



# GEORGIA VI. IRANIAN STUDIES AND COLLECTIONS IN GEORGIA

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## GEORGIA

### vi. IRANIAN STUDIES AND COLLECTIONS IN GEORGIA

The institutional foundations of Iranian studies in Georgia were laid after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Two centers emerged, namely the University of Tbilisi and the Georgian branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which later became the Georgian Academy of Sciences. Scholars in both institutions recognized that a knowledge of Eastern languages, especially Persian, was essential for the study of Georgian history, literature, and language.

From these beginnings Iranian studies expanded within the general framework of research and teaching on the Near East. At the university, courses in the Iranian languages and the history of Persian literature were offered in 1938 by the chair of Iranian Philology and in 1945 by the Department of Oriental Studies. At the Academy of Sciences Iranian studies from 1960 on came under the Institute of Oriental Studies, whose sections have functioned as a kind of area program: languages of the Ancient East, Persian philology, Indo-Iranian languages, Medieval history of the Near East, and modern and contemporary history of the Near East. Iranists are also



active in other institutes of the Academy: history, archaeology, and ethnography; manuscripts; and history of Georgian literature.

Georgian specialists in the humanities and social sciences have at hand a rich store of Persian materials. The libraries and archives in Tbilisi hold some 1,800 Persian manuscripts. The larger collection, 1,237 documents, is housed in the Central State Historical archive, while the Institute of manuscripts has 422 manuscripts, consisting of works of poetry, philosophy, theology, history, and science. They are divided into two sections: the Central Asian and Qajar. Among the treasures of the former are *dīvāns* of Ḥāfeẓ (copied 1461) and Sa'dī and an illuminated *Ḳamsa* of Neẓāmī (copied 1428; Mamatsashvili, ed., 1977b, pp. 50, 53, 103-5; Abuladze et al., p. 167).

Georgian scholars have published critical editions of Persian historical documents dealing with Georgian-Persian political and economic relations. One edition, containing the texts of fifty ordinances in Persian issued between 1626 and 1756 concerns such matters as deeds of gifts by Georgian landlords and appointments to official posts (Hubua). A more extensive edition reproduces the Persian texts of some two hundred documents, mainly firmans issued by the shahs between the second half of the 16th century and the middle of the 18th century and dealing with the granting of fiefs and Safavid policies toward the Georgian Church (Puturidze, 1961-77).

Of particular interest are collections of bilingual Georgian-Persian documents. Issued by Georgian rulers between 1581 and 1758, they are useful for the study of various aspects of Georgian-Persian relations, including trade and landholding in Georgia and Persia (Puturidze, 1955; Dundua). The issuance of bilingual documents after the Treaty of Amasya in 1555 (q.v.), which awarded Persia the eastern part of Georgia, was but one aspect of the Safavids' efforts to consolidate their control over eastern Georgia (Gabashbili, pp. 268-307; Abashidze, pp. 3-8). The majority of the documents date from the era of Rostom as *wālī* (1632-58), who followed a policy of reconciliation with Persia.

Georgian scholars have made extensive use of Persian historical works in studying the history of their own country. It is a tradition that goes back at least to the 17th century when the famous Georgian historian Parsadan Gorgijanidze (1626-96), assembled a large number of Persian and other foreign-language sources for his history of Georgia (Alasania, p. 109). Georgian historians have drawn particularly upon Persian-language narrative sources produced from the times of Timurids and Safavids to the end of the 18th



century in order to confirm or supplement information from native Georgian sources (Tabatadze, pp. 96-106; on Persian sources for the history of Georgia from the 12th to the 15th century, see Anchabadze and Guchua, eds., III, pp. 51-62; Dumbadze, ed., pp. 67-74). After the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801 until 1917 the practice of using Persian-language sources languished.

Georgian scholars have accorded great importance to numismatics for the study of their country's history. They have focused particularly on hoards of Sasanian coins discovered in Georgia in order to clarify the relations between eastern Georgia and Persia between the 3rd and 7th centuries. They suggest that the Sasanian derham dominated foreign and domestic trade in eastern Georgia (Tsotseliya, 1975, pp. 25-37). An analysis of the collection of Sasanian coins in the State Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi, the most extensive in Georgia, confirms that derhams circulating in eastern Georgia were produced mainly by mints in southwest Persia (Tsotseliya, 1981, p. 21).

Similar investigations of Persian coins in Georgia between the 16th and the first half of the 18th century have revealed much about Perso-Georgian commercial and financial relations. The first coins minted in the name of the Safavid shahs appeared in Georgia in the middle of the 16th century and after the 1630s drove out their Ottoman and European competitors. In the process Persian terms for calculating sums of money, notably the toman and *'abbāsī*, were introduced in Georgia, and the Safavid monetary system in Georgia survived the collapse of the dynasty (Kuteliya, pp. 8-65).

Georgian historians have also investigated the history of Persia itself since the 18th century, especially those aspects related to the history of Georgia or to the ideological concerns there during the Soviet period. On political history they have focused, for example, on the reign of Karīm Khan Zand and the seizure of power by the Qajars and on the participation of Georgians in the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) of 1905-11 (e.g., Shengeliya and Chinashvili). On social history they have produced valuable studies of the Turkmens and of the effects of administrative centralization on these and other nomadic tribes (Gvilava, 1968 and 1981).

Georgian linguists have studied the influence of Persian elements on the Georgian language in order to deepen their understanding of how modern Georgian developed. Characteristic of their approach to the problem is the fundamental work by Mzia Andronikashvili, which identifies Iranian elements in the vocabulary of Georgian and suggests when and how they entered the



language.

Georgian linguists have also contributed substantially to the study of the Persian language. Notable is the work of Sh. G. Garpridashvili and Dzh. Sh. Giunashvili, which uses oscillographic and spectrographic analysis to study the acoustics of the Persian literary language. T. A. Chavchavadze has examined noun formation in Persian, while T. D. Chkheidze has studied onomastics.

Of all the branches of Iranian studies that have flourished in Georgia, perhaps the most productive has been Perso-Georgian literary relations. Investigations of the influence of Persian literary classics on Georgian medieval literature have yielded especially valuable results. Indeed, the work that inaugurated the modern discipline of Iranian studies in Georgia was the article published by N. Y. Marr in 1891 on the connection between Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* and its Georgian version.

Georgian Iranists have given special attention to the artistic and historical significance of Faḡr-al-Dīn Gorgānī's *Vīs o Rāmīn* and its place in both Persian and Georgian literature. Using the Georgian version, *Visramiani*, they have amended and completed the Persian text (Kobidze, pp. 7-92; Mamatsashvili, 1977b) and have published a critical edition of the Persian text (M. Todua and A. Gvakharia, ed., Tehran, 1349 Š./1970).

Georgian scholars have also investigated the Persian and the Georgian versions of numerous Eastern classics, notably the Georgian versions of *Kalīla wa Demna*, which were composed between the 16th and 18th centuries (N. G. Chkheidze; Todua, I, pp. 212-57; Baramidze, VI, pp. 158-244). They have shown that the Georgian translators, King David of Kakheti (d. 1602) and King Vakhtang VI (1711-14, 1719-23), used a more reliable Persian text than the one that has come down to us. In similar fashion, they have analyzed the Georgian versions of *Yūsof o Zolaykā*, composed in the 16th and 17th centuries, and have concluded that they were not based on the poem of 'Abd-al-Raḡmān Jāmī but on a version written by one of his imitators (Gvakharia, 1958). Georgian scholars have also studied the Persian sources of the Georgian versions of Neẓāmī's *Laylī o Majnūn* (Jakobia, pp. 221-84; Mamatsashvili, 1967), Ẓahīrī Samarqandī's *Sendbād-nāma* (Teimuraz), Moḡammad Daqāyeqī's *Baktiār-nāma* (q.v.; Gvakharia, 1968), and Neẓāmī's *Haft peykar* (Kobidze, 1969, pp. 136-63).



Of all the Persian classics, perhaps Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* had the greatest influence on Georgian literature and folklore. It has been the object of continuous study by Georgian literary scholars in the 20th century. They have published a critical edition of the Georgian versions (*Shah-names anu mepeta tsignis kartuli versiebi*) and have made important discoveries concerning the varied Persian sources which their translators used. They have shown, for example, how the Georgian texts contain numerous interpolations from the imitators of Ferdowsī (D. Kobidze).

Georgian scholarship on modern Persian literature has focused on realism in prose and the treatment of social issues (Giunashvili). There are also monographs on Ṣādeq Hedāyat (Keshalava) and 'Alī-Akbar Dehḡodā (Fatemi).

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