

Georgian Scholar Grigol Peradze –
Student of the University of Berlin

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Resume: Grigol Peradze (1899-1942) conducted important Kartvelological work in Germany, England, France, and Poland. Grigol Peradze was a clergyman. Consequently, his scientific work mainly focused on researching Georgian Medieval Christian literature and introducing it into European scholarly circles of humanities. Grigol Peradze was strongly against the Nazi regime. He died a martyr's death at Nazi concentration camp and is canonized by the Georgian church.

This article represents a study of the period of Peradze's life when he studied at the University of Berlin. The research is based on the materials of archives. For more archival sources about the life and work of Grigol Peradze in this period, see the publication in German: Steffi Chotiuary-Jünger, *Die eine Welt-Grigol Peradze in Berlin and Potsdam vom 4. Januar 1922 bis (8.) 29. April 1925: Georgica*, 33, 2010, p. 9-36.

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Grigol Peradze arrived in Berlin on January 4, 1922 in order to study theology at the Society of Johannes Lepsius. He was sent to Germany by the Georgian church to become a theologian. Similar to nowadays, entering the university was very difficult at the time. However, on May 12, 1922 young Grigol Peradze became a student. Peradze's admission letter to the University of Berlin in Latin is kept in Berlin. In the archives of the University of Berlin, there is a list of students accompanied with their signatures, including the signature of Peradze. The number of his student card is 5886/112. Grigol Peradze describes himself as "a priest from Tbilisi - Georgia".

Peradze was not the first Georgian student at the University of Berlin. The first Georgian started studying there in 1874 and chose

chemistry as his major. By 1918, fourteen more Georgian students had been accepted at the University. They studied medicine, philosophy, chemistry, social and political sciences. Among those students were Konstantine Gamsakhurdia and Ivane Javakhishvili. Particularly many Georgian students were accepted at the University of Berlin since 1920/21. The reason of it could be political changes in Georgia. In three years, from 1919 to 1921, the number of Georgian students tripled the number of those Georgians who had studied at the University of Berlin during the previous 44 years. Although some of the students were still interested in philosophy, medicine and natural sciences, most of the new students chose economics as their major. Even though Grigol Peradze was one of the students accepted at the University of Berlin in this period, he differs from them by choosing the faculty of theology.

Peradze studied at the University of Berlin. However, first he lived in Potsdam. Since he was awarded scholarship by Lepsius Society, he lived in the house of the secretary general of this society.

Information about Peradze's studies in Berlin can be found in different sources, such as letters, articles, student documents, etc.

1) During spring term, 1922 the Georgian student passed exams in the following subjects: history of churches 1 and faith scripture - taught by Professor Holl; explanation of psalms - taught by Professor Baudissin; introduction to the New Testament - taught by Professor to Brueckner; New testament, introductory seminar (the epistle of the revelation of St. John) - taught by Professor Deissmann. Professor Holl and professor Deissmann were the most important and distinguished lecturers of Peradze.

In March and April, 1922, as soon as Grigol Peradze arrived in Germany, his first publication was published in a German periodical "Der Orient". It seems that in this article Grigol Peradze described Georgian church of his time. Lepsius - the editor of the newspaper had asked Grigol Peradze to write the article. Later Grigol Peradze seldom wrote on topics and questions concerning contemporary historical events. Contents of the mentioned article would not only interest the members of Orient-Mission, but it would also direct attention of German officials and individuals to the situation in Georgia at that time.

We can only have a general opinion on Peradze's studies in Berlin. It should be mentioned that while studying at the University, Grigol Peradze was also acquiring education outside the University: he often visited Lepsius. In one of the letters written by Grigol Peradze to Dr. Lepsius in 1922, he apologizes for not being able to visit him, since he should, as a rule, be at the University in the afternoons. In addition, he asks Lepsius to help him borrow some books from the library.

2) In winter term 1922/1923 the Georgian student, makes acquaintance with other scholars and attends their lectures. Two of them are mentioned in his dissertation in 1927: Professor Sellin and Professor Harnack. He attended their lectures every semester until graduating from the University. All in all, he attended 4 courses taught by Sellin and 3 courses taught by Harnack.

In this period Grigol Peradze was supported by a number of organizations and individuals. A letter of a teacher Th. Schneider from Wiesbaden written to Dr. Lepsius includes the following information: "I have recently sent you a package containing 3 books and one note-book. I guess those can be useful for e.g. the Georgian [Student]. I will cover the costs of sending the package myself with pleasure".

3) In spring term 1923 Grigol Peradze attends for the last time lectures of Professor Holl who became the rector of the University of Berlin. It is likely that even though Holl was very busy since becoming the rector, Grigol Peradze still kept contact with him until the death of Holl (in 1926).

In the same term the Georgian student attended a course taught by seven professors. One of them, the lecturer Karl Brockelmann who taught Syriac, seems to have made an especially positive impression on him, since he is mentioned in Peradze's dissertation.

By the end of Spring term 1923, Grigol Peradze receives a letter from Dombrowka Palace, situated in Oppeln region, at the river Oder, dated 20th of May, 1923. He is invited to the palace for summer holidays. A little later Dr. Lepsius receives one more letter in Potsdam sent by a pastor from Ziegenhagen, Arnwalde/Pommern region. The pastor donated 30.000 Marks to Peradze. Considering the prices in Germany of that time, it was quite much money (e.g. in

spring term 1923, attending one academic course of one professor would cost Grigol Peradze 1200 Marks).

After Summer exams in 1923, Grigol Peradze spends his holiday in Rødby, Denmark, from August to October.

4) In winter term 1923/24, Grigol Peradze attended 8 courses. His new professors were Fabrizious, Mittwoch and Kaftan. Each of those professors taught him two courses.

5) The number of courses that Grigol Peradze attended in spring term 1924 is less compared to the number of courses that he took in the previous terms: dogmatic 2, ethics, exercises for the seminar of The Old testament about the life of Jeremiah and the Holy Scripture; the society of church history; grammar of The New Testament.

This term the new teachers of the Georgian student are Titius and Michaelis. Titius taught him one course, while Michael is taught him two courses. However, only the former one is mentioned in Peradze's dissertation.

In 1924, after Spring term, Grigol Peradze spends his holidays again in Rødby, on Lolland Island, Denmark. He started travelling on the 6th of August, 1924 and finished his journey on the 27th of October. On the 20th of August, 1924, Grigol Peradze sends a letter to Lepsius where he claims that notwithstanding the improved conditions of life, he is not satisfied by his working conditions.

6) In winter term 1924/1925, Grigol Peradze writes a term paper about Georg Hagioritis. His dissertation, written later, indicates that professor Holl from Berlin advised the Georgian student to write a PhD dissertation on Georgian monkshood.

Peradze started researching Georgian monkshood intensively in Berlin. However, he was searching for books, sources and materials outside Berlin as well. For example, he contacted professor Goussen in Bonn, who started working on founding a Georgian library in 1913. Since then Grigol Peradze decided to study materials at least partially in Bonn.

In order to accomplish his intention, Grigol Peradze applied for help to the University of Berlin. He was granted the recommendation letter from the university. The same month, during Christmas holidays, Grigol Peradze travels to Bonn. It seems that because of work he had to stay in Bonn longer than he intended. In

one of the letters written in this period, dated 2nd of February, 1925, addressed to Ivane Javakhishvili, Grigol Peradze indicates his new address in Potsdam: "Elisabet(h)str. 18".

On 28th of February, 1925, Grigol Peradze returned to the University of Berlin and having passed oral and written exams, was granted a certificate, confirming that he is able to read relatively easy theological literature in Greek original and attach grammar comments to the text.

In February, 1925 Grigol Peradze decided to continue his studies in Bonn. In the archives of the University of Berlin, there is a reference granted to Peradze, issued by the rector and the senate of the University of Berlin, confirming that from May 12, 1922 to Spring term 1924/1925 Grigol Peradze was a student of the faculty of theology at the University of Berlin.

To sum up, one can conclude about Peradze's studies in Berlin and Potsdam that he lived like many other students and followed a daily routine. The University of Berlin laid the foundation for linguistic studies of the Bible. In Berlin Grigol Peradze studied German, Greek, Syriac, Arabic. Written language exams and examination results provide evidence to the fact that Grigol Peradze had started studying other languages as well. It seems that he was also interested in Jewish, Persian and Armenian philology.

At the University of Berlin Grigol Peradze studied not only languages, but also the scientific basis of theology. There he had good working conditions. Among his lecturers Grigol Peradze particularly respected and often mentioned: Holl, Von Harnack, Deissmann, Titius, Sellin, Brockelmann, Bruno Meißner and Mittwich. Interestingly, during the age of National-Socialism three out of those eight professors were forced to retire, while four were fired and were deprived of the right of any pedagogic activity, because of their Jewish origins. Consequently, it seems that in Berlin Grigol Peradze acquired knowledge from many Jewish teachers and was friends with them. It could be one of the reasons why the police arrested Grigol Peradze in Warsaw, claiming that he was supporting Jews.

During his studies in Berlin, Grigol Peradze realised that his favourite subject was not just theology, i.e. his major at the University of Berlin, but the combination of theology, history and Oriental studies.

Peradze devoted his dissertation to the memory of his supervisor, scholars Johannes Lepsius. Lepsius had influence on the formation of many young scholars in Berlin and Potsdam. He also understood and supported Peradze's special interest in combined studying of biblical and historical theology and Oriental languages.

In his dissertation Grigol Peradze agrees with and opposes many famous scholars. Among his teachers and acquaintances from Berlin he quotes: Holl, Sachau, Brockelmann, Harnack, Lietzmann. Grigol Peradze accomplished writing his dissertation when not even one year had passed after his leaving Berlin. For this reason, one can conclude that most of the dissertation he had structured, worked upon and written in Berlin. Grigol Peradze was formed as a competent and authoritative scholars in three years in Berlin.

In 1932 Grigol Peradze contacted Professors Deissmann and Lietzmann in Berlin who were eager to find a teaching position for him at the University of Berlin. They were even considering founding a new department. "It seemed to me that everything was going well. I came to Berlin from a far distance, in order to get necessary working conditions. But I lost this position probably because of my impracticality"- writes Peradze. However, probably the reason for not getting the teaching position was not the personal character of Grigol Peradze or his "impracticality". According to the history of the University of Berlin, R. Meckelein had been the lecturer of the Georgian language since 1915. Because of increasing number of students, since 1918, it became necessary to introduce a new special course. The main candidature for the teaching position was of Micheil Tsereteli, who was appointed as a diplomatic representative of the Republic of Georgia in Stockholm at the time.

In 1928, the fifth section of Oriental studies in Germany agreed that they were willing to support Georgian studies and sent an application to the Minister of Culture of Prussia. It seems that there were two candidates that were considered for the teaching position at the department of Kartvelian Studies at the University of Berlin: Grigol Peradze and Tsereteli. Tsereteli had recently returned to Berlin and he had better chances of getting the position. Since October 1933, Tsereteli had been teaching 3-hour course in Georgian. In 1936 he became a professor of the Georgian language and literature at the faculty of philology, in the framework of a

seminar of Indo-Germanic languages. There were more reasons for extending the privilege to Tsereteli. For example, there are extracts from two documents:

1. I allow myself to support the candidature of Professor Micheil Tsereteli. By moving from Brussels to Berlin five years ago (in the conditions that made his services to Germany clear and for what we should be grateful to him), he made it possible to teach the Classic Georgian language at our University..." p.II/34, writes the director of the seminar of Oriental languages

2. Professor Tsereteli, Georgian who does not hold citizenship of Georgia, was supporting Central European countries during the war and for this reason he had to flee Bolsheviks in 1918. He is the deputy director of Georgian Fascist organization and is close to the National-Socialists", - is written in the letter of the head of the Nationalist-Socialist Union of docents - Niedermeier, addressed to the Dean of the faculty of philosophy, dated 27th of April, 1936.

The article represents short contents of an article written in German, published in the journal "Georgica" [1].

References:

1. Steffi Chotivari-Jünger, "Die eine Welt – Grigol Peradse in Berlin und Potsdam vom 4 Januar 1922 bis (8.) 29 April 1925", *Georgica*, 33, Berlin 2010, S. 9-37