

What to Expect When You're Electing

by The Tuqay Editorial Bureau - 01.10.2012

Most elections are boring. It's true, not some sort of Imposition of Western Norms or anything; people vote for the fella they like the most, and the obvious candidate usually wins. The binary nature of democracy -- the "him, not her" aspect of it -- really puts a damper on the theater of the political process. This will not be a problem this month in Georgia.

Anything could happen in this election. Misha could win, Bidzina could win, there could be massive election fraud, Russia could invade, the United States could invade, Chechen separatists could make a surprise visit, aliens could make a surprise visit...literally none of the headlines would be shockers.

This is not, however, the venue for an article about politics. There are plenty of articles about that, and they can all be read online, too. If the political and global international relations repercussions of the election are your sort of thing, there are other places to go. And anyways, spoiler alert: there won't be as many as anyone promises there will be.

It is always nice to see the Caucasus as a place that matters. Not as a perfect place, of course. None of the republics, autonomous republics, oblasts, or other international or sub-national jurisdictions of the mountains make any protestations otherwise. The Caucasus is not a wonderful place because of its perfections, it is such a place because of its many imperfections. Fitting for a region so canvassed by mountains that its impossible to draw a straight line, in the Caucasus, there is a tremendous difference between "path of least resistance" and "path of shortest distance." It is a place where optimism and grit are assumed to persevere over strategy and formulaics, and most of its leaders have actually been quite successful in that regard.

Rebellion against the state is nothing in rebellion against God and Empire are de rigueur. And anyways, we're not talking about rebellion nowadays, we are talking about the recombination of the state into something wholly new (something that was also done many times for gods and conquests, of course). We do not pick sides here at The Tuqay, but we do root for the most interesting storylines we can find. That is why we are so enthusiastic about the choose-your-own-adventure plotline of the current election.

We were once, five years ago, in a small town in Georgia. Unlike most small towns in Georgia, this one had a fresh coat of paint over everything and well-swept streets. Word was that the president was on his way for a speech. The theater of statecraft needed a proper setting. That was then, and this is now, but there isn't much different. Georgia is greeting all of the foreigners coming in to observe with a bottle of wine. The three republics of the Southern Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are all looking to leave their 20th century past behind them and introduce their 21st-century faces to the world. Georgia has perhaps gone the farthest, with a new flag and a Trump-ified seacoast. The current elections are just the prologue of a new act in that epic.

And an epic it is. In his wonderful *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*, Zachary Mason muses on reorienting Homer's epic unto the Caucasus Mountains. He explores the concept further in an interview with Geoff Manaugh; who needs seas when you have valleys? Who needs islands when you have peaks? The linguistic complexities of the mountains are legendary, and are just a slender example of the complexities we enjoy when we talk about the mountains. The epic of the mountains started with Prometheus and will continue long after this current election and the kilobytes used to describe it are obsolete. The yawning stretch of history is self-evident in Georgia, and it is intimidating if you let it be.

So don't let it be. Enjoy the drama, and try to shape tomorrow! Just don't expect the next decade to look like this decade. And don't hold any expectations for the decade after that. The mountains have a way of making fools of even the blindest of blind seers and most heroic of heroic protagonists. Odds are, you and I are someplace in between those extremes. Yet we -- and the candidates -- have always kept into consideration the strange possibility that we are not. ❖

