

## Caucasian Region and Caucasian Cultures and Subcultures

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The tradition of culturological investigations existing so far did not consider the Caucasian region a subject of its study, neither is it regarded a topos having concrete geocultural identify compared with other cultural regions. Because of its specificity, eclecticism and uniqueness, setting it in the framework of the doctrine of scientifically identified eastern and western civilizations seemed impossible so far. These questions are still unanswered:

- What cultural orientation does the Caucasian region bear?
- Could it be regarded as one culturally formed area, which becomes quite difficult judging from its high degree of diversity?
- What are the prospects of the conserved cultures of the Caucasian region in the context of planetary strategy of current global integration?

With the background of current social, political, economic and cultural situation the Caucasian region and namely Georgia will have to make a choice and find its own directions in the process of Prospective integration and marginalization.

It is significant to undertake a comparative study of available cultural information and on the basis of existing cultural experience examine (palpate) maximally painless ways of integration and adaptation. In the framework of mentioned targets the possible subject-matter may be defined as follows:

1. The problem of historical identity in the Caucasian cultures and subcultures (the issue of linkage of native history and its degree).
2. The problem of definition of time-spatial orientations in the Caucasian cultures.
3. The issue of religious identity and time-spatial continuum.
4. Ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance.
5. The exploration of traditional forms of gender-specific stereotypes in the cultures of the Caucasian region.
6. The issue of adaptation of traditional forms of religious, ethnic and gender-specific identity.
7. The popular diplomacy and the definition of possible vectors of conflicts.
8. Variant forms and types of description of the subject of ethnos and culture in the culturdogical paradigm.
9. The regime of functioning of political and economic culture and the degree of their determination In the general cultural context

Proceeding from the complexity of the task we think to undertake a comparative study of Georgian Culture and the Caucasian cultures and subcultures within three basic and most important paradigms

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- Classical proto-state of culture
- Dynamics of culture and its historical chronotype
- Postcultural state of affaire and the mechanisms of adaptation of culture.

The classical proto-state of culture is a divine tabu, while the first cultural creative act is ruining the tabu. The verbalisation of proto-state of culture takes place according to cosmogonical and cosmological principle of narration.

The ruin of tabu and cosmogonical narrative are substituted to the description of cosmological time-spatial continuum which converses us into dynamics of culture where ethnos becomes the subject of aesthetic transcendency and begins to mark and realize aggregate ritual forms.

### **The Caucasian Cosmogony and cosmology**

1. Aggregate forms of everyday life of the population of the Caucasian region.
2. The Caucasian poli-religious, poli-ethnic dimensions and the aggregate system of values.
3. The aggregate aesthetic structure of the population of the Caucasian region.
4. The aggregate structure of ethics and values.
5. The post-historical epoch and the problem of adaptation of the Caucasian people.

The fact, that the irrational axis which unvoluntarily strives to set the Caucasian geographical space in one aggregate cultural paradigm is not the problem of only recent period. The Caucasus, considered as one separate body, indeed a mosaic of ethnicities and religions, creates really one whole kaleidoscopic picture. But in spite of this, during the whole world history the region was somehow united by the key system of values, which was common for the population of both the highland and the lowland of the Caucasus. We shall try to give the systemic analysis of a few above-mentioned basic questions and highlight the prospects of the Caucasian culture of the post-historical epoch.

In this respect, the first thing that is important for the Caucasian space is the fact that the Caucasus is quite unvoluntarily a unity, a topos of four cosmogonical elements (earth, water, air, fire). Certainly, such places are not so few in the world but this archaic cosmogonical scheme has been preserved and retained its vitality so far; and the high degree of the conservation of the Caucasian culture is conditioned by this archetypical model having been kept in the minds of aboriginal people. The mythological characters of the Caucasian cosmogony observe mainly common ritual custom and create the picture of cosmology according to cosmogony applying non-topological principle.

Those universal, mysterial, ritual and symbolic schemes which may be considered a basic skeleton of the world mythology cluster in graphic, ritual and symbolic unity in the Caucasus. Vital and preserved up today the whole spectrum of graphic identities of divinities and their panorama or the similarity of symbolic graphic signes enables us to suggest that the universalism of cosmogonical schemes in this concrete topos is embodied in the system of quite unique images. That's why the consideration of the Caucasian cosmogonical space as a single Caucasian cosmology is

possible only through formal unity of characters. As far as the cosmogony can be considered an autonomous culture, and because the culture itself already implies a definite space of power, the cosmogony changes into cosmology and transforms into a definite element of ethnic, habit, tradition. This is already a creative sphere, where creative forms assume crucial importance and are shaped as elements of ethic. The ethic is a form of creation.

Proceeding from the above-mentioned assumptions, we may say that the "accumulated" archetypal character-the initial image of the Northern and the Southern Caucasian regions is Amiran who experiences all four stages (earth, water, air, fire) of initiation:

1. Amiran easily gains victory over the astral creatures of the underground world-the black, red and white devs (giants).
2. Amiran experiences the second initiation with water in the stomach of a giant-whale.
3. His initiation with air takes place when he wins the struggle against the armed guards of heaven in the realm of Kamar's father-Wind.
4. As a result of the initiation with fire Amiran becomes finally chained to the high mountain range of the Caucasus and remains in the kingdom of fire forever.

Amiran's mythologem originates in the Caucasian mountains as one single aesthetic principle and to some extent is reflected in the lowlands of Georgia, as far as in the low-lands its topological provision takes place.

These four elements can not be united (the unification takes place thanks to close contact of wind, earth and fire in the plain area among the Black sea, Trialeti mountains and the Caucasus) without the southern lowland of the Caucasus. It should be noted here, that this mythologem is not spread among the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is not the model of their archetypal behaviour-the reason is unambiguous-the mythologem of Amiran is an inseparable part of mountains which can hardly be found in Armenian and Azerbaijan geographical environment.

Initially there was no hegemon to create a civilization element necessary for geoculture in the Caucasian region. Conditionally, the same role might be carried out by the development of economic activities i.e. by using the so called "Silk road", passing via Georgia. Though, in this respect, it should be noted that the territory of contemporary Georgia and its vicinity functioned as the Caucasian-regional centre at that time (that's why the principal symbol of a new cosmology-Christian myth-Svetitskovieli was important to be considered somewhere nearby Tbilisi) and Christianity too as a new cosmological principle acquired new centrifugal and centripetal tendencies relative to the rest of the Caucasus.

The schematic picture of cosmological images is quite well reflected in the architecture of nomadic and sometimes of settled ethnos too, residing on the southern and northern slopes of the Caucasian mountain range. They may be considered the first art-forms of this kind. The tower itself-an architectural scheme of ritual purpose, is designed according to cosmological principle. A typical Caucasian tower (e.g. Tushetian) is a five-storied construction (having five garrets and floors) figuratively depicting five underworld layers, which give us the idea of cosmogonical model of the

Caucasian world. From this point of view, the gender-specific structure of the tower which reflects special, functional role of a man and a woman in the cosmos assumes great importance. The first floor is designated for domestic animals. The second floor is the dwelling of women. They are busy with habitual "feminine" work.

It should be noted, that only men shepherd sheep (sacred animals). Women take care of only cows. The third floor is the place of meeting for men and women. Only men live on the fourth floor; the last, fifth floor is regarded to be the gods' place their domain. Women had no right to observe or step into that area.

It seems also quite interesting to note that parallels to this vertical structural-topological systems there exists one single horizontal topological system which gives one single or quite a similar scheme of sacred ritual behaviour in the horizontal space. The realms of the "Mother of the place" and other divinities are also structured by the ritual schemes. The sacred place is confined only to men. Women are forbidden to enter its borders.

### **The Debate on the Similarity of "Structuring" Divine Space is possible**

In the traditional Caucasian society a family represented (as well as it does now) a central topos, which has preserved a status of value up today. According to recent sociological data it is one of the top values on the list of priorities.

Despite the fact, that this cultural region having ancient history, shifted to different religious identities, underwent industrial adaptation and at the moment it on the way of informational adaptation, the archaic model of family is still quite strong here and is only may manage to lose its position in the process of adaptation to globalisation. This one single archetipal model unambiguously conditions common formal-ethical norms of behaviour and above all, those general forms and principles which create culture and are reflected in it. At the same time it defines the common value system which despite being poliethnic and later polireligious systems contribute to relational self identification in the region.

The geocultural orientation of the Caucasian region becomes even more significant in the process of globalization. But is the Caucasus the bearer of a single cultural orientation especially as its cultural tissue is heterogeneous not only ethnically and anthropologically, but religiously too. In such morphologically complex cultural environment Georgia assumes great importance not only from economic but from political point of view as well, demonstrated by e.g. transnational economic projects and except this, transpolitical virtual revolution.

In the Caucasus Georgia is the crossing point of numerous cultures, the place of gathering, with indeed different values-Asian, European, Christian, and Muslim, traditional and post cultural values-represented distinctly. Despite this we must admit that first of all it is basically a country of conserved culture (but not conservative) as well as is the whole Caucasus.

It is obvious, that the conservation of culture is one of (if not the only) the protection mechanisms against historical cataclysms of which the country had been suffering for hundreds of years. The conservation of the national cultural forms seemed to be the only way of preserving them.

Gaining national and state identity makes the reflections upon personal and cultural self-identity possible. It is apparent; that the citizen of a free country doesn't need any high degree bounds to traditional forms because it is no more the only measure of protection against foreign cultural expansion for him. That is why his efforts are mainly directed to social identity. This is the reason behind the ruin of traditional stereotypes and deconstruction of social roles.

The globalization process forces the Caucasian geo-culture to come up against new possibilities. It has been given a chance to become the only cultural transit region, which will contribute not to diffusion of various cultures but become an actual topos for cross-cultural dialogue.

In the Georgian geo-cultural topos each culture becomes open and transparent. This global tendency creates a conflict regime for the Caucasian culture. It remains conserved on the one hand but is a transit area on the other hand. This is the actual reality in our culture.

As in every culture, there exists in the conflict regime the issue of self-identification, which does not cause problems. But there are some tasks to be carried out:

The cultural strategies of the Caucasian region need to be redefined, and a new strategic orientation of cultural politics should be worked out.

The role of Georgia as a medium and trans-space between the North and the South Caucasus, between the East and the West should be clearly outlined;

In the context of new historical globalization the relations among the North and the South Caucasian ethnic, religious, gender-specific cultures and subcultures have to be defined.

Proceeding from the above-mentioned assumptions consideration, of Georgian culture as a mythological and ritual one in the paradigm of European culture seems necessary.

Reduction of contemporary Georgian as well as the whole Caucasian culture to one single concrete description is impossible. It is designed like a mosaic and hence reflects the structure of the whole Caucasus from the point of view of social, cultural and regional description.

On the one hand, it may be described as an urbanized one with the centre in Tbilisi, and on the other hand, as a pseudo-ritual one reflected in the traditions and mentality.

The subculture of Tbilisi is the symbol of urban culture in the Caucasian culture. It represents a special phenomenon, which embodies not only Georgian culture with its diversity, but is quite wider in content. In essence it may be regarded as the centre of the South Caucasus. It is the cultural topos, actually the transit area for every subculture and the Caucasian culture as well.

The urbanization process is difficult to comprehend for unadapted consciousness. Especially for those information flows, which penetrate the whole social body of the Caucasian ethnoses. The Georgian social space has passed through the two most complex adaptation processes:

The industrialization of the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Incorporation in the contemporary global processes by means of total informatization.

The restoration of the Georgian statehood facilitated adaptation to the above-mentioned global processes accelerating redistribution of social structures. Traditional social roles have not been considered relative to new social and economic politics yet.

After a difficult process of accommodation to industrialization, our consciousness has faced a new dilemma. Building of a state manifested a new social, political and cultural conflict against the background of world globalization. The economic crisis, the stagnation in the production process, the heaviest social climate in the traditional values insured serious havoc, and provoked the deconstruction of the structure of traditional roles and inner values.

The traditional values themselves which represented ritual, nearly pagan paradigmatic axis (especially in the Georgian mountainous regions), had been devoid of religious content and were preserved in the form of traditions. In the process of world globalization the orientation to the traditional values may be considered a main reason behind the political crisis. That is why the state building process turned out to be so painful. A serious abyss has been created between the ruling elite and the people, the center and the regions. The marginalization of intelligentsia, a creative resource of the nation, is under way. The degree of credibility to popular actors of non-governmental sector bearing imported ideology is extremely low. If, on the one hand, circles oriented to the western values propagate democratic ideology, and this ideology and liberal values are more or less acceptable for the urbanized population, it is not immanent for the majority of rural population. It comprises the same, violent import for them, which, like the communist ideology, has been imposed against their will. That is why they retain the conflicting situation with their own identity even today (as they did in the Soviet period).

The cultural identity and representatives of both Georgia and the whole Caucasus takes us back to the sphere of mythology, philosophy, literature and art, where much more obviously and painfully, but at the same time harmoniously non-traditional and institutionalized structures coexist.

During the last decade the current processes ongoing in Georgia enables us to make presumptions about the real threat of globalization in the virtual informational space. Because of high degree of conservation of Georgian culture the country failed to filter the information flow to which it had not been adapted either in the 90s or in the 2000s. Besides, the culture preservation regime of the recent years calls our attention to the fact that the rapid coping with informational globalization is under way. There are 12 television channels only in Tbilisi, to say nothing of regional television and press services. Democracy has been substituted by telecraty. Currently, an informational conflict is going on.

Informational concepts which give us the possibility: of characterizing globalization not as political or economic but as cultural paradigm, enables us to think that the culture is that particular universality which makes the incorporation into a new myth-globalization-possible.