

Mariam Chkhartishvili

I. Javakhsivili Tbilisi State University

I. Javakhsivili Institute of History and Ethnology

Zurab Targamadze

I. Javakhsivili Tbilisi State University

Sopio Kadagishvili

I. Javakhsivili Institute of History and Ethnology

Tbilisi, Georgia

**Process of National Identity Forging: *We vs Others*
(According to Nineteenth Century Georgian Literary Fiction)**

Identity is nothing but boundaries. In establishing boundaries, the pivotal role belongs to *others*. Accordingly, while observing the identity forging process, conceptualization of *others* deserves a special attention. And this is true for all types of identities, among them the collective – cultural ones, i.e. ethnic and national identities.

In the period of national consolidation, *we vs others* dichotomy assumes great topicality: the cultural elite of the given *we* – group tries to strengthen the border lines with outside world and maximize differences against the other *we* – groups. At the same time, the elite of nationally mobilizing community attempts to minimize inner differences (eliminate *otherness*) so that to make the native entity socially and culturally solid and homogeneous. This strategy finds its reflection in the national identity narrative in which the topics associated with *othering* and making and remaking of boundaries are accentuated.

The aim of the presentation is to grasp the conceptualization of *others* through the Georgian case study. It is focused on the nineteenth century, i.e. epoch when rooted in remote past Georgian ethnic community transformed into the modern nation. Georgian literary fiction serves as a source of the representation. The choice of the source of this type (often neglected in traditional historiographies) is conditioned by the nature of the research question which is formulated in spirit of the “New History” allowing the scholar to extend the “territory” of the history discipline and investigate social perceptions and not only actual occurrences.

The obtained data allows to represent the nineteenth century process of Georgian national consolidation: one can see how Georgian intellectuals were concerned with conceptualization of *others* in order to add the relevant saliency and visibility to Georgian identity.