

Azerbaijani-Georgian Literary Relations in the Scientific Creativity of Academician Madad Chobanov

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ABSTRACT

The article examines Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations. It is noted that since the beginning of the last century, Azerbaijani and Georgian literary relations have always developed in parallel in the field of artistic thought, especially poetry and prose, as well as in the field of science, and that in the second half of the twentieth century, the academic research and dissemination of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations entered a new stage. However, these relations were formed not by inertia, but by the creative relations of individual personalities. Just as personalities shaped the literary environment, personalities also shaped and developed literary relations. Thanks to the great contributions of S. Vurgun, K. Kaladze, G. Leonidze, I. Habibeyli, E. Javelidze, L. Eradze, D. Aliyeva, and others, the Azerbaijani-Georgian friendship, which experienced its best period in terms of both scientific and artistic translation and literary relations, was continued in a new context by Academician Madad Chobanov (1937–2023) in the second half of the last century. This scientific, literary, and artistic tandem entered a new stage of its development in Azerbaijani and Georgian literary studies. These friendly relations constituted a new stage in the fields of linguistics, literary studies, poetry, literary translation, and literary relations. The special place occupied by the theme of Azerbaijani-Georgian friendship in Chobanov's work not only revealed the literary, cultural, and spiritual heritage of both peoples, but also accelerated the multifaceted nature of literary and cultural relations and brought this ancient friendship to a new level.

Keywords: Azerbaijani-Georgian; literature; literary translation; literary relations; friendship; Madad Chobanov

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the last century, Azerbaijani and Georgian literary relations have always developed in parallel in the field of artistic thought, especially poetry and prose, as well as in the field of science, and in the second half of the twentieth century, the academic research and dissemination of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations entered a new stage. It must be noted, however, that these relations were formed not by inertia, but by the creative relations of individual personalities. Just as personalities shaped the literary environment, personalities also shaped and developed literary relations. Through the great contributions of distinguished literary figures Samad Vurgun, Suleyman Rustam, Rasul Rza, Mammad Rahim, Husein Arif, Mammad Bey Abashidze, Irakli Abashidze, Grigol

Abashidze, Galaktion Tabidze, Georgi Leonidze, Karlo Kaladze, as well as distinguished scholars Isa Habibeyli, Elizbar Javelidze, Leyla Eradze, Dilara Aliyeva, and others, the Azerbaijani-Georgian friendship, which experienced its best period in terms of both scientific and artistic translation and literary relations, was continued in a new context by Academician Madad Chobanov (1937–2023) in the second half of the last century.

This scientific, literary, and artistic tandem entered a new stage of its development in Azerbaijani and Georgian literary studies, constituting a new stage simultaneously in the fields of linguistics, literary studies, literary translation, and literary relations. The reasons for this were not accidental: Professor Madad Chobanov was born in Darbaz village, Bolnisi district of Georgia, grew up there, successfully completed his secondary education in his native village, then received higher education in Tbilisi, lived approximately 60 years of his life in Georgia, and for a long time worked as a teacher, associate professor, professor, deputy head of department, head of department, and chairman of the academic-methodological council at the Azerbaijani department of the Faculty of Philology at A.S. Pushkin Tbilisi State Pedagogical University (later named after S.S. Orbeliani, and currently known as Ilia University). He engaged in academic research alongside his pedagogical activities, wrote a number of articles and published books advancing the development of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations, and maintained his connection with Georgia until the end of his life.

2. RESEARCH

The distinguished Azerbaijani and Georgian scholar, eminent Turkologist, author of more than 80 books and hundreds of scientific and publicistic articles, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, and Academician Madad Chobanov maintained constant scholarly contact from the second half of the last century with recognized Georgian Turkologist scholars Venera Jankidze, Elizbar Chavelidze, Georgi Shagulasvili, Mikheil Chinchaladze, Leyla Eradze, and others, devoting considerable effort to the academic study, promotion, and development of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations, and enriching this treasury of friendship with one outstanding work after another.

Academician Madad Chobanov was the first to bring the mutual relations of the Azerbaijani and Georgian languages and literatures, and the developmental history of literary relations, into scientific investigation, writing more than ten books and hundreds of scientific, scientific-publicistic, and literary-critical articles on this subject. These articles were published in Baku in the proceedings of ANAS, Baku State University, and ADPU; in newspapers including “Azerbaycan,” “Respublika,” “Xalq,” “Ədəbiyyat və incəsənət,” “Ədəbiyyat qəzeti,” “Azərbaycan müəllimi,” “Sərqin səsi,” “Ziya,” “Təhsil,” and “Elm və təhsil”; and in Georgia in various press organs published in Azerbaijani, Georgian, Russian, and Armenian, including “Sovet Gürcüstanı” (“Gürcüstan”), “Qələbə bayrağı – Gamardjevebis droşa,” “Samqori,” “Trialeti,” “Yeni Marneuli,” and others, as well as in the academic proceedings of the Tbilisi State Pedagogical Institute.

2.1 Azerbaijani Poetry in Georgian: Nizami, Fuzuli, Vaqif, and Axundov

In his article “Azerbaijani Poetry in the Georgian Language,” published in the “Qələbə Bayrağı – Gamardjevebis droşa” newspaper of November 4, 1972, Madad Chobanov noted that Azerbaijani poetry, which had achieved fame throughout the East, had always attracted the attention of the fraternal Georgian people. He observed that the fact that Armenian and Georgian intellectuals from as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had both translated Azerbaijani poetry into their native languages and used it by transcribing it in their own alphabets was by no means coincidental, and that these writings were still preserved in the Georgian State Museum named after Janashia. He emphasized that among these archival materials, the lyrical works of the great master Fuzuli, beloved by the

Georgian people, were numerous, and that it was clearly apparent that Armenian and Georgian intellectuals had been reading Fuzuli's works after transcribing them into their own alphabets. As a noteworthy fact, in the performance notebooks of Georgian folk singers there were numerous ghazals from the great sixteenth-century Azerbaijani poet Fuzuli's poem "Leyli and Majnun." These facts demonstrate that Fuzuli's ghazals always occupied a prominent place in the repertoire of Georgian folk singers.

In the same article, Chobanov also noted that the artistic creativity of the famous Azerbaijani poet Fadai had attracted the attention of Georgian intellectuals as early as the seventeenth century, informing readers that the Georgian scholar A.I. Kabidzeni, who had conducted research on Fadai's poem "Bakhtiyanama," had identified two Georgian translations of the work. One of these is a translation of "Bakhtiyanama," which had passed into the category of Persian tales, made into the Georgian language at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries; the second translation was made in 1828 by A. Sulxanishvili.

In his article "Nizami in the Georgian Language," published in the same newspaper on September 19, 1972, Chobanov traced the deep historical roots of these literary connections, noting that the peoples of the Southern Caucasus had shared historical destinies and lived in close neighbourly friendship for centuries, and that the literary relations of the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples, which had a history spanning several centuries, had broadened and strengthened from the early twentieth century onwards, reaching their highest stage in the second half of the century. He directed attention to the fact that the Georgian people already read the works of the classics of Azerbaijani literature in their native language, and quoted Chobanov's own summary of Professor A. Baramidze's introduction to a collection: "A. Baramidze demonstrates that as early as the twelfth century, as a result of the cultural and political relations between the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples, the cultures, arts, and literatures of both peoples were known to each other. Therefore, the works of the Azerbaijani poet Nizami had already been widely disseminated in Georgia as early as the twelfth century" (Çobanov, 1972a).

Chobanov further noted in this article that in 1956 the "Sakhelqomi" Georgian SSR State Publishing House published a second edition of selected works of the great twelfth-century Azerbaijani poet N. Ganjavi in a print run of 5,000 copies, and that in 1964 the Tbilisi "Literatura da khelovneba" publishing house published Nizami's "Khosrov and Shirin" poem in the Georgian language in a print run of 10,000 copies (Çobanov, 1972a). In the same article, Chobanov emphasized that Nizami's "Khamasa" attracted the attention not only of translators but also of literary scholars, and in particular that a significant portion of the scholarly research of the eminent Georgian literary scholar Konstantino Paghava (1919–1974) was devoted to Nizami's creative work.

In his article "Fuzuli in Georgian Literary Studies," published in the "Azərbaycan müəllimi" newspaper on January 17, 1973, Chobanov noted that the interest of Georgian intellectuals and literary scholars in the translation, study, and promotion of Azerbaijani literature had grown manifold in the second half of the twentieth century. He highlighted the great contributions in this area of both the distinguished Turkologist and Nizami and Akhundov scholar Konstantino Paghava and the eminent Georgian scholar, linguist, Turkologist, and literary scholar Elizbar Javelidze (b. 1937), and named the latter's 1972 monograph "Fuzuli" a "new and valuable gift to Fuzuli studies." The monograph, published in 5,000 copies in the Georgian language, was devoted to the life and work of the sixteenth-century Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fuzuli and comprised nineteen sections. Chobanov appraised it as follows: "The poet's (M. Fuzuli's) life and work, his artistic characteristics, his activities in the literary school of poets who wrote in the Azerbaijani language in Baghdad — which was a great cultural center of the East at

that time — and other topics are discussed in detail in the separate sections of the work listed above. This considerably increases the merit of the book” (Çobanov, 1973).

Regarding M.F. Akhundov, Chobanov’s article of November 28, 1972 in the “Qaləbə Bayrağı” newspaper traced the long history of Georgian interest in Akhundov’s comedies, noting that the great Georgian poet Akaki Tsereteli had been the first Georgian writer to approach Akhundov’s works critically, calling him “the Azerbaijani Molière,” translating “Vazir-xani-Lənkəran” into Georgian, and that this work had been performed on the Georgian stage on January 31, 1898, achieving great success. Chobanov also recalled that at the opening of Akhundov’s monument in Tbilisi on July 9, 1958, B. Jgenti, secretary of the Georgian Writers’ Union, declared: “The memory of M.F. Akhundov, the great writer, philosopher, and thinker of Azerbaijan, is equally dear to all of us — representatives of the three fraternal republics. These connections derive from the spiritual relations of three cultures. It draws from the Armenian epic treasure ‘Sasuntsi David’ and from the Georgian poetry gem ‘Amiran,’ from immortal Rustaveli and from the great Nizami” (Çobanov, 1972c).

2.2 “I Love Georgia” and “Songs of Friendship”

Academician Madad Chobanov was also the first in the history of the Southern Caucasus to compile and publish an Azerbaijani-Georgian Short Conversational Dictionary (together with docent M. Chinchaladze), which was published four times in 1977, 1991, 2000, and 2010. As was written in a review by the distinguished writer and researcher Nariman Abdulrahmanlı together with Farhad Xubanlı: “In the field of lexicography of two fraternal peoples, the first step was taken by this book, compiled by docents M. Chobanov and M. Chinchaladze of TPI named after A.S. Pushkin. The book is a valuable aid for both Azerbaijani and Georgian readers” (Abdulrəhmanlı & Xubanlı, 1989).

Among Academician Madad Chobanov’s most celebrated contributions to Azerbaijani-Georgian cultural relations were two anthologies he compiled and published. The almanac “I Love Georgia” (Sevirəm Gürcüstanı), containing poems by Azerbaijani poets about Georgia and compiled by Madad Chobanov, was published by “Azərnəşr” in Baku in 1977. In his review, poet Sə-falı Nəzərli wrote in the “Sovet Gürcüstanı” newspaper: “This book, recently published by Azerneshr, can be considered a worthy gift to the Georgian people. The book was compiled by Madad Chobanov, a teacher at TDPI named after A.S. Pushkin” (Nəzərli, 1977).

The anthology “Songs of Friendship” (Dostluq nəğmələri), containing poems by contemporary Azerbaijani poets about Georgia and compiled by Madad Chobanov, was translated into Georgian by the distinguished Georgian scholar and poet Leyla Eradze and published by the “Merani” Georgia State Publishing House in Tbilisi in 1978. The editor of the book was the distinguished Georgian poet Grigol Abashidze, and the foreword was written by Azerbaijani national poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzade. The book opened with the poem “To Rustaveli” by Azerbaijani national poet Samad Vurgun. In a review published in the “Sovet Gürcüstanı” newspaper, Cangidze and İsmayılı wrote: “The ‘Songs of Friendship’ anthology, compiled by Madad Chobanov and translated into Georgian by Leyla Eradze, contains nearly fifty poems written about Georgia by contemporary Azerbaijani poets... This anthology must be considered a commendable development in the field of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations” (Cangidze & İsmayılı, 1978).

In a speech at the International Poetry Evening of Transcaucasian Poets held in Baku in 1978, Leyla Eradze declared: “Knowing the Azerbaijani language has opened before me the doors of a rich art treasury. I have devoted a large part of my creative work to translating examples from the rich and beautiful literary art of the Azerbaijani people into the Georgian language. I have submitted a new anthology for publication, ‘Songs of Friendship’ (Azerbaijani poets about Georgia), compiled by Madad Chobanov. The anthology contains works written with a lofty sense of internationalism by a number of

distinguished masters of words, beginning with Khaqani” (quoted in *Ədəbiyyat və incəsənət*, 18 February 1978).

2.3 Scholarly Books and Reviews: Kur Flows into the Caspian

In his review article “Kur Flows into the Caspian” (Kür Xəzərə qovuşur), published in the “Sovet Gürcüstanı” newspaper on June 9, 1988, Academician Madad Chobanov reviewed the 384-page anthology of selections from Georgian literature of the same title published by “Yazıçı” in Baku in 1988. He named this anthology, translated and compiled by philology doctors Əflatun Saraclı and Dilara Aliyeva, “a new gift to Azerbaijani Georgian studies after the poem ‘The Knight in the Panther’s Skin’ by Sh. Rustaveli (translated by S. Vurgun, S. Rustam, M. Rahim).” Chobanov wrote of the translators: “They did not simply take the works of Georgian writers and translate them. In order to familiarize our demanding readers with the artistic heritage of the fraternal Georgian people and to create a general concept of the history of Georgian literature, they have reviewed Georgian literature, which has an ancient history... and have selected the best examples of artistic literary art that harmonize with modern life, thus creating as it were a course in the history of Georgian literature” (Çobanov, 1988).

In the same review, Chobanov specifically praised the quality of Əflatun Saraclı’s poetic translations, providing concrete examples and noting that “even reading the translations of many of the poems, one is amazed; there is no room left for any doubt about the quality of the translation.” He quoted examples from the translations of D. Guramishvili’s “Testament,” A. Chavchavadze’s “Caucasus,” I. Chavchavadze’s “Poet,” and A. Tsereteli’s “Poet,” which he held fully preserved the content, spirit, and artistic quality of the originals.

2.4 Later Scholarly Works and Legacy

After moving to Baku in 1994, Academician M. Chobanov continued his scholarly-pedagogical activities while also writing a series of research works and numerous articles in the field of Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations, publishing one after another: “Azerbaijani–Georgian Literary Relations” (Collection of articles, Vol. I, Baku: “Borçalı” Publishing House, 2008; Vol. II, Baku: “Yeni Poliqrəfist,” 2013), “Historical Roots of Azerbaijani-Georgian Relations” (Historical-popular essays, Baku: “Borçalı,” 2010), and “Literary Reflections” (Literary-critical articles, Vol. I, Baku: “Borçalı,” 2010; Vol. II, 2016) (Çobanov, 2008; Çobanov, 2010; Çobanov, 2013).

Even after his death in 2023, his memorial days were celebrated in Tbilisi, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Marneuli, Gardabani, and other regions; numerous poems, essays, and books were dedicated to his memory; a series of articles were published in the Azerbaijani and Georgian press; various events, competitions, olympiads, and other activities were organized; and presentations of his beautifully printed books were held in Baku and Georgia. A particularly significant tribute appeared in the Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelos Respublika” on August 19, 2024, in an article titled “Academician Madad Chobanov: Our Literary Language is the National Treasure of Our People!” published under the project “Promotion of Our National-Cultural Heritage” with support from the State Committee on Work with Diaspora of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The article notes that Academician Chobanov was the author of more than 80 books, including 15 monographs, more than 10 textbooks and teaching aids, and more than 60 scholarly works (Hüseynova, 2024; AzərTAC, 2024).

3. CONCLUSION

The special place occupied by the theme of Azerbaijani-Georgian friendship in Academician Madad Chobanov’s scientific work not only revealed the literary, cultural, and spiritual heritage of both peoples, but also accelerated the multifaceted nature of literary and cultural relations, the process of mutual influence and enrichment, and brought this friendship, which has been ongoing since ancient

times, to a new level. In his research, the scholar sustained this tendency and carried these long-standing friendly relations to a new stage. He was born and raised in Georgia, received his secondary and higher education in Georgia, lived approximately 60 years of his life in Georgia, and for a long time worked as a teacher, associate professor, professor, deputy head of department, and head of department at the Azerbaijani department of Tbilisi State Pedagogical University, writing a number of outstanding scholarly monographs and numerous literary-critical works aimed at the spiritual rapprochement of the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples.

Even after 1994, when he moved to Baku, Academician M. Chobanov did not break off his connection with Georgia, maintaining regular contact, visiting Georgia at least four to five times a year, meeting with former Georgian colleagues and Azerbaijani scholars, poets, and writers living in Georgia, closely participating in Tbilisi's literary environment and literary processes, and hosting solemn events dedicated to his anniversaries in Tbilisi, Marneuli, and in his native village of Darbaz. In a word, through his scientific creativity, Academician Madad Chobanov's embodiment of the traditions of friendship and brotherhood of the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples in literary-artistic and scientific literature passed to a new plane, found its broad reflection in scientific thought, ensured his author's longer life in scholarship, and thus Azerbaijani-Georgian literary relations were further enriched.

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