

Tornike Asatiani

The Story  
of  
Georgian Heraldry



The State Council of Heraldry at the  
Parliament of Georgia

Tbilisi  
2023

The project was implemented by the State Council of Heraldry  
at the Parliament of Georgia

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The Story of Georgian Heraldry

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ISBN 978-9941-8-5803-1

The present book - "The Story of Georgian Heraldry" - by one of the distinguished scholars - Tornike Asatiani - is a step forward in introducing Georgian Heraldry to the international community. The book contains numerous illustrative materials and a fascinating narrative. The Georgian public, including professional readers, knows and appreciates several comprehensive works of the author, and now the Council publishes their short compilation for the English-speaking audience. Tornike Asatiani is among the rare specialists of heraldry who gathered and analyzed quite a significant amount of historical heraldic items and symbols of the modern Georgian state and prepared them for publication. The studies of Doctor Tornike Asatiani are valuable from a scientific point of view and practical experience. A reserve lieutenant colonel with long-lasting service in the Defense Forces of Georgia, Tornike Asatiani was also a member of The Georgian Heraldic Association, later the Permanent Commission Studying Heraldry Issues at the State Council of Heraldry and contributed to designing and recognizing new symbols of the state. Both his practical and theoretical knowledge gave him exceptional expertise in the field.

pic. 001.

On the book cover: Georgians entering Jerusalem. Illustration (fragment) from the map of Nicola de Fer, 1696. Photo courtesy of CSEM (Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalis) <https://csem.ge/>. Appreciations to the head of CSEM Prof. Giorgi Sordia for providing the illustration.

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Discovering an unknown extravagant story of the exotic Georgian heraldry with a considerably short history but with ancient roots***

**T**he Georgian coats of arms are the fascinating continuation of the typical attribute of medieval European feudal society - heraldry, which emerged in Western Europe on the verge of the Crusades and flourished during and after them. As heraldry in any country uses very specific terminology to describe the coats of arms, a brief glossary of heraldic terms used in the book is added in the appendix of the publication. The terms included in the glossary will be marked in *italic* font throughout the text.

Certain phenomena in history are strikingly exotic because of a unique and colorful mixture of cultures, styles, and forms caused by a meeting of civilizations. For instance, the uniforms of Algerian Zouaves in the French army or Sikh regiments in India under British rule, or Georgians from the Personal Convoy of His Imperial Majesty could be seen as some examples when traditional costumes and weapons were colorfully mixed with European uniforms, military equipment, rank system, and decorations. The same can be said about Moorish architecture in the Middle Ages south Spain with its Arabic forms though with the flavors of Roman, Byzantine, Visigoth, and North-African Berber influences, or even about the capital city of Georgia itself, Tbilisi, which with its architecture, lifestyle, and spirit always was and still is a boiling pot of cultures, religions, and ethnicities, located at the edge of Europe and Asia. One could probably draw a parallel between those examples and Georgian heraldry with its ancient symbolic and historical roots but, at the same time, with European visuals



Pic. 002.

Tomb plaque of Geoffrey of Anjou (1113-1151), Count of Maine and Anjou and father of the future King Henry II of England. The shield is considered to be the first occurrence of inheritance of coat of arms. 1158. Musée de Tessé, Le Mans.<sup>1</sup>

and forms, which create absolutely unique original style outstanding from any other heraldic practices in the world.



Pic. 003.

Uniforms of Georgians from the Personal Convoy of His Imperial Majesty.<sup>2</sup>



Pic. 004.

Caucasian mountains highlanders from the Personal Convoy of His Imperial Majesty.



Pic. 005.

Uniforms of Indian Sikhs in British colonial forces.<sup>3</sup>



Pic. 006.

Uniforms of Algerian Zouaves in the French army.<sup>4</sup>



Pic. 007.

Example of Moorish architecture – Gran Teatro Falla in Cadiz, Spain.<sup>5</sup> “Moorish design was adapted by Christian architects and patrons, where it was combined with Romanesque and Gothic Christian typologies”.<sup>6</sup>



Pic. 008.

Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia) old city district – a mixture of cultures, religions, and architectural styles. In general, Georgian heraldry, mixed architectural designs of Tbilisi or uniforms of Georgian military units in the XIX c. all are the representation of multicultural nature of the country

Together with observations on original visual forms of Georgian heraldry, it is also interesting to follow its development and transformation as it was hardly but steadily cutting a historical path like a small stream through the rough and rocky surroundings of the turbulent and violent periods of wars, radical changes of political systems, ideologies and fights for independence in the country and a whole Caucasian region.

The aim of this book is dual. Firstly, to present the history of Georgian heraldry through the facts and assumptions based on the academic research and publications of various authors. Secondly, to tell the story of the Georgian coat of arms in a way that will make it an easy and passionate read not only for scholars and specialists of the subject but also for the broader specter of readers interested in history generally and in the history of Georgia and the Caucasian region particularly.

The well-developed feudal system, very similarly structured and with numerous similar characteristics identical to the Western European systems made a fertile ground for the acceptance and development of heraldry in Georgia. Also, self-seeing as part of European Judeo-Christian civilization played its role in why Georgians were so eager to adopt heraldry, never known before in the country or around it among its neighboring states and cultures.

The understanding of knighthood was similarly adopted by Georgian chivalry with their extended family histories and legends connected to those histories as in Western Europe. However, in Georgia, the concept had never been formulated in separately written knightly codes or reflected in such a specific creation as heraldry. Despite that, due to the principal and often formal similarities of the Georgian feudal system with the European and shared understanding of courtois concepts, Georgian noblemen, once exposed to the coat of arms' splendid forms and astonishing stories conveyed by symbolic compositions found heraldry as another way to highlight their social status or ancestral deeds.

Like many ancient civilizations or nations, Georgians also used certain emblems from old times as ornaments or for claiming property, marking documents, minting coins, and many other requirements. These emblems were mainly derived either from local ancient totems, antique Hellenic and Roman symbology, or represented variations of emblems spread on territories of Mesopotamia, the Near East, and Front Asia.

Despite the widespread use of various symbols in many spheres of life, Georgian emblems never converted into anything similar to the Western European style heraldic system with strict canons of use, specific terminology, or codification in written texts and rolls of arms. In spite of this, very specific, characteristic, and original symbols can be found on ancient Georgian gravestones, architectural decors, coins, seals, combat equipment, and other attributes of the everyday life.





pic. 009:  
St. George (geo – St. Giorgi, წმ. გიორგი) in typical Georgian armament with a cross on the shield. An exhibit of Svaneti Museum of History. Mestia, Georgia. High Middle Ages.



pic. 010:  
Georgian infantry spearman with a quarterly shield. An exhibit of Svaneti Museum of History. Mestia, Georgia. The XIII c.



pic. 011.  
St. George with an ornamented shield. An exhibit of Svaneti Museum of History. Mestia, Georgia. The XIII c.



Pic. 012.  
Gravestone with a pictogram, frequently met in Tusheti region, on the background the village's guard towers. Omalo, Tusheti, east-northern Georgian mountains.<sup>7</sup>



Pic. 013.  
Plower's gravestone. St. Nino church, the X-XI cc. Akhalqalaqi, Georgia. Together with practical agricultural function, plowing also had a sacral meaning in ancient Georgia. Plowers were respected as similarly were blacksmiths, as forging had a sacral meaning too.<sup>8</sup>



pic. 015.

Kolkhuri Tetri (Kolkhis "whites" or "silvers", geo. – კოლხური თეთრი). Silver coins spread during the Hellenic period in the Kingdom of Kolkhis (Kolkhida) and around the Black Sea Basin during Hellenic period, VI-III BC.



Pic. 016:

Coin of Queen Tamar (თამარ მეფე) 1088-1207/10, with a symbol of Bagrationi dynasty in the High Middle Ages. The inscriptions are in Georgian and Arabic for wider use across the whole Front Asia.



Pic. 017.

King David (დავით, Davit) IV the Builder's (1089-1125) coin with a composition of the cross and four roundels, resembling the design of the five-cross flag of Georgia.<sup>9</sup>



Pic. 018.

Seal of King of Georgia Giorgi (გიორგი, George) III 1156-1184, with an image of dismantled St. George.<sup>10</sup>

The study of Georgian heraldry paradoxically started during the Soviet occupation of the country by a few Russian scholars in St. Petersburg in the 1920-30ies, resulting in unpublished work called “Caucasian Armorial”.<sup>11</sup> But the most prominent role in the study of Georgian heraldry was played by Mikheil Vadbolski with his pioneering work “Georgian Heraldry”<sup>12</sup> first published in the 1980ies, though, only after the corrections from that time Communist censorship. Mr. Vadbolski was a descendant of a Polish noble family tracking their ancestry from Rurik Varangian dynasty, ancient rulers of Russia. Mikheil Vadbolski settled in Georgia in 1920ies after participating as a cavalry officer in the Great War and the Russian civil war. It’s symbolic that under the Soviet regime, the only fundamental work on a study of Georgian heraldry was accomplished by a person of European descent from the country of rich heraldic traditions, Poland. Mikheil Vadbolski’s book helped the survival of Georgian heraldry as many of its examples would be lost without Mr. Vadbolski’s efforts, because communist perceived heraldry as a remnant of feudal oppressive past which does not deserve to be studied in a socialist proletarian society.

After regaining independence in 1990, a study and also practice of heraldry flourished in Georgia. The number of scholars researching Georgian heraldry defended dissertations and published numerous articles, brochures or books on the subject. At the same time, an immense role in studying of history of Georgian heraldry and in developing of contemporary state heraldry in Georgia was played by the State Council of Heraldry headed by Mr. Eldar Shengelaia and later Mr. Mamuka Gongadze. This piece of work also represents a continuation of these efforts. As the absolute majority of publications on Georgian heraldry are in Georgian, the English edition of the presented work is a groundbreaking event to a certain extent.

The readers can familiarize themselves with the periods of development of Georgian heraldry referring to the chart included in the appendix for visualization of the subject.

This book is not only about heraldry but also shows how Georgian heraldry, just like any other, is connected with many aspects of Georgian history, culture, and geography.



Pic. 019.  
Eagle bas-relief from Georgian Khakhuli monastery (now in Turkey), the X c.

## CHAPTER I – THE BEGINNINGS IN GEORGIA AND ABROAD

### *Georgian state coat of arms created in the country and overseas in the XV-XVII cc.*



Pic. 020

Attributed coat of arms of Kingdom of Georgia from Grunenberg's armorial, the XV c.



Pic. 021.

Coat of arms of Lazika (historical name of western Georgian i.e. ancient Kolkhis) "kung von lasya gehort undern kan" from Grunenberg's armorial. The XV c.



Pic. 022.

Attributed coat of arms of Abkhazia "Kung von abstas undern kan", from Grunenberg's armorial.



Pic. 023.

Attributed coat of arms of Abkhazia "Kung von aptdas undern kan", from Grunenberg's armorial. The XV c.

The history of the coats of arms connected to Georgia starts in the XV c. with the state coat of arms of the Kingdom of Georgia in Konrad Grunenberg's (1442-1494) *armorial*<sup>13</sup> created in Germany. This is a so-called attributed or invented coat of arms which likely was not derived from Georgian symbolic traditions but was composed by the author of the armorial to depict the Kingdom of Georgia. Such arms were widespread and popular in late Middle Ages Europe, and Grunenberg's *roll of arms* is rich with those. As much as it is known for now this coat of arms wasn't known in Georgia till the recent discovery of it in the armorial by Georgian scholars.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, none of the emblems from this coat of arms had directly appeared in or indirectly influenced Georgian heraldry. Despite being attributed the coat of arms still portrays a vision of Georgia as a kingdom of Christian warrior nation through the common heraldic charges of *lion rampant* (symbol of strength and agility,<sup>15</sup> an embodiment of courage, strength, and nobleness, frequent symbol of kings and kingdoms<sup>16</sup>), straight cross-shaped sword (so-called knightly sword<sup>17</sup> – a symbol of warfighting) and a type of a crown which at that time, was typically associated with monarchs.

Besides the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Georgia, several other shields in Grunenberg's book are also connected to Georgia. These are the coats of arms of Lazika (west Georgia) and Abkhazia (the extreme north-western historical province of Georgia).

Lazika's symbol is the only one which has a connection to the real, not attributed or imaginary symbols of Georgia because, as it will be seen later the fire mountain speared by arrows appears in the XVII c. and XVIII c. as coat of arms of eastern Georgian Kingdom of Kartli. This makes it the oldest real, not imaginary, and continuously used coat of arms in Georgian heraldry.<sup>18</sup>



Pic. 024

The page with Georgian coats of arms from Grunenberg's armorial, the XV c.

Another oldest example of an invented coat of arms connected to Georgia created in Europe is the personal heraldic shield attributed to Svimon I Kheli (Simon the Furious, geo. სვიმონ ხელი. 1537-1611) King of Qartli (1556-1569, 1578-1599) on his portrait made by Italian engraver and publisher Giovanni Orlandi (fl. 1590-1640).<sup>19</sup> Svimon I earned the nickname Furious (Kheli) in constant daring wars against Ottoman and Persian invaders of Georgia. In Ottoman Empire, he was similarly known as Deli Simon – Mad Simon, due to his ferocity in combat.

In the westerners' that time ideas generally, and in heraldry particularly an elephant symbolized fierceness and destructiveness in battle.<sup>20</sup> It was also associated with the military leadership.<sup>21</sup> Very frequently, it was depicted in paintings, sculptures, bas-reliefs, and heraldry with a castle on its back - reminiscence of a howdah,<sup>22</sup> sometimes manned with warriors, to even further underline its strength and power in combat. That explains why it is not surprising the battle-elephant with a castle was associated with the almost legendary Christian warrior king from a faraway less-known eastern country – Georgia.

When Simon I the Furious was finally captured by Ottomans, a salvo of cannons was fired in Istanbul to celebrate a victory over the relentless, fearless enemy of the



Pic. 025.

Portrait of King of Qartli Svimon I Kheli (geo. სვიმონ ხელი, Simon I the Furious) from the engraving of Giovanni Orlandi, Beginning of the XVII



Pic. 026.

The coat of arms of King Svimon I the Furious from the same engraving.

Empire. This reveals how prominent and famous figure Simon I was in that time Christian and Muslim worlds and why he's among very few Georgian kings known in medieval Europe. Together with the sound and flames of cannons fired in Istanbul, Simon's portrait and coat of arms virtually granted to him by the Italian author are the testimonies of his great military deeds in fighting for the freedom of Georgian lands and for the whole Christendom as his contemporaries saw it.

Probably one of the first coats of arms, if not the very first one created in Georgia might be a design from the album dedicated to the travel in Georgia by Don Teramo Cristoforo de Castelli. The image extremely closely resembles the XVII c. Italian coats of arms and the style of armorial devices in that time Italy. The design represents a stylized typical baroque shield of arms with a cannon on it, a Latin *motto*: cum vigore sonus (Eng.: with a vigorous sound) over the shield, and the baroque style vegetation cartouche detail resembling a crown. The text following the composition apprises Mingrelian Prince, who dared to wage war against the much larger and stronger Georgian Kingdom, defeat it and achieve an independence with an idea to revive the ancient kingdom of Colchis.

The album's Georgian reprint doesn't explain the image other than simply commenting at the bottom of the page: "cannon". It can be cautiously assumed that impressed by the boldness of the Prince, Don Cristoforo created an imaginary coat of arms of the Principality based on his knowledge of heraldic design styles widely spread and known in his contemporary Italy.

Several aspects suggest that this is a coat of arms, not a mere image of a cannon: 1) the existence of the shield, 2) the existence of the *motto*, 3) the existence of a heraldic charge, in this case – the cannon. Though, some questions raise the nonexist-



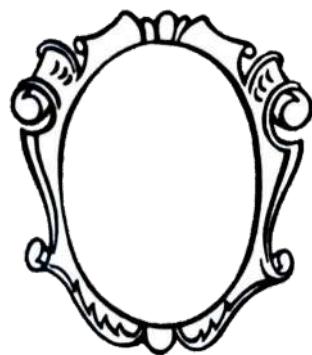
Pic. 027.

Possibly an attributed coat of arms of Principality of Mingrelia by Italian missioner de Castelli, XVII c.<sup>23</sup>



Pic. 028.

Example of cartouche baroque shield of arms design, Italy, XVIII c.



Pic. 029.

Example of baroque shield of arms typical for the late XVII c.

ence of the heraldic colors – *tinctures, metals, furs* or their graphic equivalents; 4) the design visibly differs from any other sketches or drawings of de Casteli. Based on these arguments and the spirit of the nature of the text linked to the image, it can be stated with a high possibility that the composition is an attributed or imaginary coat of arms of Mingrelia created by Don Cristoforo de Casteli between 1628-1654, during his travel in Georgia.

Georgia's first real state and provincial coat of arms appear in history in the XVII c. They were depicted in the royal title album (Titulyarnik) of Tsar Alexi Mikhailovich of Moscow.<sup>24</sup> These are coats of arms of “all Georgian lands” – St. George, Kingdom of Qartli or “Iverian lands” as the inscription on the shield says (Iveria/Iberia was an ancient name of East Georgia) – a flaming mountain speared with two arrows per saltire and the Kingdom of Kakheti – a horse *rampant* between two 8-point stars. While the first represented the unified Kingdom of Georgia which already did not exist at that moment as it disintegrated in the XVI c., the other two were small eastern Georgian Kingdoms ruled by the same Bagrationi (geo. ბაგრატიონი) dynasty which ruled in Georgia since the early Middle Ages. At that time, Georgian kingdoms were searching for allies in Europe and in the north to confront the onslaught of Ottoman and Persian invaders.

Russian Tsar considered these relations as a reason to include the Georgian coat of arms in his Title Book, what was a typical representation of a so-called coat of arms of a pretension, when a ruler would name under his/her title the land, which in reality does not belong to his/her properties, but s/he wishes to claim the possession. It can be seen through the heraldry how expansionist was Russian policy towards neighboring countries. The same coat of arms was also included in the diary of Austrian diplomat



Pic. 030, 031.

Georgian coat of arms from the diary of Austrian diplomat Johann Georg Korb. The Original<sup>25</sup> (030) and the colored (031) versions of the illustration.

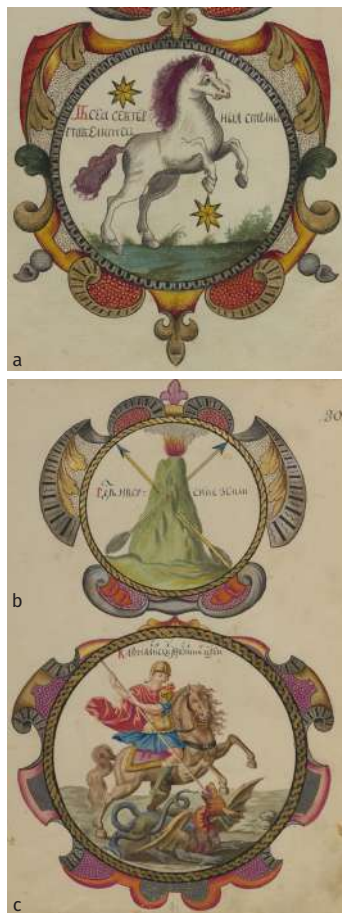


and traveler Johann Georg Korb (1672-1741).

Interestingly in one of the versions of these three coats of arms, from the “Titulyarnik” of Russian Tsars (see picture 032), the coat of arms of Kakheti Kingdom with a horse on it has the following inscription on Russian: “Ruler of all northern countries”. Strange naming of the Kingdom is explained by old Christian tradition and understanding or visualization of the Christian world. Georgian lands in early Christianity were called northern counties because, for a long time till the early Middle Ages, Georgia was rightfully considered as the extreme north-eastern Christian country.<sup>26</sup> The above-mentioned inscription on the coat of arms is related to those views. However, it must be mentioned that in Georgian historiography there is another explanation for the inscription.<sup>27</sup>

Approximately in the same period appears the first authentic, not attributed personal coat of arms of a Georgian individual – Anthimus of Iberia (geo. Antimoz Iverieli – ანთიმოზ ივერიელი, Romanian – Antim Ivireanul), born in 1660 in Georgia, died as a martyr in 1716, executed while deported by an Ottoman ruler from Walachia to Istanbul. He was a famous cleric in Romania, Metropolitan of Walachia, theologian, publisher, calligrapher, translator, and an author, who greatly contributed to the enlightenment of his contemporary Romanians and Georgians and the spread of the printing press in both countries. Later, Anthimus of Iberia was canonized by both Georgian and Romanian churches.

Upon request of that time King of Qartli (in old European texts – Kartalinia, a central province of Georgia), a poet-king and enlightener, Vakhtang VI (geo. – ვახტანგ, 1675-1737, ruler of Qartli under Persian authority 1703-1714, King of Qartli 1716-1724), in 1708 Anthimus sent to Georgia his disciple – Mihai Ishtvanovich, who assisted the king in his endeavor to established the first printing press in Tbilisi. This fact is also directly related to the development of heraldry in Georgia because with a significant portion of certainty, it can be assumed that Mihai Ishtvanovich additionally to his



Pic. 032.

Coat of arms of Kingdom of Kakheti (a), Kingdom of Qartli and of “all Georgian lands” (b) i.e. unified Kingdom of Georgia from the later (beginning of the XVIII c.) edition of the “Titulyarnik”.<sup>28</sup>



Pic. 033.  
Mosaic of Anthimus of Iberia.<sup>31</sup>

shield with a snail crawling toward a six-pointed star. This symbolizes permanent efforts and faithful service to scholarly knowledge and pure Christian virtues. It's possible to associate the six-pointed star with the Biblical David's the King of Israel and Judea star, as it was popular in Georgia because the ruling Bagrationi royal dynasty perceived themselves as descendants of biblical King David.



Pic. 034.  
Coat of arms of Anthimus of Iberia.<sup>32</sup>

participation in the establishment of the printing press, was also a painter of the state and royal dynastical coat of arms of Georgia. Though, this subject will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Anthimus' coat of arms is known from the manuscript dated 1716. The author of this, indeed a very original heraldic piece of art is considered to be Anthimus himself.<sup>29</sup> As a calligrapher and miniatures painter Anthimus was creating the coat of arms on the bookplates published by his printing presses in Romania.<sup>30</sup> His own coat of arms is a stylized Polish

Anthimus' coat of arms consists of baroque-style shield *Gules* on snail *Argent* crawling from earth *Vert* upwards towards a six-pointed Biblical king David's star. A bishop's mitre and a clergy hat are atop the shield, while typical ecclesiastical ceremonial scepters are placed behind it – all the regular attributes of ecclesiastical heraldry. A palm wreath decoratively surrounds the shield. The shield's heraldic composition symbolizes steady commitment and selfless work to achieve Biblical virtues, wisdom, and illumination.

This is how two European inventions, heraldry and the printing press came to Georgia together through

the efforts of the same exceptional personality, Anthimus of Iberia.

Since these events at the beginning of the XVIII c. a center of gravity of development of Georgian heraldry shifted from overseas to Georgia, where the very original version of heraldry will flourish during the next 200 years and after a brief Soviet era lull will transform into contemporary Georgian heraldic style.



The statue of Anthimus of Iberia (geo: ანთიმოზ ივერიელი, rom: Antim Ivireanu) by Mihai Istudor in Bucharest, Romania.

## CHAPTER II – FORMATION OF HERALDRY IN GEORGIA

### *XVIII c. the time when Georgian heraldry established a strong foundation in Georgian statehood through the creation of an entirely original state and territorial coats of arms*



Pic. 035.

Bagrationi royal dynasty and Kingdom of Kartli coat of arms, 1709.

considered as the state coat of arms of that time Georgia. Additional proof of this will be provided later below while discussing another XVIII c. document containing a collection of Georgian coat of arms.

Probably the most complete version of these early examples of coat of arms of the Bagrationi dynasty and kingdom of Kartli is depicted on the title page of the 1709 edition of apostolic texts.

The following heraldic composition is placed in the decorative square shield<sup>33</sup>: in the

The first not attributed but a genuine coat of arms created inside Georgia is again connected to the names of already mentioned king Vakhtang VI and Anthonimus. This is when the originality of Georgian heraldry, briefly discussed above, appears. The uniqueness of Georgian heraldry, expressed in the Georgian interpretation of heraldic art, already takes shape and is vividly visible in these early Georgian coats of arms.

With the support of Anthonimus, who sent his disciple, Mihai Ishtvanovich to Georgia with the task to assist Vakhtang VI in establishment of the first printing press in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in the beginning of the XVIII c., on the very first editions published in Georgia different versions of stylized coat of arms of ruling Bagrationi dynasty with verses of description (blazon) were added on the title pages. As the ruling dynasty, especially as ancient and longtime ruling as Bagrationies, was identified with a state, the coat of arms of Bagrationies can also be



Pic. 036.

Christ's robe burial place in Svetitskhoveli, according to the legend

left, as in heraldry sides of the shield are considered from the view of a hypothetical shield holder) as a symbol of monarchic power and strength.

center, smaller round shield or *escutcheon* is placed containing: Christ's robe, which by legend is buried under Svetitskhoveli cathedral in Mtskheta, the ancient first capital of Georgia; the harp and the sling – distinguish attributes of Biblical king David – the harpist, hymnist and defeater of Goliath with a slingshot. By the legend king David is the ancestor of Georgian and Armenian Bagratians (Bagratids). The escutcheon is held by four angels. On the top of the *escutcheon*, there are representations of sovereignty and monarchy – the crown; and the civilian and military authority – the sword and the scepter. Beneath the escutcheon at the bottom of the main shield or by heraldic terminology at the base point is a lion passant guardant

The coat of arms is provided with the special explanatory verses on Georgian. The verses describe the symbolism of the heraldic pieces in the shield, the legend of Bagratians' bloodline descending from Biblical king David, and a story of Christ's robe,



Pic. 037.

Svetitskhoveli cathedral in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia. The most respected pilgrimage place in Georgia.<sup>34</sup>

which according to the legend (widely known and assumed as a fact in Georgia) was taken by two Jewish elders from Jerusalem after crucifix of Christ, brought to Georgia and buried under the ever-living wooden pillar (on Geo: სვეტიცხოველი, Sveti tskhoveli – living pillar) grew by itself from the place of burial of the robe.

The first Bagrationies' coats of arms from the first books printed in Georgia most likely were created by Vaktang VI, Anthimos of Iberia and Mihai Ishtvanovich. The idea and concept probably were created jointly, while with a high probability Mihai would perform the painting. The concept, style, and shape of these coats of arms closely resample the coats of arms from the books Anthimos printed and decorated in Romania.<sup>35</sup> Apparently, Anthimos' disciple, Mihai, continued on Georgian printed books, the established traditional heraldic style used by his teacher on publications printed in Romania. Vaktang VI wrote the explanatory verses of Bagrationies' coat of arms, what



Pic. 038.

Bargationies' coat of arms with motto. Book of Easter Prayers, 1738. National Archive of Georgia.

is not surprising as together with being a statesman he also was a writer, poet, scholar, and a law codifier king, a kind of philosopher-king type ruler.

There is another interesting and original version of Bagrationies' old coat of arms, though on the later edition of Easter Prayers from 1738. The main differentiating feature of this version is a dual motto of the coat of arms around the *inescutcheon* and the main shield. The *mottos* read: around the main shield, citation from Biblical David's psalms – “*The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: ‘One of your own descendants I will place on your throne’*” (psalm 132, 11); around the inescutcheon citation from the New Testament – “*the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout*” (John, 19:23. KJV); As it can be seen both mottos, just as the blazoning verses of the coat of arms described above, are about Bagratons' legendary an-

cestor Biblical king David and Christ's robe, proving divine transcendent rights of the dynasty to rule.

The cited phrases from the Bible chosen as mottos for Bagrationies' coat of arms have an ancient trace in Georgian history. The first notions of Bagratids' Biblical ancestry in a written tradition are well known from the early Middle Ages not only in Georgia but in Armenia and Byzantium too. More interestingly, exactly the same citation used as the motto was embedded in the letter addressed to Lang Timur (Tamerlan) on the verge of one of his invasions of Georgia in 1400 by King of unified Georgia Giorgi (გიორგი. George) VII (1393-1407) as a prove that Bagrationi dynasty is ruling in the country by will of the God and their ancestor great Biblical king David killed the Goliath with a slingshot, what means that any, even the largest enemy army can be defeated by Georgians and that there can't be any other ruler in front of whom the dynasty will bow except the God himself.<sup>36</sup>



Pic. 039.

Timur (Tamerlan, Persian: Timur-I Lang – Timur the Lame) giving orders to the General Assembly for a campaign against Georgia whilst receiving Mutahartan, Emir of Erzinjan in Armenia.<sup>37</sup>

Development of heraldry in Georgia was continued by Prince Vakhushti (ვახუშტი) Bagrationi. In his groundbreaking geographical work on Georgia and the whole of Caucasia, named “Atlas of Georgia”<sup>38</sup>, Vakhushti incorporated various heraldic designs and coats of arms of Georgian and Caucasian lands. Among these heraldic pieces, several can be considered the first provincial coats of arms of Georgian lands created in Georgia.

The main piece of this work concerning heraldry is the map of the Caucasian region with coats of arms of the most significant kingdoms, principalities, provinces, and nations. The atlas is so rich in heraldic symbols and coats of arms that, together with its primary geographical function, it also can be recognized as the first roll of arms or armorial of Georgia. By this, Georgian heraldic development trespassed the borders of Georgia as, in some cases, Vakhushti created one of the oldest versions of symbols of certain Caucasian lands and, in others, the very first coats of arms of those.

Oddly, Vakhushti depicts three different versions of coat of arms of Georgia. The first one displays St. George – historically, the traditional guardian saint of Georgia, which also was used as a symbol of the country in some earlier coat of arms. On the second, other already known symbols of the ruling Bagrationi dynasty are depicted. But Georgia's third coat of arms is the most interesting, as this is the first time Archangel Michael can be seen as a heraldic symbol of Georgia. However, this can surprise only with a hasty glimpse as if investigated it will be obvious that there were historical bases to depict Archangel Michael as a symbol of Georgia.

Archangel Michael in Easter Christendom was generally known as a guardian of Christian countries.<sup>39</sup> It's also known from ancient historical Georgian chronicles that once during the battle, King of Georgia David IV the Builder was saved from the enemy's arrow by a golden pendant of Archangel.<sup>40</sup> Finally, St. Michael is depicted on



Pic. 040.  
Map of Caucasia and coats of arms of Caucasian lands by Prince Vakhushti Bagrationi, 1735.



Pic. 041.  
Three coats of arms of Georgia.



the gold-plated silver finial of the ancient traditional windsock-style flag of Svaneti (a mountainous region of western Georgia) “Lem” originally made from a wolf’s whole skin, later - by sewn silk. As can be seen from these examples, there were plenty of historical reasons why the image of St. Michael could be used as one of the versions of the coat of arms of Georgia. Historical backgrounds behind all the symbols from coats of arms of Georgia created by Vakhushti show that he wasn’t designing those randomly or by his imagination but based on established written, visual, or verbal symbolic traditions in the country.



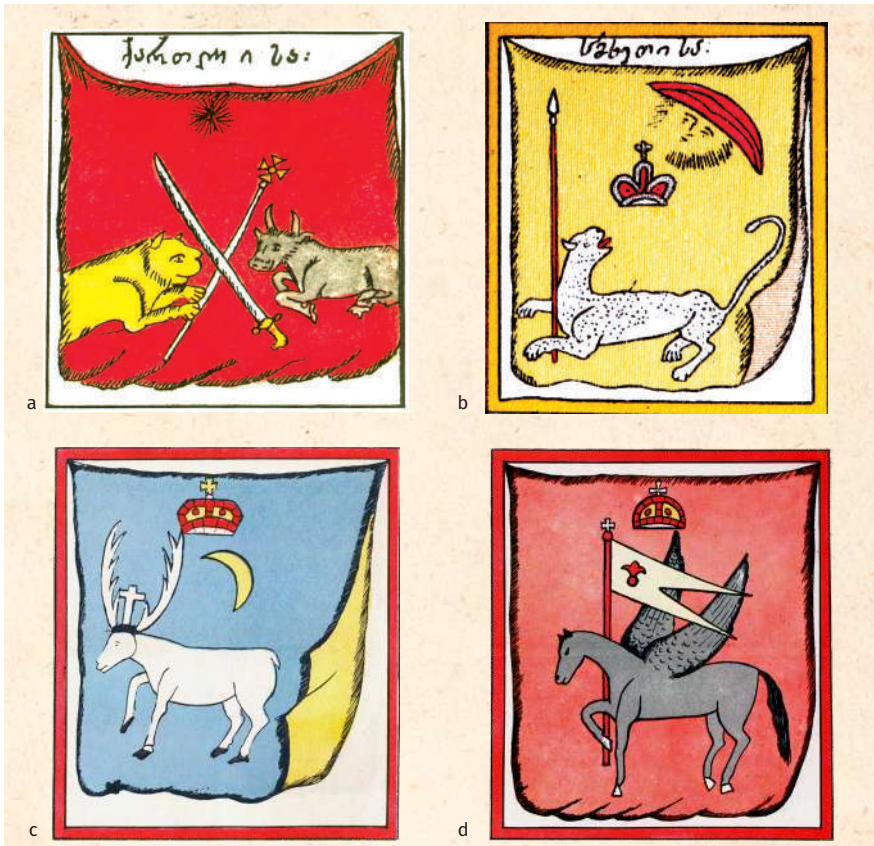
Pic. 042.

Silver top of the ancient traditional wolf-skin flag called “Lem” (geo. – ლემ, lion) in western Georgian mountainous region Svaneti (სვანეთი).

It’s also notable that Vakhushti designates as “coat of arms of Bagrationi’s and Georgia”, the armorial created by Vakhtang VI and Anhimus. Such a designation indicates that as in many monarchic countries, in that time Georgia too, the coat of arms of the ruling dynasty was also simultaneously equaled to the country’s state symbols.

Vakhusti was an innovator in regard to the state coat of arms. Still, his truly groundbreaking heraldic work was a creation of coats of arms of Caucasian lands and Georgian provinces. He designed ten coats of arms for the following territories: Georgian provinces – Kingdom of Qartli, Kingdom of Kakheti, Kingdom of Imereti, principality of Odishi (Mingrelia, on Georgian – Samegrelo), principality of Guria, principality of Abkhazia, free Svaneti, province of Samtskhe-Javakheti; lands of Caucasia – Kingdom of Armenia, Laks of Dagestan, lands of Ran, Osetia, and Shirvan.

The coats of arms of Vakhushti aren't a mere random selection of symbols or imaginary pieces of heraldry. A concept is vivid in each shield. The shield of the kingdoms (Qartli, Imereti, Armenia, Kakheti) have a crown inside as a symbol of sovereignty. Some of the coats of arms reveal the geography and fauna of the principalities. For example, the shields of the mountainous regions of Svaneti, Ossetia, or Dagestan contain mountains and animals spread in the area, which are the main characteristics of the geography and animal habitats of the regions. Some other coats of arms are based on traditional totemic animistic symbols. The historical symbols of certain territories and nations are also taken into consideration, as for instant, the lion in the coat of arms of Armenia is a well-known traditional symbol of Armenia, which is also represented even in today's state coat of arms of the country. All of this confirms that Vakhushti Bagrationi's Caucasian coats of arms are a thoughtful conceptual work of their creator with a deep knowledge of nature, symbology and traditions of the areas described in the atlas.



pic. 043.

Coats of arms of the Caucasian kingdoms: a – Qartli (ქართლი), b – Armenia (სომხეთი), c – Imereti (იმერეთი), d – Kakheti (კახეთი), according to Vakhushti Bargationi.

Interestingly, all heraldic charges are placed in the shields correctly, facing right from a perspective of an imaginary shield holder as heraldry rules demand. The colors i.e. heraldic *tinctures* and *metals* are also mainly correctly used based on heraldic canons (*see explanation of use of heraldic tinctures and metals in the appendix, glossary*). It can be assumed that these characteristics indicate Vakhushti's knowledge of basic heraldic rules and his inclination to follow those.



pic. 044.

Coat of arms of Caucasian principalities and lands: a – Principality of Odishi (i.e. Mingrelia, geo. Samegrelo, ოდიში i.e. სამეგრელო), b – Principality of Abkhazia (აფხაზეთი), c – Samtskhe Saatabago (i.e. Atabeg, Atabek, Atabey of Samtskhe, geo. სამცხე საათაბაგო; later, Pashalik of Akhaltsikhe), d – Principality of Guria (გურია), e – Svaneti (სვანეთი), f – Ossetia (ოსეთი), g – Dagestan and Laks (დაღესტანი და ლეკთა), h – Shirvan (შირვანი), i – Ran (რანი) according to Vakhushti Bagrationi.



Pic. 045.

One of the oldest Georgian family coat of arms of Archbishop

The XVIII c. is also marked by the emergence of the Georgian family coat of arms. One of the earliest examples is of Princes<sup>41</sup> Amilakhvari. The coat of arms of Archbishop Athanase Amilakhvari (ამილახვარი) was imprinted on the prayers book published in 1768.<sup>42</sup> The detailed explanation of symbolic meanings of the charges is preserved by Prince Teimuraz (თეიმურაზ) Bagrationi from 1845 while blazoning a slightly different later version of Amilakhvari coat of arms. According to him<sup>43</sup>: whiteness of the *mantle* means a pureness of a heart and golden edges of the mantle – princely dignity; the flag of St. George is a reminder that historically kings of Georgia were assigning Amilakhvaries to lead a right flank of their armies; the boot with a spur represents cavalry commanding function of the family in the Georgian army<sup>44</sup>; the sun symbolizes the kings' benevolence while blood dripping chalice sacrifice for the king; the castle on top of the rock represents Gori city walls and the citadel (the central city of Qartli region and that time stronghold against Ossetian raiders) which were guarded by Prines Amilakhvari; the armor and armament in and around the shield reflect military honor and gallantry.



Pic. 046.

Later version of the Amilakhvari coat of arms, 1845.

Another, one of the oldest by Georgian standards family coat of arms is a heraldic device of famous Georgian poet and statesman Besarion Gabashvili (commonly called and known by his shortened first name, Besiki) from his gravestone in Iasi, Romania, where he was on a diplomatic



Pic. 047.

The coat of arms of Besarion (Besiki) Gabashvili on his gravestone. Gravestone of Besiki Gabashvili in Iasi, Romania.<sup>45</sup>





Pic. 048.

Castle of Gori in 1640ies painted by Italian catholic missionary Don Christoforo De Castelli



Pic. 049.  
Castle of Gori



Pic. 050.  
Amilakhvari family castle in Qvemo Chala (Qartli region), the XVII-XVIII cc.

mission and unexpectedly died in 1791 at the age of 41. At that time, Besiki was in diplomatic service at David II, king of Imereti's court. He was sent to bargain military support from Russia through the negotiations with the commander of Russian southern forces, Field Marshal Grigory Potemkin.

As it can be seen, the coat of arms is two swords holding arms, symbolizing military service and valor, what might be seen strange for the poet and diplomat. The explanation must be in the military subjects of negotiations with Russia and the fact that he was following the Russian military during Potemkin's campaign in Moldova as part of his diplomatic mission.

Surprisingly, the princely crown is on top of Besiki's coat of arms, however his family – the Gabashvilies, held the title of baron (or knight, geo. – *aznauri*. For Georgian feudal titles, see the appendix at p. 89). It's difficult to explain how such an occasion occurred. The coat of arms is a personal heraldic device of Besiki, as no evidence has been discovered so far to prove that any other member of Gabashvili family was using a

similar heraldic crest. Despite this, as a general rule in Georgian heraldry, if one member of a family was using a particular coat of arms, it was also acceptable to use the same heraldic device by other members of the family. Thus, it can be said that Besiki's coat of arms could be recognized as the Gabashvilies family crest.



Pic. 051.

Portrait of King of Qartli and Kakheti Erekle (Heraclius) II, 1762-1798.

Probably the most significant impact on the development of Georgian heraldry had heraldic activities at the court of the king of the eastern regions of Georgia – Qartli and Kakheti, Erekle II (geo. ერეკლე, Heraclius). He was the king of Kakheti in 1744-1762 and then the king of the unified eastern Georgian Kingdom of Qartli and Kakheti in 1762-1798. The great warrior king constantly fighting against Persian, Turkish, and North Caucasian invaders was also an energetic reformer and Westernizer of the country. These reforms involved almost all spheres of life, including the introduction of granting the family coat of arms, formalizing the state symbols, and creating of heraldic devices of the lands under the control or objects of pretension of the Qartli-kakhetian Kingdom.

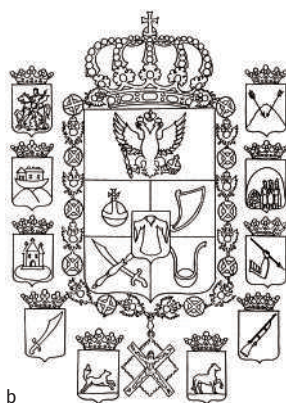
Erekle continued the tradition established by Vakhushti Bagrationi described above and created heraldically more appropriate state and territorial coats of arms.

The best-known coat of arms from the Erekle's epoch is the one from the great royal seal used to ratify the controversial Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russian Empire in 1783.

The main shield depicts the traditional dynastical heraldic charges of Bagrationies, which, as it was explained above, also were seen as state emblems. Above the Bagrationi family symbols is placed the two headed eagle of the Russian Empire, as the Georgievsk treaty meant that Eastern Georgia would be under Russian military protection and agree its foreign policy with the Empire, though maintaining independence and complete freedom in internal affairs. The so called Georgian crown is placed above the shield. This is one of the earliest appearances of it in the heraldry, though it will be well known in later decades and continuously used as an essential, integral part of the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Georgia even after its occupation by the Russian Empire in the XIX c.



a



b

Pic. 052.

- a – Great royal seal of King of Qatli-Kakheti Erekle (Heraclius) II from Treaty of Georgievsk, 1783;
- b – Sketch of the great royal seal of Qartli-Kakhetian kingdom.

The most exciting elements of the great seal are the coats of arms of Caucasian lands surrounding the main shield. Starting from the top left from the viewer and following down-around these shields are of the following regions: St. George – Kakheti, Noah’s ark on Ararat Mountain – city of Erevan, lake and monastery – Atabeg of Samtskhe, a saber – Borchalo, a fox *courant* – city of Shaqi, a wolf passant – city of Shirvan, a musket – city of Shamshadil, a *dexter* arm embowed holding a spare – city of Kazakh, Biblical three Wise Men (or Magi) – city of Ganja, a mountain pierced with two arrows – Qartli.<sup>46</sup> The typical heraldic duke’s crown is placed over each of the shields. The heraldic charges on the seal are seen to be turned *sinister* (heraldic left what means a right side from the viewer). This would be a violation of heraldic rules, according to which all charges should be turned to the *dexter* (heraldic right what means a left side from the



Pic. 053.

Map of Caucasia locating lands and cities with the coat of arms on the great seal of Erekle II.<sup>47</sup>

viewer). But, it is important to bear in mind, that after using the seal, the image would be seen like in a mirror, contrary, and the charges would be facing a proper *dexter* side in the shields.

The map above reflects to what extent the Qartli-Kakhetian kingdom had an outreach in South Caucasia during the rule of Erekle II. In this case, heraldry, as it frequently happens, was used to mark the territory in a figurative way.

The great state seal of Erekle II is an evident of the following few facts: Qartli-Kakhetian kingdoms' role in South Caucasus and pretensions to be a central power in the sub-region; high level of development of heraldry at Erekle's royal court; increasing influence of Russian expansionism in the region. Though these coats of arms are that time Georgian heraldic devices which most closely resemble European heraldic examples, nonetheless unique Georgian style can be identified in some of them, for instant, in the shield of Qartli, Erevan, Kakhi or Shirvan.



Pic. 054.

The seal of the King of Kakheti, Erekle. 1746.<sup>48</sup>

It is essential to remember that while discussing the XVIII c. Georgian coats of arms of provinces or lands, to a certain extent thematically, that still touches a subject of the state coats of arms as that time feudally fractured Georgia's provinces such as Mingrelia, Guria, Kakhetia or Imereti were either small kingdoms or independent principalities and duchies.

The great state seal is a vital historical source not only for heraldry but for the general history of Georgia too. Even so, the most amazing and exotic examples of heraldic devices of Erekle's epoch were heraldic charters granted and signed by the king himself. As the practice of granting a new title and a coat of arms was widespread at Erekle's court, it will not be feasible to show all the coats of arms issued by the King of Qatli-Kakheti in this edition. Nonetheless, the few most vivid and well-preserved samples or digital reconstructions of that time's family heraldic documents will hopefully still provide the reader with an exact essence of the XVIII c. heraldic activities in Georgia.

The smaller and older seal of Erekle II is another unique heraldic device of his time, but simultaneously it became very significant in regard to nowadays Georgian state flag.

The seal is dated 1746, from the times when Erekle was still only a king of Kakheti, before re-uniting it with Qartli to form the Qartli-Kakhetian kingdom. Undoubtedly





Pic. 055.

The cross and roundels composition on the seal of the King of Kakheti, Erekle.



Pic. 056.

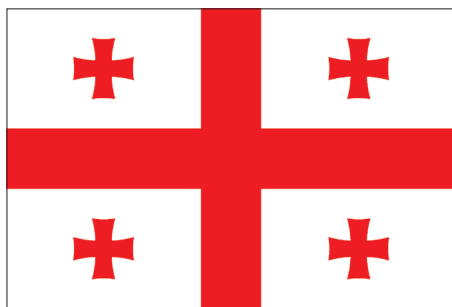
Fragment of Angelino Dulcert's portolan from 1339, with the five-cross, so called Jerusalem flag, over Tiflis – Tbilisi.

(known as Greek) cross with four roundels on its sides – one of the symbols of Jerusalem, similar to so called five-crosses of Jerusalem. A version of this symbol of the holy city with roundels on the sides of the central cross rather than the crosses was more popular and widespread in eastern orthodox Christianity.

The current state flag of Georgia is a so-called five-cross composition closely resembling the Jerusalem cross. It is historically known that in the high and late Middle Ages, Muslim rulers of the city were allowing Georgians to enter Jerusalem with upraised and waving flags. Among the banners were the ones the Jerusalem cross on them. Additionally, on the portolans – navigational maps and charts of the late Middle Ages, the same five-cross flags are placed over Georgian lands and cities. Similar and symbolically identical composition of the cross and four roundels can be found on Georgian coins of the early and high Middle Ages (refer to

this is a heraldic seal with a coat of arms of that time Kakheti kingdom. It's remarkable that in this case, the king was using an absolutely uniquely created composition instead of any modification of the already traditional heraldic devices of the Bagrationi dynasty, a member of which was Erekle, just as any other king in Georgia since the early Middle Ages.

Though the image on the seal is partially damaged, the coat of arms still can be easily identified: two lions rampant are holding a bow placed horizontally, two *saltire* (diagonally crossed) arrows are above it with arrowheads facing downwards. Under and between the bow and lions is a mountain. It cannot be seen clearly, though it can be recognized by an explanatory inscription added in Russian – “ropa”, which means mountain. Above all is a crown with six points. This composition is surrounded by the inscription in Georgian – “King Erekle son of the God anointed King Teimuraz.”<sup>49</sup> But here comes the most interesting and important part of the seal – on the very top of it, as a divider of the surrounding text, can be vividly seen a straight



Pic. 057.

The state flag of Georgia, adopted in 2004.

the pic. 017 of this book). Based on these historical sources, contemporary Georgia adopted the five-cross flag.

The cross and roundels from the seal of Erekle are utterly significant as, firstly, this is a rare example of the use of such a symbol in the XVIII c. Secondly, this is an even more exceptional instance of using this composition on the state symbol – the royal seal. Altogether this is another argument supporting the considerably recent adoption of the five-cross composition as the new Georgian state flag.



Pic. 058.

Grant of arms to Aznauris (Barons/Knights) Am-brosadze by Erekle II, 1785, and a zoom in detail of the Coat of arms of Bagrationi ruling royal family on top of the grant of arms.<sup>50</sup>

Erekle II was granting the coat of arms both to the dukes/princes (geo. – თავადი, Tavadi) and barons/knights (აზნაური, Aznauri). This was mainly happening either with the families and persons who acquired noble titles from the hands of King Erekle or who were promoted to the higher feudal titles. Interestingly, the first category was comprised of predominantly non-Georgian ethnicity families whom the king wanted to appreciate for their service or to persuade for support and loyalty. Similarly, as in that time Western Europe, frequently the grantees of a coat of arms in Georgia too were influential, wealthy merchants. Though, in Georgia, the practice of buying the coat of arms or title was unknown, both could be acquired only through the king's favor.

The compositions of coats of arms granted by Erekle II were truly original and distinctive – a mixture of Western heraldic traditions and local symbolic views. Two coats of arms described below perfectly illustrate this. One of the most exciting parts of these coats of arms are their *blazons*, using more unconstrained and less technical language than in European heraldry but always providing symbolic explanations of the charges.

Here is a *blazon* of the coat of arms of Aznauri (Barons/Knights) Amrbosadze from the grant of arms dated 1785, translated from Georgian: “prolonged round shield with a silver place. In the middle, a rock as a sign of loyalty. On the rock is an eagle standing on one leg and with another, holding a charter as a sign of the King’s favor granted the title of Aznauri. The eagle holds an olive branch with olives, symbolizing generosity. On the right and left sides of the pillar, there are branches of dates fruit palm and laurel, representing productivity. Above all is a crown of Aznauri (Baron).”<sup>51</sup>



Pic. 059.  
The coat of arms of Aznauri (Barons/  
Knights) Ambrosadze. Reconstructed  
based on the blazon.

Another coat of arms with a fascinating history behind it is the one granted to Armenian merchant Shamir Sultanumiani who received a title of a Tavadi (the equivalent of Prince or Duke). Armenians traditionally were considered prosperous merchants and Erekle had plans to attract their presence and commercial activities in Georgia to boost the country’s economy. For this, he was offering various business benefits and prestigious positions in society by granting titles and coats of arms. In exchange, Armenian merchants were supporting Erekle’s rule, developing businesses and in the case of Shamir he was even proposing the king to consider creation of a united Georgian-Armenian Kingdom.

An example of this cooperation was the relations of King Erekle with Shamir Sultanumiani and his father, who was providing information and diplomatic services from faraway India to the Qartli-Kakheti Kingdom. Erekle II had some ties with India left from the times when he, yet a prince in 1737 with a Georgian regiment, was accompanying Shah of Persia Nadir Shah in his Indian military campaign.

A reflection of such a mutually valuable relationship between the king and Armenian merchants was a grant of arms and the title to Sultanumianis in 1786. The described cooperation is interpreted in the heraldic shield very colorfully and somewhat exotically in the words of Georgian *blazon*: “A round shield with a golden place and a ship in the middle. The ship is a symbol of continues dedication towards good deeds. In the middle of the ship is placed a rock as a sign of firmness. A symbol of power, an arm emerges from the rock while holding the binoculars, a sign of foresight. The apple tree with fruits is planted on the rock as a symbol of respect and fruitful business.”<sup>52</sup>

Naturally, not only merchants were receiving the coats of arms during the times of Erekle II. For instance, the well-known statesman and diplomat at Erekle’s court, Solomon Lionidze also received the title of Tavadi (prince or duke) and coat of arms for

gallantry and suffering the wounds in the battle of Erevan (otherwise known as the battle of Kirkhbulah). The blazon from the grant of arms states: "This is a coat of arms of valor – Heraclius armed with a sling and covered with a skin of lion."<sup>53</sup> Princely crown tops the shield.

Practically all other coats of arms created at the court of Erekle II had the same characteristics of a creative mixture of European and Georgian symbolic systems incorporated into the absolutely unique heraldic style as could be seen in the few examples described above.

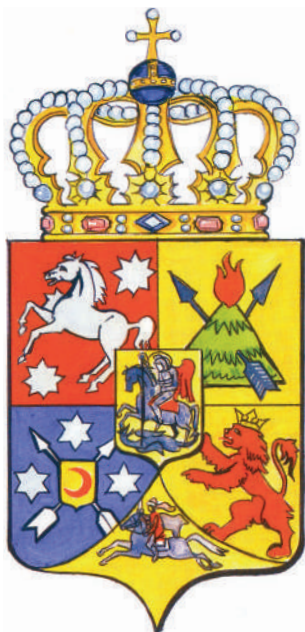
As it could be seen, the XVIII c. was a time of flourishing of Georgian heraldry with introduction of locally created state, land, and family coat of arms. At the same time, during that period, the very distinctive and original Georgian style of heraldry was established which influenced the development of the art and science of heraldry in Georgia for forthcoming decades and centuries, even throughout the turbulent times of Russian or Soviet occupations, till the contemporary era of reincarnation of the genuine Georgian heraldry.



Pic. 060.  
Coat of arms of Solomon Lionidze.

## CHAPTER III – THE LATE INTRODUCTION BUT A RAPID PROLIFERATION

***Introduction of the civic and ecclesiastic coat of arms and a story of Georgian family coat of arms introduced late in the XVIII c., but quickly and widely spread in the XIX, with vividly distinctive local original characteristics even under the pressure of Russian Imperialism***



Pic. 061.

The coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Georgia, from the beginning of the XIX c. till 1917.

The crown is the Georgian heraldic crown, known in heraldry since the XVIII c. on Georgian state coat of arms.<sup>54</sup>

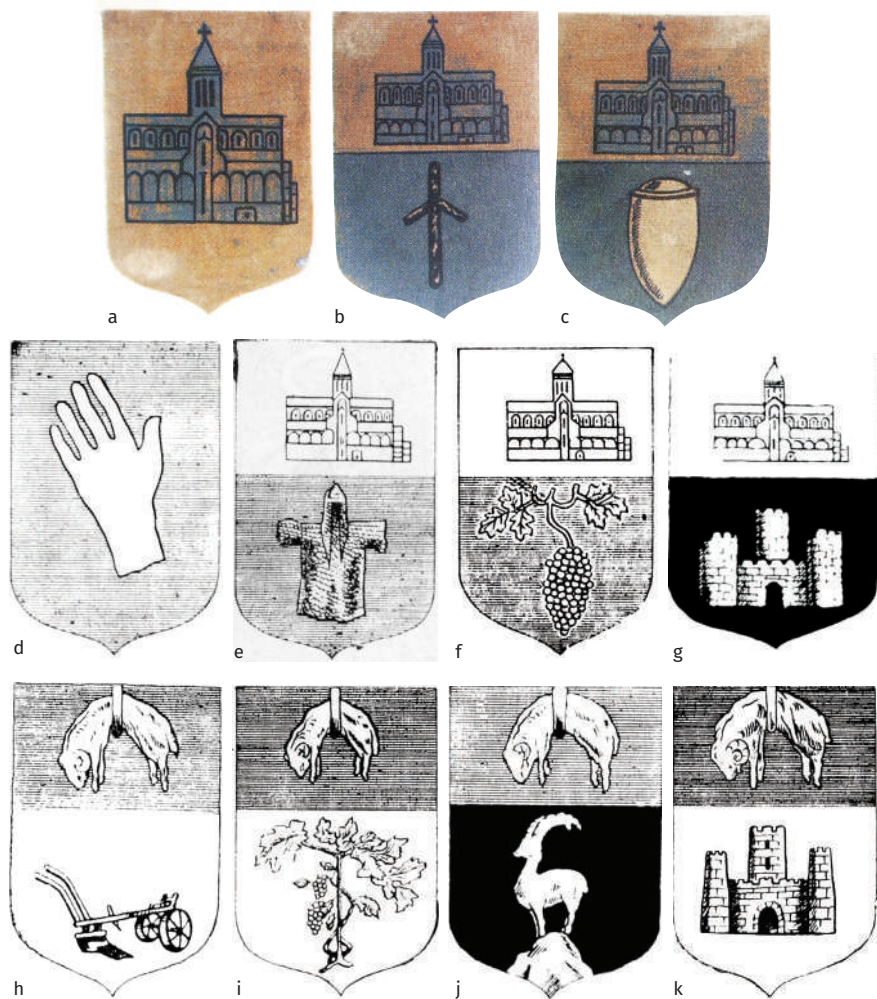
French shield quarterly per cross, 1st Kakheti; 2nd Qartli; 3rd Kabradinian lands: *Azure, inescutcheon Or* with crescent *Gules*, pierced by two arrows *Argent*, between three 6-pointed stars *Argent*; 4th Armenia *Or, lion rampant Gules*, with crown *Or; inescutcheon Or* St. George in the armor *Azure*, on the horse *Sable*, saddle and angel wings *Gules*, piercing a dragon *Vert* with a spear; Base – Dukes of Cherkassy: *Or*, horseman with a spear *Azure*; Georgian crown.

From the beginning of the XIX c., all the previously appeared segments of heraldry – state, provincial and family coat of arms further developed and widely spread in Georgia. Simultaneously, this was the period when new forms of heraldic devices emerged in Georgia. These were parts of the civic heraldry – coats of arms of cities, towns, and districts; also the ecclesiastic heraldry and finally, the corporative symbols which barely could be defined as heraldic devices, though still closely resembled those.

Before describing the new beginnings of the heraldic spheres previously unknown in Georgia, it is necessary to have a glance at the changes which happened with the state arms of Georgia. Probably the most complex armorial device representing Georgia was created in the XIX c. as a coat of arms of the Kingdom of Georgia which unified in its shield heraldic symbols of all main Caucasian lands: Georgia itself, Qartli, Kakheti, Armenia, Cherkassy, and Kabardinia, is blazoned as followed: French shield quarterly per cross, 1st Kakheti; 2nd Qartli; 3rd Kabradinian lands: *Azure, inescutcheon Or* with crescent *Gules*, pierced by two arrows *Argent*, between three 6-pointed stars *Argent*; 4th Armenia *Or, lion rampant Gules*, with crown *Or; inescutcheon Or* St. George in the armor *Azure*, on the horse *Sable*, saddle and angel wings *Gules*, piercing a dragon *Vert* with a spear; Base – Dukes of Cherkassy: *Or*, horseman with a spear *Azure*; Georgian crown.

The Georgian crown, which tops the shield, has been known since the XVIII c., but on this broader coat of arms of the Georgian Kingdom which essentially covers the whole of Casasia the crown's heraldic name – Georgian Crown was blazoned and

established in heraldry. This heraldic armorial of Georgia, which usually was placed around the Russian Imperial two-headed eagle as part of the greater state coat of arms of the Russian Empire alongside the shields of Grand Duchy of Finland, Kingdom of Poland, or the marshaled shield of Grand Duchies of Kyiv, Vladimir, and Novgorod is a reflection of the key role the kingdom of Georgia was playing in the Caucasian region before annexation by Russian Empire.



pic. 062.

Coat of arms of Georgian cities and districts according to M. Vadbolski: a – Governorate (rus. - Gubernia) of Tbilisi, b – Tbilisi city, c – town of Signaghi, d – district of Zaqatala (now in Azerbaijan), e – district of Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti (unified territories of east-northern Georgian mountainous provinces), f – city of Telavi, g – city of Gori, h – city of Akhaltsikhe, i – city of Ozurgeti, j – city of Oni, k – town and fortress of Shorapani.

One of the most significant events for Georgian heraldry in the XIX c. was the emergence of city or municipal heraldic devices. The coats of arms of Georgian towns were created in the XIX c. in three waves, if it is possible to call this process so. The first wave occurred in 1819, soon after the annexation of eastern Georgia by the Russian Empire in 1801. General of the Russian imperial army in the occupied Georgia, Alexander Ermolov, who brutally suppressed an anti-Russian rebellion in one of the provinces of Georgia – Guria, created the coat of arms of Georgia under Russian rule and was planning to submit to St. Petersburg coats of arms of all main Georgian cities for adoption by Imperial Department of Heraldry. The exact images of these projects are unknown, but with the high level of possibility, these are the coats of arms preserved by the historian mentioned above, Mikheil Vadboldski, in his book "Heraldic Symbols of Georgia". The author does not designate these heraldic devices as created by Ermolov, but as all other city arms are precisely attributed, most likely the shields presented by M. Vadboldski are the earliest Georgian city coats of arms created in 1819 but never actually adopted officially.

In Russian civic heraldry, it was a norm to place the symbols representing a city or district in the second lower part of the shield while leaving the first upper part to a larger territorial administrative entity to which the city was subordinated. This explains why in each of the shields, there is either symbol of Tbilisi Governorate – a Christian church resembling the cathedral in Mtkheta, the old capital of Georgia and a center of Christianity, or a golden fleece – the heraldic symbol of western Georgia and that time Kutaisi Governorate, reflecting the Hellenic Myth of Argonauts visiting coast of ancient Colchis. Accordingly, in the shield of all eastern Georgian cities the first part was bestowed to the coat of arms of the Tbilisi Governorate and in the all western Georgian ones to the Kutaisi Governorate. The only exception is the coat of arms of Zakatala (i.e. Jar-Belakan) district, an administrative entity under Tbilisi Governorate. Zaqatala region, i.e. Saingilo (geo. - საინგილო) is within the borders of contemporary Azerbaijan, though historically it was controlled by Georgian kingdoms and the majority of the population are Georgian Ingilos. Jar-Belakani or Saingilo, was separated from Georgia in the XVIII c. after being occupied by invaders from Dagestan.

Whoever designed these coats of arms, it's evident that the main themes used to compose the heraldic devices were the cities' and districts' history, distinctive buildings or main businesses of the local population. Here are a few examples as proof of this assumption.

The coat of arms of Tbilisi (the capital city of Georgia) bears St. Nino's cross made from branches of vine and tied by her hair as historical chronicles and a local Christian tradition states. St. Nino is regarded as the baptizer of Georgia. Her cross is preserved in Bodbe monastery in the Kakheti region of eastern Georgia. The cross is unique not only because of its history but also due to its exceptional form, which doesn't have any



pic. 063.

St. Nino's (baptizer of Georgia) cross made from the vine branches.

analogies among heraldic or worldwide known crosses of any type.

Placing St. Nino's cross in the shield of Tbilisi is an acknowledgment of its importance for Eastern Christianity and Georgian identity. The cross later appears in other mainly ecclesiastic coats of arms, though this is the first appearance of it in Georgian heraldry.

Another example of reflecting the Georgian historical past in the municipal coats of arms is a shield of Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti district with a chain mail on it. Khevsuri warriors from the small Georgian region Khevsreti in the high mountains of Caucasia were historically famous for wearing a chain mail, using small round shields together with specific type of swords, but what was remarkable about Khevsurs, they continued to fight covered in chain mail during the XIX c. According to the accounts of the XIX c. Russian Army officers were stunned to see they had to battle re-embodiments of medieval knights – Khevsurs in chain mail, during eastern Georgian mountainous

provinces' uprisings against the oppressive Russian Imperial rule. Even more surprisingly some of the Khevsurs appeared partially covered in chain mail when they fought alongside the regular infantry units of the Georgian Republican Army against Communist Russian occupation in 1921.

Knowing the importance and history of chain mail in military life and folklore of



pic. 064.

Khevsuri highlander warriors – from the Georgian province, Khevsureti in the high Caucasian mountains.<sup>55</sup>



pic. 065.

Khevsurs' militia joining the Georgian Republican regular Army mobilized to confront the Red Army invasion in 1921.<sup>56</sup> One of the warriors can be seen wearing Khevsurs' typical chain mail headgear.



Georgians from the north-eastern mountains of the country, it doesn't need additional explanations why the chain mail represents the region in the coat of arms from the early XIX c.

It is also not a surprise that another mountainous region of Georgia Racha, with a central town, Oni, located on the slopes of the western part of Caucasian mountains, was granted an armorial bearing depicting the tur, which, though being the endangered species, still are widely spread in the area even today.

Not only was history capturing the attention of designers of the heraldic devices for Georgian cities and districts in the XIX c., but heraldically stylized images of significant fortifications or iconic religious architecture (for instance, above mentioned Cathedral of Svetitskhoveli in the coat of arms of Tbilisi Governorate) was also finding its place in the heraldic shields. This is why the castle is placed in the coat of arms of Akhaltsikhe. At the same time, the heraldic device of Akhaltsikhe is also a *canting* coat of arms as it symbolically represents the name of the city – “Akhaltsikhe” in Georgian means “new castle”.



pic. 066.

Fortress of Akhaltsikhe. Reconstructed in 2011-12.

The first officially adopted coats of arms of Georgian cities occurred in 1843 when heraldic bearings of the most important cities of the so-called Georgia-Imeretian Governorate under the Russian Empire were created. They can be seen in the illustrations below.



pic. 067.  
 Municipal coat of arms of Georgia officially adopted in 1843:  
 a – Georgia-Imeretian Governorate, b – Tbilisi, c – Kutaisi, d – Telavi,  
 e – Gori, f – Akhaltsikhe, g – Ozurgeti, h – Zakatala

It is obvious that the quality of these heraldic devices from the point of view of heraldic art not only did not improve in comparison with the previous unadopted samples but, in some cases even declined. Though, the themes of heraldic compositions are shifted from mainly historical background to the environment surroundings and economic functions of the cities. Even the capital city of Georgia, Tbilisi, the city extremely rich with history and iconic sightseings was granted with a heraldic device – *Argent*, caduceus of Hellenic god of trade Hermes *Sable* with *Or*, portraying the city only as a center of the active trade.

Arguably, there were political calculations behind such a shift. Russian Imperial power was attempting to fade away the national historical memory of Georgians. Thus in the *blazons* of the coat of arms it is highlighted, for example, that castles in the new versions of the shields of Akhaltsikhe, Gori, and Zakatala are partially destroyed as there is no need for castles under the peaceful rule of Russia and instead, economy is flourishing what is conveyed through the symbols of prosperity, for instance – olive fruits in the shield of Ozurgeti, haystacks and wheat fields in the Gori's, vineyard in Telavi's and similarly other agricultural themes placed in the other city arms too.

The remarkable fact connecting heraldry and philately is related to the 1843 maiden coat of arms of Tbilisi. It was depicted on the first stamp in Georgia and in the whole Russian Empire which was circulating between Tbilisi and Borjomi in 1857-1858.<sup>57</sup>

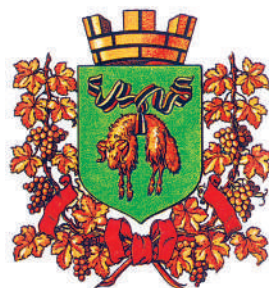
Generally armorial of Tbilisi was widespread and could be seen commonly in many occasions of everyday life and places around the city: on the official building, on advertisements or announcements, on official documents, on equipment of governmental workers, etc.

In the second part of the XIX c., new coats of arms of Georgian cities and administrative entities were created again, but this time they were designed precisely according to the heraldic rules. Some of them were beautiful in form with the meaningful symbolic content.



pic. 068.

The first postal stamp in Georgia and the Russian Empire with a Tbilisi coat of arms. Circulating between Tbilisi and Borjomi, 1857-58.



Pic. 069.

Coat of Arms of Kutaisi, the city, 1870.



Pic. 070.

Coat of Arms of Kutaisi, the Governorate, 1870.



pic. 071.

Coat of arms of Tbilisi city,  
1878.



pic. 072.

Coat of arms of Tbilisi Governorate,  
1878.

Undoubtedly one of the most beautiful armorial devices of Georgian cities of that time were coats of arms of Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

The heraldic shield of the city and Governorate of Kutaisi created in 1870 was a *Vert*, golden fleece *Or* hanging on the *insignia* of St. George's Order. The heraldic device is connected to the Hellenic myth about Argonauts traveling to Colchis chasing the quest to obtain the golden fleece. Colchis i.e. Colkhida is an ancient name of western Georgia, the central city of which is Kutaisi. According to one of the interpretations of the myth capital city of the Colchis Kingdom – Aya, was a predecessor of Kutaisi. The coat of arms of Kutaisi is a vivid example of how the ancient history of Georgia and Hellenic mythology were translated into the heraldic bearing. The difference between Kutaisi city and Governorate coats of arms were various *external ornaments* and *coronets*: Governorates' shields were framed by the intermixed ornament of St. Andrew's *insignia* and laurels and topped by the Imperial crown; in contrast, city coat of arms had a frame made based on an economic function of the city – agricultural towns had the wheat bunches, industrious ones – hammers and the ports – anchors, all of these intermingled with Alexander's

*insignia*. The coronet for the city armorials was a city wall-crown with a number of battlements depending on the size of the city.

The second coat of arms of Tbilisi in the XIX c. was created in 1878, right after the victory of joint forces of the Georgian militia and Russian army in the war against Turkey in South Caucasia. This significant event was immediately reflected in heraldry – in the shield of the newly introduced coat of arms of Tbilisi, the major city of Caucasia. The *blazon* of heraldic device: *Or*, on a *cross Sable*, between four lion heads *Gules* with tongues and eyes *Sable*, two hands *Argent* holding orthodox cross *Or*, standing on overthrown crescent *Argent*.

It is quite apparent that this heraldic device represents the commemoration of the decisive Russian-Georgian military victory and interprets it as a triumph of forces of the Christianity over Islamic menace. Another hidden meaning was also encrypted among the charges – two hands holding the cross signified Georgian and Russian joint military efforts confronting the common enemy. It was important for Tsarist ideology to highlight that Georgians and Russians were fighting alongside each other as during

the century, multiple significant uprisings occurred in Georgia against Russian annexation and Imperial rule in different regions of the country in 1802, 1804, 1812, 1832, 1841, 1856-57. This is why the Imperial propaganda attempted to forge Georgian-Russian relations by any hard and soft power means, including heraldry.

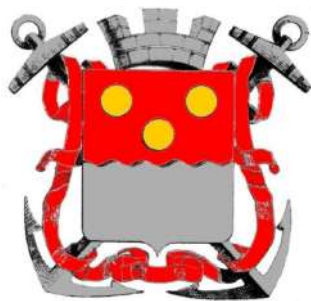
Both of these coats of arms have a different look, one being more complex and extravagant, while the other is magnificent in its simplicity. However, both preserve historical memories of legends or events, are masterfully designed and reflect the splendid perfection of classical Western European style heraldry.

In the third wave of the civil coat of arms production in the second part of the XIX c., some new heraldic bearings of Georgian cities, districts, and fortresses emerged.

The coat of arms of Black Sea port Batumi was finally officially adopted in 1881 after years of working on its project: French shield *per pale* wavy, *Gules*, 3 *roundels Or*, *Argent*. In this case, the *roundels* i.e. *bezants* symbolize trade as Batumi was a growing city with a very active ongoing international trade. It was declared a porto-franco in 1878 and later, in a few years, started exporting oil from Baku. Thus it is natural that the heraldic emblem of trade – roundels took a central part in the armorial device of the city. The external ornament of the shield – anchors, is typical for the port cities, as well as the coronet, which is the districts' coronet in Russian heraldry.

Among the projects of the late XIX c. civic coats of arms was a heraldic device created for Sokhumi or as it was called that time after decades of Turkish control – Sukhum-Kale: French shield, *Azure*, displaced *Pale* (the charge uncommon in British but used in German heraldry – *verschbener Pfahl*) *Or*, two cranes *Argent*, beaks and eyes *Gules*, *canton* – coat of arms of Kuban Governorate.

In spite of the antique origins and rich history of Sokhumi, previously known as



pic. 073.

Coat of arms of Batumi city and district, 1881.



pic. 074.

Coat of arms of Batumi city and district, 1881.



pic. 075.

Project of the coat of arms of Sokhumi (Sukhum-Kale), end of the XIX c.



Poti (1868),



Telavi (1858),  
pic. 076.



Gori (1858)

New or modified coats of arms of Georgian cities, towns, and fortresses from the second part of the XIX c.

Dioscuria (related to the myth of brothers – Castor and Pollux/Polydeuces) from the Hellenic and Roman epochs, the coat of arms merely refers to the geographical location of the city at the Black Sea shore. Presumably, once again Russian Imperial bureaucracy was trying to hide the historical roots of the city and completely assimilate its population.

Another political decision regarding Sokhumi was made by subordinating the city to the North Caucasian Kuban Governorate rather than to the western Georgian Kutaisi governorate, although the city had incomparably closer geographical and historical ties with Georgia. Sokhumi is the principle city of the Abkhazia region, now the separatist quasi-state braked out from Georgia in the 1990ies. Since the Russian Empire forcefully stepped over the Caucasian mountains, its policy was aimed towards the fragmentation of Georgia, instigating inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflicts to achieve more effective control over divided Georgian population and lands. Placing Sokhumi under Kuban Governorate was a part of this continuous policy.



Signaghi (1858),



Dusheti (1875),  
pic. 077.



Akhalqalaki (1867).

New or modified coats of arms of Georgian cities, towns, and fortresses from the second part of the XIX c.



pic. 078.

Coat of arms of fortress Redut-Kale, i.e. coastal fort Kulevi at the Black Sea coast of western Georgia, 1868.

Other armorial devices of Georgian cities, towns, or fortresses designed in the second part of the XIX c. were the coats of arms of: cities – Poti and Telavi, towns – Sighnaghi and Dusheti, fortresses – Akhalqalaqi and Redut-Kale (i.e. geo. – ყულევი, Kulevi). Some of these administrative entities already had heraldic bearings, which were modified or changed during this third wave of creation of the civic coats of arms in the XIX c. Yet, most of these cities or towns received the coat of arms for the first time in their history.

Among these latest civic armorials of Georgian cities is one particular coat of arms, which is probably also necessary to discuss separately. This is a heraldic device used to simultaneously represent the fortress Redut-Kale and the western Georgian region of Mingrelia (former Principality of Odishi or Samegrelo, i.e. Mingrelia): *Sable*, bull's head *Or*, with horns *Argent*, tongue and eyes *Gules*.

The port and the sea fort at Kulevi for centuries was one of the settlements on the Eastern coast of the Black Sea at the isthmus of river Khobi in the historical region of Georgia Mingrelia (i.e. Odishi), but at the beginning of the XIX c. its importance grew drastically as the main port on the Georgian sea coast – Poti was under the control of Turkish Ottoman Empire. Local Georgians maintained a fortification, a guard tower (“Kale” in Turkish) at Kulevi, but in 1804 Russian troops, according to the agreement with the sovereign Prince of Mingrelia, established their own fortification at the seashore, a “redoute”. Eventually, local “kale” and Russian introduced “redoute” joint in the single new toponym of town Kulevi – Redut-Kale. From that time till the late XIX c. Redut-Kale was the primary military logistical hub along the main supply route in the north-western Georgia and a significant trade center for local and overseas goods. These are the reasons why the tiny town of Kulevi was granted a coat of arms, a rare honor for towns of the same scale in Georgia. Interestingly, Kulevi regained its importance in the XXI c. as an oil terminal and a part of trans-Caucasian so-called south corridor of carbohydrates’ transit. Though, Kulevi does not have a coat of arms anymore.



pic. 079.

Russian military authorities meeting with the local Georgian (Mingrelian) noblemen at Redut-Kale (Kulevi), 1847 (picture of painter G. Gagarin);

The story of Kulevi is a curious his-



pic. 080.

a – view of Redut-Klae from the sea, 1840;

b– the forts, “redoutes” of Redut-Kale, the painting by Jean-Baptiste Henri Durand-Brager, 1855 (the pictures courtesy of SP-Lohia Foundation for the Preservation of rare Books, Manuscripts, and arts).<sup>58</sup>

torical tale connected to heraldry, but even more fascinating is the fact that the same coat of arms also represented the region of Mengrelia. This explains why the head of a bull is depicted in the shield. According to the wording in the official grant of arms to “the Mingrelian lands and fortress of Redut-Kale”: “the head of a bull is a symbol which represented ancient Colchis Kingdom on the antique coins”<sup>59</sup> – so called Colchis

Whites, silver coins which were circulating in VI-III cc. BC for trade between Greek polises at the eastern Black Sea shore and local Georgian tribes of Colchis lands. On many of these widespread and well-known coins, either head of bull or a human with the head of a bull was engraved. That is how the ancient symbol of a bull’s head was revived in the XIX c. thanks to the heraldry.



pic. 081.

a, b, c – Versions of silver Colchis Whites (geo. კოლხური თეთრი, Kolkhuri Tetri) with images of a bull’s head.

As it can be seen, all the examples of civic heraldry from the XIX c. drastically differ from previously discussed Georgian coats of arms. The reason is that heraldic devices of the cities in the XIX c. Georgia were created by Russian heralds. This explains why that time Georgian city coats of arms are identical in style and form to the Russian ones. Through these heraldic samples, it is also observable how Russian heraldry developed during the century – from the primitive heraldic compositions created with violations of the rules, to the fine coats of arms from the late XIX c. perfectly following the heraldic



dic canons and representing one of the best examples of civic heraldry. For instance, as mentioned above, the coats of arms of Tbilisi from 1878 and Kutaisi from 1870 are the best illustrations of such high-quality heraldic compositions.

At the same time, it needs to be noticed that due to the rich historical past of Georgian cities, their coats of arms are mainly based on themes derived from the history of the city, military campaigns nearby, or historic buildings – castles, churches. These characteristics make heraldic devices of Georgian cities slightly distinctive from the great mass of civil armorials created in the Russian Empire during the XIX c. It is also easily observable that Russian Imperial heralds were concentrated hiding and replacing old, purely Georgian symbolic and heraldic traditions with a shifting of the themes of civil coats of arms towards nature and environment surrounding the cities and towns. This is another example of heraldry being a mirror of ongoing politic processes.

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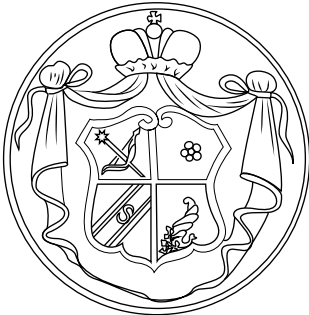
As it was revealed in the previous chapter, heraldry was introduced to Georgian noblemen much later than it became widespread in Europe, but it flourished immediately and intensely, finding very fertile ground among proud, ambitious Georgian noble families with ancient and rich family histories. Georgian nobility had large family structures resembling the clan systems or Polish noble family organization.

Georgian noble families were structured according to the rule by which the eldest man of the main line of the family tree had the highest feudal title and was seen as a head of a larger family comprised of lateral “lower” branches of the family tree with comparably lower titles. Despite these differences in titles, rights, land ownership, and wealth, all representatives of the family conceived themselves as part of one big family with a shared history and place in the feudal society. This explains why in the Georgian heraldic system, as a rule, the coat of arms belongs not only to the concrete individual but to the whole family too. It can be used by all members of the same large family, though with some exceptions, which will be mentioned below. Additionally, as female members of Georgian feudal families could inherit parts of the ancestral land, accordingly, if they desired they could and were using the family coat of

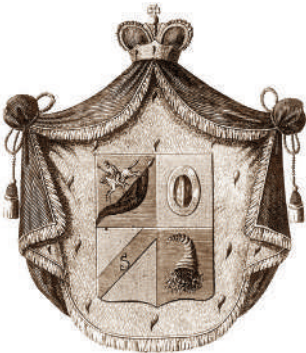


Pic. 082.

Coat of arms of Gurielies on the gravestone of the daughter of Sovereign Prince (Mtavari)



Pic. 083.  
Earlier version of the coat of arms of  
Princes Tsitsishvili, 1785;



Pic. 084.  
The coat of arms of Princes Tsitsishvili  
officially adopted by Imperial Depart-  
ment of Heraldry, 1800;



Pic. 085.  
The later colorized version of the  
Tsitsishvilies' officially adopted coat  
of arms.

arms, which can be clearly seen on the gravestones of the XIX-XX cc. Georgian noble ladies.

Overall, over 150 Georgian noble families were using coat of arms from the end of the XVIII c. till the beginning of the XX c. Among those only about 30 were officially granted by Georgian or Russian Imperial state authorities. The fact that most Georgian family coats of arms were not adopted formally does not diminish their importance for Georgian heraldry and history or their status as armorial devices. The unofficial coats of arms were predominantly properly designed, widely used for decades or sometimes even centuries and were rightfully representing their bearer in many different ways: on documents, letters, household items, weapons, equipment, gravestones, and other objects.

The main reason why so few Georgian noblemen in the XIX c. had a coat of arms officially adopted by the Russian Imperial heraldic authority – Department of Heraldry, is that such a *complete heraldic achievement* was an utterly expensive pleasure for considerably poorer Georgian nobility. Georgian Princes in the XIX c. naturally could not own vast lands and serfs as Russians were and therefore had much fewer financial resources to cover the expensive services of the Imperial Department of Heraldry. From a historical point of view and for the study of Georgian heraldry and symbology in general, unofficial coats of arms of Georgian families are even more important and interesting as they were free from the classical style of the Department of Heraldry and better preserved the uniqueness of Georgian original heraldic or symbolic traditions.

Below, some of the most distinctive coats of arms of Georgian families from the XIX c. will be investigated in detail.

Together with previously discussed heraldic devices of the Amilakhvaries, the coat of arms of Tsit-

sishvili princely family is one of the oldest among Georgian family arms. It already appears in the roll of arms of Anisim Kniazev dated 1785,<sup>61</sup> though later, the slightly altered version was officially adopted in 1800: *Per Cross Quarterly*; 1st *Azure* wrapped flag *Gules per saltire*, above it galloping horseman with a spear *Argent*, 2nd *Or* oval shield *proper*, 3rd *Or band sinister Azure charged* with Latin “S” *Argent*, 4th *Azure* cornucopia *Or*; Princely *mantle* and *crown*.



Pic. 086.  
Fresco of Zaza Fanaskertel Tsitsishvili.<sup>64</sup>

As can be seen from the illustrations of the Tsitsishvilies’ heraldic bearings, the co-existence of multiple variants of the same coats of arms was quite usual in Georgian heraldry. In this case, the older version is preserved through the family seal copied by A. Kniazev, the later one was included in the Imperial Armorial of the XIX c., and finally, the even later colorized copy was created by an unknown author either at the end of the XIX c. or in the XX c.

To investigate Georgian coats of arms and to decipher the meanings of the charges, the history of Georgian families has to be called into assistance. In this instance, the flag and the horseman in the first quarter of the shield of the later coat of arms must be a representation of the information conveyed by Ioane Batonishvili<sup>62</sup> (Bagrationi) in his history of Georgian nobility:<sup>63</sup> great ancestor of the family, Zaza Fanaskertel Tsitsishvili (Tsitsishvili of Fanaskerti) was a commander of the cavalry. It has to be mentioned that in some other coats of arms too, especially in the earlier created ones (end of the XVIII c. - beginning of the XIX c.), the flag represented a military leadership of ancestors or current representatives of the families in whose shields it was placed.

Ioane Batonishvili also emphasizes that Tsitsishvilies historically were well-known for their wealth, which most likely was depicted in the shield of arms by the cornuco-



pia, i.e. a horn of plenty. The castles owned by Tsitsishvili family along the XVII-XIX cc. are standing as a proof of the wealth and the might of this powerful Georgian feudal house.

It is also possible to propose a cautious explanation of the charges in the third quarter of the shield – the band sinister bearing a Latin letter “S”. Use of Latin letters In the XVIII c. Georgian coats of arms was not only rear but practically excluded. As for today, no such heraldic device is known from that time. The nature and principles of composing of that time armorial devices, as it was discussed, relied more on local Georgian symbols and very rarely comprised of foreign introductions, such as, for example, Latin letters. It is also utterly difficult to find any interpretation of why the letter

“S” could be used in the coat of arms as neither the name of the Tsitsishvilies nor the geographic locations (except Samtsverisi, one of their family castles) or historical events connected to them reveal any connections to the syllable “S”.



On the other hand, the most distinguished representative of the Tsitsishvili feudal house was above mentioned Zaza Fanaskertel Tsitsishvili, who, together with being a military commander, also was an author of the famous medical tractate “Karabadini” written in the XV c. Hence, it could be supposed that the original charge was a snake, an element of the commonly known symbol of medicine – part of Asclepius or Caduceus medical emblems. Later, when Georgian heraldry was interpreted by Russians



Pic. 087.

- a – remnants of Tsitsishvili castle in Nichbisi, Qvemo (Lower) Qartli, the XVIII c.,<sup>65</sup>
- b – Tsitsishvili castle in Mdzovreti, the XVII c.; <sup>66</sup>
- c – Tsitsishvili castle in Samtsverisi, Qartli, the XV-XVII cc.<sup>67</sup>

in the late XVIII and the XIX cc., they could misinterpret the symbol and explained it as the syllable “S”.

The coat of arms of Prince Tsitsishvili is one perfect example of what an incredible amount of historical information is coded in the heraldic charges of Georgian family heraldic devices and to what extent different readings of certain heraldic symbols or emblems can be proposed by the researchers and scholars.



Pic. 088.

A fragment of Zaza Fanaskertel Tsitsishvili's medical tractate "Karabadini".<sup>68</sup>

Though born in Georgia in 1765, Prince Petre (geo. პეტრე, rus. Piotr) Bagration, one of the heroes of the Battle of Borodino with Napoleon's forces, neither was identifying himself with Georgia much - more seeing himself as a Russian General, nor his coat of arms is a pure representation of Georgian heraldry, but it is a worldwide known armorial device published in respectful heraldic publications<sup>69</sup> and most importantly bearing charges from the very roots of the Georgian heraldry. This is a famous person with a famous coat of arms. These are the reasons why to describe this heraldic device in detail.

Prince Bagration was granted the coat of arms from the Imperial Department of Heraldry in 1803: *Per Cross Quarterly*, 1st *Gules* royal orb *Or*, 2nd *Azure* harp *Or*, 3rd *Azure* sling *Or*, 4th *Gules* scepter and sword crossed *per band Or*; princely *mantle* and *crown*.



Pic. 089.

Symbols of medicine: Caduceus and Asclepius.<sup>70</sup>

All charges of the shield are recognizable from the Bagrationies dynastical old coat of arms known from the very beginning of the XVIII c. representing the royal civilian and millitary sovereignty (the orb, scepter, and sword) and the legend according to which the dynasty descended from Biblical king David the psalm writer and defeater of Goliath (the harp and the sling).

The slightly modified heraldic device of the Bagrations is preserved by the family seal on



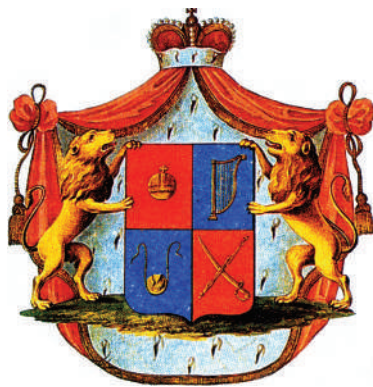
Pic. 090.

Petre Bagration wounded at the Borodino battlefield while defending positions of the “Bagration flashes” repelling seven assaults of Napoleon’s forces (painting of A. Vepkhvadze, 1948).<sup>71</sup>

images of the Order. This was a well spread practice in the XIX c. Russian and also Georgian heraldry when armigers were adding their highly honored decorations or typical weapons of their military service as external ornaments of the shield of arms.

The coat of arms of Prince Bagration is another perfect example of how, even in the purely Russian-made armorial devices of Georgian families, the old ancestral symbols were used to contain the messages of the family histories.

An exciting story that simultaneously portrays the ancient history of Georgia and the turbulent times of the communist revolution is connected to the coat of arms of Sovereign Princes (geo. მთავარი, Mtavari) of Abkhazia, Shervashidze.



Pic. 091.

The coat of arms of Prince Petre Bagration, 1803.



Pic. 092.

The seal of a slightly altered heraldic device of the Princes Bagration, with added 8-point star and the insignia of the St. Andrew’s Order, 1809.

The coat of arms is solely based on Greek mythology. The main city of the Abkhazia region has always been and still is the city of Sokhumi, in Hellenic and antique epochs known as Dioscuria (Greek – Διοσκούριάς) at the Black Sea shore of Georgia. The name of this one of the Greek polises around the Black Sea (that time – Pontos Euxeinos, on Greek - Πόντος Εὐξεινος) derives from the myth of Dioscuri brothers Castor and Pollux, who along their other mythical deeds participated in Argonauts' adventure to the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Their symbol was a couple of hats with the stars on top of them. The symbol was depicted on the coins minted in Dioscuria in II-I cc. BC.



Pic. 093.

The coin of the Greek polis Dioscuria (nowadays Sokhumi) with the symbol of the mythical Dioscuri brothers, II-I cc. BC.<sup>72</sup>

As the Princes of Abkhazia and Sokhumi (Dioscuria), Shervashidzes adopted the Dioscuri brothers' symbols from the ancient coins into their family coat of arms. The Shervashidzes were the rare exemption among the Georgian nobility, with a complete heraldic achievement granted by the Imperial Department of Heraldry in 1895.

But with this history of the ancient ties of heraldic and Hellenic symbols, the story of Shervashidzes' coat of arms does not finish. Amazingly, the armorial device of Shervashidze can be discovered on the walls of one of the beautiful royal castles of Danish kings – Frederiksborg, in the hall of the Dannebrog Knightly Order. The reason for this is that Georgian Prince and the General-Adjutant of the Imperial Army, Giorgi Shervashidze was a cavalier of this Order and a husband of Princess of Denmark Luisa Sofia Frederica Dagmara, the daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark and the widow of Emperor of Russia Alexander III.

A storm of the communist revolution disrupted the happy story of the Georgian Prince's and Danish Princess' morganatic marriage. General Adjutant Prince Giorgi was imprisoned by communists and put in jail in Yalta, Crimea. Gravely ill, he died in captivity in 1918, but before that ordered his relatives to grant his rich library to Tbilisi University. Giorgi Shervashidze was also among the founders of the society of spreading of literacy in Georgia in 1879. His spouse managed to bury him in the tomb at the local fort in Crimea, and migrated by ship to Europe.



Pic. 094.

The complete heraldic achievement of Sovereign Princes of Abkhazia, Shervashidze, 1895.



Pic. 095.  
Sovereign Prince, General Giorgi Shervashidze,  
1903.



Pic. 096.  
The coat of arms of Shervashidze in the  
hall of Dannebrog Knightly Order hall in  
Frederiksborg royal castle.



Pic. 097.  
The Royal Danish Order of the Danne-  
brog, Grand Cross Star.<sup>79</sup>

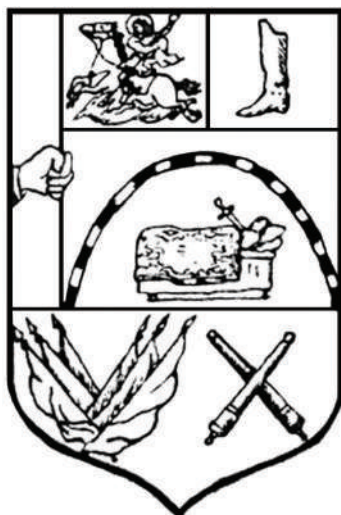


Pic. 098.  
The coat of arms of Princes Shervashid-  
ze by Arnaud Chaffanjon.



Strangely, a completely different coat of arms of the Shervashidzes is preserved in the Almanac of Gotha by Arnaud Chaffanjon.<sup>74</sup>

The typical feudal story lays as bases for the central theme of the later XIX c. version of the coat of arms of the Amilakhvari princely family already discussed in this book. The fess point of the shield shown in the illustration 099 is occupied by a strange, uncommon charge for heraldry – a man with a dagger struck in his chest lays on a bed under an arc.



Pic. 099.  
The XIX c. version of Princes Amilakhvari coat of arms.

This image depicts the act of selfless heroism performed by the ancestor of the Amilkavaries from the Middle Ages, Prince Iotam Zedgenidze. He had information that an assassination plot was planned against his suzerain King Giorgi VIII (King of unified Georgia: 1446-1466, King of Kakheti: 1466-1476), the last king of the unified Georgian Kingdom. Iotam warned the king about danger but failed to convince him that the assassination attempt was imminent. The desperate loyal vassal then asked Giorgi VIII that if he did not believe the threat was real, at least, to allow him to sleep in the king's bed instead of him. The king agreed. Indeed the murderers sneaked in and stabbed Iotam with a dagger, heavily wounding but failing to kill him. The assassins were apprehended on the spot. This historical anecdote of saving the king by the devoted vassal is reflected in the later heraldic devices of the Amilakhvaries, who were the descendants of Zedgenidze family. The same story is behind the symbolic meaning of the blood-dripping chalice from the earlier variants of the Amilakhvari so-called cognate coat of arms described earlier in Chapter II.



Pic. 100.  
King Giorgi VIII on his blood-money charter to Giorgi Zhuruli, 1460.<sup>75</sup>

Counts Eristavi of Qsani (geo. ქსნის ერისთავი, Qsnis Eristavi) chose an original way to present the prominent geographical feature of the land under their feudal possession in the family coat of arms. The Eristavies of Qsani held a territory that engulfed a vast area of river Qsani valley at the highland slopes of the Caucasus Mountains in



Pic. 101.

The coat of arms of Counts Eristavi of Qsani.<sup>76</sup>

eastern Georgia. To show control over the narrow valley, a warrior with a sword and a flag standing by each of his feet on two mountain peaks arching over a gorge was depicted on the earlier (possibly the late XVIII or the early XIX c.) coat of arms of Eristavi of Qsani from their family seal.

Two other versions of the coat of arms of Eristavi of Qsani are also known. Both resemble each other and simultaneously significantly differ from the above-explained variant, though a mountain with a flag is



a



b

Pic. 102.

a-b. The later versions of the coat of arms of Eristavi of Qsani, the XIX c.



Pic. 103.

The castle of Counts Eristavi of Qsani in Akhlagori, east Georgia, the XVII-XVIII cc. (temporarily under the Russian occupation).<sup>77</sup>

still visible in both versions. This detail reflect the heraldic composition of the earlier family shield of arms.

It can be seen from many examples described that Georgian armorial devices contain some absolutely exceptional elements. Among such are supporters from the complete heraldic achievement of Georgian Princes Javakhashvili granted by the Imperial Department of Heraldry in 1901.

Similarly, unique supporters are depicted as part of the armorial device of the Counts Eristavi of Aragvi (geo. არაგვის ერისთავი, Aragvis Eristavi). In this case, human supporters are again in traditional Georgian clothes, though typical for the populations of mountainous regions of eastern Georgia, where the Eristavies of Aragvi were from.

From the documents of the Department of Heraldry, it is clear that this armorial device of Eristavi of Aragvi was created based on the older coat of arms of the family sent by the Eristavies, which by the form and composition resembles the heraldic devices granted by Erekle II and might be as old as from the end of the XVIII c.

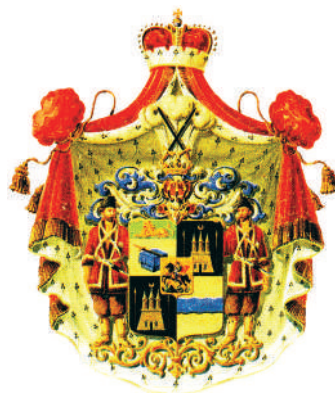
Apparently, the Eristavies of Aragvi were using another kind of coat of arms too, which had little in common with the other two versions. But it is interesting how the church, possibly the family church from the Eristavies' residence in Ananuri, eastern Georgia, is depicted in the shields.

Just as in Europe or Russia, Georgian nobility used their coat of arms on many family items such as household items, personal accessories, decorative armament, weapons of practical



Pic. 104.

The coat of arms of Princes Javakhashvili with the human supporters in Georgian traditional cloths and arms, 1901.



Pic. 105.

The complete heraldic achievement of Eristavies of Aragvi, 1901.



Pic. 106.

The old coat of arms of Eristavi of Aragvi.



Pic. 107.

Third version of the coat of arms of Eristavi of Aragvi.

use, or on the buildings in their possession. Nevertheless, the example of possibly the most original use of the heraldic device is a postal stamp with the coat of arms of Princes Tumanishvili. The heraldic stamp was made in the XIX c. for a personal use on the private correspondences of the family members.

It is worth to pay attention and mention one detail from the coat of arms of the Tumanishvili: the arm holding a quill pen. A story behind it is that the members of Tumanishvili family were hereditarily holding a position of the head of a royal chancellery at the court of Georgian kings in the late Middle Ages. To proudly depict this hereditary position the specific charge - the quill pen, was added to the family shield of arms.

This example once again underlines that behind almost every single charge of the Georgian family coats of arms is a particular story or a reason. Unfortunately, sometimes these reasons though are unknown to contemporary researchers. This problem is mainly related to the decades of communist rule in Georgia when ties to old heraldic practice were cut and research of the subjects associated with heraldry was discouraged, if not restricted.

The described Georgian family coats of arms are only a tiny part of the family or personal coats of arms of Georgian noble families, which, together with the concepts



Pic. 108.

The family castle and the church of Counts Eristavi of Aragvi in Ananuri.<sup>78</sup>

behind the creation of heraldic devices, illustrate the originality and uniqueness of Georgian heraldic styles.

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The XIX c. is also a time when ecclesiastic heraldry emerged in Georgia. Generally, the gravestones of Georgian clergy retain examples of this branch of heraldry in Georgia. Ecclesiastic heraldry has deep roots in Georgia as the images resembling the heraldic devices appeared in the XVII and the early XVIII cc. on the seals of some high-ranked clergymen. One of the examples of such personal seals, predecessors of the first Georgian ecclesiastic coats of arms, can be considered the stamp of the Patriarch of East Georgia, Domenti IV (1705-41). He was an enlightened person, a renovator of churches and monasteries, and a great patriot, what made him an object of persecution from both Turkish and Persian invaders. In addition he was a brother of King Vakhtang IV, who, as described above, was one of the first introducers of heraldry in Georgia. In the wake of all of these, it should not be surprising that Patriarch Domenti (formerly Damiane Bagrationi) was using the seals with the symbolic images as a distinctive mark of his personality and rank very much resembling early heraldic devices by the concept, but significantly differ from those by form.



Pic. 109.

The coat of arms of Principality of Mingrelia on the dish of Sovereign Princes Daidiani, the rulers of Mingrelia, till 1867.<sup>79</sup>



Pic. 110.

The Tumanishvilies' coat of arms on the family postal stamp.

In the XIX c., it became more common for Georgian clergy to use personal emblematic compositions showing closer similarities with ecclesiastic coats of arms. The image on the gravestone of Mitropolit of Bodbe monastery, Ioane Makashvili is probably already possible to be called a coat of arms as, except the shield, it has all attributes of a heraldic device: mitropolit's mitra as a *coronet*, *mantle*, *decorations*, *compartment*, the common charges: book, cross and shining star, even a crest is presented – the All-Seeing Eye (i.e. the Eye of Providence) can be considered as such. Despite all of this, without the main part of the armorial device – the shield of arms, it is still difficult to recognize the design as a coat of arms in the strict, narrow classical understanding of this term.



Pic. 111.  
Seal of Domenti (future Patriarch of East Georgia), 1672.



Pic. 112.  
Seal of Patriarch Domenti IV, 1705.



Pic. 113.  
The design closely resembling an ecclesiastic coat of arms from the gravestone of Mitropolit of Bodbe, Ioane Makashvili, 1837.



Pic. 114.  
The ecclesiastic coat of arms of Bishop of Gori, Petre Konchoshvili, New Shuamta monastery, 1909 rulers of Mingrelia till 1867.

Though, in several decades, on the gravestone of Bishop of Gori, Petre Konchoshvili, buried in the New Shuamta (geo. - ახალი შუამთა, Akhali Shuamta) monastery, classical ecclesiastic coat of arms can be identified with the shield of arms seen clearly. The only charges of the coat of arms are the letters: E and P scripted on the old Georgian “Asomtavruli” (capital letter) alphabet, meaning – Episcopo (Bishop) Petre (Peter). The alphabet and its use in the Georgian heraldry will be discussed in more detailed way below while describing the coat of arms of town Mtkheta in the last fifth chapter of the book.

It is evident that Georgian high rank-clergy, who mainly were descendants of noble families, did not want to fall back from the civilian noblemen and were adopting specific heraldic style designs based on the use of Biblical scenes, Christian religious items, or ritual attributes throughout of the XVII-XVIII cc. which transformed into the typical ecclesiastic heraldic devises at the end of the XIX c.

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The most underdeveloped part of Georgian heraldry is the corporative heraldry. Not only it was not completely established in the times before the Soviet revolution, but even after regaining of independence by Georgia, corporative heraldry could not obtain a certain form, besides the rare exceptions which will be described below during the discussion on contemporary Georgian coats of arms. Obviously, in the communist era too, like any other types of armorials, corporative heraldry could not develop either.

Naturally, the trademarks or different emblems of organizations or companies existed in



Pic. 115.

The flag with corporative symbols of the guild of horse equipment makers and leather workers in Tbilisi. The XIX-XX cc.

the XIX c. Georgia, but somehow they did not obtain a form of armorial devices. The symbols from that time which can be considered the closest to the corporative coats of arms are the flags of guilds (geo. *ამყარი*, *amqari*) of various professions in the cities like Tbilisi, Kutaisi or Akhaltsikhe. Though, they were not the coat of arms, these flags were baring the same functions as corporative heraldic devices – representing the guild of armorers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, shoemakers, tailors or any others, encouraging corporative team spirit. They were handed over from one to another generation of guild representatives. Usually, the guilds' flags had a form close to the streamer-style flags.

The main motives on the flags were guardian Saints or the Biblical characters of the given profession, the tools of the profession, various ornaments and inscriptions defining the profession. For instance, the guardian of the armorers' guild was the Biblical patriarch, Abraham, so on the corporative flag, he was depicted with a sacrificial dagger in his hands. The guardian of carpenters was Prophet Elijah, as he was believed to be a carpenter at some point in his life. The guardian Saints or Biblical characters were chosen based on these perceived connections of those to the professions of one or another guild.

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Summarizing, at the end of the XIX c. and the beginning of the XX, almost all branches of heraldry were considerably developed in Georgia, and a coat of arms was a regular part of everyday life in the cities, though obviously mainly for and among the high society. Heraldry definitely found fertile ground in Georgia. It most likely would further flourish with new and refashioned forms in the XX c., but the Soviet revolution of 1917 radically and violently changed the whole course of development of the country and naturally, the heraldry too.

## CHAPTER IV – THE STORM OF CHANGES, REPUBLICAN HERALDRY IN GEORGIA

*With the independent democratic Republic of Georgia surviving between 1918-1921 in turbulent times after WWI and the Communist revolution in Russia and later Soviet annexation period (1921-1990), naturally, Georgian heraldry underwent drastic changes in style, meanings, and form*

The Consequences of the communist revolution of 1917 were catastrophic for Georgia. Revolution touched practically all aspects of life in the affected countries, but some spheres, including the heraldry, suffered the most as it was associated with the nobility and feudal society. It was forgotten, if not restricted, and replaced by revolutionary communist symbolism, which essentially was an integral part of the state propaganda. Together with practice, the study of heraldry also declined drastically. Very few scholars were studying heraldry, and those studies were not encouraged. Even fewer enthusiasts were practicing heraldry, individually creating the unofficial family or other type of coat of arms for limited private use.



Pic. 116.  
State coat of arms of the Democratic  
Republic of Georgia in 1918-21.  
Author – Iosif Charlemagne.

Though, before these dire times for Georgia and heraldry, in 1918-21, during the brief existence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, with a Socialist government, heraldry was not oppressed, but the form was altered. One of the perfect examples of heraldic devices from that period was the Republic's state coat of arms.

Changes from the previous Georgian coats of arms are eye-striking. All main canons of heraldry are disregarded: there is no shield, the main charge is facing *sinister* (non-heraldic, left side of the shield if viewed from its bearer), and finally, the colors are chosen freely without referring to the tinctures and metals of heraldry or rules of their use and placement. Instead of the image of St. George, representing the country and the state for centuries, the figure of a horseman – “White George” (geo. - თეთრი გიორგი, Tetri Giorgi) occupies the central part of the stylized shield. Five stars with the sun and moon, ancient emblems often used in old Georgian visual arts, are arching over his head. The idea behind replacing of St. George with the White George was to eliminate religious motives in the state symbol of the new secular democratic republic and to attempt to maintain historical tradition related with the Saint horseman – St. George.



Although, absolute disdain of the forms and rules of classical heraldry is obvious, the state armorial still preserves Georgian symbolic traditions, even if modified: “White Giorgi” replaces St. George but is a reminiscence of it; also, the shield of arms does not exist but it is replaced by framing made from the seven-pointed star traditional ancient Georgian emblem. This makes the coat of arms a vivid example of the transformation period in Georgian heraldry from its classical forms to the modern, secular, and social-ism-oriented symbols. Later, in a few years this process will accelerate and culminate with the complete replacement of heraldry by the communist ideological so called peasant-proletarian emblematic system, discussed below.

The Georgian Republic of 1918-21 governed by Social-Democrats previously supporting the revolution was a genuinely democratic state, and even though the state heraldic practice changed its form towards modernization, the study of heraldry or use of coats of arms was not suppressed in any way.

Another illustrious sample of the post-revolutionary republican heraldry of Georgia is the corporate symbol, the coat of arms of Tbilisi State University (TSU). It was established in 1918, and its coat of arms also was adopted in the same year. The Author was the Georgian painter and designer Dimitry Shevardnadze.



Pic. 117.  
The coat of arms of Tbilisi State University (TSU), 1918.

Similarly to the 1918-21 state coat of arms, the TSU emblem though commonly called a coat of arms, represents an entirely different type of symbol absolutely remote from heraldry. Again just like the state arms, the TSU emblem also preserves Georgian historical traditional décor in the framing around the stylized shield, where a deer feeding her fawn is the central theme of the composition. The image of the deer and the fawn evidently imitates traditional Georgian styles from the baretiefs, medieval manuscript miniatures, and iron stamping art. The provided illustrations (pic. 118 a, b, c, d) can be compared to the ornaments from the state and the university coats of arms to reveal a resemblance.

Georgian democratic republic has vanished under the overwhelming onslaught of Russian occupying Red Army forces after a brief armed conflict in 1921. Together with democracy communist dictatorship almost eliminated the last remnants of heraldry and the traditional symbolic system. This was an attempt to make the symbolic traditions disappear, not only physically but mentally too, from the collective mind of the nation.



Pic. 118.

Inspirations from Georgian traditional arts for the coat of arms of TSU:

a – Bronze Buckle from village Gebi (Georgia, Racha) the, II-III c. AD;

b – Bronze Buckle from Tedzami gorge (Georgia, Qartli);<sup>80</sup>

c – A deer and a fawn from the mosaic in Bichvinta Church, the VI c. AD;<sup>81</sup>

d – Barelief from Nikortsinda church (Georgia, Racha), the XI c.

In place of the occupied independent south Caucasian republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, Soviet Russia established the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of South Caucasia, which existed during 1922-1936. The coat of arms of this entity marks the establishment of the Soviet symbolic system in Georgia. It was characterized by the obliteration of heraldic and ancient historical emblematic traditions and replacing those with symbols and emblems of communism, industrialism, modernism, and atheism.

As the coat of arms the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of the South Caucasia (SFSRSC) is not created according to the canons of heraldry, it is impossible to emblazon it, though a simple description of the image can be provided. In the round shield on the background of the Caucasian mountains the factories, oil pumps, wheat, and vines are visible; behind the mountains, the sunrays are emerging, while above the peaks is a five-pointed red star, the center of the shield is occupied by a hammer and a sickle. In the simple framing surrounding the shield, the abbreviation of SFSRSC is scripted in Georgian, Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani. At the compartment is a regular motto of all



Pic. 119.

Coat of arms of Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of South Caucasus, 1922-1936. (The photo is courtesy of NPLG – National Parliamentary Library of Georgia)



Pic. 120.

Coat of Arms Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, 1937-1990.

state coats of arms of Soviet republics: “Proletarians of all countries – unite!”

The mountains obviously represented the main geographical feature of the region – The Caucasus Mountains, the rising sun rays symbolized – a bright future under the communist rule, the factories, wheat, and vine – main industrious and agricultural activities of the population, including the oil fields of Caspian Sea, while a star and a hammer intercrossed with a sickle were the main emblems of communist revolution and the dictatorship of proletariat and peasants.

In 1937 after the dissolving of the South Caucasian Federation, the separate Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia was established, and new coat of arms of this new entity was also introduced.

The symbolic meaning of the features of the coat of arms of Soviet Georgia was identical to the previously described state symbol of the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of South Caucasus. One of the main differences is that there are no signs of industrious buildings like factories or oil pumps in the Georgian coat of arms, as, at that time, the country was rather agrarian, than industrious.

The most distinctive detail making the Georgian coat of arms stand out from the dull, featureless row of the Soviet state symbols is the original framing made of stylized traditional Georgian ornaments. This was a modest effort to maintain an element of ancient Georgian patterns. Still, even this timid attempt adds a bit of originality to the composition and slightly differentiates it from the state symbols of other Soviet republics of the USSR.

In the Soviet period, the use of city coats of arms was minimal. No system would regulate the creation, adoption, or use of city symbols. It was entirely up to city administrations if they desired to adopt the city coat of arms and to what extent it would be used. Often the cities had unofficial coats of arms created for amusement, to reflect any significant event related to the city, or to promote the city itself, representing industrious powerhouse, a large port, or a touristic destination.



Pic. 121.

Tbilisi coat of arms, from 1989 till today.  
Author – painter, Emir Burjanadze.

In Georgia, the most known civic heraldic device was the coat of arms of Tbilisi. Though, just as many other Soviet-era symbols, some of which were described above, the emblem of Tbilisi also barely can be called a coat of arms. The composition violates several heraldic canons: first of all, it is exceptional and utterly rare when heraldry allows the placing of certain letters inside the shield of arms, but scripting the whole words in it is a blatant violation of the fundamental heraldic laws, another striking anomaly is that there isn't a single charge in the composition – the main figure is a stylized half-shaped pheasant merged with the letter T

of Georgian alphabet (თ), and partially filled with the letters from the name of the city – თბილისი. Behind the pheasant-word hybrid image is an oak branch. At the bottom of this complex and somewhat chaotic design are the inscriptions of the city's name – Tbilisi, on old Georgian alphabets, under those – few waves. At the top of the composition, seven stars are arcing above all other details.

The official description of the coat of arms provides a symbolic explanation of the design. The round shield is used as historically it was traditional in Georgian warfare and armament.

The main composition is constructed on the famous legend of the foundation of Tbilisi: the king of ancient Iberia, Vakhtang I Gorgasali, was hunting in the forests near the first capital of Georgia – Mtskheta. During the hunting, he killed a pheasant with an arrow. He sent his falcon to find the prey but lost sight of him. In search of the birds, Vakhtang and his men came upon the small creek and saw that the pheasant was in its waters. When he pulled out the bird, it was boiled as the creek turned to be hot. This amazed the king, and he decided to found the city realizing not only the warm streams would be advantageous for the new city location, but the surrounded grounds also would contribute to the development of the new settlement. The name of the future city was also chosen based on the existence of the hot streams in the area: *tbil* – means warm in Georgian, and conjoined with the suffix – *isi*, it makes a word meaning the

warm streams – Tbilisi.

In the city emblem, the pheasant represents the above mentioned legend. The oak branch symbolizes perpetuity and strength and the waves – the hot creeks. The seven stars are the traditional ancient symbols used in Georgian emblematic designs.<sup>82</sup>

The coat of arms of Tbilisi was adopted in 1989. Formally this still was a communist era, but the national movement was already gaining ever-growing momentum. That explains the historical focus of the themes of Tbilisi arms, but at the same time, knowledge of heraldry and its rules was almost completely lost in that time society, as a result, the composition only remotely resembles the classical understanding of coat of arms and is rightfully named more cautiously in the official statement of the council of Tbilisi as the “heraldic sign”.

Some other Georgian cities also had coats of arms during the Soviet period but mainly the unofficial ones. For instance, the touristic town of Borjomi surprisingly had a coat of arms with an appearance very close to the classical heraldic devices.

The resemblance of the coat of arms of Borjomi with typical heraldic bearings allows blazon of the composition: French shield, party per quarterly, *Gules* fountain *Argent*, *Azure* skier *Argent*, *Azure* deer *Argent*, *Vert* fir-tree *Argent*. The fountain signifies the natural mineral spa waters Borjomi has been famous for as a spa resort for many decades. The skier hints at the skiing resorts of Bakuriani - a small town near Borjomi well-known skiing destination. The deer and the fir tree refer to the flora and fauna of the extensive forests and the national park surrounding Borjomi Valley.

Concerning ecclesiastic heraldry, it survived during Soviet times only through the coat of arms of the Georgian Patriarchy which more or less maintained the form which at least distantly resembled European heraldry. As it could be expected St. George was chosen to represent the patriarchy on its emblem. The motto beneath the shield states: “God is with us!” The framing



Pic. 122.  
Coat of arms of Borjomi from a souvenir badge, 1970ies-80ies.



Pic. 123.  
Coat of arms of Georgian Patriarchy.

consists of stylized wings of Angels and a Bishop's mantle. The baptizer of Georgia, St. Nino's crosses are on both sides of the mantle.

In Soviet Georgia, despite being totally under the control of Soviet internal security services the Patriarchy was among the rare historical organizations which were still functioning after the communist occupation. Thus, it seems logical that the coat of arms of it preserves many characteristics of old Georgian heraldic devices.

In general, Soviet-era symbols are difficult to qualify as coats of arms and part of the heraldry. They have several distinctive characteristics by which they stand aside and are easy to differentiate from the classical samples of heraldry. Their style and form absolutely ignore not only the heraldic rules and traditions but also any historical symbols or emblematic systems, except rare exclusions. Instead, communist symbology invented and established its own style and type of emblems, though it never introduced any rules. Simultaneously, strict restrictions were enacted to exclude or minimize the use of old symbols and classical heraldic styles.

The heraldic charges of the coats of arms also were changed, as it was mentioned, from traditional ones to modern items, tools, and buildings. The religious, historical, or military charges almost completely faded away from the shields. Probably the most significant change happened in the meaning and understanding of the function of a coat of arms. During the communist regime, remnants of heraldry were put into the service of ideology and propaganda. Its forms, meanings, and compositions all aimed to strengthen the ideological messages coming from the ruling Communist party.

Soviet heraldry differed not only from the classical European one but even from the style adopted in the democratic republic of Georgia. The main difference was that, though during the democratic period, the heraldic rules were disregarded just like in the communist era, the attempts still were clearly made to maintain a connection with traditional Georgian symbols by imitating or modifying those, while during the communist times historical symbology was wholly replaced by the Soviet emblematic system.

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Despite suppression from the communist regime, there still was a space where Georgian heraldry continued its existence in the classical form, though in a limited manner. This was a community of Georgian emigrants in Europe. However, only the practice of family coats of arms survived among Georgian migrants. Their heraldic devices also served them as proof of their high social status. This added importance to the heraldry in their eyes. The coats of arms created for migrants were made in strict accordance with heraldic rules by experienced heralds or painters. However, the absolute majority of those did not have anything in common with the Georgian traditional style of

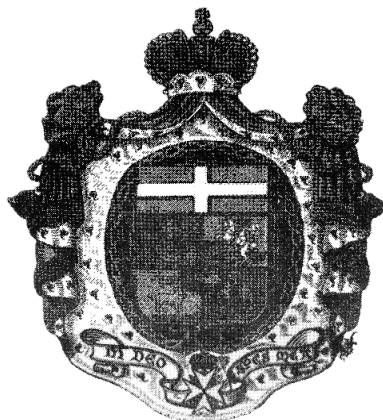
heraldry and the ancient symbols. The most prominent scholar collecting and accounting Georgian migrated nobility's coats of arms in Europe was Arnaud Chaffanjon. He added the genealogical information and coats of arms of Georgian families in the well-known almanac – *Le Petit Gotha Illustré*, published in Paris during the 1960ies.

By presenting a few coats of arms created in Europe for the Georgian migrant families, the reader can grasp the nature of these unique heraldic armorials in Georgian heraldry.

One of the vivid examples of the XX c. Georgian emigration heraldry is the coat of arms of Tavadi (Prince) Nicolas Chkhotua, published by Jacques Ferrand together with several other coats of arms of Georgian nobility in his book on Georgian princely families.<sup>82</sup> Many other heraldic devises created or modified during the European emigration of Georgian noble families are preserved in the book by Arnaud Chaffanjon, *Le petit Gotha illustré*.<sup>84</sup>

The armorial device of Nicolas Chkhotia is not only interesting as a representation of Georgian emigrant heraldry but also because it is a rare occasion of marshaling of arms in Georgian heraldry: *Chief Gules cross Argent*, quarterly: 1st *Azure crescent Or* and cross *pat-tée Or* above it, 2nd *Gules St. George Argent* killing dragon *Vert*, 3rd *Gules deer Or sinister*, 4th *Gules golden fleece Or*; inescutcheon: arms of Chkonია – quarterly, 1st and 4th *Vert Greek cross coupé Or*, 2nd and 3rd *Gules ship Argent*; chain of the order of Malta around the shield, princely *mantling* and *crown*, Latin *motto* below the shield: *in deo space mea* (eng. my hope is in God).

The coat of arms is one of the most complex armorial devices in Georgian heraldry. It is composed of armorials of Tavadi (Prince) Chkhotua and Aznauri (Knight) Chkonია, when Nicolas Chkhotua was adopted by his maternal grandfather in 1920, after a marriage of his mother with Aznauri (Knight) Shalva Chkonია in 1901.



Pic. 124.

The coat of arms of Ambassador Bailli of Sovereign Order of Malta Tavadi (Prince) Nicolas Chkhotua, middle of the XX c.



Pic. 125.

Combined coat of arms of Bagrationi of Mukhrani and Pasquini, 1940.



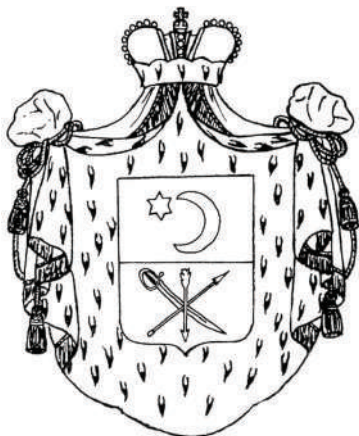
Pic. 126.

The traditional coat of arms of Shalakashvilies.



Pic. 127.

Coat of arms of Shalakashvilies in emigration.



Pic. 128.

The third original version of the coat of arms of Tavadi (Prince) Shalakashvili.

Interesting intercrossing of Georgian and Italian heraldry took place as a result of a marriage between representative of one of the branches of the Georgian royal family in exile Irakli Bargationi of Mukhrani (geo. ბაგრატიონ მუხრანელი, Bargation-Mukhraneli) and Maria Antonietta Pasquini, daughter of Ugo, Count di Costafiorita. The marriage was reflected by a combined heraldic device, which is a rare example of the interconnection of Georgian family coats of arms with European ones (pic. 125).

Not all the coats of arms of Georgian emigrant noblemen were created from scratch. In some instances, the old coats of arms were only partially modified during the emigration years of of their owners after the occupation of Georgian democratic republic by Soviet Russia in 1921. Such was a coat of arms by Arnaud Chaffanjon used by Tavadi (Prince) Shalikashvilkies in emigration, which just slightly differed from the heraldic device traditionally used by them.

As can be seen from the illustrations (pic. 126 and pic. 127), the few differences between the coats of arms are that in the newer emigration time's version in the 1st quarter the horseman doesn't hold the flag, in the 2nd quarter the key is added to the saber, in the 3rd the lamb is turned sinister, in the 4th the way fess has a different odd form.

Interestingly, Shalakashvilies also had the third coat of arms completely different from the other two described above. Unfortunately, just as with several other coats of arms of Georgian noble families, it is unclear exactly when was created the third original version or which branch of the family was using it. Though by its appearance the third simplest heraldic device of Shalakashvilies should be the earliest variant of their family coats of arms, as visually, it resembles the early



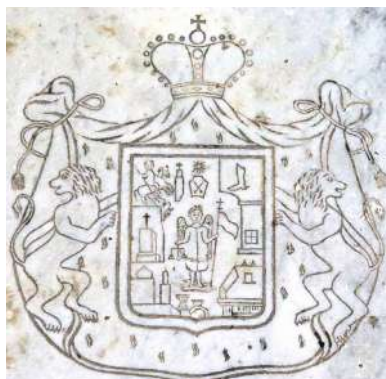
samples of Georgian family armorials.

The reader might be curious how the coat of arms of the Amilakhvari family developed since its creation in the XVIII c. as one of the first Georgian family heraldic devices. During the XIX c., many different versions of it were used by various branches of the family or individual representatives of it. Some of these versions or later developments of the coat of arms of the Amilakhvaries can be observed on the provided photos, illustrating that certain families were using a great number of different variants of their family heraldic devices. These are the examples of cognate coats of arms in Georgia.

The coats of arms created for the Georgian families in emigration played a vital role in preserving an uninterrupted line of development of classical Georgian heraldry. However, another side of the coin was that these armorial devices were fruits of the classical western European heraldic practices and predominantly lost a connection with old Georgian heraldic tradition. Still, they stay as unique and distinguished representations of Georgian heraldry, enriching it with a new essence.



Pic. 129.  
Personal coat of arms of General of Cavalry  
Ivane Amilakhvari (1829-1905).



Pic. 130.  
A version of the coat of arms of Amilakhvari  
from a family gravestone, the second part of



Pic. 131.  
Coat of arms of Amilakhvaries in emigration  
after the communist revolution by Arnaud  
Chaffanjon, the XX c.

## CHAPTER V – NEW WINE IN THE OLD JAR OR BACK TO THE ORIGINS WITH THE NEW FORMS

*Reclaiming its independence, Georgia in the lane of reverting to traditional, national, and European ways in all spheres of life opened up doors for the second life to Georgian heraldry*



Pic. 132.

The greater state coat of arms of Georgia, since 2004

were abolished, and state symbols of the democratic republic of Georgia functioning in 1918-21 were restored, including the state coat of arms, described in detail in the previous chapter. But this didn't appear enough for Georgians who had a craving for the state symbol with better visual and deeper historical roots connected to the country's past and national identity.

In the wake of such sentiments in the country, the newly elected reformatory government of Georgia in 2004 announced the creation of a special commission for the study of problems and formulating recommendations regarding the state symbols. In the less than a year, the commission accomplished a great amount of work and based on its findings, an open contest on new state coat of arms was announced. Simultaneously the commission, based on the comprehensive research of Georgian heraldry and the history of local symbols, came out with concrete conditions for the adoption of the new state coat of arms as a result of the contest.

On November 1, 2004, the Georgian parliament passed the law on state symbols, in-

From the end of the 1980ies, together with the national-independence movement gaining momentum and growing in still Soviet Georgia, interest in heraldry and historical symbols of the state, provinces, cities, and families sparkled in the society. This interest further spread and became stronger after Georgia broke away from the Soviet Union.

With the regaining of independence by Georgia in 1990, a new era of Georgian heraldry had started. All Soviet symbols

cluding the greater and lesser state coats of arms. The Parliament adopted the state arms blazoned below and functional till nowadays. The author of the designs was Mamuka Gongadze, a painter, researcher, and specialist in heraldry who had been working on the subject for years.

The greater state coat of arms of Georgia: French shield *Gules*, St. George *Argent* with halo *Or*; *supporters* two *lions rampant Or*, Georgian crown *Or*, *compartment* Georgian décor *Or*, underneath – *motto Argent*, in corners two *crosses pattée Gules*, in-between in Georgian: Strength is in Unity.

In 2008 The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia replaced the commission with a primary task to direct and regulate all subjects, protocols, and issues related to the state symbols. The first head of the Council was Mr. Eldar Shengelaia, whose role in the adoption of the new coat of arms and flag of Georgia is hard to overvalue. After years of work, Mr. Shengelaia was substituted by Mr. Mamuka Gongadze, who is leading the Council to these days.

Since then, efforts doubled to accomplish another giant task of Georgian heraldry after the adoption of the new state coat of arms – to create and approve heraldic devices of all administrative entities of Georgia. This was a titanic workload that took years of research, negotiations, and designing to accomplish. The long and hard work of many involved in this task resulted in the creation of new original coats of arms of Georgian municipal cities, towns, and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

All armorial devices of Georgian cities created by the Council of Heraldry are represented below, in the special section of the appendix, but as the format of this book cannot accommodate complete descriptions of all of these coats of arms, only a few of them will be discussed in detail below.

The coat of arms of the town Mtskheta probably contains the most hidden messages about its history and location than any other contemporary Georgian city arms. That should not be surprising as it had been situated in a very distinctive location for thousands of years. Hence its *blazon* too is somewhat complicated and unusual: Shield *Gules* a St. Nino *cross*; between: robe of Christ *Argent*, crown *Or* above *pall Argent*, fire-spitting rock *Argent* pierced by two arrows *Or*, arm holding carpenter’s square *Argent*; vine *mantling Or*, old capital city *crown Or*, *Motto Gules crosses pateé Argent* per corner, in-between “Mtskheta” on archaic Georgian alphabet.

The cross of St. Nino, the baptizer of Georgia to Christianity in the IV c., reflects



Pic. 133.  
The lesser state coat of arms of Georgia: French shield *Gules*, St. George *Argent* with halo *Or*, piercing the dragon *Argent* with a *spear Argent*.



Pic. 134.  
Coat of arms of Mtskheta

arms of the Bagrationi family, that it is buried inside the Svetitskhoveli cathedral, which is located in the center of Mtskheta. The *pall* signifies that the city is built at the confluence of rivers Mtkvari and Aragvi. The crown above the pall naturally represents the status of the town as the ancient capital of the eastern Georgian Kingdom of Iberia (geo. ივერია, Iveria). The mountain with the spears is obviously taken from the coat of arms of the Qartli region, as the town is located in Qartli.

The arm with a carpenter's square conveys a legend according to which the Svetitskhoveli's architect's hand was amputated to ensure that he would not build another similarly marvelous cathedral elsewhere. The legend does not have any historical bases and such symbols were frequently used as a signature of the builders on many other ancient buildings. However, the myth is still popular in Georgia.

that she was settled in the vicinity of Mtskheta that time capital of the Kingdom of Iberia (eastern Georgia), where she eventually converted Queen Nana and King Mirian. Upon arrival to Mtskheta from Cappadocia, St. Nino created a cross from the vine branches and tied those with her hair, making what made it look originally – the cross with the lowered shoulders, called St. Nino's cross ever since. The story also underlines the role vineyards and wine was and is playing in Georgian identity – the very first Christian cross in the country was made of vine.

The robe of Christ represents the previously described legend while discussing the coat of arms of the Bagrationi family, that it is buried inside the Svetitskhoveli cathedral, which is located in the center of Mtskheta. The *pall* signifies that the city is built at the confluence of rivers Mtkvari and Aragvi. The crown above the pall naturally represents the status of the town as the ancient capital of the eastern Georgian Kingdom of Iberia (geo. ივერია, Iveria). The mountain with the spears is obviously taken from the coat of arms of the Qartli region, as the town is located in Qartli.



Pic. 135.  
Bare relief on the wall of Svetitskhoveli cathedral.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, the *motto* is a reminder of the old Georgian alphabet "Asomtavruli" (geo. ასომთავრული). During the centuries three different types of the alphabet were used in Georgia: first was the Asomtavruli, or capital letter alphabet, since the invention of the unique Georgian writing system in the V c. AD till the early Middle Ages. It was replaced by the so-called "Nuskha Khutsuri" (geo. ნუსხა-ხუცური) or simply "Khutsuri" (geo. ხუცური), meaning on Georgian – "priests", which was used during the Middle Ages to be consequently replaced in the late Middle Ages by "Mkhedruli" (geo. მხედრული), on Georgian

– “horsemen” as it primarily had been used by the non-clergy population. Today’s Georgian alphabet is a modernized version of the latter.

|             |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |    |    |     |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|
| Mkhedruli   | ა  | ბ  | გ  | დ  | ე  | ვ  | ზ   | თ   | ი  | კ  | ლ   |
| Khutsuri    | ⴐ  | ⴑ  | ⴒ  | ⴓ  | ⴔ  | ⴕ  | ⴗ   | ⴙ   | ⴛ  | ⴝ  | ⴟ   |
| Asomtavruli | Ⴀ  | Ⴁ  | Ⴂ  | Ⴃ  | Ⴄ  | Ⴅ  | Ⴆ   | Ⴇ   | Ⴈ  | Ⴉ  | Ⴊ   |
| English     | a  | b  | g  | d  | e  | v  | z   | t   | i  | k' | l   |
| Mkhedruli   | მ  | ნ  | ო  | პ  | ჟ  | რ  | ს   | ტ   | უ  | ფ  | ქ   |
| Khutsuri    | ⴌ  | ⴍ  | ⴎ  | ⴏ  | ⴑ  | ⴒ  | ⴓ   | ⴔ   | ⴕ  | ⴗ  | ⴙ   |
| Asomtavruli | Ⴇ  | Ⴈ  | Ⴉ  | Ⴊ  | Ⴋ  | Ⴌ  | Ⴍ   | Ⴎ   | Ⴏ  | Ⴐ  | Ⴑ   |
| English     | m  | n  | o  | p' | zh | r  | s   | t'  | u  | p  | k/q |
| Mkhedruli   | ყ  | ვ  | ძ  | წ  | ჭ  | ც  | ძ   | წ   | ჭ  | ც  | ძ   |
| Khutsuri    | ⴘ  | ⴙ  | ⴚ  | ⴛ  | ⴜ  | ⴝ  | ⴞ   | ⴟ   | ⴠ  | ⴡ  | ⴢ   |
| Asomtavruli | Ⴋ  | Ⴌ  | Ⴍ  | Ⴎ  | Ⴏ  | Ⴐ  | Ⴑ   | Ⴒ   | Ⴓ  | Ⴔ  | Ⴕ   |
| English     | gh | q' | sh | ch | ts | dz | ts' | ch' | kh | j  | h   |

Pic. 136.

Development of the Georgian alphabet and English syllable equivalents. Some old syllables unused in contemporary Georgian are not presented. Mkhedruli was in use since the XI c.; Khutsuri: VIII-XI cc. (parallel use till the XVIII c.); Asomtavruli: V-VIII c.

Contrary to the coat of arms of Mtskheta, the heraldic device of town Bolnisi is very simple, but its single charge also has a deep historical background: *Gules*, Bolnuri cross *argent*; regular Georgian city crown *Argent*, *motto* “Bolnisi” on old Asomtavruli Georgian alphabet *Sable* on *Argent* lent.

Similarly to the Nino’s cross, the Bolnuri cross (geo. ბოლნისური ჯვარი, Bolnuri jvari; on Georgian means “Bolnisi style cross”) does not have exact analogs in heraldry either. Though cross pattée and Maltese cross are somewhat similarly shaped. The closest type of cross to the Bolnuri is the Teutonic cross which mainly was depicted as pattée but sometimes can be seen with more curved shoulders like Bolnuri. It can be stated that the St. Nino’s and Bolnuri crosses are somewhat unique additions to the heraldic world from the Georgian heraldry.



Pic. 137.

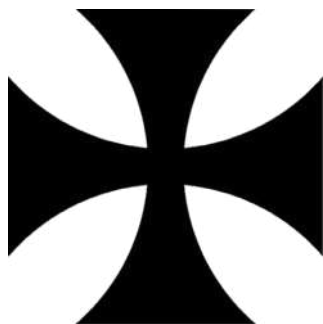
Coat of arms of Bolnisi

The reason why the inscription of the *motto* is in Asomtavruli is that the oldest Georgian text found in the Georgian territory was discovered on the walls of one of the oldest Georgian Christian temples – Bolnisi’s Sioni. The Bolnuri cross also is embedded in this text from where it spread out on other Georgian

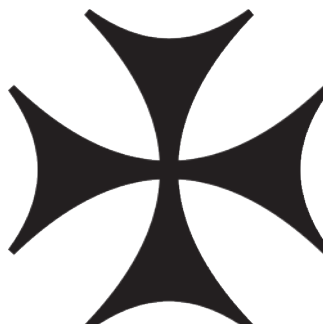


Pic. 138.

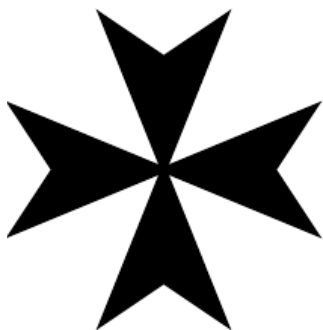
The oldest Georgian written text in Georgia and the Bolnisi cross barelief, V c.<sup>87</sup>



Pic. 139.  
pattée.<sup>88</sup>



Pic. 140.  
Bolnisi.



Pic. 141.  
Maltese.



Pic. 142.  
Teutonic

architectural monuments and is still a trendy design in Georgia.

Some new coats of arms of Georgian cities are based on modifications of older historic city arms. The new heraldic device representing Kutaisi retained the main charge, a golden fleece of the old coat of arms described above in Chapter III, but in a slightly modernized and stylized shape as a hint of the Hellenic legend of Argonauts. This message on the connection of the city to the antique epoch is strengthened by adding an image of Argo, the ship of the Argonauts, as the second charge of the shield of arms.



Pic. 143.  
The new, current coat of arms of Kutaisi.

Blazon of the coat of arms of Kutaisi: *Vert* golden fleece *Or*, *Base Azure* ship Argo *Or*; Mantling vine *Or*; old capital city *coronet* a four towers *Or*; *motto* Kutaisi *Or* on *Vert* lent, crosses *pattée* at each corner *Or*. The coat of arms of Kutaisi is a perfect example of preserving the theme of the old heraldic device through the modernization of its form and stronger emphasizing the message contained by the coat of arms by adding an extra relevant charge to it.

A similar approach is used in the case of the new coat of arms of town Oni: *Azure*, head and horns of tur *Or* at *heart point*, Bolnisi cross *Argent* at *honor point*, three peaks of Caucasian mountains at *bases* (see the older version above, in Chapter III). As remembered from the previously described older, from the early XIX c. heraldic device of Oni – a tur, mountain goat was rightfully representing the town due to the fact that the natural habitat of this animal is in the western Georgian mountainous region of Racha where the town is located. This main charge of the older coat of arms of Oni was stylized and transferred into the new one to make a core element of the shield of arms.

In general, in the process of creating the new coat of arms of Georgian cities, the Heraldic Council was always trying not to forget the old heraldic traditions of the country and to incorporate a history of the heraldic devices and previously used charges in the new versions in the one or another way. The coat of arms of Kutaisi, Oni, Ozurgeti, Akhaltsikhe, and many others are a vivid representation of these efforts. The Council of Heraldry deserves to receive credit for masterfully blending the history



Pic. 144.  
The new coat of arms of Oni.



Pic. 145.  
The coat of arms of Samtredia.

and modernization in the new city arms without violating any rules of heraldry.

There are a few other concepts of composing the Georgian city coat of arms used by the Council of Heraldry, some examples of which will be briefly discussed next.

Samtredia for instance, has a canting coat of arms where a visual pun of the town's name is used to represent the town. "Mtredi" in Georgian means a pigeon. Accordingly, "Samtredia" means "pigeons' place", and consequently, a pigeon is placed as a single charge in the shield of arms of this western Georgian town.



Pic. 146.  
The coat of arms of Adigeni.

There are rare occasions in the present-day Georgian civic heraldry when contemporary technological devices are depicted in the coat of arms – a telescope and seven heavenly bodies in the shield of arms of Adigeni municipality represent the astrophysical observatory operating since 1932 in a small town, Abastumani located in the Adigeni municipality. The observatory has been an important research center since its establishment during the Soviet times, and the area around it, together with the town of Abastumani has been a well-known touristic destination since even the earlier times.

Naturally, just as in many other city arms worldwide, a great number of the Georgian city coat of arms represent the surrounding natural features, the businesses or main occupations of the cities, and their region's population.



Pic. 147.  
The coat of arms of Ambrolauri.

The mountain peaks in the coat of arms of Ambrolauri town reflect the location of the municipality on the slopes of the Caucasian ridge, while vine and grapes show that the region is famous for the high-quality varieties of grapes and winemaking industry.

Historic skill and traditional way of hunting are presented in the coat of arms of town Chokhatauri: *Per pale Vert and Gules*, falcon *reguardant* with the torn strap, sitting on the hand *Argent*, eight-pointed *mullet* above and *sinister* of falcon. Three wavy barrulets *per chief* and *base*.





Pic. 148.  
Coin of King Giorgi III,  
1174.<sup>89</sup>

The western Georgian region of Guria, where Chokhatauri is located, is famous as one of the rare places in the country and globally where the ancient way of hunting by the trained falcons is still practiced. In Georgian, it is called Bazieroba (ბაზიერობა) – gamehawking or falconry.

How popular was the falconry historically in Georgia is well indicated by the coin of the King of unified Georgia, Giorgi III, minted in 1174, on which he appears with a falcon on his hand.

Some new Georgian coats of arms contain exotic or absolutely unique charges. Such coats of arms preserve the distinctive uniqueness of Georgian heraldry while being created in strict accordance with the heraldic rules. This probably is another achievement of the Council of Heraldry during the process of adoption of the new municipal armorial devices.

One of the perfect examples of such unusual exotic charges is the image of a dinosaur placed in the coat of arms of the town Tskaltubo, as in the municipality, at the Sataplia location, can be found the well-preserved traces of dinosaurs' footprints. Currently, the site is a part of the local national park and one of the most popular touristic attractions in Georgia.

Even stranger charge of hands holding a ball is in the coat of arms of Lanchkhuti. In this municipality is located a village Shukhuti where till today, annually, on every Easter, the Georgian national rugby-type game – Leloburti or simply Lelo (geo. ლელობურთი, ლელო; Lelo-ball) is played. The game of Lelo reveals similarities with rugby and was played in many other regions of western Georgia, though had been preserved till now only in Shukhuti, Lanchkhuti municipality. It is believed that Lelo is a reason why Georgians perform so well in international rugby constantly participating in Rugby World Cups since 2003.



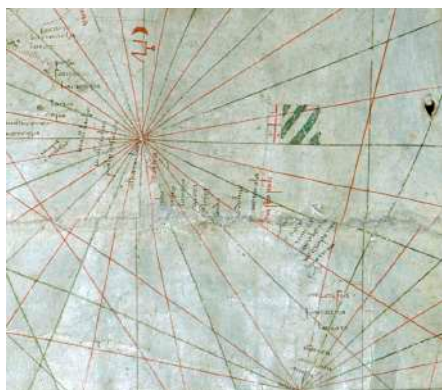
Pic. 149.  
The coat of arms of Chokhatauri.



Pic. 150.  
The coat of arms of Tskaltubo.



Pic. 151.  
The coat of arms of Lanchkhuti.



Pic. 152.

The flag of Abkhazia and Georgia over Sokhumi on the portolan of Angelino Dulcert, 1329-1350.

The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia created several coats of arms for certain municipalities under Russian occupation. The coat of arms of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, currently the breakaway Abkhaz separatist region under Russian occupation, has the shield: *Per cross quarterly*, 1st coat of arms of Georgia – *Gules St. George Argent*, 2nd and 3rd *Vert* three bars *Argent*, 4th *Azure* symbol of brothers Dioskuries – stylized hats of Castor and Pollux *Or*.



Pic. 153.

The project of the coat of arms of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (occupied territory).

St. George in the first quarter of the shield of Abkhazia, signifies that Abkhazia is a part of Georgia. The Argent bars over the Vert field are taken from the flags depicted over Abkhazian territories and the city of Sokhumi (i.e. antique Dioskuria) on the medieval portolan maps. The symbol of Dioskuri brothers, Castor and Polux makes the coat of arms connected with the ancient Disokuria (Sokhumi) city coins and the family coat of arms of Sovereign Princes of Abkhazia, the Shervashidzes. The symbol and arms of Shervashidze are discussed in detail in the III chapter of this book.



Pic. 154.

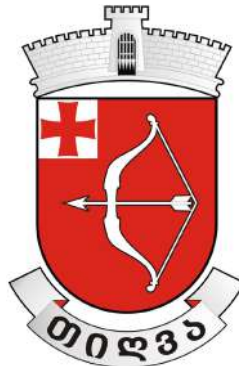
Municipality of Azhara in Abkhazia (occupied territory).

The coats of arms are also created for the following municipalities under the Russian occupation in the separatist breakout regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Azhara in Abkhazia; Eredvi, Tighva, and Kurta in South Ossetia.

In the appendix can be found the rest of the all newly created and officially adopted Georgian city arms. They were designed based on the common principles to strictly follow the heraldic rules, to use historical, natural, and architectural features of the cities, and to present the shared conceptually structured visual form. The coats of arms of self-governed cities slightly differ from the others by the style of *mottos*, added *mantlings* and type of *coronets*. In addition, the self-governed port cities have



Pic. 155.  
Village Eredvi in South Ossetia  
(occupied territory).



Pic. 156.  
Village Tighva in South Ossetia  
(occupied territory).



Pic. 157.  
Village Kurta in South Ossetia  
(occupied territory).

the crossed anchors behind the shield of arms and the coat of arms of the municipalities under the occupation – the different shields and coronets.



Coronets of the Georgian city coat of arms:

Pic. 158.  
for regular municipal  
towns and cities. For the  
capitals of Autonomous  
Republics the coronets  
are golden (Or), instead of  
silver (Argent)

Pic. 159.  
for the capital city of  
Georgia

Pic. 160.  
for former, historical  
capital cities of Georgia.

Pic. 161.  
for the municipalities  
temporarily under  
Russian occupation.

Practically, only Tbilisi coat of arms, described above in Chapter IV, is left untouched during this significant reform of Georgian municipal armorials despite its non-heraldic view. It is indeed odd that a city like Tbilisi, with a rich history and heraldic traditions, still has an emblem that violates the heraldic canons to the extent that it is even difficult to call it a coat of arms.

\* \* \*

No other sphere of heraldry is regulated in Georgia except state heraldry which comprises of: the coat of arms of the State, its institutions, and municipalities of the country. Therefore the family coats of arms in today's Georgia are not regulated or accounted for by any official institution.



Pic. 162.

The coat of arms of Ilia State University.



Pic. 163.

The coat of arms of Sokhumi State University.

Several different painters and genealogy researchers are creating completely original new family coats of arms or modifying and renewing previously existing ones for certain financial incentives offered by interested individuals. Such heraldic devices usually are composed in freestyle, though mainly in accordance with basic heraldic rules. Their compositions and heraldic charges generally are related to family histories, legends, traditions, historical anecdotes, ancestral locations, professions of famous members of the family and other similar sources. Christian symbols are also frequent in the contemporary Georgian family coats of arms, what is probably a somewhat unique feature if compared with current heraldic practices in other, especially Western countries.

Among contemporary authors practicing family coat of arms in Georgia definitely, a distinguished place is occupied by now deceased Leo Shervashidze (1910-2003), who created the unofficial coats of arms of a great number of Georgian historical noble families which did not have heraldic devices before. Though, probably his biggest accomplishment was the *Armorial of Families of Abkhazia*. The book

not only presents the coat of arms of Abkhazian families,<sup>90</sup> but also plays a role in the reconciliation of Georgians and Abkhazians after a devastating war between central governmental military and Abkhazian separatists in the 1990ies instigated by third-party forces.

\* \* \*

Changes in Georgian heraldry also touched corporative heraldry, mainly through the emergence of some logos of the universities which were created in accordance with the basic norms of heraldry. Examples of such logos which can be considered as heraldic devices are, for instance, the emblems of Ilia State University or Sokhumi State University.

Probably the newest branch of Georgian corporative heraldry is military heraldry. It emerged instantly together with the regaining of independence by Georgia and the cre-

ation of the first military units of the Armed Forces. After that, military symbols in Georgia underwent multiple significant changes in forms and techniques depending on specific political contexts or conceptual views of military and Ministry of Defence authorities. Till recent years, this sphere of heraldry was very weakly regulated, hence the military coats of arms never had a homogeneous appearance. It was difficult to imagine that a myriad of military emblems drastically different in styles and content were representing the symbols of a single institution.

During the last few years, the Council of Heraldry in close cooperation with MoD and the General Staff of Georgian Defence Forces, finally managed to organize the creation of completely new or renewed modifications of the old military symbols to make them look like parts of the standardized conceptual system. Today coats of arms of Georgian Defence Forces' branches, departments and units are heraldically accurate, simple compositions performed in a single style. As a result of the reform, some long-established military symbols of certain units disappeared, but the goal of the systematization of military symbology was fully achieved.

The subject of Georgian military emblems possibly deserves a separate study or monograph, and the format of this book doesn't allow investigation of it deeper and broader. However, a few examples of old and current emblems of Georgian military units and institutions can provide a general understanding of the old and news styles of those and the main principles behind the current practice of creating of military emblems.

The development of Georgian corporative and military heraldry and other spheres of the Georgian official or unofficial heraldic practices is evidence that the story of Georgian heraldry is far from being finished.



Pic. 164.  
The emblem of 113th Light Infantry Battalion Shavnabada created in 2002.



Pic. 165.  
The old emblem of the National Defence Academy.



Pic. 166.  
The emblem of the National Guard, ante 2021.



Pic. 167.  
The current emblem of the General Staff of the Defence Forces.



Pic. 168.  
The current emblem of the National Defence Academy.



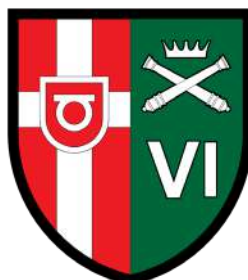
Pic. 169.  
The emblem of the National Guard, since 2021.



Pic. 170.  
The emblem of the Administrative Department of the General Staff



Pic. 171.  
The emblem of Eastern Operational Command.



Pic. 172.  
The emblem of the Western Operational Command 6th Artillery Brigade



Pic. 173.  
The emblem of the 4th Mechanized Brigade.



Pic. 174.  
The emblem of the 42nd Composed Armored Battalion 4th Mechanized Brigade.



Pic. 175.  
The emblem of the 1st Tank Company 42nd Composed Armored Battalion 4th Mechanized Brigade.

## SUMMARY

### ***Georgian heraldry is yet another historical and cultural testimony of Georgia's belonging to the European civilization***

**S**crupulous investigation of Georgian coats of arms permits to identify few common characteristics of Georgian heraldry unchanged throughout its whole history: a mixture of ancient local traditional emblems and visual forms with heraldic symbols common in Europe; significantly late (XVIII c.) introduction of heraldry to the society; extensive incorporation of rich histories of the country, regions, cities, and families into the shields of arms, frequently through the charges unusual in heraldry; broad use of Christian symbols; rejection of division of the shield in the earliest (prior to the late XVIII c.) coats of arms; a mild flavor of the Eastern motifs in some heraldic compositions; flexibility in shapes and forms to a certain extent, especially in the earlier examples.

Another characteristic of Georgian heraldry is an utterly rare use of such heraldic charges as *honorable ordinaries* and *sub-ordinaries: chevrons, bends, fesses, bordures*, and other similar ones. As these types of heraldic charges were the earliest devices used in coats of arms, at the time of the late introduction of heraldry in Georgia, in the XVIII-XIX cc., they lost popularity and were used rarely not only in Georgia but in Europe too.

It is also curious to observe that in the well-known heraldic division of Europe on the “lion countries” (mainly north-western Europe) and the “eagle countries” (central, eastern and south-eastern Europe), Georgia, despite being at the ultimate south-eastern edge of Europe, must be considered as a “lions’ country”, because while an eagle can be seen in several coats of arms, the images of lions prevail decisively.

Though the Georgian heraldry is not as profoundly developed as Western European practices, there is still a lot of work to do in terms of studying and researching it. A tremendous amount of difficultly obtainable information has to be gathered, processed, and analyzed to understand the ancient Georgian emblematic system related to pagan symbols connected to the Mesopotamian and the Near Eastern civilizations, symbols of the Hellenic and Roman epoch, totemic and early Christian emblems or a mixture of both. It is also extremely difficult to investigate and decipher the meanings behind the charges of family coats of arms as the symbolic tradition and many parts of family histories were lost irrevocably during the decades of the communist regime.

Undoubtedly, an original distinctive style of heraldry had been developed in Georgia during the last 300-400 years, what resulted in the formation of the exceptional blend

of local symbols and European heraldic system. Accessing Georgian heraldry in broader terms as a historical and cultural development brings to the assumption that it is an example of multiculturalism and the meeting of civilizations in its best ways and with extraordinary outcomes.

## APPENDIX

### 1. PERIODS OF GEORGIAN HERALDRY – CHRONOLOGY OF THE DEVELOPMENT

One of the inherited characteristics of heraldry is to reflect the epochs, changes in the political status of the countries, or cultural transformations of the societies. Georgian heraldry is probably one of the most vivid examples of this feature of heraldry. Probably the best way to portray how Georgian heraldry was responding and mirroring the drastic changing happening in and around the country is to build a table of periodization of the history of Georgian coats of arms with relevant comments and several examples for each period.

| Periods       | Timespan       | Main Features   | Examples   |
|---------------|----------------|---|--|
| 1 National    | XVII-XVIII CC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connection with traditional ancient symbols;</li> <li>- Weak knowledge of heraldic rules;</li> <li>- Depicting histories of families or territories.</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great royal seal of Erekle II;</li> <li>- Amilakhvari CoA;</li> <li>- Vakhushti's territorial CoAs.</li> </ul>          |
| 2 Classical   | XIX c.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fully following classical European heraldry rules;</li> <li>- Emergence of civic heraldry;</li> <li>- Appearance of corporate heraldry.</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CoAs of Georgian cities;</li> <li>- Family CoAs granted by the Heraldry Department.</li> </ul>                          |
| 3 Republican  | 1917-2004      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total change of the forms and contents;</li> <li>- Heraldry in service of the state propaganda and ideology;</li> <li>- Losing ties with traditional symbols.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State CoA of Dem. Rep. of Georgia (1918-21);</li> <li>- CoA of Georgian SSR;</li> <li>- CoA of town Borjomi.</li> </ul> |
| 4 Cotemporary | 2004-          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete adherence to heraldic canons;</li> <li>- Balance between classical heraldic forms and ancient Georgian symbolic traditions.</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State CoA of Georgia;</li> <li>- New CoAs of cities and municipalities</li> </ul>                                       |

The table shows the development of Georgian heraldry and how it was reacting to and reflecting the transformations of the Georgian state and society.



## 2. THE COAT OF ARMS OF GEORGIA'S MUNICIPALITIES



Kutaisi  
25.02.2009



Batumi  
30.10.2009



Poti  
28.10.2005



Rustavi  
09.01.2009



Mtskheta  
28.02.2018



Abasha  
26.11.2010



Adigeni  
28.05.2010



Ambrolauri  
29.12.2008



Aspindza  
18.05.2011



Akhalgori  
26.04.2010



Akhalkalaki  
06.07.2010



Akhaltsikhe  
30.05.2010



Akhmeta  
30.11.2011



Bagdati  
26.10.2012



Bolnisi  
30.03.2009



Bordjomi  
19.08.2009



Tchiatura  
05.02.2016



Chokhatauri  
17.11.2009



Chkhorotsku  
22.07.2011



Dedoplistskaro  
29.04.2011



Dmanisi  
27.07.2007



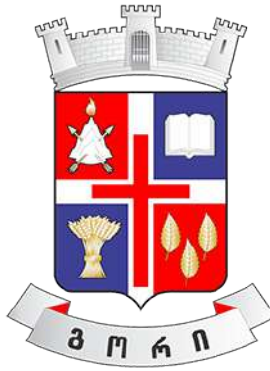
Dusheti  
26.10.2012



Gardabani  
24.07.2009



Gurjaani  
30.04.2010



Gori  
09.10.2015



Kareli  
30.12.2010



Kvareli  
09.08.2012



Kobuleti  
29.11.2013



Kaspi  
29.12.2009



Kazbegi  
31.08.2010



Keda  
28.10.2011



Kharagauli  
03.01.2011



Khashuri  
27.04.2010



Khoni  
14.04.2011



Khulo  
29.04.2011



Khelvatchauri  
29.08.2012



Khobi  
20.12.2010



Lanchkhuti  
25.06.2014



Lagodekhi  
30.10.2009



Lentekhi  
22.07.2011



Marneuli  
15.04.2009



Martvili  
21.07.2011



Mestia  
05.11.2014



Ninotsminda  
20.04.2010



Ozurgeti  
05.08.2015



Oni  
21.08.2008



Sagarejo  
27.05.2011



Samtredia  
03.10.2008



Sachkhere  
19.09.2013



Senaki  
27.05.2011



Signaghi  
29.04.2011



Shuakhevi  
28.02.2013



Telavi  
24.03.2020



Tetrtskaro  
26.12.2008



Tianeti  
15.09.2010



Tkibuli  
11.06.2012



Tsageri  
31.10.2013



Tsalka  
05.08.2009



Tsalenjikha  
31.03.2009



Tskaltubo  
29.10.2010



Vani  
04.02.2016



Zugdidi  
06.07.2018



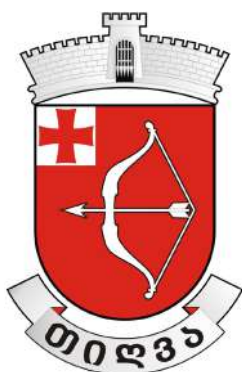
Zestaponi  
27.01.2012



Terjola  
08.06.2017



Eredvi  
24.05.2010



Tighva  
24.05.2010



Kurta  
25.05.2010



Ajara  
04.05.2012



### 3. GLOSSARY OF THE HERALDIC TERMS USED IN THE BOOK

While the main principles and rules of heraldry are similarly recognized globally, still the different countries with well-developed heraldic traditions (France, Britain, Germany, etc.) are using slightly different heraldic terminology. As the book is in English, and English heraldic terminology is used in it, therefore the Glossary is also mainly based on and explains the terms used in the British heraldic practice.

**Armiger** – A person entitled to bear heraldic arms

**Armorial, roll of arms** – A manuscript or a book containing a collection of coats of arms

**Armorial device, heraldic device, heraldic bearings, Achievement of Arms** – Different more specific terms for coat of arms

**Barrulet** – The sub-ordinary charge, a thinner, 1/3 of fess

**Base** – The lower point of the shield

**Bezant** – A gold disk i.e. roundel, originally a coin from Byzantium

**Blazon** – A specific terminology language – the heraldic parlance, used for description of the armorial devices (coats of arms). originated from French – Blason.

**Canting or punning arms** – heraldic bearings which represent the bearer's name or function

**Canton** – In heraldry, a sub-ordinary charge placed upon a shield. It is, by default a square in the upper dexter corner, but if in the sinister corner is blazoned as a canton sinister

**Charge, armorial charge** – A single pictorial representation or a geometrical shape depicted on the shield of arms

**Charged** – Emplacing the charges on the field of a shield or over the other charges

**Cartouche** – An ornamental shield or tablet, often containing an heraldic device

**Common charges** – non-geometrical charges inspired from a real life or legends, fan-

tasy and mythology, such as: human figures, human parts, animals (“bestiaries”), animal parts, legendary creatures (or “monsters”), plants and floral designs, inanimate objects, and other devices.

**Compartment** – The base under the shield of arms on which the supporters rest

**Complete heraldic achievement** – An officially granted heraldic device displayed with all its surrounding parts (external ornaments)

**Coronet** – Part of the external ornaments of coat of arms. Simpler, smaller version of the crown

**Courant** – a beast running with all four paws raised



Pic. 176.

**Crescent** – In heraldry, a half-moon with the pints directed upwards

**Crown** – an armorial charge if depicted on the shield of arms, or a part of external decorations of the shield

**Cross** – 1) An ordinary charge; 2) a common charge with numerous variations of form

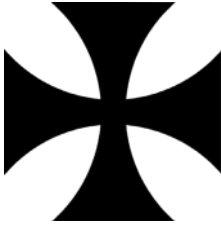
**Cross Greek couped** – A cross with the straight shortened arms which do not touch the edges of the shield

**Cross Maltese**



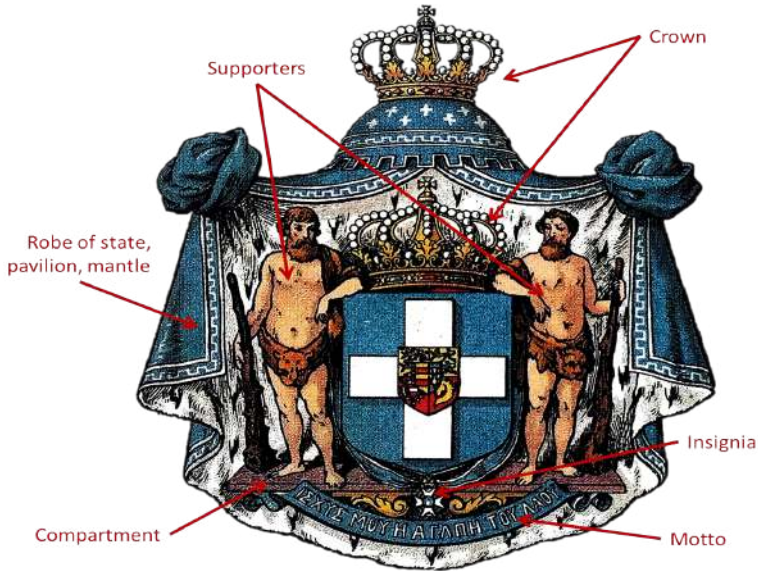
Pic. 177.

## Cross Pattée / formy



Pic. 178.

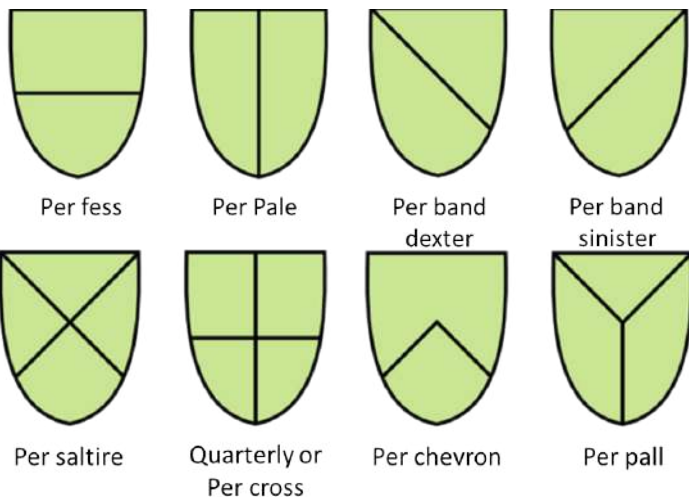
**Decorations, ornaments** – The elements of coat of arms (external ornaments) placed around the shield such as: a crown, the supporters, a mantling, a compartment, a motto, a helmet, a wreath, a pavilion or a robe of state, etc.



Pic. 179.<sup>93</sup>

**Dexter, sinister, sides of the shield** – heraldic right and left of the shield. In heraldry the sides are described not from the viewer's point of vision, but contrary, from the point of view of an imaginary bearer of the shield

### Divisions (partitions) of the shield



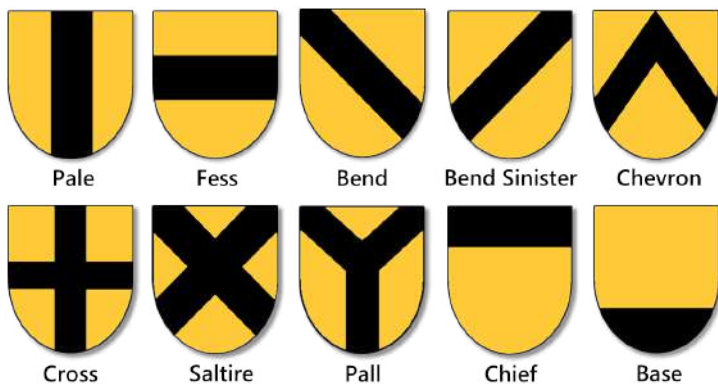
Pic. 180.

**Field of the shield** – The area of a shield of arms covered with tinctures, metals and charges

**Fur** – Along with metals and tinctures, furs are used to cover the shield of arms or the charges on it, though mainly are used for external ornaments, such as pavilions or robes of state. The two principle furs used in heraldry are ermine and vair

**Guardant** – Anfas, A facing the head towards the viewer

**Honorable ordinaries, ordinaries** – A principal charge of bold simple rectilinear shape by which the geometry of other armorial figures is regulated



Pic. 181.

**Inescatcheon** – A smaller shield placed on the fess point of the main shield of arms

**Insignia** – the various honors and decorations (orders, medals) the armiger has received, usually placed around or underneath of the shield as an external ornament

**Lion rampant** – a beast shown in profile standing upright



Pic. 182.

**Metals and tinctures** – the colors in heraldry: metals: Or – gold or yellow, Argent – silver or white; tinctures: Gules – red, Azure – blue, Sable – black, Vert – green. Importantly apart from very rare and special exceptions it's strictly forbidden to place the metal charges on a metal field of the shield or on other metal charges, just as tinctures should not be placed over the tinctures.

**Passant** – a beast walking with the right forepaw raised



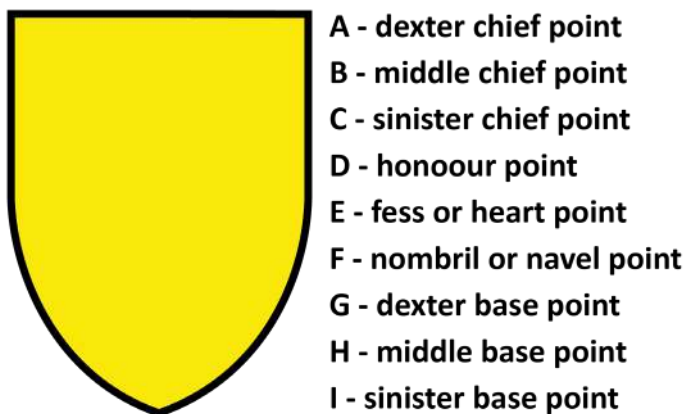
Pic. 183.

**Passant guardant contourny** – a beast walking to sinister and looking towards the viewer



Pic. 184.

**Points of the shield** – positions on the shield of arms occupied by the charges



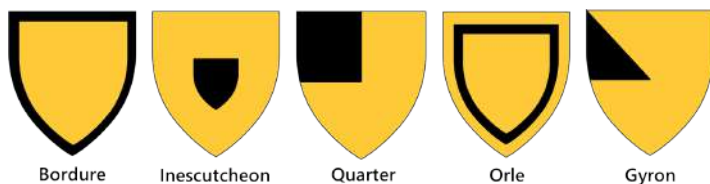
Pic. 185.<sup>94</sup>

**Proper** – 1) used to denote a charge shown in its natural colours or natural form; 2) used to indicate a standard set of tinctures for a standard heraldic charge, like "a sword proper", which has an argent blade and Or hilt and quillons.

**Regardant** – A heraldic bestialy with the head turned back, facing backwards

**Roundel** – A small circular charge (see also Bezant)

**Sub-ordinaries** – geometrical objects, smaller than *ordinaries*, placed in the shield. See some examples below:



Pic. 186.

**Shield, shield of arms** – the main shield of an armorial bearing on which the charges are placed, differs in shapes by countries of origin and time of creation

#### 4. COMPARATIVE TABLE OF GEORGIAN AND SOME EUROPEAN FEUDAL TITLES IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

Though the subject of the comparison of Georgian and European feudal titles is worth a separate scholarly study and publication, below the reader can have a glance at the proposed version of such comparison to tentatively grasp to what extent the Georgian feudal title system was developed in many ways likewise the titles in different countries of Medieval Europe.

As precise identity cannot be achieved between Georgian and any particular Western European country's titles, for enhanced flexibility of the comparisons the Georgian titles are compared to the titles spread in various European countries.

While it is impossible to identify exact equivalents of European feudal titles among Georgian ones, the table pairs the titles based on similarities in the status of those on the feudal ladder, historical roots from which the titles derived, rights on the land, suzerain-vassal relationships, and other characteristics.

The misinterpretation of Georgian noble titles while comparing those with European equivalents was mainly caused by Russians' decision to make all Georgian noblemen either Princes, i.e. *Kniazes* (rus. князь) or *dvorianins* (rus. дворянин) – general gentry, disregarding the complexity of Georgian feudal system and numerous Georgian noble titles with the slight though important differences: *Batonishvili*, *Mtavari*, *Eristavi*, grades of *Tavadies* and *Aznauries*. Such a simplified approach by Russian invaders was caused by the fact that feudalism in Russia did not develop similarly to Europe or Georgia. Thus the Russian language simply did not have equivalents of Georgian noble titles, and the titles adopted from Germany had different specific statuses in Russian Empire. Contrary, the Georgia feudal system closely resembled Western European analogs. The table below is a humble hasty attempt to at least partially eliminate this misunderstanding.

The table also aims to facilitate understanding of Georgian feudal titles mentioned in the book when describing the family coats of arms. In Georgian heraldic practice the coat of arms of the family could be used by all members of the family without any differences.

| Georgian titles                       | European titles             | Grades of Georgian titles  | Remarks  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| King (მეფე)                           | King                        | <p>მეფეთ-მეფე (king of kings) the title of Georgian kings as the peak of their dynastic power during the “golden age” of Georgian kingdom in the XII-XIII cc.</p> <p>Kings of unified Georgia</p> <p>Kings of lesser kingdoms of Qartli, Imereti, Kakheti existing before the unification in the XII c. and after a collapse of the unified kingdom since the XVI c.</p> |  |
| Batonishvili (ბატონი-შვილი)           | Princes of a royal family   |  | Sons of a ruling king in unified Georgia or in the kingdoms of Qartli, Imereti or Kakheti after disintegration of Georgia  |
| Mtavari (მთავარი)                     | Sovereign Prince or Duke    |  | Ruler of an independent province i.e. principality. Their Contemporary European travelers usually regarded the dynastic rulers of the independent Georgian principalities as Princes   |
| Eristavi (ერისთავი)                   | Count, earl, le comte, graf |  | Holders of fiefs comprising from particular geographic areas or smaller historical sub-provinces. The title is derived from the appointees of king to rule certain administrative districts, just as “count” derived from an administrative function and transformed into a feudal title |
| Monapire Eristavi (მონაპირე ერისთავი) | Marquise, mark graf         |  | The title of the Eristavies whose fiefs were located at the border areas of the state. Initially appointed administrators of the border lands, later became inherited lords of the land and patrons of smaller feudals   |
| Tavadi (თავადი)                       | Prince, Vsicount, Baron     | 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank Tavadies   | Vassals of kings or Eristavies.  |
| Aznauri (აზნაური)                     | Knight, Chevalier           | Aznauries of king, church and Tavads   | The most honored Aznauri were direct vassals of the king, after the vassals of the orthodox church, the lowest step on the Georgian feudal ladder were Aznauries the vassals of Tavadies   |



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*ამბავი ქართული ჰერალდიკისა*

წიგნი, რომელიც პარლამენტთან არსებული ჰერალდიკის საბჭოს მხარდაჭერით გამოიცა, ეძღვნება ქართული ჰერალდიკის ისტორიას. თხრობა მოცემულია სამეცნიერო-პოპულარული მანერით, რითაც საინტერესო ხდება არა მარტო დარგის სპეციალისტებისთვის, არამედ ზოგადად დაინტერესებული მკითხველისთვისაც, რომელსაც შესაძლია არ გააჩნდეს ჰერალდიკის ცოდნა.

თვით სათაურის სტილიდანაც ჩანს, რომ მიუხედავად ტექსტისა და წარმოდგენილი მასალის სამეცნიერო სიზუსტისა, ქართული ჰერალდიკის ისტორია ამავდროულად გადმოცემულია, როგორც საინტერესო, ხშირად სახალისო ან ეგზოტიკური და რაც მთავარია როგორც კულტურულად, ისევე სოციალურ-პოლიტიკურად მნიშვნელოვანი სრულიად ორიგინალური მოვლენა, რომელიც მეტად საყურადღებო და თვალწარმტაცია არამარტო ლოკალური გადმოსახედიდან არამედ საერთო ევროპულ კონტექსტშიც.

ისტორია გადმოცემულია ქრონოლოგიური მეთოდით და არა გერბების სახეობათა ცალკეულად განხილვის პრინციპით. ამგვარად უფრო თვალნათლივი ხდება ქართული ჰერალდიკის განვითარების ეტაპები, მისი თავისებურებანი და გამოვლილი აღმასვლები თუ ქარტეხილები. კვლევის საკითხი განზოგადებულია ევროპული ჰერალდიკის კონტექსტში და შეფასებულია შედარებითი ანალიზის საფუძველზე.

თემის ქრონოლოგიურ ჩარჩოებად დასახულია ერთის მხრივ XVI ს. როდესაც საქართველოსთან დაკავშირებული პირველი, კლასიკური ევროპული გაგებით გერბები ჩნდება ევროპაში და მეროეს მხრივ ამჯამად ჰერალდიკის სფეროში თანამედროვე მიდგომებისა და ვითარების აღწერით. რასაკვირველია წიგნში მოყვანილი კვლევის ზოგიერთ შედეგთან დაკავშირებით ისტორიკოსთა ნაწილს შესაძლოა გააჩნდეს განსხვავებული მოსაზრებები, რაც შეძლებისდაგვარად წინამდებარე გამოცემაშიც ასახულია, მაგრამ წარმოდგენილი ძირითადი შეფასებები ჰერალდიკის სპეციალისტთა შორის მეტ-ნაკლებად შეჯერებულ პოზიციებს ეყრდნობა.

ძირითად ნაწილს დანართებად ახლავს ქართული ჰერალდიკის პერიოდიზაციის ცხრილი, ქართული და ევროპული ფეოდალური ტიტულების დაახლოებითი შეფარდების თუ მისადაგების ტაბულა, უცხოელი მკითხველისთვის საგვარეულო გერბების კუთვნილების განხილვისას უკეთ ორიენტირებისთვის და მოკლე ჰერალდიკური

გლოსარიუმი, რომელიც მხოლოდ წიგნში გამოყენებული ტერმინების განმარტებას იძლევა.

ქართული გერბთმცოდნეობის საერთაშორისო არენაზე წარდგენისა და უცხოელი მკითხველისთვის გაცნობასთან ერთად წინამდებარე გამოცემის მთავარი მიზანია წარმოაჩინოს და დაადასტუროს, რომ ქართულ გერბებს გააჩნია სრულიად უნიკალური და გამორჩეული ჰერალდიკური სტილი როგორც ფორმით ასევე შინაარსით. ამავდროულად ქართულ ჰერალდიკაში გასაოცრად მოხდა ჰარმონიულად შერწყმა ადგილობრივი სიმბოლიკისა კლასიკურ ევროპულ ჰერალდიკურ წესებთან.

ჰერალდიკა ალბათ იძლევა მაგალითს მთელი ქვეყნისთვის თუ ერთის მხრივ რამდენად მართლაც ევროპული და ცივილიზაციურად დასავლეთისკენ ორიენტირებულია ქართული კულტურა და მეორეს მხრივ რამდენად ურთიერთ თავსებადია ქართული და ევროპული მიდგომები, პრაქტიკები, ტრადიციები და რაოდენ წარმატებულ თუ გამორჩეულ შედეგებს იძლევა ამგავრი ეფექტური შეთანწყობისკენ მიმართული ძალისხმევა.

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house traditionally held the position of heads of kings' stables. Names of some of the functions and positions at the old Georgian kings' court were copied from Arabic or Persian traditions. In this case, the family held the position for such a long time that it transferred into the last name.

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## Acknowledgement

This book would never have been published without exceptional support from The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia and its Head, Mamuka Gongadze, who is not only successfully managing the Council for years but also is a remarkable heraldic design artist and an incredible full-hearted friend of all involved in heraldic related research, art, and activities in Georgia. For years, starting from its very beginnings, together with its founder Eldar Shengelaia, the Council was encouraging, enabling heraldic research and popularizing heraldry in Georgia among governmental authorities and broader society.

Without several persons' assistance, support, and advice, the book would not have a look it has. Among these persons, the first to be mentioned is the designer Tamar Korashvili, who not only ensured the visual quality of the book but also provided recommendations to improve the content in many instances.

Certain people and organizations, listed below, deserve great appreciation for providing photos and sources or for creating the projects and products which made specific rare sources publically reachable: NLPG (National Library of Parliament of Georgia) and its "Iverieli" project, National Archive of Georgia, National Museum of Georgia, Museum of Fine Arts, National Center of Manuscripts, Tbilisi State University, the Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CSEM) and its head Prof. Giorgi Sordia for providing unique vexillological material, Prof. Giorgi Partskhaladze and Doc. A. Andersen for providing cartographic support, Thomas Lyngby and Gitte Snefstrup for assistance in gathering information and materials from Frederiksborg castle, Zurab Tsintsadze and Doc. Irine Asatiani for providing the sources and photos, Rusudan (Ruska) Asatiani for assisting in obtaining of materials and photos of the archive of Oscar Getling.

Finally, special thanks should be expressed to all the representatives of the State Council of Heraldry for years of serving the cause and for being wonderful colleagues and friends.