

## AVTANDIL NIKOLEISHVILI

### GRIGOL ORBELIANI AND *MUSLIM GEORGIA*

The disintegration of the united Georgian kingdom into separate principalities since the 15<sup>th</sup> century has been tragic not only in terms of violation of territorial-national integrity of our country but also in terms of tremendous harm to the national consciousness of the Georgians. The fact that the idea of national unity – originated as early as in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by Giorgi Merchule – transformed into the provincial patriotism in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian literature must be regarded as a logical result of the above-mentioned tragic phenomenon.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century till the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ancient Georgian regions – Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara and Tao-Klarjeti that were then occupied by the Ottoman Empire totally escaped the attention of Georgian writers. In fact, not a single word of sympathy towards these regions and our brothers who lived there has been written in Georgian literature of that period.

Grigol Orbeliani (1804-1883) was the first writer in the history of the Georgian literature who identified the de-occupation of the invaded Georgian regions as the issue of special interest. From this point of view, his epistolary works compared to his literary compositions are more significant.

Grigol Orbeliani's attitude towards the so-called Muslim Georgia became especially intense during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). In his letters sent to his relatives and friends the poet expressed fascination with the fact that the Georgian territories that had been conquered by the Ottoman Empire more than three centuries earlier were returned to our motherland.

Thus, Grigol Orbeliani expressed not only his national orientation but also patriotic attitudes of the entire Georgian nation towards the problems related to the history and modernity of Muslim Georgia.