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Social, Ethnic, and Place Identity of Repatriated Muslim Meskhetian in Georgia.

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Abstract

Formation of identity is an important process. Displacement, the forced change of one's living place, has influenced the cultural and ethnic identity of many peoples' lives. Place of residence obtains different meaning and brings about different memories and feelings when a person is displaced. This study examines the lives of Muslim Meskhetians, people deported from Georgia's South-West during WWII by Stalin's social policy. In the 1940s, as a result of Stalin's policy to clean the southern border of the Soviet Union of "undesirable people", the Muslim population, comprised in large part by Turkish-speaking Meskhetians, approximately 92,307 residents of five administrative districts of Southern Georgia, living at the Georgian border with Turkey in the regions of Samtskhe and Javakheti, were deported to the central Asian republics of the Soviet Union: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kirgistan. After 1956 some Muslim Meskhetian families tried to return to their homeland. While the authorities opposed their repatriation, some Georgian dissidents and intellectuals were sympathetic to Muslim Meskhetians and actively supported their return. As a result, 250 Meskhetian families returned to Georgia and were settled in the Gali district, at Achigvara farm, in 1969. Formal repatriation of Muslim Meskhetians to Georgia started in 1977. They were settled in different regions of Georgia: Zugdidi, Gali, Khoni, Samtredia, and Ozurgeti. The first wave of repatriated Muslim Meskhetians mostly settled in villages near Samtredia and Ozurgeti. After implementation of a new repatriation law, which was adopted in 2007 and implemented in 2012, repatriated Muslim Meskhetians are living in different districts of Georgia, even in their original homeland in the South-West. This article describes research which studies different aspects of the lives of repatriated Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia. Based on theoretical concepts of ethnic identity, place identity, and the quantitative research conducted in different districts of Georgia where repatriates live, the study analyses ethnic, civil, and place identity of Muslim Meskhetians.

Keywords: Ethnic identity; Muslim Meskhetians; Civil Identity; Place identity; Ahiska Turks

Introduction

Muslim Meskhetians from the South-Western part of Georgia who were deported during WWII, were scattered around post-soviet republics. There they adapted to different social environments differently. According to migration researchers, new social environments influence

the style of human life and identity. Integration is the best way for people in a new environment to adapt (*Berry, 1997*). There are a number of factors which support the integration process of displaced persons: the individual skills of an emigrant, willingness to learn the new language, and culture (Sam., Berry (2006); Berry (2001); Sammut (2010); Padilla (2004).

The adaptation-integration process in the new environment has an impact on human identity. Formation of identity during the life of an individual is an important process. An individual may have several identities, since in different contexts s/he considers himself/herself as a member of different groups. (Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles 2013)¹. (Moscovici, 1981)².

Formation of individual identity is affected by social environment, the way s/he is perceived by others, and what his or her role in primary and secondary groups and/or organizations is. Study of the process of identification takes on special significance when people change their living environment. (Sam & Berry, 2006)³. In these circumstances, we are able to witness how individuals' identities change, and whether their ethnical, cultural, and place identities change as a result of migration. Social identity of a person is also an important aspect. For instance, it is important to note what is his/her civil consciousness is like in the new environment and his/her attitudes towards the local society. (Tajfel & Turner, 1974)⁴.

This article presents data on the study of individual aspects of life of the repatriated Muslim Meskhetians inhabiting Georgia.

This study promises to show what has changed in the lives of Muslim Meskhetians in recent years in terms of their adaptation and integration by examining data on the ethnic, civil, and social identity of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia.

1. About Muslim Meskhetians⁵

According to Georgian historical sources, the majority of Muslim Meskhetians are ethnic Georgians who were forced to live under the Turkish occupation from 1578 to 1883. As a result, their lives, religion, and language have changed, converting them from Georgian-speaking

¹ Schwartz, S. J., Luyckx, K., & Vignoles, V. L. (Eds.). *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. (New York: Springer, 2013).

² Serge Moscovici, *On social representations*. *Social cognition: Perspectives on everyday understanding*, (1981):181-209.

³ Sam L. David and John W. Berry (Eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴ Henry Tajfel, 1974.

⁵ Pirtskhalava, E. (2018) *Being here and there: a case study of Muslim Meskhetians' identity and belonging, formation and reconstruction in the United States*. *Caucasus Survey* Published online: 21 Sep 2018. Taylor & Francis online

Orthodox Christians to Turkish-speaking Muslims. While Turkish is still the primary language of Muslim Meskhetians, they continue to identify with parts of both Turkish and Georgian culture (Baramidze, 2011; Janiashvili, 2006).

Trier and Khanzhin (2007) note that Muslim Meskhetians have been known throughout history by a plethora of names. Historically, they have been recorded as Georgian [those born in the pre-1917 Russian-Empire Caucasian province or the post-revolution Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia], Muslim Georgians [a small religious minority in the predominantly Christian Soviet Georgia], Muslim Meskhetian Turks [reflecting a particular region within Georgia, Meskhetia, and their genealogical relatedness to the Ottomans], Meskhs [emphasizing solely the geographical district], Turks [in contrast emphasizing their genealogical roots as the most important identity marker], Azeri [a Soviet administrative ascription based on the religious and linguistic affiliation between Azeri and Turks], Meskhetian Turks [the late-Stalinist name given to the group], Ahiska Turks, or Akhaltsikhe Turks [the most contemporary name that the US-based community appropriated].

Muslim Meskhetians have been living together with Christian Georgians in the Caucasus since ancient times, inhabiting the region of southwest Georgia near the Turkish border. In 1578-1883 AD, this territory was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Colonization led to a shift in religion from Orthodox Christianity to Sunni Islam in the region of Meskhet-Javakheti, and to a language shift from Georgian to Turkish. After the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), the Ottomans retreated from the region, which then became an integral part of Russia but retained most signs of Islamization. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought further cataclysmic changes. For a brief spell, in 1918-1921, Georgia was independent. Then, as a result of armed conflict with Bolshevik Russia, it lost its independence and became incorporated into the USSR. In these politically unstable times, large numbers of local Muslims allied with the Ottomans and migrated from Georgia to Turkey (Sumbadze, 2007) (Maglakelidze, 1994; Nozadze, 1989). Some Muslim Meskhetians relocated out of Soviet borders; those who remained were targeted by the Sovietization campaigns of the new authorities.

The Soviet strategy was to define all Muslim-practicing nationalities under one umbrella. All local Turkish-speaking Islamic communities were labeled as “Azeri” in the civil documents by the new administration. The Muslim Meskhetians, the Khemshils (Muslim Armenians), and Kurds from Georgia were all categorized as “Azeri” in these documents. Thus, the Soviets cognitively united the Georgian Turkish speakers with their next-door neighbors, the Azerbaijani. This was an artificial construction that allowed the Soviets to open Azeri-language schools in Georgia to educate the Muslim youth (Sumbadze, 2007).

During WWII, the Soviet administration initiated a wave of mass deportations. According to Resolution No 6279 of the USSR Defense State Committee of July 31, 1944, and on the order N00117 of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs of September 20 of the same year, 19,818 families were deported from the Georgian SSR. Among them were Turks - 14,493 families; Kurds – 1,830 families; Azerbaijanis – 3,058 families; Yazidis - 7 families; Tatars - 126 families and Khemshis (Muslim Armenians of Laz origin) - 304 families. (Trier & Khanzhin,

2007). All Turkish-speaking Muslim groups in their entirety were pulled into cargo-carrying train cars and forcefully moved thousands of kilometers away during a single night on the 15th of November, 1944. At this time, the majority of men were mobilized to serve in the Red Army of the Eastern Front fighting the Nazis, while the remaining women, children, and elderly ended up in the central Asian Soviet republics of Uzbekistan (53163), Kyrgyzstan (28598), and Kazakhstan (10546) (Bugai, 1994; Sumbadze, 2007). Approximately 92,307 residents of five administrative districts of Southern Georgia from the regions of Samtskhe and Javakheti were deported. While many deportees died during the move, the dislocation of the Muslim Meskhetians was particularly traumatic, as they were not allowed to return to their place of origin for over four decades. The psychological wounds of displacement remain deep, and their social lives were also shaken by new conflicts with the local Central Asian populace.

In the year 1989, 207,500 Muslim Meskhetians lived in the Soviet Union and over 51.2% were registered in Uzbekistan (Babak, Vaisman & Wasserman 2004;252). The majority of the Meskhetians settled in the Fergana Valley. In June 1989, a pogrom broke out against the Muslim Meskhetians in the Uzbek section of the Ferghana Valley and resulted in the deaths of dozens of Meskhetians. (Yunusof 2000;92) The underlying causes for the pogrom are still ambiguous. After intervention by the Soviet Army, the situation was somewhat stabilized. However, as a result, 17,000 Muslim Meskhetians were immediately evacuated by Soviet Army troops, and the events led to a larger outflow of Muslim Meskhetians from Uzbekistan over time. It is estimated that over 60,000 Meskhetians left the republic after the initial evacuation. Thus, they suffered a second involuntary resettlement 45 years after Stalin's deportation. Some Muslim Meskhetians were left without homes (Aydingün, 2002). Others moved to Azerbaijan or Russia to settle in the Krasnodar region bordering Georgia. If circumstances permitted, some formerly-deported people returned to Meskhetia in Georgia (Ossipov, 2002, cited in Koriouchkina, 2009).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation refused to issue Russian-citizenship passports to the Muslim Meskhetians and this community became illegal immigrants within the territory of Russia. Repatriation to Georgia was not an option at that point, neither pragmatically nor legislatively. The United States offered refugee status to all Muslim Meskhetians living in Krasnodar, Russia. From 2005 onwards, Muslim Meskhetians started to relocate to thirty-three US states (Koriouchkina & Swerdlow, 2007). The communities formed by the Muslim Meskhetians in Pennsylvania and Illinois became the focus of this study.

Typically, scholars who study cultural adaptation expect that the longer a refugee is away from their homeland, the more likely their cultural values, traditions, and lifestyles will change. Yet, it has been pointed out that Muslim Meskhetians are an interesting society, having successfully preserved much of their cultural traditions in the face of multiple forced migrations and displacement experiences (Trier & Khanzhin, 2007).

Today Muslim Meskhetians live in different parts of the world and, as a part of their integration, have often ascribed a new identity to themselves. For example, those who live in Azerbaijan identify themselves as Turks (Yunusof, 2000), but others, such as those in the Republic of Georgia, strongly deny any connection to Turkey and draw attention to their

dissimilarities with Turks, arguing for strict Georgian identification (Sumbadze, 2007). Since their arrival in the United States, they have begun to create a new immigrant ethnic identity for themselves, referred to as *Ahiska Turks*.

In the studies of Avci (2012) and Bal and Arzubiaga (2013), these researchers have referred to Muslim Meskhetians by their ascribed identity *Ahiska Turks*. Prior to these studies, non-Georgian scholars consistently referred to this population as Meskhetian Turks.

2. Theoretical perspectives of social, ethnic and civil identities

Membership of different social, ethnic, or cultural groups affects the development of different opinions about oneself. The concept of identity is used to create a self-concept. Identity is an important construct of a person. It covers a variety of aspects, and is the product of social, cultural, political and other constructions. Amongst these other constructions, it should be noted that people ascribe an important value to ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is defined as a construct made of a lot of components, which include search, acquisition, and strengthening of ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Phinney, 1096). Ethnic identity belongs to an individual from a specific ethnic group. The process of recognition should be recognized by “others” – their own group members as well as “other” group members. Ethnic identity is considered to be an inborn feature, but today people have the opportunity to decide which ethnic group to adopt. Two approaches are considered as the basis for the emergence of ethnic identity. According to the premordialistic (Isajiw,1993; Smith, 1991) approach, ethnic identity is inborn and predefined. Ethnicity is given from birth, solid and permanent. According to another constructive approach, ethnic identity is a choice: what it relies on, what its content is, and the shape it takes is dependent upon the free will of an individual. Its basis may be language, religion, culture, race, history or territory (Simmel, 2011; Barth, 1969). Many psycho-social factors influence the formation of ethnic identity, but perhaps most important is the universal desire of an individual to establish a positive social identity.

Social identity represents part of the self-concept of an individual, which comes from a specific social group membership (Turner, Penny, 1986). The specifics of intergroup behavior in the theory of social identity (Tajfel, Turner, 1970) can be explained by the concept of social identity. An individual obtains social identity when s/he realizes the meaning of his or her own social group for him/her and acknowledges that this group plays an important and positive role in his/her everyday life. In the process of migration, immediately after arriving in a foreign country, ethnic origins and the significance of these become more pronounced as

the individual begins to perceive cultural differences. The variability of ethnic identity can be changed in recipient countries as a result of acculturation and assimilation. Depending on the social context, the preservation of ethnic identity can have negative as well as positive effects on the migrant.

There is another form of identity: The **Place Identity** (Cuba and Hummon 1993a, 1993b). From the perspective of social psychology, place creates the frame of culture and traditions in which identity is constructed, preserved, and transformed (Cuba, Lee, & Hummon, 1993b). Social and environmental psychologists Harol Proshansky, Ebby Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983) claimed that place identity is the part of self-identification of an individual which is shaped by the experience of daily interaction with physical spaces (Proshansky, 1978). Places where people live, or lived, acquire different meanings and arouse different feelings and memories. From this point of view, the house is usually one of the most important places, and its change causes changes in the individual's self-identification. The move from one geographical location to another may negatively affect a person's psychic condition in the same way the death of a relative, friend, or family member might (Fried,1963). Thus, the notion of identity is particularly important in the study of forced migration cases, because we know how traumatic this kind of displacement may be for the psychic condition of the individual.

In social interactions, people automatically assign a person to some kind of category, determine appropriate attributes for this person, and thus his/her "social identity" is born and shaped. One form of social identity is civil identity, whose formation depends on the formation of civic consciousness.

These types of identity are important for people living in any country. The society of Muslim Meskhetians is an interesting society in this regard. Their identity – in terms of ethnic identity – represents the verbalization of a variety of identities, from their side as well as from other groups. In different groups they are named as Meskhetian Turks, Turks, Georgians, and Ahiska Turks.

This article studies the integration of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia based on subjective perceptions of Muslim Meskhetians. The survey sought to answer the following question: What are the ethnic, civil, and social identities of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia?

3. Muslim Meskhetians in Modern Day in Georgia

About Muslim Meskhetian ethnic identity there are differences in opinion among researchers. Over the years they have been referred to in scientific sources as Meskhetian Turks. In Georgian historical sources, they are called Muslim Georgians, or ethnic Georgians

who lived in Samtskhe-Javakheti, and who experienced occupation by the Ottoman Empire for nearly three centuries (VI-VIII). Living under this jurisdiction, claim the Georgian historical sources, influenced their lives, faith, and language (Sumbadze, 2007; Maglakelidze, 1994; Nozadze, 1989). Now, the group of Muslim Meskhetians can be considered in two parts: one part of Georgian “orientation”, who historically recognize their Georgian origin, and another who say they are Turks, however, not from Turkey but from Akhaltsikhe

The Muslim Meskhetians who lived in exile for decades underwent different repatriation attempts to Georgia throughout the years. During the first wave of repatriation in the 1970s, they settled in the western part of Georgia, namely in the regions of Samegrelo, Imereti, and Guria. Some repatriates stayed in their homeland and have been living in Samtredia and Ozurgeti villages for more than 40 years. Others live in the capital city of Tbilisi. A small portion returned to the post soviet-Central Asian republic.

In 1999, in accordance with a decree from the Council of Europe to return deported people to their homeland, Georgia began working on its repatriation law. On 11 July, 2007, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the law (№ 5261) on “repatriation of the people exiled from Georgian SSR by former USSR during the ‘40s of XX century”, which was enforced in 2012.

After the adoption of the law, some Muslim Meskhetians did not wait for its enforcement, but entered Georgia in their own way and settled in Samtredia and other parts of Akhaltsikhe. Later, after the law’s enforcement, Muslim Meskhetians with the status of repatriate arrived in Georgia. They received Georgian Citizenship and are living in the municipality of Akhaltsikhe (they live in town and also in villages surrounding the town, from which many of their ancestors were deported).

The Muslim Meskhetian community (society) is a traditional and closed society, in which individual behavior is determined by historical models that characterize stable social behavior rules passed from generation to generation. Changes in such a society are slow, while mechanical solidarity of the society is characteristic.

In a Muslim Meskhetian family, traditional male and female roles are defined according to gender. This is due to influence from the collective culture and their religion. They are characterized by extended family life, homogamy in creation of families, and the preeminence of parents in the creation of new families. Theirs are mainly monogamous families, and gender segregation in education should be noted. Existing studies have confirmed that Muslim Meskhetians have not assimilated for years in their host countries, including Georgia, where they have lived from the ‘70s of the last century (Sumbadze, 2007). Due to the compact settlement of Muslim Meskhetians, the process of integration with the

local population proved to be a problem in Georgia, a problem dependent on the perceptions and attitudes of all members of the community, new arrivals as well as local Georgians (Sumbadze, 2007).

Nowadays “Meskhetians’ economic strategy is seasonal migration to Turkey, Seasonal migration helps Meskhetians integrate into the local community. Meskhetian women are unemployed, staying at home to take care of the family. The young generation, both girls and boys go to Georgian school; Some of them have decision to continuing education at the college or university. Some family decided to send children to a religious school” (Darchiashvili.2018).

General data of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia

Proses to getting data about Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia was very difficult, unfortunately the national Statistics Office of Georgia does not have official separate data on the number of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia. During the desk research we found data from association “Tolerant”⁶ who is in Akhaltsikhe, according to the data collecting in 2012, *Muslim Meskhetians are on the territory of Georgia.*

Tab. N1. Accommodation of Muslim Meskhetians 2012.

Municipality	City/village	Family	all	Women	Man
Tbilisi	Glandni/Nadzaladevi	15	57	35	28
Akhaltzikhe	Akhaltzikhe	13	63	31	33
Akhaltzikhe	Klde	2	3		3
Akhaltzikhe	Abastumani	8	42	18	19
Akhaltzikhe	MugareTi	1	7	5	2
Akhaltzikhe	Vale	2	8	3	5
Samtredia	Ianeti	30	163	72	91
Ozurgeti	Nasakirali	32	151	75	76
Gori	Tsilelubani	10	42	21	21
Gori	Shavshvebi	1	2	1	1
Gori	Natsreti	1	5	2	3
All		115	543	263	282

The data of this research we have from the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, the department of Repatriation and Refugee issues, Ms. Irakli Kokaia⁷ was one of the respondents who give us the data about Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia. We tried to meet head of the municipality of the villages

⁶ “Tolenarti” Association of Samtskhe -Javakheti <http://asociacia-toleranti.blogspot.com/>

⁷ Irakli kokaia. Head of the Refugee and Repatriation division, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia; <http://mra.gov.ge/eng/static/661>

where are living Muslim Meskhetians, they gave to us the data about the number of family and gender, but not everywhere we had success to get information. ⁸

Tab. N2. Accommodation of Muslim Meskhetians 2017.

	<i>Family</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>Women</i>
Ianeti, Samtredia municipality	<i>36</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>92</i>
Nasakirali, Ozurgeti municipality	<i>24</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>55</i>
Akhaltikhe municipality	<i>60</i>	<i>260</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>136</i>
Cori	<i>4</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>
Tbilisi	<i>10</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>22</i>
Total	<i>134</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>315</i>

Since 2012 16 families and 56 individuals have arrived to Georgia. Unfortunately, we could not find the other new data about Muslim Meskhetians living on the territory of Georgia.

It Should be admitted according to our data from all Muslim Meskhetians who are living in Georgia in research participated 40%.

The article presents a part of the analysis of the research data within the framework of the research project **“The Study Process of Adaptation, Integration, and Civil-Social Identity of Muslim Meskhetians”** conducted by the research team of “Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University” in 2017-2018 in Georgia with the support of the “Open Society Georgia Foundation”.

4. Methodology

For the purpose of my research, I followed the general advice of migration scholars advocating an in-depth examination of the resettlement experience. For this research I employed qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on recommendations for selecting the sample size in qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 1998), we conducted 60 qualitative in-depth interviews with Muslim Meskhetians, experts and people who are living in the same place (the towns, the villages) close to them.

During the research was conducted 250 face to face quantitative interviews among Muslim Mekhetians who are living in Georgia. It should be noted that the participant of quantitative part of the study were only Muslim Mekhetians. In order to gain entry in to each community, we initiated contact with community leaders of local Muslim Meskhetian groups living in in each

⁸ Issues Information was obtained from the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, the department of Repatriation and Refugee. From the local government of Nasakirali, Samtredia,

district where they were living, and then collected further data via snowball sampling. Data was collected in period- October and November in 2017. Participants appeared to be quite comfortable while sharing information about their family structure, relationships, and gender roles. The group of researchers consisted of 4 people. It could be admitted communication with Muslim Meskhetians community was not easy, it depended from district. Because of one of the researcher was familiar person for them, she was being in 2004 as participant – observer, Muslim Meskhetians from this two district (Nasakirali, and Samtredia) were more open, and in this two district study was going more easier than in the other places. Muslim Meskhetians who are repatriated after adapting of low they had problem with Georgian and with Russian language, but with help of interpreter the problem was solved.

The questionnaire included different psychological instruments:

1. “Twenty Statements” Test (Kuhn&McPartland 1952) – the test will be used to measure respondents’ self-identity, the roles played and the priority of these roles
2. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills and Argyle2002) – this instrument will be used to measure respondents’ perception of happiness
3. Scale of Interpersonal Trust (Holmes & Rempel, 1989) – this instrument will be used to measure the level of trust in interpersonal relationships and the degree to which it influences behavioral patterns and openness to new relationships
4. Bogardus Social Distance Scale(Bogardus 1925) - this instrument will be used to measure respondents’ willingness to participate in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness with members of diverse social groups, such as of another race or ethnicity.
5. Questionnaire of Civil norms(Dalton, 2008).
6. East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM) (Barry, 2001, Georgian translation Shekriladze, I., 2015) is a four-dimensional self-report measure of acculturation with 29 statements on a 7-point Likert scale (e.g.: “at home I usually speak English”) which measures the degrees of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization on four corresponding subscales. Cronbach’s alpha (by subscale) equals to .77/.76/.74/.85 respectively (Barry, 2001; Taras, 2008).

5. Research results

The number of participants of the quantitative research are 250 Muslim Meskhetians Female 57.4%; male 42.6%. Most of them are living in the Akhaltsikhe district (53.5%) and are spread amongst 4 different locations which have historically been their homeland, another parts are living in Samterdia, Ozugeti, Tbilisi, Batumi, Gori.

Tab.N 3. Participant of the research

Name of town/ village	Gender		
	Total %	Male	Female
Akhalsikhe town	36.6	43.6%	31.4%
Akhalsikhe D Vale	2.7	3.8%	1.9%
Akhalsikhe D Mugareti	1.6	1.3%	1.9%
Akhalsikhe D. Abastumani	12.6	12.8%	12.4%
Gori	7.1	3.8%	9.5%
Tbilisi	4.9	2.6%	6.7%
Batumi	2.2	2.6%	1.9%
Tsetskhlauri	2.2		3.8%
Ozurgeti	16.9	15.4%	18.1%
Samtredia	13.1	14.1%	12.4%
Total	100		

The distribution of age is the highest among the respondents: 21.3% are young people aged 18-24. 20.8% are 35-44 years old. 25 – 34-year-old respondents constitute 18.69% of respondents. 14.8% are 45-54-year-old participants. Respondents of 55-64 years were 13.7%. 3.8% are two groups: younger than 18 years and 75-84 years old, and people above 85 years constituted 0.5% (n = 1).

The distribution of Education – majority of Muslim Meskhetians has school education 48.6% (M 42,3%, F 53.3%) ; Higher/ University education have 9,3% (M 19,2; F 1,9); Incomplete higher/Student 6,6% (M 7,75; F 5,7%) ; College 19,1%(M 24,4%; F 19,1%) Basic 17,8%(M 6,4%,F 21,0%) According this data - almost half of participant Muslim Meskhetians have secondary education (48.6%), professional (college) education (19.1%) and 9.3% have higher education. It should be noted that more male respondents than female respondents have higher than a secondary education.

According to the data, most of the interviewed respondents (31%) arrived in Georgia in 1980. They are living in Tbilisi, Samtredia, Ozurgeti, and Mugareti. The other part of them, 26% of participants, who are living Abastumani, Gori, and Vale, arrived in 200-20012, and after 2012 arrived 27% of participants, mostly of them are living in Akhaltsikhe

The repatriation law implementation process started in 2012. Before 2012, Georgian government supported Muslim Meskhetian coming back, and resettlement process to different part of Georgia. They tried to support integration process of Muslim Mekhstians in host society on their Historical homeland by this way. From this time and during the process when government was working on this law some family of Muslim Meskhetians made decision to retune by them self. They preferred living in south west Georgia which is their homeland territory according their ancestors. They bought private houses and land. Now they are living there. Muslim Mekhsetians who arrived after implementation of repatriation law, get Georgian citizenship, but part of them who came by themselves between 2000-2012 have problem with getting Citizenship.

Adaptation of Resettled Individuals

The process of integration depends on the language competence of individuals in the national language of the country in which a person lives. This language competence depends not only on secondary education in that language, but also on the language people use to communicate at home. National language competence is an issue for Muslim Meskhetians in Georgia. When asked which language they use at home, the majority of respondents replied that they speak Turkish Anatolian Dialect at home. Only a few families speak in Georgian with their family members.

89 % of respondents use the Anatolian dialect of the Turkish language at home. Fewer than 9 % say that they speak Georgian at home. Even fewer use Russian as a colloquial language. The colloquial language at home is the indicator of ethnical identity as well in many cultures. To determine ethnic identity, participants were asked questions about how they consider themselves: The possible answers were: Ahiska Turk (Turk from Akhaltsikhe), Georgian, or Turk. More than a half of the respondents identify themselves first of all as Ahiska Turks (57.9%). The majority of male respondents identify themselves as Ahiska Turks. Only one female considers herself a Turk.

The term “Ahiska” Turk has become common practice in the last few decades. This ethnic group dislikes when they are referred to as Meskhetian Turks and some of them (mostly those living in other countries) even consider being referred to as Georgian as incorrect. It can be assumed that the psychological mechanism of this identification is linked to the phenomenon of “place identity” (Cuba and Hummon 1993a, 1993b). It should be noted that

the participants of the qualitative research (who were the same participants involved in the quantitative research) referred to themselves in qualitative interviews as Georgian.

Tab. N4. National Attachment according gender.

	Male	Female	Frequency	Total %
Ahiska Turk	60.3%	56.2%	106	57.9
Georgian	39.7%	42.9%	76	41.5
Turk		1.0%	1	0.5
Total	100%	100%	183	100

There are differences in preferred identity name according to the education level of participants. Among secondary (64%), technical (71.4%), and incomplete higher (91.7%) education respondents, the majority identify themselves as Ahiska Turks while the majority of basic (66.7%) and higher (70.6%) education respondents identify themselves as Georgians.

Tab. N5. National Attachment according to education

Identity	Education						Total%
	Primary	Basic	Secondary	Technical/vocational	Incomplete Higher/student	Higher	
Georgian	100%	66.7%	36.0%	28.6%	8.3%	70.6%	41.5%
Turkish		3.7%					.5%
Ahiska Turk		29.6%	64.0%	71.4%	91.7%	29.4%	57.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

As for differences in age groups, the majority of respondents below 18 years old (57.1%) and between 35-44 (52.6%) and 65-74 (60%) identify themselves as Georgians. The majority of the rest of the age groups identify themselves as Ahiska Turks. In the case of their allocation according to the regions, the majority of people living in Akhaltsikhe identify themselves as Muslims; almost half among them (48%) claim that first of all s/he considers himself/herself a Muslim. This is followed by the population of Ozurgeti (13.6%) and Abastumani (13.6%). As for those respondents who identify themselves to be citizens of Georgia first of all and not Muslims, ¼ live in Ozurgeti (25%) and more than one fifth (21.2%) in Samtredia.

Social distance is an important measure in order to find out how open people are to becoming close to people who are ethnically or socially different from themselves. The Bogardus Social Distance Scale is used to measure the readiness of social contacts of different proximity with the representatives of various ethnical or social groups and races. In this scale we put the nationality of people who are living in Georgia, it can be admitted that we

put Adjarians, who are ethnical Georgians especially, they are Muslim Sunni as Muslim Mekhsetians, and they are living in the same place in Ozurgeti districts where were repatriated Muslim Meskhetians in n 80th in 20 centuries. Because of for Muslim Meskhetian religion is important we thought to divide Georgians according to religion will give to us good pictures within social distance.

On the Bogardus Social Distance Scale the participants' desire to have close contact with representatives of the same group (other Muslim Meskhetians) is highest. Relationships with Christian Georgians take second place for them, followed by Azerbaijanian, Turk, and Muslim Adjarian. The participants showed the least interest in having close contact with were the ethnic groups Kurdish and Gipsy. Based on these results, we can say *that ethnicity determines their contact proximity more than their religion.*

As for the nearest contact, such as marriage, the data taken in the research differs from reality. However, in reality, mixed marriages with Christian Georgians are very few, which once again highlights that they may not be completely sincere when responding to quantitative surveys conducted by Georgian researchers.

Tab. N 6 Social Distance %

	Meskhetian	Georgian	Azerbaijanean	Turk	Adjarean	Russian	Armenean	Kurdish	Gipsy
Would be ready if a relative got married	98.3%	40.9%	36.7%	32.6%	32%	12%	9.4%	5.8%	3.3%
Would be my close friend	99.4%	97.8%	88.1%	90.6%	87.8%	77%	64.1%	43.5%	32.6%
Would be my next door neighbor	100%	97.8%	92.7%	93.9%	91.7%	87%	87.3%	57.8%	44.2%
Would work with or for the same organization	100%	98.3%	93.8%	95%	93.4%	90%	90.1%	77.3%	62.4%
Would be my acquaintance	100%	98.9%	97.2%	95.6%	93.4%	93%	93.4%	92.2%	74%
Would admit as a temporary guest to my country	100%	99.4%	100%	97.8%	93.9%	96%	95%	100%	80.1%
Would not admit to my		0.6%		2.2%	6.1%	4.4%	5%		19.9%

country									
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As for the differences in the demographic context, there is no significant difference in the results. Results according to gender, age, and education give almost the same picture. Respondents aged between 55-64 (64%), and 65-74 (60%) show the highest level of probability of contact with Georgians while respondents aged 75-85 show the lowest (0%). With Azerbaijanian people respondents aged 65-74 show the highest probability of contact (60%) and those under age 18 show the least probability. When it comes to Turkish people, those aged 55-64 show the highest probability of close contact (48%), and those aged 65-74 and 75-84 show the least probability (0%). In regards to contact with Adjarians, respondents aged 55-64 show the highest level of probability (64%), and the lowest level of probability lies among those respondents who are under 18 (0%). The willingness of closest level of contact is expressed by the majority of respondents who are aged between 55-64 (32%), and the fewest among those who are under 18. With Armenians, respondents aged 55-64 show a 20% probability of close contact. Those under 18 show the lowest level of probability of contact, and those who are between 65-74 and 75-84 also show 0) % probability. With Kurdish people, respondents aged 55-64 show a 15% likelihood of close contact, and those who would agree to the marriage of a relative to a Gipsy are 7.9% among those aged 35-44, 4% among those aged 55-64, 2.9% among those aged 25-34, and 2.6% among Muslim Meskhetians aged between 18-24.

As for education, according to the data, 70.6% of respondents with higher education would agree to the marriage of a relative to a Georgian. Half (50%) of respondents with incomplete higher education would give consent to a relative's marriage to an Azerbaijanian while only 25% of respondents who have completed their higher education would. Marriage to an ethnic Turk is acceptable for 59.3% of Muslim Meskhetian respondents with basic education. For respondents with incomplete higher education it turned out to be the least acceptable (25%). 55.6% respondents with basic education and 52.9% of respondents with higher education among Muslim Meskhetians give consent to the marriage of a relative to a local Muslim Georgian. 33.3 % of respondents with primary education would give consent to the marriage of a relative to a Russian or Armenian. 59.3% of respondents with basic education would give consent to the marriage of a relative to a Kurdish person. As for the marriage of a relative to a Gipsy, 7.4 % of respondents with basic education would approve, 3.4% of respondents with secondary education would approve, and 3% of respondents with technical/vocational education would approve.

Concerning differences between the genders of respondents, this data shows that females consider marriage with a Georgian more acceptable than males while the difference between the consent to the marriage of a relative with an Azerbaijani is even higher; more females give consent to this marriage than males. Meanwhile, a relative getting married to an Adjarian is more acceptable for males than females.

Tab.N7. I would give consent if my relative got married with (The data is given in percentages (%))

	Female	Male
Meskhethian	98.7	98.1
Georgian	43.4	39
Azerbaijani	42.1	32.7
Turk	32.9	32.4
Adjarian	27.6	35.2
Russian	11.8	11.4
Armenian	10.5	8.6

“Twenty Statements” Test – This test is used to investigate self-identities, as well as roles and role priorities. According to this test, most of the respondents first identify themselves with the social roles they have, namely with “mother”. This may be caused by the fact that most of the respondents were female representatives. In second place ranks identifying oneself with the Muslim religion, meaning that their religious belief for each third respondent is one of the main components of their identity. Next comes the social role that they perform. 9.3 % of respondents say that they are Georgians, 5.5 % Georgian citizens, and only 1.1% says that they are Georgian Meskhetians. Only one of the participants in the survey said that s/he is Meskhetian Turk.

Fig. N1 “Twenty Statements” Test



As expected while filling out the “20 Statement Test|”, importance is given to the order of the list. As the test adaptation in Georgia has shown people often name the following categories: *professional identity, family role, status, gender, and age*. Among the identities named by the Muslim Meskhetians, family role holds an important position. Religion is also highlighted, which takes the second place in most cases and has a more privileged role than ethnic or civil identity.

As a result of the data analysis, it can be said that to identify Muslim Meskhetians *with their religious identity is important*. This is confirmed by the data obtained from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. According to the data, they keep the closest distance with the people of their own religion. Namely, they would make families or would welcome the marriage of family members if the partner were first of all Muslim Meskhetian, then Georgian, then Azerbaijanian, Turk, or Adjarean. The willingness to marry Georgian being in the second position arouses doubts, because in our view, it does not reflect the reality of marriage with the local Orthodox Georgians of Muslim Meskhetians living in Georgia.

We studied civil-social identity of Muslim Meskhetians with the help of several questions.

Answers to the question: How proud are you to be a citizen of Georgia? - has been allocated as follows:

Tab. N8. How proud are you to be a citizen of Georgia?

	Male	Female	Total %
Very	80.8%	71.4%	75.4
Quite	14.1%	21.0%	18.0
Partially	3.8%	1.9%	2.7
Not proud at all		1.0%	.5
No reply	1.3%	4.8%	3.3
Total	100%	100%	100

It is interesting that people replied to this question in this way, as in more than 70 cases respondents were not citizens of Georgia. (The repatriation law implementation process started in 2012. Before 2012, Muslim Mekhsetians who arrived after implementation of repatriation law, get Georgian citizenship, but part of them who came by themselves between 2000-2012 have problem with getting Citizenship.) When we put the above-mentioned question to non-citizens, we formulated it this way: *“How proud would you be if you were a citizen of Georgia?”* The answers to the question were mainly either very proud or quite proud. Only one respondent stated that s/he is not or would not be proud at all. There is almost no difference in answers according to gender. Both males and females are or would be proud of being citizens of Georgia. The same situation is observed in the answers of different age groups and education levels.

As for civil identity (whether they identify themselves as Muslims or citizens of Georgia first of all), the majority of respondents identify themselves as Muslims first and then citizens of Georgia. The same tendency is observed among males and females; there is no difference in this respect, however the validity of the obtained result may be suspicious in this case, too, because the majority of the respondents were not the citizens of Georgia.

Tab N. 9. Affiliation

	Male	Female	Total %
Muslim	71.8%	65.7%	68.3
Citizen of Georgia	26.9%	29.5%	28.4
No reply	1.3%	4.8%	3.3
Total	100%	100%	100

A similar allocation can be observed when comparing the groups with different education levels. In every case the majority identify themselves as Muslims first. Among the respondents with a completed higher education degree, the answers are comparatively equal; a bit fewer than half (41.2%) identify themselves as Georgians. When comparing the answers according to age groups, the answers are also similar. The majority of all age groups name the Muslim religion as the primary characteristic of their identity.

Tab.N10. Affiliation according education

							Total %
	Primary	Basic	Secondary	Technical/ vocational	Incomplete higher/student	Higher	
Muslim	66.7%	55.6%	67.4%	77.1%	91.7%	58.8%	68.3%
Citizen of Georgia	33.3%	37.0%	30.3%	17.1%	8.3%	41.2%	28.4%
No reply		7.4%	2.2%	5.7%			3.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Religious identity is more important for Muslim Meskhetians than social-civil identity. Only amongst those with a completed higher education degree can a different tendency be observed.

To the question: In order to be a good citizen, how important is it for a person to perform the activities mentioned below? – The answers were allocated as follows:

Tab.N11. Good citizens

	Average	St/D
Good citizen: should be law obedient	4.89	.397
Good citizen: should help the poor	4.89	.451
Good citizen: should participate in elections	4.52	.747
Good citizen: if witnesses a crime, should contact the police	4.50	.623
Good citizen: should have his or her own opinion	4.50	.658
Good citizen: in case of war, should join the army	4.19	1.015
Good citizen: actively participate in volunteer organizations	3.70	1.291
Good citizen: in case of necessity, should be a juror	3.56	1.214
Good citizen: should be actively involved in politics	2.82	2.82
N=177		

The majority of the citizens think that to be a good citizen the most important thing is to be law-obedient (SD=0.4) and help the poor (SD=0.5), and they consider the least important to be involved in politics (SD=2.9). In total, we can say that all the statements, given on the table, were considered as important by the respondents in order to be good citizens, because their indicator is higher than the possible average indicator (2.5).

For Muslim Meskhetians, *law obedience is the most important statement.* This can be confirmed in their lifestyle. It is hard to find the statistic indicator of their law offence. This is an important and powerful civic value for them.

Conclusions

Based on the conducted quantitative research it can be concluded that:

Religious identity is more important than civil identity for Muslim Meskhetians. The majority of Meskhetians living in Georgia identify themselves first of all as Muslims and then as citizens of Georgia. There is no difference in gender. There is a difference observed within the group of more highly educated participants. The Muslim Meskhetians with higher education identify themselves as citizens of Georgia first of all and then as Muslims.

According to measurements of the **social distance** scale, **Muslim Meskhetians are willing to have the closest contact with representatives of the same group** (Muslim Meskhetians). The relationship (which means Friendships, neighborhoods,) with Orthodox Georgians holds the second place, then Azerbaijanians, Turks, and Muslim Adjarians, and the least desirable are the relationships with Kurdish people and Gypsies.

The significance of religious identity to Muslim Meskhetians is confirmed by the data from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, according to which they consider the closest distance to people with their credential, namely to establish a family or would give consent to the marriage of a family member if the partner were first of all Muslim Meskhetian; Georgia is named as the following position, which we consider does not reflect the reality, because the percentage of the families made with Orthodox Georgians does not confirm this attitude another question raises the circumstances, that the Adjarians are muslim georgians, who are Sunni as Muslim meskhetian, and according to our information, what we get from the qualitative research, in modern Muslim Memsekhetians in ozurgeti, where are live Adjarians, in the same village marriages is more acceptable (There is several mixed families, with Adjarian's women) with them than with orthodox Georgians, then comes Azerbaijanian, Turk.

Muslim Meskhetians, for whom **civil identity is primary, rather than religious** (who identify themselves as Georgian citizens first of all and then Muslims) are more integrated within Georgian society.

According to social identity, law-obedience is the most important factor for Muslim Meskhetians and is a powerful civic value.

In terms of ethnic identity, the majority of respondents (more than half) identify themselves as Ahiska Turks first of all. A larger portion of males rather than females identify themselves as Ahiska Turks. Muslim Meskhetians with higher education identify themselves as Georgians rather than other. The newest generation, aged fewer than 18, who were born in Georgia identify themselves as Georgians, as well as the majority of those who are above 65.

It can be said, that in terms of their identity, which was formed as Ahiska Turks, it is the phenomenon of "Place identity" itself and not the ethnical identity, which the majority

of respondents have not fully realized. They say that they are Ahiska Turks from Akhaltsikhe and not the Turks from Turkey. As Harol Proshansky, Ebby Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff claim (Proshansky, Fabian, Kaminoff, 1983), Place Identity is part of the self-identification of an individual. Places where people live acquire different meanings and arouse different feelings and memories. In recent years, self-identification of Muslim Meskhetians in the experience of deportation has been established. Muslim Meskhetians are unanimously rejecting the name of Turk Meskhetians and are transferring to Ahiska Turk identification.

Finally, for integration process is not enough only living in the territory which is important for repatriates. As research shows Georgian language is very important for communication and for education process. Importance of education is underlined during this quantitative research. The second generation of Muslim Meskhetians who came with their parents to Georgia, on idea that Georgia is their Homeland, and new generation who are born in Georgia and get school education in Georgia, who have many friends in the school and neighborhood, they consider themselves Georgians as Civil Identity, their attitudes to religion and to ethnicity is different. As scholars (Gordon, M.1964; Berry, J.1997; Augoustinos & innes, 1990; Moscovici, 1981; Hooward, 2000) argue that knowledge the language, the Education and communication with local inhabitants is very important for integration.

Limitation of Research

Limitation of the research is the researchers were Georgians. Despite of that for field work was hired the interpreter which helped researcher during the face to face interview (survey), we think that lack of knowledge of Turkish languages has an influence on the answer Muslim Meskhetians who arrived after 2012.

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