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Georgia in the Works of Polish Scientists

Abstract: Georgian-Polish relations are reflected in archival materials, travelers' notes, memoirs, and fiction. In the works of Polish scholars, Georgia is presented in various aspects: historical, literary, cultural, ethnographic, and linguistic. The renowned orientalist stands out among among Polish scholars. His works were related to the issues of the Caucasus. Jan Reychman himself was a friend of the Georgians, and in his writing, he presented the relations between Poles and Georgians in his literary creativity. Georgia is portrayed from a historical perspective in the works of the Polish scholar Bogdan Baranowski. In his research, he explored both Georgian-Polish literary connections and the history of Georgia. Other Polish researchers have also made Georgia the subject of scientific study. Among them, Andrzej Furer deserves special mention. During his internship in the 1980s, he familiarized himself with historical sources in the archives and museums of Tbilisi. Petre Borawski should be mentioned among the Polish scholars interested in Georgia. He is well acquainted with the history of Georgia and was a direct participant in political processes. In 1991, he was a member of the delegation that signed the treaty of friendship and cooperation between Georgia and Poland. The Polish patriot Aleksander Chodźko, who immigrated to Georgia in the 1830s, spent two years in Tbilisi studying the Georgian language. He published a book in Polish in London in 1833, in which one of the essays was dedicated to Shota Rustaveli. When we talk about the works of Polish scholars on Georgia, we cannot overlook Jan Braun, a great friend of Georgia.

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Nino Pkhakadze, *Georgia in the Works of Polish Scientists*

He was a Polish linguist, Kartvelologist, and Basque scholar. His doctoral dissertation was on the topic: "Multiplicity of the Georgian verb" (1955). He also described Georgian manuscripts kept in Krakow (1958). He translated several poems by N. Baratashvili, A. Tsereteli, G. Leonidze, and some samples of Georgian folklore into Polish. Georgian-Polish relations are characterized by political, economic, cultural, and military ties. In the works of Polish scholars, Georgia is presented as a country with an ancient history, diverse cultural experiences, rich literary traditions, and a language remarkable for its structure and linguistic features.

Keywords: history of Georgia, cultural experience, literary traditions, linguistic features, spiritual connection.

Georgian-Polish relations span many centuries. The historical, political, and cultural aspects of these relations are interesting. It is known that one of the primary factors for establishing close relations between countries is geographical proximity. Georgian-Polish relations do not have such a basis. However, there are deeper and more important reasons that contribute to the spiritual rapprochement of ethnically and geographically distant peoples. These include their quest for freedom and independence, which is based on similarities in political interests, cultural values, and intellectual orientation.

The political history of Georgian-Polish relations begins in the fifteenth century with efforts to create an anti-Ottoman coalition. The visit of ambassadors from King Constantine of Kartli to King Aleksander Jagiellończyk of Poland was connected with this. Despite the unsuccessful attempt, diplomatic ties were not severed, and Polish missionaries worked in Georgia alongside other Catholic missionaries in later periods.

After the declaration of state independence, the Poles supported the young Georgian state and immediately expressed their readiness to receive a representative from Georgia in Warsaw. Poland recognized Georgia's independence in early 1919, two years before the High Council of the Entente recognized Georgia de jure. In April 1918, the foundation was laid for Polish diplomatic missions in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, but the missions began to operate in March 1920¹.

The most dramatic period of Georgian-Polish relations is the nineteenth century. During this period, a large number of Poles, with different statuses, who

1 N. Kikava, *Archeion*, Tbilisi 2013, VII, 2018, p. 18.



Georgia

opposed the Russian policy were resettled in Georgia; among them were high officials (Count Paskiewicz, A.S. Griboyedov-Grzybowski, P.D. Zavileiski), engineering personnel and ordinary soldiers. It is a kind of paradox, but instead of the obedience and emotional aggressiveness of the punished emigrants, we got a completely different result. Deep cultural relations of the emigrated Polish patriots and the Georgian intelligence.

Many of the Poles who emigrated were actively involved in the life of the Caucasus. Moreover, they introduced this area to other Poles, and many of them connected their lives with Georgia forever.

The immediate impressions of the emigrants from Poland to Georgia are interesting. Among the memories, we can single out Stanisław Nowacki, a prisoner who participated in the construction of a military road, who depicted the Caucasian conglomerate, customs, and manners in his "Travel". Non-commissioned officer Stanisław Nowacki is the first Polish "traveler" who described the Caucasus with his observations, for him a kind of "terra incognita".²

Georgian-Polish relations were reflected in various directions, in archival materials, traveler's notes, memoirs, and literature. From this point of view, one of the important directions is scientific works. In the works of Polish scientists,

² S. Nowacki, *Travels to Georgia during my captivity in Russia took place in 1813, 1814, 1815*, Poznan 1833 (S. Nowacki, *Podróże do Georgii w czasie mojej niewoli w Rosji odbywane wr. 1813, 1814, 1815*, Poznań 1833).

Georgia appears in different aspects: historical, literary, cultural, ethnographic, and linguistic.

Of course, it is impossible to fully analyze all scientific works related to Georgia authored by Polish scientists within one article; however, it is possible to make a kind of review, systematize the material, and outline the interesting accents that appear in the works of Polish scientists about Georgia. It should also be noted that the importance of the works of Polish scientists was also paid attention to in the Georgian scientific literature about Georgia. They studied various aspects of Georgian-Polish relations. The following works are interesting in this regard:

1. Chelidze J., *Georgian-Polish Literature Relations*, Tbilisi 1975 (Chelidze J., *Kartul-polonuri literaturuli urtiertobebi*, Tbilisi 1975).

2. Tsintsadze I., *Materials for Relations of Poland and Georgia*, Tbilisi 1966 (Tsintsadze I., *Masalebi polonetisa da saqartvelos urtiertobisatvis*, Tbilisi 1966).

3. Zedgenidze G., *Georgain Diplomat Bogdan Gurjicki*, „Mnatobi” 1965, N12 (Zedgenidze G., *Kartveli diplomati Bogdan Gurjicki*, „Mnatobi” 1965, N12).

4. Zedgenidze G., *From the History of Diplomatic Relations of Poland and Russia to Iran (works of Bogdan Gurjicki)*, Tbilisi 1971 (Zedgenidze G., *Polonet-rusetis irantan urtiertobis istoriidan (Bogdan Gurjitskis moghvatseoba)*, Tbilisi 1971).

5. Zhuzhunadze O., *For the History of International Policy of Georgia in the I half of XV century*. In the book: *From the History of International Policy of Georgia*, Tbilisi 1966 (Zhuzhunadze O., *XV saukunis I nakhevis sakartvelos samepo-samtavroebis sagareo politikis istoriidan*, Tbilisi 1966).

Among the Polish scientists, we should single out the famous orientalist Jan Reychman. His works were related to the issues of the Caucasus. Many articles and monographs belong to Jan Reychman. The researcher mainly discussed literary relations in his works. He touched a little on the activities of the Poles who immigrated to Georgia. Jan Reychman himself was a friend of Georgians and in his works, he presented the spiritual relations of Poles and Georgians in a literary sense. In 1972 Jan Reychman's "Polish Travelers in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century" was published. The book describes a trip to Iran, Turkey, the Euphrates and Tigris basin countries, Caucasus. Here one chapter is dedicated to Georgia.

The famous Polish orientalist and historian Jan Reychman has published many works on Polish travelers to the Near East. In Georgian scholarly literature,

we note Jan Reychman's remark about the fact that until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Polish travelers who had to travel through Transcaucasia and were traveling to Persia or India, did not stop on the way... They did not write impressions, or descriptions, did not write report cards, they were random travelers. Few people traveled from Poland to the Caucasus³.

In the scientific literature⁴ it is mentioned that this definition of Jan Reychman is correct, as Georgia was fragmented in these centuries (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) and Georgians could not be used as an ally against Turkey by Polish rulers. In these centuries, the road to the Caucasus was also dangerous. Jan Reychman examines the legend of how Lek bandits captured and killed Vladislav the Fourth's ambassador to Persia – Count Stahrenbeg.

Georgia appeared in a historical perspective in the works of the Polish scientist Bogdan Baranowski. In his works, the researcher dealt with both Georgian-Polish literary relations and the history of Georgia. We should name the most important works of the scientist: 1. B. Baranowski, *Polskie zainteresowania z XVIII i XIX wieku kulturą Gruzji*, Łódź 1982 (B. Baranowski, *Polish Interests in Georgian Culture in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Łódź 1982), in which the history of Georgia is briefly presented and interesting issues of Georgian-Polish literary relations are covered. 2. B. Baranowski, K. Baranowski, *Polaków kaukaskie drogi*, Łódź 1985 (B. Baranowski, Kaz. Baranowski, *Poles' Caucasian Paths*, Łódź, 1985). 3. *Historia Gruzji (History of Georgia)*, 1987, co-authored by his son Krzysztof Baranowski. In the mentioned monograph, the chronological framework is much larger. It tells the history of Georgia since ancient times. Important moments of our country's past are highlighted: the spread of Christianity, and Georgia's foreign relations with different countries: Byzantium, Arabs, Iran, Turkey, Mongols. In the same monograph, Russia's interests in the Caucasus are described and the history of its settlement in the Caucasus is presented.

The titles of individual chapters of the monograph should be considered a feature of the authors' vision. The title of the first chapter of the monograph is *Caucasian Mosaic*, which interestingly highlights the strategic importance of the region and the historical landmarks of Georgia in the entire Caucasian space.

³ J. Reychman, *Polish travelers in the Middle East in the 19th century*, Warsaw 1972 (J. Reychman, *Podróźni polscy na Bliskim Wschodzie w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1972).

⁴ G. Khundadze, V. Kikilashvili, *From the History of Georgia-Poland Relationship*, Tbilisi 2011 (G. Khundadze, V. Kikilashvili, *Sakartvelo-poloneti urtiertobis istoriidan*, Tbilisi 2011).

The title *Sunny Valley* reveals the author's warm attitude towards Georgia. The mentioned part of the book talks about the activities of Poles who immigrated to Georgia. The authors' view of the special spiritual closeness of two ethnically different peoples is interesting. The similar historical fate of geographically distant countries and the kind of attitude of the Polish and Georgian people towards freedom and independence determined, in their opinion, the special love of the Poles towards the Georgians.

In his works, Bogdan Baranowski covered an interesting issue about the visit of the ambassadors of the King of Georgia Constantine to Poland in 1465, who were going to Spain to develop a joint battle plan against the Muslims. According to the scientist's observation, it is not excluded that there was a negotiation between the Georgian ambassadors and the Polish commanders regarding the united struggle against Turkey.

Other Polish researchers also made Georgia the subject of scientific research. Among them, Andrzej Fuhrer is particularly noteworthy, he got acquainted with historical sources in the archives and museums of Tbilisi during his internship in the eighties. He also studied the archives of the Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Tbilisi. The result of this work was well presented in the dissertation defended at the Scientific Council of the Faculty of History in 1991, which covered the events of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

An interesting study of the literary and cultural relations between the Georgian intelligence of the nineteenth century and the emigrant Poles belongs to the Pole from Tbilisi, Stanislav Ravich⁵.

The opinions of Polish scientists about military-strategic partnerships are interesting. This aspect is presented in Giorgi Bezhitashvili's thesis *Georgian Military-Political Emigration in Europe (1921–1953)*, Telavi 2011⁶.

The researcher lists the Polish scholars who discussed the activities of the military diplomat Bogdan Gurdzicki. He notes that Polish historians-scientists discuss the personal qualities and merits of Bogdan Gurdzicki, one of the first diplomats who appeared in Georgian-Polish relations, in the implementation

⁵ St. Ravitch, *Life, and creativity of the Polish poet Tadeusz Lada-Zablotsky in Georgia*, Tbilisi 1971 (Sv Ravich, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo pol'skogo poeta Tadeusha Lada-Zablotskogo v Gruzii*, Tbilisi 1971).

⁶ G. Bezhitashvili, *Georgian Military-Political Emigration in Europe (1921–1953)*, Telavi 2011 (G. Bezhitashvili, *Kartveli samkhedro emigrantebi evropashi (1921–1953)*, Telavi 2011).

of the goals of the Polish royal court in the process of relations with Persia, Ottomans, Russia, and Georgia. In Polish sources, Bogdan Gurdzicki is known as an educated, military-savvy person, who in 1662 received the rank of captain of the royal army, and in 1676, the Seimas granted him the rank of nobleman. As Zedginidze notes in his work (1965), Bogdan Gurdzicki was active in Poland in the second half of the seventeenth century, and before that, he had considerable experience in the foreign policy of Georgia. Researcher Bezhitashvili points out that Bogdan Gurdzicki's work in Poland does not reflect the relations between the states, but it is clear that the individual activity of a particular person contributed to the rapprochement of the countries. If we take into account the importance of the participation of Georgian military emigrants in the current political processes in Europe and the history of the European course of Georgian foreign policy, the beginning of the military emigration to Poland (in the twenties of the twentieth century) the discussion of the activities of Bogdan Gurdzicki acquires special importance. Bezhitashvili has summarized the opinions expressed in Polish scientific literature about Bogdan Gurdzicki:

Stanisław Kościakowski: In 1668, the last year of his reign, the Polish king Jan Kazimierz sent Bogdan Gurdzicki to Persia on a special mission, and during the reign of Jan III Sobieski, among the Polish ambassadors at the Persian court was Colonel Bogdan Gurdzicki, who acted as ambassador with Captain Zagórski in Isfahan.

Stanisław Zaleński: King Jan Kazimierz sent Rotmeister Gurdzicki as an ambassador to Suleiman Shah in 1668 and himself offered an alliance against the Ottomans, obviously this was an expression of great honor and trust.

Jan Kruszyński: (Polish traveler and chronicler) Discusses the Afghan Revolt in Persia in 1722, mentioning Bogdan Gurdzicki several times as a military expert and a skilled political figure.

Bogdan Baranowski: The most famous diplomat in Polish-Persian relations in the second half of the eighteenth century was Bogdan Gurdzicki.

Polish scientist Jan Reychman: Bogdan Gurdzicki, a famous diplomat who served in the Polish military, was originally from Georgia⁷.

⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

Nino Pkhakadze, *Georgia in the Works of Polish Scientists*

Among the Polish scientists who are interested in Georgia, we should mention Piotr Borawski⁸. He is well acquainted with the history of Georgia and is a direct participant in political processes, in 1991 he was a member of the delegation at the signing of the friendship and cooperation agreement between Georgia and Poland. He was especially interested in the issue of the so-called Turkish Meskhs. One of his interesting articles is dedicated to Georgia in 1917–1921. The author emphatically points out important moments of Georgian-Polish political ties. He noted:

The first official contacts between the independent Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Poland took place in October 1918, when the representation of the Republic of Poland in the Caucasus was established in Tbilisi. Jozef Pilsudski, then the military and political leader of Poland, hoped to establish close political and military ties with Georgia, and later with all the other republics of the Caucasus. Later, the representatives of the Polish government did not stop their relations with the Georgian government in France. It is also known that Poland received and gave service to dozens of Georgian soldiers. He also provided material support to the Georgian government-in-exile in Paris.

It is interesting to see the correct historical vision of the researcher, which is also confirmed by small excerpts:

„After the Bolshevik revolution, confusion reigned in Transcaucasia”.

„After the Bolshevik coup, the spirit of striving for independence increased in Georgia”.

„Although independent Georgia existed only for three years, during this time it proved that it was worthy of freedom. There is no doubt that if it were not for the aggression from Russia, Georgia would have been able to strengthen its statehood”.

Georgian literary heritage is interestingly reflected in the works of Polish scientists. Polish patriot Aleksander Chodźko⁹, who immigrated to Georgia in the thirties of the nineteenth century, spent two years in Tbilisi and studied the Georgian language, and published a book in Polish in London in 1833, in which one of the essays was dedicated to Shota Rustaveli.

⁸ T. Beradze, *Georgia's relations with Eastern Europe from ancient times to the present day*, “Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences” 2010, Volume 3, Issue 1.

⁹ A.-M. Thiesse, *The Creation of National Identities Europe, 18th–20th Centuries*, Brill 2021.

When we talk about the works of Polish scientists about Georgia, we cannot ignore the great friend of Georgia, Jan Brown. A lot is known about him¹⁰. We will emphasize once again that he was a Polish linguist, Kartvelologist, and Bascologist. In 1951–1955, he completed a post-graduate course at Tbilisi State University under the guidance of Akaki Shanidze, and there he defended his candidate's thesis on the topic: *Multipleness of the Georgian Verb* (1955). He particularly fruitfully researched the problem of the Basque-Caucasian language relationship and defended the theory of genetic kinship of these languages. With his scientific cooperation and consultation, the first complete edition of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* translated by the poet Jerzy Zagórski was published in the Polish language. He was also a scientific consultant for the anthology of Georgian poetry compiled in Polish by Igor Sikiritzki (Lodz 1985) and the work of English Kartvelologist David Marshall Lange's *Ancient Georgia* in Polish (1972). He described Georgian manuscripts preserved in Krakow (1958). He translated into Polish a few poems by N. Baratashvili, A. Tsereteli, G. Leonidze, and some examples of Georgian folklore.



Akaki Shanidze and Ian Brown

Thus, Georgian-Polish relations are characterized by a special attitude on both sides. These relations are multifaceted: political, economic, cultural, and military. The Poles paid attention to Georgia early on, they adapted to the Georgian culture and devoted many studies to the history, culture, and literature of Georgia. In the works of Polish scientists, Georgia appeared as a country with an ancient history, diverse cultural experiences, rich literary traditions, and a language that is outstanding in the world due to its structure and linguistic characteristics. Most importantly, these studies once again revealed the spiritual connection and interest congruence between the Polish and Georgian peoples.

¹⁰ *Caucasological collections: On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the birth of Caucasologist and Baskologist Ian Brown*, Tbilisi 2007 (*Kavkasiologiuri krebuli: edzhvneba kavkasiologisa da baskologis ian braunis dabadebidan 80 tslistavs*, Tbilisi 2007).

Nino Pkhakadze, *Georgia in the Works of Polish Scientists*

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