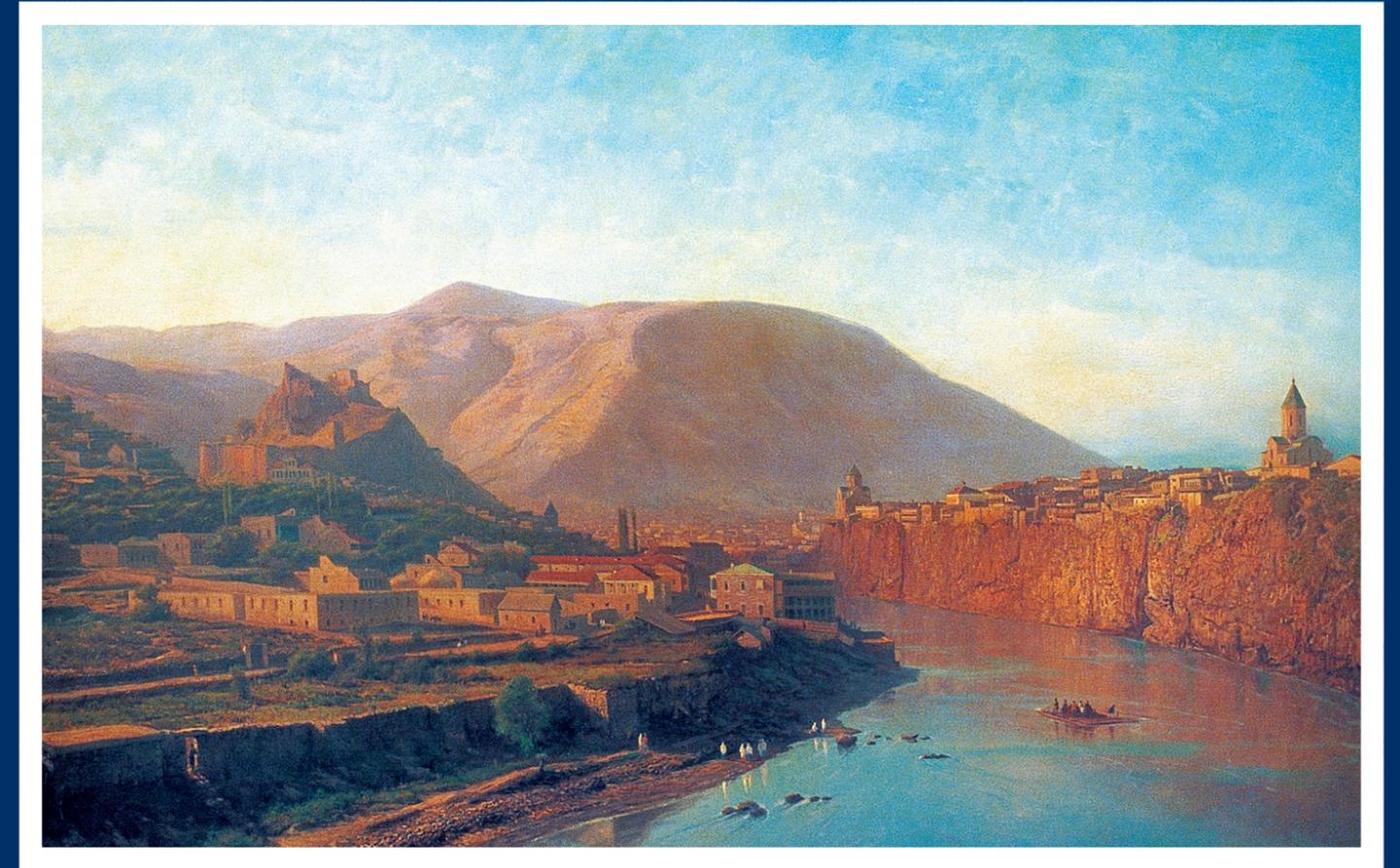


MEMORIES OF TIFLIS Edited by Nicolas V. Iljine



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Fachhochschulverlag  
Frankfurt am Main

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ПЛАНЪ  
ГОРОДА  
**ТИФЛИСА**

ПРИЛОЖ. КЪ ПУТЕВОД. Г. МОСКВИЧА.

МАСШТАБЪ  
1:100,000



Historical city map of Tiflis (Tbilisi) drawn to scale of 1:11,700  
1912 by Rudnev D. Cartographic Est.,  
Saint Petersburg



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## Greeting *Vasili Tsereteli*

Tbilisi has been a vital cultural, political, and economic center of the Caucasus for centuries, as the capital of Georgian kingdoms and republics. Under Russian rule, 1801-1917, it was called Tiflis and was the seat of the Imperial Viceroy for the entire region.

I was born in Tbilisi, my family has its roots there, I remember well, as a schoolboy that the archeology and ethnography of our native Georgia were themes that my Grandfather, Zurab, discussed when he was back home from expedition in distant mountainous region. The results, as I learnt later, were the publishing of several volumes.

It is a particular pleasure to support this new book edited by my friend and art world colleague, Nicolas Ilijine, to whom we offered our hospitality during his research trips to Tbilisi.

To create MEMORIES OF TIFLIS, a book that captures the history and spirit of Tbilisi, Nicolas Ilijine has assembled a group of prominent experts covering the architecture, art, music, folklore, literature and photography of the pre- and earliest Soviet period; much of the focus is on the turn of the century, when Georgia's vibrant capital played an important part in the avant-garde.

The enormous array of photographs gives a vivid picture of everyday life, from the bustle of commerce, the variety of ethnic and religious groups, to the glamor of high society. The beauty of the region and its people is captured in glorious images.

Tbilisi is located in the crossroads of East and West between the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea, and it was renowned for its rich culture, art, music, and of course, wines.

MEMORIES OF TIFLIS is a valuable addition to the very few books available in English for the interested reader and traveler. It is much more than a travel guide, it is a gorgeous reference work that belongs on every bookshelf.

*Vasili Tsereteli, Executive Director  
Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art*

## Foreword *Nicolas V. Iljine*

My first indirect contact with Georgia was in 1965 when a doctor from Tbilisi visiting Germany gave me a copy of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, a unique epic poem by the twelfth-century Georgian author Shota Rustaveli. Later I met Georgian film directors Otar Iosseliani, Giorgi Daniela and Lana Gogoberidze and was thrilled watching Sergei Parajanov's films. I became fascinated by the Georgian culture.

My first trip to Tbilisi was in June 2008 to attend the three-day-long wedding celebrations of my singer friend Miranda Mirianashvili and Leonid Ogarev. Miranda and her sister Medea were great hosts on several occasions in Tbilisi.

The picturesque old Tiflis architecture, draped in the hills across the river Kura, is finely chiseled, and the Georgian capital has a vivid history dating to the fifth century with many wars and invasions by Persians, Arabs, Mongols and Turks until the annexation by the Russian Empire in 1801.

I collected old postcards for this book, as I did for my books on old Odessa and old Baku. I took several more trips in the last 10 years, meeting people who helped me create this chronicle of Tiflis. I focused on the period 1870-1920s, which was the most vibrant time in all the manifestations of culture. Thus, we only partly cover the beginnings of the Soviet period regarding cultural themes.

Besides the authors in this book I am indebted to many friends for their tireless help and advice:

Irena Popiashvili, who had headed an art gallery in New York and is the founder and dean of the Visual Arts and Design School at the Free University of Tbilisi, introduced me to most of our authors and spent much time helping me discover today's culture in Tbilisi off the beaten track.

Levan Taktakishvili, Head of the Digital Department at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, for advice and access to the rich photo collection.

Lika Manatsashvili, Chief Curator, Tbilisi History Museum, for help and providing advice and photographic material.

Professor Tamila Tsagareishvili, Curator of the Tbilisi Ethnographic Museum, from whom my wife, Christa, and I learned about the architecture and archaeology of different regions of Georgia.

Zurab and Vasili Tsereteli, Directors of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, who graciously hosted us in their Tbilisi residence.

Baadur Kobliamidze, Architect, Tbilisi, who shared his collection of old wine labels and advertisements.

Professor Dr. David Lordkipanidze, General Director of the National Museum of Georgia, who provided valuable advice and reproduction permissions from the many museums he oversees.

Antonina W. Bouis, New York, for translations from the Russian and Jean-Claude Bouis for editing and reviewing the manuscript.

Amanda Singer, New York, for designing and editing.

Prof. Ulrich Stascheit who, not only because of his Georgian wife, encouraged me to engage the Fachhochschulverlag Frankfurt am Main he is involved in, especially in view of Georgia being the guest country at the 2018 International Frankfurt Book Fair.

Dr. Lev. A. Sviridov who was a strong moral & practical support using his LAS Press in New York.

My deep gratitude goes to Vasily Tsereteli, Executive Director of the Moscow Museum of Modern Art for providing the support and enabling this publication.

Last but not least, David Shimshilashvili and his gallerist wife, Khatuna Melikishvili, who demonstrated the traditions of Georgian hospitality and introduced us to artists and academics.

Indeed there are not many countries that are so warmly welcoming and helpful in spite of a difficult economic situation and unfortunate political strife with their big northern neighbor.

*Nicolas V. Iljine*



Ваадур Коблиамидзе Collection







Grigory Gagarin, *Maidan*. Tiflis. Paper, cardboard, pencil. Middle 19th century; Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi History Museum (Caravansera)

# Tiflis History *Aka Morchiladze*

## **A Legendary Heritage Survives**

Tbilisi, a comparatively large city for such a small country like Georgia, lies in its heart, on both banks of the river Mtkvari.

It is hard to imagine Georgia without Tbilisi, either geographically, politically or spiritually. That's how it all started, adding up many events kept in its history over the years.

Tbilisi is a huge world in its own right, with a rich and noble heritage. In fact, its long and tangled history, quite colorful, tragic and cheerful, is nothing else but an unbroken story of losing and regaining it, through fierce fighting and wars of course. As many things in our lives, the story begins with a legend, but it's also obvious that it all started well before the legend.

It was in the 5th century:

At the time the king was Vakhtang Gorgasali, one of the greatest figures of the Georgian history. A warrior king, the monarch building forts and castles, the one who united the country and fought all his life only to die in battle from an arrow shot in the back.

One story runs as follows:

Vakhtang Gorgasali is supposed to have hunted in the area that is now the oldest part of Tbilisi. The king's hawk or possibly his falcon must have chased a pheasant and after a while both, the bird of prey and its prey were found in the gorge with a warm stream.

The gorge became the place where eventually the city was built and still exists. Its name also derives from the word "tbili," which means "warm." The warm stream surely was a gift from the nature, hitherto unnoticed and unappreciated, but extremely significant and useful for King Vakhtang.

There is another version of the legend, not involving birds though:

Vakhtang Gorgasali shot an arrow at a roe-deer. The hunting company chased the wounded animal and saw it bathe in the warm spring, heal its wound and escape from the gorge, with the arrow still piercing its body. The hunters didn't chase it, apparently stunned by the miracle. Anyway, the gorge with the warm water captured their attention. They couldn't have known at the time, but the natural springs are rich in sulfur.

As a result, King Vakhtang closely studied the location and decided to build a fort there. It was completed by his son Dachi who even moved his household to the new place from the ancient capital Mtskheta, which has nearly merged with Tbilisi nowadays.

Since then Tbilisi has been the capital of Georgia.

If it at times it wasn't, every king strove for it to be because no other city in Georgia, which was sometimes united into a powerful kingdom but at most times divided into numerous small kingdoms and counties, has faced so much destruction, so many raids and sieges as Tbilisi.

In the fifteen centuries of its existence Tbilisi has been a booming polis, a flourishing city at the trade crossroads, a significant political center, a fortified stronghold, as well as an impoverished, ransacked and gloomy settlement.

Moving away from legend, it is thought that the warm springs didn't play the crucial role in King Vakhtang's decision. As befits a true strategic mind that had founded several cities and built forts around the country, he must have seen the advantages of the location he chose for his capital. Moreover, it is argued that there already was a fort which he rebuilt, upgraded and expanded, turning it into his new stronghold.

If we consider archaeological finds, the history of Tbilisi moves back several millennia, which is fully testified by the ancient settlement excavations. Now it looks as though King Vakhtang was able to foresee the auspicious position of the site, which indeed proved his efforts worthwhile. While his other cities and forts perished, turned into ruins, Tbilisi still stands where the king wanted it to be.

The rest of the history is very much similar to those of other early medieval urban settlements.

### **A Site of Blood and Tears Is Revived**

From the very start, Tbilisi was a battle site, a place that has had its share of blood and tears.

The Khazars can be cited as one of the first to have burned the city down, the Persians as the first of its foreign rulers and the Arabs as those who came to the city with a firm intention of staying forever.

The Emirate of Tbilisi, El-Tibilisi, must have been a tiny episode in the Caliphate's history of unstoppable conquest. When the Arabs invaded Eastern Georgia, they ruled the whole region from Tbilisi.

With time, as soon as the Georgians regained strength, the lands ruled by the Arabs shrank, confining the political entity called the Emirate of Tbilisi to the city and its environs as a result. Being too remote from the Caliphate itself, El-Tibilisi eventually drifted away from its supreme power, aiming to break away from it.

Three dynasties of Arab emirs ruled Tbilisi for nearly four hundred years. And all along, they were constantly challenged by the city monks, a kind of an urban parliament group that ultimately succeeded in stripping them of their power.

The Arab rule came to an end when David the Builder seized the city in 1122, moving the throne to Tbilisi for eternity, for his descendants, as the historical annals have it.

A hundred years of peace and prosperity followed. The monarch's throne was firmly established in Tbilisi, occupied by King David's descendants, among them Queen Tamar,

Grigory Gagarin, *Interior of Tamamshev Theatre*. Tiflis.  
Paper, watercolor. Middle 19th century; Georgian National  
Museum, Tbilisi History Museum (Caravanserai)



Grigory Gagarin, *Interior of Tamamshev Theatre*. Tiflis.  
Paper, watercolor. Middle 19th century; Georgian National  
Museum, Tbilisi History Museum (Caravanserai)



the greatest monarchs in the Georgian history, the symbol of greatness and national pride. Allegedly, no one was sentenced to death during her reign.

However, the centuries that followed were marked with inevitable wars, invasions, conquests and subservience, as well as constant attempts from the Georgian kings to regain the city and its fort.

Dramatic as it may sound, the five hundred years of ordeal in Georgia invariably centered on the struggle for Tbilisi. The Mongols didn't burn down the city. They simply extended their rule to include the country. Actually, before that, the city was raided and its inhabitants killed by Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, the last ruler of the Khwarezmian Empire, himself pursued by the Mongols. In a way, he paved the road for their appearance.

If there was anyone striving to build a vast empire in the East, they considered it their holy duty to take over Tbilisi. Avoiding a lengthy discussion of the city's geopolitical significance, it would suffice to mention that numerous khans, shahs and sultans raided, invaded and conquered the capital, among them Tamerlane, Shah Abbās and other historical personae. But still, it seems the eternity sided with Tbilisi and the Georgian kings.

The alteration of Persian and Ottoman garrisons also brought periods of lull and comparative peace. These lasted as long as the Georgian monarch reigning at the time complied with the ruling empires.

The periods of peace varied in length and frequency, but ultimately they shaped the character of the city, its culture and subcultures, its intercultural world that already must have been a mixture of religions, languages, traditions and relationships.

The apparent diversity of the city, its colorful character and typical traits are well documented in the travelogues of various visitors. Most notably, the lively city never failed to impress foreign travelers.

Tbilisi seemed to be doomed to house alien garrisons for centuries, destined to be reconciled with the idea forever, but after all those years of losing and regaining the city, in the middle of the 18th century, encouraged by the support of the loyal inhabitants, King Erekle II managed to drive the Persians out of Tbilisi, raising Georgian flags over the capital.

Setting aside an attempt to sort through the tangled political prerequisites for the time being, the event proved to be a true turning point in the history of the country.

The ensuing peace lasted for fifty years until King Erekle, aging and exhausted, failed to confront a large Persian military campaign led by Agha Mohammad Khan, and the enemy marched into the city.

It was the last devastation Tbilisi was to experience. Agha Mohammad Khan looted, burned and destroyed the city, literally razing it to the ground. Having massacred the population, he bathed in the sulfur baths and left, intending to come back but didn't because he was assassinated by a group of conspirators.

## **Empire Overrides Monarchy**

Tbilisi met the start of the 19th century depressive, destroyed, with a handful of inhabitants and a new political development: the Russian Empire, the hitherto known ally, abolished the Georgian monarchy. The country reigned by the Bagrationi dynasty for over ten centuries was now called the Tbilisi Province (guberniya).

Thus started Russian rule. The Russian army quietly marched into Tbilisi. There was no resistance, no fighting. Only the royal family was persecuted. Having survived so many centuries under numerous Eastern despotic rulers and liberated from them only recently, the city began to lead a completely different life, guided by new rules and regulations, new legislation and behavioral patterns.

If we adopt a cultural viewpoint for the moment, it can be stated that the entire change only benefitted the already impressive diversity of the city.

The commander-in-chief responsible for the whole Transcaucasia, later called the viceroy, was stationed in Tbilisi. Every single commander-in-chief was a military person, which was no surprise considering there was no other form of governance in the Russian Empire. Consequently, the ruling style and techniques were a blend of military and political methods. For instance, before the Russians there were no prisons as such in Georgia, the legal system being completely different from the new rule.

King Erekle II reigned for more than fifty years in Eastern Georgia, an epoch that left a long-lasting influence on Tbilisi.

Erekle was an impressive figure. It is widely acknowledged that he was endowed with an extraordinary military talent and courage, a king who never shied from actual battle, an outstanding commander, accomplished in strategy and tactics. He was likewise renowned for his governance marked with many reforms. On the whole, he was extremely interesting as a monarch, a civilian, a citizen – as a person.

No other Georgian king has provided the number of anecdotes comparable to those about King Erekle. The folklore abounds in stories about how the king interacted with his subjects, the nobility and common people, directly or indirectly. Never before him was the monarch so real and tangible, his presence physically felt by everyone in the country. Moreover, in his time the capital acquired its unique character and style.

The city that could no longer boast of the earlier wealth and prosperity used those fifty years of peace to revive something deeply buried in its heart, something intrinsic, but unable to spread its wings because they had been clipped for so long.

One traveler of the period simply describes Tbilisi as the House of Joy. In a way, the story of Tbilisi might be a quest for the lost joy, the desire to revive it.

In King Erekle's times the style and taste of Tbilisi were quite remarkable. An exquisite dresser, the king became a role model for

the inhabitants. The general trend was to dress up, predominantly in red, yellow, green and blue colors. The clothes were rather expensive, especially among the young, who favored silver, the best weapons, the best horses, and select harnesses.

Noblemen, merchants, craftsmen and commoners – all had their own clothes and distinct styles, very colorful as a rule, eye-catching and memorable. Remembering his glory days, Sayat-Nova, a poet and ashik, said he used to walk into the royal parties wearing bright red. The flashy, colorful attire of another poet, Besik Gabashvili, often became the talk of the town.

At the time elegance, smart looks and being well-groomed were the order of the day in Tbilisi. Every tiny detail mattered, buttons and all. Nothing was mass produced, everything came as a one-off, unique item. History has kept a letter written by Prince Levan to his hatter, which reads as a treatise on what a hat should be, what the customer wishes to be done to fully suit his taste.

There is a certain passion there. But there was another kind of passion – poetry. The period was marked with the power of verse, permeating every aspect of the city life.

In those days versification was such an everyday matter that even King Erekle, if in the mood, would add a short verse to his signature when issuing orders. Ordinary letters, commonplace communications, were often done in verses. Everyone, whether able or not, tried to write poems, produce rhyming texts,

because it was considered to be fashionable, even chic. Those who couldn't, usually learned how to or commissioned others to write poetry for them.

Poems were written on handkerchiefs, walls, tree trunks, plates, cups and glasses, jewelry boxes, and on pieces of paper, of course. The impromptu verses were often accompanied by musical instruments, thus giving birth to the urban songs of the time.

Sayat-Nova, an Armenian ashik from Tbilisi, was the first to choose Persian instruments and tunes for his Georgian and Armenian poetry.

The Tbilisi of the time was a must-visit city for all travelling ashiks from the Eastern countries. If anyone wished to challenge another poet, it had to be in Tbilisi.

But as opposed to other great Eastern cities, small Tbilisi definitely stood out for its wine and feasts.

There were plenty of feasts, usually rather noisy at that. Merrymaking could start anywhere for any reason, but invariably finished in the sulfur baths. Just like the legendary pheasant, hawk or falcon.

Once Alexander Pushkin briefly visited the city, complained about the exuberant prices but excitedly described the local baths and an unforgettable massage he was given by Hassan, a masseur without a nose.

The Tbilisi baths give an illusion of rebirth, while a rigorous scrubbing and massage performed by their skillful masseurs was a magnificent means to feel born anew and invigorated.

On the whole, Tbilisi is nothing else but a hope of rebirth and renewal. But it's too early to describe Pushkin's times.

In King Erekle's times Tbilisi had its own hero, a handsome poet who loved dressing well, Besik Gabashvili: the son of an influential, strict priest, he was at the heart of many romantic scandals. Cherished and pampered by his beloved city, the young man still left his hometown and, like many true poets, died in a foreign land.

The carnivals of Tbilisi, its mask and costume celebrations such as Keenoba, the fertility festival, are worth a separate mention, as well as mass boxing competitions with their rather hot-blooded imitation of real fighting or military agility shows, a tradition rooted in the constant expectation of imminent wars and subsequent ordeal.

Waiting for hard times with carnivals – facing misfortune with poems or music that roamed every street mingling with the bell sounds from Georgian and Armenian churches, as well as the muezzin calls from two mosques – was nothing but the expression of joy and festivity coming from the depths of the heart.

But was the atmosphere created by solely the merrymakers?

Davit Orbeliani, popularly called Davit the Commander thanks to his numerous battles in the foreign lands, undertook the task of translating a thick Persian chivalric romance. He accomplished it with such passion and language that for more than a hundred years the book was a bestseller, favorite reading in Tbilisi.

The literature translated in King Erekle's time continued to grip the Tbilisi readers. Soon in well-off houses they would be turning the pages of Hugo and Dickens, then Zola and Symbolists, even reciting their poems by heart, but common people remained loyal to *Qaramaniani*, Davit the Commander's translation, as well as a score of similar romances regularly supplied by the city's small printing houses.

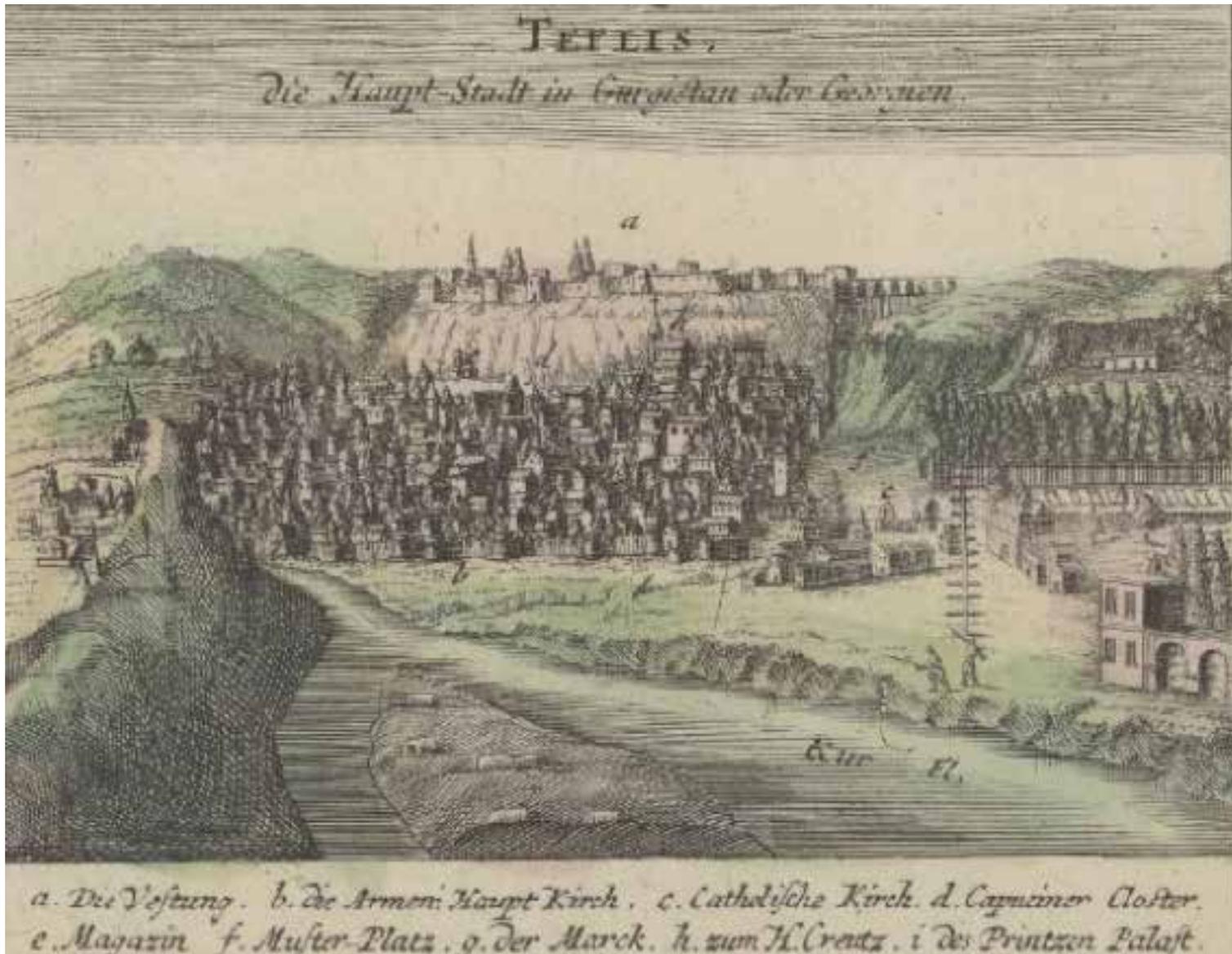
But that will come later.

The mood for poetry, the desire to dress up, the wish to relax and enjoy oneself continued well into the city already occupied by the Russian Empire.

Ultimately, somehow the city was naturally exuberant, enjoying the peaceful period, feeling hopeful and, as another poet-commander Grigol Orbeliani said, forever fighting the cruel destiny.

Outside Tbilisi the roads posed serious threats to travelers. Prince Levan was ambushed along one of them and King Erekle devoted his life to making them safer.

And all the while, Tbilisi stood proud, losing itself in merrymaking and enjoying life with gusto.



Imprimerie Royale, 1717

Tbilisi merchants who had roamed the near and distant lands, often creditors of the monarch, the Tbilisi nobility, urban noise and street criers, colors, artisans, vendors and guild craftsmen clad in black – the true defenders of the common people's morale: such was the general spirit of the city.

The flat-roofed houses crawling uphill that had maintained the closely-knit community spirit for many years and kept the sense of unity and homeliness literally vanished overnight.

Agha Mohammad Khan's invasion failed to kill Tbilisi, but left it struggling for life. The buildings were destroyed, libraries burnt, houses looted, inhabitants massacred, the people who had represented the nation dispersed, King Erekle died in the town of Telavi, on the same bed he was born.

Erekle's time was over. The 19th century set in.

### **“House of Joy” Shines Despite Russian Conquest**

Giorgi, the last Georgian monarch, had put his trust in Russia. Pious and open-hearted in an old-fashioned way, he firmly believed that when one is helped, it is quite sufficient to acknowledge the supremacy of the helper. His death was immediately followed by the final and irreversible abolition of his kingdom. Tbilisi was turned into one of the territorial administrative centers.

Initially, in the beginning of the Russian governance, Tbilisi was no more than a stronghold guarding the roads leading south, east and west, and the place where the expansion was to start when new lands would be taken over by the Empire.

At the time Tbilisi acquired a somewhat grim look. It turned into a military city. It is from Tbilisi that Russia meddled with the affairs of smaller Caucasian states, as well as attempted to clarify its relations with Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

Troops marched from Tbilisi to fight rebellious Georgians. Everyone from King Erekle's numerous and rather tangled royal family fled the country or were exiled; Mariam, the last queen of Georgia, stabbed General Lazarev to death, the one who dared to come in person to send her into the Russian exile.

The Russians were relentless. The Military Georgian Highway was built, on the bones of Georgian peasants, as they said. Military rule, new laws, a new language, the power held by bureaucrats, complete neglect of local traditions and rites, unrestrained rampaging of soldiers, and many other factors triggered rebellions. These were easily suppressed, overpowered by the Russian regular army, but numerous smaller revolts still broke out here and there.

The Georgian nobility was clad in new clothes, shaved and trimmed according to the new style. The Russian military uniforms, even of the lowest ranks, as well as civil servant positions, were widely acceptable and highly appreciated.

A monarch is still a monarch so to say. Having pledged their loyalty to the Russian Emperor, the Georgian nobility seemed quite content. But it was the common people who suffered, especially the peasants. The time-old relations among the social classes and society layers underwent serious changes.

Georgia had never seen peasants' unrest, but at the time many took to forests, became highway robbers, thus giving rise to the period of folk heroes and outlaws.

Arsena Odzelashvili was the most famous among them, his name and deeds immortalized in the folk poem often accompanied by bagpipes and existing in dozens of versions.

However, not all aristocrats were happy with the new regime and the changes it brought.

People whispered in tea and coffee houses, in churches and monastic cells, out of earshot and prying eyes.

In the epoch of Romanticism a conspiracy was being prepared. The descendants of the noble families, all officers of the Russian army now, returned to poetry, the favorite pastime of their renowned ancestors. But their poems are different – they are more European in their essence.

The godson of Catherine II, Alexander Chavchavadze took part in the war against Napoleon and later was made a general. He was the head of the most illustrious Tbilisi household, a poet and

wine-lover. His son-in-law was Alexander Griboyedov, a Russian diplomat and writer, killed in Persia while still quite young.

Romanticism brought an entirely new concept to Tbilisi – the salon, where the talk was mainly about the possible conspiracy. The whole city was a mesh of conspirators, among them philosophers, monks, mullahs, officers, senior civil servants and the Commander-in-chief himself.

By then, Tbilisi wasn't as multicolored in an Asian manner as it used to be. It had more European features than ever before. Russia allowed many German families to settle in Georgia. A group of younger Germans decided to stay in one of the suburbs of Tbilisi, turning it into a completely different area. Also, the capital received several Russian sects, as well as the defeated Polish rebels exiled to the outskirts of the Empire.

In King Erekle's time there was a handful of Europeans in Tbilisi, so few one could easily name them. But now the Italians and French opened their shops and ateliers.

The upper class appearance changed dramatically. Unshaven men in the national costume were not allowed at state balls. But the commoners still wore their traditional clothes: for over a century and well into the Soviet period, the artisan guild members favored a black, tight-fitting chokha (a kind of fine wool coat), worn over black trousers and a black shirt with a red breast piece, and a silver dagger dangling from their silver belts. The belt was called "the burial band" because usually

it was sold by the guild to raise money to bury the deceased owner.

From the elite, only Alexander Orbeliani resisted the onset of the new fashion, stubbornly wearing traditional dress, refusing to shave his mustache in favor of more trendy sideburns. He didn't in the least mind being viewed as an eccentric.

King Erekle's grandson, forever loyal to the Georgian national dream, Alexander Orbeliani was the leader of the conspiracy group that had been preparing the rebellion meticulously.

The Georgian historical tradition is the tradition of failed rebellions. The long-cherished revolt against the Russian Empire failed too, supposedly sold out by a traitor. The outcome was predictable: various forms of punishment, most commonly exile.

It left a lacuna in Tbilisi. The captives were kept in the military barracks on the left bank of the River Mtkvari, the area still called the Barracks.

During his imprisonment in the barracks, one of the young officers' mother died. The conspirator was Grigol Orbeliani, a poet and a society man, one of the outstanding characters of the period.

In order for the young officer to bid farewell to his deceased mother, the mourning procession passed the barracks. Amazing at it might seem, about thirty years later, Grigol Orbeliani was the only Georgian to hold the position of the Commander-in-chief

General, for a short time though, until the Russian Emperor found a more appropriate viceroy to serve in the South Caucasus.

By then he already made a name fighting against Imam Shamil in the North Caucasus. Not only was he a renowned general, a well-known poet and partying nobleman, but highly popular for his ability to befriend commoners.

Supposedly, Grigol Orbeliani was the first to feature ordinary townfolk in his otherwise haughty poetry. As a merry-maker, wine-lover and admirer of the oriental rhyming quintuplets, he must have felt a very special affinity with the urban musicians and versifiers from the lower classes, commoners who shared his passion for hearty feasting.

Among them, Lopiana, an innkeeper, stood out. It is unknown how he reacted to the sudden appearance of his name in the elite poetry, but it's a fact that Tbilisi at the time teemed with musicians and versifiers of all kinds.

When the poet-general used a candle-maker Melkos' line as an epigraph to his own poem, it was regarded as a typically Tbilisi feature. Feasts offered a pleasant and enjoyable way of losing oneself, or escaping from reality, as well as an opportunity to write about them.

From the very first days of the Russian rule in Georgia, an entirely new caste of feast-makers emerged, still quite common nowadays. Though everything underwent changes, nearly two centuries later the desire to party on the river banks, to drift on a torch-lit raft feasting and singing all night through, has remained.

The House of Joy continued its existence in this way.

The inns of the old Tbilisi deserve to be mentioned separately.

Dimly lit coffee houses had always lined Tbilisi streets. Those were the places where ordinary citizens could meet, play board games, throw dice, compete in impromptu versification and song-writing, and tell the stories of high and low. There were numerous cheap eateries, called ashpashkhana that welcomed customers from all walks of life. With the Russian conquest, the notion of a roadside inn also became quite popular, making the innkeeper an indispensable character of the city life. He wasn't a regular restaurateur though, rather disinterested in profit as such.

As a rule, an innkeeper had a perturbed past and extensive life experience, just like Lopiana. At one point, the folk hero Arsena ran a roadside inn at one of the city entrances, but the outlaw used an alias for his modest business. Many popular inns were known by their owners' names, which have been preserved in the urban toponymy.

The outlaw Arsena was Grigol Orbeliani's contemporary, living at the time when Emperor Nikolai I decided to visit the southern borders of his vast realm. Some welcome he received!

The Emperor in Tbilisi!

The only suitable place for the state ball at the time was a caravanserai recently built by merchant Zubalashvili. Tbilisi had

long before been the city of caravanserais, but Zubalashvili's was modern, more European in style. Rather typically for Tbilisi, it rained heavily on the day of the Emperor's ball.

The new caravanserai looked like an island between two torrents, but it didn't mar the ball. The Emperor and the Exarch were highly impressed with the building, which prompted the philanthropist merchant to donate it to the seminary that was opening.

The seminary was the main and the noisiest educational institution during the 117 years of Russian rule.

Georgia didn't have a university or any other civil higher education establishment for that matter. All Russia allowed was a military college. Paradoxically, with time, the seminary turned into a breeding place of future revolutionaries. Practically every single social-democrat was a seminary graduate, including Stalin and Noe Zhordania, Chairman of the Government of independent Georgia of the 1920s. The seminary was closed in the Communist period, but later the building housed the Art Museum.

Nikolai I nearly met his death in Tbilisi when on the city outskirts the Emperor's carriage turned over. He was unscathed and the administration decided to erect an enormous cross to commemorate the place where the monarch survived the accident.

In those days there lived a young man in Tbilisi who surely brightened up the otherwise grim and tedious life of the city. The cheerful nobleman was Nikoloz Baratashvili, one of the numerous children of

a despotic father, destined to become the greatest Romantic poet of Georgia.

Declared unfit for military service because of a childhood trauma that left him lame, and unable to go to university due to financial constraints, first became a clerk in the State Chancellery, then an aide to the local commander-in-chief in Ganja, where he died of malaria at the age of twenty-eight.

His poems, only known in the elite salon circles in his lifetime, were soon forgotten after his untimely death. For many years a collection of his poems was kept by Ekaterine Chavchavadze, the former queen of Samegrelo, and that's how they found their way to the hearts and minds of the new generation of intellectuals.

Ekaterine was the daughter of Alexander Chavchavadze, the poet-general. Before her marriage to the Prince of Samegrelo, she was admired by nearly all the eligible young men in Tbilisi. Together with her sisters, she undoubtedly was the star of the salons of the time. Grigol Orbeliani, who never married, was deeply in love with her, as well as Nikoloz Baratashvili. Instead, she was destined to take the throne of Samegrelo, the western part of Georgia.

The Romantic poet's return to his hometown was truly triumphant. His poems were published posthumously and his remains were interred at the Didube Pantheon fifty years after his death.

His symbolic homecoming grew into a genuine national manifestation.

The funerals of celebrities were yet another, separate feature of Tbilisi. For a long time, until the first Russian revolution echoed in the southern capital, the funerals of public figures and distinguished people had practically been the only legal means of expressing national feelings. The same applied to the funerals of Armenian celebrities in Tbilisi.

Funerals became one of the distinctive features of city life when the Russian authorities banned such popular mass festivities as boxing competitions. Those were regarded as too crowded, thus unacceptably dangerous. As a result, only religious gatherings were allowed, so Epiphany became the most populous and interesting event in wintertime Tbilisi when the parishioners of Georgian and Armenian churches crossed the river Mtkvari on makeshift bridges.

There were other festivities, drawing large crowds because they were colorful and highly entertaining. Every guild in those days had its own patron saint, so when one of them celebrated the saint's day marching in the streets with bright banners, it invariably attracted city people as well as visitors. However, it was possible to express a civil position only at funerals. The Gendarmerie watched them carefully, reporting every detail of the procession, insignificant as it might have been.

Just before WW II, Baratashvili's remains were moved once again in Soviet times. He was interred at the Mtatsminda Pantheon, which overlooks Tbilisi from St. David's Mount, the final resting place for the eminent poets and writers since 1887. In the Communist heyday two Bolshevik leaders and even Stalin's mother were also buried there.

## Tbilisi's Opera Boosts Freedom

Tbilisi was dismal and grim in Baratashvili's days.

It is remembered to have been devoid of joy, hopeless after the unsuccessful conspiracy, shrouded in gloom. The usual feasts failed to make any difference. The riverbanks and parks were still the places to stroll and meet others, but there was nothing new, no food for thought, nothing that could give hope for the better. Newspapers, magazines, books and intellectual pastimes were strictly limited to a handful of high society salons. And nothing beyond them. Monotony settled in, a few familiar voices were unable to break the overpowering dreariness, or revive the cheerful atmosphere. One had to cheer oneself, just like Baratashvili did. And then there was the Revolution.

It was completely unexpected and rather strange. No one thought it would happen. Nothing foreshadowed it, but it happened.

In 1844, Duke Mikhail Vorontsov was appointed viceroy in Transcaucasia. The field marshal had an extremely interesting biography, was known for his military acumen and administrative skills, admired for his courage, sharp brain, exceptional flexibility and diplomacy.

They must have expected just another general because so far Georgian society was rather unlucky with commanders-in-chief. The grand commander Ivan Paskevich had been a great disappointment, but Vorontsov chose a completely different approach.

Having familiarized himself with the local conditions and general atmosphere, Vorontsov adopted an unconventional policy, deciding that it was paramount to revive the cultural life, allowed periodicals to be published and gave his consent to open a national theater. His reforms came into effect slowly but surely.

Needless to say, Vorontsov was fully loyal to the Emperor and the imperial interests in the region. Strictly speaking, it wasn't the viceroy's responsibility to cater for the cultural needs of the local people. He was different from his predecessors in his firm belief that where the whip policy had failed, the revival of culture, respect for the local traditions and dynamic social life would ensure better integration of the otherwise unruly country. He thought it was more effective than sending hundreds into exile to Siberia.

One of the anecdotes clearly demonstrates the approach adopted by Vorontsov:

Together with his entourage, the viceroy was returning to Tbilisi after visiting Kakheti, the eastern province of Georgia. The company was moving fast, anxious to get to the capital before nightfall. A group of local aristocracy and landlords waited for the viceroy at a specific spot, hoping to express their respect to such a high-ranking official visiting their part of the country. Vorontsov ordered his carriage to slow down.

His military aide voiced his concern, fearing it would seriously delay their progress, but Vorontsov is believed to have said: 'See those raiders? There's at least two thousand years of unbroken genealogy behind each of them and at the moment they wish

nothing else but a civil greeting from us. Don't you think their expression of respect deserves a show of equal respect from us?'

Many Georgians sincerely liked Vorontsov, believing he had ensured more freedom, while others viewed him as more dangerous compared to his predecessors. They thought his tactical moves would finally lead to complete integration of Georgia into the Russian Empire.

Anyway, in his time Tbilisi was gripped with new entertainment, the theater, which forever changed the city life.

However, the touring Russian theater companies and first Georgian productions were neither widely attended nor designed for vast audiences. Vorontsov's intention was to introduce the opera to Tbilisi.

He was all too well aware of what the opera was at the time: the primary of all art forms. But the Chancellery had no extra means, so the viceroy had to find a sponsor for his dream to come true. Several of his attempts proved futile: wealthy silk and wool merchants refused the duke's request to finance the project.

Eventually, a prospective sponsor stepped forward to help with one condition. An affluent merchant, Gabriel Tamamshev, demanded that the Opera House be a caravanserai at the same time.

It indeed was an unusual arrangement, but Tamamshev was guided by a carefully weighed commercial incentive: before reaching the hall and boxes, the audience had to go through a

passage lined with numerous shops. The calculating merchant was adamant and finally Vorontsov consented.

The site was chosen in the heart of the present-day capital, exactly across from the building where the imperial ball had been held. Nearby was the square named after the eminent commander, General Paskevich, to commemorate his conquest of Yerevan. With the passage of time, though, the place dropped the original name, being commonly referred to as Yerevan Square. Despite being called a square, it was in fact on the outskirts of the city, which was prone to flooding. Spring rains would bring torrents down the shrub-covered hills, turning the narrow and shallow adjacent gorge into a destructive stream heading straight for the river Mtkvari.

It was this part of the city that the Russian administration planned to develop. A modern, wide street was being built. Today it's Rustaveli Avenue, but in those days it was called Golovinsky Prospect, after Commander-in-chief Yevgeny Golovin. One end of the street was named Dvortsovaya (palace) as it housed the viceroy's elegant palace.

The new square was lined with administrative buildings, the Military Headquarters and a couple of hotels.

Stretches of land and sometimes whole districts belonged to the Georgian nobility. The site chosen for the Opera House was the property of Estate Tsitsishvili, an extremely kind-hearted and somewhat naive aristocrat. In truth, he didn't care much for the



Unknown artist, Tiflis. Lithograph. 19th century; Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi History Museum (Caravanserai). Photograph by George Demetrashvili.

plot, so he gave it to Tamamshev for practically nothing: fine wool enough to make two chokhas and two smoked sturgeons.

Vorontsov invited Giovanni Scuderi, an Italian architect he had known for years and who had changed the look of Odessa while the duke was a commander-in-chief there. Scuderi had built the so-called Dry Bridge in Tbilisi and surely the viceroy had grand plans for him to shape the entire city.

The Opera House turned out to be unusually attractive, breathing with eastern lightness, a blend of caravanserai and something totally new, completely unfamiliar for the townsfolk. Poor Giovanni Scuderi died the same year the opera house was completed: a boulder fell on him as he was overseeing the construction of the military church on the main thoroughfare.

The Opera House and its curtain were painted by General Grigory Gagarin, a famous artist, and Vladimir Sollogub, a well-known Russian writer, was appointed as its first director. The opera, popularly referred to as Tamamshev's caravanserai, opened its first season on 9 November 1851 with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Prior to this, the makeshift stages across Tbilisi had entertained the elite public with classic opera overtures, symphonies and other pieces of European music, but they had never seen an opera performed.

It was a true revolution, something that became the heart of the new Tbilisi.

Vorontsov must have predicted the popularity of the opera, but he couldn't have foreseen its true impact on the city. The opera proved to provide freedom. Apart from the boxes glittering with diamonds and shiny lapels of the evening costumes, it brought along the feeling of utter and unrestrained freedom. It was the opera that bridged the gap between Tbilisi and the rest of the world, connecting the city with the contemporary world.

More than anything else, the city now had a brightly lit place, something never seen before, something magically alluring, something completely unfamiliar.

The newspaper pictures of the time are quite impressive: crowds wishing to attend the performance, ticket sellers, a screaming woman: "Let me in, I want to listen to Bellini! Don't step on my chador!"

A woman in a chador at the Opera! There was more: street vendors used to sing *Figaro here, Figaro there*, and every cobbler in the city knew *La donna mobile*. Thanks to the opera, numerous Italian flower shops and French clothes ateliers opened, modern hotels expected the much-awaited Italian opera companies. It demonstrated how much culture meant for the city.

But still, the opera had a relentless enemy – Tbilisi rains. The square wasn't paved yet and every heavy rain sent torrents downhill, making it impossible to get into the Opera House. One had to step into the knee-deep stream from the carriage.

The smart inhabitants quickly found a way to fight the operatic streams. A whole army of urban furniture movers would wait at the

gates. Walking on stilts, they would rush to the arriving public and carry them across the water to the opera entrance.

A devastating flood is recorded in 1857, at the time *Il Traviatore* was premiered. As if to spite the weather, huge crowds kept arriving to the opera. By then Vorontsov had left the Caucasus, had passed away in fact. For health reasons, he had resigned soon after the Tbilisi Opera was opened. The authorities couldn't have predicted the events that his project would trigger, something they would never welcome.

The Opera House was full. The hall lay in darkness, waiting for the overture. In the front row, one of the seats was respectfully given to Hadji Murat, once Imam Shamil's outstanding commander who later sided with the Russians. Suddenly someone shouted from the audience: 'Hadji Murat, the traitor!'

Immediately, chaos followed with loud voices, noise and the lights came back on. The person who started it all was never found.

The darkness of the Opera hall was a place of complete freedom in Tbilisi at the time.

High school and the seminary students were strictly forbidden to buy opera tickets, but they found clever ways to see performances. They would creep inside, hide on the balcony, only to do some mischief in the opinion of the authorities.

That's how one of the students waved the old royal banner in the hall one day and then escaped the police chase in the darkness.

It was all Verdi's fault. Verdi made hearts beat faster. But it wasn't solely the magic of his music. Italian singers were equally responsible, the ordinary singers of the opera company as well as just Italians.

The developments in Italy duly reached Tbilisi, and affected the minds rather powerfully. Italy was fighting for its independence and unity. In those days Garibaldi's daguerreotype was the favorite portrait among the students and a Garibaldi hat was the most desired present to receive.

The pervasive feeling was that of freedom. Vorontsov's original idea to replace the Georgians' thoughts about independence and the glory of the abolished kingdom with something new, something like the revival of culture, fell through. Instead, with time, the pursuit of the national aspiration grew into a completely different story.

The authorities banned Italian opera as such. The Opera House was to stage only Russian operas. The ban lasted for several years and, as a result, the opera seemed to have died.

There was nothing to nourish hope, still clinging to the ephemeral romantic ideas. The audience was there, but the opera ceased to have the same appeal, stopped to leave a sense of danger in its wake, as if dragging a theatrical train.

Later, when Italian opera was allowed to return to the stage, everything went back to normal, as if those gloomy years had never been.



Fragment of Stone Relief, 1858, Armenian Apostolic Church. Photo: Natalya Pereverzeva

In Tbilisi the Italians were the most interesting people at the time. More opera companies arrived, the singers who had stayed in the city with host families over the difficult years, surfaced again. Discussions about Garibaldi were heard again, as well as the Italian opera arias from numerous balconies across the city.

The fire started in one of the shops, its salesman was later prosecuted. There was no water in the pool on the square. Basically the city had no firefighting service as such. The entire city stood watching their favorite building, their greatest love burning down, helplessly.

In fact, it was an altogether different period. At the time Tbilisi greatly differed from its former self that listened to *Lucia di Lammermoor* years ago.

The building, which was never restored as an opera house, remained in the square for a long time. It was pulled down during Lavrenti Beria's time and the vacant square was named after him, but after his execution, the Soviets erected Lenin's statue there, renaming it into Lenin Square.

Later, a new Opera House was built in Golovinsky Prospect.

In those days Tbilisi was already a fast-growing city. Construction seemed to be the order of the day. Incidentally, the second Opera House also burned down, much later and under completely different circumstances, but the tradition kept on.

When visiting Tbilisi Alexander Dumas went to that first Opera House, which was well-known in Europe because French magazines published its pictures together with accompanying articles. Dumas came to Tbilisi on completing his lengthy tour of Russia. Like Pushkin before him, he also complained about high prices. The only two things he described in his travelogue were the Opera House and the feast Georgian writers gave in his honor. Apparently, at the end of the boisterous feast, his hosts gave him a written confirmation that Dumas had really drunk the most wine during the evening.

### **Thriving New Generations in Tbilisi**

In Dumas' time serfdom was the system in the country, consequently the city was small because all peasants were legally bound to their landlords. However, the Imperial Decree quite soon abolished serfdom in the Russian Empire.

In Georgia the decree came into effect three years later. The event had an immense influence on Tbilisi because the impoverished peasants moved to the capital, which opened its gates wide to the potential workforce, mainly from the western part of the country.

It was the moment when Tbilisi began its fast growth, establishing itself as the main city in Transcaucasia. Suddenly Tbilisi became everyone's home, everyone's hope, everyone's means of living.

The population soared, and capitalism arrived with big strides. Its introduction was noisy, complete with clanging, banging, wheezing

and hammering as a rail line was built, connecting two guberniyas, Tbilisi and Kutaisi, and reaching the Black Sea.

An entirely new settlement sprang up behind the railway station, stretching the city in that direction. On the whole, construction was under way everywhere. Affluent citizens flocked to Sololaki, the hilly part above the old Opera House square and the main cause of frequent floods, to build mansions with exotic inner gardens. No more floods: only greenery and respectability.

The old part of the city, dating back to the early medieval period and quite unchanged from King Erekle's times, remained beyond Yerevan Square, while the modern part was definitely more European. It seemed to grow day by day, incorporating more and more land and small villages which used to skirt Tbilisi. The process was relatively easy because land was cheap, and starting new businesses caused no pain or conflicts.

Suddenly, it was easy to find a job. Businessmen frequented banks. Many people of aristocratic ancestry with century-old living conditions and traditions fell victim to the social changes. Hunger drove many impoverished noblemen to seek new ways of survival, doing what they would have never done under the old regime. Some got jobs, others went to university, while some continued to live on loans, which brought them to bankruptcy.

Tbilisi also matured further as the cultural center of Transcaucasia. Moreover, it was the center of imperial opposition, quite legal though. The Georgian and Armenian periodicals published in

Tbilisi did not always echo official opinion. Working under the threat of being closed down, newspaper editors were constantly fighting censorship, while writers looked for new ways to cheat the system, still determined to express their ideas. Those were mainly national in their essence. At the time *Droeba* was the most progressive newspaper with talented young intellectuals working for it. Also, many prominent public figures readily cooperated with the popular periodical. The editorial staff occupied the building belonging to Prince Mukhranski on Golovinsky Prospect. The office became a true haven for the new generation of writers and professional journalists. Alexander Kazbegi, the future novelist, even lived there for some time, writing and publishing his work in the newspaper. Despite a wide circle of readers, the income was negligible.

The new generation made a somewhat strange social layer. They stepped into the old Tbilisi life with new political ideas. Most of them were writers but eager to undertake any job even remotely connected to social improvement, anything they considered necessary or useful for the nation. In their absolute majority they came from traditional aristocratic families, but belonged to modernity, received good educations and carried new ideas. In those days they used to say they had drunk the Tergi waters. The explanation lies in the fact that returning home from Russia one had to cross the mountain river Tergi. The expression meant they had studied in Russian universities and then came back home. A character in one of the plays of the time says he used to study in the north but didn't go mad. All in all, the attitude was that one could study abroad, then cross the Tergi having the same moral values as one had before leaving. Fathers and sons – a time-old generation gap.

Ilya Chavchavadze became the editor of *Iveria*, a daily newspaper. Simultaneously, he was a bank manager and in charge of practically every social initiative that might be advantageous for the nation. The formal government of course held the power, but there was another force alongside, seemingly law abiding but forever seeking loops in the imperial regulations. Ilya Chavchavadze was the unquestionable king of the other society. In this respect, he was an authority even for the officialdom. He is the king without a crown, as they used to say.

At the time Tbilisi was extremely lively and dynamic. Colorful as it had been earlier, now it became even more so. But the difference between the old and the new city was tangible, even visible. The old part, virtually unchanged, was situated beyond Yerevan Square and the so-called Middle Bazaar, one of the greatest attractions of the city.

The Bazaar went through a revival too. It was an entire quarter with many narrow streets lined with artisans' shops, invariably crowded and noisy, including the Sioni Cathedral, a synagogue, Armenian churches and a mosque with the Shaitan Bazaar in front, all of these providing excellent grounds for the subcultures to proliferate.

A new law enacted in the Empire gave even more independence to cities, which was a great gift for Tbilisi. On the surface, it passed unnoticed in the old part, but the subcultural cannon banged louder than ever.

The blend of various cultures, the mixture of races and nationalities, the local combination of European and Asian

features so typical for the old part gradually penetrated the new city as well.

Tbilisi featured a French-style cafe with live music side by side with a mosque. One could hear a piano from one window and a traditional shawm playing from another. It was a place where a coffee house verses were as loud as the classic poetry of elite salons, where birds sat on barrel-organs because the street musicians used to leave crumbs for them to peck, where street artists had so much work they spent nights painting, where the police couldn't keep track of who was going where, and where Asian dining rooms were next to French restaurants. Such a blend could easily impress any visitor.

Daily hubbub, noisy market places, bustling crowds and numerous visitors, camels on the main square, a dialogue between a Norwegian and a Persian at a goldsmith's counter, a Russian clerk and a merchant from Aleppo putting his unusual signature on an excise, and much more – all these were generously spiced with feasts.

The number of inns, restaurants, cafes, diners, hotels and furnished rooms grew at an amazing rate. The demand was great, customers thronging in places with often trite, mostly exotic names: Bristol, Sympathy, Eldorado, Belle View, Ne Uezhay Golobchic Moi (Russian: Don't leave, my love), Tili Puchura (Georgian: Tiny Louse) and many others, all with colorful signs.

Mouth-watering aromas swirling from pots and sizzling pans with boiled, stewed, fried and sautéed food. Everywhere, cheap

and good quality wine, fresh and inviting French cakes. More importantly, a prevailing air of hopefulness that everything is going to be fine. And of course, ubiquitous and ceaseless feasts.

Tbilisi had yet another feature – parks and gardens. Their tradition had a long history.

Once, the old, small city was surrounded by gardens and orchards. The soil had always been rich, so hardly anyone could resist the temptation to plant fruit trees. On the outskirts it didn't matter at all who owned this or that orchard. Usually the owner didn't mind if his land was used for picnics. The most popular recreation area was Ortachala, with its many gardens and orchards.

The new times brought along more green zones, this time designed not only for feasting but for entertainment as well. Mushtaidi Park, once on the edge of the city, turned into the favorite place to relax and have fun. During the day the park welcomed strolling crowds, while at nighttime it lit up its many cafes with live music.

Various inns, diners of all kinds and modern cafes circled the city. The Ortachala Gardens teemed with old-Tbilisi style inns, which never lacked clients, lovers of al fresco feasting round the clock.

In summer Tbilisi was hot and dusty. There was no running water system. Instead, every quarter had its own water-carrier who would supply drinking water in huge jugs. There was no electricity either, though the main streets were gas-lit.

### **Tbilisi Shaken by Crime, Student Unrest**

The city was neither safe nor comfortable to live in. With all the crowds, locals and visitors out in the streets, pickpocketing, mugging and robbery were common crimes. The police were doing all they could, running around frantically to catch the culprits. In those days even the most decent and respectable citizens were armed. No one was guaranteed from coming across thugs operating at nights.

For a long time, a young man from a good family, Tato Tsulukidze was a murderer terrorizing Tbilisi. Eventually, he was captured somewhere in the south, brought back and publically hanged on the Arsenal Hill in Tbilisi.

The city was full of musicians, bands playing Asian instruments, general merrymaking and dissatisfied students.

In the 1870s four students of the Seminary were publicly executed because they failed to properly salute the viceroy strolling in Alexander's Park. At the time the high post was held by none other than Mikhail Nikolayevich, the Emperor's brother.

Unreliable students were constantly expelled from the seminary. They demonstrated no wish to become clerics, though most of them were priests' sons.

Conventionally, practically all provincial young people who came to the capital for their education were referred to as priests' sons. They invariably irritated the authorities with their radical activities.



Kirill Zdanevich. *Khalatov's Caravanserai. Tiflis*. 1920s. Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi History Museum (Caravanserai). Photograph by George Demetrashvili.



Kirill Zdanevich. *Tiflis*. 1910s. Oil on Canvas, 45 x 53 cm, Collection of Mikhail & Elena Kamensky

The seminary was ruled with an iron fist, while the students' aspirations pushed them elsewhere. The regimentation was so harsh that it bordered on unfairness. Expelled for keeping "an inappropriate, dangerous diary" and reading the *Otechestvennie Zapiski* journal, student Ioseb Laghiashvili stabbed Pavel Chudetsky, the rector of the seminary, who had deprived the young man of his future.

It was the first terrorist act in Tbilisi history, as controversial as the one at the beginning of the century when the last Georgian queen killed General Lazarev.

A punishment fit for a priest's son awaited the young student. It looked as though the whole thing was the echo of events happening in the Empire. By then reformer-Emperor Alexander II was already assassinated and rebellious ideas occupied the young generation.

In his mass in Sioni Cathedral, infuriated by the death of his friend and colleague, the Exarch of Georgia, also Pavel, cursed the whole nation for giving birth to the infamous murderer.

No one from the attending elite had the courage to oppose the Exarch. No one except Dimitri Kipiani, a distinguished public figure, already quite advanced in years, who voiced his protest. He wrote to Pavel, saying it was a shame to curse the nation. His letter was polite and respectful, but in the reign of Alexander III the elderly man was not spared despite his long, loyal service to the crown. Dimitri Kipiani was stripped of all his titles and awards and exiled. He comforted his supporters, saying if in the past the Georgians were exiled to Siberia

for vile crimes, he would be the first to be sent away for a good deed. He didn't make it to Siberia though because he was murdered in Stavropol, in south Russia.

Dimitri Kipiani's body was transported back to Tbilisi and buried in the Mtatsminda Pantheon, which most likely marked the national significance of the cemetery for the national identity. His burial turned into a truly national manifestation. In the meanwhile, as a juvenile, Laghiashvili escaped the gallows. The Georgian public showed considerable sympathy towards the young man, and General Konstantin Mukhranski even provided him with an experienced defense attorney. The former student was sentenced to lifetime exile. Years later Anton Chekhov met him in Sakhalin, from where Laghiashvili ran to America, where he finally settled.

The terrorist act was followed by tightening the ruling fist over national institutions. The reign of Alexander III was grim and unyielding, especially for those seeds of freedom sown in Tbilisi earlier. However, the seeds were already firmly rooted, making it impossible to exterminate them. The police system was so unrestrained that officers could easily leap onto the stage and terminate any theatrical performance.

### **Drama Flourishes in Georgia**

There was another novelty: Tbilisi witnessed a genuine theatrical boom. In fact, theater became highly popular throughout Georgia, but its advancement started in Tbilisi.

It was extremely expensive to keep a professional theater company. But the popularity and love for theater was so great that the city abounded in amateur troupes. Having a makeshift stage in the city quarter was seen as a matter of prestige.

The performances were offered in Georgian, Armenian, Russian and Azeri languages. Georgian and Armenian theaters were particularly closely linked to each other because the plays of that period described the city life, which made it easy to borrow them from each other. Translating them wasn't difficult either because the ethnic groups spoke each other's languages.

Tbilisi being the topic of most plays must have ensured such a widespread admiration for the theater. Gabriel Sundukiants and Avxenti Tsagareli's plays depicted the ordinary life with such precision that common people easily identified themselves with the characters.

In their majority, these were comedies featuring everyday matters. The characters were drawn from well-known figures from all walks of life. They were so true to life that sometimes, when the actors playing karachokheli began speaking with their typical jargon, the real karachokheli from the audience would jump onto the stage. The performance would be stopped until the actors drank the wine offered by their genuine counterparts.

Practically everyone was involved in amateur theaters around the city: workers of the tobacco factory, high school students and traders of small businesses. Everyone tried to act like professional

actors, to play perfectly. Their audience was the neighborhood and the performances were pure charity. Such theaters would appear in most unexpected places and, like poetry in King Erekle's times and the opera slightly later, the art of theater grew into a new love of the city.

One Tbilisi inhabitant recalled that together with his friends he once saw a patriotic play about the conflict between Georgians and Persians. When they left the theater, they came across a group of Muslim water carriers filling their jugs in the river Mtkvari. The young people were so excited after the performance, so charged with emotions that they picked a fight with the unsuspecting water carriers.

Actors were universally worshipped in Tbilisi, and they were very poor. The best playwright of the time, Avxenti Tsagareli, worked in the railway system just to support his family. His wife was Nato Gabunia, a theater star, and his play Khanuma about a successful match-maker was staged under every tree across the country, but it didn't help. The profession earned no money – only love and admiration from all social layers.

### **The Capital Prospers as a Kaleidoscope**

Tbilisi boasted of many social layers, the diversity that was obvious or not very, of its European-Asian mix, a true melting pot, which ensured its unique attraction.

One of its distinctive features were its noisy, bustling streets. The language of the street was witty, often archaic, always polite and respectful, sometimes obscene which was brought about by the modern times, or poetic and even metaphoric. Much had traveled from the classic poetry into the living language. Similes were indispensable elements of speech in those days.

At the time Tbilisi featured two antipodes: karachokheli and kinto.

Karachokheli (literally, "wearing a black khokha or tunic") belonged to numerous artisan guilds. Raised on old moral and ethical principles, they were epitomes of virtue and honor. If they had to fight, it was a one-to-one fistfight. Known for their disregard for material wealth, they were hard workers, earning their daily bread the hard way and often feasting with their co-workers. Surrounded by his close mates, a karachokheli was never alone, always sure that after his death his family would be well taken care of by his guild. With strangers he was polite but firm. For him it was paramount that he left a good memory of himself, a name of a man of integrity. A reputation mattered for a karachokheli more than anything else, that's why they lived following their unwritten moral code.

In the meantime, a lightly dressed kinto was a vendor, running up and down the streets, balancing huge trays with fruit and fresh fish on his head. They were witty, sometimes their language was obscene and they never shied from verbal confrontation. They were far from modest, but could easily be quite cowardly, being good at hawking, haggling, joking and swindling. If a kinto started

feasting, he wouldn't stop until he ran out of money. He could indulge in little luxuries and wasn't always fair in fights.

A karachokheli mainly sat in his workshop and one could hear his unhurried, respectful and metaphoric speech only inside his workplace. But a kinto was out in the street, that's why his language was that of the street – colorful and highly creative. He invented new words and coined new expressions. It doesn't matter which language he borrowed the words from, most probably he said what came first to his mind. He adjusted the word to the Georgian grammar, making it function as if it has always belonged to it, and talked and talked.

A kinto was a beloved comical character on Tbilisi stages, his speech a horrible mixture of Georgian, Russian, Armenian, Turkish and Persian. Professionally, he wasn't restricted: he could sell fruit and fish one day, steal or open his own inn the next day.

Beside these two groups, there were other traders who associated themselves with either of the two, or stood separately, as belonging to the social layer of merchants running medium-size businesses, or the petite bourgeoisie.

All those social groups were naturally looked down upon by the higher classes, but there were many distinguished figures among them, widely known and admired for their ethical values and characteristic traits.

While a public figure's funeral normally grew into a national manifestation, the funeral of an outstanding commoner from the

old city could easily turn into a formidable event. Although there wouldn't be any signs of national protest, people just wanted to express their gratitude to the deceased for their lifelong contribution to the urban life. Most often they would be praised for what was referred to as being "a manly man" or "a true man."

In 1885 in Didube, one of the suburbs, Abrugune was killed. He must have been one of the best known inn keepers at the time: generous, brave, defender and helper of the poor, a man who loved feasting himself, but disliked ornate speeches. It is highly doubtful the new city had even heard of him. His funeral was of the scale that found its way into the newspapers. The procession included several barrel organs, four shawm bands and practically the entire population of the old city.

Old Tbilisi maintained its old laws and taste, something it carried well into the new century. Its life was hardly affected by revolutions.

Poetry fitted the taste of the old city perfectly, but it was very different from what modern poets from the new city wrote. Old Tbilisi had so many poets of its own that any other city could only feel envy. They followed the century-old tradition of ashiks, competed in rhyming puzzles and impromptu verses, won prizes and became popular. Many of them were musicians as well, which ensured the archaic tradition lived on.

The inhabitants of the new city remembered them only when it came to entertainment. Having such a poet-musician and his shawm band at the end of the table was a desirable gift for any

feast-maker. In fact, it was the main income of the numerous, otherwise poor poets.

Men of letters, critics and writers looked with disdain at this urban tradition. The number of such uneducated poets was so high and their army grew at such an alarming rate that thick newspapers and magazines complained of the "pollution of the literary language" caused by those semilliterate people.

Indeed, their poetry had nothing to do with literature as such. In most cases they were illiterate, counting syllables on their worry beads, choosing a tune by memory and playing it by ear.

All in all, it was an ancient ashik tradition continued, but adjusted to the local lifestyle and permanent feasting. The most surprising part was that all printing houses across the city worked round the clock to publish the self-taught poets' little books, and in huge numbers at that. Every new poem, long or short, every ballad could be published as a separate edition. And they sold like hot cakes.

In this city everything came in two!

Among those poets many had commonplace urban professions, but more than often their love for poetry and music would overshadow everything else and they would abandon their jobs to devote themselves wholly to their pastime. They were exceptionally interesting personalities: witty Skandarnova, sardonically grim Davit Givishvili, and Hazira, who supported blind musicians' bands and whose coffin was followed by nearly all artisans' guilds existing in Tbilisi at the time.

The best-known urban poet was Ietim Gurji whose songs are still alive today. He was a man with a difficult fate, lived in poverty, was sent to prison, wrote poems and songs about Tbilisi, establishing the urban moral. He died just before WW II, so many inhabitants still remember him singing in Tbilisi courtyards for alms. Once Sergey Esenin was taken to visit him in his humble cellar dwellings. They say it was a strange meeting, with very little said, but highly significant.

Two very different poets – Ietim Gurji, or just Ietima for the locals, and Akaki Tsereteli, or just Akaki for all Georgians – lived and shared Tbilisi at the same time in history.

Without any doubt, Akaki was the most famous of all poets to have lived during the Russian reign. His poetry, highly musical, lyrical and sincere, was effortlessly memorized by his readers. With his verses, he introduced lightness and reinforced the beauty of the everyday, “folk” language. He surely was the genuine people's poet whose poems spread from one to another, often by word of mouth.

It was rumored that Chudetsky's assassination by Laghiashvili was inspired by Akaki's poem *The Dagger*. Another of his poems, *The Sunrise*, a soft but powerful hymn about Georgia struggling for its independence, was published on the front page of the magazine *Kvali*, but because the copies sold out immediately, handwritten ones appeared on trees in the city. Home country – that was what Akaki tried to instill in his readers.

His popularity was so great that when people heard he was in the train that stopped for a couple of minutes at some small

station, crowds would rush onto the platform to welcome him, looking through the windows for a familiar face with a long white beard. Akaki was the creator of the new Georgia. The country didn't exist yet, but still ...

Another strangeness of the city was that Ietima and Akaki never met face-to-face.

But was the old city capable of creating genuine art? Critics of the time were convinced it couldn't. For them, Tbilisi that lay beyond the ruins of the Kojori Gates was obsolete, uneducated, uncultured, sinking in mercantile affairs, and absolutely incompatible with the modernity.

By then telephones were already ringing in the city, and the first automobiles and trams competed with carriages in the streets. It was decided to expand the urban area onto St. David's Mount overlooking Tbilisi, a funicular tram already operating on the mountain slope. Clothes underwent the most radical changes, becoming more and more elegant every day.

New newspapers, new books, new, new, new ... A new century. Everything revolved around novelty. Groups of eccentric men gathered in Didube to play a strange game called football. And, such shame, in shorts! Grandmas didn't chide their granddaughters for wanting to be actresses. Eventually, they got used to shorts.

New poets who called themselves Symbolists, wearing striking clothes in flashy colors, roamed the streets, pinning papers



Ivan Aivazovsky. *View of Tiflis from Sade Abaza*. 1868, location unknown; stolen from the Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts

everywhere. Socialists met in small houses in various parts of the city. Young women sewed red flags because high school girls were fond of revolutionaries. Police superintendents provided shelter to runaway political prisoners. Caricatures became more malicious. And all the while, the old city remained the same, complete with its jokes and poverty, fistfights, bazaars, a labyrinth of narrow streets, temples of various confessions crammed within half a square mile.

And then suddenly it started, unlike the gentle revolution the opera caused quite some time ago.

Secretly, Marxism had been brewing slowly but surely, ever since Laghiashvili killed the rector of the seminary.

Tbilisi had never been a large industrial center, rather a city of smallish factories producing tobacco, silk and clothes. But there was the railway with its accompanying workshops, a true breeding ground for Georgian revolutionaries.

The vast majority of the railway workers were Marxists. According to one of the reports of the time, Tbilisi, and one of its suburbs in particular, was the hub of all subversive activities in the beginning of the 20th century.

Not yet officially acknowledged as an administrative entity, the suburb was called Nadzaladevi, literally “forceful,” because for several decades people from provinces had settled there without any permission when they came to Tbilisi in search of jobs. With time, the settlement grew into a formidable suburb and in 1904 it was included into the city plan.

Practically every city in the Russian Empire had a similar suburb, often called Nakhlovka, which roughly means “taken without permission,” but none of those ever became as significant as the one in Tbilisi.

Nadzaladevi grew around the railway station and its workshops in Didube. The suburb was extremely tight-knit and demonstrated such unity that it was virtually impossible for the police to raid it. With time, when things snowballed, it got even worse.

The first Russian revolution reverberated throughout Georgia, affecting the provinces more than the capital. In many regions the revolutionary committees seized power, while Tbilisi held the ground. There were no barricades, but terrorism reigned with all the atrocities it entails – primarily innocent victims.

The forest-covered mountains, outskirts of villages and often entire villages teemed with revolutionary units, the Red Squads, making it absolutely impossible to distinguish a commonplace criminal from an ideologically-charged insurgent.

Tbilisi was full of arms. Shooting was constant, protest rallies were organized everywhere, expropriation was the order of the day. In a word, His Majesty Terror ruled.

Now committees determined human fate. Anyone condemned by such a revolutionary group was doomed. Bombs and hand grenades were made in workshops, together with dozens of other chemical mixtures, and all of these were put to action.

The entire Transcaucasia was in turmoil. For the most part, it had nothing to do with the revolution and struggle for independence. Occasionally things went out of hand, when for instance an ethnic clash between Armenians and Azerbaijanis resulted in blood. Old Tbilisi, where Christians and Muslims had peacefully co-existed for many centuries, responded to the tragic event in its own manner:

Ordinary people erected gallows in one of the squares and nailed an inscription to the pole, saying: "Any Muslim who kills an Armenian will be hanged here, as well as any Armenian who kills a Muslim."

The Royal Manifesto seemed to slightly pacify the agitated people, as well as the city itself. General Alikhanov-Avarsky led punitive expeditions across the whole of Georgia.

Tbilisi wasn't destroyed by the revolution, but its mood was badly affected. The city seemed to have survived, relatively unscathed, leaving the sad happenings behind. However, the lightness, the joy and the sense of inner freedom were gone, seemingly forever. Now it was the city of politics. What happened once would surely happen again.

From the time when Laghiashvili killed the seminary rector until the second revolution, Tbilisi was blessed with a genius, whose works arguably were the greatest achievements the city had at those difficult times.

Now we are talking about Niko Piroshmanashvili, better known as Piroshmani. He was the son of a peasant from Kakheti, eastern

Georgia. When his mother died, Kalantarov, an Armenian nobleman, raised the boy at his father's request. He received a basic education at home and tried various jobs to make a living. He was fond of painting from early childhood, though he had never studied art. For some time he traded in dairy products, then attempted to work on land in his native village. The only formal job he ever had was that of a train conductor, which lasted for three years. Single, without a home of his own, he used to stay with friends or rent rooms. After abandoning the railway job, he devoted himself to painting.

In those days Tbilisi was a mecca for self-taught artists. Just like everything else, there were two types of art in the city: modern, thus learnt and cultured, and Tbilisi-style.

In old Tbilisi an artist was anyone who was commissioned to decorate and paint interiors and exteriors. Considering the rate at which the city was growing and the number of diners, cafes and restaurants, the demand for artists was huge.

Every single shop, inn, restaurant with live music, as well as Asian diners and wine cellars needed a colorful sign, and not only that. Many owners commissioned artists to decorate the interiors as well, asking them to paint canvases on very specific themes. Those pictures hung on the walls to be enjoyed by the clients along with the owners.

There was plenty of work, and hard-working Piroshmani did well even in highly competitive atmosphere, and made a comfortable living at that. For most part, his friends were karachokheli,

innkeepers and small business owners. He was nicknamed Duke for his tendency to wear elegant European clothes.

Many urban stories feature Pirosmani, most popular among them is the artist's love for a French restaurant singer Margarita. One day he brought a whole cart of flowers to her hotel. All those stories describe him as the city chronicler, outstanding in his talent, a true inhabitant of old Tbilisi.

The canvases of the self-taught primitive artist hung in every inn and restaurant in Tbilisi. It is highly questionable whether the innkeepers appreciated his art, but it is well known that the new city with its numerous art connoisseurs and academic artists was unaware of his existence.

He continued to paint after the revolution, but he changed. He started to drink heavily in the city recuperating after the rampant terror and refused to accept payment for his work. As it often happened in the old city, Pirosmani was taken care of by his friends. But he was still discovered.

It was improbable for his canvases to have stayed unnoticed for a long time. When vacationing in Tbilisi, two young artists, brothers Kiril and Ilya Zdanevich, couldn't keep their eyes off his picture in a restaurant by the railway station and began to look for him, shouting "Giotto, Giotto!" all the way. He was found, but neither the Zdanevich brothers nor artist Dimitri Shevardnadze later were able to save him from the firm grip of the old city.

The academic intellectuals flatly refused to acknowledge Pirosmani. In the meanwhile, the old city seemed to slide into the abyss, especially with the start of WW I, which also marked his end.

Overnight, Tbilisi turned into a front-line city. The Russian-Turkish hostilities turned it into a military stronghold where alcohol was prohibited. In fact, it was the sale of wine that was prohibited, apparently to keep the soldiers sober. It caused mass closures of inns and roadside restaurants, which, in turn, left Pirosmani unemployed.

Somehow, he managed to live through the war and even survived the second revolution. He survived just like many in Georgia, with a little help from others.

Wartime Tbilisi was also marked by a senseless incident: a group of sycophants believed that the Turks would break through and attack Tbilisi. At the City Council meeting where the whole Russophile elite was present, the nobleman Davit Guramishvili claimed the tragic day for the nation was approaching fast. He insisted that the inhabitants leave Tbilisi at once and that the city itself should be destroyed so that the enemy wouldn't get it.

He reiterated that it was a pity and a shame to destroy such a beautiful city. In fact, the nobleman presented a petition drawn on behalf of the aristocracy. It called for destroying Tbilisi rather than leaving it to the enemy.

At that point, Shalva Karumidze, a young man known for his revolutionary nationalism, sprang up from his back bench and yelled: "I've got armed men at the door and a bomb in my pocket and if you don't stop this nonsense, I'm going to blow the whole place up!"

The Council dispersed among general screams and panic. Had Tbilisi been so easily threatened, it would have disappeared many times.

At the end of WW I Tbilisi was full of deserters. The power was in the hands of deputy committees made of soldiers and workers. One of the toponyms has kept the memory of those days: the place where soldiers used to sell their war-time items or those they got from marauding is still called the Deserters' Market.

Impoverished and miserable, Pirosmani died in the spring. He fell ill and was taken to the hospital and then to the Peter-Paul Cemetery. His grave is unknown.

A month later Noe Zhordania announced the independence of Georgia. He addressed the crowds from the new Opera House balcony on 26 May 1918, late in the afternoon. Vlasa Mgeladze, an old revolutionary, took a carriage to St. David's Mount where he rang the church bells in celebration. Then he shouted down to the graves of Ilya Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Dimitri Kipiani and others buried in the Mtatsminda Pantheon that Georgia was free at last.

Freedom lasted for two years and eight months. Then the Russian Red Army marched into Tbilisi. But that's another story – similar to other stories about the city, but still distinct.

*Translated from Georgian by Maya Kiasashvili*



Мостъ на Маджаръ  
Понтъ Маршанскы.

Ташкенъ,  
Тифлисъ.

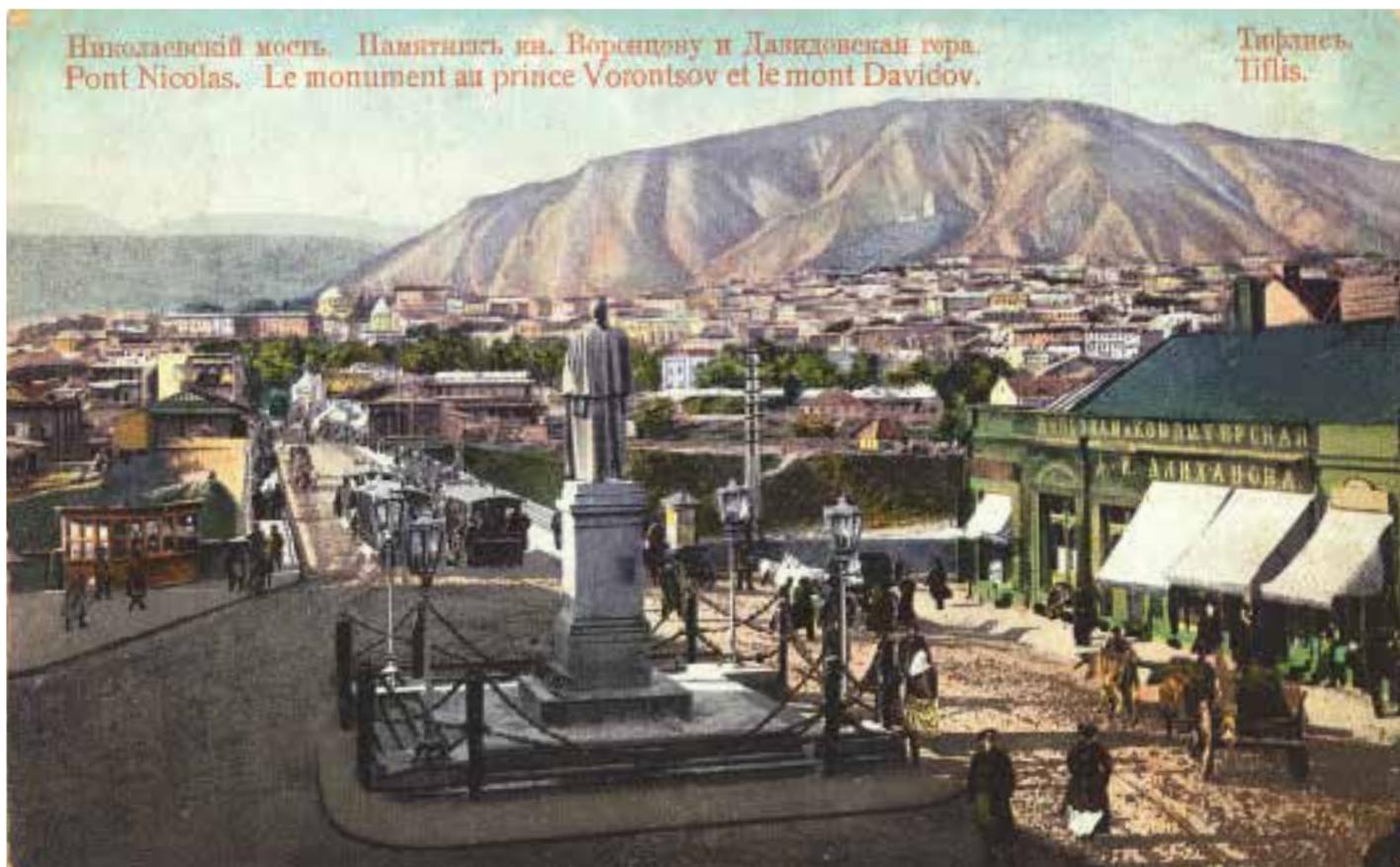


Тифлисъ. Притоки рѣкъ.  
Тифлисъ. Лагунъ рѣкъ.



Николаевский мостъ. Памятникъ ин. Воронцову и Давидовская гора.  
Pont Nicolas. Le monument au prince Vorontsov et le mont Davitov.

Тифлисъ.  
Tiflis.





The grave of Griboyedov at the St. David Church

НАСТОЯЩАЯ ШВЕЙНАЯ  
МАШИНА  
ЗИНГЕРЪ

СВОЯТВОРНСТЬ  
КОМПАНІА ЗИНГЕРЪ.

РАСХОДНЪ ЗАВВОДЪ  
СТІАЛЪ ПРІМІШЛЕННОСТІ М. Ф.

КОМПАНІА ЗИНГЕРЪ

THE SINGER MANUFACTURING COMPANY  
NEW YORK

СИНГЕРЪ

СИНГЕРЪ



Тифлисскiя Муша

Tifliser Trager

Tiflis Porter



Тифлисс. Два муши съ бурдюками на спин. Типы Маврица.

Two Porters with wineskins

# Chronology of Georgia *Donald Rayfield*

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
<b>BC</b>		
1112		Assyrian King defeats Diauhi (Tao kartvelians)
790		Urartu King invades Shesheti ( modern Shavsheti, s.e. Georgia)
743		Urartu King Sarduri II defeats Kulha (western Georgia)
c. 720	Scythians & Cimmerians conquer Transcaucasia	Kartvelian tribes disperse west & north
450		Herodotus records Sasperi (Iberians) and Colchians as Persian subjects
400		Xenophon's mercenaries encounter Georgian, Mingrelian and Laz tribes
334 - 1	Alexander the Great's conquests	Satrap of Iberia, ? Greek-controlled
299 - 234		King Parnavaz I's alleged reign
188	Romans conquer Anatolia; Armenia expands in Transcaucasia	Colchis becomes autonomous
169		Jews migrate to Mtskheta
66	Gnaeus Pompey invades Pontus	Pompey subdues Iberian King Artag
47		Colchis taken over by Pontus
40 - 36	Mark Antony invades Anatolia	King Parnavaz becomes Roman ally
<b>AD</b>		
51		Parsman I's Transcaucasian empire opposed by Parthians and Romans
131		Hadrian sends Flavius Arrian to tour Colchis and Iberia

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
134 or 138		Parsman II received in Rome
242 - 72		Shapur I of Persia invades all Georgia
298	Roman-Persian peace of Nisibis	Iberia comes under Roman suzerainty
313	Edict of Milan recognizes Christianity	
317	Eclipse of sun visible from Black to Caspian seas	King Mirian III adopts Christianity
370		Emperor Valens invades Iberia
378		Iberia becomes Persian vassal again
465		King Gobaz I of Lazica-Colchis visits Emperor Leo I and makes peace
460 - 80		King Vakhtang Gorgasali established all-Georgian Empire
520		Persians rule Iberia, subvert Lazica
551	Armenians split from Byzantine church, adopting monophysitism	
554		Byzantines murder King Gobaz II of Lazica
626		Emperor Heraclius razes Tblisi, makes both Iberia and Lazica vassals
643 - 45	Arabs begin conquest of Transcaucasia and Anatolia	
704		Tblisi an Arab emirate under Caliph
735		Murvan the Deaf ravages Kartli
800		Vasak Bagratun of Armenia marries Iberian princess, founding Georgian Bagration dynasty in Tao-Klarjeti

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
853		Bugha the Turk ravages Kartli and rebel Emirate of Tblisi
975		Future Bagrat III by adoption and inheritance becomes heir to all-Georgia's thrones
979	Emperor Basil II with help of Davit III of Tao defeats Bardas Skliros	
1004		West and East Georgia united under Bagrat III
1021		Basil II repossesses S. Georgia
1071	Turks defeat Byzantium at Manzikert, capture Romanos IV	King Bagrat IV finally makes peace with Turk leader Alp Arslan
1083		King Giorgi II submits to Turk Malik Shah: the 'Great Turckdom' begins
1092	Malik Shah and his vizier Nizam al-Mulk die	King Davit IV the Builder begins recovery of lost territory and rebuilds state and army
1099	Crusaders capture Jerusalem	
1104		Ruisi-Urbnisi Council reorganizes and subordinates church
1105		Kakhetia reunited with Georgia
1117		King Davit imports Qipchaqs as mercenaries, divorces Queen Rusudan and marries Qipchaq Gurandukht
1121 - 23		Muslim coalition routed at Battle of Didgori; Tblisi recaptured as capital
1131		King Demetre has half-brother Vakhtang blinded for coup attempt
1155		Demetre overthrown by Giorgi III

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1177 - 78		Giorgi has nephew Demna killed after coup attempt, then crowns daughter Tamar as co-monarch
1188 - 89		Queen Tamar divorces Russian husband, marries Davit Soslan
1195		Battle of Shamkor expands Georgian empire
1202		Battle of Basiani routs Sultan Rukn ad-Din
1204	Crusaders sack Constantinople, Empire of Trebizond created	
1220	Chingiz Khan conquers Central Asia	Mongol vanguard enters Georgia
1225 - 28		Chorasman Jalal ad-Din defeats Georgians at Garnisi, then at Bolnisi
1231	Jalal ad-Din murdered	
1235		Mongols invade Georgia from east
1243 -47		Kings David Ulu and Narin seek investiture by Mongols in Karakoram
1260		Mongols allow Samtskhe autonomy under Sargis Jaqeli: Georgia now in three parts, west, east and south
1289		King Dimitri II executed by Mongols
1334		King Giorgi V 'the Brilliant' reunites and stabilises Georgia with legal code
1347		Black Death halves population
1386		Timur Lang's first invasion
1402	Timur Lang routs Sultan Beyazit	

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1405	Timur Lang dies	
1407		Türkmen Qara-Koyunlu invade
1412		King Konstantine I executed by Qara Yusuf of Qara-Koyunlu
1438 - 39	Pope Eugene IV calls Ferrara and Florence Ecumenical Council	Georgian delegates refuse Union with Roman Catholic church
1452	Ottomans take Constantinople	
1459 - 60		Georgian rulers offer Pope and Holy Roman Emperor anti-Turk Coalition
1470	Tsar Ivan III 'gathers' Russian lands: Moscow is 'third Rome'	
1490		Konstantine II calls council: 30-year civil war halted, but no unification
1555	Sultan Süleyman, Shah Tahmasp sign Treaty of Amasya, dividing Transcaucasia into Ottoman and Persian zones for 175 years, despite almost perpetual war	
1569		Shah Tahmasp imprisons King Simon of Kartli and install Daud-Khan
1578		Shah Khudabanda frees King Simon
1585		Russian envoys reach Kakhetia
1599		King Simon captured by Turks at Partskhisi, imprisoned in Istanbul
1605	Tsar Boris dies: Russia in chaos	Prince Konstantine of Kakhetia kills father King Aleksandre II and brother Giorgi on Shah Abbas's orders. Russian envoys leave

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1610		Shah Abbas patronizes King Teimuraz I of Kakhetia and Luarsab II of Kartli
1620 - 24		Shah Abbas has Teimuraz I's sons castrated and mother martyred, and strangles King Luarsab
1625		Giorgi Saakadze's army defeats Shah Abbas at Martqopi: Teimuraz made King of Kartli & Kakhetia. Teimuraz sends envoys to Philip of Spain and Pope
1626		Teimuraz attacks & defeats Saakadze at Bazaleti
1633		Teimuraz flees Kartli
1639		Russian envoys reach Mingrelia
1649 - 52		Teimuraz & King Aleksandre of Imeretia exchange envoys with Moscow
1658 - 61		Teimuraz visits Moscow, then Vakhtang V hands him over to die in prison in Iran. Vakhtang briefly reunites Georgia
1697	Tsar Peter the Great tours Europe with Aleksandre Bagration	
1703 - 11	Georgian books printed first in Moscow, then in Tblisi	Kings Erekle I of Kakhetia, Giorgi XI & Kaikhosro of Kartli die in Iranian military service
1714		Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's mission to Europe to make Shah Hosein release Vakhtang VI
1721 - 22		Peter the Great induces Vakhtang VI to join in conquest of Caspian coast, then abandons him
1723 - 30		Ottomans rule Tblisi & most Georgia

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1749		King Teimuraz II and Erekle II rule & modernise Kartli and Kakhetia, control Shah Rokh
		Erekle II King of Kartlu & Kakhetia
1752		Solomon I of Imeretia stabilizes all western Georgia, allies with Erekle II
1762	Catherine the Great takes power, intervenes in Kartli-Kakhetia	
1766 - 73	Russo-Turkish war	Generals Tottleben and Sukhotin 'support'; Georgian forces against Turks
1783		Erekle II signs traktat recognizing Russian suzerainty
1795		Agha Mohammed Khan destroys Tblisi and ravages Kartli
1800 - 01		King Giorgi XII dies; Tsar Paul and Alexander I abolish Kartli monarchy and order royal family deported
1803		Dowager Queen Mariam kills General Lazarev. Crown Princes Iulon, Parnaoz, Aleksandre begin guerrilla war
1806 - 10	New Russo-Turkish war	
1807	Napoleon offers Georgia to Shah if he joins war against Russia	
1810		King Solomon II of Imeretia is deposed & captured but escapes. 4 guards executed by Gen. Tormasov

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1811		Georgian Patriarch replaced by Russian exarch. Imeretia rebels
1812 - 13	Napoleon invades Russia	Kakhetian-Khevsur rebellion
1820		Gurian rebellion crushed
1826	Tsar Nicolas I crushes Decembrists; Persia capitulates to Russia (Turkmenchai Treaty)	General Paskevich replaces General Ermolov
1829	Turkey signs Adrianopolis Treaty	Black Sea ports & Akhaltsikhe revert to Russian-ruled Georgia
1830 - 31	Polish rebellion crushed	
1832 - 34		Plotters against Russian rule arrested, interrogated & reprieved
1837		Nicolas I visits Transcaucasia, sacks Baron Rozen from son-in-law's crimes
1841		New Gurian rebellion crushed
1845		Count Vorontsov made viceroy
1853	Crimean War begins	Dadianis dispossessed by Mingrelia
1854		Vorontsov resigns
1855	Tsar Alexander II accedes	
1856	Treaty of Paris ends war	Russia keeps Black Sea ports. Alexander Bariatinsky made viceroy
1857		Utu Mikadze leads Mingrelia rebels. Svan Prince Dadeshkeliani executed
1859	Bariatinsky captures Shamil	
1860		Tblisi opera theatre revived

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1861 - 62		Bariatsky marries Elisabed Orbeliani; Tsar's brother Mikhail is viceroy
1864 - 66	Russia deports all Ubykh & most Abkhaz & Circassians to Turkey	Abkhazia resettled by Mingrelians. Tblisi tradesmen strike. Abolition of serfdom proceeds slowly
1872		Railway reaches Tblisi from Poti
1878	Russo-Turkish War ends; Kars and Ardahan revert to Russia	Iveria: 1st viable Georgian periodical
1879		Kutaisi Jews cleared of ritual murder
1881	Alexander II assassinated	Alexander III abolishes viceregency
1886		Seminary Rectory assassinated
1903	General Golitsyn dispossesses Armenian church	
1904	Georgian socialists meet in Geneva	General Golitsyn resigns after attempt on his life
1905	Russia loses war with Japan; revolution in cities	Vorontsov-Dashkov becomes viceroy; appoints 'red' governor Staroselsky in Kutaisi. Strikes and rebellions
1906	Russia's first Duma dissolved	Bolsheviks kill Gen. Griaznov
1907		Ilia Chavchavadze murdered. 'Kamo' robs bank for Bolsheviks, killing many
1908		Exarch Nikon murdered
1914	World War I begins. Georgian Legion formed in Berlin	
1915		Grand Duke Nikolai becomes viceroy; victory over Turks
1917	Tsar abdicate. In November Bolsheviks seize power	Transcaucasian Committee takes power. November: Georgian National Assembly takes over under Zhordania

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk cedes Georgian territory to Ottomans. In November Germany and allies surrender to Britain & France	May 1918 German mission supervises independent Georgia
1919		British take over Batumi and Georgian railways
1920		May: Soviets recognize Georgia. Britain withdraws
1921		Soviet armies invade and force Georgia into Transcaucasian Soviet Republic. Mensheviks escape with archives and treasures
1924	Lenin dies January	Anti-Soviet uprising brutally crushed:
1931	Stalin unopposed. Collectivisation of Soviet peasants	Lavrenti Beria made first secretary of Transcaucasian Communist Party
1936	Show trials of Old Bolsheviks	Georgian SSSR formed. Beria murders Khanjian, Armenian's party chief, and Lakoba, Abkhazia's leader
1937	Stalin & Ezhov begin Great Terror, setting quotas for victims	Beria arrests 50,000, shoots 20,000
1938	Beria heads NKVD in Moscow	Kandid Charkviani governs Georgia
1941 - 42	Germans invade USSR	
1953	March: Stalin dies; June Beria arrested, shot December	
1954		Mzhavanadze rules Georgia, Inauri heads Georgian KGB
1956	Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech	Hundreds killed in Tblisi revolt
1964	Khrushchev ousted by Brezhnev	
1972		Shevardnadze replaces Mzhavanadze

Date	World Events	Events In Georgia
1977		Dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia arrested. Abkhazia demands secession
1985	Gorbachev in power: perestroika	Shevardnadze USSR Foreign Minister
1989		April demonstrators killed in Tblisi
1990		Gamsakhurdia elected Chairman of Supreme Soviet. S. Ossetia & Abkhazia demand independence
1991 - 92	USSR dissolved. Yeltsin takes power in Russia	Georgia independent; civil war. Ioseliani stages coup. Shevardnadze returns. War with Abkhazia
1993 - 95		Gamsakhurdia murdered. Pro-western political course
1999	Putin takes power in Russia	
2003		Saakashvili and Zhvania stage 'Rose Revolution' coup
2005		Zhvania murdered
2008		August war with Russia

From: Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia by Donald Rayfield

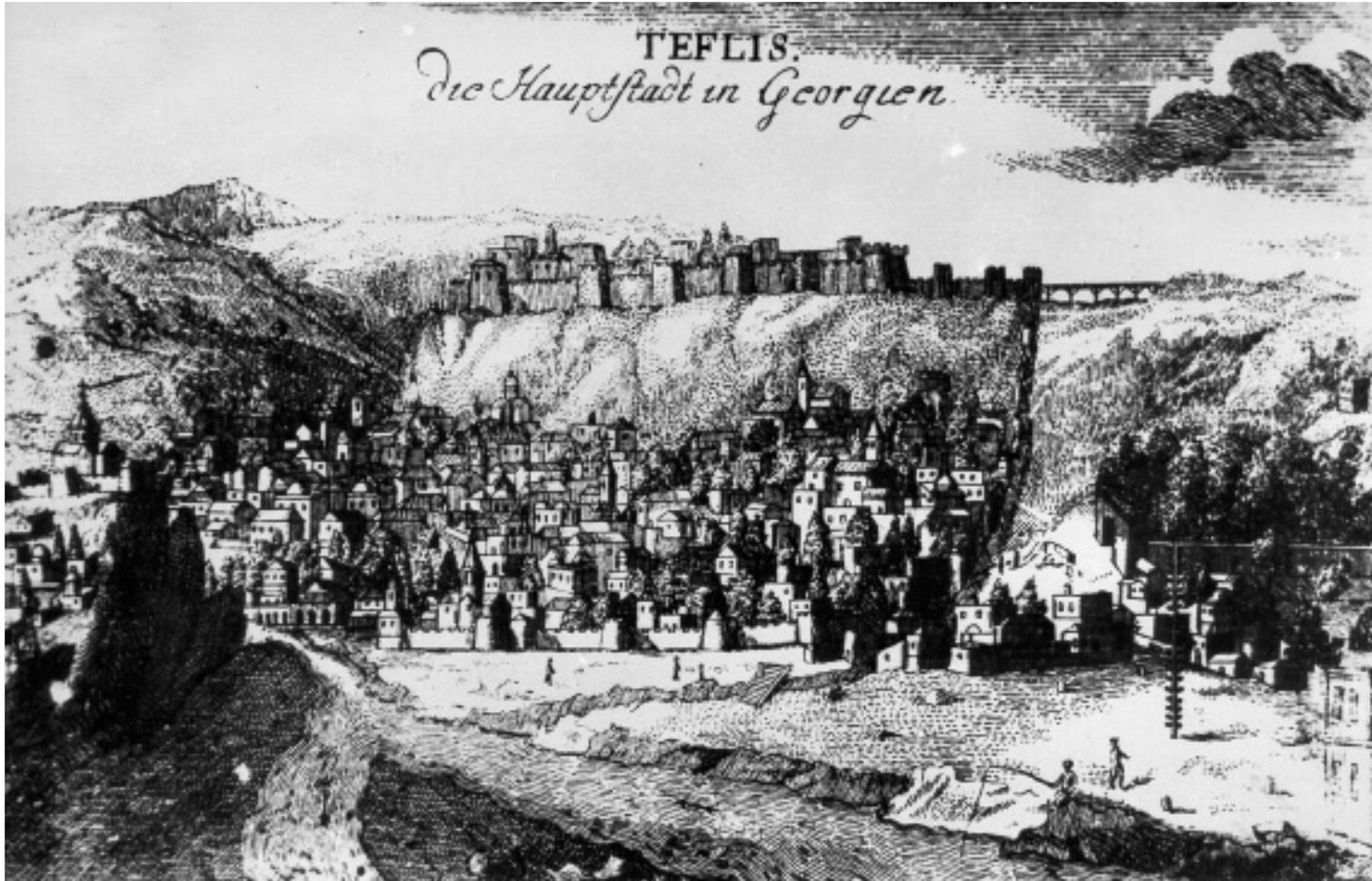






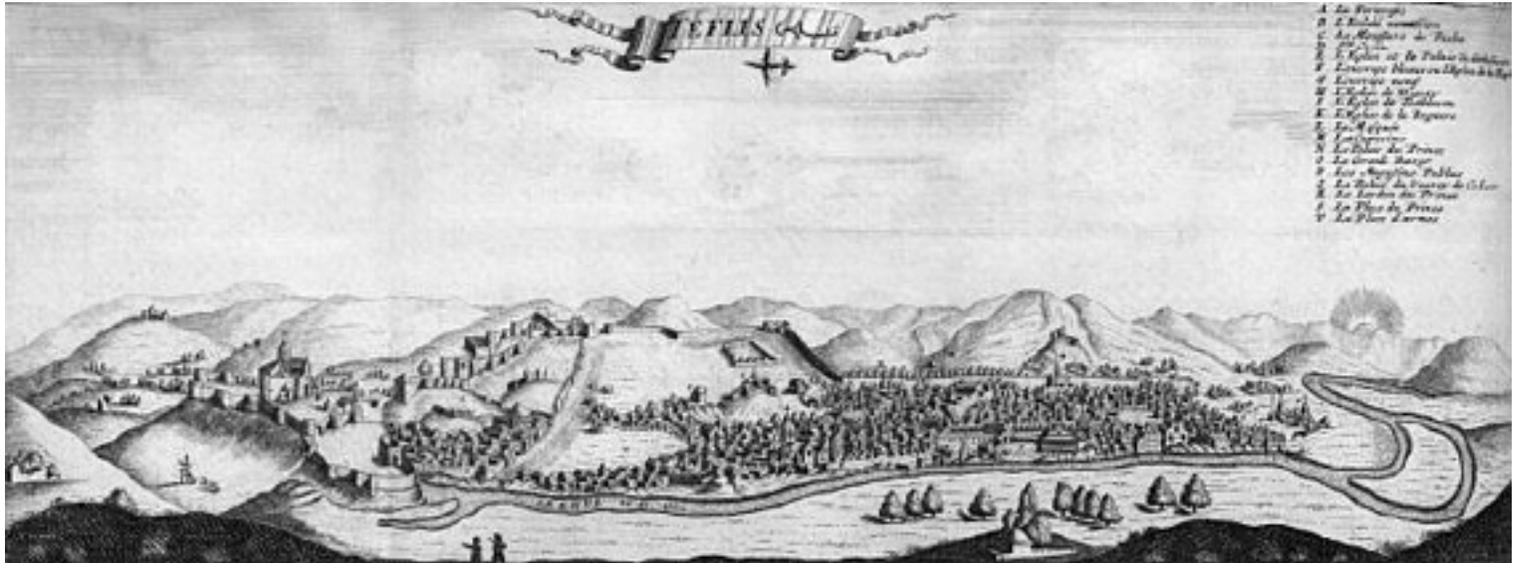


Armenian Man in Tiflis 1880, Photo by Dimitri Ermakov



View of Tbilisi. 1701. Drawing by Joseph Tournefort.

# Tiflis Architecture *Tamaz Gersamia*



View of Tbilisi. 1672. Engraving from Jean Chardin's book "Voyage to Persia and Other Counties of the East."

Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia, one of the oldest cities in the world. Its history is closely tied to the history of the entire country. Archeological excavations show that the territory of the contemporary city and its outskirts was settled back in the Eolithic period. In the third to second centuries BCE, the populace of these heavily settled areas had trade relations with Rome, Syria, the Bosphorus, and Bactria. The fortress city Tbilisi is first mentioned in the Georgian chronicles in connection with events in the second half of the fourth century. It is believed that the Roman geographer Castorius called Tbilisi "Philado" in his map Tabula Peutingeriana in the second half of the fourth century. We cannot rule out the possibility that the maker of the roadmap, intended for travelers and traders (it indicates trade routes and main towns), was based on even earlier sources.

The earliest information on Tbilisi as the capital of the Iberians appears in foreign sources, from the Byzantine historian Feofan, in the late sixth century. Intensive construction of Tbilisi began in the second half of the fifth century under King Vakhtang Gorgasali (452-502), whom legend credits with founding the city. The legend says that one day while hunting in the area, he wounded a pheasant that fell into a hot spring and was healed. The quality of the medicinal water seemed so attractive that the tsar decided to move the capital to Tbilisi. Undoubtedly, the Tbilisi mineral waters determined human habitation there from time immemorial, but we must also bear in mind the fact that by this time the old capital of Mtskheta was losing its former significance compared to Tbilisi. The appearance and growth of the city had many factors: a good

strategic and geographic location (it was the crossroads connecting Georgia with western and eastern countries) and also its location in the center of a historically rich agricultural area. At the same time, the city's growth coincided with major socioeconomic changes in the country, particularly the transition to new feudal relations.

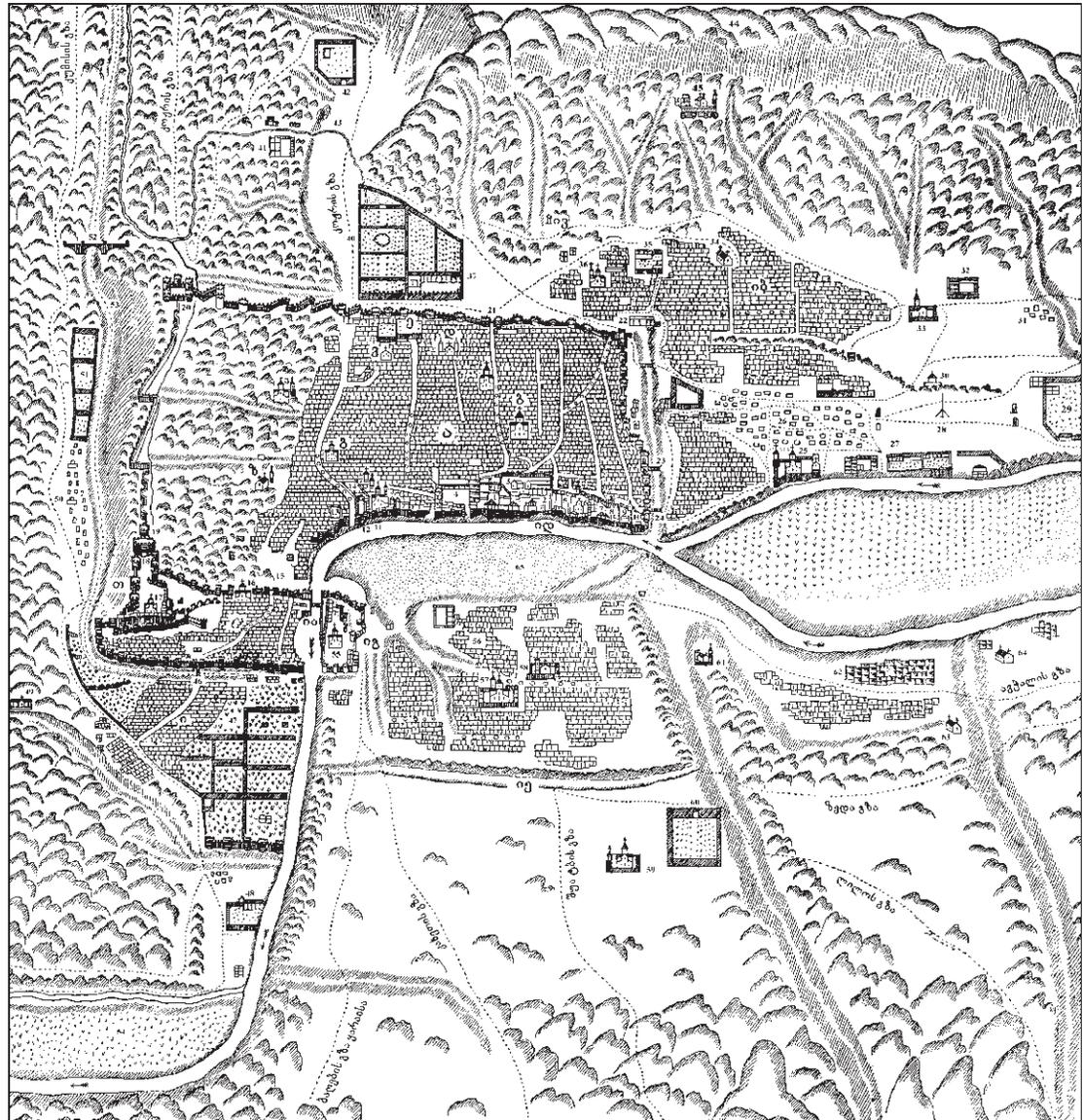
Despite the scant sources of information, we can imagine that in the fourth to seventh centuries the city was a major political, cultural, and trade center of Georgia. In the early sixth century, a bishopric was established and in the sixth and seventh centuries the Sioni Cathedral and the Anchiskhati Basilica were built, the city's oldest churches. "Luxurious, trading, glorious and great" is how the Armenian historian Moisei Kagankatvatsi described Tbilisi in the early seventh century. The tenth century saw the movement to unite the country from its feudal divisions. The lengthy and complicated struggle to unite the state and turn Tbilisi into the capital of a united Georgia came to an end only in 1122 under King David the Builder. From then right up to the start of the eighteenth century Tbilisi was the capital and major political and administrative center of one of the most powerful and wealthy states of Asia Minor, a large trade and craft city.

The main roads passed through Tbilisi, connecting Georgia to the east with India, to the south with Armenia, Arabia, and Iran, and to the north with Russia. Many caravans came and departed from the city. The Great Silk Road passed through Tbilisi, connecting China with the Mediterranean and Black seas (it started back in the third-second centuries BCE). A Persian geographical work of the early eighteenth century noted "Tiflis [from 1936, Tbilisi—T. G.]

is a big, fortified city, situated in a hard-to-access crevasse ... many bazaars ... numerous gardens filled with fruits. ... It has 65 baths; the water in them is hot without fire." The famous traveler Marco Polo wrote that Georgia "has a wonderful city called Tipilis, surrounded by outskirts and numerous strongholds. ... They manufacture silk and other fabrics." The city was also known for the production of weapons, artistic handicrafts of precious metals, ceramics, glass, enamel, and leather.

The unification of the city led to a sharp increase in a national consciousness and an incredible flourishing of medieval Georgian culture. The city began growing quickly along the shores of the Kura River. Archeological and written sources show that the city's territory expanded greatly in this period and the population had reached 60,000-100,000 people by the early eighth century. A period of political and economic decline lasted from the first quarter of the thirteenth century until the end of the eighteenth, the result of endless enemy attacks and wars, which naturally had a negative effect on the city. For example, the invasion of Jelal-ed-din in 1225 and 1226, then the conquering Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century demanded heavy duties to be paid, in 1386-1403 Tamerlane invaded eight times, and so on. The Turkish invasion of Constantinople in 1452 played a role in Tbilisi's history, as did the move of the trade routes between Europe and Asia.

The city was forced to contain itself within its old borders, inside the fortress walls, right up until the mid-eighteenth century, when relative peace returned and Tbilisi began rebuilding. Craft production and trade were reborn and trading contacts were



1 მეფის სასახლე	15 ციხის მედანი	28 მედანი ანუ ასპარეზი	42 იმბოლესი ბაღი	56 ავლაბარი, ისნი	60 მეფის ბაღი
2 დედოფლის სასახლე	16 ნიკოლოზის საყდარი	29 ვიზიულის ბაღი	43 საღვთაიკისწყალი	57 სომხის საყდარი	61 მონასტრის საყდარი
3 კარის საყდარი	17 ციხის საყდარი	30 სანაზურგო მეფისა	44 ანტონის ქუჩა	58 ვერძის საყდარი	62 კიხე დაბალი
4 მეფის მეფის	18 მაღალი ციხე	31 სასულიერო თათრისა	45 შაჰმურთა	59 გიორგის საყდარი	63 ი. მალაღი ციხე
5 ბაქრაშვილის სასახლე	19 ტაძრის ოფიცი	32 ციციშვილის სახლი	46 ტბილისის ბიდი ციხიდან	60 მეფეთის ბაღი	64 სვიდაბაღი ან ტბილისი
6 ანისხატი	20 შახტაბი	33 ქაშვილი	47 ტბილისის ბაღი სვიდაბაღისა	61 სომხის საყდარი	65 ჩუღურეთი
7 ანოპოლიის სახლი	21 კოჭის კარი	34 კალობანი	48 ხალაფარი	62 კერაბეული	66 ახალი სოფელი
8 ბატონიშვილის სახლი	22 დღმის კარი	35 არაგვის ერისთავის სახლი	49 შიბორი	64 ახალი ბაღი მეფისისა	67 კერაბეული
9 ლუარსაბისა	23 მეფის კარი ხაღი	36 სომხის საყდარი	50 თითარი საფლავი	65 ახალი ბაღი მეფისისა	68 ა. ვალა ანუ ტბილისი
10 მეფის ბატონისა	24 ქვემო კარი ხიდი	37 მეფის კარავალი	51 ციხის ბაღი	69 მამასახლისის საყდარი	70 სომხის საყდარი
11 სორი	25 ეპეჩი	38 მამასახლისის ბაღი	52 ოქუანის ხიდი	71 სომხის საყდარი	72 სომხის საყდარი
12 იბოლიის კარავალი	26 სასაფლაო სომეხთა	39 დედოფლის ბაღი	53 წაქისისწყალი	73 სომხის საყდარი	74 სომხის საყდარი
13 მეფის კარავალი	27 მეფის სასახლე	40 მეფის დიდი ბაღი	54 კრწანისის ბაღი	75 ლათინის საყდარი	76 ლათინის საყდარი
14 მეფის ფუნდუკი	28 განჯის კარი	41 ანარაუი	55 მეტეხი ციხი		77 ფრანგის საფლავი

Map of Tbilisi made by Georgian scholar Vakhushti Bagrationi. 1735.



Narikala Fortress and part of the old city. 1880s.

renewed. By the end of the eighteenth century the city was relatively prosperous and economically sound. However, post-feudal Tbilisi could not compare to the city of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—the population and territory were reduced. The descriptions left by travelers are very important in the study of the city of this period. The French traveler Jean Chardin (1643-1713), a jeweler by profession who visited Tbilisi in 1672-1673, left valuable information. “Tiflis is densely populated. It has more foreigners, doing big trade, than anywhere else,” “the city is surrounded by a beautiful and solid wall.” A drawing with a view of Tbilisi, appended to his book, is particularly valuable. It is essentially the first graphic depiction of Tbilisi to reach us. In 1701, Tbilisi was visited by the French botanist and physician Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708), who gave one of more interesting descriptions of Tbilisi. “Tiflis is a rather big and populous city,” with a population at the time of 20,000.

A good visualization of the city of the late feudal period is in the map created by Georgian historian and geographer Vakhushti Bagrationi in 1735. The city consists of four main regions: Tbilisi, i.e., the oldest inhabited part of the city (the area of the sulfur baths), called Seidabadi since the seventeenth century; Kala, the main part of the city; Isni (Isani) located on the left bank of the Kura; and the fourth part of the city, Garetubani (the suburbs north of Kala along the Kura River). In the seventeenth century, the administrative, social, and trade center of the city moved into the Kala neighborhood, where the new urban planning axis of the city formed from Fortress Square along Sioni Street to King Square. This is where the palace complex was built.



Metekhi castle and church. 1880-1890s.

Throughout the fourth through thirteenth centuries, Tbilisi was a typical feudal city. It was surrounded by fortress walls and like every medieval city consisted of the fortress and unplanned city neighborhoods. We can imagine that the main type of dwelling in Tbilisi was the darbazi, an ancient type of eastern Georgian house, described by the Roman architect Vitruvius. It has a distinctive pyramidal vault (gvirgvini) with an opening for light and smoke, supported by a carved “deda-bodzi” (mother column). Darbazis were common even in the early twentieth century, but now there is only one house of this type in Tbilisi, on Chekhov Street. Along with darbazi, terraced houses with flat clay roofs (“bani”) were very popular; the flat roof of the house below served as a terrace for the house above. Residents usually spent their evening hours on the rooftops.

For many centuries, the Narikala and Metekhi fortresses were the natural dominant features of medieval Tbilisi, and they have maintained their significant commanding positions in the city even to the present time.

Built in the second half of the fourth century, the Narikala Fortress is the oldest and most important city stronghold, occupying the edge and eastern slope of the Sololaki Ridge. Designed with a complex system of fortifications, it consisted of the Upper (citadel) and Lower Fortress. On the northwestern side, adjacent to the wall of the Lower Fortress was the earliest market square of the city, the Tsikhis Moedani (Fortress Square). The imposing Shakhtakhti tower fort, which housed an astronomical observatory in the fifth through ninth centuries, has been preserved on the western side of the fortress, facing the gentle slope of the Sololaki Ridge. At the southwestern foot of the fortifications, beyond the Sololaki Ridge in the Tsavkissi Gorge, the former fortress gardens of the Georgian kings were transformed in 1845 into the Botanical Garden, the oldest one in the Caucasus remaining to this day. The Metekhi Fortress along with the Narikala was the main military defensive stronghold of the city. It is not known exactly when this fortification was erected, but in all likelihood, it must have been in the second half of the fifth century. From the seventh century on, Metekhi on the left bank of the Kura on the so-called Metekhi plateau became the residence of the Georgian kings. A king's palace was built here. In 1289, the Metekhi Church was built on the site of an earlier church. In 1967, a monument to Vakhtang Gorgasali, founder of Tbilisi was unveiled (the sculptor was E. Amashukeli). Sachino, a summer palace built in 1776 by King Erekle (Heraclius) II for his wife, Darejan, was also located at Metekhi.

The end of the eighteenth century was marked by tragic events for the city. In 1795, the Shah of Iran, Aga-Mohammed Khan, grew enraged and nearly demolished the city completely. Mainly because of this event, there is almost no urban construction dating earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century. After the departure of the Iranians, the majority of the population returned to the ruined city and Tbilisi once again began to restore itself, although understandably, it was hard to heal all the wounds caused by this invasion in such a short period.

In 1801, Tbilisi, like all of Georgia, was annexed to the Russian Empire. The Georgian kingdom was essentially dismantled. Tbilisi was officially declared a Russian gubernia (province) capital city. Despite this fact, its significance was much wider. Tbilisi, which was the capital of Georgia and then the capital of the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom, and now remains the administrative and trade center of the country. From 1840, Tbilisi became the "administrative center of the Trans-Caucasian territory," and from 1845 to 1917, the residence of the governor of the Caucasus, the administrative center of the Caucasus. The highest representatives of Russian military and civilian authority in the Caucasus were located in Tbilisi. Through Tbilisi, Russia conducted trade and diplomatic relations with the countries of the Orient. The city was also a central location in the Caucasus for purchasing raw materials and selling produce. Because the city to a large extent had been destroyed and there were no buildings for administrative offices, it could no longer meet the demands of the new era. Therefore the development of the city beyond the fortress walls began in the very first years of the nineteenth century, although in reality, before the early 1820s, the



General view of the city (in foreground one of the historical neighborhoods of the city—Kala). 1900s.



General view of the city. 1896.



Transporting wine. 1900s.

boundaries of the city nonetheless remained practically unchanged. A significant turning point in the pace of construction occurred in the 1830s-1840s, when the collapse of feudal relations was particularly notable, and the bourgeoisie began to grow rapidly. The so-called apartment tariff was abolished, trade expanded, new branches of production appeared and cultural life was enlivened. From that time, the growth of the city intensified, and its population also increased. The preferential tariff passed in 1822 for a period of 10 years significantly strengthened transit trade, and as a result, Tbilisi once again became an important trade hub. According to the testimony of Charles Gamba, the French consul in Tbilisi from 1820-24, "Sometimes on one and the same day in Tiflis merchants from Paris, couriers from Calcutta and Madras, Armenians from Syria, Yezidis and Uzbeks from Bukhara all arrive, giving it the honor of being the main junction between Europe and Asia."

The bureaucratic apparatus of the new government was more extensive and complicated than the medieval administration and it opened the way to completely new official buildings that had not existed in feudal Georgia. It was these official government buildings that largely reflected the unfamiliar architectural forms incorporated and disseminated from Russia; moreover, as in other cities of the empire, all the official buildings were built in the style of late Russian classicism (empire), the approved style of the empire of that period. In addition, measures were taken (starting in 1805) to introduce building codes for private construction. From that time on, it was necessary to obtain permission in advance from the government to build a home. Furthermore, the construction had to be done, as in other provincial cities of the Russian Empire, in accordance with the

"model façade" that was "imperially approved for private buildings in the cities of the empire," choosing from model albums especially created for this. At the same time, the new codes provided the right "for the owner to design inside the building freely as he wishes." Thus, in the construction of Tbilisi, for the first time, definite and obligatory rules and standards appeared regulating development. Tbilisi, like any city of the feudal era grew spontaneously, although by the seventeenth century, there were already established rules for construction, even if not recorded in writing. In construction of new quarters, red lines (so-called projection lines) were observed. This planning was nevertheless of a somewhat limited and one-sided nature. Throughout the entire nineteenth century, and even later, including the early twentieth century, despite such a significant growth of the city, its development, as before in the Middle Ages, was accomplished without the presence of a single, guiding plan.

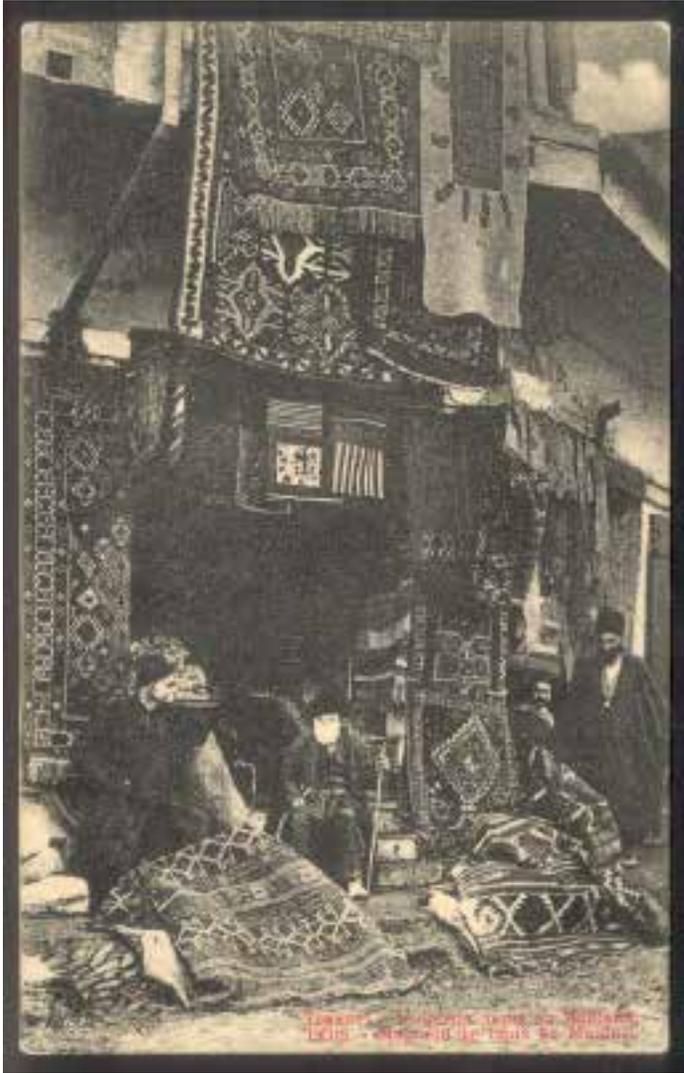
Thus it can be said that the city to a certain extent developed "spontaneously," that is, enabling its linear growth by obeying its natural location, its natural conditions – the sharply-expressed relief and the river. The development essentially came down to the planning of certain streets and districts of the city, which basically consisted in setting the so-called red lines. In drawing up the draft plans of various parts of the city, the idea of a regular "rectangular system" was established along with the "radial ring" system that was very popular in Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However the superimposition of the rectangular grid without taking into account the special features of Tbilisi's terrain to a certain extent indicates a mechanistic approach to its planning.

From the onset of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of borders, the external face of the city changed as well; the city walls were taken down and new buildings were erected which brought to the city's architecture a new scale, new forms. Gradually, feudal Tbilisi turned into a bourgeois bureaucratic city, and the oriental "Asiatic" city took on a European nature. The Europeanization of the architecture was connected to changes in the city's ordinary way of life, the appearance of new habits and customs, new clothing, and a new style of interior decoration, and it proceeded slowly. The city preserved many of its old specific features; therefore the old traditions lived side by side with the new for a long time. Moreover, in the process of evolution, the old and new not only clashed; very often they intertwined and blended. The result of this was the emergence of a large number of unique, entirely specific and typical Tbilisi characteristics, thanks to which the Tbilisi of the nineteenth century attracted everyone with its vivid colors, which appeared both in its external face as well as in its everyday life. Of course, this largely concerned the old town, and above all the "oriental" bazaar, and the type of petty merchants directly connected with this bazaar, the so-called kinto and the karachokheli craftsmen who established unique standards of behavior, with their own specific dress and own jargon.

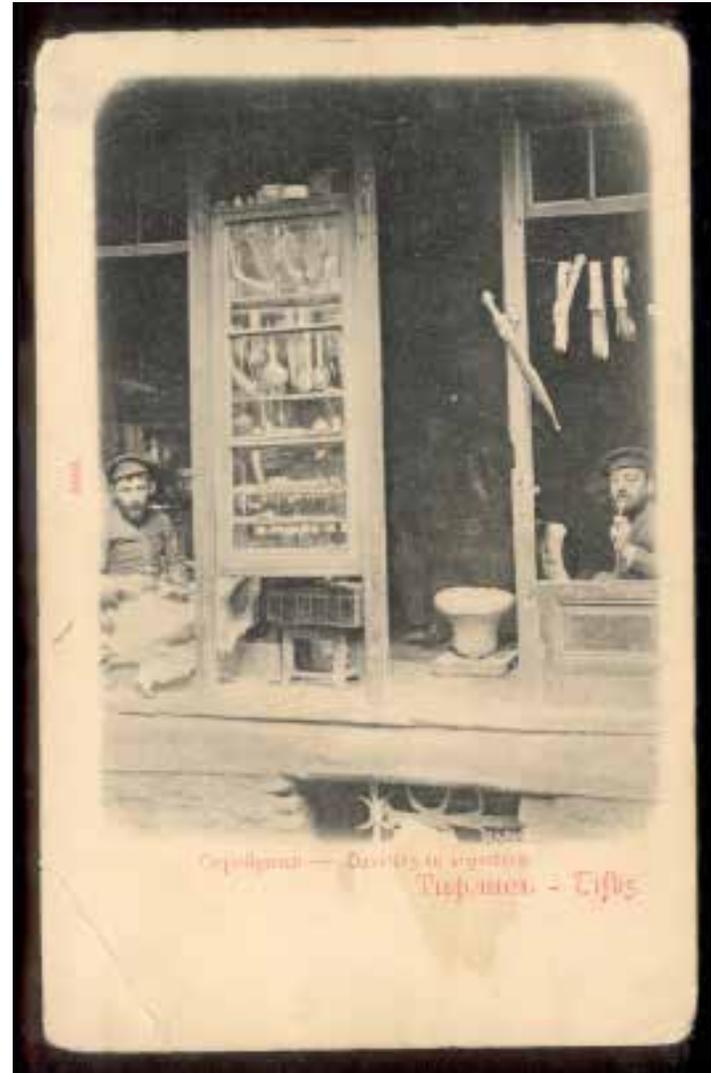
"Tiflis presents an original picture of a mixture of Asiatic and European buildings, striking the eye. . .As the center of trade of the Transcaucasus region and Russia, Tiflis attracted the merchant class of different countries of Asia and Europe, whose garments and appearances were a strange diversity, Turks, Persians, Indians, Tatars, Germans, British, highlanders, Armenians, Georgians, Russians and others in

national costumes, in uniforms and frock coats; European coaches, German vorspann, Georgian carts, packs of buffalos, camels, asses – all of them appeared in an incessant panorama before the eye and made up an original picture," wrote novelist and historian Platon Zubov (Six Letters on Georgia and the Caucasus Written in 1833).

Changes became even more tangible in the late 1840s. "To enter Tiflis through the Moscow outpost or the Erivan outpost means to enter two cities completely unlike each other; here you travel along a broad, even street; there you climb from one hill to another, making your way along dark, crooked, disorderly narrow streets of the old town. . .Here you meet with strolling bureaucrats with walking sticks and fashionable á la polka coats; carriages rush at you with feathers fluttering on women's Parisian hats; you make your way through a whole crowd of Georgians in blue chokhas with long sleeves rolled up; you will meet Tatars with shaved heads; Ossetians with daggers in their belts and furry hats. . . Women picturesquely wrapped in white chadors, here almost no green, there on all sides are gardens. Here is an entirely provincial city, the buildings are made of stone, the majority of them are two stories, placed at a respectable distance from each other, there, without ceremony, there is hut on top of hut; towers like cells look out at you from all sides due to the low, totally windowless floors filled with stalls, taverns, Tatar coffee shops and so on. Here it is spacious, there it is cramped. . .Tiflis is in some sense a Janus, with one eye looking to Asia and the other to Europe," according to the Zakavkazsky vestnik (Transcaucasian Herald, 1847, no. 6, "Letter to Moscow.").



Carpet store on the so-called Tatar square. 1890.



Silversmiths. Late 1890s.



Store and workshop for making papakhas. Late 1890s.



Store and workshop of saddler. Late 1890s.

“Here is Tiflis! ... This news was the same as if you had been told: Here is Saturn. Or: Here is Mercury. We had already thought Tiflis is a planet...” This was the first impression, subsequently one of many, as the French writer Alexandre Dumas (père) described his visit to Tbilisi in 1858, he let out cries of joy at every step. The composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky wrote that he recalled Tbilisi like a sweet dream.

The new government bodies were at first concentrated only in the old city, around the so-called King's Square, where the Russian administration buildings were constructed from the ruins of the King's palace complex. For the home of the commander-in-chief, however, a location was selected behind the fortress walls where at the present time the Palace of Student Youth is located (Rustaveli Prospect, 6). The original structure, erected in 1802, was rebuilt several times and received its final façade after the reconstruction of 1865-1869, led by the Dresden architect Otto Simonson who settled in Tbilisi. The official design leads to the square in front of the so-called Kojori Gates (modern-day Freedom Square). In 1824-27, the Headquarters of the Separate Caucasian Corps was built in the style of late Russian classicism and it still stands today. The Jacob Zubalov (Zubalashvili) Hotel was built on the north side of the square in 1833-35 in the same style, which today houses the Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts (architect Giuseppe Bernardazzi). Parties and balls were organized many times in the great hall of this building in 1836-37. On October 11 (Old Style), 1837, a ball was given in honor of a visit by the Russian Emperor Nicholas I, attended among others by the famous Georgian and Russian Romantic poets Nikoloz Baratashvili and Mikhail Lermontov. This neighborhood includes the earliest preserved

examples of late Russian classicism in Tbilisi, the “new” three-tiered bell-tower of the Sioni Cathedral, built in 1812.

In the late 1830s, construction continued along the future Golovinsky (now Rustaveli) Prospect, where parcels were marked out along both sides of the avenue for development. Here, in 1837-40, the nobility's gymnasium was built, the external façade of which at the present time is significantly altered (now housing the Tbilisi First Gymnasium). The Tiflis Noble Gymnasium was the first gymnasium for men in the Caucasus (opened in March 1830). The city was developing as well in the direction of Sololaki (the historical district of the city), squeezing out the gardens situated there. In the 1820s and 1830s, a regular grid of streets was created, which has remained unchanged to our time. Throughout almost the entire nineteenth century in the old part of Tbilisi, new buildings went up, or old ones were reconstructed, along with the residential homes. Examples of this activity include the traditional buildings both of the caravanserai, whose construction ceased only in the 1870s, and the famous sulfur baths which many travelers and guests of the city enjoyed, starting in the Middle Ages, as a unique and significant feature of the city. Alexander Pushkin, who visited Tbilisi from May 27 through June 10 (Old Style), 1829, wrote: “In my whole life, I have not encountered either in Russia nor Turkey anything more luxurious than the Tbilisi baths.” Another Russian writer, Alexei Tolstoy, claimed that “sitting in the marble pool, a person feels as if he is either Pompey or Lucullus.” For everyone, the baths occupied a special place at that time and were not just a hygienic institution but a kind of club in which the residents routinely spent their leisure time, holding dinners and often scheduling business



Cobbler. Late 1890s.



Fruit store by the Metekhi rise. 1890s.

meetings. They were always open to those who wished to come. In those years, bathing times were not restricted; after having washed, people could remain in the baths even until morning. Sometimes for a minimal payment they served the purpose of hotels for peasants arriving in Tbilisi. Among the baths still existing are the Orbeliani baths or the so-called Motley Baths, at that time the women's baths located on Abano Street, with a characteristic portal with little towers in the form of minarets covered with ceramic tiles. Women went to the baths not only to bathe but brought their laundry to wash and even their children. Women would stay at the baths all day long, sometimes lunching there. Moreover, they had the opportunity to show off their toilettes and precious jewelry which outside the baths, during ordinary times, was difficult to do completely; thus does the poet Ioseb Grishashvili describe the "life" of the baths in his book *Dzveli Tbilisis literaturuli bokhema* [The Literary Bohemians of the Old Tbilisi]. The baths were built of stone, with dense walls; the floor, like the baths, were made of hewn stone slabs, and above, there was a cupola-shaped roof in the middle of which was a round or square window for natural lightning; this was their chief architectural feature

Among the caravanserais that have been preserved in Tbilisi, the most famous is the building where the Museum of the History of Tbilisi is now located (since 1984) (the so-called Qarvasla), next to the Sioni Cathedral. King Rostom built the original structure in 1650. It was damaged by the invasion of the Iranians in 1795 and restored in 1820. This caravanserai was rebuilt several times. The first time after the great fire of 1855, the second in 1912 when the façade from the side of Sioni Street was significantly altered in

the Moderne Style. Although the external façade of the building shows the influence of European architecture, Iranian motifs were traditionally used in the interior, and on the whole, its architectural composition strictly adhered to all the demands put to edifices of such purpose in all the countries of the Near East: an internal courtyard with a large pool, surrounded by galleries on three floors, along which were situated rooms (housing, trade, repair shops, storehouses). On the top floor were 33 living quarters, among which were two trade offices; an average of 25 stores with goods of European and Asian manufacture; and on the lower floor, warehouses in which goods were stored. Another caravanserai was named for Tekle, the daughter of King Erekle II. The building, which still exists, dates to the mid-nineteenth century, although it undoubtedly contains an earlier core. It was built on the site of Princess Tekle's caravanserai, which is noted in Georgian documents as early as 1672. The façade facing Sioni Street must be the result of a later reconstruction. In its compositional form, the building of the caravanserai is a large, open courtyard, surrounded by four stories of galleries. This caravanserai had 62 residential rooms, 30 stores, 2 warehouses for storing good and 15 spaces occupied by various repair shops. There was also a pool in the courtyard. At the present time, this building houses the Tbilisi Orthodox Seminary (13, Sioni Street).

Among the public buildings of the mid-nineteenth century, the most significant was the theater building on the former Erivan (now Freedom) Square, built in 1847-51 according to the design of the Italian architect Giovanni Scudieri. This was the first specialized theatrical building not only in Georgia but in the entire Caucasus.



Washing wineskins. Early 1900s.

Aside from a theater, the building included trading rooms, and in that connection, it was often called “the caravanserai with a theater.” The stores and trade warehouses, however, were built with a purely commercial purpose: the theater was the main building, and immediately after it was built, the building became the city’s “property in perpetuity.” Architecturally, the facades of the building and the interior of the theater did not match each other. As was written at the time, “the façade is of the lightest Italian architecture” but the interior was of an “oriental” nature. Essentially, the building was one of the early examples of eclecticism in Tbilisi. In designing the facades, Scudieri used the architectural motifs of the famous basilica in the city of Vicenza by the architect Andreas Palladio. The interior design of the auditorium and the foyer were made according to sketches by the artist Prince Grigory Gagarin “in a perfected Arabic style,” with arabesques, kufic inscriptions and even ornaments in the form of stalactites. It must be noted that the auditorium of the Tbilisi theater drew the admiration of contemporaries. In a report to the Emperor, the governor of the Caucasus, Prince Mikhail Vorontsov wrote that “you can say the interior decoration of the hall astounds all who visit it with its elegance.” The writer Count Vladimir Sollogub, appointed director of the theater’s stage repertoire wrote: “Built in Tiflis, the theater on Erivan Square is unparalleled anywhere in its decoration; it is impossible to express in writing. . .all the charm, all the jeweled décor of the new hall: it looked like an enormous bracelet made of different enamels”. Alexandre Dumas (père) noticed: “The hall is a palace of wonders, without shame I can say that the hall of the Tiflis theater is one of the most exquisite halls I have ever seen anywhere in my life.” As for the commercial part of the building, it could well be recognized as a commercial building of the “passage” type. Thus,



Dukhani (restaurant). Delivery of wine in wineskins. Late 1890s.

it was an entirely new type of shopping mall for the city, and the earliest not only for Tbilisi and Georgia but possibly even fairly early for Europe itself (the “caravanserai” made its appearance in 1849).

As was noted above, the regulation of the designs extended to the architecture of the urban home. However, here it was hard to mechanically import new, unfamiliar forms. The ordinary customs of life hindered this as well as the artistic taste of the residents of the city, conditioned by centuries of established traditions. To this had to be added the specific natural settings of the city. Thus, a process of organic assimilation takes place, an active, creative reworking and blending of artificially inculcated forms of late Russian classicism with the local traditional elements resulting in the characteristic type of old Tbilisi homes. As early as the first half of the 1830s, some features gradually appeared that unquestionably showed the influence of Tbilisi. First of all, this was the balcony and primarily the



Inn on Vorontsov Street. 1890s.

hanging, closed balcony that appeared on the facades of residential buildings. A specific component of the outward face of the home was to emerge in these balconies – the wooden column order, a unique wooden Doric, which reached its full development during the 1840s. Homes of this type even now have been preserved in various quarters of the historical part of Tbilisi, which undoubtedly

contribute to the preservation of the city's characteristic individual look. These preserved homes are representative examples of these residential buildings: 2, Gudiasvili Square; 3, Betlemi (Vifleyemskaya) Street; 13, Dumas Street; 12, Lermontov Street; 34, Sh. Dadiani Street; 8, Amagleba (Voznesenskaya) Street; 3, G. Lortkipanidze Street ; 10, Erekle II Square; and others. An interesting description of



Kinto Fishmerchant. 1900s.

a Tbilisi residential building of this period is given in an article in the newspaper Kavkaz, no. 23 in 1846: "An indispensable accessory of every decent home in Tiflis is the balcony. This comes about for two reasons. The balcony protects from the heat, and in the hours of the evening coolness...provides a place of relaxation, where one can breathe the fresh air. The flat roofs of homes also serve that purpose."

In the late 1840s, other tendencies began to make themselves felt, notably the influence of eclecticism, construction with the use of elements of various historical styles. From the 1850s throughout almost the entire 1860s, Gothic architectural forms enjoyed particular popularity in the architecture of Tbilisi, which prior to that had been entirely unknown. In particular, certain Gothic details are encountered in the home of the wealthy fish processor V. Arshakuni, "the pearl of Tiflis" as it was called, one of the most famous Tbilisi homes of the nineteenth century. The design of the building and extension of the already existing home was made according to the design of the architect G.M. Ivanov in 1857, after which "the palace-home acquired the fabulous oriental appearance which Tiflisers admired until the late [nineteenth] century." The mural of the interiors is related to the traditions of late Iranian décor, although at the same time, European influence is sensed as well. V. Arshakuni, the owner, "dreamed of building a fabulous home to the amazement of the whole Caucasus" and to celebrate "his house-warming party with an unusual ball." From 1869-1886, the Tbilisi Art Circle was located in this building – an elite amusement club founded in 1869. From 1922 to the present day the Tbilisi State Academy of the Arts is housed here at 22, Griboyedov Street.

The city's infrastructure, especially the roads, was rather primitive until the early 1860s. The streets and squares were paved only in the old part of the city; therefore, all the rest of the city, including "... even the main streets of Tiflis in foul weather were distinguished for their impassable mud, so that it was impossible for a pedestrian to cross them without sinking up to his knees. That's to say nothing of the squares. These were enormous receptacles of black, thick mud, representing a serious danger even for those who passed over them on horseback or in a carriage" (D. Bakradze and N. Berdzenov, *Tiflis v istoricheskom i etnograficheskom otnosheniyakh* [Tiflis in History and Ethnography], St. Petersburg, 1870). "The lighting of the city is poor," wrote Baron Tornau in the early 1840s: "two dull lamp posts shone on the main street to



Group of Karachokheli. Later 1890s.



Karachokheli with a fighting ram. Early 1900s.



Karachokheli drinking on a rooftop. 1890s.

the right and left of the home of the commander-in-chief, and on Erivan Square a lamp post was lit near the police station, but all the rest of the streets of the old and new city remained plunged in the impenetrable darkness of the southern nights." More active steps in the direction of improvement of the city were taken only in the late 1840s, but even these were mainly in the central parts of the city. In particular, in 1848, along one side of Golovinsky Prospect (Rustaveli Prospect) a sidewalk was built "paved with hewn stone slabs, separated from the street by a barrier and planted with trees," and in some areas "benches were placed for those wishing to rest; it serves now as the best place in the city for a stroll," wrote A. Umanets (the newspaper *Zakavkazskiy vestnik*, 1851, nos. 28, 29).

In the early 1860s, the avenue was paved with cobblestones. By this same time, lampposts illuminated the avenue, lit with the



Palace of the viceroy of the Caucasus. Photo 1900s.

onset of twilight and burning until dawn on 24 nights of the month (those which were moonless). In 1859, the first public garden in Tbilisi was built on the former Alexander Square, on the grounds of the so-called old Kabakhi. G.I. Sharrer, a landscape architect and Prussian subject, managed the installation of the garden (a sketch of the garden and the design of various pavilions was made by the architect Otto Simonson). Among the number of special events to improve the city of that period were the time signals given by a cannon located in the upper part of the Alexander Garden (now the April 9th Garden). The cannon boomed at 12 o'clock noon daily.

In 1867, a monument was erected in Tbilisi to Prince Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov, built with voluntary contributions. This was the first sculpture placed in the city, created by the sculptor Nikolai Pimenov with the assistance of the sculptor Vasily Kreytan. The monument was unveiled on March 25 (Old Style) and the blessing ceremony was photographed by K. Veysse. This was one of the earliest documentary photographic images made, and likely not only for Tbilisi.

Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, Tbilisi, like all of Georgia, embarked on the path of rapid capitalist development that enabled the abolition of serfdom in 1864. Industry grew intensively, and factories, plants and railroads were constructed. The construction of the railroad from Tbilisi to Poti was completed in 1872, with a length of 290 kilometers – the first railroad in the Caucasus (designed by British engineer P. Bailly). In 1883, the railroad linking Tbilisi to Baku was opened. The increase in the importance of Tbilisi as a trade center was also fostered by the



Тифлисъ, Дворцовая улица.

Dvortsovaya Street (headquarters of the Caucasus Military Okrug on the left). Photo 1900s.



Zubalov's (Zubalashvili's) hotel. Later it was the building of the Orthodox seminary. Early 1880s.



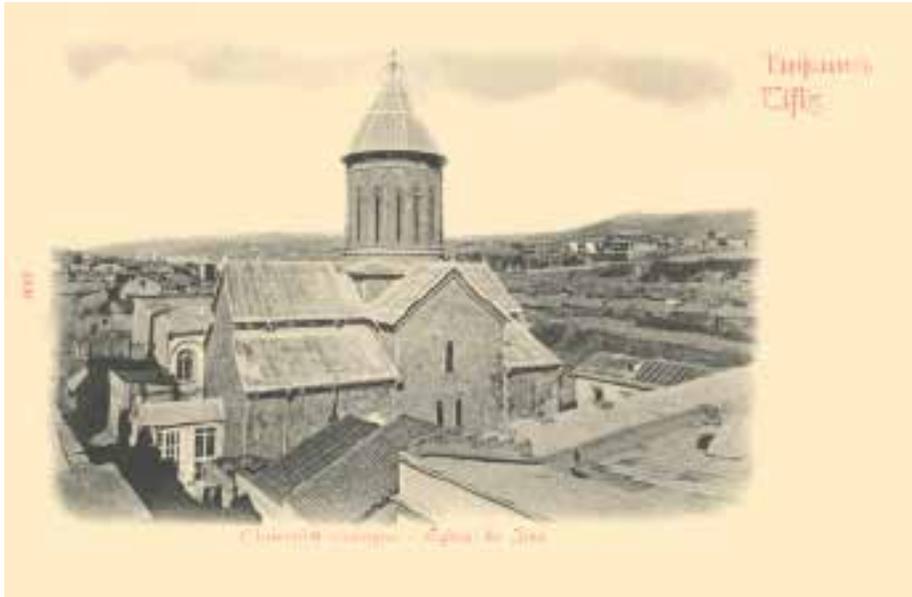
New belfry of the Sion Cathedral on Sion Street. On the right, the Tekle caravanserai. Early 1900s.

construction of ports in Poti and Batumi. In 1874, the city statute was introduced in Tbilisi, that is, city self-rule. In this same period the city territory expanded rapidly, related to bringing the railroad on line and the construction in 1885 of the Vere Bridge (designed by the engineer S. Umansky). With the construction of this bridge, a new important cross highway was organized, linking the two main linear planned axes of the construction of the left and right banks of the Kura, Golovinsky (now Rustaveli) and Mikhailovsky (now David Agmashenebeli) prospects. In 1833, the first line of the horse-and-rail road was opened, linking the railroad station with Vorontsovskaya Square (now Saarbrücken). Along this same route in late 1904 passed the first line of the electrical tramway. In 1887, the first Avchala waterway came into operation. In the early 1890s, electrical lighting began to appear in some neighborhoods. In 1892, street addresses for houses were assigned for the first time, and in 1893, the first city telephone network was installed intended for 110 customers. In the early twentieth century, the right-bank and left-bank parts of the city were linked by several bridges. These were the Bolshoi and Maly Mikhailovsky Bridge, 1848-53, the Metekhi and Avlabar bridges, 1870 and the so-called Mnatsakanov Bridge, 1882, and the already-referenced Vere and Mukhran bridges, 1911.

Tbilisi had its own internal city form of transport that differed from many other cities. This was the funicular, which linked the districts of the city with the upper plateau, the funicular on Mount Mtatsminda, where the creation of a new part of the city was planned, that is, Upper Tbilisi. The funicular was built by the Belgian Tram Company and designed by French engineer L. Blanche. From an engineering perspective, this was a significant structure: the road was 501 meters

long, the incline was 28-33 degrees. The funicular was opened on March 17, 1905 (Old Style). It is considered one of the longest and steepest in the world. Initially the upper and lower stations of the funicular were built by Tbilisi architect Alexander Shimkevich. In 1938, the upper station was replaced by the building still there today (architects Z. and N. Kurdiani and A. Volobuyev), and the lower station was restored to its initial form in 2012. Mtatsminda (Holy Mountain) rises above the central districts of Tbilisi. The funicular's viewing platforms give a magnificent and memorable panoramic view of the city. Mtatsminda, which according to Alexander Griboyedov was "the most poetic feature of Tbilisi," is visible from practically every district. According to the chronicles, Saint David, one of the so-called 13 Syrian fathers, missionary monks, was the first on Mtatsminda. The mountain is sometimes called Mamadaviti (the hill of Saint David). Halfway from the foothills to the summit stands the church of St. David, which was built in 1871 at the site of more ancient buildings. Near the church on two terraces of equal heights is located the Pantheon of Writers and Civic Figures of Georgia. On the lower square in a stone grotto is the grave of the Russian writer and diplomat Griboyedov and his wife, née Princess Nino Chavchavadze.

For many centuries, the citadels Narikalaa and Metekhi dominated medieval Tbilisi. From the early nineteenth century, the territorial growth of the city and the relocation of the administrative and civic center of the city to the former suburb of Garetubani gradually moved the center of gravity to Mtatsminda. It came to occupy a more noticeable place in the overall architectural and planning composition of the city, especially after the construction of the new



Sioni Cathedral. 1880s.



Building of the First Men's Gymnasium. 1900s.



Orbeliani, aka Motley baths. Early 1890s.



Massage at the sulfur baths. 1890s.



Theater building. General views. Project. 1850.



Building of the Tbilisi Artistic Circle. Early 1880s.



View of the old part of town. 1880s.

Church of St. David, the funicular, the building of Golovinsky (now Rustaveli) Prospect, and became the defining feature of the new Tbilisi, one of the characteristic symbols of the capital of Georgia, along with Narikalaa and Metekhi.

The second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century was an important stage in the development of Tbilisi. During this period, the territory of the metropolis grew significantly. Thus, in the 1860s, it was about 800 hectares, and in 1917 it had already reached 3,000 hectares. The population rose rapidly: in 1865 it was 71,000, in 1897 it was 159,600, in 1910, 286,593, and in 1914, 344,600.

Substantial changes occurred in the architecture of the municipality as well, since Tbilisi fell into the orbit of the general European

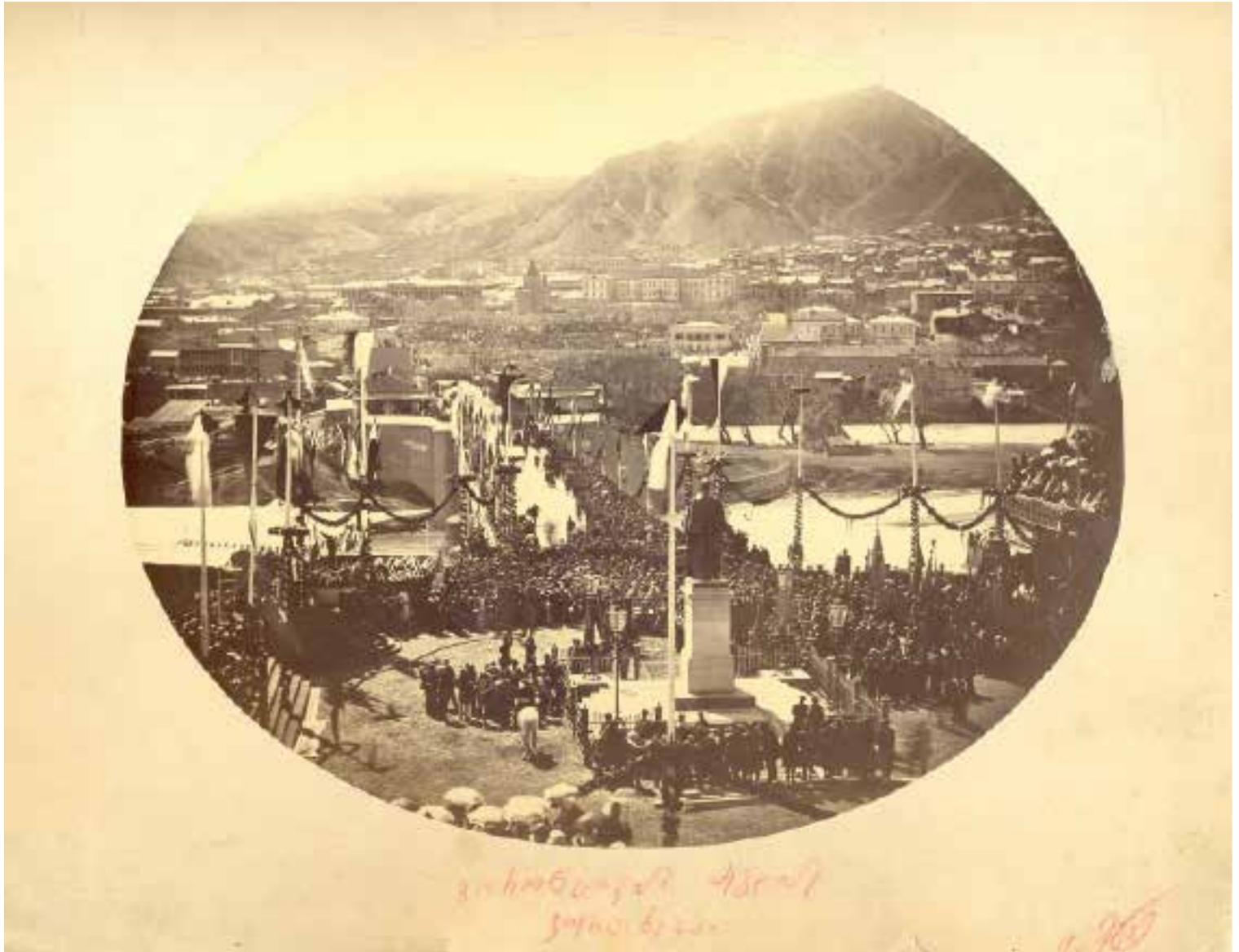
process of development in the second half of the nineteenth century. Therefore this period, viewed as one of eclecticism since various European historical styles were spreading in the cities of Russia and Western Europe, saw the interpretation of the styles of the nineteenth century, the majority of which were not known in Georgia before this. Gradually, the difference that existed before this between the architecture of residential and public buildings began to disappear. The Tbilisi residential house basically took on the same external form as those common at the time in the cities of Russia and Western Europe. In the same way, the rental apartment buildings characteristic of that era began to prevail in the architecture of the residential houses. Industrial and commercial spaces (factories, workshops, banks, large department stores and so on) began to occupy a special place in the architecture of public and government buildings.



Ballroom of the Tbilisi Artistic Circle. Early 1880s.



Library of the Tbilisi Artistic Circle. Early 1880s.



Unveiling of monument for Prince Mikhail Vorontsov. 1867.



Vere Bridge. Mid-1890s.



Railroad Station. 1900s.



Vorontsov Square. 1890s.

Along with this, the architecture of Tbilisi, like the cities of Europe, was characterized by the application of new constructions, new building materials (iron, cast iron, cement, concrete) and at the same time, stylization, eclecticism and construction in different historical styles having nothing in common with local forms. An article in *Kavkaz* dated June 20 (according to the old calendar), 1871 (No. 71) is of particular interest, in our view. Taking into account that all the questions addressed in it have not lost their relevance even in subsequent years, we cite this article almost in full:

“It is necessary to live as the climate commands. The clothing, housing and environmental of all peoples are always in accordance with the climactic conditions. But meanwhile we see in Tiflis obvious violations of this rule. At one time homes were built here that if not entirely comfortable for the winter still were quite

protected from the summer heat. Except for the *darbazes* of the ancient Georgian homes, all the city residences were built about 30 years ago, surrounded from the street and the courtyard by balconies and verandas, and were far more comfortable for the summer than those put up now – with an observance of all the rules of architecture, but not climactic conditions. Our architects (it is good that in Europe so many architectural albums are published!) imposed the facades of the homes of middle Europe in hot Tiflis. What is comfortable for Berlin and Paris is not very comfortable at 30 degrees Réaumur [99.5 F]. As an example, we will indicate the expansive building of Mr. Mirimanov, in which are housed a judicial chamber, a district court and stores (the reference is to the Artist’s House at 7, Rustaveli Prospect which is now destroyed—TG); they say this is a design from some Parisian building; its entire, long, high façade, without

the slightest awning or little balcony faces the southwest, and almost the entire day is under the sun's rays... Comfortable! Our architects, in producing Berlin and Parisian architectural delights seem to have forgotten about the architecture of the southern countries of Europe, where verandas so basically, so intelligently play an important role."

The city developed intensively on both banks of the river, and once again following already established traditions, along it. The functional zoning of the territory of the city marked out in the first half of the nineteenth century was particularly notable in the early twentieth century. The former Garetubani, its main axis Golovinsky (Rustaveli) Prospect, the area of the current Freedom Square and Sololaki were finally formed as the administrative, civic and cultural center. Here the highest government institutions were located (the governor's residence, his office, the headquarters of government bodies), the Caucasus Museum, theaters (the state theater and the artists' society theater), assemblies (clubs) and so on to which in the future would be added a number of cinemas.

On the left bank, Mikhailovsky Prospect with all its parallel and cross streets played the role of a center, but on a relatively small scale. At that time, the architectural and artistic looks of the central districts of the city were evolving, gradually being changed by the construction in the first half of the nineteenth century. The number of floors of buildings was increased and administrative and public buildings grew larger. This was the time of the formation of old districts of modern Tbilisi, which even today are part of its individual architectural look.

The new stage of development of architecture meant more impressive civic and government buildings that exceeded the previous structures both in purpose and scale. Right up to the end of the 1890s, the architecture of these edifices largely used the forms of the classical "repertoire." But, from the 1880s, the purity of style is violated in each new project, so that buildings constructed at the same time were stylistically diverse.

For example, the official buildings in the 1880s were simultaneously built in the Moorish, Russian and even Gothic styles. However, it must be noted that these stylizations nevertheless did not occupy the chief place in the city's architecture, especially in the last decade of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand, in the official construction, the line of Renaissance-baroque eclecticism continued firmly and the most significant buildings of this period were built in this eclectic manner. On the other hand, already at the cusp of the twentieth century the Moderne style appears in Tbilisi's architecture, rapidly gaining a great popularity.

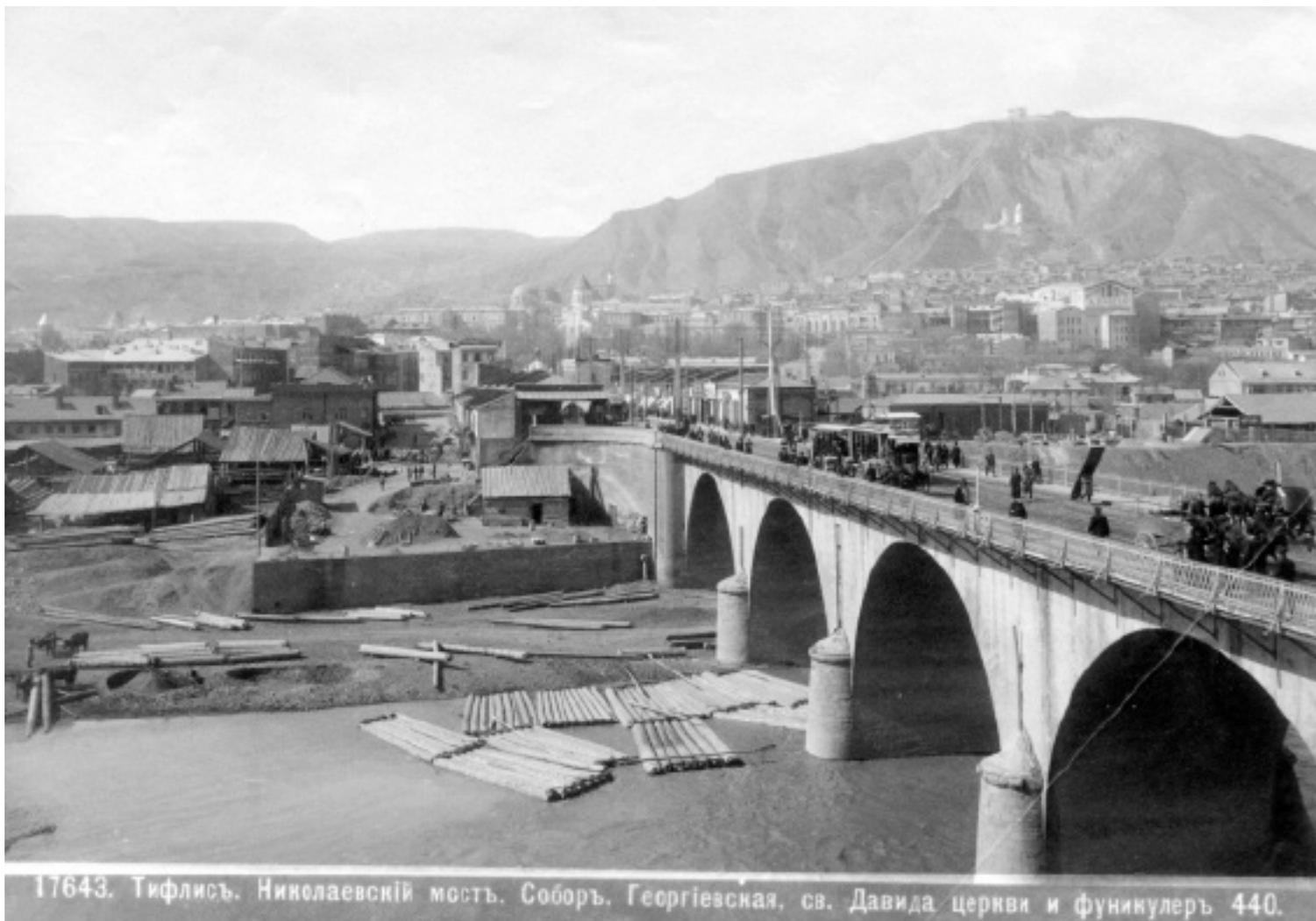
By the 1880s there were attempts to use the architectural forms and motifs of Georgian historical architecture, that is, the creation of the Georgian style as a national variation of historical stylization.

Moderne in Europe and Russia yielded to neoclassicism and rationalism (Constructivism). In Tbilisi, only the influence of neoclassicism is felt in a few buildings constructed before and after the First World War.

The façades of residential buildings, unlike in the first half of the century, and of official government buildings are rendered in the



"Konka" and shops on Mikhailovsky Bridge. 1890s.



17643. Тифлисъ. Николаевскій мостъ. Соборъ, Георгіевская, св. Давида церкви и фуникулеръ 440.

Nikolaevsky Bridge and view of the city's central part. Early 1910s.

same way, that is, in various historical styles, as noted above, Moorish, Gothic, classicist, and so on. This evolution of the urban residence developed in parallel, albeit belatedly, with the urban evolution Europe. Starting in 1902, the Moderne Style, which had been widespread before the onset of World War I, appears in the architecture of residential buildings in Tbilisi. A fairly large number of homes in this style have been preserved in urban construction.

One of the most significant official architectural projects in the second half of the nineteenth century in Tbilisi was the reconstruction of the governor's palace. At first the proposed site was the so-called Gunib Square, that is, the current location of the former parliament (8, Rustaveli Prospect). An open competition was announced in 1864, and it was won by the Tbilisi architect Otto Simonson. However the new construction failed and it was decided to renovate and expand the existing building, with the design assigned to Simonson. The reconstruction continued until 1869. In creating the facades, the architect used architectural motifs of the Italian Renaissance, replacing the previous classical facade. In 1918-21, the palace housed the parliament of the independent democratic republic of Georgia. Today, the Palace of Student Youth occupies the site, which has preserved its original look (6, Rustaveli Prospect).

The Caucasian Museum was founded in 1856. The single-story museum, designed by Tbilisi architect Albert Zaltsman, was inaugurated on September 1 (Old Style), 1870. A second building was added in 1879-80, by Tbilisi architect Leopold Bilfeld. The opening of the renovated museum was scheduled for the start of the Fifth All-Russian Archeological Congress in Tbilisi on

September 8 (Old Style), 1881. Particular attention was devoted to the design of the main entrance, whose walls were covered with frescos of mythological subjects related to the Caucasus and also depictions of King David and Queen Tamar, made according to the frescos of Gelati and Vardzia. The frescos were painted by the Austrian artist Franz Xaver Simm and his wife, the artist Marie Mayer, in April-August 1881. In the early twentieth century, they decided on a new home for the Caucasus Museum and public library on the same site. The 1910 design by Tbilisi architect K. Tatishchev was in a pseudo-Moorish style. However, a partially altered design by the Tbilisi architect M. Neprintsev was used when construction began in 1913. In particular, the main façade, unlike the previous one, was in the Persian style, utilizing forms and details of late-Iranian architecture.

The building of the museum in rough form was completed in 1917, although the architectural reconstruction of the main façade where the forms and details of the national architectural heritage were used was completed only in 1929 (by the Tbilisi architect N. Severov). It was the first specialized museum building to be erected in the Caucasus. Today it is the building of the Simon Janashia Museum of Georgia.

Among the civic buildings erected in 1860-1870, one of the most notable is the new city hospital, known as the Mikhail Hospital. An open competition was won by the Tbilisi architect Albert Zaltsman. From December 1865 to April 1866, he was sent to Germany, France, Belgium and England to "familiarize himself with the modern state of European hospital facilities." The hospital was opened



Funicular on Saint David Mountain (Mtatsminda). Second half 1900s.



View of the central part of the city and Mtatsminda. Mid 1880s.



Golovinsky (Rustaveli) Prospect.  
On the left, the Palas Hotel. 1914.



Golovinsky (Rustaveli) Prospect. On the right, the  
Artistic (now Rustaveli) Theater. Second half 1900s.

in 1868. The so-called pavilion system was used in its design, considered the most progressive for that time. Forms of classic architecture were used in the construction of the building. It was equipped with the latest technology and achievements of that time; some technical innovations were used by analogy with the Berlin Charité hospital. Essentially, this was the first purpose-built treatment facility of this type not only in Tbilisi but in all of the Caucasus. The hospital was also an educational institution in which young doctors “in the capacity of junior orderly” had to undergo an internship of two years before entering service. This training was also available to provincial doctors “wishing to refresh their knowledge.”

The London Hotel (31, Atoneli Street) was considered one of the best hotels of the city of that period. Built in 1872 by Otto Simonson, it opened in 1875 and was owned by A. Zubalov (Zubalashvili). The interesting decorative mural in the central entrance has been preserved to the present time. On June 28 (according to the old calendar), 1890, the first event featuring Thomas Alva Edison's phonograph was held here (only for representatives of the press). In 1896, Marjory Scott Wardrop, a translator and popularizer of Georgian culture and literature lived here. She is the author of a full prose translation into English of Shota Rustaveli's narrative poem, “The Knight in the Panther Skin” (published in London in 1912). In 1899, the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun stayed here.

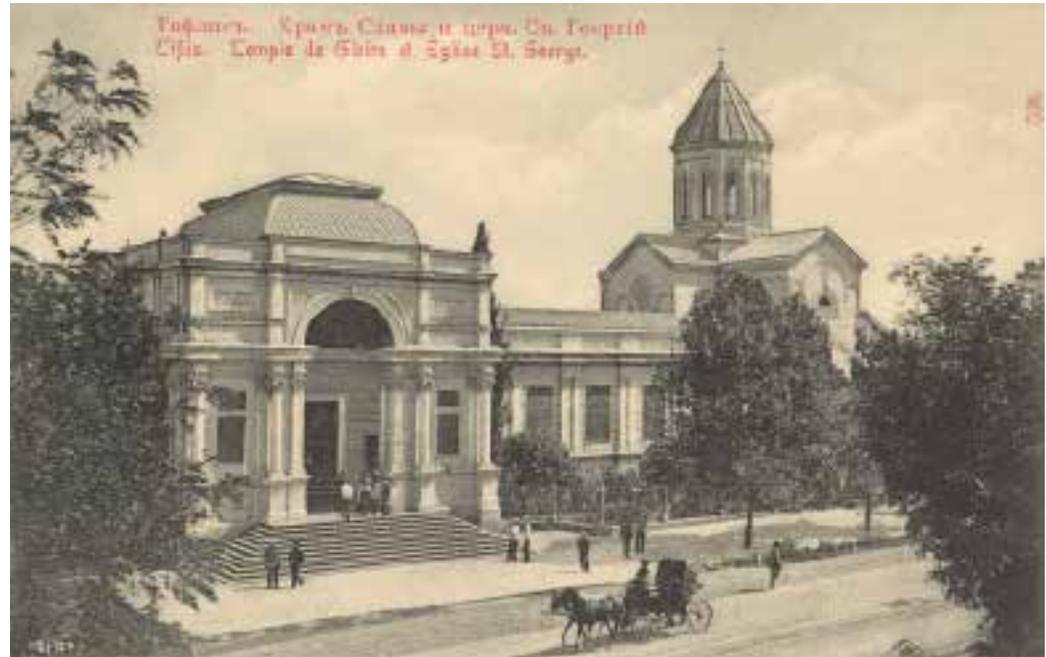
The foundation of the current national Dimitri Shevardnadze Gallery was laid in 1885 and construction was completed in 1892. Initially, it was the Military-Historical Museum, or the Temple of Glory (designed by Zaltsman). The architecture employed

baroque forms. Its scale was appropriate for the evolving Rustaveli Prospect. Its prototype was exhibition palace in Rome, built in 1880-83 by the architect Pio Piacentini, but the Temple of Glory was of a smaller scale. The first exhibit and sale of paintings in this building by Tbilisi artists was on January 21 (Old Style), 1890.

From 1898-1901, the theater of the Artists' Society (now the Rustaveli Theater) was designed by Tbilisi architects Alexander Shimkevich and Korneli Tatishchev on Golovinsky (Rustaveli) Prospect. Rococo motifs were used in the façade. This is one of the best theatrical buildings in Tbilisi, which at the same time largely determined the artistic look of the city's main avenue. Despite being at the perimeter of the complex of buildings, it stands out from neighboring ones of nearly the same height, thanks to the mansard-shaped roof and the portico terrace that extends the entire width of the sidewalk at the entrance of the building. The theater holds up to 800 spectators and had one other particular feature of that time – “a revolving stage which allows shortening the intermissions.” The famous Chimerioni Café, created by the Blue Horns literary group was located on the ground floor of the building in the late 1910s and early 1920s. It served as a meeting place for writers, poets, artists, performers and musicians. The walls of the Chimerioni were painted by the Russian theatrical artist Sergei Sudeykin together with the artists David Kakabadze, Lado Gudiashvili and Sigizmund Valishevsky.

The Majestic Hotel (now the Tbilisi Marriott) played a significant role in creating the overall look of the main avenue of Tbilisi. It was built in 1915, designed by Tbilisi architect Gabriel Ter-Mikelov, and while it is distinguished by professional craftsmanship, it is hard to speak

Military Historical Museum (Temple of Glory) and the new Kashveti church of Saint George. Early 1910s.



London Hotel. 1880s.





Georgian Nobility Gymnasium. Second half 1900s.



City Duma and Uprava. 1910.



State (Opera) Theater. Second half 1900s.

of something really new. The building, whose composition achieves unity, is situated on the corner of Rustaveli Prospect and Gorgiashvili Street, with a well-found line of connection. Its architecture continues the “Renaissance-Baroque” line in Tbilisi architecture.



Konstantine Zubalov (Zubalashvili) People's House. 1909-1910.

One of the largest constructions of this period was the Georgian Gymnasium, built in 1900-1906 in the design of Simon Kldiashvili, the first Georgian architect to have obtained a European academic education. Externally, the edifice does not offer anything original. It has a traditional appearance, rendered in classical forms, of a large academic building, quite appropriate to its purpose, which at that time was developed both in Russia and Western Europe. However, the simplicity and clarity of the composition; the gentle, even facades; the imposing proportions; the restraint in décor; and the prudent, functional execution undoubtedly account for its quality. In January 1918, the Georgian University, the first university in the Caucasus, was opened on this site (now the first building of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University). Essentially taking up the entire block, it continues to maintain its significance in urban development.

In Tbilisi then, just as now, music played a significant role in the life of the city. It is interesting that the newspaper Kavkaz of February 9, 1858 (No. 12), in one of its articles, wrote, “in 1846 there were 11 pianos and grand pianos in Tbilisi and this year there are more than 200 – impressive progress, almost unbelievable.” Pyotr Tchaikovsky considered Tbilisi a city rich in “every kind of artistic stimulus.” In fact, he began to work on his operas *Iolanta* and *Queen of Spades* and his ballet *Sleeping Beauty* in Tbilisi. The building of the music school designed by Tbilisi architect Alexander Shimkevich was built in 1904 (currently, after reconstruction, it is Tbilisi Vano Sarajishvili State Conservatory). Private donations and the proceeds from concerts by the Russian composer, pianist, and conductor Anton Rubinstein paid for the construction. Classical forms of architecture were used, although there are clear signs of the Moderne Style in the hall itself.



Tbilisi Mutual Credit Society. 1913-1914.



Kino Palace. 1915.

The Third Women's Gymnasium is one of the most significant examples of the Gothic style in Tbilisi. It was built in 1903-1905 (28, Asatiani Street) and designed by the Tbilisi architect Alexander Ozerov. The gymnasium's board of trustees acquired the parcel of land, but a loan was needed for the construction. The Ministry of Public Education told the gymnasium leadership that it could not lend them the money. The Tbilisi City Credit Society agreed to give the loan, but it did not have the right, according to its charter, to give it for a building not yet constructed. The matter grew more complicated and dragged on for two years and even required the intervention of Emperor Nicholas II, who permitted the Ministry of Education to provide the loan, which in the future would be covered by the Tbilisi City Credit Society.

The most significant examples of the pseudo-Moorish style in the building of Tbilisi are the modern Sakrebulo (the former city legislature and council) on Freedom Square and the Tbilisi Zacharia Paliashvili Theater of Opera and Ballet. The original city legislature was built in 1849-51 by Scudieri, employing Renaissance forms. It was reconstructed in 1882-1884 by Tbilisi architects Paul Shtern and Alexander Ozerov. In 1910 and 1912, the third floor was added, over the wings as well from the side of Sh. Dadiani Street and G. Tabidze Street, giving the building a contemporary look.

The idea for a new theater (the so-called government theater) emerged after the theater, built in 1851, burned down in 1874. An open competition was announced in 1876. One of the conditions of the competition was that the building had to be in the Moorish style. The first prize was awarded to the design of St. Petersburg

architect V.A. Shreter. The final (third) version was approved in February 1880 and construction began that same year. It dragged on, and the theater was completed only in 1896. The first season opened on November 3 of that year. Many prominent Georgian and foreign singers performed on its stage over a period of many years, and some began their career here. In particular, the singer Fedor Chaliapin said, "I was born twice: for life in Kazan, for music in Tbilisi."

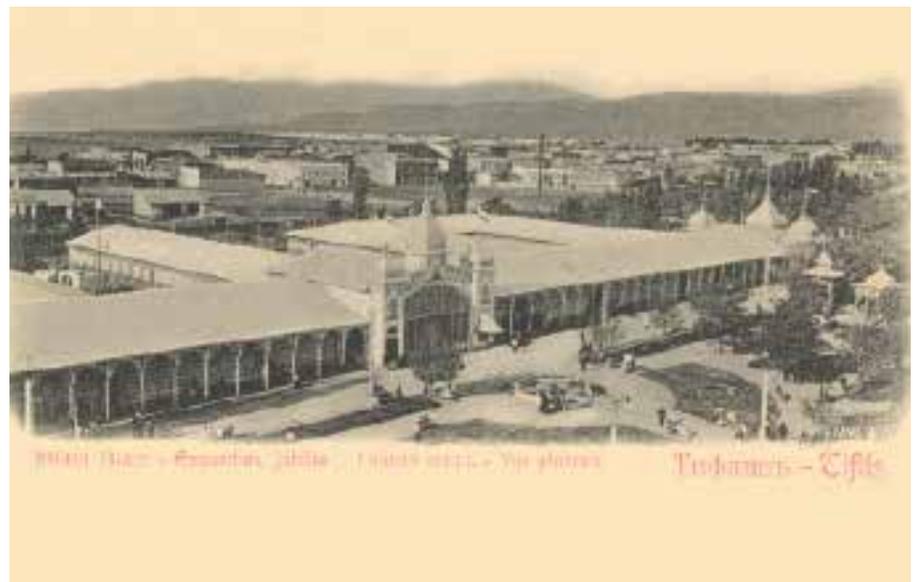
It has already been noted that in Tbilisi's architectural development of this period, one of the most significant and interesting aspects was the use of the forms and motifs of historical Georgian architecture, that is, the Georgian style, which was the national variation of historical stylization. But the identification of the Georgian style with European historical stylizations is not entirely correct, since this was a process of the creation of their own style, using their historical architectural legacy. Such a stylization had a progressive significance, since here we are dealing with the phenomenon of the manifestation of national self-awareness. The examples of the Georgian style are a relatively small group. At the same time, their architectural themes are fairly broad – residential, public, religious, commercial, interiors, and small architectural form. As examples, we could cite the new Kashveti Church, the building of the Noble Land Bank, the so-called Georgian Bank, and the wine cellar of the government department.

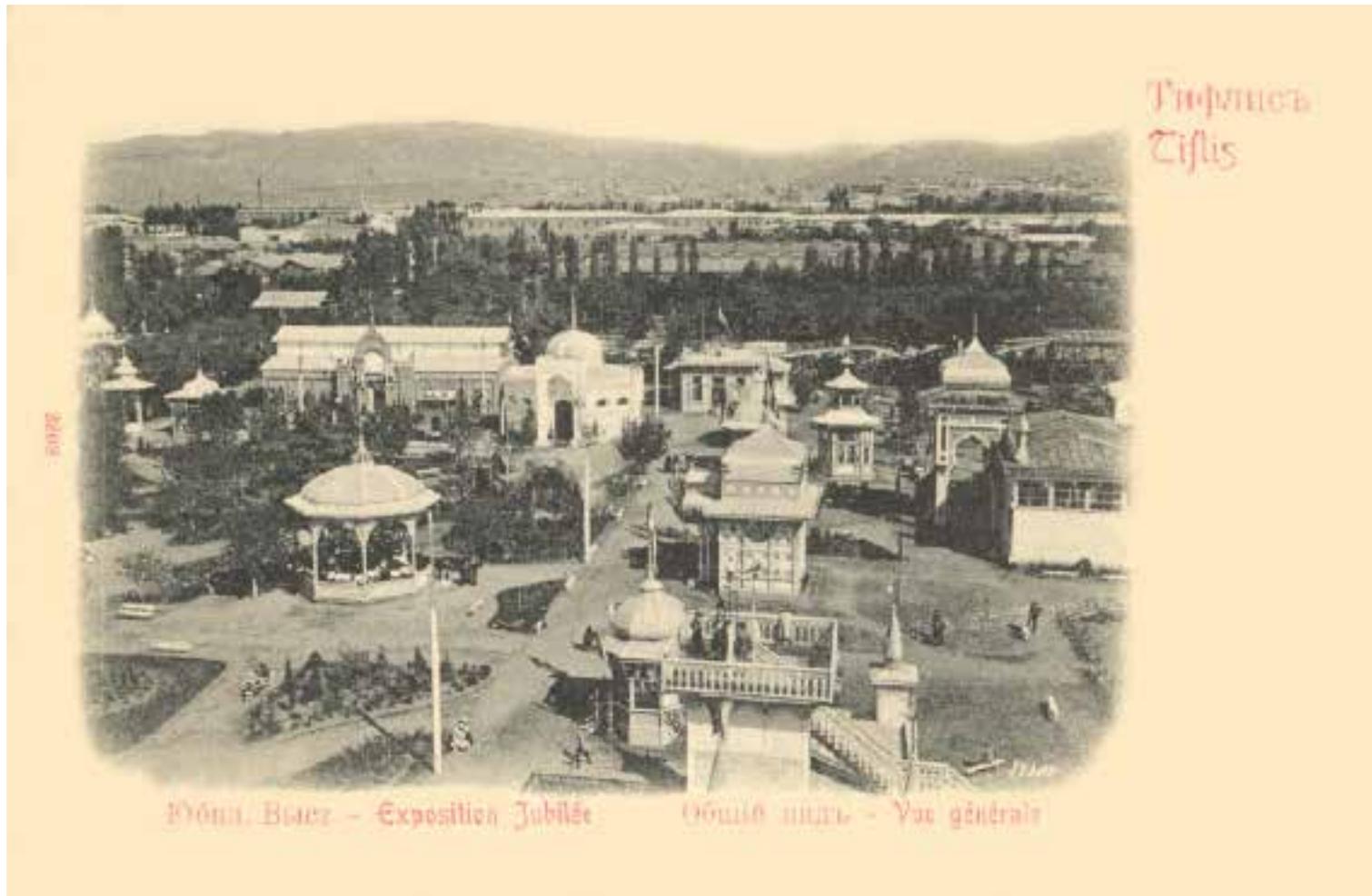
The new Kashveti Church of St. George plays a significant role in the ensemble in the center of the city and notably in the building up of Rustaveli Prospect. It was erected in 1904-1910 on the site of the old church built in 1753, approximately the site of a sixth-century church. It was designed by the Tbilisi

The Caucasus Exposition of Objects of Agriculture and Industry of 1889. General view.



Caucasus Jubilee Exhibition of 1901. Main exposition building.





Caucasus Jubilee Exhibition of 1901. General view.

architect Leopold Bilfeld and the architect Edward Andreoletti. The famous Samtavisi Cathedral, a monument of Georgian architecture of the eleventh century, served as a prototype. Despite its differences from the prototype, the new Kashveti Church possessed noteworthy aspects. It preserved the characteristic structure of the Georgian cathedral and on the whole the harmony and elegance of the prototype, and most importantly, has its own individual look. The rich ornamental decoration was made by the prominent Georgian master stonemason N.D. Agladze. The church had two stories, unusual for a Georgian church, but required by the plan. The lower church was named for St. Marina the Martyr. Prince Grigol Orbeliani, the famous poet, civic figure, adjutant general and general of the infantry was buried there.

The building of the Noble Bank is the most significant example of the Georgian style, since it accomplished creating a building for a public purpose in the Georgian style (the architect was Anatoly Kalgin and the artist was Henryk Hrinevsky). Their design was selected in a competition held in 1912. (Today, it is the first building of the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia). The authors did not take the route of mechanically copying the forms of historic Georgian architecture, instead subordinating external architectural forms to functional purpose. This is indicated by the free composition; the asymmetrical rendering; the large halls with big windows; the layout of the galleries and terraces; and the diverse, decorative design also subordinate to architectural forms. The ornate carving of the facades was done by the masters N., V., and L. Agladze.

The wine cellar of the government department (1, Petriashvili Street), one of the significant examples of the Georgian style, was designed by Alexander Ozerov and built in 1894-96. It employs forms of historical Georgian architecture. It held one of the most valuable collections of wines, including extremely rare ones: a Hungarian wine of 1806, an 1811 cognac from the cellars of Napoleon I Bonaparte, the so-called anti-cholera vodka of 1717 and others. These architects had completed the construction in 1886 of the Sakrebulo formal hall, with ornaments and elements of Georgian national architecture in the interior.

There are two neoclassical buildings in Tbilisi. One is the Volga-Kama Bank branch on the corner of today's Gudishvili and Purtseladze Streets (now it is one of the buildings of the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia). A design competition was announced, and according to the available information, the winning plan was made by the St. Petersburg architect Fyodor Lidval, who was called "the pioneer of northern Moderne," together with the architect Georgy Kosyakov, although subsequently only Kosyakov was given credit. The sign on the façade says it was built in 1915.

The other is the new building of the Tbilisi Art Circle on the corner of the modern Rustaveli Prospect and Besiki Street. It was built in 1916 by the Tbilisi architect David Chisliev. The rendering of the corner part of the building with the use of the caryatid (by the sculptor Iakob Nikoladze) is particularly noteworthy. At the present time, it is a multiuse building (16, Rustaveli Prospect).

From the early twentieth century the Moderne style enjoyed great popularity in Tbilisi. Quite a few significant and interesting public premises were constructed in this style, including the Tbilisi Zubalov (Zubalashvili) City Public Building, the Officers' Economic Society Building, and the building of the Tbilisi Mutual Credit Society.

A closed competition was announced for a public building in 1901. Thirty designs were submitted and first prize with the right to build went to St. Petersburg architect Stepan Krichinsky. The foundation was laid in 1902, and the dedication took place on March 25 (Old Style), 1909. The building was funded by the prominent industrial and philanthropist Constantine Zubalashvili, and was made a gift to the city in his will. At the present time it is the Marjanishvili Theater. The building has been significantly redone. Opposite the theater, on the corner of Marjanishvili and Uznadze Streets, the Officers' Economic Society building was constructed in 1911-13, designed the Tbilisi architect Alexander Rogoysky. It retains its original look (currently the "Tbilisi" Bank building). The construction of the Tbilisi Mutual Credit Society on Sololaki Street (now Leonidze Street) began in April 1911. The design was by Tbilisi architect M. P. Ohanjanov. In the 1920s-1930s, a third floor was build over the existing building. At the present time it is the home of the Korneli Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts.

The early twentieth century brought a new architectural theme to the city – cinemas. The first summer movie theater in Tbilisi was opened approximately in 1903 (by the Rosetti cinema) in the

Mushtaid Garden. New, special buildings for cinemas were mainly built on Mikhailovsky Avenue (the modern David Agmashenebeli Avenue) although at the time, movie theaters were also housed in individual public buildings. For example, in early 1910, the following cinemas were opened on Mikhailovsky Prospect: the Modern, the Lyra, the Odeon (a summer theater), the Moulin Electric, the Saturn, the Apollo, and the Kino Palace. Three of them have been preserved to some degree. The original look of the Apollo, built in the Moderne style (1909 by the architect I. Kolchin) has been preserved. In 2012, the Modern building was restored to its original look. The Kino Palace was reconstructed in 1989. At the present time, it houses the Tbilisi Jansug Kakhidze Symphonic Music Concert Hall. The Kino Palace, which was opened in November 1914, was described by the Tbilisi press as the most grandiose electrical theater not only in Tbilisi but in the entire Russian Empire, equipped with the latest technology of that time and seating 1,000 spectators. Both the Modern and the Kino Palace were in the Moderne style.

As has already been noted, the distinction between the external appearance of public and residential buildings disappeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. The façades of residential buildings as well as government, official and public buildings were made in the same way, that is, in various historical styles. In the residential construction of that period, the so-called commercial buildings mainly prevail, although a significant percentage of them are homes for individual use, i.e. villa cottages. At that time, residential buildings in their functional appearance largely preserved their connection to traditional Tbilisi plans. Among the most interesting residential buildings

of this period are those built by Tbilisi architects, including at 20, G. Tabidze Street (by Otto Simonson, design 1859); 22, G. Tabidze Street, (architect Albert Zaltsman, 1883); 128, David Agmashenebeli Avenue (architect Paul Shtern, design 1893); 79, David Agmashenebeli Avenue (architect Alexander Shimkevich, design 1901), 6, Marjanishvili Street (architect K. Antonov, design 1901), and the home owned by V. Martynovsky, principal of the 3rd Tbilisi Gymnasium, who compiled the textbook *Russian Authors for schools*. The textbook was widely disseminated in Russia and repeatedly reprinted. It was also accepted for study of the Russian language in France. It is believed that his royalties went toward the construction; 3, Chonkadze Street (architect M.P. Ohanjanov, 1903); 4, Roma Street (architect S. Kldiashvili, early 1900s); 13, Machabeli Street (German architect K. Zaar, 1905); the home was owned by the prominent industrialist and philanthropist Sarajishvili, now the Georgian House of Writers; 12, Kostava Street (architect A. Ozerov, design 1910); 11, Gogebashvili Street (architect K. Leontyev, 1911-1913); 37, Rustaveli Prospect (architect N. Obolonsky, 1913); 3/5 G. Tabidze Street (architect G. Sargsyan, 1913); 12, Chonkadze Street (architect M.P. Ohanjanov, with the participation of the architect I. Kolchin, 1914), this building won a 1915 competition for best facade for construction completed in 1914; 11, Kikodze Street (architect Gabriel Ter-Mikelov, design, 1914).

The so-called Caucasian Exhibitions occupied a special place in the life of the city. The one in 1889, Caucasian Exhibition of Implements of Agriculture and Industry, was the ninth such exhibition of this type. The first, Exhibition of

Natural and Manufactured Productions of the Caucasus and Transcaucasian Territory, opened on March 18 (6), 1850, and had 2,690 visitors. Subsequent exhibitions took place in 1852, 1857, 1860, 1861, 1863, and 1869. The exhibit was opened on September 27 (15), 1889. A catalogue of the exhibit and special souvenir medals were issued. The grounds near the Mushtaid Garden, a square of about 6 hectares, served as its location. (This is the present location of the National Stadium.) Along with Caucasian companies, Russian and foreign firms were allowed to participate outside of the competition (the exception was the 8th section of the exhibition, "Agricultural Implements and Machines"). One of the main purposes of the exposition was to determine the current state of agriculture and industry in the Caucasus and Transcaucasian region, and also to show examples of local manufacturing.

The Caucasian Jubilee Exhibition was formally opened on September 15 (2), 1901. It was called the jubilee exhibit because it was timed to the 100th anniversary of when the Georgian kingdom joined the Russian Empire. It was held on the same grounds as the previous exhibit (in 1889), part of the Mushtaid Garden. Shimkevich designed the layout of the grounds. The area of the main exhibition building was about 6,000 square meters. The exhibit was intended to show the industrial and economic level and state of agriculture in the Caucasus from the period after the annexation of Georgia and certain regions of the Caucasus to the Russian Empire. The exhibit consisted of 19 sections. The main section was agriculture, representing the main branch of local production. Next followed the section

on major manufacturing and industry, where the oil industry was particularly noteworthy, one of the most significant in the Caucasus. Unlike the previous exhibitions, “architectural,” “artistic” and “scientific statistical” sections were represented, with the “handicrafts section” (applied folk art and crafts) being the most visited. A special exhibition cultural program was planned. Folk dancers and singers representing peoples of the Caucasus joined local, Russian and foreign groups and individual artists to perform on the stage of the special exhibition theater. Most noteworthy were the Georgian Choir directed by Kargareteli and Kavsadze; the Armenian choir directed by Kara-Murza; the Russian and gypsy choirs directed by A.Z. Ivanova; the Legue French quartet; and the American comic Mack Wood and others. There were amusement pavilions. The jubilee exhibit, visited by more than 180,000, was closed on November 1 (Old Style), 1901.

World War I interrupted the development of the city. Construction activity almost came to a halt. In the period 1918-1921, Tbilisi was the capital of the independent Georgian Republic. At that time, there was a small revival in the construction of the city, but the complicated political and economic situation of the country did not allow for more.

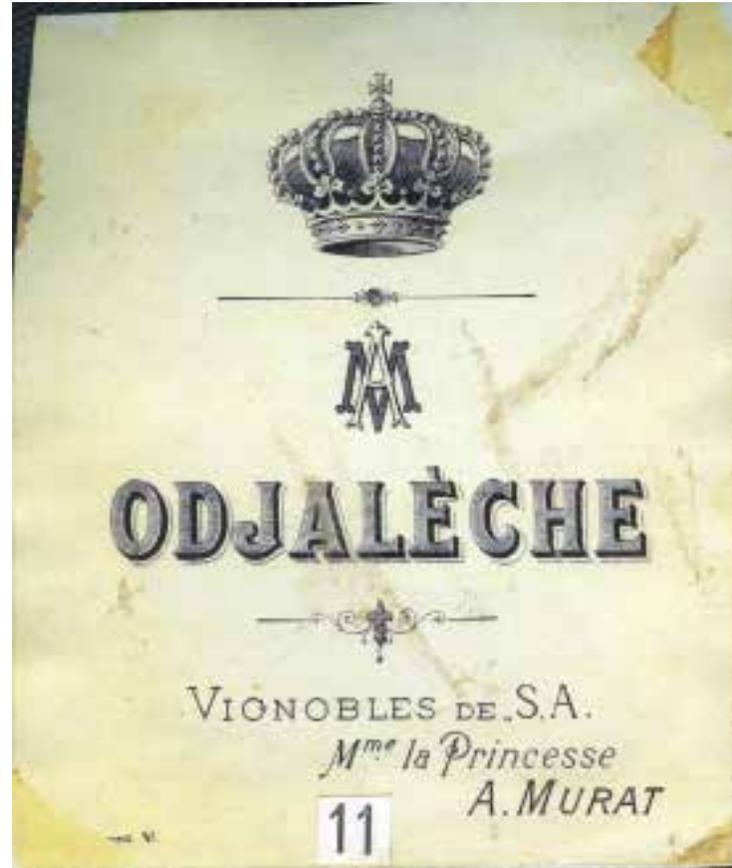
*Translated from Russian by Antonina W. Bouis*

Caucasus Jubilee Exhibition of 1901. Pavilion of the David Sarajev (Sarajishvili) factory.



Cognac. Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.





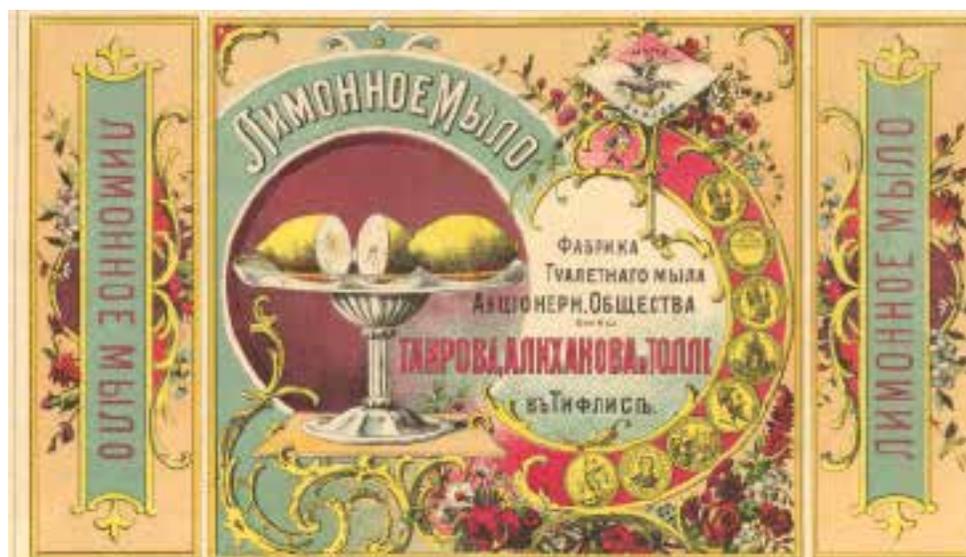
Clockwise from top left:  
David Sarajev (Sarajishvili) cassis.  
Kipiani Wine.  
David Sarajev (Sarajishvili) crème de menthe.  
Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.



Devdariani Wine. Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.



Kipiani wine. Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.



Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.

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قانقت س چو لے باکرنگ

კონფეტის ფაბრიკა  
 თიბლისი  
 არგუტინსკაი ქ. ბ. ს. ს. სახ. მ. მ. მ.

**„როზალი“**

Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.



Baadur Kobliamidze Collection.





Interior of Eremi Artsruni's caravanserai (1850)  
Kavkazskii kalendar

## Palimpsest Tiflis - Art in Tiflis *Levan Chogoshvili and Nana Kipiani*

*Kavkazsky Vestnik*, Issue #6, 1847, described Tbilisi as: "Janus with one face towards Asia and the other towards Europe." The slightly hackneyed phrase still describes the urban culture of Tbilisi.

The late 1910s were, as the French say, *La Belle Époque* for Tbilisi. This brief time was tragic as well as fortunate.

Georgian-Tiflis culture embarked on an avant-garde radicalization of language and form in 1913, the year before World War I. Along with the rest of the world, Georgia also bid farewell to the old and stepped into new, dramatic times. After the war, in 1918, in light of the Bolshevik revolution Georgia seized the opportunity to gain independence.

That year marked a start of good times: Georgia was an independent, democratic and optimistic republic, joyful and sorrowful at the same time. Tbilisi, the capital, was still like Janus, looking in two different directions – to the West and to the East. It was Asia for the Europeans and Europe for the Asians. It was both the center and the periphery, epic and exotic at the same time. However, in reality it had centripetal traits, the ability to unite different characteristics. It was a place where Hellenistic-Byzantine-European and Eastern cultures had clashed for centuries, clashed and united in their own way.

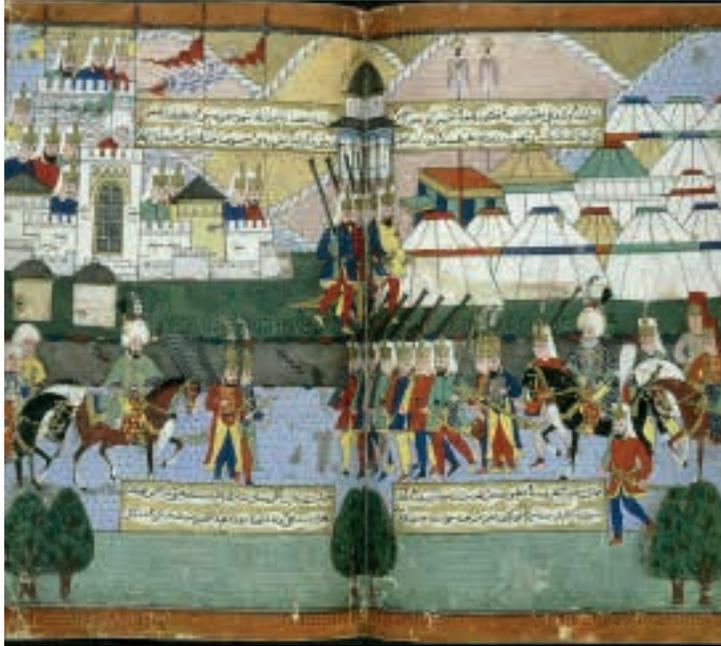
In order to better understand modernist Tbilisi and its form of modernism, we should consider this singularity – Tbilisi had never been just a capital city. It was the center of Transcaucasia when the Georgian borders were much wider than today, and when it was conquered and its borders began to shrink gradually. Therefore, although Tbilisi was conquered at least twenty times, destroyed and

burned down, and also because of this, the city was never limited to merely regional importance. It was an arena where empires struggled – Roman, Byzantine, Iranian, Khazar, Arab, Turk-Mongolian and Russian. Dimitri Bakradze and Nikoloz Berdzenov (Berdzenishvili) wrote: "Tbilisi has seen the birth and disappearance of historical nations: of Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols and Byzantines <...> who have all left their trace on the language, customs and traditions of the Georgian people."

Tbilisi, first called Tiflis when it was founded as a capital city in the 5th century and again in the Russian Empire from 1801 to 1917, is diverse and a palimpsest.

It is widely acknowledged that historical Tbilisi welcomed places of worship for all confessions. The reason lies not only in tolerance, but in its history as well, which made the city multiethnic. Jews, who lived in peace for more than twenty-six centuries in the city, Armenians, Turks, Yazidis, Kurds, Russians, Poles who revolted against the Russian Empire, Germans who formed settlements, Czechs, French with their own diaspora, and many others all lived in this city. Orthodox Christian, Armenian Monophysite, Catholic and Protestant churches as well as mosques and Zoroastrian shrines all stood in Tbilisi. Many of them were destroyed in the Soviet period.

Despite never-ending attacks and destruction, Tbilisi remained the capital of the only country in southeast Europe and the Near East that preserved Christianity and its kingdom despite the pressure of the Islamic world. The kingdom was abolished only in 1801, after the Russian Empire conquered Georgia.



Ottoman army parading before the walls of Tiflis in August 1578 after the city had been evacuated by Da'ud Khan. A double-page miniature painting from the Ottoman manuscript Nusretname ("The Book of Victories") by Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali. 1582. British Library, London, United Kingdom. © The British Museum Board

Georgian culture was especially diverse and varied for the ethnic Georgians were Orthodox as well as Catholic and Muslim.

Until the mid-19th century, Catholic Georgians played a critical role in rapidly turning agricultural and feudal Georgia into a modern country, in developing industry and implementing new technologies. This had a political importance for attaining independence in 1918, as well as cultural significance in terms of stepping into the modern era of scientific and artistic thinking.

In the early 19th century, the French consul Jacques François Gamba wrote: "Wine traders from Paris, couriers from Petersburg, merchants from Constantinople, Englishmen travelling from Calcutta and Madras, Armenians from Smyrna or Yazidis, Uzbeks from Bukhara – all came on the same day to Tbilisi." And it was always like this. Georgia was consistently an important commercial center on the Silk Road. Often an object for conquests, for centuries it also played the role of a buffer zone for Europe.

Kavad Shah of Iran said of King Gorgasali, who was incidentally his distant dynastical relative, "Beware of the wolf-headed" (Dur Az Gorgasar, in Persian), which is the source of the king's epithet: Gorgasali, or the wolf-headed. The name was more than appropriate because the wolf was one of the chief totems from times immemorial.



View of Tiflis in 1820s. Engraving from: Gamba Jacques François, Chavalier. *Voyage Dans la Russie Méridionale, et particuliermet dans les provinces situées au-delà du Caucase fait depuis 1820 jusqu' à 1824.* C.J. Trouvé, Paris, 1826.

Tbilisi is first mentioned as a fort in Georgian records of the 4th century, the stronghold in the River Mtkvari (Kura) valley, surrounded by mountains, which made it a strategically advantageous location, and the very reason King Vakhtang Gorgasali turned it into the capital.

On the one hand, the etymology of Tbilisi, founded by the monarch of Georgia's ancient precursor Kingdom of Iberia, is connected to the Indo-European root of the word "tpili" (warm) because of the hot sulfur waters here. On the other hand its root can be traced to the name of Kartvelian tribes, – Tabal, mentioned in the Bible – and what by itself is tied to the name of goddess and Sun in the ancient Euphratean-Caucasian civilization. So it is not surprising that Iranians, Semites and Greeks previously called this country Iberia. These words have one root in Caucasian as well as in Indo-European languages and they don't contradict each other.

But what was there before that? We need to get back to the Horse Hoof and Digomi Valley, Didgori, the environs of the Tbilisi fort in the 5th century. "There is a field of Didube in the north of Tbilisi, initially called the Horse Hoof," writes Batonishvili Vakhushti. The toponym Didube is recorded only in the 11-12th centuries, as are other names.

As late as the early 19th century, the area was the family estate of the last Queen of Iberia – Mariam Tsitsishvili-Bagratiuni— where she was arrested in 1803 and exiled to Russia. There is said to have been a royal residence there in the 12th century. According to legend Queen Tamar was married in the court church there in 1188.

In 1817-1818 families immigrating from Germany started seven new settlements there. In 1829 a European-style Mushtaidi garden was developed by Mujtahid, the religious leader of Kajar's Iranian Shiites, Tavzir of Mir Petekh-Aga Seid Tavziri. The garden bears his name even now.

The Mushtaidi Garden became a recreational center in 1885, with restaurant, café, and open-air theater; it was also a place for business meetings. The silk production stations and the Silk Museum with its unique collection were built in the garden in those years.

It is claimed that it was in Didube, and not in the Ortachala Gardens, that Niko Pirosmani fell in love with the open-air stage actress Margarita. At that time, he was called the Duke because



*Arrest of the Last Queen of Georgia*, Engraving by Charles Michel Geoffroy. From the book: Lacroix, Frédéric, *Les mystères de la Russie Tableau politique et morale de l'empire Russe*. Paris, 1845.

he was so well dressed. Margarita's famous portrait belongs to that period. But it must be a legend because in 1909 the posters were displayed not there but in Old Tbilisi, in the Ortachala Gardens saying: Novelty! Theater Bellevue, only 7 shows of beautiful Margarita De Sevre in Tbilisi. Unique talent: she sings chansons and dances the cakewalk at the same time!

In 1888, a Frenchman flew up in his hot-air balloon from the Mushtaidi Garden, once even taking a milkman's donkey with him. The wind took them towards the city center, towards the Metekhi Fortress, over the river Mtkvari and then safely landing them in the Ortachala area.

## **Archaeology**

The Digomi Valley was the scene of numerous battles during the feudal era. It was in the Digomi Valley, in the Upper Didgori, that King David the Builder won the famous 1121 Didgori battle against Turk-Seljuks. The European crusaders fought along with him in his huge coalition army. This war is deservedly believed to have saved Europe from Muslim conquest.

The spring festival was held in the Digomi Valley in the 11-12th centuries at Saint George's Church. Before Christianity the festival was dedicated to the deity of fertility. A tall stone phallus, the symbol of fertility from prehistoric times, stood on the mountaintop. Since then various settlements, burial sites, numerous cult and agricultural buildings were excavated

there: remains of the Kura-Araxes culture were found on the banks of the Digomi waters, settlements dating back to the 4-2nd centuries BCE; multi-layer Early Iron Age settlements of the 9-6th centuries BCE, late antique and early Middle Ages settlements; rounded tombs with gold, bronze and iron artifacts, black-glazed zoomorphic ceramics from the 8-7th centuries BCE. Together with the local crafts of the 3rd-1st centuries BCE, the excavations revealed the remains of Roman ships, coins, and an irrigation system – aqueducts and channels dug in cliffs.

The other finds include Roman Emperor Vespasian's inscription dating back to 75 BCE, and at Nakulbakevi the continuous progression of human life since the 5th millennium.

Tbilisi is archaeologically rich. In its historical center, archeologists found the remains of the Forty Saint Sebastian Martyrs' Church below the main fortress, Shuristsikhe (Narikala), and the Botanical Gardens where young avant-gardists used to spend their time. At its gates, in 786 Abo Tbileli, an Arab from Baghdad, the servant of the Kartli ruler Nerse, was tortured for his Christian belief. During these excavations, together with the part of the Tbilisi wall, which was built using innovative construction techniques of the time, dating back to Vakhtang Gorgasali and earlier, the archeologists discovered Roman thermal sulfur baths of the 2-3rd centuries, a wine cellar of the 3-4th centuries as well as the remains of settlements of various ages, castle ruins and so on.



Lado Gudiashvili, *Grigol Robakidze on Donkey Bridge* (for the book "To Sofia Melinkova"). 1919, Tiflis.



Gigo Gabashvili. *Model*, Doubled photography. 1900s. Georgian National Museum, Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Art. Photo by Mirian Kiladze

Abanotubani, the oldest part of the city, bears all the characteristics of the 4th millennium. It also belongs to the Kura-Araxes culture, which stretched as far as Egypt. One of the significant pieces of evidence supporting this is the world's oldest Sakdrisi-Kachagiani

gold mine dating back to the 4th millennium BCE, found within 80km of Tbilisi. It also reminds us of the Golden Fleece, kept in Georgia-Colchis, inseparably connected with Iberia. Strabo, the Greek geographer and historian, wrote: "In their country gold is carried down by the mountain torrents, and the barbarians (unless they call them Iberians, by the same name as the western Iberians, from the gold mines in both countries) obtain it by means of perforated troughs and fleecy skins, and this is the origin of the myth of the golden fleece." In its turn, it reminds us of Hercules, who was among the Argonauts that stole the Golden Fleece, and who, according to one of the versions of Greek mythology, freed Prometheus, the beloved Georgian hero from Colchis, the chief demigod of the Georgian-Caucasian epic.

Grigol Robakidze, a symbolist writer and the leader of the modernist poet group Tsiperkantselebi (The Blue Horns) wrote in 1917: "Today or tomorrow Georgia will be freed <...> to feel it until the last drop <...> especially for Georgian artists: <...> to embrace their Georgianness in all its historicism..."

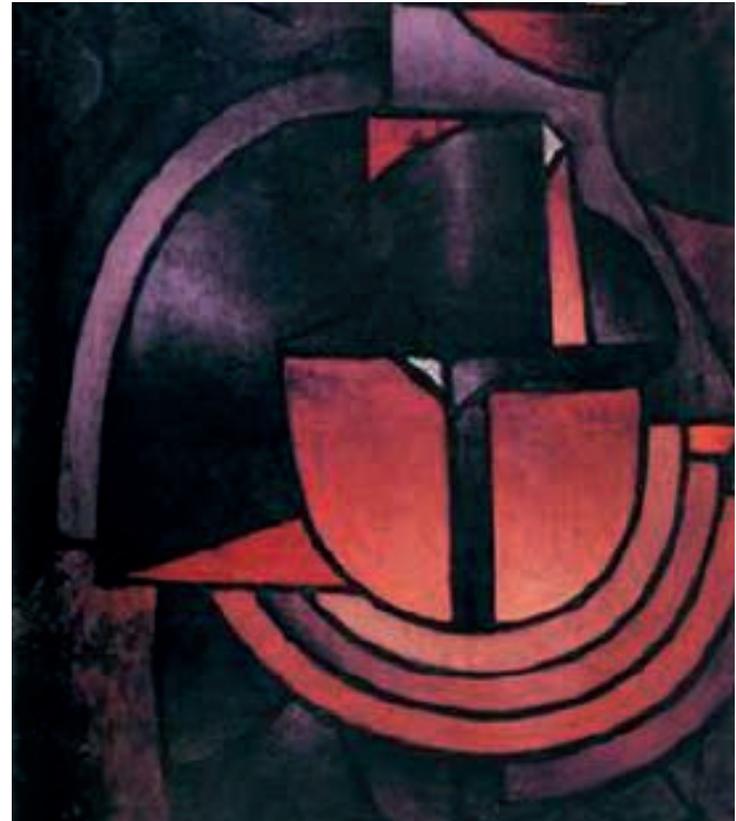
Our attitude towards Tbilisi: we always try to see it in its wholeness. But completing the city in its historicism is an impossible undertaking. However, we love simultaneity. Giorgi Chubinashvili, the pupil of Heinrich Wölfflin, the founder of the School of German Art History, wrote that Georgian architecture solved the problem of spatial analysis with specificity, which is the trait of perceiving space simultaneously. "Space is perceived as a whole and simultaneously," and this simultaneity in space does not characterize only architecture – it is a manner of thinking.

## Georgian Modernism

Born in Kutaisi, Georgian modernism moved to Tbilisi and in a sense both modernism and the Tbilisi avant-garde make one entity: Georgian modernism and avant-garde, which emerged in 1913-1921, are international, as they are based on the Parisian modernism and avant-garde, and enriched by its cooperation with the multinational Russian (Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian) avant-garde. The Georgian avant-garde, still alive by momentum in the contemporary discourse of the Soviet years (1921-1932), makes a third layer, closely connected with the two, although the difference between the avant-garde of the eight pre-Soviet years (1913-1921) and the Soviet decade is still acutely felt.

Grigol Robakidze wrote in 1910s, "Tbilisi became the city of poets, and it was even declared as such in the café International. <...> They said poetry is only in Tiflis. <...> The country was really ravaged – and Tiflis was the only city that met this 'ravage' with poetic singing. Tiflis became fantastic."

Today, when the "fantastic" trait of Tbilisi has long disappeared, when it is hard for the city to emerge from the Soviet gray reality in which it had been sunk for decades, those modernist years are really perceived as chimerical, because in the city that had gone through tragedies – youthfulness and friskiness could be felt in those years. The country was truly being ravaged, danger was approaching, but juvenile hopefulness triumphed. From today's perspective we can see that the country was doomed,



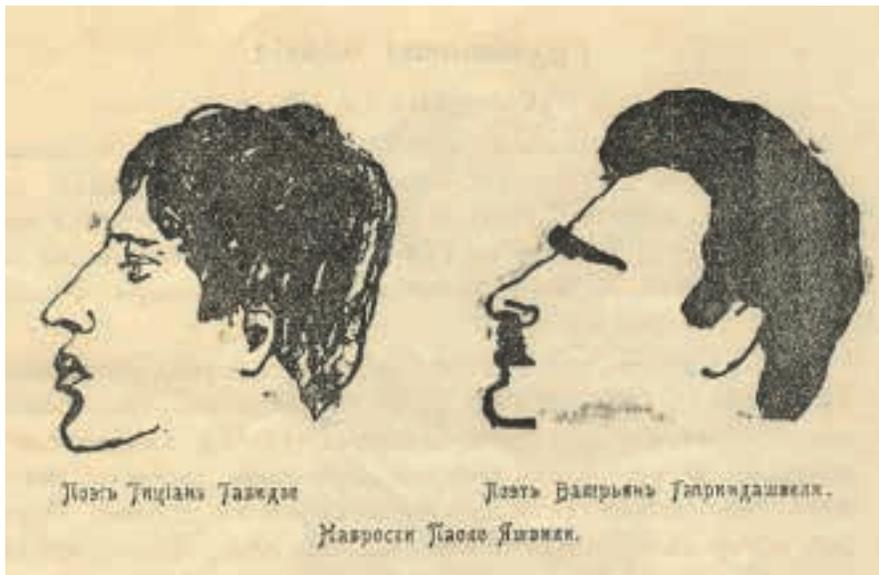
David Kakabadze, *Self Portrait*. 1914. Private Collection.

but they did not know it then. To quote Arthur Danto: "The past saw its future, based on how it saw its own present."

Only we, being their future, see that the Tbilisi modernism lasted for mere two decades and was forced to end its existence in the 1930s, when the Soviet policy declared the avant-garde a bourgeois culture and banned it. We also see that only fragments have survived the repressive Soviet years, and at the expense of



Igor Terentyev, *Self-Portrait*, 1919. From the magazine *Kuranti*, 1919 N2



Paolo Iashvili, *Portraits of Poets Titsian Tabidze and Valerian Gaprindashvili*, 1918. From the magazine *Kuranti*, 1919 N2



Igor Terentyev, *Portrait of Poet Yuri Degen*, 1918.  
From the magazine *Kuranti*, 1919 N2





Syndicate of Futurists Zdanevich; left to right: V.Gudiashvili, Kara-Dervish, K.Zdanevich, V.Valishevskaya, A.Kruchenykh : Private Collection St.Petersburg

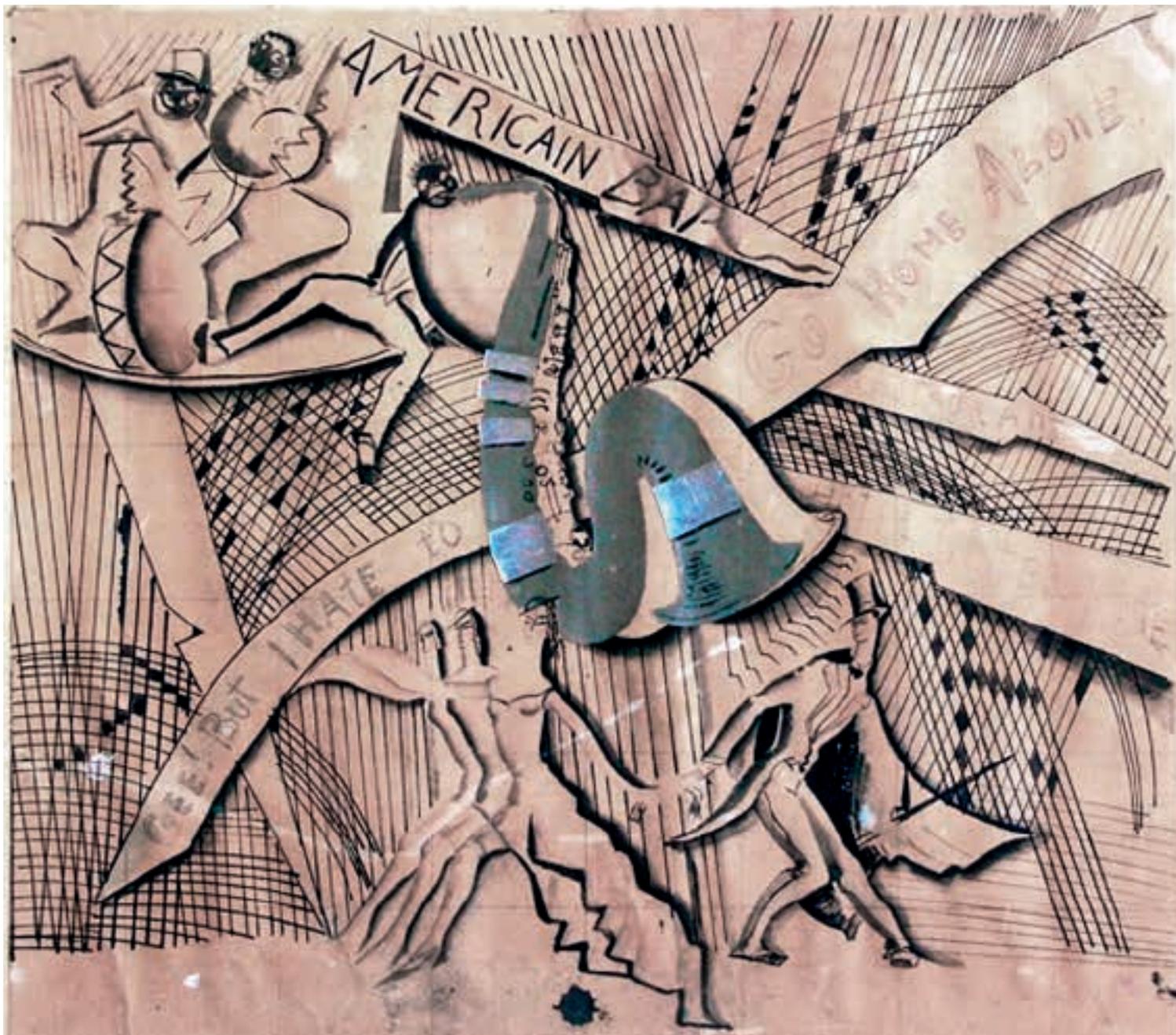
physical and psychological risks at that. Many artists and their works fell victims of the period. It was the freest period in 20th century Georgian art, yet also the most tragic, as it shared the political misfortune of the country. By 1923 a modernist poet said that Georgia is the country of dreams and sorrow.

Either way, we call this period of modernistic youthfulness and liveliness the era of artistic cafés. The Tbilisi avant-garde lived in cafés. There were years of poverty of course. The Russian futurist poet Igor Terentyev, who immigrated to Georgia, is believed to have sold matsoni (traditional yogurt) for a living.

But still, those were the dynamic years of experimentation, when the purpose and essence of art were being reconsidered and

the new poetic language was created. At that time, the Russian Futurist Alexei Kruchenykh, who also worked in Tbilisi, called it the third center of culture. "The abundance of creative powers turned the capital of Georgia into the cultural center of Europe," Tatiana Nikolskaya wrote. The poet Yuri Degen, executed in 1923 in Baku by the Bolsheviks at the age of 27, wrote in Phoenix magazine in 1919: "The Caucasus gave Vladimir Mayakovsky and brothers Ilya and Kirill Zdanevich to Russian Futurism."

Beginning in 1918 the fantastic and diverse capital opened its artistic borders wider – it was home to Polish, Armenian, German artists and poets, painters immigrating from Russia, and Georgian modernists and avant-gardists. While Russia was torn apart by civil war, Tbilisi turned into the "island of intellectuals."



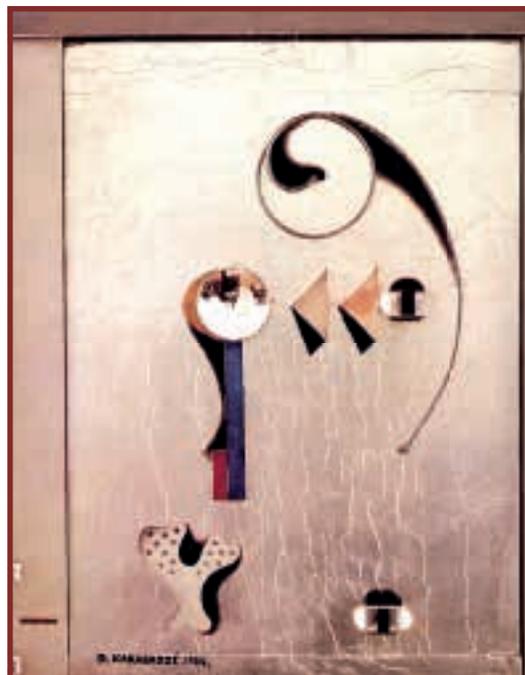
Lado Gudiashvili. *American Bar: Gee! But I Hate To Go Home Alone*. 1933. Tblisi. Collection of the Kote Marjanishvili State Theatre. Photo by George Demetrashvili



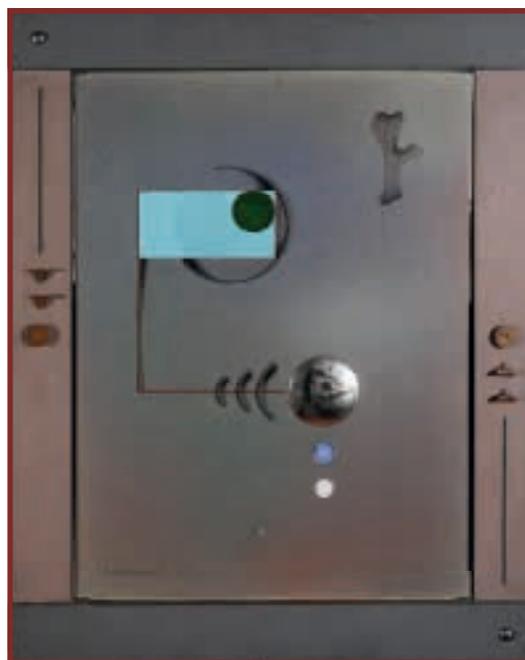
Lado Gudiashvili. *Kafe Rio*. 1917 Tiflis, Private Collection.  
Photo by George Demetrashvili



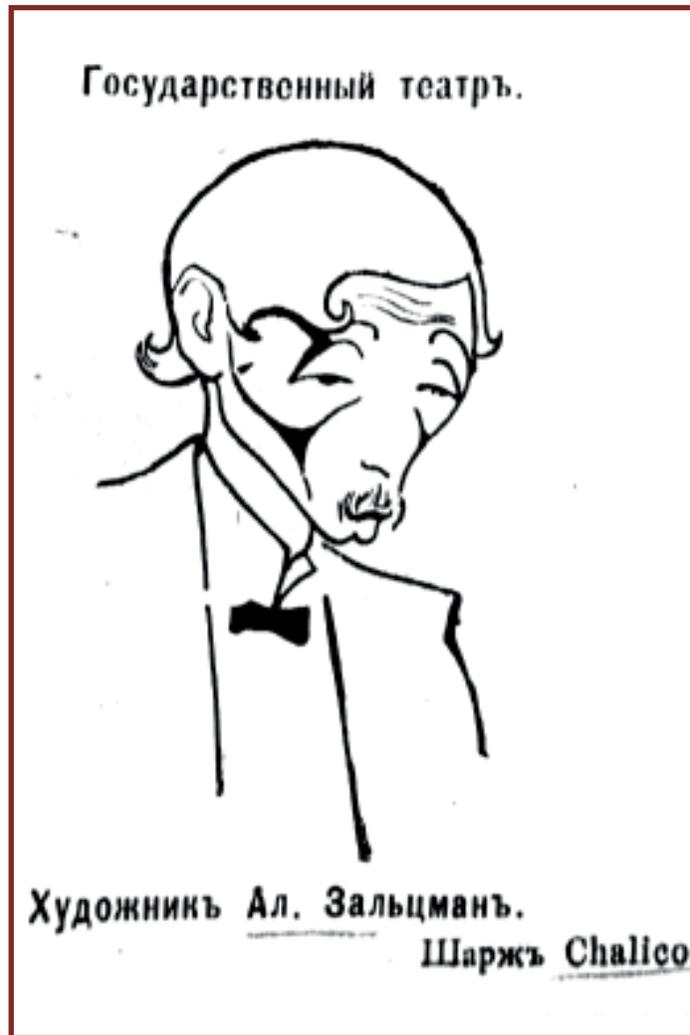
Lado Gudiashvili. *Kafe Rio*. 1917 Tiflis, Private Collection.  
Photo by George Demetrashvili



(Left) Grotesque by Nosov Beliakov. *Nikolai Tcherepnin on Conductor's Podium*. 1919 Tiflis  
(Right) David Kakabadze, from the series *Objects with Lances and Mirrors*. Wood, foil, glass, metal, 1924, Paris. Private Collection. Photo by Mirian Kiladze



(Left) Grotesque by Zyga Waliszewski. *George Gurdjieff Portrait*. 1919 Tiflis (location unknown)  
(Right) David Kakabadze, from the series *Objects with Lances and Mirrors*. Wood, foil, glass, metal, 1924, Paris. Private Collection. Photo by Mirian Kiladze



Grotesque by Chaliko (Shalva Kikodze). Artist Alexander Salzman. 1919 Tiflis



Grotesque by Elemp. Composer Thomas de Hartmann. 1919 Tiflis



Grotesque by Chaliko (Shalva Kikodze). *Poet Sergei Gorodetsky*. 1919 Tiflis



Grotesque by Elemp. *Theater Critic Yakob Lvev*. 1919 Tiflis



Grotesque by Chaliko (Shalva Kikodze). *Poet Titsian Tabidze*. 1919 Tiflis



Grotesque by Elemp. *Maliaveva-Korona, "The Argonauts' Boat."* 1919 Tiflis

Tbilisi of the time, referred to by some scholars as a “suburb” of the avant-garde, managed to become one of the avant-garde centers in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus and Russia. It is worth remembering that we are dealing with a country without an iota of ambition to become a world cultural hub, without a trace of imperial aspiration. Quite the contrary, Georgia’s only dream had always been to be independent, to attain and enjoy sovereignty. The fact that Tbilisi suddenly became an avant-garde center was the result of a sequence of coincidences, enhanced by the deep cultural memory bearing all the inherent features of the Hellenistic, Iberian-Georgian, Armenian, Hebrew, Byzantine and Iranian legacy. All of this was further fortified by the role of the Georgian nobility and military high-ranking personalities across the Eurasian region, the geopolitical position of Transcaucasia before WWI. Similarly, you could say that the fate of the 20th century politics was largely determined by the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, the politicians of the modern era.

For some time, in fact from the moment Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire, Tbilisi had functioned as the political, administrative and cultural center of the entire region. Not surprisingly, following the 1918 Bolshevik revolution, the Seim of Transcaucasia declared Tbilisi as the capital when the Democratic Federal Republic of Transcaucasia was formed. However, it collapsed in two months and Georgia declared its independence on 26 May 1918. On 28 May, Azerbaijan and Armenia also declared their independence in Tbilisi.

### **The Artistic Café**

It is in 1918 that the era of artistic cafés began in Tbilisi – a permanent, noisy process, complete with its unusual rhetoric, very frisky and youthful.

Of course, cafés existed well before that – places like Hope, International, Café-Hall, Brotherly Consolation, A Cup of Tea, The Georgian Club, The Blue Toad, etc. But the artistic cafés such as The Fantastic Tavern, The Argonauts’ Boat, Kimerioni, The Peacock’s Tail – carried a very special importance in turning the artistic life into an uninterrupted process, which “proved maximalist in its radical expressiveness” and “outweighed even Russian Futurism at first” and even European Dadaism. Everybody met one another in those cafés – Symbolists, Acmeists, Futurists, Dadaists, Cubo-futurists, Zaumniki, everyone.

Being together, despite ideological and conceptual opposition, was another trait of the Tbilisi avant-garde. The capital at that time observed them with interest – the artistic cafés were always overcrowded. Kruchenykh wrote in the Tiflis magazine Kuranti that not only did the representatives of various movements read their works in The Fantastic Tavern, but they read them in different languages. Terentyev wrote in his poem Glorious: “Hostile love and celebration unite us,” where hostile love was the tight relationship that existed beyond creative battles. The feeling of unity was created by the truly “celebratory” mood of fantastic Tiflis.



The artistic café "Argonauts' Boat." Murals by Kirill Zdanevich. 1918 Tiflis



The artistic café "Argonauts' Boat". Murals by Kirill Zdanevich. 1918 Tiflis





Café Kimerioni. Murals by David Kakabadze. 1919 Tiflis

In 1917, Zdanevich and Kruchenykh presented a lecture on “Zaum Poetry and Poetry in General” in the restaurant Sadurglo, and Zdanevich read his famous poem Yanko Krul Albanskai at the Conservatory. Yes, at the Conservatory! It is impossible to talk about the Tbilisi avant-garde without Nikolai and Alexander Tcherepnin. Nikolai Tcherepnin was the director of the Conservatory in 1919-1922. He gave academic space to the avant-gardists. The artists Davit Kakabadze and Sergei Sudeikin gave their lecture about modern painting on 5 April 1919. Similar evenings were often held in the Tbilisi Conservatory.

Modern Caucasian Poetry and Intuitive and Crazy Poetry evenings were held. At the exhibition of works by Lado Gudishvili and Alexandre Bazhbeuk-Melikov organized in The Hope canteen of the Tsisperkantselebi (Blue Horns), Kirill Zdanevich gave his lecture on Futuristic paintings and Alexei Kruchenykh read Eko-khud. Numerous exhibitions, concerts, literary readings, theatrical and benefit performances were held in café-clubs on a regular basis.

In 1919, George Gurdjieff founded The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Tbilisi. Thomas De Hartmann, the author of the music for Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* (1909), which wasn't staged in Germany at that time, followed Gurdjieff to Tbilisi in 1917. Another artist from Tbilisi, Alexander Salzmann, also returned to his hometown. They staged plays in the Tbilisi Opera House. It is assumed that Hartmann staged Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* together with Salzmann, though its official premiere was held in 1971 in the Guggenheim Museum.



Café Kimerioni. Murals by Sergei Sudeikin. 1919 Tiflis



General view of Café Kimerioni



Café Kimerioni. Murals by Sergei Sudeikin. 1919 Tiflis



Zyga Waliszewski. *In Frans Hals's Hall*. 1918 Tiflis. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts

An artistic café-studio called The Boat of Argonauts, with murals by Kirill Zdanevich, opened in the cellar of the Officers' House on Rustaveli Avenue in 1918. The café was managed by Grigol Robakidze, poet Sergei Gorodetsky, Titsian Tabidze, Valerian Gaprindashvili and theater critic Yakob Llev. The Acmeist poets Sergey Gorodetsky, Sergey Rafalovich, composer Alexander Tcherepnin, the Zdanevich brothers, director Nikolai Evreinov, Sandro Corona and others used to meet there.

Degen writes that Tbilisi had lacked bohemian art until then. "How far Tbilisi has come in terms of artistic development, <...> with wonderful decorations by Kirill Zdanevich and the mood that reigns in The Boat."

The Cubo-futurists Kirill Zdanevich and Zyga Waliszewski, of Polish origin, painted The Peacock's Tail café. Waliszewski was the

youngest artist in the crowd, and both the Suprematists and the Dadaist-Futurists from the group 41° considered him a member.

In her letter to Tatiana Nikolskaya in 1975, Melita Cholokashvili described how poems in Georgian and Russian were read and sketches were staged in The Peacock's Tail, a small storeroom



Zyga Waliszewski *The Birthday of Velasquez's Infanta*. 1919 Tiflis. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts



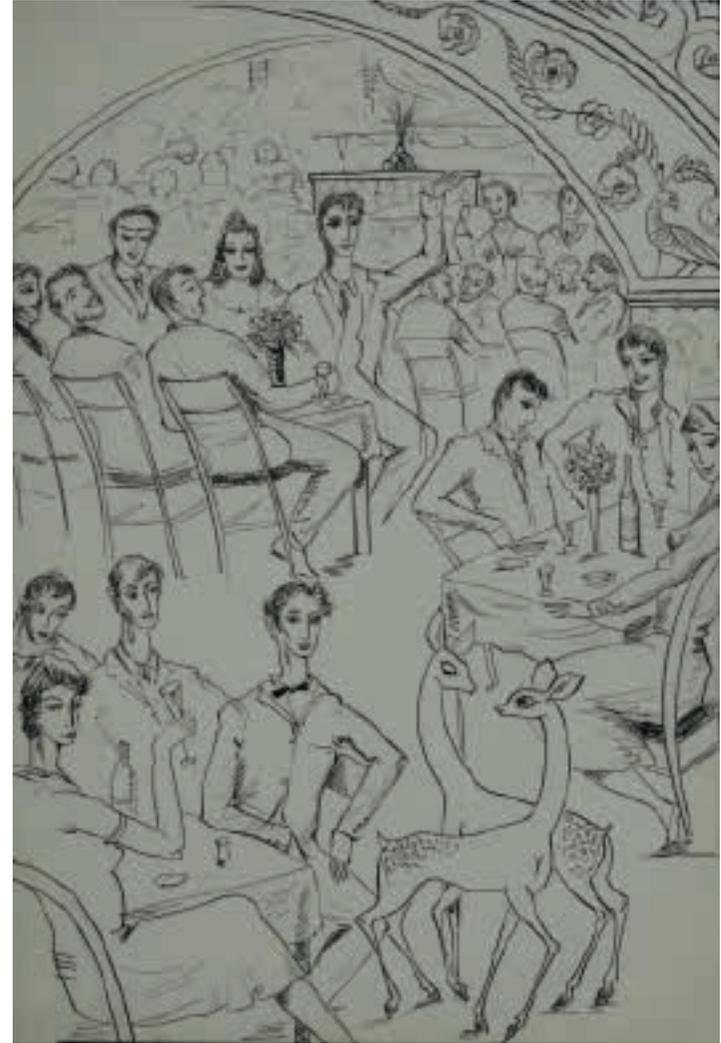
Alexei Kruchenykh. *Zdanevich and Kruchenykh*.  
1919 Tiflis. Private Collection



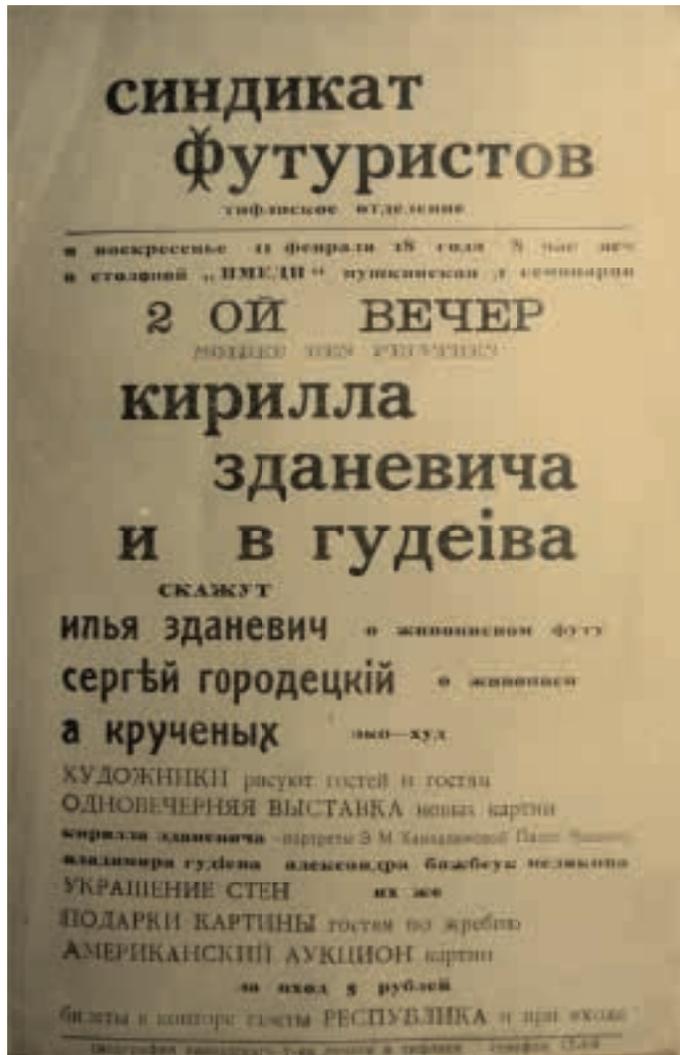
Zyga Waliszewski. *Zdanevich Addresses Donkeys*.  
1919 Tiflis. Private Collection



Kirill Zdanevich. *The Fantastic Tavern*. 1910s. Location Unknown



Lado Gudiashvili. *Café Kimerioni*. 1964. Georgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian Literature



Poster of the Tiflis Division of Futurists' Syndicate: 2nd Evening of Artists Kirill Zdanevich and Vladimir Gudiev (Gudiashvili) in the Dining Room 'Imedi' (Hope). Speeches: Ilya Zdanevich on Futurism, Sergei Gorodetsky on Painting, and Alexei Kruchenykh on Eko-khud. 1918 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library



Poster for the Lecture of the Corkscrews of Futurism. Alexei Kruchenykh, Ilya Zdanevich, Yerentyev - 41° - in the Middle of Borjom-park and Supper for Everyone. 1919 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library



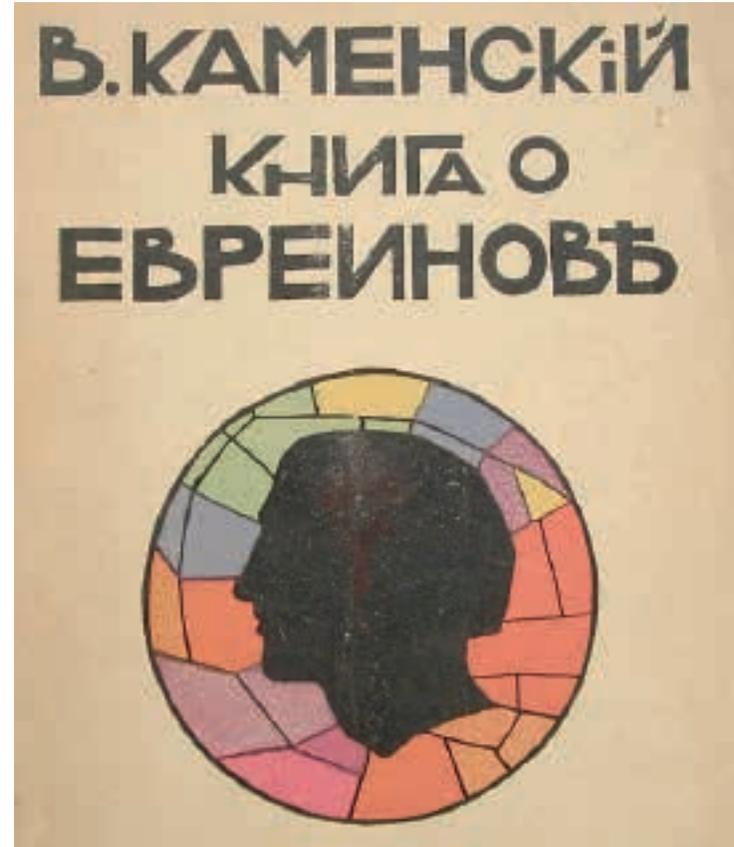
Poster "Ticket for Terentyev 41". 1919 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library



Vasily Kamensky, Alexei Kruchenykh, Kirill Zdanevich.  
Book Ferro-Concrete Poems. 1918 Tiflis

near Golovini (now Rustaveli) Prospect. . Symbolism and eroticism in art were discussed there, The Peacock's Hymn written by Prozorovsky to Sergei Gorodetsky's words was sung: "Don't you sit like a peacock, or an owl, / But sing the songs like the sonorous thrush, / Because there's a tail of a peacock over your head, a tail of a peacock."

In 1918 the Batonoshvili House, constructed in 1877, where the Council of Georgian Nobility used to gather, became a meeting place for the noisy avant-garde society, and the historic building housed The Fantastic Tavern. Slightly earlier, in 1917, before the Futuristic Syndicate was founded, it was called The Studio of Poets, created by Yuri Degen and composer Sandro Corona. Later Ilya Zdanevich, Terentyev and Kruchenykh's group Company 41° founded the



Alexandre Shervashidze, *Portrait of Evreinov*. Cover for Vasily Kamensky's book "About Evreinov." Petrograd 1917

Futurist university. During 1918-1919 almost 200 different lectures were given there.

From the description by Grigol Robakidze:

"The fantastic city needed fantastic space – and so immediately the poets and painters opened the Fantastic Tavern in 12 Rustaveli

Avenue, a small room where ten to fifteen people could gather, but thanks to some mystical powers managed to fit fifty people. <...> Phantoms looked from the walls of the room. <...> The poets and artists read poems and lectures. Giorgi Artemich Khazarov joined them, a mathematician by profession and Freudian by inclination. <...> He applied Freud's theory to explain everything. Once he even explained Tatiana's dream by Pushkin using this method."

According to the poet Vasily Katanyan, the murals on the left wall, the ceiling and the upper part of the front wall were painted by Lado Gudishvili, the left wall and part of the ceiling were painted by Petrakovsky, the left wall of the entrance by caricaturist Ser Gey, the left side of the arch by the sculptor Iakob Nikoladze, the rest of the arch by the poet Ilya Zdanevich and the wall niche across the entrance by the poet Yuri Degen. The Batonishvili House was burnt down in 1921, destroying the paintings of The Fantastic Tavern forever.

"Whoever wasn't in Tbilisi then?" Grigol Robalidze posed a rhetorical question. "Here the Futurists took their first step towards Dadaism.

"They founded the 41° <...> Alexei Kruchenykh created all of Russian literature out of "kak" (how). <...> The country vibrated and abrundi (shift) became its meaning. You should have seen how he used to jump up when he came across such an abrundi. Kruchenykh had a big helper in this respect: Igor Terentyev. <...> Ilya Zdanevich <...> was glorious when he read his Death of Gappo in the cafés. You should have seen how this little man suddenly grew and gripped the enchanted society (the rustle of death could truly be heard at the end of the poem). Vasily Kamensky also visited Tiflis. He read



David Kakabadze. From the series *Cubistic Paris*. 1924 Paris. David Kakabadze Private Museum. Photo by Mirian Kiladze

Stenka Razin from the stage and the robbers' threat 'Sarin na kichku' recited in his low voice spread along the streets of Tiflis."

In 1918 Kamensky published his famous book *Ferro-Concrete Poems*, written with Kruchenykh and illustrated by Kirill Zdanevich.

In 1917 he read his poems and drew pictures while on horseback in the arena of the Tbilisi Circus. He wrote in *The Path of an Enthusiast* that life was wonderful in terms of frequent performances in Tbilisi. "During our walks along Golovin Avenue we were surrounded by groups of brilliant youth. They truly loved poets here and received them as fit the Kakhetians, so that heads turned as if one were dancing a Lezginka.



Kirill Zdanevich. *Nude*. 1919 Tiflis. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze



Shalva Kikodze. *From the Life of the Puppets, Kiss*. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze



Mikhail Chiaureli. *Sketch*. 1910s Tiflis. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography

Oho! Georgians know how to appreciate poetry! That's why there are a lot of poets in Georgia. It was then that the innovative group of poets Tsisperkantslebi (Blue Horns) became amazingly popular. <...> The Armenians had a Futurist poet Kara-Darvish. And we, the poets lived in close friendship.”

They strolled around dressed in colorful Persian textiles, with painted faces, and with the Futurist philosophy voiced by Nikolai Evreinov, the director of the Tbilisi Treasury Theater, as Kamensky writes in his 1917 book about him, the cover of which was illustrated by Alexander Shervashidze.

The Georgian painter Shervashidze, a descendant of Abkhaz sovereign princes, lived in France after the annexation of Georgia



*Wedding in Tbilisi, in the Palace of the King Vakhtang V (Shah Nawaz)  
Engraving from Journal du Voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux  
Indes orientales, la Mer Noire et par la Colchide, Paris 1686*

and collaborated with the Ballets Russes with Diaghilev invitation till 1948. On 14 May 1946, the ballet Shota Rustaveli was staged in Monte Carlo, with choreography by Serge Lifar, music by Alexander Tcherepnin, Arthur Honegger and Tibor Harsanyi, libretto by Evreinov, and sets by Alexandre Shervashidze and Natalia Goncharova.

In 1919 in the cellar of the newly opened Rustaveli Theater, the Blue Horns opened a café called Kimerioni, which was painted by Davit Kakabadze, Sudeikin and Lado Gudiashvili. The director Konstantine Androne (Andronikashvili ) staged tableaux vivants based on Gudiashvili's painting Countryside, with a Black Mask acting as master of ceremonies. There were lectures and performances of Titsian Tabidze's Our Season, the poet Shalva Apkhaidze's Kantselebi's Profiles; Evreinov's staging of The Death of Joy, The School of Equals, etc. . The artistic café Kimerioni closed down in 1921, to be replaced by the Red Restaurant, which soon shut as well.

All artistic cafés disappeared after 1921.

## Language and Art

In 1913, Tbilisi intellectuals began an intensive rethinking of the problems of language and its form. It was an aesthetic rebellion of the post-realistic period, the battle for the creation of a new language. The Georgian artists declared the independence of art. They stripped it of its utilitarian function, dissociated themselves from the rectilinear Patriotic Lyric, from naturalism, calling for “the individualism, freedom, self-purpose of art.”



*Capture of Tiflis by Agha Muhammad Shah. Fragment from Qajar-era miniature from Faith 'Ali Khan Saba's Shahinshah Nama. British Museum © The British Museum Board*

In his article *Dadaism and The Blue Horns*, Titsian Tabidze wrote of Grigol Robakidze: "The development of civil life, with politics separated from it <...> gave him the opportunity to express his poetic nature." By this Tabidze meant the freedom of art, which was expressed in Lado Gudiashvili's graphic work *Cheers to Free Art in Free Georgia*. Incidentally, it was on the cover of the first issue of the magazine *Theater and Life* published in the first year of independent Georgia in 1918. The background of the painting shows 1917, the year of the Russian revolution. In Tabidze's words: "This revolution wasn't inherently cherished by the Georgian people, it was mailed by post from Petrograd."

Davit Kakabadze wrote in his 1919 magazine *Seven Luminaries*: "Art can embark on the path of revival only when it serves solely artistic purposes." He regularly published articles on artistic forms, principles of the painting, and so on.

In Georgia professional art in its European understanding emerged only in the second half of the 19th century, when the first generation of Georgian professional painters with European and Russian education in the arts returned to Tbilisi. It was the time when professional genres like easel painting and sculpture began to take shape.



Franz Roubaud, *Russian Troops Enter in Tiflis in 1783*. Panoramic painting of the 1880s for the Tiflis Military Museum, called the "Hall of Fame" (from the 1920s, National Gallery of Art) Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi History Museum. The fragments of the painting are restored in the photograph by Mirian Kiladze



*Royal Prince Nikoloz Mukhran-Batoni and His Family. 1862 Tiflis. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze*

As Dr. Dimitri Tumanishvili notes, “the prolongation of the feudal lifestyle, as well as its relevant culture, was a primary factor for us until the mid-19th century.” Although attempts at professional art were made in the 17-18th centuries, it became systemic and professional only in the second half of the 19th century

when it addressed contemporary European realism tradition, historical-national themes and social issues, under the influence of the Russian school of Wanderers (Peredvizhniki). The leading themes were historical because, as in Italy and Greece, they were connected with the idea of liberation and independence.

Earlier, in 1832, in the period of Georgian Romanticism, in line with the European romanticism, there was a major conspiracy to re-establish statehood. Tbilisi was the center of the conspiracy, which resembled the Polish rebellion of 1830-1831 against Russia. One of the leaders of the conspiracy was Solomon Dodashvili, a Georgian philosopher and the founder of the Georgian academic school of logic. The participants were Georgian writers who carried the idea of enlightenment and the initiators were the royal princes and other nobility exiled to Russia.

The idea of enlightenment had appeared earlier. Ivane Javakhishvili called the early 18th century an encyclopedic era because of its cultural importance. At the time Vakhtang VI was the king of Georgia, described by Vakhushti Batonishvili as "interested, wise, and hardworking."

### **The Georgian Monarchy**

Vakhtang VI implemented important reforms despite Persian rule. In culture, he gathered educated scientists and scholars and established the first Georgian printing house, for which he invited a Hungarian printer Mihai Isṭvanovici (known as "the Wallachian" or Stepaneshvili) to Tbilisi in 1707-1708. A building was specially constructed on the right bank of the river Mtkvari, near the palace. He designed the first typeface for Georgian, and in 1709 the printing house started work in Tbilisi for the revival of education.

Vakhtang VI had a European orientation, encouraging the Catholic missionaries during the reign of Giorgi XI. Later, with the support of Domentis Catholicos, the king sent Sulikhan Saba Orbeliani to Europe with a diplomatic mission. Vakhtang VI expected help from Louis XIV, as we can see from Sulikhan Saba's documents and letters.



*King Giorgi XII, second half of XVIII c.*

Sulkhan Saba's mission was unsuccessful. "Not long after his return to Georgia, Vakhtang declared his support for Russian intervention in Transcaucasia." Despite this, Vakhtang VI "was left exposed and alone. Facing a Turkish invasion <...> Vakhtang was forced to evacuate Tbilisi. He made his way across the Caucasus to Russia, where he died in 1737."

The invasion was followed by twelve years of Ottoman rule. Only in 1748 did King Erekle II, the descendant of Vakhtang VI, a military leader and beloved hero of the nation, manage to regain Tbilisi and establish peace for 50 years. He even opened a Seminary of Philosophy in the garden of Anchiskhati Church in 1755. And in 1783, due to his fanatical loyalty to Christianity, he signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire, according to which he was obliged to become a permanent ally of Russia in foreign political matters. In return Russia vowed to allow him to keep the Georgian Kingdom with one of the oldest dynasties in Europe – the Bagrationi Dynasty – as rulers. However, no promises were kept after the king's death. Then in 1795, Aga-Mohammad-Khan invaded Georgia, destroying and burning down Tbilisi. The major part of the population died of hunger, and the plague spread in June 1797, thus completing the destruction of the city.

Tbilisi entered the 19th century in a state of devastation – burnt down and decimated by the plague. In 1801 eastern Georgia submitted to Russia on terms that had nothing to do with the Treaty of Georgievsk. In less than a year, the monarchy that had survived through uninterrupted battles during its history ceased to exist. In 1844, when almost all territories were annexed, Georgia was divided

into two governorates, or provinces, of the Russian Empire – Tbilisi and Kutaisi. The position of a Viceroy of Caucasia was established, with the viceroy's residence in Tbilisi, the administrative center of the Caucasus.



*Prince Alexandre, Son of King Achill II, 1696, oil on canvas, Georgian National Museum, author unknown. Photo by Mirian Kiladze*

On 4 January 1802 the manifesto abolishing the Georgian Kingdom signed by Alexander I was promulgated in the main cathedral of Tbilisi, that very cathedral that was built by King Vakhtang Gorgasali in the second half of the 5th century. In 1850, commissioned by Viceroy Mikhail Vorontsov, it was painted by Grigol Gagarin, who found place for many Georgian

saints on the walls. Before that, the Autocephaly of the Georgian Church was abolished in 1811 and it was made subject to the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and only in 1917 was the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church restored and Bishop Kirion, an eminent religious figure, chosen as the first Catholicos-Patriarch.



Paul von Franken, *Tiflis*. 1879. Georgian National Museum. Museum of FineArts. Photo by Goerge Demetrashvili

A relatively peaceful period began at the turn of the 19th century. Time moved forward dramatically, and Georgia had the opportunity to gradually fulfill the Europeanization ideas of its kings, patriarchs, poets, writers and educators, some dating back to the 17-18th centuries.

That period was politically difficult and contradictory. But, despite permanent anti-imperial rebellions in Georgia, cultural life in Tbilisi continued to flow.

### The Visual Arts

Georgian culture did not integrate into the big narrative of Western Europe from the 14th century, which was based on the idea of mimesis and illusionism in visual arts. In Georgia such attempts started in the 18th century, but were more general and world visionary rather than formal. In fact, the introduction of European art began only in the 19th century – with classicist elements in the beginning, blended with Eastern experience and later with romanticism.

In visual arts, as already mentioned, the first generation of professional artists bearing the tradition of realist thinking emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century. The outburst of modernism and avant-garde occurred in the professional art of the second generation, in the beginning of the 20th century and without the solid prerequisite of illusionistic experience. Therefore, the modernism and avant-garde of Tbilisi and Georgia did not need to overcome the experience that Europe



Mikhail Ivanov, *Tiflis, Shuristsihe on the Bank of the River Mtkvari*. 1783. Watercolor. Russian Museum. © The State Russian Museum

rebelled against. It emerged easily and the society accepted it with ease as well. Therefore the direct predecessor of the Georgian-Tbilisi modernism and avant-garde were the portraits of the nobility of the Tbilisi school, which existed from the 18th till the second half of the 19th century.

In 1922, the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam wrote about portraits in the national museum: "A long row of serene portraits will appear in front of you, <...>, reminiscent of German art with its technique and deep static tranquility. At the same time the flat perception of form and linear composition (rhythm of the lines) breathe with the traits of Persian miniatures. <...> These works by unknown painters are the true victory of Georgian art over the East. And beside them, how worthless seem the fragments of the violin, once broken by Picasso that captivated the new Georgian art."



Grigory Gagarin, *Maidan*. Tiflis. Paper, cardboard, Pencil.  
Mid-19th century; Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi  
History Museum. Photo by George Demetrashvili



View of old Tiflis.1870.



Lev Lagorio, *Ortachala District in Tblisi*. 1866. Georgian National Museum, Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by George Demetrashvili



Giorgi Shervashidze, famous Georgian poet, last Sovereign Prince of Abkhazia in costume of *The Knight in Panther's Skin* staged according to Mikhály Zichy's illustrations for Rustaveli's 12th century poem. Late 1880s, Tiflis.



Niko Pirosmiani, *Train from Kahketi*. Oil on cardboard. 1916. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze

The Tbilisi school with its aristocratic virtue and an intense interest in the person, intimacy, individualism, concentration on the face of the portrayed, sad mood, rejected entourage, carries obvious signs of romanticism. The portraits' stateliness, deformation of proportions, anti-illusionism, linear character, use of local color, and timelessness return us to the traditions of the Georgian church ktitor (donor) portraits; at times the detailed, exquisitely wrought ornaments of clothing with a trace of decorativeness take us to the Persian portraits of the Qajar dynasty period. But the Georgian school made careful, selected borrowings from the Qajar state portraits that resemble ornamental still lifes. It is also far from the contemporary West European mainstream realism and is closer to the Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Latin American, Spanish, relatively earlier Scottish aristocratic portraits. Such a resemblance "is due not only to similar solid feudal traditions, but by the fact that these countries represented peripheries in relation to the West European culture" where its influences encountered local traditions.

The portraits of Tbilisi school with its anti-illusionism were soon replaced by realistic art and photography. In 1893 the society of amateur photographers was founded in Tiflis. Its rich collections help us restore everyday life, architecture, social classes, environment, landscape, etc. of Tbilisi and Georgia of the past.



Niko Pirosmiani, *The Eagle Caught the Rabbit*. 1914 Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze



Niko Pirosmiani. *The Doctor on a Donkey*. Oil on cardboard. 1914-1915. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze

Destroyed and burnt Tbilisi began to rise again, developing into a new city, at the turn of the 19th century. The committees for restoration of the destroyed residential areas, the development of the city, and construction of new districts were formed on the Emperor's orders. The city was to be rebuilt on the principle of European regular planning.

Together with developing new urban planning, the city preserved its old principles, which yielded an interesting result: the historical part, which was kept within the pre-18th century boundaries, was already known as Old Tbilisi. However, in the strata of the feudal urban-construction of the destroyed city, only religious architecture, fortresses, foundations,

cellars and the stratum of urban planning survived. This planning layer was fully preserved during the renovations, such as the network of streets, density, scale, old landmarks, for example, Shuri Fortress (Narikala) and Metekhi Church-Fortress, facing each other from the opposing banks of the river Mtkvari.

Therefore, instead of replanning the feudal "organic" city, landscaping architectural principles were preserved: the new urban culture of the 19th century carried out a wonderfully selective process during the rehabilitation – it took what it needed from the old, based on its social and historical requirements. It also took into consideration the specific features of the terrain, only changing what the new lifestyle prompted. Ultimately, the type of residential housing changed: from flat-roofed terraced houses to the ones with balconies. The result was a mix of Old Tbilisi and new Tbilisi residential houses, still seen in the city today.

The historical part, Kala, preserved the character of the feudal city, 15 centuries of history lost to fire. The early European classicistic houses were built on the settlements that were preserved untouched, showing confluence of the local and eastern elements – wooden carved balconies (another example of the western and eastern synthesis), a network of narrow streets, sheer slopes and mountainous relief. Well up to the Shuri Fortress (Narikala), the hilly Old Tbilisi was plastically tied to the new part of the regularly planned city. Although the city already had new districts, Old Tbilisi remained an inspiration for painters, poets, writers and travellers – everyone was duly impressed with Old Tbilisi, describing its life and history. Both local and foreign artists were moved to paint it.

As early as in the 17-18th centuries, there were painters among the European missionaries who travelled to Georgia: Cristoforo De Castelli visited in 1628, Arcangelo Lamberti in 1638-1649. Joseph Götting, a military specialist who worked at the court of Erekle II, was also a painter and did a portrait of Giorgi XII, the son of the last King of Georgia.

From the turn of the 19th century the Russian government sent artists to Georgia. The first visitor was Mikhail Ivanov, alumni of the Imperial Academy of Arts, who painted Tbilisi before the invasion of Aga-Mohammad-Khan, which is a rarity in itself. Nikanor Cherentsov visited Georgia in 1828 and painted the Tbilisi views.

The French painter Horace Vernet came in the 1830s, and in the 1840s, Giorgy Gagarin visited Georgia together with the poet Mikhail Lermontov, both in military service. Lermontov's watercolors of Tbilisi are very famous, as well as the paintings by Gagarin, who was an art scholar, painter, and architect, actively working in Tbilisi: he painted portraits of Georgian aristocrats, made copies of medieval church murals and painted the Sioni Cathedral. He was engaged in the construction of the first Opera House, painted its interior and curtain. In 1845 he published an album in French titled *Scènes, paysages, mœurs et costumes du Caucase* in Paris.

Numerous Russian, Italian, Polish, Ukrainian and German painters visited Tbilisi in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Lev Lagorio travelled to Georgia in the 1850s and painted his famous picture *The View of Tbilisi from Ortachala* (1866). Germans Paul von Franken and Theodor Horschelt, Italian Luigi Premazzi, and Frenchman Jean-Pierre Moinet



Niko Pirosmiani. *Bear in the Moonlight*. Oil on oilcloth. 1914. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze

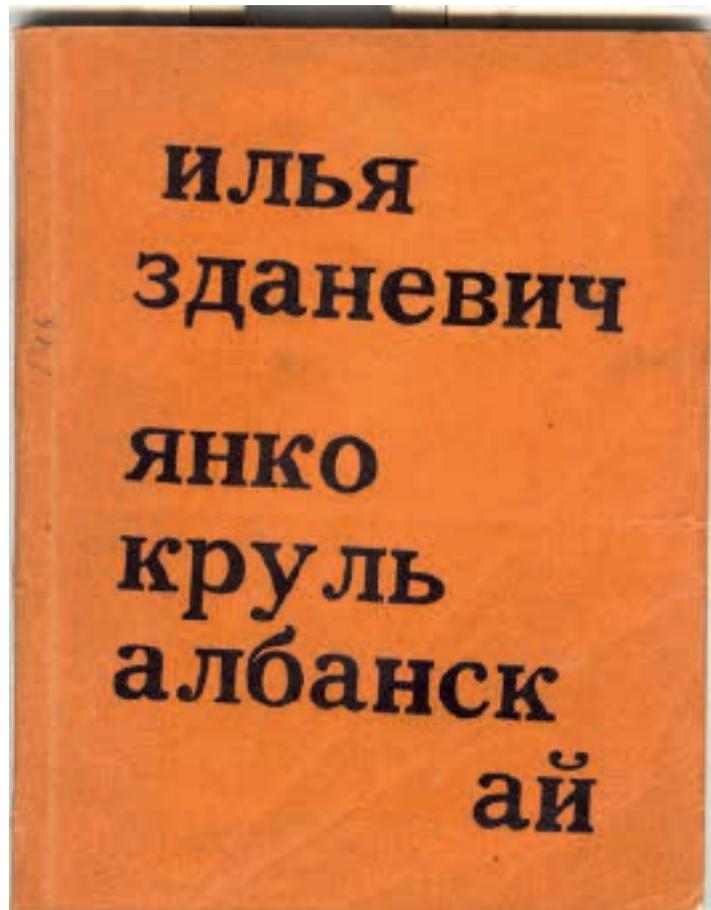
also came to Georgia. Views of Tbilisi were painted by Ivan Aivazovsky, Ilya Zankovsky, Franz Roubaud, Richard Zommer, Max Karl Tilke and others. Boris Vogel, Voldemar Boberman, Mary Ettlinger-Eristavi, and the inimitable Oskar Schmerling (who lived in Tbilisi), as well as others visited Georgia, and Old Tbilisi was an inspiration for all of them.



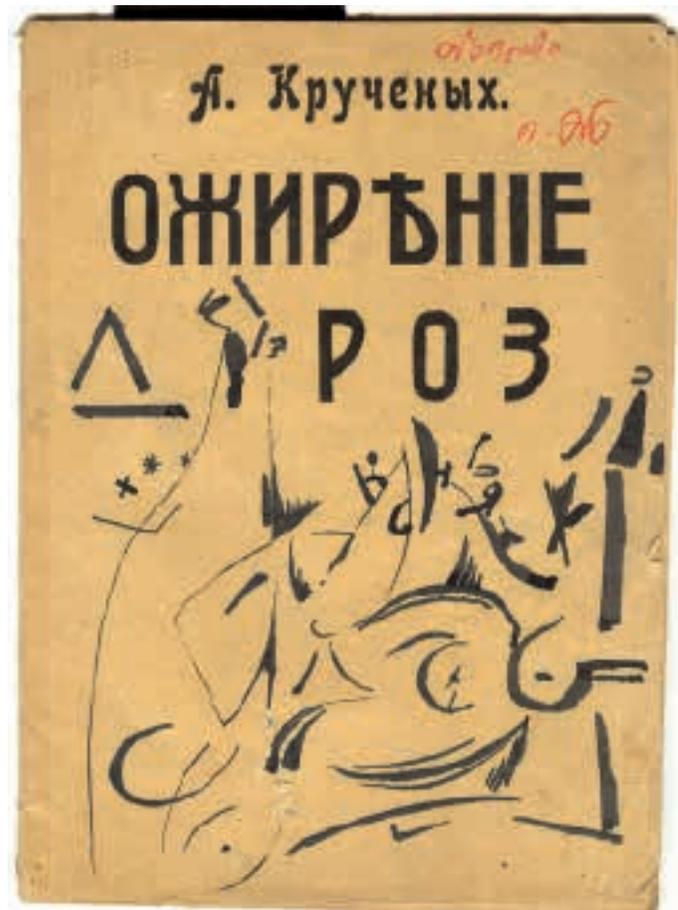
(Top & middle left) Ilya Zdanevich, *Zga lakoby*. 1918 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze

(Bottom left) Kirill Zdanevich's drawing in Alexei Kruchenykh's book *Uchites Khudogi*. 1918 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze

(Right) Ilya Zdanevich, *Ostrov Pashki*. 1919 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze



Ilya Zdanevich, *Yanko Krul Albanskai*. 1919 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze



Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Ozhirenje Roz*. 1918 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze



„Самосудъ“ Государственного театра.  
Шаржъ Сэръ Гея.

Ser Gei. Artistic "Trial" over Moscow Drama Theater. Grotesque, 1919



The Hungarian painter Mihály Zichy visited Georgia in 1881 and 1888, creating the illustrations for *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. Performances were staged based on his pictures of the famous medieval epic, and he is still considered an indivisible part of the Georgian culture to this day.

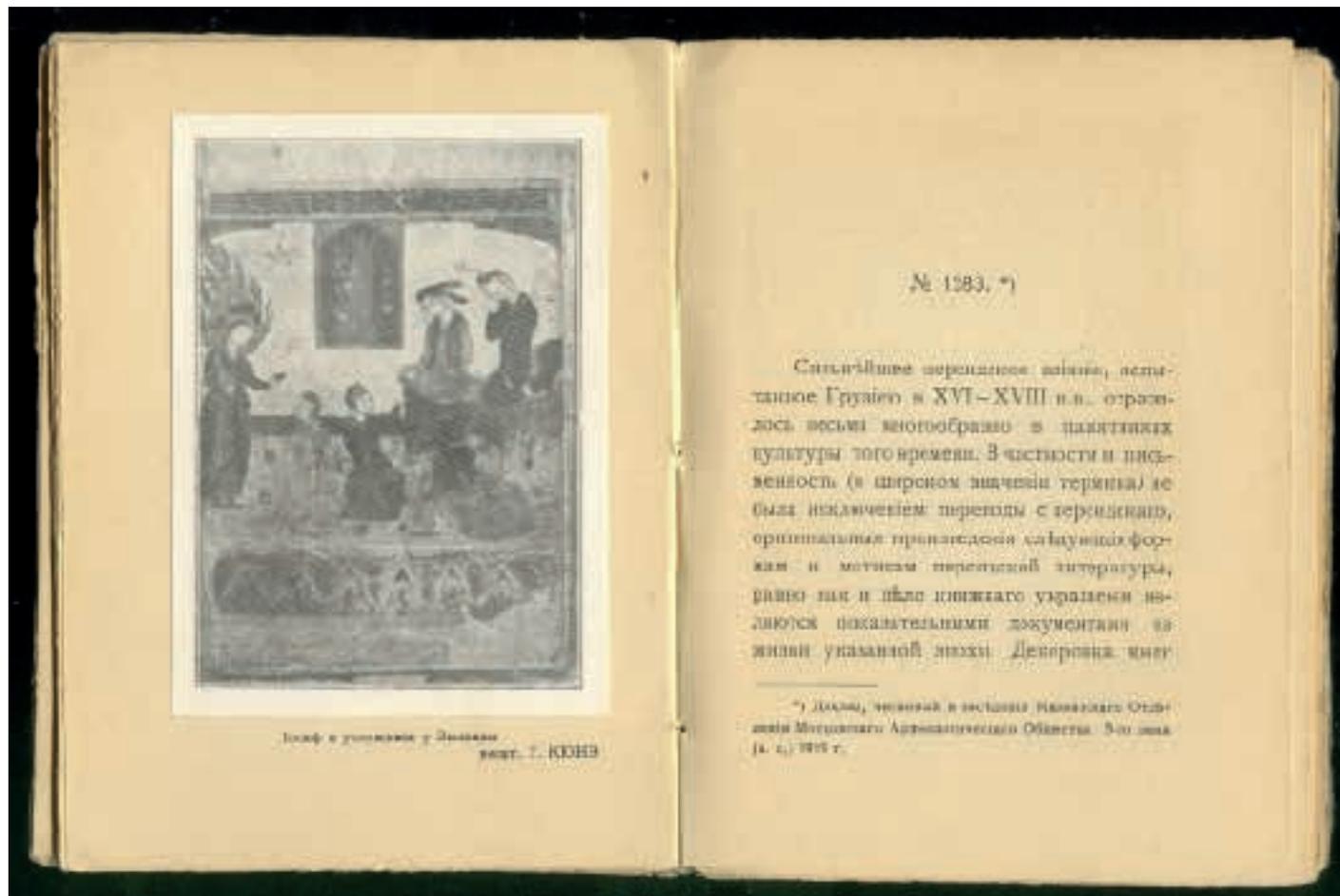
The Georgian modernists raised the question whether Georgia belonged to Europe or Asia. The question did not appear randomly, for the process of self-identification had long begun. Ever since the 19th century, Georgia faced the demand for self-reflection. In adopting a Western orientation, Georgia fully appropriated its problems as well, turning the identity crisis into an artistic and theoretical problem, and started to study its own ground and culture. This resulted in an immense number of essays not only about the new function of art, but about history and their place in it.

### **The Avant-Garde and Pirosmani**

In 41°, the newspaper published by Ilya Zdanevich's group, he writes: "The company unites left-wing Futurists and establishes [the language of translational poetry] zaum. <...> 41°'s goal is to use every great discovery of its members and find a new axis for the world. The newspaper will be <...> a reason for constant turmoil. We intend to roll up our sleeves." When Grigol Robakidze (writing under the transparent pseudonym Isabella VII) complained via the newspaper *New Day*, asking "What have you, the Futurists, done?" Zdanevich replied in the newspaper 41°: "Futurism <...> creates a zaum word. <...> It does not refuse to portray God, on

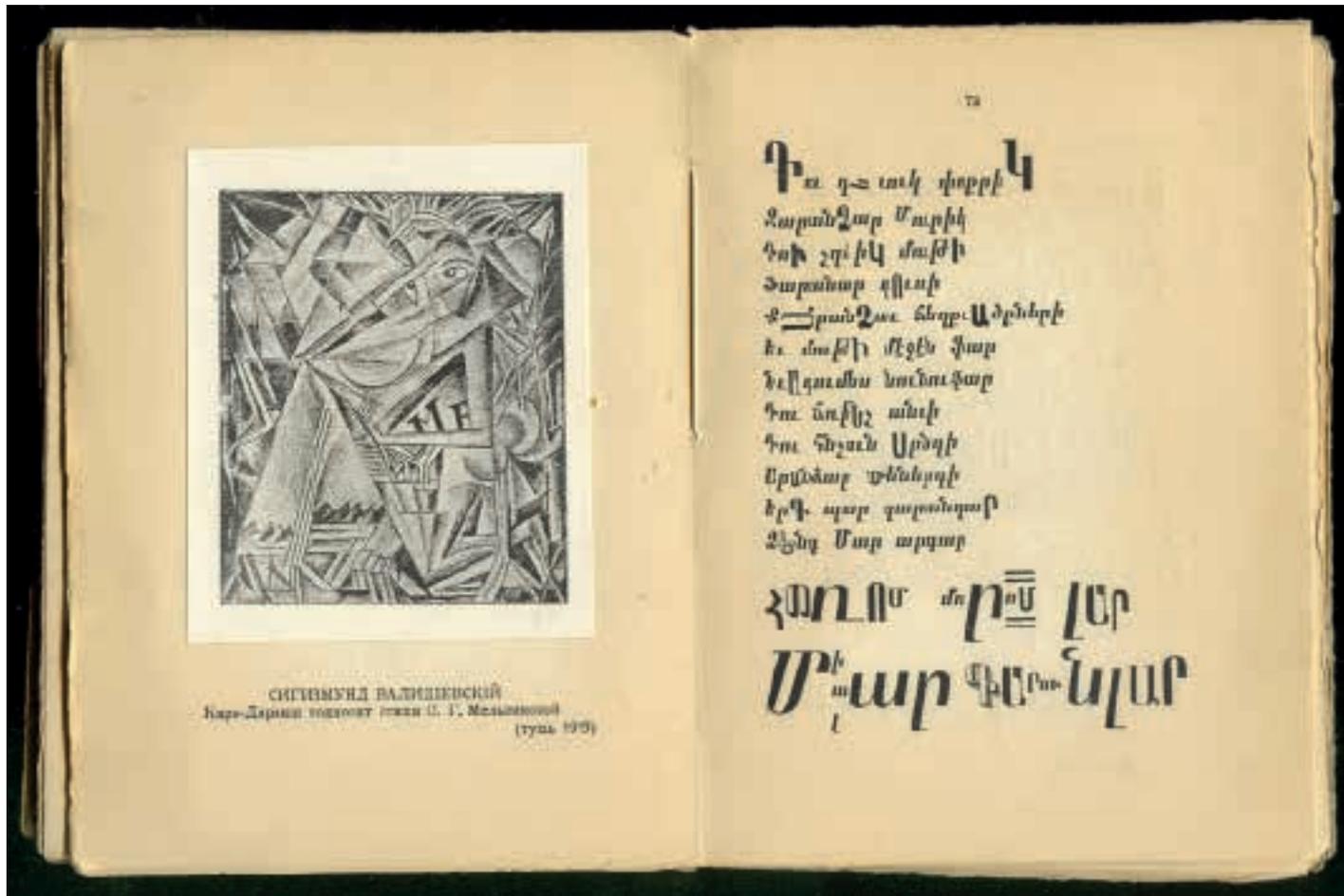
the contrary, strives towards Him and quite successfully at that, by defeating the disappointed aesthetes using its means. Some ask what Futurists can do. <...> Futurists Mikhail Le Dantu, poet Ilya Zdanevich and artist Kirill Zdanevich discovered the national genius of Georgia and saved it," he concludes.

True, it was with the help of Ilya Zdanevich that the Tbilisi avant-garde turned Pirosmani into the bridge between contemporary culture and the national culture of the past. The newspapers wrote about the ongoing campaign for moving Pirosmani's remains to the Pantheon, which was initiated by the artistic circles. Alas, it did not happen. We still do not know the exact location of his grave. This is symbolic, as Pirosmani is a synergy – synthesis and collision of the old and the new, the end and the beginning at the same time – the one who finished the epic vision of the old world and expressed the conceptual avant-garde idea; a self-taught, non-professional in terms of Western academic education, but a true professional like El Greco, firmly standing on the traditions of the eastern Christianity in philosophical terms concerning life and artistic language. Anonymous, like early Christian masters, and very famous, like a modern artist – a painter of signboards and pictures for taverns, he still had to be discovered and in 1912, in the tavern Variagi in Sadguri (Railway Station) Street, he was discovered by the Tbilisi and Russian avant-garde, by the Zdanevich brothers and a Russian painter of the French origin Mikhail Le Dantu. Four of his works were exhibited alongside Mikhail Larionov, Kirill Zdanevich, Natalia Goncharova, Le Dantu, Kazimir Malevich and Marc Chagall at *The Target* exhibition in Moscow.



Book *To Sofia Melnikova*, published by 41°, 1919 Tiflis. Left side: *Joseph Serving at Sillhan*, miniature from the 17th century Georgian palimpsest manuscript. Right side: Dmitri Gordeev, "N 1283. A Few Words about the Illustrated List of Characters in Ioseb-Zilkhanifni" with one illustration (in Russian). Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tblisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze





Book *To Sofia Melnikova*, published by 41°, 1919 Tiflis. Left side: Sigizmund Valishevsky, *Kara-Darvish Presents his Poem to Melnikova*. Right side: Kara-Darvish, *Poem (untitled)* (in Armenian); Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tbilisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze

In 1923, Ilya Zdanevich dedicated one of his most famous zaum dramas, *LidentYU fAram* (Le Dantu as a Beacon), published in five parts in Paris, to Le Dantu, who called Pirosmani “a Georgian Giotto,” rather than comparing him to Henri Rousseau, as most did. Le Dantu, a painter and theoretician, was well aware of proto-Renaissance Giotto’s achievement– he brought medieval church art to the culmination and opened the door to the new, a five-century long narrative of illusionism. In his turn, Pirosmani was an organic expression of the end of this narrative for Europe, who simultaneously finished the era of the epic perception of his national anti-illusionary world and opened the door to the avant-garde.

Ilya Zdanevich researched Pirosmani throughout his entire life. In 1926 the avant-gardists published a trilingual (Georgian, French and Russian) book *Niko Pirosmanashvili*; in 1927 the film director Leo Esakia published a book *New Painting and Niko Pirosmanashvili*, which was banned for decades. In the 1920s Beno Gordeziani, an artist, interesting interpreter of art and the leader of the Tbilisi avant-garde team H2SO4, also wrote about Pirosmani.

All the above said, the synthesis of innovative and traditional into a single artistic space, so obviously embodied in the phenomenon of Pirosmani and so important for the avant-gardists, returns us to the phenomenon of unifying simultaneously various layers and times into one space, which characterizes the Georgian-Tbilisi culture.

## **Publishing Life**

We have mentioned that the 1910s were the era of Tbilisi artistic cafés, but it is also the era of artistic books and magazines.

In fact, Ilya Zdanevich became a professional typographer in Tbilisi, which, starting from the 1940s was followed by the publication of his innovative artistic books in Paris, in cooperation with Picasso, Braque, Derain, Chagall, Matisse, Giacometti, Survage, all of whom he contacted on behalf of his 41° publishing.

Published in limited editions, the books by the group in their 41° Publishing House are unique: they include A. Kruchenykh, K. Zdanevich, *Uchites Khudogi* (Learn, Artists, 1917), I. Zdanevich, Yanko Krul Albansky (Yanko, King of Albania, 1918), A. Kruchenykh, *Ozhirenje Roz*, (The Obesity of Roses, 1918), A. Kruchenykh, K. Zdanevich, *Malakholia v Kapote* (Melancholy in a Capote Coat, 1918), A. V. Kamensky, K. Zdanevich, A. Kruchenykh, *Zhelezobetonnyaya Poema* (Ferro-Concrete Poem, 1918), Kruchenykh, *Lakirovannoe Triko* (Lacquered Tights, 1919), I. Zdanevich, *Ostraf Paskhi* (Easter Island, 1919), I. Zdanevich, *Zga Iakoby* (Zga, Allegedly, 1920), *To Sofia Georgievna Melnikova* (1919).

The group 41° and its members intended to renew the sounds of poetry and words as such, researching the texture and aesthetics of poetry, the relationship of a word with different arts, diachronic and synchronic layers in art, etc.

Salle de la Société de Géographie

184 BOULEVARD SAINT-GERMAIN

LES  
GÉORGIENS  
D'AUTREFOIS

*conférence par*

ILIAZD

AU PROFIT DES ŒUVRES DES DAMES GÉORGIENNES

LE DIMANCHE 19 DÉCEMBRE 1948

A 21 HEURES

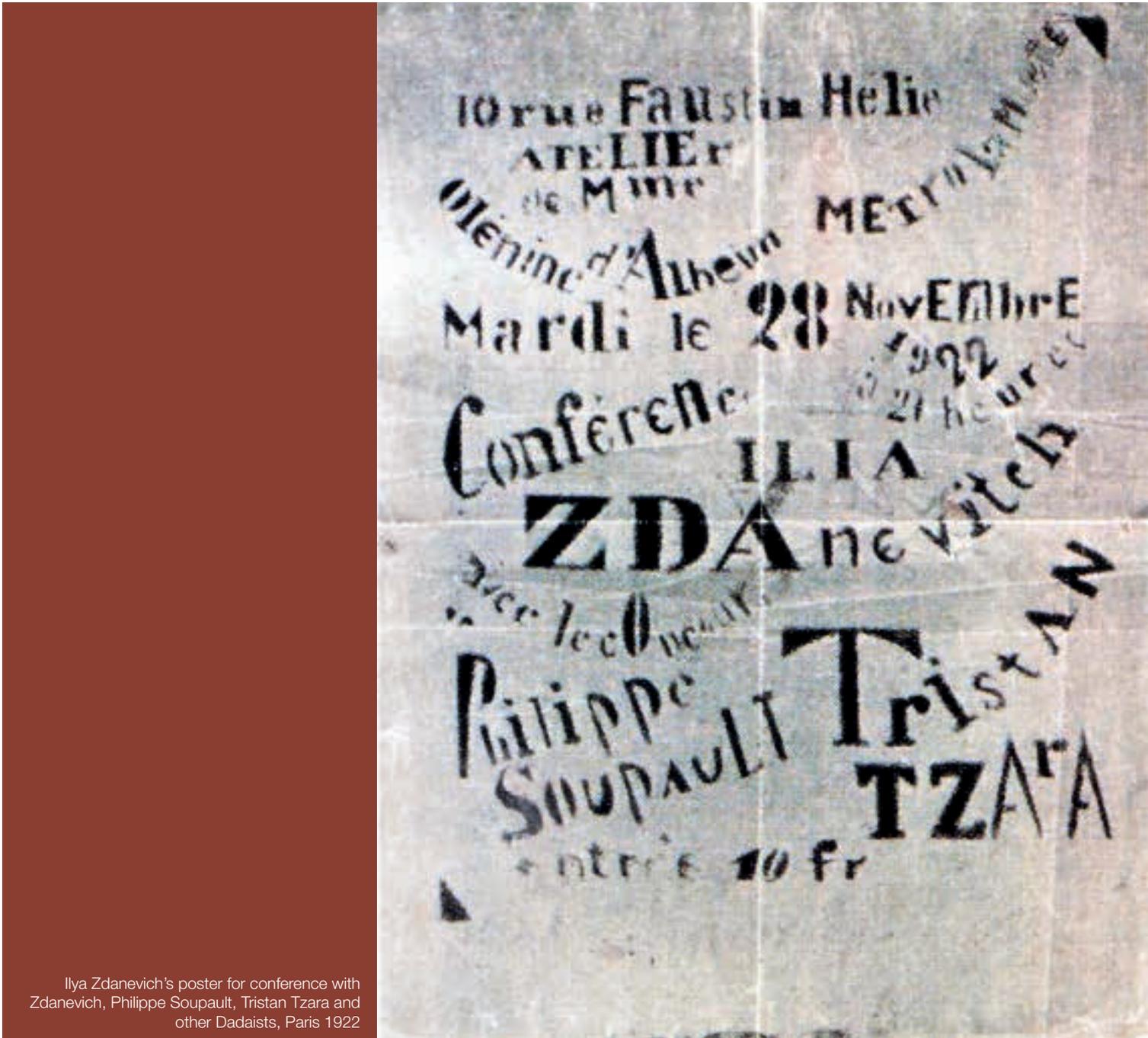
LES CARTES EN VENTE DANS LA SALLE

IMP. UNION PARIS

Poster for the lecture of Ilya Zdanevich (Iliaz)  
"Who the Georgians Were" in the hall of the  
Geographic Society, Paris 1924



Ilya Zdanevich's poster for conference *Les nouvelles écoles dans la poésie russe*. Paris 1922



Ilya Zdanevich's poster for conference with  
Zdanevich, Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara and  
other Dadaists, Paris 1922

As for the publications: there are numerous, mostly bilingual magazines, which is why it is an era of artistic publications and an era of cafés: Theater and Life, Dreamer Wild Goats, The Blue Horns, Seven Luminaries, The Tolabuyrasi Zone, ARS, Phoenix, Kurantebi (the Bells), Harlequin, Tiflis, newspapers 41°, Caucasian Herald, Barricade, Day, and many more. From 1921 until 1930 Ariphion, Magazine of Galaktion Tabidze, H2SO4, Literature and Other, Left-Wing, Ukimerioni, Georgian Literature, and so on and so forth were regularly published.

Initially, almost all of them were publications dealing with issues of visual arts, literature and theater. Cinema was added in the 1920s. Declarations, manifestos, articles, lectures, theoretical texts, translations, criticism, new works and chronicles of ongoing artistic news and illustrations of works were published. For instance, the interdisciplinary magazine Seven Luminaries by Davit Kakabadze and his historian brother, Sargis Kakabadze, was about art, literature, psychology, finances, the cooperative movement, inheritance, politics, history, education, among other issues.

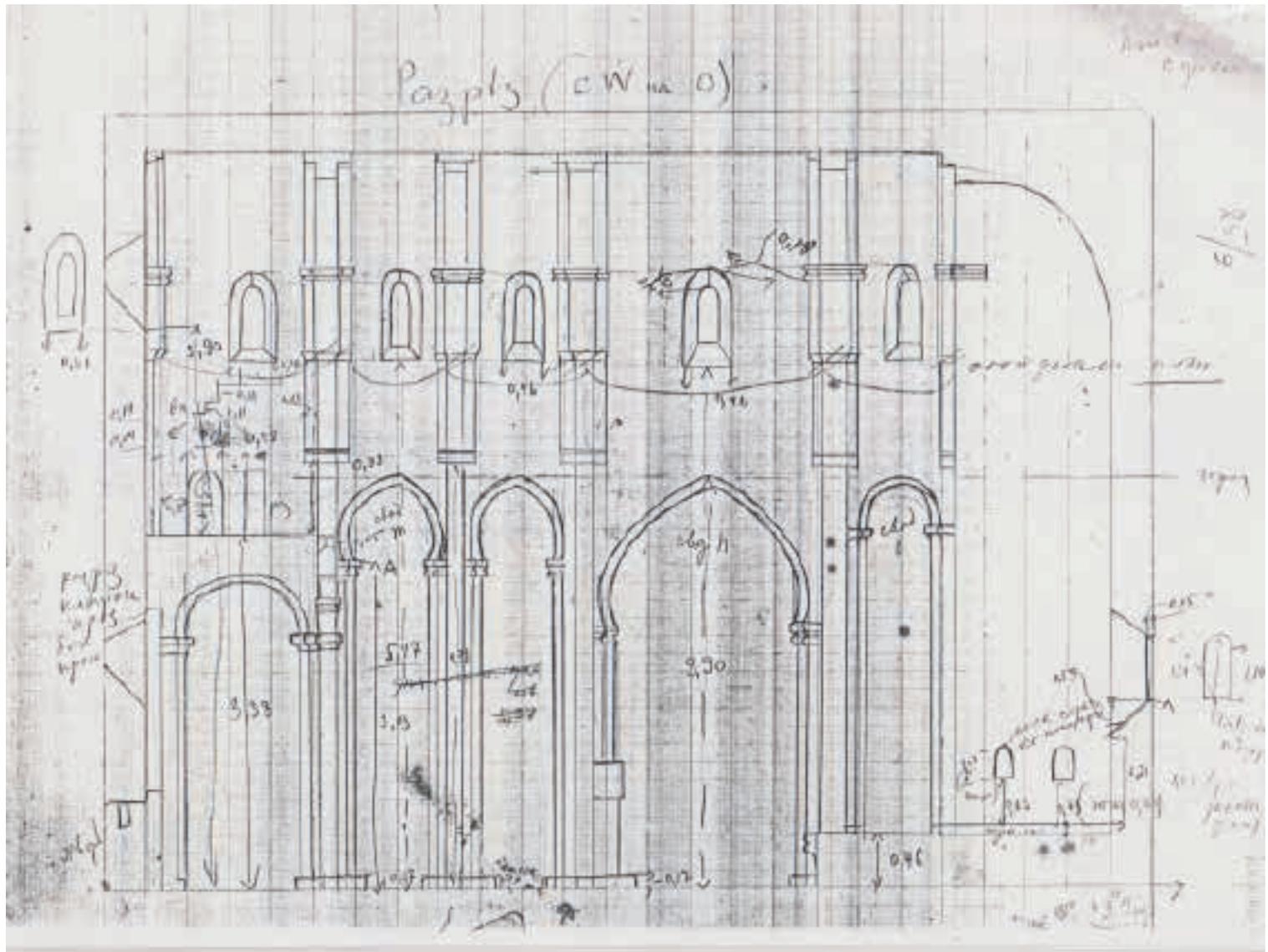
Artistic “trials” were held in the Conservatory. Two of them are well known: one featuring a Moscow drama theater and the other King Erekle II, with a judge, lawyer, prosecutor, jurors, audience and avant-garde boldness.

However, the true hero of the modernists was Giorgi Saakadze, the head of the city of Tbilisi, a political military leader caught between Iran and the Ottoman Empires in the beginning of

the 17th century, who was prepared to walk the precarious path leading to unification of Georgia, which in most cases was sacrificed to the interests of the rival empires. A rather controversial figure, he was known as the Great Mouravi (Governor).

Titsian Tabidze wrote that they fought against the feudalism in literature exactly like Giorgi Saakadze struggled against the actual system. In his essay Georgian Modernism Grigol Robakidze said: “For me, the solution of Georgian problems <...> is expressed in the hero Giorgi Saakadze.” When in 1937, Titsian Tabidze was accused of being involved in a conspiracy by the NKVD, they tortured him to get the name of the leader. Finally he “confessed,” saying it was Giorgi Saakadze. They interrogated him about their secret meeting place, to which he replied, “In Noste.” In the late 1930s Giorgi Leonidze wrote a screenplay about Saakadze, but Stalin did not like its “simplicity,” with the result that the screenplay cannot be found to this day.

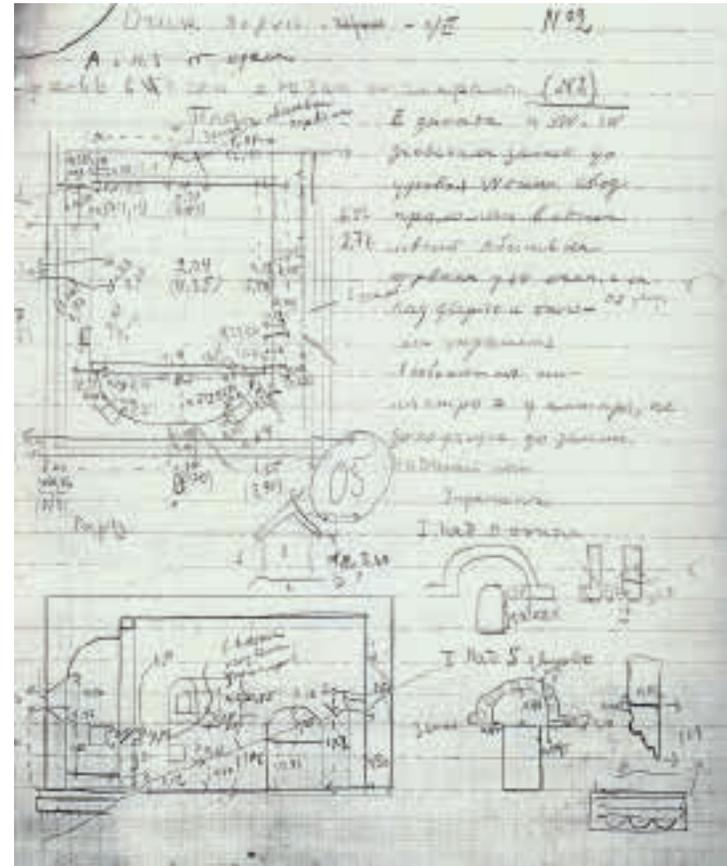
History, time, and space ... Together with Kruchenykh, Zdanevich wrote about his brother Kirill's “Orchestral Painting” in the catalogue of the first one-man exhibition in Tbilisi in 1917: “It is possible to bring together various modes of painting onto one canvas rather than to paint in one definite manner. Each mode attempts to tackle a specific task, but fails to encompass painting in its entirety. By combining modes, an artist liberates art from the power of temporary tasks, and by destroying the arbitrary character of each style grants a work marvelous wholeness ... unites all extremities and paralyzes the dark emptiness!”



Ilya Zdanevich, Sketches made during the archeological expedition in Tao-Klarjeti (today Turkey) with archeologist Ekvtime Takaishvili in 1917. Sketch of the south part of the church Otkhta, 10th-century Georgian monastery in historical Tao



Section of the 10th-century church Parkhali; Georgian monastery in historical Tao



Plan of the 10th-century church Oshki; Georgian monastery in historical Tao  
Iliazd Archive, Marseille



Dimitri Shevardnadze. *Still-Life*, double-sided picture, oil on canvas, 1910s, Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts

Zdanevich's concept of orchestral is a prediction for polystylism of contemporary art, also a characteristic of the Tbilisi avant-garde of that time.

Earlier, in 1913, Zdanevich gave a lecture in Moscow, in which he declared that Futurism had died and that, if one observed closely, it never existed at all. It was a kind of *épatage*, meant to shock those present. According to the Russian newspaper *Russian Gazette*, Zdanevich talked about Eastern mysticism and Western dizzy speed, declaring that the time and space died together with Futurism, which was followed by a humorous comment from the newspaper saying that thank God the pocket watches of the audience confirmed that time continued to move forward and had not disappeared.

That same evening Zdanevich presented his concept of Everythingness, the expression of which can be found in the 1919 book he published in Tiflis titled *To Sofia Melnikova*.

It seems important because, first of all it is a multinational face of the Tbilisi avant-garde: a polylinguistic book putting together Georgian, Russian and Armenian texts, as well as Latin translations of the authors' family names. Also, it unifies two book models – the avant-garde artistic and the traditional modes. This opposition creates a contrast – modernistic verbal-visual alternating rhythm coexisting with the avant-garde non-referential poetic texts, typographical experiments – with letters of various size, shape and thickness, which demands working out a personalized interpretation from the reader. And there is also an article by Dmitri Gordeev called “N 1283. A Few Words about the Illustrated List of Characters in *Ioseb-Zilikhani*” about 17th century palimpsest manuscript, with one illustration.



Dimitri Shevardnadze. *Two Ladies*, double sided picture, oil on canvas 1910s, Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts

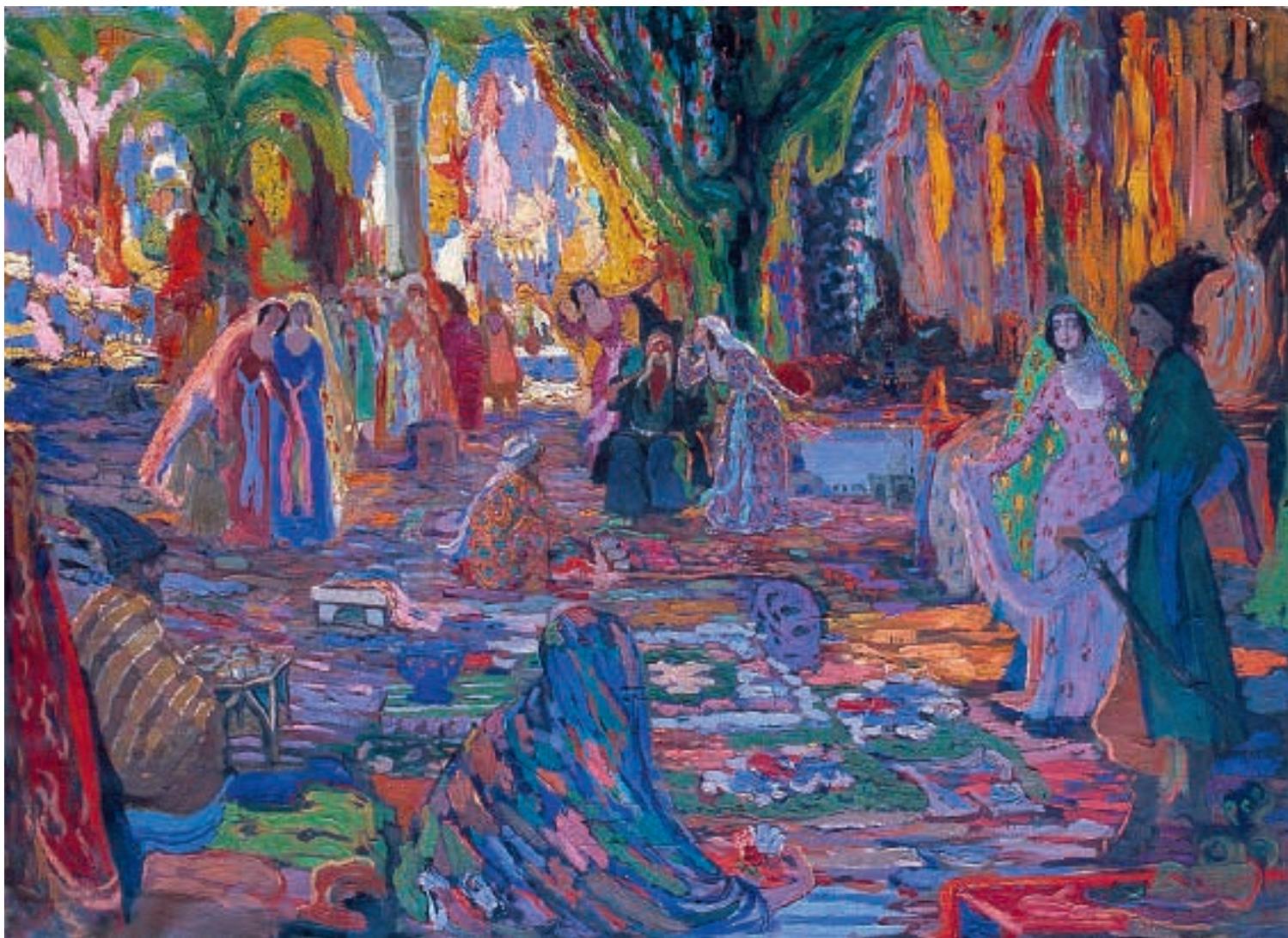




Ilya Zankovsky, *Sioni Street*, Tiflis. Second half of the 19th century. Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi History Museum. Photo by George Demetrashvili



Lado Gudiashvili. *Feast of Kintos with Woman*.  
1919 Tiflis. Georgian National Museum, Sh.  
Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts.  
Photo by Marian Kiladze



Mose Toidze, *Bazaz-Khana*. Tiflis. 1903. Georgian National Museum; Tblisi History Museum. Photo by George Demetrashvili



Bazbeuk-Melikov, *Old Tbilisi*. 1917. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Marian Kiladze

The inclusion of a text on a 17th century palimpsest in an avant-garde book is conceptual: in a way it highlights the palimpsest nature of the book itself, expressed in the traits mentioned above, and in polystylism, uniting various movements: zaum, Symbolist, Acmeist poetry, Cubo-Futurism and neo-Symbolist graphic arts, as well as the fusion of various eras, methods, and languages into a new unified artistic space. The words of the modernist poet Titsian Tabidze testify to the above: “Rustaveli and Mallarmé should come together in an artist. Rustaveli <...> as the gatherer of Georgian words <...> and Mallarmé <...> as collector of presentism and futurism”; or another example: “By all means Grishashvili has become distanced from Besiki, but <...> have they separated to the extent that they cannot recognize each other?” For him, Rustaveli was the unifier of Georgian

words and Mallarmé was “the author of yet undiscovered formulas.” The overall idea was overcoming “the dark emptiness” through the synthesis of radical innovations and assimilation of the inheritance.

## History

All the avant-garde magazines wrote about history, analyzing their own art as part of history, which was unusual for the Western avant-garde. For the West the present is the beginning of the future, so the temporal dimension is obviously primary. In comparison, the Georgian-Tbilisi avant-garde was more oriented towards unifying the temporal space – the present is the result of the past and the beginning of the future. According to Kakabadze, it saw an event not “from a special perspective,” but as a “unified totality in space”; characterized by panoramic perception, it perceived time more epically. The difference is that for Western people reality is perceived in its duration, but for Georgians – in simultaneous space. In this sense Western modernism differs from the Georgian just as the dramatic differs from the epic.

The editorial board of ARS, one of the most famous artistic magazines in Tbilisi, wrote: “Transcaucasia is the region of cultures. <...> The first Europeans, the Greeks, created fairy tales about our heavenly land. Their <...> god was tortured for the world here, on our cliffs. <...> It was here that the Georgians and Armenians created their brilliant cultures, and where the thrilling Muslim world thrived as well. <...> What richness of creative powers is tied together here. <...> We unified our ideas.” It is noteworthy that the

*Epitaphios of Prince Givi Amlakhvari and His Wife Tamar, 1678/79  
- 1694/95, Georgian National Museum, Shalva Amiranashvili  
Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Mirian Kiladze*



*Epitaphios of Prince Rostom Chkheidze, 1661, Georgian National  
Museum, Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by  
Mirian Kiladze*



editorial board members were a group of international modernists and avant-gardists. Lectures about art were given in the Artisterium, which functioned as the editorial office, and exhibitions and literary evenings were held regularly. Exhibitions of works by Yuri Marr, Lado Gudiashvili, Bazbeuk-Melikov and Russian Futurists were organized there. They carried out the study of Tbilisi, measured and drew plans of houses, made sketches. ARS closely cooperated with the scholars Niko Marr, Ivane Javakhishvili, Ekvtime Takaishvili, Gordeev and Levon Bashinjaghyan, a regular of the Fantastic Tavern.

The avant-garde scholar Niko Marr, an expert in Caucasian studies, creator of Japhetic theory in linguistics whose ideas were established in 1900-1910 and who was referred to as "Velimir Khlebnikov of science," was making continual experiments with words in zaum poetry. His work interested Zdanevich, and in 1917-1919 he studied Marr's works and devoted a whole diary journal to the analysis of his ideas.

In 1917, the Zdanevich brothers, Mikheil Chiaureli, Dimitri Shevardnadze and others accompanied Ekvtime Takaishvili in the expedition to Turkey to research the medieval architecture on the historical territory of Meskheta – Tao and Klarjet. Ilya Zdanevich, who surprised even the Parisian Dadaists with his radicalism in the 1920s, worked extremely hard in this expedition, taking measurements, making plans, sketches and records of feudal religious architecture. After immigrating to Paris, he participated in several international congresses of Byzantology. He also drew architectural plans of Roman churches and gave lectures on "Who the Georgians Were" in the 1940s at the Paris Geographic Society.

Davit Kakabadze, an extremely important figure in the Georgian avant-garde, also researched Georgian feudal church architecture and made a documentary film about it. He researched jewelry as well, and wrote a fundamental work about traditional Georgian ornaments.

Educated in Munich, the modernist Dimitri Shevardnadze founded the Tbilisi Art Museum and the National Art Gallery, for which he gathered a collection of portraits of nobility of the Tiflis school, Qajar portraits, and works by Pirosmiani. He also established the society of Georgian artists that organized expeditions to research Georgian feudal church architecture and murals. The Georgian avant-gardists took part in the work. In 1937, his activities led to his arrest.

The Russian writer Konstantin Paustovsky wrote: "I realized that life in Tiflis would not pass unnoticed for me and that the city would have a deep impact on my fate."

Indeed, Tbilisi was a strange city, full of contrasts and controversy. In 1918-1921 activities oriented toward innovation involved the entire city and country and not just groups of avant-garde artists separated from the society.

The graduates of European and Russian universities returned to Tbilisi in 1916-1917. In 1918 they founded the Tbilisi State University, which is interesting in the context of the Tbilisi avant-garde – the academic staff of the University were all aged between 28 and 30. Only the initiators were relatively older – the historian Ivane Javakhishvili was 42 and Ekvtime Takaishvili was 55 years old.



Alexander Tsimakuridze. *Old Tbilisi*. 1920s. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by George Demetrashvili

The University was also distinguished by having two women professors, extremely rare for those times.

Afterward the Institute of Caucasian History and Archeology was founded, followed by the Technical Society of Georgia, and science journals, dictionaries and books were published.

Important works by Georgian scientists in almost all spheres were regularly published in Niko Marr's journal *The Christian East*.

The government funded internships for young people to study and work in foreign countries, and the artists Davit Kakabadze, Lado Gudaiashvili, Shalva Kikodze, Elene Akhvediani, Keto Magalashvili,



Vera Rokhline. *View of Tblisi*. 1917. Private Collection



David Kakabadze. *HUE*, staged photography, Paris 1921



David Kakabadze. Z (Speared Fish). Wood, metal glass, Paris 1926. Yale University Modern Art Gallery, USA

Mikheil Chiaureli, and Vasil Jorjadze, the writer Nicolo Mitsishvili, and the composer Erekle Jabadari were among those who traveled to Europe.

It was the time of rapid actions when art and science heavily influenced everyday life and vice versa – everyday life had a deep impact on art and science.

In the second half of the 19th century several societies were founded in Tbilisi: the Artists' Society in 1873, The Artistic School in 1874, the Caucasian Society of Decorative Arts in 1877 and the Georgian Professional Theater Society in 1879. Several important exhibitions were held: Gevorg Bashinjaghian's in 1883, Ivan Aivazovsky's in 1887 and the first exhibition of the Caucasian Society of Decorative Arts in 1888.

Russian and foreign artists, living for short or long periods in Georgia, also participated in the process alongside the Georgians, including Luigi Premazzi, Petr Kolchin, Felix Khodorovich, Ilya Zankovsky, Luigi Longo, Alexei Eisner, and Max Tilke.

Earlier, in 1867, Gustav Radde, a German scientist, inaugurated the Museum of Caucasus, the first museum dedicated to local nature and crafts in the whole Russian Empire, equipped with the most advanced museum technology of the time. It exhibited the geological, botanical, ethnographical and zoological diversity of the Caucasus.

With the support of the Russian Empire, Georgia was rapidly equipped with new technologies. The representatives of the Rockefeller,

Rothschild and Nobel families all gathered in Transcaucasia, due to its strategic importance – oil, railway, trade, connection of the East with the West. In the 1870-1880s Georgia already had a well-developed railway network. Incidentally, the writer Nico Nikoladze contributed much to the project. When the Baku-Tbilisi railway opened, the Rothschilds founded the Société Commerciale et Industrielle de Naphte Caspienne et de la Mer Noire.

The Siemens Company extended their Indo-European telegraph to Georgia, and in 1871-1931, Tbilisi newspapers no longer needed two, three or four weeks to get the foreign news. Instead, they could print the news disseminated the day before by the foreign agencies.

The development of modern technologies and the inflow of information made possible the city modernization and the artistic avant-garde.

In 1918 the poet Ioseb Grishashvili dedicated a poem to Grigol Robakidze: "If you have found the rose heaven with Wilde and can write your address on the sun breeze, I still admire a kinto with a peach-laden tray."

In 1927 he published *The Literary Bohemia of Old Tbilisi*, which read like an epilogue to Old Tbilisi, that last sparkle that bid the final farewell to the fragments of the East that had survived from Tbilisi's past.

Modernism had certain interest in the eastern character of the city. The works by Lado Gudiashvili depict the life of the karachogeli and the kinto and have tragic intonations because they register the death of the eastern as well, which definitely added to its romanticism.



Beno Gordeziani, *Tbilisi - Revolution*. From the magazine  $H_2SO_4$ , 1924, Tbilisi



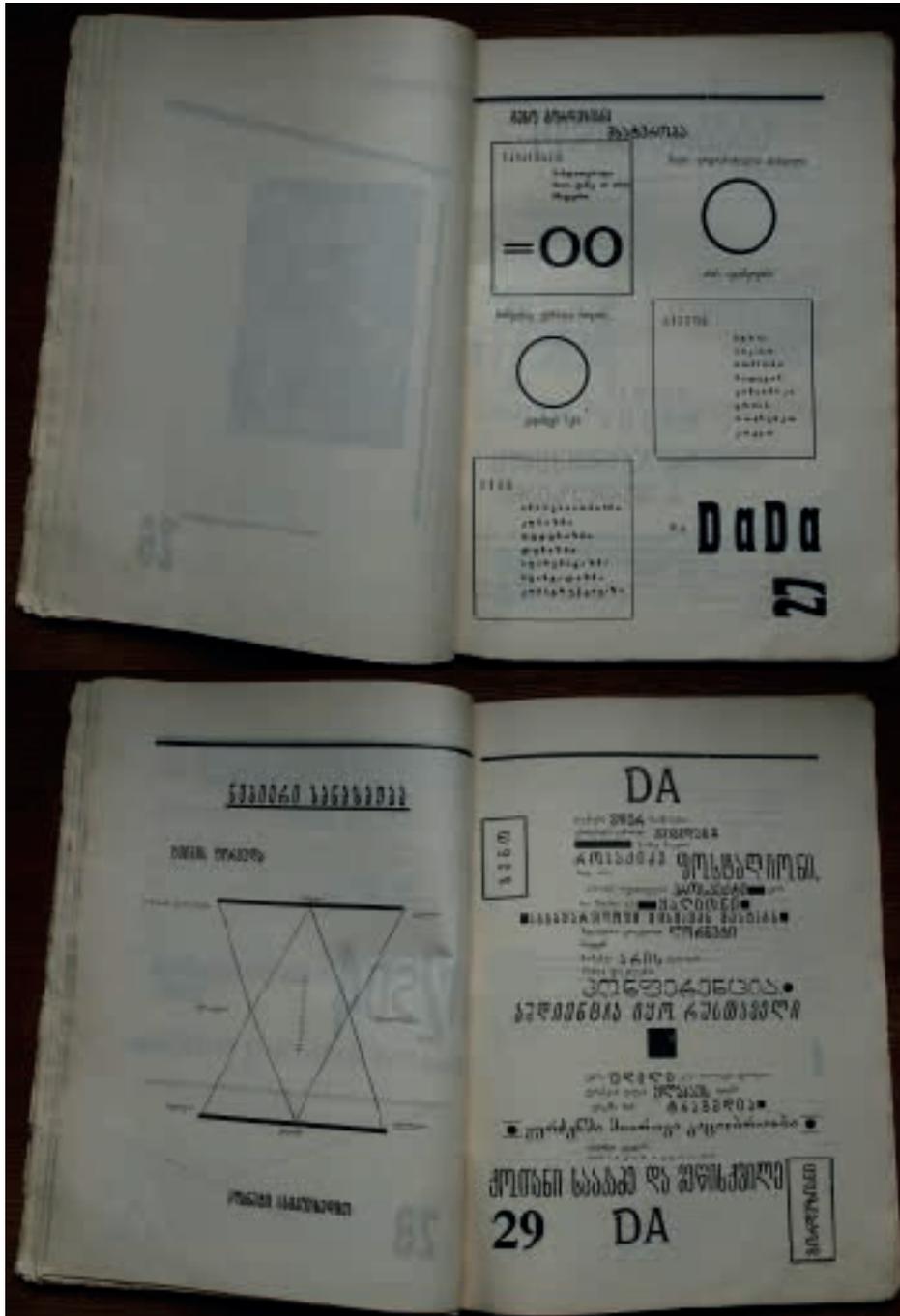
Beno Gordeziani, *Tbilisi - Policemen*. 1930a. Georgian National Museum, Sh. Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts



Cover of the book  $H_2SO_4$ , Tiflis 1924 (Georgian Futurists and Dadaists book), published by group  $H_2SO_4$ . Book design by Irakli Gamrekeli, Beno Gordeziani. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library. Photo by Gio Sumbadze

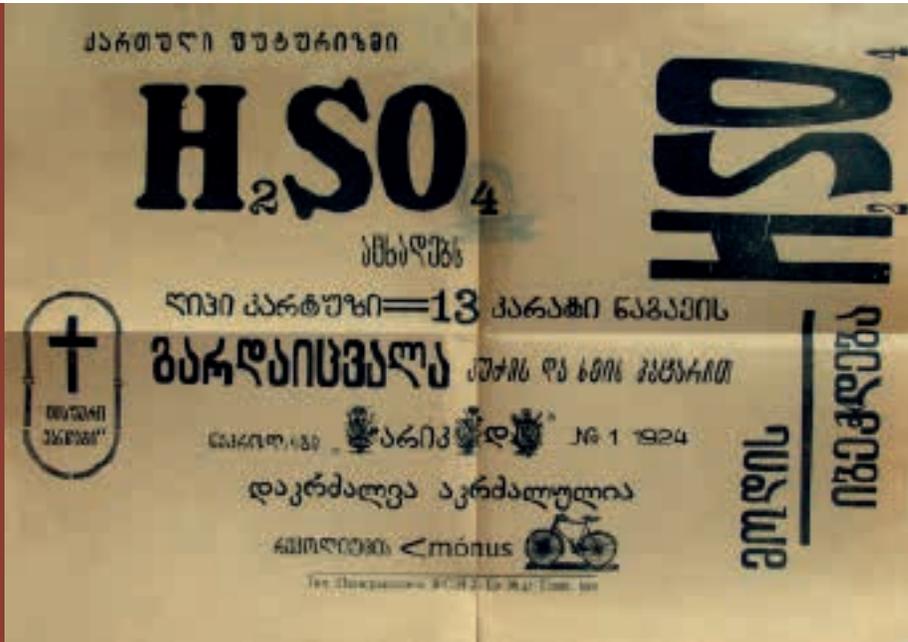


Cover of magazine Literature and Other. Collage.  
1926 Tiflis. (the magazine group  $H_2SO_4$ ).  
Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library.  
Photo by Gio Sumbadze

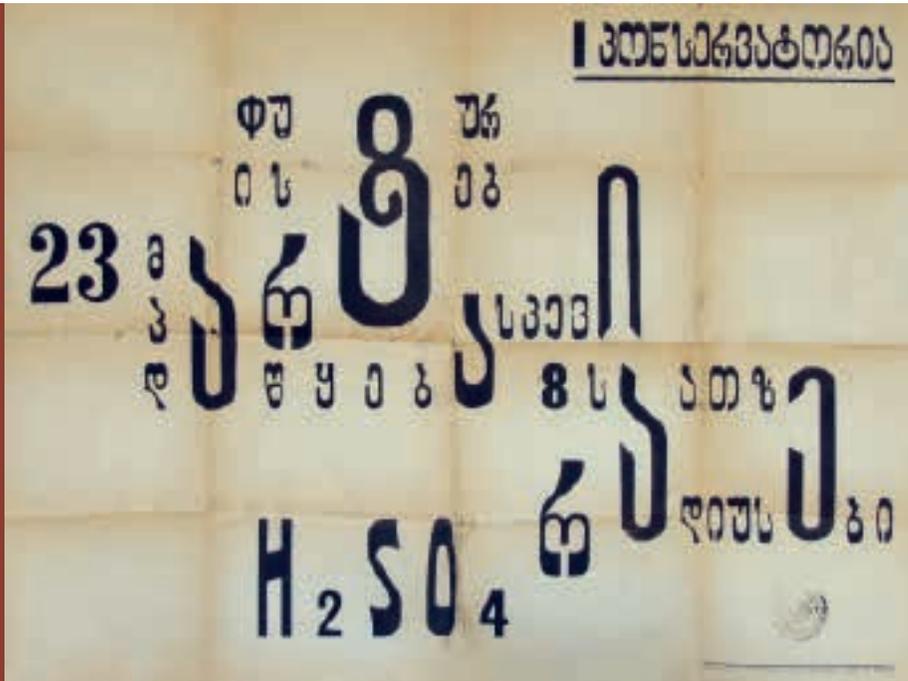


Book H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, Tiflis 1924 (Georgian Futurists and Dadaists book). Published by the group H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Book design by Irakli Gamreli, Beno Gordeziani. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library. Photo Gio Sumbadze

Poster of Georgian Futurist group, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> on the Opening of Discussion on March 13 1924 in the Conservatory, Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library. Photo by Gio Sumbadze



Poster by Georgian Futurist group H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> announcing the demise of *Blue Horns*, the group of Symbolist poets, from stomach and voice catarrh; the funeral is forbidden. 1925 Tiflis. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library. Photo by Gio Sumbadze





*Leftism* Magazine N1, 1927. Cover by Irakli Gamrekeli. Photo by Tokhadze. Ioseb Grishashvili Home Museum-Library, Tbilisi. Photo by Gio Sumbadze



*Gdemi* (The Anvil), Magazine N6, 1923. Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian Literature. Tbilisi

The eastern character of Tbilisi is still very different from the real East. An extract from Galaktion Tabidze's verse expresses the idea: "Maybe exhaustion with the sameness / of the warm days of the East / will ravage the Mtkvari valley / and come to devastate Tiflis."

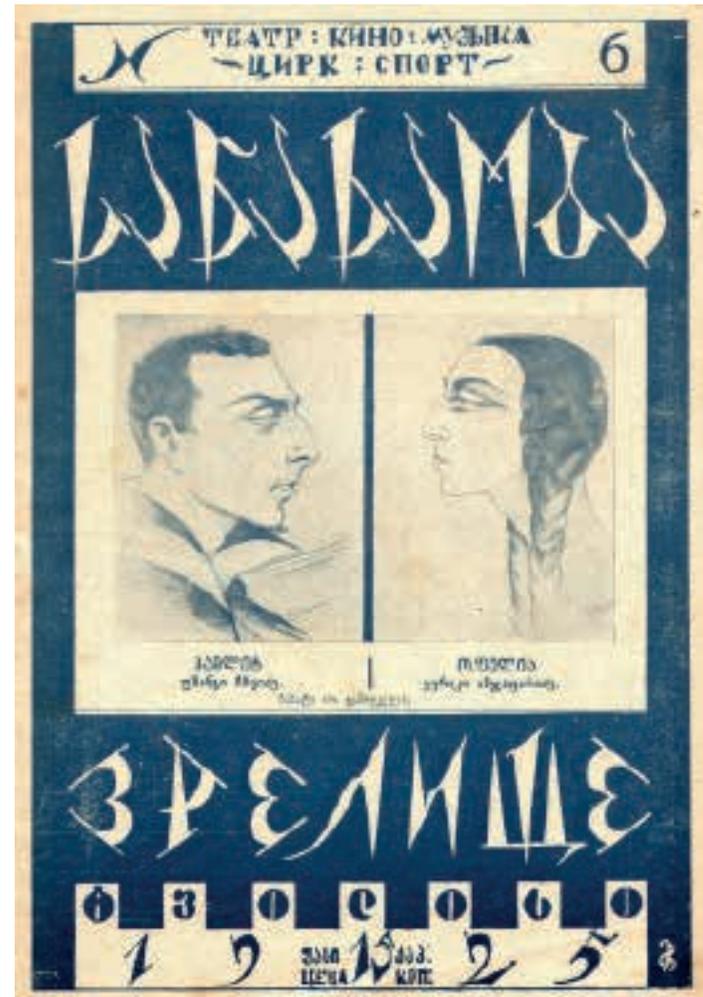
The tedious sameness of the East – here we came back to Janus again, the issue of Tbilisi being both European and Asian at the same time.

When describing Florence and Venice, Georg Simmel notes that Florence is at one with itself, its outer face openly showing the essence of its inner life. In contrast, Venice is a mask-city that veils the essence of ongoing life beyond facades with their light architecture. The moment this essence of life disappears we are left with only a stage set, the false beauty of the mask, which does not happen in Florence.

Tbilisi seemed to combine Simmel's description of Florence and Venice, the two traits of those cities. On the one hand, Tbilisi was a city preserving the fundamental rule and essence of its life in its architecture, and on the other hand, the city masked itself with the exotic, spectacular and theatrical ornamentation. These two layers have been instilled in it since the period of the Arab rule, or the 7-11th centuries.

The exotic eastern characteristics were rather superficial, spreading lightly over the inner essence of life. External and alien, it turned into a mask of exotic aestheticism. Demna Shengelaia wrote in his 1927 novel Tiflis: "From blistering Mongolia and lascivious Persia blew the southern wind."

The fact that the Eastern became exotic proves that, although it had been there for centuries, this alien layer acquired a carnival, superficial, and sensual mannerism that has never characterized its



*Sanakhaoba* (Catcher) Magazine N6, 1925. Cover by Irakli Gamrekeli.  
Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian Literature. Tbilisi



Irakli Gamrekeli. *Masses and Man*. Ernst Toller. Set design. Rustaveli Theatre 1923. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography

original, Eastern culture as such. In this environment the orientalism that had been established for centuries did not fully integrate into or blend with the local culture. Basically, it gained the lightness of familiarity, flowing like embroidered lace, elaborate and exquisite, typical of the eternal, hot East itself.

As Shengelaia vividly described the city: “Abo Tbileli was tortured in Tbilisi and the author of these lines has witnessed,<...> how the sacred candles are lit, how women pray on their knees in front of his icon, how the muezzin calls from the Shah-Abbas Mosque. <...> Wineskins lie in wine cellars like Baqbaq-Divs,

and a caravan of camels from Persia in the Shaitan Bazaar <...> ruminates drought. <...> The bells of the Sioni Cathedral are booming, the Anchiskhati Church responds and the districts of Old Tiflis are filled with the smells of: Jewish raw leather, Ossetian cheese, salted fish, tobacco, sulfur baths and eastern yellow melons. <...> The oilcloths painted by poor Nikala Pirosmani for a glass of wine hang in a drinking house, The Beauty of Ortachala and Easter Lamb. <...> A lot of strange things happen in Tbilisi, and when you see Tiflis for the first time, you should swallow a pebble, because Tiflis is wicked, Tiflis can lie in wait.”

A muezzin in the mosque and Pirosmani's Easter Lamb – the duality and simultaneity of Tbilisi, an ongoing debate: Europe or Asia, the essence or a mask.

Mandelstam wrote: "I believe Georgian culture belongs to the type of ornamental cultures. Embracing a huge area that belongs to others, they absorb their patterns, at the same time inwardly fiercely resisting the essence of the powerful neighboring areas."

What Mandelstam described as "ornamental" is the mask that the Georgian kings wore when they donned turbans while "inwardly fiercely resisting" it by continuing to build Christian churches, even when the city was in the hands of the Arabs, Iranians or Ottomans. The "host" culture still stood firm, attested to by churches that have survived dramatic times, constant and resisting, testifying to their dominant position. Queen Ketevan sacrificed her life for Christianity, and the Georgian queens embroidered illustrations of the Entombment of Christ.

Saiat-Nova, the passionate oriental singer at the court of Erekle II, creator of love lyrics saturated with eastern eroticism, who played the kamancha and tambourine, gave his life to Christianity in a Christian church during Aga-Mohammad-Khan's invasion. And all the while he was the first to sing Georgian verses to Persian sounds, laying the foundation to the Georgian-language branch of ashugh poetry and introducing the mukhanbazi poem. This was at the end of the 18th century.

The fate of many Russian modernists was connected to Tbilisi, and they all perceived it in their own way. In his poem, Mandelstam depicted Tbilisi as an oriental carpet hanging over a camel's hump: "I dream of hunchbacked Tiflis / The sazandars' music groans / People cluster on the bridge / The crowd carpets the capital." Boris Pasternak adopted a different, more precise, even dramatic metaphor when describing the city: "Glittering like a niello on a silver handle of a sword, Tiflis emerged and remained a chimera, colorful with its raspberry roofs and bright like an ancient army."

Tbilisi debated a lot about the West and the East. Titsian Tabidze wrote: "I put Hafez's rose in Proudhon's vase, / In Besik's garden I plant Baudelaire's Flowers of Evil." And Grigol Robakidze said: "Western Europe is precious, but we can't give up East for Europe. It will be better to celebrate their wedding with a Georgian feast." Yet the Blue Horns published the Manifesto to Asia and bid farewell to it forever. "The first voice is the voice of the fighting poets – of denial of Asia."

In his well-known essay "Two Concepts of Space (West and East)," published in Paris in Leon Rosenberg's magazine *L'Effort Moderne*, Kakabadze writes: "Eastern art is characterized by abstract concepts and forms. Western art is based on concrete and material forms. Eastern art strives towards the eternal while the Western strives towards the temporary." He writes about the essential West and essential East and not about Asia represented or perceived as a cradle of mannerism. He expressed the idea of the unity of East and West, important for the Tiflis avant-garde, in the manifesto *Made Pictures*: "We will not allow the world to divide into two districts of East and West ... We stand in the center of world cultural life."

The idea of simultaneous unification of time and space worked for the Tiflis avant-garde: the palimpsest nature of Tbilisi culture, the principle of essence and addition.

### **The First Decade of Sovietization**

And finally, 1921, the year of annexation came, followed by the Soviet years, the big rebellion of 1924, similar to the one that took place in 1832. The grim times of imprisonments, executions, rebellions and foreboding followed. In 1925, Tabidze wrote: "The voice of poetry has not changed / Muses open dawn's door / but different times have caught us, / and likely we'll be bumped off somewhere."

The Dadaist poetry of the Blue Horns coincided with the period. They translated Dadaist texts, and the artistic battles continued in the Ortachala and Krtsanisi Gardens.

A new group formed of artists, writers and poets – H2SO4 – and they published two books, one in 1924 with the title of the group and the second, *Literature and Other*, in 1925.

In his copy of the book, preserved in his personal library, the poet Ioseb Grishashvili added notes along the authors' names: "Beno Gordeziani – Dadaist artist, Niogol Chachava – pure Futurist, Irakli Gamrekeli – Futurist artist, Pavlo Nozadze – pure Dadaist, Jango Gogoberidze – pure Dadaist, Akaki Beliashvili – Futurist, Bidzina Abuladze – Futurist, Simon Chikovani – pure Futurist, Nikoloz Shengelaia – Communist Futurist (obvious), Shalva Alkhazishvili – Communist Futurist."

The H2SO4 published in 1924 was extremely original with its vocabulary, design, graphical presentation, script – all of these based on the idea of Marinetti's *Typographical Revolution*, and naturally, the tradition of the Tbilisi avant-garde book of the 1910s.

The group H2SO4 unified the principles of Dadaism, Constructivism, and Futurism.

The artist Beno Gordeziani discussed the 'roots' of H2SO4. As the scholar Soso Sigua notes, "H2SO4 is a metaphorical title like the Blue Horns but anti-romantic. The foreword of their periodical *Drouli* published the same year said it was a weekly literary organ of the leftist front." It means that H2SO4 was replaced by leftism, and indeed, in 1927, Beno Gordeziani published the magazine *Leftism*, with the H2SO4 members on the editorial board. Davit Kakabadze's *Our Architecture of Today*, Levan Asatiani's *Poetry and Zaum*, Varlam Zhuruli's *The End of Patriotism*, etc., were published in the magazine.

### **Film and Theater**

Using the 1928 film *Their Kingdom* as a starting point, the film directors Mikheil Kalatozishvili and Nutsa Gogoberidze wrote about cinema, the methodologies of filmmaking and the role of lighting and montage. Sadly, only a few fragments of the film have reached us.

It was already the period of modern film language, or the period of the creation of avant-garde film, which had a very short history: in 1930 Nutsa Gogoberidze, the first Georgian woman filmmaker, made the documentary *Buba*, in 1930 Mikheil Kalatozov – *Salt for Svaneti* (artist Davit Kakabadze) and in 1932, *The Nail in the Boot* (artist Serapion Vatsadze). They were not shown until the 2000s. Unfortunately, Davit Kakabadze's film *Georgian Material Monuments* has vanished without a trace.

In 1929, Kote Mikaberidze filmed the parody *My Grandmother* (artists: Valerian Sidamon-Eristavi and Irakli Gamrekeli) using futuristic and expressionistic film language. The film became a sensation in 2000, but Kote Mikaberidze was banned from cinema in the 1930s.

In 1928 Mikheil Chiaureli filmed *To the First Cornet* Strechnev and *Saba* in 1929 (artists: Davit Kakabadze and Lado Gudiashvili).

The demise of avant-garde cinematography in Georgia began in 1932.

Until the late 1930s an experimental theater existed in Georgia, with innovative directors – Kote Marjanishvili and Sandro Akhmeteli – and innovative theater artists – Petre Otskheli (executed at 27), Irakli Gamrekeli, Davit Kakabadze, Kirill Zdanevich, Elene Akhvlediani, Mikheil Gotsiridze. With the composer Tamar Vakhvakhishvili and costumes by Lado Gudiashvili, Kote Marjanishvili staged the first pantomime play *Mzetamze*.

In the 1920s the Georgian theater began actively employing Expressionist, as well as Cubist and Constructivist, methods of cinema montage. It seemed fully familiar with the European and Russian experience, having a particular appreciation for the German directors Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, the Russian directors Nikolai Evreinov and Vsevolod Meyerhold, and for staging contemporary German leftist drama.

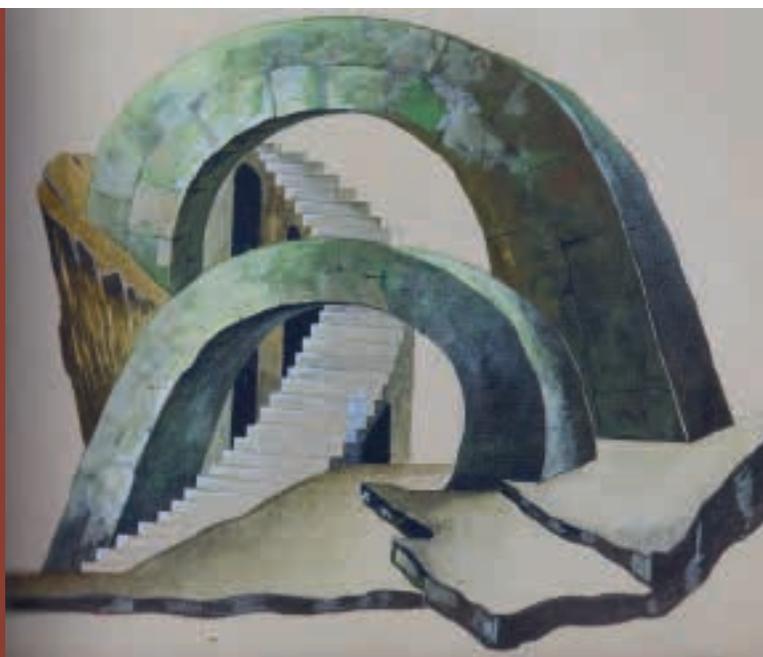
David Kakabadze and Helene Akhvlediani started using film projection in theater in 1928. Kakabadze used film clips in the production of Ernst Toller's play *Hoopla, We're Alive: the action by actors in the clips was continued onstage and vice versa*. Helene Akhvlediani designed Karlo Kaladze's play *How staged by Marjanishvili*, where she combined the shadow theater methods with film projection.

Very young Petre Otskheli emerged by then, designing Kaladze's *Khatije*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Schiller's *Robbers*, Gerzel Baazov's *The Mutes Began To Speak*, and many other productions. Karl Gutzkow's classic *Uriel Acosta* (director: Kote Marjanishvili, composer: Tamar Vakhvakhishvili, 1929) is still considered a major phenomenon in the history of Georgian avant-garde theatrical art.

Everything started with the theater season of 1923-24 at the Rustaveli Theater: on his return to Georgia, Kote Marjanishvili staged plays by German playwrights Ernst Toller (*Masses and Man*) and Georg Kaiser (*Gas*) and Grigol Robakidze's *Maelstrom*. It was extremely unusual: the language full of grotesquerie, metaphor, and deformation. The magazine *Theater and Life* wrote



Irakli Gamrekeli. *Town of Winds*. V. Kirshon, sketch for set design, Rustaveli Theatre, 1929 Tblisi. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



Irakli Gamrekeli. *Robbers*. Friedrich Schiller, sketch for set design. Rustaveli Theatre. 1933, Tblisi. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



Irakli Gamrekeli. *Intervention*. I. Slavin. Set design. Rustaveli Theatre 1934, Tblisi. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography

about Maelstrom (artists Irakli Gamrekeli and Kirill Zdanevich) that “the first part of the play, Phenomenology, and the fifth, The Dadaist’s Ground, left an indelible impression on the audience.” H2SO4 published an article Theater Absurd, which said: “The new artist is the engineer of theater. <...> Denial of the decorative in theater, <...> construction on the stage, construction in space, constructive sets on stage.”

In the 1920s young artists such as Josef Gabashvili and modernist women artists appeared in Georgia for a short period: Klara Kvess, Emma Lalaeva, Irina Stenberg, almost lost in the history of Soviet art.

Gradually, the multicultural nature so characteristic of Tbilisi disappeared. The artistic societies of Armenian, Russian and Azeri painters, which had still functioned in the 1920s, vanished together with the artists themselves.

Many painters and writers were arrested, exiled, executed. In order to survive, others attempted to adjust their art to the time.

Ilya Zdanevich moved to Paris forever and, being already a famous artist there, kept his passport of independent Georgia for the rest of his life.

Davit Kakabadze, despite his fame in Paris, could not give up Tbilisi’s artistic space. His return to Georgia in 1928 proved fatal for his art. The years following his personal exhibition held in the hotel Orient in Tbilisi, he called “the period of silence.”

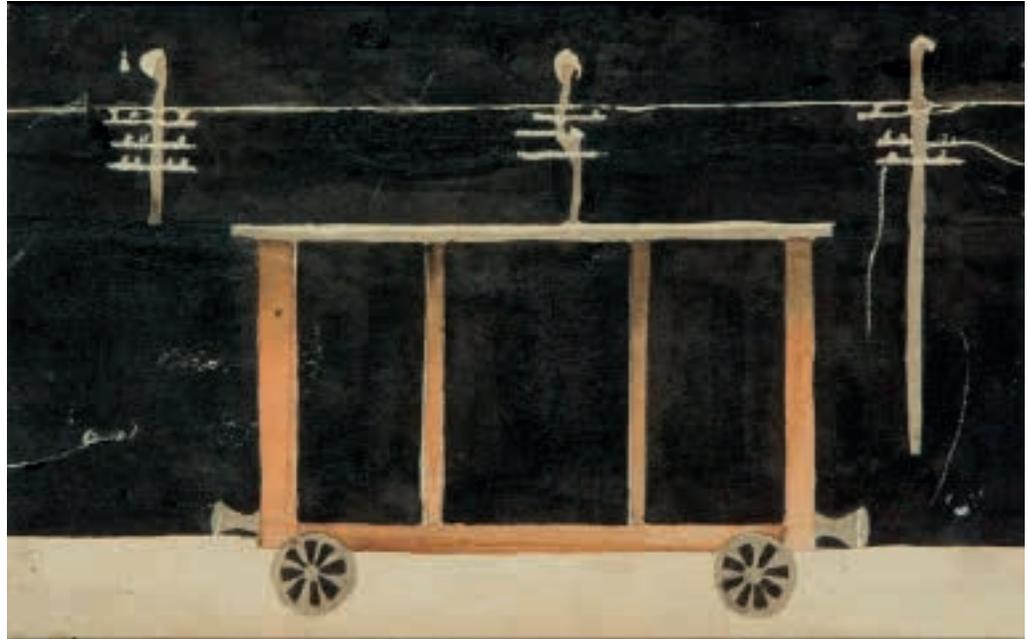


Still from the film *My Grandmother*. 1929. Film director Kote Mikaberidze, artists: Valerian Sidamon-Eristavi and Irakli Gamreli. National Archive of Georgia

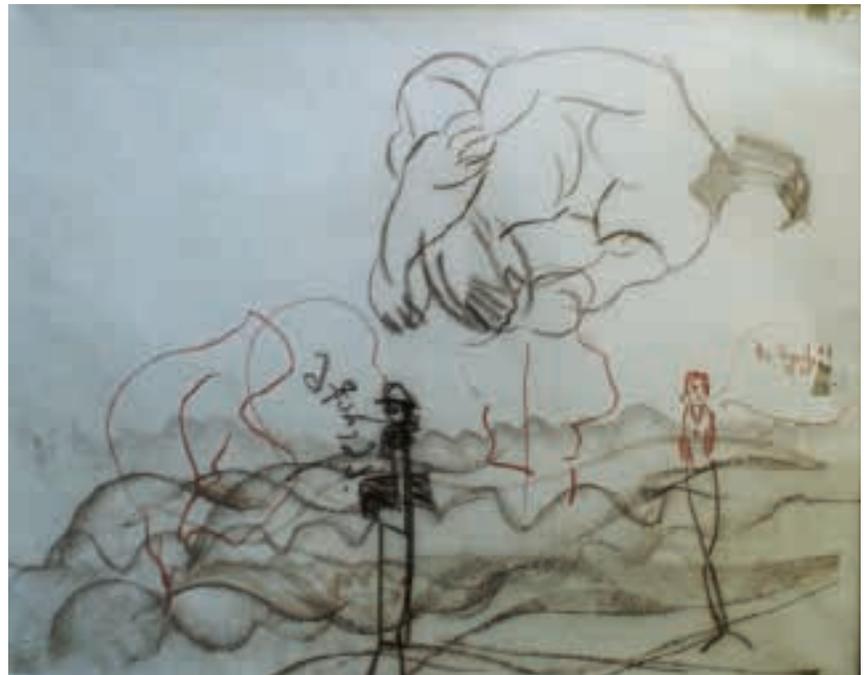


Still from Mikhail Kalatozishvili's film *The Nail in the Boot*. 1932.  
Film artist Serapion Vatsadze

Elene Akhvediani. *Shine, the Stars*. Ivan Mikitenko.  
Set design. Watercolor on cardboard, Marjanishvili  
Theatre, 1931, Tblisi. Georgian State Museum of  
Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography

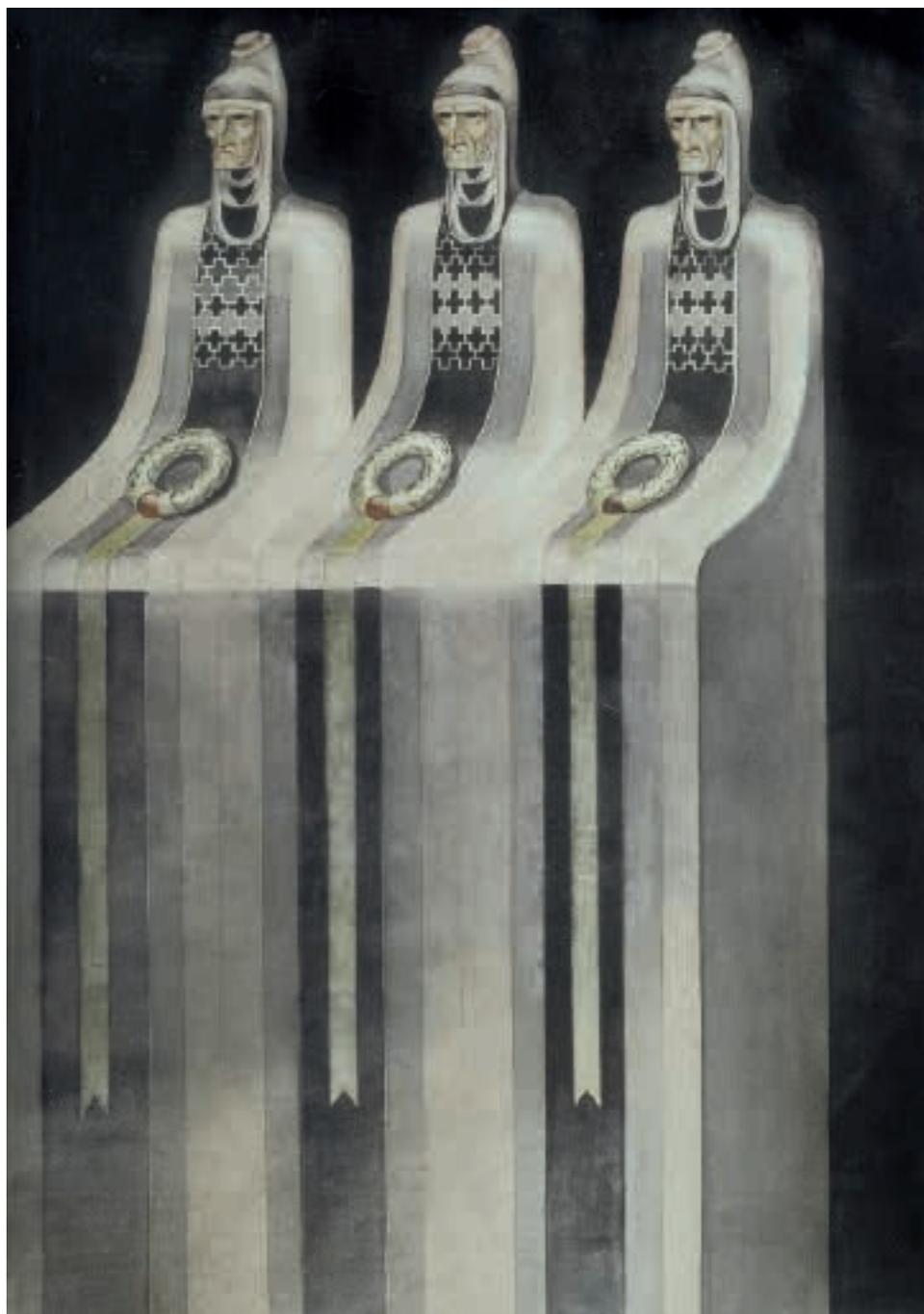


Elene Akhvediani. Sketch *Go, I Say! - I'm Too Lazy*.  
Paris 1925 - 1926. Georgian National Museum,  
Elene Akhvediani Museum, Tblisi





Petre Otskheli. *Flying Painter*. Costume design for the film *Flying Painter* (film director Leo Esakia). 1936, Tbilisi. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



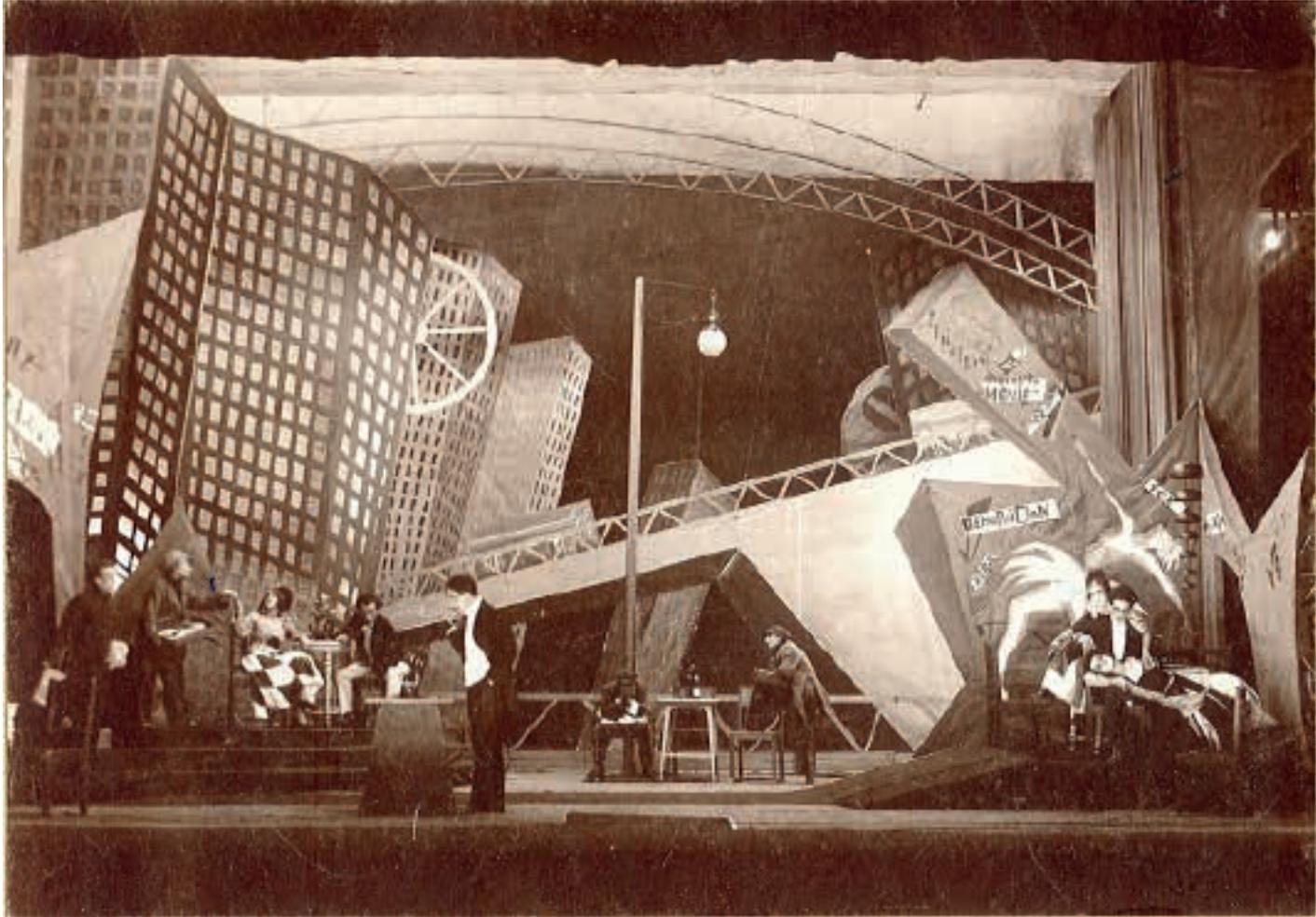
Petre Otskheli. *Othello*. Set design for the Shakespeare tragedy, 1933, Tblisi. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



Kirill Zdanevich. *Maelstrom*. Fifth scene *The Dadaist's Ground* Gr. Robakidze. Sketch for costume design, Tblisi Rustaveli State Theatre, 1924, Tiflis. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



Kirill Zdanevich. *Maelstrom*. Fifth scene *The Dadaist's Ground* Gr. Robakidze. Sketch for costume design, Tblisi Rustaveli State Theatre, 1924, Tiflis. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



Kirill Zdanevich. *Maelstrom*, Gr. Robakidze, photo from performance, Tbilisi Rustaveli State Theater, 1924 Tiflis. Georgian State Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography



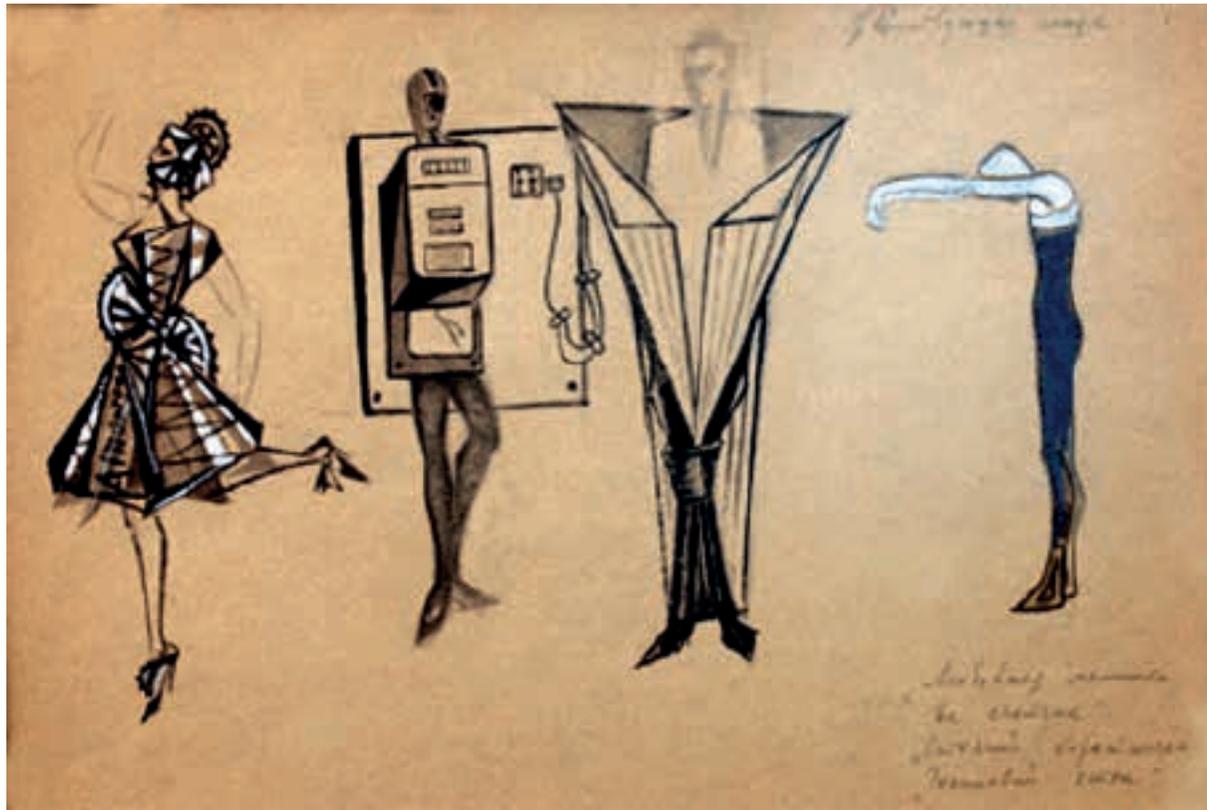
Ioseb Gabashvili. *Self-Portrait*. 1931 Tblisi.  
Private Collection



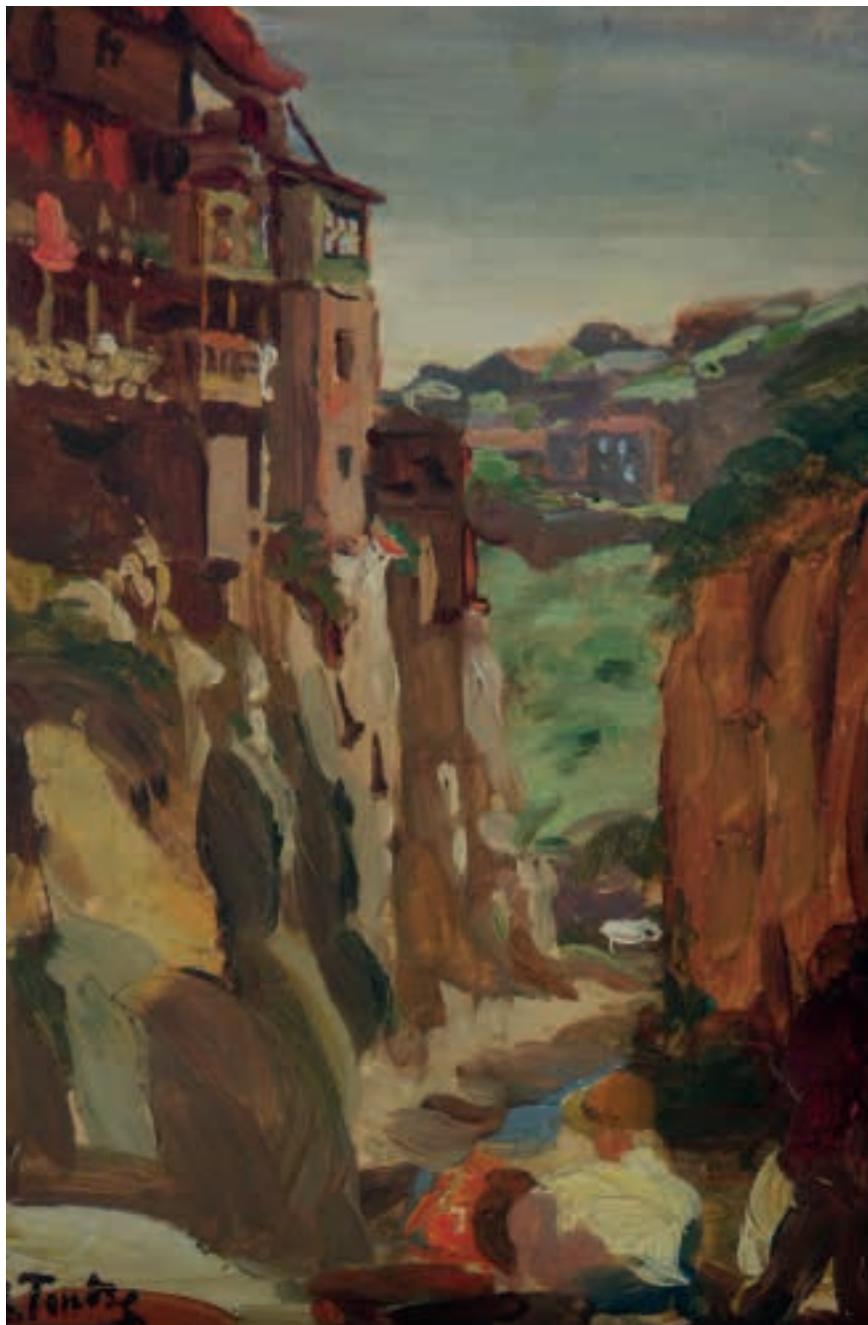
Ketevan Magalashvili. *Portrait of Vera Kuftina*. 1930s, Tbilisi.  
Georgian National Museum, Sh.  
Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts



Klara Kvess, *Nude*. 1920s Tblisi. Private Collection

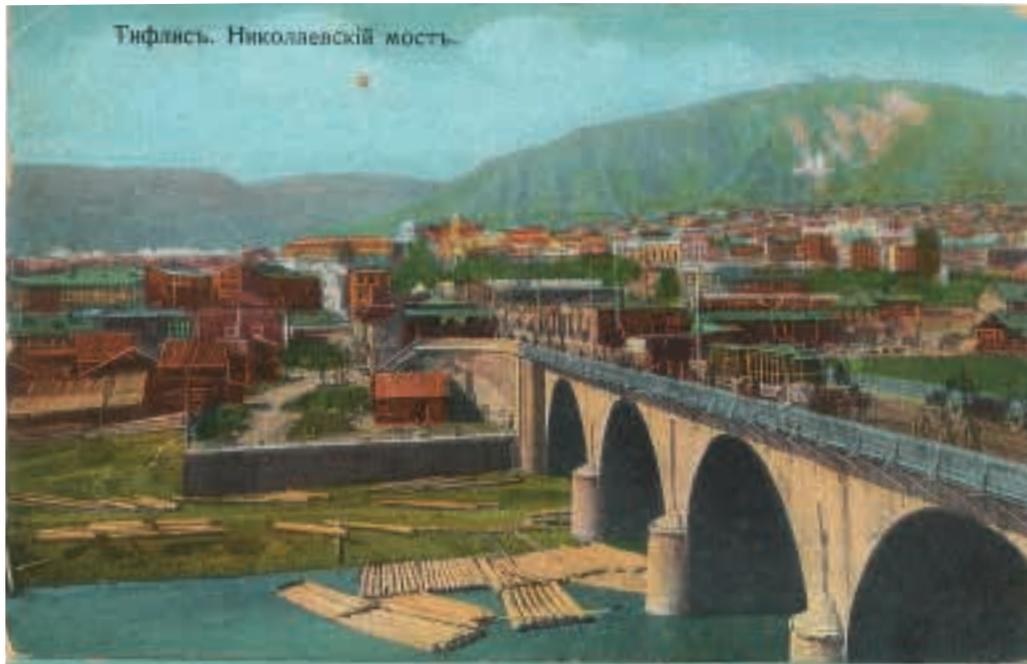


Emma Lalaeva, *Untitled*. 1920s Tblisi. Private Collection



Mose Toidze, *Old Tiflis*, 1935, © National Museum of Georgia





Nikolaevsky Bridge



State Theater

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du 8 Novembre 1907, note n° 60114

SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME

DES

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Constitués par-devant M<sup>rs</sup> Van Halbergh et Van den Rynne, notaires à Bruxelles

par acte du 31 juil. 1882, modifié par actes des 19 octobre 1885, 2 mars 1886, 24 juillet 1884, 14 mai 1890 et 27 février 1891; péchés au Règlement Royal  
du 9 juillet 1886, 31 octobre 1886, 19 mars 1888, 2 août 1888, 27 mai 1890 et 4 et 11 mars 1891

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DEUX ADMINISTRATEURS

En 1913, il sera remis une nouvelle feuille de coupons sur présentation de ce titre et contre remise de l'ancien





Music in Tiflis During 1870 - 1920 *Levan Tskhadadze*



View of Old City, 1898. Photo Dimitri Ermakov

Tbilisi, in the middle of 19th century, was a multicultural city, where Christians (Georgians, Armenians, Russians, Greeks) Muslims and Jews lived together in peace. Today one can find churches, mosques and synagogues situated together in the old city, which makes it an exotic attraction for visitors.

After many wars and turmoil in mid-19th century Tbilisi became once again a trade center of the Tiflis Governate under the Russian Empire. Infrastructure, roads and railways were built throughout the Caucasus region from the Caspian to the Black Sea, from Armenia to the northern Caucasus, and they all intersected in Tbilisi.

Because of its bohemian life style, the city attracted many writers, musicians, actors or just party lovers and it quickly became “the city that never sleeps.”

Music played a big role in the daily life of Tbilisians. There were basically three different music styles, Georgian Polyphonic Folk Music, Classical Music and Urban Music.

1. Saving Church and Secular a Cappella Songs
2. Classical Music
3. Urban Music of Tbilisi

### **Saving Church and Secular a Cappella Songs**

One of the most valuable and unique immaterial cultural heritages of Georgia are church and secular polyphonic a cappella songs. These songs had been passed from one



Piliimon Koridze (1829 - 1911)

generation to another as folklore and in oral memory, and in the early 19th century they were in serious danger of disappearing.

The Russian Empire repealed the autocephaly (right of self-governance) of the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1811 and banished church liturgy in the Georgian language.

Theology students were forced to learn Slavonic style church liturgy in Russian, while abandoning the centuries-old Georgian Orthodox Church traditions.

For Georgian church society this was a clear signal that chants needed to be protected from extinction. The plan of rescue was to gather the songs from every part of Georgia and write them down as a music scores.

Here are some of the most important people who played a big role in preserving Georgian polyphony.

### **Pilimon Koridze**

In 1881 the famous Georgian opera singer (bass) Pilimon Koridze left his successful career at La Scala Opera house in Milan, Italy, and returned to Tbilisi. He started to work at the Tbilisi Opera House, but most of his time was dedicated to traveling in western Georgia in order to write down polyphonic church and secular songs, which were orally preserved from one generation to another for many centuries.

After years of working Pilimon Koridze and his friends gathered thousands of songs, from the singers in western Georgia who specialized in Georgian polyphonic folklore and were able to

memorize up to 5,000 songs. Koridze wrote many of them down roughly in order to save time and preserved them as manuscripts but later in 1912, Bishop Ekvtime Kereselidze rewrote all his manuscripts and saved them from vanishing.

### **Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov**

Pilimon Koridze and his friends were not the only ones working in this direction. In 1882 at the age of 23, Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov moved from St. Petersburg to Tbilisi. He was a composer, musicologist and pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. Ippolitov-Ivanov recalls in his book *Georgian National Songs* that he had always wanted to visit the country that was home to this divine polyphonic music.

Apparently his first experience with Georgian folk music was in St. Petersburg, where he heard his friends sing. He spent seven years in Tbilisi, active as a conductor and director of music school. While traveling to eastern Georgia he gathered (like Koridze) thousands of polyphonic songs and wrote them down. Ippolitov-Ivanov played a major role in saving Georgian folk music.

### **Lado Aghniashvili**

We now can say that the 1880's were crucial to Georgian polyphony. The ancient culture of a cappella singing was preserved for future generations, not as oral memory but as printed material.



Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859 - 1935)



Lado Aghniashvili (1860 - 1904)



Meliton Balanchivadze (1863 - 1937)



Opera Caravanserai (1847 - 1874) by Giovanni Scudieri

Another important public figure, active supporter and collector of Georgian folklore, along with Koridze and Ippolitov-Ivanov, was Lado Aghniashvili. Born in eastern Georgia in 1860, he dedicated his whole life to Georgian ethnography and folklore. In addition to various activities as an educator, translator and cultural manager in 1885 he founded a choir called “Georgian Choro” (Kartuli Choro)

which specialized in traditional Georgian polyphonic songs. “Georgian Choro” gave their first performance in Tbilisi in 1886 and influenced many great Georgian musicians, including the important Georgian classical music composers Zakaria Paliashvili, Dimitri Arakishvili, and Meliton Balanchivadze.

## Meliton Balanchivadze

Born in 1862 in the west Georgian village of Banoja, Meliton Balanchivadze, father of choreographer George Balanchine, was a prominent Georgian classical music composers. He dedicated the biggest part of his life to Georgian polyphony. Together with other leading public figures of that time, Balanchivadze encouraged Koridze to collect songs. He started as a singer in Tbilisi's Opera House in 1880, and in 1882 formed a Georgian folk song choir. For their 1883 debut they held the first ever concert performance of Georgian polyphonic music. From that year on he joined Koridze's team and helped him to collect songs in western Georgia. In 1886, Balanchivadze became a member and leader of Aghniashvili's newly formed choir "Georgian Choro." He conducted the orchestra, which was established along with the choir, and played transcriptions of Georgian folk music. Balanchivadze was also one of the founders of the Georgian opera school.

## Classical Music Opera

The 1870s started quite tragically for classical music in Georgia. In 1874, when opera was blossoming in the capital, disaster struck: the Tbilisi Opera House burned down before the performance of Bellini's *Norma* on 11 October. This building, situated on Yerevan Square (currently Freedom Square) and the first opera house in the Caucasus region, was built by the Italian architect Giovanni Scudieri in 1847. It was completely financed by a merchant from Tbilisi, Gabriel Tamashev after the Tsar's Treasury refused to fund



Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky in Kojori (near Tbilisi) in 1889;  
photo by Ioseb Andronikashvili, Museum of the Tbilisi Conservatory

the construction. In return Tamashev received commercial space in the opera building, where he could sell his goods, which is how the building got its name, the Opera Caravanserai.

One could find more than 40 shops, around 60 taverns and nearly 100 storage rooms on the ground floor. The opera hall itself, which was built in an oriental style and could fit about 800 people, was located on the first and second floors of the building.

Not long after the opening of the opera house in 1851, the French newspaper *L'illustration* published an article about the building, highly praising its architectural beauty: "The city's only theatrical interior is decorated entirely in Mauritanian style and truly represents one of the most elegant, graceful and fascinating examples to be seen."



Gabriel Tamamshev, photo by Alexandre Roinashvili

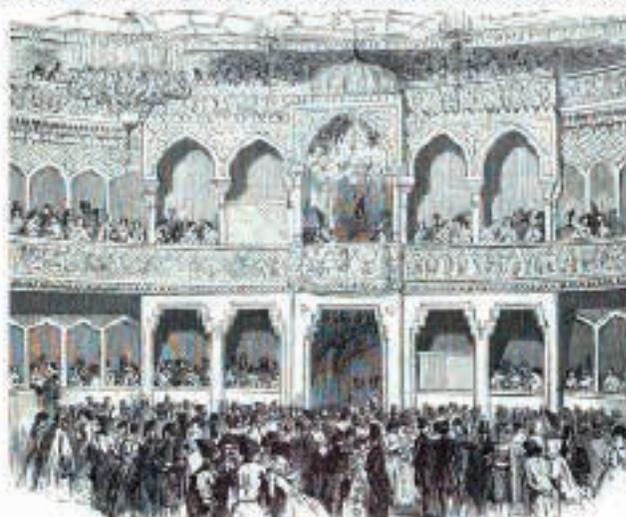
Une salle de spectacle dans le style mauresque, conçue et exécutée par le prince Grigolze Goguetze, à Tiflis (Caucase).

Une salle de spectacle, dans le style mauresque, conçue et exécutée par le prince Grigolze Goguetze, à Tiflis (Caucase).

La salle est ornée de motifs arabes et turcs, et est divisée en plusieurs loges et tribunes. Le prince Grigolze Goguetze a voulu donner à cette salle un caractère de grandeur et de beauté, qui ne se trouve pas dans les autres salles de spectacle de Tiflis.

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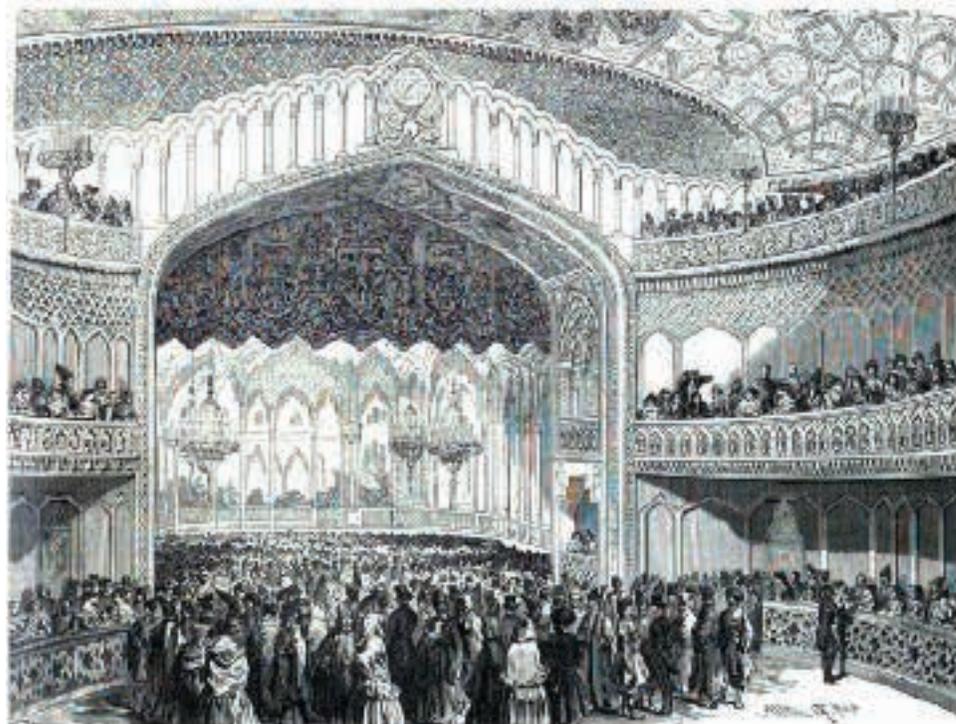


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Interior of Tbilisi Opera House - L'illustration issue 1851 (July - Dec, page 261)

Operatic tradition began in earnest when General Vorontsov, who was appointed as head of the Caucasus region by the Russian emperor, brought an opera troupe from Stavropol to perform in Tbilisi in 1845. Musicians from the troupe regularly gave opera performances and in 1846 they played a symphonic music concert, which was held in a manege (riding hall) transformed to an opera stage.

Opera gradually became a part of a Tbilisi life. It was soon so popular, that one could listen to the masterworks of Italian composers only one or two years after they were premiered in their homeland. For example, Verdi's *Rigoletto* was first presented to the public in Venice in 1851 and posters announcing the same piece in Tbilisi appeared in 1853.

Generally the operas of Italian composers Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi were very popular. Orchestra musicians and conductors were mainly invited from Russia, but there was also a time when an Italian Maestro Barbieri led the orchestra and conducted 12 different operas in the short period of three months.

After the 1874 fire, the orchestra remained, musicians continued performing on different stages and kept Georgian classical music alive. In 1896 a Russian architect of German origin, Viktor Schröter, built a new opera house for Tbilisi, which stands on Rustaveli Prospect, not far from the old opera house location.

Feodor Chaliapin (1873 - 1938)

## **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

As the life of the opera house was developing in Tbilisi, the city attracted many renowned musicians, including Tchaikovsky who visited Tbilisi (also Borjomi) five times between 1886 and 1890. During his visits Tchaikovsky stayed with his brother Anatoli, who at that time was a prosecutor and a vice governor of Tbilisi.





Ioseb Andronikashvili (left) playing violin with his friends

Alongside his government occupation Anatoli was a dedicated music lover, an amateur violinist and an active member of Tbilisi Opera Chamber Music evenings. Tchaikovsky had Georgian friends as well, including Kharlampi Savaneli and Ioseb Andronikashvili. They met in St. Petersburg, where Savaneli (1842-1890) was studying choir conducting and opera singing and Andronikashvili (1855-1940) was studying highway engineering. After returning to Tbilisi in 1873, Savaneli opened a music school, which later became the Tbilisi Conservatory and Andronikashvili became one of Georgia's most important road engineers and an active supporter of music and theater.

Savaneli and Tchaikovsky went sightseeing in Tbilisi during Pyotr's first visit. Tchaikovsky wrote to his friends: "Sunny weather, lots of evergreen trees, surrounded by colorful flowers. The place reminds me of Italy and especially of Florence."

For his visit, the opera house repeated the performance of Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* which was already premiered in Tbilisi in 1885 directly after the premiere in Moscow. He was overwhelmed by the performance conducted by Mikheil Ipolitov-Ivanov and declared that his music was better played and more respected in Tbilisi than anywhere else.

In the same year Tbilisi celebrated a jubilee of Tchaikovsky, which later was held in Prague in 1888 and New York in 1891.

Inspired by the beauty and hospitality of the city, Tchaikovsky worked on his ballet *Sleeping Beauty*, and during his stay in Tbilisi and Borjomi finished several of his most famous works, including *Souvenir de*



Aloiz Mizandari (1837 - 1912)

*Florence* and the orchestral suite *Mozartiana*. Tchaikovsky used a Georgian lullaby as a main theme of the Arabic dance in his ballet *The Nutcracker*, which infuriated Balanchivadze: "How could the author of *Eugene Onegin* dress up an original Georgian melody in an unsuitable dress and send it out to the whole world!" Of course it is hard to say it was intentional, since Tchaikovsky loved Tbilisi and Georgia enormously.

## Feodor Chaliapin

There is an interesting story about Feodor Chaliapin and his vocal studies in Tbilisi. In 1892 at the age of 19, Chaliapin moved to Tbilisi from Kazan and spent three years there, before moving to St. Petersburg. Different sources say that he worked at the railway station, either as a luggage porter or in the administration. After work he sang in various restaurants in Tbilisi. One of those evenings turned out to be very fortunate for Chaliapin, when he met Dimitri Usatov. A well-known vocal teacher, who quickly recognized the potential of Chaliapin's talent, Usatov took him as a student. His lessons were not free, therefore Usatov sent young Chaliapin to his friend Konstantin Alikhanov, who studied piano in the St. Petersburg conservatory and was co-founder of the Tbilisi Music School in 1973. He also owned a pharmacy in Tbilisi.



Rachmaninov's Bechstein in Tbilisi Conservatory Museum

Chaliapin started to work at Alikhanov's pharmacy and with his salary he could pay Usatov for the vocal lessons. Alikhanov supported many young musicians in the same way.

One year after he began studying with Usatov, Chaliapin made his debut on the stage of Tbilisi's Opera House on September 28, 1893, as King of Egypt in Giuseppe Verdi's Aida and next day in Charles Gounod's Romeo and Juliet as Frère Laurent; both performances were extremely successful.

Later in 1894, Chaliapin moved to St. Petersburg and in 1921 left Russia and moved to Paris, where he died in 1938. Usatov returned to Russia as a very famous man, known and praised as a teacher of Chaliapin himself!

## Tbilisi Conservatory

Classical music life was developing day by day in Tbilisi and the city was in need of more and more professional musicians. Gradually music institutions sprang up like mushrooms: the Music School of the Caucasus Music Society, Transcaucasian Noble Ladies Institute, and Dmitri Usatov's Private Music School for Singing were very popular, but only the Music School founded in 1873 by Kharlampi Savaneli, Konstantin Alikhanov and Aloiz Mizandari managed to turn into a conservatory. Mizandari was a graduate of St. Petersburg Conservatory (just like Savaneli and Alikhanov). Well known as a successful pianist, he toured and gave concerts in Western Europe in 1865 and 1867. During his travels Mizandari



Kharlampi Savaneli with his students at Noble Ladies Institute



Rachmaninov with teachers  
of Tbilisi Conservatory

met and worked with such musicians as Liszt, Brahms, and Rossini. Some say that he even played a concert together with Liszt, performing pieces written for four hands. Mizandari was famous as a composer. He was an author of the first Georgian Piano Music Album and also wrote masses for 4 voices for the Catholic Church. Unfortunately most of his compositions were not published and disappeared.

Alikhanov, Savaneli and Mizandari's school was originally called "Music Classes at Affordable Prices." In 1876, it changed into a "Music School" and in 1880 became a "Music College."

In 1891 Anton Rubinstein, celebrated pianist and composer, founder of St. Petersburg Conservatory (1862), organized a charity concert to build the Tbilisi Conservatory. Davit Sarajishvili, an influential patron of the arts, was a major donor. The money was collected and the Russian Music Society approved the plan, but for unknown reasons, construction was delayed. It was only after the abolishment of the Russian Music Society in 1917 that Tbilisi Music College could become the Tbilisi Conservatory.

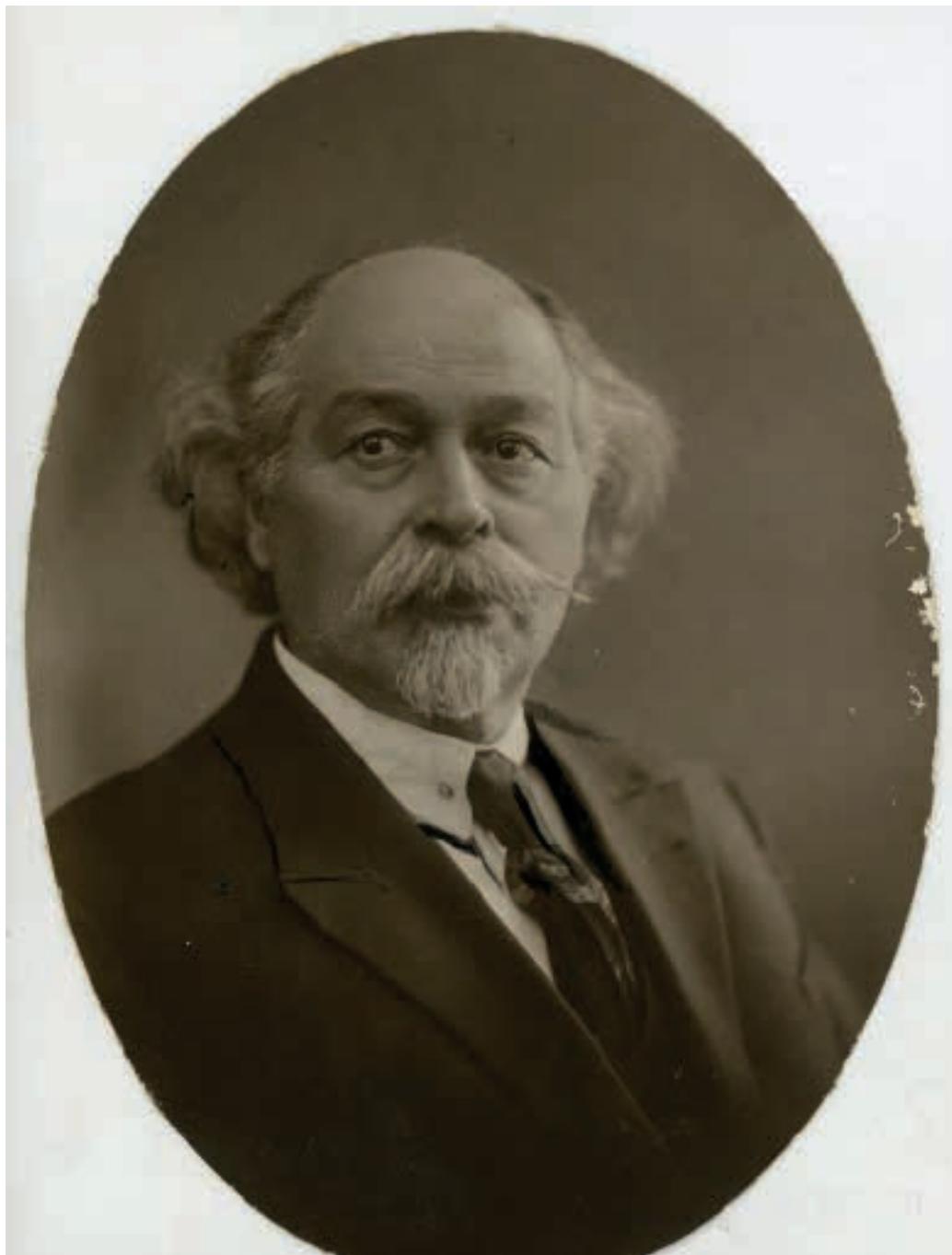
The conservatory was the first in the Caucasus region and attracted many international musicians from Germany, Italy, Poland and Russia. Among the teachers were former students of Kuhlau and Kessner, as well as Weniawski's former student Konstantin Gorsky and many others. It is also worth mentioning, that Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, who taught the Tbilisi Conservatory in 1924, continued teaching at the Julliard Music School.

### **Sergei Rachmaninoff's Grand Piano**

Before immigrating to the United States, Rachmaninoff visited Tbilisi three times and gave concerts in 1911, 1913 and 1915. For his first performance he brought his own instrument, a Bechstein German grand piano, which remained in Tbilisi. Later the well-known benefactor Stepane Mirzoev bought it. In 1925 Mirzoev sold the grand piano to the Tbilisi Conservatory for 25,000 rubles and now the instrument is kept in the conservatory museum.



Zakaria Paliashvili (1871 - 1933)



Dimitri Arakshvili (1873 - 1953)



K. Gorsky (pupil of Wieniawski), Ivane Sarajishvili - uncle and cello teacher to Vano Sarajishvili, E. Kolchin and Ioseb Andronikashvili

After becoming US citizen, Rachmaninoff was proclaimed an Enemy of People by the Soviet Government, therefore all his belongings left in Russia were destroyed. Fortunately no one suspected that his Bechstein was still in Georgia, so the instrument was saved.

In 1941, when Rachmaninoff was "forgiven" by Soviets and forever praised as a great Russian composer and pianist, Moscow attempted to buy the Grand piano, but the teachers of the Tbilisi Conservatory refused to sell it.

### **First Georgian Opera Composers**

Musical developments in the country led Georgian musicians to a logical Conclusion – it was time to compose the first Georgian opera!

Several composers were the founders of Georgian classical music and played an enormous role in creating and developing the opera as a genre. Zakaria Paliashvili was born in 1871 in Kutaisi in a Catholic family. As a child he sang in the church choir and studied organ with Felix Mizandari, brother of Aloiz Mizandari. In 1887, he moved to Tbilisi and joined the choir of Lado Aghniashvili . Later in 1891 he became a student of the Tbilisi Music School, where he took French horn lessons. In 1900-1903 Paliashvili studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory with Sergei Taneyev.

After returning to Tbilisi he was involved in many cultural projects, worked as a teacher, organist, and conductor, founded a choir and orchestra, led the Georgian Philharmonic Society and the society of Performing Operas in Georgian Language. Paliashvili was an admirer of Georgian folk music; he traveled in different parts of Georgia to collect the folk songs from peasants, wrote them down as a score and created one of the first albums of Georgian folk music.

Paliashvili became director of Tbilisi Conservatory in 1919, but much earlier in 1910 he had begun work on his first tragic opera Abesalom and Eteri. The premiere took place in 1919, but the third act of the opera was performed 6 years earlier, in 1913, where the Georgian tenor Vano Sarajishvili shone in the leading role as Abesalom.

Vano Sarajishvili studied cello with his uncle Ivane Sarajishvili and choir and vocal studies in Tbilisi, St. Petersburg and Italy, he gave many concerts and sang in a number of famous opera houses in Europe. In 1908 he came back to Tbilisi and like Paliashvili got



Sazanda - Dimitri Ermakov (ca. 1890 - 1895)



Sazanda - Dimitri Ermakov (ca. 1890-1895)

actively involved in the cultural scene. He quickly became the public's favorite singer and got a nickname, the Nightingale of Georgia. His warm and elastic "bel canto" voice attracted audiences. Sarajishvili sang a leading role in all Georgian operas premieres in the 1910's and had his career's most fruitful years. After the Bolshevik invasion of Georgia, the Communist Party reduced his salary at the opera house without any reason and persecuted him. In 1924, deeply depressed, he got influenza and died at the age of 45. In 1948 the Tbilisi Conservatory was named for Sarajishvili and still carries his name.

Dimitri Arakishvili (1873–1953), another important Georgian composer, was very much impressed by Lado Aghniashvili's choir (like Paliashvili) when he heard it in 1890. A few years later, Arakishvili moved to Moscow and studied composition, theory and conducting (1894–1901) and became one of the most important

scholars of Georgian polyphonic music (modern researchers use his works as examples today). He returned to Georgia in 1918 and dedicated his full time to the education of new generations. He founded another conservatory in 1921, which was mostly concentrated on teaching string quartet, choir and opera. In 1924 both conservatories in Tbilisi were merged. Arakishvili is the author of numerous symphonic and opera works. His first opera, *Saga of Shota Rustaveli*, was written in 1904 and premiered in 1919.

Victor Dolidze (1890-1933) is the author of the first Georgian comic opera *Keto and Kote*. Parents of the composer wanted him to become a banker; therefore he studied economics in Kiev. But Dolidze's heart was always beating for music, so he regularly took violin, theory and composition lessons. Before leaving for Kiev he even founded an Orchestra of Mandolins and Guitars, as he was a virtuoso mandolin player himself and a winner of Tbilisi Mandolin Competition. In 1917, Dolidze returned from Kiev and in a very short period he created three operas. His opera *Keto and Kote* was premiered in the same year as Paliashvili's *Abesalom and Eteri* and Arakishvili's *Saga of Shota Rustaveli* – these three operas are the foundation of Georgian classical opera as a genre. All three operas became very popular among the Georgians and are still performed regularly.

### **Urban Music of Tbilisi**

Tbilisi in the 19th century was a fusion of different cultures. Together with Georgians, you would find Armenians, Russians, Azeris, Kurds, Tatars, Persians, Greeks, Jews, Germans, French,

English and Arabs living in Tbilisi at that time. The city welcomed and adopted everyone with their own culture or religion, which created a unique way of life and people with this lifestyle were called “Real Tbilisians.”

The music, which you would hear on the streets, was the result of this fusion and the core of Tbilisi’s urban music. As composer Dimitri Arakishvili said: “The mix of cultures created an artistic atmosphere in the city and with the influence of beautiful nature, song muses visited everyone.”

Singing was heard everywhere. An open-air concert in the streets or in the yards was a typical happening for that time. But people sang in wine cellars and bars, workers and entrepreneurs gathering after a busy day and partying till the next morning. The appearance of musicians would transform a quiet street into a lively place full of excitement. People would immediately surround the artists or gather on their balconies to enjoy and even be part of the performance.

Parties aboard a wooden ferry on the river Mtkvari (Kura) were another exotic sight. A ferry would be loaded with food and wine and a group of friends enjoyed the meal alongside the sweet sounds of duduk or the playful music of Kintauri dance.

What did the music sound like and what were the popular instruments of that time?



Dasta - two zourna players and singer with “doli” (drums)

It is known that Georgia had many different kind of folk instruments, including wind, string or percussion, but most of them were lost in late medieval period, because of continuous wars. Consequently instrumental music was influenced by the occupying country's traditions, mostly by Oriental culture.

Alexi Barnovi writes in his book *The Musicians of Old Tbilisi* (1974) that many instruments were imported from Persia, Arabia and India. For example, the tar, kemaneh and bağlama (also known as saz) were adopted from Persia. Daire (tambourine), zurna, and

duduk came from Arabia (although according to UNESCO duduk is indigenous to Armenia) and a percussion instrument called naghara (similar to the Georgian diplipito) came from India. All of these instruments were used for centuries in Georgia, especially in Tbilisi, and along the way, they lost their original look or way of use, because local musicians in Tbilisi adopted them to Georgian melodies, rhythms, and harmony.

For example the kemancheh was known as an instrument with three strings but a local musician called Aleksandre Ohanezashvili added one more string and gave the kemancheh more challenging technical abilities.

The tradition of playing duduk as a trio was invented in Tbilisi by the famous singer Bagrat Bagramov. The first duduk trio was called "Dasta," and each member of the trio had his own function, one played the melody, one accompanied on the bourdon bass, and played the doli (Georgian drums) and also sang. Later in the 1930's duduk playing was assimilated with Georgian polyphonic three-voice singing and the doli player/singer was replaced by a third duduk. The harmonic and melodic background of the music, just like the instruments, was purely oriental. In his study, Georgian National Songs, the composer and conductor Mikhail Ipolitov-Ivanov analyzes not only Georgian polyphonic songs but also songs indigenous to Tbilisi melodies. He clearly sees the influence of Arabic and Persian harmonies.

Many different kind of songs were created, which were accompanied by these instruments. For example, the songs

"Mughamati" (in neighboring countries people call it "Bayati"), "Mukhambazi," "Tansipi," and "Shikasti."

All of these songs differed in various ways:

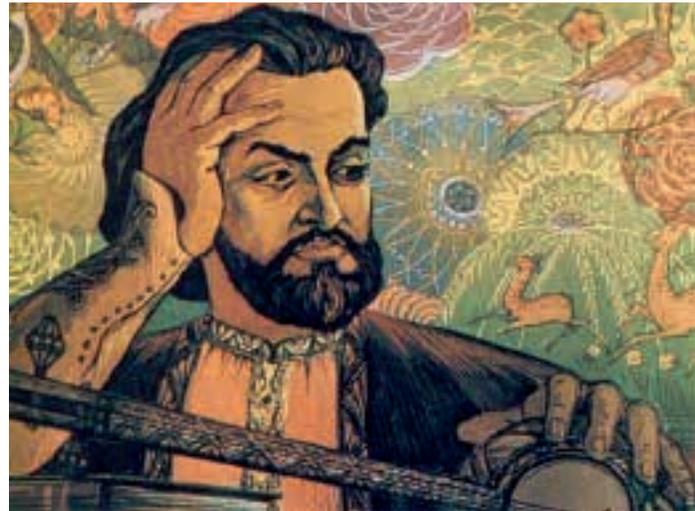
1. By the number of syllables in the poem. Syllables had to be 7, 8, 11, 15 or 16.

Some of the poems could also have a free structure.

2. Mourning or festive music in minor and major keys.

3. Purpose and tradition of performing the songs.

For example, "Dilis Saari" was the morning song, which was performed on the morning after the wedding and was played on the duduk, though some sources claim that it was played on the zurna. There is a little legend about this song:



Saïat-Nova with his kemancheh

Once a great king had a wedding and he invited sought-after zurna players to perform. The beauty of the bride impressed one of the zurna players. In order to see her face once again, he played the next morning under her balcony. The princess came out half asleep and enjoyed the sounds of sweet music. This is why the song is called “The Morning Song” (Dilis Saari). You would hear it during dawn, after the bohemian night in Tbilisi.

“Bayati” or as Georgians call it, “Mughamati” was based on Omar Khayyám's poetry. The song had a specific structure, using a 7- or 15-syllable poem, and the main idea of the story was revealed only at the end of the poem. The song was mostly accompanied by duduks or by an ensemble called sazanda. The sazanda setting: tar, kemenche, and daf with chianuri. Chianuri is a Georgian national string instrument, which was added to sazanda trio and transformed it into a quartet.

“Davi,” a tune about a camel and his owner has a very special background: Once upon a time a tired camel kneeled in a sunny desert. The owner wanted to cheer him up and decided to play a tune on his salamuri (pipes, Georgian flute). The camel got up and continued walking, but after some time it got tired again and kneeled down to rest. Now the owner started to sing for his camel. The camel got up again and they continued their long journey. The “Davi” song is built exactly the same way as the legend tells: first you hear an instrumental part and then the singing. “Davi” was very much loved by the famous writer and public figure Ilya Chavchavadze. He compared the kneeling camel to Georgia, as part of Russian Empire, and said that

one day Georgia would rise up again and continue its journey towards independence and development.

It is also worth mentioning that “Shikasta,” originally an Azeri song that came from the Karabakh region and was sung at funerals by women, had a completely opposite meaning in Tbilisi. Men sang it at parties or after the “Dilis Saari” (the morning song) during the sunrise.

Duduk and zurna players were popular more among the lower classes of the city while the sazanda ensembles were enjoyed by the wealthy and noble society. Even in 18th century, when Georgia was defending itself from Ottoman and Iranian empires, oriental music and ashiks (troubadours) were very fashionable. King Erekle II was impressed by the musicality of Sayat-Nova, a famous Georgian-born Armenian ashik (1712 or 1722–1795), who could sing in Georgian, Persian, Armenian, Azeri and Turkish). Basically Sayat-Nova was the first artist to create Georgian poetry accompanied by Persian melodies, which gave birth to Tbilisi urban music and developed greatly in the second half of the 19th century.

In conclusion, we can say that Tbilisi between 1870 and 1920 was a place of three completely different musical styles. The city's tolerant atmosphere gave space to every culture and religion and those who acknowledged the tolerance of the city were called “Real Tbilisians.”



Flourishing Cross Alaverdi Gospel, 11th Century  
Miniature © National Museum of Georgia



Epitaph of Queen Mariam, 17th Century, Silk, Golden & Silver Thread  
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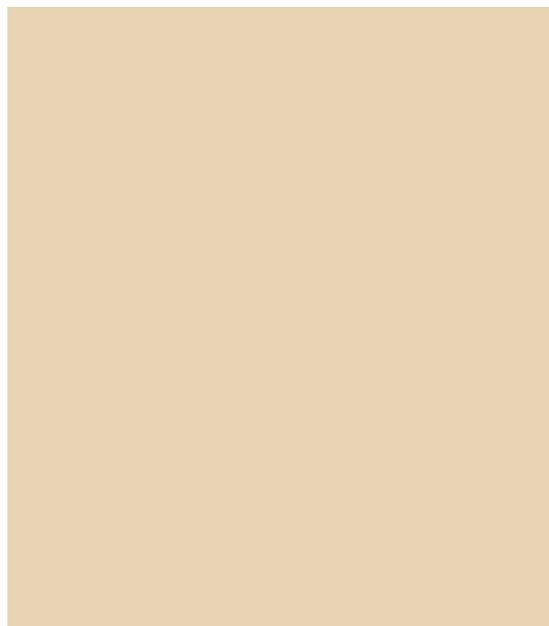
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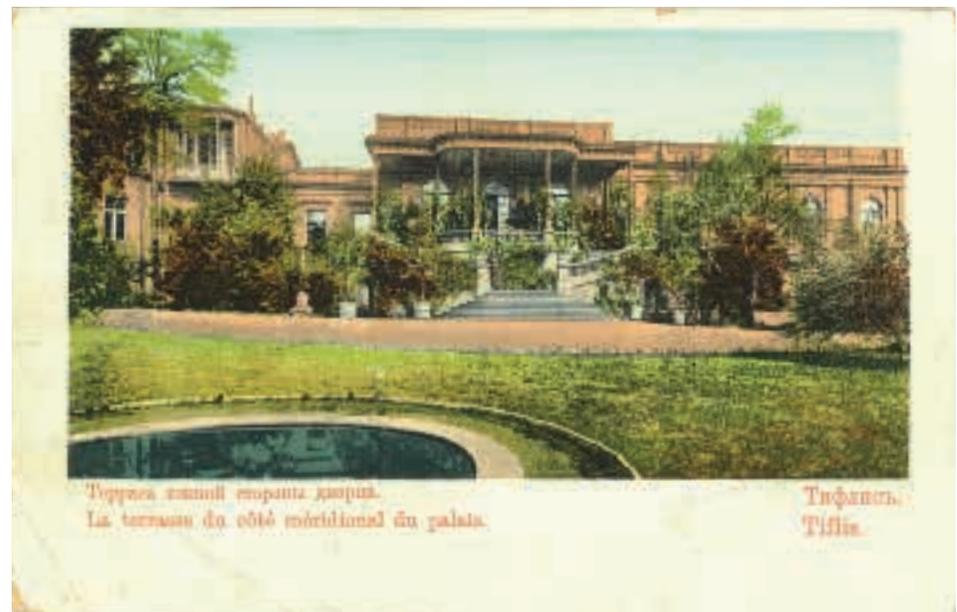


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## Folklore and Celebrations *Giorgi Kalandia*

In this town, people believed that during the new moon the river Kura stopped flowing, and a dragon that lived under Metekhi Bridge threw out pearls. The town created entertainment and pleasure for all social classes and nationalities.

Tbilisi, also known under its Persian name of Tiflis, and to the Georgians themselves as Kalaki (The Town), was distinguished by a diversity of traditions. The main carnival of the city—the Khanate – began on the first Monday of Lent and was known by different names: “Black Monday,” “Holy Monday,” “Kumeti.” Almost all social classes living in Tbilisi participated in the Khanate. Nineteenth-century newspapers described the fascinating sight of the city being divided into two parts, the Isani district and the Narikala district. Narikala was favored by the inhabitants of the Vera and Sololaki districts of Tbilisi and Isani was favored by the inhabitants of Avlabari, Chughureti and Kukia districts. The Khan came out from Isani and at the crossroads he deployed his officials and army chiefs to take money from onlookers and passersby. The procession of the Khan was a wildly festive part of the carnival which included famous actors in masks called berikas, the “King and Queen” riding horses, bridesmaids, as well as those collectors of tribute. All wore Persian clothes and had soot-blackened faces blackened to suggest the Khan’s tribesmen. Onlookers were compelled to worship the Khan and pay his Tribute Collector who took their offerings with the accompaniment of a zurna. Musicians played the war anthem Dogush, adding more excitement to the festivities.

A man mockingly dressed as a Persian Khan, but wearing a sugar paper hat and riding a donkey arrived in the center of Tbilisi. In one hand he held a skimmer instead of a sword and in another – a rusty spit with an apple or onion skewered on it. His throne was set up in one of the hills of the city, his officials had begun their “robbery,” arresting and taking passersby to the Khan to pledge allegiance. By midday the Khan had managed to “conquer” the whole city. In the afternoon the Khan was informed about a rebellion within the city, with the Georgian army standing on Sololaki hill. The Khan immediately prepared for battle. He and his wife rode on donkeys and attacked the apostates. The clashes occurred in Mtatsminda. Soldiers in the main fortress of Tbilisi, Narikala, first threw down stones, then fought. Some used fists and others wooden swords. There were many broken noses and broken heads. The final victory was won by Narikala and the defeated warriors of the Khan scattered. They were made to ride facing backwards on donkeys and then thrown into the river Kura. The carnival ended with the defeated Khan being tossed into the river.

The famous Georgian painter Lado Gudiashvili depicted the final scene of the Khanate. The Khan’s clothing was always a strange costume, sometimes the full-dress coat of a drunken captain. The Khan painted by Gudiashvili is dressed this way. In this picture the King is sitting on a camel, holding a sword and giving the order to throw the defeated Khan into the river Kura. The wooden sword with an apple on the tip, a very important detail in the show, was a notable part of the mockery.

Until the nineteenth century, the Khan often wore the Shah's costume in numerous depictions of the Persian invasion of Tbilisi, but later, troubled by the tsarist regime, Georgians began to costume the Khan as a Russian tsar.

In 1880 the government banned the Khanate festival because it was viewed as a protest of the Georgian people against Russian imperial rule.

In spring, Tbilisi had another very interesting tradition: the Berikaoba, an improvised masquerade folk theater, reflecting the human spirit of freedom, and also considered a political satire and social protest. When almond trees began blooming, old and young alike gathered on streets and squares to prepare for the spring thanksgiving



celebration. The chosen participants of the Berikaoba were the main berika, other berikas dressed as a pig, an Arab, a Lezghin, a Tatar, a priest, a godfather, and a Queen as well as singers and musicians. The size of the group depended on the size of the district and sometimes reached thirty. Participants of the Berikaoba were chosen according to their experience in previous years, but abilities were taken into account in choosing new members.

Then came the wardrobe design and preparations as well as the crafting of props. Costumes and masks were made of animal hide – goat, sheep and ox hides; animal skulls; tails; there were masks of pumpkin, woven cloth, cardboard and paper; animal horns and bird feathers; wedding dresses and colorful Georgian paper; multicolor fabric dolls; bells and coal; wooden short swords; shields and slings. Various colored flags and torches fluttered in the sky and on the ground held a collection of collected colorful saddlebags, baskets and large pitchers.

Texts for the berikas' performances were changed many times over and enriched with new content and transferred from one generation to another. Many scripts contain pictures reflecting the Georgian people's fight against foreign invaders, as well as expressive scenes of the harsh deeds of nobles, vergers and judges. Around one hundred stories of the Berikaoba have survived; most of them are comic and mainly depicting people's everyday lives. The Berikaoba had a threefold structure: walking from house to house, playing in a field, and a reception. In Tbilisi the great Berikaoba was held on a specially chosen field with almost a hundred participants.

Berikas walked door to door throughout the yards and districts of Tbilisi, townspeople awaiting them with joy and welcoming them abundantly, often offering gifts: meat, flour, boiled butter, honey, eggs, wine, vodka.... If a berika somersaulted on the ground, it was a sign of bad luck for the family and meant that the berikas were not satisfied with the hospitality they had received. Young boys gathered up foodstuffs and carried them away.

Only men participated in the Berikaoba. Female characters were men in disguise. Women themselves organized separate Berikaoba performances in which only women participated, though the men were welcome to watch.

At the end of their 'walk-around' the berikas met on the square and began wrestling and fighting with wooden swords. The winning side smashed eggs and took the collected food from the losers.

The celebration ended with the "berika feast," a table laid with the collected booty. Sometimes this feast went on for days with much singing, dancing and play. After the feast the chief berika lined up the participants to face East and thanked God, asking for an even better and more abundant future Berikaoba.

Beside its carnival celebrations, Tbilisi was also well known for its sports competitions, among them the distinguished fisticuffs, bare-knuckle boxing, which often took place on Sundays between the districts of Tbilisi. The main rivals were the North and South (upper and lower) districts, the dividing line being Sioni Church. The upper part included Kukia parkland, the north

side of Avlabari and Chughureti; the lower part included Maidan, Seidabadi, Kharpukhi, the black village, and the south part of Avlabari. Fighters sometimes fought wearing kilted Chokha, more often struggling barefoot and without skirts, some of them even scrambling on their knees.

Several types of boxing became popular in Tbilisi: Fisticuffs, which limited the fighters to upper limbs, elbows and shoulders; "Mixed Boxing," which allowed using the head and upper and lower limbs; and "Saldasti," which involved wooden swords and slingshots.

Fisticuffs started with preliminary bouts: matches between little boys, then 18-20 year olds, and then men in the 25-30 year category. When passions had reached a boil on both sides, the shouts went out from the fans and the real competition began between focused and experienced combatants.

It took 15 minutes to decide the outcome and the defeated and beaten boxers slowly left the arena. But the battle was not finished. There were instances when defeated fighters started throwing stones, bricks and pieces of wood and the sports competition escalated into a mass quarrel. In 1851, 5 people died and 300 were injured in this annual event. Regular fisticuffs participants were artisans and sometimes merchants. In Tbilisi the boxing was protected by the high officials. Supporters sat on horses arguing amongst themselves and encouraging their gladiators. Sometimes, they rewarded the fighters with money and seized weapons, belts, hats and felt cloaks, considered as a lawful spoil.

“Saldasti” boxing was usually held in winter. Fighters, especially young men seeking the favor of female spectators, fought with slingshots and wooden swords. For Saldasti the slingshots were small and swords cut from wood, yet even so the competition

often ended with some kind of physical mutilation. According to the 1846 newspaper Caucasus “There were many maimed, injured and mutilated fighters the day after the bouts.”



Selling Lavash in Armenian District



Fruitstall

8801. Тифлисъ. Лавка. Прохлада зим. (дугва) и шиноурило. 456.



Metalsmith



Azeri Water Carriers



Carpet Shop



Meat Shop

These results were not followed by bad feelings and very often, wounded fighters went to the final feast together.

Until the invasion of Agha Mohammad Khan, Kviratskhoveli Church stood in Chughureti, the oldest district of Tbilisi. All of Georgia celebrated Kviratskhovloba, the day of Saint Toma. On that day people played a ball game that began after liturgy in the church; people divided into two groups fighting to get the ball. They believed that the winning side would have an abundant harvest throughout the year. Sometimes people hacked the ball up and shared the pieces. It had such a magical significance that an owner of a piece was sure to have abundance and plenty in the family.

In the early morning, churchgoers carried an icon from Anchiskhati Church to the hill where people prayed. On the day of the Kviratskhovloba celebration, people rolled down red eggs, which led to the hill being called The Red Hill. After church, there was a public feast followed by shows, riding, dancing and singing.

In Tbilisi there was also the sacred Hill of Elijah. On 20 July, volunteers from different districts of Tbilisi made an Elijah doll to honor the prince of the clouds and lord of the weather. They went door to door where each host would pour water on the visitors' head and give eggs and flour for the doll. After touring the whole city people sold the eggs and flour and bought a lamb and goat. The lamb was sacrificed to God, the goat – to Elijah. People believed that only Elijah could prevent a drought and bad weather.

In the capital of Georgia one amazing weather-related tradition is still observed. In February, when the wind starts blowing nonstop for a few days, people believe that Surb Sarkisi is angry. This is an old tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Couples in love were blessed on the celebration day of the protector of love, Saint Sarkisi. With his fourteen brothers in arms, Saint Sarkisi was tortured for his Christian Faith.

Unmarried people in particular started fasting one week before the Surb Sarkisi day and the night before the celebration they baked salty scones and ate them at bedtime, hoping that in a dream their future fiancé or fiancée would give them water. According to the water vessels they saw, they would discover their future fates. For example, gold and silver vessels meant wealth, copper and clay – average, and a wooden vessel meant poverty.

Seekers of destiny also boiled thick porridge intended for ravens. The boiled porridge was put on a windowsill waiting for a raven to fly over to eat it. After eating, the raven would be encouraged to fly farther and betrothal was expected from the house on which it landed next.

Precious Christmas traditions existed in Tbilisi. The holiday was celebrated with merriment, group strolls, and a variety of sights. In ancient times, residents of Tbilisi left their house doors open on New Year's Eve. People believed that happiness was around and would pass by if the door were shut. Especially distinguished was the New Year Feast – the tabla (tray). A hostess lit candles on all four corners of the tabla, which was decorated with sweets and fruits. Thereafter, a senior member

of the family walked around the house with the tabla in his hands. People believe that guardian angels followed them to bring prosperity and abundance to their families.

On 31 December, regardless of social status, each family prepared gozinaki – Georgian sweets for New Year. A few days before the New Year Georgian hostesses tidied and cleaned their houses. Also, they prepared a ritual bread of human shape called basila. It was the bread of family destiny. For a plentiful and healthy year the bread should rise well; if the bread did not rise, it was a sign of a bad and unlucky year to come. People celebrated New Year's Eve by shooting off guns. Usually, the head of a family left the house and returned with a firebrand. He brought the firebrand to the fireplace or stove and, with hard strikes, spread the sparks and shouted: "Much gold, wheat, bread and abundance to our family!" He also crumbled wheat in each corner of the house and gave family members honey bread. The mekvlé (the first person to express congratulations on a New Year) had an important function. The mekvlé was chosen carefully, because people believed that he could bring happiness to the family. On New Year's Eve women did not go out, so that they could welcome guests at home.

After the New Year, Tbilisi celebrated the great Christian feast day of Epiphany. The traditional date for the feast is January 19 (January 6 on the New Calendar). After a liturgy the priest, with a cross in his hands, led people to the river, where a "Jordan River" scene was set. Tiflis hamkari (artisan guilds) and the city's army participated in the festive procession. After praying, the priest put the cross into the river, thus blessing and sanctifying the river

water. People could take the blessed water home. It was believed that everyone who swam into the river would be blessed and, despite the cold, the "Jordan" quickly filled with eager swimmers, sometimes resulting in tragedies. For example, in 1892, at the Armenian Vanki Church the temporary wooden bridge could not stand the weight of the people and more than three hundred people fell into the water, some of whom drowned. Despite such tragic incidents, the blessing of the water remained one of the most crowded celebrations. In 1921, the Bolshevik invasion led to the banning of the "Jordan" and other religious holidays.

Tbilisi is distinguished by its hospitality. The Ortachala Gardens were used to host Tbilisi's special guests. Ortachala, the oldest district of Tbilisi, was considered the main cultural oasis of the city and even on the hottest summer days, during intense heat, people went with friends to the Ortachala Gardens, some travelling by phaeton, some on foot. In Ortachala, foreign guests could observe sedate and abundant feasts, witty conversations and toasts, the music of organs, zurna-pipes (a musical instrument), poetry and song. In Ortachala the enamored Karachogheli (a grave, righteous knight) with wine in his hand, dedicated precious songs to pretty women. In that place Pirosmani painted joyful knights and beautiful women lying on white rugs. In Ortachala poets wrote lyrical poems on the theme of the city.

From Easter Monday to Ascension Day, almost forty days, Ortachala and nearby districts celebrated the hamkari, artisan guilds. Hamkari went to gardens of the city, killed goats and sheep as offering to the gods and prepared a pilaf. Some food was distributed among the poor, some was sent to convicts in prison.

Craftsmen were blessed during celebration days. In olden times, hamkari were professional organizations of artisans. Each branch had their own hamkari and every local craftsman, regardless of rank or nationality, could join this organization. The hamkari had its own board led by an elected chairman. Each hamkari had its own flag with an artisan emblem depicted on it. They also had guardian saints and symbols. For example, the cobblers' flag depicted Elijah



Cobbler

the Prophet; a lamb was on the butchers' flag, Noah's Ark on the carpenters' flag, and a dove on the joiners' flag.

The hamkari had a charter by which collegiality was strictly observed. No member could continue work started by his colleague.

The poor of the city paid great attention to craftsmanship, so they apprenticed their young children to masters (the average age of children was 8-10 years). As well as learning a trade, an apprentice did several jobs including sweeping the shop and bringing food from home. The master gave only bread to his apprentice and cared about his clothing.

Getting an apprenticeship was not easy. The master would invite competent persons to examine the apprentice. Among the invited people were several honorary members of the main hamkari who checked the apprentice's work and made a judgment. If the work was good, the apprentice received the title.

Qualifying as a craftsman was celebrated with a blessing in a very beautiful ceremony. On that day craftsmen from different workshops gathered and started walking, waving a flag and playing the zurna. The destination was a garden. Candidates ready for blessing were distinguished from other participants. They led the celebration, wearing silk belts with their tools on their waists. In the garden a large copper pot with pilaf hung above a fire. There was a blue table laid on the other side of the garden. Instead of plates vine, fig and cabbage leaves were used, and instead of glasses – bowls of clay. Burning candles surrounded the feast. A priest gave

a lecture to the candidates before the blessing. As a craftsman 'certificate,' the main craftsman slapped the face of the apprentice three times: first on the right cheek, the second on the left and the third again on the right. The last slap was the hardest. Then, everyone sat at the table and started the feast.

The charter of the hamkari called for supporting widows and orphans. Members always took care of orphaned families. A widow would receive food almost every day, but she would not know which craftsman was the sender.

Old Tbilisi is unimaginable without its inhabitants, but among them most distinctive were the kinto and kharachokheli: They were very different from each other, reflecting the variances found in the lifestyle of Tbilisi. The city is a study in contrasts even today. Here, you can see both exotic Asia and the full luxury of Europe. The two types of inhabitants wore distinctive clothing.

Karachokheli was a stalwart, truthful, fair knight, outwardly tall, impressive and broad-shouldered. Karachokheli's chokha, black or navy blue, was an unfastened overcoat going down to the ankles. The first part of the word "kara" in Turkish means "black," so the karachokheli is a person wearing a black chokha. The edges of the chokha were very wide with flat decorative edging. The sleeves were wide and loose with decorative cuts and cuffs at the wrists. Silk and satin were used as lining. Several trapezoidal parts developed from the waist. If the chokha was gathered at the back, it was called naochiani chokha. The chokha had differing numbers of hems. A chokha with eleven hems was more beautiful than one with seven hems. The dertciki (tailors who made traditional

clothing) in Tbilisi used colorful linings under the front part of the hems. On the chest area, both left and right sides had beautiful cartridge-cases (samasreebi) ornamentation.

Akhalukhi was made from silk and satin. It was low-necked with fine gatherings at the base. Underneath, people wore red shirts. Their wide trousers were made from black wool and had to be tucked into their boots. Their clothing was tied together with a silk string with tassels.

The most important feature of the karachokheli style of dress was a belt with a gobaki (a large uniform decorative element fastened with a hook) made of leather with silver relief ornaments designed in pyramidal shapes. Silver belts with gobaki were very popular throughout the Caucasus region and serve as physical evidence of the high level of development of the Georgian blacksmith trade.

Karachokheli only wore belts on akhalukhi. Also, they did not carry a sword or dagger on their belts or any other weapon unless it was wartime as they were industrious and peaceful people in general.

The finishing touch for the karachokheli outfit was the bukhris kudi, a hat made out of karakul fur, a colorful handkerchief, a silver pipe and a purse for tobacco.

Kintos dressed in a kind of caricature of karachokheli clothing. Kintos ignored the karachokheli dignity and refused to wear the Georgian chokha. Their behavior and way of life was completely different, and, of course, this was reflected in the manner of dress.



5003, Тифлисъ: Только это отъезжающій въ рѣкѣ, отъ плоти бревно въ 12-ть аршинъ. 173.

Tugging Raft of Timber Beams

Kintos did not have a stable trade or craft, instead supporting themselves with odd jobs and specializing in the resale of various items, while the karachokheli were members of traditional artisan unions (hamkari) and were very communal and helpful to each other.

In the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in Georgia, most people wore traditional clothing. For this reason, there were many tailors who made traditional clothing (dertoiki), especially in cities in Eastern Georgia (Tbilisi, Gori, Telavi, Sighnagi, Akhaltsikhe) and in Western Georgia (Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Sukhumi). Each union had its own patron saint. The tailors' union had a flag with the Blessed Virgin Mary's image on it.

Karachokheli belonged to the lower social class of the city. They were common, ordinary craftsmen who had their own code of conscience. This is very similar to the artisan shops of Medieval Europe which included craftsmen of the city. But the karachokheli lifestyle differed significantly.

Karachokheli lived almost without social law, following only the rules inculcated by their leader – the main craftsman. These are set out as follows:

1. A karachokheli was obligated help another in hardship.
2. Karachokheli must not steal another's apprentice.
3. In the case of one karachokheli's death all the other craftsman belonging to the hamkari contributed toward burial and other expenses.
4. The whole hamkari blesses the apprentice as a master.
5. The election of the main craftsman must be unanimous, if

even one member of the hamkari is against a candidate, he will not be elected.

Old Tbilisi is inconceivable without the feasting and entertainment of the Karachokheli, relaxing in barrelhouses, the Ortachala and Krtsanisi gardens, or on rafts and boats bobbing on the waves of the river Kura. They were feast-loving people and never saved the money they earned. They were carefree and spent their earnings on wine. There is a legend in Tbilisi about a karachokheli called Aleksa, who found a fortune of a hundred tumani (old Georgian money) in the Ortachala garden. Instead of saving the money, he hosted the whole hamkari for almost a week, during which time none of workshops were active and people fell into hardship. Everyone needed craftsmen, and yet still they feasted and sang loudly.

Karachokheli never fought. They worked and cheered up unfortunates. They always cared for indigents, helped sick people, cared for the city, and sang to girls. The voice of the karachokheli was sweet and impressive and their favorite musical instruments were the zurna, duduki, sazandari, and kamancha. A feast with a karachokheli present was never boring thanks to their wonderful toasts on themes of philanthropy, humane opinions, and sympathy for people's hard daily life and pain.

The morning after a feast, the karachokheli went to the sulfur baths of Tbilisi and, after a hot bath, resumed the feast in the bathhouse with the karachokheli's toasts.

Kintos were the antipode of the karachokheli in action as well as dress.

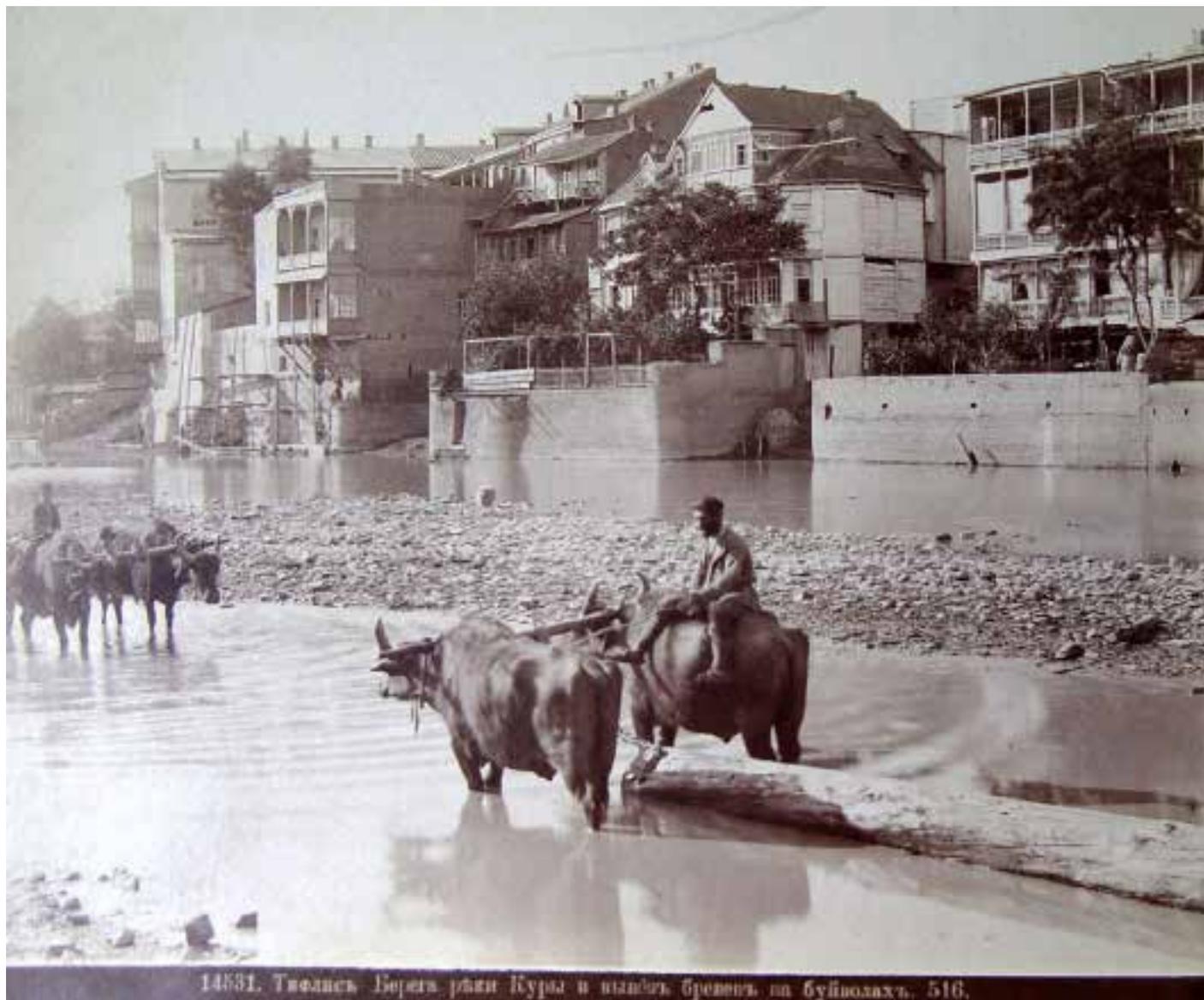




Poultry Traders



Fisherman on a Raft



14531. Тифлисъ Берега реки Куры и мостовъ бревенъ на буйволахъ. 516.



1904. Кавказско-армянские горы, село Армавир, 211



Trade of carpets

Kintos wore a cotton speckled skirt with a high collar. The skirt had a buckle on the left side. On the collar were four buttons but the clasp was always unfastened. They also wore short black akhalukhi (a long dress under a Circassian coat); their short legs were covered with wide black satin pants tucked into socks; pants

so wide that they rippled when they walked! Other aspects of the kinto outfit included a flat felt hat and slippers without heels. They wore watch-chains on their chest, and a red silk or tight silver belt on their waists with a silk or calico napkin tucked in. Kinto means “a peddler with a big platter on his head.” The platter or tray was carried about the Tbilisi streets, laden with fruits and vegetables.

The Kinto caste came about in Medieval Iran. There were two categories of kintos in the Persian State: some of them were servants of the nobles, others worked as city water bearers and tobacco sellers, and still others were vendors or swindlers. While two categories of kintos existed in Iran, the Tbilisi kintos combined all these “skills”: a Georgian kinto was a merchant, swindler, lackey and newsmonger all in one! In old Tbilisi it was said: “A kinto cannot live without a lie, he will die without swindling and falsehood. They even trick one another.”

Most the Georgian public figures, amongst them great Georgian enlightener, writer and teacher Iakob Gogebashvili, noted: “The kintos have debauched the inhabitants of Tbilisi, their depravity is such that the government must take action.”

Kintos and karachokhelis were integral parts of Tbilisi life. Georgian women were another symbol of the city, famous for their beauty. Najm Hamadan, a Persian historian of the XVII century, wrote: “The women of Tbilisi are full of beauty and charm.”

The famous French traveler Jean Chardin, inspired by his travels in Georgia, noted: “The Georgian tribe is absolutely the most beautiful in the East; and I can safely say in the world. I have

not seen a man or woman with an uncomely countenance, yet I have seen many as beautiful as angels. Many women are charming. It is impossible to behold them without falling in love. It is impossible to paint more anything more beautiful than a Georgian woman's face and body. Georgian women are very courteous, polite and talented, but also proud and haughty. They have big, loving hearts."

The Georgian women's dress – kaba – can be characterized by two main styles: the Sakhlavtaviani (laced in the front) and the Gujastiani (a dress which included a square cut on the chest). The main parts of a dress were a chest piece, long open sleeves, cuffs, and a girdle.

The Georgian dress was tight at the waist and wide and flowing at the bottom. It consisted of upper and lower parts which joined each other at the back. The upper part consisted of 3-6 pieces and was tight-fitting. The upper part had a whole lining. The front had narrow bone or iron plates in order to make the fit all the tighter. The neckline was cut low. Until the 1870s, the upper part was mainly Gujastiani (fastened with hooks at the front) and the place where the chest-piece was visible was most often made with square-shaped cuts. Later, the Sakhlavtaviani dress became popular, made with an open cut and laced in the front. The cut out upper part of the dress was filled with valuable embroidered pieces of fabric.

There were two kinds of dresses; one was sewn at the waist; the other sewn just at the back, leaving the front part of the skirt unsewn. The two parts were joined by embroidery and a two-branch girdle



Ossetian Araba (kind of bullock cart)

adorned with precious stones. The long and wide girdle dipped at the front of the dress. Some of dresses had the back section of skirt longer than the front and this style was referred to as a 'tailed' dress.

Cuffs were not sewn on the dress, instead tied to the woman's arms with strings under the sleeves and fastened with hooks or silver buttons at the wrist.

The same materials were used for the dress and its elements; silk fabric and thread, gold and silver threads, precious and semiprecious stones. Embroidery was often used: plant ornaments – grape leaves, grape clusters, wheat stalks, and oak leaves. The ornamentation and the color combinations of the dresses displayed the high aesthetic tastes of the Georgian tailors.



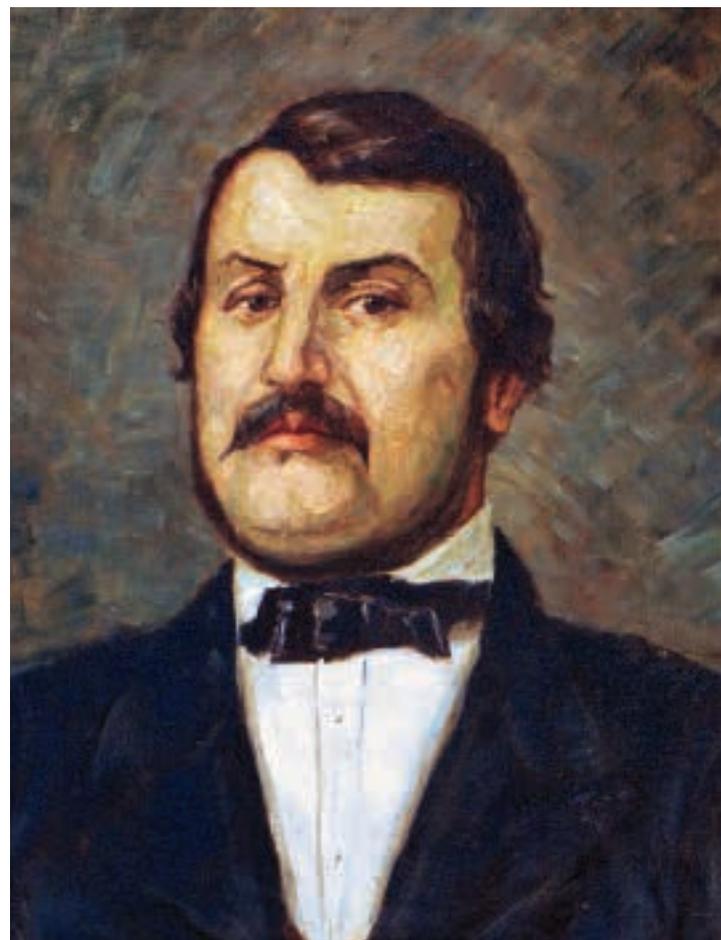
Georgian couple



"Artist's circle" hall decoration



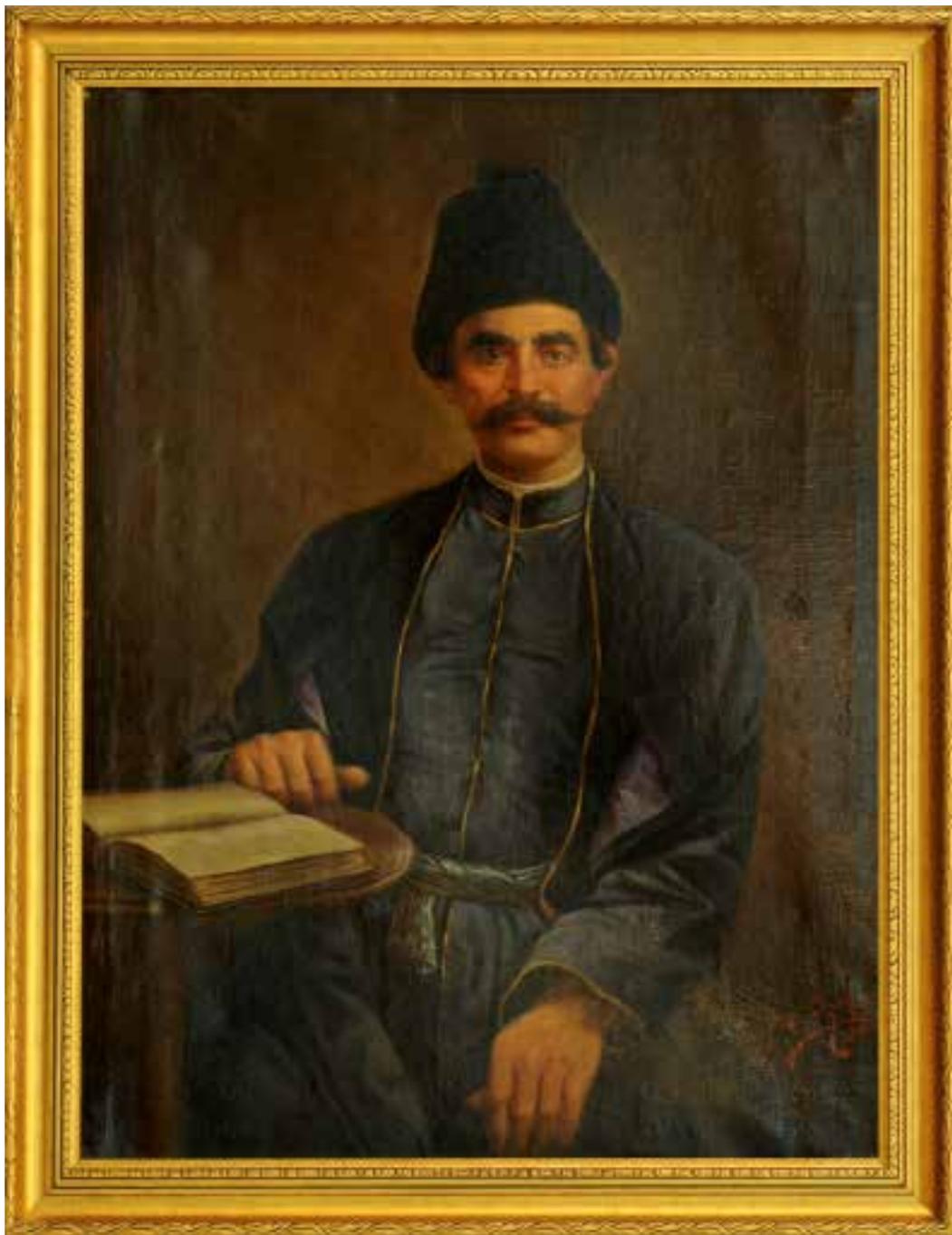
The poster of the play "Homeland" by Davit Eristavi arranged in Tbilisi.  
Silk. 20.01.1882



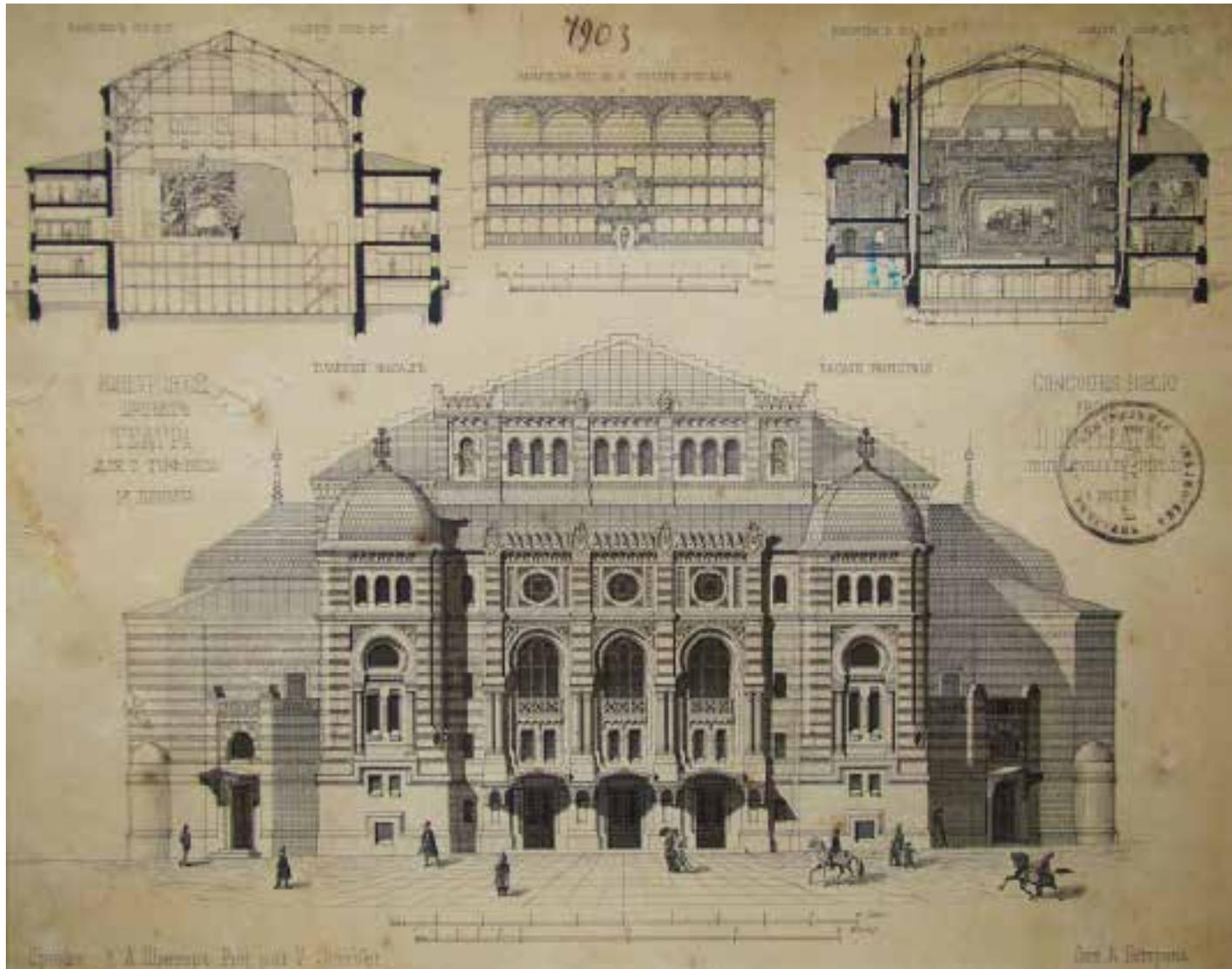
*Portrait of Giorgi Eristavi, Tbilisi, 1932* by Ketevan Maghalashvili (1894-1973),  
linen, oil 61 x 51cm



Young Davit the son of Giorgi Eristavi



Portrait of Giorgi Dvanadze (1829-1885) by Gigo Zaziashvili (1868-1952), linen, oil, 72 x 54cm



Victor Shreter (1839-1901.) Consulate project of Tiflis Fiscal Theatre, received the first place, 1879. A. Begrova lithography 27 x 36cm



Age and social factors were taken into consideration to determine the quality of the material, color coordination and ornamentation. Younger women and girls chose lighter colored fabrics while older women preferred to wear darker colors. Wedding dresses were traditionally white.

Tbilisi was the heart of the Caucasus with an active cultural life at the crossroads of trade routes. Different fields of art flourished from Asia and Europe. European culture took root first in Tbilisi in the region. Interest in Western music began in Tbilisi and it was performed in the musical-literary salons of Tbilisi. Piano, guitar, mandolin and other instruments were heard here first.

The first Georgian professional theater in the Caucasus was also founded in Tbilisi. The Persian invasion of 1795 put an end to Georgian theater until 1850. That year the first production, *Separation*, was staged on 2(14) January in the Tbilisi secondary school assembly hall, with George Eristavi performing and producing. This date is considered the day Georgian theater was re-established and since the 1880s has been designated as Georgian Theater Day.

The birth of national professional theater was preceded by a great and interesting event: in 1845 the vice-regent Mikhail Vorontsov brought Russian theater to Tbilisi. Soon, Manana Orbeliani informed him about the request of progressive Georgian society to restore Georgian theater using their own playwright, who had already written comedies. Vorontsov turned to George Eristavi in 1849 and ordered him to prepare *Separation*. "While this comedy will be translated in the Russian language, tell every Georgian who is in love with the theater to learn the roles and perform your comedy under your leadership in the Tbilisi Gymnasium (secondary school). Then we'll see the quality of your work and Georgia's stage talent."

*Separation* was translated into Russian by Dimitry Kipiani. George Eristavi read the play to Vasil Bebutov, who was appointed censor. Bebutov laughed a lot and told the governor: "There's nothing in the play to hinder its presentation."

George Eristavi had detractors in Georgian theater restoration. Among them were Mariam Batonishvili, Platon Ioseliani and Revaz Eristavi. Platon Ioseliani openly abused him and said: "It's a great



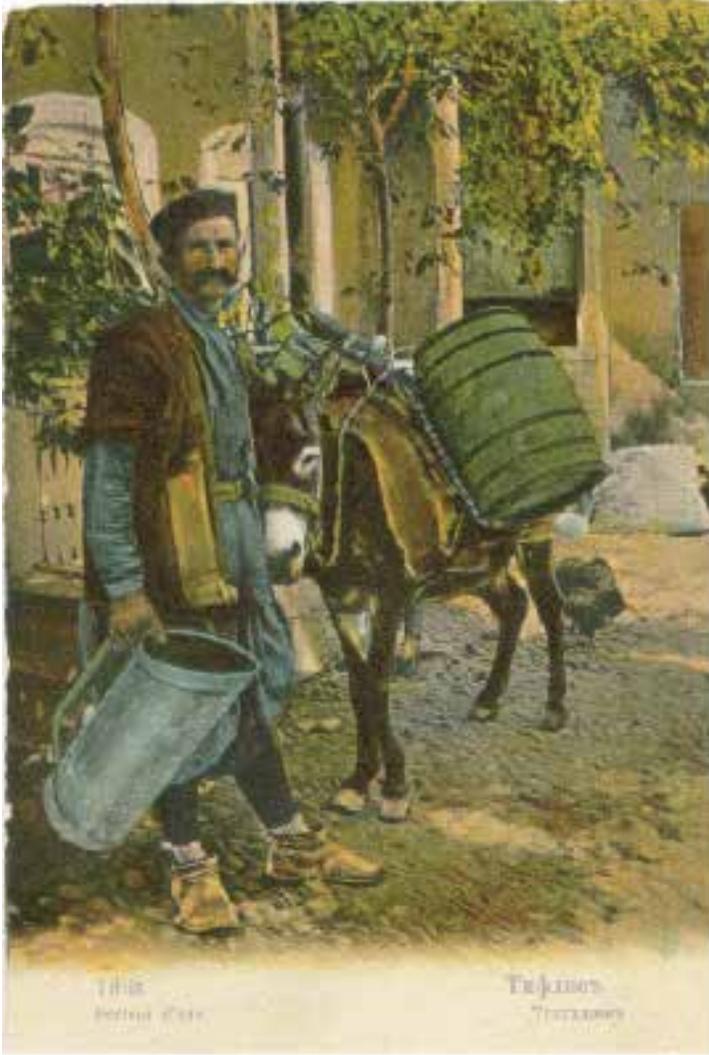
Alexandre Beridze (1858-1917), curtain sketch for "Artistic circle" theatre. Tbilisi, 1886, paper, cardboard, watercolor, 47 x 63cm

impudence to set up the theater, we don't need to help it spread prostitution. The greater the reason to leave this initiative." Revaz

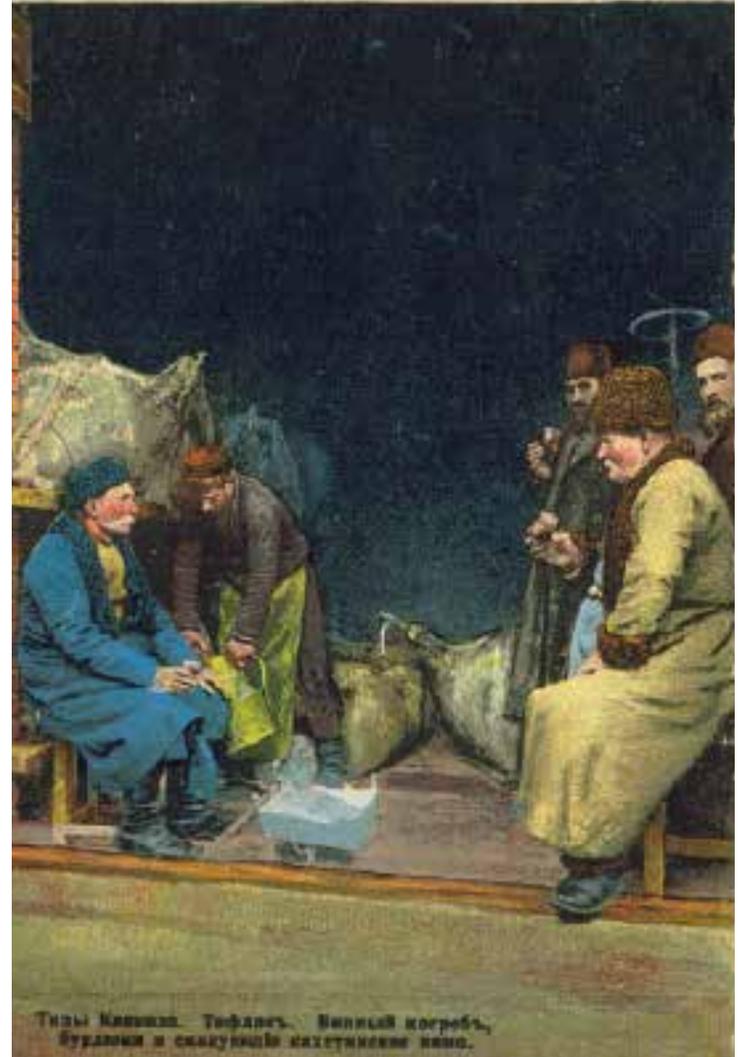
Eristavi also furiously resisted this case – "Actors have arrived and are playing the fool," he declared at every opportunity.



Anton Novak (1865-1932), Fiscal Theatre curtain, Tbilisi, 1898. cardboard, oil, 25 x 36cm



Water Carrier



Kakhetian Wine Cellar



Gunsmith



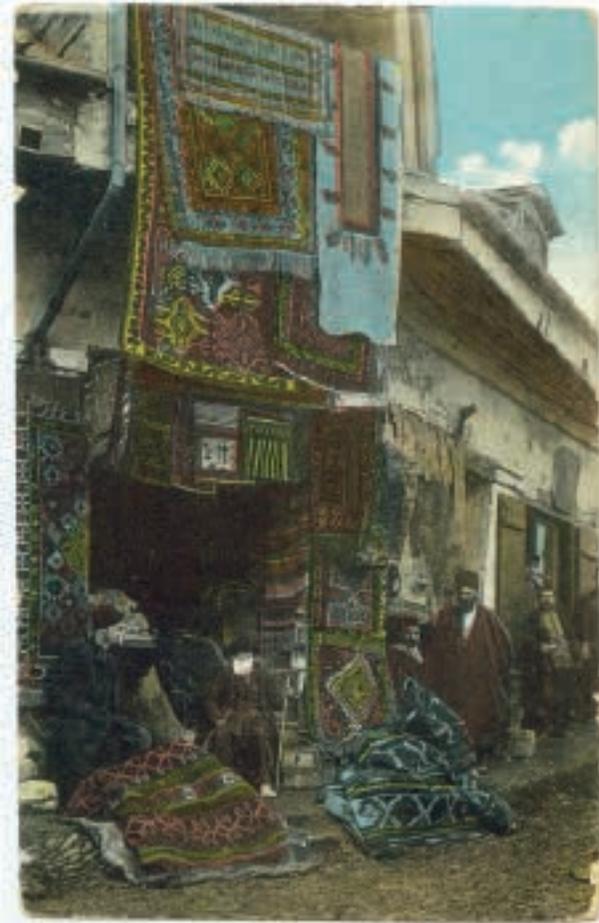
Seller of Lavashi (type of a bread)



Maidani square



Barber Shop



Trade of carpets

Ferry on the river Kura





Bull Hoof Trimming



Women from Tbilisi

It did not take a long time to rehearse, as everyone knew the play by heart. George Eristavi (author) was the director and also played the role of Mikirtum Gasparutch. They say that Vorontsov

attended the final rehearsal, since the Chief Governor came to rehearsals in order to motivate the actors.

The performance was a great success. It was standing room only. On 1(13) January 1851 Separation was performed again, in the Manege Theater. The large crowd was very pleased by the show. The newspaper Caucasus in 1851 wrote: "In Tbilisi, Prince Eristavi's comedy Separation was presented on the stage of the Manege Theater." This fact was particularly significant as Georgian actors were performing in a play in the Georgian language written by a Georgian playwright.

Vice-regent Vorontsov sent a letter to the Emperor of Russia Nicholas I about the performance, calling it a success: "Without the assistance of Russian dramatic performances, the first experiment to stage a performance in Georgian by the best figures of Tiflis society was made in early 1850. This attempt was very successful and proved that it's possible to produce Georgian plays regularly. The actors appeared and formed a troupe. I think Your Majesty would be pleased to know that work like this will have a strong and good influence developing scholarship, taste and clean morals."

Georgian and Russian performances were first organized in the Tbilisi Gymnasium hall. The hall was very small in size and seated approximately 150-180 spectators. It was wonderfully decorated, designed by famous painter Grigory Gagarin. Of course, the stage was also small and it was not possible to make complex sets. But Gagarin made some necessary ones: rooms, forest scenes, etc. Yet it was impossible to stage difficult plays and that fact hastened plans to build a new theater. Construction of a new building was not an easy matter: it



Woman from Tbilisi

required huge sums of money and until that issue was resolved, Yatsenko converted the Manege into a theater and began to present Georgian-Russian plays there. But the recently rebuilt Manege Theater was also small and accommodated only 300 spectators, it was not suitably equipped and lacked the necessary technical conditions for a theater. So there, too, it was impossible to present serious productions.



Manorial Bank Theatre. Scene and spectators' seats

A totally new building was needed for the Georgian Professional Theater, but construction was delayed and the government developed the following advantageous conditions to forward the project:

1. The land for construction must be transferred to the builder free of charge.
2. The theater could not take up the whole building but only the second floor. The first floor and basement would be for stores that the builder could use.
3. The whole building would be transferred to the constructor, except the theater.

After the announcement of the construction terms, a citizen of Tiflis, the merchant Gabriel Tamamshev, agreed to build the theater. A contract was signed on October 28, 1846, and the construction began on April 15, 1847, and continued for four years. The architect was Italian, Giovanni Scudieri (1817-1851).

In November 8, 1851, the theater opened with a grand banquet attended by representatives of high society. The Italian Opera troupe staged almost twelve opera performances there over three months.

In November the first opera season was opened in Tbilisi. After the performance, society spent all night feasting on rafts in the river Kura to celebrate the opening of the season.

In 1853 Tbilisi enjoyed the first ballet. This remarkable theater considerably elevated cultural life in general. It quickly became an important cultural center of Georgia. The hall accommodated 800 spectators, there were shops and commercial stores, and

the complex was often called the Caravanserai Theater. For the facades Giovanni Scudieri had chosen basilica architectural motifs of Vicenza, which belonged to famous Italian architect Andrea Palladio. The hall and foyer were designed by Prince Gregory Gagarin (1810-1893) with various ornaments. The newspaper Caucasus wrote of that painting: "When Prince Gagarin settled in Tbilisi his talent improved and he was able to immortalize his name not with illustrations and pictures, but with whole monuments. He designed Tbilisi's new theater with an improved Arabic style. The new hall is very beautiful and charming. It is like a huge bracelet made of stone and mortar with different enamels as in oriental pictures... When you enter the theater's lower tiers, the boxes will astonish you: they are edged with broad white and blue lace on a pale lilac background... There are medallions with the names: Aeschylus, Sudraka, Shakespeare, Calderon, Molière, Goldoni, Goethe and Griboyedov."

When famous French writer Alexandre Dumas came to Tbilisi in 1856, he wrote about the old Tiflis theater building in his book Caucasus: "When I entered the hall I was amazed by the perfect and simple style of ornaments. It felt like I was in a Pompeii theater hall. In the upper foyer ornaments blended with Arabic carving. Then I entered the hall, which was like a Fairy Palace with its decoration. It's possible that not even a hundred rubles was spent on gilt, but I have never seen anything like the Tiflis Theater Hall in my life... The curtain is remarkable: in the center of the painting is a group statue on a pedestal. The one on the right is Russia and on the left – Georgia. In the Russian group you can see Petersburg and the Neva, Moscow with the Kremlin, bridges, railways, ships,

civilization. On the Georgian side you see Tbilisi with castle ruins, bazaars, rocks, with the stormy Kura, irreproachable sky and its poetry. Under the pedestal, on the Russian side, you can see the Constantine cross, St. Vladimir, Siberian furs, fishes of the Volga, Ukrainian wheat, fruit of Crimea, religion, commerce, agriculture, abundance. On the side of Georgia there are: remarkable clothing, wonderful weapons, silver guns, swords with elephant bone and gold, gilded sabers, pearl plated Chonguri, drums, black wooden zurna (musical instrument), adornment, war, wine, dance and music ...”

On the ceiling of the theater hung a huge chandelier ordered by Vorontsov from Paris with financing from Tamamshev of 9,400 Francs. The chandelier traveled by ship from Marseilles and met by Georgians in Poti. It was divided into parts and put in 12 boxes and taken by cart. It is said that the chandelier was broken in transit, forcing Tamamshev to order another.

Unfortunately, the theater existed for only twenty-three years. On September 11, 1874, a fire broke out in the theater and it was destroyed. There was no local fire brigade to extinguish the fire, although carried buckets of water from the river Kura during a sixteen hour period.

Fire destroyed another famous Tbilisi Theater mercilessly. In 1847 it stood where the current Griboyedov Russian dramatic theater is, as a building of the Caucasian Commodity Depot, near to the Georgian Manorial Bank and Georgian society for promoting literacy. The owner of the Caravanserai in that building was a Tbilisi citizen called Gr. Artsruni. Georgian professional theater actors

received Artsruni's permission to renovate the building to make a theater. It was named the Manorial Bank Theater, but people commonly knew it as the Artsruni Theater. This building burnt partially in 1897 and completely in 1914.

The newspaper Iveria noted: “On 6 February 1901, at 2 o'clock, at Golovini Avenue the new building of the Tiflis Artists' Society was consecrated.” Caucasus magazine wrote: “Today, we see that we have huge private capital and private initiative, which can be used for the highest public ideals and civilization.”

The house, where the Rustaveli Theater now stands, was built for the Artists' Society in 1898-1901. The authors of the project were architects working in Tbilisi, Korneli Tatishchev and Alexander Shimkevich.

The building rose three stories above street level. Shops were on the first floor and the Artists' Society took up the second and third. There was a theater that held 900 spectators and also a concert hall. The most modern stage technology was imported from Europe: a ventilation system was arranged in a different style from the Tiflis Theater, and great attention was paid to the stage, which was made accessible for phaetons. The pavement outside was expanded and an open verandah was attached to the building. The restaurant Anona served guests in the basement.

Throughout the XIX century, theatrical life along the main avenue of Tbilisi was highly active. In November 1896 the Fiscal Theater (now the Opera Theater building) was completed by architect Shreter on



Manorial Bank Theatre



Manorial Bank Theatre Lustr



Fiscal Theatre



Fiscal Theatre stage



Zubalashvilis People's house, stage and spectators' seats



Zubalashvilis People's house



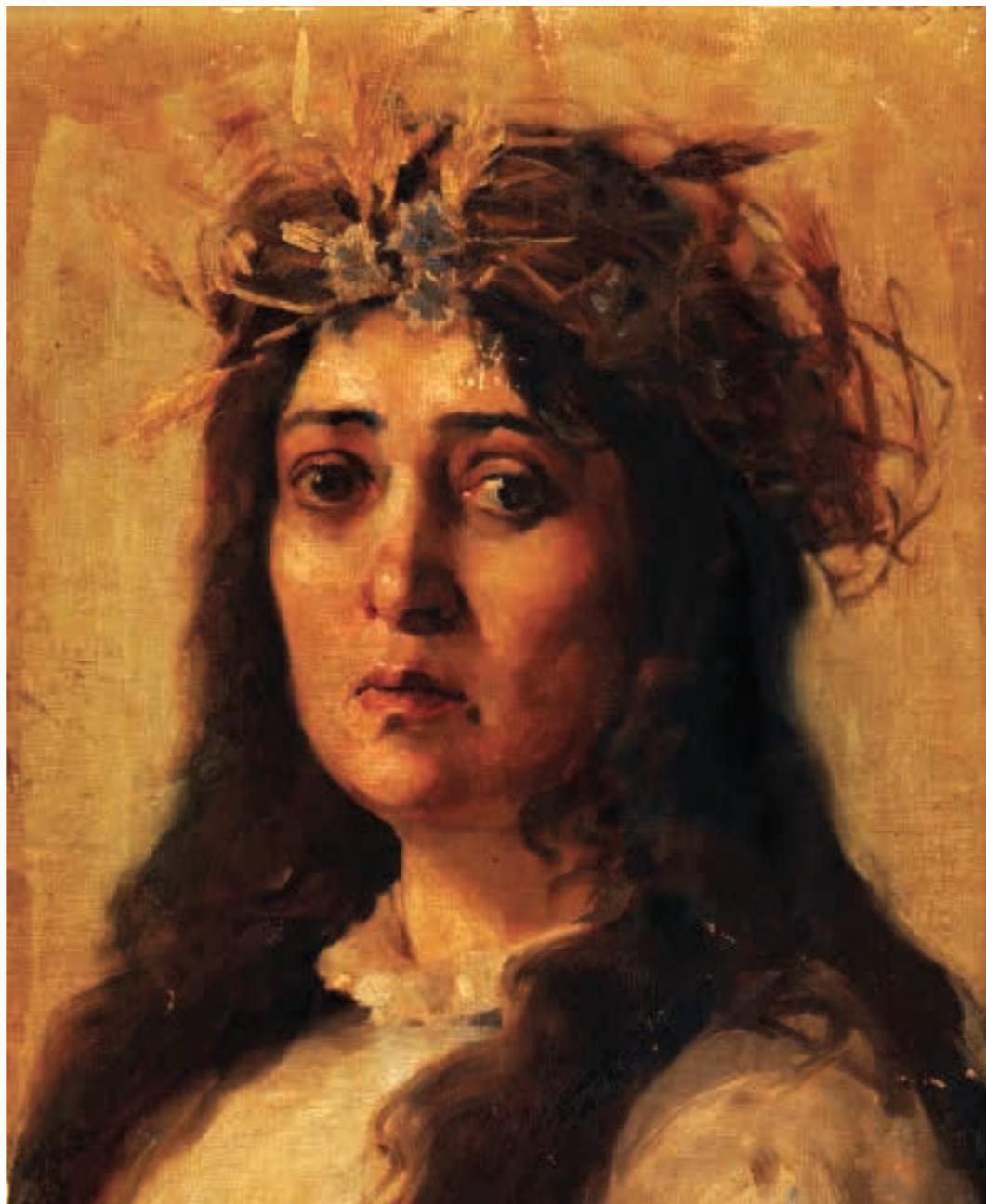
Zubalashvilis People's house, reading hall



"Homeland" by Davit Eristavi. The scene of oath



Georgian Dramatic troupe. 1879-1880



Aleksandre Beridze (1858-1917), Mako Sapharova-Abashidze (1860-1940) as a character of Ophelia, Tbilisi, 1883, cardboard, oil, 51 x 34cm



Unknown artist. Portrait of Tamamshev, canvas, oil, 23 x 33



Robert Sturua (Elder) (1916-1982), Portrait of Nino Uznadze (1837-1878),  
Tbilisi, canvas, oil, 61 x 47cm



Singer Jipro Davliashvili

Tbilisi views





Palace of a Vicegerent

Golovini Avenue (now Rustaveli Avenue), which could hold 1,200 people. The prototype was the Richard Wagner Bayreuth Theater. The façade has Islamic architectural elements. In 1973 a fire destroyed most of the building.

The public theater, nowadays known as the Marjanishvili Theater, was built in 1909 on funds from the Zubalashvili brothers, who dedicated it to the memory of their father, Constantine, son of Iakob Zubalashvili.

The architect whose proposal won the competition was from St. Petersburg.

Construction began on November 7, 1902, and finished in 1907. It was officially opened on April 4, 1909. The Zubalashvili Theater was given as a gift to the city.

A metal plate is buried in the foundation of the house with the Russian inscription: "On September 24, 1902, the foundation was laid of Zubalov's public house, by his descendants: Stephen, Peter and Jacob. This house is being built through the funds of these descendants. The construction works are being carried out under the leadership of architect Rogoisky, according to the project of city engineer, architect S. Krichinsky."

Soon the house became one of the most important cultural centers in Tbilisi. The building consisted of a theater with 630 seats that were always full. Performances were staged in 12 languages, both theatrical and operatic.

The main section of the three-story building was the theater, with parterre, or orchestra and balcony. There were boxes on both sides of the stage. The balcony on both walls facing the stage was on the second floor. The light came from large rectangular windows that were cut into the walls. Because there was no artificial lighting, performances (and generally all other events held there) took place in the daytime.

In the history of Georgian theater, 1878 was a year of great changes when a suitable grounding was prepared for creating a permanent theater. Two famous Georgian public figures, Iliia Chavchavadze and Akaki Tsereteli, lead this process. The formation of a permanent theater troupe took a long time as issues of economics and a theater building needed to be resolved. A special preparatory committee was created along with a special fund to which money collected from performances was transferred.

In spring 1879 a troupe was formed. The troupe included the most talented actors and they performed to great acclaim in every town. The permanent troupe rented the Gr. Artsuni Caravanserai, where they played performances for years.

David Eristavi's play Homeland had the greatest import for Georgians in the late XIX century. David Eristavi (Eristov) completed the translation of the French play in summer 1881.

The first performance of Homeland was held in the Summer Theater on the evening of January 20, 1882. Spectators had



Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980), character for the dance "Georgian Jazz", Tbilisi, 1954, paper, watercolor, 30 x 21cm



Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980), costume for the dance "Georgian Jazz", Tbilisi, 1954, paper, watercolor, 32 x 22cm

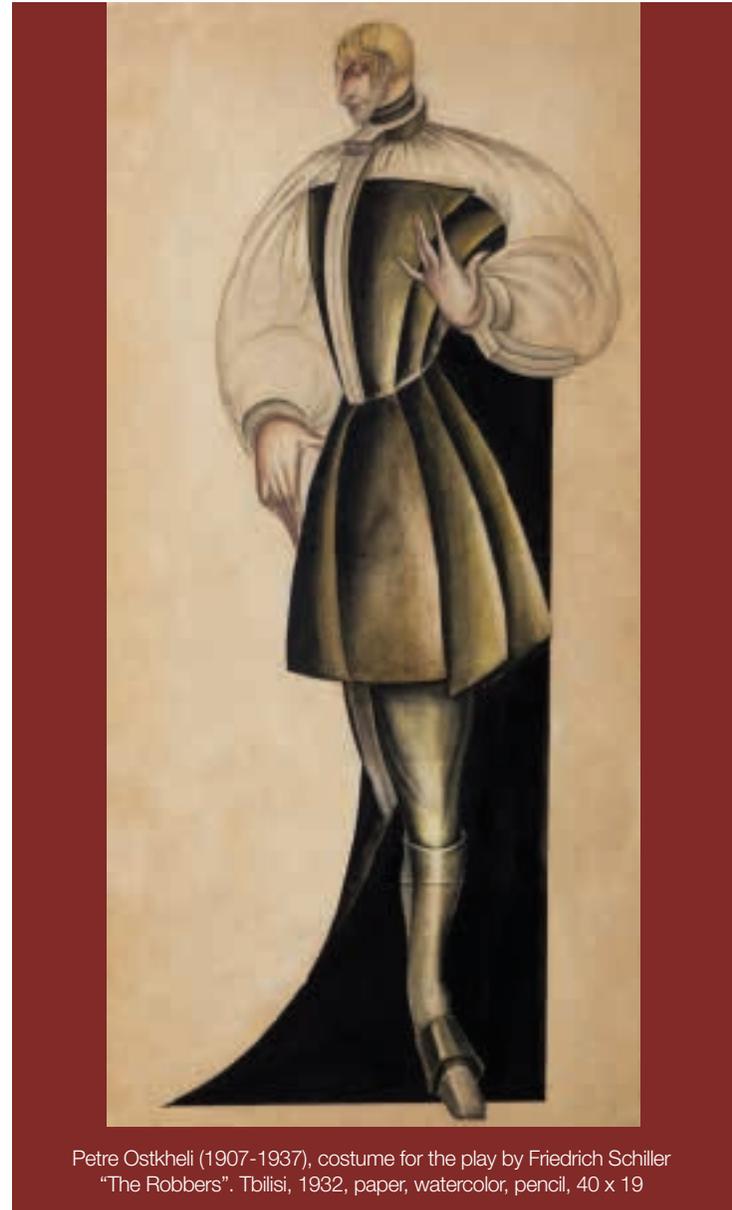
great expectations. The Italian painter Giusti had painted sketches for the sets and Grigory Gagarin designed the costumes.

Homeland became a people's celebration. The actors M. Sapharova, B. Avalishvili, V. Abashidze, N. Gabunia, L. Meskhishvili, and K. Khipiani fascinated the audience. "As a sign of respect, the Georgian troupe gifted a laurel wreath and satin poster to the author of the play, David Eristov. After the performance people carried D. Eristov and M. Bebutov from the theater above their heads and put them into their phaeton."

The Russian imperial newspaper *Moskovskie Vedomosti* was enraged by the production of *Homeland*. The newspaper described the Georgian performance as a low-grade spectacle and compared the national flag to a circus prop. Naturally, this upset Georgian society. Ilia Chavchavadze called it the "Buffoonery of a Buffoon." The social ferment led to the foundation of the National Liberation Movement against the Tsarist autocracy.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Georgian liberation of 1918, the theater played a special role in the creation of an independent country.

January 2, 1920, the day of the birth of Georgian theater, became Actors' Day, a professional theater celebration. According to the press, the whole day in the capital was filled with actors, carnivals, and festive performances.





(left) Petre Ostkheli (1907-1937), costume for the play by Friedrich Schiller "The Robbers". Tbilisi, 1932, paper, watercolor, pencil, 39 x 18cm  
(center) Givi Gulisashvili (1922-1995), costume for the Georgian dance "Kintouri", Tbilisi, 1932, paper, watercolor, 22 x 10.5cm  
(right) Givi Gulisashvili (1922-1995), costume for the Georgian dance "Kintouri", Tbilisi, 1930, paper, watercolor, 22 x 10.5cm

In July of the same year, the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, at the request of the Minister of Education, transferred the second floor and all halls of the current Rustaveli Theater building to the Georgian Drama Theater, and Akaki Paghava became its head. A strong troupe became the Independent Georgian State Theater, uniting artists of all generations, five producers and forty-two actors. On October 15, 1920, the Independent Georgian State Theater opened the first season with *Gushindelni (Yesterday)* by Shalva Dadiani, delighting its audiences.

On May 7, 1922 in the building of Rustaveli Theater was opened to the first Georgian artists' convention. Sandro Akhmeteli, a most innovative producer, delivered a speech analyzing the condition of Georgian theater, noting the need for a new Soviet theater for the Soviet country. Akhmeteli demanded fundamental changes in the creative and organizational life of the existing theater and a reconsideration of the whole troupe.

In the same year, Kote Marjanishvili, a producer who had founded the Georgian Soviet Theater, returned to Georgia. Marjanishvili preserved ancient democratic and realistic traditions of the theater and at the same time enriched them with revolutionary ideas. In 1922, Marjanishvili staged the revolutionary-heroic play *Fuenteovejuna: The Sheepwell* by Lope de Vega. It became the basis of the renewal of Georgian theater.

Kote Marjanishvili and Sandro Akhmeteli were brilliant directors. During the formation of the theater, they did not restrict actors' individualism, but promoted their talents. A great generation of

artists was formed, and it determined the high level of Georgian Theater for another fifty years. The art of the Marjanishvili Theater saved Georgian theater from disaster.

But eventually, the situation grew tense in the Rustaveli Theater, particularly during the working process on *Lamara* by Grigol Robakidze. The different theatrical vision of the two artistic directors, Marjanishvili and Akhmeteli, became obvious. Marjanishvili viewed the play as a lyrical drama and staged two acts in this way. But, after Marjanishvili fell ill, Akhmeteli continued the staging, turning it into a heroic-romantic performance. After seeing Akhmeteli's version of *Lamara*, Marjanishvili told him: "You can take my name off the poster." They last met each other on August 6, 1926; that same year Marjanishvili left the Rustaveli Theater.

Akhmeteli's work in the Rustaveli Theater continued with great success, with landmark performances. Akhmeteli astonished the theatrical elite. In the years 1930-33 the Rustaveli Theater saw great success in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Baku. The theater was invited on tour in Europe and America. Anatoly Lunacharsky, the cultural commissar of the USSR, said, "The Rustaveli Theater astounded Moscow and is the leader amongst world theaters."

According to the great writer Vazha-Pshavela in 1930, *Lamara* by Grigol Robakidze attracted the particular attention of society with its directorial vision and national aspiration. Despite the request of Soviet leaders, Akhmeteli did not remove the play by the émigré Robakidze from the theater's repertoire. This was considered a distinct expression of national spirit. For this and other reasons

Sandro Akhmeteli was fired from the theater and, after seven months of imprisonment, he was executed at the age of 51.

Tbilisi, with its polyethnic ways and rhythm of life has always been a special intercultural phenomenon in Georgia. Town festivals, in which all the citizens took part (no matter what nationality or religion they represented) included dramatized shows, folk games and, of course, dances. Urban dancers make a sharp contrast with traditional Georgian choreography due to their peculiar plasticity and gesticulation, employing eclectic and improvisational movements. The main difference between these dances is the social strata in which they arose. All this is reflected in a dance fantasy *Pictures of Old Tbilisi* staged by The Georgian National Ballet.

The worship of wine, a rose and a woman, widespread in the circle of *karachokhelis* is embodied in an original way in the dance "*Karachokheli*." A lady in a pink dress unexpectedly appears among hunting *karachokhelis*, who are wearing black *chokhas* and black, tall, pointed hats called *papakhas*. The lady comes from nowhere, as if she emerged in the imagination of the feasters – captives of Bacchus. Georgian and Oriental colors, classical refinement and Asian passion merge in the woman's dance. Her sudden disappearance is as effective as her appearance.

The dance "*Davluri*" represents the feast of the urban aristocracy. Unlike the other social levels, the aristocracy always tried to cling to traditions. "*Davluri*" is a simplified version of "*Kartuli*." Unlike "*Kartuli*" however here the lady dances with two partners. They seem to compete with each other, although both of them adhere

to the main principles of classical dance. We can observe less complicated forward-backward steps. We do not sense the sedateness so characteristic of "*Kartuli*" but instead feel the quick tempo, festive atmosphere and the final group dance that are audience pleasers.

Elderly citizens of Tbilisi still remember the vivid silhouette of a *kinto* in the narrow streets with a tray on his head. The quick, sly and slightly impudent character of the *kinto* is well presented in the dance "*Kintouri*." The Oriental sense of rhythm, characteristic movements, and extravagant dance steps shine in the fiery choreography.

Tbilisi, a multinational city with a variety of traditions, created a separate culture where Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian and European traditions were united. The Tbilisi courtyard contributed to the merging of multinational cultures. What was the Tbilisi courtyard? It was one big family where the door was never closed and where everyone was equal regardless of nationality. One of the oldest district inhabitants reminisced, "In the center of the Tbilisi courtyard, under a big mulberry tree, there stood a table and benches where, every evening, men would go out and start endless discussions. Sometimes they argued, sometimes they reviewed foreign policy issues. In the evening a feast was organized with collected offerings. There were various foods to be found: fried or boiled chicken, ham, various beans, *sujukhi* and *basturma* brought from Erevan, Russian cheese, radishes, vegetables and, of course, marinades. Each district had its bakery of choice for bread.

"The feasting men invited a hurdy-gurdy man and musicians playing duduki (Georgian musical instrument) and then the real feast began while children watched from the balconies above. The following morning khashi (a soup with sweetbreads) was prepared for the hung-over men. In the evenings women organized tea and coffee get-togethers."

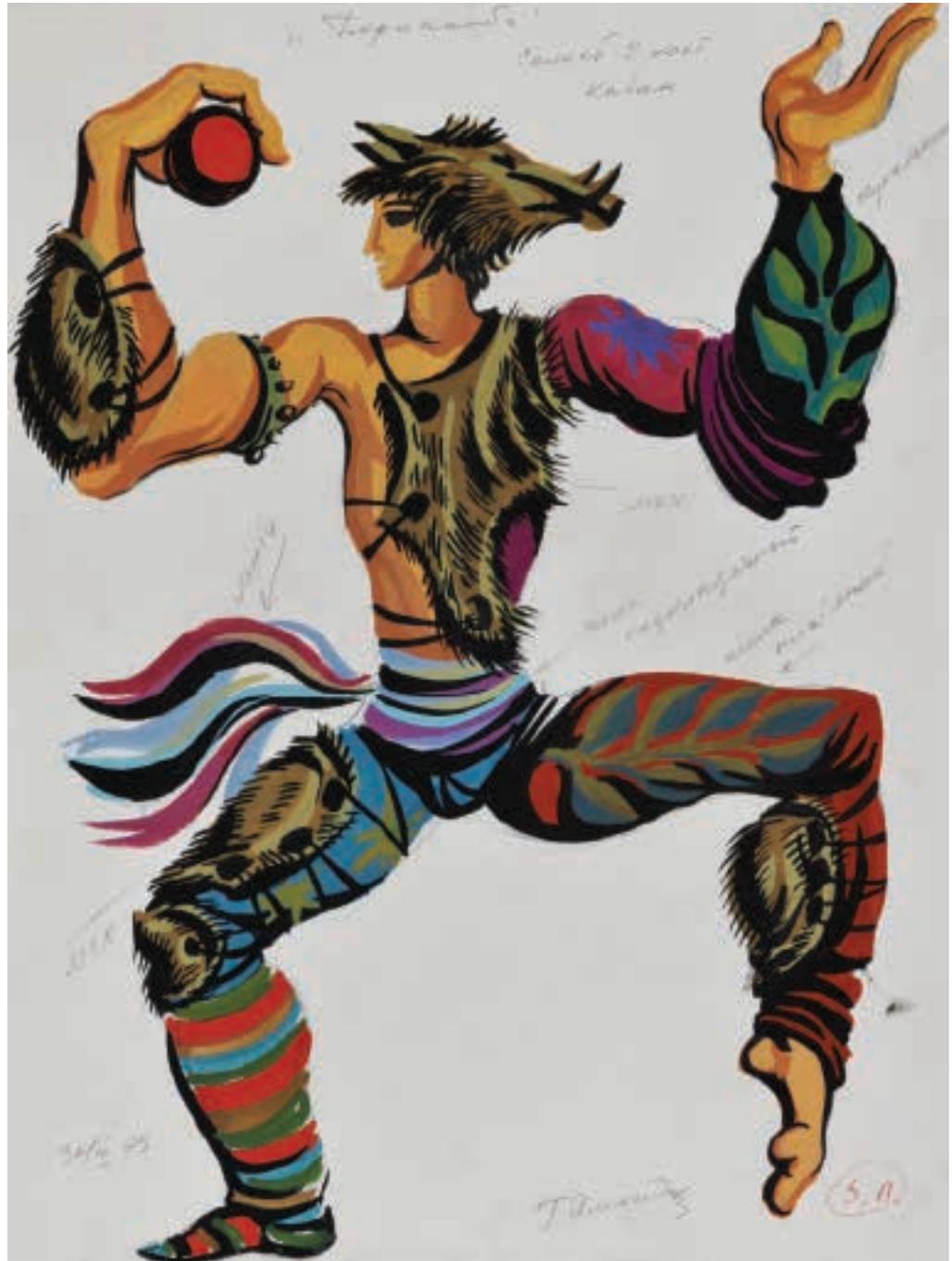
Another topic is Tbilisi lotto and teatime. A peculiar teatime tradition came to Tbilisi from Russia: the game of lotto and the samovar. Women competed in the preparation of a number of sweets, basically biscuit cakes baked over kerosene stoves. There was also the very important preparation of food stores for winter: housewives carefully selected fruits and vegetables and cooked them in the courtyards. They ate them together in winter too in the form of jams and preserves, which were made in the center of the courtyard, cooked in copper boilers over a fire. In that period, tomato and eggplant jams in particular were very popular. People celebrated holidays together in Tbilisi courtyards.

Thus, the capital of Georgia has always been distinguished by a centuries-old history and by traditions and an urban culture unique to Tbilisi.

*Translated from Russian by Antonina W. Bouis*



Koka Ignatov (1937-2002), sketch for the ballet "Berikaoba" by B. Kvernadze, Tbilisi, 1973, paper, gouache, pencil, 45x35



Koka Ignatov (1937-2002), sketch for the ballet "Berikaoba" by B. Kvernadze, Tbilisi, 1973, paper, gouache, pencil, 45x35



Arutin Shamshinov (1856-1914), Keenoba in Tbilisi, Tbilisi, 1893, canvas, oil, 85x122



Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980), Keenoba, Tbilisi, 1938,  
canvas, oil, 72 x 89cm



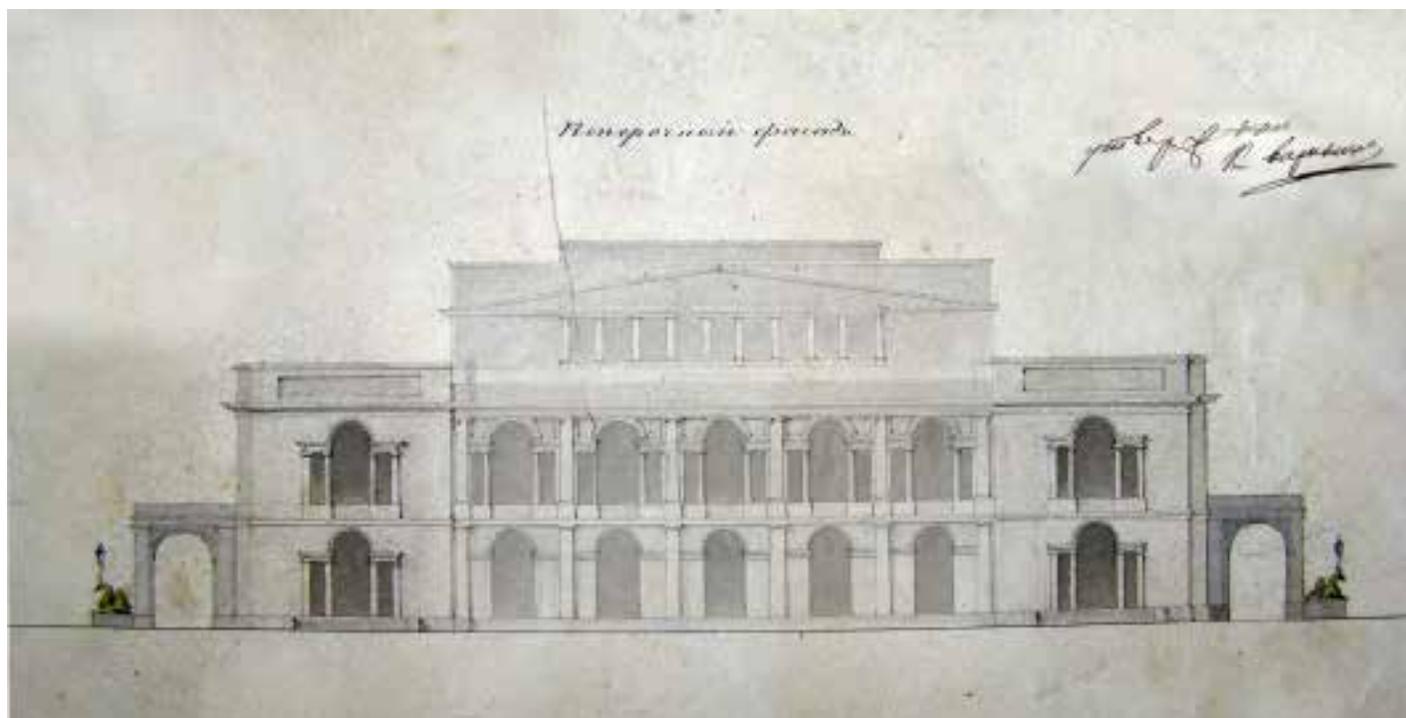
Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980), Berikaoba, Tbilisi, 1938,  
canvas, oil, 72 x 89cm



Lado Gudiashvili (1896-1980), *Commedia dell'arte*, Tbilisi, 1948, paper, Indian ink,  
50 x 71cm



(clockwise from left) Fiscal Theatre, also called as Caravanserai Theatre and Tamamshevi Theatre Viktor Shreter (1839-1901), Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Tbilisi, 1896, cardboard, watercolor, 54 x 83cm Schematic plan of internal painting of Tbilisi Theatre old building. Author Gr. Gagarin



Giovanni Scudieri. Façade of Caravanserai (Tamamshev) Theatre, paper, ink, Tbilisi, 1847, 30 x 66,5cm



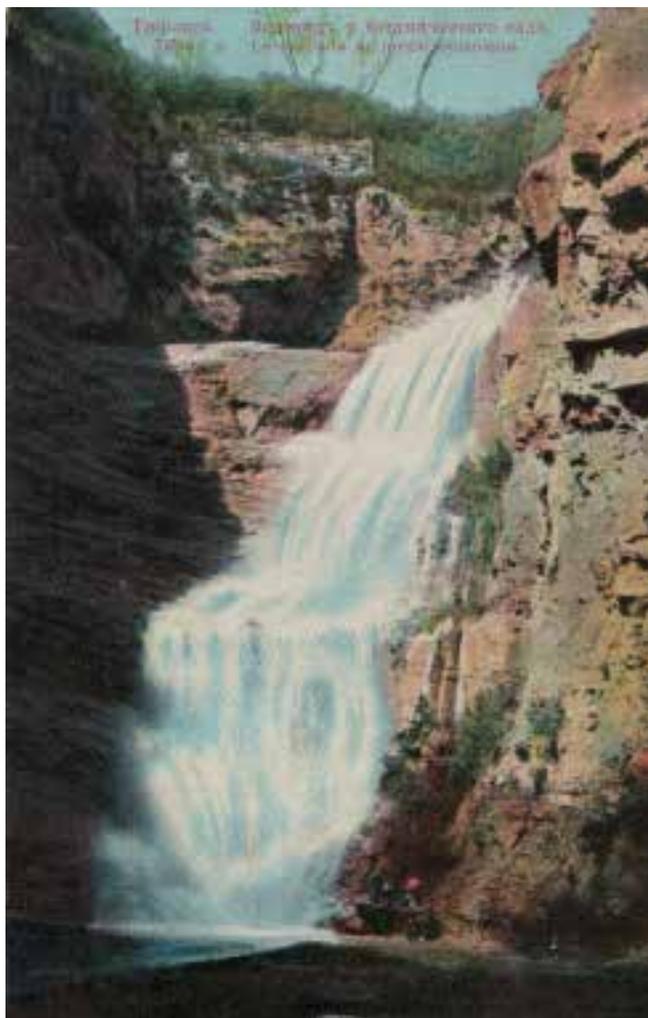
Die St. Margarethenkirche in Tilsa.



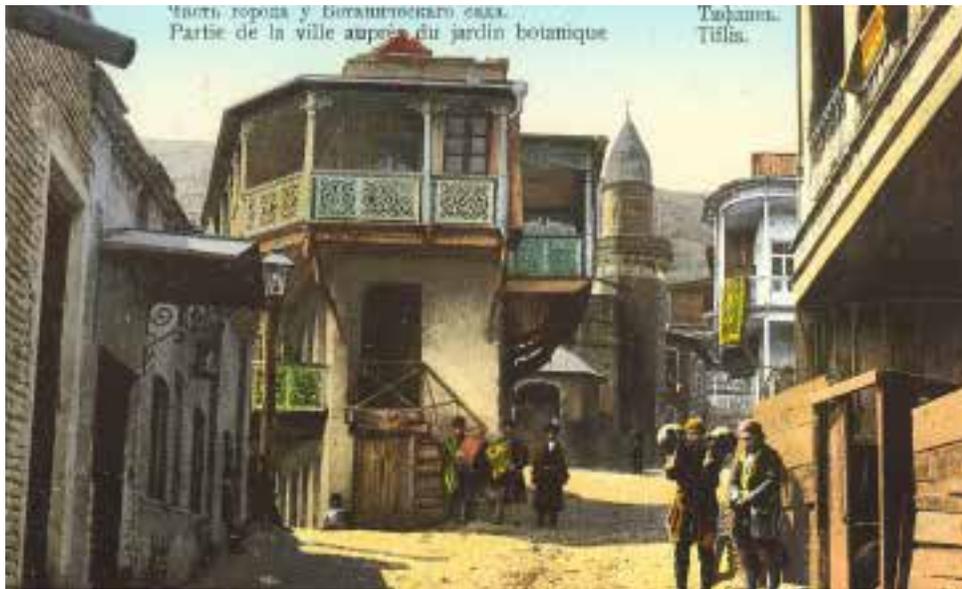
Greeting Cards

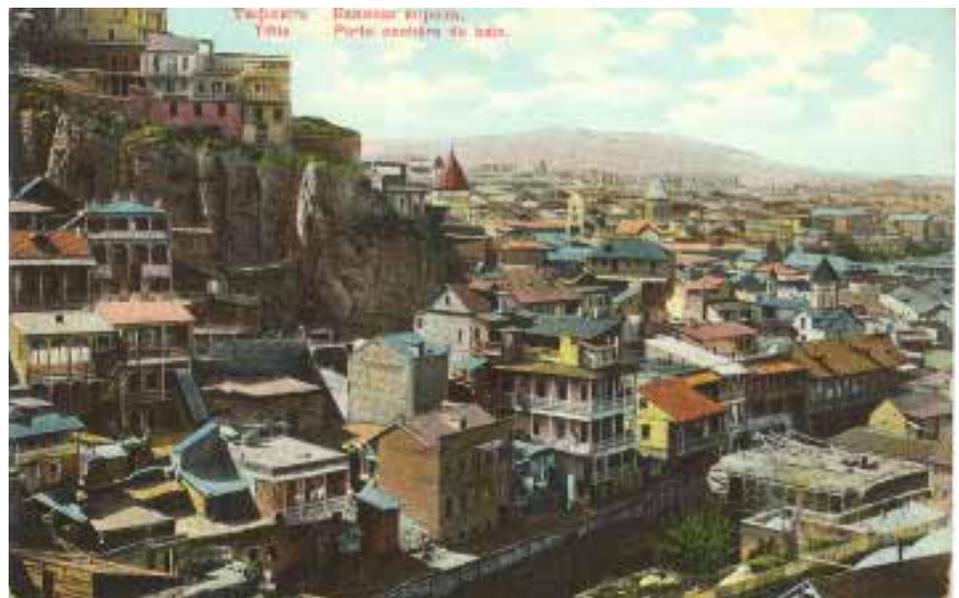
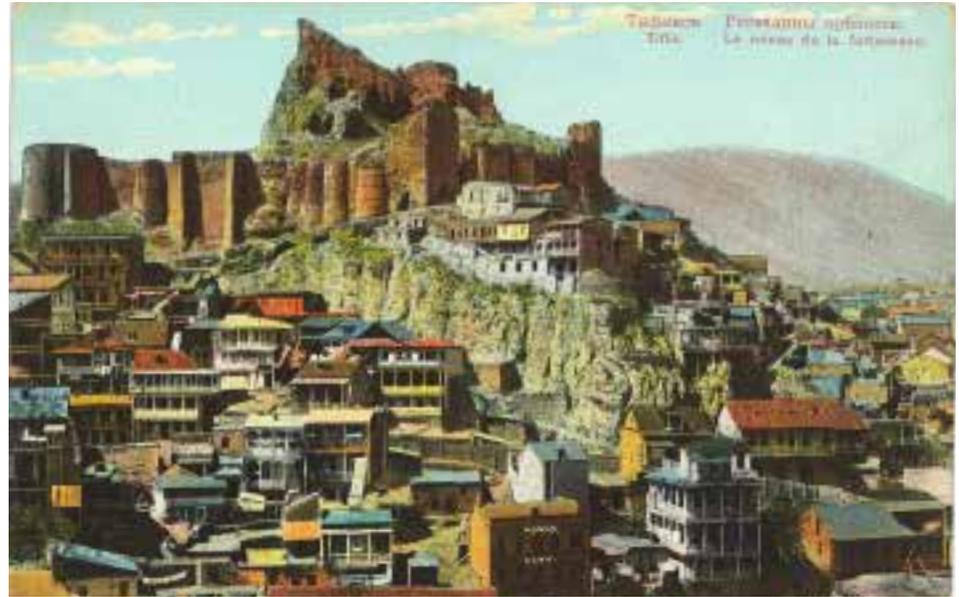


Greeting Card











Akaki Tsereteli

## Fifteen Hundred Years of Georgian Literature *A brief survey by Donald Rayfield*

Georgian, a language spoken by some four million people, has a literature whose duration of fifteen hundred years places it among the world's strongest and most long-lived cultural traditions. (Then we must remember that Shakespeare's English was also spoken by no more than four million people.) Like many east European and west Asian languages, Georgian acquired an alphabet and a literary base (the Bible, the Christian liturgy) when it accepted Christianity and the cultural suzerainty of Byzantium. Byzantine missionaries were good practical linguists: the alphabets they gave ensured a viable literary language. The earliest Georgian texts date from the fifth century. For the next six hundred years, Georgia enjoys the same possibilities and restrictions as Byzantine Greek literature. Everything springs from the Psalms and New Testament: a tradition of hymnography, exegesis of the gospels and lives of the fathers. To this were added the lives of Georgia's own martyrs for the faith, notably Saint Shushanik in the 6th century (although her harrowing and graphic hagiography may in fact date from a later period). Georgian hymnographers, particularly the tenth-century Mikael Modrekili (the hermit), did however show considerable lyric originality, drawing on what were probably pagan Georgian folk meters and imagery to elaborate on the traditional Greek and Christian formulas.

By the ninth century Georgian had established enough of its own monastic centers to begin hagiographies of its own fathers: the Life of Father Serapion of Zarzma, written by his nephew Basil, and The Life of Grigol of Khandzta by Giorgi Merchule, written in the ninth or tenth centuries, have graphic episodes that show a novelist's rather than a chronicler's talent, and as historical documents are valuable for the insight they

give us into the balance between Church and State in early Georgia. When the Mongols ravaged Georgia in the 13th century much historical documentation was destroyed, so that these literary and religious texts are an important substitute. Still more important are the Georgian chronicles, which made a transition from the legendary to the documentary as they were compiled between the eighth and twelfth centuries. It may be that the famous Conversion of Kartli reflects a semi-imaginary fourth-century Georgia, but as the chronicler moves towards his own times (the eleventh century), the chronicles become credible. Later editions, by an anonymous chronicler, take us up to eye-witness accounts of the Mongol invasion of 1225 which was to bring catastrophe to Georgia.

Byzantine and Georgian traditions shunned any secular role for literature. Only as Byzantium weakened and Georgia, with its neighboring semi-Muslim culture of Shirwan, came under the orbit of Persian culture in the twelfth century did secular literature, primarily the narrative poem of the adventures of star-crossed lovers and intrepid knights, overlay the Orthodox Christian tradition of soul-improving hymnography and exegesis. Curiously, Persian and Arabic influence brought Georgian literature of the twelfth century closer to the chivalrous mediaeval literature of France and Germany: love and prowess supersede as supreme values the salvation of the soul and scorn for this world. For a while Georgian was an intermediary between the Greek and the Arab world, in the case of the Balahvariani (which became The Story of Varlam and Josaphat) the language through which a Sanskrit work found its way to Europe.

Two great twelfth-century works of translation and imitation, however, propel Georgian literature to excellence in its own right. One is the *Amirandarejaniani* written by a certain Mose Khoneli of whom we know nothing: this is an extravagant prose narrative of courtly love, a paean of feudal values, whose most striking element is its complete independence of both Christian and Muslim values and its wild battles and passions. Yet more indebted to Persian is the Georgian *Visramiani*, a free prose version of the poem by the Persian poet Gurgani, which has some of the themes and plot of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Tristan and Isolda*.

These two works were the foundations on which Shota Rustaveli created his *Knight in the Panther's Skin* — the first work in Georgian to achieve international acclaim. The *Knight in the Panther's Skin* is for Georgians what Dante's *Divine Comedy* is for the Italians or Shakespeare's tragedies are for the British. A work of unprecedented poetic intensity and virtuosity, it expresses thinking which bridges the mediaeval and modern worlds. It inaugurates a literary language for following generations. It furnishes an anthology of quotations that have seeped into the language even of illiterates.

While Dante and Shakespeare belong to the world, Rustaveli's *Knight in the Panther's Skin* is the private treasure of the Georgians. One barrier is that we (even Georgian scholars) know so little about the origins of this work and its author. We have a handful of certainties, a few reasonable assumptions and many conjectures.

The certainties are:

- 1) From the seventeenth century there survives a manuscript of some 1600 stanzas, each of four lines, each line of sixteen syllables, an integral narrative, called *Vepkhistqaosani* – *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, and attributed to a Shota Rustaveli;
- 2) A few lines from this poem are found in a cave inscription of the fifteenth century;
- 3) Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “sequels” and variations of this poem were composed in Georgian.

The reasonable assumptions are:

- 1) That this is an original poem, even though there are many reminiscences of Persian poets (e.g., the presence of a knight wearing a black panther's skin, and allusions to *The Loves of Vis and Ramin*) and it is called by the narrator a “Persian poem.” No Persian original is known;
- 2) That the poem was written during Queen Tamar's reign when her consort Davit Soslan was still alive: between 1189 and 1207: apart from linguistic evidence, strong hints in the early stages of the plot and in the assertions of the narrator make this highly likely;
- 3) The author was a highly educated polyglot Georgian.

The most useful conjectures are:

- 1) That Shota Rustaveli was an aristocrat, a court official and perhaps at the end of his life a monk in Jerusalem, or a sponsor of a monastic settlement;
- 2) That a fresco portrait, probably seventeenth century, in the Georgian Holy Cross monastery at Jerusalem, may be of Shota Rustaveli;
- 3) That *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* may be Rustaveli's only

surviving work, although some historians attribute odes to Queen Tamar to his hand;

4) That the poem may be just the only survivor of a tradition of secular narrative poetry in Georgia's "Golden Age" (the 10th to early 13th centuries) — other works (apart from the prose epic of Amiran and Darejan and a free Georgian verse version of the Persian *Vis and Ramin*) having perished with the coming of the Mongols.

Other conjectures, supported by legend and rumor, suppose Rustaveli to have been in love with Queen Tamar and therefore forced into exile — thus interpreting the poem's driving force of maddening passion as a personal inspiration.

Few poets of Rustaveli's stature, however, have left so little proof of their existence. We are effectively dealing with an anonymous text.

First the plot: King Rostevan celebrates the transfer of power to his daughter Tinatin, who is in love with the King's general Avtandil. During a celebratory hunt a mysterious melancholy knight in a panther's skin, Tariel, is found, but vanishes. At Tinatin's command Avtandil seeks him out—the first adventures being a quest for the hero glimpsed during a hunt. Tariel, once traced, reveals that he is in love with a princess Nestan-Darejan, betrothed by her father, Parsadan, king of India, to the prince of Chorasmia. Parsadan has deprived Tariel of his throne. At Nestan's instigation Tariel murders the prince and flees, accompanied by Nestan's lady-in-waiting, Asmat. Nestan (like *Vis*) is imprisoned for refusing an unwelcome marriage. She is handed to two sorcerers, who take her out to sea. She is sighted by Pridon, ruler of Mulghanazar. Tariel despairs of finding her and retreats to live in a cave with Asmat, where Avtandil finally finds him.



Konstantine Gamsakhudia



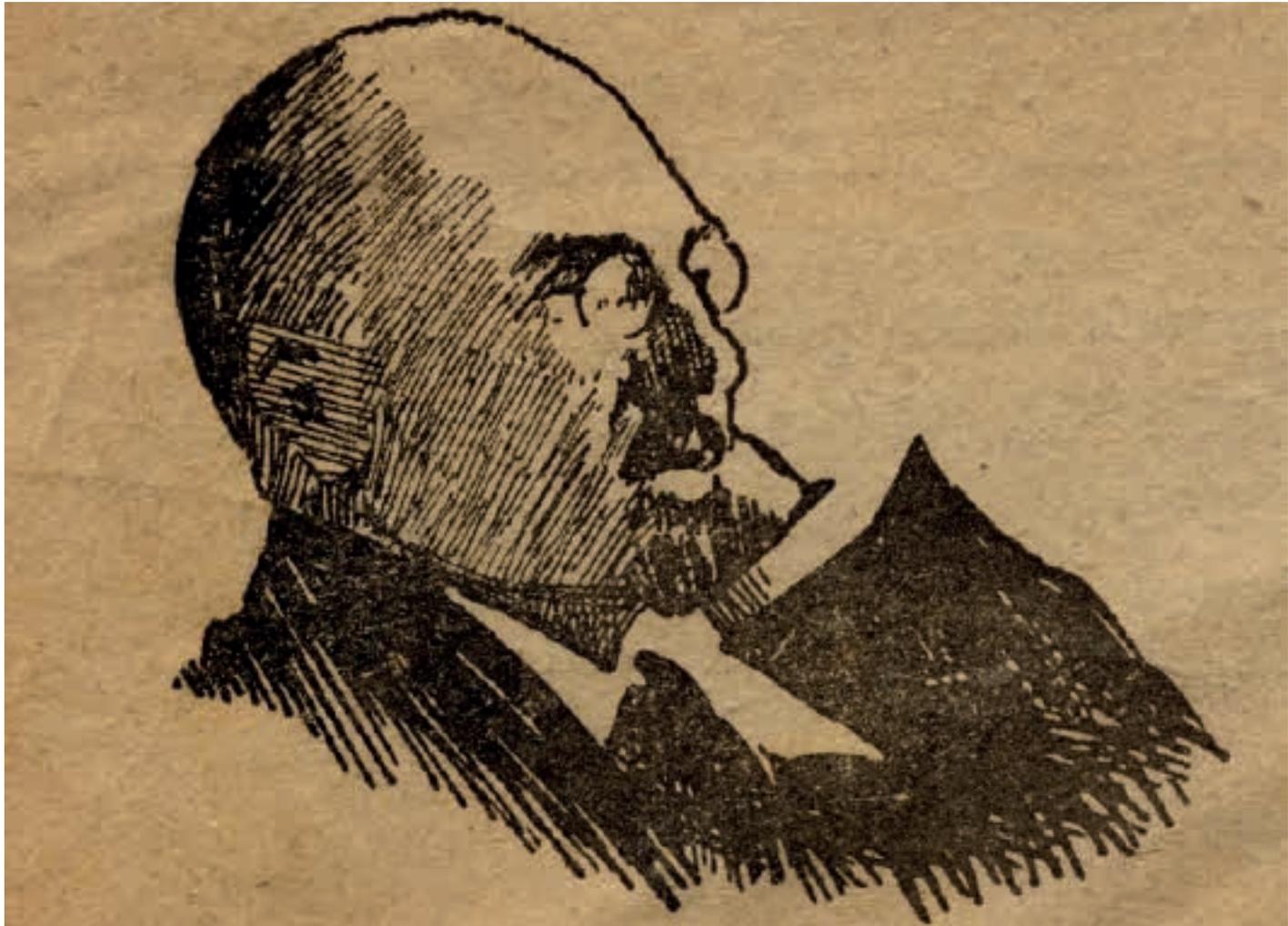
Iliia Chavchavadze

The next stage of the story marks Rustaveli out from his models: oaths of male friendship now bind Avtandil and Tariel and become as strong a motif in the plot as the desperate Ramin-like love of Tariel or

the hunting and fighting prowess of the heroes. Rustaveli's chivalrous ideal equates male friendship with courtly love. In search of Nestan, Avtandil visits the third knight, Pridon, who, in the traditional pattern, completes the brotherhood. Eventually, Avtandil reaches the Kingdom of the Seas, where Nestan is imprisoned. The three knights free Nestan. Tariel inherits India; all return to their dominions and establish a harmony and unity that transcends nationality and race.

All the quests, the refined but crazed passion are familiar to us in the West: they remind us that our own mediaeval courtly, chivalrous romance has the same origins as the Georgian (or Persian) romance — we owe to the same Arab invaders of the 8th century AD the poetic device of infusing religious altruism into erotic love. The Knight in the Panther's Skin is thus a cousin of *The Romance of the Rose*, of *Parzival* or of *Morte d'Arthur*.

Rustaveli is not just a romancer however. If we have any clues to the personality of the poet it is in the eclectic outlook behind the storytelling— now common-sense, now mystical, now Christian, now pagan. Christ, the Trinity, the Virgin are never mentioned, but Saint Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians is cited by Avtandil: "Have you read what the Apostles write about love?... Love raises us up, they ring out like little bells." Phrases such as "In the final end all concealed things shall be made known" recall the Gospel of Saint Luke. Although heroes and heroines make their oaths in Zoroastrian, Hellenic and pagan formulas, invoking the sun or the four elements, Rustaveli's God is good and generous — "He makes Himself yet more immaculate and causes no imperfections" — and his everyday world is deceptive and treacherous. This is fundamentally a Christian dichotomy.



Mikheil Javakishvili

It is hard to form a coherent picture of Rustaveli's mind. He declares himself an idealist, a believer in the unknowable nature of God. Yet his outlook can have a sportsman's or soldier's bluntness.

Episodes such as Avtandil's visit to the trading-port of Gulansharo introduce a bawdy tone, where the lowly Patman shows us that Rustaveli can also create a sensual Wife of Bath. In his feudal view



Davit Guramishvili

of humanity, only aristocrats indulge in pure altruistic sentiment; common humanity lives by its wits and appetites.

Thus the poem celebrates sometimes feudalism, courtly love, and altruism, sometimes common sense and worldly love. A practical political mind is at work in the links which Rustaveli establishes

between his exotic fictional plot — the triumph of love, harmony, and the establishment of stable rule — and political reality, the brief apotheosis of the Georgian state under Tamar and her consort Davit Soslan. Rustaveli's fresh ideas set him apart from his sources: his heroines are striking for the Middle Ages: they have an emancipation that makes them not victims, prizes or beneficiaries but equal participants, even when captive and awaiting rescue. Rustaveli's tolerance says much of Queen Tamar's Georgia which made little distinction of gender, religion or race among its subjects. We lack the evidence to call Rustaveli a humanist or a Renaissance man: a series of reactions, not systematic ideas, informs his outlook. He is not afraid to contradict himself. There are, however, aspects of the poem which are alien to the modern Western reader. Sometimes Rustaveli seems extravagant to a fault. His concept of insane love, *mijnuroba*, goes far beyond the devotion of a Lohengrin. His battle and hunting scenes are barbarous. But the violence is symbolic: lion and panther locked in mortal combat stand for male and female elements in the hero's psyche, prowess in battle and hunting, passion in affection and sorrow. The device of the panther's skin which Tariel wears bears witness to the predatory fury of erotic passion. "Love is needed to bring us close to death, to drive the learned mad and make the unlearned wise." "Mijnuroba is something else, not comparable with fornication; it is one thing, fornication another, between them sits a great barrier."

Rustaveli invented for Georgians a poetic language compatible with the colloquial; the grammar and vocabulary of modern Georgian are born in his stanzas. In the sixteen-syllable line Rustaveli found the ideal vehicle for a heavily inflected polysyllabic

language. Following Persian models, Rustaveli made rhyme a display of virtuosity, sometimes achieving four five-syllable rhymes in a stanza. Rhyme acts as much as a mnemonic system as an orchestration. Even today thousands of Georgians can recite many stanzas of the poem. Rustaveli's aphorisms have become idioms; his images have turned into clichés.

Thanks to Genghis Khan and Tamberlane, the political and demographic disasters of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries destroyed Georgia's chances of building on its Golden Age. What literature survives from these times is mainly practical: chronicles, three medical handbooks (*graphidia*) that are compilations from largely Greek and Arabic sources, a few legal documents. Only by the end of the 16th century was there any recovery, and most work was pastiches of Persian poets such as Nizami or sequels to Rustaveli's epic poem. Literary originality did not revive until well into the seventeenth century, when Georgia, split into component kingdoms, occasionally enjoyed respite from Persian tyranny. The anonymous author of the prose novel *Rusudaniani* brims with eloquent invention, using as his material stories familiar from folk tales and the Arabian Nights. More important, however, was the rise of the King-Poet in King Teimuraz I, the first major Georgian poet to have an authorial persona and a specifically autobiographical inspiration. Earlier Bagratid kings had been poets, notably David the Builder of the 12th century with his remarkable *Songs of Penitence* and his son Demetre, to whom are attributed the words of the greatest Georgian hymn "Thou art the vineyard." Teimuraz I, however, initiated a tradition in which Georgian kings, as versatile if not as evil as Nero, aimed to be the greatest king among poets and greatest poet among kings. Teimuraz had plenty of material: his mother was tortured to death by the Persians, his children

met bloody ends, his allies betrayed him, he had to compromise with his conscience, to keep the little and spasmodic power he had. His struggles, particularly his guilt, are best expressed in his poem on his mother's death, *The Martyrdom of St Ketevan of 1628*. His poem *Joseph and Zuleika*, a version of the Qur'anic account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, is the first work of Georgian literature to come, thanks to Augustine missionaries, to the attention of western Europe.

After Teimuraz came 150 years of desperate and vain attempts to win recognition and moral, if not military, support for a beleaguered Christian culture threatened by Moslem super-states, Turkey and Persia. Cultural influences began to percolate: printing presses were set up in Tbilisi in the early eighteenth century, although they worked spasmodically and many early Georgian books were printed in Rome, Venice, St Petersburg. Nevertheless, enlightened kings brought European values into Georgia. In the eighteenth century, Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani, uncle and close friend of King Vakhtang VI, composed a *Book of Wisdom and Lies*, fables which match Persian invention with Voltairean wit, and compiled the first Georgian dictionary. Although the dictionary was not printed until the 19th century, in manuscript it provided Georgia with standardized literary norms. The eighteenth century also produced three great lyric poets, Davit Guramishvili, Sayat Nova and Besiki (Besarion Gabashvili). Guramishvili spent most of his life in exile in the Ukraine, and made his sufferings and religious conversion into a lively autobiographical sequence of poems which combine the erotic and religious in an almost scandalous way. Sayat-Nova was an ashugh, a court singer, equally at home in Azeri Turkish and Armenian, but left a considerable body of love poems in Georgian.

Besiki was the first Georgian writer (there have been fewer than a dozen) to win such public affection that he became known by his Christian name only. His passionate manuscript poetry, which has a Byronic mix of eroticism and historical cynicism, influenced generations of Georgians.

As the eighteenth century ended, Persian attacks threatened the very existence of the Georgian kingdoms and annexation by Russia became the only option. Many of Georgia's aristocrats were exiled to Russia, and intellectual life took place in the academy at St Petersburg, rather than in the shattered colonial world of Tbilisi. While Russia did not enslave, behead or castrate Georgians, its bureaucracy was stifling and its systematic undermining of national culture and the autocephalic church was insidious. The beneficial effect was Russia's role as a gateway to Europe: Georgians began to travel through Russia to receive an education in Leipzig, Zurich or Brussels. Georgian scholars, trained in St Petersburg, retrieved lost mediaeval literature from manuscripts all over the Near East. By the 1850s this new education had its effect, and a recognizably Georgian romantic school, influenced by Lamartine as much as by Pushkin, incorporated traditional historical motifs into the new cult of nature. At least Georgia, unlike Russia, but like western Europe, had mediaeval chivalry to celebrate and revive. Poets such as Alexander Chavchavadze (the father-in-law of the Russian dramatist Griboedov), and three poets all called Orbeliani (Alexander, Vakhtang and, most significant, Grigol), despite a certain derivative and rhetorical quality, at least showed that modern Georgian poetry was possible. They were superseded by the shortlived Nikoloz Baratashvili, whose forty poems were

not widely known until fifteen years after his death in 1845. About Nikoloz Baratashvili's genius there can be no doubt: he seems to anticipate Rimbaud and Mallarmé as well as continue Shelley or Hoelderlin, and yet remains quintessentially Georgian.

Although Georgians were introduced to a flood of European literary material, when the viceroy Vorontsov founded an opera house in Tbilisi (to distract the aristocracy from politics) and encouraged the performance of comedy in Georgian, Georgian culture in the 19th century was hindered by the fact that the Georgians lived mostly in the country, while in their capital city Tbilisi they were outnumbered by Armenian merchants and Russian officials. For a long time there were not enough theater-goers to support a theater or readers to support a publisher of fiction. Only aristocrats who did not write for money could indulge in writing, until the 1880s, when industrialization at last brought sufficient numbers of Georgian to town to constitute an audience or a readership. At least these aristocratic luminaries, Ilya Chavchavadze and Akaki Tsereteli (both known by their Christian names) provided an example of literary prose full of civic aspiration and sufficiently talented to be compared with the Russian realist tradition of the 1860s. They also operated, as far as Tsarist Russia permitted, in the political arena, fighting for human rights, political representation, the end of the death penalty, universal education, land reform. They gave future Georgian writers a ideal of the poet as a responsible national leader. Chavchavadze's novella *Is He Human* to this day is a potent reproach to Georgians for their self-indulgent hedonism and a Tolstoyan wake-up call, while Akaki Tsereteli's *The Story of My Life* is one of the most vivid of nineteenth-century autobiographies.

The first Georgian writer so genuinely popular that he was able to earn a living by writing was Aleksandre Qazbegi, who in the 1880s produced potboilers of real merit, often with the graphic spirit of Maupassant, always with powerful melodrama. His story of murder and revenge, *The Parricide*, inspired Stalin to take the name of the avenging hero Koba as his pseudonym. From Qazbegi until today, Georgia has never lacked a talented and popular fiction writer.

But real genius came from a wholly unexpected quarter, from the highlands north of Tbilisi: the poetry of Vazha Pshavela (real name: Luka Razikashvili) and the flood of folk verse from which Vazha's own work stems and to which he led his readers. Both Vazha's work and the newly discovered folk verse influenced everything that followed.

Although he was born in 1861 in the mountains of Pshavia (hence his pseudonym), his verse and prose shares concerns and themes with the work of Ilya Chavchavadze and Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha amounts to far more than just another poet great enough to be known by his first name alone. As the Georgian Futurists admitted, when repudiating all the past, "Vazha stands outside time and space." He is qualitatively greater than any other Georgian writer, and the roots of his creation lie elsewhere, partly in a hitherto unknown aboriginal Caucasian folk culture, partly in pre-Christian, Hellenic beliefs, and partly in an intuition of other nations' cultures—all as inexplicable in nineteenth-century Pshavia as Shakespeare's learning and philosophy were in sixteenth-century Warwickshire.

Vazha had a rough education in the Kakhetian centre of Telavi, and then in Tbilisi and Gori. Poverty forced him to abandon university

study at Saint Petersburg. He remained a hunter and boxer all his life, but had an extraordinary memory for poetry, spoken and written. By 1886 (the one happy year in his life), he had married and was a village schoolteacher, living like a peasant. His first burst of poetry from 1885 to 1890 is highly original, culminating in the half-comic narrative poem *Gogotur and Apshina*, and his bitterest narrative poem, *Aluda Ketelauri* of 1888, which introduces the theme of conflict between individual morality and the commune's imperative: Aluda refuses to dishonor an infidel Ingush tribesman he has killed. This poetry combined Vazha's native folklore and dialect with European literary traditions and literary Georgian. He evolved a harsh, laconic language, tempered with hypnotic incantation. His steely pessimism evolved, under the influence of Goethe, the Bible, and Shakespeare, into a vision of idealistic man battling indifferent nature. Elements of German Romanticism (itself close to folk culture) combine with Schopenhauer's belief in a malevolent will: one fine short lyric, "Tell the lovely violet" of 1903 mourns for an unborn soul, a poem, or love:

*Tell the lovely violet,  
The worms will come and eat you up,  
Even the head, my beauty,  
That you lift up so elegantly.  
If you believe life to be  
The open door to paradise,  
Don't come, hide in the earth,  
It isn't worth coming.  
Don't see the sun, you will regret it,  
Does the sun shine all the time? [...]*

Vazha's longer poems such as *Aluda Ketelauri* fed back into folk. His poetry reached a zenith in 1893 with *Host and Guest*, where the clash between laws of blood feud and laws of hospitality drives hero and heroine to their death. Vazha's driving impulse was rage, expressed as an intransigent refusal to compromise. Vazha's, and Georgian poetry's, supreme achievement is *The Snake-Eater* of 1901, a Georgian Faust. Its hero, Mindia, is developed from folk myth into an archetype of the poet shaman unable to coexist with family or community, which make demands on him that force him to break his vows and lose his magic powers. Mindia is captured by wizards, who eat snake-flesh to maintain their powers. Mindia, desperate to die, believing this food will be fatal to him, finds instead he has acquired magic understanding of animals and plants. He escapes and becomes the village shaman, but is too sensitive to fell trees or kill game. Wife and children demand firewood and meat, forcing him to break his vows. He loses his powers, and, when war breaks out, he leads his tribe into defeat. This particular Faust has no salvation except suicide. One may see in Vazha a national prophet, a Romantic pantheist, a Symbolist rejecting the cosmos. Yet together with this violent, austere doctrine, Vazha articulates the turbulent love of nature. Vazha's most famous short poem is an allegory of Georgia's fate and a lament for his own death:

*I saw a wounded eagle,  
It was warring with crows and ravens,  
The wretch tried to rise up,  
But could no longer stand,  
It was dragging one wing on the ground,  
Its chest was bleeding. [...]*

Rustaveli became known to the English and the Russians in 1900s, but Vazha was the first actually to influence poets abroad. By 1950 four major Russian poets had translated Vazha; his influence began to spread. Pasternak's reading of *The Snake-Eater* affects his own Faustian Doctor Zhivago. Osip Mandelstam (who spent in all nearly a year in Georgia) proclaimed Vazha as "a real hurricane of the word, passing over Georgia, ripping out trees by the root . . . bubbling with the concrete, the palpable, the everyday . . . he seems to rip words with his teeth, using the temperament of Georgian phonetics, which is passionate enough as it is." In the 1970s, Vazha's greatest poems *Aluda Ketelauri*, *Host and Guest*, and *The Snake-Eater* were merged into one stark and terrifying Symbolist film by Tengiz Abuladze, *Invocation*.

The giants of Georgian literature all died in the first decades of the 20th century: Ilya Chavchavadze was murdered in 1907 (probably by a gang linked to Stalin — an irony, since Chavchavadze had been the first to recognize the adolescent Stalin's poetic gifts); Akaki Tsereteli died, cantankerous and reclusive, in 1915, also the year of Vazha's death. A new Europeanized generation, however, immediately replaced them: the years of the Russian empire's collapse and Georgia's brief period of independence made Tbilisi a major cultural center for Georgian poets as well as Russian refugees. The main force was a group who called themselves the Blue Horns, led by a talented poseur, Grigol Robakidze, who made his mark as a literary leader and as a dramatist of Wagnerian ambitions (and later met his nadir as an exile in Hitler's Germany by writing *Adolf Hitler von einem fremden Dichter gesehen*). The Blue Horns had two poets of real genius: Titsian Tabidze and Paolo Iashvili. Indebted to Russian



Georgi Leonidze, Paolo Iashvili, Titsian Tabidze

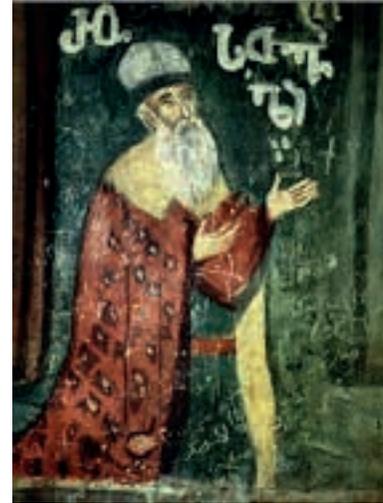
Symbolists, they nevertheless incorporated what they had learnt from Vazha Pshavela and from folk poetry which Vazha and his brothers had recorded and put in print, to synthesize original verse.

Some writers stood aside from the Blue Horns. Titsian's cousin, Galaktion Tabidze was perhaps an even greater poet; inspired by

Verlaine and Baratashvili and his own deep melancholy, he wrote verse of unparalleled musicality and invention for four decades. Two major prose writers also emerged: Mikeil Javakhishvili who had all the vivacity of Qazbegi without the meretricious melodrama and who was to achieve fame in the 1920s with his Schelmenroman of a con-man, Kvachi Kvachantiradze (somewhat

reminiscent of Maupassant's *Bel Ami*) and in the 1930s by romanticizing a bandit, Arsenia Marabdeli. A more sinister figure was Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, a diplomat representing Georgia in Weimar Germany, a follower of Rilke, Wagner and in many ways a fascist *avant la lettre*: his florid prose set a new standard for Georgian syntax — in fact, Vogt's *Grammaire de la langue géorgienne* found all the examples for Georgian morphology and syntax in Gamsakhurdia's writings alone. Gamsakhurdia, despite his clashes with authorities even in the Great Terror, survived, thanks to a strange symbiotic relationship with Lavrenti Beria and because Stalin liked his historical novels glorifying Georgia's mediaeval kings (Stalin's own copies are heavily annotated, even correcting mistakes in translation from Greek to Georgian that Stalin detected).

The Soviet invasion of Georgia in 1921, despite a bloody revenge on insurgents in 1924, did not immediately end this renaissance. After 1929, however, when Stalin in the USSR and his acolyte Beria in Georgia established a totalitarian ideology, poets and novelists became officially engineers of the soul: by 1935, there was no Georgian literature of any moral or aesthetic value left. Despite their anxiety to conform, a quarter of the Union of Writers were murdered by Beria on trumped up charges of sedition. In 1937 Titsian Tabidze and Mikheil Javakhishvili were tortured to death; Paolo Iashvili shot himself. Others survived, but, in true Stalinist tradition lost their spouses or siblings to the NKVD. Galaktion Tabidze, like Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, was marked out for survival (despite their non-conformism), but Galaktion Tabidze's wife was brutally murdered by the secret police.



Shota Rustaveli



Teimuraz I

Georgian literature was stagnant for the fifteen years that followed Stalin's death. Even when the thaw came to Russia, Georgian culture remained frozen. There was no major Georgian diaspora or émigré culture to stimulate or inspire a renaissance. Only when Eduard Shevardnadze, appointed to power by Brezhnev, decided to recruit the intelligentsia as allies, did writers receive a little leeway. With Shevardnadze's support, the ex-political prisoner Chabua Amirejibi pushed his novel *Data Tutashkhia*, about a bandit pursued by the Tsarist gendarmerie, past the censorship. In the 1970s another major novelist, Otar Chiladze, began to publish a series of fine, if prolix, novels, in which a process of Orphic redemption takes place against a background of ancient or modern Georgia, in allegories of Russian tyranny. A number of interesting poets, notably women (who were never so closely examined for political correctness by the macho Georgian communist censors) such as Ana Kalandadze established their reputation, too.

When the USSR collapsed and Georgia became independent, writers could write and print what they wanted. The irony is that Georgia, under inept kleptocrats and idiotic chauvinists, was plunged into economic collapse and civic turmoil: writers had to find money elsewhere, from scholarships and invitations abroad. After the Rose Revolution of 2003-4, a remarkable renaissance began and a number of gifted novelists and playwrights have flourished, for example, the prolific Aka Morchiladze and the provocative Lasha Bughadze.



Ana Kalandadze



Vazha Pshavela

Тьляцк, Гословиний проспект.







*Palacio Nacional, Plaza de Armas, Santiago*



*Estación de Ferrocarril, Valparaíso*



Утвержденное правительствомъ общество  
КАХЕТИНСКИХЪ САДОВЛАДѢЛЬЦЕВЪ  
**КАХЕТИА**  
въ ТИФЛИСѢ И ТЕЛАВѢ.

Общество «КАХЕТИА» предлагаетъ потребителямъ  
лучшій виноградъ въ своемъ поддѣлкѣ чиста исключи-  
тельно кахетинскаго вина, полученнаго имъ непосредственно  
своими руками.

**Кахетинскихъ садовладѣльцевъ.**

Генералъ Общества «КАХЕТИА» и главный складъ находится  
въ Тифлисѣ, на Французской площади въ Корпусѣ графа  
Толстого. Отдѣленіе склада Михайловск. ул. № 95,  
спускъ Михайловской башни.

ДОВОДУ ДО СВЕДѢНІЯ ПОЧТЕННѢЙШЕЙ ПУБЛИКИ  
что мною открыто въ Тифлисѣ отдѣленіе моей вино-  
торговой фирмы. Извѣстенъ въ продажѣ:

**ШАМПАНСКОЕ!**

привозащенное французскимъ спо-  
собомъ изъ амеретинскихъ винъ  
(вина натуральная).

Имеретинскія столовыя выдержан. вина,  
отличающіяся отъ кахетинскихъ  
виновъ извѣстностью и приятнымъ  
вкусомъ.

**ЛЕЧЕБНЫЯ ВИНА.**

Хересъ, португейнъ, малага, марсаля  
и мадера,

какъ укрепляющія и похотяющія  
пищеваренію.

**Цѣны умѣренныя!**

Главный складъ и заводъ въ КУ-  
ТАИСѢ соб. д. Отдѣленіе по-  
мѣщается въ ТИФЛИСѢ на Двор-  
цовой ул., д. Сараджева во дворѣ.

Съ почт. **Ф. Н. Челуговъ**

При этомъ ублаженіи прошу не смѣшивать мое производство имере-  
тинскаго шампанскаго

**„КОЛКИДА“ и „ЦАРИЦА ТАМАРА“**

съ другими виновыми винами.





Caucasus Society for the Advancement of Fine Arts. Photograph by Eduard Klar, 1902, 23 September, Museum of the sculptor Iakob Nikoladze

1st row left to right: Iakob Nikoladze, Alexandre Mrevlishvili;

2nd row left to right: Baratova, Georgy Bashindzhagyan, Chekalina, Felix Khodorovich, Oskar Shmerling, Patkanova;

3rd row left to right: unknown soldier, Genrikh Hrinevsky, Bondar, Fedunin, Gigo Gabashvili, Alexander Zakharov, Artemy Shamshinov, Tsioglinsky, Luigi Longo;

4th row: left to right: Egishe Tatevosyan, Tarasov, Boris Fogel, Alexander Zlatsman, Amayak Akopyan, Konstantin Zanis, Mikhail Sklifasovsky

## The Photographers of Golovinsky Prospect *Giorgi Gersamia*

On August 19, 1839, the French government announced that it had acquired the process developed by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre to capture images in a camera obscura and was giving free access to anyone who wanted it. Daguerre wrote “A Historical Review and Description of the Procedures for Daguerreotype and Diorama” and promoted the commercial distribution of his invention outside France.

In less than a year the time needed for a photograph was reduced so much that portraits were possible and portrait studios started opening everywhere. Enterprising daguerreotypists traveled to distant lands to earn money.

The first daguerreotypist to arrive in Tiflis in 1842 was the French citizen Joseph Tachere. According to the police: “He behaved honestly, worked at making daguerreotype portraits.” In eighteen months, in 1844, he moved to Odessa, where he worked until 1850. He traveled through Tiflis to Persia and tried to establish himself in Tehran. Tachere appeared in Tiflis again in March 1851, on his way back to France. A daguerreotype painter, he opened a studio near Mukhrani Bridge, but soon after went to Paris.<sup>(1)</sup> None of his works survived, nor did any of many other daguerreotypists who appeared in the city.

Artists, dentists, merchants, retired military men, and noblemen who had learned to craft of photography came to Tiflis.

What was Tiflis like at that time?

A reference book of 1888 reads: “Tiflis has up to 105,000 residents, of whom half are Russian (officials) and Georgians (craftsmen) and the other half are Armenians (traders and craftsmen).

The city in appearance is divided into two parts—the Asian and the European. The Asian part is occupied by the craftsmen, the European part has beautiful houses and streets where the official aristocrats and bourgeoisie live; here is the palace of the chief executive with garden, a beautiful Caucasian museum, a public library, the editorial offices, of local Russian, Armenian, and Georgian publications, gymnasiums, and theaters. The city is rather beautiful, situated in a valley between two large mountains on the shore of the Kura River. ... Here, in a southern city, street life is highly developed, and almost everyone works at his craft in full view of passersby, and you will meet representatives of all the nationalities of the Caucasus on the local boulevard.”

In early 1846 the newspaper *Kavkaz* wrote, “We are pleased by the great confluence of all kinds of artists in Tiflis. Was it so very long ago that we had only one portrait painter, known here as the Georgian Raphael? Whoever needed a portrait came to Ya. N. Ovnatamov, and he always successfully satisfied every demand; he even painted portraits from memory of people who had died and whom he had not seen often. ... But now we have the arrivals of the daguerreotypist Bart and then the portraitist Konradi, from Odessa.”

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<sup>(1)</sup> State Historical Archive of Georgia. F. 11, o. 1, d. 2463.



Viceregent's palace, photograph by David Korganov 1863  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Baador Kobliamidze Collection



Tiflis street (Museum Library of Iosif Grishashvili, Tbilisi)



Fruit sellers (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Portrait of unknown woman, photograph by Alexander Okulovsky  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

Portrait of unknown woman, photograph by Vladimir Barkanov  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Photograph of a hunter, photograph by Adolf Makarovich  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Group of children, photograph by Bargat Shakhbazyan  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Group of Gurians, photograph by Edward Westley  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Industrialist and patron of the arts Giorgi Kartvelishvili.  
Publisher of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota  
Rustaveli, State Museum of Georgian Literature

Kavkaz called the arrival of Genri Gaup and Ivan Alexandrovsky as one of the best presents of autumn 1848, for they “made portraits with oil paints, watercolor, and the use of the daguerreotype with color with the perfection that only the daguerreotype can achieve.

While Gaup was a little-known Moscow daguerreotypist, Alexandrovsky was an outstanding individual. He had studied in 1839-41 in the Imperial Academy of the Arts in Karl Brullov’s class. He was a military artist in the Caucasian war. He opened his own photography studio on Nevsky Prospect in 1853 and in 1859 became the court photographer to Alexander II. He also built a stereoscopic apparatus that he patented in 1854. In 1860 he began constructing submarines and torpedoes with the latest technical advances.

The number of photography studios grew inexorably. Over the years, there were “The St. Petersburg”, “French”, “Berlin”, “Europe”, “Rembrandt”, “Transcaucasus Photography”, “Light and Shadow”, “Bas-Relief”, “Electra”, “Pushkin”, and so on.

In January 1863, despite the large number of photographers in town, Edward Westley decided to open his Caucasian Photography Studio. Here is an excerpt from his newspaper announcement: “Chromo-photography is the latest American method for coloring photographic portraits and cards, completely unknown here (in Tiflis); in the liveliness of colors and their durability chromo-photography surpasses all other methods of painting.” (Kavkaz, 1864, No. 82). A year later he was selling views of Tiflis and Kutaisi and other marvelous locations and a collection of stereoscopic views of the Military-Georgian Road, Pyatigorsk, and other places.



Georgian family (Collection of Ekaterina Cholokashvili)

In February 1865 the watercolorist Valerian Senchillo placed an advertisement in Kavkaz announcing that he was opening a studio with the artist Kampioni: “The specialty of my studio is watercolor, chromo-photography, and aniline paints on photographs. ... The prices are so moderate that any not wealthy person can have a portrait in color, which gives more liveliness and more elegant look.” (Kavkaz, 1865, No. 18).

Daguerreotypes and colored photograph portraits in beautiful leather frames became accessible in price and replaced miniatures painted by portrait artists. They had to cooperate with photographers or seek clients in other places.

The story of the outstanding portraitist Akop Ovnatanyan is illustrative. On October 27, 1868, he appealed by letter to the authorities:

"To Head of the Main Directorate  
Viceroy of the Caucasus Baron Alexander Pavlovich Nikolai  
From Yakov Ovnatamov, Free Artist born in Tiflis.

With my old age approaching and the flourishing of photography in all parts of Russia, I have become convinced to my great distress that inside Russia I cannot earn the money I did previously using my talent. In any case, feeling still strong enough to help my family and knowing, that photography has not reached the size within Persia that it has in other States," he asks permission to join the service of His Majesty the Shakh. Akop Ovnatanyan was forced to leave Tiflis forever. The artist died in Tabriz in 1881.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1857 on the orders of General Field Marshal Alexander Baryatinsky, Viceroy of the Caucasus and Commander in Chief of the Caucasus Army, Alexander Ivanitsky, an engineer in charge of mining in the Caucasus and an experienced photographer, was sent to Paris and London to purchase necessary equipment and photographic materials to create

<sup>(2)</sup> State Historical Archive of Georgia. F. 7, o. 1, d. 2524.

a photographic establishment at the headquarters of the Caucasus Military Okrug.<sup>(3)</sup> In Paris he became a member of the French Photography Society, met the famous optician Charles Chevalier, whose clients included Nicéphore Niépce and Louis Daguerre. His shopping list of equipment, lenses, and chemicals covered everything needed to obtain images using the method of Louis Daguerre and Fox Talbot. Ivanitsky personally presented the Viceroy with photographs he brought back from Europe.

Part of the 600 kilograms of photographic equipment was paid for by Count Iwan von Nostitz and sent to him via Vladikavkaz. Colonel von Nostitz had served in Tiflis and met with Ivanitsky and then in 1858 was appointed commander of the well-known Nizhegorodsky Dragoon Regiment, stationed in Chir-Yurta in the Northern Caucasus. There in November 1858 he received Alexandre Dumas, who was traveling in the Caucasus. "Count Nostitz showed Moinet an album of views of the Caucasus that he had taken himself. ... Moinet took home five or six photographs and I brought a portrait of Hadji Murat—alive." Count Nostitz took the first ever photo portrait of Shamil. "In Chir-Yurt the prisoner was brought to the commander of the dragoon regiment, Count Nostitz. The count is a great lover of photography and in whatever remote corner of the Caucasus he found himself, he always had his photographic equipment. Naturally, he offered to take Shamil's portrait, which pleased the imam greatly. He expressed the desire to have his portraits sent to Temir-Khan-Shura, for his wives and his son Mohammed-Shata."

<sup>(3)</sup> State Historical Archive of Georgia. F. 264, o. 1, d. 111.

## НЕОФИЦИАЛЬНАЯ ЧАСТЬ.

ТЕАТРЪ ГРУЗИНСКАГО ДВОРЯНСТВА.

*Въ субботу, 29-го марта 1897 года,*

**ПЕРВЫЙ СЕАНСЪ**

ЕДИНСТВЕННАГО ВЪ МИРЪ И ВСЕМИРНО-ИЗВЪСТНАГО

# СИНЕМАТОГРАФА

## ЛЮМЪЭРА.

ДВИЖУЩАЯСЯ ЖИВАЯ ФОТОГРАФІЯ.

ПРОГРАММА СОСТОИТЪ ИЗЪ 3-хъ ОТДѢЛЕНІЙ.

Особенное вниманіе обращаютъ на себя коронаціонныя картины:

Въездъ Ея Величества Государыни Императрицы въ Москву.

Торжественное шествіе Ихъ Величествъ на Коронацію.

Красное крыльцо. Торжественное шествіе Ихъ Величествъ на Коронацію.

Фрейлины Ея Величества.

Делуація азіатскихъ племенъ: черкесы, казани и пр., и пр.

**Чудные виды столицъ.**

**Сцены изъ военнаго быта.**

**Сцены изъ дѣтской жизни.**

**Виды Чернаго моря и пр., и пр.**

Дирекція синематографа Люмъэра обращаетъ особенное вниманіе на то, что синематографъ Люмъэра ничего общаго не имѣетъ съ жалкими подражателями, посѣдившими г. Тифлисъ.

**БИЛЕТЫ ПРОДАЮТСЯ ЗАБЛАГОВРЕМЕННО ВЪ КЛАСАХЪ ТЕАТРА.**

Дирекція синематографа **ЛЮМЪЭРА.**

237 1.

We know of five views of Tiflis and Mtskheta taken by Ivanitsky in 1858. After a long delay, in early 1863, the photography department at the Headquarters of the Caucasus Army was opened, “meaning to use photography for topography, ethnography, and archaeology ... where art can be used to benefit the region and science.” Military topographers played a large role in the development of professional photography. Among them were the outstanding Tbilisi photographers Evsei Kondratenko, Petr Simonenko, Andrei Pastykhov, Adolf Makarovich, and Konstantin Zanis.

Photo studios were primarily located on the lively central streets that housed fashionable stores, theaters, and museums. The studio addresses almost never changed, but the names of the photographers did, as different people rented the space with 8 to 10 rooms, living quarters, photography pavilion, laboratory, rooms for retouchers and separate rooms for the printers, and so on.

To open a photography studio, you had to apply to the Tiflis governor for a permit. The photographer had to be politically and morally reliable. Photographs were under the strict control of the inspector of printers, lithographers, and similar establishments.

At first photographers imported photographic accessories from abroad. Lev Dubelir announced that he had “received a large parcel from abroad of chemical materials for photography and painted scenery by the best artists of Vienna” (1865), while the warehouse for pharmacists supplied photographers with albumin paper and other materials (1874).

Eventually, stores and optics studios were established to sell cameras and equipment. In 1903, Erivan Square saw the appearance of “the first special warehouse in the Caucasus of photographic apparatus and supplies. Otto Gagen is the sole representative of the Voigtländer Company, producing lenses and Apollo plates.” Johann Heckler’s store of art and photography supplies recommended a camera as the best holiday gift.

The store belonging to Alfonse Mulman, an optical mechanic, was in the town center on Golovinsky Prospect. The photography section of the Caucasus Society of Trade in Pharmaceutical Wares offered a large selection of cameras of different brands, enlargers, plates, bromine silver paper, postcards, and all kinds of accessories.

Personalized backing could be ordered in Odessa, Moscow, Vilnius, and Vienna. The photographs would be glued to the backing. They looked better and kept longer. On the reserve side, the backing gave the name of the photographer and the address and listed the exhibitions in which he won medals and the awards, and titles given by ruling courts in Europe and Asia.

The Caucasus Art Society was organized in 1874; its goal was the development of artistic activity in four areas: painting, sculpture, architecture, and photography. It opened a permanent exhibition. The artists Luigi Premazzi, Ilya Nikolayevich Zankovsky, and A. K. Longo, the sculptor Felix Khodorovich, and photographers who belonged to the society showed their works. Dmitri Nikitin showed an album of 100 photographic views of Georgia and Tiflis and the construction of the Poti-Tiflis railway. Edward Westley made



Amateur photographer Sergei Margulov (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

a lot of photographs in Pyatigorsk, adding to his collection of ancient monuments. Other members were Barkanov and Adolf Makarovich, head of the photography at the Headquarters of the Caucasus Army. When the Caucasus Art Society united with the Musical Society in 1877 to form the Caucasus Society for the Advancement of Fine Arts, Dmitri Ermakov, who was living in Trapezunda at the time, joined Barkanov and Nikitin as a corresponding member.<sup>(4)</sup>

Prince Grigory Grigoryevich Gagarin, who was seconded in 1848 to Viceroy M. S. Vorontsov “to be used in scholarly and artistic ways,” was an honorary member of the society.

Members of the society included the architects Luigi Caribaggio, Leopold Bilfeld, and Alexander Zaltsman and the Russian artists Pavel Vereshchagin and Luigi Premazzi, and Petr Kolchin, who were all living at the time in Tiflis. The artist and photographer Fedor Khlamov came to Tiflis after graduating from the Imperial Academy of Arts and taught drawing at the First Men’s Gymnasium and Seminary. In 1860 he opened a photography studio and offered his services for portraits. His last newspaper advertisement in 1866 announced the studio of the artist Khlamov was opened on Golovinsky Prospect in the center of town and took orders for works in oil paints, both individual icons and full iconostases. They also sold view of Tiflis, photographs of paintings by the best masters, and 3 photographic machines with all appurtenances. Photography lessons were available at reasonable prices.

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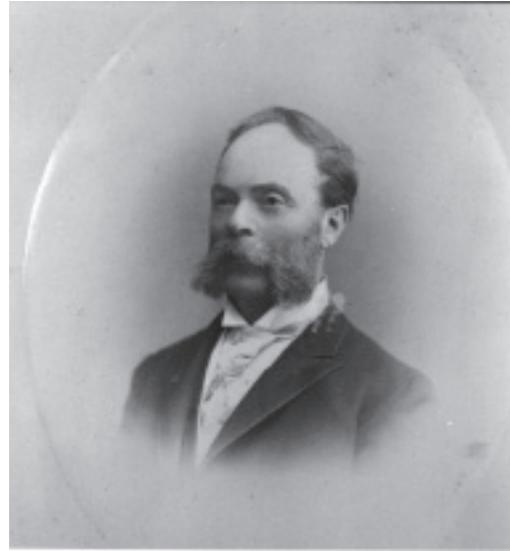
<sup>(4)</sup> Kavkazskii kalendar’, 1876/1877, p. 252.

In the early 1860s a peasant boy from a provincial city became a student of Khlamov. Alexander Roinashvili (1846 – 1898) became the first Georgian professional photographer and public figure. He blossomed under Khlamov’s tutelage and creative atmosphere and in 1875 he opened his first studio on Dvortsovaya Street. He offered the usual services: “Portraits of large size, and a cabinet of portrait visiting cards. Views of Tiflis and the Caucasus, various types, and portraits of celebrities are for sale.” He participated in scientific expeditions, photographed architecture, icons, and manuscripts, as well as representatives of various corners of the Caucasus. He traveled to Central Asia and Persia to enrich his collection of pictures of antiquity. Working in Dagestan, he took an interest in the history of Christianity in the North Caucasus, did original research, and corresponded with scholars. The Fifth Archaeological Congress took place in Tiflis in 1881. Roinashvili offered delegates of the congress his photographs of monuments and objects of antiquity, including the inscriptions of the Tatev Monastery in Armenia. His activity did not go unnoticed. He was elected a member and staff member of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society on March 26, 1886.

Roinashvili also participated in the solution of many social issues, from the development of Georgian theater to the renaissance of crafts. A large group of photography students lived for free and worked in his studio.

Long before his death, he wrote a will leaving everything (a museum collection and the photographic studio with equipment and negatives) to the literacy society. The headstone on his grave

(Left) Photographer Dmitri Nikitin,  
National Archive of Georgia  
(Right) The photographer Petr Gankevich  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Group photograph of Alexandre Roinashvili  
with students  
(Collection of Tengiz Beridze)





Georgian theater troupe, Georgian Museum of Theater, Music, Cinema and Choreography

Portrait of unknown woman, Photograph by Alexandre Roinashvili (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

reads: "To the model benefactor filled with love of his Homeland Alexander Roinashvili from the Society for the Dissemination of Literacy Among Georgians. 1898." <sup>(5)</sup>

Working in the city at the same time was Dmitiri Ivanovich Ermakov, son of the architect Luigi Caribaggio. It is believed that he was educated in Tiflis at the School of Military Topographers, where they also taught photography. The teachers were the officers Elisei Kondratenko and Petr Simonenko, both excellent photographers.

Dmitri Ermakov (1846-1916) is first mentioned in the journal of the general meeting of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society on November 4, 1870.

"The photographer D. Ermakov, who traveled this summer through Turkish Armenia, sent the Geographical Society a marvelous collection of views taken in Tortumsk Okrug, which lies to the northwest of Erzerum. The members present responded with particular praise for the scientific interest and thorough finish of these photographs that show ancient churches, ruins, and so on."

A year later he sent another series of photographs to the society: "Photographic depictions of views, monuments and national types, taken in various parts of Transcaucasia, rarities and antiquities from the collection of Russian Imperial Consul Moshnin in Trapezunda (total of 79 photographs)."

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<sup>(5)</sup> Vissarion Tabidze. *Aleksandr Roinashvili* (in Georgian), Tbilisi, 1962, pp. 85-98.

He sent similar materials to the Russian Archaeological Society in St. Petersburg.<sup>(6)</sup>

On December 16, 1881, Ermakov was made a member and staff member of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society.<sup>(7)</sup> In 1886, Countess Praskovya Sergeevna Uvarova, chairwoman of the Moscow Archaeological Society, was looking for a photographer for an expedition. Yevgeny Gustavovich Veidenbaum, an outstanding specialist on the Caucasus, gave her a recommendation: "In my opinion, the best photographer for your expedition would be Mr. Ermakov. He has all the equipment for an expedition camera, brings a deep sense of responsibility in his work, and does not lack archaeological interests. And it appears that he is quite altruistic."<sup>(8)</sup>

He became a member of the French Photographic Society in 1871 and in 1874 received a medal for the photographs he sent from Trapezunda. A medal went as well to Barkanov, who was also a member of the society.

On October 28, 1880, the governor's chancellery informed the Chief of Typography and Lithography, Count Engalychev, that the artist Kolchin had permission to open a photography studio together with Ermakov in Tiflis, on Dvortsovaya Street in Saradzhev's house, recently vacated by Roinashvili. But Ermakov

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<sup>(6)</sup> IRGO, transcript of meeting 14 January 1868.

<sup>(7)</sup> N. I. Veselvosky. *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva 1846-1896* [The History of the Imperial Russian Archeological Society 1846-1896], St. Petersburg, 1900, p. 344.

<sup>(8)</sup> Georgian National Manuscript Center. P. S. Uvarova Fund, no. 78.

found it hard to remain in the monotony of a photography studio. He began planning his next expeditions.

Wanting to revisit the architectural monuments of southern Georgia, he wrote to Countess Uvarova, chairwoman of the Moscow Archeological Society, in May 1907: "This is something very special, both in architecture and the ornaments are beautiful in the highest degree. ... Knowing the beauty of these photographs, I will gladly close my studio in Tiflis for six weeks to go the region."<sup>(9)</sup>

The tireless voyager, participant of many archaeological and ethnographic expeditions, creator of an impressive series of pictures of distant lands, the Caucasus, Tiflis and its residents, author of a collection of almost 25,000 negatives, and recipient of 36 awards for photography died on October 28 (Old Style) 1916. "The board and members of the Caucasus Society for the Advancement of Fine Arts, in whose name a wreath was placed on the coffin, photographers and friends of the deceased attended the funeral. Instead of a wreath on the grave of the late D. I. Ermakov, local photographers donated the sum collected to one of the Gymnasiums of Tiflis."

Members of his family left Tiflis. His negatives, photographs, and equipment were sold. The location of his burial place in the Kuki cemetery is no longer known.

Today, the collection is in Tbilisi at the Simon Janashia National Museum of Georgia. Part of the negatives have restored and digitized thanks to the Dutch foundations Stichting Horizon and

<sup>(9)</sup> Georgian National Manuscript Center. P. S. Uvarova Fund, no. 71.

Flora Family Foundation, the Nederlands Fotomuseum, and the National Museum of Georgia.

Every new photographer arriving in Tiflis offered innovations to attract clients. Here are a few examples. On May 11, 1880, the nobleman Genrik Filippovich opened his studio in a purpose-built building. The artist from Warsaw announced that "besides the usual portrait he executes heliominatures in oil paints which show the brilliant results can be reached with photography when combined with the artist's artful brush." His "photosculpture," photographic portraits taken from living faces to appear as marble busts and statues, elicited even greater interest. He also organized tableaux vivants in city parks in the summertime.

In 1882, the Hungarian artist Mihály Zichy produced a benefit of tableaux vivants from *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. More than a hundred people participated, with costumes and painted sets. Local artists were called in to help, including Genrik Filippovich, Felix Khodorovich, and Petr Kolchin. Photographs of the event have not yet been found. There are photographs of the tableaux vivants produced by Zichy in Kutaisi.

Eduard Klar (1861-1922) moved to Tiflis from St. Petersburg in 1893. He rented V. V. Barkanov's studio from his widow, and after business success opened his own studio in 1903 in the center of town. Barkanov's photographic legacy was added to Ermakov's collection. Klar's "wonderful photos, portraits, enlargements, technique and taste brought him two medals (in local exhibitions),



Gold medal of Sergei Margulov, Photography exhibition of the Tiflis Society of Amateur Photographers 1897  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

a silver and a large gold one.” He was the photographer of the Government (opera) Theater, met with the touring prima donnas and then photographed them at his atelier. The photographs were as elegant as the faces of the singers who posed for him. He had studied drawing with the famous artist Gigo Gabashvili (who was a brilliant photographer, as we have recently learned), and he played the violin. In late 1907 he began taking commissions for color photographs. He used the Lumière brothers Autochrome process.



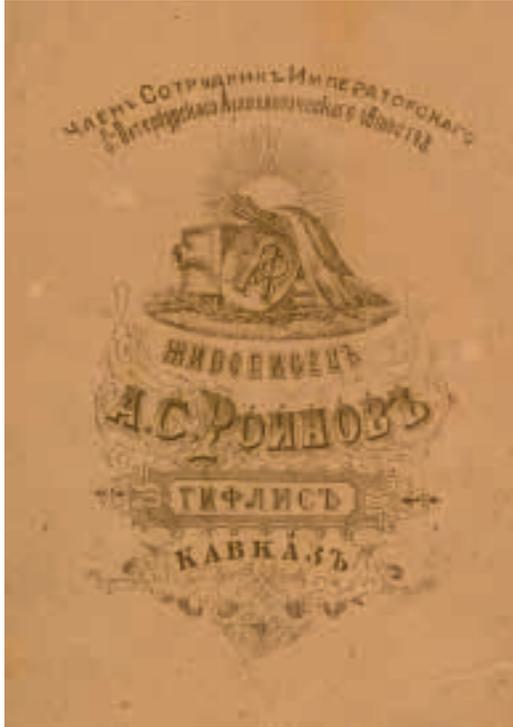
Portrait of photographer Grigori Ter-Gevondiants (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

Petr Gankevich (1879-1931) opened his studio on Golovinsky Prospect in January 1903. A full member of the Odessa Photography Society, with many medals for his works, Gankevich advertised that he used electrical lighting when taking photographs. “Nights from 7.30 until 10.00, electricity is used for photos in makeup, masquerade and ball dress and for all works requiring artistic effects.” He lived in Tiflis until his death, and his daughter, Lili Gankevich, studied with Yevgeny Lanceray at the Tbilisi Academy of Arts.

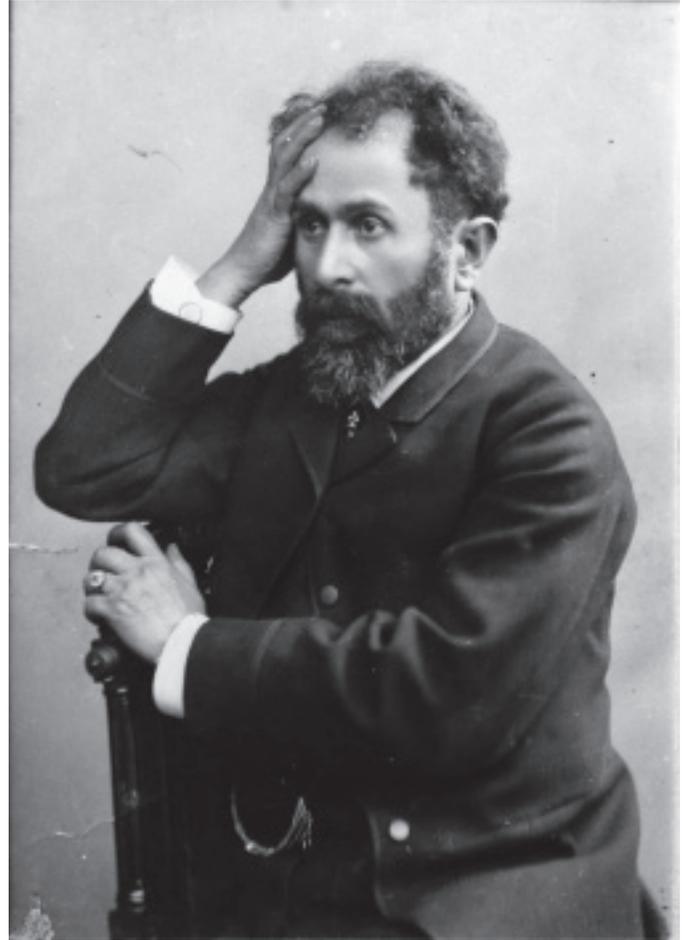
We are informed about Artur in his newspaper advertisements. Artem Shakhbazyan (Artur) opened a studio in 1860, closely supervising the execution of orders. In 1865 he went to Paris specifically to perfect



Photograph stock of Grigori Ter-Gevondiants



Photograph stock of Alexandre Roinashvili



Photographer Alexandre Roinashvili (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Portrait of Petros Adamian as Hamlet, Photograph by Grigori Ter-Gevozdants (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Portrait of Photographer Bagrat Shakhbazyan (ARTUR) (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

Dvortsovaya Street 1896  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



Studio of artist Gigo Gabashvili  
(Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

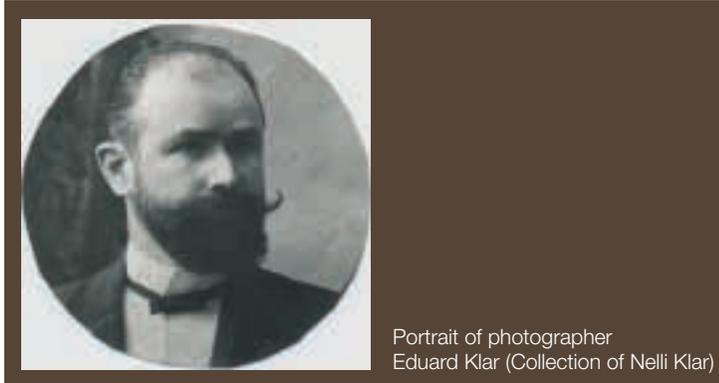




(left) Artist Oskar Shmerling, photograph by Konstantin Zanis (Collection of Alla Shmerling)  
(top right) Interior of house of industrialist Grigori Adelkhanov, photograph by Sergei Margulov (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)  
(bottom right) Tiflis interior (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)



(left) Poet Akakii Tsereteli, photograph by Alexandre Roinashvili (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)  
(top right) Family of Pastor Richard Maier (Collection of Ivetta Maier)  
(bottom right) Filmmaker Vasili Amashukeli. 1912 State Museum of Georgian Literature



Portrait of photographer  
Eduard Klar (Collection of Nelli Klar)

his art. He became a member of the French Photography Society and upon his return offered the public the latest in photography. Two generations of Arturs (Artem and his son, Bagrat) worked diligently in their portrait atelier, photographing wealthy residents for over half a century. The studio was in their private house on Elizavetinskaya Street. Now there is a small square at that location.

In the 1870s there were only 5-7 photography studios, by 1890s there were 10, and the number peaked in the 1900s, with 14-16 ateliers. In 1916 their turnover was 55,000 rubles.

Portrait photography was profitable because of its popularity and accessibility. Technical issues were gradually overcome and the quality of portrait lenses improved. With creative use of poses and background and soft tonal lighting, photographers could achieve artistic levels in their portraits. They created a large collection of portraits of public figures, writers, and actors representing various strata of society.

The photographers of Tiflis diligently captured views of the city, streets, squares, individual buildings, public transport, bridges, bazaars, and workshops of craftsmen, festivities and notable events. Many subjects of their cameras have changed unrecognizably, while others have vanished forever.

The result of the work of numerous photographers, professional and amateur, is the visual history of old Tiflis, and this collection of old photographs has itself become a historical monument.

A little bit about the Lumière moving pictures in Tiflis. The first demonstration of cinematography took place on Saturday, 16 November 1896, at the theater of the Georgian nobility. A few days later, on 20 November 1896, there was a performance at the Nikitin Brothers Circus which involved the famous physicist Karl Krause, who presented an amazing world innovation. However, the Lumière company announced that it had nothing to do with pathetic imitators and organized the first séance of the legendary cinematographer, Lumière, on Saturday, 29 March 1897, at the Georgian nobility theater. It was not a large crowd, although the audience got a lot of pleasure. They particularly liked "Train arriving at the station." They also warmly applauded the equestrienne Amalia. The film of the coronation (Nicholas II took the throne on 26 May 1896) was repeated by public demand. The daily shows were tremendously successful.

That was the start of tumultuous construction of "electrotheaters" in Tiflis and many provincial towns. Golovinsky Prospect in Tiflis was home to the Mignon, Arfasto, and Kino of Miniatures.

Mikhailovsky Prospect had Kino-ARSA, Odeon, Fortuna, and Apollo. The projectionists in these theaters were often young men who dreamed of film cameras and making movies.

The first amateur filmmakers in Georgia were Vasily Amashukeli (1886-1977) and Alexander Digmelov (1884-1958). After graduating from the gymnasium in Kutaisi, Amashukeli went to Moscow to study at an art school. After a year, he needed money, so he took a job as an electrician at a Moscow factory. Frequent attendance of movie theaters helped him master projectionist expertise. In 1905 he moved to Baku. In 1908, together with Ivan Gepner, who owned a movie theater, he went to Moscow to buy a Gomon film camera, where he studied for three months with the company's camera engineer, and then returned to Baku where he made films. Only the titles remain: "Walking on the Beach," "People at the Baku Bazaar," "Oil Rig at Work," "Unloading a Ship," and so on.

After "Parade of the Gunib Regiment in Baku" came out, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over Shamil, he was given an offer to work with Simon Esadze, chief of the Military History Department of the Headquarters of the Caucasus Okrug. The affiliation did not occur.

In 1910, several movie theaters were built in Kutaisi. Amashukeli was offered a job to equip them technically and he returned to his hometown, working as the projectionist of the Radium Theater while also making films of local events: they included "Landscapes of Kutaisi," "An Excursion to the Ruins of Bargata Church," "Birthday of Actor Lado Meskhishvili," and "Daisy Day."

Amashukeli entered the history of Georgian cinematography for his documentary of the trip made by the great poet and public figure Akaki Tsereteli to the mountainous regions Racha and Lechkhumi in Western Georgia between 21 July and 2 August 1912, where jubilant fans of his poetry greeted him. The full-length film (1,200 m) was shown in September in Kutaisi and was a huge success.<sup>(10)</sup> Georgians abroad requested copies and it was sent to Moscow, Istanbul, and Harbin. Interestingly, Digmelov worked on the footage at the laboratory of Sofia Ivanitstkaya's movie theater in Tiflis. Amashukeli lived in Kutaisi and unfortunately did not work any more as a camera operator. In 1974 he was named a National Artist of Georgia. The negative of "The Trip of Georgian Poet Akaki Tsereteli to Racha-Lechkhumi" has not survived. The State Archive of Georgia has part of the film, around 400 m. The film was restored in 1954 and then digitized in 2009.

In Tiflis in 1904, Digmelov worked as the projectionist at Sofia Ivanitskaya's movie house. While still at school, he worked in a small photo studio as photographer and retoucher. Later, he and his father (whose pseudonym was Jan Morris) toured Georgia and Central Asia with a show of foggy pictures from the poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and various moving pictures. By 1920 Digmelov began thinking about a film camera and when Ivanitskaya took his advice and brought a Pathé camera and development equipment from Moscow, he began filming a local newsreel. To the delight of viewers, who had never seen themselves on screen, he played races at the hippodrome, airplane flights, military parades, church holidays in Mtskheta and so on. His negatives were frequently acquired by the

<sup>(10)</sup> Karlo Gogodze. Vasil Amashukeli. Tbilisi, 1954.



Simon Esadze, National Archive of Georgia

Pathé Brothers, Gomon, and Timan and Reinhardt.<sup>(11)</sup> Many foreign companies filmed in the Caucasus and showed the films in Europe. The Italian cameraman and director Giovanni Vitrotti had a small studio in Tiflis in 1910-1911 and made documentaries about Georgia and Armenia.<sup>(12)</sup>

When World War I broke out in 1914, Digmelov was drafted. As part of the military charitable Skobelevsky Committee in Petrograd, the Military-Cinematography department was formed in 1914. The 14 April 1914 issues of *Vestnik kinematografii* announced that “the department will manufacture cinematic films of military-educational content intended specially for soldiers and battle films for the general film market.” The department was allowed to film the fighting and expeditions of the Caucasus Army. The head of the department was the military historian Colonel Semen Esadze, author of books on the Caucasus wars, but also experienced in cinematography. The photographers and cameramen Captain Alexander Smirnsky and Alexander Shugerman worked in the department.

In the fall of 1913 the studio of Alexander Drankov and Alexei Taldykin had produced a 50-minute film by Ludwig Cherny, Esadze, and cameraman Nikolai Efremov called *The Conquest of the Caucasus*. Such Georgian actors as Valerian Gunia (in the role of Shamil) and Nikolai Eristov were in the film. The battle scenes used 20,000 soldiers. At public request, the picture was



Filmmaker Alexander Digmelashvili (Digmelov) (Giorgi Gersamia Collection)

<sup>(11)</sup> Alexander Digmelov. “Mogonebebi [Reminiscences],” *Savchota zelovneba* [Soviet Art], 1987, No. 11, pp. 39-46.

<sup>(12)</sup> Lasha Bakradze. “Adreuli ‘tsotsxali suratebi’ Sakartveloshi da Kavkasiashi” [Early “tableaux vivants” in Georgia and the Caucasus], newspaper *24 saati*, no. 216, 11.09.2014, p. 3.

shown at the Moderne movie theater in Tiflis in January 1914 with a live military band. Later the Pathé Brothers company bought the negative of *The Conquest of the Caucasus* (*The Taking of Gunib*) “for a significant sum.”

On 2 February 1915 “the chief of the Military Historical Department of the Headquarters of the Caucasus Military Okrug informed Colonel Esadze and editor of the department Captain Smirnsky that they have permission to take cinematographic and photographic pictures at the Caucasus theater of military action and in other areas of the Caucasus region.” Esadze also worked with the cameramen of the Skobelevsky Committee—Janis Dored, Erkole, and Petr Ermolov, among others.

Thus, on 3 (16) February 1916 in Petrograd, Alexander Khokhlovkin released a film by the Military Historical Department called *Heroes and Trophies of the Turkish Fortress Erzerum*. Then on 5 (18) May, the Skobelevsky Committee released *The Storm and Taking of Erzerum* (perhaps jointly with the Military Historical Department). On Friday, 10 June 1916, “the unprecedented military film taken by Colonel Semen Esadze, *The Taking of Trapezunda*, was shown by royal dispensation” at the Apollo theater in Tiflis.

On 22 October (4 November) the Paul Timan and Friedrich Reinhardt company, under the direction of Esadze, filmed *Heroic Exploits of the Caucasus Army* (cameramen Yanis Dored, Erkol, and Ermolov).

Filming of military operations continued despite the lack of materials. The Russian markets had no film stock at all, so film and

chemical products were ordered from Kodak and photographic plates from Ilford and Co through the British War Ministry. The supplies were shipped from London by sea through Arkhangelsk and across Russia to Tiflis, where the only organization capable of filming was the Military Historical Department of the Headquarters of the Caucasus Army.

Despite wartime conditions, Esadze helped the filming of *Khristine* by seconding military cameraman Shugerman and his camera to German Gogitidze, a pioneer of Georgian film production, and director Alexander Tsutsunava.<sup>(13)</sup> Part of this first Georgian feature film, directed by Tsutsunava in the summer of 1916 and spring 1917, appeared on screens on 6 July 1917. Gogitidze finished the final shooting in the summer of 1918 with Digmelov, as camera operator, who had returned from the front to Tiflis in early 1918. Before working on *Khristine*, Digmelov worked with Esadze in May to film the peace negotiations in Batumi of the delegations from Transcaucasia and Turkey. The newspaper *Tiflisskii Listok* wrote: “Mr. Esadze’s films show all the most prominent figures of the recent conference. The public is particularly interested in Generalissimo Enver-Pasha, whose arrival in Batumi is captured on film. The all-powerful dictator of Turkey turns out to be a rather youthful, slender general, dressed in an ordinary Turkish military suit. The delightful and marvelous places of the shots—the sea, incredibly captured from the Batumi beach. The marine effects, filmed by the cinematographer-artist, are no less beautiful than the reality and the brilliant photography is as good as the best foreign films of this type.”

<sup>(13)</sup> German Gogitidze. *Qartuli kinos tsarsulidan* [From the Past of Georgian Film], Tbilisi, 2013, p. 70.

The construction of a large film studio in Tiflis in 1919 created a stir in the Russian cinema world. It was built by Filma, a company owned by Pavel Pirone a Belgian and Baku businessman who owned film distribution companies in Baku, Erevan, and Tiflis. The Russian actor and director Vladimir Barsky (1866-1936) was appointed director of the film department and the artist of the Moscow Art Theater Vladimir Simov (1858-1935) was made artistic director. At that time, a large group of film people, actors, directors, and artists were in Tiflis, having fled from the Red Army approaching Yalta and Odessa. Even orchestra musicians from movie theaters shut down in Petrograd came to Tiflis. In 1919-1920, Pirone released several feature films, mostly with Barsky, Simov, and Digmelov. They were planning to make *The Demon* and *Hadji-Murat* with actors from the Moscow Art Theater, but that was not meant to be. On 25 February 1921, Menshevik-held Tiflis fell, and two days later Digmelov was filming the funeral of Red Army soldiers who died fighting for the Sovietization of Georgia. That was the beginning of the Soviet period of his work as a cameraman and his participation in the creation of Georgia's national cinema.

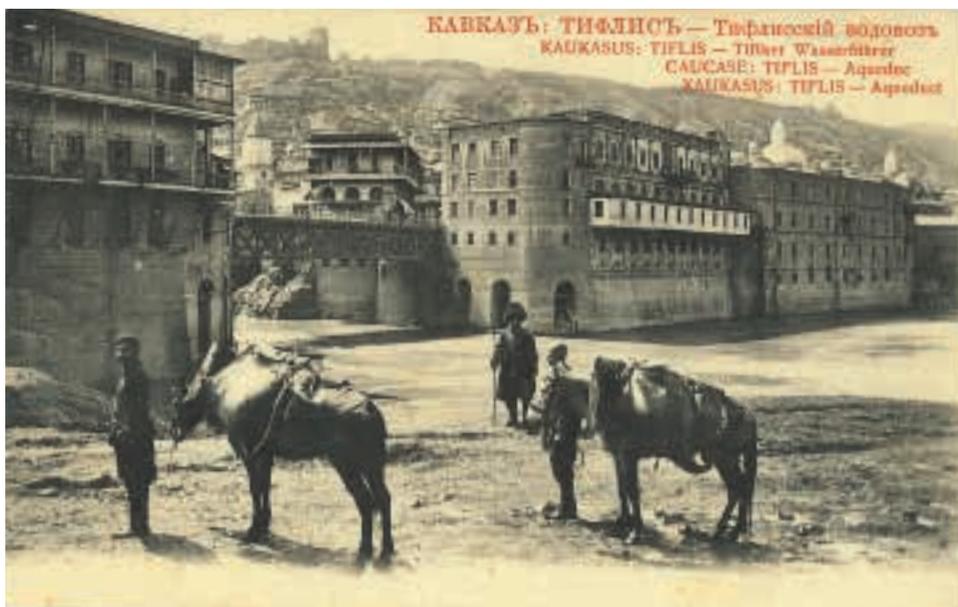
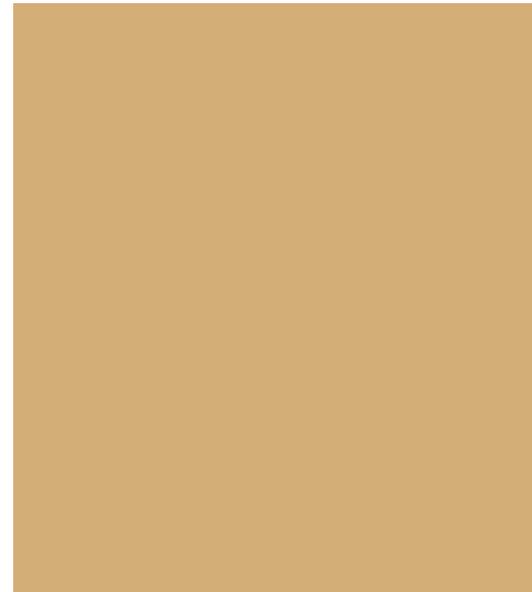
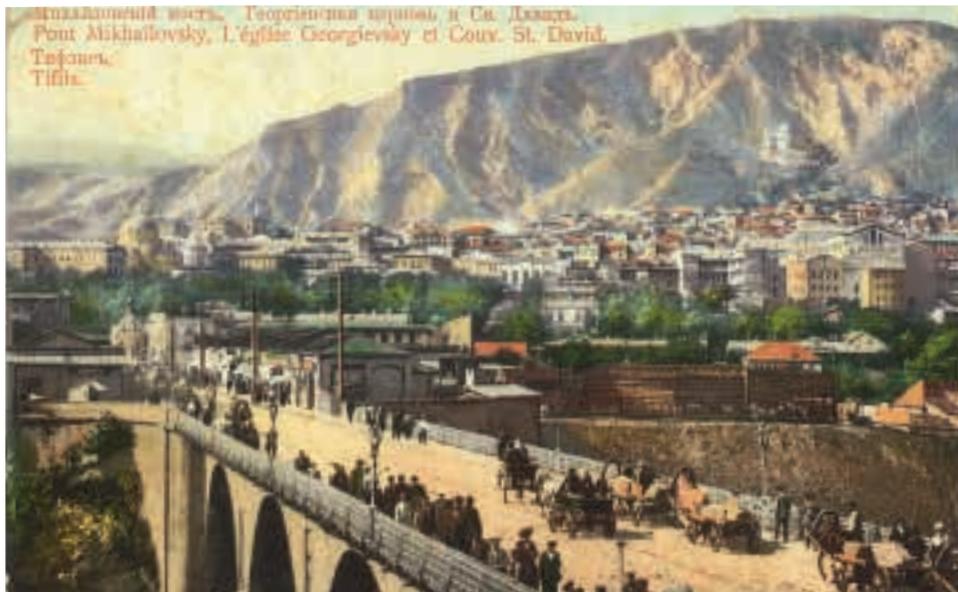
Digmelov had the fortune to work with numerous outstanding film people and to shoot many marvelous motion pictures. The filmmaker Ivan Perestiani<sup>(14)</sup>, who had directed more than a dozen works with Digmelov, wrote about his late friend: "... a very serious, honest, just, and wise man, a self-taught artist of photo and cinema, who never imitated anyone and was inimitable himself, who never said a bad word to any of his fellows in art ... inevitably

instilled deep respect in everyone who knew him. ... This man worked on the creation of a studio in very difficult days without lowering the quality of his work. Honor and glory to him!"

*Translated from Russian by Antonina W. Bouis*

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<sup>(14)</sup> Ivan Perestiani. *75 let zhizni v iskusstve* [75 Years of Life in Art], Moscow, 1962, p 312.

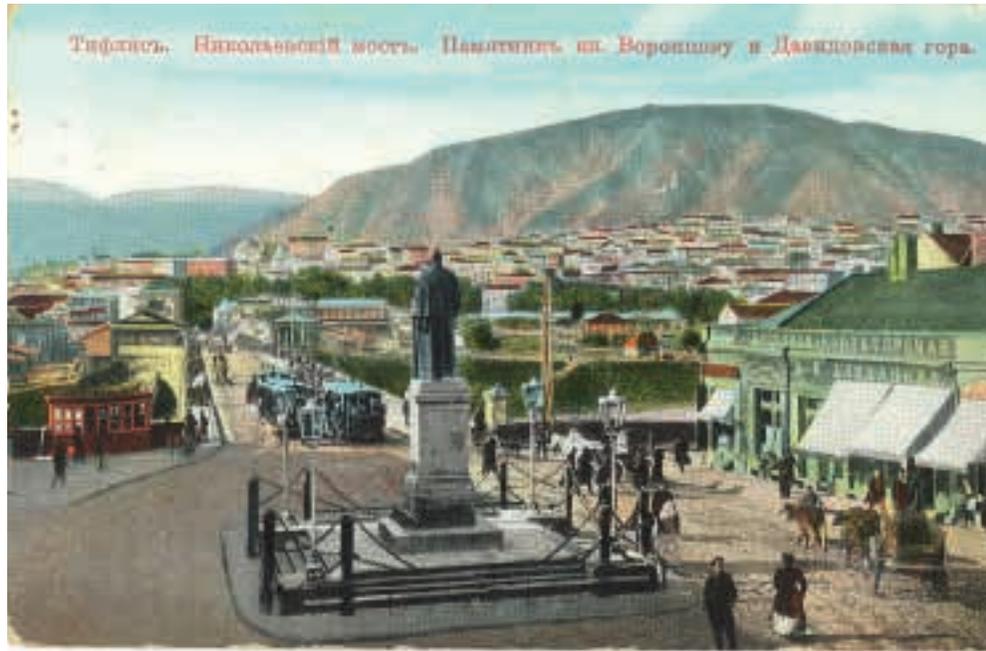




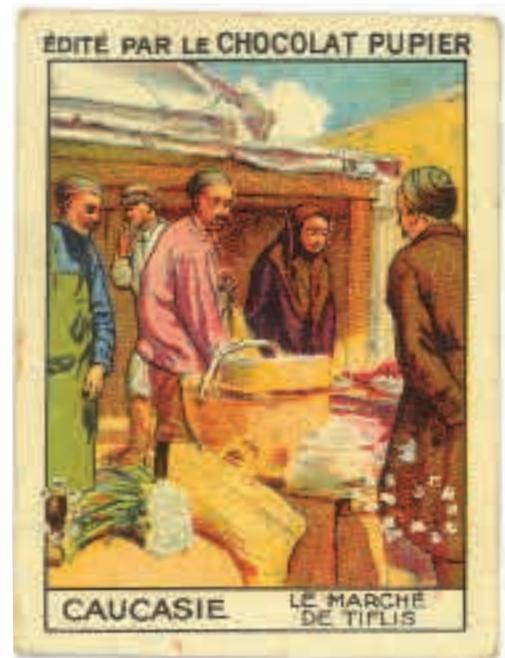
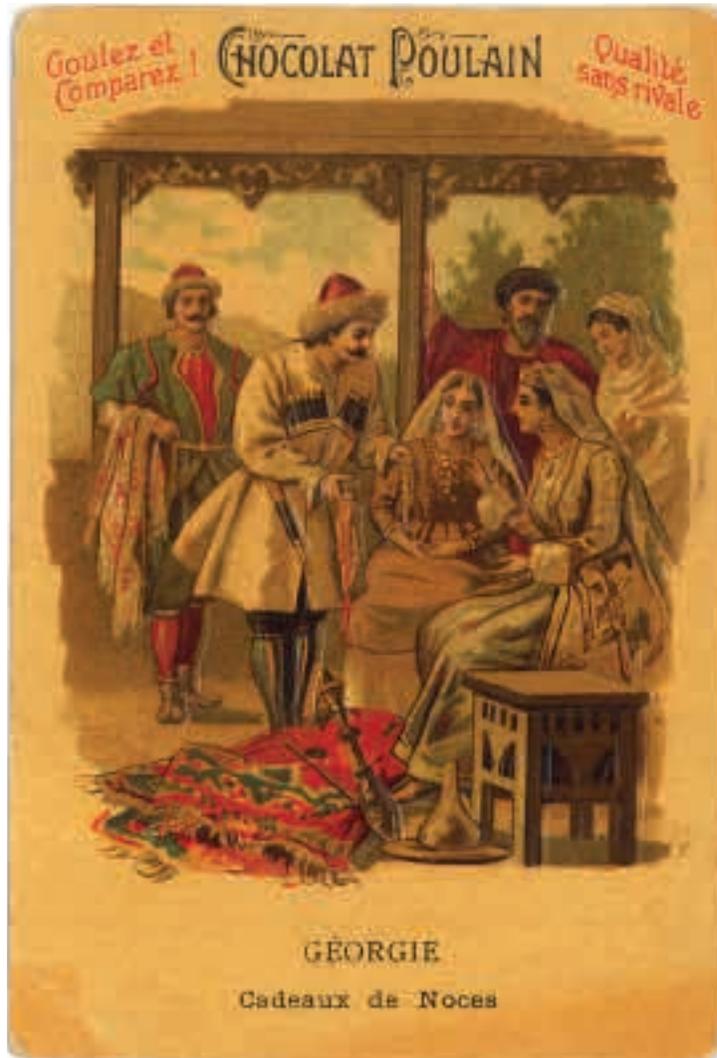
Coal Transport



A 12 ton wooden log on wheels











Arrival in Tiflis 1880



Shamshinov Keenoba Festival in Tiflis



100

Ботанический садъ Тифлиса и оранжерея  
 Jardin botanique fleuri et orangerie

Тифлис - Тифлис

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 vœux de bonne année de votre bien dévoué  
 Tiflis, rue du Laboratoire, 6. Charles Carrotte*



101

Городица и Анорантеонъ обитанъ - Солонишки и церкъа деъ мѣстъ

Тифлис - Тифлис

*27 маа 1880.  
 Непублическио Бача, попроси описъ, всѣ  
 Милгунска. Бауръ Н. П. Панауръ.  
 Тифлиси оуп. Кабана*











№ 3-й.

Тифлис, 13-го апреля, 1912 года.

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редакция находится по Тифлису на  
улице Давидовской, № 10. Редакция  
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## Biographies



**Levan Chogoshvili**, artist. Professor of Free University, Tbilisi; in 1998-2007 he was a Professor of Tbilisi State Art Academy. He was one of the un-official artists in 1970–1980s Soviet decades. Founder of Contemporary Art Foundation. 2000; Co-founder of the Caucasian Institute of Photography and New Media. 2001; Professor of the Caucasian Institute of Photography and New Media. 2001–2005; Coordinator of Basel-Tbilisi artists' exchange program within the artists international exchange project of Christoph Merian Stiftung,

Basel. 1998-2008. Founder and board member of Arts Interdisciplinary Research Lab. (AIRL). Member of ICOM and CIMAM.



**Giorgi Gersamia** was born in 1939 in Tbilisi. He graduated from the cinematography department of The All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow in 1963. In 1962–2004 worked at Gruzia Film studios as director of photography. Shot two dozen feature films. In 1988 received the title of Honored Worker in the Arts. In 2000, won an OSGF grant and created the virtual Museum of Georgian Photography ([www.photomuseum.org.ge](http://www.photomuseum.org.ge)). In 2007 began teaching at the film department of the Shota Rustaveli State University of Theater and Film.



**Tamaz Gersamia**, architect and art historian was born in Tbilisi in 1943. He has a degree as doctor of architecture (1974) and was awarded the title of Honored Architect of Georgia (2015). He is a graduate of the Georgian Polytechnic Institute (1967). His graduation project, Reconstruction of Old Tbilisi, won first prize at the All-Union Competition of Graduation Projects (1968). After graduation he worked as an architect in a design institute. He is the author of several accomplished projects. He worked as artist-architect on

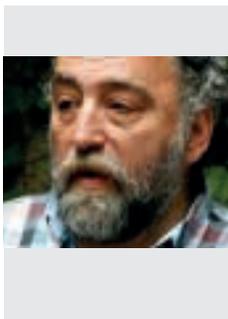
several archeological expeditions. He was a post-graduate student in 1970-1973 at the Georgian Polytechnic Institute. That was followed by scholarly work in Czechoslovakia ("Reconstruction of Historical Cities"). In 1975 he joined the Institute of the History of Georgian Art. His main interest is in the architecture of Georgian historical cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Along with his research and writing, he teaches at the Tbilisi Academy of the Arts. He has participated in international conferences and symposiums on the history of art and architecture. He has many scholarly works on this theme as well as several books. His book *Old Tbilisi*, a photo-chronicle of Tbilisi in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, received international recognition. He has made significant contributions to the fields of the architecture of Georgia's historical cities and of protecting urban legacies. He is a laureate of the first International Architectural Biennale in Georgia (1988, first prize), a cavalier of the Medal of Honor (2003), and an honored citizen of Tbilisi (2010).



**Giorgi Kalandia** is a professor, director of the Georgian State Museum of Theatre, Music, Cinema and Choreography and the chair of the "Foundation of Dadiani Palaces Rescue". Ex-Journalist now is an active public figure. In different years he has received numerous awards for his journalistic activities. Beside the museum work Kalandia is a lecturer at the David Aghmashenebeli State University. From 2012 he received the title of the Honorable Doctor of the University. George Kalandia is an author of several publications.



**Dr. Nana Kipiani** since 1982 is as senior researcher of G. Chubinashvili Research Institute of Georgian Art History (now - G. Chubinashvili National Centre of Georgian Art History and Monuments protection); from 2013 Professor of Free University, Tbilisi; in 2008-2013 was a Professor of Ilia State University. She is a founder of non-government organization Arts Interdisciplinary Research Lab (AIRL). Was a coordinator of Basel-Tbilisi artists' exchange program within the artists international exchange program (IAB) of Christoph Merian Stiftung, Basel (1998-2006). Member of ICOM and CIMAM.



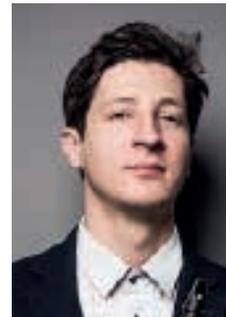
**Aka Morchiladze**, born 1966, is an Author of many award-winning fiction and nonfiction books, and essays about Tbilisi among them. A prominent Georgian writer and literary historian who authored some of the best-selling prose of post-Soviet Georgian literary fiction. Morchiladze's work shows reorientation of the early 21st-century Georgian literature towards the Western influences. His first book "Journey to Karabakh" was published in 1992 and turned into the movie of same name and also developed on stage and as a radio play.

Morchiladze was the host of historical TV series The Unknown Georgia. Some of his books are translated into several European languages.



**Donald Rayfield** has been most of his life a lecturer and then Professor of Russian and Georgian. In 1973 he first visited Georgia and has since then written a history of Georgian literature, edited A Comprehensive Georgian-English Dictionary and recently published a history of Georgia (Edge of Empires), which will soon be published in a Russian edition. He is also the author of a biography of Anton Chekhov and a study "Stalin and his Hangmen", both of which have been translated into other languages, including Russian. He has translated a number of

Russian and Georgian poets, playwrights and prose writers and written on a various topics in comparative literature. He is now translating the stories of Varlam Shalamov and working on a study of the Crimean Tatars.



**Levan Tskhadadze** is considered as one of the leading young musicians in Georgia. He was born in 1983 in Tbilisi. He studied in the E. Mikeladze School of Instrumental Music and V.Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatory with Davit Jishkariani. Levan continued his studies in Amsterdam and Nice with Harmen de Boer and Michel Lethiec. In 2011 he obtained his masters degree at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Levan is a founder and artistic director of the Tbilisi Wind Festival, where he collaborates with worlds

leading wind players, such as Radovan Vlatkovic, Maurice Bourgue, Sergio Azzoloni and many others. He won several prizes during his studies, such as: Francois Leleux Wind Competition in Tbilisi and a grant from the foundation "Solo", founded by Elisabeth Leonskaya. He played as principal clarinet in Tbilisi Opera Orchestra, Georgian Chamber Orchestra in Ingolstadt, Europa Philharmonie, Belfast Ulster Orchestra, Georgian Sinfonietta, Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss and Salzburg Chamber Soloists. Since 2013 he forms a duo with award-winning guitarist Izhar Elias. He regularly works as a soloist with many Georgian orchestras and his collaboration with Georgian Sinfonietta took him to Konzerthaus, Berlin and to the Big Hall of Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. His recordings are often broadcasted on various European TV and Radio channels.



Lezginka Dance

## About the Editor

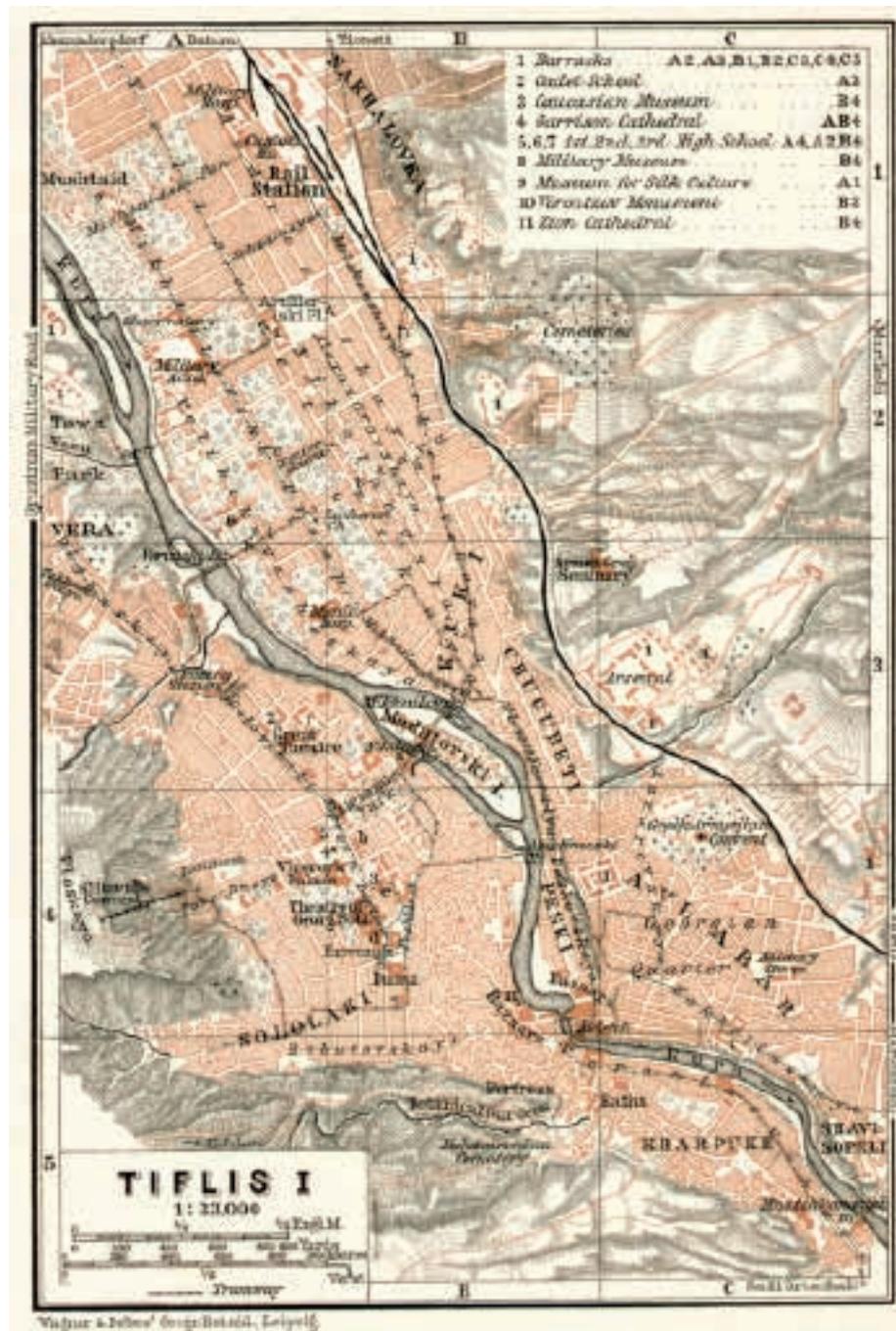
Nicolas V. Ijjine was born in Paris 1944 to Russian parents. Educated in France and the UK. Based in Germany since 1964. Married, two children.

Worked at Lufthansa German Airlines for 35 years, lastly as General Manager Public Affairs responsible for worldwide sponsorship, PR and cultural activities.

1996-2007 Director Corporate Development Europe & Middle East at the Solomon R.Guggenheim Foundation, New York.  
2007-2010 Vice President International Development at GCAM Group, headed by Thomas Krens, New York.

Since 2014 Advisor to the General Director of the State Hermitage  
Nicolas Ijjine has been involved in international cultural relations with Russia since 1965. He has helped organise a multitude of art exhibitions in Europe, Russia, and the USA and published several books including *Odessa Memories*, *Memories of Baku*, *Nikolai Suetin*.







Wagner & Debes, Leipzig, 1914

# Imprint

MEMORIES OF TIFLIS

© 2018 Fachhochschulverlag  
In collaboration with LAS Press New York, NY

Edited by Nicolas V. Iljine

Text Edited by Antonina W. Bouis & Jean-Claude Bouis

Essays © Levan Chogoshvili & Nana Kipiani, Giorgi Gersamia,  
Tamaz Gersamia, Giorgi Kalandia, Aka Morchiladze, Donald Rayfield,  
Levan Tskhadadze

Translations by Maya Kiasashvili, Antonina W. Bouis

Design by Amanda Singer

Printed by TZ – Verlag & Print GmbH, 64380 Roßdorf

ISBN 978-3-947273-02-7  
46 Euro plus postage

Fachhochschulverlag.  
DER VERLAG FÜR ANGEWANDTE WISSENSCHAFTEN E.K.

Kleiststr. 10, Gebäude 1, 60318 Frankfurt am Main

Telefon +49 (0) 69 1533 2820  
Telefax +49 (0) 69 1533 2840  
bestellung@fhverlag.de (for orders)  
<http://www.fhverlag.de>

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the  
Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

Cover: Lev Lagorio, Ortachala District in Tblisi. 1866.  
Georgian National Museum, Museum of Fine Arts.  
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