

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE OF TBILISI AS A REFLECTION OF  
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE CITY**

**Nino Chanishvili**

The city of Tbilisi underwent incredibly rapid development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From a feudal town, it grew into one of the most important metropolises of the Russian Empire and became the major political, administrative and cultural center of the South Caucasus. The present article purports to explain how the social and the cultural context of Tbilisi reverberated on the face of the city.

Trends of urban development similar to Tbilisi are found in different cities of the Caucasus and the Balkans as well. Baku, Salonica and Sarajevo have been chosen for comparative analysis because these cities, like Tbilisi, constituted regional centers of different Empires in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Tbilisi and Baku were incorporated into the Russian Empire, Salonica was in the Ottoman Empire, whereas Sarajevo in the beginning was part of the Ottoman Empire, but from 1878, the city was dominated by the Austro-Hungarian rule.

Historically, beginning from the medieval period, these cities were inhabited by ethnically and religiously diverse populations. The rulers of their respective empires approved this diversity and supported the process of settlement of the cities by migrants of different nationalities and faiths. The Russian Empire, for example, settled Tbilisi as well as other regions of Georgia with Armenian nationals evicted from Turkey and Persia, so-called Dukhobors expelled from Russia and sectarians deported from Wurttemberg and Baden. The development of urban culture in these cities was rapidly taking hold and the co-existence between these people of different nationalities and faiths was more or less peaceful. Certainly there was not always integration. For instance, there was a strict segregation between the Christians, Muslims and the Jews in Salonica. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century confrontation broke out between the Georgians and the Armenians on economic and social grounds. The same problems kindled conflict in Baku, which in 1905 ended in a bloody clash between the Azeris and the Armenians.

The present article does not intend the study of the social pattern of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Baku, Salonica or Sarajevo. Rather, it will focus on Tbilisi. Only certain aspects will be compared with the urban development and architecture of the other three cities mentioned.

**The Claim for the city**

Tbilisi became a cosmopolitan city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This transformation was predetermined by several factors. In 1801, after the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by Russia, Tbilisi became the administrative and cultural center of the South Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> Tbilisi, and the

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<sup>1</sup> In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire incorporated the rest of the Georgian regions and established there a unitary political rule; the provinces of Western Georgia Mingrelia, Imereti, Abkhazia and Guria became part of the Russian Empire. See R.G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Bloomington, 1998, p. 64.

Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti as a whole, were more or less peaceful. The city started to expand and develop at a quick pace. Industry was also on the rise, which attracted more migrants.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Tbilisi, erstwhile capital of the united Georgia, and the throne city of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti until 1801, non-Georgian nationals exceeded in number the native Georgians. By 1803 the number of the Georgian population in Tbilisi amounted to 2,700 (22.6%).<sup>2</sup> This demographic characteristic was partly the consequence of the 1795 incursion of the Persians, who plundered the city and exterminated a large number of Georgians. Those who survived had to flee Tbilisi. Besides, the Georgians were more inclined to rural life. For instance, such an important urban activity as trade was considered shameful for Georgians. Therefore, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the trade business in Tbilisi fell into the hands of the Armenians. In the view of the feudal aristocracy of that period, being a "merchant" was tantamount to being an "Armenian". The Georgians who were engaged in trade were referred to as "Armenized" by the Georgian feudals.<sup>3</sup>

The mass migration of Georgians to Tbilisi began in the 1860s, and this was connected to the abolition of serfdom in Georgia.<sup>4</sup> As a result of the reforms, the peasants, who were deprived of their lands, set forth to Tbilisi in search of employment. The main métier of the uneducated peasants was jobs as valets or maids, or jobs in factories and plants.<sup>5</sup> Migrants from Western Georgia, mainly Mengrelians, Imeretians and Gurians, worked in hotels as servants and bellboys. Some of them were beguiled into prostitution.

In the same period the Georgian noble families begin to settle in Tbilisi. The Russian Government accepted the Georgian nobility as the Russian *Dvorianstvo* and granted them appropriate political and economic rights.<sup>6</sup> Russian policy to integrate Georgians became prominent after a conspiracy in 1832 when a part of the Georgian nobility intended to restore Georgian monarchy.<sup>7</sup> In order to prevent this threat, the Russian Government supported the engagement of the Georgian nobility in civil service or in the military, granted them pensions, and admitted their children to Russian Universities and military schools, after which they would be provided with jobs and appropriate salaries.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a part of the Georgian nobility actively participated in the country's political and social affairs. In the same period the Georgians started a movement against Russification in order to revive Georgian culture and national identity.<sup>8</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup> U. Anchabadze, N. Volkova, *Starii Tbilisi, Gorod i Gorojane v XIX veke* (The Old Tbilisi. The City and its citizens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), Moscow, 1990, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Sh. Meskhia, *tbilisis istoria* (History of Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1990, Vol. I, pp. 372-373. In the second part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the King granted some Armenian tradesman the noble titles and the titles of Princes. These were Abimelikov, Bebutashvili, Ivangulov, Arshiev, Melikov, etc.

<sup>4</sup> In Kartli-Kakheti the serfdom was abolished in 1864, in Imereti – in 1865, in Mengrelia – in 1867.

<sup>5</sup> G. Giorgadze, *sazogadoebrivi urtiertoba saqartveloshi baton-kmobis gadavardnidan pirvel revoluciamde 1864-1905* (Public Relations in Georgia from the Abolition of Serfdom until the first Revolution 1864-1905), Tbilisi, 1928, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> About the Georgian and Russian Administration see Suny, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-95.

<sup>7</sup> About the conspiracy see S. F. Jones, Russian Imperial Administration and the Georgian Nobility: The Georgian Conspiracy of 1832, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 65, No. 6, January, 1987, pp. 53-76.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1860s the so called *Tergdaleulebi* (19<sup>th</sup> century Georgians going to Russia and Europe for education; literally: having drunk Terek waters) viewed the development and the prosperity of the Georgian people and culture within the Russian Empire, in the later period the Social-Democrats also did not intend to break ties with Russia. Until 1918 they believed that Georgia's independence was possible within free and democratic Russia. See Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, Cambridge, 2005. p. 9.

1879 "The Society for the Propagation of Literacy among Georgians" was established. The society was determined to foster the edition of books, opening up schools and libraries.

In the same period the Georgian theatre started to perform. Georgian newspapers were published, the history of Georgia studied and literary monuments collected. However, the Georgian press, one of the main tools for the Georgian intelligentsia, avoided discussion of urban issues. When they wrote about Tbilisi, their articles derided those Georgians who aspired to the European way of life and deplored the lost traditions of the old Tbilisi. This is what the leading Georgian newspaper of the 1870s "Droeba" wrote about the city life:

"The pupils who have grown up in Tbilisi are all well educated. Just have a look at the pedestrians in a delightful weather. You will see the extraordinarily educated ladies, who look like Parisian coquettes. How come they happen to be here! Beginning from their hats and high heel fashionable shoes to the way they walk in the streets, is nothing but Parisian. They even talk in French as they believe speaking in their mother tongue is a shame and a sign of being far out."<sup>9</sup>

The newspaper "Iveria", which in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the most influential publication seriously affecting public opinion, believed that the necessary prerequisite for the cultural, economic and social development of the country was the land and the village. The past was idealized; the paper deemed that there was no social division and that instead of landlords there were just patrons in Georgia. Only in the 1890s did the paper pay attention to city affairs and intensively dished up articles about the city's self-governance. In an editorial, "Iveria" contended that due to self-governance, Tbilisi had become far more fascinating, expanded and clean, and quite fairly noted the following:

"There is no doubt that this beautiful scenery must appease to the Georgians, even more so, that the city is on the road of serious accomplishments. However there is one heart breaking fact, that the Georgians have no merit in the city's success. Indeed what did the Georgian society do for their home town during the last seventeen years? Unfortunately the answer is nothing".<sup>10</sup>

Over the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Armenians played a distinguished role among the city's multiethnic population. Their mass migration started in the Middle Ages when the Turk Seljuks conquered and occupied the Armenian territory. A big community of thousands of Armenians was created in Tbilisi and its outskirts. According to the records of the 18<sup>th</sup> century travellers, P. de Tournefort and J. A. Guldenstedt, the Armenians constituted the majority of the population.<sup>11</sup> The number of Armenians particularly increased during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Besides Persia and Turkey, they migrated from different parts of the Russian Empire.

Armenians belonged to different strata of society. An Armenian could easily be a shop keeper, a physician, a lawyer, or a director of a Bank.<sup>12</sup> However, the main métier of the

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<sup>9</sup> Assay, The gossip and his bag, "droeba" 1870, No. 12.

<sup>10</sup> "droeba", 1893, No. 6.

<sup>11</sup> In 1701 according to Tournefort the population of the city amounted to about 20,000. Out of this figure there were 14,000 Armenians, 3,000 Muslims, 2,000 Georgians and 500 Roman Catholics. In the city there were 5 Orthodox Churches, 7 Armenian cathedrals and 2 Mosques. In 1772 Guldenstedt noted that more than a half of the citizens were Armenians, the second half were Georgians and the same amount of Tatars. 14 churches belonged to Georgians, whereas the Armenians had 20 cathedrals. 3 Mosques belonged to Tatar Muslims. See M. Polievktov, G. Natadze, *zveli tpilisi* (The Old Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1930.

<sup>12</sup> E. Melchior De Vogue, Trough the Caucasus, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 81, Issue 481, June, 1890, p. 32.

Armenians was trade and commerce. Armenians owned the bulk of the lucrative businesses, ranging from the petty shops to the caravanserais. They also owned most of the Tbilisi's famous baths.<sup>13</sup> The demographic and economic predominance of the Armenians was so explicit, that when the American Missionary Eli Smith visited Georgia with his partner at the beginning of the 1830s, he wrote that they thought they were still in Armenia and pointed out: "With the exception of one Georgian, two or three Greeks, and a Swiss firm that commenced business while we were there, every merchant in Tiflis is Armenian, and nearly same is true of the mechanics."<sup>14</sup> The same fact was emphasized by Luigi Villari in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "One has but to walk down the chief streets to see that the names over all the chief shops and of the most important firms are Armenian. They may end in -off or in -eff – Kalanataroff, Oganjanoff, Mantasheff, Gukasoff, &c".<sup>15</sup>

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the industry in Tbilisi became well developed, almost all important enterprises came under the ownership of the Armenians. The Tobacco factories belonged to Enpiajints and Bozarjants.<sup>16</sup> Their merchandise was exported to Moscow, St. Petersburg and also to some European cities. "I. Tairov and K. Alikhanov" was a soap producing firm.<sup>17</sup> In 1870 the merchant Mirzoev founded the first paper producing factory. All the equipment for the factory was imported from England. Later the factory was purchased by the banker I. Chikhatov. There were two well equipped leather plants in Tbilisi "A. Zargariants and F. Vartazariant" and "G.G. Adelkhanov". The latter was the only enterprise in the Caucasus producing leather clothes, including *Burkas*, rather popular in the Caucasus. "Iaralov and Alikhanov," and "Karapetov and Berezhanov" were cast-iron foundries.

The wealthy Armenians resided in *Sololaki*, the most prestigious district of Tbilisi. Here they constructed sumptuous houses. "If you see any particularly large and handsome house and ask to whom it belongs, in nine cases out of ten "a rich Armenian" will be the answer"<sup>18</sup> - remarked Luigi Villari. As for the Armenian petty merchants, craftsmen and *dukhangs* (small inns and restaurants) owners, they lived mainly in *Avlabari* and *kvemo Kala*.

Several Armenian newspapers "Mshak", "Nordar", "Agbiur" and "Arzagank" were issued in Tbilisi<sup>19</sup>. Those Armenians who had long lived in Tbilisi spoke among each other in fluent Georgian and rarely used their native Armenian.<sup>20</sup> Many even forgot their mother-tongue and

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<sup>13</sup> The Armenian owners of the Tbilisi caravanserais were: Artsruni, Shadinovs, Khalatovs, Tamamshev, Bebutovs, Melikov, Kherodinov, Sarkisov, Khojaparukhov, Seilanov. Only a few caravanserais were owned by non-Armenians – Tekle batonishvili (princess), Zubalashvili, Maisuradze, Usta-Mekhti Hussein Ogly, Baron Brugen. As for the baths, their Armenian owners were Sumbatov, Melikov, Tamamshev, Shioev, Mirzoev, Chitakhov.

<sup>14</sup> E. Smith, *Researches of the Rev. Eli Smith and H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia: including a journey through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oortmiah and Salmas*, Vol.I, Boston-New York, 1833, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup> L. Villari, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus*, London, 1906. p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> See V. A. Gertzenstein, *Ilustrirovanni Sputnik po Tiflisu i ivo oktestnostam* (The Illustrated Guide Around Tiflis and its Outskirts), Tiflis, 1899, p. 76-88. Tiflis was the Old Russian name of Tbilisi.

<sup>17</sup> Earlier than that the popular French soap producing factory had opened up and belonged to the Toll brothers. Gertzenstein, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>18</sup> Villari, op. cit. p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Putevoditel po Tiflisu* (A Guide around Tbilisi), Issue K. N. Begichev, Tiflis, 1896, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> A. Bakhutov, *Putevoditel po gorodu Tiflisu s istoriko-etnograficheskom ocherkom i splanom goroda* (A guide Book about Tiflis with the Historical and Ethnographic Assay and the Plan of the City), Tiflis, 1913, p. 23.

maintained only the religion.<sup>21</sup> Those Armenians who settled in Tbilisi in a later period preferred to learn Russian, like the local Georgians did, since all civil and military affairs were carried out in Russian.

From the 1870s, the governance of Tbilisi shifted to the Armenian bourgeoisie. This turn of events was connected with the establishment of the city self-governance in 1876, which was based on the decree issued in Russia and required a property qualification from a person wanting to participate in the elections. The property qualification implied possession of immovable property within the city whose tax to the city amounted at least 1500 rubles.<sup>22</sup> Thus the city administration naturally occurred in the hands of the local Armenians, as the Georgian bourgeoisie had not so far developed, and Georgian landlords had lost the main source of income after the abolition of serfdom. Due to the paucity of workers, they could not cultivate their lands and were compelled to put their estates in mortgage, and were often unable to redeem them.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the Georgians possessing the requisite property qualification became a minority. The material and social superiority of the Armenians was an object of discontent for the Georgians and it was further intensified by the fact that the city governance was also under Armenian control.

Another old community of Tbilisi was the Persians, who belonged to a lower social class than the Armenians. They resided mainly in the district of *Seidabadi* (the city of the Seids).<sup>24</sup> The majority of Persians who lived in Tbilisi were construction-workers and tradesmen. The Persian construction-workers were considered skilful craftsmen.<sup>25</sup> However, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century their number considerably diminished, and basically only interior decorators remained, who adorned buildings with elements of Persian architecture. The Persians were actively engaged in the production of traditional Georgian squire bricks.<sup>26</sup> Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these bricks constituted the main construction material in Tbilisi. Many Persians were merchants, including the *dukhans* owners and street vendors.<sup>27</sup> Certain branches of commerce, such as carpet trading, were dominated by them. Their *dukhans* and dineries converged in one of the trading quarters of Tbilisi, *Meidani*, where the Persians offered the public their traditional cuisine. Moreover, the Persians were skilful bath shampooers, whose deft work made the Tbilisi baths so popular.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Most of the Armenians were Monophysites, with the exception of a small number of Catholics. There was an Armenian ecclesiastic seminary in Tbilisi. Until the 1880s Armenian schools were independent and were directly controlled by the Catholicos of Armenia. See Gertzenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 51; Giorgadze, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>22</sup> On the basis of the amended civil finding in 1892 and 1899, the Central Administration tightened control over the self-government. See Giorgadze, *op. cit.* p. 367-384.

<sup>23</sup> The Government issued the so called "order" that the nobility could take credits. For the reason that they were unable to repay their debts, in 1886 the Georgian nobility was absolved from the payment of half of their debts, but they were obliged to pay the other half during 37 years. See Giorgadze, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-296.

<sup>24</sup> The Shah of Iran, Sefi settled the Seids in the vicinity of the baths and on the mount of tabori.

<sup>25</sup> M. Alexidze, *sparselebi da sparsuli kultura XIX saukunis saqartveloshi* (Persians and the Persian Culture in the 19th Century Georgia), Tbilisi, 2009, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Many 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers described the Tbilisi baths. See R. Ker-Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia etc. During the years 1817-1820*, In two Volumes, London, 1821-1822, p. 118-122. F. von Freygang, *Letters from the Caucasus and Georgia; To which are added, the Account of a journey into Persia in 1812 and an abridged history of Persia since the time of Nadir Shah*, London, 1823, p. 77; F. Corf, *Vospominania o Persii* (Recollections about Persia), St. Petersburg, 1838, p. 31, 35; J. Curtin, *Memoirs*, Madison, 1940, p. 149; O. Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia, Notes on Travel in a land of Women, Wine and Song*, London, 1888, pp. 26-27; E..L. Markov, *Ocherki Kavkaza*, (Notes on the Caucasus), St. Petersburg, 1887, pp. 245-248; Majed Os-

Tbilisian Persians differed palpably from their countrymen. They practically did not observe Islamic traditions as they were practiced in their country. For example, the Persian women did not cover their faces while walking in the streets. A Persian pilgrim Mirza Mohammad Hossein Pharahan, who visited Tbilisi in 1885, wrote in his diary: "Muslims here are just like Christians. They do not observe the rules of the diet; Feed on Christian food and eat bovine meat slaughtered by the Christians, moreover they indulge in drinking all kinds of alcohol."<sup>29</sup>

In the urban development of Tbilisi, German migrants from Wurttemberg and Baden played an important role. They resided in Mikhail's Avenue and its vicinity, in the left bank of the river Mtkvari. Their community was isolated and never practiced mixed marriages.<sup>30</sup> They spoke in German among themselves and used Russian only in business intercourses. In 1872 the railway between Tbilisi and Poti was laid and the railway station was built near the German colony. From that time, Russians, Armenians, Tatars and Persians settled around the colony, but the Germans still avoided the newcomers. The Germans had their own places for entertainment, clubs, shelter for the elderly, schools and church. The German colonists brought in the culture of beer to Tbilisi. They opened up breweries and restaurants. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were five beer breweries in Tbilisi.<sup>31</sup>

Since the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by Russia, its influence became tangible. Although the Russian population was not large in Tbilisi, its representatives occupied influential administrative and military positions. The Russian officials resided in Mtatsminda district and in the vicinity of Viceroy's Palace. Unlike other citizens of the city, the Russian officials tended to return home after having completed their tenure in Tbilisi, despite the fact that Russian government encouraged their settlement in the region. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the policy of resettling Russians to the Transcaucasia was intensified. In 1897 a special law on colonization was adopted according to which a village, or a group of people, willing to migrate was granted special privileges: they were supported financially, free timber as construction material and credits for future plots of lands were offered to them in addition to travel allowances.<sup>32</sup>

Tbilisi also happened to be a haven for the different Russian sects – Molokans, Dukhobors, Baptists, and Subotniks. Among them most numerous were Molokans.<sup>33</sup> Russian authorities suppressed Molokans and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century their mass deportation from Russia to

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Saltane, *qalaq tbilisis agcera* (The description of the city of Tbilisi), The texts was edited and commented by M. Mamatsashvili, Tbilisi, 1971, pp. 85-87; F.F. Tornau, *Vospominania Ruskovo Oficera* (Memoirs of the Russian Officer), Moscow, "AIRO-XX", 2002. A. Pushkin, *Puteshestvie v Arzrum vo vremia paxoda 1829 goda*, (The Journey to Arzum during the Campaign of 1829), *Selected works*, Moscow, 1990, pp. 384-385; A. Dumas, *kavkasia* (The Caucasus), translation by T. Kikodze, Tbilisi, 1970, pp. 295-299; J. Curtin, *Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin*, Madison, 1940, p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Aleksidze, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> W. E. Curtis noted that Germans hated Muslims and the Armenians. The Germans considered Muslims to be worse than the pagans. As for Armenians, they believed that they were treacherous and insidious people. See W.E. Curtis, *Around the Back Sea*, New York, 1911, pp. 118-120.

<sup>31</sup> The First brewery was opened up by Luisa Mader in 1850. Friedrich Wetzel did the same in 1865. Two more breweries were established in 1865-1885 by Dietrich and Gutbordt and lastly, Meidel constructed one more brewery in 1880s. See Gerzenstein, op.cit., p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Giorgadze, op. cit., pp. 218-224.

<sup>33</sup> The Molokan sect was created by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Tambov district of Russia. At the behest of their leader – Semion Uklein, they merged with the sect of the Dukhobors. The Molokans rejected Icons, the Fasting and the Orthodox liturgy as a whole. They gathered in worship houses where they sang and read the Old Testament. By 1900 their number in the Russian Empire amounted to 1,200,000.

the peripheries of the Empire was executed. In Georgia the Molokans settled in Samtskhe-Javakheti, and in the regions of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. At first they were forbidden to live in the Caucasian cities and towns. Later, state policy on this question became more liberal, which prompted the Molokans to settle in the cities. In Tbilisi they appeared in the 1830s, preferring to live in *Rikhe* neighborhood, but in the 1850s they created their own community in the territory of the *akhali kukia*. The Tbilisians called it the Molokans' district.<sup>34</sup> Russian-speaking authors sometimes referred to it as the "Molokanskaja Sloboda".<sup>35</sup> In the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of Molokans in Tbilisi was rapidly increasing. Later their population shrank, which could be explained by the conversion of the Molokans to Orthodox Christianity and their merger with other sects, mainly with Baptists.

The Molokans' district was located on both sides of the railway station. One street was even named *Molokanskaia Ulitsa* (Molokan Street). Here, the Molokans created their place of worship in the first floor of a two-storey house. They had their own graveyard in the district of *kukia*. In the 1860s the Molokans set up the market, which was known as the Molokan Bazaar, a popular market functioning until the 1960s. The Molokans traded fish, vegetables, salt and dairy products. They worked mainly as coachmen and owned the best phaetons in the city.

Besides the above mentioned communities, Tbilisi was inhabited by Jews, Poles, French, Ukrainians, and various nationalities of the Caucasus. In general it was hard to say to whom Tbilisi belonged, and it was a special concern of the Georgians. By the end of the century Noe Jhordania wrote the following in the newspaper "Kvali":

"At the first sight it is hard to say what country's or what people's capital you are in. In the lower society you hear the Georgian, the upper classes and intellectuals speak Russian, merchants and in trading places you hear nothing but the Armenian. The city's economy is in Armenians' hands, the administration is controlled by the Russians; in the meantime Georgians occupy unimportant positions and deal with petty affairs."<sup>36</sup>

## Transformation of the Feudal City

When the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was annexed by Russia in 1801, Tbilisi actually represented a feudal city. It was feudal in terms of both its governance system and its appearance. Moreover, it was a semi-agrarian city. The city dwellers owned plots of cultivated land either in their backyards or a bit further away. They also owned vineyards, gardens, spring waters and water conduits for the irrigation of their lands.<sup>37</sup>

The majority of the city's population were not free citizens, but rather the King's or landlords' serfs. There were about 3,498 households in Tbilisi by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, of which serfs constituted 3,400 households, i.e. 97.2%. The king was the main owner of the serfs.<sup>38</sup> The reins of the city's economy were in the hands of the Royal Court. Its representatives controlled different commercial houses – the caravanserais and *dukhans*. The

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<sup>34</sup> T. Kvirkvelia, *zveltbilisuri dasaxelebani* (The names of the Old Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1985, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> D. M. Bakradze and N. Berdzenov, *Tiflis v istoricheskom i etnograficheskom otnoshenii* (Tiflis in the historical and Ethnographical Context), St. Petersburg, 1870, p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> N. Jhordania, Tbilisi, "kvali", 1898, N 29.

<sup>37</sup> Sh. Meskhia, *tbilisis istoria*, (History of Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1990, Vol. I, p. 440.

<sup>38</sup> The king owned about 1500 families; see Meskhia, op. cit., p. 363.

Royal Court also controlled the guilds, unions of merchants and craftsmen. Only 98 households (2.8%) possessed the title of free citizens.<sup>39</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century the cities of Georgia were ruled by *mouravebi* (stewards) selected by the King from the aristocracy. For instance, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century King Erekle II appointed his son-in-law, Prince David Tsitsishvili, his daughter Mariam's husband. The *mouravi* controlled the law-court and appointed subordinates to maintain order in the city. Every city was also supervised by the King's appointees, *mamasakhlisebi*, who were selected from the merchants' class.

As noted above, Tbilisi had the outline of a typically feudal city. Its major part was situated within the old city walls and comprised three districts: *sakutriv tpilisi* (Tbilisi proper), also known as *Seidabadi*, which harbored the famous baths, and *Kala*, the most densely populated district, were located on the right side of the river Mtkvari. The suburb *Avlabari* was laid on the left bank of the river. *Garetubani* (outskirts) located north-westward from Tbilisi was mainly occupied by the King's and Queen's gardens, which became the main district of Tbilisi several decades later.

The architectural landmarks of the old citadel *Nariqala* included churches, mosques and the baths. According to the German orientalist, Julius Klaproth, who visited Tbilisi in 1807, there were 15 Orthodox Christian churches, 20 Armenian and 2 Catholic churches in Tbilisi.<sup>40</sup> Out of Tbilisi's two Mosques, one, which served the Sunni Tatars, was destroyed as a result of Agha-Mohammad Khan's incursion into Georgia, though its fascinating Minaret stood intact. The right and the left sides of the city were connected solely by Avlabari Bridge.<sup>41</sup> The markets and several caravanserais were functioning. At that time Tbilisi had two bazaars comprising 704 stores run by Armenian, Tatar and Georgian merchants. Each street harbored shops of a certain trade. "These markets comprehend, according to the Asiatic fashion, the work-shops of all the artisans. You here find a whole street inhabited exclusively by shoemakers, another occupied by the shops of cap-makers, and a third by those of smiths. Silkspinnners, silver smiths, gun-makers, and sword-cutlers, all pursue their respective occupations, and by their public industry afford a pleasing spectacle to the traveler, so that the basar is one of the most interesting walks in Tiflis." – wrote J. Klaproth.<sup>42</sup>

The streets of the city were barricaded with ruins. As Frederica Von Freygang remarked, Tbilisi of those days represented a mass of debris, a melancholy monument of ravages committed by Agha Mohammad Khan and his troops.<sup>43</sup> The aristocratic quarter of Tbilisi, Anchiskhati district, where there used to be the palaces of the King, the Queen, Batonishvili (Prince), Catholicos and several influential feudal lords, were also destroyed. Only the gates survived of the King's Palace.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the city was filthy and untidy. There were

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<sup>39</sup> Sh. Chkhetia, *tpilisis istoriisatvis* (For Tbilisi's History), Tbilisi, 1938, p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> Polievktov, Natadze, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> The Iranians burnt down the Avlabari Bridge during Agha Mohammad Khan's incursion into Georgia. At the behest of King Erekle II the restoration of the wooden bridge commenced during the same year. The construction of the bridge took two years. The population of Tbilisi who were separated from each other by the bridgeless river, started to use flat bottom boats, which had the capacity to carry people and a small amount of cargo. In 1805 the restored bridge was demolished by the rough waters of the river. The Russian leadership constructed a new bridge in the same year which functioned until 1826. See N. Kvezereli-Kopadze, *The Bridges of Tbilisi*, Tbilisi, 1961, pp. 11-21.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Litarary Miscellany*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 76., 1874, pp. 329-331.

<sup>43</sup> F. Von Freygang, *Letters from the Caucasus and Georgia*, London, 1823, p. 128.

<sup>44</sup> Sh. Meskhia, op. cit., p. 427.



no pavements. "The streets are without exception narrow; and from the primitive state of the pathways, intolerably filthy in wet weather, and dusty in dry" – remarked the British artist Sir Robert Ker Porter.<sup>45</sup> The sole development of the narrow streets of the city constituted mud huts and a few flat-roofed two-storey houses.

Every Governor of the South Caucasus strived to make a contribution to modernizing Tbilisi. According to Robert Lyall, General Ermolov had determined to convert Tbilisi into a European city and the only district to be left intact would be *Avlabari*.<sup>46</sup> The military were well aware of his wish and walking along the streets and lanes of Tbilisi they would snatch a brick or two from the houses they passed by to make them crumble and fall.<sup>47</sup> Following General Ermolov's order, in 1818 a great deal of bricks were withdrawn from the walls of Nariqala Fortress and Saint Nikoloz Church on the territory of the fortress was transformed into a gunpowder depot.<sup>48</sup>

Major changes in the life of the city were brought about during the years of Mikhail Vorontsov's rule (1844-1854), the first Viceroy of the Russian Tsar in the Caucasus.<sup>49</sup> The Viceroy's vigorous activity rapidly impacted on the development of Tbilisi. In 1846 the Public Library situated in front of the Viceroy's Palace started functioning, and by 1852 the Library already contained 13051 volumes.<sup>50</sup> In 1846 the newspaper "Kavkaz" was founded and was published in Russian and Armenian languages. The Section of the Imperial Geographic Society and the Caucasian Society of Agriculture and the new Observatory were opened up. On Vorontsov's initiative the interior of the Sioni Chathedral was renovated.<sup>51</sup> The old Ottoman Mosque on Botanical Street was restored in 1846-1851 by Italian architect Giovanni Skudieri.<sup>52</sup>

In 1849-1851, a new stone bridge was constructed to replace the existing stone one, connecting the right bank of the river with the new districts of Tbilisi, Kukia and Chughureti.<sup>53</sup> In 1858 Mnatsakanov Bridge was constructed. Sanapiro and Michael Streets were planned. New streets popped up on the right side of the river and the area of the former Royal Gardens was used for the construction of new houses. Mushtaidi Garden was acquired and made public. In 1848-50, on Vorontsov's initiative a new street was laid in *Seidabadi* where the custom house used to be. Previously, this street, stretching downwards, had not been paved and got muddy in rain, which hampered the transportation of goods.<sup>54</sup> Owing to the newly laid street, the connection of *Seidabadi* and *Ortachala* to the centre of the city improved.

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<sup>45</sup> R. K. Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, During the years 1817,1818,1819 and 1820*, London, 1821, pp. 116-117.

<sup>46</sup> R. Lyall, *Travels in Russia, the Crimea, the Caucasus and Georgia*, London, 1825, p. 521.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 520.

<sup>48</sup> Pl. Ioseliani, *Opisanie drevnostei goroda Tiflisa* (Description of the Antiquities of the City of Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1866, p. 250. Later, as a result of the explosion which occurred in the said warehouse, all buildings that existed inside the citadel were completely destroyed.

<sup>49</sup> In 1845 the post of the Viceroy in the Caucasus was created. The Viceroy enjoyed special rights and reported directly to the Tsar. The Viceroy governed the Caucasus according to special decree. At the same time the Viceroy was the Commander in Chief of the military forces in the Caucasus. See Giorgadze, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> K. Begichev, *Putevoditel po Tiflisu*, (A guide for Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1896, pp. 116-118.

<sup>51</sup> The painting of the interior of the Sioni Chathedral was done by Grigol Gagarin in 1851-1855.

<sup>52</sup> *The Old Towns of Georgia: Tbilisi*, Tbilisi, 2002, pp. 115-116.

<sup>53</sup> N. Kvezereli-Kopadze, *tbilisis xidebi* (The bridges of Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1961, pp. 52-63.

<sup>54</sup> A. Kishmishev, *Lichnie vospominania* (Personal Memoirs), Tiflis, pp. 5-6.

A special event for Tbilisians during Vorontsov's rule was the construction of the theatre on Yerevan Square. The theatre was designed by Giovanni Scudieri, and built in 1847-1851. It was the first theatre building in Georgia.<sup>55</sup> This Project was extremely important for Graf Vorontsov. Even after his departure from the Caucasus the former Viceroy continued to raise funds for the theatre.<sup>56</sup> It was built partly at the expense of Tbilisian merchant Gabriel Tamamshev and comprised a caravanserai too. There were warehouses and shops in its basement. The building was surrounded by shops from the outside. The theatre hall itself, seating 700 spectators, occupied the central part of the building. The facades of the caravanserai were designed in the style of the Italian Renaissance architecture. The interior, painted by Grigol Gagarin, was in the oriental style. Despite its eclecticism the theatre building impressed visitors. Alexander Dumas wrote: "[The Tbilisi theatre] is, if not the best, at least one of the best theatres on the face of the earth."<sup>57</sup> In 1855, British soldiers, captured by the Russians while General Muraviov conquered Kars, were brought to Tbilisi. The British captives frequented Tbilisi Theatre. Colonel Atwell Lake recollected: "In the evenings...we amused ourselves by going to the theatre, where our party very comfortable filled a box... The house was one of the prettiest I ever saw; Elegant in shape, and elaborately fitted. Count Vorontsov, who for a long time resided in Tiflis, had expended large sums of money on it. The dresses were quite magnificent, having been procured by him from Paris. The acting was above mediocrity, and the music good – the young ladies of the ballet being, of course, beautiful".<sup>58</sup> Some foreign travellers wondered to find the theatre in such a remote place. J. H. Savile commented: "... we went to the opera – nay! start not! – a real Italian opera in Georgia – to see the company and the "Ballo in Maschera"... decorations [are] in white and gold in Moorish style; the stage boxes lined in blue silk, and the upper boxes decorated à l' Alhambra."<sup>59</sup> As for Tbilisians themselves, the theatre and the Italian opera was so much admired, that popular arias could be heard in the city's streets sung by the common people.

Unfortunately the life of the theatre was not destined to last long. During the night of 22-23 September 1874, the theatre building caught fire.<sup>60</sup> The fire was witnessed by the American linguist Jeremiah Curtin. He watched from the Hotel "Kavkaz" on the Yerevan Square, just opposite the theatre: "The city has no water supply or had none at this time. The small quantity that was used in the vain attempt to extinguish the fire was brought from the river in barrels and sheepskin bags. Had there been engines and plenty of water, the fire could have been put out in a few minutes and with small loss of property. As it was, the entire block burned down. In the Block was the Opera house, a fine building, and several best stores in the city."<sup>61</sup>

Urban development of Tbilisi continued after Vorontsov. The newly built districts more than ever resembled the centres of European cities. Golovin Avenue was the main street of the

<sup>55</sup> V. Beridze, *tbilisis xurotmozgvreba 1801-1917* (The Architecture of Tbilisi, 1801-1917), Tbilisi, V. I., 1960, pp. 58-63.

<sup>56</sup> A. Jersild, N. Melkadze, The Dilemmas of Enlightenment in the Eastern Borderlands: The Theater and Library in Tbilisi, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 3 (1), Winter 2002, p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Dumas, *kavkasia* (The Caucasus), Tbilisi, 1970, p. 275.

<sup>58</sup> Atwell Lake, *Kars and our Captivity in Russia*, London, 1856, pp. 256-257.

<sup>59</sup> J. H. Savile, *Half round of the Old World, Some Account of a Tour in Russia, the Caucasus, Persia, and Turkey, 1865-1866*, London, 1867, p. 125.

<sup>60</sup> After the fire, the building was restored without the theatre. There was just the storehouse; in 1930 during the reconstruction of the square the storehouse was demolished. See Beridze, op. cit., Vol., I, p. 59.

<sup>61</sup> *Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin*, edited with notes and introduction by Joseph Schafer, Madison, 1940.

right bank of Tbilisi. According to the map drawn in 1800 we see in its place a narrow path that coincided with Dighomi route. Golovin Avenue drew particular attention from the Caucasian governors ever since the first decades of the century. It was the street where the Viceroy's palace was situated. In the 1830s, when the plan for the development of Garetubani was adopted, the government principally insisted on creating a special artistic outline for this street that would distinguish it from all others. At that time the main street of Garetubani was still unnamed and only in 1848 it was named after Golovin<sup>62</sup>. In the same year a pavement was laid on one of its sides and green spaces were arranged in front of it. In 1845-47 the new Viceroy's Palace was erected. The palace was originally designed by I. Semionov. But the present shape the palace acquired can be attributed to the architect Otto Jacob Simonson in 1845-1847. The same architect designed a plan for Alexander's Garden.

During the last decades of the 19th century, Golovin Avenue, with its administrative buildings, theatres, clubs, luxury stores and hotels, turned into a cultural and financial centre of the city. Large-scale profitable houses with Europeanized facades replaced minor residential houses. However, large public buildings determined the architectural shape of the street. The Caucasian Museum, designed by Albert Zaltzman in the renaissance-baroque style, was built in 1868-1869. In 1885-1888 the same architect developed a design for the Military-Historical Museum whose façade was decorated in baroque repertoire. In 1871-1889 Alexander Nevsky Church, designed by David Grimm and Robert Gedike, was erected. The building was constructed in Russo-Byzantine style, and its massive forms and dimensions towered over the adjoining settings. In 1896 the construction of the state-owned theatre designed by Victor Schroter in Moorish style was accomplished. In 1898-1901 the building of the Artistic Society was constructed. It was decorated with Baroque motifs designed by Korneli Tatishchev. In 1884 *Konka* (a horse-drawn tram) was arranged in Golovin Avenue and in 1897, the main street of Tbilisi was provided with electric lighting.

The main street of the left bank of Tbilisi was Mikhail's Avenue. It was the most prestigious district of the left bank, inhabited mostly by German settlers. Mikhail's Avenue was one of the most populous areas in Tbilisi. It was beautified by a number of public gardens designed by Germans. The gardens were gas-lit and represented places of gathering and entertainment. Some of them had buffets, ale-houses and stages, where artists from overseas held performances. Large crowds of people gathered there particularly in the summer months. At that time *Tourists' Club* and *Tiflis Assembly* changed their residence and settled there, while the *Russki Klub* (Russian Club) and *Nemetskoe Sobranie* (German Assembly) were operative all the year round. Amateur concerts, and plays in German were often held there. Besides the clubs, several cinemas – the *Modern*, *Lira* (lyre), *Odeon*, *Apollo*, *Moulin Rouge* and *Saturn* were operating in Mikhail's Avenue.<sup>63</sup> The Russian Theatre of Comic Opera was also located in Mikhail's Avenue, in the garden of *Sans souci*.

Despite the urban and architectural novelties brought about by the time and the Russian administration, Tbilisi never became a purely European city. For the Russian authorities the old Tbilisi houses bore Asiatic traits but it was difficult to destroy all of them and to design the streets anew, as it required immense financial resources. Though even the new quarters, e.g., *Kukia* and *Chughureti* were full of one-or-two-storey vernacular houses. Moreover, the

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<sup>62</sup> G. Bezhanishvili, *rustavelis prospeqti da moedani*, (Rustaveli Avenue and Square), Tbilisi, 1967, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Tiflis i ivo okrectnocti. Ilustrirovanni putevoditel* (Tiflis and Its Outskirts. Illustrated Guidebook.) Tbilisi, 1913.

upper streets of the prestigious districts, such as *Sololaki* and *Mtatsminda* were full of these type of houses.

In addition, there was a lack of social amenities. For instance, only the central parts of the city were supplied with water, whereas the rest of the population used the Mtkvari water to drink. Drinkable water from the Mtkvari, from the natural streams and wells, was carried by ox-carts, donkeys, and by *metulukhcheebi* (water-carriers). "The houses of Tiflis are provided with water in a strange fashion. It is carried by horses, in curious leather bags hung on either side of a rude saddle. At the house door, the horse is stopped, a large measure is set on the ground, and water is drawn from the bag to fill it, each house-keeper being furnished as much as she demands. Water and wine are also carried in skin bottles made from complete hides. Men may be seen walking along the streets; or a wagon may jolt by, bearing a huge buffalo-skin dilated with wine", described the American journalist V. Nelson.<sup>64</sup> Even by 1905 the city was not yet lit.<sup>65</sup> Only the central streets were paved, whereas the suburbs were unpaved so that in summer they were dusty and in rainy weather got too muddy to walk.

The old quarters of the city and its renowned bazaars were preserved almost intact over the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Owing to them Tbilisi preserved an ancient oriental setting and was particularly attractive to the foreign tourists. By the close of the century Charles O. Dana, an American traveller, wrote that in Tbilisi "as in all other oriental or semi-oriental town, the most interesting lounging place is the bazaar."<sup>66</sup> The major bazaars of Tbilisi were *Shua Bazari* (the middle bazaar, i.e. Armenian Bazaar), and *Meidani*. Both of them were located in *Kala*, one of the oldest parts of Tbilisi. *Shua Bazari* comprised of two parallel rows of counters. The brick houses were divided into two parts – the front one, where the traders stood had a function of a store, and the rear part of the counter was used as storehouses. By day the bazaar used to be crammed with people. The *Meidani*, excitedly described by some travellers, actually constituted a small trading square. It directly butted *Seidabadi* and was surrounded by low buildings from all sides. Predominantly Persians and Tatars inhabited the area of *Meidani*. They ran *dukhangs* and bakeries in *Meidani*.<sup>67</sup>

The *Shua Bazari* and *Meidani* reminded travelers of famous oriental bazaars and they often won even greater praise. According to the English traveller Harry de Windt, "The Armenian and Persian bazaars are perhaps the most interesting, I doubt whether the streets of Yezd or Bokhara present so strange and picturesque a sight, such vivid effects of movement and colour."<sup>68</sup> The French industrialist and artist, Alfred Koechlin Schwartz wrote that the Tbilisi Bazaars were so picturesque that one found it difficult to depict them.<sup>69</sup>

The spectacle was created not only by the narrow streets with the counters distributed according to the trades, but also by the people bustling around. Tbilisi bazaars represented a kind of anthropological museum. Harry de Windt gives a pictorial description of the people walking around in ethnic attire: "Every race, every nationality is represented, from the stalwart, Fruddy-faced Russian soldier in flat white cap and olive-green tunic, to the grave, stately Arab merchant with huge turban and white draperies, fresh from Bagdad or Bussorah. Georgians and Circassians in scarlet tunics and silver cartridge-belts, Turks in fez and frock-

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<sup>64</sup> W. S. Nelson, On the Borders of Czardom, *New England Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 6, October, 1888.

<sup>65</sup> T. Kvirkvelia, *Arxitektura Tbilisi* (Architecture of Tbilisi), Tbilisi, 1982, p. 58.

<sup>66</sup> Charles A. Dana, *Eastern Journey*, New York, 1898, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> A. Bakhutov, *Putevoditel po gor. Tiflisu* (Guidebook to the city of Tiflis), Tiflis, 1913, pp. 46-47.

<sup>68</sup> Harry De Windt, *A Ride to India across Persia and Baluchistan*, 1891.

<sup>69</sup> Alfred Koechlin-Schwartz, *Un Touriste Au Caucase*, Paris, 1881, p. 236.

coat, Greeks and Albanians in snowy petticoats and black gaiters, Khivans in furs and quaint conical lamb's-wool hats, Tartars from the Steppes, Turkomans from Merv, Parsees from Bombay, African negroes, - all may be seen in the Tiflis Bazaar during the busy part of the day."<sup>70</sup> The same picture prevails in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and Luigi Villari made essentially an identical remark: "The most interesting feature of the bazaar, and indeed of the whole of Tiflis, is the population... At Tiflis you find specimens of all these races, and in the bazaars you can hear all their languages spoken, with the addition of such extraneous tongues as Polish, German, French, Italian, Hindustani, Sart, and sometimes even Chinese."<sup>71</sup>

As a whole, Tbilisi was a "city-hybrid": its new part *Garetubani*, with its public buildings, comfortable private residential houses and wide, straight streets resembled "Small Paris". Whereas the old quarters with their dukhans, bazaars, baths and caravanserais preserved oriental shape. Baron August von Haxthausen wrote: "[Tiflis] has a peculiar aspect: on the side from which we entered, the quarter inhabited by Russians, it has a perfectly European look: straight streets, rows of modern houses, elegant shops, milliners, apothecaries, even a bookseller, with cafes, and churches with cupolas and towers... But where this European town ends, one of perfectly Asiatic character begins, with bazaars, caravansaries, and long streets, in which the various trades are carried on in open shops... In no place are both the contrasts and the connecting links between Europe and Asia found in same immediate juxtaposition as in Tiflis."<sup>72</sup>

If we compare the general tendencies of Tbilisi development to those of Baku, Sarajevo and Salonica, we see that in all four cases we get the same picture. Certainly, urban morphology of these cities is not identical, but similar are the introvert quarters with religious buildings, bazaars, caravanserais and baths established in the Middle Ages and preserved basically unchanged over the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Adjacent to medieval irregular streets, grid plans were used for new quarters. In the second half of the century the process of urbanization developed rapidly. However, the new transport system, water supply, lighting, paving of the streets – all this was primarily carried out in new districts and only reached the old neighborhoods a good deal later.

Baku developed considerably from the 1860s. In 1859, after the earthquake in the city of Shemakh the regional centre was moved to Baku and the region (*gubernia*) itself was named after Baku. However, the most important factor was the oil production that started in the 1870s. Baku had been a calm city until then and lagged far behind Tbilisi in significance. European entrepreneurs opened companies and representations in Baku and started to invest capital. Among them were the Nobel Brothers and Rothschild family. Baku started to develop rapidly outside the old city walls where major administrative, public and commercial buildings were built. But *Icheri Sheher* (the inner city), established in the Middle Ages, remained the centre of the city and maintained its prior significance. The officials and the rich citizens preferred to live there and constructed luxury houses in the vicinity of the baths and mosques.<sup>73</sup> "Within the town shoddy buildings in the European manner jostle shoulders with

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<sup>70</sup> Harry De Windt, *A Ride to India across Persia and Baluchistan*, 1891.

<sup>71</sup> Villari, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>72</sup> August Von Haxthausen, *Transcaucasia, Sketches of the Nations and Races between the Black Sea and the Caspian*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>73</sup> Sh. S. Fatulaev-Figarov, "Arkhitekturnaia Entsiklopedia Baku" (*Encyclopedia of Architecture of Baku*), Baku, Ankara, 1998, p. 17.

Oriental booths and tea-houses; renaissance villas in white stucco face squalid rows of Tartar shops," wrote the travellers J. M Hone and P. L. Dickinson.<sup>74</sup>

Until 1878 Sarajevo was a typically Ottoman city, divided into micro-districts called *Mahala*. Every *Mahala* included about 30-40 houses, a mosque, a bakery, a store, *mekteb* (Koran school) and coffee-houses.<sup>75</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Empire aimed to turn Sarajevo into a symbol of administrative prominence.<sup>76</sup> The design and architectural development of the streets distributed along the river Miljacka, and the placing of public buildings along them echoed Parisian projects of Haussmann, and Vienna's Ringstrasse. Haussmannization was not unknown to Salonica either. In 1869 when Pasha Sabri became the ruler of Salonica he had the Vardar Gate and the eastern part of the fortress walls pulled down. As a result, for the first time the city became visible from the outside and from the sea.<sup>77</sup> The main boulevard was moved to where the city wall had previously been. It is noteworthy that the new *Konak*, the Pasha's palace, built according to the project of Vitaliano Poselli, was designed not in the Oriental, but in neoclassicist, style.

On the whole the surge of urban planning most clearly reflected on the architecture of the public buildings. They basically determined the "Europeanisation" of the newly developed districts of these cities. Unlike the residential houses where local traditions were preserved for a long time, the architecture of the public buildings developed entirely according to imported models. The buildings were erected in diverse historical styles. Classicism in some cases was the source of this trend, while in other cases it was Renaissance and Baroque, and sometimes Moorish style. Such buildings might be found in any European city so that their identification according to either regional or national features is impossible. The only thing distinguishing Tbilisi public buildings from European ones was their small scale. The complicated relief and narrow streets did not permit the construction of large-scale multi-storey buildings.

As an illustration we may consider Tbilisi, Sarajevo and Baku City Halls. Their appearance was due to the development of the Municipal administration. Each of them represents a different architectural model. The City Hall of Tbilisi was built in 1882-1886 by design of Aleksander Ozerov and Paul Stern in the Square of Yerevan. The main façade of the building was designed in pseudo-Moorish style and overlooks the square. Owing to its polychromic facades, broken up by homogeneous, pointed arched windows, the building looks monotonous. The City Hall of Sarajevo was similarly designed in pseudo-Moorish style by a Viennese architect, Karl Vittek. The Sarajevo City Hall is one of the best examples of pseudo-Moorish style of the Europe of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Vittek travelled to study oriental architecture specially for this project. The imposing building of the City Hall is articulated by the central risalit and side tower-like wings<sup>[MB1]</sup>. On the polychromic facades the entire repertoire of Spanish Moorish style – stalactites, niches arching inwards, low columns taken across by horseshoe-shaped arches is used. As regards the City Council building of Baku, it was designed by a Polish civil engineer, I. Goslavski. The architect used renaissance-baroque motifs. The centre of the immense three-storey building is flanked by a tower-like

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<sup>74</sup> J. M. Hone and P. L. Dickinson, *Persia in Revolution, with Notes of Travel in the Caucasus*, London, Dublin, 1910, pp. 161-162.

<sup>75</sup> B. Mehmed, *Sarajevo throughout the History – from a Neolithic Settlement to a Metropolis*, Sarajevo, 2008, p. 84.

<sup>76</sup> R. J. Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, Michigan, 2009, p. 60

<sup>77</sup> M. Mazower, *Salonica City of Ghosts, Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*, London, New York, Toronto and Sydney, 2005, p. 239.

entrance, the mansard is determined by the style of the Second Empire, and the ground floor is covered by a rustic imitation of Florentine Palazzos.

## Architecture of Residential Houses

As we have already noted, unlike public buildings, houses preserved local building traditions for a long time. The houses built in Tbilisi in the 19th century typically differ in terms of planning, structure, positioning on the street and the décor of the facades.<sup>78</sup> Some types of house existed until the beginning of the 20th century, while others disappeared. For instance, *darbazuli sakhli* (earth dwelling house with central wooden pillar and hole for light and smoke), whose development counts back many hundreds of years and which was widespread not only in the cities, but in the villages as well, entirely disappeared from Tbilisi development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as its characteristic rural-style organisation of space could not meet the needs of a modern city.<sup>79</sup> *Baniani* or flat-roofed houses too, that constituted a significant part of the city development and added a peculiar trait to Tbilisi in the 1860s, gradually disappeared from its architectural landscape.<sup>80</sup> The flat-roofed houses were covered not by flanked, but rather by flat roofs. The roof of one house served as a yard for another. Friedrich Parrot, a German professor gives a description of those flat-roofed houses: "... that is, the peculiar roof, if we may be allowed to give this name to the uppermost floor or terrace of their houses. This formed of a layer of earth and stiff clay, about two feet thick, quite even, but inclined by about two inches to one side, so that during a heavy shower of rain the water may not run off at all sides, but be directed through a couple of openings in the parapet, which rises about a foot above the level of the roof."<sup>81</sup> The roof of the flat-roofed houses had a kind of a social function. It represented a resting and entertainment place.

Tbilisi houses of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were inward-looking<sup>[MB2]</sup>, basically deprived of any kind of décor that can be evidenced by the graphic data and the descriptions of the contemporaries. The face of Tbilisi as an open city with fretted wooden balconies and walkways — overhanging bridges connecting houses — developed later, in the late 1830s. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the essential part of the residential houses, the balconies, replaced the *bani*, that used to be the place of gathering and entertainment. People had tea, breakfast, dinner and sometimes even slept on the balconies.<sup>82</sup> They were in a way, part of the street. On Sundays Tbilisi inhabitants would keep an eye on the city life from their balconies. The British Captain Richard Wilbraham depicts such a scene: "On a Sunday afternoon the balconies of Tiflis present an animated scene. The fair Georgians, partially concealed by their long white mantillas, assemble there in groups, to see and to be seen. At that distance they

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<sup>78</sup> Vakhtang Beridze studied the typology of residential houses most thoroughly. See V. Beridze, *tbilisis khurotmodzgvreba 1801-1917*" (*Tbilisi Architecture 1801-1917*), Vol. I., Tbilisi, 1960., Vol. II., Tbilisi, 1963.

<sup>79</sup> V. Tsintsadze, *Tbilisi, Arkhitektura Starogo Goroda I Zhilie Doma Pervoi Polovini XIX Stoletia*" (Tbilisi, Architecture of the Old City and Residential Houses of the First Half of the XIX Century), Tbilisi, 1958, p. 72.

<sup>80</sup> In 1828 based on the Russian Emperor Nikolai the First's decree, it was prohibited to build flat-roofed houses in the vicinity of main streets. Central Archive, Fund 209, No. 88.

<sup>81</sup> F. Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, New York, 1859, pp. 60-61.

<sup>82</sup> A. Bakhutov, *Putevoditel po gorodu Tiflisu s istoriko-etnograficheskim ocherkom i s planom goroda*, (Guidebook to the City of Tiflis with a Historical-Ethnographic Review and the Plan of the City), Tiflis, 1913, p. 25.

look pretty and fascinating.<sup>83</sup> It is notable that houses with balconies were spread all over Tbilisi both in *Kala* and *Avlabari*, inhabited by Georgians, Armenians and Persians, and likewise in *Chughureti* and *Kukia*, where German settlers and Russian Molokans lived. In addition to the façade wooden hanging balconies, every house in Tbilisi, notwithstanding its dimensions and magnitude, overlooked its courtyard with open wooden galleries or glazed loggias.<sup>84</sup> Only a few houses without balconies at the rear overlooking the courtyards were found in the Tbilisi."

In the 1830s and 1840s emerged the type of Tbilisi houses combining on the one hand, local craft traditions and on the other hand, architectural forms imported from Russia, namely the classicistic motifs.<sup>85</sup> Houses of this type sprang up in various parts of Tbilisi, in particular in *Kala*, *Chughureti* and *Kukia*, as well as in the upper parts of *Sololaki*, on the streets remote from the centre. They were owned by middle-class citizens.

The positioning and connection to the street of these houses reveal a European trait. The houses are situated on the edge of the street so that their facades are directed streetwise. By their position as towards the street, their planning and structure, this type of house differs greatly from the buildings found in the old districts of Tbilisi, where we see that the houses enclosed the courtyard coming out onto the street from three sides. The articulation of the facades is plain, with simple profiles and openings and framings. Windows are decorated by flat arched facings with key stones. Massive wooden balconies represent the dominating structure of the buildings, often set in the middle of the façade, while in some cases they cover the entire length of the storey. Houses of an earlier period, in particular those built in the 1840s, bear a more archaic and at the same time, it could be said, monumental, appearance. One of the most prominent examples of this period is the house at 13 Dumas Street. The two-storey brick house is situated on a large plot of land between two parallel streets. From Tsintsadze Street the building comprises a courtyard opening onto the street. The dominant artistic feature of the main façade is an overhanging balcony. The street is so narrow that the balcony covers half of the street. The balcony is open to the front by semicircular arches and from the wings by tortuous arches. The rest of the façade is spare. The ground floor has tight-angled windows. In the elevation of the second floor, arched windows are set in the protruding facings.

Houses dated 1870-1890 could be classified separately and can be called "combined". In this case one part of the building is similar to the type described above and the other part has a courtyard façade coming out onto the street. Buildings of this type are often characterized by a complicated space-planning structure. A good example of this type of building is the two-storey house at 2 Lermontov Street situated at an intersection of two streets. The structure of the house has the shape of Russian "II" and comprises a small courtyard opening onto the street. The courtyard divides the façade coming out onto the street into two wings of different sizes. The façades are adorned with sculpted embellishments, garlands, volute-shaped scrolls and a parapet with balustrades.

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<sup>83</sup> R. Wilbraham, *Travels in the Trans-Caucasian Provinces or Russia, and along the southern shore of the Lakes of Van and Urumiah, in the Autumn and Winter of 1837*, London, 1839, p. 127.

<sup>84</sup> Wooden balconies were widely added to public buildings as well. For instance, caravanserais had overhanging wooden balconies all along the facades. Balconies overlooking the river Mtkvari enclosed the facades of the *London* and *Grandotel* hotels.

<sup>85</sup> Beridze, Vol, I, p. 92.



Tbilisi houses typologically stand closest to Baku residential houses.<sup>86</sup> Houses with balconies were unknown to Baku until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The specific feature of the residential houses of Baku represented their positioning a distance back from the street and with the facades overlooking courtyards. If the buildings were situated on the street line, their blind walls faced the street. Most of the houses had entrances from the courtyards and not from the street side. Especially closed were the houses of Baku and of the entire Apsheron rural houses. This was due not only to the traditional way of living and religion, but to the local climatic conditions. Strong winds carrying dust and sand made the population protect themselves by high blind walls. Balconies, widespread in other regions of Azerbaijan, were not built to the facades. So, the houses with balconies appeared in Baku, as in Tbilisi, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Balconies were built not only within the inner city but in newly developed districts too. As a rule, they were constructed on the edges of the streets. In terms of their disposition to the street we don't find here houses similar to Tbilisi houses, with courtyards partly or entirely open in the direction of the street. Houses of an earlier age bear archaic character here too, articulation of the facades is rather scanty and in many cases instead of windows, the ground floors simply have niches.

Here we do not intend to compare Tbilisi residential houses with those of Sarajevo and Salonica architecture, as Ottoman houses, embracing a big geographical area by itself, typologically were basically different.<sup>87</sup> The complex planning structure of Ottoman residential houses was based on the social and gender differentiation. Only men's dwellings faced the street, while women's living rooms were directed exclusively to the courtyard. The austere facades were split up only by the windows and their framing was accentuated on the facades by being painted in light colours. The houses in Salonica and Sarajevo had projecting bay windows on the façade, and only on some houses could be found open balconies. It is noteworthy that the residential houses of Sarajevo are markedly introverted. Even the smallest houses are enclosed like towers.

### **The Upper-Class Eclecticism**

The European style of life was mostly affordable for the representatives of the upper class. It was the villa-like houses that were best expressive of their well-being, financial potency and ambitions. Thus, the architects too, were given greater freedom and a wider artistic range. They added new shape to European and local architectural forms and combined them all in a single building.

As an illustration we will discuss a number of houses constructed in Tbilisi and other cities. M. Kalantarov's two-storey residential house (17/27 Machabeli St.) was built at the intersection of Asatiani and Machabeli streets. The owner wanted a house similar to the Tbilisi Opera House, and the architect Ghazar Sarkisian was able to achieve a theatrical effect. The entire building, its façade, interior and the wooden balconies, are influenced by Islamic architecture. The facades are leaning on low columns and are split by horseshoe-shaped windows. The windows are set in right-angled facings with their surface filled by a relief

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<sup>86</sup> On Azerian houses see M. Useinov, L. Bretanski, A. Salamadze, *Istoria arkhitekturi Azerbajjana* (The History of Azerian Architecture), Moscow, 1963, pp. 326-359., A. V. Salamadze, *Arkhitektura Azerbajjana XIV-XIXvv.* (Architecture of Azerbaijan), pp. 149-193.

<sup>87</sup> On Ottoman Houses see M. Cerasi, *The Formation of Ottoman House Types: A Comparative Study in Interaction with Neighboring Cultures*, *Muqarnas*, Vol. 15, 1998, pp. 116-156.

picture. The exterior angle of the building is accentuated by a circled bay window and a large balcony roofed by a cupola. The arches of the balconies facing the courtyard also follow Islamic architecture and at the same time are adorned with numerous details fretted in wood. Particularly opulent are the furnishings of the main entrance, decorated by stalactites made in stucco technique, mirrors, and the ceiling painted in the late Iranian manner.

The house on Vasilis Olga Street designed by Piero Arigoni is distinguished among Salonica's pompous villas. It belonged to a rich Turk-Alban merchant Mehmet Kapandzi. The structure of the house comprises of parts having different numbers of floors. It ends with a wooden balcony of the central sharply edged/pointed bay window and roofing. Their structure and fretted wooden details resemble Swiss Chalets. Its left wing crowns a tower similar to French chateaux. The Gothic lancet windows, Renaissance quoin and key stones, oriental pointed arches and horse-shoe-shaped arches are applied to the facade. Despite such an abundance of forms in a single building, by and large, the house produces an impression of integrity.

Most popular with the rich citizens of Baku was the pseudo-Renaissance and Baroque style. The Renaissance order and Baroque details – cartouches, garlands, volute-like scrolls, and wavy gables were widespread. Loggias and bay windows inspired by local motifs were sometimes added. One such example is the house of Gan Mamedov (45 Minareti Street) constructed in 1908. The main façade of the three-storey building follows the curved line of Minareti Street. The stone-dressed façade is decorated with baroque architectural details. A massive wooden bay window is embedded in the middle of the elevation and is reminiscent of traditional wooden balconies.

### **In Search of National Identity**

Finally, we will refer to the tendency evolved in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where we find a conscious endeavour to revive national architectural forms, which by itself was not accidental and was associated with the political and social processes occurring in Georgia from the 1860s. This movement was most vigorous in the literary field. *Tergdaleulis* believed that literature was the best instrument for the political and moral struggle.<sup>88</sup> One of their priorities was to revive the Georgian language and study the past of the country.

This process was far smaller-scale in architecture, the best proof of which is the scantiness of new buildings. In addition, this tendency was superficial and lacked the theoretical basis, in contrast to the revivalist movements emerging in Europe. The so-called "Georgian style" cannot equal in magnitude even the Serbian model. It emerged in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only after the Serbian Autonomous Republic was announced. The Serb-Byzantine style was far more nationalistic and radical in religious architecture.<sup>89</sup>

That the "Georgian Style" was superficial and lacked magnitude can be explained by the fact that there were few professional Georgian architects. Moreover, there was no special school or college to train expert architects. Professional architects working in Tbilisi had received their education either in Russia or in Europe and consequently they knew little of Georgian architectural traditions. Among the architects of that time only A. Kalgin and S.

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<sup>88</sup> D. Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia*, Richmond, 2000, pp.159-160.

<sup>89</sup> B. Pantelic, Nationalism and Architecture, The Creation of National Style in Serbian Architecture and its Political Implications, *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 56, No. 1, March 1997, pp.16-41.

Kldiashvili participated in the expeditions organized in order to study Georgian architectural monuments. And although there was a certain amount of data already available on Georgian historical monuments, it was mostly of empirical and not scientific character.<sup>90</sup> As regards special literature, as a rule professional articles on architecture were not published and solely news and information on new constructions were announced, whereas novelties in the sphere of literature, poetry and literary pieces were daily printed in Georgian periodicals. Expert articles on architecture were published only in the Russian journal "Zodchi", published in St.Petersburg.

All this accounted for the fact that this direction did not acquire a larger scale in Georgia. Nevertheless, the so called "Georgian style", as a national version of historical stylization bears an uninterrupted character and lasts from 1890 to 1917 and is found both in public and religious buildings, as well as in residential houses.<sup>91</sup> The Princely Wine Cellar and Kashveti Church are examples of Georgian style in its early stage. The former was built by the architect A. Ozerov. It represents an edifice made by means of a combination of two three-nave basilicas. The arched stone facings are set on brick walls. Application of these two materials side by side was unknown to Georgian religious architecture. Similarly unfamiliar to Georgian architecture was the rosette decorating the central façade. In 1904-1910 Kashveti Church was constructed by a German architect Leopold Biefeld's design. As a model for his work the architect took Samtavisi Church. Kashveti Church duplicates Samtavisi's plan, architectural shape, and façade decoration. Despite the fact that these buildings basically follow Georgian traditional forms, still they make a schematic impression. Thus it was more a stylistic imitation than an organic continuation of the medieval tradition.

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<sup>90</sup> Beridze, Vol. II., p. 83.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.