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East-West dichotomy in Georgian Cultural Thinking before and during the Soviet Period

Georgia lies on the border of Europe and Asia and the dichotomy “East-West” until the soviet period for Georgians mostly considered juxtaposition of Asia and Europe (the Islamic and the Christian worlds). This subject has been thoroughly investigated in the article “East-West cultural discourse as seen by Georgian poets of the nineteenth century”.

In the Soviet period this opposition has been changed. One of the identifiers – “The West” was very frequently used in the period and meant “the capitalist world”. The other – “East” was almost never mentioned but implied “the socialist camp”. This dichotomy was also expressed merely by pronouns “we” and “they”.

It is very difficult to give a realistic picture of the cultural and critical thinking of the Soviet period according to the publications of the time because anything that has passed through the soviet censorship can be false and not reflect authentic ideas of the authors. Archival materials, black copies of the literary works, personal letters and diaries are much more reliable in this aspect.

One of the Georgian authors of the period who writes much about the above-mentioned dichotomy is Guram Rcheulishvili. His nine short-stories published in the Soviet period don't give any material for our investigation but in the six volumes of his works published in 2002-2007 there are lots of fiction and non-fiction texts about the subject that give us a good basis for sound reasoning. Guram Rcheulishvili started writing soon after the 1956 9 March Tbilisi massacre and continued for four years. He died at 26 but had very interesting views, ideas and refleions on the happenings and situations around him and in the other part of the world.