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<https://doi.org/10.34858/api.4.2025.88>

THE MAIN ISSUES OF THE ESTATE SYSTEM IN GEORGIA (FROM THE ANCIENT TIMES TO 1921)

Introduction

Georgia is one of the oldest states in the world. The history of the Georgian state dates back to the birth of Christ. Located on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, in the western part of Transcaucasia (i.e. the South Caucasus), Georgia is considered as a country on the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and geopolitically as the southeastern part of modern Europe.

The native name "Georgia" (in Georgian sounds like "საქართველო/Sakartvelo"), i.e. the country of the Kartvels/Kartvelians (in Georgian – "ქართველი"). And "Sakartvelo" goes back to the name "Kartli" (in Georgian – "ქართლი"). Kartli is the central historical and geographical region of Georgia and the center of Georgian (Kartvelian) statehood.

The name of Georgia in the Eastern languages is "Gurjistan" (or "Gorjestan" and "Gurjistan"), and in the various European languages it is: "Georgien" (in German), "Géorgie" (in French), etc. Both the name of our country in English – "Georgia" and the name "Gruzia" established in Russian and a number of other languages – originate from "Gurjan" or "Gurzan" – from the Arab-Persian origins. These names come from the Arab-Persian "gurj" ("Gurjistan" – "the country of the wolfs"), which goes back to the Persian word "gorg" (i.e. "wolf") and is associated with the ancient Persian "vrkan".

The name of Georgia in Armenian is "Vrastan" (in ancient language – "Virk"), which means "Upper Country".¹

Lithuania is the second state in the world (after Georgia) where the official name of our country sounds like "Sakartvelo" (since 2018).

1. The first early class state formations and large associations of tribes on the territory of Georgia

At the turn of the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, the first early state formations were created on the historical territory of southern and southwestern Georgia – Diauehi/Daiaeni (in Georgian – დიაუხი/Diaokhi) and Colchis (in Georgian – კოლხეთი/Colkheti). In the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions, both the named formations and the crucial associations of tribes on the territory of southern Georgia are mentioned: Zabakha, Katarza and Viterokhi. The Georgian names of the corresponding regions: Tao, Kolkheti, Javakheti, Klarjeti and Odzrkhe.

At the beginning of the 7th century BC, Diauehi was defeated by the state of Urartu. In the 30s–20s of the 8th century BC, the ancient state, known from the legend of the Argonauts and their quest for the Golden Fleece, was overrun by the Cimmerians coming from the north.

2. An early slave-holding state on the territory of Western Georgia – the Colchis Kingdom

In the 6th century BC, on the territory of present-day Western Georgia, an early colchian state was created – the Kingdom of Colchis, which existed until the 4th century BC.²

As early as 26 centuries ago, in particular, from the end of the 6th century, the minting of local silver coins began on the territory of Colchis, which are rightly recognized as one of the oldest coins in the world. The official name of these coins,

¹ G. Melikishvili, *On the History of Ancient Georgia*, Tbilisi 1959 (in Russian); ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Грузия.

² G. Melikishvili, *On the History of Ancient Georgia...*; G. Melikishvili, *Georgians, the question of their origin; The most common associations of the population of south-western Georgia; Invasions of the Scythians and Kymmerians. The ancient kingdom of Kolchids; Colchis in the VI-IV centuries BC; Kartli (Iberia) in the VI-IV centuries BC. The emergence of the Kingdom of Kartli; Georgian Political and Ethnic Formations in the Elite Era. The population of historical Colchis in the II-I centuries BC; Colchis in the VI-IV centuries BC*, [in:] idem, *Essays on the history of Georgia (in eight volumes)*, vol. I: *Georgia from ancient times to the IV century AD*, Tbilisi 1970, pp. 312-421 (in Georgian).

which were distributed in Colchis from the end of the 6th century BC to the first half of the 3rd century BC, is "Colchis" (in Georgian – "კოლხური თეთრი"/"Colkhuri tetri"). This term in Georgian means "Colchis white". Further, the word seems to signify the color of silver. It should be added that a small unit of the modern national currency of Georgia is also called "tetri". Colchis were in circulation both in the inner regions of the country and abroad.³

In the 7th-6th centuries BC, the Greek colonization of the Black Sea coast began. On the territory of modern Western Georgia, the following were found: Phasis, Dioskuria, Pitiunt, Gienos, Pichvnari. The emergence of these colonies in the eastern Black Sea region contributed to the development of urban life and trade in Colchis. These visits had a definite impact on the social, economic, and cultural life of the Kingdom of Colchis. They connected the Colchians with the Greek world. Despite this, the mentioned settlements could not exert political pressure on the indigenous population of Colchis. Colchis had connections with the northern Black Sea region, with the colonies of the southern Chernomorsk region (Heraclia, Sinop) and with the cities of Asia Minor (Pergamon, Samos), with the eastern and southwestern parts of modern Georgia.

3. The Eastern Georgian State – the Kingdom of Iberia and the Christianization of Georgia

In the 6th-5th centuries BC, there was an intensive consolidation of the Eastern Georgian (Kartli) tribes in the east and south of the historical territory of Georgia.

At the turn of the 4th-3rd centuries BC, the kingdom of Iberia (i.e. Kartli) was formed on the territory of present-day Eastern Georgia, which lasted until the end of the 6th century AD.

The first king of this ancient Georgian state was Pharnavaz – the main founder of the Pharnavazid dynasty.⁴

³ T. Dundua, G. Dundua, N. Javakhishvili, A. Eristavi, *Money in Georgia. Catalogue, second revised edition*, Tbilisi 2003, p. 5 (in Georgian and English).

⁴ G. Melikishvili, *Kartli in VI-IV centuries BC, The Emergence of the Kartali Kingdom*, [in:] idem, *Essays on the History of Georgia (in eight volumes)*, vol. I: *Georgia from ancient times to the IV century AD*, Tbilisi 1970, pp. 422-444 (in Georgian); *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. III: *Princes*, heads of the author's collective P. Grebelsky and S. Dumin, authors-compilers: P. Grebelsky, S. Dumin, G. Apakidze, I. Bichikashvili, M. Katin-Yartsev, S. Kovylov-Alekseevsky, F. Kudasheva, T. Lenchevsky, Sh. Mikhailov, V. Pervushkin, Y. Unkovsky, Y. Chikovani, S. Shishlov, A. Shumkov, scientific ed. S. Dumin, scientific consultant V. Lapin, Moscow 1996, p. 22 (in Russian).

In the work of the 11th-century Georgian historian Bishop Leonti Mroveli "The Life of the Georgian Kings", which is included in the collection of the non-Georgian letopises "Kartlis Tskhovreba" ("The Life of Kartli" or "History of Georgia"), it is reported that Parnavaz took the revolt of the ruler Azon (Azo), who was one of the leaders of Alexander the Great and ruled the country during the fourth century of the Faith. Parnavaz, with the help of the ruler of Egrisi (old Kolkheti, now – Western Georgia) Kudji, the north caucasian tribes and with the support of the Seleucid dynasty, achieved victory over the Azos. King Parnavaz created a Georgian script,⁵ which is one of the origins of the world's 14 alphabets.

Parnavaz reigned until the middle of the 30s of the 3rd century BC. Together with Kudji, he led the movement for the creation of a united Georgian state. As a result of this, in the 3rd century BC, during the reign of the descendants of Parnavaz, Iberia became a vast and powerful region, which already included a significant part of Western Georgia (mainly Argveti). Egrisi recognized the faith of the kings of Kartli. Kartli managed to establish its control on both sides of the Caucasian Range.⁶ The Parnavazids and other dioceses ruled Iberia until the 70s of the 6th century AD.

Colchis (Egrisi) and Iberia (Kartli) from time to time fell under the influence of Iran, then of Rome (later – Byzantium).

Georgia is one of the oldest Christian countries in the world. The names of the holy apostles Andrew the First-Called and Simon the Canaanite are associated with the emergence of the first Georgian Christian communities in the 1st century AD.

In another work by Leonti Mroveli "The Conversion of St. Nino of Kartli", which is included in the collection of the "Kartlis Tskhovreba", it is reported that in the 4th century St. Nina from Kapadocia (a province in Asia Minor, now in the predivisions of Turkey) came to the capital city of the Kingdom of Kartli – Mtskheta. She began to propagate Christianity, heal people and work miracles. The Elders of St. Nino were first accepted by the queen of the Kartli – Nana, and then by her husband – King Mirian.⁷

In 326, Christianity in Kartli was proclaimed a state religion. St. Nina of Cappadocia died around 335. The relics are buried under a bushel in a convent in the village of Bodbe

⁵ Leonti Mroveli, *The Life of the Georgian Kings*, [in:] *Kartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia)*, vol. I, prepared for publication on all the main pages of S. Kaukhchishvili, Tbilisi 1955, pp. 22-26 (in Georgian).

⁶ *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. III..., p. 22 (in Russian).

⁷ Leonti Mroveli, *The Appeal of St. Nino's Kartli*, [in:] idem, *Kartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia)*, vol. I..., pp. 87-116 (in Georgian).

(Kakheti). She is renamed in the rank of the Saints, and King Mirian and Queen Nana are canonized. In the following century, the Georgian Christian Church acquired autocephaly.

4. Georgia after the accession of the Bagrationi dynasty

One of the oldest royal dynasties in the world – the Bagratids (in Georgian – Bagrationi) ruled Georgia during one millennium, until the tenth years of the 19th century.⁸

The appearance of the first representatives of the future royal dynasty of Bagrationi is traditionally attributed by a certain part of the specialists to the 6th century and is associated with the historical province of southwestern Georgia – Speri (now – the vicinity of the city of Ispira, in the areas of the Republic of Turkey).

After the great anti-Persian uprising of 571, when the Georgians achieved the restoration of their statehood with the help of the Byzantine Empire, Guaram (Gvaram) became the eristavar (ruler) of Kartalinia. According to the Georgian family chronicle of the Bagratids, Guaram was a representative of this family. The Byzantine emperor granted Guaram the title of Curopalata.⁹

It should be added here that there are many legends about the origin of the royal dynasty of the Bagratids.

One of them dates the beginning of the history of this family to biblical times and leads it from the royal psalmist. That is why it is no accident that the coat of arms of this dynasty contains a harp and a sling – direct allusions to the accessories that characterize the monarch of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah (with its capital in Jerusalem) David, the conqueror of Goliath and the singer with the accompaniment of a ten-stringed psaltery. The antiquity of this family is reflected in its rich history and multifaceted genealogy. Some researchers believe that the royal dynasty of the Bagratids is the third oldest in the world – after the imperial dynasties of Japan and Ethiopia.¹⁰

In the work of the Georgian historian of the first half of the 11th century from the Bagration family Sumbat Davitis-dze "History and Narrative of the Bagratids" it is noted that the Bagratids, who reigned in Armenia and Georgia, were direct

⁸ *Bagratids, Scientific and Cultural Heritage. Collection of Articles, with Genetic Tables*, published under the auspices of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences, the Georgian Society for the History of Science and the House of Bagratids, Tbilisi 2003 (in Georgian).

⁹ Z. Abashidze, M. Bakhtadze, O. Janelidze, *Georgia and Georgians*, ed. Z. Abashidze, Tbilisi 2013, pp. 39-91 (in Georgian).

¹⁰ *Titles sounding through the centuries*, eds V. Blagovo, S. Sapozhnikov, Moscow 2017, pp. 7-9 (in Russian).

descendants of the mentioned King David and his descendant Solomon, and the sons of the latter, who came out of captivity, went from Palestine.

In the above-mentioned Georgian source we read:

And these seven brothers, the sons of that Solomon (they went from the land of Palestine, the Jews who had come out of captivity), came to Aquilicena to the queen Rakael and were baptized by her. They remained in the country of Armenia, and to this day their descendants dominate in Armenia. And four of their brothers came to Kartli, and one of them, Guaram, was elected eristavi. He is the eristavi of Kartli and the father of the Bagrations, and these Georgian Bagrations are the descendants and relatives of that Guaram.¹¹

In the middle of the 7th century, Arab invasions began in Georgia. In Western Georgia, the Arabs could not establish themselves, but they did in Eastern Georgia. In the 8th century, they created an emirate with its center in Tbilisi, which extended its power to almost the entire Kartli, i.e. to Central Georgia.

After the occupation of Kartli by the Arabs, representatives of the Bagrationi family moved to Tao-Klarjeti (southwestern part of Georgia, now within Turkey) and from the beginning of the 9th century became the rulers of this historical province.

In 888, Adarnase II, the first among the Bagrations, took the title of "king of the Kartvels" (the word "Kartveli" means "Georgian" in Georgian) and reigned until 923. From now on, Tao-Klarjeti was called the "Kingdom of the Kartvels".

The royal dynasty of the Bagrations, which ruled Georgia for a millennium – from the 9th century – to the beginning of the 19th century,¹² giving the homeland many outstanding monarchs.

In the middle of the 10th century, the emirs from the Jafarid family turned Tbilisi and its environs into their hereditary possession.

It should be added here that a direct descendant of King Adarnase II, a worthy representative of the Bagration dynasty, the great Georgian monarch David IV the Builder (1073-1125) liberated Tbilisi in 1122, which became the capital of the united Georgian kingdom.¹³

¹¹ S. Davidis-dze, *History and Narrative of the Bagrations*, [in:] *Kartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia)*, vol. I..., p. 373 (in Georgian).

¹² *Bagrations, scientific and cultural heritage...*; N. Sychev, *The Book of Dynasties*, Moscow 2006, pp. 611-622 (in Russian).

¹³ *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. III..., p. 35 (in Russian).

Despite the disintegration of the united Georgian kingdom (end of the 15th century) into three parts – Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti, representatives of different branches of the Bagration dynasty reigned in these kingdoms. Since 1762, Kartli and Kakheti have been united into one state – Kartli-Kakheti (in Georgian – "ქართლ-კახეთი"). which was ruled by representatives of the Kakhetian branch of the Bagrationis.

5. The hierarchy of the Georgian aristocracy during the reign of the Bagrationis

In Georgia, as a country with ancient state traditions, there has been a fairly large and strong national aristocracy since ancient times, which for many centuries has passed a rather difficult path of development.

The best representatives of the Georgian nobility, under the leadership of the kings of Georgia, selflessly fought against foreign invaders who wanted to conquer our homeland. The heroic defense of the centuries-old independent statehood and the Christian faith continued uninterrupted until the beginning of the 19th century.

Georgia had its own aristocratic titles. The following vassals were subordinate to the King, in Georgian – "Mepe/მეფე" (listed in hierarchy):

1. "Mtavari/მთავარი" – a possessing prince, hereditary ruler of a large region that existed on the territory of Western Georgia, for example, principality of Megrelia (Mingrelia), principality of Abkhazeti (Abkhazia), principality of Guria and principality Svaneti. This title corresponded to the European title of duke (in German – Herzog);

2. "Eristavi/ერისთავი" – the ruler of Saeristavo (in Georgian – "საერისთავო"), a large, often border province of Georgia, which existed including the 18th century, for example, Saeristavo of Aragvi (abolished in 1743), Saeristavo of Ksani (abolished in 1774), Saeristavo of Racha (was abolished in 1789). This title corresponded to the European title of marquis, which stood between the titles of duke and count, or the title of margrave (Markgraf), who was the ruler of the border territory. Since this position was inherited, it was later transformed into a surname, for example, Eristavi of Aragvi (in Georgian – "არაგვის ერისთავი/Aragvis Eristavi"), Eristavi of Ksani ("Ksnis Eristavi"), Eristavi of Racha ("Rachis Eristavi"). They bore the title of prince (in Georgian – "თავადი/Tavadi");

3. "Tavadi/თავადი" – prince, head of the princely family. The younger members of the clan were called "Tavadishvili/თავადიშვილი" (in Georgian – the son of the prince). The thawads were divided into three categories, the highest of which were the "didebuli tavadi/დიდებული თავადი" (nobles) – the holders of the most extensive possessions and the highest positions at the royal court. In the 18th century, in Kartalinia, the heads of about five or six of the largest feudal houses were revered as didebuls. The title of tawada corresponded to the European title of count (Graf, Marquis);

4. "Aznauri/აზნაური" – a nobleman, the head of a noble family. The younger members of the family were called "Aznaurishvili" (in Georgian – the son of a nobleman). Aznauri were divided into three categories: royal ("Samepo aznauri/სამეფო აზნაური"), princely ("Satavado aznauri/სათავადო აზნაური") and ecclesiastical ("Saeklesio aznauri/საეკლესიო აზნაური"). This title corresponded to the European title of Baron.

The Georgian peasantry (in Georgian – "გლეხოზა/Glekhoba") was also divided into different categories.¹⁴

6. The Treaty of Georgievsk of 1783, the abolition of Georgian statehood and the forced incorporation of Georgia into the Russian Empire

On July 24, 1783, in the North Caucasus, in the Russian fortress of Georgievsk, the Treaty was signed an agreement between the Russian Empire and the Kartalino-Kakheti (East Georgian) Kingdom. On the basis of this Treaty, Eastern Georgia came under the protection of the Russian Empire. Russia guaranteed the protection of the Kingdom of Kartali-Kakheti from external aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of the country. In return, Eastern Georgia ceded its sovereign rights in the field of foreign policy and allowed the entry of Russian troops into its territory for joint actions with the Georgian troops.¹⁵

The Treaty of Georgievsk, drawn up in 1783, on the basis of which the Kingdom of Kartalino-Kakheti came under the protection of the Russian Empire with guarantees given by Empress Catherine II – non-interference in the internal affairs of the country and the continuation of the reign of the Bagratians – had an official appendix – a list

¹⁴ N. Javakhishvili, *Essays on the History of Georgian-Baltic Relations*, Tbilisi 2019, pp. 128-129 (in Russian).

¹⁵ M. Gorgidze, *Georgians in St. Petersburg (pages of the chronicle of cultural relations)*, Tbilisi 1976, p. 34 (in Russian).

of Georgian noble families. The list includes the surnames of 62 princely and 317 noble families,¹⁶ which, on the basis of this Treaty, were granted the same rights as the Russian princely and noble families.

At the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, there were two kingdoms on the territory of Georgia – Eastern Georgian (Kartalino-Kakheti) and Western Georgian (Imereti), as well as principalities: Mingrelia (In Georgian – Samegrelo), Abkhazia (in Georgian – Abkhazeti), Guria (in Georgian – Guria) and Svaneti (in Georgian – Svaneti). The hereditary rulers of these Western Georgian principalities – the possessing princes Dadiani, Shervashidze (In Georgian – Sharvashidze), Gurieli and Dadeshkeliani (Gelovani by origin) were sometimes realistically and sometimes formally subordinate to the Imeretian kings.

On January 11, 1798, the king of Kartli-Kakheti Irakli II (1720-1798) died in the Telavi Palace. The new tsar blessed the eldest son of the late tsar, the heir to the throne Giorgi/George XII (1746-1800), who reigned for less than three years, dying on December 28, 1800.

From that day until June 1801, the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom was ruled by the eldest son of the late king, the legitimate heir to the throne, Prince David Georgievich Bagrationi (1767-1819). He ruled the kingdom as a ruler, but not as a king, since under the terms of the Treaty of Georgievsk of 1783, confirmation from the Emperor of the Russian Empire was required.

Ten days before the death of King Giorgi XII, on December 18, 1800, Emperor Paul I signed a secret manifesto on the abolition of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti and its forced entry into the Russian Empire.

With this manifesto, Emperor Paul I treacherously violated his own promise, which was given to King Giorgi XII to preserve the autonomous rights of the Georgian state. A manifesto of similar content was issued by the new Emperor Alexander I on September 12, 1801. Thus, the Eastern Georgian (Kartli-Kakheti) kingdom became part of the Russian Empire.

Since 1810, the Western Georgian (Imereti) Kingdom, and later the above-mentioned Western Georgian principalities, became part of Russia.

¹⁶ *The Treaty of Georgievsk, the treaty of 1783 on the entry of Eastern Georgia under the protection of Russia*, the text was prepared for publication, the introduction and notes were provided by G. Paichadze, Tbilisi 1983, pp. 84-91 (in Georgian).

As we can see, the guarantees contained in the Treaty of Georgievsk did not prevent the Russian Empire from abolishing the centuries-old Georgian statehood at the beginning of the 19th century. Two provinces were created on the territory of Georgia – Tiflis (Eastern Georgia) and Kutaisi (Western Georgia). In Georgia, a policy of imposing Russian state institutions and Russification was carried out, and the autocephaly of the Georgian Church was abolished. This policy effectively continued until the collapse of the Russian Empire.¹⁷

The abolition of Georgian statehood cost the Romanov dynasty dearly. It is symptomatic that for such an insidious action in relation to the country of the same faith, Providence punished Emperor Paul I with the hand of the Russified descendant of the Georgian prince Iashvili – Major General Vladimir Mikhailovich Yashvil (1764-1815) also actively participated in the attempt on the emperor's life.

In the work of the famous connoisseur of the "Silver Age" of the Russian Empire Georgy Chulkov *Emperors of Russia. Psychological Portraits*, the attempt on the emperor's life, which took place on the night of March 11, 1801, is interestingly described. In the mentioned book we read:

The conspirators entered the royal bedroom... Pushing each other, the officers surrounded the emperor. Someone touched his arm. Pavel squeamishly pushed her away. That was the beginning of the end. Nikolai Zubov hit the emperor in the temple with a heavy snuffbox. Pavel rushed to the corner, looking for a weapon. The drunken Prince Yashvil brutally attacked him. Pavel shouted, defending himself. Then everyone, in a nightmare of hops, threw the emperor to the floor. Someone grabbed a scarf and, throwing a noose, tightened it around the neck of the autocrat. Bennigsen approached Pavel when he was no longer breathing. The Emperor lay motionless, with a disfigured and bloody face.¹⁸

After that, several more emperors of Russia were not destined to die a natural death.¹⁹

A well-known Russian historian, public and political figure, academician Mikhail Nikolaevich Pokrovsky (1862-1932) wrote:

¹⁷ N. Javakhishvili, *Essays on the History of Georgian-Baltic Relations...*, pp. 77-78 (in Russian).

¹⁸ G. Chulkov, *Emperors of Russia. Psychological Portraits*, Moscow 2011, pp. 78-79 (in Russian).

¹⁹ G. Chulkov, *Emperors of Russia. Psychological...*; N. Konyaev, *Romanovs. The Rise and Death of the Dynasty*, Moscow 2003 (in Russian).

Georgia, a country with an extremely old culture (Georgian history begins with the time of Alexander the Great, i.e. more than a thousand years before the first information about Russia) had the misfortune to be at the crossroads of brisk trade routes from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea and from Europe to Asia. For this reason, its history is a history of constant invasions and conquests. After the Macedonian conqueror, the Romans, the Persians, the Byzantines, the Turks, and again the Persians came here. The last two varieties of conquerors wrought especially severe devastation: the Persians at the end of the eighteenth century left only two houses in Tiflis, all the rest were burned to the ground. After that, Russia no longer had to conquer Georgia, the tsarist troops simply occupied it (in 1801). The Georgians were too weakened to offer any serious resistance. The royal rule.²⁰

The loss of national statehood and the arbitrariness of the imperial administration caused deep discontent among the freedom-loving Georgian people. The Georgian people did not put up with the imposed situation, striving to revive the Bagratids, seeing in this royal dynasty a living symbol of the Georgian state. That is why in 1803 the Russian imperial authorities forcibly relocated to St. Petersburg most of the members of the Kartalino-Kakheti royal family, among whom were the heir to the throne, Prince David, and his next (in age) brother, Prince Ioane (1768-1830). Later, their fate was shared by the rest of the royal family. Only two princes escaped this: Alexander Iraklievich (1770-1844), who fled to Persia, and his nephew (grandson of his paternal brother), only son of Ioane – Grigol (Gregory) Ioannovich (1789-1830), who managed to stay in his homeland until March 1812.

Prince Grigol's father Prince Ioane was the son of King of Kartli-Kakheti – Giorgi XII, and a famous Georgian statesman, educator, encyclopedist, writer and scientist, lexicographer, feldtsekhmeister of the Georgian artillery.

Until 1812, prince Grigol was in Imereti (Western Georgia) in the princely family of his mother's parents Ketevan Tsereteli (1772-1823), daughter of prince Zurab Tsereteli, where he was brought up in Georgian Christian traditions. At that time, the Kingdom of Imereti was still independent, which the empire managed to conquer only in 1810.

Grigol was the legitimate heir of his uncle – the heir to the throne of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom – exiled to Russia, officially recognized by the Emperor of Russia – Prince David, who had no children.

²⁰ M. Pokrovsky, *Selected Works in Four Books*, book 3, eds M. Tikhomirov, V. Khvostov, L. Beskrovny, O. Sokolov, Moscow 1967, pp. 525-526 (in Russian).

The sensible part of the Georgian population did not give up hope for the reign of the Bagratians again. Against the hated occupation regime, the Georgians raised armed uprisings, of which the uprising of 1804 in Mtiuleti (mountainous part of northeastern Georgia), which was brutally suppressed by the imperial administration, stood out for its scale.

On January 31, 1812, a popular uprising broke out again in Kakheti. At that time, Georgia was governed by the Commander-in-Chief appointed by the Emperor of the Russian Empire, Phillip Paulucci (1779-1849), a marquis of Italian origin.

The great-grandson of the Kartli-Kakheti King Erekle II, Prince Grigol Bagrationi, a personable, tall man, who was 23 years old at that time, joined the uprising. Gregory grew up at the court of his great-grandfather Erekle II and grandfather Giorgi XII. The future poet and calligrapher moved in the circle of the chosen society of that time.

The appearance in Kakheti of a young descendant of the glorious Georgian kings became a great incentive for the rebels. They proclaimed him their leader and declared him the king of Kartli-Kakheti. As a result of the struggle, the rebels liberated almost all of Kakheti and the northeastern part of Kartli from the Russians. He was the last king of Kartli-Kakheti from the thousand-year-old Bagration dynasty, who reigned in Eastern Georgia from February 20 to March 6, 1812.

The official historiography of the period of the Russian Empire and the USSR considered Grigol not a King, but a pretender to the throne. However, recently in Georgian historiography I have expressed the opinion that Grigol I should be considered the last king of the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom, since he still reigned for two weeks. Our monographic study, published in Georgian, was devoted to this issue.²¹

Materials about the King Grigol I and the Kakhetian uprising of 1812 are contained in both Georgian-language and Russian-language publications. We would therefore not dwell on that issue.

7. Georgia in the Titles of the Russian Emperors and Georgian Heraldic Symbols in the State Emblem of the Empire (from the 19th century to 1917)

In the 19th century, the Russian Empire successively annexed the kingdoms and principalities located on the territory of Georgia, which eventually became part of the

²¹ N. Javakhishvili, *Grigol I – the last Georgian king*, Tbilisi 2008; N. Javakhishvili, *Grigol I – the last king of Kartli-Kakheti*, Tbilisi 2020 (in Georgian).

large empire, which was reflected in the titles of the emperors and Russian heraldic symbols.

In 1801-1917, the Russian emperors considered themselves to be the tsars of Georgia at the same time. In their titles, the term "King of Georgia" was used before the titles "Grand Duke of Lithuania", "Grand Duke of Finland", "Prince of Estonia, Livonia, Courland" (i.e., rulers of the Baltic states), etc.

Until March 3, 1917 (i.e., before the collapse of the Russian Empire), the official title of the emperors of Russia in full looked like this: "By God's hastening mercy, We, the namesake, Emperor and Autocrat of All Russia, Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod; Tsar of Kazan, Tsar of Astrakhan, Tsar of Poland, Tsar of Siberia, Tsar of Tauric Chersonesos, Tsar of Georgia, Sovereign of Pskov and Grand Duke of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volhynia, Podolsk and Finland; Prince of Estonia, Livonia, Courland and Semigallia, Samogitia, Karelia, Tver, Yugra, Perm, Vyatka, Bulgaria and others; The Sovereign and Grand Prince of Novgorod are the lower lands, Chernigov, Ryazan, Polotsk, Rostov, Yaroslavl, Belozersk, Udora, Obdorsk, Kondia, Vitebsk, Mstislav and all the northern countries, the Sovereign; and the Sovereign of the Iberian, Kartalinian and Kabardian lands."²²

As we can see, the above titles indicate that the emperor, in addition to the internal provinces, was the ruler and autocrat of a number of non-Russian countries and territories, including Georgia.

It is noteworthy that in the above list, the title "King of Georgia" is mentioned before the titles confirming the possession of the Baltic States. Thus, Georgia ranks seventh in the list of titles, Lithuania tenth, Estonia (i.e. Estonia) fourteenth, Livonia (later northern Latvia) fifteenth, Courland (later southwestern Latvia) sixteenth, and Semigallia/Zemgale (later southeastern Latvia) seventeenth.

In the Great State Coat of Arms of the Russian Empire, along with the coats of arms of other countries, a certain place was occupied by the "Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Georgia", which is presented in sixth place.²³

In the 19th century, the "Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Georgia" was introduced into the Great and Middle State Coats of Arms of the Russian Empire, which was based

²² G. Murashev, *Titles, Ranks, Awards*, St. Petersburg 2002, p. 7 (in Russian).

²³ *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. I: *Princes* head of the author's collective P. Grebelsky, authors-compilers: P. Grebelsky, S. Dumin, A. Mirvis, A. Shumkov, M. Katin-Yartsev, scientific ed. S. Dumin, scientific consultant V. Lapin, reviewer M. Florinsky, St. Petersburg 1993, pp. 39-40 (in Russian).

on the Great State Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti of the time of King Erekle II (1720-1798).²⁴

The Great State Coat of Arms of Russia depicted the coats of arms of various possessions that were part of the Russian Empire, among which the "Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Georgia" had the most extensive description. Along with the coats of arms of the Georgian kingdoms, it also depicted the coats of arms of the Caucasian possessions that had ever been part of Georgia or were subordinate to it: the North Caucasus and the khanates located on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan and Armenia, in particular, the "coat of arms of the Kabarda lands", "the coat of arms of the Cherkassy and Mountain princes" and "the coat of arms of Armenia".

In the official description of the Great State Coat of Arms of the Russian Empire, we read:

The coat of arms of the Kingdom of Georgia is a four-part shield, with a tip and a small shield in the middle:

in the middle small shield there is the coat of arms of Georgia: in a golden field St. George the Victorious in azure armor, with a golden cross on his chest, in a scarlet mantle, sitting on a black horse covered with scarlet and gold fringe and striking with a scarlet spear of green, with black wings and scarlet eyes and the tongue of a dragon;

in the first part – the coat of arms of Iberia: a silver galloping horse in a scarlet shield; in the corners, upper left and lower right, silver eight-pointed stars;

in the second part – the coat of arms of Kartalinia (Kartli): in a golden shield there is a fire-breathing mountain, pierced crosswise with two black arrows, points upwards;

in the third part – the coat of arms of the Kabardian lands: in an azure shield, on two silver cross-shaped arrows, pointed upwards – a small golden shield with a scarlet crescent moon turned to the right; three-quarters silver six-pointed stars;

in the fourth part – the coat of arms of Armenia: a scarlet crowned lion in a golden field;

at the end there is the coat of arms of the Cherkassy and Mountain princes: a Circassian riding a black horse, in silver weapons, scarlet clothes and a black fur mantle, with a black spear on his right shoulder.²⁵

This diverse coat of arms, crowned with the Georgian royal crown, is a unique heraldic example. It symbolically personifies the entire Caucasus, united under the royal crown of the thousand-year-old Bagration dynasty. Thus, the rulers of the Russian

²⁴ N. Javakhishvili, *Caucasian Symbolism on the Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Georgia*, "Georgian Diplomacy" 2007, vol. 13, pp. 131-141 (in Georgian).

²⁵ *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. I: *Princes...*, pp. 39-40 (in Russian).

Empire officially recorded on its most significant symbol, the State Emblem, that Georgia had traditionally been a hegemonic state among the countries of the Caucasus region.

On the Great State Coat of Arms of the Russian Empire, along with the coats of arms of other countries, the symbols of the Baltic States were also presented, in particular the "Coat of Arms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania", as well as the coats of arms of Estonia, Livonia, Courland and Northern Greece. All this once again confirms the fact of what a great geopolitical function Georgia performed.²⁶

8. Georgian aristocracy in the Russian Empire (from the 19th century to 1917)

When, despite the above-mentioned Treaty of Georgiev, the Russian Empire abolished the centuries-old Georgian statehood, representatives of the Georgian royal dynasty of the Bagratians, as well as princely and noble families, faced a dilemma – either to serve the Russian emperors, or to refuse state and military service in protest. A certain part of the Georgian nobility did not reconcile themselves to the abolition of Georgian statehood and fought to the best of their ability for the restoration of the independence of their native country. This struggle continued with varying intensity until the collapse of the Russian Empire.

The advanced part of even those Georgian nobles who forcibly began to serve the Russian Empire sacredly preserved the memory of the independent Georgian kingdom, which had existed for thousands of years under the crown of the Bagratians.²⁷

After Georgia became part of the Russian Empire, the above-mentioned Georgian titles disappeared and the all-Russian ones – prince and nobleman – took root. In particular, the direct descendants of the last Georgian kings from the Bagration dynasty received the title of "His Serene Highness", and the representatives of the side branches of the same family received the title of "Prince". The title of His Serene Highness was also given to the brothers and descendants of the last possessing princes of Megrelia, Abkhazia and Guria, and their relatives, as well as the descendants of the possessing princes of Svanetia, bore the title of prince.

²⁶ N. Javakhishvili, *Essays on the History of Georgian-Baltic Relations...*, pp. 83-84 (in Russian).

²⁷ N. Javakhishvili, *Georgians Under the Russian Banner (Georgian Military and State Figures in the Service of Russia in 1703-1917)*, Tbilisi 2003 (in Russian).

From the beginning of the 19th century, all cases concerning the Georgian aristocracy were considered in the General Assembly of the local Supreme Government, and from there they were submitted for approval to the Heraldry of the Russian Empire. In 1818, the Georgian (later Tiflis) Noble Deputy Assembly was established. Already during the reign of Emperor Alexander I, the Highest Approved Opinions of the State Council recognized the princely dignity of the Russian Empire.²⁸ All these lists were published.²⁹

Russian researcher Boris Solovyov writes:

In Russia, 56% of all princely families were Georgian, and nevertheless, many petitions for the granting of princely titles came from the Georgian nobility. In 1850, special commissions in Tiflis and Kutaisi, established to examine related cases, awarded the princely title to 69 pretender families, except for those who already possessed the princely title.³⁰

According to official statistics, in 1897 the number of Georgian (or Georgian-origin) nobility exceeded 70 thousand people, which was 5.29% of the total population of Georgian nationality.³¹

It is noteworthy that according to the census of 1913, the entire population on the territory of then Georgia was 2.6 million people.³²

The significant number of Georgian aristocracy was due to the fact that the history of Georgian statehood dates back long before the birth of Christ, and the last Georgian kings from the Bagration family, who had the right to grant the title of nobility, still reigned at the beginning of the 19th century.

Academician Mikhail Pokrovsky notes:

The numerous Georgian landlord estate, very similar in composition to the Polish nobility – a few magnates who received the Russian princely title, and a mass of small landowners of tens

²⁸ *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. IV: *Princes of the Kingdom of Georgia*, heads of the author's collective P. Grebelsky, S. Dumin and Y. Chikovani, authors-compilers: S. Dumin, Y. Chikovani, P. Grebelsky, M. Katin-Yartsev, A. Shumkov, ed. S. Dumin, scientific consultant G. Anchabadze, Moscow 1998, pp. 13-14 (in Russian).

²⁹ *Nominal Family List of Persons Belonging to the Princely and Noble Families of Georgia*, St. Petersburg 1851; *Lists of Princes and Nobles of Georgia 1851: Nominal Family List of Persons Belonging to the Princely and Noble Families of Guria*, St. Petersburg 1851; *Lists of Princes and Nobles of Georgia 1851: Nominal Family List of Persons Belonging to the Princely and Noble Families of Imereti*, St. Petersburg 1851; *Lists of Princes and Nobles of Georgia 1880: Nominal Family List of Persons Recognized in the Tavad and Aznaur Dignity in Mingrelia [Attitude of the Caucasian Committee, Submitted to the State Council on February 14, 1880]*, St. Petersburg 1880 (in Russian).

³⁰ B. Solovyov, *Russian Nobility and Its Outstanding Representatives*, Rostov-on-Don 2000, pp. 175-176 (in Russian).

³¹ *General Summary of the Results of the Development of the Data of the First General Population Census Conducted on January 28, 1897*, St. Petersburg 1905, p. LVI (in Russian).

³² *Georgian SSR*, [in:] *Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia*, Tbilisi 1981, p. 33 (in Georgian).

of hectares, became the apparatus of Russian administration, the apparatus with the help of which the Russian authorities, who did not know the Georgian language, could »restore order« in Georgia. Magnates became Russian generals and governors or vice-governors under the Russians, and small landowners were content with the posts of bailiffs and even sergeants.³³

From the 18th century until the collapse of the Russian Empire, some representatives of Georgian noble families became related to representatives of aristocratic families of the Russian Empire – Russian, German, Polish, Lithuanian, Swedish and other origins.

The abolition of serfdom in the Russian Empire undoubtedly had a progressive character both for this state and for Georgia, which was part of it. Despite the remnants of the old system (landlord ownership and temporary obligation), the peasant reform contributed to the formation of capitalist relations and the socio-economic development of our country. And all this gave an incentive to modernize Georgian society. Despite all that was happening, the Georgian aristocracy retained its former authority and influence in society for some time.

From the well-known Georgian princely families came outstanding political and public figures, who from the 60s of the 19th century led the national liberation movement of the "sixties", the purpose of which was the restoration of national statehood. At the forefront of this movement were Prince Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) and Prince Akaki Tsereteli (1840-1915), who were great writers and public figures with great authority and influence on the Georgian society of that time.

But the development of capitalist relations and the social transformation of Georgian society led to the fact that the princes gradually ceded the leading positions in the economic and social life of the state to both the nobility and the lower strata.

From the end of the 19th century, against the background of the aggravation of the social situation, the ideas of the social-democratic movement gradually became popular among the population of Georgia, in the flagship of which were representatives of the Georgian noble families: Noe Jordania, Nikolai (Carlo) Chkheidze, Irakli (Kaki) Tsereteli, Evgeny Gegechkori and others. They led the Menshevik wing not only of Georgian, but also of all-Russian social democracy. As for the Bolshevik wing of the Georgian Social Democracy, representatives of workers and peasants dominated there.³⁴

³³ M. Pokrovsky, *Selected Works in Four Books...*, p. 526 (in Russian).

³⁴ N. Javakhishvili, *Essays on the History of Georgian-Baltic Relations...*, pp. 129-131 (in Russian).

9. The Georgian aristocracy after the collapse of the Russian Empire and the abolition of the traditional estate system during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1917-1921)

The advanced part of the Georgian aristocracy met the challenge of the century with dignity, in particular, the collapse of the Russian Empire, the loss of a privileged position in society and the agrarian reform carried out by the government of the newly restored Georgian state, as a result of which large landowners lost huge appanages. In particular, the former state, appanage, church-monastic and private lands above the established norm (7 dessiatinas) were transferred to the land committees.³⁵

On November 21, 1917, speaking at the First National Congress of Georgia, the last leader of the nobility of the Tiflis province (Eastern Georgia), Prince Konstantin (Kote) Nikolaevich Abkhazi (1867-1923), publicly donated all the property of this estate organization to the Georgian people. The last marshal of the nobility of the Kutaisi province (Western Georgia), Prince David Otievich Nizharadze, did the same.³⁶

The total value of the property of these estate organizations, which prepared the basis for an independent Georgian state, was 60 million rubles in gold.³⁷

Such was the position of the Georgian aristocracy, which with this step once again confirmed its loyalty to their beloved homeland.

On this occasion, speaking at the above-mentioned congress, the prominent Georgian Social Democrat Akaki Chkhenkeli (1874-1959), a former deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Empire, who since November 1917 was deputy chairman of the then regional government – the Transcaucasian Commissariat and Minister of Internal Affairs, and then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, said:

The step taken by the Georgian nobility is historic... If we could say that Georgian Social Democracy did not occupy the last place in the political life of Russia, then the Georgian nobility clearly occupied the first place among the nobility throughout Russia. This circumstance confirms the strength of the Georgian nation, the importance and influence of its democracy...

³⁵ R. Gabashvili, *What I Remember (Memoir)*, [in:] *Georgian Emigrant Literature – Return*, vol. III, ed. G. Sharadze, Tbilisi 1992, p. 255 (in Georgian).

³⁶ "Ertoba" ("Unity") 1917, No. 203, p. 3, newspaper of the Transcaucasian Social-Democratic Workers' Organisations; "Sakartvelo" (Georgia) 1917, No. 259, p. 1 (in Georgian), newspaper of the National Democratic Party of Georgia.

³⁷ "Ertoba" ("Unity") 1917, No. 204, p. 2; Sh. Vadachkoria, *Questions of the Political History of Georgia (XX Century)*, vol. I, Tbilisi 2003, p. 239 (in Georgian).

When the Georgian people are formed in the political and legal sense, they will have their own property, the basis of which will be the property of the nobility.³⁸

Chairman of the National Council of Georgia Noé Jordania, speaking at the above-mentioned congress, said: "The privileged class in Georgia will no longer exist. The Georgian people have become one in the legal sense. This is the basis of our future. The act of government on the abolition of titles will be published in a few days."³⁹

On November 28 of the same year, the press published a decree of the Transcaucasian Commission, according to which, from that day on, the class division, titles and privileges were abolished throughout the territory of Transcaucasia and all citizens, regardless of national and estate origin, could enjoy absolutely equal rights.⁴⁰

The first Georgian constitution, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of the Georgian Democratic Republic on February 21, 1921, stated: "All citizens are equal before the law. There are no class differences. The awarding of a degree, except for an academic one, is prohibited."⁴¹

We think that the biography of Prince Konstantin Abkhazi is not without interest. His mother, Princess Nina Grigorievna Chavchavadze (1834-1883), was the sister of the above-mentioned leader of the national liberation movement of Georgia, Ilia Chavchavadze.

K. Abkhazi was an officer of the army of the Russian Empire, a holder of the Order of St. Anna of the III degree and the Order of St. Stanislav of the II degree. He retired with the rank of colonel (1911). In 1913, he was elected marshal of the nobility of the Tiflis province. With the outbreak of World War I, he was again assigned to military service and formed the Caucasian Rifle Artillery Brigade, appointed its commander. He fought on the Western Front. He was awarded the Orders of St. Vladimir IV and III degrees with swords. In December 1915, by order of the new viceroy of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov, he was sent to Tiflis to fulfill the post of marshal of the nobility. In 1916, he was elected from the nobility of the Tiflis province to the State Council of the Russian Empire.⁴²

³⁸ "Ertoba" ("Unity") 1917, No. 202, p. 2 (in Georgian).

³⁹ "Ertoba" ("Unity") 1917, No. 203, p. 3 (in Georgian).

⁴⁰ "Ertoba" ("Unity") 1917, No. 206, p. 2; "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia") 1917, No. 262, p. 3 (in Georgian).

⁴¹ *The Constitution of Georgia*, adopted by the Constituent Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Georgia on 21 February 1921, [in:] *Collection of Legal Acts of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)*, compiled by E. Gurgenidze, ed. V. Sharashenidze, Tbilisi 1990, p. 460 (in Georgian).

⁴² *Noble Families of the Russian Empire*, vol. IV..., p. 100 (in Russian).

In November 1917, K. Abkhazi was elected a member of the National Council of Georgia. On May 26, 1918, he signed an act on the restoration of the state independence of Georgia. In 1919, he was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia. After the occupation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, he actively fought for the restoration of state independence. In 1919, he was promoted to Major General of the Georgian Army. In 1921, he was elected chairman of the National Democratic Party of Georgia. He headed the Military Center of the Committee of Independence of Georgia, which organized an uprising against the Bolsheviks. In February 1923, he was arrested and shot by the Cheka of Soviet regime along with other members of the Military Center.⁴³

Conclusion

Thus, in Georgia, as a country with ancient state traditions, since ancient times there has been a fairly numerous and strong national aristocracy, which for many centuries has passed a rather difficult path of development.

The best representatives of the Georgian nobility, under the leadership of the kings of Georgia, selflessly fought against foreign invaders who wanted to conquer our homeland. The heroic defense of the centuries-old independent statehood and the Christian faith, which was proclaimed the state religion in Georgia as early as 326, continued uninterrupted until the beginning of the 19th century.

Georgia had its own aristocratic titles. After Georgia became part of the Russian Empire, the Georgian traditional aristocratic titles disappeared and the all-Russian ones – prince and nobleman – took root. In particular, the direct descendants of the last Georgian kings from the Bagration dynasty received the title of "His Serene Highness", and the representatives of the side branches of the same family received the title of "Prince". The title of His Serene Highness was also given to the brothers and descendants of the last possessing princes of Megrelia, Abkhazia and Guria, and their relatives, as well as the descendants of the possessing princes of Svaneti, bore the title of prince.

⁴³ U. Sidamonidze, *Abkhazi Konstantin*, [in:] *Encyclopedia "Georgia"*, vol. I, Tbilisi 1997, pp. 256-257 (in Georgian).

The advanced part of the Georgian aristocracy met the challenge of the century with dignity, in particular, the collapse of the Russian Empire, the loss of a privileged position in society and the agrarian reform carried out by the government of the newly restored Georgian state, as a result of which large land owners lost huge appanages. In particular, the former state, appanage, church-monastery and private lands above the established norm (7 dessiatinas) were transferred to the land committees.

On November 21, 1917, speaking at the First National Congress of Georgia, the last marshal of the nobility of the Tiflis province (Eastern Georgia) publicly donated all the property of this estate organization to the Georgian people. The last marshal of the nobility of the Kutaisi province (Western Georgia) did the same. The total value of the property of these estate organizations, which prepared a unique basis for an independent Georgian state, was 60 million rubles in gold.

On November 28 of the same year, the Transcaucasian Commissariat, which was the local supreme government of the entire former region of the already defunct Russian Empire, adopted a decree according to which, from that day, the division of estates, titles and privileges was abolished throughout the territory of Transcaucasia and all citizens, regardless of national and estate origin, could enjoy absolutely equal rights.

The first Georgian constitution, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in Tbilisi on February 21, 1921, stated that all citizens were equal before the law, there were no class distinctions, and the awarding of degrees, except for academic degrees, was prohibited.

Thus, during the existence of the First Republic of Georgia, the traditional estate division, titles, privileges were finally abolished, and all citizens enjoyed equal rights, which was confirmed in the constitution of this independent state.

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Summary

In Georgia, as a country with ancient state traditions, there was a fairly large and strong national religion, which has passed a rather difficult path of development over the course of many centuries.

The best representatives of the Georgian nobility, under the leadership of the kings (in Georgian – "მეფე/Mephe") of Georgia (Parnavazids/Parnavaziani, Bagratids/Bagrationis and others) fought selflessly against foreign invaders who wanted the destruction of our country. The heroic defense of the centuries-old independent state and the Christian faith, which was proclaimed the state religion in Georgia as early as 326, continued uninterrupted until the beginning of the 19th century.

Georgia had its own aristocratic titles. After Georgia by deception became part of the Russian Empire, the Georgian traditional aristocratic titles disappeared and the Russian titles of prince and nobleman took root. In particular, the direct descendants of the last Georgian kings from the Bagration dynasty received the title of "His Serene

Highness the Prince" ("უგანათლებულესი თავადი"), and representatives of the side branches of the same family received the title of "Prince" ("თავადი").

The title of "His Serene Highness the Prince" was also given to the brothers and descendants of the last rulers of principality ("Mtavari/მთავარი") of Megrelia (Samegrelo), Abkhazia (Abkhazeti) and Guria, and their relatives, as well as the descendants of the sovereign princes of Svaneti, bore the title of "Prince" ("თავადი").

The advanced part of the Georgian aristocracy adequately met the challenge of the century, in particular, the collapse of the Russian Empire, the loss of a privileged position in society and the agrarian reform carried out by the government of the newly restored Georgian state, as a result of which large land owners lost huge appanages. In particular, the former state, appanage, church-monastery and private lands exceeded the established norm (7 dessiatinas) were transferred to the land committees.

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The total value of the property of these estate organizations, which prepared its own basis for an independent Georgian state, was 60 million rubles (in gold).

On November 28 of the same year, the Transcaucasian Commission, which was the local supreme government of the entire former region of already defunct Russian Empire, adopted a decree according to which, from that day on, the division of the Caucasus, titles and privileges were exercised throughout the territory of Transcaucasia and all citizens, regardless of national and ethnic origins, could absolutely enjoy equal rights.

In the first Georgian constitution, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Georgia on February 21, 1921 in Tbilisi, it was stated that all citizens are equal by law, there are no class distinctions and the awarding of fines, except for the academic one, is prohibited.

Thus, during the existence of the First Georgian Republic, the traditional civil division, titles, privileges and all citizens enjoyed their rights, which was also confirmed in the constitution of the independent state – the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

Key words: The Georgian Kingdom, The royal dynasty of Bagratids (in Georgian – "Bagrationi"), King (in Georgian – "Mephe"), The Ruler of principality ("Mtavari"), Prince ("Tavadi"), Nobleman ("Aznauri"), The Democratic Republic of Georgia, The first Georgian constitution