

## Turkish Translators and Researchers of the Georgian Literature in 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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### **Abstract**

The article aims to search the Turkish translators and scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian literature. Though information on this topic details is very scarce. As for translating the Georgian literature into Turkish, it was lunched comparatively late and is not of systemic, deliberate character. As far as we know, Ahmet Melashvili and Ahmet Banoglu took first steps in this respect. In 1940 Ahmet Banoglu showed interest in the Georgian literature, but his initiative was ignored. A serious interest in the Georgian literature was detected only in 1960s in Turkey. Therefore, we examined only the Turkish translations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's Georgian literature.

***Keywords:** Georgian literature, translator, Turkish, translator.*

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which Turkish society has been and continues to be interested in the study and translation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Georgian literature. The available data in this regard is quite limited. The translation of Georgian literature into Turkish began relatively late and, to this day, has not developed into a systematic or targeted effort.

It is known that the first steps in this direction were taken by Ahmet Melashvili and Niyazi Ahmet Banoglu. In 1940, Niyazi Ahmet Banoglu expressed an interest in Georgian literature; however, his

initiative did not receive the necessary attention. Serious engagement with Georgian literature in Turkey only began in the 1960s. Notably, in 1969, Nodar Dumbadze's "I See the Sun" was translated into Turkish from its German version, which garnered significant interest among Turkish readers.

Naturally, it was a great fault that the Turkish readers did not know the Georgian literature. Ahmet Ozkan Melashvili, Ibrahim Yavuz Goradze, Hayri Hayrioglu understood all this brilliantly. Therefore, they started presenting the Georgian literature to the Turkish public. In 1968 Ahmet Melashvili issued a book titled "Georgia". The book introduced brief information about Georgia and Georgian literature to the Turkish readers [Melashvili, A. O., 1968, pp. 129-162]. Besides, he translated "Elguja" by Alexander Kazbegi and titled it as "Elguja and Mzago". The translation was printed in Istanbul in 1973. The poems by Ilia Chavchavadze (translators: Parna Beka Chilashvili and Osman Nuri Mercan, Tahsin Sarach, Hasan Chelik, Hussein Uygun), story "Letters by the Passenger" (translators: Ali Altun and Asmat Japaridze), poem "Eremite" (translator: Ali Altun). The poems were published in the magazine "Chveneburi". "Chveneburi" also published a poem titled "Fosterer" written by Akaki Tsereteli, poems (translator: Ali Altun) and article "On Ilia's Murder" (translator: Osman Nuri Mercan) [Poems, 1999, pp. 25-27]. The pages of "Chveneburi" also published the poems by Nikoloz Baratashvili, while in a magazine titled "Mamuli" the reader saw an article "Nikoloz Baratashvili – the Peak of the Georgian Romanticism" [Yerguz, I., 1997c, pp. 11-12].

Ismail Yerguz was the article author. Laurent Moignon, Bilkent University professor, translated "Eagle" by Vazha-Pshavela which was published in the 35th issue of the "Chveneburi" magazine in 2000 [Pshavela, V., 2000, p. 34].

In the 30s of the 19th century, a political plot in Georgia (1832) gave a new form and content to the literature. This plot was added to

the crisis launched in the end of the 18th century and caused brilliant conditions that led to emergence and development of romanticism in the beginning of the 19th century. Afterwards, he briefly reviews the creative works by the Georgian romanticists and notes that “in the first half of the 19th century, there were attempts to revive the old Georgian literary traditions. The writers of this period (called as a transitional one) re-process the themes of the Georgian classical literature by in a different style. We see no new topics in the Georgian literature of that epoch”.

It should be noted that in this case the author fails to properly assess the merits of the Georgian romanticists. He also fails to provide a due evaluation of the Georgian romanticists’ merits and meaning of their literary heritage for the development of the new Georgian literature. The contribution by the Georgian romanticists cannot be assessed as only the revival of the old Georgian literary traditions and re-processing of the old Georgian literary topics.

As it has been recognized by everyone, the poetry written by Alexandre Chavchavadze, Grigol Orbeliani and Nikoloz Baratashvili, the greatest representative of the Georgian romanticism, is a new step on a long way of the development of Georgia’s literature [Yerguz, I., 1997c, pp. 9-10]. Their creative works are distinguished by new problems and new vision. As great Georgian writer and public figure Iliia Chavchavadze declares, the most important thing in that epoch was that along with re-understanding of the old Georgian literature, the process of Europeization of Georgia’s literature began [Yerguz, I., 1997c, pp. 9-10]. He says that Nikoloz Baratashvili is the first Europeist poet, totally free from eastern tendencies [Yerguz, I., 1997c, pp. 9-10].

Starting 1850, critical realism appears on the fore in the Georgian literature. Dramatist Giorgi Eristavi, Z. Antonov are the poets that served critical realism. Eristavi enriched his works with comic

episodes, while Antonov wrote “Epos of Koroglu,” which represents the most successful piece of work by him.

Realistic pieces of work were created after 1850. Lavrenti Ardaziani, with his story “Solomon Isakich Mejganuashvili” put a new social force on the literary arena. In the work titled “Surami Castle” Daniel Chonkadze discusses the lords and slaves’ problems and establishes a new awareness amongst the public.

Critical realism is not the only direction in the Georgian literature of 1950s [Yerguz, I., 1997a, p. 7]. Simultaneously, romanticism continues existence expressed in Giorgi Rcheulishvili. Undoubtedly, romanticism is under crisis in this period.

A distinct epoch began in Georgia in 1860, which includes literature and every cultural areas. This is the epoch of “Sixties”, i.e., those having crossed the Tergi River for departing for Russia to be educated there. They got education in St.Petersburg. Russian revolutionary-democratic ideas influenced them significantly. Therefore, they intended to cause fundamental changes in the Georgian literature and social life.

In 1960s, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Niko Nikoladze, Giorgi Tsereteli appear on the literary arena. They were poets, translators, writers, activists, public figures and politicians. These four people inspired the national movement that spread nationwide in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The so-called Mountain School authors are considered to be the heirs of the Sixties’ generation. Alexandre Kazbegi, poet Luka Razikashvili, known as Vazha-Pshavela [Yerguz, I., 1997a, p. 8]. In his creative work, Vazha Pshavela was against obsolete traditions and preached total mercy, protection of personal dignity and recognition of others’ dignity. Bachana, Tedo Razikashvili significantly influenced the Georgian literature and honorably reflected national problems in their creative pieces of work.

Vazha Pshavela enriched the Georgian literature with new topics and style. We can say that he created his own school [Yerguz, I., 1997b, p. 9]. Lyricist poet Niko (Bachana, his brother) and his son, writer Tedo Razikashvili were his first listeners.

Starting 1890, a new generation appears in the Georgian literature and starts developing realism further.

In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Marxist propaganda was launched intensely in the Georgian literature. In the fictional and other pieces of work Marxism was provided to the reader as a system able to settle social problems. In this period, a group of Marxists emerges in the Georgian literature which assesses developments differently.

Egnate Ninoshvili is the most significant writer of this period. He developed critical realism in accordance with the new epoch conditions and prepared a fundament for spreading socialist realism across Georgia.

Stories written by Engate Ninoshvili (“Gogia Uishvili”, “Simona” and “Knight of Our Country”) describes the life in a Georgian village in the aftermath of the abolished serfdom. Davit Kldiashvili, Shio Aragvispireli, Lalioni (A. Mamulashvili) are the representatives of this direction. They can be considered as the first representatives of social realism.

It should be noted that considering Davit Kldiashvili, Shio Aragvispireli, and Lalioni as representatives of Socialist Realism is incorrect. From the perspective of contemporary criticism, Socialist Realism, as a conditional form of realism, is a topic that is rarely discussed today.

The introduction of Georgian literature to Turkey did not end there. Various Turkish writers visited Georgia for different purposes, and upon their return to Turkey, they published articles on Georgian literature and theater. Most of these works focused on their impressions of Georgia and its culture.

For example:

- In July 1979, Turkish writer Ömer Faruk Toprak published his memoirs about Georgia in the newspaper *Politika*.
- Zeynep Oral published an article on Georgian theater in the magazine *Art*, while Refika Erduran wrote about it in the newspaper *Mze*.
- Necati Cumalı (in his book *Revisionist*), Tarık Dursun (in the newspaper *Yeni Ortam*), and Haldun Taner shared their impressions of Georgia in their writings.
- Hayatı Asilyazıcı published articles on Georgian theater and literature in the magazine *Maya* between January and August 1969.

Particularly noteworthy is Hayatı Asilyazıcı's visit to Georgia in 1987 for the 150th anniversary of Ilia Chavchavadze. Upon returning to Turkey, he published his *Travel Impressions* in the December 1987, January 1988, and February 1988 issues of the magazine *Broi* (Issues 26 and 28). These articles primarily focused on Georgian theater [Chelik, H., & Sarach, H., 1988, p. 27-29]

Besides, Aziz Çalışlar was also invited to Georgia for the 150th anniversary of Ilia Chavchavadze. He published an article about Ilia Chavchavadze in the January issue of the magazine *Broi* [Chelik, H., & Sarach, H., 1988, p. 27]. In the same issue, Hasan Çelik and Tahsin Saraç published their jointly translated poems [Chelik, H., & Sarach, H., 1988, p. 28].

Another Turkish writer invited to Ilia Chavchavadze's jubilee was Fakir Baykurt, who resided in West Germany. Under his initiative, on December 4, 1987, the newspaper *Turkish Post*, published in West Germany, introduced Georgian writers to German readers [Javakhishvili, M., 1988, p. 5], Special attention was given to Ilia Chavchavadze. Furthermore, in the December 1987 issue (No. 28) of the magazine *Writing*, published in West Germany, readers were introduced to Ilia Chavchavadze. In the February 1988 issue (No. 29),

an article on contemporary Georgian poet Pridon Khalvashi was published, along with several of his poems [Javakhishvili, M., 1988, p. 6].

Interest in Turkish history, language, and literature has always been present in Georgia and remains strong to this day. Numerous monographs, dissertations, articles, and studies have been written on the peculiarities of the Turkish language, Turkish loanwords in Georgian, and the historical and literary relations between Georgia and Turkey.

The study of Georgian-Turkish relations began after the establishment of the Department of Turkology at Tbilisi State University and the Oriental Studies Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. Georgian Turkologists have conducted extensive research on both the Turkish language and its literature, covering a wide range of topics.

The main areas of research included:

- The study of Turkish grammar rules;
- Analysis of Georgian-Turkish linguistic interactions;
- We are investigating Turkish loanwords in Georgian, as well as Georgian loanwords in Turkish and its dialects.
- The study scrutinizes the speech patterns of the Turkish-speaking community residing in Georgia.
- The study focuses on the spoken language of Georgians living in Turkey.
- Linguistic analysis of Turkish archival materials;
- Research on the language of the Orkhon inscriptions is underway.
- We conducted a comparative typological analysis of Georgian and Turkish languages.
- We are conducting a typological study of Georgian and Turkish idioms.

These studies have made significant contributions to the understanding of the linguistic and cultural connections between

Georgian and Turkish societies, further deepening the exploration of their historical and cultural ties.

Georgian Turkologists linguistically studied the Ottoman documents preserved in the State Archive of Tbilisi and issued interesting monographs as a result. They studied the Turkish Language Textbook dated the 18<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in the archive. They also studied the Bible written in Turkish but in Georgian letters, Georgian version of “Koroglu” and other archive materials. They created Georgian-Turkish and Turkish-Georgian dictionaries, books offering conversational phrases. In this respect it is very interesting to observe the two-volume Turkish-Georgian dictionary issued in 2001 and Turkish-Georgian phraseologisms as well.

As for the Georgian literature, scholars studied “The Book of Dede Korkut”, “Koroglu Epos,” oracy of the Georgians living in Turkey, creative work written by Jalal Ad-Din Rumi, Ruhi Baghdadi, Yunus Emre, Muhammad Fuzuli, Nefi, Lami, Ahmet Hashim, Mihri Hatun, Mehmet Emin, Yakup Kadri were studied with the pieces of works by Sabahatin Ali, Tevfik Fikreti, Hairullah Effendi, Fakir Baykurt, Suat Dervish and other famous writers and poets. Scholars also studied Turkish poetics. They translated in Georgian the following: Turkish tales, anecdotes of Nasreddin Hoja, Book of Dede Korkut, poems by Nazim Hikmet, the work of Sabahatin Ali, Omer Seyfetin, Orhan Hancherlioglu, Haldun Taner, Aziz Nesin, Suat Dervish, Isa Nejati, Reshad Nuri Guntekin, Yakuf Kadri Karaosmanoglu, Ahmet Hashim, Bekir Yildiz, Fazil Hüsnü Daglarca, Adalet Agaoglu, Ali Oktay Rifat, Orhan Pamuk and other famous people- writers or poets.

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