

Introduction to the Foodways of Georgia

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This article's theme is an introduction to the foodways of Georgia, the main purpose of the research is to scientific way map out the foodways of Georgia and its origins. The research project is still in its infancy so the author throughout the paper, consequently discusses the staple foodstuff in today's Georgia such as wine, bread, Khachapuri and Khinkali. The author research method is interdisciplinary where different sources are used such as artefacts, historical written sources (for example, receipts, cookery books, narrative stories, accounts, agricultural texts, lists), photographs (past and present) and oral sources (such as interviews with local housekeepers). The author also stresses the importance of working in an interdisciplinary way, in order to get a wider, broader answer to the asked questions instead of just working with one source.

ქართული საკვების ტრადიცია

ულრიკა სოდერლინდი
სტოკჰოლმის უნივერსიტეტი

ამ სტატიის თემა წარმოადგენს ქართული საკვების ტრადიციის შესავალს. კვლევის ძირითადი მიზანია მეცნიერულად განსაზღვროს ქართული საკვების ტრადიცია და მისი წარმოშობა. კვლევის პროექტი ჯერ საწყის სტადიაშია, რის გამოც ავტორი განიხილავს მხოლოდ დღევანდელი საქართველოს ძირითად საკვებ პროდუქტებს, როგორებიცაა ღვინო, პური, ხაჭაპური და ხინკალი. ავტორის კვლევის მეთოდი ინტერდისციპლინარულია, სადაც გამოიყენება სხვადასხვა წყაროები, როგორებიცაა არტეფაქტები, ისტორიული წერილობითი წყაროები (მაგალითად, რეცეპტები, კულინარიული წიგნები, ნარატიული წყაროები, აღრიცხვები, აგროკულტურული ტექსტები, სიები), ფოტო მასალა (ძველი და ახლანდელი) და ზეპირსიტყვიერი წყაროები (მაგალითად, ინტერვიუები ადგილობრივ ოჯახის დიასახლისებთან. დასმული შეკითხვებისათვის უფრო ფართო პასუხების გასაცემად, ავტორი ხაზს უსვამს ინტერდისციპლინარული გზით მუშაობას.

Introduction

According to a Georgian legend, God took a supper break while he was creating the world. He became so involved in his meal that by accident, he tripped over the high peaks of the Caucasus and as a result he spilled his own food onto the land below. The land below blessed with the scarps of Heavens table was Georgia. This article is about a newly started project the working name of that is “Foodways of Georgia”, as the working name indicates the research field is to map out in a scientific way the foodways of Georgia and its origins.

Method and Theory

The project is carried out in a highly interdisciplinary manner where different kinds of sources are used such as: artefacts, historical written sources (for example, receipts, cookery books, narrative stories, accounts, agricultural texts, lists), photographs (past and present) and oral sources (such as interviews with local housekeepers). As an archaeologist I have learned and been taught to interpret minutiae of human relics as evidence of lives once lived and as a historian I am well accustomed to work with written sources and photographs as indices of culture. As I see it, interdisciplinary work gives a broader, deeper and more complex picture and answer to the asked question/s in a study than just limited oneself to one type of source. Most of the times the different kinds of sources do not tell the same story or history to the asked question/s and from my point of view that is what makes working dynamic in an interdisciplinary way. This is especially true for the Caucasus region with its complex pre-history (Bukhrashvili, 2003. pp. 226-227).

Culinary art in the life of Georgians in the past and present is fundamental in the research and by combining different kind of sources it serves the method very well to work in an interdisciplinary way.

The theoretical framework for the research is based on a created theory that is called “homo gastronomicus”. A lot of factors are of vital importance for the reasons and choices the human being makes in her diet throughout his/her entire life. In short these factors are on a personal level; need, physique, nourishment, efficiency, edibility, tradition, ideology, technology, availability, distance, economy, regulations, influences (that are professional, commercial and social), geographical and mental borders, philosophy, the five senses, heritage from childhood, social structure, social class, gender, utensils (Söderlind 2005, p 21-47).

Apart from that a nation's gastronomy also consists of factors such as diet, provisions, food stuff (in different categories), culinary art, cookery and fare. The choices of diet are thus complex and never static. It gets even more complicated due to the fact that the factors mentioned above do not necessary have the same meaning for all individuals in the same geographical area. All these factors and contexts constitute the "homo gastronomicus" and can be applied to any period in time (Söderlind 2005, p 21-47).

Survey of the Field in Short

The research of food and beverage is a field that has been minor in general amongst historians and archaeologist if one looks at it on a large scale. However, that being said the field is not totally empty on scientific works regarding antiquity and the Middle age areas. Then most important works regarding the antique area have been written by Dalby, Andrew that writes about the antient period in Greece and Imperium Romanun (Dalby, 1996, 2000), he has also written about food in the Byzantine Empire (Dalby, 2003). Dalby is not the only scholar that has paid attention to the cuisine of antiquity, worth mentioning in the field is also Grottenelli & Milano's (2004) work on the role food played for the identity of humans in antiquity, Garnsey's work (2002) on how food reflected the different social classes during the time, Wilkins & Hill's (2006) large and general work of what was eaten in Greece and Rome and on the same theme of Alcock's (2006) and Brothwell's (1998) works on distribution of food stuff as an overview in the classical world. On the same topic but with a different angles are the works of Faas (2003) and Slater (1991) that deals with the actual eating and dining of the foodstuff. The cuisine of the classical and antique area had a major impact on local cuisines all over Europe during the Middle Ages which has been proved by several researchers (Adamsson, 1995, 2002, 2004, van Winter, 2007, Scully, 2007, Redon, Odile, Sabban & Serventi, 1998, Bober, 1999, Elliot, 2004, Bhote, 2003). Very little has been done in Georgia in the field of food and beverages, worth mentioning here is the work by Bukhrasvili (2002, p 33-36) that deals with food techniques of the central Transcaucasian populations of the mid- 3rd millennium B.C.

Why study Georgia from a Culinary and Gastronomic Perspective?

Georgia (საქართველო, Sakartvelo) is a transcontinental country in the Caucasus region, situated at the dividing line between Europe and Asia. The country's geographical location with borders on the Black Sea, the modern

Russian Federation, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, has meant that through pre-history and history, it has been a crossroads between the West and the East.

Due to its location, the country has been invaded several times over the course of history, for example, by the Greeks, Persians, and the Ottomans, to name but a few. The invasions mean that much of the antique and Islamic worldview still exists at the country's borders—which is an ancient cultural situation. The invasions have also left their footprints on Georgia's food- and drinking traditions and habits. This has resulted in the existence of many different gastronomical and culinary branches in the foodways of Georgia today.

I am still in the early stages of the research on Georgia's food and drinking traditions and habits. Consequently, in this paper, I will concentrate on some staple foods of Georgia, such as wine, bread, *Khachapuri* and *Khinkali*.

Georgia was one of the earliest Christian countries in the world which has attributed a certain role to wine in the transition from pre-history into the Christian era. Wine still holds a very special place in the hearts and minds of the Georgian people. I will thus deal first of all with wine in Georgian foodways.

Wine

The beginning of human civilizations is closely connected to the development of agriculture and the history of cultivated plants, and Georgia played a crucial role in this process. One of the reasons for that is that wine culture in Georgia can be traced to early prehistoric times (Rusishvili 2007, p 5, 13). The research of linguists such as T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanon indicates that the root of the Indo-European term for 'wine' - *u(e/o) iano* which means wine – have derived from the Georgian word ღვინო [Rvino] (Gamkrelidze, 1984, p 647, 649-651). These linguists are of the opinion that the word would have been transferred into the Proto-Indo-European language before this language started to separate into its various branches in the fourth millennium B.C. The separation transformed the word in different ways, leading to the English 'wine', Italian 'vino', and Russian 'vino', to give but a few examples (Gamkrelidze, 1984, p 649-651, Mcovern, 2003, P 33-34).

The archaeological discovery of cultivated vines in Georgia supports the linguistic theory of the origin of the word 'wine'. Cultivated grape pips have been found on the archaeological site 'Shulaveris Gora' (situated in the trans-Caucasus region of modern Georgia).

The site is dated to sixth – fourth millennium B.C. and belongs to the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe chalcolithic culture (Kushnareva, Chubinishvili, 1970,

p 170). Even if there is a large time span for the culture itself C14 (Radiocarbon dating is a radiometric dating method that uses (^{14}C) to determine the age of carbonaceous materials up to about 60,000 years old) analyses of the cultural layer where the pips were found gives a dating of 6625±210 years millenium B.C (Kushnareva and Chubinishvili, 1970, p 170). At other sites belonging to the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe culture a ceramic vessel which had ornamentation in relief was found. The ornamentation appears to show grapes and could very well be the earliest 'label' for grapes and wine that it is known of today. In the vessel there was also found a sediment that showed that is consisted of too much wine residue after analysis (Hansen, Mirtskhulava, Guram 2007, p 13-19, Chilashvili, 2004, p 47-9. Soltes, 1999, p 58-59).

After the initial evidence of cultivated grapes and of wine-making. cultivated grape pips were found in many other archaeological sites dating to the Bronze Age, Antiquity, and the Middle Ages. This indicates a situation of continuity in the cultivating grapes of Georgia (Rusishvili, 2007, p 13-35). It is not until the Bronze Age that table grapes for eating are found which indicates that humans in the earlier chalcolitic societies cultivated vines and grapes for wine-making and not for eating. Wine was, therefore, the primary reason why the vine was cultivated (PhD, N. Rusishvili, personal communication, Center for Archaeological Studies of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2008-10-23).

It is not only grape pips that appear in the archaeological sites that can be linked to wine. At a site belonging to the Trialeti Culture (third – second millenium B.C.) a superb sample of toreutic art, a silver wine cup richly decorated, was found. This cup has become known as the "Silver Cup Of Trialeti" (Kushnareva, and Chubinishvili, 1970, p 16). There is ongoing debate about what the scene depicted on the cup means. Some researchers state that it is a depiction of the God Mithra surrounded by worshipers, and of the tree of life. Others, however, are of the opinion that the depiction is that of the God Mithra surrounded by hops and worshippers drinking haoma (Kuftin, 1941, p 84, Jafaridze, 1981, p 15, , 2004, p 67-73.). Mithra means 'contact' or 'pact' and these terms are closely associated with a God known among the Persians around 1200 B.C. Mithra was understood as a personification of the sun and a God of justice. The God Mithra is often described as a forerunner of the God Mithras who became known as a very important God in Greece and Rome during Antiquity. The people of Georgia worked not only in silver during their middle Bronze Age period; they also mastered the art of working in gold as is evident from the discovery of a wine cup made of a gold sheet dating from that period. The cup, which has a double wall and hollow legs, is richly decorated with sardonic, lapis lazuli, red jasper, agate, and amber stones. The cup is a stunning example of glass- pasted filigree work (Japhardidze, 1981, p 52).

During an archaeological excavation in 2006 (Mtskheta, the old capital of Georgia) a small bronze figurine depicting a 'Tamada', holding a drinking horn in his right hand, was found. The figurine is dated to the beginning of first millennium B.C (Japaridze, 2006, p 23). To this day, the Tamada is the toastmaster at banquets or special dinners in Georgia. The occasions on which the Tamada is present are called '*supra*' (table). The Tamada's main task at the *supra* is to salute the toasts. The Tamada is elected at the beginning of the *supra* and it is considered a great honour to be so selected for this function (Goldstein, 1999). A *supra* goes on for hours and the Tamada gives the toasts in a special order. The first toast is for the host and his family; thereafter follows a toast for the mother country of Georgia, then toast to the memory of the deceased heroes of the country and families of Georgia, followed by a toast to parents (especially mothers), friends, relatives, and the future of Georgia, to name a few of the toasts performed at a *supra*. Usually the guests empty their wine glasses on each toast and the glasses are filled again for the following toasts. No wine is drunk between the toasts. When the Tamada has given the last toast and rises up from the table the banquet or dinner, this is a signal that the event is over.

A special kind of artifact known as a '*kvevri*' has been found in the course of many excavations. A *kvevri* is a wine vessel which became known as an amphora during Antiquity in Greece and the Roman Empire; In Georgia, however, this kind of vessels has always been termed '*kvevris*' and still is. It is known from sites that can be dated as far back as Antiquity, that the *kvevri* was placed up to its neck in the ground and then filled with grape juice. The *kvevri* was sealed with a lid and the juice was left to ferment. The wine-farmer looked after the fermentation process until the wine was ready. The wine was then transferred to bags made of animal skins. In Georgia, there is no tradition of carrying wine in *kvevri*; skin bags have been used for this purpose since antiquity – perhaps even at an earlier period also. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that it was easier to carry a skin bag full of wine on one's back than to transport a hard *kvevri*. Furthermore, the skin bags did not break as easily as the *kvevri* did during transportation on ships or in chariots. The *kvevris* was mainly used for during the fermentation process of the wine. However, it is evident from several archaeological sites that, during Antiquity the *kvevris* were also used for non-cremation burials (Chilashvili, 2004, p 91-105).

Fig. 1: It is known that at least since antiquity wine was left to ferment in kvevris that had been placed up to its neck in the ground. This photo is from a bishop's palace dating to the Middle Ages. Some wine farmers still use this ancient fermentation technique (© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2008).



Fig 2: During archaeological excavations kvevris are a common artifact to detect. This kvevri was excavated under the floor of the old church in Atskuri, Georgia. The expedition was led by professor in Archaeology Litcheli, Vakhtang (© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2006).



Georgia was one of the world's first Christian countries, and dates such as 337 A.D. and 319 A.D. have been put forward for the country's adoption of Christianity (Tarchnisvili, 1953, p 572). Georgia's conversion to Christianity is closely linked to St. Nino. According to one tradition, St. Nino was from Kolastra, Cappadocia (in today's Turkey) and she was a relative of St. George (the patron saint of Georgia). She was said to have come to Georgia from Constantinople. Other sources claim that she came from Rome, Jerusalem or Gaul. According to a legend, St. Nino saw Virgin Mary in a dream and she told Nino that she should enter Georgia with a cross made of the wood of vine stocks. When Nino woke up from her dream she found herself holding two pieces of wood from vine stocks and she tied them together with her own hair. With this cross made of wine she fled Roman persecution in Cappadocia and made her way into Georgia and started to teach Christianity. The legend also tells that she performed miraculous healing and converted the Georgian queen, Nana, and eventually the pagan king, Mirian III, of Iberia. Mirian III declared Christianity an official religion in c. 327 A.D. and Nino continued her missionary activities among Georgians until her death in 338 or 340 A.D (Machitadze, Zakaria, 2006, p 48-52, Wardrop, M./Wardrop, O, 2006, p 12. Tarchnisvili, 1953:572, Lang, 1956, p 13- 39.).

St. Nino's tomb is still shown at the Bodbe Monastery in Kakheti – which is also the main wine region– in eastern Georgia. She has become one of the most venerated saints of the Georgian Orthodox Church and her attribute, a Grapevine cross, is a unique cross in the Christian world. Since, according to the legend, it was the Virgin Mary, who told St. Nino to go to Georgia and teach Christianity, the Grapevine cross became a symbol of Georgian Christianity.

Humans cannot live on wine alone and, as in the case of wine-culture, evidence for bread consumption in Georgia also goes back to pre-historic times. Four endemic cultures of wheat were also found in the Shulaveri Gora site representative of the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe chalcolithic culture – where the first evidence of cultivated vine was also found (Kushnareva and Chubin-ishvili, *op. cit.*, 1970, p 170).

Fig 3: Saint Nino's cross made out of vinestocks.
(© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2006).



Bread

As indicated above, bread has a long traditional history in Georgia, dating back to the chalcolitic period. The crop that is mainly used for bread-making in Georgia today is wheat. The Georgian word for wheat flour actually is translated into English as “bread flour”.

A special oven called ‘*tone*’ exists in Georgia for bread baking. This kind of oven is designed to provide very high, dry heat. Fuel for the fire is provided by charcoal which lines the bottom of the structure. In order to produce temperature approaching 900 degrees Fahrenheit (480 degrees Celsius), bakers maintain a long vigil to keep the oven’s coals continually burning. At such high temperature, the bread made in a *Tone* oven develops a very crisp outer layer without sacrificing moistness on the inside (Todua, 1979, p 692).

One can find analogies between the ‘*tone*’ oven and the ‘*tandoor*’ oven in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, the Transcaucasus region, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia and Bangladesh. The earliest example of a *tandoor* oven has been found at the Harappa and Mohenjo Daro settlements of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization (2600-1500 B.C). Even so, ovens of the *tandoor* -type have been found in early-Harappan contexts (The Early Harappan Ravi Phase

is named after the nearby Ravi River, lasted from ca 3300- 2800 BC). The mature phase of earlier village cultures is represented by Rehman Dheri and Amri in Pakistan. Trade networks linked this culture with related regional cultures and distant sources of raw materials, including lapis lazuli and other materials for bread-making. Villagers had, by this time, domesticated numerous crops, including peas, sesame seeds, dates and cotton, as well as various animals, including the water buffalo) on the Makran coast, including at the mound site of Balakut that pre-dates the findings from the Mohenjo Daro settlements (Mohenjo-daro (Mound of the Dead) was one of the largest city-settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization of south Asia situated in the province of Sind, Pakistan. Built around 2600 BC, the city was one of the early urban settlements in the world, existing at the same time as the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete). Description of ovens of this kind are also found in texts and accounts from Mesopotamia (Bottéro, 2004, p 47).

Fig. 4: A detailed photograph of bread being baked in 'tone' oven. This sample of bread is ready for consumption and is being taken out of the oven. 'Tone' bread is thin bread and it is preferably eaten when warm. 'Tone' bread is never cut using a knife but is divided into smaller pieces by hand instead (© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2007).



The word *tandoor* comes from the Dari words *tandūr* and *tannūr*; these are derived from very similar terms, Persian *tanūr*, Arabic *tandūr*, Turkish *Tandır* and Azeri word *təndir*. However, according to Dehkhoda Persian Dictionary the word originates from Akkadian *tinûru*, and is mentioned as early as in the Accadian Epic of Gilgames (reflexes of which are Avestan *tanûra* and Pahlavi *tanûr*). As such, the term may not be of Semitic or Iranian origin at all, dating back as it does to periods before the migration of Aryan and Semitic people to the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia (Bottéro, 2004, p 47).

Fig 5: A wall painting in Tbilisi that advertises the merchandise of bread made in a "Tone" (© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2007).



The fact that the main crop grown for use in bread baking in Georgia was wheat, does not mean that no other crops were used. In the western part of the country a crop called "ღომი" [Romi] [ghomi], that belongs to the Monocotyledons culture, was used. The crop (that was similar to millet) was boiled and eaten instead of bread. When sweet corn came into use in the western part of the country, it was used instead of Ghomi and the crop is now extinct. Nevertheless, this kind of bread is still named Ghomi in western Georgia, even if it is baked using fine grained cornflour and such bread is often called cornbread when described to visitors. Ghomi was also found in the Monocotyledons cultural period and remained in use until the beginning of twentieth century (T, Tskvitinindze, personal communication, Kobuleti, Georgia, 2007-09-24). Bread (პურის) is a very important element of a diet for Georgians; and, with just two exceptions, *Khachapuri* and *Khinkali*, it is eaten at every meal. It does not matter how many dishes there is on the table, if bread is missing, the meal is not considered to be complete.

Fig 6: My hostess in Mestia, Georgia, baked fresh bread every morning. For a Suede it was very nice to wake up to the smell of newly baked bread
(© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2007).



Khachapuri and Khinkali

Khachapuri (ხაჭაპური) is a specialty of Georgian cuisine. There are different regional varieties, such as, *adjarian khachapuri*, *imeritian khachapuri*, *ossetian khachapuri* and *Mengrelian Khachapuri*. The name is very often translated into English as cheese bread, but it is not bread at all. The dish consists of a mixture of dough made from a mixture of youghurt, wheatflour, baking soda, sugar, egg yolk and salt. The dough is prepared approximately three hours before using. The different varieties of the dish arise from the seasoning used – such as sour cream, garlic, and so on – and this is also specific on the regional bases. Even if the different varieties of khacapuri do not look alike, they are all made using this dough and are filled with cheese before they are baked in a pan on the stove or in the oven, and then coated with butter before being served (*Georgian dishes, s.l., s.d* 16-18, 20, 26). *Khacapuri* is a very popular dish and is often eaten as a snack between meals or as fast food, even though the dish is very filling.

Fig 7: Different kinds of *Khachapuri* exist in Georgia today. This version can be found in Mengrelia, Nokalakevi (© Söderlind, Ulrica, 2007).



Khinkali (ხინკალი [khinkali]) is also a typical Georgian special dish and, along with *Khachapuri*, is considered as a national dish. *Khinkali* is a kind of filled dumpling. Grey flour (such as flour from rye), rather than white wheaten flour is used to make the dough, which consists of flour, salt and water. The dough is rolled out, round pieces are cut out and minced ham and pork are placed on top of them. The minced meat is flavoured with chopped onions, (in some cases also garlic) egg, pepper, and green herbs (such as parsley, coriander, cumin etc). The *Khinkali* with meat filling is the most common variety, although cheese, potato and mushrooms are also used for this purpose. The dough is wrapped around the filling and the dumpling is twisted around several times, the best made one is the one that is twisted around twelve times. The dumplings are put into boiling water and are served with butter and black pepper (*Georgian dishes, s.l., s.d.,30*).

The dumplings are eaten by hand without the use of any cutlery. The dumpling is picked up by hand where the dough been twisted round. That part is harder then the rest and not as hot either as the remainder of the dumpling. The eating of *Khinkali* is an art form since all of the meat juice stays inside the dumpling. It is not easy for a foreigner to eat *Khinkali* while maintaining good table manner. As *Chinkali* is a filling dish, it is very common to leave the part of the dumpling uneaten. Thus when a meal is finished it is possible to count how many *Khinkali* each person had eaten. Wine is not a good choice while eating *Khinkali*. It is one of the few Georgian dishes when wine is not recommended.

It is presumed that *Khinkali* is originated from China, where they were originally named '*Jiao Tzu*'. From China they spread to Russia (Pelmeni) and Central Asia (chuchvara). It is possible that the spread of the dish from China to Georgia started with the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century.

Closing Discussion and the Future

I am still in the beginning of my research regarding the foodways of Georgia and as the work moves forward new questions arise and need to be answered.

An important question that arises and that is possible to answer as the research proceeds, is whether if hops really are depicted as surrounding the God Mithra on the silver wine cup that dates to the Bronze Age, and whether the God is drinking *haoma*. If this proves to be the case, it will indeed change what is known to date about the *haoma* cult – that the cult was closely connected to Mithra in the Persian Empire before the God was transformed into Mithras during antiquity. Many researchers have devoted much effort in trying to find out what the main intoxicating ingredient of the *haoma* beverage was. Some say that mushrooms (*Amanita Muscaria*) were used, while others are of the opinion that the original plant would have been a small bush that secreted a strong smell and had bitter leaves. The *haoma* beverage was a very intoxicating one and was also hallucinogenic. The plant that is in use today among the worshippers and followers of Zoroaster is a different one – which belongs to the Efediner (Peganum Harmala) family. The intoxicating and hallucinogenic effects of this plant are not as strong as its forerunner. If, indeed, the main ingredient in *haoma* was hops, there must have been some other ingredients in the beverage that gave the consumer the strong hallucinations. What was the ingredient remains to be seen.

Even if the research is still in its early stages, I consider that it is safe to say that the cradle of wine-making is today's Georgia. This is due to the early discovery of cultivated grapes in complex societies dated to the chalcolitic era in Georgia, and also, due to the fact that the inhabitants of these early societies cultivated the vine in order to procure wine for drinking and not grapes for eating, something that took place later – actually in the Bronze Age. I know from sources written in antiquity that Greece took a great interest in the Kingdom of Colchis – the territory of modern western Georgia (Lordkipanidze, 2000, p 11-12). As a result, Greece colonized the coast of Colchis and established trading posts in Phasis (modern-day Poti), Gyenos, and Dioskuria (modern-day Sokhumi). Phasis and Dioskuria became splendid Greek cities dominated by mercantile oligarchies.

These cities became very important trading centers along the Black Sea coast. Wine amphoras have been discovered near Poti (Gamkrelidze, 1992, p 108) which shows that there was a developed export and import wine-trade in existence. This shows that wine was an important and established product in the society's economy during the Grecian era – but it does not indicate when wine became an important economic factor in society. However, just because earlier societies, such as the chalcolithic one, have not left any written records does not mean that wine was not an economic factor. So far, there have been just a few maritime excavations in Georgia along the Black Sea shore line, and if further excavations are allowed with a focus on locating ships and boats from earlier periods, then it might be possible to indicate when wine became an important economic factor in Georgia. I strongly believe that wine was an important economically long before antiquity and, since Georgia was probably visited by people travelling along on the waterways since the Stone Age, discoveries from that period and the Bronze Age would help to shed light on this question.

There are around six hundred species of grapes in Georgia today (Chilashvili, *op. cit.*, 2004, p 198-213). The wine louse (*Phylloxera vastatrix*) that was so devastating for the vineyards in Europe in the late nineteenth century did not affect Georgia to the same extent. This means that even if Georgia has lost some of its species, some ancient ones still exist. It would be very interesting to collect samples from these wine stocks and to analyze them in order to find out how they are related to each other, and also if the ancient stocks are the ancestors of the modern ones. This can be done in cooperation with biologists and plant pathologists that have access to several grape DNA banks in Europe.

With regard to the staple food – bread – there is still a significant amount of work ahead of us in order to map out all the different kinds of bread that exists in the country, and I have not yet completed the search of written sources regarding bread and bread-making. For example, I am currently working on finding out where the 'tone' came from originally, discovering if it indeed has its roots in the old civilizations of the Indus valley and Mesopotamia.

I am also very interested in finding out why there are different varieties of the dish *Khachapuri* in different parts of the country, and also how far back in time I can trace it. As for *Khinkali*, I believe that it originated from China but further research on this question is necessary before any firm conclusions in this regard can be reached. However, I have a working theory about the diffusion of the dish. I think it started to spread with the Mongolians and their invasions. In Georgia, one cannot find *Khinkali* in the western part. I think

that the dish never reached that region of the country due to the fact that the Mongolians never entered the forest which covers its surface. They did not know how to fight a battle in the forest region as they were unfamiliar with forests in their own homeland. It is of great interest that a dish that has a foreign origin is regarded as a national dish. There is a written source from the year 1658 that states that *Khinkali* was made of dry ham of animals (it does not say anything about salting or any other preparation of the meat besides drying) (Sulxan-saba, 1993, p 423). For me, this raises the question as to how, why, and when the dried meat was transformed into the dish we know today as *Khinkali*. I hope that I can answer that question in due course as the research progresses.

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- Alexander Pushkin once said that "Every Georgian dish is a poem".