



**The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes' land ownership-land use in Adjara during  
the rule of the Ottoman and Russian empires**

**Otar Turmanidze**

Doctor in History Science

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Niko Berdzenishvili Institute

N 32/35 Ninoshvili st.; Batumi, 6010, Georgia

+995 599 291507. Otar.turmanidze@bsu.edu.ge

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0482-2404>

**Abstract**

The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi settled in Adjara from Imereti, namely from Saeri-Stavo of Argveti, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Adjara was then conquered by the Ottomans. The Abashidzes converted to Islam here and entered the service of the Ottoman state. The Ottoman Sultan gave them lands and estates and gave them the title of Sanjak Beg of Lazistan.

The Abashidzes were large landowners in Adjara. The article discusses the land ownership and land use issues of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi. After the implementation of the agrarian reform (Tanzimat) in the Ottoman Empire, the Agha-Begs no longer had private property. In return, they were assigned hereditary pensions, but the Abashidzes, like the rest of the Agha-begs of the Ottoman Empire, were left with the right of ownership and use.

During the Ottoman rule, there was a continuous struggle between the state agencies and local landowners regarding land and

estates. This struggle continued during Russian domination. During this period, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi started mass sale of land and estates. They were also engaged in leasing and mortgaging pieces of land. The income in a form of natural products or money received from this was the main source of their existence. The article discusses the legal status of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi. It is emphasized that during the Soviet regime they suffered severe economic and political oppression.

**Keywords:** land ownership; Tanzimat; Ashari; rent; buying-selling.

### **Introduction**

The estate was and is the main means of existence and development of society. Ilia Chavchavadze defined its meaning in the formula: "Estate, language, faith". The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes made a significant contribution to the fight for the estate against foreign oppressors.

The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes were large landowners. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, villages were given to them in the form of a military leni in the Ottoman Empire. But after the abolition of the military-teni system, the Abashidzes were deprived of the right to private ownership of the land and the land remained in their possession. Because of this, the Abashidzes protested and fought irreconcilably against the regime of the Ottoman sultan.

After Southwestern Georgia was transferred to the Russian Empire, the king's authority maintained the land ownership and land use rules of the Ottoman Empire and did not recognize the ownership rights of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes over the land. The Abashidzes did not comply with the demands of the Tsarism and sold a large part of their land for fear of losing it. As a result, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes found themselves in the middle rank from the category of large landlords.

After the establishment of the Soviet government in Adjara, the estates of the Agha Begs were confiscated. Estates and other imm-

ovable and real estate were confiscated from Abashidzes for free. As landlords, they were deported from Adjara, and in 1937, their representative, Memed Abashidze, was shot, and his children were deported to a remote part of Russia.

### **Methodology**

The paper is written based on the historicism and logic of the guiding principles of scientific methodology. The material is selected, grouped and analyzed using proven methodology in science. As for the research methods, the methods of analysis and synthesis, comparison, reconciliation are used.

### **Outcomes**

The outcome of the research is that a relatively complete scientific work was created on the land ownership and land use of the Abashidzes, the influential Begs in Adjara. The issue has not been fully studied scientifically. Through this work, new, unknown archival material is introduced for the first time. In addition, the colonial policy of the Ottoman and Russian empires towards Adjara is depicted on the example of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes' land ownership and land use, which is not only interesting in general, but also important in terms of practical value.

### **Discussion**

The Abashidzes family is well known in Georgia as well as abroad. By social origin, they belong to the status of both nobles and peasants. The Abashidzes are mentioned in Georgian historical sources in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In this era, the Abashidze family's principality existed in the Saeristavo of Argveti, and it was one of the strongest principalities (Soselia, 1973:153).

There is a different opinion about the Abashidzes settling in Adjara. According to Olgha Soselia, Doctor of History, the Abashidzes settled in Adjara in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They converted to Islam and joined the service of the Ottoman state. Based on Kh. Akh-vlediani, S. Gersamia, G. Sharadze, T. Komakhidze, I. Sikharulidze, Ab. Surguladze and others, the Abashidzes settled in the area of Batumi in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, converted to Islam, and the Ottoman Sultan gave

them the title of Sanjak Beg of Lazistan and transferred the estates to them. This is where their rise begins. They bring convincing documents to prove this. Such a view was also developed by Iusuf Abashidze, who compiled a short history of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi (asma, F, 5, inscription. 1, c. 48; Turmanidze, 2001:44).

At present, there is a lot of literature about the Sanjak-Beg Abashidze from Batumi, in which the genealogy, political, cultural-educational and journalistic activities of this lineage are discussed. But Apart from Kh. Akhvlediani, there is no mention at all about the land ownership and land use of this lineage in the works of the mentioned authors. In this sense, the present article represents a novelty in science.

The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi received the Ottoman Sultan's firman on the estate more than once. According to the rule existing in the Ottoman Empire, these firmen were renewed as a result of the accession of a new Sultan to the throne. For example, Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1760) gave the Abashidzes of Batumi a military Leni, which consisted of 16 villages, in a contract dated 1715. These villages were spread over the territory from Chorokhi River to Chakvi (stsssa, F. 231, inscription 1, c. 99, sheet 7; Turmanidze, 2001: 44). According to the same Sultan Akhmed III 1717 firman, the Abashidzes were given a tax estate, the annual income of which was 200 thousand Achchas. Of this amount, 11,040 Akhchas were to be contributed to the state treasury, and the rest remained for their use (Akhvlediani, 1944: 95; Turmanidze, 2001:44). Thus, a significant part of the lands of Batumi and its surroundings became the property of the Abashidzes. These were both uninhabited and inhabited lands. Peasants cultivated these lands and paid taxes to the Abashidzes.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century until 1848, the Abashidzes ruled the Sanjak of Lazistan. After that, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi were no longer rulers of the Lazistan Sanjak. The last ruler of Sanjak of Lazistan was Yusuf Abashidze, who died in 1848. He had 5 children: Emin, Salih, Husein, Ibrahim, Ahmed. Two of them were childless (Emin and Akhmed). Descendants were left to Salih, Husein and Ibraim (Sharadze, 1995:36). During the Russian occupation, documents

for the purchase of lands were signed by Salih, Husayn, Ibrahim and their descendants. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main source of existence of the Abashidze family was the income from the estates.

In the 30s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the agrarian reform began in the Ottoman Empire, which is also known under the name of Tanzimat. In 1839, the Decree of the Ottoman Sultan was published, on the basis of which feudal estates and servants and peasants no longer remained in private ownership. The new agrarian reform put an end to the military leniency system of land ownership. The lands were declared state property, and the Aghas (nobles) were equalized with the peasants with their right. According to the Tanzimat, all citizens (subordinates) of the Ottoman Empire pay taxes in the same way. The agrarian reform in South-West Georgia, including the Lazistan Sanjak, was completed in the second half of the 60s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The feudal lords, including the Abashidzes, were left with the right to use the estates. For this benefit, they paid one-tenth of the land revenue, which was called *ashar*.

The Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi were big feudal lords. In terms of the size of their estates, they were inferior only to the Khimshiashvilis and Tavdgiridzes in South-West Georgia. According to one report of the Commission of Batumi District, after Tanzimat, the Abashidzes had 73 *desyatina*s (125 *kili*) of land. According to the second report of the same commission (May-June 1880), the Abashidzes owned 500-600 *desetinas* (atssa, F. I. -81, inscription 1, c. 1, sheets 65-70; asma, c. 48, sheet 10). The Abashidzes claimed a much larger territory, which included a large part of the city of Batumi and its surrounding villages (Urekhi, Peria, Bartskhana, Ijadie, Gorodoki, Angisa and others). These lands were owned under the usufruct rights and leased.

The Ottoman government assigned hereditary pensions to the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi, like other landowners, after Tanzimat. In the 60s and 70s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 6 people from the Abashidze family received vicarious hereditary pension. From them,

Khusein, Salih, Ibrahim and Ahmed received 633 kurushes, and Dursun and Ismail - 317 kurushes (stssa, F. 231, inscription. 1, sheet. 36, sheet. 6-7).<sup>6</sup>

After the liberation of southwestern Georgia from Ottoman possession, the situation of the Abashidzes, like other landowners, changed. The Russian government, using the Ottoman legislation, did not recognize the private property rights of the local population to the land. The lands were declared the property of the treasury. The landowners were obliged to pay rent, as was the case in the Ottoman Empire. The landowners of South-West Georgia relentlessly fought against the agrarian policy of tsarism, they demanded the confirmation of private ownership of land.

Land movement, including petitions and complaints, continued until the end of Tsarism's ownership, but to no avail. The Khimshiashvili family was an exception, to whom the Russian government, taking into account the merits of Sherip Khimshiashvili in the war of 1877-1878, approved 8,295 desyatinas of estate as private property in 1912 (Turmanidze, 2009:132). The Abashidzes of Batumi repeatedly appealed to the highest authorities of the Caucasus to approve the land in their use as private property, but they always received a negative answer.

During the Russian occupation, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi no longer received the local hereditary pension appointed by the Ottoman government. They were not in the state service, nor were they engaged in private entrepreneurial activities. They were mainly engaged in political and cultural-educational activities. Memed Abashidze, Zia and Haidar Abashidze distinguished in this direction. In such conditions, the only source of Abashidze's existence was the income from the estates. In the 80s and 90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Abashidze lands were not separated. Therefore, they leased the lands collectively. In addition, they sold lands collectively, sometimes individually.

The sale of land by the Abashidzes began in 1879 and continued until the Sovietization of Georgia. The land purchase documents were

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<sup>6</sup> One kurush was equal to 5 kopecks.

approved by notaries of Batumi and Kutaisi. But the Russian authorities did not recognize them. Therefore, there were continuous disputes and complaints between the Abashidzes, notary officials and local estate agencies.

The Abashidze family sold the main part of the land in 1879-1890. The first deed of land purchase was signed by Pezli Abashidze son of Salikhi Abashidze, who in 1879 sold 22 square sazhen (land measurement unit in Russia that equals to 7ft) of land in the territory of Batumi to Staff Captain Nikolay Uspenksi, son of Vasily. The Abashidze family made the biggest deal on the purchase of land in 1880. 457 desyatina and 1527 square meters of land were sold to the vice-colonel Jason Soprom dze Ioselian, Ivane Simoni dze Shadunov and Durmishkhan Zhurul. The contract was signed by Ibraim Abashidze, who had a deed of trust from Salikh, Husein, Suleiman, Akhmed, Dursun, Ismail Abashidze. Jason Ioselian bought a large part of this common estate - 456 desyatina and 773 square sazhen, for which he paid 60 thousand rubbles. Durmishkhan Zhurul bought 1554 square meters, and Ivane Shadunov - 1600 square meters. The purchase document was approved by the notary of Kutaisi.

The Abashidze family made the biggest deal on the purchase of land in 1880. 457 desyatina and 1527 square sazhen of land were sold to the vice-colonel Iason Ioseliani, son of Soprom, Ivane Shadunov, son of Simon and Durmishkhan Zhuruli. The contract was signed by Ibraim Abashidze, from the Abashidzes' side, who had a deed of trust from Salikh, Husein, Suleiman, Akhmed, Dursun, Ismail Abashidze. Iason Ioseliani bought a large part of this common estate - 456 desyatina and 773 square sazhen, for which he paid 60 thousand rubbles. Durmishkhan Zhuruli bought 1554 square sazhen, and Ivane Shadunov - 1600 square sazhen. The purchase document was approved by the notary of Kutaisi.

One part of the mentioned land-estate (33 desyatina and 939 square sazhen) was located in the Porto-Franco area of Batumi, the rest - in the villages of the surroundings of Batumi (Stepanovka, Angisa, Urekhi, Korolistskali sea coast). In particular, 320 desyatinas were

located in Urekhi, 60 in Angisa. The estate consisted of several hundred plots. For example, there were 11 plots in Stepanovka, 43 in Urekhi, 48 in Angisa, 643 in the Batumi oil district (Tamari settlement), 61 in Liman-Meele, etc. (atssa, F. 25, inscription 1, c. 9, sheet. 51-52); part of the territory was covered with forest. The second part was used by the peasants, for which they paid ashari (rent payment for land usage) to the state treasury. Charging the population to rent for land usage was determined by the fact that the Russian government considered the lands owned by the Abashidzes to be state property and considered their sale of land illegal. Therefore, as it was said, the disputes-complaints were constantly going to the judicial bodies. The issue was repeatedly discussed by the Kutaisi Okrug Court and the Tbilisi Judicial Chamber. By the decision of the latter, as a supreme legal act, the purchase and sale of land was declared illegal (atssa, F. I.-81, inscription. 1, S. 1, sheets 50-56, 162 -170; F. i- 25, inscription. 1, c. 1, sheet. 10). Nevertheless, land sales continued. In 1882, Iason Ioseliani bought another 20 square sazhen of land from Akhmed-Beg Abashidze in the territory of Batumi (atssa, F. i-25, inscription 1, c. 1, sheet. 92).

Iason Ioseliani died in 1889. His only heir was his daughter Elena, who married Konstantine Abkhazi. Iason Ioselian sold part of the land when he was alive. After his death, his daughter Elene fought with her husband for the private ownership of the lands bought by Iason Ioseliani. They filed a number of requests and complaints to the Russian authorities on this issue. But the request-complaint did not lead to any results.

The lands of the Treasury and the Abashidzes were not separated within the borders of Batumi. Therefore, disputes and complaints between the state agencies, the Abashidzes and buyers on this issue continued without an end. In 1881, for example, the Abashidze family sold land to the retired Poruchik (messenger, officer for orders) Michael Pavlovich Mefisov, right in the territory of Batumi. The agreement was signed by Husein and Ibrahim Abashidze from the Abashidze family. Mikheil Mefisov wanted to fence this land, but the



Batumi City Council and Satatbiro (Duma) did not allow him on the grounds that this agreement was illegal, as the mentioned plot of land was considered state property (atssa, F.I,-7, inscription, c. 57, sheets 10-19).

In the villages of the vicinity of Batumi, the Abashidzes sold both large and small land plots. In 1882, in the village of Peria, Khussein, Akhmed, Salikh, Ibrahim and Dursun Sanjak Abashidzes sold a piece of land to Turkish citizens-Mustafa Ependi Hajioghlu and Osman Ependi Khaiasoghli; the piece of land consisted of 10 desyatina and 1846 square sazhen. Buyers paid 40,000 rubles to the Abashidzes (atssa, F. 25, inscription 1, c. 25, sheet 93). On October 27, 1889, Khusain Sanjak-Beg Abashidze's wife (widowed) Aishe Tuntul Khanum sold one piece of land in the village of Bartskhana for 600 rubles to Vera Mghebrov from Kutaisi and Verdi Oganosov from Azerbaijan (city of Shusha) (F. 25, F. 93, F. I - 81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheet 174). The notary of Batumi has signed the procurement documents. The Abashidzes sold only small volumes of land directly within the city of Batumi, which the buyers used to build buildings and establish orchard.

The Abashidzes started to sell their lands in mass volumes in the 90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was due not only to the desire to increase monetary income, but also to the fact that the Tsarist officials started a new census of the lands of southwestern Georgia. After the liberation of Adjara from the Ottoman rule, local estates were included in the military-civilian administration, but in the second half of the 1890s, the lands of southwestern Georgia were transferred to the Ministry of Land and State Property. The lands of Batumi District, as state property, were directly subordinated to the State Property Division of Kutaisi Governorate. This caused a sharp protest of the land-owning population. In such a situation, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi started selling land on a large scale. In 1894-1900, they sold 62 plots of land. 4 plots in 1898, 19 in 1899, and 33 plots in 1900. The purchase and sale documents were again approved by the Batumi notary.

In the 90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as before, the Abashidzes sold land both as a group and individually. In 1894, 2 plots were sold. The

first plot, which consisted of 1160 square sazhen and was located on the territory of the city, was sold by Dursun and Ali Beg Abashidze to Parmen Gegenava, son of Simon and Konstantine Javelidze, son of Simon. The second plot (88.5 square sazhen) was sold by Ibraim Abashidze's wife Salie Khanum. The plot of land was also located within the city of Batumi. The land was bought by Petre Medus, son of Karlo, a resident of Batumi, for which he paid the appropriate price (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, p. 5, pages 15, 17). In 1895, the same Salie Khanum sold land in the territory of Batumi to Artur Onanyants, son of Vardan, who paid 1215 rubles of silver money (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, c. 30).

Within Batumi, in 1896, Memed Abashidze sold 2 plots of land to Lutbie Chilingarov. The first was 154 square sazhen, the second - 155.5 square sazhen, Lutbie Chilingarov paid Memed Abashidze 774 rubles in silver money (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheets 40,96). Ali-Beg Abashidze sold the first plot of 756 square sazhen to Pavle Mchedlov, son of Luka from Akhaltsikhe, the second plot of 223 square sazhen was sold by Pevzi Abashidze to the "Staff Captain" Nikoloz Uspenski, son of Ivan (atssa, I-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheets 56, 61, 71).

In the following years, the sale of land by the Abashidze family increased significantly. In 1898, Zia, Dursun, Memed, Ali and Pezli Abashidze sold 229 desyatinas in Angisa to Iulion Sharashenidze, son of Nikoloz and Aleksandre Mikelaishvili, so of Maksime, residents of Batumi. As usual, the purchase document was approved by the Batumi notary on July 30 of the same year. It was the largest land sale in the 1890s and 1900s. In 1898, the Abashidze family sold 3 more plots of land. Aishe Tuntul Khanum, the wife of Khusein Abashidze, and Salie Khanum, the wife of Ibraim Ab Tsavinov, son of Isak. The purchase agreement was approved by the Batumi notary on May 1. According to the contract of August 28, 1898, Dursun-Beg Abashidze sold a small plot of land in the territory of Batumi to Vera Mghebrov from Kutaisi and Verdi Oganosov from Azerbaijan. Under the agreement of 1898, Zia-Beg Abashidze sold 50 square sazhen of land in Angisa to Mikheil

Chkhartishvili from Ozurgeti (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, p. 5, sheets 133, 151, 156, 162, 178).

In 1899-1900, the sale of lands by the Abashidze family reached its climax, they sold 52 plots of land in two years. The lands were located in the city of Batumi, Angisa and Bartskhana. In 1899-1900, the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes sold small amounts of land individually. Zia and Memed Abashidze sold the largest amount of land in two years. Zia Abashidze sold 34 plots of land, and Memed Abashidze - 17. The Abashidzes sold land both in sazhens and plots. Therefore, the exact determination of the total area of sold land is difficult. The lands were sold at different prices. The value of the land depended on market demand, soil fertility, and territorial location. The land within the city of Batumi was much more expensive, the land on the sea coast had a lower, but still high price.

In 1899-1900, Zia Abashidze sold lands in the city of Batumi and its surroundings to Triantapil Mavropoulos, Artem Kevkhashvili, Josephina Shevardnadze, brothers Taniel and Vladimir Tavartkiladze, Karun Chilingarov, Vasil Bardanov, Jambul Saudia, Mate Vlasov, Pavle Krenke, Apolon Rukhadze, Zakaria Dekanozov, Mikheil Khristants, Ivane Garakanidze, Giorgi Kukuladze, Kukulia and Dzadzamia, Ivane Tarakanov and others. Land purchase prices were different. For example, T. Mavropoulo paid 505 rubles for a 500 square meter plot of land located in Angisa. Zh. Shevardnadze bought 195 square meters in sazheni (Batumi) - 400 rubles, brothers Taniel and Vladimir Tavartkiladze bought 12327 square sazhens - 500 rubles (located in Angisa), A. Kevkhashvili from Signaghi (Kakheti) paid 1000 rubles for 3236 square meters. A Chilingarov paid 510 rubles in 505 square sazhens, V. Bardanov paid 400 rubles in 300 square sazhens, etc. (atssa, F. i. 81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheets 187-388).

Memed Abashidze (in 1899-1900) sold lands in the city of Batumi and its surroundings to Davit Gamkrelidze, Makrine Chikvaizde, Pedosi Mikeladze, Robert Gunrize, Mikheil Khristants, Samuel Chakhvadze, Mikheil Antadze and others. For example, D. Gamkrelidze paid 2000 rubles for 1000 square sazhens of land. P. Mikeladze paid

500 rubles in 2017, R. Gurnize- 40 rubles in 100 square sazhen, S. Chakhvadze paid 1100 rubles in 525 square sazhen, A. Antadze paid 45 rubles in 200 square sazhen, etc. (atssa, F.I-81, An. 1, S. 5, sheets 188, 239, 243, 276, 291, 307, 319, 327).

The sale of land by the Abashidzes decreased after 1900, because the main part was sold before that. In 1901-1904, the Abashidzes sold 8 plots of land, which were located in the city of Batumi and in the territory of Angisa. For example, Husein Abashidze's wife Aishe Tuntul Khanum sold 70.12 square sazhen of land in Batumi. It was bought by Abgar Abgarian, son of Stepane, who paid 600 rubles, Memed Abashidze sold a 126 square sazhen of plot of land to Mariam Turkia, daughter of Ilia. The buyer paid the seller 2080 rubles. Dursun-Beg Abashidze sold 249.6 square sazhen of land for 2743 rubles. The land was bought by Paraskeva Anjaparidze, son of Simon.

In the 1900s, as before, most of the lands were sold by Zia Abashidze. In 1901, 4 plots of land were sold: 19,018 square sazhen, for 9,000 rubles, were sold to Artem Kevkhashvili, son of Kristepore, 143 square sazhen were sold for 600 rubles to the brothers Tavartkiladzes, 50 square sazhen were sold for 100 rubles to Zharkova and etc.; (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheet. 416, 417, 425, 447, 453, 457, 460). In 1905, the Russian authorities conducted a new census of the lands in the coastal area of Adjara. According to this census, the Abashidzes owned 316 desyatinas and 227 square estate which were mainly located in Urekhi and Angisa. From this place, Memed Abashidze possessed 38 desyatinas and 1171 square sazhen, Dursun Beg possessed 42 desyatinas and 1200 square sazhen, Pevzi and his children-33 desyatinas and 846 square sazhen, Zia Abashidze and Riza Abashidze-200 desyatinas, (stssa, F. 13, inscription 10, c 604, sheets. 26-27. 37-38).

The sale of lands by the Abashidzes continued until 1921. During the sovietization of Adjara, 237 sazhen of lands were owned by the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi. It turns out that after 1905 they sold more than 79 desyatinas of estates. In these years, lands were sold by Memed, Zia, Ali, Aslan Abashidze and others. For example, in

1913-1919, Memed Abashidze sold 10,400 square sazhen of land to Zakaria Bestavashvili, son of Simon for 5,000 rubles, Zia Abashidze sold three plots of land: 642 square sazhen to Khasan Tavdgiridze for 300 rubles, the second plot for 1,104 rubles to Kaptoghli from Batumi, 100 square sazhen to Apollon Rukhadze, son of Mamuka. The wife of Suleiman Sanjak-Beg Abashidze sold 100 square sazhen of land with buildings for 14,300 rubles. In the same years, the Abashidzes sold land in Angisa to the Persian subordinate Suleiman Dairogli by a collective agreement (atssa, f. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheets 416, 418, 428, 435, 436, 438, 443, 446, 448; c. 22, sheet 261).

The Sanjak-Beg Abashidze from Batumi, by land leasing and mortgage, received a significant amount of money. In 1901, for example, Pezli and Ali Abashidze took 2500 rubles as a loan from Abgar Abgaryan by leasing a piece of land. On the same ground, Ibrahim Abashidze's wife, Salie Khanum, borrowed 1000 rubles from Batumi commersant (a person involved in commerce) for a two-year term (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c 5, sheets 405, 421). Giving loan through the land leasing was an exception. Obviously, it was caused by necessity. It was more profitable and frequent to lease the land.

It is mentioned in official sources that the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi did not engage in physical labor for tilling the soil and harvesting crops. Therefore, the lands were leased to those who wished. There were many such people in Adjara. Obviously, the rental money was also the main income of the Abashidzes. In 1901, for example, Memed Abashidze leased a 625 square meter plot of land in Angisa to Dursun Barkalogli, a resident of the village of Dandalo in Kvemo Adjara, for a period of 12 years. The rental fee was 300 rubles (25 rubles per year). In the same year, the Abashidzes gave 1452 square meters sazheni of land to Dimitriad under a collective agreement for a 12-year term. The mentioned plot of land was also located in Angisa and the annual rental fee was 15 Rubles, and the whole was 180 rubles. Aishe Khanum, the wife of Salikh Abashidze, leased a 596.6 square sazheni plot of land (in Adlia) to Kirile Jorbenadze and Pavle Zakaradze for 12 years. The rental fee was 360 Rubles (30 rubles annually).

Pezli and Ali Abashidze signed the agreement on behalf of Aishe Khanum. For the violation of the contract, the parties were liable to a fine of 1500 rubles (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheet 433, 445, 457, 464).

Land leasing by the Abashidzes increased even more in the following years, but some plots were not signed under an official contract. Along with small plots, they also leased large areas. For example, in 1911, Pezli and Ali Abashidze leased 8 desyatinas of land in Angisa to Andria Rusia son of Simon. The term of the lease was 3 years, and the annual lease fee was 100 Rubles (atssa, F. i-81, inscription, 1, c. 22, sheet. 457). In 1916, Ali Beg Abashidze leased land plots to Nestor Manjgaladze, S. Shamatava, S. Andghuladze and I. Gogmachadze. The sources do not indicate the size of the land area, lease rent and lease term (atssa, F. i-81, inscription. 1, c. 5, sheet. 434). Nevertheless, this material is still noteworthy in this respect.

The landowners of Batumi province including the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi, continued to dispute with the Russian authorities for the approval of the land-estate in private ownership. Due to these disputes and complaints, the Viceroy Council of the Caucasus, as a result of a long discussion, on April 18, 1912, approved the draft law on approving the ownership of land and estates in the provinces of Kars and Batumi, for which the landowners had to pay a ransom amount equaling to 517,440 Rubles for 28 years (stsssa, F. 13, inscription 7, c. 2909, sheets 116-120; Turmanidze 2009:69-70).

This kind of solution of the issue did not suit the land-owning population, including the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes from Batumi. Meanwhile, the First World War began. From April 1918 to July 1920, Adjara was under the rule of the Turkish and British invaders. The Democratic Republic of Georgia could not manage to resolve the agrarian issue in Adjara by legislation, as it was done in the rest of Georgia.

The agrarian policy of the Soviet government was a tragedy for the land-owning population of Adjara, including the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Batumi. After Sovietization, land nationalization was announced. Private property was abolished, buying and selling, mortgaging

and leasing of land was prohibited, the lands of Agha Begs were confiscated. Abashidze were deprived of 237 desyatinas free of charge and given to peasants with no water and small land. After the liberation of Adjara from the domination of the Turks until 1921, several generations of the Abashidzes changed. Memed, Khasan, Zia, Iusuf, Haidar, Kadir, Nuri Abashidze were alive during Sovietization. Motivated by opposition to the implementation of agrarian reform, the Begs were exiled from Adjara. Among the Abashidzes, Khasan, Riza and Iusuf were deported from Adjara. Memed Abashidze was arrested and first was exiled to Baku, and then served his sentence in Tbilisi. Later, some Abashidze begs hid in Turkey. An exception was Haidar Abashidze, who was released soon after his arrest.

Along with the lands, three residential houses with 10 rooms were confiscated from the Abashidzes. Even a car was taken away. Women and young children remained in Abashidze's families. They were doomed to die. Memed Abashidze returned to Batumi from exile in 1928, but was actually under political supervision. He was arrested and shot in 1937 on false charges of counter-revolutionary-Trotskyist activities. In 1937, two children of Memed Abashidze - Ibraimi and Ifeti, who were in exile for 15 years, were arrested on the same charge. This is how the life and history of land ownership and land use of the Sanjak-Beg Abashidze of Batumi ended tragically, their political rehabilitation was carried out in the second half of the 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But what the Sanjak-Beg Abashidzes of Adjara experienced during the Tsarism and the Soviet government is an incurable pain and will remain so in the years to come.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, after moving to Adjara, the Abashidzes were used by the Ottoman authorities to implement their colonial policy in this area. Because of this, they were given a military Leni and became large landowners. But after the agrarian reform, the Abashidzes estates remained only in ownership. The Abashidze's land ownership and land use worsened even more during the Russian Empire. They were forbidden to transfer lands to other's ownership. Nevertheless, the Abashidzes

sold a large part of their land, and during the Soviet rule, the entire land of the Abashidzes was confiscated and they were repressed as landlords. This is how the Sanjak-Beg Abashidze's land ownership and land use ended, and now it belongs to history.

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