

ტარიზმის ენობრივი პოლიტიკა  
დასავლეთ საქართველოში  
მე-20 საუკუნის დასაწყისის  
ქართული ემიგრაციული პრესის მიხედვით<sup>1</sup>  
LANGUAGE POLICY  
OF TSARISM IN WESTERN GEORGIA  
AS REFLECTED IN GEORGIAN ÉMIGRÉ PRESS  
OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY<sup>2</sup>

ლევან ფაჩულია  
სოხუმის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი  
თბილისი, საქართველო

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ABSTRACT

The issue of the functioning of the Georgian language in the common Georgian linguistic space has been a concern since 1801, beginning with the period of Georgian statehood and continuing through the abolition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church. During the reign of the Tsar in the Russian Empire, the Georgian language faced gradual restrictions and, eventually, even bans in schools and state institutions, among other places. Throughout the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, our ancestors tirelessly fought against the Russifying anti-national policies across all aspects of public life.

Tsarist Russia's language policy in Western Georgia sought to reduce and stifle the presence of the Georgian language in parish schools and churches.

Evaluating these threats appropriately from a modern perspective is crucial.

This report explores the anti-Georgian language policy of the Russian Tsar in Western Georgia, drawing on publications from the early 20th century, notably the newspaper "Georgia". These publications were produced by Georgian emigrants residing in cities such as Paris, Berlin, New York, and Istanbul, and they covered various significant topics emerging at the turn of the 20th century.

The Russian authorities attempted to lay the groundwork for anti-Georgian propaganda by highlighting the division of the common Georgian language into dialects and the regular linguistic developments resulting from the asymmetrical evolution of the three closely related languages (Georgian, Zan, and Svan). This foundation was utilized by proponents of Russification to falsely assert that the

<sup>1</sup> კვლევა განხორციელდა შოთა რუსთაველის ეროვნული სამეცნიერო ფონდის მხარდაჭერით [FR-22-21517]

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Georgian language was not the mother tongue of the Megrelians. Despite numerous efforts by Russian officials during the Tsar's rule, the strong national and state consciousness of Western Georgia's population prevented Russia from achieving its goal of national degeneration among the Georgians.

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**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ცარიზმის ენობრივი პოლიტიკა საქართველოში, ქართული ემიგრანტული პრესა, ნაციონალური იდენტობა, ქართველური ენები.

**Keywords:** language politics of tsarism in Georgia, Georgian emigrant press, national identity, Kartvelian languages.