini-buses). Therefore, corruption and protectionism helps him to create material foundations for further defending and enhancing his power as an oligarch.

A brilliant historical analysis of oligarchy's rule was presented by R. Lachmann in his essay about Florence of the epoch of the Renaissance (Lachmann 2000: 41-92). It demonstrates well that oligarchic rule is an ambiguous process. At the stage of formation of oligarchic capitals it may provide unique opportunities for economic, political and cultural uplift, as occurred in Florence, but in the long run it appears to be perilous in all terms, as the necessity of keeping up incomes and achieved statuses, low flexibility of oligarchic financial and business structures, and serious cleaves and clashes between the oligarchy and other citizens leads to the collapse of the state.

Who are the Armenian oligarchs?

This is not a mere question of definition, but rather an issue of social and cultural genealogy. An analysis of the lists of those who are usually called oligarchs in people's conversations or mass media articles[1] and their official and unofficial biographies helps to come

[1] Articles referring to oligarchy and its representatives in Armenia usually provide concrete names of oligarchs, e.g. a series of publications under the general name "The Robbers of Armenia" (Грабители Армении), written by a group of Russian journalists based on interviews with Smbat Karakhanyan, the head of the Armenian National Club "Miabanutyun", a Russia-based Armenian organization.

up with several types of oligarchic persons. The very last list of oligarchs (around 50 persons) was published in an oppositional call for rallies and protests against the oligarchy immediately after the 4-day war in Karabakh, in April 2016[1]. The list contains the names of the wealthiest politicians and entrepreneurs who are known to be "oligarchs". This list mainly corresponds to lists I was given by tens of informants, though it may evoke some controversies regarding one name or the other. Among the enlisted persons, one can find businessmen who possess and run most of the Armenian economic spectrum (enterprises and properties in the sphere of industry, trade, tourism and entertainment) and who have come to hold positions in the government (Members of Parliament and other officials) using their economic and force resources. The other group consists of high-ranking politicians or militaries personnel (parties and army leaders) benefiting from their positions and coming into business through the political resource of power. Unlike the former, who present the image of being businessmen, the latter position themselves mostly or only as politicians or state employees. These two groups are competing and relatively independent of each other, although they may form alliances during election campaigns or other political processes. And the third group encompasses those who may occasionally become a parliamentary or governmental official, but are mostly known as "relatives" (siblings, parents, children, spouses, relatives-in-law, members of the clan, etc.) of the first two groups. They formally take a subordinate position towards their patrons, but

[1] "250 մլն դոլար՝ օլիգարխներից. պահանջ-երթ՝ ապրիլի 22-ին" ("Let us demand 250 million dollars from oligarchs: protest march on April 22", http://www.a1plus.am/1448852.html

in fact centralize significant sources of administrative and economic power in their hands and can even compete in power and wealth with their patrons, i.e. representatives of the first two groups (like A. Sargsyan, the brother of the incumbent president of Armenia). There are also two churchmen in this list: Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan and Catholicos Garegin II who are constantly accused of having close relationships with oligarchs or leaders of the criminal world. The list contains mostly male names with the exception of two females: Hranush Hakobyan, the Minister of the Diaspora, and Hermine Naghdalyan, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament[1].

In order to better understand the social and cultural characteristics of the Armenian oligarchy as a social group, we would have to trace back to their social origins. It would be logical to assume that the previous communist party officials gradually took all economic levers in their hands, as occurred in some post-socialist countries (Verdery 1996: 211). However, this did not happen in Armenia. There are only a few businessmen and politicians descending from the young generation of the middle and lower level of the nomenklatura, who could make use of resources and capacities provided by their positions (social capital, property and financial means)[2]. The previous and incumbent presidents of Armenia (Robert Kochary-

[1] The research on the Armenian oligarchy by N. Shahnazaryan, conducted in 2003, stated that "all Armenian oligarchs are men" (Shahnazaryan 2003: 2). It seems that gender stereotypes are currently changing and women may also be "seen" as oligarchs.

[2] Their social capital (liaisons in Moscow and among the high ranking party officials) turned to be useless in post-communist times and their financial savings disappeared during the monetary reform. A significant part of the previous partocratic and administrative elite left Armenia during the "cold and dark" years (the early 90s) after having privatized and capitalized their properties acquired in the Soviet times due to their privileged positions (apartments, country houses).

an, Serzh Sargsyan) are good examples of such "oligarchs". They would have made their careers as party functionaries had the Soviet Union not collapsed. Instead, the Karabagh movement and war offered good opportunities to them to succeed as politicians who concentrated a huge amount of power in their hands. There are several circulating versions of how it happened in reality[1], but none of them is verified by any official source. In the meantime, high ranking Communist party officials were excluded from the political processes of the early 90s and most of them left a country that had fallen into deep economic crisis because of the war and blockade. The attempt of return to the politics of the previous party nomenklatura (personified by Karen Demirchyan, first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party) in 1998 after having a rather good start, nevertheless failed at the end for several reasons that I am not going to discuss here. However, some continuity with the Soviet past took place in cases when current oligarchs originated from families of the leaders of clandestine economy, the so-called "*tsekhoviks*" (e.g. Albert Sukiasyan aka Grzo) and the industrial and administrative nomenklatura consisting of the directors and managers of plants and industrial enterprises of the Soviet type (Hrant Vardanyan, Ruben Hayrapetyan, Khachatur Sukiasyan). After the collapse of the Soviet economy, the latter managed to privatize the enterprises they previously ran for nothing, and operated them successfully.

Another way of coming into wealth and power was the Karabakh war, which promoted to power positions those who managed to benefit politically and economically from it through a system of eco-

[1] Some of those versions imply their involvement in criminal activities, treachery and fraud while they were climbing the political ladder.

nomic preferences (Iskandaryan 2011: 22; Iskandaryan 2013: 458), whether they really participated in the military actions, or just revealed themselves as so-called "*asfalti fidai*"[1]. The nickname of "*asfalti fidai*" (literally "the pavement fighters") was given to those who made their primary capital through plunder and violence, pretending to be members and even commanders of the National Army units. Military resources, force power and methods of violence turned them into a sort of "violent entrepreneur" as described by V. Volkov in his study of violent entrepreneurship in Russia. Oligarchs specialized in the "violent entrepreneurship" economically and politically control entire regions, in formal (as governors) or informal (through patronizing relationships, protection or rather "security" for loyalty and shares in businesses) ways.

All three presidents of independent Armenia also built their career during the Karabagh movement and war. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was one of activists of the movement. Robert Kocharyan was presidents of the Karabagh Republic and Serzh Sargsyan was of the organizers of self-defence battles in Karabakh, then the Minister of Defence of RA, and both were promoted to the position of Prime Minister of Armenia. As they supported the careers of a number of officials of Karabagh origin, people started to talk about the Karabagh oligarchic clan that conquered Armenia and appropriated its resources[2].

Not every type of social or physical capital accumulated in Soviet

[1] Վար Դան Հովհաննիսյան, Արդյո՞ք ովքեր են ասֆալտի ֆիդայինները, (Var Dan Hovhannisyan, Who are "*asfalti fidai*"?), see at: http://blognews.am/arm/news/32947/ardyoq-ovqer-en-asfalti-fidayinery.html

[2] In reality, the number of politicians and oligarchs of Karabagh origin is not that big and it is definitely not bigger than that of those coming from other provinces of Armenia.

times has turned to be useless. Some oligarchs are descendants of the so-called "authorities" that informally led and controlled local neighborhoods, or rather the male networks in these neighborhoods. They are rather traditional Italian "mafia" type leaders of criminal or semi-criminal networks who were involved in illegal trade, production and services in Soviet times, and who made use of their social capital by mediating business relationships, fixing conflicts, and getting power positions in local city councils or regional or central government in independent Armenia. In the late Soviet times, they were tightly interconnected and associated with the criminal sphere, although almost none of current Armenian oligarchs have been known as real "thieves-at-law". ("*orenqov gogh*")[1]. However, they followed a specific way of life regulated by an informal law prioritizing and conceptualizing such specific notions as honor, truth - rules that are common for both criminal and street cultures in Armenia (Ponomaryova 2014: 46-48). The "oligarch" Mher Sedrakyan aka Tokhmakhi Mher exemplifies this type of oligarch.[2] In the early post-Soviet times, such leaders or "authorities" immediately became mediators and controllers of the omnipresent and spontaneous street

[1] Thieves-at-law were removed from the economic and political field of Armenia in the early 90s by Vano Siradeghyan, the Minister of Internal Affairs at that time. It was reminiscent of the elimination campaign against the mafia in Italy of the late 20s and early 30s (Volkov 2012:45-46). Vano, as people called him, declared a true war against the criminal authorities, despite the fact that some of them were smuggling arms for the Karabakh war. In the end, Vano himself was declared an outlaw, although he managed to escape arrest and flee.

[2] In an interview, Mher Sedrakyan stressed that the most important thing for him is "honor" ("*pativ*", "*tasib*"), he was known as "*tasibov tgha*" (an honorable guy). He also spoke in detail about his early "career" as an informal leader of male "brotherhoods" or bands ("*taghi heghinakutyun*"), which seemed to have played a crucial role in his further promotion as a mayor of the district community. See http://news.am/arm/news/178020.html

trade, or the so-called "table trade" (Ponomaryova 2014: 23-24, Tadevosyan 2011: 82-83). However, those street authorities (or their revious protégés) who managed to make a fortune and political career as well as legalize their businesses grew opposed to them, despite the fact that they kept "talking in the same language" of norms and values.

But most of the current oligarchs and the most powerful among them seem to be random "parvenus" (Gagik Tsarukyan, Samvel Alexanyan, Ruben Hayrapetyan, etc.), originating in the lower strata of society, without even being remarkable representatives of the criminal and street worlds, though possibly being in close relationship with some of them. They are those who were rather young at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, who held mobile and mediating positions at that time, not requiring special professional skills: previous drivers, workers, security persons, policemen, suppliers, etc., and who had access to some important resources (transport, fuel, electricity, land, goods of first priority) directly or through patronizing relationships with others (relatives, friends, godfathers, etc.). Before the *Perestroika* and partial legalization of private business, some of the generation of oligarchs born in the late 50s and early 60s had participated in clandestine economic activities, meaning illegal manufacturing of goods and trade, the so-called "*tsekhs"*. These clandestine economic networks used to intertwine with other social and kinship networks in Armenia and the other republics of the Caucasus and this guaranteed secrecy, flexibility and the economic success of those networks. In the late 80s and with the beginning of the Karabagh war, and the disintegration of the previous Soviet space, they quickly turned into financial adventurers and small/medium

traders making use of the resources to which they had access. People may tell different stories of how each of them made their capital in "those years" (the early 90s), but most of them agreed that it was due to the monopolization of some emergency goods' import and trade during the crisis years at least at the local level (petrol, oil, wheat, sugar, other emergency food, etc.) or through having access to the corrupt privatization of properties such as land, some profitable industries and productions like cement, beer, alcohol (wine, vodka, cognac), textile, transport, etc. at a tiny, almost symbolic price[1]. After they made their primary capital, they built on it by entering into administrative positions like mayors, city councilors ("avagani"), etc. and then directly to the government of the country, simultaneously monopolizing all important positions in the government structure (e.g. the prime-minister's son gets the mayor's position, his son-in-law is appointed the head of a regional tax inspection office, etc.).

In fact, trade also accounts for most of the oligarchs' incomes today. Moreover, direct involvement into power structures makes it possible to get such privileges as monopolies for trading special types of goods (flour, sugar, petrol, medication, etc.). As a result, wholesale trade belongs to the oligarchy, while retail trade remains for the lower strata, which are fully dependent on the oligarchs. In this way, this corresponds to K. Polanyi's statements on social distribution of trade in archaic societies (Polanyi 1957: 299).

However, besides the monopolies in trade, one can hear a lot

[1] According to D. Petrosyan, "Voucher privatization resulted in the concentration of Armenia's almost entire national wealth in the hands of 45–50 families. According to different evaluations, these families now control 54–70% of the country's national wealth (according to *Forbes*, 44 families in Armenia control 52% of the GDP)". (Petrosyan 2013: 13)

about the other sources of illegal income of the Armenian oligarchs; for example, many people mention corruption and appropriation of state money by directly pillaging the state budget as well as transferring huge sums of money to companies belonging to oligarchs or members of their families as payment for services never or badly offered. As information on state incomes and expenses is open and available to everyone, many people including journalists ask questions about unjustified waste of excessive amounts of money for luxury or insignificant purchases and unnecessary services or cases of clear conflicts of interest which remain without a response or reaction on the part of the government. The yearly tax returns of top state officials bear witness to amounts far exceeding real possible incomes that may be calculated given their salaries and declared properties. As formally a state official has no right to engage in business, many of them re-register their enterprises and properties under the names of their wives, children, parents, siblings and relatives-in-law. Thus, according to the tax returns, the wives of Hovik Abrahamyan (the Prime Minister), Gagik Beglaryan (Minister of Transport and former Mayor of Yerevan), Samvel Alexanyan (Member of Parliament), Gagik Khachatryan (Minister of Finance and former Head of the State Revenue Committee) claim to be richer than their husbands[1], while most of them do not even have a particular job. However, given the official information on the tax returns of oligarchs and their wives, one can only come to a conclusion regarding the sources of income, properties and financial capacities of oligarchs. Almost all important industries in Armenia that make up the lion's

[1] See some mass media coverage of this issue at: http://blog.1in.am/blog/75465.html, http://wnews.am/2015/11/27/kanayq/ .

share of internal consumption and export belong to the oligarchs, and are divided and monopolized by them. Some regional branches of agriculture are known to be monopolized by oligarchs. For example, Hovik Abrahamyan in person or through his relatives possesses or controls almost all industries of wine-growing and wine-making, fish cultivation, and food processing in the Ararat marz, Gagik Tsarukyan has monopolized potato growing in the Gegharkunik marz and almost all main agricultural and other industries of Kotayk marz, etc. According to official and unofficial sources of information, another type of income for oligarchic top state officials is having so-called shares in businesses of the sphere for which they are responsible. Thus, the ministers and ministries' top managers for agriculture, ecology, industry, economics, transport, communication, etc. are said to have hidden shares in the main companies of those spheres. This, in particular, explains the privileges usually given to those companies in violation of the principles of parity and honest competition among the market players. So, forcing entrepreneurs to "gift" a share in one's business to a state official, or his relative is a kind of racketeering, which is also a common way for oligarchs to make their wealth[1].

Some of the most corrupted spheres (state finances, taxes, custom houses, etc.) are known to have constructed a corruption pyramid where each corrupt practitioner pays "tributes" to his boss and so on

[1] There are several media articles on the sources of income and huge volumes of wealth of oligarchs, using words "endless", "unlimited" to describe it, e.g. "Գագիկ Խաչատրյանի անծայրածիր ունեցվածքը" ("The endless properties of Gagik Khachatryan" , at: http://operativ.am/?p=4509/; "Վարչապետ Հովիկ Աբրահամյանի բիզնեսը սահմաններ չունի" ("Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan's business has no limits"), at: http://hetq.am/arm/news/56953/varchapet-hovik-abrahamyani-biznesy-sahmanner-chuni.html/ etc.

further up to the heads of the leading institutions. As one may see, all the described ways of accumulating wealth require specific social mechanisms which would help to build integrated and inter-dependent networks of criminal and semi-criminal ties and loyalties.

A look at the specifics of the social environment and social origins of oligarchs allows an understanding of how these networks are formed and act. It also explains the social and cultural patterns of behavior, specifics of relationships and links between the representatives of the political and economic elite. And it definitely clarifies the specifics of the economic and political strategies the oligarchic elite employs to stabilize and strengthen their positions and properties.

Despite a variety of origins, the dominant cultural patterns of the oligarchic elite in Armenia, including behavioral codes, manner of speech, preferences, values and norms can be reduced to a model that inherited much from those of criminal or semi-criminal circles, because of their high prestige as the alternative to the totalitarian regime (Glonti, Lobzhanidze 2004: 58), and the reproduction of those patterns in the cultures of neighborhoods’ male unions and mafia-type networks.

However, before going deeper into the cultural patterns of the Armenian oligarchy of the 2000s and 2010s, I would like to address the issue of oligarchic power, its opportunities and limits.

Oligarchic Power: the system and its limits

Armenian oligarchs are not semi-legal or illegal holders of economic and political power. Most of them are the legal representatives of power, either directly or through mediators. Economic and political power are totally intertwined and fused. Moreover, the oligarchy keeps creating secular (legal and constitutional) and religious foundations for the legitimacy of their power.

However, no oligarch in Armenia can act independently, even those who have extreme political power, i.e. the President, or the Prime Minister. No one has been able to create an empire that is completely isolated from others in their business spheres. On the contrary, different types of oligarchs always establish more or less constant or temporal networks, which can reveal themselves also as political alliances from time to time. A good example of such a "network" interaction can be the scandalous case of the Hayrapetyan brothers. This is a failed example of networking, but thanks to this, the media outlets provided us with the information on how it used to work, or rather had to work. According to the Association of Investigative Journalism, in order to start a business of diamond processing in Armenia, several oligarchic structures had to form an alliance. The Prime Minister ensured "protection" and along with the Minister of Economy and the Archbishop pressured one of the Armenian banks, forcing them to provide crediting for the business. Instead, they were given money through an off-shore enterprise, registered somewhere abroad. Paylak Hayrapetyan, head of the Hayrapetyan clan was chosen as the guarantor of the deal, and was ready to mortgage one of his properties, the famous supermarket "Hayastan", while another oligarch, a friend of the latter and at the same time a close relation

of the Archibishop, was supposed to be the implementer of the deal. The secret goal of the deal perhaps was to weaken P. Hayrapetyan and his clan, and therefore, the initiative was led to an intentional failure[1].

The oligarchic system is a system of patrimonies containing land, properties, and the men living on those lands and working in their propertied enterprises and lands. No decision can be made without the primary approval of an oligarch patronizing this or that city or village. The people hired to work for any of an oligarch's enterprises totally fall under his personal power and control, mediated by managers who directly report to the oligarch or members of his family. He can award or punish them and no law can oppose it. So far, very few persons fired or harmed by an oligarch or his "vassals" have dared to take legal action against them, afraid of vengeance or realizing the futility of this action. This doesn't mean that there is no justice or humanism in people-oligarch relationships. The oligarch usually takes care of those who live in his patrimony and stay loyal to him. He distributes jobs, directly or through his political protégés ("All of Avan is working in the municipalities after Taron[2] became the Mayor" - a citation from an interview), patronizes the youth (e. g. Gagik Tsarukyan's free transportation and stipends for students), develops charity activities and charity networks, protects his "territory" from criminals other than himself and his relatives. "Sam-

[1] See the relevant publication at http://hetq.am/arm/news/26891/ovqer-en-paylak-hayrapetyani-unezrkman-hexinaknery-ofshorayin-eryaky.html. (Ովքեր են Փայլակ Հայրապետյանի ունեզրկման հեղինակները ("Who was in charge of ruining Paylak Hayrapetyan")).

[2] Taron Margaryan, the Mayor of Yerevan, was previously the municipal head of the Avan district, which is considered to be Ruben Hayrapetyan's (aka Nemets Rubo) "patrimony".

vel Aleksanyan is our God, and who are you?" – exclaimed women surrounding members of the political opposition who came for an election campaign to the Malatia-Sebastia district, the "patrimony" of Samvel Aleksanyan.

In his "estate" an oligarch has almost unlimited power. A media publication addressed the situation in the city of Echmiadzin, which is "owned" by Manvel Grigoryan (aka General Manvel) and where his son works as a mayor[1]. He had decided that some shops in the city were competing with his own supermarket, and he ordered to shut them down in practically a couple of days. According to this media article, the owners of those shops were just told that "the general wants this" and they could not help but obey him, being afraid of vengeance. The oligarch can have the reputation of a "good" or "bad" guy. But in any case, one cannot live freely in the "oligarch's" territory while being in conflict with him. Thus, I heard numerous stories about how people were thrown out of their town or village following a conflict, disobedience or just for criticizing the oligarch. Nevertheless, there are also stories of successful confrontation with oligarchs that usually become narratives spread by word of mouth, a kind of narrative of hope. For instance, I was told a story about a guy named *Zeytuntsi* Rafo (Rafo of Zeytun, a district in Yerevan) who owned a shop, located in a territory that had been marked by an oligarch as the location of his future supermarket. But Rafo refused to close down his shop and sell the space to the oligarch. The

[1] The article mentions how businesses competing with those of Manvel Grigoryan were coercively closed in Echmiadzin: "Գեներալ Մանվելի հրահանգով փակվել է Դուբայ խանութը" ("The Dubai minimarket is closed down by the order of General Manvel"), *Zhamanak*, 06.05.15, http://news.am/arm/news/265454.html

latter offered a large amount of money, threatened and even tried violent methods to convince the man, but everything was in vain. Rafo remained firm and in the end he kept his right to own the shop, which is now successfully competing with the supermarket, as it is frequented by those who do not want to buy goods in the oligarch’s establishment.

“Estates” or “patrimonies”, e.g. territories under the oligarch’s power, are not a possession fixed and legitimated by tradition or by law. They can easily be “taken away” by the establishment of another oligarch or “re-divided” among several oligarchs. Attempts to enlarge territories under control may lead to guerilla battles and conflicts between oligarchs. There can be regions having no leader. Thus, one of inhabitants of the Nor Nork district of Yerevan described the situation in their community as a “feudal democracy”, as problems are resolved by consensus there and the community is connected to the “center” (i.e. central authorities) by different oligarchs through different networks: criminal, business, and political, depending on particular spheres of influence and authority related to each of them.

Formally, oligarchs are subject to taxation, but in fact most of their incomes remain in the shadows, and everyone knows about it but pretends not to know. And engaging in charity instead of paying taxes is their privilege. Oligarchic “clans” are rather the extended families involving not only the members of the physical family and relations, but also all domestic personnel, bodyguards, secretaries, etc. who enjoy privileges almost similar to those of real family members (as one of my interlocutors said: “օլիգարխի թիկնապահն էլ է օլիգարխ” – “The bodyguard of an oligarch is also an oligarch”).

The two last presidential elections have demonstrated that the President is not elected as the political leader of a party, but he is elected as "the first among equals", as an ancient feudal principle of monarchy says. The proximity to the "king" (e.g. to the President) is a determinant principle of the hierarchy of oligarchs. The oligarchs can also be resistant and opposed, if they want more independence and greater self-sufficiency in the political and economic sense. If they are powerful enough they can resist for a long time and even rebel (examples of Manvel Grigoryan,[1] Khachatur Sukiasyan, Gagik Tsarukyan), but once they are defeated they are momentarily incriminated with things that would have made them criminals earlier, if the authorities had not kept their eyes closed at the time. Those things are economic monopolies, power abuse, payoffs and bribes, hidden incomes, violations, etc. Ironically, they become the subjects of the law when they are outside of the "law", meaning the two different legal systems—the official, "democratic" one and the patrimonial one—which internally regulate relationships, ties and spheres of activities.

The limits of the oligarch's power are best illustrated by the recent (February-March 2015) conflict between the oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan with the central authorities and in particular, with President Serzh Sargsyan. G. Tsarukyan decided to enact a kind of coup d'etat, presenting himself as an opposition leader. The authorities answered with a political campaign aimed at discrediting Tsarukyan and suppressing his attempts to usurp power. Firstly, G. Tsa-

[1] The story of the relationship between General Manvel and the President is told as a romantic story about a "prodigal son" who rebelled against his patron and close friend, but then atoned and was forgiven.

rukyan was accused of concealing revenues and not paying taxes. Each politician loyal to the President was supposed to demonstrate his loyalty by publicly castigating Tsarukyan and many really did it. That showed that the real situation was not in favor of Tsarukyan. Secondly, Tsarukyan was deprived of his "army", i.e. about a couple of hundred members[1] of his private security guards, whose licenses to bear arms were canceled overnight, as I was told by a competent source. As a result, he could not go out of his house without the risk of being killed. After the conflict was smoothed over by the mediation of Prime Minister H. Abrahamyan, the father of Tsarukyan's son-in-law, according to rumors, a significant part of Tsarukyan's properties was taken away as punishment for the mutiny.

The status of an oligarch is defined by nature of his relationship with the central authorities (the President and his family), i.e. the "king"[2]. The closer one is to the "king", the higher his status is in the hierarchy of oligarchs. As one of my interlocutors said, "There are oligarch lieges and oligarch vassals, whose communication with the 'center' cannot take place directly, but only through an oligarch liege". Loyalty to the "king" or the first among equals (oligarchs) is the most important tool that ensures immunity for an oligarch and his properties. Loyalty is embodied in money, resources and politi-

[1] This number is approximate and based on calculations by those of my interviewees who had access to such information though their private channels for political purposes.

[2] The word "king" is not just a metaphor. This is how the President is really perceived by oligarchs. In one of his interviews, the former mayor of Gyumri, Vardan Ghukasyan, also known as one of the prominent oligarchs of the region of Shirak directly said that he had always served all the Armenian kings (meaning all Presidents of RA since independence) and the Catholicos, see at: http://hayeli.am/article/319943

cal support, that is, the number of votes delivered during elections. A very good example of the importance of such loyalty is the case of Suren Khachatryan aka Liska, the *marzpet* (governor) of Syunik region. Although being permanently enmeshed in criminal scandals (murder, violence, corruption), he has managed every time not only to avoid imprisonment, but also to retain his position. He was forced to resign only once as a result of a murder in which he was suspected, but within a year he was cleared of all accusations and returned to the *marzpet*'s "throne" in his "estate", the Syunik region. Loyalty to the "first among the oligarchs" helped him gain victory in a contest with his main rival, the second oligarch of Syunik, Maxim Hakobyan, the owner of the Kajaran copper mine, one of the most profitable mines in Armenia, and even take some regionally important positions from him. On the other hand, another regional oligarch, a mayor and long-term "master" of the second city of Armenia, Gyumri, Vardan Ghukasyan (aka Vardanik, after the name of the hero of popular Armenian jokes) paid for his failure to provide enough votes for the incumbent President by losing his post as Mayor and some properties. One of the "mistakes" affecting his position was also a conflict with the Church, as he did not coordinate his efforts on restoring old churches and building new ones with the Catholicos[1].

The allegoric comparison with the feudal system of the Middle Ages is no coincidence. The question of legitimacy of oligarchic power is also resolved using a medieval approach, through religion

[1] See the interview with Michael Ajapahyan, the head of Shirak eparchy of AAC: http://www.asparez.am/news-hy/ekexecashinutyun_ajapahyan-hy/. According to another source, the conflict was caused by the illegal sale of the Church lands: http://www.7or.am/am/news/view/2283/

and close alliance with the Church. The Church, or rather, its top representatives themselves can be considered one of the biggest oligarchic institutions, owning enterprises and lands, as was already demonstrated in the above-mentioned case with the Hayrapetyans.

In fact, law and justice stop acting when economic and political elites are involved in the process. In such cases, another set of rules and laws comes in force, one based on social liaisons, the property rights of "the powerful" and loyalty to the "center" (the ruling party and power institutions), the "king" (the President) and the Church.

Living life as an "oligarch": what does it mean?

Elites must be identified as such following visible or "external signs of superiority", according to the words of J. P. Daloz (Daloz 2010: 63). Elitist groups are distinguished from others. Sociologists and anthropologists such as N. Elias (Court Society, 2000), M. Pinçon and M. Pinçon-Charlot (Sociologie de la bourgeoisie, 2007), M. Lamont (Money, moral and manners, 1992), J. O. Daloz (Sociology of elite distinction, 2010) and many others have outlined the main practices of everyday life and self-representation that, being distinctive, serve as general indicators of social status and elitism. Following these indicators, an anthropological description of what can be conventionally called "oligarchic culture" may be produced.

Power and almost unlimited material resources create prerequisites for the formation of a specific habitus, as well as the communicative and behavioral models through which an Armenian oligarch can be "identified". When following these models, one can be identified as an oligarch even if he is far from having oligarchic wealth and power. And vice versa, there are oligarchs who do not follow

the system of behavioral codes. One of my interviewees said: “Few would call Hrant Vardanyan or Arsenyan oligarchs because they are modest, educated and civilized persons”. However, both of these categories are more the exception than the rule.

As is clear from the theory, the most important criterion for oligarchy is wealth - material resources that exceed in volume the wealth of affluent citizens. Put differently, an oligarch embodies money and power, first of all. His personality does not matter in the context of the money and power he possesses. Education, beauty, charisma, and physical strength may be the source of his capital, but once he has acquired it, his importance and influence are measured by the size of his wealth. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of the oligarch is not only the physical or juridical defense of his capital, but also a necessity to endlessly prove and demonstrate his wealth by means of a number of symbolic codes—behavioral, visual, social—that are understood, perceived and accepted by his social and cultural milieu. An oligarch should fit into the image of “the oligarch”. In Armenia, the cultural codes of oligarchy have mostly originated in the late Soviet period, within the party nomenklatura and criminal elites which are the most affluent layers of Soviet society. Sociologist G. Derluguian thinks that the nomenklatura was the Soviet oligarchy (Derluguian 2010: 159-162), though, in my opinion, they do not match in one very important criterion: a nomenklatura representative could possess material wealth once he had power; upon losing his power he also lost the material privileges, at least most of them. Therefore, according to M. Voslenski (1991:112-116), power is the main quality of the nomenklatura, though its members tried to get power as well, or the material privileges and opportunities it

might provide. And that was the reason that the demonstration of material resources to which they had access was at the same time the demonstration of administrative power with which they were associated. This was not easy in the conditions of Soviet law that limited private property possession and the Soviet moral code that required people to correspond to the definite criteria of a "Soviet" man. Thus, a typical Soviet man could not have mansions, wear "haute couture" clothing, or have servants, though nomenklatura members could have all that covertly. However, the status of a powerful person was identified by the following indicators: privileges of temporal appropriation of state properties (a residence in a prestigious building, an office car with a personal driver[1], access to elitist medical services or state-controlled distribution of deficit goods) and access to the possibility of having some private properties (a summer residence, a personal car, a garage) or access to other privileges such as business trips abroad, especially to capitalist countries, extended social networks and prestigious relations and kinship with other powerful persons. Access to deficit goods and services resulted in what can be called luxury in the Soviet style (renovated apartments, fashionable clothes brought from abroad, "imported" furniture and household appliances). And, finally, high status was closely associated with food, feasts and clandestine amusements. Feasts (the so called "banquets") with deficit food were not only indicators of prestige, but also an important act of maintaining social liaisons as warrants of persisting power (Voslenski 1991: 197). The same can be said about the oligarchs: they tend to enjoy luxury in their private lives, especially in terms of mansions, cars and summer houses and maintain

[1] The so called "Padavat" (car delivered to the door).

their networks through the culture of potlatch-like feasts and gift-exchange practices. As for criminal circles, the "thieves-at-law" who were constructing alternative power networks provided the modern oligarchs with the specific "language", communication practices, the emphasized masculinity of looks and other traits of everyday culture. As Voslenski indicated in his book about the Soviet nomenklatura, the latter mostly consisted of urbanized peasants who despised the milieu from which they originated and tried to get alienated from it as much as they could. Examining the biographies of the Armenian oligarchs, one can notice that most of them are originally from the countryside. In the 90s, almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they were attracted by criminal and semi-criminal circles, made their capitals in a criminal or semi-criminal manner and started climbing the social ladder as members of the Soviet nomenklatura did after they got some social and cultural capital as party activists.

As a tribute to criminal culture, most Armenian oligarchs have nicknames by which they are best known. There is a joke about an oligarch known as Lfik (Samvel Alexanyan). He wants to open a supermarket and asks an old lady's opinion about it. She answers: "Sonny, opening a supermarket is a good thing, but Lfik will not allow you to do this". The oligarch gets angry and reacts: "You are talking to Samvel Alexanyan!" The old lady says, "I don't care what your name is, all I am saying is that Lfik will not allow you to open a supermarket". The origins of nicknames are different, but most of them as a rule imply either the home town (region, district of a city) such as Yuvetsi Karo (Karo of Yuva), Tokhmakhi Mher (Mher of Tokhmakh) or the type of business in which the person made his for-

tune. For instance, nicknames such as Tsaghik ("flower") Rubo, Shinanyuti ("building materials") Sergey, Kombikeri ("fodder") Vlad, Shsheri ("bottles") Melo etc., are related to the goods they sold at the beginning of their oligarchic career. Another category of nickname is connected to the business property they possess, e.g. Alraghatsi ("flour mill") Lyova, Belaggio (after the name of a restaurant) Grish, Evrostan (name of a company) Manvel, MAPi (name of a plant) Alik, etc. Some people think that fixing properties as nicknames of oligarchs means legitimizing their rights to keep away those who would like to claim them[1]. This really makes sense, because many properties are registered under the names of other persons (relatives or relatives-in-law) so that they could formally fit the constitutional requirements of business-free politics or avoid accusations of corruption, and tax evasion. There are also nicknames emphasizing oligarchs' personal qualities or habits, e.g. *Muk* ("mouse"), *Liska* (according to one of "etymologies" it implies the alcohol drinking habits of the oligarchs), *Khuchuch* ("curly"), *Cherny* (from the Russian word meaning "black"), *Zorba* ("impudent"), *Sirun* ("handsome"), etc. The oligarchs' attitude toward their nicknames is different. Some do not like it when people mention them, allegedly being ashamed of their semi-criminal past or previous activities (like Gagik Tsarukyan or Samvel Alexanyan, whose bodyguards always make sure no one call them by their nicknames); others like Ruben Hayrapetyan ("Nemets Rubo") or Hovik Abrahamyan ("Muk") when interviewed felt free to explain the etymologies of their nick-

[1] Օլիգարխները բացում են իրենց մականունները (Oligarchs decipher their nicknames), by James Hakobyan, http://newsroom.am).

names and were not ashamed of them[1].

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the term "oligarch" is voiced in a critical, sarcastic and even pejorative manner when used in people's daily conversations, social network communication and mass media articles describing or addressing the lives of the political and economic elites of Armenia. One may say that oligarchs are depicted or addressed as characters having the nature of an anti-hero or a trickster. "Tricksterism" is nothing new for political characters, and it has already been analyzed using the example of Lenin. (Abrahamian 1999: 7-26) Verbal and non-verbal texts representing the public discourse construct the image of an oligarch in a "tricksterian" way. Oligarchs are represented as personalities with a great physical and sexual appetite, spending days and nights eating, drinking and entertaining in casinos and night clubs. Media accounts on oligarchs taking parts in feasts and frequenting the so-called "objects" (restaurants, taverns and other places of entertainment and eating) abound on the internet. A photo of one of the "oligarchs", Arakel Movsisyan ("Shmais") with a huge belly has long been one of the "hits" of the Armenian social networks.

They are characterized as sly and cunning, always ready to swindle. They are said to pillage the ordinary citizens of the country in all possible direct and indirect ways. They are also represented as morally poor, dishonest, having no honor and in a social hierarchy of morality they occupy the place of the anti-elite, i.e. those who are opposed to the highly moral, intellectual and spiritual intelligentsia as

[1] Օլիգարխները բացում են իրենց մականունները (Oligarchs decipher their nicknames), by James Hakobyan, http://newsroom.am, Interview with Ruben Hayrapetyan, http://www.lragir.am/print/arm/0/country/print/70929

it manifests in discourses. Some of them become the heroes of jokes where the tricksterian nature is highlighted. Thus, there is a whole series of jokes about the president's brother, Alexander Sargsyan aka Sashik, who is known for grabbing 50% of business profits of almost all small and medium businessmen throughout Armenia. He is said to use different administrative resources and overt violence to force people to give him a share in their businesses. The popular jokes about him play with the words "share" and "half": "Sashik *shares* people's joy at the prime-minister's resignation", "Sashik can treat cancer. As soon as he is injected, *half* of the cancer cells disappear".

All these tricksterian features may be commented anthropologically if the habitus and values of the Armenian oligarchs are analyzed. When addressed in detail, the oligarchs' daily life, values and practices do not differ from those of ordinary people of the social and cultural categories to which they originally pertained. As we have seen before, most of them inherited patterns of partocratic and criminal cultures, being of high prestige in the days of their childhood and youth.

Habitus of the Armenian oligarchs

The family as a value. The Armenian oligarchs demonstrate visible traditionalism in family forms. Children, especially sons, are a value. Many "oligarchs" have three and more children. Family is considered in its "extended" forms (including not only relatives, and members of their kin-lines with concepts like *azg*, *tohm*, but also relatives-in-law). The oligarchs extend their high status to the whole "family". The family is not just a value, the family is also a wor-

thy social resource of almost absolute reliability. Family members are unconditionally trusted. Most of the properties of oligarchs are formally registered as belonging to their family members (spouses, siblings, children, children-in-law, etc.). According to the last declaration of property and incomes of the Members of Parliament, the spouses of oligarchs turned out to be much richer than their husbands. This is mostly done to circumvent the law, which forbids entrepreneurial activities among Members of Parliament, but there may be other reasons. In fact, this heritage is being divided among their heirs during the lifetime of the oligarch in order to avoid serious "wars" among them in the future. In case of conflicts or collisions between the oligarchs and his family members (siblings, children-in-law, etc.), the arguments are resolved without going to court, within the family. The family as a resource is widely used by the elite of a different kind. The involvement of family members into the complicated network of agencies, formally having no direct connections with the person in question, makes it possible to legally appropriate state resources and at the same time employ family and clan members. Thus, the top officials establish NGOs or enterprises registered under the names of their relatives and make them win tenders or grants, announced by the agency they head.

Unlike Russian oligarchs, their Armenian "mates" do not tend to change wives, marry young models, etc. Though sexual adventures and mistresses are a part of their life, all of them tend to build the image of a family man. But, of course, image is not the reason. Every oligarchic marriage is firstly about strengthening ties, gaining allies, creating oligarchic clans based on the idea of the Armenian traditional family where relations mean reciprocity and loyalty, and divorce

assumes problems and conflicts, loss of support and defense. It goes deeper in a small country where everyone knows each other and relation networks are too tight and intertwined. There is one more explanation as to why oligarchs do not marry their mistresses. One of my interlocutors, well experienced in criminal culture and law, expressed the opinion that the traditionalistic structure and mentality of the criminal milieu do not allow them to marry a non-virgin.

Some oligarchs (but very few of them) use online resources to construct a positive image of themselves by demonstrating photos of "family happiness". Thus, the orchestrated family photos of Seyran Ohanyan (the Defense Minister) had a big backlash in society because of the striking luxury of furniture, clothes and food on the table looking improper in the context of a continuing war situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, corruption in the army, and soldiers being killed on the border line.

Kindred networks and matrimonial practices

As already mentioned above, a need to defend properties and maintain one's status lies at the foundation of relation networks established through matrimonial practices. The tendency to marry within the oligarchic layer and thus create new alliances and clans is becoming clearer and clearer. Advertisements of oligarchic marriages bear witness to that. For example, the President's daughter married a close relative of the Head of the Constitutional Court, a son of the Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan married a daughter of Gagik Tsarukyan. The illustration of how matrimonial networks function can be found in the situation with Gagik Tsarukyan's failed coup d'etat that was already mentioned earlier in this chapter. As I

wrote, in the days of the overt conflict between Tsarukyan and the President, key politicians had to make a choice between these two. The choice was extremely difficult for Tsarukyan's in-law Hovik Abrahamyan, the Prime Minister. He maintained neutrality for as long as he could, but finally he too was forced to join the President. But as soon as he had done it, he claimed to be a mediator in the conflict resolution process. He invited Gagik to his place for reconciliation and mediated negotiations between the sides. There are many versions of what happened at this meeting, but as a result, Gagik was forgiven, though rumors circulated that he was deprived of a significant part of his properties. Evidently, being a relative of Hovik Abrahamyan played an important role in this lenient punishment of the insurgent oligarch.

The rule of money and power marrying money and power works for the majority of cases. Although there might be exclusions, when instead of money and power the bride/groom may bring other values into the family, such as a deficient "true" elitism (the discourse on "true" and "false" elitism is discussed at the end of this chapter). When the grandfather of the President's son-in-law died, all media outlets published obituaries where he was promoted from a lecturer of philosophy at the Medical University, and the Communist Party functionary in the past up to a "known academician", thus ennobling the family origins of the son-in-law, the recently appointed ambassador to the Vatican.

Oligarchic marriages are announced in the tabloids, and attempts to publish photo-reports are made, but as a whole, oligarchic marriages and their further family life are closed to public eyes. Few people can recognize the wives or children of oligarchs. They usu-

ally do not take part in the public life of oligarchs apart from family events and cases when the presence of spouses is officially required. The patriarchal nature of oligarchic families has also to do with an idea of mésalliance. One of my interlocutors told a story about the daughter of an oligarch. She fell in love with his bodyguard who dreamed of raising his social and material status by marrying her. However, the oligarch did not like the idea of such a marriage and he violently punished the bodyguard by beating and getting him arrested and imprisoned. The daughter and the wife of the oligarch were also punished for their misbehavior. A son of another oligarch and a known politician married a pop-singer (which makes her almost a prostitute in the eyes of traditionalistic society) and, as I was told, his family could not reconcile themselves with this marriage and even forced the woman to abort their unborn child. Whether or not such stories are true, the very fact of the existence of these narratives bear witness to the fact that there is a rational and traditionalistic approach toward oligarchic marriages. The children and heirs of oligarchs cannot marry random people, those who would decrease their status or make an oligarch feel ashamed and dishonored in front of his “mates”. On the other hand, an oligarch can afford to have affairs with women and even invest in them, as commonly occurs with show-business stars. However, such affairs have nothing to do with the matrimonial traditionalism of oligarchs.

The extended “family” of an oligarch actually includes not only his relatives and in-laws, but also everyone who relates to him as his personal or domestic staff: bodyguards, assistants, drivers, and other home staff. It is known that the relatives and those who work for an

oligarch get license plate numbers with similar digits[1]. Oligarchs require complete loyalty from their staff, but in exchange they take responsibility and care for them and members of their families. Based on suggestions from numerous stories and interviews, the personal staff of oligarchs can have opportunities for the career growth "within" the clan. As an example, a bodyguard starts working for a salary, then once he has proved his loyalty and good personal qualities he may be involved in a business transaction, then he may get a share and even end up as a rival to the oligarch. To avoid treachery, oligarchs often hire their relatives (cousins, nephews), as they believe that kinship may be a safeguard against disloyalty and perfidy. However, even this does not always help: there are several known conflicts of oligarchs with their relatives and business partners who dared to confront them.

Ambiance, "circles" and "networks" *(շրջապատ)*

The institute of marriage really provides opportunities for extending personal ties and kinship networks, but besides the family there are other sources of formation of loyal circles. These are variations of male unions that exist in this or that shape in the life of almost every Armenian male. One of those unions is a kind of brotherhood that unites all males living in the same neighborhood – it is known under the name "*kucha*".[2] E. Ponomaryova, a researcher of the phenomenon of *kucha*, demonstrates how the unwritten laws of honor of *kucha* dictate being loyal and ready to provide life-long support

[1] This information was presented by the mass media as well, see: "Համերներ, համարանիշներ և օլիգարխներ" (Hummers, License Plate Numbers and Oligarchs), http://www.lragir.am/index/arm/0/country/view/52289

[2] *Kucha* – "street" (Farsi).

to members of one's *kucha* (Ponomaryova 2014: 46-48). Thus, an oligarch may provide jobs for his *kucha* mates, help them run their own businesses, defend them from other oligarchs, etc.

There are also words like "*akhperutiun*" ("brotherhood") and "*shrjapat*" ("milieu") widely used by men to designate their "support" groups. The bigger one's support group is, the more secure is his power and material wealth. As one of the oligarchs known as "Shmais" told a journalist interviewing him, "As soon as I stamp my foot, 'my people' will come to support me". Ruben Hayrapetyan described his suite of bodyguards as "his friends who are always accompanying him".[1] The hierarchy of relations and relationships in such groups is often constructed in connection with the personal achievements of its members toward the oligarch and the personal sympathies of the latter. Thus, as I was told, one of the close friends and a bodyguard of Gagik Tsarukyan saved his life and he was rewarded for that by being given permission to build his house next to the big church in the city of Abovyan that Tsarukyan had recently constructed. Phrases like "people of such-and-such" are commonly used among the population when one means support groups, bodyguards, assistants, or other people relating to an oligarch and defending his interests. An exchange of services and "gifts" is the basis of these support groups. "Doing good" ("*lavutyun anel*") is a common phrase to designate services to be paid by loyalty and mutual support. One of my interlocutors, closely acquainted with Barsegh Beglaryan aka "Flash", remembered that when the latter wanted to hire someone, he offered not only a salary and privileges but also a

[1] Interview of Ruben Hayrapetyan given to journalist Seda Mavyan (*Nouvelles d'Armenie*), see: http://www.lragir.am/print/arm/0/country/print/70929

chance to suggest five more people to be hired in one of his enterprises just to "do good". Thus, the network of people who owed him or "his people" a service grew. It is worth noting that women and children play the role of an exchange of values in such "unions" and "groups".

Estates, residences and modes of living

The oligarchy is distinctive with its tendency to build "palaces" and "castles". The house of this or that oligarch often becomes the object of jokes and criticism due to this excessive lust of luxury and kitsch style.[1] Gagik Tsarukyan's castle perched on a hill not far from Yerevan reminds one of Early Baroque castles. It is seen to everyone passing by although it is surrounded by a fence and poplar trees. The house of another oligarch, Sergey Manukyan aka Shinanyuti Sergo, is built in a neo-antique style. The huge territory around it is full of antique-style statues and Baroque fountains and fenced by a golden Rococo grid. Some oligarchic houses bears traces of Armenian medieval architecture and are covered in stone carvings. In the city of Echmiadzin, the house of one of the local oligarchs is built in the Renaissance style and located next to the Echmiadzin Cathedral. The furnishing and arrangements of the houses, according to witnesses, is similar to their facades. The styles of (neo-)Renaissance, (neo-) Baroque, (neo-)Antiquity prevail because of their association with wealth, luxury and power. Some rare photos of oligarchs in their private environment prove this. It's probably worth mentioning that

[1] This topic was addressed in a number of press conferences and round table discussions, e.g.: «Эколог: Армянские олигархи возводят дворцы и великие китайские стены» (Ecologist: Armenian oligarchs erect castles and great Chinese walls", News.am, http://news.am/rus/news/194838.html

the neo-Baroque style was prestigious and fashionable in the late Soviet era.

However, there are still cases of oligarchs or their children living in common multi-story buildings, although in well repaired and furnished apartments. Thus, some photos of Barsegh Beglaryan's son's wedding, published by paparazzi, depicted an ordinary backyard and the ladder of an ordinary Soviet-style multi-story building, though well decorated. Photos showed the guests at the wedding, and among them one could see the President and other representatives of the political and economic elite of Armenia surrounded by their bodyguards.[1] However, living in common buildings is a disappearing phenomenon, a remnant of Soviet times, when for a village migrant (and many of oligarchs are former villagers) having an apartment in Yerevan was the height of their dreams. Today's tendencies consist of building houses outside the city, or within it but not in the very center, or among densely populated districts. There may be exclusions. For example, the daughters of Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan live in a prestigious newly-built multi-story building in the very center of Yerevan.

Oligarchs' houses may be built in districts or territories that are within their sphere of influence (feudal type). Another option is creating a sort of "elitist ghetto" in relatively isolated and expensive parts of the city. As an example, the territory near Victory Park may be mentioned, where the private houses of the oligarchic elite are being built. The territory is located on the hill perched over the center of Yerevan, from where one has a perfect view of Mount Ararat[2].

[1] See: http://www.1in.am/1446277.html

[2] Houses and apartments with a view to Ararat are thought to be more expensive

The setting of this and other spots where oligarchs construct their residences, as J. P. Daloz suggests, is aimed to stress one's supremacy, visibility and closeness (Daloz 2010: 70).

In terms of spheres of influence and power, Yerevan is literally divided among oligarchs. Their "territories" often coincide with the administrative division of the city. Oligarchs mark them with private houses, business enterprises like restaurants, churches and symbolic images (e.g. lions of Gagik Tsarukyan) that make the oligarch's power visible and material.

The "territories" of oligarchs may be different in size and administrative status: district, region, city, and village. "Invading" each other's territories results in conflicts from squabbles and scuffles up to shooting and guerrilla battles between oligarchs. I was told many stories about such situations, e.g. a story about the President's brother A. Sargsyan who attempted an "invasion" into the territory of Mher of Tokhmakh, after which the latter went to the President with the request to defend him from Sashik's encroachments.

Oligarchic power in their "territories" can be constructive as well, although not as much as it is destructive. Along with the monopolization of businesses and economic privileges, total subordination of local administrative power, and violation of rule of law by replacing it with their own understanding and ways of implementation of "justice", oligarchs may also invest in the social sphere and infrastructures by building hospitals (e.g. Samvel Alexanyan in the Malatia-Sebastia district of Yerevan), schools and kindergartens (e.g. Gagik Tsarukyan in the region of Kotayk), repairing roads, etc. In this way, they make everyone understand and feel who the master

and prestigious in Yerevan.

of the community is.

Besides "palaces" and "castles", newly-built churches also serve as markers of oligarchs' territories. For example, a newly-built church in the Malatia-Sebastia district marks Samvel Alexanyan's "estate", a church in Avan district marks Ruben Hayrapetyan's territory, the Artashat city church is associated with the name of Hovik Abrahamyan, Abovyan's church is a symbol of Gagik Tsarukyan's power in that city, etc. Though those churches are built for people, for the community, and entrance is free on ordinary days, oligarchs nevertheless perceive them as their family churches. Thus, on the occasion of family events such as baptisms, weddings or funerals, the churches are closed to outsiders. In May 2013, a video shot at the Holy Trinity Church in the Malatia district was circulating in the Internet[1]. That was the baptism day of someone from Samvel Alexanyan's family. One could see that the adorned church was closed and no one was allowed to enter. The journalists who put this video tried to penetrate inside but in vain, nobody was allowed.

Practices of prestige and gift exchange

The life of an oligarch appears to be an eternal feast in the public perception. This is true, to some extent. Spending time in restaurants and other eating and drinking establishments is a necessary part of

[1] Many articles, videos and snapshots on this baptism appeared in the press under headlines such as "Սովորական հավատացյալների առջև դռները փակ է, այնտեղ կնքվում են Սամվել Ալեքսանյանի երեխաները" (The doors of the church are closed for ordinary worshippers: the children of Samvel Alexanyan are being baptized there), see: http://news.am/arm/news/173487.html, or "Սամվել Ալեքսանյանը NEWS.am–ի լրագրողին թևից քաշելով դուրս հանեց եկեղեցուց" ("Samvel Alexanyan dragged the correspondent of NEWS.am out of the church", see: http://news.am/arm/news/173523.html, etc.

the social life of representatives of the oligarchy. It has two main dimensions of meaning: first, one is dealing with the abundance of exquisite food available to the rich, and the other can be interpreted in terms of acquirement of social capital that is a mechanism of establishing, maintaining and flaunting elitist connections, as formulated by J. P. Daloz (Daloz 2010: 96). Unlimited access to prestigious food and drink has always been an indicator of wealth and high social status. So it is in the case of Armenian oligarchs. My conversations with the staff of some prestigious restaurants and bars prove this statement[1]. Moreover, the extent of prestige of this or that restaurant is defined by the frequency of its attendance by elitist groups. As most of these food-related establishments is the property of oligarchs, then for oligarchs attending this or that restaurant means being in a close relationship with the owner, i.e. marriage, friendship or business alliances. Each oligarch has a couple of restaurants at his fingertips—his own or those belonging to his friends—where he can invite partners, guests or his "vassals". Commensality is an important act of prestige, a part of a system of gift exchange among oligarchs. The invitation for a feast is expressed as "honoring someone" in Armenian ("*pativ tal*"). This is also a chance to flaunt one's wealth, as the most important value of those feasts is their high cost, which is supposed to be easily recognized by a number of indicators such as the size and quality of products, the specifics of its origin and shipment, etc.). Various descriptions of the typical menus of such occasions give us an approximate idea of what is normative for oli-

[1] These conversations are not interviews, as employees of such establishments are prohibited to break the confidentiality of guests, but can share some observations in a private talk without being named.

garchic feasts. Usually, the average menu should contain expensive sorts of meat and fish (the fish must be big and meat must be that of a young animal), cheese, fruits and alcohol. The top of hierarchy of alcohol drinks belongs to foreign drinks such as whisky. Paying more than $400 for a bottle of expensive whisky is an act deserving of an oligarch. Little significance is given to an original recipe or the uniqueness of a dish. In "oligarchic" menus one can mostly see meat dishes traditional for the Armenian table and very simple in preparation such as *khorovats* and kebab (the Armenian barbeque), roasted fish or chicken, boiled fish, *kyufta* (balls of boiled minced meat) and *tolma* (vegetables or vine leaves stuffed with minced meat). However, in the context of prestige, not only the number of dishes served at a feast, but also their size and good quality are meaningful. The process of commensal eating and drinking is a ritual implying social distinctions per se. As one of my interlocutors noted, "one has to have lunch or dinner with important persons at least once or twice a week". Common rules prescribe eating and drinking large amounts at such feasts. A huge belly, as a sign of abundant food and drink, is a stereotypical feature of Armenian oligarchs, pictured and emphasized in photos, cartoons and texts. Feasts are mostly structured as traditional Armenian ones with their hierarchy of sophisticated toasts[1]. Besides, there are other, more specific codes of rules that help to define the true meaning of those feasts. For instance, there are nuances in the order of paying bills, as noted by one of the bartend-

[1] I have not participated in a typical oligarch's feast, but I have occasionally observed some while attending restaurants or resorts belonging to oligarchs and have received information from the staff of these establishments. There is no major differentiation in pricing among Armenian restaurants and almost all of them are available to the middle classes.

ers at a prestigious hotel bar[1] frequently attended by some known oligarchs. The oligarch usually pays for himself and his entourage (bodyguards, members of his clan). However, when he has drinks with someone of lower status, the oligarch lets the latter pay no matter how big the bill is, thus rendering him the honor of hosting the oligarch. One more act of prestige is a distribution of tips among the staff of the establishment. Distribution of tips and alms builds part of the image of an oligarch. I was told, that indigent people are often waiting at the premises of Samvel Alexanyan's house, because he is known for lavishly giving out alms to all those who ask for it. The same is narrated about Gagik Tsarukyan[2]. On the contrary, stinginess in giving out money negatively affects the image and popularity of an oligarch. For example, the personnel of a restaurant belonging to an oligarch complained that some of their master's guests were demonstrating a stinginess that did not fit his high oligarchic status.

During oligarchic feasts, the demonstration of status and power may have both symbolic and instrumental dimensions. In response to the loyalty of his commensals, an oligarch can "distribute" jobs and positions, and promise mediation for the resolution of different problems including criminal cases. As rumors say, the president's brother used to lose ministerial positions for which he might mediate while playing cards.

Frequently organized feasts by oligarchs are one of the main mechanisms of ensuring and maintaining the loyalty of their "big families" (relatives, partners, allies, friends, bodyguards, etc.) or ac-

[1] That bartender was one of my students, to whom I owe many sharp observations for this chapter.
[2] Field data

quiring the friendship or support of other oligarchs and influential persons (local and foreign politicians, show-business stars, etc.). However, besides those VIP feasts, oligarchs periodically organize feasts for "the people" in the hope that this will give them the sympathy and support of the population. Those may be feasts on the occasion of different events, such as the opening of a supermarket, an enterprise, or a church. The feast organized by Gagik Tsarukyan on the occasion of opening a church in Abovyan was widely covered by mass media, which criticized the greed and uncivilized behavior of "our people" who gobbled everything that was set on the tables in seconds.[1] Such feasts are often interpreted in terms of the distribution of *matagh*, a ritual sacrifice that has to be eaten commensally. The same ceremony of distributing *matagh* by Hovik Abrahamyan on the occasion of the opening of "his" church in Artashat was recorded and placed on YouTube by journalists as an example of a striking contrast between the rich and the poor[2]. Some "targeted" feasts may also be organized on other occasions, such as professional holidays (Teacher's Day). On this occasion, Gagik Tsarukyan or Samvel Alexanyan usually pays for mass feasts of teachers from schools located within the territory of their influence[3]. The same feasts are also organized for the graduates of those schools, who also are given gifts such as mobile phones, etc.

An oligarch and TV tycoon of the 2000s, Tigran Karapetyan, used to organize picnics for people of the Armenian provinces of

[1] Field data

[2] See the video on YouTube: "Հովիկ Աբրահամյանը իր անվամբ եկեղեցում մատաղ է բաժանում" (Hovik Abrahamyan distributes *matagh* (sacrifice) in the church named after him", at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6Zj1I55JVc

[3] Field data

Lori, Shirak, etc. expecting them vote for him during the presidential elections of 2008. He also organized the targeted distributions of TV sets and other household goods to indigent layers of the population. All those actions were widely televised through a TV channel owned by him. The interviewed beneficiaries praised Tigran Karapetyan wishing him all terrestrial and non-terrestrial blessings, thanked him, hugged and kissed him when he talked to them personally. However, he lost the elections having got very few votes, after which looked and sounded very angry with "these ungrateful people" for whom he had done so much good, but who didn't repay him adequately for his generosity.

Besides the mass distribution of TVs and direct buying of votes during election campaigns, oligarchs may apply other, more civilized mechanisms for attracting the electorate, such as organized charity aimed at particular groups of the population, financing social institutions like hospitals and schools (as done by S. Aleksanyan) or the provision of financial support to students and researchers through foundations established for such purposes (e.g. G. Tsarukyan's Foundation).

Luxury in an oligarchic way

The word "luxury" is used quite often as one of the most characteristic feature of the oligarchic life style. Oligarchs live in "luxury houses", drive "luxury cars", eat "luxury food" etc. However, my task as an anthropologist is to understand what kind of commodities and properties may be considered "luxurious" for the Armenian oligarchs in the first quarter of the 21st century. In the socio-anthropological context, the notion of luxury is one of the hardest to de-

fine. For example, Sombart thought that "luxury" should be defined through the related concept of "necessity", where luxury is everything which is beyond necessity taken in both quantitative and qualitative aspects (Csaba 2008: 3-5). A. Appadurai offered a different concept of luxury, which proposes that luxury goods are incarnated signs. To Appadurai, luxury may be regarded rather as a special "register" of consumption than a special class of things. This "luxury register" may have the following attributes: restriction to elites by law or price; complexity of acquisition; semiotic virtuosity; codes for "appropriate" consumption demanding specialized knowledge; and a high degree of linkage of their consumption of body, person and personality (Appadurai 1986: 38). Taking all these features into account, luxury (*chokhutiun* in Armenian) in the context of our research may be defined as a conceptual tool for the description of the comparative value of everything belonging to oligarchs. This value may be described in terms of quantitative characteristics (more, higher, larger) and specific style-related and other esthetic preferences encoding the meanings of power and wealth. The "kitsch" style prevails in the architecture and furnishing of houses, which is manifested through copying elitist styles of different historical periods like Antiquity, Renaissance, Baroque, Russian Imperial classicism, and the Armenian Middle Ages or current Dubai-like luxury style, or even mixing all possible "high" styles, is meant to embody material wealth and the power of the "chosen"[1]. The domestic servant of one of the oligarchs described his house as a "museum" because of the presence of many luxury objects, which she imagines could

[1] For an analysis of the kitsch style as a mass replication of the authentic art styles, see e.g. Abrahamian 2014.

be placed only in museums. She could barely figure out their actual cost, but her education let her associate these objects with those having real historical value. The common tendency of copying historical styles may be observed in cases of both private and business properties. One of the restaurants belonging to an oligarch is built in the form of a medieval castle; the other is shaped like the Egyptian pyramids. Another sign of luxury is an abundance of decorations, gold and the huge sizes and volumes of objects: golden and richly decorated heavy chains and big watches, enormous cars, gigantic castles and palaces, massive furniture, etc[1]. Even the VIP room in a Yerevan hospital, usually meant for oligarchs because of its high cost and isolated location, is so big that it reminds one of an average-size two-room apartment with a kitchen. All the furniture there is also huge, whereas the quality of medical assistance is the same.

The looks of most oligarchs are far from reproducing the patterns of sophisticated taste like the representatives of the European "beau monde" meaning stars, intellectuals and politicians. The feminine nature of male fashion in the last decades does not correspond to the overtly homophobic system of values in the oligarchy, influenced as it was indicated before by traditionalistic, criminal and partocratic patterns. This system of values imposes the masculine image composed as a mixture of the Soviet criminal code and nomenklatura imperatives of a "normal masculine look". It includes shortly cut or even shaved off hair, traditional "masculine" clothes like suits, shirts and ties, "masculine" colors (grey, black, blue, brown, white),

[1] The recent family photos of the Minister of Defense Seyran Ohanyan demonstrate this type of "golden" luxury with Baroque-style furniture and china, and a mountain of strawberries of huge sizes in a huge plate put in the middle of the "family table".

and styles ("smart" and "sporty" styles) of clothing. One can rarely encounter the signs of femininity often specific to intellectuals or representatives of artistic bohemia such as neck scarves, earrings or brooches, or even a beard (only a few Armenian oligarchs have beards, the majority is clean shaven). Instead, some characteristics of the criminal style, like tattoos, golden rings and chains, dark glasses, may be present (see, e.g. Glonti, Lobzhanidze 2004: 79-80).

An integral part of an oligarch's image is his car[1]. In the Soviet hierarchy of prestigious commodities, a personal car was among those at the top of a pyramid. Although in the last Soviet decade, cars grew more and more accessible for larger groups of citizens, it still remained a sign of belonging to relatively affluent and elitist groups. In the hierarchy of the least and most prestigious models of cars, their size was important as much as their technical characteristics and color. As many may remember, a model of Soviet jeep called the "Niva" and especially its white option was considered the most desirable and most prestigious one among the Armenian males. The oligarchic system of values inherited this love for massive SUVs, black this time. The bigger the car, the more prestigious it is considered to be. Black Hummer, Nissan or Toyota cars and SUVs with tinted windows are the calling cards of an oligarch and his suite[2]. Such cars may violate traffic rules, but even in this case they are

[1] As Gagik Tsarukyan said in an interview: "Հայաստանից դուրս շատ կարեւոր է, որ ձեռքիդ ժամացույցը, մատանին, հագուկապդ, նաեւ՝ մեքենադ լավը լինեն" ("Outside Armenia, people consider it very important to have a luxury watch, ring, suit and car"). In fact, he listed the main signs of wealth and luxury characteristic of the Armenian oligarchy. ("Մարդը պետք է ձգտի ամեն ինչում հազթող լինի" ("A person should aspire to be a winner in everything"), interview with Gagik Tsarukyan, 2008, see at: http://archive.168.am/am/articles/15876.

[2] Such cars are usually perceived as those belonging to oligarchs.

usually not stopped by the Traffic Police, which is corrupted in part, and simply fears the oligarch's revenge for the other part.

Religion and oligarchs

Religiosity is an exposed value for the majority of oligarchs, especially those who pretend to play a serious political role. Positioning themselves as devoted Christians and pious adepts of the Armenian Apostolic Church has proved necessary for several reasons. First, the Armenian Apostolic Church itself is an oligarchic-type organization that claims to have a monopoly on being a unique religious organization for all Armenians (Antonyan 2015 II: 35-37). To be such, it needs the strong support of centralized secular authorities and, in turn, is able to back oligarchs institutionally in their aspirations for power and influence. Second, the exposed religiosity may improve an oligarch's image in the eyes of voters in the period of election campaigns for the positions of mayor, Member of Parliament or even the President (Antonyan 2015 I: 87-88). The demonstration of fervent piety is valued in the context of oligarchic practices rather than those related to common religiosity norms. That implies manifestations of hierarchic distinctions and luxury during family rituals (baptism, wedding, funerals, holidays) and the prioritization of "networking" with the church through donations, the construction and repair of churches, providing gifts and personal support to clergymen (Antonyan 2015 II: 38).

As mentioned earlier, oligarchs like "marking" the territories of their influence with newly-built churches. Patronizing[1] and/or con-

[1] Being the patron of a church usually means being appointed to the official position of *khachkavor*, i.e. the "godfather" of the church.

structing churches have become a prestige practice for oligarchs regardless of their personal level of religiosity. Being selected as the patron of a church means a recognition of the influence, power and material capacities of an oligarch. This is like an added value to the oligarchic status and everyone wants to get it.

Besides this, the construction and renovation of churches may also imply direct economic benefits, as all church-related activities are tax-free, according to the constitution. "Hrant Vardanyan[1] is building a church in Masis for several years already. He will build it for fifteen years more, because he doesn't pay taxes for the money spent". Such utterances and opinions have been frequent among our interlocutors.

Socialization and reproduction of the Armenian oligarchic elite

The socialization of elites must happen in the elitist environment. Education in the Soviet Union was formally equal for everyone and this was true for the majority of the population. Elitist schools should not have existed by default. However, there were schools which had a reputation of being "elitist" and were actually aimed at the reproduction of the nomenklatura elites. Those were either schools located in the prestigious central part of the city and better equipped than others, or those with a special focus on this or that discipline (mathematics, languages, music) that implied the select nature of their students. Private schools opened in the post-Soviet period stood in opposition to free standardized state schools by claiming their ability to provide a better education. The high cost of education in these

[1] Hrant Vardanyan had passed away by the time of the interview, perhaps the interviewee meant that his family would build the church.

schools and a thorough selection of students in some of them made them "elitist" and put them at the top of the hierarchy of schools. The formation of the oligarchic elite made those schools more expensive and therefore more "elitist". Some state schools located in the center of the city kept their "elitism", still true to the Soviet reputation and memories. However, the concept of elitism is associated more with the amount of money parents should invest into the school (as a fee or voluntary donations, especially encouraged in state schools) and the select nature of students rather than with the quality of education. Having children of oligarchs studying at a school become part of the school's calling card, and the more elitist students who study in a school, the more elitist it is thought to be. One of my interlocutors, a member of the opposition, remembered that after noticing how the number of children of oligarchs was increasing in the school where his own children studied, he had said to the school principle, half-serious and half-joking, that it was time to withdraw his children from the school, because studying with the children of those against whom he fights is incompatible with his principles.

The presence of the children of oligarchs may lead to major social segregation among students, because children from affluent and rich families form the upper level of indicators of wealth and prestige, which can hardly be reached by the majority of students from ordinary families. These indicators mainly include the specifics of the consumption culture (clothes, gadgets, food, leisure, etc.) and a readiness to improve the physical condition of the school at their expense (repair, purchase \new furniture, books, clean classrooms, etc.). It is a shame to confess that one does not have enough money to respond to social demands like these and thus demonstrate that

one's claims to be elite were false. One of my interviewees, a single mother of a child who studied in a public school with an "elitist" reputation, complained about the permanent requests for money for different "school" or "class" needs. On one occasion, she got angry about this, and another parent replied to her, "Why did you send your child to this school? Didn't you know that only the rich study here?" The woman recalled that she went red with shame at these words.

Some "elitist" schools (Kvant, Ayb) conduct a strict selection of students through their knowledge and motivations. As the education fee is very high in these schools (sometimes even higher than in universities), the selection corresponds to the principle of "the best among the rich".[1] The elitism of a school can be defined according to some other criteria like a "western" type of teaching (international schools, or schools for diplomats)[2].

In general, oligarchy is giving more and more importance to the desire for the education of their children to correspond to international standards. This demand underlies the tendency for the establishment of closed elitist schools, like the international quality schools in Vahakni, Dilijan. An "inclusive" education practice (oligarchs' children studying with ordinary ones) is gradually ceding to an "exclusive" education style. The inclusive one implies the reproduction of a hierarchical model of society in the school or in the classroom, and the exclusive one isolates the elected from the other

[1] At the same time, Ayb provides indigent but talented students with grants partly or totally covering the tuition fee.

[2] See «Где учатся дети олигархов» ("Where do the children of oligarchs study?"), http://novostink.ru/armenia/9269-168-zham-gde-uchatsya-deti-armyanskix-oligarxov.html

strata of society. In this context, it is worth referring to the words of the ex-Minister of Education Armen Ashotyan who was reproached for sending his son to the Ayb private elitist school while ordinary people have to study in public schools reorganized and reformed by him and his team. He defended himself by saying that the goal of sending his son to an elitist school was to prevent him from having a feeling of being "selected" among inferiors in a public school, while in an elitist one he can feel equal with others "selected".

Elite or not elite?

The notions of oligarchy and the elite are differentiated and even opposed to each other in Winters' book mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Without sharing this—too formal, in my opinion, point of view—I compare it with a widely spread discursive trend of opposing oligarchy and intelligentsia as "false" elites and "true" elites. Many articles, essays and interviews in the mass media and social networks come to the common opinion that oligarchs are not the true elite, because their lifestyle, values, morality and activities cannot serve as an example for ordinary people to copy, though this is what happens to some extent in reality.

Interestingly, in this case the key concepts defining the elite and the oligarchy are very close to those identified by Winters: material power and non-material power. The "true"—i.e., non-material—power refers to aristocratism, charisma, education and talent, whereas the "false" power is merely the power that comes from money and coercion. The oligarchy's place among the true, authentic elite is rejected based on the four conventional dimensions of public discourse: nationalistic, intellectualistic, liberalistic, and tra-

ditionalistic. The nationalistic dimension accuses oligarchs of not following the interests of the nation, lacking political romanticism, and the absence of a readiness to sacrifice their own interests in the name of the interests of the nation and state. In the intellectualistic dimension, oligarchs are not the true elite as they do not correspond to the high criteria of well-breeding, education, morality and intellect that the ideal elite should possess. A liberalistic approach gauges the authenticity of the elite in terms of democracy, human rights, and political and economic rationalism that require rather moderate and wise strategies in the defense and promotion of their own interests in order not to destroy the economic and political stability of the state. And finally, the traditionalistic dimension accuses oligarchs of the frequent disregard of such concepts of the Armenian traditional morality and system of values as "honor" (*tasib*, *pativ*), which is considered to be an integral part of normative male behavior.

Discussions of the authenticity of elites can be compared with those of the authenticity of the Soviet intelligentsia raised by the late Soviet intellectuals protesting against the nomenklatura's elitist positions in society[1]. Triggered by such discursive trends, the oligarchy which is formally the political and economic elite is however forced to prove its "elitism" by emulating some accepted patterns of elitism like education, style, looks, etc. For instance, there is a trend towards the mass acquisition (or just buying) of higher education diplomas or academic degrees[2] by oligarchs, through which they try to prove their intellectual and educational eligibility. Thus, Samvel

[1] For details on the discourse of authenticity of the Armenian Soviet and post-Soviet intelligentsia see Antonyan 2012: 85-86.

[2] Late academic degrees were received e.g. by Mikhail Bagdasarov (2008), the mayor of Yerevan Taron Margaryan (2013).

Alexanyan got his diploma from the Agrarian University in 2002 at the age of 34, Manvel Grigoryan "graduated" from Yerevan State University, Faculty of Law at 42, Mher Sedrakyan got the diploma from Vardanants University at 46, etc[1]. Their widely-advertised charity actions are aimed at demonstrating the high moral characteristics and compassion of oligarchs towards the deprived, while their public manifestations of piety present them as followers of Christian morality and spirituality, their choreographed family photos are believed to demonstrate their devotedness to traditionalistic values, and attending concerts of visiting famous musicians is expected to prove their exquisite taste and cultural preferences[2]. Image-making services are growing more and more in demand among the oligarchic elite. However, all those attempts to fit into the elitist standards end up facing more protests and a reluctance to legitimize the oligarchy as the elite. In one of his interviews, political science expert Alexander Iskandaryan compared the attempts of the current authorities to symbolically imitate an independent democratic state with a cargo cult. This metaphor was also addressed to oligarchs who try to imitate the elite[3].

[1] Օլիգարխ-պատգամավորներից ով ինչ կրթություն ունի ("What education do oligarch Members of Parliament have?"), at: http://newsbook.am/?p=16931&l=am/oligarx-patgamavornericvov+inch+krtutyun+e+stacel .

[2] During a performance of the world-renowned opera singer Placido Domingo in 2010, a scandal occurred in relation to the seating of the wife of incumbent Yerevan mayor Gagik Beglaryan, aka "Chorny" Gago. The seat was meant for the mayor himself and his wife's status was not high enough to take the place neighboring those of the President and the Catholicos. Therefore, she was asked to move to another place, but she refused, and her behavior resulted in a serious conflict and the subsequent dismissal of the mayor.

[3] Iskandaryan, Interwiew: Интервью с А. Искандаряном, Реальность и имитация (Interview with A. Iskandaryan, Reality and imitation), Համատեքստ (Hamatext), http://hamatext.com/interviews/item/50-realnost-i-imitatsiya-1.

Oligarchy and Neo-feudalism

V. Volkov considers the system of a mafia-type of violent "entrepreneurship" as transitional for periods of anomia, which lasts until the state is able to suppress it through the monopolistic exertion of legal power (Volkov 2012: 73-81). This is true in cases when the state and the mafia are structurally differentiated. In Armenia, it has been legalized and merged with the state. This creates a new type of social and political power, making it typologically very close to feudal and Renaissance oligarchy[1].

I have already once tried to apply the concept of neo-feudalism to the Armenian situation when discussing the phenomenon of the oligarchy constructing churches (Antonyan 2015 I: 82). The neo-feudal (or, to put it in other terms, neo-patrimonial) approach is discussed in the works of Verdery (1996: 205-209), Derluguian (2004: 200, 224, 256), etc. It is thought to be a model for the interpretation of modern social and political processes. But it is also criticized because it is applied to realities that are only reminiscent of feudalism, but do not seem to have direct systemic references and connections. Katherine Verdery refers to it in her book about post-socialist Romania, where she describes the situation when after the weakening and total decentralization of power following the collapse of the Communist authorities and the disappearance of pressure and coercive efforts of the Soviet Union, local systems of power formed in places. Those systems were referred as "*entrpepratchiks*" as she called the previous partocracy representatives who privatized state properties and gained ownership of them in a formally legal way, or they were

[1] See the characteristics of feudal and Renaissance oligarchy in Winters (2011: 40-65), Lachmann (2000: 41-92).

also called the "mafia" among the population, suggesting their ties and connections, and also the competition between different groups in power for economic monopolies and political influence. K. Verdery compares the mafia order with the feudal order by finding formal and structural similarities (Verdery 1996: 2005-2006). Following some of those comparisons, we can represent the Armenian oligarchy like a neo-feudal type of elite. This is possible because of:

- A total merger of political, military and economic powers within a person; personal control of territories and communities, absolute local power and influence; legitimation of power and capitals through religion; extended clans and circles of "vassals"; patronization of "subjects".
- Economy and politics is strongly affected by the monopolistic "covenants" that divide the spheres of economy and administrative power among the oligarchs; economic and political competition results in a conflict of oligarchic clans.
- One's place in the hierarchy of oligarchs is determined by their closeness to the "King" or to the "Court" (the President and top authorities).
- Social and cultural practices are intended to maintain and control the extended power networks and to affirm the oligarchic status in a symbolic way.

And, surprisingly, these statements correspond to that of the re-feudalization of Florence of the Renaissance as a result of oligarchy's rule, as R. Lachmann concluded in the aforementioned essay (Lachmann 2000: 41-92).

Oligarchy in Armenia is not something brought from the outside, it appears a result of a system of relationships, values, social net-

works, and kinship ties that are inherited from the previous epochs and adopted to serve the goals of accumulation and instrumentalization of wealth and power. This system would not exist without the direct or indirect involvement of large groups of people - friends, relatives, patronized subordinates who in fact share the same values and dream to reach the same goals as the oligarchs. Unlike other types of elites which tend to deliberately isolate themselves from other strata, the oligarchs in Armenia try to get themself involved in a web of complicated social relationships within all groups and strata of the society in order to form a secure social environment for the persistence of their families and their capitals.

References

1. Abrahamian L. 1999. Lenin *a*s a Trickster, in: Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia, V.38, № 2, pp. 7-26.

2. Abrahamian L. 2014. The Market and the Origins of Kitsch, in: Bobokhyan A., Abrahamian L., Franklin K. Market beyond Economy, NAS RA Gitutyun: Yerevan.

3. Antonyan Yu. 2015 I. Political Power and Church construction in Armenia, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., van Der Zveerde E. (eds.) Religion, Nation and Democracy in South Caucasus. Routledge: London & New-York, pp. 81-95.

4. Antonyan Yu. 2015 II. The Armenian Apostolic Church and political power in Armenia, in: Hug, A. (eds.), Traditional religion and political power, The Foreign Policy Center, London, pp. 35-40.

5. Antonyan Yu. 2012. The Armenian Intelligentsia today: discourses of self-identification and self-perception, Laboratorium, Vol. 4 (1), pp. 76-100.

6. Appadurai A. 1986. Introduction: commodities and the politics of value, in: Appadurai A. (eds.), The Social Life of things: commodities in

cultural perspective, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New-York, Melbourne.

7. Csaba F.F. 2008. Redefining luxury: a review essay, in: Creative Encounters Working papers, #15.

8. Daloz J.-P. 2010. The sociology of elite distinction. From theoretical to Comparative perspectives, Palgrave McMillan.

9. Derluguian G. 2004. Bourdieu's secret admirer in the Caucasus, Verso: London, New-York.

10. Derluguian 2010: Дерлугьян Г. Адепт Бурдье на Кавказе. Эскизы к биографии в миросистемной перспективе, Издательский дом "Территория будущего": M. (Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: Sketches for the Biography in a World-System Perspective, Publishing House Territoria Buduschego (The Territory of the Future): Moscow).

11. Elias 2002: Элиас Н. 2002. Придворное общество, Языки славянской культуры: Москва. (The Court Society, Yazyki slavyanskoj kultury (The Languages of Slavic Culture): Moscow).

12. Glonti, Lobzhanidze 2004: Глонти Г., Лобжанидзе Г. Профессиональная преступность в Грузии (воры в законе), ООО "Полиграф": Тбилиси. (Professional Criminality in Georgia (thieves-at-law), Polygraph Ltd: Tbilisi).

13. Iskandaryan A. 2011: Искандарян А. Армения между автократией и полиархией, Pro et Contra, т. 15, #3-4, сс. 19-28 (Armenia between Autocracy and Polyarchy, Pro et Contra, volume 15, #3-4, pp. 19-28).

14. Iskandaryan A. 2013. Formalization of the informal: Statebuilding in Armenia, in: Giordano C., Hayoz N. Eds. Informality in Eastern Europe. Structures, Political Cultures and Social Practices, Peter Lang: Bern, pp. 451-467.

15. Iskandaryan A., Interview: Интервью с А. Искандаряном, Реальность и имитация (Interview with A. Iskandaryan, Reality and imitation), Համատեքստ (Hamatext), http://hamatext.com/interviews/item/50-realnost-i-imitatsiya-1.

16. Lachmann R. 2000. Capitalists in spite of themselves. Elite conflict and Economic transtitions in Early Modern Europe, Oxford University Press: Oxford, New-York.

17. Lamont M. Money, Morals and Manners, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992.

18. Mann M., 1986. The Sources of Social Power. Vol. I. Cambridge University Press.

19. Mosca 1994: Моска Г. Правящий класс, Социологические исследования, #10, сс. 187-198. (The Ruling Class, Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya (Sociological research), # 10).

20. Pareto W. 1961. The circulation of elites, in: Parsons T. (ed.), Theories of Society; Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, Vol. 2, The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.: New-York.

21. Pareto W. 1961a. The Use of force in Society, in Parsons T. (ed.), Theories of Society; Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, Vol. 2,The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.:New-York.

22. Petrosyan D. 2013. Oligarchy in Armenia, Caucasus Analytical Digest, #53-54.

23. Pinçon M. et Pinçon-Charlot M. 2007. Sociologie de la bourgeoisie, La decouverte: Paris.

24. Polanyi K. 1957. The Economy as an instituted process, in: Polanyi K., Arensberg C. M., Pearson H. (eds). Trade and Market in the Early Empires, The Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois.

25. Ponomareva 2014: Пономарева Э. Социальное пространство кучá: теории и практика неформальной конфликтологии ереванских кварталов, Диссертация на соискание степени магистра, Европейский Университет в Петербурге, на правах рукописи. (The “Kucha” Social Space: Theories and Practices of Informal Conflictology in Yerevan’s Urban Districts, MA thesis, The European University of Saint Petersburg, manuscript).

26. Tadevosyan A. 2011: Թադևոսյան Ա. Երևանի քաղաքային մշակույթը, Վէմ, #1(33), 78-97. (Urban Culture of Yerevan, Vem, #1(33), 78-97).

27. Shahnazaryan N. 2003. Oligarchs in Armenia, Yerevan.

28. Verdery K. 1996. What was socialism and what comes next?, Princeton University Press:

29. Volkov 2012: Волков В. Силовое предпринимательство XXI век, Европейский Университет в Санкт-Петербурге: СПб. (Violent Entrepreneurship, XXI Century, European University in Saint Petersburg, Saint

Petersburg).

30. Voslenski 1991: Восленский М. Номенклатура, Советская Россия: М. (Nomenklatura, Sovetskaya Rossiya, Moscow).

31. Winters J. A. 2011. Oligarchy, Cambridge University Press: N.Y.

Part 3.

Religion, Nationalism, Identity and Elites

3.1 "Elites" Between Nationalism and Tradition: The Modernization Processes in the Yezidi Community of Armenia

Hamlet Melkumyan

During my recent field work in Armenia, some of the Yezidi[1] in-

[1] Regarding definitions of Yezidis, Kurd-Yezidis and Kurds, for a reflection of the as yet unresolved problems of ethnicity and confession in Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia, see Dalalyan 2011: 178-180; Abrahamian 2006: 111-15. The problem of ethnic and religious identity is also common for the large Yezidi community in Georgia (Szakonyi 2007). In what is currently the Republic of Armenia, they have varied in nature but can be generalized into two flows – pre-Genocidal (i.e. pre-1915) and post-Genocidal. According to oral histories, many Yezidi families had settled in the eastern areas of the Ottoman Empire close to Mt. Ararat during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. As narrated in family stories, the Yezidis became victims of Kurdish and Turkish massacres and were forced to leave their settlements. In our discussions, my interlocutors were still talking about the Armenian and Yezidi Genocides as a narrative of the hapless "faith" of the two nations. Later on, this narrative included the Turkish-Armenian war of 1918. One may came across carpets and sculptures depicting two national heroes - Andranik from the Armenian side and Jangir Agha from the Yezidi side captured together (field data from Aknalich and Mkhchyan Villages, 2013-2014) as a symbol of "being together" in 1918s. These were famous warriors fighting to survive and save the Armenians and Yezidis from the Turkish massacres (Melkumyan 2014-2015).
The narratives of pre-Soviet settlement describe Yezidis as nomads and/or pastoralists and typically employ both the terms "Yezidi" and "Kurd" to refer to their ethnic background or mention Kurdishness with Yezidi religious identity (Darveshyan 1986, Avdal 1948, Southgate 2014, Parrot 1846). Yezidiness grew into a more prevalent and daily discourse in the late Soviet period while today the overwhelming part of the community chooses to call itself Yezidi rather than Kurd (although this opinion is at times disputed by some scholars). The dominant approach in Soviet times saw Yezidiness only as a creed professed by a group of Kurmanji-speaking Yezidis. This perspective was gradually reformulated in late

terlocutors were asking: "Why do you think this group or that person is the one to consider the community 'elites'? They are not". This question once again helped me rethink the role of a researcher. When I was identifying my field actors, it so happened that I was indirectly "building" an image for a group or a person as the "elites" (cf. Shore 2002: 3). Here, I should mention that the terms "elite" and "elitism" seemed to me quite comprehensive. Among social scientists, one may came across a definition of elites as groups that self-referenced themselves or were seen by locals as the "privileged" ones. In his text "Towards an Anthropology of Elites", Chris Shore says: "…every society has its privileged minorities: those who, for reasons of history, social status, economic position, political office or family connections, are the de facto power holders whose interests and normative values set the agenda and define the 'natural order of things'". (Shore 2002: 2). The academic works on anthropology of the elite and elitism are trying to discuss what shapes the elite and how they legitimize their power, how they reproduce themselves. Or "How do elites in different societies maintain their position?" (Shore 2002: 1). This paper will discuss the discourse of elitism in the daily life of Yezidis in Armenia, trying to show how groups are attempting to accumulate power inside the community in order to play the role of legitimate elites for outsiders. I focus on the questions of what makes elites and that maybe one can find links in the processes pre-

Soviet and post-Soviet texts arguing that Yezidis are a distinct ethnic group, they are not same with Kurds but they share a common language – Kurmanji (Dalalyan 2011). That is to say, the discourses of ethnicity and religious affiliation underwent changes in the Soviet period. Structural-genealogical studies of the Yezidi religion have produced quite interesting patterns, at the same time offering insight into the formation of the social structure of Yezidi society (Joseph 1919).

sented here with Bourdieu's capital accumulation approach (Bourdieu 1989: 17). More specifically, an effort will be made to bring out the prestigious groups in social, religious environments and explain the underlying reasons for their ascent (Abbink and Salverda 2013: 2-3).

The main patterns of prestigiousness and elitism discourse will be examined for Soviet and post-Soviet periods with an attempt to identify possible transformations and new trends of elitism in model creation. This paper is based on the materials[1] gathered from my field investigations conducted among the Yezidis in Armenia.

The Traditional Perception of Elitism: Casts and Clans

The dominant cohesive factor in the process of identity construction of the Yezidi community is religion: Yezidism (which is also regarded as an ethnic identity). The main figure of the Yezidi Pantheon is Malak-Tawus, depicted in the form of a Peacock-Angel (Asatrian and Arakelova 2003). Usually, the Yezidis call their religion Shafradin (Arakelova 2014: 3), although in daily life they describe themselves as sun-worshipers (for further Kreyenbroek 2009; Ahmed 1975; Dalalyan 2011; Langer 2010; Arakelova 2014: 3). The holy place for all Yezidis is Lalesh (in Northern Iraq) where their major pilgrimage sites and temples are located.

The Yezidi community is composed of three castes, based on religious constituents. The Murid caste has traditionally presented the lowest in the social strata of the community. The sheikhs and pirs are

[1] I am grateful to Roman Hovsepyan, Lili Harutyunyan, Nina Stepanyan-Gandilyan and Avetis Keshishyan for their contribution and for the agreement to share the field data gathered within the framework of research project № SCS 13-6F457, supported by the State Committee of Science MES RA.

considered superior due to their authority to organize the religious life of the community. In daily conversations, the House of a Sheikh is described as a "shrine" ("a Saint's House"), which would typically have a variety of functions depending on the saint for whom it stands. Overall, people speak of 7 shrines, the holiest of them being the one located in Lalesh, while sheikhs in Armenia are their "representatives"[1]. The Sheikhs' function of organizing religious life adds a prestige to their role and since the titles in the Yezidi community are hereditary, the heirs inherit their fathers' social status. The everyday life of the Murid community and clans very well reflects the perceptions about both the Sheikhs' and Pirs' prestige; however, the image of a Sheikh appears to be more articulated.

Any connection to the sacral world on behalf of Murids is made possible solely through the Sheikh and Pir institutes (Omarkhali 2008: 105, 107). In the strictly conservative community of Yezidis, each Murid clan is assigned to a respective Pir and Sheikh (Asatrian and Arakelova 2004, Arakelova 2004: 20, Kreyenbroek 1995, Omarkhali 2008: 105). Every Murid family or individual should have their Sheikh, who acts as a mediator between the people and the God. The role of the Sheikh starts after the birth of a baby boy, when the Sheikh of that family or clan is summoned to perform the baptism[2] ceremony. Later on, the Sheikh is called upon to legalize marriages and also for ceremonies related to the afterlife. If a Mu-

[1] Sheikhs' houses usually shelter certain items - "gospels" which are believed to be "representatives" of the shrine to which the Sheikh is bound. Factually, the local "saint's houses" were instituted when the Iraq-based sanctuaries became inaccessible, particularly in pre-Soviet and Soviet times.

[2] As my Murid and Sheikh interlocutors point out, only male children are baptized because the females are supposed to be "outsiders" or "soulless" and in the future will leave their fathers' houses to get married (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

rid skips these rituals, he or she is considered to be "unclean" and pushed out of the Yezidi community. The practices and communication with the Sheikhs is regulated according to oral Hymns, but was also canonized and even textualized in the Ottoman Empire in the 1872 Petition: "Every Yezidi must kiss… the hand of his Sheikh or his Pir every day" (Kreyenbroek 1995: 6). The Murid is obliged to have his Pir and Sheikh, and in case this model is broken, the Murid will not be allowed to enter the afterlife paradise (cf. Arakelova and Amrian 2012: 172). In fact, the religious authority also has certain economic aspects: every Murid should think about the wellbeing of his Sheikh and donate an enormous amount of money regularly, on an annual basis and in return for any service the Sheikh provides him or his family (field data, 2014).

During the establishment of the Soviet regime, caste prestige underwent certain transformations caused by the social equality principle advocated and put into effect by Soviet ideology. An analysis of family accounts from all three castes suggests that memories of Stalinist repressions are more frequent for Sheikh families than for the others. There are lots of cases, when Sheiks (men) had been forced by Soviet regime's local representatives to deny their religious status and when sheiks refused to do, they were exiled. One such typical case was from Zovuni village says that the Sheikh was exiled based on the accusation of being a *kulak*, although the family narrative maintains that he simply did not obey Soviet officials and did not renounce his hereditary role and functions as a spiritual leader.

Actually, the Yezidi community was involved in the *kolkhoz* system mainly as stockbreeders. The stockbreeder families were relo-

cated to the seasonal settlements in the highlands, which is why I argue that they experienced the State presence and control in daily life only partially. This circumstance has also allowed the Sheikhs to eventually accumulate economic capital as well, in the post-Soviet period. Narratives of elitism and prestige among Yezidis directly refer to the Sheikh; in any case, this is the situation for an "outsider". In fact, Sheikhs prove to be the primary makers and carriers of cultural capital, which enables them to acquire economic and non-formal authority as well (the best upland slope pastures belong to Sheikhs).

It appears that parallel to the official discourse of exile, the Soviet authorities attempted to get rid of the circles that were deemed "prestigious" or "elite" in the community. *"In (19) 36 he was a Sheikh leader in Miraq, Sheikh Arab's son Jamal. He was dispossessed and exiled in (19) 36-(19) 37. Sheikh Arab's other son Afand was also exiled, but his brother Khalifa, a renowned man among all Yezidis, was left behind. You see, the priests, the wealthy, the Sheikhs were all dispossessed and exiled. My father used to say that when they forced him (a Sheikh) to renounce his title, he replied that their family was a well-known Sheikh clan and he could never deny his legacy. Once he walked out of there, people would address him as their "Sheikh", he could not be disgraced like that. So they exiled the man to Tashkent. A month later a letter came, a black letter, saying he was dead"*. (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

The totalitarian machine of sovietization virtually succeeded, at least temporarily, to struggle against the "elites", more specifically to liquidate the prestige of old religious, economic and political elites, immersing the Yezidi community in new fields of educational and economic activity, where the labor community was held in

prestige[1]. The power of Sheikhs was observable in the Murids' lives when they tried to deal with education. This attempted to decrease the power and influence of Sheikhs on community life, and Sheikhs prohibited Murids from getting educated, as it is against canonic Yezidism. At the same time, the Soviet government tried mostly in the early period to overcome total illiteracy, including the Kurdish and Yezidi communities too. These tendencies were also seen in academic texts written in that time by researchers of Yezidis and Kurds. It seems that those academics composed their works in the format of propaganda posters and try to show how "successfully" the processes of social equity and collectivization were implemented, thanks to Stalin's policy. Texts were composed with the usage of that period's language of official media and patterns, like "…collective farms in Kurdish villages, which introduced a turning point in the economy and stimulated the use of advanced technology" or "Today, the Kurds along with other Soviet peoples are developing the ideology of Communism" (Avdal 1948: 226-227). Two marked trends stand out in post-Soviet oral history narratives: a significant part of the

[1] The suppression of the Sheikhs must have been the reason for the creation or revival of alternative sacral spaces. Oral historic accounts about the late Soviet period suggest that religious activity was then unhampered: "So many people used to come here in Soviet times... It was in (19) 59-58" (neighbor of a Sheikh in Miraq). This circumstance is noteworthy in the sense that, after the repressions of the Sheikhs, a time came when the shrine and saint culture gained vast popularity while the Soviet authorities did not try to prevent or hinder the process as vigorously as before. One of possible explanations of this inherent presence of popular beliefs in everyday life is that the Yezidis tried to avoid schooling or had incomplete educations, which allowed them to evade atheist ideology. The other reason is that due to the character of their work activities (seasonal pastorals), the Sheikhs were absent most of the time from their communities and remained "unnoticed". These observations, of course, still require a deeper inquiry in order to understand the prerequisites for the formation of the sanctuary/shrine environment.

Murid community reinstituted the "elite" discourse of the Sheikhs, reviving both rituals and the special attitude towards the Sheikh (annual financial donations). This part of Murids is largely comprised of young people born towards the end of the Soviet Union. The other part of Murids is very critical of the Sheikh institute and tends to think about it as a misleading and exploitative model that enables the Sheikhs to exert their authority over the "common people" and put them under their control. *"We don't use cabbage… (The Sheikhs say that Yezidi religion prohibits it) Our Sheikhs have blinded us, I don't believe them. ….Simply put, they wanted to blind us and rule over us. Nowadays, the people are more advanced, nobody cares about them anymore. They preach to themselves. That's how they wanted to paralyze the people"* (Murid woman), (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

The reasons behind such duality surface in the biographical interviews. As a result of atheistic and egalitarian propoganda, people with Soviet experience "revolted" against the traditional Sheikhdom. Those born in thepost-Soviet and *perestroika* periods tried to "restore" the prestige and reputation of the Sheikh institute, since the Sheikhs are "the spiritual and cultural leaders". The "revival" of the Sheikhs' authority could also have other motivators, such as the political situation in the late Soviet period. Actually, the official discourse of the Soviet period did not mention Yezidis as an ethnic unit or religious confession. The official data used to mention mostly all Kurmanji speakers as Kurds (Arakelova 2014: 13). The *perestroika* period, and then the collapse of the Soviet Union, made possible a new tendency when part of the Kurmanji-speaking villages presented themselves as Yezidi. It is noteworthy that being Yezidi first of all means to be part of the religious confession of Yezidism (scholars

usually call this community ethno-confessional). Thus, the invention of "identity" was possible though religion, which was within the capacity of the Sheikhs (Arakelova 2014: 3, 8, 14-15). The bulk of the narratives describe Sheikhs as wielders of mystic powers, intermediaries between this life and the afterlife, bearers of sacral and profane knowledge (Kreyenbroek 1995: 152), (Asatrian and Arakelova 2004). *"We are Murids, we don't really know anything. We are not literate, you see. If you want to know the real truth about us, go see our Sheikh", "Go meet the Sheikh, he will tell you better"*. Thus, the Sheikh has turned into a symbol of absolute knowledge and is represented as the possessor of intellectual capital. This could also be a stimulating factor explaining why the authority and symbolic power of Sheikhs has revived openly.

Religious-traditional and Secular Elites

The deterioration of the Sheikhs' non-formal authority during the Soviet period brought about new tendencies for participation in the public political "authority" rule. A key factor in this respect was the mandatory school education for Soviet citizens, which the Sheikhs were unable to avert and had little influence to hamper (in contrast to the inner-community perception, where education and literacy were traditionally deemed "satanic").

The years of the 1980s *perestroika* saw the inception of national-civil movements in Soviet Armenia. The dominant discourse of the time was about having a sovereign nation-state, with ethnicity seen as its main component. G. Derluguian discussed the regional patterns inherent to these tendencies, focusing on Armenian, Georgian and North Caucasian cases (Derluguian 2004: 178-179), (cf.

Tukvadze and Jaoshvili 2006). In this period, intellectual political leaders (scientists, academicians, writers) with a rhetoric of ethnic-nationalism came to the forefront of public discourse (Derluguian 2004: 61-63). These bearers of intellectual capital set out to accumulate social capital by relying on civic movements. Then the popularity they achieved was rapidly transformed into political and military capital (there are a series of interviews pertaining to these processes in Armenia with a member of the Pan-Armenian National Movement, the Mayor of Yerevan and Minister of Internal Affairs Vano Siradeghyan), (cf. Harutyunyan 1998).

In the period of *perestroika*, the Yezidi and Kurdish communities of Armenia also produced discourses of reunification around the idea of national identity. Several initiative groups were formed, the heads of which eventually strived to assert themselves as the leaders of the minority communities. One of the earliest of these Yezidi organizations, the "National Union of the Yezidis of Armenia", was founded in 1989. Murids by caste were put forward (some media outlets say "elected") for the presidency of the organization.

However, the cultural discourse is in fact opposed to the conventional "authority" model and its perceptions because in the traditional class structure Murids are not accepted as leaders, at least by the other two castes. The leadership of Sheikhs in the political discourse is "limited" to religious context. "The Sheikhs and Pirs are the priesthood; we maintain this tradition", the President of the "National Union of Yezidis" said in an interview (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

The formation of the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia" is noteworthy in itself, since "Yezidiness" here is formally represented

as ethnicity rather than religion or religious identity. Therefore, what were the means and mechanisms that empowered a person to present himself as the president of all Yezidis based in Armenia, or otherwise what kind of capital did he possess that was later transformed into power? According to the biography of the "President" of the "National Union of Yezidis" published in Wikipedia - "He finished secondary school and was employed as a teacher in the school of a village mostly inhabited with Yezidis. After that, he was director of studies at the secondary school in the same village. Later on, he became the village head. He was a member of the CPSU from 1963 to 1990. Simultaneous to his job commitments, he joined the Department of Arable Farming at an Agricultural College. In the 1970s, he gained admission to the Yerevan Marxism-Leninism University and graduated. During the 1980s, he was the deputy-head of the *sovkhoz* in a village. He was then the Head of the Livestock Provision Office. He also graduated from Yerevan Veterinary Institute" (E.M.[1] 2015).

One of the characteristics of "Yezidiness" in Soviet and early post Soviet times was that education was interpreted as a "satanic" phenomenon and schooling was not encouraged by the force of tradition.

"*You know what they used to tell us? They said we shouldn't send our girls to school, they said according to our (oral) "law", that's a sin. But why would that be a sin* (angrily)*? Why? Learning to read and write, why is that a sin? That's how it was… but the people didn't give in…*" (a Murid woman) .

Currently we can meet another point of view among Yezidi intellectuals, one of my interlocutor, a sheikh by origin and author of

[1] The names and locations have been changed.

Yezidi language handbooks said: "The tendency to refuse getting education is that the Yezidis have always lived side by side with other nations and they avoided schooling for the fear of assimilation" (Melkumyan 2014-2015). The community's policy of rejecting education is interpreted in oral narratives as a means of protecting ethnicity and identity.

Given the ethno-confessional character of the Yezidi community, the influence of religious leaders is quite substantial in secular life. However, the case of the President of the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia" proves otherwise, as the traditional perception is bypassed and instead the priority falls on the educational background. For a person from the Murid caste, the status of an intellectual served as a means of overcoming the constraints posed by traditionalism and the clergy towards obtaining leadership. For instance, the first part of the published biography captured mainly the "intellectual" capital of the person – education and employment in the education system, university degrees and ultimately his position as the President of the Yezidis. In this section, the author highlights the diversity of his intellectual capital. This also reflects the Soviet/late-Soviet common perceptions of intelligentia and intellectualism as a prestigious category. This, in turn, fitted into and was encouraged by the public discourse of the Soviet and post-Soviet years.

The policy of accumulation of social capital in the clan and community life grew into the circulation of nationalism and issues of genesis as well as identity (Krikorian 2004).

The Yezidi community functions in a clan system, where the patriarchal model is very prominent. In conservative communities, the prestige of the clan is underpinned by the glorification of the

common or genealogical archaic past and the interpretations of that past in daily life.

This issue is extremely sensitive among the Yezidis due to the fact that the thesis of their emergence from the Kurdish people is a constant matter of public and scientific debate. This approach is categorically rejected by the bearers of Yezidi identity (Dalalyan 2011). A Yezidi journalist told me: "In 1980-1990s when Karabakh Movement was increasing, the modernization of Armenia was tightly intertwined with national narratives under the leadership of intelligentia, at the same time our intellectuals also decided to raise the issue of national Identity and officially recall our population Yezidis, not Kurds". During my fieldwork, the people I encountered would often tell me, "I have only one request: in your story, do not call us Kurds. There were times when people would come, we would talk but in the end, they would write about us as Kurds". It is noteworthy that the Yezidi clergy interprets the genesis of Yezidis from the perspective of Yezidism, thus leaving open the field of scientific-secular and secular interpretation.

The President of the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia", who is considered to be at the roots of the Yezidi national movements in the 1980s, later on produced a publication entitled "We are Yezidis", where he attempted to speak from the position of a person versed both in scientific and religious discourses. The author presented himself as a "Doctor of Yezidi Religion and History" (*Yezdiner*, published in Wikipedia.org). It's curious that his scientific title was not mentioned in his official biography (the online version was updated in April 2015).

Interpretation of issues pertaining to identity and origin in a na-

tionalistic clan-system creates opportunities for social and symbolic capital accumulation. Yezidi people would usually tell me: "You had better meet E.M., he will cover your questions from A to Z"..

The official media in Armenia prove to be a means of informal legitimization of the status of the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia". The media always presents him as the President of all Yezidis, not just as the organization leader. The fact that the press and media don't offer any kind of discussion on the legitimacy of this status, but take it for granted and actively circulate it, leaves room for speculations about certain agreements with Armenian state institutions. Pledges of mutual loyalty can be traced in E.M.'s addresses to the media, as he regularly emphasizes: "although we are Yezidis, we consider Armenia to be our state".. The first step of the legitimization of his authority was to enter the public life of Armenia by "sending troops" to the Karabakh battlefront in the 1990s. The second step was the creation of a "medal" legitimizing his symbolic capital. The Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I was the first to receive the order.[1] In this case, the Yezidi organization as a micro-model replicated the macro-model of the Armenian government, as the first president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan had also awarded Catholicos Vazgen I the first title of national hero (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

Parallel to being a caste society, the Yezidis are also divided on a clan basis, which is very typical of its patriarchal environment.

[1] Experts who have had the opportunity to deal with Armenian Diaspora communities H. Kharatyan and Y. Antonyan indicated in private conversations that the community behavior of Yezidis in Armenia has common points with Armenian Diaspora communities, related to how they generate mechanisms of survival through loyalty to the local governments.

On a clan system among Yezidies Omarkhali mentions: *"A key term which is frequently met in Yezidi society, is* oc'ax *('hearth', 'home', 'family'). Among the Yezidis, the representation is maintained of a common origin of a 'clan' from one ancestor. The Yezidis from Armenia and Georgia use the word* cîd *to refer to an ancestor. In this regard, there is a cult of veneration among Yezidis of the founder of a 'clan'. There are tombs or sacred places in honor of Sheikhs and Pirs, of the founders or prominent figures of a clan, which are widely visited by Yezidi pilgrims in Iraq"*. (Omarkhali 2008: 108). The clan system plays an important role in everyday life when organizing agricultural or pastoral work: *"They used to come together to organize their agricultural work, that's why they are so productive",* an economist from Tandzut village said. In another case, our research team came across a mixed population in Ranchpar village, where all the Yezidi families were not in the village. "*They are celebrating the wedding party in another village of one of their relatives. This is typical of them - if something happens then all the members of that 'tribe' must take part",* said a fellow villager, a refugee from Azerbaijan (Melkumyan 2014-2015). These are daily fragments of how Yezidi clan members are working together to organize their social life. E.M.'s family also seems is employing this factor. In 1989 they founded the newspaper *Ezdikhan*; it is currently edited by the first deputy of E.M. and his grandson, who are both part of the same big family.

While the media targets the consolidation of social capital, intellectual capital has been secured through books which have aimed to form national identity - school textbooks: "(The co-author) and I created our ABC book – *Aniba*. We wrote this textbook to use in

the schools for the children of Yezidis" (Nazarenko 2012). This instance is related to another manifestation: the Soviet intellectuality discourse is traced here as well: a prestigious and authoritative figure for the public would come from a background of the intelligentsia or education sphere.

A. Smith argues (1999: 101, 103; 1998; 1991) that in order to present nationalism as an elite and prestigious discourse, a reference is made to one's own archaic roots and their continuity through the written language. The mechanism of how archaisation of group origin is used in case of Yezidi intellectuals can be observed here: "… in fact we had a script as far back as the 11th century, but it was lost" (Nazarenko 2012). Nevertheless the Murid "Presidency" is not entirely accepted as legitimate, since in post-Soviet years, the non-formal authority capitals seem to have been restored to their former influence, which is particularly true for the Sheikhs. In order to fully wield their legitimate cultural capital and transform it into symbolic capital, Murids need to have the capacity and ability to master the domain of religion. This tendency is already perceptible in the organization of the sacred landscape through the Murids' attempt (Nazarenko 2012) to acquire the symbolic capital of "clergymen".

In one of his interviews, E.M. recounted that he was presented with one of the seven saints' relics of Yezidis – the symbol of Malak-Tāwūs (Nazarenko 2012: 3:50-4:01 min.), while canonicly only the clergy is entitled to hold such an artifact. Hence E.M. becomes an authoritative figure through his possession of religious symbols. Moreover, the article in question was said to be crafted in India, which reinforced one of the narratives about the origin of the Yezidis. This perfectly coincides with Smith's approach to national-

ism, suggesting the legitimization of prestigiousness of nationalism through claims of its archaity.

The primary means of accumulation of social and cultural capital prove to be the weakening of traditional elitism inherent in the religious and secular casts during the Soviet period, as well as the manipulation of the traditional clan-system. This process is also globalizing and, in 1997, the "Union of all Yezidis Around the World" and E.M. presented the latter as "President of all Yezidis around the world"[1].

However, the process of construction of new social eliteness among the Yezidis underwent changes in 2011. The " 'Sinjar' Yezidi National Union" youth NGO was created in 2011 by a group of young people with backgrounds in law and oriental studies[2]. As in the case of the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia", founded back in 1989, the uniting factor here was education. Just as the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia" NGO founded the newspaper *Ezdikhan* newspaper, "Sinjar" NGO maintains its own electronic publication which ensures a larger domain of social accessibility. The names of both organizations suggest that the wording "national union" is central for the activity of these groups i.e. they both work for the construction of a national-ethnic elite. In order to complete this process, the "National Union of Yezidis of Armenia" attempted to bring the religious sphere to their private domain, something that stands at odds with the principles of Yezidi religion. In contrast, "Sinjar" NGO seeks to reinstate reverence towards the institute of

[1] This can be compared to the case of M. Shanibov's claimed leadership of all mountainous communities of the Chechens, described by G. Derluguian (2004).

[2] The Vice-President of the National Union of Yezidis of Armenia, the editor of *Ezdikhan* newspaper, is also affiliated with this organization.

Yezidi Sheikhs and Pirs. They have come up with texts of appraisal or encouragement of the Sheikhs - “the Sheikh is our spiritual father” (fieldwork notes), “However Barzani has made another, more dangerous move in the media industry. He has cut Yezidis not only off of their homeland but also their roots. To that end he needs to turn the Yezidi people against their religious authorities. Barzani has realized that to corrupt the unity of the Yezidi people he needs to discredit and turn their leaders against each other” (Amiryan 2015). In the case of “Sinjar”, intellectual, cultural and social capital are employed to gain political and civil capital. In contrast to the previous initiatives and organizations, the members of “Sinjar” heavily emphasize the mixed political and civil character of their NGO; they initiate civil movements that address the pressing issues of the community in the context of the Constitution and human rights, rather than identity and culture. After several protest-like events held by this NGO (against the parliamentarians from the governing Republican party (Yezidies prepared a gift… 2013), various civil society actors have started to follow the group on Facebook and consider it an innovative initiative engaged in civil society activism (Melkumyan 2014-2015).

The demonstrated cases suggest that the intellectual capital traditionally deemed unacceptable by the Yezidi community, but nevertheless accumulated in late Soviet and post-Soviet period, contributed to the accrual of new cultural and social capital. In the late Soviet period, the already formed and recognized elite group contented itself with the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital alone.

The group that formed in the post-Soviet period attempted to attain cultural and political capital. This direction of modernization of

the Yezidi community is primarily structured around the creation of civil discourse through nationalism.

References

1. Abbink J., Salverda T., eds. 2013. The anthropology of elites, Palgrave Macmillan: New-York.
2. Amiryan M. 2015. The Government of Barzani doing a more dangerous step, Retrieved 09. 15. 2015, from www.politic.am.
3. Ahmed S. 1975. Yezidi Sacred Shrines and Locations, in H. Field (eds.), The Yezidis: Their Life and Beliefes, FRP: Miami, pp. 167–192.
4. Arakelova V., Amrian T. 2012. The Hereafter in the Yezidi Beliefs, in: Iran and the Caucasus, 16, pp. 309-318.
5. Arakelova V. 2014. Ethno-Religious Communities: To the Problem of Identity Markers, in: Iran and the Caucasus, 14, pp. 1-18.
6. Arakelova V. 2004. Notes on the Yezidi Religious Syncretism, in: Iran and the Caucasus 8(1), pp. 19-28.
7. Asatrian G. and Arakelova V. 2003. Malak-Tāwūs: The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis, in: Iran and the Caucasus, 7(1-2), pp. 1-36.
8. Asatrian G. and Arakelova V. 2004. The Yezidy Pantheon, in: Iran and the Caucasus 8(2), pp. 231–276.
9. Avdal 1948: Ավդալ Ա., Քուրդ կինը նահապետական ընտանիքում ըստ ազգագրական և ֆոլկլորային նյութերի, առանձնատիպ Պետական պատմական թանգարանի "Աշխատություններ", էջ 213-301. (Kurdish Woman in the Traditional Family, According to Ethnographic and Folklore Materials, Papers of the National Museum of History, pp 213-301).
10. Bourdieu P. 1989. Social Space and Symbolic Power, in: Sociological Theory, 7(1), pp. 14-25.
11. Dalalyan T. 2011. Construction of Kurdish and Yezidy identities among the Kurmanj-speaking population of the Republic of Armenia. Changing Identities: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tbilisi: Heinrich Boell Foundation South Caucasus Regional Office, pp. 177-201.

12. Darveshyan 1986: Дарвешян, М. Скотоводческое хозяйство курдов Восточной Армении (по материалам второй половины XIX - начала XX века). Ереван: Изд. АН Арм. ССР. (Animal-breeding among Kurds of Eastern Armenia, according to materials of the end of 19th century, beginning of 20th century, Publishing House of the Academy of Science of Arm. SSR, Yerevan).

13. Derluguian G. 2004. Bourdieu’s Secret Admirer in the Caucasus, New York: Verso.

14. E.M., Wikipedia.org. (n.d.), Retrieved 09 09, 2015, from https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D4%B1%D5%A6%D5%AB%D5%A6_%D4%B9%D5%A1%D5%B4%D5%B8%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6

15. Harutyunyan G. 1998: Հարությունյան Գ., Մարդու Ժամանակը - Vano Siradeghyan (film) (The Time of Man – Vano Siradeghyan).

16. Hovsepyan et al. 2016: Hovsepyan R., N. Stepanyan-Gandilyan, H. Melkumyan and L. Harutyunyan. 2016. Food as a marker for economy and part of identity: traditional vegetal food of Yezidis and Kurds in Armenia, in: Journal of Ethnic Foods 3(1), pp. 32–41.

17. Joseph I. 1919. Devil Worship, Sacred Books Of The Yezidiz, Richard G. Badger The Gorham Press: Boston.

18. Kreyenbroek P. 1995. Yezidism-Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition (Texts and Studies in Religion), Edwin Mellen Press: New York.

19. Kreyenbroek P. 2009. Yezidism in Europe, Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden.

20. Krikorian O. 2004, September 16. An Interview With Aziz Tamoyan, National Union of Yezidi, retrieved September 09, 2015, from Armenian News Network / Groong: http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ok-20040916.html.

21. Langer R. 2010. Yezidism between Scholarly Literature and Actual Practice: From ‘Heterodox’ Islam and ‘Syncretism’ to the Formation of a Transnational Yezidi ‘Orthodoxy’, in: British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 37(3), pp. 393-403.

22. Melkumyan H. 2014-2015. Fieldwork Materials in the Yerevan, Armavir and Aragatsotn regions, Armenia.

23. Nazarenko S. 2012, September 14. ATV, Producer, & Formica Art Production, Retrieved September 13, 2015, from www.youtube.com / formica.am: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZRJOdyBZ5E.

24. Omarkhali K. 2008. On The Structure of The Yezidi Clan and Tribal Sistem and its Terminology Among the Yezidis of the Caucasus, in: The Journal of Kurdish Studies, 6, pp. 104-119.

25. Parrot F. 1846. Journey To Ararat, Harper & Brothers: New-York.

26. Shore C. 2002. Introduction: Towards an anthropology of elites, in: Shore C., Nugent S. Eds. 2002. Elite cultures. Anthropological perspectives: London and New-York.

27. Smith A. 1999. Myths and Memories of the Nation, Oxford University Press: New York.

28. Smith A. 1991. National Identity, Penguin Books: London.

29. Smith A. 1998. Nationalism and Modernism, Routledge: London and New York.

30. Southgate H. 2014. Narrative a Tour Through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia And Mesopotamia, Observations on the Condition of Mohammedanism and Christianity in Those Countries, FB &c Ltd: London.

31. Tamoyan A. 2001: Թամոյան Ա., Մենք եզդի ենք. Երևան. (We are Yezidis, Yerevan)

32. Tukvadze et al. 2006: Туквадзе А., Джаошвили Г., Туквадзе Р. Трансформация политической системы в современной Грузии, Центральная Азия и Кавказ, 2(4), с. 103-112. (The Transformation of the Political System in Contemporary Georgia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2 (4)).

33. Yezidies Prepared a Gift for Manvel Badeyan: a Donkey and Toilet Paper. 2013, 12 10. Retrieved 09 15, 2015, from 7or.am: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4k5F7Kbapg.

3.2 Religion and the Establishment of the New Political Elite in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia

Ketevan Khutsishvili

The second half of the 1990s was a period of dramatic political and social transformation for Georgia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia faced civil contradiction and conflicts. As in all post-Soviet states, here too the processes of formation of a civil society and the adaptation and integration of societies to the new conditions were faced with the difficulties characteristic for the transition period. In each separately taken post-Soviet republic, the process has its individual and specific forms, but the general laws caused by identical starting conditions and similar tendencies of development were also seen. The character of the historical changes going on in the post-Soviet transition societies, and among them in Georgian society, was determined by a replacement of the state machine constructed on the Communist principles of a socialist society and the Soviet people with absolutely different values - civil society, individual citizens and state institutions, with the national essence and the form claiming to be focused on democracy. The process stimulated changes in all spheres of life, which applied also to the transformation, reestablishment or foundation of elites.

On the path to the construction of a new social order, it appeared that religion gained a certain role and the impact of religious orga-

nizations on these processes started to increase. This fact was not surprising, taking into consideration the general development of Georgia. This article discusses the correlation of religion and the elite formation process.

The post-Soviet societies after the 1970s, living in conditions of secularism and atheism, or as Mathijs Pelkmans describes it - "the continued existence of unbelief, if not militant disbelief" (Pelkmans 2015: 254) in the mass order was addressed to their religious roots. Owing to the reassessment of Soviet priorities, personal and public predilections changed considerably and religiosity became the determining factor of public life. In the post-Soviet societies of a transitive type, the interest towards religion sharply increased, and the factor of the influence of religion has accordingly increased. This process was especially evident in post-Soviet Georgia. Religion carried out a political role, especially bearing the load of one of the main markers of ethnic identification (Bubulashvili 2008:29). The situation was determined because of the pre-Soviet history of correlation between religion and ethnicity in Georgia. The role of the Orthodoxy and the Georgian Orthodox Church as an institution in the formation of the Georgian ethnic identity and Georgian culture is officially recognized by the Georgian state (see the Concordat signed between the State and Church in 2002). Orthodoxy has preserved its place and importance in everyday life. Georgia became a Christian country in the 4th century. Its population historically belongs to Orthodoxy. Until today, the vast majority of the Christians living in Georgia—83.9 percent—belong to Orthodoxy. Their general share in the whole population constitutes 83.8 percent, and among them ethnic Georgians are 94.7 percent. Orthodoxy has historically

played a huge part in the formation of the Georgian culture and nation. The ninth clause of the constitution of Georgia says: "the state recognizes the exclusive role of the Orthodox Church in the history of Georgia, and at the same time proclaims complete freedom of religion and creed and the independence of church from the state". The exclusive role of Orthodoxy determined by the Constitution became the legal basis for the constitutional agreement (Concordat) between the Georgian state and the Orthodox Church of Georgia, signed on 14 October 2002. This is a Constitutional Agreement, which defines the legal status of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the relationship with the state. The main advantage of the Constitutional Agreement is considered the fact that according to it the special role of the Orthodox Church in Georgia is recognized by the state and, at the same time, freedom of belief and religion is declared (Chikvaidze, 2011). The GOCh has strengthened its positions, even though it was always active in all spheres of public and political life, and had the power to also impact secular domains (Kekelia 2012: 93).

In the last decades there cannot be a mention of any important public theme, the discussion of which would not address the authority of the Church, based on its influence on a public idea. Moreover, in disputes between the liberal and conservative parts of society both parties have tried to secure the support of the Church in order to strengthen their position. This position of the Church has major importance not only for the internal-ethnic integration of the Georgians, but also for the preservation of the ethno-confessional and public stability in the country. The Georgian Orthodox Church declares itself distant as well as from religious extremism and from extreme religious liberalism both in the country, and in the Church,

where the relationship between the so-called liberals and traditionalists has recently become aggravated. Proceeding from the importance of the Church in Georgian society, the internal problems of the Church has become a topic of discussion for all of Georgian society. These processes are rather sensitive and significant in the religious and political situation. In 2002, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II declared: "Times are changing and together with them we are changing too, and therefore the Church should take into account the spiritual and material problems that are being presented to us by this new life". Following this, the Georgian Orthodox Church claimed to take on only the role of facilitator in public discourses, but ended up appearing as an active agent in the public and political life of contemporary Georgia.

Besides the Georgians, a part of the Abkhaz, Ossetians, Greeks and Russians also profess to Orthodox Christianity in Georgia. According to the tradition and initial agreement of Orthodox Churches, the whole territory of Georgia is under the management of the Georgian Orthodox Church. However, under the influence of separatist intentions based of political reasons, the Abkhaz and Ossetian clergy has tried to introduce religious separatism in the Georgian Orthodox Church. This gives more importance to the political activities of the Georgian Orthodox Church. A classic example of a politically-loaded religious subject is the occurrence of religious separatism in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Based on a decision of the Sacred Synod of Russian Orthodox Church, the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions are considered as the original territories of the Georgian Patriarchate, but the Russian clergy has broken this decision and that has caused tensions in the relationship between the Georgian and

Russian Orthodox Churches. The opposition of the Georgian and Russian Churches with such a political context is not a new circumstance.

After the annexation of Georgia in the 18th century, the Russian Empire started to carry out strict policies (assignment of the place of Georgian Orthodox Church within the subordination hierarchy of Orthodox Churches, the spiritual and physical oppression of the clergy, etc.) towards the Georgian Orthodox Church that resulted in the close association of the latter with the national movement of the 19th century. The nationalists were trying to gain political rights for Georgia and at the same time were fighting against the Tsarist policies towards the Georgian Orthodox Church. The autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church was restored in 1917, before the declaration of the Independent Republic. Thus, the ideas of correlation of national freedom as well as the freedom and wellbeing of the Church were closely bound together once again (Bubulashvili 2008: 31). The autocephaly movement converged with the formation of national identity. The ideological roots of this process may generally be traced back to the prominent Georgian writer, and the leader of the national liberation movement, Ilia Chavchavadze. The nationalism he promoted was neither religious nor ethnic, but a civic nationalism formed around a common history and territory (Chitanava 2015: 40). The oppression of the Georgian Orthodox Church on the side of the Empire led to the nationalist agenda being put into the fight for the Georgian Orthodox Church as well.

It is natural that religion, as one of the major elements of ethnic self-consciousness, determines the character of the processes of inner-ethnic consolidation. Religious creed, as an internal orientation

for self-identification of individuals and ethnic groups, and also the constructor of cultural values, has gained huge importance for certain Georgians. The Soviet past stimulated the development of this direction. After the Sovietization of Georgia (on 25 February 1921), a new wave began of oppressing the Church. The activities of the Catholicos-Patriarchs of that period, namely of Ambrosius (Khelaia, 1921-1927)[1], Christophorus III (Tsitskishvili, 1927-1932)[2] and Callistratus (Tsintsadze, 1932-1952)[3] supported the idea of the unity of the Georgian national idea and the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The oppression decreased after WWII, as the agenda of the Soviet government changed – the main focus was concentrated on recovering after the war (Bubulashvili 2008: 33) and the Church started to play the role of a more or less free space for dissidents. The post-war period was the time when a new wave of the Georgian nationalist movement took place and the freethinkers started to build bridges to the Church. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a Georgian politician, dissident, scholar, and writer who became the first democratically elected President of Georgia in the post-Soviet era, started his activities together with Merab Kostava in the 1950s. They turned to religion and the

[1] Catholicos-Patriarch Ambrosius was one of the leaders of Georgian autocephaly movements, known for his opposition to the Soviet regime. In 1922 he addressed the Genoa Conference demanding the attraction to the red terror of Bolsheviks. The Holy Ambrosius Aghmsarebeli (the Confessor) was canonized by the Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1995.opposition to the Soviet regime. In 1922, he addressed the Genoa Conference demanding acknowledgement of the red terror practiced by the Bolsheviks. The Holy Ambrosius Aghmsarebeli (the Confessor) was canonized by the Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1995.

[2] Also a member of the autocephaly movement.

[3] Also a member of the autocephaly movement, who tried to ease the pressure from the regime.

movement led by them gained not only a political meaning, but also a religious one in a certain sense. They introduced messianic ideas about the political and religious importance of the Georgian nation into the political discourse (Chitanava 2015: 41). Later, they became the founders of the Society of Saint Ilia the Righteous, which was a combination of a religious society with a political party. This party became the basis for the political movement. In this period, the narrative of Georgian nationalism changed. "The Georgian Orthodox Church established the foundation for a new hybrid identity, which later defined the role of the Church in public and political life" (Chitanava 2015: 41). Religious rhetoric became the leading one and the Orthodoxy claimed to contain the general ethics and ideology of the national movement. However, Z. Gamsakhurdia himself was not always loyal to the Church as an organization, as he considered it to be a group of conformists collaborating with the Soviet authorities.

Despite this, the authority of the Church remained high among the population and the Church started to play the role of a political actor. Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II and the Holy Synod were publicly involved in all political events and processes since the establishment of the independent republic of Georgia. For example, they would bless those who fought for independence and territorial unity. The drastic uplift of religiosity and devoutness among Georgians after the reestablishment of independence was encouraged by the clergy (Archbishop Japaridze 2004: 65). As Korneli Kakachia noted: "Because of being a powerful symbol of the country's sovereignty and an important part of the Georgian national narrative and consciousness, the stance of the Church in terms of moral, ideological, and political issues has significant weight" (Kakachia 2014: 2).

The difficulties of the transition period of the 90s created beneficial grounds for broadly spreading religious adherence. The rise of religiosity is usually explained by my interviewees as a response to a "deep spiritual crisis" that also entailed crises of identity, multiculturalism, and relationships between minorities and majorities. Complicated interethnic and interreligious relationships intrinsic to the Georgian political and socio-cultural situation served as a background for recent and current developments in national policy (Khutsishvili 2004; Papuashvili 2002). Addressing the peculiarities of post-Soviet religiosity, most of the interviewees highlighted the role of Soviet atheistic propaganda in the extermination of religious knowledge and values, causing the alienation of society from religion and the Church. At the same time, the Georgian Orthodox Church is perceived as an institution that always sheltered those who were trying to find ways to flee ideological pressure. The late 1970s were distinguished by the activation of the national movement aimed at the independence of Georgia. Members of this movement were representatives of the Georgian intellectual and artistic elite at the same time. Thus, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a well-known writer and academician, Merab Kostava was a musician, and Giorgi (Gia) Chanturia was an assistant to the priest in the church. The dissident group they formed bore the name of Ilia Chavchavadze already mentioned as an ideologist of the Georgian national movement in the imperial times. Soviet dissidents followed Ilia Chavchvadze and they too chose religion, the Georgian Orthodoxy, as an ideological and spiritual basis for their movement, thus starting to associate themselves with the Church. Their nationalism was of an ethnic and religious nature that helped them to attract many young followers.

Though the Soviet authorities destroyed the group and its leaders were imprisoned, after the collapse of the Soviet regime those three (Zviad Gasakhurdia, Merab Kostava and Giorgi Chanturia) became the founders of the new political elite of independent Georgia that was ideologically associated with the Church and Georgian Orthodoxy from the very beginning.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was born in Tbilisi, on 31 March 1939. He was the son of the famous Georgian writer Konstantin Gamsakhurdia. Z. Gamsakhurdia graduated from the Department of Western European Languages and Literature at Tbilisi State University in 1962. He has works on Rustaveli studies, Georgian culture, and theology.

In 1956, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his friends started to act against the Soviet regime; they spread proclamations and would publish anti-Soviet pieces. In 1976, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava established the Helsinki Group. The Group demanded the acceptance of the political rights of the nation and the protection of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Because of such activities, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was arrested in 1956 and in 1977-1979. Gamsakhurdia was the main organizer of all the mass demonstrations during the years of 1987-1990, including the April 1989 protests, which ended on April 9 with the bloody attack of the Soviet army. The event led to the announcement of the independence of Georgia and Z. Gamsakhurdia became the first elected President of Georgia.

Merab Kostava, the second most important leader of the Georgian nationalist movement, was born in 1939 on May 26. His political activities began during his time at school. He, together with Zviad Gamsakhurdia and some other peers, founded the patriotic

illegal organization Gorgasliani. He was arrested several times. In 1978, the US Congress nominated Merab Kostava for the Nobel Prize. In 1987, he was released after a 10-year imprisonment. After returning, he worked as a music teacher. M. Kostava turned into a political leader despite never having held an official position. In 1993, the Supreme Council of the third convocation granted him the title of a national hero.

Giorgi (Gia) Chanturia, born in 1959, led the youth wing of the National Democratic Party. The National Democratic Party was one of the oldest political parties in Georgia. Ilia Chavchavadze introduced the idea and started to work on the program. The implementation of his idea was delayed for years due to his murder. It was founded in 1917 and restored in 1981. The majority of its leaders were associated with the Church; they were free-time workers at the churches and served the clergy during the services.

These cases of political leaders are significant in order to understand that, after the disintegration of the USSR, in the post-Soviet space, against a background of the abolished interdictions and legislative anarchy, new political groupings began to arise together with a number of already existing groups. Religion, religious nationalism and spiritual revival became important parts of the political discourse of the 90s. It was supported by the development of religious-theological education, which has roots going back to the 4th century. Churches have always been important educational units. Educational institutions at churches were especially developed in the Middle Ages in the regions of Tao-Klarjeti, Gelati, Ikalto, Gremi and Shiomghvime. In the 19th century, despite the difficult political and economic situation, theological schools continued to function

in Tbilisi and Telavi. In 1817, a Russian Orthodox seminary was opened and continued to exist until 1917 (many Georgian statesmen and cultural leaders studied at this seminary, and its most famous pupil was later the political leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin). After the restoration of the Georgian Orthodox Church, during the times of the Catholicos-Patriarchs Kirion II and Leonidas, the activities for the establishment of the seminary were activated, but the idea was not implemented, since in 1921 Georgia was occupied and sovietized. In 1963, Catholicos-Patriarch Efrem II launched courses for pastors, which in 1965 became a theological seminary (Japaridze 2004). For that period, the number of students was limited. Later, the number increased. In 1988, Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II founded the Tbilisi Theological Academy and Seminary. Young Georgians were attracted by the special knowledge offered there in Christian theological anthropology, Christian arts, iconography, restoration and applied arts, decorative gardening and ecology and church chanting and singing. Nowadays, the Patriarchate of Georgia has more than 35 theological seminaries and schools throughout the whole of Georgia[1]. At the same time, publicly-funded schools in Georgia throughout the 1990s were thought to be formally imbued with Orthodox religion (Kekelia 2015: 129). In addition to pedagogical institutions, the media were also associated with the Patriarchate. This was true first of all for the TV channel Ertsulovneba. Modern means of mobilization were used to impact public opinion and to offer the perspective of the Patriarchate regarding the events occurring within the society. As a result, according to CRRC surveys, the most religious group in Georgia was composed of young people with higher

[1] See at: http://www.orthodoxy.ge

education (Kekelia 2015: 129). "Religious sign systems are characterized by concrete ideas about the family, education, juridical decision-making or power distribution... This is why political leaders regard religious communities as highly politically relevant, either positively or negatively" (Jodicke 2015: 10)

The political role of religion increased especially in those multiethnic regions and local societies where the ethnic groups belong to various traditional (Armenian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches, Catholicism, Islam etc.) and non-conventional (Protestant movements) confessions.

The rapid changes in relationship between political and socio-economic structures and changes in the belief system in Georgia caused the necessity of finding forms of resistance to or rejection of "modernity". Tensions on religious grounds can be considered as a part of a complex social drama, which is deeply embedded, in contemporary political and economic processes. Political parties with a radical nationalistic rhetoric discredited themselves due to their inability to establish a sufficient political system and, as a result, the Georgian Orthodox Church, with a resource of trust, emerged on the ideological market (Ladaria 2009: 108).

The first wave of increased religious emotions in the 1990s bounded up with the nationalistic political projects changed after the transfer of power to the former Soviet leader and the second president of independent Georgia – Eduard Shevardnadze. As the religiosity and religious belonging turned into the most important marker of national belonging, the political leaders started to use it in their demands. The Patriarch Ilia II baptized Shevardnadze. The political leaders started to stress their connections to the Church.

After the changes in the political spectrum, a turbulent period of the formation of the political elite was followed by another rapid change. In 2003, the so-called "Rose Revolution" brought in new personalities and new approaches. The old generation was replaced and the young wing of the former Union of Citizens started to implement changes in all spheres of life in Georgian society. These new attitudes were displayed in the attempts of the young reformers to reconstruct the roots of the value systems. Modern tools were used to offer "modernized" and "European" perceptions. In this process, the most relevant tool appeared to be an informational space, both real and virtual. This space was consciously considered as the main source to influence the reconstruction of the old societal structures or even to form new ones. In this period, the mass media appeared to play an important part in the construction of new elites and became the determining factor of public life. The fast spread of the new perceptions was also promoted because after the complete or, in cases, partial discrediting of previous elites, unlimited conditions appeared for the distribution of new attitudes. Thus, local societies fell under the strong influence of the informational space. At the same time religion, religious emotions and organizations were even more actively involved in the play. The process was quite complicated as double standards and oppositional attitudes were combined. On one hand, the formation of civil society was declared as a major goal and the way to it was considered to be the liberation from the influence of "old-fashioned" attitudes. This included also open criticism and in some cases tensions towards the Georgian Orthodox Church. But at the same time, high-ranked politicians had close connections to the

Church. The former Mayer of Tbilisi, Gigi Ugulava[1] (2005-2014), studied in 1992-1994 at Tbilisi Theological Seminary under the Patriarchate of Georgia and served as an altar boy. The same was true for his party mate Koba Subeliani, Minister for Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, and for the Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia from 2008 to 2012. Koba Subeliani like Ugulava attended Tbilisi Theological Seminary in 1995-1999; from 1999 through 2004 he studied at Tbilisi Theological Academy. Starting from 1998, he worked as the Assistant Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church. He left the organization in 2004, when he moved to politics. The other politician who studied at the Theological Academy was Sozar Subari, Georgia's Minister for IDPs, Accommodation and Refugees since July 26, 2014. From 2004 to 2009 he served as the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia, and in 2012-2014 as the Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance. Sozar Subari served as a deacon of the Georgian Orthodox church in 1989-1991. Later, he was associated with the NGO Liberty Institute and moved to politics. These cases display the almost equal steps of representatives of the new political elite from association with the Church to high ranking politicians. In the early stage, the government of the United National Movement (M. Saakashvili) introduced a nation-building project that did not include the GOCh as an instrument. It was not popular, but when the government started to lose its popularity after 2007, the UNM tried to use the authority of the GOCh and annual funds were allocated to it from the state budget (Janelidze 2015: 71).

[1] Ugulava was arrested in July 2014 on charges of money laundering in the funding of his party's campaign.

Some scholars consider that such double standards are vivid because of the fact that Georgian society "is not modern if not traditional" (Kekelia 2012: 101; Zedania 2009: 11). All the above-mentioned thoughts suggest that religion is a strong mobilizing tool. Quite often, a religious cover includes some economic, political or other interests. In these terms, religion is connected with the problem of power. Thus, the connection between religion and political power is evident. Those who hold power prove their legacy through the use of religion (often the dominant one - Orthodoxy). Religion also proves the legacy of the political system in various ways. Religion unifies people around common symbols, values and norms. Religious doctrines and rituals form the foundation for "correct behavior", which gives the opportunity for social organization, and those who dictate the modes of behavior and system of values turn into the leading social group, i.e. the elite of the society. The representatives of the political elite of independent Georgia were trying and are trying to gain a resource for establishing moral and emotional connections with the other layers of society, and religion appeared to be a source of this kind. Thus, religious rhetoric was used and is used for strengthening cultural norms. Religious systems and organizations appear to be major actors of public being. Their activities and forms of expression highly, if not entirely, influence the being, and development tendencies of Georgian society.

Considering the dynamics of the last decades in Georgia, it is evident how great the religious factor is in influencing these processes. The case of some political leaders displays an interesting picture of latent opposition to the Church and state, and at the same time the Church appears as a starting point for the new political elites. This

had several objective and subjective reasons and a change in the objectives is transforming the general situation as well.

It must be mentioned also that the actions and evaluations differ from each other according to the point of view, whether it is from the side of the religious organizations or the political institutions. At the same time, the strength and depth of the influence is not similar, whether talking about the influence of religion on politics or politics on religion. "Officials from the Church have inserted themselves into national political debates on the Georgian economy, culture, domestic issues, and foreign affairs. Likewise, Georgian political elites have used religion as a tool for voter mobilization. Politicians refrain from criticizing the Church and its policies because its authority and reach make it a strong potential ally" (Kakachia 2014: 2).

For its part, religious points of view can also be divided into personal (individual) and collective (group) levels. And these levels define the modes of behavior and the models of worldview of a certain part of the society.

In contemporary Georgia, the change or flexibility—or rather, instability—of political vectors has highly influenced the development of religious relations and the ongoing processes in religious establishments are stimulating the development of the political elite.

References

1. Archbishop Japaridze Anania 2004: მეუფე ანანია ჯაფარიძე, საქართველოს მართლმადიდებელი ეკლესიის მოკლე ისტორია, (A Brief History of the Georgian Orthodox Church), Tbilisi.

2. Bubulashvili E. 2008: ბუბულაშვილი ელდარი, საქართველოს

სამოციქულო ეკლესია, (The Georgian Apostolic Church), Tbilisi.

3. Castells M. 1997. The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture, vol. II The Power of Identity, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.

4. Chikvaidze D. Constitutional Agreement between Georgian State and Georgian Apostolic Authocephalic Orthodox Church – Comment, www.orthodoxy.ge, 2011-01-19

5. Chitanava E. 2015. The Georgian Orthodox Church: National identity and political influence, in: Hug A. (ed.) Traditional religion and political power: Examining the role of the church in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova, Foreign Policy Centre: London.

6. Gavashelishvili E. Anti-modern and Anti-global tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church, in: Identity Studies N4, Ilia State University: Tbilisi.

7. Janelidze B. 2015. Secularization and desecularization in Georgia: state and church under the Saakashvili government (2003-2012), in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

8. Jodicke A. 2015. General trends in the interaction of religion and politics as applied to the South Caucasus, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York.

9. Kakachia K. 2014. Is Georgia’s Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values? PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 322, June.

10. Kekelia T. 2012. Modernization and Secularization – Georgian case study, in: Identity Studies N4, Ilia State University: Tbilisi.

11. Kekelia T. 2015. Building Georgian National Identity: a comparison of two turning points in history, in: Agadjanian A., Jodicke A., Van der Zveerde E. Eds. Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus, Routledge: London and New York..

12. Khutsishvili K. 2004: ხუციშვილი ქეთევანი, რელიგიური სიტურაციის ცვლილება და სამოქალაქო უსაფრთხოების პრობლემა თანამედროვე საქართველოში, (Changes in the Religious Situation and Public Security Problems in Contemporary Georgia), Tbilisi.

13. Ladaria K. 2012. Georgian Orthodox Church and political project of Modernization, in: Identity Studies N4, Ilia State University: Tbilisi.

14. Papuashvili N. 2002: პაპუაშვილი ნუგზარი, მსოფლიო

რელიგიები საქართველოში, (World Religions in Georgia), Tbilisi.

15. Pelkmans M. 2015. Awkward Secularity between Atheism and New Religiosity in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan", in: Ngo T. and Quijada N. (eds). Atheist Secularism and its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 244-255.

16. Reichley A. J. 1985. Religion in American Public Life, The Brookings Institution: Washington.

17. Sulkhanishvili I. 2012. Struggle for power: religion and politics in Georgia from 90s to the present, in: Identity Studies N4, Ilia State University: Tbilisi.

18. Zedania G. 2009. Secularization or desecularization, in: Zedania G., Ghaghanidze M., Secularization: concept and context, Tbilisi.

Part 4.

Post-Soviet Transformation of Soviet Elitism

4.1 Dimensions of the Intellectual Elite in the Georgian Cultural Context

Nino Abakelia

The topic under scrutiny is concerned with the dimensions of the notion of the elite in the Georgian cultural context that in turn is engaged in the ongoing chronological and spatial processes and different social and historical contexts within which the phenomenon of the elite occurs. Special literature recognizes different kinds of elites, which are elites according to the several dimensions of stratification (Mosca 1939; Pareto 1935; Mills 2000).

The research is focused on intelligentsia as one of the factions of elites and on its trajectories during the Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the history of Georgia.

The present qualitative research has several goals: to present the dimensions of the notion of the cultural elite (in particular, the intelligentsia) in the Georgian context based on field data; to formulate the instrumental functions of the elite and to explain its behavior in certain conditions; to discover hidden unconscious models of the society in question.

Since the present paper is a piece of anthropological research, on the one hand it is based on field data gathered in the urban settings of Georgia—Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi—as the important social segments of society which represent its cultural, political and financial

core, and on the other hand on the theoretical postulates of classical authors and the so-called transition literature. The field work data was gathered during August and September 2014 in the above-mentioned cities.

The methods of investigation of the phenomenon include open-ended interviews taken both individually and with focus groups based on age (from 19 to 72), status (students, researchers, retirees, etc.), gender, and other factors that contribute to differences within society. The data was collected using the emic approach.

Interlocutors on the concept of the elite

In order to grasp the concept, and as a source of suggestion for our elaborations and the project, we have chosen in our opinion the most suitable descriptive accounts of the interlocutors.

The majority of the interviewed interlocutors have approximately the same understanding of the term *elite*[1]*, in particular:*

"... it represents a small size social group, placed at the top of the societal hierarchy, which possesses power and influences the remaining members of the society. The elite might be political, economic, religious and cultural. Elite group might be represented by a political party or a coalition, intellectuals, religious communities", etc.

According to others:

"...in order to call a particular group elite it needs to have some special characteristics (such as a good, aristocratic heritage, prestige, celebrity, as the index of status position, etc.) or such resources

[1] Hereafter, all indented and italicized text represents excerpts from interlocutors' interviews which, taking into account the wishes of the interviewees, are anonymous.

as wealth, education, power, which the rest of society lacks. Consequently, the rest of society has to recognize, more or less legitimately, the elite groups. Without such an attitude and perception (recognition), the group cannot be called and defined as elite".

On the question of whether the category of elite is temporal or perpetual, the answer is almost one and the same:

"... the category of elite is always temporal, the elite changes in accordance with the Zeigeist" (the term used by one of the interviewees).

Most of our interlocutors came to the same conclusion, and share the same opinion that in post-Soviet Georgia, the elite group is also presented by the Patriarchate and clergymen who, according to widespread belief, are the keepers of occult information and skills, which transform them into an influential group.

"*After the Rose Revolution",* as one interviewee noted*, "the new national movement manifested in itself a political elite, which possessed the knowledge and skills for governing the country. However, this group lost its legitimacy, and consequently the status of elite, after the elections in 2012. During the Soviet period, the Communist Party represented the elite group. After them, the intelligentsia was thought to be the most influential group. This group possessed intellectual resources".*

According to another interviewee:

"*… in post-Soviet Georgia, the place of the intelligentsia has been occupied by the Church and if one looks attentively, one can see that the intelligentsia (or, to be precise, a definite part of it) has integrated itself with the church and recognized its legitimacy as the highest elite group".*

The concept of the intelligentsia in the Georgian discursive space
The intelligentsia of the Tsarist period

During the research, it became evident that the problem is multi-faceted and is associated with several topics such as the governing elite and non-governing elite, in the Paretian sense, the nobility and intelligentsia, the intelligentsia and counter-culture, the intelligentsia and the Church, identity, etc.

The concept of the intelligentsia as one of the facets of the elite in the Georgian discursive space, as was noted above, needs to follow the development of the concept during the Pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet epochs.

At the outset, it must be mentioned that in Georgia, as elsewhere (in the Soviet and post-Soviet spaces, comp. Antonyan 2012: 76-100), the understanding and appreciation of one of the most elusive terms—the intelligentsia—kept changing its meaning at different times.

As is known, in the 19th century, i.e. during the Tsarist imperial Russian period, the Georgian intelligentsia constituted basically of nobles (the Georgian aristocracy) educated in Russia or abroad. Generally speaking, at that time, broad access to education was a privilege mainly of the aristocracy which in turn was linked to history, social status, and legalities. And for that reason, a person of noble descent could be and generally was a representative of the intelligentsia at the same time. But as Mannheim had noted in his work "The Problem of Intelligentsia: Investigation of its Role in the Past and the Present" (Mannheim 2000: 112-113), socially ensured access to knowledge did not (always) mean that everybody whose social position enabled access to knowledge *eo ipso* got it.

But who were the educated and learned people of the time and what was their role? The learned people were the representatives of the intelligentsia who thought their mission (to use Mannheim's terminology) was to be "the thinking organ" of the whole nation.

During the Tsarist or the Vorontsov (the commander-in-chief and viceroy of the Caucasus, who was educated in London) epoch in Georgia (1842-1854), the intelligentsia (mainly writers, who were predominantly represented by the aristocracy) spread progressive ideas and as such introduced the new trends and spirits of the time to society by means of journals (*Tsiskari* founded in 1852 through the will of M. S. Vorontsov), *Saqartvelos Moambe* founded in 1863 (by Ilia Chavchavadze), theaters, etc. through which these ideas originated, spread and worked. They introduced the abolition of serfdom by means of literature and prepared the population for that. And through artistic creativity people became aware and conscious of what was happening around them.

For the discursive space of Georgia, this was not a mere accident, for according to the observance of the Georgian literary criticist A. Bakradze, many Georgian Kings were traditionally poets e.g.: David the Builder, Demetre I, Archili, Vakhtang III, Teimuraz II. And the roles of poets and politicians were traditionally interlaced in Georgia (Bakradze, 1990: 1-2).

The power of creative art revealed and made obvious that which had not yet matured on the surface of social life. In such a case, its creation had a promoting effect (Jorjadze: 1989, 103-314).

During the Tsarist period, the Georgian intelligentsia was also occupied with charity and the dissemination of education - they opened schools, opened the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Geor-

gians in Tbilisi (1879), demonstrated high morals in society, etc. During the Soviet period, because of their noble descent, they were almost annihilated.

Intelligentsia during the Soviet Period

The Soviet epoch brought dramatic changes. The core of the social group changed into the workers and peasants, who got easy access to knowledge. The ethical constituent in the definition of the intelligentsia lost its importance and the term intelligentsia included the social stratum with all people conducting mental work. The activity of the intelligentsia was taken under control.

Thus, the term intelligentsia during the Soviet period received a different dimension, which was vividly seen in the fact that physical and mental (intellectual) work was no longer polarized and, according to the Soviet simple definition of the term, the intelligentsia represented the social layer of people who earned a living by doing intellectual work. Correspondingly, intellectual work suggested a multi-layered intelligentsia which implied the highest party functionaries themselves (for example, the Secretary of the Central Committee, regardless of descent), the elite group attending to them (later called the "red intelligentsia" or "organic intelligentsia" if we apply Gramsci's theory here), who enjoyed different sorts of privileges; and (starting from the 1960s) the dissidents who fought against the existing system and remained the only form of organized opposition, and the vast group of merely educated people, who identified themselves with the traditional intelligentsia in Gamsci's sense (i.e. they actually manifested themselves as a stable (durable, everlasting) historical continuity, the main social function of which was to preserve,

reproduce and transmit to new generations the cultural legacy that they had inherited), workers intelligentsia, village intelligentsia, etc.

In Georgia, this historical tradition of the intelligentsia (and, in particular, of writers) as the guides of the nation changed during the rule of the Soviet Government. The role of the nation's guide was taken over by the Communist Party and this function was deprived of literature and writers (Bakradze 1990: 2).

As for the Georgian Communist Party itself, it was not an independent party. It was a tiny part of the single USSR Communist Party, and fulfilled the directives of Moscow. The red party membership card filled in Georgian and Russian indicated the Soviet Union's Communist Party, which actually revealed the fact that the Georgian Communist Party really did not exist at all. It was merely the name of one of the party organizations and nothing more (and this was a commonly shared fact throughout the USSR). The Georgian Communist Party could perform only the directives which were issued in Moscow.

At that time, Georgian literature was deprived of its traditional role as the nation's leader and changed its goals to spreading Kremlinism among the population. (Bakradze 1990: 2).

As is known, one of the general characteristics of the intelligentsia is its attitude towards culture (Mannheim). But these attitudes may differ. What does "cultural" mean? (Or "educated" in the case of the Georgians?) Was it associated with social types which definitely differed from one another through professional characteristics, behavior and orientation?

During the Soviet epoch, it was very significant to be educated and to be an "intellectual" with a diploma. The holders of diplomas

were recognized as enlightened. But, in reality, people did not care for education - they cared more for diplomas. Therefore, one could often hear especially during the Soviet epoch that one had three diplomas (one of them was usually from the Party High School), claiming an association with the educated. Often in such cases an emphasis was placed more on the number of diplomas than on the quality of knowledge. Even nowadays, one can distinctly feel the leftover magic of the diploma from previous days.

But why was it so important to have diplomas? Perhaps because the educated formed a kind of caste and only the learned could move higher up the social ladder.

During the Soviet period, the intelligentsia once again maintained its role as the nation leader's, but this time instead of nobles and the bourgeoisie, it was represented by the qualified bureaucratic elite i.e. made up of members of the Communist Party who were chosen by the party to hold positions of leadership to which only the nomenclature (i.e. a list of people who were potential candidates for key positions) had access.

But the fate of the elected was not that simple. The example of one of the bureaucratic self-educated intellectuals, Petre Sharia (former Secretary of the Central Committee of Georgia for Agitation and Propaganda), will suffice to illustrate this.

Petre Sharia (1902-1983) was born in the village of Tagiloni, in the Sokhumi region. He was a Soviet party and state activist, an official of the NKVD, a Supreme Soviet Deputy of the USSR, Professor, Doctor of Philosophy, and Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR. P. Sharia became Beria's partner although he formally did not join the Gruzcheka (i.e. the Georgian Committee

Emergency Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage) or the Caucasian GPU (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). After the 18th Party Congress, L. Beria headed the commission of the Central Committee on the so-called "minor rehabilitation". Sharia was also included in the staff of the Commission. Military personnel had mostly (but not completely) been freed from this responsibility. Sharia participated in the commission for a brief time, and the Commission itself was short-lived as World War II was at hand.

The questions of foreign political affairs became more urgent than the internal ones. Beria assigned Sharia to the post of the referent for foreign political affairs. But he did not stay too long at this position and was transferred to a major post for science under Beria, simultaneously holding various official posts, where he remained practically up to his arrest in 1952.

During 1946-1950, he was the Secretary of the Georgian Central Committee for Agitation and Propaganda. He was included in the membership of the party delegation led by Suslov, which visited Britain run by the Labor Party after the War for the first time. He edited books, and organized documents in order to return Georgian treasures from Georgian emigrants in France. He was a corresponding member of the newly-founded Academy of Sciences of Georgia. In short, he directed, inspired and guided. But in 1952, he was arrested because of a private telephone call from Stalin.

According to recollections, after Stalin's death, Beria did not wait for the decision of the Central Committee and released everybody who had been arrested for "the so-called Mingrelians case" and personally apologized before Sharia. He was rehabilitated in all his re-

galia. After his imprisonment, Sharia went to undergo treatment and was arrested in a heath resort on 26 June 1953 and sentenced to 10 years for "aiding and abetting" the people's enemy – Beria (Pimenov 1996: 237).

Sharia satisfied all the requirements of the Soviet intellectual: he was not of noble descent, knew several languages and was a highly educated person. As his relatives recall:

"…he really was intelligent as he knew seven or more languages, he translated the Knight in Panther's Skin (a Georgian Medieval poem) from Georgian into English and his knowledge of world literature and philosophy was perfect"[1].

It is important to mention that Sharia belonged to the orthodox Marxists. Marxism-Leninism remained something pure and holy for Sharia even inside the walls of prison. When Sharia's elder son died in 1949-1950, he suffered profoundly and wrote a poem dedicated to his son in Russian, in which discussed the powers of Heaven and Hell, and the spiritual world. The poem was printed and issued in the typography of the Central Committee in 50 copies that were distributed among those gathered for the funeral. These facts did not remain unnoticed. A short while following the event, he was ousted from governance for the book and its idealism.

Sometime before his death, he confessed to one of his young relatives that:

"…he experienced the full collapse of Marxism-Leninism. And that he fully disliked and despised Leonid Brezhnev and his team, and their ideology. And at the end of his life, when asked what he

[1] Once in my childhood travelling with my family from Tbilisi to Gagra, I myself happened to witness how he was reading Shakespeare in the original in a train compartment.

believed in, the answer was - in cosmic energy. After the death of his wife, he finally lost all interest in life and, as a severely wounded person in life, he even asked the same relative for a coup de grâce (or "blow of mercy") to end his suffering. It was known that in Tskneti dacha (a prestigious elite place nearby Tbilisi) where he spent most of his time, he had been writing his memoirs about Stalin. But after his death, nothing was discovered regarding the script. According to eyewitness accounts, two unknown persons were noticed on the day when he was found in the bathroom in bad condition, very soon after that incident, he died at the age of 81 with a diagnosis of mental illness".

Living in very extreme, extraordinary and tense conditions, his two children (Tsiala, the daughter-in law of V. Dekanozov, one of the executives of state security close to Beria, who was exiled to Aryk-Balyk in Kazakhstan and returned with practically ruined health, was a philologist and delivered lectures at the Pushkin Pedagogical Institute of Tbilisi; Nika, graduated from the prestigious Tbilisi Z. Paliashvili Central Musical school for Gifted Children with a gold medal and continued his studies at the Tbilisi Medical Institute, though as the son of Sharia he could not gain admission to the Medical Institute for three years) were both intellectuals, and both ended their days at the mental hospital of Tbilisi.

Individuals who wished to move up to a higher position had to share the dominant and the authoritarian way of thinking i.e. the Marxism-Leninism of the closed communist system.

Thus, during the Soviet period, to be intelligent did not inevitably mean to be an aristocrat, although sometimes these two concepts could overlap. In the Soviet period, a new communist multi-layered

intelligentsia originated, in which one could discern those who were closely associated with the Government, a qualified bureaucracy comprising the elite group, dissidents challenging the existed system and a wider passive group who identified itself with intelligentsia simply because it was educated.

The educational function of the 19th century Georgian intelligentsia constituted primarily of the Georgian aristocracy and bourgeoisie that was partially revived at the end of the 20th century. On 23 November 1990, i.e. on the feast day of St. George, the All-Georgian Nobility Society (the first leader of which was Edisher Bagrationi) was founded through the initiative of Ia Mukhraneli (Bagration-Mukhraneli, a branch of the former royal dynasty of Bagrationi) and her colleagues. Besides this, she founded a lyceum and the "Royal Crown" monarchic movement. She was the first to launch free educational courses of the Georgian language, history and culture for foreigners. In both the pre-Soviet and Soviet epochs, to be an intellectual meant to be enlightened, to be progressive and to be elite.

The intelligentsia after the demise of the Soviet Union

In modern days, the attitude towards the intelligentsia has changed once again. A single worldview cannot be dominant and the closed scholastic system clears the way for what can be called the intellectual process.

As G. Gvakharia commented in his media interview on the power and position of the intelligentsia in the Soviet structure, broadcast on Tavisupleba radio, in Georgia, in the epoch of *Perestroika* (i.e. in 1985-1991) it was voiced for the first time that the term intelligen-

tsia, reflecting a Russian phenomenon in the Russian movement of the leftists and founded in the circle of Bakunin, was installed in the Soviet culture through a Russian effort. Georgian intellectuals, according to G. Gvakharia, tried to detach themselves from socialism and not to share in the term (which had common ideological roots with communism - N.A.). At that time, this was the usual and widespread attitude towards the intelligentsia. But as soon as E. Shevardnadze returned to Georgia (i.e. in the early 1990s) he immediately restored the concept of intelligentsia in its "full rights", needing the assistance of intellectuals and different sorts of celebrities, and turned the intelligentsia towards social-democratic ideas, which he at that time (as one of the ideologists of *Perestroika*) shared. The Georgian intelligentsia which started its activities during the Soviet epoch and developed and revealed its creative self-expression under the shelter of the Soviet government was inclined once again towards socialism. An intelligent play on nationalist sentiment formed a kind of symbiosis, which was expressed by the combination and binding together of the two words of nationalism and socialism. And the association of these two words with a hyphen was thought to possibly result in the failure not only for the Georgian culture but also for the whole Georgian nation. The relationship between the terms intelligentsia and socialism are the same as between feudal and feudalism (Gvakharia 2002: 08.04. Posted by burusi, 05.06.2011. 1-2).

Thus the term intelligentsia primarily associated with the Russian phenomenon and implying intellectual freedom as a moral category (Lotman 1999: 122-149)—freedom from economic, political ideological dependences and obligations—lost its initial meaning

during the Soviet period… According to philologist and publisher L. Beraia, the representatives of the 19th century intelligentsia spread literacy among the Georgians and the enlightenment of the population and charity were its main functions and its focus of concern. At present, the intelligentsia has not developed and is not conscious of its civil duties; it is characterized as conformist and hence it will be good if the term at last will be substituted with another term—intellectual—which suits it more.

According to Gela Charkviani (see below for more about him), for the creative intelligentsia, capitalism—or perhaps it is better to use the euphemism "society acting based on market priorities"—is hardly acceptable. Throughout history, artists have been dependent on mecenas (sponsors) – monarchs, rich landlords, high ranking confessors, capitalists. In the Soviet Union, the state substituted the mecenas. Instead of privileges, the creative person was laid on the Procrustean bed of political censure, though gradually the pressure was weakened. At any rate, in Georgia of the 1970s, a chance had been given to creative persons to actualize their ideas more or less fully… Their relative material situation was high in the society. Generally, art as well as the prestige of some of their representatives were guaranteed by the State itself by means of controllable media… Unbridled capitalism and boundlessly grown and scattered free media turned everything upside down (Charkviani 2015: 86-86). Soviet communism was a paradise for talentless people with no initiative. The state compensated their lack of skill through the limitation of the gifted. That's why it is bemoaned by the talentless, unskilled and the so-called žuliks (swindlers) (Charkviani 2015: 117).

The ideological self-portrait of a dynastic intelligent family

The Charkviani family, to which Gela Charkviani belongs, is in itself a rare and unique example of a dynastic intelligentsia, and one can follow its ideological self-portrait through the perspective of three generations from the Soviet period up to the current time - the grandfather Candid Charkviani, the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party from 1938 to 1952, a rare witness to fateful events for the Georgian nation; his son Gela Charkviani (a Georgian diplomat); and his grandson – Irakli Charkviani (a rock musician, poet and writer).

Candid

Candid Charkviani, as First Secretary, ruled the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party from 1938 to 1952. As his son, Gela Charkviani remarks in his book "An interview with the Father" (2013), that despite not belonging to the first generation of Bolsheviks, Candid Charkviani perfectly knew Marxist theory, unlike the ideologically empty, cynical-opportunistic and bureaucratic majority of Bolsheviks, and remained faithful to it till the end of his days and his son's every attempt to switch him over to western liberalism was ineffectual (Charkviani 2013: 6).

Candid Charkviani, as a well-educated person, had fundamental knowledge of the German language, and could write equally well in Georgian and Russian. He had never been repressed, perhaps because of the fact that during the period of virulent political rivalry, he had never been biased against anybody and his assessments lacked ill-intent or mockery (Charkviani 2013: 5).

For many years, Candid Charkviani regularly met Stalin, through

his position of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Georgia, both in formal and quite informal settings and in particular, seated at a table (Charkviani 2013: 4).

Among the projects completed during his rule as the First Secretary of the Central Committee, Candid Charkviani was especially proud of the three big projects in the fulfillment of which he spent a lot of time, inventiveness, energy and diplomatic effort. These projects were the town of Rustavi and the metallurgic factory, Samgori or the Tbilisi Sea and the Tbilisi Metropolitan. These projects were signed by Stalin. There were other projects as well: the foundation of the Academy of Sciences and the association to it of scientific-research institutes, hydro-electronic stations, work over an 8-volume Georgian explanatory dictionary, national park planning, building recreational zones for the town, etc. (Charkviani 2013: 11).

Candid Charkviani ruled Georgia for 14 years. And it seems like a small-scale cult had gradually been created around his image. Such was the nature of the system. Charkviani's portrait was hung next to the portraits of Stalin and Beria in many state organizations.

The Tbilisi Sea festive opening was most vividly imprinted in Gela Charkviani's memory on 4 November 1951. As he recalls, the only person who could not share in the general merriment and pure emotions of the citizens was the main guest and the creator of the event, Candid Charkviani. Gela Charkviani speculated that his father constantly heard Stalin's phrase spoken in Russian: "*Khudo budet, tovarisch* Charkviani" ("Things will go badly, comrade Charkviani") and waited tensely for what would be the next step against him.

As is known, the Soviet Union used to be a strictly hierarchized totalitarian Empire, where alongside the legalized system of ruling,

a so-called system of "telephone commands" functioned, which meant receiving decisions from higher instances through oral directives. "The initiatives of the working masses" were planned exactly by means of oral instructions concerning definite questions. And such "initiatives" were strictly controlled from the upper echelons of the social scales (Gvantseladze T.).

In the Soviet epoch, the falsification of the role and significance of a historical figure was a common thing. In order to illustrate this, Gela Charkviani recalls his secondary school, where pupils were taught about Shamil twice. At first he was introduced to the pupils as a hero and a patriot of the Caucasian peoples, but the second time, he was a spy for England. History was and is an object of constant manipulation (Charkviani 2013: 149-151).

In March 1952, Candid was relieved from his high position. This was the wording used i.e. he had not been dismissed. At that time, such a nuance implied an existential danger. Being relieved in most cases was followed by arrest. But as G. Charkviani remarks, it seemed that Stalin retained a slight sympathy towards him. After his removal, he continued to work as an inspector of the republics of Central Asia in the all-USSR Central Committee in Moscow. In the meantime, sanctioned by Stalin himself, he was persistently harassed in the Georgian press. But in spite of the malediction, he still remained the candidate of all-USSR Central Committee till the 19th Communist Party Congress i.e. till October 1953.

In his last years he, as usual, translated from German his favorite poet Heinrich Heine and improved the second edition of his memoirs, while suffering greatly and grieving over his dead wife Tamar Jaoshvili. (Charkviani 2013).

Gela: (Georgian diplomat, educator and television personality)

"I've figured out that the probability of being born as a son of the Party First Secretary was three times lower than winning a lottery. I'm afraid to win a lottery would have been better".

This half-sarcastic and half-sad statement by Gela Charkviani sets the stage for his book, called *Nagerala*, which in Georgian means a plant that grows accidentally from seeds that have been scattered in the ground after the harvest.

After Candid Charkviani was removed from his post, his family had to move to Moscow and starting from that time the Charkviani brothers underwent serious life experiences. They passed the whole course of human weaknesses… there was deceit, but also examples of faithfulness of those to use Marx's words "who could lose nothing except only their chains" and when in 1952 their family was exiled from Tbilisi and went to Moscow, they were seen off only by those people (Charkviani 2013).

In Moscow, they lived on Možaisk road (today, Kutuzov Avenue) in the building of Central Committee officials. Candid Charkviani was served by Russian drivers. The family was driven in a "Pobeda" passenger car. The higher officials, the Children of the Central Committee department heads, recalls G. Charkviani, looked haughtily at them for they were served by "Zims" (a Soviet limousine). The hierarchical status symbols of everyday life were carefully differentiated. Gela Charkviani remembered the situation in which he heard the news of Stalin's death on 5 March 1953…

After finishing school in Moscow in 1957, Gela Charkviani returned to Georgia and continued his studies there.

Starting from birth, Gela Charkviani, being a part of the ruling

elite, used to always be within the field of vision of the ruling center and this lasted almost throughout. In 1992-2003, he was the President's advisor on international affairs, in 2005-2006 the President's Press Secretary. In 2006-2009, he was the Ambassador of Georgia to the UK and Ireland, etc.

According to Gela Charkviani's characterization, the Soviet system was something cesarean or Papal. Brezhnev was simultaneously the Secretary General of the Central Committee, the high priest of the Marxist religion and the Head of the Presidium of the Supreme Council – Cesar. He admits with humor that the Charkviani family gradually transformed into a royal dynastic family. At first there was the king Candid, then the king Irakli. He was at the same time the King's son and the rock king's father.

Irakli - "the king"

Irakli, as one of the very interesting, gifted and tragic generation's distinguished representatives—known under his pseudonym *mepe* ("the King")—was not only a musician but, first of all, a poet. He wrote verses and music, and at the same time he was a prosaic writer. He was a very wide spectrum artist. His poetry and interesting metaphoric thinking differed much from the others, his themes were also different. He did not follow the traditional lyrical figurativeness of Georgian song. One could find tragic notes both in his voice and melody (Charkviani 2013).

As one can conclude from Irakli Charkviani's writings, his grandfather was not only the First Secretary of Central Committee for him, but a good amateur poet and highly educated person in the first place, who translated Heine's lyrics from German and wrote verses

himself. At the same time, he remained in his perception as a very brave man who already in his early childhood had implanted in his consciousness that a precedent of freedom and independence was possible even in very closed and authoritarian societies, but for that one needed to be a great artist… and since then his consciousness, as he notes, bore the fruit which could be plucked only by a select few. Irakli Charkviani, in his "Author's columns. Interviews" (2011: 104) states in short that at an early age he had acknowledged that freedom or independence was possible and the vivid example of this were his grandfather and father.

As he mentions in his book: "… *at that time, during the 1970s i.e., the hippies' period, the hearth of musical counter-culture was his own house and he apologized before everybody, who at that period stood on stage with ribbons and tasteless songs polluting the broadcasting air of Georgian culture. The basis for Georgian underground music was established in the 1970s, when Hair and Superstar were staged in the West. Such things were performed in homes and at salons, though at the same time there existed an official pop universe which lacked taste as always and was detached from everything relevant. However, at that time, alternative poetic performance originated in Georgia - poetry that could not be transmitted on TV, that could be heard only in certain kitchens and which was absolutely unacceptable for official circles, for which one might be arrested and even imprisoned… when he listened to the narratives of his grandfather he understood that it was possible and even inevitable to break through the enclosure, but for that one needed to be as great an artist as Picasso or Dali…*

During the 1980s there were attempts to adopt and imitate west-

ern forms. There was a group in Georgia which performed the songs of the Beatles (but they did not represent counter-culture) or a group who used rock sounds for Vazha-Pshavela poetry. Thus, such formalists existed but the real underground with modern Georgian texts was created in the Charkviani family:

Among the frightened youths of that time only a few could allow themselves such things as my father did. Others created pop music acceptable for everybody. In our family's case, this sort of fear was first overcome by my grandfather during his everyday contact with Stalin, then by my father through his communication with my grandfather. During the 1980s, a lot of salon and alternative type performances were given. In Tbilisi, it was always possible to find a few houses, where strong counter official cultural nests were woven in which people had moved to the stage after Perestroika, and at last they managed to say something to the millions - what their fathers had tried to say to them during the 1970s".

According to Irakli Charkviani, the Georgian and the Post-Soviet counter-culture roots in general are much complex than western ones, for they seem deeper and more repressed:

"The tradition of fright among us is more serious, that's why we always try to hide ourselves under something and perform the sort of art there which is called alternative today. Thus today the counter-official is acceptable for everyone, though true art is always unofficial. It always runs ahead of time.

Georgian and Soviet counter-culture is actually based on dissident poetry and music, and originated in the twenties of 20th century (Charkviani 2011: 108).

In our country, modernism moved underground and healthy west-

ern modern forms into a gray "Gulag", the "time served" in Siberia which during the "Perestroika years" through Gorbachev's will was freed in the form of alternative art. Why was counter-culture persecuted against and why doesn't it arouse sympathy in the masses even today? The first reason is that avant-gardism is based on experiments, and the average man ("obivatel" in Russian*) needs guarantees. He must be sure of tomorrow. Pop culture forms this illusion for him and that's the reason for the boom in pop culture. Experimentalists, as a rule, run ahead of time and are recognized later. They don't wait for applause, they leave the stage without it; for them experimenting, new synthesis, and art is more important than the satisfaction caused by plebian yells. The harmony resulting from the experiment itself is more important for the experimentalist than to please and enjoy the masses who demand guarantees and are at odds with everything new. The artist is not interested in manipulating the masses but he is involved in the exploration of his abilities and in continuous development (Charkviani 2011)*.

Irakli's rebellion, as his father Gela Charkviani remarks, was not political… *he like me was interested only in ideology. Ideologically, Irakli was mine. He was a liberal and had the same creed as me, that is why his protest was directed against the conservative part of society and lacked a political character… Irakli writing in the avant-garde manner, composed new Georgian rock music and enjoyed startling and shocking people.*

At the end of the 20th century, based on the Georgian underground ideas, it became possible—for a certain part of the population, at any rate—to begin watching the ongoing processes of the current culture with a liberal insight.

Conclusion

The revelation of the trajectory of the concept of intelligentsia showed the changes it underwent during its history in Georgia and delineated the forms of cultural production.

During the Tsarist period, the connotation of the term "intelligentsia" was fully positive as it was associated with nobles, the aristocracy, partially the bourgeoisie and enlightenment project. It was independent and autonomous of the dominant ruling group. In the Georgian case, the intelligentsia and, in particular, writers and poets of noble descent (Ilia Chavchvadze) represented the guide of the nation and new ideas and new trends were spread by them. They embodied the moral face of the nation. As mentioned above, power and poetry were traditionally associated with the images of Georgian kings.

During the Soviet period, the intelligentsia lost its independent position; the guiding role it had was taken over by the Communist Party, which exercised control over the whole social life of the country.

During the Soviet epoch, when the differentiation or division in different classes or concrete groups were already eliminated, it received two levels of meaning: *functional* - characterized by temporality or synchronic innovation, to use the terms in Gramsci's sense, (they were represented by the so-called *organic intellectual*s who had access to power and resources or party functionaries, bureaucrats, etc. regardless of their descent) and *moral* (that characterized, to use Gramsci's terminology again, *traditional intellectuals* who actually presented themselves as a manifestation of the "uninterrupted historical continuity" (people who were associated with enlight-

enment, morality, nobleness and so forth).

The Soviet *organic* intelligentsia (or the so-called "red" part of it) was associated with conformism and communist ideology. After the collapse of Soviet Union, they were left unsupported and disoriented.

The ideological self-portrait of the Charkviani's dynastic intelligent family helped us to reveal the representational roles of intelligentsia during the Soviet and post-Soviet epochs, that, as it can be deduced, were drawn by their own creative works.

Charkviani's case vividly highlighted how it was possible to fuse even in one person these two levels and in various proportions and rates. Besides, the autobiographical writings of this family revealed how the understanding of morality, power, and wellbeing had been changing during the whole Soviet period. As it can be inferred, during the Stalin epoch, absolute power and wellbeing were associated with the occupational position of a person. As soon as one lost one's job, one would simultaneously lose everything and often life itself, or at least the wish to live. (Comp. Sharia's case).

During those non-alternative situations, as Gela Charkviani remarked, people behaved according to the circumstances. In different conditions, people might reveal different qualities. Besides, as humans they had limited opportunities for self-expression; any kind of activity had to be placed into the political context in conditions of rigorous approval or disapproval "from above" (the latter could be dangerous for the functionary and for the members of his family. As for private cultural capital: education, the knowledge of languages, well-bred manners in the minds of people revived and reproduced the old, aristocratic patterns, the patterns of olden times. The Soviet

intelligentsia in a peculiar manner appealed to traditional values and norms and tried to infuse the forms of the past with contemporary content.

In spite of everything, a high moral position might be quite relative - one could do much for the development of the republic, could fulfill important projects in economics, culture, etc. but at the same time one had to wash one's hands of what was going on around him (on repressions, executions, etc.).

The son of Candid Charkviani, Gela, represented the generation that received more freedom and the possibility of self-expression. Young people like Gela (whose parents, together with the others, experienced the epoch of repressions but remained alive and managed to stay in the room at the top, or to repeat Gela's words again "remained on the radars of society, on which not only shining was dangerous but even twinkling") had access to education, to high positions and so forth. But as is seen from Gela Charkviani's biography, Georgian society in the 1950s and 1960s used to be more meritocratic rather than the society of late socialism, when engagement into the definite social and power networks (*nomenklatura*) became the basic pre-condition for the access to power and material resources. Gela Charkviani's success was based on his own achievements and not his father's.

Surprisingly (or ironically enough) in Irakli's (i.e. in the third generation's) consciousness, the seeds of freedom were sown by his grandfather—First Secretary Candid Charkviani—when he narrated the story of Galaktion (one of the most beloved Georgian poets), who sold or lost the Order of Lenin (the holy of holies for communists) and how he was forgiven. So from his early childhood, Irakli

knew if one wanted to lose the Order of Lenin, one needed to be a Galaktion at least.

As in the case of Irakli, the rock musician showed us he did not choose the ordinary or prestigious way of the "golden youths" of late socialism with its attendant attributes (a prestigious way of life, prestigious education, prestigious apartment, etc.), but chose the marginal way of the Soviet intellectual (the alternative *nomenklatura*, the moral elite)[1].

It is symbolic that Irakli, the representative of the post-Soviet intelligentsia or intellectuals, combined in himself the image of "the king" (as the king of rock), poet and musician and consciously or unconsciously "revived" the old tradition.

Thus for the post–Soviet epoch in Georgia, the term "intelligentsia" assumed, it seems, a negative connotation especially among the young generation and the enlightened and educated people who thought themselves detached from the communist ideology and red intelligentsia, and preferred to identify themselves with intellectuals.

During the post-Soviet period, the organic intelligentsia lost its active supporter—the state—and consequently its social functions.

The Georgian case revealed that the "intelligentsia proved to be the stratum of society which produced ideas and formed the ideologies that were the most important means of binding between social dynamics and the formation of ideas".

[1] As Y. Antonian noticed in a private conversation, the fate of Stas Namin, Anastas Mikoyan's (a Soviet statesman during the mandates of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev) grandson who also became a rock-singer was similar to Irakli's case. However, unlike the other marginalized representatives of that time, both Irakli and Stas were defended from persecution by their family names, and they had some sort of material basis, which enabled them to express themselves freely.

References

1. Antonyan Yu. 2012. The Armenian Intelligentsia Today: Discourses of Self-Identification and Self-Perception. Laboratorium. Vol. 4 no.1, pp. 76-100.

2. Bakradze A. 1990: აკაკი ბაქრაძე, მწერლობის მოთვინიერება, თბ. (Taming of Literature, Tbilisi).

3. Bataille G. 2006: Батай Ж., 2006. Проклятая часть. Сакральная социология, Научно-исследовательский центр, Ладомир: Москва. (The Accursed Share. Sacred Sociology. Scientific-Research Center. Ladomir, Moscow.)

4. Blauvelt T. 2014. The "Mingrelian Question": Institutional Resources and the Limits of Soviet Nationality Policy - Europe-Asia Studies (May).

5. Charkviani C. 2015: ჩარკვიანი, კ., სტალინთან ურთიერთობის ეპიზოდები , არტანუჯი, თბილისი. (Some Episodes from Relationships with Stalin, Artanuji, Tbilisi).

6. Charkviani G. 2013: ინტერვიუ მამასთან, არტანუჯი, თბილისი. (Interview with the Father, Artanuji: Tbilisi).

7. Charkviani G. 2015: ნაგერალა, ჩანაწერები, ინტელექტი, თბილისი. (Nagerala, Notes, Intelekti: Tbilisi)

8. Charkviani I. 2011: საავტორო სვეტები, ინტერვიუები,ინტელექტი თბილისი. (Author's Columns, interviews, Intelekti: Tbilisi.)

9. Cohen A. 1981.The Politics of Elite Culture, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.

10. Gvakharia G. 2002. On Power and position of intelligentsia in the soviet structure broadcasted on the radiotavisupleba. (http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge). 08.04. 2002.

11. Graeme G. 2005.The Dynamics of Democratization, (Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process), St. Martin's Press: New York.

12. Gramsci A. 1971. From the Prison Notebooks, Lawrence and Wishart: London.

13. Gvantseladze T.: გვანცელაძე, თ., აფხაზური სამწიგნობრო ენის ქართულ გრაფიკაზე გადაყვანის ისტორიიდან. (From the History of Transmission of Abkhazian Literary Language into Georgian

Graphic), www.amsi.ge/istoria/div/gvanc.html.

14. Jorjadze A. 1989: ჯორჯაძე, ა. წერილები. (The Letters, Tbilisi).

15. Lévi-Strauss C.1963. The Savage Mind, University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

16. Lotman Y. 1999: Лотман М. Ю. 1999. Интеллигенция и свобода (к анализу интеллигентского дискурса) Вып. 2 (10): Русская интеллигенция и западный интеллектуализм: Материалы международной конференции, Неаполь, май 1997, История и типология. М. 1999. (Intelligentsia and Freedom (Towards the Analysis of the Discourse of Intelligentsia), Issue 2 (10), The Russian Intelligentsia and Western Intellectualism: Materials for the International Conference, Naples, May, 1997. History and Typology, Moscow).

17. Mauss M. 2008. Excerpts from The Gift (1925), in: Anthropological Theory, 5th edition R. Jon Mcgee Richard L.Warms. Mc Graw Hill.

18. Mills C. Wright. 2000. The Power Elite, Oxford University Press.

19. Mosca G. 1939. The Ruling Class, McCraw-Hill: New York.

20. Pareto V. 1935. The Mind and Society, Harcourt, Brace: New York.

21. Pimenov R. 1996: Пименов Р. И. Экспозиция Кремля во Владимирской тюрьме // Воспоминания, Т. 2, Документы по истории движения инакомыслящих ; вып. 6–7, Панорама: М., (Exposition of the Kremlin in the Vladimir Prison: Recollections. Documents on the History of the Dissident Movement, issue 6-7, V. 2, Panorama, Moscow).

4.2 Playing with Titles: how to be the Elite in a Socialist Way

Tea Kamushadze

In this chapter, I will discuss the peculiarities of the concept of the elite in Georgian society established during the Soviet times and linked to one particular category of people – Heroes of Socialist Labor. It is impossible to discuss contemporary Georgian society, consider such issues and notions as the elite and elitism without considering the recent past. Therefore, we may only speak of elites or non-elites in contemporary Georgian society with a view of the Soviet context. Considering the Soviet notion of elitism and following through the transformation of its associated meanings will allow us to judge the peculiarities of becoming elite and being elite in Georgian society. Hence, the purpose of this particular article is the discussion of the Soviet concept of elitism, while following its trace into present-day Georgian society.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to discuss the elites and elitism of the Soviet period, since a "classless", "socialist" and "communist" society leaves no space for the representation of the elite at the formal level. It may seem easy at first sight to discuss the Soviet political ruling elite, but in case of a country where everything was already politically loaded, this would appear artificial and pointless. There may also be a certain temptation to single out the Soviet cultural elite for the outcomes and traces of their activity that are obvious

and tangible both in Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia. Despite this, discussing the cultural elite would not allow us to identify specific features of Georgian society then or nowadays. Considering this, I have chosen a specific title for the discussion of the Georgian elite, which consolidated people from different social, material, cultural or professional groups and offered them a distinct lifestyle. The title of Hero of Socialist Labor incorporated a worker, an actor and a top state official into one group.

The research represented in this article relies on the cases of Heroes of Socialist Labor that come from one particular city of Georgia – Rustavi. I have collected various types of narrative sources and, using the method of in-depth interviews, tried to inquire into the issues that fall within the scope of my interest. We succeeded in finding materials on six Heroes of Socialist Labor in this city and among them, four worked at the metallurgical works. However, today only one of these heroes is alive. As a result of my repeated visits to this person, I managed to collect ethnographic materials to use in this research. Why Rustavi city and the Heroes of Socialist Labor of Rustavi? In 1944, the communists started the construction of Rustavi on a historical settlement, making it the main arena of ideological propaganda for the regime. In contrast to the rest of Georgia, the residents of Rustavi were engaged in minor, if any, agricultural activities. This fact could be explained by the specific nature of the city. It was built on a wasteland and afterwards populated by people arriving from all over the Soviet Union, with mainly migrants from the agrarian regions of Georgia who had to abandon their old lifestyle to join the labor class. Thus, as a city of workers, Rustavi formed an exemplary urban space within Soviet Georgia - a city of

heavy industry with a high concentration of the labor class. Owing to its multicultural nature, Rustavi is frequently referred to as "The City of Forty Brothers", practically representing a micro model of the Soviet Union.

Although the research of elites is now a unique phenomenon in Georgia, they are exclusively associated with the post-Soviet period and a focus on the power elite (Chiaberashvili, Tevzadze 2005). Thus, the elite and elitism (old intelligentsia vs. new intellectuals) have become the subject of research and discussion exclusively during the post-Soviet period, only implicitly addressing the Soviet experience against the discourses of the contemporary society (Nodia 2002). Moreover, the word "elite" in the current critical public discourse is a subject of irony and mockery that might actually be due to reflections on the Soviet heritage. The notion of "elite" was deconstructed by entry of "random" people into the Soviet elite and from the term in the post-Soviet reality (Gvakharia, n.d.).

This article does not pursue the aim of either providing justification for any of the definitions of the elite, nor deconstructing them or suggesting any new definitions. It is rather an attempt to define the discourse of socialist elitism and to outline the peculiarities that ensure its effectiveness in Soviet times and its failure in post-Soviet times, and refer to its changing contexts. While discussing the process of the construction of socialist elitism, it is impossible to refer to the whole period of the Soviet regime; rather, I will concentrate on "late socialism" (1960s-1980s). Given all this, I think raising the issue of the Soviet concept of elitism and considering specific cases within this context will be interesting both in terms of the national and international academic discussion.

In the first part of this article, I will discuss the status of Hero of Socialist Labor as a chance to become or be part of the elite, and try to substantiate why Heroes of Socialist Labor may be called elite and what makes them such. What is the system of values that serves the formation of the elite and what are the identity markers that could be identified through the existing forms of representation? What features of elitism can be identified based on cases of Heroes of Socialist Labor? What type of elite was established by the regime in their name? Another topical issue is the homogeneity of this group. What kind of relations existed inside the group? And the concluding part of the article will cover such issues as whether these group members managed to retain their existing status and translate into the new elite after the collapse of the Soviet Union. If not, what was the reason? And how one could interpret the fact that the elite of those times failed to reproduce themselves in the present period?

The Title of Hero of Socialist Labor and the Peculiarities of the Formation of Soviet Identity

The highest award – the title of Hero of Socialist Labor - was established on the basis of the former title of Hero of the Soviet Union by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of 1938. There are some remarkable details pointing out the absolute uniqueness and specificity of this title throughout the Soviet Union - the first recipient, and the general statistics on granting, withdrawing and denying this award. This title was first awarded to Joseph Stalin himself on his 60th anniversary, in December 20, 1939. As to the statistics, from the date of its introduction and up to 1991, two figures (20,605 and 21,560) have been quoted by various sources. The

last recipient of this award was Ms. Bibigul Tuligenova, a Kazakh opera singer. According to the newspaper *Pravda* (1938), the title of Hero of Socialist Labor was awarded for outstanding services to the homeland by those who contributed to the development of the national economy, culture, sciences and glory of the USSR. It should be noted that the date is a distinctive dividing line between the attempt at forming a new elite and the process of wiping out the old one. The late 1930s in Georgia, as well as in all other republics of the Soviet Union, were marked by bloody repressions that mostly sacrificed the so-called intelligentsia. So, after the destruction of the class enemy, there occurred a certain need for presenting a new elite that would rely on merit-based, rather than class principles. It is also to be noted that the stories of admission to the list of Heroes of Socialist Labor differ and are often contradictory. For instance, until 1943, no workers or farmers were incorporated in this list. Regarding the creative elite, their names started to appear later, in the 1960s, as Heroes of Socialist Labor. It is noteworthy that this group includes two teenagers who were awarded this title for exceeding their labor plans, while they studied at school. Remarkably, 95 people were deprived of the title and some of them were later re-awarded. There are 16 cases of posthumous awards (Stakhanov Forgotten Heroes, 2009). The situation regarding this title points to the difficulties of unifying people around it. The factors such as time and the epoch that established and changed the tendencies for the title seekers should be noted.

The fact that distinguishes and gives elitism to this title is that it contains the word "hero". A hero, as a special category of human being, in its traditional meaning, is related to the self-sacrifice of an individual, and is mainly declared after that person's tragic death

in the name of high ideals. In this respect, it was a certain breakthrough in the public consciousness when the communists started looking for heroes in factories, fields and vineyards, placing labor above human values. Labor also became a key word in this title, since it was placed at the foundation for heroism. The substantiation of labor as of particular honor and dignity implied also the formation of a new identity. Labor was expected to play a crucial role in the development of the identity of Soviet citizens. The formation of new identities also created real ground for the development of the relevant elites.

As seen from the example of Rustavi city, the process of the formation of Soviet identity, including the establishment of a new elite, focused on two directions: 1) Presenting labor as the highest value; 2) The substitutive use of terms characteristic of struggle and war; the description of labor as the process of struggle; 3) Presenting labor as a creative process and the worker as a creative intellectual man standing for the service of his country.

The substitution of values was a permanent process mostly propagated through printed media. If traditionally the highest value for a Georgian man was to defend his homeland and sacrifice his life for it, now to become a hero it was suffice to bring glory to one's country through labor. Consequently, information sources started to similarly apply to labor all the epithets pertaining to war and struggle. At the level of terminology, industrial labor was described as a daily struggle. Workers were brought into the focus of society. Daily newspapers and magazines disseminated news about workers and their lifestyle. All this bore a strong resemblance to the so-called "yellow press" or tabloids reporting about celebrities and their daily

lives. Special reports were prepared to allow these people to share their experience with others. Many documentary films and TV spots associated with these new heroes of Rustavi city are still available in the archives of the public broadcaster, where we found the story of one of the Heroes of Socialist Labor of Rustavi city, Amiran Pantsulia. In one of the film segments, the hero informs us of the tragic episodes in the history of his city, how Rustavi was ravaged by the Mongol invasion and was later revived (Axali Mijna 1953-1958, 1970). Thus, a Hero of Socialist Labor from the Rustavi metallurgical works became part of the new history and a representative of Rustavi city.

The newspaper headlines or titles of literary articles and their contents best illustrate the efforts of the official bodies to represent labor as a day-to-day struggle, while an enterprise or a factory was depicted as a battlefield, where fruitful work was equated with a military victory and useful labor would become the basis for awarding the title of a hero. Meanwhile, all labor activities were considered to be equal. Physical labor was put on par with intellectual work, such that the efforts of an unskilled laborer and an academician would gain equal value for the country, and good evidence for this is seen by the establishment of this highest award of a Hero of Socialist Labor. This award was similarly granted to politicians, workers, farmers, scientists and artists. On the pages of the newspaper *Metallurgi*, steel casting was considered comparable to writing a poem, and so on. To illustrate this phenomenon, I quote an abstract from the interview of one Hero of Socialist Labor in which he discusses the process of casting steel "...Then, at the end, four of our brigades were working. Each had their own plan. People are not alike, as you know.

Let's take a look at a simple example. One person can write a poem, but others cannot. The same is true in case of the factory" (Lomidze 2012). I think the comparison made by this labor hero during his interview somewhat echoes the process of formation of values and identities in the Soviet period.

The newspaper *Metallurgi*—the main periodical publication of the Rustavi metallurgical works—provides specific examples illustrating the formation of the Soviet identity. The newspaper was launched on January 1, 1957 and it represented the official authority of the metallurgical works. It was a bilingual newspaper with articles presented in both Georgian and Russian. From the pages of this publication, issued twice a week, the readers would get to know the success stories of the workers.

Two different articles in the same newspaper *Metallurgist,* published in 1961, feature poems dedicated to labor heroes. The addressee of both these poems is a Hero of Socialist Labor. The title of the first poem is "To the Hero of Socialist Labor A. Dzamashvili":

Today, at the feast of Georgia
I wanted to bless you:
Once again you brought glory to your homeland
Through your communist labor.
Let those who see your work
Say "Blessed is the hand that created it!"
Let the story of your heroic deed
Resound over and over again (Makharadze 1961: 2).

Thus, the hero, who brought glory to his country through his labor, is praised to the skies. This makes him famous and recognizable throughout the country. Notably, the phrase "Blessed is the hand that

created it" refers to his creativity. Obviously, this simple poem conveys the entire dialectics of the Soviet identity on which to build up the new elite.

The second poem is also devoted to a Hero of Socialist Labor, V. Cobridze:

Simplicity is always valued,
Being worthy in word and deed,
You know you are the people's servant (Gordeziani 1961: 3).

The verses mentioning the "simplicity of word and deed" refer indirectly to the "affiliation" of its addressee, introducing the hero as part of the people and their servant. From the author's viewpoint, simplicity is what should be valued in a hero and it is the destiny of the selected people alone. It is also important that he sees the mission of the hero as standing in service of the people. While using different words, both these poems convey the common idea that the selected man is the one whose labor has glorified his homeland and himself. All this obliges him to stand in the service of the people. As noted by Alexei Yurchak, these forms of ideological representations during the late Soviet period became increasingly common and predictable (Yurchak 2005).

The article "The Pride of the Georgian People" published in the newspaper *Metallurgi*, which was dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Rustavi city, reads: "The Great October, the Communist Party, and the Soviet Government brought freedom and happiness to the people; their lives became joyful and happy and their labor became a matter of honor, reputation, courage and heroism" (Jamaspishvili 1958: 1).

Similar phrases are quite typical for the language used in the

newspaper *Metallurgi*, and are actually paraphrased in all publications. The "confusion" of terms referring to struggle and labor cannot be a mere coincidence and certainly falls under the overall ideological propaganda. The regime pursued the aim to instigate a militarist spirit on the labor front that was reflected in newspaper headlines such as:

"At the battlefront of profitability" (Kvakhadze 1967: 2)

"Attacking the five-year plan" (Chokhonelidze 1967: 1)

"With a soldier's spirit" (Odishvili 1967: 1)

"Fighting for better performance indicators" (Bejuashvili 1967: 1)

"We have to fight again" (Menapire 1967: 2)

The New Year and jubilee editions of newspapers, where images favorable to the system were gathered, are of special interest. For instance, there is the message of superintendent Pavle Tsereteli, in which the relevant emphasis is made, taking account of the historical narratives of the city: "The past year brought many big victories, joy and happiness to the Georgian people. The name of our educator Shota and his parent nation has by far overstepped the beaten meridians of Tariel and Avtandil. The second order of Lenin is on the flag of our republic. The metallurgists of Rustavi city have contributed their might to the glory of Georgia, and in their name I wish a Happy New Year and new victories to our people" (Tsereteli 1967: 1).

This greeting, naturally, reports on the labor victories and contains national narratives in an attempt to make them serve the purposes of the new times. The author believes that these novel hero-metallurgists glorify Georgia no less than the heroes of the famous poem *The Knight in Panther's Skin* written by Shota Rustaveli. Drawing paral-

lels between the heroes is another method deliberately employed by the communists to create a new "socialist" national identity. Resorting to the past and reinterpreting it so as to achieve the legitimization of the present may also be considered part of Soviet propaganda. I also recall a TV report about a new resident of Rustavi city, metallurgist Mr. Berdzenishvili. It starts with an episode representing a young man sitting at the writing table, looking like an intellectual. It follows that he has a wife and two sons named Tariel and Avtandil[1]. At the end of the film, we learn that the man is from Gardabani. (Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1951). This little story introducing one more resident of the city suggests lots of symbols and associations, and even more so through the parallel with XII century poet Shota Rustaveli. Linking the name of Rustaveli to the newly built industrial city is a method widely practiced by the communists.

Another instance of seeking analogues in history is an article published in the same newspaper, *Metallurgi* in 1967 under the headline "A Generous Man". This article represents a good example of international labor relations. It is dedicated to a Georgian metallurgist working in Romania, whom the author compares with Antimoz Iverieli (see below) and his activity. The section "People from our Factory" is about Givi Maghlaperidze, who gained his work experience in Magnitogorsk. The text reads as follows:

– "Givi has friends outside our country. For instance, in Romania, where he trained Todor Dobre in pipe-casting skills. Together with other metallurgists, Givi went to help his Romanian colleagues.

– This Georgian man of courage, who followed in his famous

[1] Tariel and Avtandil are the main heroes of the poem *The Knight in Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli, from the XII century.

ancestor Antimoz Iverieli's footsteps, has greatly contributed to launching of a tube-rolling shop in Romania.

– That's how labor and life have trained and strengthened Givi Maghlaperidze. Remarkably, his shift was far ahead of the first milestone of the five-year plan. There is still a long way to go. Bless you and your skillful hands" (Murmanishvili 1967: 3)

The author of this article draws this parallel intentionally. Antimoz Iverieli (1650-1716), a Romanian public figure of Georgian origin, is the pride of both the Romanian and Georgian people. His name is associated with the opening of a printing house in Georgia, in the XVIII century. He is recognized as a paragon of virtue for his other activities as well. While Antimoz Iverieli used the experience he gained abroad to benefit his native land, Givi shared his knowledge and experience with his foreign colleagues in Romania. The historical parallels drawn by the author served to bestow praise on and build confidence in the contemporary hero. Thus, the author underlines that all human activities are of the equal value. At the same time, a specific emphasis is made on friendship with people and the possibility of cooperation with them.

Therefore, the formation of the Georgian identity, the signs of which were marked out in the media, contributed to the building of the new elite. Those selected by the media might potentially be considered elite, due to the serious adjustments introduced in the notion of selectiveness existing earlier. To make it more convincing, the system considered nationalism and national narratives as a critical resource.

Socialist Realism and the Real Story of One Hero

Socialist realism was offered as a new reality to society by the Soviet system, with the form of representation significantly exceeding its content. According to Eugene Dobrenko, socialist realism should be seen not as a factory of happiness or a laboratory of illusions, but as a plant producing a specific reality - socialism. In his opinion, the key function of socialist realism was the substitution of reality, rather than fraud (Dobrenko 2007). Soviet heroes come up as a specific product of socialist realism that took over the role of selecting and representing these heroes.

Conditionally the "socio-realistic" and "real" stories of one hero in this article are less controversial and they may even be said to complement each other. Therefore, when discussing the Soviet reality with real people, their speech and thoughts seem to be saturated with the vocabulary and perceptions of socialist realism. Despite this, the stories narrated by our hero still allow us to single out some for the socialist realism discourse. Real stories of the hero are collected using an ethnographic method and rely on the immediate narration of the hero. In his socio-realistic story (meaning biographic data written about him), the hero, narrating the "real" story of a future hero in the first person, introduces to us his family, working environment and his personal attitudes regarding everyday or eternal matters. In his "Ten Days of A Hot Summer (A Steelworker's Diary)", the author Karpe Mumladze presents a future Hero of Socialist Labor, Otar Lomidze. In connection with this book the author recollects his meeting with the chairman of the Writers Union - Giorgi Leonidze, "He thought for a while and then said: one summer in Rustavi will not be enough for any writer. If you want to do some-

thing, you should live and work there. It is necessary not only for you, but likewise for Rustavi. What is typical for our times is living and working near heroes” (Mumladze 1982: 19-27). The proximity of a writer and a laborer, living side by side, would not only serve as a victory for socialist realism in literature, it would also make significant adjustments to the traditional understanding of elitism. On one hand, there is the process of bringing writers and poets closer to the factories, and on the other hand, the attempts of the workers to describe and convey the new reality on their own. In these new times, workers and farmers become selected heroes for the writers. Later a writer’s option could be influenced by the political elite as well. A good example of this could be our protagonist Otar Lomidze, who was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor after several publications of this book. This shows that he was first noticed by the writer and then by the party nomenclature, first appearing to us a literary figure and then as a real hero. With the author of this narrative, we come across an interesting reflection on this issue: “And I was looking for a hero, who had not yet been among the so-called officially selected, but I had to be sure that tomorrow or the day after tomorrow he would become an example for everybody.... Indeed, a writer has an important mission - to reveal a hero and to prove his heroism” (Mumladze 1982: 19-27). Thus, the author is well-aware of his own role and mission to render reality through social realism, so that it becomes real. He points to the potential of his hero to become part of the elite, though indirectly. It could also be understood from Lomidze’s words that the issue of awarding the title of a hero remained a subject of consideration for years, and was hampered for some reasons. Although the writing and publication of the book

might not have played a crucial role in awarding the title, this factor need not be neglected anyway.

There are stories of awarding a title of Hero of Socialist Labor that reveal quite contradictory processes of formation of the new elite. I heard one such story about a Hero of Socialist Labor from Sachkhere (West Georgia). He worked in the Chiatura (an industrial city) mines. Workers from other locations were allocated dwellings in Chiatura so that they did not have to travel daily to their homes. There was a man working by his side who was far ahead of the labor plans and was considered a candidate for receiving the title. However, during a visit to his dwelling, the sanitary conditions of his room were found unsatisfactory, and the choice was made in favor of another man, whose personal items and room appeared to be in order. In this particular case, it was not labor achievements, but compliance with sanitary norms that proved critical in awarding the status. Therefore, we encounter certain contradictions with a different interpretation of the merit-based principles.

The reflections of the hero of this book serve to underpin the Soviet identity, following the footprints of social realism. This identity is backed up by a hero, an authority and so a steelworker hero falls in the category of the moral elite.

"For instance, many of my friends work in Gardabani. Instead of alloy steel, they produce cardboard. Cardboard may probably also be needed, but... do not be naïve to think that light labor and easy living is the aim and task of a man! What satisfaction it is to overcome challenges! You should be a courageous man from birth and remain so until the end... A man should do what he can. If you are capable of doing more and you do less, then you are a coward, a deserter!" (Mumladze 1977)

It should also be noted here that the approach to various kinds of activities is inconsistent, i.e. on one hand, the declared value of all kinds of activities is equal, but on the other hand, a labor hierarchy exists where hard physical labor is equivalent to courage and is placed on top of the ladder. Consequently, this undermines the value of light work, making it less honorable and even shameful for a man in good physical condition.

In this section and through his main hero, the author reflects on the meaning of labor, and how it should be the life objective for everyone and that we should work whole-heartedly. Those who work selflessly are considered to have courage, while he uses the word "deserter" to describe the opposite case. Maximalism in labor is actually the key criterion to making the author of these words a candidate for heroism, and joining the elite. Obviously, there is a somewhat didactic tone in these specific words, which is also the objective of the selection.

One of the major places to manifest one's own identity in Georgia is the Georgian *supra* ("feast"), with its heroic narratives. The *supra* is a place of gathering where the male population sets and establishes identities. In "A Steelmaker's Diary", feasting is described in a rather interesting manner. Upon hearing the requests of the members of the feast, to be their *tamada* i.e. the toastmaster who presides over the feast, the main character of the novel responds as follows:

"…They say it must be you. As if it is not enough for me to be a supervisor at work, now they want me to preside over the feast! However, they are also right: if you are the head at work, it obliges you to head the feast too".

Underlining this status of leader is also a way to present him as a

selected person who is also subject of consensus. The main character of the novel, once selected as *tamada* for the feast, recalls the *tamada* Giorgi Chavchanidze and he recites the verses ending like this:

"Where did you lay your portion of bricks, or erected your step-ladder?

Where does your straight road lead, for what was your sweat shed?

Colchis tea, Kakhetian vine, or perhaps a Georgian steel pipe?

Tell us what is Georgian in you?" (Mumladze 1977)

In this poem we actually find new Soviet markers for the identity of *Kartveloba*. Remarkably, struggle and labor are immediately switched so that shedding blood for the homeland is substituted by shedding sweat in labor. If in the past it was the privilege of aristocrats to sacrifice their lives for their homeland, then sacrifice through labor was the privilege of workers like him.

This is followed by a chain of toasts made by the *tamada* that are traditionally dedicated to the labor process and represent the significance of its results.

"Let's drink to our labor, to our present victory! Let's drink to the steel casting that welds in the foundation of communism!"

The hero stresses the fact that he drinks only a little wine and does not drink vodka at all, and even criticizes excessive drinking of wine.

Then they toast their ancestors, underlining how the good habits and traditions of their forefathers should inevitably be continued.

"Let's drink to our forefathers, who were pure-minded and innocent at heart! May their good habits and traditions persist! Let's drink to our parents!" (Mumladze 1977).

The character in the novel he talks of the high number of his namesakes in the Martin furnace, indicating that one of them is a worker poet whose poems are frequently printed, and that he knows some of them by heart.

In one of the episodes of his diary, the hero describes a visit of pioneers to the steel works and the interest with which the youth observed the process of steel casting, after which he says that some of them will become poets like Galaktioni[1] and some will chose to be steelmakers like him. Then he recalls the visit of Galaktioni to the works and the meeting that followed. The poet called him a real hero. In response to this, the steelmaker argued that Galaktioni himself was a hero.

"It may so happen that one of these pioneers will glorify the country like Galaktioni! Or become a famous steelmaker. In any case, I do not feel wronged by fate: when labor makes you happy, no matter how hard, you should score a goal, and especially since you have to show fortitude, you are all the more satisfied!" (Mumladze 1977)

The mention of Galaktioni in this context undoubtedly indicates the creativity of the works and its significance, meaning that some of the pioneers, who visited the works, may discover a talent for writing poems and will draw inspiration from the works, from steel casting. And the fact of his meeting with Galaktioni presents them as equals and friends. It must not be mere chance that the hero ends his narrative with the verses of Alio Mirtskhulava:

"Spring, May is coming,

[1] Galaktion Tabidze (1891-1959), the most outstanding Georgian poet of the XX Century, he hold the titles the People's Poet and Academician of the Georgian Academy of Science.

Spreading its fragrance over gardens and fields
Coming with Georgian serenity,
Spring is in my country!" (Mumladze 1977)

When reading this book, we encounter some discrepancies that have to do with the depiction of the hero himself. At first glance, he represents a man leading an ordinary lifestyle, but at the same time he is positioned as a leader, an initiator. His stories arouse no surprise or interest, but are monotonous, leaving the reader with a sense of logical dissatisfaction. It seems that the representation of the hero in such a way is not a mere coincidence or a matter of the writer's taste. Making heroes out of common people may be considered as part of the Soviet ideology and even a means of formation of the Soviet elite. Anyone who is noticed and singled out may be selected. Yet, he will never change completely; despite having been selected, he will remain an ordinary person. Being part of the great mass of the population makes him the best example to follow for society. The love of poetry and quoting verses by the hero are also part of this controversy. Quoting worker poets, and the visits of great poets to the works also serve to the advancement of the same idea. A good piece of evidence of the fact that this process was part of that single-minded ideology is the operation of a literary circle and Palace of Culture within the metallurgical works from the very date of its opening. This was where they issued a literary journal called *Rustavi Torches* in order to publish the creative works of the workers. It should also be noted that, in his real life, the hero of the book also participated in the meetings of the literary circle, but as he himself says, he could not eventually be persuaded to become a writer. Despite this, in real life he was friends with many writers and poets.

Thus the scheme of bringing together literary men and workers is one remarkable aspect for the understanding of Soviet elitism.

Another notable aspect of Soviet elitism was access of labor heroes to material goods and other resources. Heroes of Socialist Labor were given a car and a good apartment in a prestigious district that not all Soviet families could afford. There is an amazing story about how Mr. Otar and his family received an apartment on the Avenue of Frienship. A female director of one of the crews that arrived from Russia went to the city committee and said his family had been suffering for several days already from the lack of space in their small apartment, and that they had planned to screen the film they were producing in France, and it would be a shame to show this. Immediately afterwards, the hero’s family was granted a larger apartment. He could afford to have a Volga car. “To buy a Volga was not at all an easy task in the Soviet Union, if you know what I mean. On the market, buying it off of someone, a GAZ 24 Volga cost 30,000 rubles in those times, while its state-set price was 15,000. To obtain permission to buy a Volga from the Government, you had to fill out declarations and have strings to pull within the Government”. (Morchiladze 2014). Because of his Volga car, his relatives frequently asked the hero to accompany them to wedding parties that further enhanced his personal and his family’s status. A social network was even a much more significant resource - he had a circle of acquaintances throughout the Union, where his word and opinion carried a certain weight. “Of course, the people respected me too. It is no secret that after I became a deputy, even though I did not do much, if someone got arrested, people would call me as if I were the prosecutor general..”.

Mr. Otar remembered two occasions when, through his mediation a young Georgian man was released from Irkutsk prison, and when he rescued from prosecution a group of teenagers who had been detained for disorderly conduct in the city. In connection with the Irkutsk case, he also noted that all he had to do to get on board the plane was to arrive at the airport half an hour in advance, and he could embark with no problem, taking a flight to any destination across the Soviet Union (Lomidze 2012).

The status of Hero of Socialist Labor was followed by the status of the deputy of the Supreme Soviet that formally represented him as part of the political and decision-making processes. The status of a deputy involved visits at the national level and excursions with representatives of the poitical elite. It is remarkable that, irrespective of this high position, he was still listed as a worker and continued to perform physical labor as before.

Another vivid piece of evidence of the opportunities coming from joining the nomenclatural elite and the deconstruction of this notion is the possibility for a worker to directly communicate with the highest public official. Our hero was commissioned by the party nomenclature of the metallurgical works to send a letter to Brezhnev in which he commented on the interview given by him to a French television station. Mr. Otar took the letter written in Russian to the party committee. One woman started to correct spelling mistakes found in the letter, and that upset its author. “Hey, I said do not correct the mistakes! It should be felt that the letter was written by a worker, and a Georgian worker at that!” (Lomidze 2012). Afterwards he forgot to mail the letter and a couple of days later asked his son to drop it in a special mail box. In exactly two days, he was

told that he had received a personal letter from Brezhnev. During our conversation he confessed that his first thought was, "What do I need his letter for?" But when the letter was published in a newspaper and he was then awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, he understood that things like this did not happen by mere chance. In such cases, we deal with the acts of demonstration pointing out that there should exist no barriers to the elitism, and that top officials could be directly accessible, even if only formally and through a prescribed procedure.

As noted above, while the future hero wished it to be clear that the letter sent to the top official was written by a worker, his worker's clothes and the corresponding environment made him feel "uncomfortable" in the general public and in the circle of his acquaintances. He remembers one story – "They wrote much about me at that time. And some of my friends, who studied at the university said, 'Let's go and see what Otar is doing and why they write so much about him.' They came to the workshop. I have to admit that some of us had a sleeve torn off or burnt. When I saw them approaching me, I told one of our workers that these fellows were coming to see me and since I did not want to meet them in filthy clothes, I would rather go home and wait for them there - especially since my shift was coming to end. I asked him if he knew where I lived and to bring them to my house". (Lomidze, 2014). Obviously, a man of such repute, who was the subject of articles and photos published in newspapers, did not wish his friends to see him in the shabby clothes in which he worked.

It is a stated fact that steelworkers who had to perform hard work retired relatively early, at the age of 50 years. That's when the He-

roes of Socialist Labor were admitted to the "real" elite - they would join the party or bureaucratic nomenclature in the capacity of heads of various institutions. For instance, the first Hero of the Metallurgical Works - Archil Dzamashvili, became the director of the Rustavi movie theater after retirement; Amiran Pantsulia was appointed director of a consumer service center; Vardish Koberidze was first made chairman of the professional union and then chairman of the DOSAAF[1] committee. As for Mr. Otar, he became the director of the newly built hotel in Rustavi. It was at this age of retirement that Heroes of Socialist Labor would gain certain influence and authority in society, and not due to their status at the metallurgical works. However, all this lasted only until the collapse of the Soviet Union. "When the new government came, they said I was a communist. I said 'Ok, if I am a communist, I will leave'" (Lomidze, 2012). Anyway, by that time only 3 Heroes of Socialist Labor remained alive, and all three of them had to abandon their posts, and neither could their descendants keep pace with the new times. According to Mr. Otar, the other heroes shared his fate as well.

It is ironic how, as a result of political transformation, the understanding and composition of the elite has change significantly within the society in a short run of time. All this probably point to the peculiarities of filling and constructing the socialist elite during the Soviet epoch in which the notion of elitism was not accepted and shared by society.

[1] The Russian abbreviation DOSAAF "Добровольное обшество содействия армии, авиации и флоту" means "A voluntary association for promotion of the army, aviation and fleet" – a mass self-defense patriotic organization of laborers to promote strengthening of the defense potential of the Soviet Union and to train laborers for the defense of the socialist homeland (Foreign Words Dictionary).

While Mr. Otar was happy to narrate the story of his meeting with his friends, after 40 years it still hurt him to remember one incident. The main character in this story was the parent of a schoolboy. Mr. Otar recalled that Komsomol members took some of Rustavi city's schools under their patronage and these schoolchildren regularly visited the works. "I was bringing children from School N 10, when I was approached by a rather arrogant parent, who I am sorry to say looked like a beer vendor, despite his expensive car. We used to travel to the works by bus. This man offered a seat in his car. When we entered the territory of the works, we met metallurgists dressed in a specific manner, not wearing ties of course! When he saw them, he said to his son – "Look at them. You will have to work here, unless you study well!" Angry and hurt at these words, Mr. Otar told the man to stop the car and got off, saying he has to meet the group. In this case, a successful businessman who, like representatives of the elite has access to material resources (an expensive car), threatens his son by sending him to be employed by the metallurgical works if the boy has poor academic progress. One phrase pronounced by this man disrupts that socialist reality - the prospect of being employed at the steelworks no longer seemed attractive to the youth. Another interesting fact is that this man did not percieve Mr. Otar as one of the workers of the metallurgical works and felt free to express his opinion, opposing physical labor to intellectual activities.

Mr. Otar's attitude toward this individual relates to the present day in somewhat interesting manner. Further reflecting upon how this type of people call the activities carried out by these professions, he says "An illicit dealer (speculator) has now become a trader, and a anyone wearing a tie – a businessman". (Lomidze 2014). So it seems

that in contrast to Mr. Otar and other socialist labour heroes of Rustavi city, this type of "anti-elite" has managed to adapt to the contemporary reality and to retain access to resources. To illustrate how the economic and correspondingly the social status of Mr. Otar's family has changed, I would like to mention one fact. I first visited him on 29 November 2012. It was a very cold and windy day and Mr. Otar met me in a thick jacket. He had no heating at home and so I did not even think of taking off my overcoat. We sat like this and talked for about 3 hours. An 87-year old hero, who still continues to work at Rustavi metallurigical works, appeared the best guide to me in this labyrinth of the Soviet laboratory. This was clearly seen in his living room itself, with the "red corner" representing the glorious past of the Soviet hero and the jars of canned fruits and vegetables prepared for winter that stood in line under the table. While writing this article, the contradictions following confusion of the Soviet and post-Soviet realities gave rise to some further questions, such as who was this person for that system - a selected hero or a victim?

And finally, I would like to end my narrative of the Heroes of Socialist Labor of Rustavi city by recalling one "surrealistic" story told to me by Mr. Otar about another Hero of Socialist Labor– Archil Dzamashvili. "In Surami, in a place called Chumateleti, there is a church, where people celebrate Mariamoba (the name day of Mary, the Blessed Virgin) on 28 August. I was newly wed then, and since my family comes from those areas, I took my wife there. It was an ancient church and there was no light inside it. In one corner, there was a photo like an icon. People would light candles before it, and it was a photo of Archil Dzamashvili with his brigade. I recognized the cover of the magazine *Metallurgist*. They were wearing bowl-type

hats. People believed they were lighting candles to angels. I could recognize the photo, because I had the magazine at home“ (Lomidze, 2014). It is quite difficult to give an interpretation of this fact, as the photo cannot be fully recovered, leaving space for speculation. Anyway, this fact is a good representation of the other vague side of reality created by the system as a result of selecting heros and offering them to the society. Like their false icon, heroes once greatly adored have sunk to oblivion, as if they never existed at all.

Conclusion

To conclude, the positioning of Heroes of Socialist Labor into the category of the elite allows us to judge upon the policy of formation of socialist identitites, where the socialist realism could be regarded as one of the key methods. Social realism played a critical role in the construction of this reality with the newly formed elite representing part of it. For the construction of socialist identities, they actively used national narratives saturated with a militaristic spirit. Thus, for struggle and sacrifice, a new arena was offered – a labor battlefront. Hence, the elite was formed by the people who demonstrated heroism in terms of the fulfillment of the labor plans. While equating various activities, a labor hierarchy was created with hard work on top of the ladder. By example of the individual stories of the Heroes of Socialist Labor we can observe the contradictions proceeding from the logic of awarding titles. Awarding a title would become a dividing line in the life of a recipient, who was offered an elite lifestyle on one hand, and had to continue to perform the same job and participate in that routine on the other hand. Despite the fact that these eligible individuals occupied an important position in society

owing to their access to material resources, as well as their proximity to the nomenclature, they proved unable to retain it after collapse of the Soviet Union. It appeared that, at the level of values, the elitism of these people was not shared by society and hence, they ceased functioning with the coming of new times. Through the example of these concrete Heroes of Socialist Labor, I have tried to demonstrate the discourse and contextual side of the elite and not its specified definition.

References

1. The New Age - 1953 -1958. 1970: ახალი მიჯნა - 1953 -1958. Film, Directed by G. Vepkhvadze. Public TV Channel of Georgia.

2. Bejuashvili J. 1967: იბრძვიან უკეთესი მაჩვენებლებისათვის (Fighting for Better Performance Indicators, *Metalurgi*, 3 June, p. 1).

3. Chiaberashvili Z., Tevzadze G. 2005. Power Elites in Georgia: Old and new, in: Fluri Ph., Cole E. From Revolution to Reform: Georgia's struggle with democratic institution building and security sector reform, Publication of Bureau for Security Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence; National Defence Academy, Vienna and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces in co-operation with PfP-Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vienna and Geneva.

4. Chokhonelidze K. 1967: უტევენ ხუთწლედის ზღუდეებს (Attacking the Five-Year Plan, *Metalurgi*, 3 February, p. 1).

5. Dobrenko E. 2007. Political Economy of Socialist Realism. 1st ed. London: Yale University Press New Haven.

6. Foreign Words Dictionary, National Parlamentary Library of Georgia (Online). Available at: http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=3&t=11842 (Accessed 13 November 2015).

7. Gordeziani G. 1961: სოციალისტურ შრომის გმირს ვ. კობერიძეს (To the Hero of Socialist Labor V. Koberidze, *Metalurgi*, 12 May, p. 3).

8. Gvakharia G. n.d. *youtube.* (Online) Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgWVhQLyW1A (Accessed 10 June 2015) .

9. Jamaspishvili S. 1958: ქართველი ხალხის სიამაყე (The Pride of the Georgian People, *Metalurgi*, 21 January, p. 1).

10. Kvakhadze Z. 1967: რენტაბელობისათვის ბრძოლის ფრონტზე (At the Battlefront of Profitability, *Metalurgi*, 27 January, p. 2).

11. Lomidze O. 2012. Interview with a Hero of Socialist Labor (Interview) (26 November).

12. Lomidze O. 2013. Interview with a Hero of Socialist Labor 2 (Interview)(16 January 2013).

13. Lomidze O. 2014. Interview with a Hero of Socialist Labor 3 (Interview) (10 February).

14. Makharadze S. 1961: სოციალისტურ შრომის გმირს ა. ძამაშვილს (To the Hero of Socialist Labor A. Dzamashvili, *Metalurgi*, 12 May, p. 2).

15. Menapire U. 1967: კვლავ ბრძოლაა საჭირო (We Have to Fight Again, *Metalurgi*, 1 May, p. 2).

16. Morchiladze A. 2014: ჩრდილი გზაზე (The Shadow on the road), Tbilisi “Bakur Sulakauri”.

17. Mumladze K. 1977: ცხელი ზაფხულის ათი დღე (Ten Days of A Hot Summer) . 2nd (ed.) Tbilisi: “Sabchota Saqartvelo”.

18. Mumladze K. 1982: მხატვრული ნაწარმოების გმირი (The Hero of Fiction) Mxatvruli Natsarmoebis Gmiri - Deputati. In: K. Mumladze, (ed.) Umtkitsesi Rvalisa. Tbilisi, Publishing House Merani, pp. 19-27.

19. Murmanishvili K. 1967: ხელმადლიანი ვაჟკაცი (A Generous Man, *Metalurgi*, 6 January, p. 3).

20. Nodia G. 2002: ძველი ინტელიგენცია და ახალი ინტელექტუალები საქართველოში: პარადიგმის ცვლა? (The Old Intelligentsia and New Intellectuals in Georgia: Shifting Paradigm?), Tbilisi, “Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development” Volume I.

21. Odishvili G. 1967: ჯარისკაცული შემართებით (With a Soldier’s Spirit, *Metalurgi*, 10 February, p. 1).

22. Soviet Georgia 1951: საბჭოთა საქართველო (Film) Georgia: Public TV Channel of Georgia.

23. Stakhanov: Забытые Герои (Forgotten Heroes). 2009. (Film) Directed by Aleksander Slavin. s.l.: Public TV Channel Russia 1.

24. Tsereteli P. 1967: საახალწლო მილოცვა (New Year Greetings, *Metalurgi*, 1 January, p. 1).

25. Yurchak A. 2005. Everything was forever until it was no more: the last soviet generation, Princeton University Press.

Contributors

Abakelia, Nino is Associate Professor of the Department of Arts and Sciences at Tbilisi Ilia State University. She holds a PhD in History. Her research interests include the Anthropology of Religion, Elitism, Myth and Ritual, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity, Symbol in Culture, the Sacred and the Secular. Contact email: nino_abakelia@iliauni.edu.ge

Antonyan, Yulia is Associate Professor of the Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of History at Yerevan State University. She holds a PhD in History and Ethnology. Her research interests include the Anthropology of Social Structure, Elitism and Anthropology of Religion. Contact email: yuliaantonyan@ysu.am

Cheishvili, Giorgi is PhD candidate of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen, Norway. He holds a Master’s degree in Ethnology from Tbilisi State University, Georgia. His research interests include the Anthropology of Borders, Elitism, and Memory Studies. Contact email: giorgi.cheishvili@uib.no

Derluguian, Georgi is Professor of Social Research and Public Policy at New York University’s campus in Abu Dhabi. Having received his degrees from Moscow State University (African history) and State University of New York at Binghamton (sociology), Georgi Derluguian has been conducting field research since the early 1980s on various guerrilla movements, revolutions and

civil wars in Mozambique and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus. His main focus is on the social origins of nationalist intellectuals and the politics of market reforms. Prof. Derluguian received numerous prestigious awards including Carnegie Scholar of Vision, Norbert Elias Prize, and the Times Literary Supplement for his monograph *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-Systems Biography*. In 2013 he co-authored with Immanuel Wallerstein, Randall Collins, Michael Mann, and Craig Calhoun the debate book *Does Capitalism Have a Future* which is now translated in seventeen languages. Contact email: gd44@nyu.edu

Hovhannisyan, Eviya is PhD student of the Department of Anthropology at the European University in Saint-Petersburg. Her research interests include Social Anthropology, Nationalism and Refugee Studies. Contact e-mail: eviahovhannisyan@gmail.com

Kamushadze, Tea is PhD candidate of Anthropology of the Department of Ethnology, Faculty of Humanities at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She holds an MA degree in History and Ethnology. Her research interests include the Anthropology of Socialization, Anthropology of Economy and Post-Soviet Transition in Urban Spaces. Contact e-mail: tea.kamushadze@tsu.ge

Khutsishvili, Ketevan is Associate Professor of the Institute of Ethnology, Faculty of Humanities at Tbilisi State University. She holds a PhD in History and Ethnology. Her research interests include the Anthropology of Religion, Ethnic and Minority Issues. Contact email: ketevan.khutsishvili@tsu.ge

Melkumyan, Hamlet is researcher of the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of

Armenia, and a part-time lecturer at Yerevan State University. His academic interests include Anthropology of Informal Economy, Religious Studies, Elitism and Nationalism Studies. Contact e-mail: hamlet.melkumian@iae.am, hamlet.melkumyan@ysu.am

Muradyan, Haykuhi is PhD student of the Department of Cultural Studies, Faculty of History atYerevan State University. Her research interests include Cultural Policy Studies and Elitism. Contact email: haykuhimuradyan@gmail.com

Elites and "Elites":
Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia.

Edited by
Yulia Antonyan

Softcover: 278 pages.
Size: 60x84 $^{1}/_{16}$. Printing run: 200.