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Deed of Anthim the Iberian Seen in the Context of Georgian Identity Forging

Mariam Chkhartishvili

Abstract.

Modern nations are results of long term ethnic developments. In a certain point ethnic communities begin transforming into national ones. This transformation is rather complicated process including economical, political, cultural aspects. The most decisive is a cultural change: collective identity markers are assuming national characteristics. The cultural transformation implies relevant vehicles enabling unimpeded circulation of culture within the in-group. Homogenization of culture helps to cohesion among the members of would-be-nations. If in ancient times the invention of script had played the role of cultural transmitter, in modernity same social function belongs to the print media. Invention of printing was not only path-breaking fact in history of technologies; it was a turning point in social development of humankind as well: so called “imagined communities”, i.e. national communities were formed through the printed media.

Having these considerations in mind it became clear the importance of activities of Anthim the Iberian – the eminent Romanian ecclesiastic worker and typographer of Georgian ethnic origin. The process of cultural mobilization that had taken place in 17th-18th cc Romania in lifetime of Anthim the Iberian is a fact of all European importance. Georgia too, despite being situated in European margin, was affected by the trends of modernity and longed to develop further her cultural self-determination. In this Georgian intellectuals were supported by Romanians. The first typography in Tbilisi is a demonstration of this support.

The formation of Georgian nation was a durable process. It was culminated in the emergence of first Georgian nation-state: Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918. However, the prerequisites of this crucial fact of Georgian past had emerged many centuries earlier of this date. The 17th-18th centuries might be considered as an eve of Georgian nation’s consolidation. It is why for representation of history of Georgian identity these centuries deserves special attention. Our investigation has focus on the process of cultural self-determination. It is a period when Georgian realm was politically disintegrated. Hence, it is relevant to question: how was possible to retain identity?

In the presentation we will attempt to answer this question through elaboration on main markers of Georgian identity. In this context will be analyzed foundation of first typography in Georgia.

Identity studies are relatively new field of Georgian historiography. This topic was ignored in Soviet scholarship and it is only last decades that they are carried out with great intensity. It is why not all spheres and even not all stages of Georgian identity development were concerned yet. In this regard 17th-18th centuries are among the less visited periods.

The national identity-making process is treated in terms of ethno-symbolists’ approach recognizing importance of nation’s ethnic “building blocks”. At the same time it is recognized constructive nature of human identities and intellectuals’ decisive role in their conceptualization.

Keywords:

Georgia, Self-identification, Printed Media

Introduction.

The most of important details of biography of great Romanian ecclesiastical worker of Georgian ethnic origin Anthim the Iberian (ca. 1650–1716)¹ are still unclear and made conclusions despite their circulations among academics and general readers are not always well-documented: often they are of speculative character. The reason of this of course is a lack of relevant evidences. Professor Nicolae V. Dură in his recent article devoted to Anthim the Iberian² has outlined the state of the problem study. In particular, he has shown that all main facts of Anthim the Iberian’s biography (date and place of his birth, place where he had learned foreign languages and skills of printing, the place where he had taken monastic vows, date of his arrival in Romania, motivations of his arrival) despite that some of them are already widely agreed, actually need further elaborations. The aim of his paper he sees in encouraging the

¹Antim Iverianul - Metropolitan of Wallachia (1708-1716) was canonized by Romanian Orthodox Church in 1992.

²Nicolae V. Dură. “Antimoz Iverieli” (Anthim the Iberian). *New Contributions on his Life and Printing Activity. Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2016, pp.153-162.

researchers to continue inquiries. I share his opinion: indeed, the problems connected with Anthim the Iberian's biography should be studied again and again, however, the investigations should not be carried out based solely on the particular sources (after all, their number is limited and there is little chance that in future the scholars would be able to discover the new evidences) and with the focus on one subject, but by analyzing the entire context in which the deed of Anthim the Iberian should be read. I am sure that from the general perspective the details will be seen more clearly and through the grasping the whole picture the particular facts will become fully understandable.

This assertion might be contradicted by the opinion that the context in which the deed of Anthim the Iberian is usually read just the topic which has been elaborated most of all: the political or economical and cultural developments of Romania in period from the second half of 17th c until the first decades of 18th century is profoundly studied. Professor Keith Hitchins in his concise representation of Romanian history was able to capture the very spirit of this epoch: "As the seventeenth century progressed writers and intellectuals in the principalities gradually moved away from the medieval foundations of their culture as they absorbed new influences, some coming from traditional sources, but many displaying a distinctly Western origin. Disparate currents which had formed earlier came together in the second half of the century to review an embrace by the educated of modern ideas about the world and their place in it and about the ultimate ends of human creativity. The seventeenth century then, marked a crisis of conscience among both clerical and lay elites not unrelated to the political and economical turmoil that encompassed rulers and boiers. They were all challenged by new intellectual and cultural currents emanating from the West, by secularization of culture, by new ideas about a purpose of history and literature, and by the replacement of Slavic by Romanian as the language of both, increasingly, of the church."³ "Largely through the efforts of such enlightened churchmen as Metropolitan Dosoftei and Metropolitan Antim Iverianul of Wallachia (1708-1716), fundamental liturgical works in Romanian were introduced into the church".⁴

So, this contradiction has its ground. However, under the historical context I meant not only the set of facts been in direct connection with Anthim the Iberian's activities, but the impacts which his activities had to the distanced in space and time continuous processes. First of all I had in mind the processes of nation-building. One might be question again: how this processes could be linked with the activities of Anthim the Iberian who lived at the turn of 17th-18th cc, after all the time of modern nations' emergence is a nineteenth century. This is also rightful question. But the most important fact of the biography of Anthim the Iberian - promoting of printing in Romania - gives me ground for the above-mentioned association: as it was already found out by students of nationalism and nation-building processes, print media represents an exclusive feature of era of national consolidations. Thus, the deed of Anthim the Iberian being traditionally considered in the chain of facts of Romanian cultural and religious history should be placed within the widest context of Europe's transition to modernity.

For understanding of the above-mentioned linkage between nation and printed media I will need to be enlarged on issues of theory. In particular, it would be necessary to define a phenomenon of nation and characterize the process of national consolidation. Below I intend to do this grounding my discourse on recent results generated in the relevant field. Theory would help the reader to perceive the deed of Anthim the Iberian in the contexts of nation building.

Thus, in the first section of the paper I will be concerned with general context.

The printing activities connect Anthim the Iberian with his native country Georgia as well. Georgians through the intersection of Patriarch of Jerusalem asked governing Prince of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) for help in founding of typography. Anthim the Iberian sent his co-laborer Mihail Ștefan (Stepaneshvili) to Georgia. The typography was established in the capital city of Tbilisi and in 1709 the first book had been printed. This fact which became possible in result of Anthim's activities in Romania had powerful impact on the process of Georgian identity forging. Hence, in the second section of the paper I intend to outline history of Georgian identity with the focus on 17th-18th

³ Keith Hitchins. *A Concise History of Romania*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p.46.

⁴ Ibid, p.48.

centuries' developments so to provide particular (spatially distant) context for evaluating the deed of Anthem the Iberian.

Theory and general context.

There are many definitions of phenomenon of nation. It is impossible even to mention all of them in one paper. However, I think that the available data could be represented by reducing diversity to three main approaches.⁵ First one is so called "primordialism". Adherents of this approach consider nation in a statist way ignoring even the possibility of development. Nations are perceived like biological species. There is seen no deference between ancient and modern communities, ethnic entities and nations. Of course, this is naïve, and in fact, incorrect understanding of such a complex phenomenon as is nation. In the most of cases this approach has no circulations among academics, only nationalists and common people share it.

The second is an approach which in academic jargon is referred as "modernist" approach. It is diametrically opposite to the above-mentioned one. It has challenged the primordial approach in 1960s. Modernists assert that nations are essentially novel. Nothing like them existed in pre-modern era. Nations are pure imaginations. They have no actual past. Nations' pasts and identities are constructed by nationalist intellectuals.⁶ Today this approach enjoys wide popularity among the academics; especially attractive is an idea about constructiveness of identities. From my point view too this is very important finding, however, in general, this approach also is not convincing, because by means of it is impossible to represent the past of those nations which have deep ethnic roots. The main importance of modernist approach is that it had played a decisive role in overcoming of primordialism and paves the way to the elaboration of the alternative approach called as "ethno-symbolism". It is which from my point of view the most helpful one for representation of nations.

Ethno-symbolists like modernists asserts that in the most of cases the nations are products of modernity and the decisive role in their shaping belongs to intellectuals, and nations in certain degree are constructions, however, they did not emerge from *ex-nihilo*. They are conceptualized in terms of pre-national ethnic cultures. The intellectuals transform pre-modern cultures into the national ones through the selection and re-conceptualization of ethnic heritages. Just from it they make nations' shared values, memories, symbols. Very important role play the myths of electivity, which are connected with sacral foundations of nations and actually reflect the advanced level of social cohesion. National culture is nothing but re-considered and revitalized ethnic artifacts. Thus, according to ethno-symbolism the nations are modern, novel and at the same time traditional and continuous.⁷

The transitions from ethnic level of identity development to national one though it implies political, economical preconditions are the cultural process called as "vernacular mobilizations". Nations are nothing but specific forms of culture. It is a public culture which means that all members of the community enjoy equal rights in regard of access to national goods, including education. It is quite understandable if one would have in mind the fact that nations are communities of citizens, i.e. they are socially homogeneous. It is clear that in case of understanding phenomenon of nation and process of nation building in this way, the great emphasis should be put on mediums of cultures' circulation. Homogenization of culture helps to cohesion among the members of would-be-nations. If in ancient times the invention of script had played the role of cultural transmitter, in modernity same social function belongs to the print media. Invention of printing was not only path-breaking fact in history of technologies; it was a turning point in social development of humankind as well: so called "imagined communities", i.e. national communities were formed through the printing media.

Here is a decisive role of print media which allows maximizing circulation and infects all members of the would-be-nation community with the national ideas. The result is a creation of "imagined

⁵ For concise and essential characteristics of deferent approached see A.D. Smith, *Nationalism. Theory, ideology, history*, polity press, reprint 2003, pp.43-61, though the author himself distinguishes not three but four paradigms.

⁶ The founder of this approach is Ernest Gellner. See his seminal book "Nations and Nationalism", Second edition, Introduced by John Breuilly, Corneil University Press, 2009.

⁷ For more details about the ethno-symbolist approach see A.D. Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press, pp.8-29.

communities” – the term coined by Benedict Anderson for designation of national communities.⁸ In general, media, creates “imagined communities”, printed media shapes nations.

With these theoretical points in mind one can grasp that Anthem the Iberian was one of the main contributors of the ambitious project which might be called as project *Romanian national consolidation*.

Georgian background.⁹

The modern Georgian nation emerged in 19th c. We can point to many indicators that bear this out; the character of inter-group bonds was rethought. If in the previous period the designation of Georgian in-group was the term *natesavi* (the main segment of this word, *tes-l-i*, in Georgian is “seed”, so, *natesavi* means a group of humans of a common origin), now it was *eri*. Simultaneously with this change, the sphere of usage of *natesavi* was narrowed to immediate relatives. In the Middle Ages *eri* was used to refer to socially-based identities. Only from 19th c did it begin to operate as term designating in-groups based on ethno-cultural grounds. *Natesavi* meant that the in-group consisted of members sharing a common origin, while in the case of *eri* the basis for membership was not specified. Thus, *eri* as well as *natesavi*, refer to a group of humans, though the last one does not accentuate (but does not exclude as well) the common origin of its members. They might be, but they also might not be the descendants of a common forebear.

In current usage, *eri* means nation. Already in the second half of 19th c Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) – the eminent Georgian writer and leader of national-liberation movement had entwined term *eri* with term of *nation*.¹⁰

⁸ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition, Verso, London, New-York, 2006.

⁹ The representation of history of Georgian identity is based on my own investigations, the most of which are published in form of monographs and papers in Georgian, English, Russian, French, and Turkish, among them: Mariam Chkhartishvili & Sophio Kadagishvili. Georgian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century: Values, Ideals, Symbols. *Proceedings of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Institute of Georgian History*, vol. IV, 2011, pp. 426-435. Mariam Chkhartishvili. The Shaping of Georgian national identity: *Iveria* and its readers. In: Ivan Biliarsky, Ovidiu Kristea, Anca Oroveanu (eds.) *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea.*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. 188-211. Mariam Chkhartishvili. Georgian nationalism and the idea of Georgian nation.- *Codrul Cosminului. Departamentul de Stiinte Umanesi Social-Politice*, vol. 19, # 2, December, 2013, pp.189-206. Available at http://atlas.usv.ro/www/codru_net/page19_2e.html (retrieved 2016-07-26). Mariam Chkhartishvili Daiaen/Diaochi: Ethnic Stigma. *Georgian Source-Studies*, vol. 15-16, 2013/2014, pp. 207-221 (in Georgian, summary in English, p.221). Available at <http://georgianstudies.ge/docs/XV-.pdf> (retrieved 2016-07-26). Mariam Chkhartishvili. Conceptualizing the Georgian nation within the Romanov Empire: Georgian Intellectuals in Search of a Matrix. In: Biagini, Antonello and Motta, Giovanna (eds). *Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, vol. I, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, pp. 202-213. Idem, Georgia, Kingdom of (fl. C12–13th). In: MacKenzie, John M. (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, 2015. Available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/book> (retrieved 2016-07-26). Mariam Chkhartishvili, Zurab Targamadze, Sophio Kadagishvili, *The Impulse of the Great War on Georgian Identity Development* In: Biagini, Antonello and Motta, Giovanna (eds). *The First World War: Analysis and Interpretation*, vol. 2., Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 75-86. Mariam Chkhartishvili. Development of Georgian historical thought in Middle Ages: comparative analysis of evidences on Kartli Kingdom. *Georgian Source-Studies*, vol. 17-18, 2015/2016, pp. 262- 268 (in Georgian, summary in English, p. 269). Available at <http://georgianstudies.ge/docs/XVII-XVIII.pdf> (retrieved 2016-07-26). For alternative representation of Georgian history the Anglophone reader can see many contributions, among them David Braund. *Georgia in Antiquity. A history of Colchis and Transcaucasia Iberia 550 BC-AD 562*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994. Ronald Grigor Suny. *The making of Georgian nation*. Second edition, Indiana University Press, 1994. Stephen H. JR. Rapp, *The Sasanian world through Georgian eyes. Caucasia and Iranian commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian literature*. Ashgate Publishing, 2014. Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires. A History of Georgia*. Reaktion books, 2012.

¹⁰ Mariam Tchkhartishvili. Création de l'idée de la Nation Géorgienne dans le cadre du Discours Européen, *Valeurs et Identite Europeenes Conférence Internationale*. Texte des Conférences, Tbilissi: Université d'Etat Ivane Javakhishvili, 2014, pp. 286-292. Available at: http://georgie-europe2014.tsu.ge/french_geo/EVROPULI-GIREBULEBEBI-DA-IDENTOBA-geo.pdf (retrieved 2016-07-26).

During the whole 19th c as well as 20th c (excluding the period from 1918 to 1921, i.e. the years of the independent Georgian state – the Democratic Republic of Georgia), Georgian identity was perceived in the framework of an ethno-nation. In 19th c Georgia was part of the Russian Empire and in-group consolidation was possible only in terms of ethnicity. This process continued in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, which was not an independent state. The rather feeble sense of common Soviet attachments was overwhelmed by strong ethno-nationalistic dispositions. This situation was maintained by inertia until very recently. Only since the *Rose Revolution* in 2003 Georgian society has begun gradually moving towards the conception of Georgian civic nation which is able to accommodate the ethno-cultural diversity of Georgia and forge an up-to-date national culture and multiethnic nation-state.

The modern Georgian was based on Georgian *ethnie*,¹¹ which has a very long history of development. Georgian ethnic community emerged many centuries before the commencement of Christian era. Originally, it was represented by Kingdom of Colchis and later on, namely, from 4th century BC - by Kingdom of Kartli. These states were stretched across the both sides of Likhi Range; however, they had different political centers: the capital city of the Colchian Kingdom was in the western part of Georgia, capital city of the Kingdom of Kartli was in eastern Georgia. These were ethnically well-defined entities. The 4th-3rd cc BC may be considered as a special stage in Georgian *ethnie* forging. The process of cultural unification had taken more intensive character and concerned all main ethnic markers. The Georgian language was given official status, while the use of other languages was restricted. Georgian was materialized through the unique script introduced by King Parnavaz (4th-3th). A new cult of the god Armazi was established. All members of Georgian in-group were obliged to venerate the idol.

In 4th c the Georgian *ethnie*'s consolidation process received a very powerful impact: Christianity became the official religion of the Georgians. The adoption of trans-ethnic ideological system caused further intensification of in-group solidarity and inner mobilization. It was this ideological crossroad that witnessed the creation of the myth of Georgian ethnic election, the core idea of which was the assertion that the Robe of Christ was stored in the capital city of the Kartli Kingdom Mtskheta. According to this ideology, Georgians were chosen among all Christian peoples as they live in the place where Lord's Tunic was kept and where in times of Second Coming would be established the 'New Jerusalem'. Thus, this version of Georgian messianic ideology implied that after Crucifixion the sacral center of the world would be moved from Jerusalem to Georgia. The myth of ethnic electivity was necessary for ensuring special status of Georgians within the Christian oicumene.¹²

In 5th c consolidation along ethnic borders continued. The Georgian Church became autocephalous. Georgians began perceiving themselves not as mere kinsfolk, but first of all as a sacred communion in Christ. Georgian became language of church service. Books of *Holy Writ* were translated into Georgian. The historiographical monument "Conversion of Georgia" (*moktsevay kartlisay*¹³) was compiled¹⁴ in which was represented not only adoption of Christianity as a official religion, but also entire

¹¹ The term is coined by Anthony Smith for designation of ethnic communities.

¹² For more details about the impact of Christianity on Georgian identity development and ideology of ethnic electivity see Mariam Chkhartishvili. *Georgian ethnie in the epoch of religious conversion*, Tbilisi: Universal (in Georgian, summary in English, pp.169-179). Mariam Chkhartishvili. Forging Georgian Identity. Ideology of Ethnic Election. *Caucasiologic Papers*, vol. I, 2009, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, pp. 386-391. Mariam Chkhartishvili . Mtskheta as New Jerusalem: hierotopy in the "Life of St Nino". In: M. Lidov (ed.) *New Jerusalem . Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacral Spaces.*, 2009, pp. 131-150 (in Russian, summary in English, pp 149-150). Available at http://hierotopy.ru/contents/New_Jerusalems_07_Chkhartishvili_MtshetaStNino_2009_RusEng.pdf (retrieved 2016-07-26).

¹³ Kartli is a ancient designation of Georgians and of the country they lived in. On the meaning of this term see Mariam Chkhartishvili. *Georgian ethnie in the epoch of religious conversion*, pp.35-65).

¹⁴ Mariam Chkhartishvili. *Problems of Study of Georgian Hagiography (The life of Saint Nino)*, Tbilisi, Metsniereba, 1987 (in Georgian, summary in Russian, pp.125-126). Mariam Chkhartishvili (ed.) *Conversion of Georgia (Kartli)*. Russian Translation. Tbilisi, Metsnieba, 1989 (Summary in English, pp.76-78). Available at http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/3164/1/Obrashenie_Gruzii.pdf (retrieved 2016-07-26).

history of Kartli Kingdom from times of its origin. In this monument “specialness” of Georgian community was emphasized.

In the following centuries the elaboration of Georgians’ global mission becomes more insightful. Georgian hagiographer Ioane Sabanidze (8thc) had conceptualized Georgia as an ‘edge’, ‘margin’; hagiographer identified Georgians as in-group “dwellers of the edge of this world”¹⁵, i.e. at the end of Christian oicumene. However, the hagiographer tried to make his readers (listeners) to be sure that this was edge with divine mission: the dwellers of this place actually were gate keepers, those who should receive the first attacks from side of non-Christians. Georgian community was perceived as “a mother of Saints”.

Christianized Georgia became part of ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’.¹⁶ Byzantine realm was favorable for Georgians. It did not prevent Georgian identity development and was comfortable for cultural exchanges. The united Georgian Kingdom was formed in 10th -12th centuries. It encompassed not only lands populated by Georgians, but also by other peoples. United Georgian Kingdom was strong feudal state with pan-Caucasian political ambitions and developed medieval culture. During this period Georgian community had reached the stage of pre-modern¹⁷ nation: Georgian inter-group bonds had become very strong. Collective memory was reflected in historiographical writing “Life of Georgia” (Kartlis tskhovreba”). This was collection of compilations. New versions of ethnic electivity also emerged. One of them was linked with divinity of Georgian ruling house of Bagrationi. Simultaneously with this another versions of Georgians’ electivity were elaborated. Thus, during centuries sense of electivity did exist as a marker of Georgian identity.

From the 13th c onwards, due to domestic as well as outside factors, the political borders of the Georgian state began gradually narrowing. Ultimately, the unifying frame was destroyed altogether. However, destruction concerned only a superficial political marker. What actually happened was that the Georgian *ethnie* broke into smaller political units. Instead of one single state, several political bodies were carriers of Georgianness. It is customary in Georgian historiography to consider the political disintegration as a very unfavorable event in the history of the Georgian nation. Unfavorable circumstances caused the fragmentation, but the fragmentation itself was adequate respond to mortal challenges. Actually, it increased Georgian community’s chance for survival.

Political fragmentation and emergence of several semi-independent political bodies on the place of united Georgian state did not rupture Georgian ethno-cultural unity. The most eloquent testimony for this assertion is the Georgian language, which is characterized by the emergence of a standard linguistic code at a very earlier stage. Already in pre-modern times language was perceived as unique characteristic of Georgian self.¹⁸

The period of inner disorder was very hard time for Georgian identity development. The situation had been worsened by the changes at international arena. The collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 was great challenge to Georgia. She was left against the non-Christian East/Asia alone, without political allies and favorable cultural space. Georgians began looking for supporters and partners in Western Europe. But centuries had passed by in fruitless attempts. Georgian Orthodox kings were ready to created favorable conditions for catholic missionaries’ activities in Georgia. In the letters to Popes they emphasized their role as guardians of Christian realm.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ilia Abuladze (ed.). *Monuments of old hagiographical literature*, vol. 1., Tbilisi, Metsniereba, 1963 p.49.

¹⁶ The term was coined by Dimitri Obolonsky. See his seminal work *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe in 500-1453* PHC, New York Washington, 1971.

¹⁷ A.D. Smith, *Nationalism. Theory, ideology, history*, pp. 109-111.

¹⁸ Mariam Chkhartishvili & Ketevan Mania. Linguistic marker of Georgian identity in the pre-modern era and in time of national consolidation. *Proceedings “Language and culture”*. Kutaisi, 2010, pp. 472-483 (in Georgian, summary in English).

¹⁹ See Murman Papashvili. *Interrelations between Georgia and Rome in 6th-20th cc*, Tbilisi, 1995. (in Georgian).

The permanent devastating invasions of enemies not only destroyed unifying political frame, but also caused gradual downfall of culture.²⁰ In the seventeenth century political situation was still hard, despite this it was time of relative relaxation. From the second quarter of this century Kingdom of Kartli was ruled by converted into Islam Georgian Kings. Persia was weakened and at the same time the Georgian Kings' policy towards Shahs became more flexible. In result of these circumstances Georgians' life became more or less peaceful. This favorable situation resulted in cultural renaissance. This process was promoted by the group of enlightened intellectuals. One of the most remarkable among the Georgian cultural elite was the King Vakhtang VI (1675–1737).²¹ He was in power from 1704, however as a King he ruled in 1716-1724. He was a King of one of the political unite in the eastern part of Georgia, namely, the Kingdom of Kartli. He spent half of his life beyond the Georgia. At first he was forced to live during the years at the Persian royal court awaiting confirmation from Shah to occupy the throne of. As necessary requirement for ascending the throne was change of Christian faith. Vakhtang VI did not agree to do this and stayed in Persia. He lived here almost as prison. He tried to receive support from European countries, secretly sent the famous erudite Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani (1658–1726) to France and Italy; however, this mission had not any practical results. Finally, hopeless Vakhtang adopted Islam and returned in his native country as a King. However, very soon he publicly abandoned Islam and continued openly to do Georgian politics. Because of this he was again forced to leave homeland. He asked Russian authorities for refuge and in 1724 with numerous retainues immigrated to Russia where he died in 1737.

In short intervals of peace Vakhtang VI tried to promote very important reforms. Part of them were targeted at strengthening of state institutions and are very important for representing of Georgian history of this period, however, in this paper I intend to concern only activities of the King in cultural sphere which actually were nothing but preparing of “building blocks” of Georgian national identity.

As the reader was able to see from the above displayed brief survey, Georgian identity was based on several main markers. First of all these were: religion, language, shared memories and sense of uniqueness. All main stages of identity development were accompanied with processes of strengthening of these markers. As examples I can refer to the facts which I have already mentioned above: in the 4th -5th cc was elaborated ideology of Georgian ethnic electivity based on belief that Lord's Tunic was kept in Georgia. In this very period important historiographical writing was composed, language also was conceptualized as exclusive marker.²² In the 11th century was elaborated new version of elective ideology, Orthodoxy became important feature of Georgian identity and tool for expansion of Georgian culture beyond the ethnic borders. Language also was socially very important. The 17th century saw strengthening all of these markers. The King Vakhtang VI and his co-laborers contributed to fill them with new sense and social potency. Actually, these activities heralded the beginning of a new stage in history of Georgian identity.

As was already mentioned shared memories play decisive role in forging cultural identities. It is why to each stage of identity development “served” relevant historical writings. To the development of genre of Georgian historical writing greatly contributed King Vakhtang VI. He summoned “learned men” and ordered them to established “Life of Georgia” using all available manuscripts of the monument which, as I have already noted, was composed in the 11th century. This was collection of historical compilations. The collection was complementing from time to time with new compositions. However, because of political and economical hardship this process was stopped for centuries and by the epoch under the analysis “The life of Georgia” was interrupted at the events of 14th century. The “learned men” solved successfully all problems connected with obtaining and studying of sources and provided up-to-date texts

²⁰ For the characterization of periods of ancient Georgian literature see: Korneli Kekelidze. *The history of ancient Georgian literature*, Tbilisi, Tbilisi University Press, vol.2, 1952, pp. 18-20 (in Georgian).

²¹ The great number of academic literature is devoted to the King Vakhtang's political and cultural activities, among them monograph by Levan Menabde *Vakhtang VI*, Tbilisi, 2011 (in Georgian).

²² Mariam Chkhartishvili & Ketevan Mania. Linguistic Marker of Georgian Identity in Pre-modern Era and in Time of National Consolidation. In: *Proceedings of the international “Language and Culture”*, Kutaisi, 2010, pp.472-483 (in Georgian, summary in English).

of old writings and also voluminous representation of those centuries which were missing. Thus, one of the most important markers of collective cultural identities was strengthened.

However this was only one point in the King's cultural²³ activities. His great concern was Georgian language as well. He helped to its development through two ways: by initiating dictionary and establishing printing in Georgia.

So that to understand the importance of this fact one should realize the importance of language as a marker of collective cultural identity. Language more than other markers ensures strength of social cohesion. To the community's cohesion first of all is important communicative function of language, which guarantees exchanges not only in sphere of culture, but also helps to unimpeded circulation of solidarity sentiments and ideologies within the in-group. Thus, it create favorable environment for in-group's homogeneity and exclusiveness. In addition language has symbolic meaning. Linguistic symbolism is linked with collective perceptions of in-group members, their convictions that native language is blessed and divine. Both these functions co-exist. Social meaning of language and its connection with identity is well studied in special literature.²⁴

King Vakhtang's close relative, mentor and co-laborer Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani compiled dictionary of Georgian language. He worked during many years and had completed his work by 1716. In special literature has been already noted that the compiling of dictionary was not Orbelianis' own initiative. Impulse came from politician, in particular, from the King Vakhtang.²⁵ Vakhtang himself chose title for this dictionary, edited many of its entries. In general the dictionary was compiling under his supervision. Both the King and Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani ascribed to language role of an arbiter for the Georgian speaking collective.²⁶

It is interesting how Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani saw this "arbitrage". He was sure that dictionary could help Georgians to regenerate the original language which was corrupted during the centuries. Thus, Sulokhan-Saba wanted his readers to believe that he was not introducing something essentially novel, but only uncovering authentic forms of Georgian which were kept beneath the corrupted layers.²⁷ He asserted continuity of linguistic identity from times of King Pharnavas (4th-3th cc). According to him the aim of his work he saw in finding and revitalizing standard Georgian. Actually, he was making standard language, however, thought that perfectness of forms came from the remote past. Arguing for the continuity of identity is a characteristic feature of nationalism and first sign of national mobilization process' commencement. From this point of view is quite convincing that some scholars treat Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani for his contribution in lexicology as predecessor of Ilia Chavchavadze - the founding father of Georgian nation.²⁸ The same could be said about initiator of the dictionary, i.e. the King Vakhtang VI.

Language itself is very important tool for making exclusive in-groups; written languages as vehicles, as mediums are far more powerful. As for printed media they can multiply the texts and make communities homogeneous as they infect with one and same ideas huge number of in-group members: "... the arrival of *print capitalism* and widespread written language revolutionized both language use, and eventually ideas of nation and nationality... Printing enabled planned utterances to be devised and circulated. Communication was no longer limited to formulaic administration, religious tracts, or spontaneous speech. Ideas and theories were propagated, especially concerning religion. With the invention of the printing press, written ideas could be reproduced on a massive scale, not only in the

²³ I should add, that also "political" as in general culture and power are firmly connected.

²⁴ Einar Haugen. Dialect, language, nation. In: J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith (eds). *Nationalism Critical Concepts in Political Science*, vol. IV, London and New York, Routledge, pp.1347-1348.

²⁵ Tinatin Bokvadze. *Ideologized Values*, Tbilisi University Press, Tbilisi, 2005 (in Georgian, summary in English, pp.), p.92

²⁶ Ibid. p. 93.

²⁷ Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani. *Dictionary of Georgian language*. Established according to authentic copies, prepared for publication supplied with investigation and appendix by Ilia Abuladze, Tbilisi, Merani, p. 28.

²⁸ Zaza Piranishvili. Saba and Georgian Cosmos. In: I.Ratiani (ed.). *The collection dedicated to Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani's 350 anniversary*, Tbilisi, Institute of the Georgian literature, p.19.

Church Latin that was the traditional language of European religion, but in vernaculars that could be more widely understood”.²⁹

I will not be enlarged about the details of founding the typography³⁰ in Tbilisi which as it was already mentioned was initiative of Vakhtang VI and had become possible with support of Romanians. In 1709 three books were printed: *Gospel*, *Psalms* and *Acts of the Apostles*. These were not first case of printing books in Georgian, however, this was first case when Georgian books were printed in Georgia.³¹ Twenty books had been printed during about decade (from 1709 until 1722). All of them were of religious character. Solely one was belonged to the genre of secular literature. This was “The knight in panther’s skin” by Rustaveli (12th c).³² It was accompanied by comments of Vakhtang VI. These comments are considered as a first attempt of scientific approach to this poem and beginning of scientific Rustvelology. Printing the poem about carnal love was challenge to the clerics. Vakhtangs’ attitude to the poem was positive. He treated it in allegoric way. Actually, this was not fact of history of Georgian literature or printing. This was sign of secularization of culture: marker of the transition to modernity and national stage of identity development.

Thus, cultural renaissance in 17th-18th centuries Georgia was nothing but preparation to great turn. To this process directly or indirectly contributed many enlightened Georgian intellectuals, among them, Anthim the Iberian who was involved in analogues processes in Romania. I think it would be very promising if in future scholars will compare in detail the developments in 17th-18th centuries’ Georgia and Romania. The comparison of this kind has already precedent. I mean Professor Keith Hitchins’ thought-provoking paper devoted to the comparing Georgia and Romania in the second half of 18th century.³³

Conclusion.

The formation of Georgian nation was a durable process. It was culminated in the emergence of first Georgian nation-state: Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918. However, the prerequisites of this crucial fact of Georgian past had emerged many centuries earlier of this date. The 17th-18th centuries might be considered as an eve of Georgian nation’s consolidation. It is why for representation of history of Georgian identity these centuries deserves special attention. The focus of the present investigation was the process of cultural self-determination. It is a period when Georgian realm was politically disintegrated. Hence, it was relevant to question: how was possible to retain identity? I have tried to answer this question through elaboration of the main markers of Georgian identity. In this context was analyzed foundation of first typography in Georgia and impact of this fact on further social developments. It is obvious that Georgian and Romanian histories of this period should be placed one and same context and Anthim the Iberian is a person who ensured cultural exchanges between these two Orthodox peoples.

²⁹ Graham Hall. Where do standard languages come from? Power, print and nations, *Iatefl Gisig Newsletter*, vol. XVIII, 2005.

³⁰ There are available great number of academic literature on subject. I limit myself with refereeing to the book by Otar Gvinchidze. *Anthim the Iberian - typographer and political worker*. Tbilisi, Metsniereba, 1973 (in Georgian).

³¹ Avtandil Ioseliani. *Issues of History of Georgian writing, book and typography* (from ancient times until 1960s), Tbilisi, Metsniereba, 1990.

³² The number of academic literature in Georgian devoted to the poem is great. For the Anglophone reader I can refer to contribution by Elguja Khintibidze. Towards Rustaveli’s place in medieval European-Christian thought. In: Nutsubidze, Tamar, Horn, Cornelia, and Lourié, Basil (eds). *Georgian Christian thought and its cultural context*. Memorial volume for the 125 Anniversary of Shalva Nutsubidze (1888-1969). *Texts and studies in Eastern Christianity*. vol. 2, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2014. pp. 285-307.

³³ Keith Hitchins. Great powers, Small powers: Wallachia and Georgia confront of the eastern question, 1768-1802. In: Ivan Biliarsky, Ovidiu Kristea, Anca Oroveanu (eds.) *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea.*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp.12-28.

“Romanian soil represented for Antim Iverianu a generous space for learning, writing and disseminating among people deep lessons of Orthodoxy, the truth of philosophical and moral values about the Universe and human civilization,” notes in her interesting paper Maria Cornelia Bârliba.³⁴

I fully agree with this view; however, on a ground of the above-presented data I dare to continue it in the following way: it was Georgian background which made Anthim the Iberian open to favorable conditions and helped him to understand main currents of Romanian developments. After all, his native country and Romania were involved in similar processes of identity forging.

³⁴ Maria Cornelia Bârliba. Antim Iverianu – A model of intellectual dialogue. In: *Georgia and European World. Philosophical-cultural dialogue. Dedicated to Anthim the Iberian*, Tbilisi, 2009, p. 40.