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### ON ECCLESIASTICAL LANGUAGE OF WESTERN GEORGIA IN 6<sup>TH</sup>–7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

In the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries the western provinces of Georgia came *under the influence of Byzantium*. Therefore, some scholars claim that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century the western Georgian church was part of the Greek eparchy, with Greek as an ecclesiastical language, respectively.

There is also a *contrasting* view regarding the Georgian language as the one functioning as the state and liturgical language since the adoption of Christianity as the *state religion* in the Kingdom of Egrisi. Ethnological literature highlights that the religion was a defining factor for ethnicity in Medieval Georgia.

Here's a question – *If Greek served as a liturgical language in the Middle Ages then should one have doubts concerning the ethnicity of Georgians. We believe, the answer is definitely negative.*

*If Hers, Taoans, Svans and Egrisians did not incorporate Georgian national identity then why would the hymnographers from Tbeti apply such creative patterns of the Georgia language as „აიღვთისსახლა“, „აცისკრისფერა ბნელი“. Why does the margin of the Martvili Gospels preserve the scribe's phrase: “Oh! I am so hungry!”*

*Hymnographic, hagiographic, liturgical as well as epigraphic monuments, and charters written in ecclesiastical Georgian of the 5<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries indicate the linguistic and ethnic integrity of the Georgians.*