

Regarding publishing the historical works in Georgian language about Svaneti authored by Dimitri Bakradze and Countess Uvarova (Review)

Abstract: Several years ago, the historian Konstantine Chilaia translated from the Russian language and published "Traveling in Free Svaneti in 1853" authored by Colonel Ivane Bartolomei. Readers, especially the ones who love history, expressed great interest in it. "Traveling in Free Svaneti in 1853" is considered to be followed by the work "Svaneti" (1864) authored by Dimitri Bakradze, translated from the Russian language by K. Chilaia and published with comments, as well as the materials from the famous Russian scientist Countess Uvarova's trip to Svaneti (Journal "Кавказъ", Part III, M.1904). **Dimitri Bakradze, Countess Uvarova - "Svaneti" was translated and comments were added by Konstantine Chilaia, Publishing house "Universal", Tbilisi. 2023.**

The presented book supplements the previous work with historical facts since the mid of the 19th century as well as pictures describing the daily life of the people in Svaneti and interesting information not only about Svaneti but also about Georgia, in general.

The work describes the church inscriptions in Svaneti since the 11th to the 18th century. Each community description includes the parameters such as the type and character of Svanetian people, physiological features, beliefs, and attraction to native land.

The author got familiar with the peculiarities of each community and expressed odd opinions, which did not contradict the main line of the work, and publicized the gained historical materials objectively. (For example, about the Jewish origin of the Lakhamule people, Z. K.). There is interesting information about the superstition of the Svanetian people. The author highlights the fact about the tradition of peaceful resolving of public affairs (arguments, Z.K) and common decision-making, which took place at the community (village Z.K) convention.

It is known that the icon inscriptions contain important information. In this regard, the icons preserved in the churches of Svaneti and their inscriptions are especially noteworthy and often supplement the materials preserved in Georgian historical sources with interesting details. For example, the inscription on the Pkhotreri icon partially duplicates the St. George icon of Ilori which was made during the governance of Levan II Dadiani (1611-1657) (see K. Grigolia, The inscription on the icon of St. George of Ilori, Enimki Moambe, Tbilisi 1942)

The icon inscriptions in the churches of Svaneti clearly show the relationship between the mountain and the valley in the late feudal period. In the work, principle-ruled and free Svaneti are separated. The description of Svaneti communities according to the villages, families, and clans included in them contains the necessary information for the researcher interested in the mentioned problem.

The publisher clarifies information, facts, and events with the help of other historical sources. Based on scientific analysis, it gives the reader the necessary explanations about the event described in the book.

It is worth noting that the relics deposited in the churches of Svaneti are not originated locally, but the items preserved here are from all over Georgia: icons, bells, religious and other types of utensils, etc. This is not surprising, because Svaneti, with its unique historical-geographical location, high mountains, and impenetrable forests, was isolated from the rest of the world and inaccessible to foreign or domestic enemies. It is not excluded that the tradition of keeping the country's treasure in Svaneti dates back to the 12th century, when during the reign of Tamar, the Mechurchletukhutsesi (Royal Treasurer) of the country was Vardan, Eristavi of Svaneti. This circumstance once again emphasizes the special place and role of historical Svaneti in the reality of both united and divided into kingdoms-principalities in different periods.

The presented paper is read easily and with interest, which indicates the high academic quality of the translation and the publisher in general.

The presented Georgian edition of the historical works of Dimitri Bakradze and Countess Uvarova about Svaneti has an interesting and necessary importance for Georgian historiography, which will be useful for both researchers-historians, students, and the general reading public interested in historical issues.

Several years ago, the historian Kostantine Chilaia translated and published the studies from Russian, "Travel to the Free Svaneti in 1853" by the Colonel Ivane Bartolomeo, which was accepted with a great interest by the people who are interested in history and in general by the readers. "The Svaneti" by Dimitri Bakradze (1864) was kind of continuation of the work by Ivane Bartolomeo, which as translated from Russian and published with the comments by K. Chilaia and the material of traveling to Svaneti by the famous Russian scientist, Countess Uvarova (Journ., „Кавказъ“, Part III, M.1904), Translation and Comments made by Kostantine Chilaia, Publish-house „Universali“, Tb., 2023).

The mentioned book fills the previous work offered by an author with the historical facts of the middle period of the XIX century, with images describing of the Svaneti residents' daily life, interesting notes not only about Svaneti, but also about Georgia in general.

The work describes the inscriptions of Svaneti churches of XI-XVIII centuries. Each community is characterized with all their parameters (The type and character of Svanetian, physiological data, beliefs, attachment to the homeland).

An author is introduced with each community, their peculiarities, extraordinary views which does not confront with the main line of a paper, to report the historical material available for him (for instance, about the Jewish origin of the Lakhamuleli people, Z.K.) . There are interesting notes about prejudice of Svaneti people. The author highlights an interesting fact about the peaceful tradition of resolution public cases (disputes Z.K.) which took place at the community (village Z.K) assembly.

It is known, that the inscriptions of the icons include the important notes. The icons and their inscriptions preserved in Svanetian churches are special in this respect, which often fills the materials preserved in the Georgian historical sources with the interesting details. For instance, Pkhotreri icon inscriptions is almost identical to the inscription of the Ilori St. George Icon, which was made during the reign of Levan the II Dadiani (1611-1657), Enimka Tribute, Tb., 1942).

The inscriptions of the icons kept in Svaneti Churches clearly shows the relationship of highland and lowland during the late feudal period. The county and free Svaneti is given is separate part. The information of the individual villages, households and families of the Svaneti communities are accessible in the work for concerned researchers with the problem.

The publisher verifies the notes, facts and developments by other historical sources. The explanations about the facts described in the book are given based on the scientific analysis.

It should be noted that the origin of the Christian relics available in the churches of Svaneti are not local, but there are the items, like icons, bells, church and other types of utensils, etc. from the entire Georgia. It is not surprising as Svaneti with its unique historical and geographic location, with the high mountains and deep forests was isolated from other world and it was not reachable for the enemies. The tradition to preserve the treasure of the state in Svaneti dates back from XII century, from the period of Queen Tamar, when Svanetian Eristavi (principle), Vardan was the state treasurer. This fact highlights the unique place and function of the historical Svaneti once again, for united Georgia and Georgia split into kingdoms and provinces.

The presented work is read easily and with interest, which indicates the high academic quality of the translation and the publisher in general.

The Georgian edition of the historical works by Dimitri Bakradze and Countess Uvarova's about Svaneti is an interesting and necessary acquisition for Georgian historiography. It will be useful for researcher-historians, as well as for the students and the readers' community interested in the history