

Akaki Tsereteli State University
Faculty of Humanities

With the Right of Manuscript

Tamta Cheishvili

**The Issues of the Social and Political History
of Georgia in the Articles of the Newspaper
“Mtskemi”**

AN ABSTRACT

1004 - History

**From the presented dissertation for obtaining the academic
degree of
Doctor of History**

**Kutaisi
2018**

The work has been conducted at the Department of History and Archaeology of the Faculty of Humanities of Akaki Tsereteli State University

Research Supervisor: **Giorgi Mchedlidze** -
Doctor of Historical Sciences,
Professor Emeritus,
Academician of Gelati Academy

Opponents: **Otar Gogolishvili**, Doctor of Historical
Sciences, Professor - 07.00.01
Gocha Saitidze, Doctor of Historical
Sciences Professor - 07.00.01

The defence of the dissertation will take place on
July 24 at 12:00
(Date and Time)

At the meeting of the Dissertation Committee formed by the Dissertation Board of the Faculty of Humanities of Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University.

Address: Block I, Room 1114, 59 Tamar Mepe Str., Kutaisi, 4600.

The dissertation will be available from the library of Akaki Tsereteli State University (59 Tamar Mepe Str., Kutaisi, 4600).

The Abstract was sent off "22" June, 2018.
(Date)

The Scientific Secretary
of the Dissertation Board, Professor T. Kikvidze /I. Kikvidze/
(Signature)

General Overview of the Work

Significance of the Theme. In the centuries-long history of Georgia, throughout the existence of the nation, the last quarter of XIX century and the beginning of XX century are fairly considered as one of the toughest periods on account of the reality the Georgian people faced.

As a result of the great endeavour of the Russian Empire and the active Russification policy pursued by its officials, the signs of Georgian statehood were somewhat destroyed or endangered. The country represented two peripheral provinces of the enormous empire and the Georgian Orthodox Church, deprived of autocephaly in 1811, was subjected to the Synodical rule of the Russian Church as an Exarch district.

Under the influence of Russia's imperialistic policy, the areas of education and culture started to develop in an anti-national way. Furthermore, the empire tried to turn these areas into a weapon of ultimate conquest of Georgia and assimilation and degradation of the local population. First and foremost, it attacked the fundamental national values, which threatened the identity of the Georgian nation.

At the beginning of XIX century some part of Georgian intellectuals and clergy supported the idea that Georgia's integration into Russia led to peace, the development of material culture, new cities and villages. The well-equipped and repaired (mostly whitewashed with lime) cathedrals (like cathedrals in Russia), somehow satisfied the clergy in social terms and other factors caused content as well. However, the explicit Russification policy of the empire made the Georgians thoughtful. As a result, the aforementioned idea was gradually replaced by an alternative position, especially after Russia successfully completed the conquest of the Caucasus, making the Russification policy even more active amid

illusory peace. This policy became particularly persistent in the 1880s - during the period of reaction.

In the last quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century, one of the remaining weapons of the Georgian society, deprived of the state and church independence, was literary, historical and publicistic publications.

During the period mentioned above, the newspapers and journals significantly contributed to the activation of the cultural-educational life and maintenance of the national self-consciousness of the Georgian nation. The articles published in them reminded Georgian readers of their historical past and provided a clear picture of the problematic issues of the period to a certain extent. One of the vivid examples was the fortnightly religious Georgian-language newspaper "Mtskemi" published in 1883-1910 (in 1885-1905 the editorial board started to issue the Russian-language supplementary section „Пастыръ“). The editor of the newspaper was Archpriest David Ghambashidze. Despite the fact that in the beginning the editorial office was located in Shorapani and was later moved to Kvirila (Zestafoni) - the place of residence of the editor, until 1902 the "Mtskemi" was issued in Kutaisi. It was published in Kvirila (Zestafoni) only in 1902-1910.

The newspaper was mainly spread in western Georgia and the signature office was located in Kutaisi. Most of the correspondents of the "Mtskemi" were representatives of the clergy. The newspaper also cooperated with Vasil Barnov, Mose Janashvili, Luarsab Botsvadze, Simon Gugunava, Ivane Gvaramadze (Meskhi), Dimitry Bakradze, Triphon Japaridze, etc.

Despite the fact that the "Caucasian Censorship Committee" strived "to subject periodicals and other kinds of publications to the totalitarian system and its objectives", the editorial board of the newspaper tried its

hardest to provide readers with a pathos of national self-consciousness: to repeatedly remind them of the past of Georgia and show them the necessity of mental and spiritual education, which would help the long-suffering Georgian nation to see the tendencies threatening the national identity beyond certain material well-being gained under the imperial rule. These tendencies appeared on a daily basis explicitly or implicitly.

However, the "Mtskemi", like other contemporary periodicals, did not always cover all the real problems with equal success due to a number of objective or subjective reasons. One of the reasons was censorship which the "Mtskemi" faced in Kutaisi.

It should be noted that the editorial board of the newspaper was not often distinguished by radical statements and, from an overall perspective, contemporary readers might have the impression that its policy corresponded with "honor, to whom ye owe honor; tribute, to whom ye owe tribute". Nevertheless, the newspaper never failed to openly express the position based on the national ideology in relation to the significant and sensitive issues concerning the Georgian people. Moreover, it was one of the pioneers to cover such issues... Indeed, there were numerous important themes.

The Purpose of the Research. The purpose of our research is to see the entire spectrum of the events which took place in the last quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century throughout the territory of Georgia and in the social and political life of the Georgian society, in the context offered by the editorial board of the newspaper "Mtskemi" as a primary source, taking account of the peculiarities determined by the epoch and political conditions as well as the nature of the policy of the editorial board and the genre of publication. All the characteristics mentioned above provide an opportunity to get acquainted

with and analyze the materials containing unique information, most of which have not been studied yet.

Scientific Novelty of the Dissertation lies in the fact that the periodical studied by us still lacks the attention of researchers in terms of the subject of our research. Consequently, the presented dissertation is the first attempt to monographically study the whole list of issues.

The novelty of the theme of the research is also determined by the fact that new sources in the form of press materials enter the scientific system, which will further broaden the scope of the researchers' interest in the issues of the social and political history of Georgia.

We have studied the entire spectrum of the serious problems faced by the Georgian nation, which were actively covered in the newspaper and presented in series of papers and separate articles.

Practical Value of the Work. Since the newspaper is the primary source of information about the coverage of the facts and events which occurred in the last quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century, we believe that the work will be informative for those interested in one of the most difficult periods of the social and political history of Georgia.

Approbation of the Work. The major points of the dissertation have been published in three scientific publications. The work has been discussed, approved and recommended for defence at a session of the Sector of History of the Board of the Faculty of Humanities of Akaki Tsereteli State University.

The Structure of the Work. The dissertation contains 141 printed pages. It consists of the introduction, sources and historiography, three chapters, six subchapters and conclusions.

The Main Content of the Work. The introduction deals with a general description of the social and political history of Georgia in the last

quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century. Besides, the chronology of publication of the newspaper "Mtskemi" and the circumstances determining its social and publicistic character have been discussed. In addition, the introduction deals with the purpose of the research, sources and bibliography, historiography, the issues of scientific novelty and significance of the dissertation, theoretical and practical value of the work. The problem of the research has been determined and the main objectives of the study have been indicated.

A Rich Source Base Was Used While Working on the Dissertation

The main source of the work is the issues of the newspaper "Mtskemi" (1883-1910), which are scattered in state archives and public libraries of Tbilisi and Kutaisi, the periodicals of Kutaisi Museum of History and Ethnography and libraries of Akaki Tsereteli State University.

We predominantly focus on the articles which clearly demonstrate the social and political situation of Georgia in the last quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century; the life and needs of the Georgian clergy, political officials, intellectuals and peasants and their attitudes towards various issues.

The introduction analyzes and applies a number of monographs and studies, such as: "Public Relations in Georgia (1864-1905)" by Grigol Giorgadze published in 1928, which contains quite interesting and important information about different directions of the Russification policy: the educational program of Caucasus, the educational policy of the supervisor of the educational district of this region - Ianovsky, the issues of the crisis of the Georgian language - the silent method of teaching and the issue of the Megrelian language, activities of the Caucasian Censorship Committee in Georgia, etc.

Also, in the process of working on the dissertation we were able to find important information in the monograph by Professor Giorgi

Mchedlidze - "Issues of Modern History of Kutaisi" (546 pages, Kutaisi, 1993), which deals with the history of Kutaisi of late XIX century and early XX century. Taking account of the specifics of the research and chronological framework, among the informative materials of the book we focused on the conditions of the fields of education and culture and certain aspects of the activity of Kutaisi self-government at the end of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century as well as the social and political situation of Kutaisi during the 1905-1907 Revolution.

The monograph co-authored by Professor G. Mchedlidze (Doctor of Historical Sciences) and M. Kezevadze - "Kutaisi-Gaenati Eparchy" (576 pages, Kutaisi, 2008) proved to be an important informative source during the research. The work is the only attempt of monographical study of the problem reflected in the title. The authors presented the full history of one of the most important eparchies of the Georgian Church, considering all the existing sources and historiography.

In the process of working on the dissertation we gained very important information in the monograph by Professor and Academician A. Nikoleishvili (Doctor of Philological Sciences) - "Bishop Gabriel (Kikodze)" (124 pages, Tbilisi, 1990), which is devoted to the life and contribution of Gabriel Kikodze - a great Georgian bishop, patriot and glorified figure of the Georgian Church of the second half of XIX century.

Interesting materials were found in the collection of works by a group of authors - "Kutaisi from the 1260s to the 1920s" (620 pages, Kutaisi, 2013), compiled and edited by Professor G. Mchedlidze. From this work we selected the information about the events of the last quarter of XIX century and the first decade of XX century. In particular, we focused on the materials about the activity of Bishop Gabriel and the contribution made by M. Sharadze in terms of publication of hymns.

We were also interested in the works by Metropolitan Anania Japaridze: Part 3 of "The Conventions of the Church of Georgia" and "The Virgin Mary – the Protector of the Georgian Language". The author discusses the policy of disintegration of Georgia adopted by the Russian Empire in XIX century and at the beginning of XX century. In the process of studying the issue he uses a number of literary and publicistic sources among which is the primary source of the presented dissertation and the object of our research – the newspaper "Mtskemi".

Metropolitan Anania Japaridze pays particular attention to several sections: the anti-Georgian policy of the Russian government in relation to the language factor in the field of education; the activities of Russian and some Georgian secular or clerical officials aimed at encouraging separatism in Samegrelo and other regions of Georgia.

The article by the historian - Professor G. Mchedlidze - "The Origins of the Georgian Press in Kutaisi" provides important information about the chronology of publication of the newspaper "Mtskemi" and its characteristics. The issue analyzed by the author gives us the opportunity to assess the specifics of the activity of the editorial board of the newspaper and its public role from an overall perspective.

The work by the aforementioned author - "Kutaisi in the Last Quarter of XIX Century" - provided us with appropriate directions while working on the assessment of the social, economic and cultural life of Kutaisi and western Georgia in the second half of XIX century. In the work - Part 3 of "The Conventions of the Church of Georgia" the author collected, studied and discussed the issues concerning the fight of the Georgian clergy against Russian colonialism; also, the policy of the empire aimed at dividing the Georgian nation in religious, linguistic and ethnic terms, using a pseudo-religious method.

Apart from the aforementioned researchers, the issues which we are interested in were scientifically studied by the following authors: N. Berdzenishvili, G. Gasviani, I. Gogebashvili, I. Grishashvili, P. Gugushvili, Z. Guruli, D. Gureshidze, N. Durnovo, I. Zurabishvili, Z. Vashakmadze, G. Vachridze, P. Vachridze, E. Takaisvili, E. Toradze, S. Kakabadze, M. Kezevadze, K. Kekelidze, M. Kelenjeridze, F. Lomashvili, S. Maglakelidze, Z. Mikaberidze, N. Nikoladze, N. Papuashvili, N. Tkeshelashvili, T. Putkaradze, T. Pkhaladze, M. Khutsishvili, N. Ghambashidze, I. Javakhishvili, Sh. Japaridze, etc.

Through the scientific literature applied for the dissertation we found very important information giving us the opportunity for an in-deep discussion on the issue.

Chapter I.

The Chronology of Publication of the Newspaper "Mtskemi" And Its Social and Publicistic Characteristics

The first chapter of the dissertation deals with the social and publicistic characteristics of the newspaper. At the same time it describes the role of David Ghambashidze as editor in formation and development of the social and publicistic characteristics of the "Mtskemi".

The "Mtskemi" was a newspaper of religious nature (editor - Archpriest David Ghambashidze), which was continuously published twice a month in 1883-1910. Until 1885 it was published only in the Georgian language and afterwards - along with its Russian-language supplementary section „Пастыръ“, which was issued once a month.

The official purpose and function of the newspaper was to inform the clergy and secular communities about all the orders and actions of the supreme clerical and secular authorities, to promote the teaching of Christian moral and faith among the Georgian clergy and secular

communities, and to explain certain suspicious issues, the knowledge of which was "necessary to properly fulfil the duties", according to the program of the editorial board of the newspaper.

1.2. The Role of David Ghambashidze in Formation and Development of the Social and Publicistic Characteristics of the Newspaper "Mtskemi"

Since the editor of the newspaper David Ghambashidze (1841-1910) represented the editorial board of the newspaper for many years, this factor, in our view, played a major role in the formation of the values of the publishing policy, which is clearly visible to the reader, considering the objective or subjective reasons mentioned above. Therefore, we believe it would be appropriate to focus on the psycho-social portrait of the editor.

It should be noted that D. Ghambashidze was very fond of peasants and therefore he chose the village as a place for his theological and pedagogic activities, despite the fact that he had been offered to be an archpriest in a cathedral. He did his best to set up parish schools and enhance the aspiration for learning.

The activities of Archpriest David Ghambashidze were immensely dignified and versatile. They were related to all the significant issues concerning the Georgian people.

The name of Archpriest David Ghambashidze is associated with the "Committee for Restoration of Church Hymns", which made a considerable contribution to the activities of collecting and recording Georgian hymns. This is highly significant, especially if we take account of the epoch during which the Georgian folklore and theological culture faced the danger of degradation.

We actively discuss the theological and publicistic activities, opinions and values of Archpriest D. Ghambashidze in the chapters and subchapters of the dissertation because, as mentioned above, he actually represented the editorial board of the newspaper and, in our view, the editorial policy was based on his personal values to a considerable extent.

Chapter II.
The Issues of Social and Political Relations in Georgia in the Last Quarter of XIX Century and at the Beginning of XX Century According to the Newspaper "Mtskemi"

Chapter II covers the social and political situation in the last quarter of XIX century and at the beginning of XX century (1883-1910) on the basis of the materials of the newspaper "Mtskemi". Besides, it criticizes the ideology of the Russian Empire, especially the policy against the Georgian language.

The first objective of the Georgian society was to secure the national identity. At the beginning of the 1880s, in the context of strengthening the Russification policy, the signs determining the national identity of the Georgian people – the native language, culture and church – were endangered. The policy of the government was also a serious threat to the national integrity of the Georgian people.

A number of articles dealing with the aforementioned issues were published in the periodicals of the time. The editorial board of the newspaper "Mtskemi" was very active among them.

One of the first national issues to which the editorial board of the "Mtskemi" devoted an article and to which we would like to draw the attention of the readers implied the prohibition of teaching the Georgian language in the schools of Samegrelo pursuant to the circular of January 11, 1885. The circular was based on the 1881 curriculum in accordance to

which the Russian language was to be taught through the local language. In the circular it was stated that the local language of Samegrelo was Megrelian and the Russian language was to be taught through this language.

The editorial board expressed its concern about this anti-Georgian phenomenon: "We have never heard that the Georgian language is a foreign language for the Megrelians as suggested by some people... It is also a mistake to claim that the Megrelian language belongs to a group of languages different from Georgian. This is not only incompetence, but also a completely purposeful action aimed at the disruption of the unity of the Georgian nation".

The Georgian society was convinced that this direction of the Russification policy was becoming more and more active and aimed at dividing the Georgians into ethnic tribes in order to prevent the consolidation of the Georgian nation. The attack on the native language was the best way to accomplish the goal. The editorial board of the newspaper responded to this through strong criticism.

2.1. Publications of the "Mtskemi" newspaper to defend the Georgian language against imperialistic - reactionary ideology.

In the last quarter of the XIX century and early XX century, the King's Government strengthened the reactionary - assimilatory policy in Georgia, which led not only to persecution of the Georgian language, but to the government's attempt to reduce the use of the language, leading to its extinction. The king's officials intended to cut off the Megrelians from the Georgian united national 'body', as if they were not Georgians, but people of another origin, and tried to expel the Georgian language from schools.

The Empire went so far in execution of its intentions, that, in 1886, it decided to send an Eastern Language Faculty candidate - A. Green,

from St. Petersburg University to Georgia. He had a good command of Georgian and was instructed to immediately create the Megrelian alphabet on the basis of the Russian alphabet. He was also instructed to translate from Russian to Megrelian some texts, including small letters for children, a textbook "Родное слово" by the most famous Russian pedagogic scholar K. Ushinsky, and a "Reading Book compiled for East Tatars", which stirred up a storm in the Megrelian community.

In 1889, after Tada Asordordia created the "Megrelian" alphabet on the basis of the Russian "Alfabet" and some "Holy Fathers" took some pains to translate the Holy Scriptures into the Megrelian language, the whole process resulted in irreconcilable protests from the side of Megrelians. The congress of the clergy in new Senaki reviewed the policy of the Tsarist government regarding Samegrelo and Svaneti as "the spawn of heresy, the reason for all kinds of apostasy, invidious explanation of the Divine Scriptures and complete misunderstanding of the text".

The editorial staff of the "Mtskemi" newspaper repeatedly responded to these processes and occasionally expressed in various publications their indignation and even sarcastic attitudes to the above-mentioned events.

Georgian public figures responded to the above-mentioned difficult situation and made no concealment of their negative attitude towards the imperial policy of Russia. Series of publications by Iakob Gogebashvili - titled "Main Errors", were published in 1890 under the pseudonym of "Jacob Svimonidze" in the "Mtskemi" newspaper, where the author spoke about the role of the mother tongue, discussing examples of other countries, and tried to explain to the Georgian readers the significance of the native language.

2.2. About the Empire's attempt to stimulate regional-linguistic and religious separatism in the publications of the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

The XIX century is considered to be one of the most important and capacious in the history of Georgia, which reflected in many radical transformations such as fundamental reversal of the political vector, changes in social and cultural spheres as well as shift in thinking.

Through ideological pressure the Russian Empire tried to separate Georgian Muslims, Catholics and Gregorians from the Georgian nation, by applying a non-ethnic, pseudoreligious method according to which historically, Georgians were only orthodox people and they or their majority never converted to other religions. Considering the aforementioned logic, Georgian Gregorians were not ethnically Georgian, but the "Armenians assimilated with Georgians". Furthermore, Georgian Catholics and Muslims were ethnic Armenians and Turks (Tatars) assimilated with Georgians over time due to certain circumstances.

Imperial Ideology, along with Political-Governance Sphere, fully subordinated Georgian Church and Schools and used them as a tool of national degeneration of Georgian people. The hardest thing regarding schools was the curriculum in a foreign language that could not provide even minimal natural educational requirements and needs of the Georgian people. Russian policy directly threatened the national integrity of the Georgian people. The government was supposed to cause disunity, separate and disconnect the Georgians and turn them against each other.

2.3. Murder of Chudetsky ,the tragic stories of D.Kipiani and E.Mchedlidze on pages of the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

In the process of working on the thesis, we paid attention to one of the most notorious stories of the second half of the 19th century, which

later remained in the history of Georgia as a tragic but remarkable page. It foreshadowed great events when Dimitri Kipiani, another dignified patriot and father of the nation, found his honorable place in the history of our country and was consecrated a saint.

We decided to discuss this issue on the assumption that the "Mtskemi" newspaper published a number of publication letters and articles about the chronicle of the events. Among them we found the "Court Records", which depict the range of dramatic events connected to the murder of P. Chudetskiy, which was followed as a side effect by the physical (not spiritual) sacrifice of St. Dimitri Kipiani.

The newspaper edition responded to another murder as well, but it was considered less significant in society at that time. The matter concerns the case when Gabriel Bishop's Chancellor - Esatte Mchedlidz, was murdered. The May of 1885 edition (#10) of the "Mtskemi" newspaper reported on the "Amazing and Horrific Murder", which took place on 8 May in Kutaisi, in a crowded place, where a 32-year-old man was killed. The most interesting fact in the whole story is that the "Shroma" newspaper named D. Gambashidze, the editor of the "Mtskemi" newspaper, as an initiator of the murder: "D. Gambashidze used the Georgian press and continually provoked E.Mchedlidze (Boslevel). He was the main instigator of the killing of this young publicist." At the same time, the editor of the "Mtskemi" newspaper required to identify and punish the murderer and establish a motive.

Chapter III.

Issues of the Georgian Orthodox Church reported in the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

The third chapter is dedicated to the Georgian Orthodox Church, based on the materials published in the "Mtskemi" newspaper. Here is

represented a detailed overlook of the articles published in the "Mtskemi" newspaper, most of which were written by archpriest David Gambashidze.

The empire government was well aware that political enslavement of Georgia was impossible until the complete destruction of independence of the Church, without its transformation into a loyal servant of the Russian-colonization policy.

Autocracy declared war on the Georgian Church. For the purpose of invalidation of the national character, all kinds of religious services in the Georgian Church were forbidden, progressive and patriotic clergymen became marked at once for persecution. The campaign of Megrelian-Svan language translations was also directed towards the disintegration of the Georgian Church and was an evil attempt to bring these regions away from the 'national body'. The Russian clergy showed mainly aggressive attitude to the national-cultural and ecclesiastical traditions of the Georgian people. One part of the official Georgian church representatives implemented the empire policy (ones did it surreptitiously, others did it unconsciously without even realizing it, for still others-lack of general education was the reason). As for the religious leaders with high level of self-consciousness, their role was, undoubtedly, great and important. The only problem was their small number and paucity.

Domination by Russian Empire was a big trouble and a burden for Georgian people, but the Georgian Orthodox Church managed not to lose its role.

However, this was not the easiest thing to do. As a result of the ruthless ecclesiastical policy carried out by the Russian Orthodox authorities, of cutting the ground from under the Georgian Church and eradication of centuries-old traditions, Georgia got serious challenges that resulted in 'broking up and scattering' true Christians and caretakers of the Georgian Orthodox community.

"Mtskemi" newspaper saw the real danger of losing the root functions of the Church and, within the scope of the capabilities, was

actively trying to highlight the problems within the Georgian Church. That, in its turn, caused some alienation of the Georgian people. In this part of the thesis, life and deeds of bishop Gabriel are described. Great number of publications in the "Mtskemi" newspaper gave us the right to devote particular attention to this person in the dissertation.

The chronology of ecclesiastical congregations in Georgia and their ideological role at the active stage of the national-liberation struggle are outlined in this dissertation.

3.1. Publications About Gabriel Bishop's heavy activity and death in the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

Rich and comprehensive information about Imereti Bishop Gabriel's life and death that can be found on the papers of published newsletters in the "Mtskemi" newspaper, can not be left unattended. In the newspaper, extracts of sermon for religious holidays and various other events are preserved. At the same time, the list of information collected and represented in the articles reflects the picture of the socio-economic, political and religious life of Georgia. In addition, from periodical publications, great love and gratitude of the Georgian parishioners to their spiritual parent is clearly perceptible.

We tried to highlight some significant moments of Gabriel's life, his heavy and valiant activity. We used information from the newspaper articles and other resources available, in order to compare facts and make general conclusions.

Bishop Gabriel had a very hard life, as it was the time when the pressure of Russian colonial policy in Georgia was very strong. Bishop Gabriel did not hesitate to openly express his opinion protecting Georgian interests and, therefore, to endanger his life and career.

The "Mtskemi" newspaper takes a special place with its content and sincere impulse, with articles and publications that relate to the death of the Bishop of Imereti. The reader clearly feels and understands how big the loss, caused by the death of the spiritual mentor, was for the parishioners. The Georgian Orthodox Church named Gabriel Kikodze as a saint for his merit and special contribution. Since Bishop Gabriel dedicated his life and activity to Georgian people, he was, is and will stay on the ideal example of human moral perfection. We tried to represent more detailed information about the Bishop of Imereti, based on extensive materials published in the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

3.2. Chronology of church congregations and their ideological role in the active stage of the national-liberation movement of Georgians.

Throughout the XIX century, after the cancellation of autocephaly of the Georgian Church, all local ecclesiastical congregations were repealed. It should be mentioned, that such types of congregations were forbidden even in the Russian Empire after the abolition of the Patriarch Institute in the Russian Orthodox Church. And moreover, in the periphery of the empire, there would be no logical place for such events. However, against this background, diocesan-ecclesiastical congregations, which were allowed in Georgia in those days, performed their vital function. All that could be read on the pages of the "Mtskemi" newspaper. The diocesan-ecclesiastical congregations, held in Georgia in 1905-1907, deserved special attention of the newspaper mostly because of their content and ideology.

Since the spring of 1905, the congregations of the Georgian clergy became more frequent, and requirement of the restoration of the autocephaly of the Apostolic Church of Georgia (autocephaly) became relevant.

Georgian archpriests Kirion (Giorgi Sadzaglishvili), Leonid (Longinoz Okropiridze) and Georgian scientists: Niko Marr, Alexander Khakhanashvili and Aleksandre Tsagareli entered into controversy and

polemics and proved to Russian scientists and clergy that abolition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church was faulty and illegal. Therefore, they demanded justice and legal restoration of the autocephaly. It is true that the Russians were forced to recognize the illegitimacy of abolishing autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church. This fact was not reflected in the decision of the meeting. Nevertheless, the issue of restoration of autocephaly of the Georgian Church was decided in the negative. The priests also required a school reform, freedom of speech, printing and meeting, they also required granting to clergy all civil rights that did not contradict the idea of the doctrine. The demand also included dismissal of the duty to serve in the Secretary of State and the Government's policy, as well as exemption from all kinds of civil service and clerical work. According to the petition, government salary was to be the main source of income for priesthood and their material dependence on the parish was definitely to be terminated.

Perhaps, on the one hand, it was facilitated by the rescript of the emperor Nikolay II issued in February of the same year. By virtue of it the right of free speech was given to all the peoples in the empire, and, on the other hand, the great desire and intention to use the current situation in the empire for the benefit of Georgia and its people played an essential role in the process. In February-March, the issue of electing a new Catholicos was being actively discussed by the Georgian Orthodox Church. It was supported not only by the clergy but also by the laymen, and they unanimously devised a petition that should have been directed towards the Russian Imperial Courtyard. However, it is noteworthy that the petition was not sent to the place of destination. The congregation even dared to put the issue of teaching the Word of God in Georgian language at schools. "About the management of Holy Orders in the Georgian Orthodox Church and election of the Catholicos" – such an issue was added to the above-mentioned petition. They also added: "Most of the lawmakers are

convinced that schools are to be changed completely with the Catholicos..."

The Church operating in Tbilisi and Kutaisi provinces, in the framework of the Russian Empire, was trying to create a single administrative unit called "Georgia". For this purpose, in 1905 (April 1), the council of nobles of Tbilisi began working out a message to the Russian Emperor. The message was the following: "Georgia is to be recognized as a part of the Empire ... Georgia consists of Tiflis and Kutaisi provinces, of Batumi, Sokhumi and Zakatala districts" In April of the same year, the nobles of Kutaisi gathered, as they anticipated the evil plans of the empire regarding Georgia, and they made a decision to send the so-called "Address" to the Emperor with the following text: "The nobles of Kutaisi province join the desire and wishes developed by the precious nobles of Tiflisi province, declared in the 'address'. The only way out for Georgia, which consists of Tiflis and Kutaisi provinces, Batumi, Sokhumi and Zakatala districts, is to be eligible to manage its domestic affairs independently..."

On May 28-29 a meeting of the Kartli-Kakheti clergy was held in Tbilisi. The "Mtskemi" newspaper was actively covering and supporting all the above-mentioned events.

As a result of the meeting the following was concluded: „ The regime existing in the clerical seminars and educational centers is harmful. That is why it has been decided to close these schools until they are completely transformed... "

The government and officials responded to the ruthless protest of the Georgian clergy with strict repressions, the congregations of the Georgian clergy were especially persecuted. Repressions against Georgian clergy reached the peak on May 31, 1905, when the congregation of the Diocese of Tbilisi was rigidly dispersed. With the direct instruction of the Exarchos, the clergy who gathered at the Tbilisi Theological Seminary were beaten and forced out of the building... In the

end, the liberation movement was defeated and the Georgian clergy was ordered from the official authorities to perform the action of thanksgiving for the peaceful survival of the state. The leaders of the autocephaly movement became victims of repressions. Bishop Kirion, one of the mentors and leaders of this movement, who in February 1906 finally managed to return to his homeland, was once again sent to Russia, to the Diocese of Kovno for attempts to alter Abkhazians and integrate them into the Georgian culture. At the time of the liberation movement even the following bishops could not escape the punishment: Leonide, Ambrosi Khelaia, Archbishop Korneli Kekelidze, Ellarion Jashi - the priest of Tbilisi Cathedral, Nikoloz Namoradze - head of Gelati Monastery and others. The loss of liberation movement of 1905-1907, forces of reaction and their increased activity, reduced the possibilities of achieving the goal. But the struggle of the clergy to restore the autonomy of Georgia and autocephaly of the national church was not suspended even after the revolution and continued to be in full force.

The newspaper ceased to exist and its editor died so that the autocephaly of the Georgian Church was not restored.

As for the Georgian clergy, it is to be noted that they played a big role in the process of successful overcoming of the difficulties faced by the Georgian people. The matter of particular appreciation is their struggle to defend Georgian culture, preserve national idea of the Georgian Church, to foresee and anticipate real intentions of the Russians, to rally Georgian people around the national ideals and open ecclesiastical and secular educational institutions and centers. In addition to that, the movement for improvement of the Georgian language and its ecclesiastical and educational function is of particular importance. Success of the movement was possible mostly due to the activity of the conscious clerics.

General conclusions

In the last quarter of the 19th and early XX century, Georgian society, which lacked state and ecclesiastical independence, used one of the weapons of literary-historical publications and feature materials as one of the most important weapons for fighting.

1. Magazines and journals published during this period played a major role in activation of cultural-educational life and maintaining national self-consciousness of the Georgian nation. The articles published in those additions reminded the Georgian readers of their historical past and, in some ways, were trying to present the problematic issues of the time. Among the periodic editions of that time - a seminary newspaper "Mtskemi" - was of particular importance. It was published in Georgian language in 1883-1910, by Archbishop David Gambashidze's editorial in Kvirila (Zestafoni).

2. It should be noted that the editorial staff of "Shepherd", as well as other contemporary periodicals, were not always able to cover all the real problems of that time for one reason or another. One of the important reasons was the control of the content and censorship, which took place in Kutaisi regarding especially the "Mtskemi" newspaper. Nevertheless, this theological newspaper did not hesitate to declare its nationally determined position regarding many actual and painful issues of their country. On the contrary, it used to play one of the leading roles in covering the most important topics.

3. Our attention was mainly attracted by articles in which the social and political situation of Georgia in the last quarter of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century is represented, which depict the life, needs, attitudes of Georgian clergy, political officials, intellectuals and peasants in relation to various issues.

The "Mtskemi" newspaper had been published for 27 years and used to inform readers and the whole society on various issues dedicated

to official religious themes, as well as moral or intellectual development and social-political problems. We tried to keep focus on some of them, giving them a great deal of attention because of their content and ideological quality.

The topics of our interest include: "Activities of the Committee to Resolve Chanting of Religious songs", Mosa Janashvili's work "Spread of Christianity in Georgia", prohibition of liturgy in temples and teaching in Georgian language in Samegrelo schools by the Russian imperial authorities, the problem of protection of the Georgian language, the problem of oppression of the population of Georgia on the basis of the regional-ethnic and religious factors, murder of the rector of Tbilisi Seminary P. Chudetsky and the tragic story of St. D.Kipiani, as well as the murder of E. Mchedlidze - the secretary of the chancellery of the bishop of Imereti.

4. Our attention was attracted, and we considered it necessary to cover in the thesis the story of D. Gambashidze's (editor of the "Mtskemi" newspaper) clerical or publicistic activity, his views and values, because they, in our opinion, fully corresponded to the main line of the editorial policy of the newspaper.

5. Various issues of the newspaper depict important stories and events of the last quarter of XIX century and beginning of XX century. Information deals with the king's government, more intensive reactionary-assimilation policy of Georgia carried out by the Russian empire, which resulted in persecution of the Georgian language as well as the government's attempts to weaken, reduce the use of the Georgian language and simplify the steps towards its total disappearance. The king's officials intended to cut off Megrelians from the Georgian national united 'body', as if they were not Georgians, but other people of another origin and tried to expel the Georgian language from schools.

6. We focused our special attention on the study of the problems of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which were particularly affected by the pressure from the side of the Russian policy. The editorial staff of the "Mtskemi" newspaper was able to view and foresee the real danger caused by loss of fundamental functions of the Church and was sincerely trying to cover the situation and main problems existing within the Church, which, in some way, caused the alienation of the Georgian people.

Over the years, many publications about congregations were issued by the editorial office of the newspaper. The function of the vital importance was acquired in Georgia by allowing diocesan-ecclesiastical congregations, especially on the background of the ongoing socio-political situation, which was covered and faithfully reported by the "Mtskemi" newspaper.

We gave special attention to some of them. For example, the "Mtskemi" newspaper reported on diocesan congregations held in 1905-1907, depending on their content and ideological importance.

Through the dissertation work we tried to study the whole list of the issues printed in the "Mtskemi" newspaper, especially the ones, that lacked researchers' attention, were not the subject of the study in the context and from the angle the topics taken for our research.

The main provisions of the thesis are published in the following publications:

1. Chronology of church congregations and their ideological role in the active stage of the national-liberation movement of Georgians in the "Mtskemi" newspaper publications. Georgian Science and Society Development Foundation International Scientific journal "Intelecti". 2018 year. №1 (60). Pg. 144-149.
2. The Role of the Ideology of the Russian Empire in Posing the Regional-Linguistic and Religious Problems, on the Basis of the Newspaper "Mtskemi". Akaki Tsereteli State University's "Moambe". 2018 year. №1 (11). Pg. 41-49.
3. Some issues of anti-Georgian politics of the Russian Empire on the edge of XIX-XX cc in the publications of the " Mtskemi " newspaper . Akaki Tsereteli State University's "Moambe". 2017 year. №2 (10). Pg. 63-79.