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Georgia through the Eyes of the Georgian
Heavy Metal Musicians –

“A Country of Cultural Crossroads”

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Abstract

The subculture of heavy metal has often been perceived as a counterculture to the leading mainstream cultural expressions and paradigms. In the light of globalization the heavy metal culture has spread to far off places around the world from its origin in the West. The Georgian heavy metal culture began developing in the last two decades since the fall of the Soviet Union, when new influences and ideas penetrated former Soviet states. My objective in this thesis is to study the heavy metal subculture in Georgia through a holistic perspective to understand the greater influences and leading paradigms that have permeated Georgian society in the last two decades and how the Soviet ideas and attitudes have had to accommodate to modern Western influences. The different spheres I have analyzed in Georgian society are the Georgian identity, nationalism, Christianity and the Georgian view on homosexuality through the eyes of the Georgian heavy metal subculture. All of these aspects are of importance in understanding the Western and the Eastern influences upon the Georgian society. As a theoretical framework I will use theories of globalization and the meaning of a subculture as a counterculture to leading paradigms.

Keywords: Georgia, Globalization, Soviet Union, Subcultures, Heavy metal, The West, The East

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1. Introduction

Globalization as a phenomenon has been a subject of research for many scholars for decades. Responses to globalization have also been of interest where local people react in different ways depending on the particular society they are active in. These reactions can for example consist of general apathy or the creation of communities or subcultures. The hegemony of the West¹ has been effective in spreading its cultural expressions, but what happens when these traits from the West clash with those from the East²? These Western expressions have during the last century permeated Georgia in a small scale due to the Soviet rule but they have had more influence on the Georgian society since the fall of the Soviet Union. What is of interest here are the global influences that has penetrated the local level after the fall of the Soviet Union. These influences paired with past Soviet culture created new cultural expressions.

Georgia exemplifies how a country develops when two different cultures clash; the capitalist West and the past communist Soviet Union. In researching the Georgian responses to global as well historical and traditional expressions I have chosen to do a holistic study of a subculture in Georgia. Subcultures are usually perceived as bearers of symbolism and meaning and reflect the societal paradigms that are active in a given society. Furthermore, subcultures are perceived as reactions to current societal institutions and policies (Bennet et al. 2004, pp. 1-18).

The heavy metal culture has throughout history had an obvious part in the rebellion against mainstream norms and values. Ever since the beginning of rock music it has been perceived as highly controversial and has often been rejected by the mainstream. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the heavy metal subculture in Georgia. By viewing the Georgian heavy metal scene as a community in opposition to the leading norms and values in Georgia I will be able to get an overall understanding of how global influences as well as the Georgian historic relationship with the Soviet Union has affected the Georgian societal and cultural climate. I will study these global phenomena upon Georgian society through some distinct aspects such as identity, nationalism, the Georgian church and the Georgian view on homosexuality which has been of particular interest when researching the Georgian heavy metal subculture. In analyzing these aspects I will get an overall view of what impact global impressions as well as Soviet impressions have had on Georgian culture.

¹ See Appendix A, fig. A1

² See Appendix A, fig. A2

My field study has been conducted during two months in November 2012 – January 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia. It is an interesting case of how Western culture has affected an Eastern culture in the specific context that is Georgia today. I will begin this thesis by explaining my theories as well as my methodology. I will thereafter continue with an overview of how heavy metal music has been perceived in the West, the Soviet Union and Georgia before I go into analyzing the more specific values and norms that operate in Georgia.

1.1 Focus and purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the members of the Georgian heavy metal subculture view themselves and the world around them to get an understanding of how global and Western as well as post-Soviet paradigms have penetrated and hybridized Georgian society. I will use the heavy metal subculture as a tool in understanding Georgian cultural expressions that have penetrated Georgia from the West as well as from the East. Further, I will research a subculture associated with the West, integrated in the East, which has combined both Western and Eastern cultural expressions and through the holistic perspective of the Georgian heavy metal subculture view how these separated worldviews are reflected in Georgian society today.

My research questions are as follows:

How has Western values and culture, in the wake of globalization, influenced Georgian society?

How are these phenomena (Western values and culture) apparent through the perspective of the heavy metal subculture?

How do these Western influences correlate or clash with the already existing Soviet mentality and traditions in Georgia?

2. Theory

2.1 Globalization in the East and Hybrid Cultures

The historical globalization has its roots in colonization and imperialism by the former hegemonic Western powers as well as trade and migration between nations. Indeed, migration and trade still makes up for a lot of the current cultural streams that penetrate countries, however, the main factor for today's spread of information and cultural expressions is the mass-media and the internet. The Western media is dominant in spreading music, movies and information around the world and some people argue that this kind of globalization is destroying cultural identities. They claim that the culture that is being affected by the Western mass-media is losing its own cultural heritage and national identity (Stokes, 2004). Most authors researching globalization have focused on the Westernization or Americanization that has taken place in the world during the last century. The world today acts in asymmetry and the developing countries are still dependent on the developed countries which makes it evident that the Western media and its industry still has a lot of influence over the rest of the world (Stokes, 2004).

Globalization must be seen in the light of the localities; their responses to global influences and their resistance towards certain aspects of globalization. Collier and Ong (2005; pp. 3-21) claim that for something to be "global" it has to be something that can move through different and diverse spheres of a social context and fit into specific social settings. The local phenomena, in contrast, are simply conventional and socially accepted traits. The extent of the "global" can, however, be limited by the political institutions and the cultural traditions or values in a specific country (Collier and Ong, 2005; pp. 3-21). Since the beginning of the cold war until the end of the 1990's globalization has been a highly regarded term. Neo-liberalism with privatization, free markets and social sector reforms has been on the agenda and been pursued all around the globe. Indeed, many countries still follow the neo-liberal approach that has been dominant in particularly Western countries (Collier and Ong, 2005; pp. 3-21).

My focus for this thesis is to view the effects that globalization and westernization have had on the social and cultural climate in post-Soviet Georgia. Fabian (2007) refers to globalization as "a rise of supraterritoriality.. and..Westernization as Americanization and/or Europeanization". Globalization derives from the idea that borders lose meaning and the world becomes more interconnected. Fabian (2007) claims that the supraterritoriality creates a faster change in societies. This is why studying globalization in post-communist countries that

have been relatively closed to outside influences is of great interest. When local, national and global influences clash the culture both gains some aspects and loses others in its overall entity. The polarization between the East and the West ended only about two decades ago. There are therefore many remnants of Soviet culture left in Georgia. The abrupt ending of the communist rule to more democratic and liberal societies has caused much economic and political turmoil in many Eastern countries. Many countries have, however, recovered with the introduction of free market economies. Many of these countries are struggling with the rise of nationalism, with minority problems and general apathy in the footsteps of communism towards democratization (Fabian, 2007).

When discussing Georgia's current societal structure, one has to have in mind the history and influence the communist rule had. The former communist Soviet states have nowadays become more porous societies where global influences have reached the local population. Scholars have shown that globalization has had both a positive and a negative effect on the Soviet societies. Fabian (2007), claims that specifically the Eastern European countries are more prone to a more nationalistic tendencies because of the countries many years under foreign occupation. She also claims that the global into the local, or the West into the East, creates a highly complex society with many contradictions that follow (Fabian, 2007).

Others argue that instead of making a culture Westernized or Americanized the culture itself becomes a hybrid culture. Kraidy, (2005; pp. 3-12) asserts that this happens when two distinct cultures mix with each other and identities, styles, and values blend into each other, thereby creating new cultural expressions. It is, however, not always easy to differentiate the local from the global or the domestic from the foreign. Cultures have for centuries gone through hybridization and it is therefore difficult to tell whether some cultures have adapted a foreign trait or if it was their own cultural trait originally. Some cultural phenomena are easier to be seen on a local than on a national level and vice versa. It has become a cultural fusion of hybrid cultures all around the world today which many people argue derives from the hegemonic relationship the West has created towards the rest of the world (Kraidy, 2005; pp. 3-12). The hybrid-culture theory is of particular interest in the case of the Georgian heavy metal scene. The fact that the heavy metal subculture has penetrated post-communist Georgia, as it derives from and has mostly been seen in a Western male-dominated context, makes a theory of globalization as well as hybrid cultures relevant for my thesis. The Soviet Union has for decades had a complex relationship with the West, but has not been unaffected by the Western attitudes and ideals.

2.2 Music Subcultures as a Mirror of Society

“Subculture” as a term and phenomenon got its first explanation from the Chicago school as they “provide a key to understanding of defiance as normal behavior in the face of particular social circumstances.” The creation of subcultures and their defiance to mainstream society are thus reactions to social and political changes in a society. Subcultures are formations that act as a resistance to the current socio-political climate. Bennett et al. (2004) highlight the skin-head culture in England as a reaction against modernization and capitalism in attempting to recreate the working class ideals. One specific subculture is, however, not necessarily the same in a different location (Bennett et al., 2004, pp. 1-18). For example; the heavy metal subculture in Georgia is not necessarily the same as the one in Sweden. Heavy metal nowadays exists all over the world; new genres have been created by musicians that adhere to different value systems than those genres originally Western. There are no “global subcultures”, only local, regional and national communities within the same subculture which might act against two totally different social systems (Bennett et al, 2004, pp. 1-18).

Subcultures exist as countercultures to mainstream culture and ever since the information age the number of different subcultures have increased dramatically. This means not only that the mass-media serves as a medium for the given music, but also as a way for providing youth with visual and ideological factors that is incorporated in the said subculture (Bennett et al, 2004, pp. 1-18)

The study of rock, pop, heavy metal music as well as other forms of subcultural groupings in a society have been a topic for many scholars for ages and are thus not something original (Bennet et al, 2004, pp. 1-18). The meaning and value system surrounding the different subcultures have been of particular interest as they reflect a certain sense of conscious exclusion from the mainstream society. The music of certain subcultures is viewed as a language or as the communicative medium for the individual or the subculture. Subcultures of a certain music genre are thus a form of expression and communication either within their own subculture or as an outreach and reaction to the surrounding world (Bennett et al, 2004, pp. 1-18). To be able to study the Georgian heavy metal scene it is important to establish the principle that music and its surrounding culture express a language of meaning and symbolism. It is likewise important to establish that the Georgian heavy metal culture is a direct cause of local, national and global influences. Furthermore, the music subcultures are often responses to feelings of exclusion from mainstream society.

Attali, (1985) argues that music can be seen in the light of the current *modes of production* in a society. By this, he means that the economy in a given society and the production of music are intrinsically bound together. The different stages throughout history of production, consumption, different political systems and ideologies have also produced a certain kind of music. He quotes Theodor Adorno in the opening chapter;

“If we listen to Beethoven and do not hear anything of the revolutionary bourgeois – not the echo of its slogans, but rather the need to realize them, the cry for that totality in which reason and freedom are to have their warrant – we understand Beethoven no better than does one who cannot follow the purely musical content of his pieces.”

Attali means, like Adorno, that music in a given society is a mirror reflection of the current social conditions. Not unlike Bennet, Attali strengthens the theory that music in a given society is intrinsically bound with the system of politics and culture.

The Georgian heavy metal scene must be analyzed in the light of its past communist rule as well as in the light of the constant stream of Western influences. To be able to understand the impact and consequences of Soviet rule as well as Western and American influences upon Georgian culture it is important to establish that music subcultures express both a conscious and unconscious symbolic meaning. By viewing the subculture as a bearer of meaning and symbolism and as a reaction to contemporary societal norms and values it will be possible to analyze the result of the Westernization and the communist rule in Georgia.

2.3 Regarding earlier research

A huge amount of research has been done on globalization, subcultures and the West versus the East. I have, however, insofar not encountered any research addressing the Georgian heavy metal scene or what this means or symbolizes in the Georgian society. There has been some general research done about Georgian rock music and gender relations (Tsitsishvili, 2006). This is, however, not highly relevant research for my thesis since she gives an account of the rock music and the internal gender relationships in Georgia. There are several other scholars addressing the globalization that has taken place in other former Soviet states (Ryback, 1990). Though, since the fall of the Soviet Union, there has been a growth in studies about popular culture in the East. However, very little is written about Georgia in these aspects and that is why I want to offer a new perspective. The heavy metal subculture is both fairly new as well as rather small and will thus be an interesting window of how a post-Soviet country such as Georgia is developing in a globalizing world.

2.4 Anthropological approach

In this thesis I will use a holistic perspective when researching Georgian culture and society. This is an appropriate approach since it will give me the possibility to view the larger picture from a smaller perspective, or for that matter to see the global through the local. When studying globalization, the anthropological approach is a highly effective way to conduct research since the local always has been and will be affected by the global.

3. Methods and Materials

This thesis is based on interviews as well as participant observation. I have focused my interviews on four of the Georgian heavy metal bands since they are all well established in the Georgian heavy metal scene and have good insight in the heavy metal subculture. Because of Georgian hospitality, some luck and my own initiative I succeeded in finding the bands and places that were interesting and useful for my study. Many of the bands offered to show me around in Tbilisi and introduce me to other bands; also they let me join them on rehearsals and concerts³.

I have had four key-informants who are the ones I have done structured as well as semi-structured and group interviews with. I have also been meeting a lot with members from other bands; with whom I, however, did not conduct any formal interviews. Since the heavy metal scene in Tbilisi is relatively small I have met most of my informants at several different occasions when there have been concerts or at other heavy metal venues. They frequently go to visit each other rehearsal studios. I have therefore been meeting several heavy metal musicians from several different bands at the same time.

My field study mostly consisted in participant observation i.e. I was following the bands around to rehearsals, going to rock restaurants and rock bars and doing small trips around Tbilisi where they were showing me around. I have also heard their opinions and discussions around dinner tables where reflections about the heavy metal music, politics, the church, everyday activities as well as other more or less relevant topics have been discussed.

This is a multi-sited field study in the sense that I am doing it at several places inside and outside Tbilisi where heavy metal bands meet. Furthermore, I will regard the many different institutions and impressions that have been and still are affecting the Georgian society and therefore the Georgian heavy metal scene. Gupta and Ferguson, (1997), explain that the old sense of the field is not possible to apply in contemporary anthropological studies. Nowadays field sites are influenced by multiple different factors such as political institutions and global influences and are no longer “closed” as they used to be. Marcus, (1995), argues that all systems and locations are influenced by the larger context. This is why, it is important to look at the larger picture to understand all the complexities and the context on a local level. To be able understand the influences of the Georgian heavy metal one has to regard the larger

³ See Appendix B, fig. B1

societal paradigms and institutions that either intentionally or un-intentionally make reflections on the smaller parts of a society.

In addition to the interviews and participant observation, i have used a dictaphone and I have been writing field journals during my entire visit in Georgia. I have also been taking a lot of photographs as well as smaller video clips, mostly from rehearsals and concerts.

3.1 The Heavy Metal Informants

The heavy metal musicians I have been interviewing are between 20-40 years old. Most of them have been studying at the University and a great majority of them are working in different kind of computer programming or IT related work places. This said, most of my informants were relatively well-educated and knew the English language fluently. They were also fairly well-travelled since most of them had been studying or performing abroad at some stage. All of my informants are men and most of them are dressed in very average heavy metal outfits; mostly dark t-shirts or band t-shirts, dark trousers and jewelries with Nordic symbols like Thor's hammer. The four informants I have conducted interviews with are not quoted with names in the following text. Where the text appears to be lacking in references it is information abstracted from the interviews.

A majority of the heavy metal musicians have been growing up as middle class Georgians and have proceeded in studying at the university which therefore made them earn a bit more money than the average Georgian. Since the Georgian culture and mentality requires that a couple gets married when dating, many of my informants were already married and a few of them had children. Georgians are highly family oriented and they often live with their family until they found a partner to marry and move in with. This was something my informants all regarded as a highly important cultural value. The family ties are deeply rooted in the Georgian culture and mentality.

3.2 Reflections on the Methodology

When doing field studies it is important to reflect on the different relations between researcher and subject that might affect both the interviews as well as the participant observation. These relations are signified by certain different social aspects such as gender, age, profession etc. (Davies, 2008 pp. 45-64) The unequal relation between researcher and subject will always be present when doing anthropological fieldwork, especially in a culture far different from your own. Most of my informants were well-educated, had good knowledge of what occurs outside

of Georgia and had many similar interests as myself, which created a significant decrease in the impact of the unequal relations. Though, the fact that I am a Swedish woman, younger than most of my informants, and in the role of a researcher, have surely affected the results of this study. However, since I am aware of these factors, I have also been trying to minimize them as well as reflect on their impact.

4. Background

4.1 Heavy Metal in the West

In the late 1960's a new kind of music was emerging throughout the Western world which consisted of a heavier and louder sound with distorted guitars and faster drums called *heavy metal music* (Dunn et al. 2005). The term heavy metal has ever since been used as an umbrella term to describe all the different and more extreme genres of heavy metal music. The heavy metal music at this time was filled with gloominess and darkness as well as lot of symbols of the occult. The stage performances by bands such as Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin contained a lot of visual arts where occult and anti-religious symbols were used. The majority of the audience at this time was white, male and working, class but the scene has since become less homogenous and in the 80's when heavy metal became attractive to the mainstream audience the middle class and women joined the heavy metal culture as well (Walser, 1993; 108-130).

In the midst of the 1980's a moral epidemic against heavy metal music spread across the Western world with its epicenter in the US. Christian groups, rock critics, academics and parental organizations claimed that heavy metal was the music of the devil and that it was destroying the youth. It was a degenerating, loud, obnoxious kind of music that did not belong in a civilized Western society (Walser, 1993; 120). Heavy metal musicians were sent to court to defend themselves from accusations that their music promoted suicide among teenagers, that they were spreading unhealthy messages to the youth and that they were worshipping Satan (Dunn et al. 2005).

In the middle of the 80's the heavy metal genre *death metal* music was introduced, which is one of the most extreme forms of heavy metal music. Some of the characteristics are the excessively faster drums and the growling⁴ of the vocalist. It features a harsher sound with lyrical themes consisting of violence, death and war. Even though the death metal music has reached some success in the public eye, it has never really broken into the mainstream and has succeeded in staying fairly underground (Klingberg et al. 2011, pp. 103-125).

Authenticity is an esteemed virtue among the heavy metal musicians and their fans. *Black metal* was initiated in the middle of the 1980's but is mostly known as its Norwegian counterpart; the *Norwegian black metal*. Although death metal never became mainstream, the

⁴ See Appendix A, fig. A3

black metal bands thought death metal had gained too much commercial success and black metal thus grew from the death metal as a reaction (Klingberg et al. 2011 pp. 143-171). The black metal music was in the beginning only about making the music sound as bad and raw as possible. The music also contained a longing for going back to the roots to create music only for themselves that the mainstream audience would never listen to (Aites et al. 2008). The Norwegian Black metal is highly influenced by the satanic ideology which includes aspects of elitism, nationalism as well as paganism. This is also a reason for the black metal musician's rejection of religion, especially Christianity. It has much likeness with the Nazi ideology and is connected with a romanticized vision of the history preceding the Christian hold on the West (Klingberg et al. 2011 pp. 143-171).

4.2 Heavy metal in the East

"It has been a conflict with weaponry measured in watts and decibels rather than megatons, with ideological, not human, casualties. It has been a conflict in which the Soviet Union and its East European allies have played out a classic scenario: they have succeeded in winning nearly every battle but have ultimately lost the war. /Ryback, 1990, pp. 6.

The same influences that penetrated the Soviet during the 20th century also penetrated Georgia. Georgians have had a similar upbringing as other former Soviet populations until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and it is therefore important to give an account of how the rock scene was perceived in the Soviet Union as well as how it was perceived in the West at the time. Even though the Soviet Union was more or less closed from outside influences at this time, much of the popular culture that existed in West succeeded in penetrating the communist Soviet Union (Ryback, 1990). In 1991 the Iron curtain⁵ fell along with the Berlin wall. Ever since, the Eastern European countries have experienced both political turmoil and economic crisis. The rock music in Eastern Europe is as much bound to the politics and the individual's expression and rebellion against the system as it has been in the former Soviet state Georgia (Ryback, 1990, pp. 211-231).

The rock scene in the Soviet Union started in the 50's but did not have any real kick-off until the Beatles emerged in the 1960's. People would spend half of their monthly salary on getting a pair of "Western" trousers or a Beatles vinyl from the black market. The government reacted by sending police to rock concerts where they jailed rock fans and rock musicians.

⁵ See Appendix A, fig. A4

They also stopped long haired people in the streets and proceeded in forcing them to the barbershop where their hair was shaved off (Ryback, 1990, pp. 3-34).

The generation during the 1960's had, however, realized the enormous gap between the communist Soviet Union and the "real" world. These people were more independent and had more hopes for the future and had lost their faith in the Soviet regime. They were looking for new norms and values in the rock music that spread in Leningrad and Moscow at this time. The rock scene was however still very underground and most bands were performing in the privacy of someone's home (Easton, 1989).

The same development that took place in the Soviet Union at the time can also be put parallel to the Polish and Hungarian rock development. Polish rock and heavy metal had its real breakthrough during the years of the martial law where the lives of the Polish people became hugely restricted in an attempt of the Polish government to fight the opposing political parties. The deprivation and oppression of the public led to a wave of rock that spread across Poland in the early 1980's. The Polish government blamed, in the same way as the Soviet Union did, the violence and decadence that followed in the traces of the rock music on Western pop-culture (Ryback, 1990, pp. 180-190). Many people knew more about the pop and rock musicians in the US and Europe than they did about their own communist heritage and its prominent leaders. The punk and rock bands of the 1980's in Hungary focused especially on lyrical criticism of the Soviet rule, their own communist rule, or in general the Hungarian political system (Ryback, 1990, pp. 167-179).

At the end of the 80's a large change took place for the inhabitants of the Soviet Union. Both the Glasnost⁶ and the Perestroika⁷ was introduced by the former sitting president Gorbachev. This freedom of expression that was introduced meant that the control over rock music was relinquished and radio stations were allowed to broadcast Western rock music and political messages from outside the Soviet Union. Songs and bands did not have to be approved by the government and police did not interfere at rock concerts anymore. This led to the expansion of the Soviet rock music scene and more people started to perform and record rock music (Easton, 1989).

⁶ See Appendix A, fig. A5

⁷ See Appendix A, fig. A6

4.3 Heavy Metal in Georgia

The actual rock scene in Georgia got its kick-off with the rock festival *The Spring Rhythms – The Tbilisi Rock* festival that was held in Mars 1980. The festival was the first rock festival ever in the Soviet Union and also the starting point for other rock festivals and concerts to be held in the future. The only rock music people could get a hold of at this time were badly recorded vinyls from a Moscow record label called “Melody Rec Studio” or vinyls bought from the black market. The introduction of heavy metal throughout Georgia did not start until the end of the 1980’s. It was, however, highly problematic to rehearse heavy metal music or record a good album; the producers had no experience with the music, the recording equipment was not adapted to heavy metal music and the instruments were horrible. Most of my informants claim to have heard heavy metal for the first time from radio broadcasts.

Soon after gaining independence from the Soviet Union on the 9th of April in 1991, Georgia like many other former Soviet states, ended up in an economic crisis. There was rapid inflation and at the same time Georgia ran large budget deficits. In 1988 till 1993 the two separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were fighting for their independence from Georgia. The situation did improve during the latter years of the 1990’s due to large loans, privatizations, major market-reforms and economic liberalization (Bodewig, 2007). During the same years the underground heavy metal scene was still active in Georgia but it was virtually unknown to the general public. Concerts and parties were held in the privacy of someone’s home.

“After the war (Georgian civil war 1988-1993, authors comment), there was no light in the city, so there were huge problems with money and with jobs... Maybe this music was the answer for such problems.” /Informant D, 2012

Most bands I met in my field study were founded during the 2000’s. Technological advancements such as the Internet became accessible to the public during the 2000’s and this had a big impact on the growth of the Georgian heavy metal scene. This made it easier to discover and get access to the world outside of Georgia which in turn resulted in more heavy metal influences taking hold. The heavy metal subculture consists of a very tight and small group of male musicians and around 200-400 people usually come to see them perform. That is why I have chosen to put my focus here, due to the very distinct demarcations that exist inside this subculture.

5. Field Study: The Georgian Heavy Metal Scene

I have given an account in the past chapters of how the rock and heavy metal scene has developed in the West, in the Soviet Union and in Georgia. Furthermore, I have shown how the heavy metal scene has been perceived by the public and what kind of people have been engaging in the heavy metal subculture. I will hereinafter discuss and analyze the Georgian heavy metal scene and its relation to mainstream culture in contemporary Georgia as well as the informants view and relation to the traditional and the global. I will further discuss my theoretical questions in the light of some distinct aspect which has become quite apparent in my field study of the heavy metal scene in Georgia. There are certain aspects in the Georgian heavy metal scene which highlights the societal problems that have arisen since Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union where new Western influences have affected the cultural climate. Furthermore, these distinct aspects also highlight the reaction of a subculture working in a system of cultural crossroads.

5.1 Black and Death Metal adapted to Georgia

Globalization that acts on the local level must be seen in the light of the already existing socially accepted localities. Some global phenomena are easily adapted to a local level if they are able to comply with the already local context and values. Furthermore, the global impact on a local level depends on the existing institutions and policies in a given country (Collier and Ong, 2005; pp. 3-21). Some heavy metal traits have suited the Georgian heavy metal musicians better and others have been remade to fit the contemporary societal norms in Georgia. The fact that the Georgian heavy metal musicians first and foremost have embraced the death and black metal genres is therefore a result of the leading paradigms in contemporary Georgia. In this chapter I will further discuss why the black and death metal genres have grown increasingly popular in the Georgian heavy metal scene as well as what these genres of heavy metal symbolizes in a Georgian context.

There is not a distinct difference between the two genres black and death metal in Georgia and there is especially no large diversity in the people performing the music. Both of these genres in Georgia have been blurred together and do not differ as much as their Western counterparts do. These genres are, however, distinctly different from the mainstream culture in Georgia. About half of the Georgian heavy metal bands are performing different styles of black metal and the other half is performing different styles of death metal music.

A lot of the black and death metal originates from Scandinavia. The heavy metal musicians often use pagan jewelries which derive from Scandinavian folklore and are commonly used by heavy metal fans in Scandinavia. Many of my informants knew a lot about the Scandinavian heavy metal scene and frequently listened to heavy metal music from Norway and Sweden. Several of my informants mentioned the death metal band *Dark Tranquility* from Sweden as their main source of influence. Informant A mentioned the Norwegian black metal band *Burzum*⁸ as his most important influence. The Scandinavian heavy metal scene has therefore been of great importance in shaping the Georgian heavy metal scene. The fact that particularly these genres of heavy metal have become rooted in Georgia is of great interest. In the East, the black and death metal genres are two highly distinct genres, while the same genres in the West are two genres among many other heavy metal genres (Ryback, 1990).

When establishing the principle that subcultures in a given society are reactions and rebellions against leading paradigms and mainstream culture the next step is to research what the said subculture is a reaction against (Bennet et al, 2004, pp. 1-18). What can be concluded of this is the importance in interpreting why these particular genres have developed in Georgia, what they represent in general and what they oppose in the Georgian society. As I mentioned earlier, the black metal music is often referred to in the same context as the Norwegian black metal. The informants, however, have a slightly different view of what the black metal music means to them; *Signs*⁹, for example, refer to themselves as the only true¹⁰ black metal band in Georgia. My informant A, who is a member of Signs has always been listening to black metal and no other kind of heavy metal music. For him it is more about the Norwegian black metal ideology than the music itself.

“Yeah, I like the ideology. The first thing is that it’s underground, not selling out. But the main thing for me is to create music for myself and not for anybody else. And that’s about ideology. Also, there are a lot of good bands with good lyrics. It is a kind of very strange singing about the problems with humanity and I like that. Burzum is my favorite band.” /Informant A, 2012

The musicians in the black metal band *Im Nebel*¹¹ on the other hand are not interested in the Norwegian black metal ideology. They write songs about love and their life and have been highly inspired by poetry in writing their lyrics. They are not a “true” black metal band and refrains from singing about Satan.

⁸ See Appendix A, fig A7

⁹ See Appendix B, fig B1

¹⁰ See Appendix A, fig A8

¹¹ See Appendix B, fig B2

The black metal ideology contains anti-mainstream themes. Furthermore, it often goes hand in hand with nationalistic and patriotic ideals. Fabian (2007) argues that this derives from certain countries not having been able to be independent nations and that the nationalism might instead be recreated through the music. A country such as Georgia, has for centuries been ruled by other nations and empires and has not until recently become an independent nation. I will, however, discuss the impact of Georgian nationalism further in the following chapter.

Ever since Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union, there have been several conflicts regarding the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, many Russians nowadays move to Georgia and many Georgians go to Russia to study at the university or pursue a career. Though, some tension still exists; the previous Saakashvili government accused many native Georgians for being Russian spies. Informant B claimed that he was accused of being a spy since his father descends from Siberia and was therefore forbidden to leave Georgia for two years.

Many people in Georgia wish for a closer relationship with Russia. These people remember the times during the Soviet Union where people were wealthier and things were organized in Georgia. My informants assert that this is a view that especially the rural living people hold because they are extremely dissatisfied with the contemporary situation in Georgia. They long for a time when Georgia was a prosperous country and everybody had enough food and did not worry about tomorrow. Informant D told me that; "People had no freedom, but at least they had food during that time". This highly ambivalent relationship the Georgian population has regarding their past and present with Russia is visible in the Georgian heavy metal subculture. Many Georgians do not want to live in dependency of Russia at the same time they have problems differentiating themselves from their Soviet past.

Heavy metal musicians want to go to Russia to record their albums since the scene is much larger and there are more possibilities for heavy metal musicians nowadays in Russia than there were during the Soviet era. Several of the heavy metal musicians view themselves as a modern minority, stuck in a highly traditional and backward society. Not much has changed the past twenty years and this is reflected in the heavy metal scene and one of the reasons why they are so keen in rejecting and disliking Russian ideals

The influences from the West are, however, highly visible in the Georgian heavy metal scene. Indeed, the Norwegian black metal carries ideas of going back to the roots and romanticizing of the past. The fact that the music represents ideas of anti-collectivism and not being ruled by

a mainstream system is a rebellion, not against European influences, but rather against past and present influence by Russia. The black and death metal music per se is everything that the Soviet was not; originally Western, authentic, individualistic and rebellious. These genres in the West have first and foremost been used as a tool against mainstream culture; it has been a counterculture to consumerism and collectivism. The heavy metal culture in Georgia has thus been remade from its Western counterpart to fit the current cultural and political situation in Georgia. The death and black metal subculture in contemporary Georgia is a reaction to the dominant system in Georgia that is highly influenced by impressions dating back to the Soviet system. Bennett's et al, (2004) argument of subcultures as a reaction to dominant paradigm is strengthened by researching the heavy metal subculture in Georgia. The heavy metal culture is a counterculture against post-Soviet paradigms still active in Georgia today and an obvious characteristic of how the West have influenced the East in the last decades.

5.2 Georgian Identity and Nationalism

Like in the West as well as in the former Soviet-states, the Georgian heavy metal scene has had to withstand a lot of oblique glances as well as harassment from the public. Furthermore, this is why the particular subculture of heavy metal is of such interest; because this genre has been of particular dislike from the public eye, which in turn shows that this subculture have been opposing some serious and important aspects of the mainstream culture and society.

Many of my informants blame a lot of the heavy metal music's non-growth on the Georgian peoples "Soviet mentality" or sometimes simply "Georgian mentality". This expression is often referred to in comments about the church or rural living people. Informant B holds that nowadays more people move from the country-side into the larger cities and that they usually are the ones with the conservative Georgian mentality. He asserts that there is no difference for the general Georgians between Red Hot Chili Peppers and black metal; it is all bad. When talking about the fact that no labels want to sign Georgian heavy metal bands informant B argue that this is due to post-Soviet propaganda or the orthodox Christian mentality in Georgia.

Surmanidze et al., (2008), argues that the strongest layer in the Georgian mentality is that of preserving one's own culture and national identity. The authors assert that the Georgian mentality and the strong national identity derive from the orthodox Christianity, both as a way

of understanding their history and contemporary society and as a way of building their everyday life around. The fact that Georgia for centuries has been invaded by several different cultures; first the Islamic world (Turkey and Persia), then by the Soviet and lately have been invaded once again by the Russians, have had a large impact on shaping the Georgian national identity. This might be a reason for Georgians to defend their national identity and be more vigilant from outside disturbances. My informants, however, seem to define the Georgian mentality as something slightly different and never in a positive manner. My informants generally reference to the Georgian mentality when discussing the Georgian Orthodox Church, homosexuality, liberalization or open-mindedness in general. A person with a Georgian mentality, as I have interpreted it from interviews means, sometimes all of the, or at least some of the following aspects; an Orthodox Christian, narrow-minded, ignorant, (often rural living), nationalistic, pro-Soviet person that is strongly against anything out of the ordinary. My informants are probably the complete opposite or at least want to be perceived as the complete opposite of the aspects synonymous with their definition of Georgian mentality.

Informant C explained to me that many talented musicians do not want to perform heavy metal music because of the stigma it brings when most Georgians presume heavy metal music to be satanic and degenerating music. A large portion of the Georgian's perceived the black metal band *Pergamo* to be a Satanist band and they claimed that this kind of music was degenerating and an embarrassment to Georgian culture and identity. The same band got letters from people telling them that they should go to church and get baptized. This phenomenon that people outside the mainstream culture do not belong in the Georgian society is something that is very similar to the mentality that has characterized societies in the Eastern bloc like Poland, Hungary and the former Soviet (Ryback, 1990). People who have been dressing, or acting out of the ordinary have been jailed or harassed in the streets. As I discussed earlier the heavy metal and rock community were especially under attack because the influences were seen as "American ape-culture" and as a new form of cultural imperialism. As Fabian (2007) claimed; globalization have had both positive and negative effects on societies and individuals. Indeed, the individual's freedom to express oneself has created a lot more subcultures in Georgia today where individuals with a similar interest or value system can meet. According to my informants, many people in Georgia are still nostalgic about the Soviet times and might therefore be more careful and cynical regarding Western influenced expressions.

“In Uni, when I was student I was like; I have long hair, I am a metal head. -You are a metal head?! I had to tell them. But then the problem was; what is metal? They didn’t know what kind of music it was. They think metal maybe is music like Deep Purple. So I was like; do you like Dimmu Borgir? They really think that Black Sabbath it’s much worse than Dimmu Borgir, much more satanic.”
/Informant B, 2012

Many Georgians have since the beginning of the heavy metal music era in Georgia disapproved of the style of music and the way heavy metal fans and musicians dress. The fact that the heavy metal musicians often feel misunderstood seems like a common theme among the heavy metal musicians I have been interviewing. The people of Georgia, not listening to heavy metal, make the sign of equality between a certain kind of music and Satan as soon as the music is out of the ordinary. But it is not only the music itself that is the problem; it is the dressing and the culture around the music that sometimes is problematic as well. Informant A works as a computer programmer at a casino established by the Saakashvili government. There, he cannot say that he is into heavy metal music and always has to have his long hair in a ponytail. He claimed that he might get fired if he says that he is an atheist or that he is listening to heavy metal music. When going away on holidays he cannot say that he is going to a heavy metal festival but have to come up with another excuse to be allowed to leave for holiday.

In this “Georgian mentality” there is a strong sense of nationalism. Georgians are very proud of their heritage, traditions and country. This proudness of their country is visible in one of the most common traditions in the Georgian society; the *Supra*. This is translated to a feast dinner where one cheers in wine to different aspects of Georgian culture and society. One man, the *tamada* (the toastmaster), holds speeches about the nation, God, the family, the women, friendship etc. and after every speech everybody cheers in wine. This tradition shows what value Georgians put in their history and contemporary Georgian culture. The interesting part of this is that the heavy metal musicians also perform these highly traditional Georgian expressions.

The fact that the black metal music has permeated and is probably one of the largest genres of heavy metal music in the post-Soviet societies surely has something to do with a strong sense of nationalism. As I mentioned earlier, a big part of the black metal ideology has roots in nationalism and patriotism and in some cases even Nazi ideology. Besides this, heavy metal culture is also to a large extent a reaction to mainstream values and norms as well as a statement about wanting authenticity back as well as going back to the “roots” of music. Informant B argues that the Nazi ideology is especially strong in the Armenian heavy metal

scene but is also visible in the mainstream Armenian society. When going to the Armenian festival “End of the World Metal Party” in Yerevan with Im Nebel, the nationalistic ideas were highly prominent in one particular concert. There were six heavy metal bands playing at the festival of which one was a Nazi metal band. These musicians came from the country-side of Armenia and when speaking to the vocalist of the band he claimed that most of their lyrics were about nationalism and patriotism. However when seeing them on stage, the audience were making Nazi signs and yelling “Sieg Heil”.

“Yeah... Ok nazi ideology is from Caucasus from the beginning. In Yerevan the ideology of Nazis is much more popular than in Georgia. Like the idea that Europeans are from Caucasus. Maybe the reason for it is that in Georgian ideology you don't have that much swastika signs and in Armenia there is lots of it. There is full of swastika signs. Armenian means arch human in short translation. I think it's more in the average Armenians. The second difference between Georgia and Armenia is the fact that there are not only native Georgians in Georgia; it's Russians, Armenians and Germans. In Armenia it's very hard to find other nationalities than Armenians.” /Informants C, 2012

Several of my informants hold that the nationalistic culture exists in Georgia as well, however, not as distinct as the Armenian one. The “Georgian mentality” seems as something most heavy metal musicians seek to be as far away from as possible due to the fact that it contains both aspects of nationalism as well as religiosity. At the same time the death and black metal genres are highly nationalistic. The fact that the Georgian heavy metal musicians both embrace some parts and reject other forms of nationalism is of great interest. The Georgian identity is, according to my informants, closely interconnected with a traditional and narrow-minded view which is absolutely rejected by the heavy metal musicians. At the same time these heavy metal musicians have embraced other forms of nationalism which is visible in the black metal genre.

Most of my informants have been growing up after the fall of the Soviet Union and express that they feel more closeness towards Europe than Russia. They have also embraced a more European mentality. The music, how they dress and their values in general are very much like those that young people in Europe have. At the same time they have been growing up closely linked to Russia in a society that has been highly affected by a Russian mentality. The Georgian heavy metal subculture would most likely be referred to as a hybrid culture where Europe and Russia have met and created another value system neither like a European one or a Russian one (Kraidy, 2005). The Georgian heavy metal musicians still carry the same family values and norms as their parents have, even though they probably have a slightly more liberal world view. At the same time, Georgia is closing in on Europe and the borders

between what is referred to as Eastern and Western are being blurred (Fabian, 2007). Modern Georgians want to be as close to Europe as possible and many young people see the many possibilities in the European way of living. They are, however, still stuck in the same system that has been and still is restricting their possibilities. Therefore, Western influences and attitudes are embraced as an alternative to the Georgian ones. This shows the clash with the Georgian society in the incorporation of Western cultural traits. The Georgian heavy metal scene's apparent opposition to leading Georgian paradigms as well as the public's opposition to this Western subculture is an obvious clash of two cultures.

5.3 The Georgian Orthodox Church

“Georgians are truly religious; they can't understand this main idea about metal, even black metal. They think that it's not right, anything that is original is different from their own world-view and that's bad. “

A large part of what people in Georgia refer to as the Georgian identity encompasses a Christian lifestyle with Christian morals and values. As the Georgian saying “the guest is a gift from God” is a statement that Christianity has deep roots in the Georgian traditions. This, on the other hand, does not mean that all Georgians go to church every Sunday or that they believe in what the bible says. Though, my informants argue that this “orthodox Christian” mentality is one of the reasons why people do not want to engage in heavy metal music and why people stigmatize and make judgments without knowing anything about heavy metal music. The fact that my informants always mention the Christian mentality in the same sentence as the Georgian mentality also shows how closely linked these are and how much influence and power the Georgian Orthodox Church has. My informants claim that the public and the media in Georgia prefer to use the word “satanic” when they talk about heavy metal music in a derogatory and judgmental way.

Even though religiosity is becoming less prominent in the larger cities, it is still as strong in the country-side. I travelled to the old capital city Mtskheta with Im Nebel where they were guiding me around to churches, monasteries and other religious spots. I unfortunately had to enter all the religious places by myself due to their refusal of entering anything that had something to do with religion. My informants argue that the church itself and the patriarch of the church Illia 2nd probably possess more power than the sitting president himself. When referring to Illia 2nd, informant B says that he *is* in fact the president of Georgia. My informant

refers to the fact that most people do and listen to whatever the patriarch is telling them what to think or do.

It is probably not strange that the heavy metal musicians have a sore eye for the Orthodox Church in Georgia. They have during both the Soviet Union and after the independence always been classified as Satanist by the believers of the church. When asking about the impact of the government on the heavy metal scene most people say that they do not bother at all with heavy metal music. The problems that have occurred for my informants have mostly consisted of Christian individuals that have been trying to stop concerts, harassed them in the streets or told them to stop playing because of the music's satanic content. What particularly disturbs my informants is that people do not seem to understand or grasp at all what the music and the lyrics are about. Informant B argues that their lyrics have nothing to do with Satan although they are playing in a black metal band. "It's mostly about romance and how we reflect about ourselves in the world". He also claims that many of the songs on the album as well as the name of the band are inspired from poems of Hermann Hesse, who is a German-Swiss poet and writer. All of the informants have complained about the narrow-minded view most Christians in Georgia possess. Everything that is out of the ordinary or that does not fit into their own Christian worldview is something bad and something that will destroy the Georgian culture and identity.

"It's in the Georgian mentality to be true religious. You can't know how religious they are. Do you remember Mel Gibson movie about Jesus? Passion of the Christ. I was in Uni and my friends called and sent me questions if we could go to the movie. They had to call the church and ask if they could go and watch it. And the church advised not to go because it's too satanic. He told like; you don't have to watch this movie and many Georgians will not watch it. Like if you do, you have to pray every morning, every week. And all Georgians who watch it will do that for one week." /Informant C, 2012

A lot of people were gathered in the streets to protest the movie because of the "satanic content". When asking my informants about what problems the people of the Orthodox Church has caused in Georgia many of my informants mention this particular incident. There are no informants mentioning any actual conflicts between the heavy metal musicians and people from the Orthodox Church. Most clashes that occurred have been Christian individuals demonstrating against large events which have not corresponded with the Christian values and norms. Many heavy metal musicians are, however, in strong opposition of the Orthodox Church and their influence on the Georgian society;

"It's like a mind controller; it's trying to make jail in your mind. It stops people from being open-minded. It's not only about metal; it's just about changing something in your culture. To be more

open-minded. They don't like anything out of the ordinary, for example lesbians. I think that's ok. But the church always makes problems for them. Like metal it is like a different culture, they are trying to destroy us. They are trying to stop everything that comes from evil... Georgians are very religious and a lot of old people are not very acceptable. In Halloween when guys and girl were dressed up they think the government is Satan's assistant. It's very religious people, they don't know where this comes from so they think this is kind of bad." /Informant B, 2012

All of my informants have been mentioning these incidents that go on during Halloween. At every Halloween an organization called "United Parental Organization" gather in the streets to protest the unchristian events which emerge during the Halloween night such as small children dressing up as scary characters. Informant B holds that Halloween always ends up in fighting in the streets. The same group of Christians also wrote articles in a Georgian newspaper when a heavy metal festival was being held in Istanbul, Turkey. The content of the article was the same; that the satanic people of the heavy metal scene were trying to destroy the Georgian culture.

"They are inspired by church and they are coming with priests on some parties like Halloween and are creating a big mess and fighting. So I think if the metal scene would grow in Georgia we would have problems with them. They are not an official organization but they have the men of the church on their side." /Informant C, 2012

Some of my informants have an outright despise for religious people, other say that they accept everybody's religion as long as they do not bother them with it. My informant from the "true" black metal band Signs, do not want anything to do with the church at all. He is also the only one who claims to be a fan of the Norwegian black metal ideology which has been gaining a lot of attention due to the frightening acts done during the early 90's in Norway when musicians of the early black metal scene burned churches and murdered people in the name of the black metal ideology.

"The ideology of Burzum is very popular here. Especially among young metal heads; it's very fashionable if you have t-shirt with Burzum. The thing here though, if you burn a church here, there would be ten churches in the same place." /Informant B, 2012

Informant B holds that Burzum is one of the most popular bands in Georgia among heavy metal fans and that it is very popular among the newer heavy metal crowd to wear Burzum t-shirts and to support the Norwegian black metal ideology. He does not hold that the early black metal musicians did something great by burning down churches and murdering people but anyway agrees with the general ideology.

"Maybe I won't go and burn churches and maybe I won't go and kill some Jew but I think it is something that the situation brought. I don't think he wouldn't like Jews I they lived in Israel and if

they won't spread their Christianity over the world along with other religions (SIC). It's just the situation. I am thankful for Norway who brought me black metal." /Informant A, 2012

The particular influence of some of the more extreme genres of heavy metal may be seen as a reaction to the Christianity that still has a strong hold on Georgia. The heavy metal musicians often despise the Christians in the same way the Christian individuals reject the heavy metal subculture. For the Christians, however, it does seem to be something more deeply rooted than only the "satanic music". Georgia has, as I mentioned, been ruled by several different countries and when being ruled by the Soviet Georgia had to change their state religion to Russian Orthodox. The Georgian Orthodox Church might, in the same way as other Georgian expressions, be a statement about nationalism. The heavy metal musicians reject anything associated with the church and therefore in some ways their Georgian identity.

The heavy metal subculture is in many ways the most extreme form of rejecting Christianity. The subculture itself has always been associated with Satanism and is consequently highly provocative for Christian individuals. The subculture, as Bennet et al, (2004) claims, is a clear statement about what these people find wrong in the Georgian society. The heavy metal subculture, with all the surrounding attributes, is in stark opposition to Christianity. The rejection of Christianity is something that is closely connected with heavy metal music which in turn is something closely connected with a Western liberal mentality. The heavy metal then becomes not only an opposition to Christian values, but also something Western and modern, that contrasts the Eastern traditions and culture.

5.4 Homophobia in Georgia

In Western societies, a sign of modernity is the liberal perspective of the individual's freedom to have whatever sexuality he or she prefers. More and more countries in the West are embracing this more liberal view and gay marriages are nowadays legal in several Western countries. However, homosexuality in Georgia is far from being accepted by the general public. The stigma against homosexuals in Georgia is also transferred to the heavy metal musicians. The long hair among the heavy metal musicians in Georgia has been criticized and looked down on by the public. My informants maintain that the public do not react negatively because their long hair represents heavy metal; instead they believe that long hair symbolizes homosexuality.

“Back when I was a kid I had long hair. It was very difficult to have that. I saw people look at me in the streets and I know that they didn’t understand it. They think that I’m gay. And even the beard is not normal... When I see a guy with long hair or a gay person I’m ok with that. Regular Georgians they judge, like that it’s not right. It’s getting better but very very slowly.” /Informant C, 2012

Openly gay people in Georgia are a stigmatized minority. There are no official places for gay people to hang out, they are not allowed to marry and there are few specific laws to protect gay people from discrimination (Meyer et al., 2010). During my interviews I asked the heavy metal informants on their thoughts about homosexuality and found their answers very diverse. Some of them thought that most people should be able to do whatever they want to, some thought that it is ok for people to be homosexuals as long as they keep it to themselves and another group thought that homosexuality was something disturbing.

The heavy metal informants were, however, used to being looked at and have people asking them if they were gay because of their long hair. When asking them why people were connecting their long hair with homosexuality they did not know. Informant C told me that he has never been harassed in the streets by the police or the public. He, however, knew a few people who had been arrested in the street and sent to jail where the police proceeded in shaving off their hair. This harassment against long haired people in Georgia is similar to badgering the long haired people endured during the Soviet years.

The harassment of gay people in Georgia has, however, decreased during the last couple of years. There is nowadays one unofficial club in Tbilisi known as a gay club. In 2005 the previous president Mikhail Saakashvili made some large reforms in the Law Enforcement Sector. Before 2005 the men who became police officers had to pay for their own uniforms, cars, gas and get their own income the way that suited them the best. When obtaining the income they were to pay their superiors, i.e. the government. This meant in a certain sense that the Georgian police officers were encouraged to be corrupt. In 2005 Mikhail Saakashvili fired around 30 000 police officers and three months later reinstated a new police force with a lot of support and money from both the US and Germany. The government significantly increased the salary of the police men and gave them new uniforms and new cars which led to a dramatic drop in corruption among the police in Georgia. The police do not take bribes and are nowadays not harassing people in the streets (Siegel, 2005). This is probably another reason why heavy metal musicians are more comfortable with walking around with long hair today than eight years ago.

The fact that homosexuality is becoming less stigmatized than it was a few years ago is perhaps a symbol of the more liberal Westernized view Georgia has embraced during the last couple of years. As mentioned, this is another phenomenon which shows the impact the “Soviet mentality” has had and still has in Georgia. To look, behave or act out of the ordinary was something stigmatized during the Soviet rule. This stigma of people not conforming to the Georgian norms is something quite persistent and distinct throughout all cases I have discussed.

However, the negative view of homosexuality is also visible in the heavy metal scene itself which proves that the heavy metal musicians, even though they try, are having difficulties in differentiating themselves from the “Georgian mentality”. None of the heavy metal musicians knew why long hair was associated with homosexuality but nonetheless most of the informants had been harassed because people believed that they were homosexuals. The fact that several of my informants have a quite liberal view on homosexuality also symbolizes the increasing influences from the West. After the fall of the Soviet regime, it was easier for Georgians to access the Western world and there has ever since been a lot more influences entering Georgia. These aspects that represent a Western liberal view of what freedoms people are allowed to have is in stark contrast to the more conservative Soviet view lingering in the Georgian mentality. This is a clear sign of the impact Western culture and influences have had on Georgian culture. Indeed, the heavy metal informants are more liberal concerning this subject, but there still exists some debate on the subject about homosexuality among heavy metal musicians in Georgia. This is another example of the traditional perspective of Georgia being influenced by the more liberal view held by the Western world.

6. Summary

I have discussed how the Georgian society has been influenced by Western as well as Eastern impressions through the eyes of the heavy metal musicians. I have been doing this by discussing the most evident phenomena that are actively operating in Georgian society and culture today according to the heavy metal musicians. Globalization, or Westernization in this specific case, seems to create parallel structures in society rather than mixing them together. My informants feel quite misunderstood by the mainstream Georgian society; at the same time they feel quite comfortable in embracing a more Western liberal view. In this way, the Western and the Eastern culture have in some cases been complementing each other and in other cases been opposing each other. The black and death metal subcultures are per se an example of both the cooperation and the clashes that have occurred when the West has met the East. Certain aspects of Western culture have been adapted to fit the Georgian heavy metal scene; for example some of the nationalistic traits. This is at the same time, however, something that fits very well with already existing Georgian cultural traits. The Georgian heavy metal subculture is an effect of both global as well as Soviet cultural and social traits. The Christian anti-culture within the Georgian heavy metal culture is in this case a reaction against traditional and historical Georgian norms and values. The opposing view of the heavy metal musicians against the Church is clearly associated to Western influences. Further, the Georgian heavy metal musicians' view on homosexuality shows what impressions are left from Soviet times and that in fact, Georgia is adapting to Western conditions. Georgian heavy metal culture is a hybrid culture, with origins in the West, adapted to the East.

The Georgian heavy metal scene has in many ways been trying to oppose and reject the traditional Soviet traits and instead embraced the Western ideals. However, when addressing nationalism, Christianity and homosexuality in Georgian society it is quite apparent that the different worldviews of the West and the East have some obvious disparities. The heavy metal subculture is leaning towards a more liberal Western mindset, but is, however, still highly influenced by a society where people still believe in traditional norms and values. My thesis has been an attempt to show how Georgia reflects an increasingly globalized and westernized world in the face of its communist Soviet history.

7. Appendix A, Definitions

A1. The West: Here referred to as the Western European countries and the United States.

A2. The East: The Eastern post- communist countries that were those behind the “Iron Curtain”.

A3. Growling: Guttural singing, mostly used by death metal musicians.

A4. The Iron Curtain: A fictional border that differentiated the Eastern communist countries and the Western capitalist countries that went into existence after the Second World War and vanished with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A5. Glasnost: A political reform by the former Soviet President Gorbachev in 1985 which aimed at a more transparent system with increased freedom of press and freedom of speech.

A6. Perestroika: An economic reform by the former Soviet President Gorbachev in 1985 which was meant to increase the economic freedom in the Soviet Union by the introduction of market economy as well as free and secret elections.

A7. Burzum: A Norwegian black metal band with creator and front man Varg Vikernes. Vikernes is mostly known for the church burnings as well as the murder of a band mate that took place in early 1990’s. He is also one of the founders of the Norwegian black metal ideology.

A8. True Black Metal: “True” is here referred to as the black metal musicians who follow the Norwegian black metal ideology. It is mostly about being “true” to the genre black metal which means not selling out and keeping the music authentic and not mainstream.

8. Appendix B, Pictures



B1, Heavy Cross, Personal photo, 2012



B1, Signs:

http://www.facebook.com/Signsblackmetal/photos_stream



B2, Im Nebel: <http://www.facebook.com/im.nebel.7/photos>

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