



TOWARDS DISSEMINATING KARTVELOLOGY IN FOREIGN SCHOLARLY CIRCLES

The Center for Kartvelian (Georgian) Studies has functioned for over 15 years at Tbilisi State University, continuously serving the spread of Kartvelological activity abroad and getting young foreign specialists interested in Georgian Studies.

The Centre for Kartvelian Studies is basically financed by the Fund for Kartvelian Studies, which exists on charity and donations. Both The Centre for Kartvelian Studies, as well as the Fund were founded by Prof. E. Khintibidze and have functioned under his direction.

The Centre implements significant programmes: various research projects, organizing international symposia and issuing their materials, holding the Summer School in Kartvelian Studies, publication of a bilingual Kartvelological journal.



Two of the scholarly projects merit special mention:

- a) By a 1994-1996 NATO Grant a unique bibliographic monograph, "Georgian Literature in European Scholarship" was compiled (published in English in Europe – Amsterdam 2001), and in Georgian by the Fund for Kartvelian Studies in 2003. On the basis of this research an annual Masters Course, "Old Georgian Literature in Foreign Kartvelology" was introduced at TSU.
- b) Under a joint project with Humboldt University of Berlin, the German translation of *The Man in Panther-skin* by Marie Prittwitz was published in 2005 according to the author's manuscript, which had been considered lost.

At present work is under way on a new project: "The Great Culture of Small Nations", within whose framework a monograph, "Display of Rustaveli", is being prepared for publication in Britain.

The annual Journal "The Kartvelologist" was founded in 1993 at the Centre for Kartvelian Studies. It is issued in English and Georgian, and is sent to foreign Kartvelologists and to major libraries abroad: the Library of Congress (USA), the Bodleian Library at Oxford (England), the Vatican Apostolic Library.

The Centre has initiated international Kartvelological symposia (in the line of Kartvelian Studies), which are held systematically and regularly. Five such symposia have been held, and the Proceedings of four of them have been issued (on the level of modern European standards).

The International Kartvelological Summer School, held uninterruptedly since 1995, is in one of the most important programmes in Kartvelology, offered annually.

The significance of this programme is growing and expanding yearly. To date up to 160 foreign youths have participated in it (since its foundation) –from the USA, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Israel, Japan, India, Australia, Turkey, Ireland, and Iran. Some of them have continued studies, specializing in Kartvelology, and today they are well-known Kartvelologists. Many of them work as researcher-Kartvelologists

abroad (in Japan, Britain, Spain, Italy: Iasuhiro Kojima, Anthony Eastmond, Antony Stobart, Jose Ignatio Martinez, Maria Sauna), as Kartvelologists-political analysts (the US, Sweden, Greece, Italy: Kelly Hush, Robert Lasson, Hellen Sider, Eletra Ercolino).

Many of those whose interest was aroused by the Summer School, were sent by their universities to Tbilisi State University (Italy, Russia: Maria Sauna, Anna Raskina, Vasilisa Krylova, Anna Chugunova, Evgeniya Zakharova). Some were engaged by the European Commission for work in Georgia, as an expert on this country (Britain: John Wright). The first Lady of the country Sandra Roelofs took her first steps in Kartvelology in the Summer School.

The Curriculum of the International Summer School in Kartvelology is unique. The School's purpose is not only to teach the Georgian language to foreigners but to give comprehensive information on Kartvelological disciplines and train them as future workers in Kartvelology. This is served by the programme of the School, namely, the number of the participants of the School is limited to at least 8-10 students. The duration of the Summer School is 5 weeks. Georgian is taught by two teachers and several assistants.

Another line of the academic programme of the Summer School is lectures in diverse spheres of Kartvelology. The lectures are of review and introductory type. The lectures are delivered by well-known Georgian scholars in English or with simultaneous translation in English.

One of the principal lines of work of the School is the cultural programme: the foreign members of the Summer School acquaint themselves with the old and present-day cultural life of Georgia; at each week-end excursions are made to various regions of the country.

One specificity of the (Kartvelology) Summer School should be noted specially: during the entire period of the School the foreign students and the Georgian collaborators of the School spend the time together – both on workdays and resting-days: classes, breakfast and dinner, concerts and plays, expeditions, travels. The Georgian setting facilitates the study of the language and establishing friendship with the people of the country.

The number of the (International Kartvelological) Summer School in 2009 totaled 8 students. These were: Thomas Dunning, Yasuno Takemura, Przemyslaw Nocun, Russell Travenen Jones, Alper Saglam, Mahmet Nadir Acet, Sema Bilgic, Erdogan Karasah. It should be noted that part of the students of the last Summer School (3 students and 1 academic) were from the Kafkas University of Kars, where the Department of Georgian Language and Literature was set up only a few years ago. The fact is worth nothing that this is not the first occasion of groups of foreign students arriving to study Georgian from other universities. Such groups arrived from Germany several times, namely from Jena University, where a Kartvelological Department functioned on the initiative of Professor Hainz Foenrich. This was also the case in 2004 and 2007, when students of the Kartvelological Department of Petersburg University arrived and took part in the Kartvelological Summer School.

It would not seem amiss to adduce several excerpts from interviews with participants of the Summer School held this year.

Alper Saglam: *I have taken great pleasure in Georgian literature, hospitality and Georgian dishes. I am very pleased that I have been able to visit many interesting places. Georgia is a beautiful country. And I particularly liked Tbilisi. There are many historical places here. I am happy to find out that Georgian and Turkish cultures have lots of things in common. I will surely tell my Turk friends that they should take interest in The Summer School of Kartvelian Studies.*

Mahmet Nadir Acet: *Georgia is a small country but the people's hearts are very big. I would live in Georgia in the future, particularly in Ananuri. I shall advise fellow Turk friends to visit Georgia. I shall continue learning Georgian for sure.*

Sema Bilgic: *I admire Georgians. They are hardworking, sincere and devoted people. Everybody respects each other. I like Georgian nature so much. One can see trees all around, wherever you look and I think that wine is the most special in Georgia! I would advise others as well to visit Georgia and study at The Summer School. I will not stop learning the language.*

Przemyslaw Nocun: *The most important reason is that Georgian culture, particularly Georgian historical monuments, have always attracted me. : that Georgia is a great country, that the people are very hospitable, culture is very rich. I think Georgia has everything to attract tourists. The country could benefit from more visitors. I would advise my compatriots to visit Georgia. But if they are interested in Georgian history, culture, language etc. then attending the Summer School in Kartvelian Studies is a great idea.*

Russell Travenen Jones: *It is extremely difficult to sum up in a handful of words my feelings about Georgia and the Georgians. The only way to understand this deeply cultured, educated, rich, and vibrant nation is to experience it for yourself. It exudes history from every pore. Mediaeval churches and ancient fortresses can be glimpsed on virtually every hillside. Georgians are fiercely proud – and justly so – of their heritage, which, of course, includes their language; it has survived despite centuries of occupation, and will doubtless prosper for centuries to come.*

Thomas Dunning: *I would advise anyone to visit Georgia! It is truly a remarkable country and I cannot wait to come back for another visit! I would recommend the summer school for anyone looking to get a deeper understanding of Georgia, its people and its language. I thought I 'knew' Georgia from my own independent study from afar, but you really have to come here to experience for yourself and the Summer School gave me the perfect opportunity to do so.*

Yasuno Takemura: *If I was asked to describe Georgia, then what first springs to my mind is hospitable people, beautiful nature and delicious food. The most characteristic feature of Georgian people is that they are always eager to help.*

Finally, it should be noted that the Fund of the Kartvelological Summer School is periodically financed at times by Tbilisi State University, at others by the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science. This year the Rustaveli Fund attached to the Ministry of Education and Science announced a grant competition, for which the Kartvelological Summer School submitted its own project and won the grant. Thus, the contribution of the special grant

project of the Rustaveli Fund was very important in this year's great success of the organizers, teachers and collaborators in holding the Summer School, as is made clear from the enthusiastic words of foreign students.

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