

THE MUSEUM OF THE GEORGIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
TIFLIS

By ANDREI APAKIDZE,
Curator of the Museum

WITH A NOTE BY SIR ELLIS MINNS

[The Editor has much pleasure in welcoming this article, spontaneously submitted for publication in the *Journal* through the Press Bureau of the Soviet Scientists' Anti-Fascist Committee. He also desires to thank Sir Ellis Minns for the contribution of the note appended to the article to form an expository supplement.]

The Museum of the Georgian Academy of Sciences is a scientific institution which maintains contact with the museums of other Soviet republics and those of western Europe and America: exchanges of exhibits with other museums are also made.

The museum's book repositories contain some 60,000 manuscript books and historical documents, including papyri and parchments. These written records cover the whole history of the Georgian people from the 5th to the 19th centuries A.D. Amongst the older manuscripts there is a collection of hymns written on papyrus dated the 8th century and a long manuscript from the 10th century. The *Jruča* (*Džruča*) illuminated manuscript, a 13th-century illuminated psalter and an early manuscript copy of Rust'aveli's poem *Vepkhis Tkaosani* ('The Man in the Tiger's Skin'), and a number of other old manuscripts are decorated with beautiful miniatures. A rare exhibit is the Shatberd collection (10th century) of essays on philosophy and the natural sciences, which also contains a list of the Georgian chronicles.

The manuscript repositories of the museum contain documents in Russian, Armenian, Greek, Persian and Turkish. Many of them are of primary importance to scholars. Two of them, for example, are the Koridet Greek tetrabiblos (10th Century) and a detailed record of the Gurjistan Vilayet compiled by Shah Abbas Iskander Munshi, a well-known historian.

Academician I. Javakhishvili's 'Description of the Georgian Manuscripts in Sinai Monastery' was published by the Museum. During recent years the Museum has also published the texts of many ancient manuscripts: these include 'Chronicles of the Times of Lash Giorgi', 'The Life of Queen Tamara', the manuscripts of the feudal period—'The Man in the Tiger's Skin', above mentioned, 'The Georgian Tetrabiblos', 'Description of the Kingdom of Georgia', 'History of Georgia-Karthlis Tskhovreba' (Queen Anna's version), 'The Works of Ioann Petritsan', 'The Martyrdom of Saint Shushanik' and others.

The Museum has recently obtained a large number of important archaeological exhibits from Mtskheta, Armazi, Trialeti, Klueti, Ureki. They include arms decorated with gold, precious stones and enamel, women's gold ornaments encrusted with coloured stones, gold bracelets and anklets, rings, etc., which all bear evidence of a high level of technique.

Amongst the exhibits obtained from Armazi there are some interesting silver vessels decorated with engraved figures in relief; some of them bear inscriptions.

A number of large stones set in gold mounts afford special interest ; the stones bear engraved portraits of the Armazi aristocrats, high state officials. The names and appearance of many of them became known only through these stones : there are the aristocrats Asparug and Zevakh and the latter's wife Karpak.

Great value is attached to the finds made by Professor B. Kuftin, of the Museum, in the region of Trialeti (South Georgia). Professor Kuftin has compiled a chronology of the whole period in which metals were smelted in the South Caucasus ; the chronology has been approved by Soviet archaeologists and provides a scientific basis for the study of the history of ancient Georgia.

One of the finest exhibits is a gold cup ornamented with filigree work, turquoises and cornelians. The same polychrome style is used for the decoration of gold pinheads, spherical beads and a gold and agate pendant which is astonishingly similar to the pendant of the necklace worn by the priests of Ababata who lived at the beginning of the third millennium B.C. in the Sumerian town of Uruk.

The Trialeti excavations show that the ancient Georgian craftsmen understood sculpture in the round as well as relief as can be seen from the figures of deer and horses on exhibition at the museum. All these exhibits are on view at the museum. There are also finds belonging to the early and late Neolithic, brought from the plains of Colchis.

THE TIFLIS MUSEUM: NOTE BY SIR ELLIS MINNS

This Museum has successively been called the Caucasian Museum, the Museum of Georgia (*Sak'art'velos Muzeumi*) and now the Museum of the Georgian Academy, itself a branch of the Academy of the U.S.S.R. It contains sections for I. Zoology, II. Botany, III. Geology, IV. Ethnology, and V. Archaeology: catalogues of I, II, III, and V were published by G. Radde (1899-1902), V with the help of P. S. Uvarova. There is also a great Library and collection of MSS. The Museum of Georgian Art, under Professor G. Chubinashvili appears to be an offshoot.

Finds made in Transcaucasia during the last seventy years or so have largely found their way to the Archaeological Section so far as they were not diverted to the Hermitage or the Historical Museum at Moscow, but of late years the different Republics and Provinces (*oblasti*) have each its own Museum and district museums have arisen in Georgia itself.

The Museum has, since 1920, published its *Moambe* or *Bulletin*, articles are mostly in Georgian or Russian, occasional résumés in western languages. Since 1940 there have been parallel series, A. Natural Sciences, B. Archaeology and Art History. It also publishes separate monographs, *Travaux*. It exchanges these with foreign institutions, but not many sets come to England.

Among the archaeological material in the Museum may be mentioned part of the Kazbek Treasure (Tallgren, *E.S.A.*, v, 109), the Hellenistic Akhagori Hoard (Y. I. Smirnov, 1934), G. Nioradze's finds at Kvemo Sasireti (*E.S.A.*, vii, 82) about XIIIc. B.C.; Zemoavc'ala of the same date (*Moambe*, vi, 139); in the Alazan valley, 1st Century B.C., with vessels that though contemporary with Roman denarii show survival of types current in Asia Minor more than a millennium before (*Die Ausgrabungen im Alasantale*, Georg. Acad., 1940); Karsnis Khevi (*Travaux*, iv, 1926), A.D. III; and from the Kura Valley (*Moambe*, xiii, B, 173), all dated.

Of an earlier period are Mrs. Pchelina's finds at Saguramo (*Moambe*, iii, 129) and in Trialeti (ib. vi, 147), the district made famous by B. A. Kuftin's wonderful discoveries of all dates from the III millennium B.C. (see Minns, *Antiquity*, 1943, 129; Schaeffer, ib., 183; *Man*, 1944 (April), 30; *J.R.A.S.*, Ap., 1944) and his Urartian cremation graves at Igdyr, north-west of Ararat (*Moambe*, xiii, B, 1-100). Thanks to him in the Museum can now be studied a new and very handsome variety of painted pottery, and gold and silver work quite unlike anything else. There too should be sought the results of very interesting explorations at Armazi ('Αρμοζική, Strabo xi, iii, 5) just north of Mtskheta. An account of the place was written by L. Melikset-Bek in 1938, just before they began: no general account of them seems to have appeared, but it is known that they yielded silver vessels with figures in relief, gems with portraits and inscriptions, and two very important Aramaic inscriptions, one with a Greek version, showing that the Georgian state was following the ways of Armenia and Iran in the early centuries A.D. (Bilingual published by G. V. Ts'eret'eli, 1941; cf. M. N. Tod in *J.R.S.*, 1943, 82-86; H. W. Bailey, *J.R.A.S.*, Ap., 1943.)

For Greek and Latin inscriptions in the Museum, see Amiranashvili in *Moambe*, iv, 189; for gems, mostly Sassanian, A. A. Zakharov, ib. v, 241.

Among the MSS. perhaps the most interesting are the Koridethi Gospels, a 9th century Greek Uncial (Θ) written by a Georgian scribe, found in a heathenized shrine in Svanetia, and offering a text 'Caesarean' i.e. more primitive than Vaticanus or Sinaiticus (published by Beerman and Gregory in 1913, cf. K. Lake and R. P. Blake, *Harvard Theological Review*, 1923). Chubinashvili published in 1940 a handsome volume on illuminated Georgian MSS. from the 9th Century (very much like Greek) to 17th Century (very much like Persian); about half are in the Museum.

Of the many Church objects he has dealt with in the *Moambe*, some are in his Art Museum and some remain in the churches. Chubinashvili strongly maintains that whereas the Caucasus countries really played the part assigned to them by Strzygowski in the development of Christian architecture, Armenia was not so predominant over Georgia as he makes out.

Of the other MSS. perhaps the most important are the early copies of Shota Rust'aveli's great chivalrous epic *The Man in the Tiger's Skin*, but there are others bearing on Georgian literature and history, also materials in the languages of the Armenians and other Caucasian peoples, Russian, Persian and Turkish. It is pleasant that Dr. Andrei Apakidze, Curator of the Museum, wishes to get in touch with English speakers. Evidence of this goodwill is already shown by the frequent choice of English for résumés in *Moambe*. We must try and make some return.

ELLIS H. MINNS.