

# **Cooking Up National Identity:**

## **Cookbooks and Social Transformations in Georgia**

by

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## Abstract:

The main objective of this thesis is to show how cookbooks both reflect and influence the transformation of national identity in post-socialist Georgia. To address this issue, I trace versions of the cookbook, *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* by Barbare Jorjadze, in three periods of Georgian history (Pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet). I conduct discourse analysis of three editions of Jorjadze's cookbook in reference to other cookbooks or similar projects from respective periods: *Book for the Kitchen*, *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*, *The Family Book* and restaurant 'Barbarestan' – commercial project that revolves around Jorjadze's cookbook and identity. This work depicts how and why this cookbook has become a cultural artefact that bears profound emotional legitimacy and nurtures national sentiments in the community. Through tracing the narratives that are woven around these cookbooks, I demonstrate how the process of forming post-socialist identity in today's Georgia is built on all the stages the cookbooks have gone through in the past century before they became material objects they are today. This research found that the cookbooks are used as a means of social influence in post-socialist Georgia by simply offering this narrative to the society as a choice of action in wide repertoire. The authors of these projects exercise some level of social influence, the degree of which is later "decided" by the public. This thesis also adds onto the body of literature on utilizing cookbooks as source for researching social matters by providing theoretical framework and demonstrating its applications.

Key Words: Culinary Culture / Cookbooks / Social Transformation / Social Influence / National Identity

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY COOKBOOKS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION?

“Cooking turns raw into the cooked, a writing transforms the  
cooked into the cultural . . . into a full-fledged cultural product”

- Priscilla Ferguson

Eating habits and culinary practices have been essential part of Georgian culture for centuries, seventeen out of fifty-six items on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Georgia are related to culinary practices (National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation Georgia, n.d.). The list includes traditional Georgian ingredients, such as Meskhetian cheese *Tenili*<sup>1</sup>; traditional technologies of winemaking, brewing beer, Lagidze Waters<sup>2</sup> amongst others; number of traditional dishes, for instance tradition of *Khachapuri*<sup>3</sup>, Svan *Kubdari* and Kakhetian bread and a form of traditional Georgian feast – *supra*. Food and eating habits are significant part of not only Georgian history and culture, but identity as well. Kiknadze describes culinary culture and *supra* as “one of the strongest identifying marks of ‘being the Georgian’”, since it is a part of one of the most important features of Georgian identity – hospitality (Kiknadze, 2004). Large body of literature on food, culinary culture and eating habits, both on local and global scale, encompasses many fields,

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<sup>1</sup> Originally from the region of Meskheti, Tenili is made of threads of rich cow's or sheep's milk cheese briefly brined before being pressed into a clay pot.

<sup>2</sup> The Lagidze Waters are a popular brand of soft drinks established by Mitropane Lagidze in 1887.

<sup>3</sup> Traditional Georgian dish of bread filled with cheese.

be it a description of family breakfast or festive gathering in literary work, philosophical reasoning about the meaning of food to society, analysis of historical sources on eating habits, or medical analysis of healthy/unhealthy eating trends and habits. They are all important and contribute a lot to the study of the culture through food. However, one form that is relatively underrepresented in the dialogue of food and its social value is, ironically, the closest to culinary practice – cookbooks. With this project, focused on Georgia as a ‘case study’, I attempt to fill this gap by discussing the importance of cookbooks for social sphere.

Mary Douglas refers to food as a code, comparing it to language in the question: “If food is a code, where is the pre-coded message?” For Douglas, the answer lies in the anthropological method of posing a question. “If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed” (Douglas, 1972: 61). If we take this analogy and perceive food and eating habits as a code for everything ‘social’, what would be a better tool to record the codes, the coded messages than cookbooks? Thus, cookbooks can be viewed as important chroniclers of social life and transformations. This notion is more understandable for earlier times, when there was no internet, no easy means for spread of information – most of the households relied either on cookbooks or orally transmitted recipes, which at some point would be written down as well – creating a non-official cookbooks. The question that arises today, in this new era of internet, technology, Google, YouTube and other platforms, do cookbooks still encompass the same social value? This thesis is based on the assumption that they do. Firstly, the production of cookbooks is a commercial business<sup>4</sup>, so they must represent the interest of the society in order to sell their

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<sup>4</sup> Other than occasional exceptions.

products. Moreover, as the main written source in culinary culture, cookbooks record not only culinary trends, but also social norms and etiquette that are not directly associated with cooking.

Therefore, even if the majority of modern citizens did not use the physical cookbooks, they still remain the main source of collecting the data related to cooking and food consumption, as they compile the trending eating, cooking and serving habits that are normalized in the society they are produced. Moreover, contrary to the common belief that cookbook sales are dropping dramatically due to the rise of popular online platforms and cooking shows, data suggests otherwise. According to Forbes magazine, based on data from NPD Bookscan, from 2017 to 2018 there was 21 percent increase in print cookbooks' sales. The magazine further elaborates: "the readers, it seems, want physical cookbooks. If they don't actually use them in their kitchens, they use them as reference tools and simply for reading enjoyment" (Maynard, 2019).

This project deals with dual nature of cookbooks interpretation as a source material. While on the one hand cookbooks can provide accurate information on specific historical periods, on the other hand there is a whole new research material that consists of the ways the same historical information is interpreted or showcased in various ways either intentionally – to serve certain socio-political agenda or unintentionally – to get influenced by them. Consequently, I have two interrelated research questions: 1. How can social transformations and changes in social norms be traced in time through cookbooks? 2. How transformation of national identity is influenced through cookbooks in post-socialist Georgia?

"The shift from socialist planned economy to free market at the beginning of the 1990s, followed by increasingly intense neoliberal policies pursued by Saakashvili's administration" (Onoprishvili

2012, in Curro 2014: 1) significantly affected many socio-cultural fields. Amongst others, this transformation strongly manifested in gastronomy, creating new opportunities for both producers and the consumers of culinary culture. “Saakashvili’s 10-year government was marked by the relentless celebration and pursuit of “Western” values and standards, at a social, political, and economic level. Alongside an overwhelming discourse which dichotomised the “old”<sup>5</sup> and the “new” in an “evil” vs. “good” opposition” (Curro, 2014: 2). To answer my main research question (question 2 above) I investigate the impression of these transformations on the process of building post-socialist Georgian identity? Where does the discourse of dichotomies fit in the process? and what role do the cookbooks play in the matter?

The following chapter (Chapter 1) frames the questions in broad sociological concepts, providing theoretical answers and explanations, which are later adapted to specific cases and fit to Georgian context. I have divided my empirical analysis into three chronological chapters (Chapters 2, 3, 4) – Pre-Soviet, Soviet and Post-Soviet. I will discuss the main features and characteristics that were common for the cookbooks published in each time frame and compare them with the editions of *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* from the same period. This will allow me to show two aspects of the process: firstly, the transformation of cookbooks as a material object through time in a broader sense – how it changes form, focus, accents; secondly, which is more interesting for my project – how the symbolic value and meaning of the cookbooks change; and how the representation of the same cookbook can change according to these socio-cultural transformations.

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<sup>5</sup> Here old signifies Soviet and early post-Soviet times, 1990s, before Saakashvili’s presidency (author’s note).



# CHAPTER 1

## BUILDING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THEORIZING COOKBOOKS AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Studies of food and eating habits in anthropology have quite long history starting from 19th century. These studies reflected broad social processes, such as political-economic transformations, symbolic values, the construction of social memories. Over thirty years ago Joseph Epstein wrote: “Judging from the space given to it [food] in the media, the great number of cookbooks and restaurant guides published annually, the conversations of friends—it is very nearly topic number one” (Epstein, 1978 cited in Mintz, Du Bois 2002: 99, used 2020) Since then, food has gained even more significance in various fields in the social sciences. According to *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, in the 1980-90s the topics of food amongst historians began gaining popularity as they were “readily embracing the field of cultural anthropology”. As they saw potential of studying various identity and social matters through food studies, historians started “returning to the cookbook as a primary source for the analysis of food habits and culinary practices” (Watts, 2012: 13,14). They analyze the texts, look beyond the primary information to answer the questions not directly linked to material culture but relate more to social topic, such as gender roles, class issues, ethnicity, politics, religion, social world view and ideologies (Alba, 2012). In this project I chose to focus specifically on cookbooks in order to demonstrate the role they have in building post-socialist Georgian identity.

## APPROACHING SOCIAL MATTERS THROUGH COOKBOOKS

While food and thus everything associated with it, have primarily physiological functions, the meaning they acquire go far beyond that - it is an intrinsically multilayered and multidimensional subject — with social, psychological, physiological, symbolic dimensions, to name merely a few— and with culturally constructed meanings (Holtzman, 2006). These meanings may vary based on the perspectives, but they are always present and extend to culinary practices as well, creating new constructs and locating culinary culture within them. Looking at a culture through imagined constructs brings us to the stories that a culture tells, to itself and to others (Ferguson, 2004). By formalizing the process of cooking and traditional cuisine, cookbooks create exactly these imagined constructs, serving as a window to the social constructs of specific cultures they represent. Material objects operate both in the arena of conventions that aim towards ongoing structure and in the arena of pragmatic performance with variety, change and competition (Tambiah 1985; Keane 2003 cited in Rosenberger, 2007, used 2020). In addition to being a material object, what makes cookbooks a rich source for studying culture and its social structure is the fact that they not only collect and describe culinary practices and recipes, but also presuppose the audience to whom they present certain narratives, symbolic meanings and representations of these practices. The presence of such narratives transforms the meaning of the cookbooks from material goods into something different, something more - “they transpose the culinary into the symbolic, the intellectual, and the aesthetic - the ingredients required to transform individual encounters into a collective experience” (Ferguson 2004: 83).

“Similar to the notion that “we are what we eat”, the culture is what it writes and publishes about eating. Therefore, a culture can be evaluated in terms of its eating practices and the texts it produces which dictate normal way of cooking and eating” (Tobias, 1998: 3). As a set of practices and texts,

cuisine codified culinary practice. “Cuisine—from the French *cuire*, “to cook”—begat gastronomy—from the Greek for the laws (nomos) of the stomach (gastro). As the etymology suggests, whereas cuisine emphasizes the producer, gastronomy engages the consumer” (Ferguson 2004: 84). To put it in other words, cookbooks have a complex “job description”. On the one hand, they account for existing trends and collect data from previously established practices. On the other hand, by engaging with large numbers of consumers, they become live mediums which in turn affect the same trends and practices they gather and catalogue. As Ferguson explains, these texts are key agents in the socialization of individual desire and the redefinition of appetite in collective terms. The resulting culinary culture, then, is anchored in both cuisine—a culinary product—and in gastronomy—a given practice of consumption (Ferguson, 2004).

However, cookbooks do not always represent the exact or the whole process of transformation of taste and habits of the society, “since recipe books do not provide insight into how a population eats, merely what it proposes to eat” (Gonzales Turmo, 2004: 3). For this reason, it is critical to stay cautious while analyzing cookbooks, read between the lines and not get caught up in the rhetoric and narratives they are representing or pushing. In this research I do this by putting cookbooks, the texts I analyze in the specific historical and social context, identifying possible influencing aspects and interpret the textual evidence according to those variables.

Cookbooks share some features with literary works: different language can be used to convey particular ideas through the manual of cooking the dish or etiquette of serving and consuming it; it can be published in different contexts and can be represented via media and other sources in numerous different ways, in turn conveying some broader ideas or ideologies; most of them have the preface wrote by author or publisher that allows the reader to see the reasons this book was created or published, the goals it has, this pretext can change the perception of the content in many

ways. According to Arjun Appadurai, cookbooks appear in literate civilizations where the display of class hierarchies is essential to their maintenance, and where cooking is seen as a communicable variety of expert knowledge (Appadurai, 1988).

Ferguson refers to Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste* and notes that cuisine varies according to many aspects, including historical periods (Ferguson, 2004). This claim by extension applies to cookbooks as well. The form of cookbooks has changed from manuscript age – when single recipes were recorded and banded together overtime – to printing age – when personal recipes were printed as books that had extra blank pages for additions – to the nineteenth century when magazines became an easy source for recipe collection (cutouts could be compiled), which brings us to today, when in addition to all above mentioned forms there are online editions of cookbooks, cooking shows, blogs, vlogs and video channels sharing the same purpose (Notaker, 2017). Moreover, the style of cookbooks has changed through history as well. The main theme for old cookbooks were more collective, focused on national or regional cuisine, traditions and habits. To name a few: *American Cookery* (1796), *The Forme of Cury, a Role of Ancient English Cookery* (1780), *How to cook and Eat in Chinese* (1945), *The New Orleans Cookbook* (1995), not to mention the books used in this research that are fully focused on Georgian cuisine<sup>6</sup>. While the same can be true for number of modern cookbooks, there is whole new genre that focus on individual perspective and individual figures, prominent chefs, so called ‘stars’ of food world, like Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, Gennaro Contaldo, Claudio Aprile and many others. In combination with other reasons listed

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<sup>6</sup> Not all of them, Book about Tasty and Healthy Food is an exception – iconic Soviet cookbook and is used for comparison, putting Soviet edition of Jorjadze’s cookbook in according context.

above, this is what makes cookbooks rich source of studying social matters per specific historical period.

## FORMALIZING: TURNING COOKING AND FOOD INTO MATERIAL OBJECTS

“Through performances in many contexts by various people, material objects have the potential to extend thinking beyond conventional realms, linking across time and space with a huge network of other systems of meaning and materiality” (Munn, 1986, cited in Rosenberg, 2007: 340; accessed May 2020). While the process of cooking is a socio-cultural practice, in order to become social construct and acquire deeper meaning, it needs to become a standardized material object; essentially, it needs to be formalized.

The process of formalizing cooking is not only a matter of social necessity, it also derives from the need of cooking to survive as a specific set of practices and the exact ways of practicing them that has certain symbolic value to the culture. Putting them in writing ensures the survival and stabilization of exact rules of practice and their transmission through generations (Ferguson, 2004). Hence, cookbooks are imperative in creating culinary culture and transmitting the practices in time, since the act of preparing and consuming food is particularly transient experience – one must destroy the product in order to experience it. While it is impossible to restore the product after consumption, the recipes provide an opportunity for duplicating the product or, at least, recreating close analogue of it regardless the time and location differences. This ensures the continuance not only of the product and the idea but the performance, the technique as well, keeping detailed account of all the ingredients and the way of dealing with them giving each meal specific meaning and symbolic social value.

I apply Genevieve Zubrzycki's argument on pictorial discourses to cookbooks, since they become physical artifacts – part of material culture – by turning social practice into cultural objects. According to Zubrzycki, “complex pictorial discourses and material things can be used as means of socialization or tools of propaganda in the hands of elites – what Chandra Mukerji (2012) calls “political pedagogy” (Zubrzycki, 2017: 8).

Another significant aspect of food consumption is the fact that it is simultaneously highly individual and exceptionally social. Eating practices involve individual agency, but are shaped by proximate practices (House, 2018). This allows us to link these two domains while partaking in specific culinary practices. However, for this link to gain valid social value and reflect in any way on the dynamics of social transformation, the formalization and intellectualization that Ferguson discusses in her book is a necessity. And again, the writing and cookbooks are instrumental for this objective, as “language allows sharing what is at once the most assertively individual and yet, arguably, the most dramatically social of our acts: eating” (Ferguson, 2004: 92).

The best way of formalizing cooking and culinary practices might be the written word. There are many examples of such written word, such as philosophical works and literary pieces, but the closest to the culinary practice are the cookbooks – the iconic example being world famous *Mastering the Art of French Cuisine* (1961) by Julia Child. Another source popularity of which is rising exponentially are online resources, however, the television shows and blogs are still not in direct competition with the cookbook industry. Often the hosts of such programs or food blogs become celebrity chefs, which opens new doors for them – their popularity extends to their recipes that are published as cookbooks that later become bestsellers. “The Internet has become a steppingstone to producing a printed work” (Notaker, 2017: 300). For this reason, Ferguson discusses the strategies of formalizing food and cooking and claiming that “the texts of culinary

discourse convert culinary production into a truly cultural phenomenon” (Ferguson, 2004: 17). Formalization helps locate common culinary practices within social context for two reasons. I already discussed the first one when I talked about text engaging with the masses and spreading the recipes and culinary practices themselves. Additionally, by doing so they regulate taste and its experience. Second is the social value or meaning texts and their authors assign to these recipes, which can be associated with various social identity markers, such as social class, economic status, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation. To sum up the sequence, for culinary practices to become social phenomena, they need to be introduced to public domain; to do so they need to reach beyond the group they originated in, for which they need to be fixed and formalized – become ‘cuisine’. In other words, culinary practices become social and cultural phenomena through the written word, manifested in the cookbook.

## FROM COOKING TO COOKBOOKS TO IDENTITY

In his canonical work *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson points out that “nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze” (Anderson, 2006: 3). As this work deals with interactions of cookbooks and national identity and the concepts Anderson referred to, it is apt to take his definition in consideration. ‘In anthropological spirit’ Anderson defines nation as an ‘imagined political community’, each word contribution to conceptualization of the idea that nation binds together number of individuals who will probably never meet or have any personal (non-imagined) communication with only imagined ties (Anderson, 2006). Later Ross Poole builds on this definition providing better understanding of national identity. Poole points out limitations of Anderson’s theory saying that we don’t just imagine the nation, but simultaneously imagine ourselves as undividable part of it, nation becomes a form of identity. This leads us to further dimensions of the ‘imaginary communities’, as there is

more to perceiving nation as our identity (or part of it) then just viewing it as an abstract construct. In order to affiliate with some group as part of our identity, it is not enough for us, human beings to just imagine the community, or structure of it, we should also know and be sure that everyone else within this community imagines the same thing while thinking of this concept, that our perceptions of the subject coincide (Poole, 1999).

““We are what we eat”, or so we are often told, but we are also how we eat and how we talk and write about food” (Welsh, 2018: 439). This statement is often perceived as highly individual and is assigned to self-transformation purposes - pleasures [from food] that we practice offer signs to the ways in which we construct ourselves and how we connect to the worlds around us (Ferguson, 2004). However, it is just as true for larger groups of people and could be used for the whole nation or state. In the introduction of his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth discusses the process of formation and definition of national identities. To put it simply, the group is mostly defined by the ethnic boundaries and not by the cultural elements and characteristics reside within these boundaries (Barth, 1969). This suggests that the nation, the group of people identifying themselves under the same boundaries has the agency (it might be the whole society, the elites dictating the process, or combination of both) to construct their own national identity, according to their aspirations. This might not be the universal truths, nor the mentioned elements would in all cases be the same, or at all related to culinary culture, however, this explanation describes post-Soviet Georgia perfectly – country with newly acquired independence with long existing boundaries had immediate need of strengthening nationalist tendencies and national identity by accentuating it’s distinction from Soviet and consequently Russian culture. For this idea to gain more clarity, I borrow Michael Billig’s concept of “banal nationalism”, which suggests the reproduction of nationhood is based on constant repetitions of “ideological habits” - most important part being these repetitions and reproductions to be done in extremally “banally



mundane way” (Billig, 1995). Additionally, such daily practices utilizing mundane objects can as well be used “as a strategy to de- and re-construct national identity on new bases” (Zubrzycki, 2017, 7). This is where food and eating habits play their role, as one of the markers of national identity. Cooking and eating are easily one of the most mundane everyday practices, as they are necessary ritual for human survival. Once associated with specific symbolic meaning they become essential piece of reproducing according type of identity, or as Ferguson puts it, “making and remaking social worlds with every bite we take, we eat what we are and to become what we’d like to be” (Ferguson, 2004, 16).

Cookbooks not only account for social matters, but as cultural objects, can also influence them. Moreover, they can be used as means of social influence. In her article written in 1986 Ann Swidler offers new models of defining social influence (two models – for settled and unsettled cultural periods). According to Swidler, “in settled periods, culture independently influences action, but only by providing resources from which people can construct diverse lines of action. In unsettled cultural periods, explicit ideologies directly govern action, but structural opportunities for action determine which among competing ideologies survive in the long run” (Swidler, 1986: 273). The difference between these two models is just as important for this project as the formulated concept of ‘cultural influence’, since it is dealing with different historical periods. Pre-Soviet and post-Soviet times can be considered more of an example of ‘settled periods’, while the Soviet period can be identified as an ‘unsettled cultural period’ governed by ‘explicit ideologies’. This model also explains the paradox of cookbooks as a source of the action – transformation, as well as the result of it, as it influences the choices of society by providing limited “toolkit” (as Swidler refers to it), limited course of action, but is also influenced by the social choice in turn.

## GEORGIAN CONTEXT

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia as an independent state has officially declared its goal to free itself from labels and habits that were vestiges of socialism. One of the “easiest” and most obvious ways of washing off the identity of ‘a Soviet citizen’ is ‘putting on’ the ‘European identity’ as its inverse. That is why the country’s official political agenda is to become part of the ‘Western’ world, by sharing and implementing its values. Many believe that the now-well-known words spoken by Zurab Zhvania, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia on the January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999 at the Council of Europe, “I am Georgian, and therefore I am European” (Council of Europe, n.d.) have become a slogan for a new Georgian identity. Even if culinary culture seems irrelevant to such political agendas, various mechanisms are implemented to transform national thought. According to Ferguson, “any group concerned with the regulation of collective behavior uses food as an important means of social control” (Ferguson, 2004: 18) and as we saw in previous sections, cookbooks is one of the primary sources of spreading this control through wide public.

While ‘cultural identity’ and ‘national identity’ are two different concepts, they are so codependent and closely entwined that in some cases it is impossible to view them as autonomous notions. Georgia is one of those cases, since national identity is strongly determined by cultural elements. Generally, “the foodways of any collectivity concern not just behavior and practices but also the values that sustain those practices” (Ferguson, 2004: 19). Moreover, in the Georgian case, food and culinary culture has deeper cultural and historical roots in the matter. Florian Mühlfried addresses this subject in his article on eating habits in post-Soviet Georgia. While examining the meaning *supra*<sup>5</sup> has gained since the 19th century, Mühlfried explains, unlike former occupiers of Georgia, the Russian shared the same religion as the Georgian. Consequently, religion could no longer be a distinguishing factor between “us” and “them.” The “othering” of the Georgian nation had to be based on something else — folk culture. “Despite its aristocratic origin,

the *supra*, as a distinct way of feasting and as a manifestation of “Georgian” hospitality, soon became a symbol of cultural otherness” (Mühlfried, 2005: 2).

## METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses the Appadurai’s approach and attempts to follow the social life of “the thing”, but, like El Or I try to follow “the markers and the users”(2012: 436) of ‘the thing’ to see “how the things that people make, make people” (Miller, 2005:38 in El Or, 2012: 436).

The main focus of this project is one Georgian cookbook that was published and republished in different historical and political periods of the society – pre-Soviet (1914), Soviet (1988) and post-Soviet (2017) Georgia – Princess Barbare Jorjadze’s *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes*. With the discourse analysis I conceptualize the cookbook not as source of culinary material and information, but a guide into social norms and understandings.

My original approach was to solely focus on one book, its history, different editions and modern representations. I wanted to combine method of participant observation with archival work and discourse analysis. I had intended to spend a month in the restaurant which is conceptually based on the book - “Barbarestan” (Tbilisi, Georgia) conducting fieldwork, combining the data with archival work in order to gain a more complete picture of the transformation of material object into symbolic capital on the nation. However, my plans were highly affected by COVID-19, and I had to totally rework my strategy, as all the sources I relied on suddenly became unavailable.

I since decided to broaden my pool of the cookbooks to gain enough empirical data and while *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* remains the main thread that follows my thesis through

and binds the narrative together, I added three more books, each from pre-Soviet and Soviet periods to better position Jorjadze's book in respective historical periods.

Additionally, because the main focus of the research is modern representations and perceptions of the book, more specifically how they are used as means of social influence in the process of rebuilding Georgian identity today, I conducted three semi-structured interviews<sup>7</sup> with representatives of the recent projects involving the books used in this thesis – two publications of the books and one restaurant. While I wish I had wider pool of interviewees as well to better grasp each institution's position on the matter, I believe the interviews I conducted were sufficient for the purposes of my research, considering the extraordinary circumstances during COVID-19.

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<sup>7</sup>Two interviews are in person, since I conducted them in 2018 as part of preliminary research and one is via Zoom, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

# CHAPTER 2

## PRE-SOVIET ERA

### GEORGIAN CUISINE AND TRIED HOUSEKEEPING NOTES:

#### HOUSEWIFE – PORTRAIT OF A ‘PERFECT WOMAN’

This chapter focuses on pre-Soviet time, discussing two Georgian cookbooks that were published in 19<sup>th</sup> century, 60 years apart *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* by Barbare Jorjadze and *The Book for the Kitchen* by Bagrat Batonishvili<sup>8</sup>. I will also analyze the modern perspectives on Batonishvili’s book, as unlike Jorjadze’s work, I will not be dealing with his cookbook later in this thesis.

Unfortunately, the first edition of *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* was not accessible due to COVID-19 restrictions<sup>9</sup>. While all next issues keep the forewords and publishers’ notes from previous editions, none of the available versions have a foreword from the Princess herself. For this reason, I can only rely on common assumptions that Jorjadze wrote the book to make knowledge and practices limited mostly to her own class accessible to broader society, for the commoners and spread the lifestyle and eating or cooking habits of the aristocracy throughout the whole country.

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<sup>8</sup> For this research I use 2017 edition of Batonishvili’s book.

<sup>9</sup> The only copies can be accessed in national library or national archives and both are closed indefinitely.



Figure 1. Pre-Soviet edition of *Georgian Cuisine and Housekeeping Notes*, image from Google search.

Beyond author's reasons for publishing the book (1874) and its contextualization, we can talk about the later editions with more certainty, as we have textual evidence. After the death of Princess Barbare, her daughter, Manana Jorjadze, decided to publish edited version of the book in 1914, as all previous publications were sold out at record speed<sup>10</sup>. She included a foreword in this edition, explaining the reasons for republishing the book and telling the reader what importance and value it carried<sup>11</sup>. From this foreword we can identify

several messages she was trying to communicate and judging from the fact she was trying to appeal to these themes, we can count them as favorable and popular themes in Georgian society at a time.

What stands out the most in her writing is the fact that she considers housewives to be the main audience not only for her address, but the whole book as well. After explaining that in editing process she omitted some recipes that seemed irrelevant for the time and added some new ones, Manana<sup>12</sup> writes, "I hope that a cookbook composed this way will be very beneficial for our housewives."<sup>13</sup> This not merely indicates to what degree social fields were divided by gender at a time and what social domains were assigned to women in the society, but also proves that

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<sup>10</sup> According to Manana Jorjadze's claim in her foreword.

<sup>11</sup> I accessed this foreword through later edition (1988); however, its validity is indisputable as the content of the book was in no way edited, it was only reprinted from the original printing press pattern with edition of new foreword.

<sup>12</sup> I will address daughter – Manana Jorjadze by her first name in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>13</sup> This and all further translations from Georgian belong to the author.

cookbooks serve as a looking glass for observing cultural structure of the society in specific historical period (Ferguson 2004; Notaker, 2017).

This cookbook blurs the line between haute cuisine and domestic cooking of the time, as its main audience are common people, housewives of various social status and the purpose of the book is spreading the knowledge of bourgeoisie amongst common people. The difference between haute cuisine and home-cooking as we know it today is quite significant, but it would have been more so in the time where this distinction originated – when the accessibility to the products, techniques, equipment and information was extremally unequal and based mostly on social and financial status. Hence, this act can be perceived as an attempt to bridge the socio-economic gap.

From the first sentence, Manana positions her mother as “one of the housewives who saw no shame in doing house chores and taking care of her household and her family...”. She paints this image of her mother with positive intentions, trying to emphasize her best qualities in order to inspire others to follow her mother’s footsteps. However, emphasizing only on traditionally ‘feminine’ traits while positioning an author as someone every woman should aspire to, gives us a clear idea of what the gender associations were like in the time and what women were expected to aspire to.



Considering the list of the Princess Jorjadze’s *Figure 2. Picture of Barbare Jorjadze*

achievements: a writer, poet, women's rights advocate and one of the founders of the first-wave feminist movement in Georgia, the contrast between her other activities and the role she was

casted in in her daughter's foreword is even more striking. Since it is impossible that all the important work Jorjadze was doing for the society would be unknown or would seem insignificant to her own daughter, we would have to assume that in order to make the book as appealing to the audience as possible, Manana had to conform with social norms and portray her mother as what was believed to be an 'ideal' or an 'exemplary' woman.

Manana takes the theme of a 'perfect housewife' one step further by saying that her mother "not only was a housewife herself but encouraged others to be one as well". She even says that the princess thought that the words were not enough encouragement and decided to use a written word in order to "propagate" the idea (of being as good of a housewife as possible) amongst other housewives. By accentuating social themes, gender aspects Manana turns her mother's book into an object of material and social value, which lays ground for this book to become part of repertoire for construction the "strategies of action" and become a tool of social influence both in "settled" and "unsettled" cultural periods (Swidler, 1986). Moreover, same concept of social influence can be extended to the original version of the book written by Jorjadze. The main objective of this cookbook was introducing new knowledge and ideas to the broader public. On the one hand pre-Soviet editions of the book prove to be mediums of social influence on Georgian identity, since in the content Jorjadze provides wide repertoire of choices that were influenced by European tendencies to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian society. However, on the other hand, by conceptualizing it the way Manana Jorjadze does, they become sociological chroniclers of the historic period.

Manana does talk about the value and importance of women for the society but limits their contribution to housewifery. As she explains, her mother decided to collect and publish Georgian recipes and household notes because she felt that the well-being of the nation began from the families, in turn the well-being of the family depends on healthy and economical eating, which is an ability that only experienced and knowledgeable housewives could possess. Jorjadze's idea



resonates deeply with more recent feminist theories that claim that women are the actors in reproducing nation, biologically, culturally and symbolically (Yuval-Savis, 1997). However, even though Manana's message raises the point about women being an important part of the society, contributing in its development and welfare, poses the same problem as the previous one – it reaffirms gender stereotypes, the division of public-private domains between genders, placing women at home, in the kitchen. It illustrates the issue Yuval-Savis discusses in her book, that even though the woman are main figures in the process of reproducing nations, they are often “hidden in various theorizations of the nationalist phenomena”(1997: 13), are removed from public domain.

## BAGRAT BATONISHVILI - BOOK FOR THE KITCHEN

The second cookbook I will analyze is *Book for the Kitchen* written in 1818. Similarly to the previous book, the author in this case is a member of high society – Prince Bagrat Batonishvili<sup>14</sup>, who was forced into exile in Russia, where he wrote this book. The book was lost for centuries and for that time Jorjadze's book discussed at the beginning of the chapter was considered to be the first Georgian cookbook (Babunaishvili, 2017)<sup>15</sup>. This changed in 2017, when the book was rediscovered. After two centuries it was republished with adapted recipes which incorporated modern culinary knowledge.

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<sup>14</sup> The grandson of King Erekle II and son of the last king of Kartl-Kakheti (one of the independent kingdom principalities of Georgia) Giorgi XII.

<sup>15</sup> Foreword of Bagrat Batonishvili's book.

According to Batonishvili, the book consists of recipes that came from European countries and spread across Russia and Georgia. While we see the same claim in Jorjadze's book as well, European dishes and techniques seem to be more present in this book. While there are many Russian words and names used as well, a quick look through the table of contents is enough to identify the European influence by the names of the dishes, such as English sauce, Italian sauce, carrot cake, Austrian budin (pudding) with blackberry cream, French *Shchi* and other ingredients and combinations that are attributed to European cuisine.

For this project, my main interest is the same as with Jorjadze's book – 1. What insights does the book provide into socio-cultural life and political situation at the time of its original publication? and 2. Why is the book still relevant in modern days, what socio-cultural value and meaning does the culinary academy of Georgia see in the book and why did they decide to republish the book again? In this section I will analyze the history, implications of the content and modern perception of the book. My analysis will also draw from an interview with Natia Samushia, who is the rector of the Georgian Culinary Academy, the 'organization' that republished Batonishvili's cookbook.

From my conversation with Samushia, it is evident that the process of republishing the book involved extensive research consisting of different stages – reconstructing the book and the text, studying the text and the language used – translating in modern Georgian and experimenting with the recipes to adapt them to modern equipment and ingredients. Remembering the process, Samushia says:

*By studying this book, we learn many things about Georgia two hundred years ago – under which countries' and cultures' influence were eating and cooking habits then, what kind of identity we had, which cultures we were trying to get closer to, what we wanted to stand for and so on. From Batonishvili's book we can clearly see that we were under European influence.*

From these words we can observe how from the simple cookbook identities can be reconstructed, or even perceived even if they were not really there. When combining Gellner's and Anderson's thoughts on nationalism and national identity, I inferred that the point of departure for the idea of national identity is not only imagining the community and oneself as part of it, but also making sure that other members of the community imagine the bond in the same way. One way to ensure this is to create various cultural artefacts that will bear profound emotional legitimacy and nurture national sentiments in the community (Anderson, 2006; Poole, 1999). By contextualizing Batonishvili's book the way Samushia does here, it turned into a cultural artefact that will help present members of the community bond with those members whom they will never meet – their ancestors, placing nationalist sentiments at the center of the 'simple' cookbook. To support her perspective, Samushia refers to specific ingredients from the book:

*I make these claims based on the dishes and ingredients described in the book by Batonishvili. For instance, 'waffles with frothed milk'<sup>16</sup>, 'pistachio sponge-cake', 'white chocolate with orange jelly', 'asparagus soup', 'sauce from Italy'<sup>17</sup>, 'sauce from England' and so many more.*

Samushia's arguments and conclusions serve as an illustration of the process where today's intellectual elites are reconstruction European, Western identity based on culinary history and old cookbooks. On this short list of ingredients, we can see many products that were unknown to the majority of the Georgian population a decade ago and are considered novelty in Georgian market. When we see a Georgian cookbook that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century teaching people how to prepare various European dishes with asparagus, cook Belgian waffles, attempts to fit some foreign sources to Georgian reality, it is tempting to assume that these recipes were representative of

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<sup>16</sup> It is lost in translation, but important for the discussion to note that all the names of the recipes are originally in archaic Georgian and show that the recipes are old – have old version of names for the ingredients and products.

<sup>17</sup> A variation on pesto sauce with Georgian herbs.

Georgian reality at the time. But upon examining both the recipes and author's notes in the book more thoroughly, we notice a similar pattern emerge – representatives of political elite trying to construct European identity and influence public opinions on the matter and one of the best ways to do so was formalizing culinary tradition and eating habits.

The fact that the book was written by a prominent figure of the Georgian political elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while in exile only strengthens this interpretation. It also points out the influence and the degree of involvement of the political figures in the process. People choose what types of food to consume, the ways of preparing and consuming them to identify themselves with specific group or idea (Barth, 1969). In this case, the Georgian elites, by embedding these ideas into common thought, encourage the population towards certain choices and work to identify not only themselves, but the whole Georgian nation with European values and norms.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the project I need to address the current perceptions around this book - especially the perception of those who are working on new version of the book, as they are framing new narratives for the book and delivering it to the public. While discussing the value and meaning of this project, Samushia often refers to the information and knowledge about the society that can be inferred from Batonishvili's book, saying that this book gives us insight into social transformations and tendencies at a time, allows us to see how developed the society was and which cultures was it 'leaning' towards. What caught my attention was the way Samushia reconstructed 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian identity based on recipes and ingredients in Batonishvili's book, even though she is well aware that the author was long detached from Georgian reality when he wrote the book. The book was written in Russia with intention to be sent to Georgia which makes it more reasonable to assume that Batonishvili intended to influence social processes in Georgia rather than to depict them. What is missing from reasoning is alternative model of social

influence, the casual relation between socio-cultural influence and “cultural action”. Batonishvili, as a representative of elite at a time, could only encourage Georgian society to affiliate with European trends, values and identity. To use Swidler’s paradigm, he could only provide a single ‘tool’ for larger ‘toolkit’ that is culture, but the choice of using it for further action belongs to people (Swidler, 1986). Essentially, the existence of the book is not enough evidence to prove that this particular “strategy of action” was chosen by people while constructing their national or cultural identity. Whether it is fully realized or not, there is distinct similarity between these two processes separated by centuries – the way the Culinary Academy frames the narrative around Batonishvili’s cookbook mimics the intent of the original author.

Another interesting theme which Samushia emphasized frequently was the reflection of the dynamics of socio-political transformations in the country in the cookbooks and culinary culture. Samushia referred to three periods as well – pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet times. According to her, while the cookbooks from pre-Soviet times exhibit a close association with European culture and identity, and a wide variety of ingredients and techniques, the picture changes drastically after the descent of the “iron curtain.”

*Many products disappeared from the market after the shutdown of borders and all the republics of the Soviet Union had to adapt to the deficits, which resulted in the recipes and dishes that are not characteristic to any specific nation and culture (including Russian), but are purely “Soviet” and are equally common all over the post-Soviet block – salad “Olivie” is a great case in point.<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> While “Olivie” (Potato salad, Russian Salad, Olivier) originally is not Soviet dish – its origins relate to Lucien Olivier who was the French chef working in restaurant “Ermitage” in 1860s Russia – the original recipe was revised and adapted to Soviet product shortage, in post-Soviet states only the revised recipe is known now as iconic Soviet dish.

In the previous chapter I discussed Mühlfried's theory on freeing oneself from Soviet identity, which referred to attempts by post-Soviet generations in Georgia to isolate themselves from Soviet heritage by their actions and habits. One of these implemented methods was associating with European, western culture, values and identity in an attempt to eschew Soviet culture. I noticed the same attitude while Samushia describing post-socialist period as the time when "the boarders reopened, shackles loosened and we [Georgians] started getting back on the rails. Georgian market regained its diversity and we reclaimed course towards Europe". Samushia, as one of the supervisors of the project and as a simple representative of modern society, attempted to dissociate herself from the Soviet past and associate with European identity by referring to the process of developing Georgian culinary culture in European direction as "getting back on the rails". This fact also supports the idea of culinary culture and cookbooks being perceived as a means for reconstructing national identity or influencing the process.

Modern Georgian cuisine is in fact modifying along with the social transformations, becoming simpler and diverse, to get closer to modern western and European tendencies. We see variations of traditional dishes that resemble their European counterparts, such as *Gebjalia*<sup>19</sup> or *Chvishtari*<sup>20</sup> balls that borrow the concept from mozzarella balls or just supplementing traditional ingredients with the ones that are popular or introduced through western trends: using natural dye in recipes that would not usually have specific color – green *Ghomi*<sup>21</sup> for instance, substituting cow's milk for coconut milk, *Khachapuri* with walnuts and raisins, Adjarian *Khachapuri* (known as cheese-boats)

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<sup>19</sup> Mengrelian dish made from cheese and herbs.

<sup>20</sup> Georgian cornbread with cheese popular in western regions of Georgia.

<sup>21</sup> A traditional Georgian dish from western region of Samegrelo. It is made with cornmeal and slices of cheese put in the hot portions to melt before tasting.

with various feelings - chili con carne, for instance and many more. For this project it is more important to ask if these changes are representative of the public attitude and associations, if the “Europeanization” of Georgian cuisine is an indicator of Georgian identity forming as European. Samushia touched upon this topic in our conversation as well, saying that the modern market is fully based on rules of economy, and that all these processes echo public demand: “The public wants more diversity, more novelty and this interest is explicitly oriented towards Europe, European values and trends”.

In the process of commercializing culinary culture and fitting it to the demands of modern Georgian market, the topic of European identity is heavily present. The question is how much of this presence is regulated or caused by the market economy. Was the project initiated by the Culinary Academy and other similar actors a response to existing demand or was it an attempt to construct new thinking process and new identity that would in turn create the mentioned demand? I acknowledge that it could be partly to the former, however based on the parallels I discuss between this project and the processes driven by 19<sup>th</sup> century elite, I am more inclined towards the latter. The model observed in this case is very similar to the old one and both are implemented by cultural-educational<sup>22</sup> elite.

It is important to stress these parallels since they indicate the difference between wishful thinking, planning and the reality that unfolds naturally. The information gathered in this research gives

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<sup>22</sup>Batonishvili was actively involved in educational field, writing books on various topics – history, economy, veterinary science and, of course, culinary culture and Samushia is heavily involved in educational fields in Georgia – being pro-rector of Georgia’s two top-ranking universities – Free University of Tbilisi and Georgian Agricultural University, in addition to being pro-rector of Georgian Culinary Academy.

enough ground to discuss the ideas of identity construction, the attempts of influencing the process, however, it does not provide evidence to claim that modern Georgian identity is already fully transformed, that these cookbooks are the results of popular or mass demand and they can be used as a source of analyzing socio-cultural state of the nation.



# CHAPTER 3

## UNDER THE SOVIET REGIME

This chapter will explore the ways the Soviet regime influenced the form of cookbooks and how Soviet social fabric and propaganda manifested themselves through material culinary culture. Soviet system can easily be identified as Swidler's model (1986) for cultural influence in "unsettled cultural period", when explicitly articulated ideologies directly govern social action. In what follows I aim to show how cookbooks were used as a tool for creating restricted and controlled choices of social action in the system which was in constant competition with alternative traditions and ideologies (Swidler, 1986).

Today, "Soviet cuisine" is a blurry and undefined concept. Since the 'creation' of a cuisine, especially the collective cuisine of a multinational state, is a continual process of transforming dishes from various geographic and cultural backgrounds, adapting them to Soviet lifestyle, ideology and resources, it is hard to name a specific time frame to analyze.

However, in Soviet era, more in this case than in any other discussed in this thesis, the culinary discourse had a lot to do with the control of individual and collective relationships to food (Ferguson, 2004). The eating habits and culinary culture of the nations were strictly formalized by Soviet cookbooks – they were not a mere collection of recipes, but mostly served as a blueprint for keeping 'proper' Soviet household and keeping up with the 'proper' lifestyle. As Scott explains, "[t]he Soviet state sought to reach into the home and transform the everyday habits of its citizens through food and drink. However, while the Fascists emphasized an austere diet to

engender lean and healthy bodies, the new Soviet diet offered a taste of a bountiful socialist future, served in a multiplicity of national forms” (Scott, 2016: 90). The cookbooks that I will analyze in this chapter serve as a perfect example of Ferguson’s claim that food and eating were used as a vital form of social control by those motivated to regulate collective behavior in any way (Ferguson, 2004). The evidence that proves beyond doubt that cookbooks were used as channels of propaganda in the empire are not as much the content of the book as the forewords and notes that are used to present the main content of the book in light desirable for the state. Such written pieces usually contain quotes from Vozhd<sup>23</sup> about Soviet citizens, revolution, or social ideologies. The written sections often showcase the book as a textbook which represents the ideals to which the leader’s quotes, or the speeches refer to.

The discussion around creating ‘Soviet cuisine’ as an instrument of control and propaganda begs the question of Georgian cuisine’s and cookbook’s relevance. Specifically, we must investigate how the cuisine of one specific nation could be used as means of socialist propaganda in the state which was focused on minimizing nationalist tendencies and building multinational collective social structure. In one of the chapters of his book *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire*, Erik R. Scott discusses this topic at length. Scott suggests that while Soviet ideology formally never deviated from the idea of “the friendship of the peoples”, Georgian cuisine and eating habits proved to be highly advantageous for Soviet politics and propaganda as it fully embodied socialist futuristic utopia (Scott, 2016). Traditional Georgian *supra* famous with abundance of food and wine, cheerful spirit, dancing and singing at the table became an image of promised happy and carefree socialist future. As a result, Georgian cuisine was often favored over

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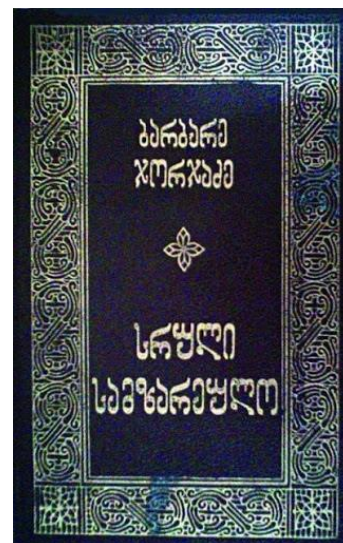
<sup>23</sup> Russian word for leader that was used almost as title in Soviet Union.

other republics'. Few examples are: including significantly more Georgian recipes in Soviet cookbooks, Georgian cookbook being of the first national cookbooks published by empire, same Georgian cookbook being twice as long as its counterparts (Scott, 2016).

As we have already established, cooking and, more importantly, cookbooks, are significant assets for social control. In the Soviet Union this idea was utilized and amplified by forming Obshchepit (общепит - общественное питание) – public food service under state control, “which performed the dual function of responding to popular demand while cultivating public taste” (Scott, 2016: 95). Because so much attention was paid to eating habits, normalizing public appetite, justifying the shortage of food and ingredients to the public, it is understandable that cookbooks – objects that carry power and value in any social structure – would be used for this goal. In the following sub-sections I will examine several cookbooks from Georgia's Soviet period to prove this point, illustrating how cookbooks have transformed from means of propaganda, actors of socio-political change to source for tracking same political and social transformations over time.

## COOKBOOK BY PRINCESS JORJADZE UNDER SOVIET CENSORSHIP

Continuing the thread of the previous chapter, I will discuss the third edition of Princess Barbare Jorjadze's book, published in 1988. This edition was reprinted from the same template as in 1914, but this time, another foreword by Medea Maghalashvili was added. In this subsection I argue that Maghalashvili's foreword is a direct representation of how the same object – in this case a cookbook – can be cast in a different light and represent different ideas and ideologies according to the historical period. In this case, the narrative is constructed to fit with Soviet ideology and politics accommodating an object of symbolic value of a single



*Figure 3. Soviet edition of Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes.*

republic within collective frame of the empire. Swidler defines ideology as an explicit, highly articulated, self-conscious and highly organized belief and ritual system, which plays a significant role in organizing social life (Swidler, 1986) through various instruments, which include material culture. Since the content of the book could not have been altered and tailored to Soviet market and available products, the narrative needed to ideologically justify the gaps between old and new norms of cuisine. So again, this time by Soviet state Jorjadze's cookbook is put in new socio-cultural narrative making it once more a cultural artefact that this time is purposely used as a vehicle of social influence, in this case feeding into socialist ideas and Soviet identity.

In this foreword completely different themes were brought forward. For instance, Jorjadze's literary accomplishments and works were the main topic of discussion throughout the text. She was featured more as an active member of the society contributing in the public sphere than a proper housewife whose only job was to raise children, cook and take care of

household. This agrees perfectly with ideological claim of the Soviet Union that it gender equality was one of the main achievements of Bolshevik revolution and their aim was to economically emancipate all Soviet women from men, allowing them to become part of the workforce, the number of ‘freed women’ was rising exponentially for first couple of decades of Bolshevik rule (Goldman, 2002). This idea was often referenced in various written sources including Soviet cookbooks I will review later in this chapter, claiming that Soviet reforms emancipated women being tied to tedious household chores and the Soviet cookbooks provided easier options of preparing healthy and tasty food for their families (The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food, 1952).

Throughout this subsection it will become clearer that the details from the Princess’s life and her characteristics were carefully picked out and sometimes even taken out of context so that her character would fit Soviet ideologies and ideals. Jorjadze was depicted as a “perfect fit” for Soviet values while coming from high society background, which was considered a complete oxymoron at a time.

In this edition it is even more obvious that the author had to follow Soviet social norms and ideals while painting an image of princess Jorjadze, as the piece underwent strict censoring before being published. For the book by a pre-Soviet author, especially by Jorjadze, who belonged to high society, to be printed by Soviet government publishers had to prove that they shared or could be affiliated with socialist ideology. This foreword is not an independent piece of writing, it is a cultural tale of the Soviet state meant to create or strengthen imagined construct of Soviet society. As Ferguson puts it, similar to others, these stories suppose an audience (Ferguson, 2004). Identifying the audience to which the text is trying to cater to is the first step towards correct interpretation of the cookbooks as material source for social matters. Hence, Jorjadze’s journey as a writer was framed to fit the interests and political ideology of the government. For

example, Maghalashvili focuses on time in Princess Jorjadze's writing career when she became interested in realism, noting that "the interest towards social problems grew in Jorjadze's writing repertoire". Other themes she singles out are calling fellow-countrymen and women for patriotism, "defending oppressed neighbor<sup>24</sup>"; advocacy for the emancipation of women; and raising her voice against serfdom. While it was obviously not possible to tie Jorjadze directly to socialist values and ideals, the fact that Maghalashvili emphasized these themes in her foreward reveals her attempt to portray the princess as someone who had the same or similar values and lived by the same principles as propagated by the Soviet state; who would fit into the system and is not a threat to social order. Additionally, although there's no great accent on this detail, Maghalashvili mentions Jorjadze's class, but soon portrays her as an exception from the group, as someone who was trying to bridge the gap between the classes by "writing in understandable and accessible language, while describing social relations at the time realistically". Even though the remarks about her position in the elite class are quite subtle, it is still impossible to miss, especially knowing the attitude of Soviet government towards the subject. Maghalashvili's forward to the cookbook reveals her skills as a deft writer; by mentioning Jorjadze's high class, she uses this detail to her advantage by making it fit within broader Soviet state narratives.

A more subtle detail is the warning we get from the author before diving into endless pages of recipes and ingredients:

*Obviously there have been some changes in the techniques and ingredients of the Georgian national and European dishes gathered in this book since publishing its first edition. Modern demands of rational food consumption caused certain corrections in the recipes of national dishes, thus elimination some of the agricultural products from the market and substituting them with new alternatives.*

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<sup>24</sup> In biblical sense.

Here the word “rational” reveals larger ideological forces at work. Soviet cuisine was oriented on nutritional value of the foods only, or so it was said and believed. It was propagated that Soviet citizen did not need any extravagant items or food for ‘happy living’. Food was viewed as a source of nutrition, something necessary to sustain a healthy human body so it could work in service of Soviet nation (The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food, 1952). The fact that the word “rational” refers to Soviet standards and understanding of the word become clearer when we investigate examine which ingredients were considered to be ‘outdated’ and ‘irrational’ to use in ‘Soviet modernity’. Examples of such products included Swiss cheese (and most types of European cheeses for that matter), asparagus, French buns, artichokes, gelatin sheets, among other foods. As we can see, the listed products are still very popular all over the world, are used both in haute cuisine and homecooked meals, and might even be considered by some as staples in a modern kitchen. This alone is enough proof that the disappearance of discussed ingredients had little to do with untampered rules of supply and demand. The situation on the market in Post-Soviet countries today, including Georgia, strengthens the argument even more. Even though this book does not represent the eating or cooking habits of the majority, the book was created for all Georgians, regardless of their class. This makes it legitimate to assume that the products Jorjadze included in this book would be physically accessible to the majority of the population, although one must admit that the matter of them being affordable to is questionable.

## THE BOOK OF TASTY AND HEALTHY FOOD AND FAMILY BOOK

To fully envision how Tried Housekeeping Notes fit into the Soviet practice of formalizing taste, using eating habits and cultural characteristics of various republics to feed and spread state ideology, concept of Soviet identity, I will review *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*. This will allow the reader to more fully grasp the general concept of Soviet cookbooks and how they served

political and ideological purposes. Although this book was originally published in 1931, it was republished twelve times and millions of copies were sold<sup>25</sup>. The book was a perfect example of a collective work.<sup>26</sup> It is still dubbed as “the most iconic Soviet cookbook” and was even translated into English in 2012.

From the very first page, the cookbook strikes one as highly politicized. The book begins with a quote by Stalin: “a peculiar characteristic of our revolutions consists in the fact that it gave to people not only the freedom, but material benefits as well, along with the opportunity of prosperity and cultural living”<sup>27</sup>. Following this quote, the whole book is a display of the *prosperity*, abundance, wealth and *culture* referenced in it. The ideologically charged edition was packed with all the elements of a gastronomical and consumptionist utopia: vocations of “socialist prosperity”, quotes by the father of the nation, colorful advertisements of Soviet food industry, menu samples, scientifically backed recommendations and encyclopedic notes (Pirogovskaya, 2018). Although the content expanded and changed throughout various editions over the years, as Scott explains, “it remained—in its structure, presentation, and logic—a high Stalinist document that informed popular attitudes toward eating in enduring ways” (Scott, 2016: 114).

The structure of the book indicates the culinary domains the Soviet state aims to influence ideologically. In “*The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*”, Soviet doctrines were spread not only through

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<sup>25</sup> For my analysis I use 1952 edition.

<sup>26</sup> The book has no author, as it was a collaborative work written by scientists from the Institute of Nutrition at the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR.

<sup>27</sup> This and later translating from Russian belong to the author.



recipes, but also through other content in the book as well. After the Table of Contents, there are quite elaborate sections which focus on formalizing both food consumption and preparation. These sections describe the basics of rational nutrition; choices of dishes for breakfast, dinner and supper; the order of preparing a dinner and general directions; setting the table; and even rules for kitchen set-up. As in Maghalashvili's foreword for "Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes", the word "rational" is used to describe Soviet ideology concerning nutrition. The difference is that in this case, there is no need to justify the content, as it was constructed in Soviet times by the state itself. Here the sole purpose of the word is to support Soviet narrative around food consumption mentioned above.

The fact that the section which serves as an introduction is titled "towards the abundance"<sup>28</sup> reveals that the book was used as a means for Soviet ideologies to establish new

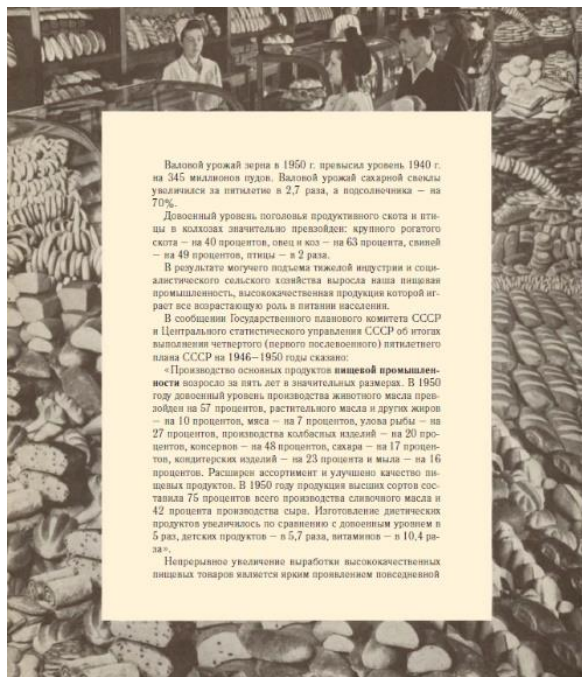


Figure 4. Page 8 from the book about tasty and healthy food, introduction "towards abundance".

styles or strategies of action (Swindler, 1986). The introduction is divided into many sub-sections and serves as a classical example of an ideological machine, beginning with Stalin's words on how much the quality of life has progressed all over the Soviet Union, how it is advancing each day and eventually, will promise ultimate abundance. The sub-sections cover the lists of unbelievable successes of the empire in various fields (reaching and 'overachieving' the plans,



Figure 6. Illustration from the book about tasty and healthy eating, page 45.

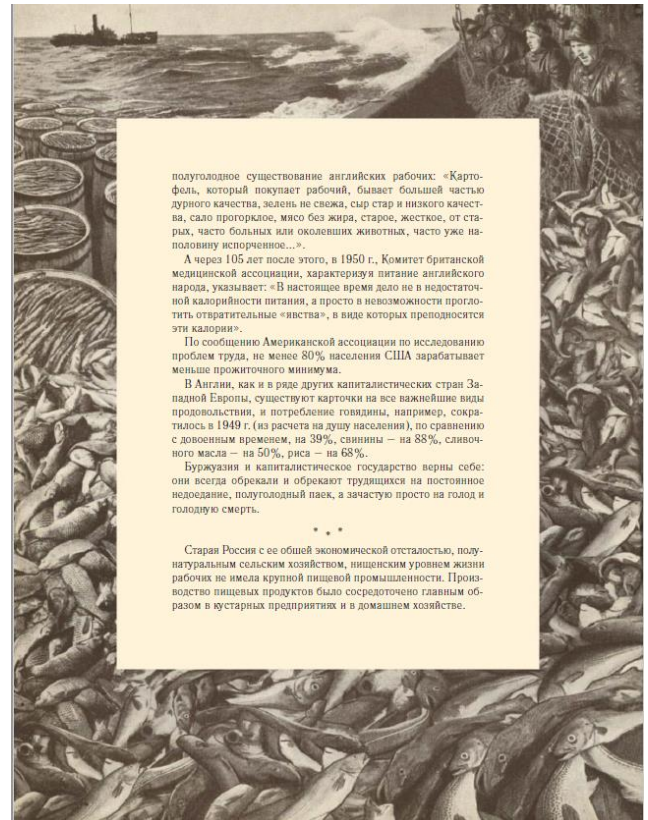


Figure 5. Page 10 from the book about tasty and healthy food, introduction "towards abundance".

technical advancement, economic growth, growth in farming and agriculture), the alleged disastrous situation in the west and suffering of the people under capitalist rule, and the troubles Russia and all the Soviet republics faced before socialist rule due to "wrong governance and management of the resources". To make the claims more impressionable the introduction as well as the rest of the book is filled

with images of prosperous Soviet manufacture fields: endless flourishing fields of ray, products of collective farming and fishing, Soviet markets and diners full or produce, consumers happy with wide variety of choice and so much more.

Just like in case of Jorjadze's book, gender roles are strongly emphasized. The foreword makes it clear that this book is created for "female homemakers" to serve as a guide for taking care of the

household and cook “tasty and healthy meals for the whole family”. However, this time, gender roles are vindicated by using prominent male figures in Soviet science to validate the information provided in the cookbook. While the foreword encourages women to take action in the family kitchen, claiming that this book offers a variety of options on how to use “the wide assortment of the ingredients provided by Soviet food industry”, this attempt at showcasing “female empowerment” loses credibility when followed by the next half of the foreword, which consists of the names and credentials of male scientists from various food and health related fields. While the cookbook puts male figures in charge of knowledge production, females are responsible only for reproducing that knowledge by following the directions.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Georgian Soviet book on domesticity – *The Family Book* by Nino Khoperia published in 1952 and since republished numerous times over the years, including the latest edition in 2015. While the book mostly focuses on recipes and culinary practices, it also dabbles in subjects such as personal and family hygiene, childcare, gardening, recommendations for flat layouts, decorating specific rooms and many other subjects. Even though the resources are quite diverse, one thing unifies all the sections of the book – all are packed with Soviet ideology and propaganda, aspiring to create and strengthen the “system” which offers “one unified answer to the question of how human beings should live” (Swindler, 1986: 279).

Each chapter starts with painting a picture of how a “Soviet individual” ought to work, live, act, rest, eat, and look like. In other words, it maps out a path through which an individual can become this “ideal human being”. For this thesis I focus on the large section of the book dedicated to the kitchen, cooking, eating and food. Even more explicitly than in the previous book, the food here

is represented as a mere source of calories. The book explains metabolic processes and gives a list of requirements food has to fulfill<sup>29</sup>.

What is significant and even peculiar about this book is the fact that even though it is written in Georgian by Georgian author, there is no mention of what kind of cuisine is represented in the book. In examining the Table of Contents, one can see that the majority of the recipes and ingredients are Georgian. However, the balance between Georgian and non-Georgian (mostly Russian, Ukrainian and Caucasian) dishes is also well preserved. For instance, the book contains several variations on the recipe for *Satsivi*, the iconic Georgian walnut sauce. While *Satsivi* is a fully Georgian celebratory dish traditionally associated with Christmas or New Year *supra*, in Soviet times it was “taken out of cultural context and became dishes for year-round consumption” (Scott, 2016: 121). Additionally, alongside traditional Georgian dishes and ingredients, such as chopped salads with walnut seasoning, *Mtsvadi*<sup>30</sup>, *Khinkali*<sup>31</sup>, *Tkemali*<sup>32</sup>, *Shkmeruli*<sup>33</sup>, varieties of *Pkhali*<sup>34</sup>, due

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<sup>29</sup> The requirements - provide enough calories for bodily function, consist all the necessary macro and micro nutrients and vitamins, be safe and easy to digest and only after that be appetizing and nourishing.

<sup>30</sup> Meat cooked on skewers traditional for Caucasus region. Georgian variation is cooked on coals from (grape)vine.

<sup>31</sup> Georgian dumpling, which originated in the Georgian mountain regions of Pshavi, Tusheti, Mtiuleti and Khevsureti.

<sup>32</sup> Georgian sauce primarily made of cherry plum or other varieties of plum. The usual flavor tends to be pungently tart.

<sup>33</sup> Traditional Georgian dish - chicken in garlic sauce.

<sup>34</sup> Traditional Georgian dish made of chopped and minced vegetables, spinach, beans, beets and mixed with ground walnuts, vinegar, onions, garlic, and herbs.

diligence was also given to non-Georgian items like *Shchi*<sup>35</sup> with *Kvas*<sup>36</sup>, *Borsch*<sup>37</sup>, *Kotlet*<sup>38</sup>, beef tongue Ukrainian style, *Goulash*<sup>39</sup>, *Oladyi*<sup>40</sup> and other dishes.

In conclusion, Soviet era, as explicitly ideological period in Georgian, provides most vivid illustrations of cookbooks' dual function. The books and their contextualization discussed in this chapter prove that cookbooks carry the power of influencing identity of large groups such as the 'union' of fifteen nations, while simultaneously accounting for the essence of the same identities and social norms they influence, for future historical reference.

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<sup>35</sup> Russian-style cabbage soup.

<sup>36</sup> A fermented drink made from rye flour. Especially popular in Russia.

<sup>37</sup> Soup made of beetroot, served with sour cream. It is associated with the eastern and central European cuisine; mostly Russia, Poland, and Ukraine.

<sup>38</sup> Russian version of cutlet made of ground meat.

<sup>39</sup> Soup of meat and vegetables usually seasoned with paprika. Originated in Hungary, however is popular in other eastern European countries.

<sup>40</sup> Small thick pancakes popular in Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian cuisines.

## CHAPTER 4

### POST-SOVIET RENDITION OF THE COOKBOOK

In chapters 2 and 3, I followed the transformation of Princess Jorjadze's book through the pre-Soviet and Soviet stages, respectively. Today, in post-Soviet society, the book lives on as a live process that is still in progress. Now, we have finally arrived at the latest version of the book, its meaning and representations. I saw from the interviews I conducted during the research that the book has become much more than just a collection of recipes. Besides its obvious culinary value, it has gained another, even more important symbolic value and has become a material artefact that enables us to inspect and interpret the narratives people construct about themselves as a society (Zubrzycki, 2017). The book is perceived as an emblem of cultural heritage, a kind of historical or cultural memento which, even after transforming and changing through time, preserves and amplifies its essence.

One of the biggest questions I faced while working on this thesis was the question of these cookbooks being means of social influence or mere chroniclers of social transformations. The main source of ambiguity was the matter of agency. In the case of Soviet society, it is easy to identify that the agency of pushing certain agendas belonged to the Soviet state. However, in democratic Georgia, considering that none of the projects I discuss are state-funded or executed, it is hard to gain concrete evidence for questions such as: "To whom does the agency of creating the agenda belong?" and "Who has the power and intention for social influence?" I found the solution is in Swindler's (1986) new approach towards defining cultural influence – as she differentiates between various socio-political states (settled and unsettled) and comes up with the appropriate models for each of them. Her proposition of cultural influence in settled times points

to the same problem I faced – “specifying culture's causal role is made more difficult in settled cultural periods by the "loose coupling" between culture and action” (Swindler, 1986: 280). She suggests that in settled times the form of influence is more subtle than under ideological strains at unsettled periods. In this case it takes the form of creating choice of action, putting it out there – putting it in the toolkit or repertoire that is much more diverse than in unsettled times and leaving the choice up to the society. Ergo, by simply creating the narrative and introducing it to the greater public, the authors of the project exercise some level of social influence, the degree of which is later “decided” by the public.

The transformation of cookbook and its function in time resulted in two products on current Georgian market - 2017 edition of the cookbook and the restaurant “Barbarestan,” which operates according to Jorjadze’s book in all aspects and is working to revive the ‘taste’ and the ‘feeling’ of old Tiflis<sup>41</sup>. In this chapter I will investigate the attitudes and expectations around named products. In the first section I will analyze the cookbook and its perception from the producers’ point of view by critical analysis of the interview with the representative of “Sulakauri Publishing” - project manager Tata Chkhaidze. The second section will focus on the restaurant “Barbarestan”, the ideas behind the project and its social and symbolic value, by analyzing the interview with general manager of the restaurant – Andria Kurasbediani.

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<sup>41</sup> The designation the city had before and during yearly 19th century, now it is often used in reference to older times (author’s note).



## LATEST TAKE ON THE BOOK – SULAKAURI PUBLISHING

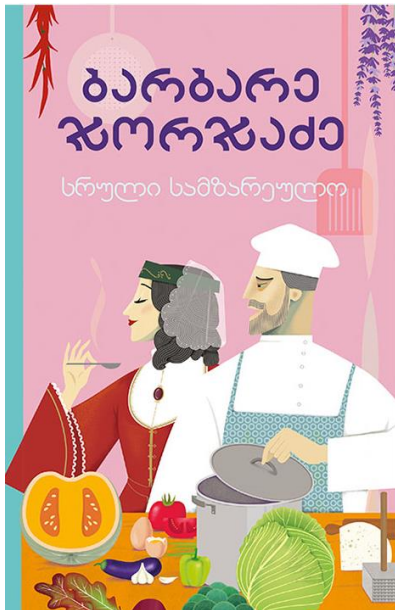


Figure 7. *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes* by Barbare Jorjadze, Sulakauri Publishing edition, 2017.

The third and latest version of the book was published in 2017 by the Georgian publishing house “Sulakauri Publishing”. This edition is based on the 1914 version of the cookbook, but it has some mild variations such as new illustrations and images of dishes plated in a modern manner. A note from the publishing house is also added to this edition, which introduces Princess Jorjadze and discusses the reasons the publishing house decided to release a fourth edition of the cookbook, 143 years after it was first published.

In a way, we could say that this foreword is an amalgamation of the two previous forewords from the 1914 and 1988 versions which I discussed above. However, completely new accents and attitudes emerge in this piece of writing from some of the same information presented in older versions.

For example, in the introduction to the life of Princess Jorjadze she is presented as a successful woman who was great at multitasking and managed to be an ‘amazing housewife, take care of household, raise three wonderful children’, while not sacrificing her other aspirations: being an important public figure, a writer, a publicist, have exciting social life, and leaving her mark on society by changing it for the better. Reading these lines, it is impossible to miss the message the author is trying to convey, a modern image of ‘ideal’ or ‘successful’ woman unintentionally comes to mind.



Another similarity is the description of her writing style, using ‘simple’ and ‘understandable’ language. Unlike the Soviet interpretation, some of the individuals I interviewed during research mentioned that they perceived the cookbook’s simple language as some sort of proof or indicator of “how advanced the society was back then”. Andria Kurasbediani, the general manager of the restaurant demonstrates classic romanticisation of Georgian past when based on Jorjadze’s book he says, “the fact that a woman from such a high society, of such a high social position was thinking about others this much, was trying to help the whole society as much, shows exactly how much better the society was back then...”.

This foreword also reminds us that this book is part of commercial business based on demand from consumers. Even though it had been reprinted numerous times in the past, the cookbook was reprinted again because the demand is still high and older versions are rare. Clearly, Georgian society is still interested in this book, this author, these recipes, and in turn, the lifestyle or ideology they represent.

Nevertheless, the note ends with more symbolic content. The last paragraph spells out the way in which the publishing house is trying to frame this book and everything it represents:

*We can say with certainty that “Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes” today – after over hundred years from when it was first published – is not only a culinary collection, but also a literary work, which helps us to travel to 19<sup>th</sup> century Tbilisi in our imagination and feel the taste and the smell of Georgia of that time.”*

In this quote we can clearly see that this note, and by extension – the publishing house, is trying to conceptualize this book as direct representation of ‘true Georgian life’ of the past, what Georgian and ‘Georgiannes’ was like in 19<sup>th</sup> century, before it was invaded by Soviet Union and shared its ideology and lifestyle. While this is not intended as a medium of propaganda as in

previous chapter, the cookbook conceptualized in this way becomes “national sensorium” (Zubrzycki 2011), through which members of Georgian society experience historical narratives and national myths, which otherwise would be too abstract to properly comprehend (Zubrzycki 2017).

Since the rhetoric about Jorjadze’s book being a representative of “true Georgian” culture and food is widespread, one characteristic of the book strikes the reader as surprisingly odd – the excessive use of Russian words, recipes, dishes, and explanations. For any other written piece from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgia this would not draw any attention as Russian written and spoken speech was universally spread in the population, many Russian words were introduced to the speech as well as writing. However, we must remember that we are discussing a book which became one of the symbols for establishing Georgia’s post-Soviet national identity<sup>42</sup>, the book that is used as a reference to pre-Soviet European roots. Historically, this book cannot be seen as representative of ‘Soviet identity’, as it was first published before Soviet times. Nevertheless, symbolic meanings go beyond logic and rationality, thus Russian language and speech is currently associated with Soviet times, even without any factual ties to specific period.

As I found out later in my research, this foreword is meant to represent the position of the publishing house as a whole, and therefore, there is no indication of the author as we saw in the previous cases. To more thoroughly understand the publishing house’s point of view, I

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<sup>42</sup> which by extent relates to Russian culture and language as it is one of the main physical representations of Soviet era.

conducted an interview with their representative, project manager Tata Chkhaidze, who worked on the edition discussed in this thesis.

Some of the main themes which Chkhaidze stressed during our interview included: The importance of Barbare Jorjadze's figure in Georgian history and the renewed public interest toward her; the project being equally commercial and 'social'; socio-political and cultural narratives around the book; transforming value and meaning of the book in time, messages this book sends to Georgian society.

*The book is often bought as a gift or souvenir. It has acquired a form of relic, it is part of our history now, it has a completely different meaning nowadays from what it used to. The book is not a subject of function so to say, you do not get it to use a recipe, to use it daily or even weekly in the kitchen, no, the consumer buys it as an album, as an item for collection, for memory...*

After Chkhaidze's description of the book, I became curious. Where did this information come from, what were her reasons for this claim? Chkhaidze's claim differs from sales data from Western sources I discussed at the beginning of this paper. According to her, the number of sales in culinary segment of the books on Georgian market has been sinking for past decades as the social media and other online cooking platforms become more popular, easier and quicker to access and operate within. However, there's another side to this story as well. Because the functional aspect of cookbooks is increasingly being substituting by alternative sources, the reasons and the stimuli behind their purchase has changed as well.

The latest edition of Jorjadze's cookbook has proven to be just as popular as its predecessors, mostly to a Georgian audience<sup>43</sup>. Based on the feedback the publishing house received regarding Jorjadze's book, Chkhaidze points out that there are a few reasons that could explain the popularity of the cookbook in the modern Georgian market:

*Firstly, it is Georgian, the author is Georgian; Secondly, this is the first book that contains not only recipes but also a collection of housekeeping notes and helpful tips; thirdly, Barbare's identity, her life story, her public image, her achievements – in light of the developments of 21<sup>st</sup> century, social values and issues the public is concerned about [as Chkhaidze later clarified, she means human rights issues, feminism movements, women activists], these themes are becoming more interesting and appealing for the public.*

While one of the mentioned reasons is more functional and of a practical character, the two main reasons mentioned by Chkhaidze revolve around national and patriotic sentiments, turning this book into a symbolic image of 'banal nationalism.' - an object that is not pushing ideas or agendas onto society, but is rather, a passive embodiment and reminder of such abstract notions.

The same rhetoric is evident in media coverage of the publication and the presentation of the book. In the reportage on national television, the book was presented as 'the cookbook by the author of first Georgian feminist manifesto', followed by provocative quotes such as, "what is nowadays considered European cuisine is not at all new to Georgia, as the book that astonishes modern chefs existed here over 1.5 centuries ago" or that "this book would be an interesting read for those who think that feminist culture and cream-soups are the result of the recent spread of the western culture"<sup>44</sup>. The reporter also remarks the disappearance of most of Jorjadze's dishes during Soviet times, saying that "Soviet time and cuisine swallowed up Jorjadze's recipes, her legacy

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<sup>43</sup> According to Chkhaidze, there are no plans or requests for its translation in the near future.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIPwV1wODsI>

along with the freedom [of nation]”. This shared rhetoric gives us grounds to believe that from the public standpoint, the book is perceived as a symbol for various abstract values such as national pride, patriotism, keeping up with modern western, European values, being part of western, European culture for centuries, therefore having rightful claim to “rejoin” it in the modern era.

What stood out to me in the latest edition, especially considering how it was framed in public eye, was the numerous Russian words, recipes, explanations and titles of the dishes present in the book. While Chkhaidze admitted that there was a discussion about modernizing the language used in the cookbook, the decision was made to keep the exact text to maintain the “authenticity and the spirit of author”, since, even if not used any more, the language is still understandable for the public. This explanation makes it clearer that the main emphasis in publishing the book is symbolic, not practical. Closer examination of the content of the cookbook only strengthens this point. Not only is the language used in the book not as understandable as Chkhaidze claimed it to be, the recipes are also not “user-friendly” to the average Georgian individual today. The measurements used in the book are not only outdated, but also hard to convert to metric system. Many ingredients are either not in use any more or not identify by the names used in the book and the explanations for some ingredients or techniques are in Russian (written either in Russian or Georgian alphabet), which makes it irrelevant for those who don’t speak the language. Moreover, some recipes require an open fire, chimney or tandoor<sup>45</sup>, none of which are any longer available to the vast majority of Georgians, and no modern substitution is provided, making the recipe useless. Another element

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<sup>45</sup> a cylindrical clay or metal oven used in cooking and baking. The tandoor is used for cooking in Southern, Central, and Western Asia, as well as in the South Caucasus.



Figure 8. Illustration from 2017 edition of Georgian cuisine and tried housekeeping notes

that suggests that sentimental value of the book is favored over the functional is the image of kitchen utensils provided in the beginning of the book (figure 7). The images of the items are copied from the first edition and colored, but there are no modern

alternatives presented in the book, nor is any information on purpose of usage provided for the reader to choose the new equivalent on their own.

In conclusion, it is important to note that while the socio-cultural and even political narratives are framed around this book – which is evident in media coverage as well as in general public attitudes towards the book, Ckhaidze tells us that this was in no way the publishing house’s initial objective or goal.

*While our main objective was commercial success, naturally in the first place, and keeping Jorjadze’s idea, publishing book that would be affordable to most of Georgian public, it is indubitable that our project played its part in all of this [based on the question interviewee refers to public perception of the book and socio-political context around it]. We aided in popularization of Jorjadze’s figure and everything it represents to Georgian people. Our goal was to remind people of Jorjadze’s story, her identity, her work and and in an unexpected turn this gave push to developing sentiments and further thought-processes in public.*

Through analyzing of the 2017 edition of Jorjadze’s cookbook and the interview with the publishing house, I have attempted to demonstrate how a cookbook can become a means of

influencing public thinking and perception of certain events or subjects even outside the political regimes with strong ideology and propaganda, maybe even unintentionally.

## BOOK TURNED INTO COMMERCIAL PROJECT – “BABARESTAN”



Figure 9. Outside view of the restaurant "Barbarestan".

Source: Facebook page of the restaurant

Another significant modern ‘product’ of the book is the restaurant “Barbarestan”, which has operated in Tbilisi since December 2005 if family owned business. It is run by the Kurasbediani family of fourteen, who take pride in representing ‘true Georgian’ traditional values both as a family and as business owners. The information about family, their values and strategies of running the restaurant is provided in separate section on their website titled “Georgian Family”.

Maka Jibuti, ‘director of the restaurant and mother of eleven’, explains that her “main objective is that both family and the business should be based on ‘right’, ‘proper’ values, ... as “Barbarestan” is not merely a food facility, but cultural and educational restaurant” (Barbarestan, n.d.). The official Facebook page description of the restaurant reads: “Restaurant “Barbarestan” represents a fine results of newly understanding a book “Complete Cooking<sup>46</sup>” published in 1914 by XIX

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<sup>46</sup> This is another version for title translation, where the wording is closer to the title, but the idea is partially lost (author’s note).



century writer Barbare Eristavi-Jorjadze. The most important person of her epoch – a writer, feminist, poet – hosts you in 21st century Tbilisi. ... at Barbare’s you will taste not only dishes, you will taste epoch and culture” (Barbarestan, 2020). As illustrated in the description above, beyond simply reflecting the culinary aspects of the cookbook itself, the restaurant also revolves around the princess’s persona. One of the main distinguishing features of the restaurant is the fact that other pieces of information provided by Jorjadze are incorporated, such as rules of setting the table and serving the guests. The interior decorations,



*Figure 10. Interior of the restaurant.*

*Source: Facebook page of the restaurant*

music, furniture, dishes and even uniforms of the personnel have been chosen very carefully to resemble the life and atmosphere of 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgia, specifically Tbilisi. The restaurant’s main objective is for the guest to get the full experience of visiting the princess from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and get to know her beyond her famous recipes and delicious cooking. After all, the restaurant’s name “Barbarestan” translates as ‘at Barbare’s place’.

My primary questions in this case were similar to those I had in regard to the publishing house. What meaning does this restaurant assign to Jorjadze’s book? How is it represented through the restaurant? Moreover, I wanted to find out the position of the creators of the project. What do they think this book means to the society today? What value does their restaurant have besides obvious commercial interest? Analyzing all this will allow me to make conclusions about socio-cultural values of the book as well as the projects that are influenced by it.



Kurasbediani frequently referenced the past in a glorifying manner, defining old times as something we should all aspire to, showcasing his understanding of national identity by possessing embodied ways of thinking and speaking about nationhood (Billig, 1995).

*Looking at this book, the recipes, it is obvious that in terms of development, progress during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we [as a nation] were falling behind significantly from what we used to be, in 19<sup>th</sup> century, evidently, we were rather farther developed individuals, thus – a further developed nation. Barbare Jorjadze is very well acquainted with what she is writing about. By this I don't only mean the culinary masterpieces she was creating, but the ways of serving your guests in a way that they feel comfortable and are interested and engaged with your service. Besides this knowledge, which, by the way, is not as well known to many individuals in the field of service, the fact that the princess, the representative of such a high social class in 19<sup>th</sup> century is thinking and writing about these issues is enough of a reference to how advanced the society was at the time, how much more developed it was in comparison to today.*

The resemblance between the points Kurasbediani makes while discussing Jorjadze's book and Samushia's analysis of Bagrat Batonishvili's cookbook are striking. When describing the dynamics of social development from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Kurasbediani works to affiliate both himself and the nation in general with European identity. He strengthens his position by criticizing the Soviet era and distancing himself both from Soviet period and identity (Mühlfried, 2005; Manning, 2003). Next, Kurasbediani raises an issue with the diversity of the market, the accessibility of the products and the ingredients. He stresses that "access to the so-called "exotic" variety of produce was much easier in 19th century Georgia than now in the days of rapid globalization", that the products and the techniques that today are considered as novelty or rare, were very easily accessible for the majority of the Georgian population in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While this is not a very uncommon or unpopular opinion around this book, the book itself does not really provide evidence to support such claims. To the contrary, many of the additional notes are about ways of choosing specific products and distinguishing their quality, methods of their preparation for cooking. These fragments of the book suggest that most Georgians at the time had limited, if any, experience or information about many of the ingredients featured in the recipes.

Based on this information, it is more plausible that the majority of the population at that time was not using these ingredients at all, hence the lack of information about how to deal with them. Therefore, Jorjadze, a representative of the Georgian elite, desired to create and shape a “shared consciousness and collective identity” (Mukerji 2012, in Zubrzycki, 2017: 9, accessed June 2020) amongst common people, by creating an article of material culture.

Therefore, the purpose of publishing this book reveals that the recipes and culinary traditions represented in this book were not common knowledge to the general public. These dishes and eating habits were introduced by the cultural-political elite to the society and were direct representations of their vision of what ‘Georgian identity’ should look like, an example which they wanted the society to emulate. This specific book serves as an example of how the elite at the time – in this case represented by Jorjadze – was choosing the products, culinary methods, techniques and eating habits and pass them to society in order to form their identity and inclinations. To borrow Levi-Strauss’s framework, Jorjadze did not choose the ingredients for her book based on their nutritional quality, because they were easy to get or prepare, or because they were “good to eat”. Rather, she chose them according to her ideological perspective, because they contributed to her cause of spreading a specific idea, specific mindset, because they were “good to think”.



Figure 11. Photo from one of the public lectures at the restaurant. Source: Facebook page of the restaurant

The founders of the restaurant believe that “Barbarestan” is much more than just a restaurant. They aspire to influence the development of the country, not only in the gastronomic field, but also contribute to social transformation as well. The restaurant aims not only to be a culinary destination, but also

become a space for sharing knowledge and information, debates around history, historical events, old Georgia (since the theme is 19<sup>th</sup> century Tbilisi) as well as the topics that are important to Georgians today. In order to facilitate these intellectual conversations among the Georgian public, public lectures are held weekly at the restaurant, over the weekends. The themes of these lectures revolve around 19<sup>th</sup> century public figures, many of whom were forgotten over time such as Jorjadze, their contributions to Georgian society and their works. Andria explains:

*It is important for us that every single employee can communicate these ideas and information with our guests, not only me and other ‘creators’ of the project, to some extent, if not in such detail - this indicates how serious we are not only about our kitchen and cuisine but about Georgian gastronomy, history and present. Any guest who leaves this place gathers so much information about Barbare: that she was one of the first Georgian feminists, a publicist, a writer, a culinary specialist and so much more – and all this being a woman in 19th century Georgia – that’s how developed our country was back then.*

This example directly illustrates how the founders of the restaurant formalize and hypothesize their idea of Georgian identity. By introducing their assumptions, beliefs and perceptions of ‘Georgiannes’ and Georgian identity to their customers – both local and foreign – they reproduce and reinforce this version of national identity in subtle manner, or to use Billig’s words, “in a

banally mundane way” (Billig, 1995) on a daily basis. The assumption is that Georgia was a “highly developed” country back in 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore, reflective of European values and ways of life. This process shows how the book and the figure of Barbare Jorjadze is instrumentalized in identity formation and how this process is linked to the market economy and commercialization. As a result, the book becomes substitute object for abstract ideas such as nationalism and national identity (Zubrzycki, 2017).

In this light, the future plans of the family are also very interesting. In the foreseeable future, they plan to publish a new cookbook with new recipes that they recreated and modernized from Jorjadze’s cookbook. Moreover, the plan is to publish a book for English speakers as well as Georgians. The reason for this is the fact that Kurasbedianies want foreigners to get to know Georgian cuisine better. “We want them to realize how ancient Georgian culinary actually is and how advanced it was even centuries ago. Additionally, the book will help them to realize that Georgian cuisine is much more diverse and complex than it appears to be to tourists” (Andria Kurasbediani). This demonstrates that the book and culinary history that is revealed through it is not only used to influence the process of constructing a new national identity, but also to influence the perception of this identity by western societies.

# CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I analyze the role of cookbooks in socio-political transformations and identity formation processes in post-Soviet Georgia. I research how cookbooks became an agent of social influence in post-socialist Georgia, which narratives allow them to frame post-socialist Georgian identity and how these narratives are woven around them. Through using discourse analysis, I trace the cookbooks through three (pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet) historical periods. I analyzed several cookbooks from these three periods: *Georgian Cuisine and Tried Housekeeping Notes*, *Book for the Kitchen*, *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*, and *The Family Book*. Additionally, I analyze interviews with the representatives of different projects which make these cookbooks accessible to today's Georgian society in order to observe and analyze modern narratives around them.

This work argues that cookbooks serve as a looking glass through which we can observe cultural values of a society (Ferguson 2004; Notaker, 2017). By creating a conceptual frame focused on cookbooks as 'material objects', I illustrate how and why social transformations and changes in social norms can and should be traced in time through cookbooks. Through tracing "social life" of these cookbooks in time, I demonstrate how a cookbook, as a material artefact, later bears profound emotional legitimacy and nurture national sentiments in the community (Anderson, 2006; Poole, 1999). In pre-Soviet period first two editions were used as means of socio-cultural influence, first by the author and later by her daughter – spreading European eating habits and etiquette popular amongst upper class in the broad society. In Soviet time, new political and ideological aspects substituted Jorjadze's ideas and the cookbook joined list of Soviet cookbooks

that worked as mediums for socialist propaganda. This brings us to Georgia today, when the cookbook that has been framed by various narratives in the past is perceived not as object of function, but as national relic, as representation of ‘true Georgian identity’ from the past and is again used as means of influence, this time for building post-Soviet Georgian identity.

This research applies Ann Swidler’s model of cultural influence to social value of cookbooks, which helped position cookbooks on broader map of socio-political transformations both in ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods (Swidler, 1986). Based on Swidler’s approach, I conclude that socio-cultural influence does not operate within clear-cut lines. In ‘settled’ periods such as in today’s Georgia, this influence is not as explicit as it was during the Soviet regime. So, by simply creating the narrative and introducing it to the greater public, the authors of the project exercise some level of social influence, the degree of which is later “decided” by the public (Swidler, 1986).

I also want to acknowledge the limitations of my study. Discourse analysis and three interviews with only one side of the market economy – the producers—is not enough to fully grasp the process of vast social transformation such as identity-building. For a more thorough investigation into these processes, I would suggest conducting qualitative research amongst consumers of the books discussed in this thesis to better illustrate the degree of effect proposed narratives have on broad society, to see if the ideas held by the producers and the consumers of these cookbooks overlap. However, despite its limitations, this thesis sheds light on the practices of using cookbooks as means of social influence and more specifically, the subtle role cookbooks assume in the process of forming a new Georgian identity based on European values.

This work has expanded the body of literature which view cookbooks as source through which social matters can be researched. I argue that post-socialist Georgian identity is heavily based on the romanticization of pre-Soviet past and western values. Through drawing on established cultural repertoires, cookbooks (and projects influenced by them) subtly reproduce and reinforce the new, 'European' version of national identity "in a banally mundane way" (Billig, 1995).

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