

Georgian Minorities: *Roma, Qists, Assyrians, Ezids*

Dea Elibegova (ed.): Georgian Minorities – Roma, Qists, Assyrians, Ezids. With contributions by Dea Elibegova, Meqa Khangoshvili, Sergey Osipov, Eka Bitkash, Dimitri Pirbari
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The Publication

This booklet includes articles on four ethnic groups or minorities - Roma, Qists, Assyrians, Ezids – in Georgia today. This South Caucasus country is today a multiethnic country where different national and ethnic minorities live side by side, and it can hardly be understood without knowledge of their minorities. The preservation of national-historical originality and ethnic self-identification of these groups, while keeping their culture, traditions, history and language is the key issue and a noble task of minorities today as well as the state.

The paper serves as first entrance, mainly for non-Georgians, but also for Georgians to be aware of the culture, traditions, history and customs of people living next to the majority population. The importance of the paper is in indicating and identifying key points characterizing the precise ethnic or minorities groups. The paper may become, after all, a useful contribution for European minority research.

By different kind of analysis the originality of each group should be highlighted. While the contribution on Roma is a genuine social science research work, with high empirical content, it states that there are significant differences between the obligations Georgia has signed for in European conventions and the de facto treatment of Roma, for which Dea Elibegova sets up an ambitious – but also self-evident – checklist for the state. She works as Chief Specialist in the Department of Minorities of the Ministry for Reintegration in Tbilisi/Georgia. Her co-author and colleague Meqa Khangoshvili describes the history and mentality of the Qists, a Chechen minority in Georgia, who always were friends of the Georgians throughout their history. Also the other chapters are more culturally and historically oriented, first about the Assyrians, written by Sergey Osipov and Eka Bitkash, both very active in Assyrian organizations, in the case of Sergey Osipov as Deputy Chairman of the World Assyrians Association, in the case of Eka Bitkash as chairperson of the Young Assyrians in Tbilisi. The Ezidism chapter by Dimitry Pirbari also includes specific religious criteria and gives an excellent overview about the habits and customs of Ezidism. After all, this booklet brings valuable insights and an interesting picture of life in Georgia.