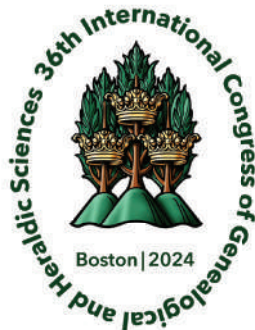


GENEALOGICA & HERALDICA XXXVI

Origins, Journeys, Destinations



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Proceedings of the
36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences
Boston | September 24–28, 2024



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About the 36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences

The 36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences hosted by American Ancestors took place in Boston, Massachusetts from September 24 to 28, 2024. This was the first time in the ninety-three-year history of the Congress that it was held in the United States. More than two hundred and twenty-four guests from twenty-one countries—including Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom—joined us for a week of lectures, receptions, a vendor hall, cultural excursions, and general camaraderie with the genealogical and heraldic community.

An opening ceremony at Old South Church on Tuesday, September 24 began with a welcome by 36th Congress President D. Brenton Simons OBE. He was followed by Paul Fox, previous Congress Secretary General; Congress Patron Brady Brim-DeForest of Balvaird; and President of the Académie Internationale d'Héraldique and former President of the Bureau Permanent des Congrès Généalogique et Héraldique, Elizabeth Roads. Ryan J. Woods, 36th Congress Secretary General and American Ancestors President & CEO, welcomed the keynote speaker, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who discussed the importance of genealogical knowledge and the preservation of family stories.

At the opening reception held at the Lenox Hotel, Ryan Woods announced that the American Ancestors research collection would be named the Brim-DeForest Library. Brady Brim-DeForest of Balvaird and his wife, Jessica Eriksen, both spoke and reflected on their love for education and libraries.

Over the next three days, fifty-three lectures were presented on the conference theme of “Origins, Journeys, Destinations.” Participants were also able to view an exhibit of rare heraldry-related items from the American Ancestors collection and private collections.

The Congress ended with a closing ceremony that included awards presented to Sarah Dery, David Allen Lambert, David Rencher, and others. Guests then enjoyed a dinner at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel and visited with colonial reenactors from the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum.

St. George in Heraldry and Georgian Heraldic Tradition

Mamuka Gongadze

This research reveals that the tradition of one particular depiction of St. George, where the patron saint of Georgia is riding a horse and defeating a dragon¹ or a leopard like animal, or Diocletian², due to various circumstances, is so widespread in Georgia and has such a long history that it can be considered as antecedent or first source for the rest of the world heraldry.

From the very beginning, we must emphasize the fact that Georgian tribes, since the pagan period of antiquity, have shown special veneration precisely to warrior deities, and therefore it is not surprising that in the Christian era, Saint George, as a warrior saint and patron, enjoyed such unparalleled popularity in Georgia, which was first expressed in iconography and then, over time, took on a political form in the seals of mediaeval kings and later in heraldry.

In general, the motif of the god-rider, a hunter, a son of God fighting evil, who with his death and resurrection embodied the annual death and rebirth of nature, was widespread in the pre-Christian mythology and religious ideas of almost all nations. Most of them have survived to this day in the form of fairy tales and myths, which, over the centuries, depending on historical events, have undergone various interpretations. The theme of the horseman's victory is also widespread not only in Greco-Roman but also in Eastern cultures in general. For example, on bas-reliefs of the Sasanian era, the king-god is often depicted riding a horse, with the defeated enemy clenching at the hooves of his horse. It can be safely said that the traditional and universal plot of the confrontation between good and evil was widely and diversely presented in the beliefs and worldview of other peoples of the world in different chronological periods. Therefore, to this day, many researchers share the opinion that the life of Saint George is not real or historical but rather a synthesis of various mythological images.

Throughout history, Georgia has often been at the crossroads of civilizations, Zoroastrian Iran and Christian Rome, later Caliphate and Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium), which were later replaced by Muslim Middle Eastern states and Orthodox Russia. In particular, at the confluence of two tendencies of dualistic Zoroastrianism and Hellenistic Christianity, which is also confirmed and made, clear at the etymological level.



A. Ashurbanipal's lion-hunt scene 7th century BC. B. The Thracian Rider God 2nd-4th century CE.

According to the research of the author of the idea for the coat of arms of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), the cult of the pagan deity White George, which

¹ Literally in Georgian: "Snake-whale".

² Diocletianic Persecution - last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire.

existed before the Cappadocian saint, was an object of worship of the moon, embodying the principle of masculinity in the ancient Georgian astral pantheon.

Two more pagan deities of the same name are known in the Georgian mountains, George of Khakhmati and George of the Lashari Cross. Despite the somewhat confusing appearance, one common feature is noticeable the folk George is a hero and God-man who fights against evil from the very beginning, and at the same time he also symbolizes a thunderbolt; he is considered the patron of the suffering, the protector of the hunt, and the embodiment of the death and renewal of nature.

With the introduction of Christianity, the celebrations, days and icons of such a mythical hero were replaced by the temples and celebrations of St. George of Cappadocia, quite naturally, the cult of St. George became the foremost for Georgians, sometimes even elevated above the Creator God. It is also noteworthy that in the people's imagination, the knight defeats evil forces and spirits in various forms and names, especially in the Caucasus Mountains of Georgia (Lashari; Iakhsari; Kopala; additionally, in the languages of Georgian sub-ethnic groups - Svan "Jrag" and Megrelian "Gerge", "Gege", "Jgege"), and his shrines are called icons and crosses. He is often equipped with a sword and a spear. The personifications of evil and darkness defeated by George are also different: the dragon, Diocletian, or other fantastic beasts. Such beliefs and holidays associated with them are still alive today; they are still celebrated in compliance with all the rules³.

Because a knight riding a white horse has been the main image of Georgian beliefs since ancient times, White George was presented to the Parliament of Georgia as the first state coat of arms on the recommendation of its author. Along with the seven luminaries, the eight-pointed star, which represented the sacred number of the moon and the saint. During the parliamentary debates, the dragon was removed by the ruling Social-Democratic Party in order to preserve the secular content of the coat of arms.



A. Coat of arms of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, B. Government Standard, C. Military Flag 1918-1921.

Despite the change, White George still became the central heraldic figure for the first democratic republic of Georgia - it was depicted as a horseman both on the government flag and the military flag.

According to church tradition, the spread of the cult of St. George in Georgia actually occurred immediately after the conversion of Kartli (Eastern Georgia) to Christianity (4th century), and from this period, Georgians attitude towards St. George reached a different level.

According to the data of mediaeval travelers, crusaders, and pilgrims, Europeans paid special attention to the cult of St. George in Georgia and to his special veneration. On the one hand, thanks to the Crusades, and on the other hand, to the Georgian mercenary troops of

³ ი. ჯავახიშვილი, „ქართველი ერის ისტორია“, I, 1951, გვ. 50-51. I. Javakhishvili, „History of the Georgian Nation“, I, 1951, pp. 50-51.

Byzantium (in the 12th century, the Byzantine emperors used them as superior soldiers to conduct separate military operations in the territories of Western Europe), Europe in the mediaeval era of knighthood seemed to rediscover the country of extreme Eastern Christianity -Georgia and Georgian warriors.

For European missionaries, Georgia is the land of St. George; moreover, some consider St. George a Georgian knight.

The twelfth-century traveler Jacques de Vitry writes: “These people honor St. George above all other saints. He is depicted on all their flags, and they worship him with special reverence” (Jacques de Vitry c. 1160/70-1240).⁴

William the Brave writes in the fifteenth century that Georgians were converted by St. George and that is why they are named after him (William the Brave, 1461: “Georgians, as they say, were converted by St. George”).⁵

This saint is probably of Georgian origin (M. Baumgarten, 1507: “Georgians are people of the East, a very good and warlike nation. They are named after the Georgian saint, whom they recognize as their patron and helper and whom they worship the most.” The sentence “According to the Georgian saint” means that St. George was born in Georgia or was Georgian).⁶

Rheinfelden writes in the seventeenth century: they are called Georgians because they follow the faith of “Knight Georgius” (Ignatius von Rheinfelden, Wurzberg, 1667, p. 151. Travel 1653-1656 years.)

Rochechouart suggests that George, the convert of Georgians, may have been a completely pagan or sectarian knight (Louis de Rochechouart).

Franz Ferdinand of Troilo (1717) tries to explain the name of Georgia with Greek etymology. He expresses his opinion that the country of Georgia was called before the birth of George, and the word “Georgia” is connected to the Greek “gewrgos - georios”, which means “the farmer” (Francis Ferdinand von Troilo).

The English lexicographer Thomas Blount (1618-1679) writes: “They hold in high esteem St. George, the Cappadocian martyr, as the Knights of the Garter did in England. They always bear his image on their banners.” The parallel that the author draws here between the English Knights of St. George and the Georgians is significant. Indeed, St. George was considered the leader of the Georgian youth, as well as the English Knights.⁷

Because of this veneration, St. George was often considered Georgian, not only in the minds of Georgians, but also other Europeans. During the reign of Queen Victoria, Alexander Brunet collected old legends about the state symbols of Great Britain. It is hard to imagine, but the name of one of them is “Georgian Knight and Dragon”. The mentioned legend tells us:



Fragment Georgians in Jerusalem with the flag of St. George.

⁴ გ. ფერაძე, „უცხოელ პილიგრიმთა ცნობები პალესტინის ქართველი ბერებისა და ქართული მონასტრების შესახებ“, 1995, გვ. 30. G. Peradze, „An Account of the Georgian monks and monasteries in Palestine“, 1995, p. 30.

⁵ ფერაძე. „უცხოელ პილიგრიმთა ცნობები პალესტინის ქართველი ბერებისა და ქართული მონასტრების შესახებ“, გვ. 73-74. Peradze. „An Account of the Georgian monks and monasteries in Palestine“, pp. 73-74.

⁶ ფერაძე. „უცხოელ პილიგრიმთა ცნობები პალესტინის ქართველი ბერებისა და ქართული მონასტრების შესახებ“, გვ. 52. Peradze. „An Account of the Georgian monks and monasteries in Palestine“, p. 52.

⁷ მ. წურჭუშია, „საქართველოს სამხედრო ისტორიის საკითხები“, 2013. M. Tsurtsumia, „The Issues of Georgian Military History“, 2013.

- The emperor Trajan, waging war in Gurgistan (now Georgia), captured a standard exhibiting a dragon struck down by a horseman. He adopted it as his ensign, and had it hoisted in all the provinces of the Empire.
- The word dragon, which is derived from the Greek, signifies a looker on, or a watcher, who guards an entrance. Most of the Oriental cities bore on their fortified gates the effigy of a dragon, whose eyes were never closed, as an emblem of the watchfulness of their sentinels.
- The standard of Trajan exhibiting the Georgian Chevalier trampling on the Dragon, the figure of that animal was hence borne on the ensign, and on the pectoral or breastplate of the Roman officers; and waved on the citadels or towers all over Britain, where it underwent other metamorphoses hereafter described. (The Georgian Chevalier and the Dragon, A. C. 98 to 117.)



Georgian Chevalier and the Dragon 1839.

Such a special veneration of St. George by Georgians, sometimes even superior to Jesus Christ himself, has not escaped modern authors. For example, as anthroposophist Michael Singleton notes in his work “St. George and the Dragon - the Self and the Other,” fearing that, like in Georgia, where the popularity of the saint had surpassed that of Christ, the Church, in order to maintain the relevance of Christ, took some measures at the Council of Laodicea in 481. “On occasion, the city dwelling clerical defenders of conciliar creeds condemn and combat this relapse of the supernatural into rural paganism (if the pleonasm be permitted – pagus meaning countryside). Sometimes they condescendingly resign themselves to turning a blind paternalistic eye to the religious beliefs and behavior of the simple faithful. However, more often than not Catholic Christianity having become de facto one religion amongst others, the higher and not only the lower clergy have come to take for granted the satisfying of popular religious demand. None the less and significantly in the region which would become known as Georgia, fearing that St. George’s passion might outstrip the relevance of Christ’s, church authorities took measures to tone down popular devotion to the suffering saint. In 481, the Council of Laodicea condemned the worship of warrior saints such as St. Michael and St. George as redolent of paganism. By 496, the gruesome story of long-drawn-out martyrdom had already been put on an index of prohibited readings by Pope Gelasius. However, at a later date, when the transformation of a humble, peasant-like martyr into the patron saint of the Eastern, then the Western world’s military elite had been completed, the hierarchy of the Church, far from expressing objections to this betrayal of evangelical pacifism, launched crusades in his name!”⁸

Although the author expresses the traditional sentiment of Georgians, we see a number of inaccuracies in his opinion due to the following argumentation: The cult of St. George as a great martyr, at the time to which the author refers, in the fifth century, was only gaining popularity not only in the Western but also in the Eastern Church and was not yet officially recognized as a saint, as Pope Gelasius I only canonized George as a saint in 494.

In addition to the fact that, according to various sources, the Council was held much earlier, approximately in the years 360-365, and approved about 60 church canons, as far as is known, it was about the Order of Angels. The Council of Laodicea condemned and rejected the giving of divine honor to angels, including the Archangel Michael, and established a rule for their depiction.

Archangel Michael - the conqueror of all hostile forces - is depicted on icons as being clothed in armor, that is, clothed with divine grace. He suppresses a demon with his feet,

⁸ M. Singleton, „St. George and the Dragon - the Self and the Other“, 2020, p. 67.

holding a green olive branch or a triangular shield in his left hand. In his right hand he holds a spear with a white flame (sometimes a fiery sword), upon which a purple cross is depicted. On some icons, the commander of the heavenly forces is depicted with a sword slaying a serpent coiled on the earth.⁹

In early icons, mosaics, and frescoes, Christians usually depicted Saint George as a standing young man, a Roman soldier, wearing armour - on a white background with a scarlet cross, which later became the flag of Saint George. It should also be noted that the first images of Saint George, in terms of clothing and attributes, almost exactly repeat the canon established at the 360th year of the Council of Laodicea regarding the depiction of the Archangel Michael. Therefore, we can assume that the Council of Laodicea condemned the veneration of the Archangel Michael as close to pagan idolatry, and at that time the saints were considered equal to angels. This restriction was later extended to the warrior saint - George - among others, this aided in the confusion towards the identity of various warrior Saints. This cannot be said about Georgia, where the cult, veneration, and cult images of St. George traditionally enjoyed great popularity and continued to exist.

The veneration of St. George spread from Palestinian city of Lod (his supposed burial place), from about the 4th century to Asia Minor, the rest of the Byzantine Empire, and by the 5th century it had reached the Western Roman Empire. However, little is known about his actual biography. The earliest text that has preserved fragments of the saint's life and martyrdom is a 5th-century Greek palimpsest. St. George belonged to the ranks of those warrior-martyrs of the early Christian era who refused to use force, threw away their weapons, and chose the path of martyrdom. Sacrifice for the faith was identified for the first Christians with imitation of Christ, and it was in martyrdom that persecuted Christians saw the salvation of their souls. In the same period, the cult of holy knights also arose: for example, St. Demetrius and St. Theodore, who, according to legend, lived at about the same time, were also soldiers, martyred for Christianity, and were depicted almost identically, except for minor canonical differences - riding horses, carrying swords, and wearing military helmets. It was not uncommon for the myths about them to be confused and linked together.

After the fall of Constantinople and George's association with the Crusades, he was often depicted riding a white horse. From about the 6th century, the legends about Saint George became increasingly rich and miraculous, expanding their geographical scope and becoming increasingly popular. Accordingly, the iconography of Saint George also changed.

As is known, the story of the defeat of the dragon is not confirmed in the early works on his life, and likely is a later insert, although over the centuries this episode has become the most impressive image among the existing traditions about the Saint, which has taken a leading place not only in iconography, but also in heraldry.

As the Georgian scholar G. Chubinashvili pointed out, in Georgia, already from the 10th-11th centuries, we find numerous images of St. George riding a horse in the same 3 types of compositions, which are known later, from the 12th century in Byzantine art.¹⁰ Based on this, the scholar suggests that such icons may have been created for the first time in Georgia. Images of horsemen much earlier than the icons of this period have been preserved in stone bas reliefs (Georgian steles) dating back to the 6th century. We can name a number of such images where the rider crushing the dragon is considered to be Saint George in scientific literature. For example, the large and small steles of Khozhorni and Brdadzori. We can also cite the friezes of the seventh-century Martvili Cathedral, where, along with stories from the Old and New

⁹ საქართველოს საპატრიარქოს გამოცემა, „წმინდანთა ცხოვრება“, ტომი IV, 2003. Patriarchate of Georgia Publications, „*The Lives of the Saints*“, Volume IV, 2003.

¹⁰ ე. გედევანიშვილი, „წმ. გიორგის კულტი და გამოსახულება შუა საუკუნეების ქართულ ხელოვნებაში“, „საქართველოს სიძველენი“, სამეცნიერო მოხსენება ფრაიბურგის კონფერენციისთვის, 2018, გვ. 23-26. E. Gedevanishvili, „*The Cult and Image of St. George in Mediaeval Georgian Art*“, Scientific Report for the Freiburg Conference, „Antiquities of Georgia“, 2018, pp. 23-26.



A. Khojorni 6th century. B. Brdadzori 6th century. C. Tsebelda 7th Century. D. Martvili monastery 7th Century.

Testament, the saints Demetrius, Theodore, and George, piercing the dragon with a spear, are depicted. These Saints embody the victory of good over evil.

Among them are narrative versions of the icon, which implies that the icon also acquires a narrative meaning, proving the cult's long existence.

Starting from the 6th to 7th centuries and later in the 10th to 11th centuries, there are numerous depictions of St. George riding a horse in Georgia. These compositions, particularly as guardian saints of supplications and ascension, are known in Byzantine art from the 12th century. Based on this, scholars suggest that such icons may have been originally created in Georgia.



A. Iphari 11th century. B. Labechina 11th century. C. Parakheti 10th century. D. Sakao 11th century.

Saint George defeating the Roman emperor Diocletian is also unique to the Eastern Christian tradition.

However, such an image is rarely found even among Eastern Christians, but in Georgia it practically became a canonical composition. Much has been written about the genesis of this iconography, and it is primarily considered a symbol of suppressed evil. It is noteworthy that in the early Greek hagiography of the life of St. George, where the episode of the defeat of the dragon does not yet appear, the emperor persecuting Christians is called the "dragon."

G. Chubinashvili connects the image of St. George, who is the scourge of Diocletian, with the political situation in the country and the tense relations between Georgia and Byzantium. He believes that in a number of cases, alongside the symbol of suppressing general evil, the face of a specific ruler may be meant. In this sense, a kind of parallel appears with the image of Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica, where he stabs the Tsar of the Bulgarians.¹¹

Prior to its adoption as a national symbol of a unified Georgia, in the 11th century, the image of St. George was prefigured on the reverse of Kvirikian dynasty coins, which depicted a dragon-slaying equestrian. It's possible the St. George engraved on the back of the coin was an early form of a heraldic pattern.

The depiction of St. George on a coin discovered between 2012 and 2015 is considered to be the oldest numismatic specimen in the world. There are four such coins featuring Saint George, but due to poor preservation, it's unclear who St. George is defeating on some of them. On one side of the coins, St. George is facing right, while on the other side, he is facing left. There is an inscription in the Georgian language, which is coded as "St. George."



A. Coin, Saint George on the Reverse Side 11th Century Kingdom of Eastern Georgia. B. Reverse of David the Builder coin 12th century.

The information about the discovery of the aforementioned coins was published by Armenian historians (A. Akofyan, R. Vardanyan)¹². According to them, the coins of Kvirike III of Kakheti are the first coins with both Georgian and Arabic script (and as such the first Christian-Muslim coins) of the Southern Caucasus and the earliest coins on which St. George is depicted. Their appearance coincides with a new wave of veneration of St. George in Caucasus and Asia Minor among both Christians and Muslims, and the spread of the saint's image as a horseman slaying Diocletian (or a demon/serpent).

However, the mentioned face of St. George acquired unique combat significance from the time of the first Crusade, when Georgia was a member of the Christian coalition and actively participated in the anti-Muslim campaign.

The Battle of Didgori in 1121 is particularly noteworthy. It had all the necessary attributes of a crusade, including participation of European crusaders and the famous legend that St. George led the battle visibly. Reports about this are in both Georgian and other European sources. Such a legend has become an attribute of almost all crusades, as has the image of a knight on horseback.

At this time, together with the image of St. George, the symbol of the Jerusalem cross, namely the tomb of the Savior, appears in Georgian symbolism. Missionaries already referred

¹¹ გედევანიშვილი, „წმ. გიორგის კულტი და გამოსახულება შუა საუკუნეების ქართულ ხელოვნებაში“, გვ. 27. Gedevanishvili, „The Cult and Image of St. George in Mediaeval Georgian Art“, p. 27.

¹² ნ. ჯავახიშვილი, „ქართული გერბის უძველესი ნიმუში. საქართველოს სახელმწიფო გერბის ისტორია“, ჟურნალი «ისტორიანი», 2020, გვ. 14. N. Javakhishvili, „Ancient Sample of the Georgian Coat of Arms. History of the State Coat of Arms of Georgia“, Journal „Historian“, 2020, p. 14.

to Georgians as temple dwellers, guardians of the Holy Sepulchre. At various times, Georgians are allowed to enter the holy city with a triumphant move, and the coin's reverse, minted by the king of the united Georgia, has a composition of five crosses, symbolizing the attitude towards the holy land. ("Temples" Corsses, Kerches, Kirchens, Gorgotas "Di sotto a monte Calvario trovarete Gorgotas" - Viaggi in Terra Santa, Napoli (Fibreno), 1862).¹³

St. George is representative of the United Kingdom of Georgia. The image of Saint George, as a symbol of Georgia, first appears on the state seal of King George III (1156-1184). The inscription on the seal, "Saint George, conqueror, with your strength I overcome my enemies," confirms that the Georgians viewed the patron saint George as a symbol of victory.

St. George, as a heraldic sign, can also be seen on other state attributes, such as flag finials. In some cases, Archangel Michael is depicted on the finials alongside St. George.



Royal Signet Inscribed with the Patron Saint George King George III 1156–1184.



A. Silver top of the ancient traditional wolf-skin flag called "Lem" (Lion) in western Georgian mountainous region. B. Silver top of Georgian Kingdom Flags Depicting Saint George.

Following the fall of Byzantium and Georgia's new status as an isolated Eastern Christian stronghold surrounded by Muslim territories, efforts were made to re-establish connections with Europe via sea routes or by fostering relations with Christian Muscovy. This period also witnessed an influx of cartographic material of Georgia, including maps and travel diaries from European missionaries and merchants.

Diplomatic embassies were dispatched to Muscovy, which, like Georgia, sought to assert itself as a Christian state after overthrowing Mongol dominance. Although the figure of St. George does not appear in the royal coat of arms of the Bagrationi dynasty, the saint's presence

¹³ ბ. ჭიჭინაძე, „საქართველოს ხუთჯვრიანი დროშის წარმომავლობა და ქართულ-ჯვაროსნული ურთიერთობები“, 2022. B. Chichinadze, "The Origin of the Five-Crossed Flag of Georgia and Georgian-Crusader Relations", 2022.

is nevertheless emblematic of Georgian statehood. His image as a territorial symbol is notably present in the 1735 Atlas of Caucasus compiled by the Georgian royal Prince Vakhushti Bagrationi, who worked in exile in Russia. In this depiction, St. George is shown riding a silver horse, adorned with a purple cloak and nimble in stature, clearly resonating as a representation of Georgia's enduring spirit.

Vakhushti's coats of arms, encompasses all the kingdoms and principalities of the Caucasus and Georgia, were evidently drawn from reliable sources, cementing the place of St. George in the heraldic tradition of the region.

It is noteworthy that the Tsardom of Muscovy officially adopted St. George as a heraldic emblem by the Tsar's decree in 1667. Similar to the double-headed eagle, the figure of St. George originates from a Christian tradition outside of Russia, yet it was fully incorporated into the Russian heraldic vocabulary. According to Russian scholars, the earliest instance of this symbol's usage can be traced to the seal of Ivan the Terrible in 1497, which prominently featured both the double-headed eagle and St. George, signaling their significance in the emerging Russian state identity.

The coat of arms of Georgia, featuring the image of St. George, is also included in the "Titularnik" of 1672, compiled under the reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. Published shortly after the decree incorporating St. George into Russian heraldry, the "Titularnik" presents Georgia as being under the dominion of the Tsardom of Muscovy- an assertion that does not align with the historical reality of the time. Nevertheless, the inclusion of Georgia's coat of arms in this document suggests the presence of clear, authoritative sources regarding Georgia's heraldic tradition. If the Muscovy coat of arms does not directly derive from Georgia's, one evidently cannot disregard the influence of Georgia's state symbols, particularly the prominent use of St. George.



The Coat of Arms of Georgia 1752 - Vakhushti Bagrationi.



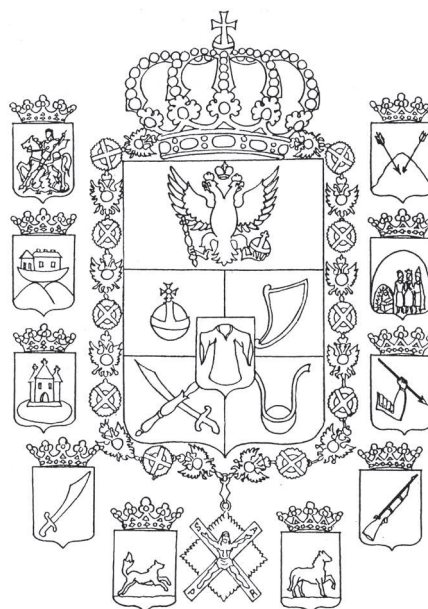
A. Coats of arms of Kingdom of Kakheti. B. Kingdom of Kartli and of „all Georgian lands“. C. Unified Kingdom of Georgia from the later (beginning of the XVII c.) edition of the "Titulyarnik" 1672. D, E. Russian coat of arms 1699.

The same heraldic image appears in the coat of arms of the Tsardom of Muscovy as recorded in the 1698 travel report of Johann Georg Korb, an ambassador of Austrian Emperor Leopold I. In this report, Georgia is once again represented by the emblem of St. George, signifying its continued symbolic association with the saint in Russian heraldic tradition.

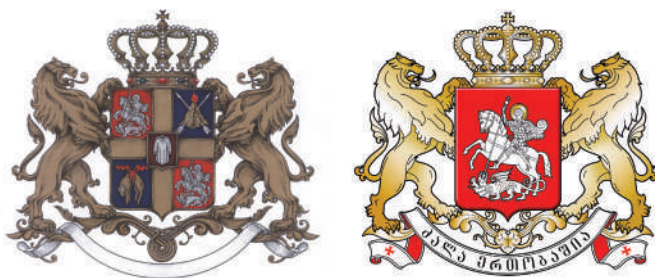
This tradition persisted on Georgian battle flags, such as that of King Solomon I of Imereti, and on the great state seal of King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti, affixed to the ratified “Treaty of Georgievsk.” A century later, this symbolic depiction became a reality, with Georgia officially coming under the protection of the Russian Empire, a status previously portrayed in imperial heraldry.

Due to the historical precedents, St. George was established as the state coat of arms for the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918, following the declaration of independence. After the Soviet occupation ended, the Supreme Council of the newly independent Georgia, elected through multi-party elections, reinstated the 1918 coat of arms with minor modifications, notably retaining the image of White George. Since the Declaration of Independence in 1991, extensive research has been conducted on the history and development of the state coat of arms.

Following the work of the State Commission in the 1990s, the Parliament of Georgia passed a resolution in 1999 to restore the nation’s historical symbols. In 2004, a national competition was held to design a new state coat of arms, incorporating the rich heraldic traditions of Georgia. A German-style shield was proposed during the competition, reflecting the depth of the nation’s heraldic heritage.



Sketch of the Great Royal Seal of Kartli-Kakhetian Kingdom 1783.



A. Winning Coat of Arms in the Competition. B. Coat of Arms Officially Endorsed by the Parliament of Georgia.

However, ethno-psychological factors appeared to play a significant role in the final selection, as the Parliament ultimately endorsed only the image of Saint George from the proposed multi-element coat of arms. This decision was made despite the fact that other symbols, such as the Golden Fleece, the Burning Mountain, and the Robe of Christ, bear equally strong heraldic significance and historical recognition in Georgian tradition.

The modern coat of arms of Georgia, adopted in 2004, features a heraldic shield with a Gules (red) field. Upon this field is a depiction of Saint George: a silver knight on a silver horse, slaying a silver dragon, with a golden spear with a cross in hand and a golden nimbus adorning him.

The elevation of Saint George as a national symbol is further affirmed by his prominent representation across various institutions. He serves as the emblem of the Georgian Orthodox Church, features in the insignia of the national football team, and is embedded in the national honors system, where the highest state decoration is dedicated to him.



A. Coat of arms of the Orthodox Church of Georgia. B. Saint George's Order of Victory 2004. C. The Emblem of Georgian National Football Team Nickname: Jvarosnebi (The Crusaders).

The Council of Heraldry opposes the use of Saint George's image in the emblems of local self-governments. However, prior to the establishment of the Council, a political decision was made to incorporate Saint George's image into the coat of arms of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. Despite efforts to amend this, the current coat of arms is enshrined in Adjara's Constitution, and any changes would require a majority vote in two consecutive sessions of the Parliament of Georgia.

An exception has been made in the case of the Mestia municipality, where Saint George appears in a non-Georgian heraldic style, differentiating it from the state's heraldic standards.



A. The Autonomous Republic of Adjara 2004. B. The Mestia Municipality 2004.

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Figure 8. Royal Signet Inscribed with the Patron Saint George King George III 1156–1184 - Georgian Printings and Other Glyptic Materials, Sara Barnaveli, 1965.

Figure 9. A. Silver top of the ancient traditional wolf-skin flag called “Lem” (Lion) in western Georgian mountainous region – Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography, Mestia;

B. Silver top of Georgian Kingdom Flags Depicting Saint George - About the State Coat of Arms Contest of Georgia, The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia, 2008. <https://www.heraldika.ge/?m=62>

Figure 10. The Coat of arms of Georgia 1752 - Atlas de la Georgie: XVIII s, Vakhushti Bagrationi, 1997. <https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/handle/1234/440539>

Figure 11. A. Coats of arms of Kingdom of Kakheti; B. Kingdom of Kartli and of „all Georgian lands”; C. Unified Kingdom of Georgia from the later (beginning of the XVII c.) edition of the “Titulyarnik” 1672; D, E. Russian coat of arms 1699 - The Story of Georgian Heraldry, Tornike Asatiani, The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia, 2023. <https://www.heraldika.ge/?m=62>

Figure 12. Sketch of the Great Royal Seal of Kartli-Kakhetian Kingdom 1783 – Archival Material, Journal “Herald” 4th issue, 2015. <https://www.heraldika.ge/?m=34>

Figure 13. A. Winning Coat of Arms in the Competition; B. Coat of Arms Officially Endorsed by the Parliament of Georgia - The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia. <https://www.heraldika.ge/>

Figure 14. A. Coat of arms of the Orthodox Church of Georgia; <https://patriarchate.ge/>; B. Saint George’s Order of Victory 2004 - The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia; <https://www.heraldika.ge/>; C. The Emblem of Georgian National Football Team Nickname: Jvarosnebi (The Crusaders). <https://nakrebi.ge/>

Figure 15. A. The Autonomous Republic of Adjara 2004; B. The Mestia Municipality 2004 - The State Council of Heraldry at the Parliament of Georgia. <https://www.heraldika.ge/?m=29>