



**BUSINESS IN TBILISI AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND
BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY (ACCORDING TO THE
ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE FRENCH MAGAZINE “LE CAUCASE
ILLUSTRÉ” PUBLISHED IN TBILISI)***

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Abstract

The French magazine “Le Caucase illustré” was published in Tbilisi from 1889 to 1892 and again from 1899 to 1902. Founded and edited by French journalist Jules Mourier, the magazine featured articles on the history, art, literature, and daily life of the Caucasian peoples. While many of these topics have been explored to some extent, this paper focuses on an integral yet largely unexplored aspect of the magazine: its advertisements.

Advertisements in “Le Caucase illustré” can be categorized into the following groups: 1) Oil industry. 2) Banking services. 3) Transport-

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tation. 4) Hotels and dining establishments. 5) Various retail shops. 6) Other services (including notary, translation, medical services, photography studios, etc.).

Through an analysis of the advertisements featured in the magazine, a comprehensive overview of business activities in Tbilisi is presented, emphasizing the city's significance in international commercial relations.

Keywords: Jules Mourier; “Le Caucase illustré”; Tbilisi; Caucasus; advertisements.

Introduction

The French magazine “Le Caucase illustré” was published in Tbilisi from 1889 to 1892 and again from 1899 to 1902 (in total, 49 issues were published) under the direction of French journalist Jules Mourier, who served as both the publisher and editor. The primary aim of these journals was to introduce Francophone readers—both in Tbilisi and throughout the cities of the Russian Empire and Europe—to the history and literature of the Caucasian peoples, their cultural heritage, as well as the region's unique flora, fauna, and local industrial advancements. The journals also featured translations of various Caucasian folktales and literary works. Jules Mourier believed that one of the main objectives of the publications was to showcase the arts of the Caucasian peoples to European audiences. Notably, the magazine was produced with high-quality printing for its time and was richly illustrated. Characteristically, the journal maintained an apolitical stance, opting not to address the various social issues prevalent in the Caucasus during that era. This neutral approach likely facilitated approval for its publication from the Russian Empire's censors.

The cover of the journal remained unchanged throughout its initial period and into the early stages of its second period, featuring an armed highlander holding a musical instrument against the backdrop of the Caucasus Mountains and ruins of an ancient stronghold. It

wasn't until 1901 that photos on the cover were altered, and the reasons for this change will be explored further below.

The journal has clearly garnered significant attention, with reviews of its published articles frequently appearing in various periodicals, both positive and negative. It captivates modern scholars, both in Georgia and internationally. A notable example is the small book by Prof. Levan Bregadze, titled 'A Journey on the Pages of 'Le Caucase illustré,' which analyzes materials related to Georgia and Franco-Georgian relations.

This article examines a significant yet underexplored aspect of the journal: advertisements. This subject has largely been overlooked by researchers up to now. Nonetheless, these advertisements provide a fascinating and relatively comprehensive portrayal of entrepreneurship, international trade, and various business activities in Georgia and the broader South Caucasus region during that period.

Methods

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed. The qualitative approach includes comparative analyses of various types of advertisements and an in-depth examination of the reasons behind the editorial board's preference for certain advertisements. The quantitative methods focus on investigating why advertisements held significant prominence during the publication's initial period and why their presence declined in the subsequent period.

Results

The study identified several major categories of advertisements published in the magazine: 1. Oil industry. 2. Banking services. 3. Transportation. 4. Hotels and dining establishments. 5. Various retail shops. 6. Other services (including notary, translation, medical services, photography studios, etc.)

Based on these advertisement categories, the magazine's distribution area and target audience were determined. The study also analyzed the reasons for the high volume of advertisements during the

magazine's initial publication period, as well as the decline in advertisements during the subsequent period.

Discussion

Before delving into the main topic of this article, I will provide a brief introduction to Jules Mourier and highlight some types of articles published in the journal.

Mourier arrived in the Caucasus in 1879 on a special mission from the French Ministry of Education, tasked with studying the history and culture of the Caucasian peoples. He primarily resided in Tbilisi and Zugdidi, and he undertook extensive travel, during which he also conducted archaeological excavations.

He has authored several books, including various translations. Notable among these are "Art in the Caucasus," "The Library of Etchmiadzin and Armenian Manuscripts," the translation of "The History of Georgia" by Sulkhan Baratashvili, and "Caucasian Fairy Tales and Legends." His work titled "Mingrelia" merits special attention. (see: Leonidze, 1989: 16-18). For French readers, his most significant contribution is undoubtedly "The Guide of the Caucasus." (Cheishvili, 2013: 13-14).

It is worth noting that at times, his writings displayed an arrogant attitude towards Caucasians in general. As a result, Mourier's activities were perceived quite controversially by both Georgian and Armenian communities. For instance, he expressed skepticism regarding Georgians' attitude towards education and harbored doubts about the intellectual capabilities of Caucasians overall. Additionally, he underestimated the significance of 'The Knight in Panther's Skin,' despite assisting Iona Meunargia with its translation into French. There are even rumors that Ilia Chachhavadze challenged him to a duel, while Akaki Tsereteli dedicated his famous poem "Little Doggie" to him.

I will present a few excerpts from Illa Chavchadadze's 'Iveria' regarding Mourier's assessment of 'The Knight in the Panther's Skin.' It states, "Mr. Mourier has published a brief analysis of 'The Knight in

the Panther's Skin,' translated into French by I. Meunargia. The author deemed it a work of extremely low quality." (Iveria, 1886, #137: 2).

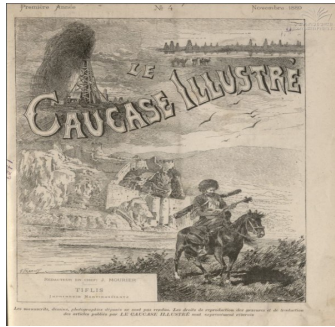
In a later issue of 'Iveria' from the same year, Mourier's critique becomes even more severe: "A little-known Mourier has seized upon the great and renowned Shota... We shall not engage with Mourier's criticism-doing so would be a significant honor for him and an equally unjust slight against the name of Rustaveli." (Iveria, 1886, #178: 2).

Conversely, Mourier expressed a deep appreciation for Georgian and, more broadly, Caucasian culture, which is evident throughout the Journal. It is worth mentioning that later on, Ilia Chavchavadze wrote a warm and gracious letter about Mourier, acknowledging his contributions. (Le Caucase illustré, 1899-1900, #2: 15-26).

It is likely that we should align with M. Iamanidze's viewpoint: "Regrettably, J. Mourier did not fully succeed in addressing the complex challenge of comprehensively studying and describing the culture of a foreign country. Nevertheless, through his efforts, he made significant contributions to both the Georgian and French people—over the years, he provided a wealth of information to his compatriots about the everyday life and culture of the Georgian and Transcaucasian peoples." (Iamanidze, 1989: 66).

Mourier received the permit to publish "Le Caucase illustré" on August 31, 1889, from the Caucasian Committee of Censorship and promptly commenced its publication. However, the magazine was discontinued in 1892 when Mourier returned to his homeland. In 1899, upon his return to Georgia, he revived the publication, which continued until 1902. (Vatova, 1971: 287-288).

L. Bregadze emphasizes that Mourier did not anticipate the cancellation of the magazine's publication. This is clearly demonstrated in both the first and final issue of 1992, where the opening segment of M. Lermontov's poem "Demon" appears, accompanied by a note stating: "to be continued in the next issue." (Bregadze, 2013: 23-24).



Before the launch of “Le Caucase illustré”, Mourier published another French magazine in Tbilisi during 1887-88, titled “Revue industrielle et commerciale du Caucase.” This magazine primarily focused on the industrial potential of the Caucasian region. Given the rising significance of oil during this period, particular attention was devoted to Baku's oil industry and the prospects for its transportation. Although the magazine included advertisements, they occupied only a minor section of its content.*

For illustrative purposes, it may be intriguing to showcase the content from one of the magazine's issues, which includes the following topics:

- Mengrelia and its significance in the Eastern War
- Religious architecture of the Caucasus
- The art of Caucasian enamel
- The Chechen Legend
- Noteworthy sights in Tbilisi
- An Armenian fairy tale
- The French exhibition held in Moscow in 1891 (“Le Caucase illustré”, #2, 1890).

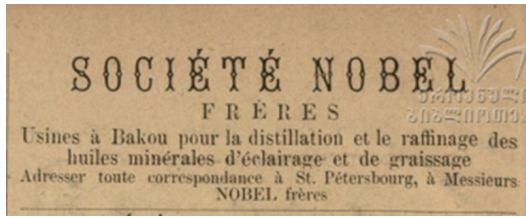
* I was unable to find this magazine in the libraries and archives of Georgia. I would like to thank Georgian researcher Tamar Svanidze, who works in Paris, for discovering some issues of “Revue industrielle et commerciale du Caucase” in the National Library of France and sending me their photocopies.

Between 1889 and 1992, the first page of magazines prominently featured advertisements from large business corporations. Undoubtedly, the cost of placing ads on the front page was significantly higher than that of the back pages. Notably, many of these advertisements were from oil companies and businesses associated with the oil trade. It is clear that the headquarters of these companies were not based in Tbilisi. These companies are engaged in oil extraction, refining, and trading. It is important to note that the list of these companies remained largely unchanged during the initial period of the magazine's publication, with only a few advertisements for other types of businesses being added. This consistency suggests that major enterprises were keen to promote their products in the magazine—following the discovery of oil fields near Baku and the subsequent surge in demand for oil products, oil has emerged as a fundamental driver of the entire Caucasian economy.

As a result, the magazine enjoyed a broad market presence. For instance, based on an advertisement from a French company, we can deduce that the magazine was also distributed in France. This suggests that the magazine's circulation was substantial for its time, although we were unable to find precise figures. Additionally, it is probable that companies paid for advertisements in advance, covering a period of one year or more.

The oil boom at the end of the 19th century parallels some aspects of contemporary realities. In this context, the advertisement for the Company of Oil Export, located in Batumi and owned by Alexander Mantashev, is particularly noteworthy. Thus, even during this era, Georgia functioned as a vital transit route for energy resources.

The proprietors of these companies also merit attention, though in some instances they remain unnamed. Among those mentioned is the notable “Society of Nobel Brothers.” While the majority of owners are European, there are also some native Armenians and Russians involved.



On the first page, advertisements of other types are quite scarce. A notable exception is an advertisement placed by American dentist Feiginberg in certain issues. It seems he enjoyed a considerable reputation among the European community in Tbilisi and likely had the financial capacity to secure a prime advertisement placement on the front page.



On the first page, there are advertisements related to banking services. Among them is one for the “Bank House,” attributed to a certain A. Pridonoff (most likely Pridonishvili, as he is the only Georgian featured in the banking ads).



Additionally, there is an advertisement for the Russian magazine “Новое обозрение” (“La nouvelle revue”), which was edited by

Niko Nikoladze. His portrait was prominently displayed on the inside title page of the magazine.

Now, I will address the remaining categories.

There are several intriguing advertisements related to export and import, transportation, and logistics. For instance, one notable ad features Karapet Mutaffov, whose company operated in Tbilisi and Baku and imported cotton fabrics, silk, and carpets from Persia. Another advertisement highlights the Company of Night and Mattievich, which exported various goods from Europe.

Regarding transportation, there is a French company, Motor Ship of N. Paquet, which regularly traveled between Batumi and Marseille, stopping at Trabzon, Samsun, and Constantinople along the way.

Parcels were transported from Batumi to London and back twice a month via motor ship, with scheduled stops in Constantinople, Marseille, and Le Havre.

Additionally, hotels and restaurants merit attention. The history of hotels in the 19th Century Tbilisi is well-studied. Here I will give attention to some hotels, advertisements of which are published in the Magazine. I would like to highlight several hotels whose advertisements were featured in the magazine. Notable mentions include the renowned Hotel "London," owned by H. Richter; "Dvortsovie Nomera," French-style apartments and rooms of Madame Barberon; Hotel "Pania," etc.

When it comes to dining options, many establishments feature a diverse Georgian-French menu complemented by Georgian wines. Notable examples include the Mushtaidi Garden Restaurant and "Pur-Ghvino" (which translates to Bread and Wine). Their operating hours are also indicated; for instance, "Pur-Ghvino" was open all night.

It's important to highlight a significant point: during that period, there were virtually no advertisements in Georgian publications. Instead, only announcements were present, such as invitations to specific events like ballroom dances and theatrical performances and subscriptions for periodicals and books. It is interesting to note that an

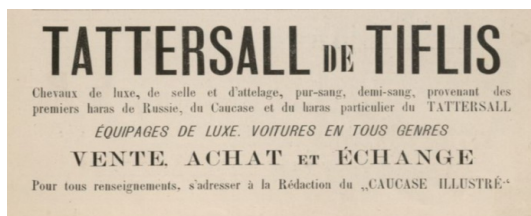
advertisement for “The Knight in Panther’s Skin,” edited by Kartvelishvili, appeared in both “Iveria” and “Le Caucase illustré.” Additionally, “Iveria” featured some announcements that could be classified as advertisements, such as those for cough medicine and metal cleaner. The restaurant “Pur-Ghvino” is also mentioned in “Iveria,” but not as an advertisement; it’s referenced in an ironic note about the restaurant’s high prices.

Let’s discuss the shops. They feature a variety of intriguing advertisements, highlighting the abundant importation of European goods to Tbilisi. Notable examples include the “Mode, Dresses and Prêt-à-Porter” establishments of Madame Hervey and Madame Ovrey, along with other French boutiques. Additionally, there was Gabriel Charakhianoff’s shop specializing in Parisian goods, offering hats, gloves, raincoats, umbrellas, jewelry, and perfumery, among other items. Various shops in the area sold optics, firearms, stationery, musical instruments, antiques, bicycles, chocolates, cheeses, and more. It is also worth mentioning that Jules Mourier was active in commercial endeavors. The magazine prominently features advertisements related to the horse trade, including buying, selling, and trading, emphasizing that interested individuals could contact the editorial staff for inquiries.



Additionally, it is important to highlight the presence of advertisements for wine and spirits. During the initial phase of the magazine’s publication, such advertisements appeared in nearly every issue. For instance, the wines produced by Prince Bagration-Mukhranski in Dighomi and Mukhrani were featured prominently, with claims that these wines have garnered several international awards. Further-

more, advertisements for the David Sarajishvili Company were prevalent. Other notable mentions included promotions for vodka produced by Sergey Megvinoff, along with wines from the wineries of Prince Jorjadze and Prince Ilia Davidovich Chavchavadze.



Advertisements for food and beverages hold significant importance, particularly those from European breweries. In contrast to the Soviet era, Tbilisi was fully stocked with them. Additionally, there is an advertisement for Thea House.



In the last category, various types of ads are grouped together, including translation and notarial services. For example, Notary Kipiani promoted his services. There are also advertisements for customs services, photo studios, and medical services. I would like to particularly highlight an ad for Madame Portugaloff, who was a physician, dentist, and surgeon all at once. Additionally, there is an advertisement for a gun shop. As mentioned earlier, there is also an ad for "The Knight in Panther's Skin," published by Kartvelishvili.



During the second period of the magazine's publication, the number of advertisements dropped significantly, with some issues having no ads at all.

The question naturally arises as to why the magazine experienced this change, especially since it initially garnered significant attention from the business community. On one hand, this decline in interest could be attributed to diminishing enthusiasm from businesses toward the magazine. On the other hand, it's possible that Mourier found alternative sources of funding for its publication. This shift might be linked to the increasing number of images of statesmen, businessmen, industrialists, and European artists featured in the magazine. It likely also contributed to the alteration of the magazine's traditional cover design.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight that Jules Mourier's "Le Caucase illustré" was the first periodical in the Caucasus to incorporate advertisements in their modern form. These advertisements made up a substantial part of the magazine's content. The ads featured in the publication provide valuable insights into the financial, industrial, and commercial activities in Tbilisi and the wider Caucasus region, while also underscoring Tbilisi's significance in East-West economic interactions.

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