

MARINA ALEXIDZE

**PRINCE DAVID BAGRATIONI:
GEORGIAN LITERATURE AT THE CROSSROAD***

The work of Prince David Bagrationi, the eldest son of the last king of Kartl-Kakheti (East Georgia) George XIII, is one of the initial pages of the Modern Georgian culture. He was born in 1767 and brought up at the court of his grandfather, King Erekle II. Apart from the Georgian teacher David Meskhishvili, the rector of seminary in Telavi, he was also taught by foreign teachers: Goeting, an Austrian, who had come from Russia, Jacob Reinegs, a German doctor, who, as it is presumed, was sent to Georgia by the Russian general Potyomkin as a political spy, and Capuchin friars, who had a mission in Tbilisi and were close to the Georgian royal court. It was due to these teachers that Prince David was greatly interested in European, especially French literature and history.

Prince David is a representative of the first generation of Georgian Voltairians. Very early, he got acquainted with the ideas of the French Enlighteners. He was keeping up with the French Revolution of 1789 and the following activity of Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he greatly admired. David Bagrationi's sympathy for Napoleon was not a mere chance: in his opinion, Napoleon was the only outer force, which could challenge Russia at that time.¹ George XIII was greatly concerned with his son's fascination by the Western ideas and especially by Voltaire. He was very fond of his eldest son and could not bear the "disastrous influence" of Voltairian ideas on him. After the death of George XIII in 1800, David became a temporary ruler of the Georgian kingdom, but in 1803, he was exiled to St Petersburg together with other princes. In D. Lashkaradze's opinion, apart from the internal confrontations at the Georgian royal court, a great role in Prince David's deportation was played by his attitude to Napoleon.² A king and a politician, who dreamed about the liberation of Georgia and sacrificed his welfare to this cause, instead of putting on the royal crown, when deported to St Petersburg, took up the pen. "The sword broken in war was replaced by the mace of art" and literary work was "a compensation for the ruined hopes".³ Prince David's life in emigration, his sorrows and hopes are clearly described in his letters, which give a vivid picture of the cultural and political life of the Georgia of those days.⁴ In St Petersburg, David translated both eastern and western literature. He translated Mirza Mehdi's "A History of Nadir-Shah", Voltaire's letters,⁵ the works of Montesquieu and Ancillon. His passion for the French Enlighteners' ideas was reflected not only in these translations. He also wrote a short novel "The New Shikh" which was created under the influence of their ideas. Prince David died in 1819 in St Petersburg and was buried in the Alexander Nevsky monastery.

* The work was supported by a research grant from the Friends of Academic Research in Georgia (FaRiG).

¹ G. Mikadze, On the Public Opinion of the Early Nineteenth Century, *Matsne* (No 6, 1964, in Georgian), p. 210-223.

² D. Lashkaradze, *Problems of Europeanism in Georgian Literature* (Tbilisi, 1977, in Georgian), p. 11.

³ V. Kotetishvili, *History of Georgian Literature* (Tbilisi, 1956, in Georgian), p. 24.

⁴ L. Chagelishvili, Some Questions of Prince David's Biography and of the Political Situation of those Times According to the Epistolary Heritage of Prince David, *Mravaltavi: Philological and Historical Studies* V, XVII (1999, in Georgian), p. 487-497.

⁵ For details on Prince David's translations of Voltaire see: G. Mikadze, *The Georgian Writers of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century and the Translated Literature* (Tbilisi, 1973, in Georgian), p. 382-392.

On his death, Russian newspapers published an obituary under the title "Death of a Voltairian".

Prince David's "The New Shikh"⁶ is an epistolary novel, the correspondence of an enamoured couple, a shikh (shaykh) and a maiden Peria⁷ by name. Almost 100 years ago, A. Khakhanashvili noted, "by this story a trend of sentimental, exaggerated sensuality emerged in our literature".⁸ Prince David, who was so keen on French literature, could not remain indifferent to the "tearful" trend, which emerged in France in the latter half of the century. In his "The New Shikh", he resorted to the genre so favoured by sentimentalism. He followed the traditions of the French and Russian sentimentalists, and his novel is closer to Rousseau's "The New Heloise" and Karamzin's "Poor Liza", than, for instance, to Richardson's novels which are fool of sensibility saturated with humour and irony, so characteristic of English sentimentalism.

There is no doubt that Prince David's "The New Shikh" was written under the influence of Rousseau. It is attested to even by the comparison of full titles of both epistolary novels: "Julie, or the New Heloise, Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau" and "The Correspondence of a Lover with a Lover, Who Live at the Foot of the Caucasian Mountains, Written in the Georgian Language by David, son of George, king of Georgia; Twelve Letters to Amuse those at Leisure". Prince David imitated not only the title, but also the principle of giving the letters: with Rousseau it is "from Heloise" and "to Heloise", in "The New Shikh" it is "to Peria" and "from Peria". The resemblance does not end here: "The New Shikh" as well as "The New Heloise" is a manifestation of "the freedom of emotions", with the only difference that if in Rousseau's novel the lovers had to overcome the social barriers, in Prince David's work they are religious. It should be noted that Rousseau's novel is the repetition of the history of the medieval theologian Pierre Abailard and his disciple Heloise, or it is a new version of an old story, hence the title "The New Heloise". The same can be said about Prince David's work. He also turned to the old plot, namely the well-known Oriental story of the Shaykh Sana'ān and based his novel on it.

The plot of "The New Shikh" caused controversial opinions among scholars. The background of the plot is not given in Georgian manuscript. It is found only in the Russian translation made by Sergey Mitropolski and published in St Petersburg in 1804. The Russian edition has an introduction, consisted of the explanation of the word "shikh", i. e. shaykh,⁹ and the brief exposition of the plot on which Prince David built his work. According to the introduction, the renowned Persian Shikh Sanain (Shaykh Sana'ān) left his motherland for Georgia where he fell in love with a common peasant girl Peria by name. She agreed to marry him but only on the condition if the shikh would drink wine. Since his religion did not allow the shikh to drink wine, he had to part with Peria. When left alone he soon regretted his having deserted the girl and began writing letters to her. Peria's heart softened after these love letters and she, too, fell in love with

⁶ The work is not published. A manuscript is kept in the K. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, fund S, no 1496.

⁷ *Peria* in Georgian means "fairy" and can also be understood as a common noun.

⁸ A. Khakhanashvili, *History of Georgian Letters, from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Tbilisi, 1904, in Georgian), p. 579.

⁹ It should be noted that the Arabic term "shaykh" / "sheykh" was mainly introduced in the Georgian language as "shikh". Very rarely "shekh" can be also seen. The form "shikh" (*shikhis dzeni, khoja shikhi*, etc) is attested in the Georgian chronicles and other written sources of the Middle Ages and the later period. See for instance: *Kartlis Tskhovreba (The Life of Georgia)*, ed. Simon Qaukhchishvili, vol. 1 (Tbilisi, 1955), p. 257; vol. 2 (Tbilisi, 1959), pp. 332, 334, 336, 354-355, 463, 493; vol. 4 (Tbilisi, 1973), pp. 130, 270, 273, 292, 391-392, 400, 454-458, 569, 604.

the shikh. T. Rukhadze thought "this supplement was invented by the translator".¹⁰ It is difficult to say at whose initiative the introduction was made, though, in my opinion, the translator would not have added it without the author's consent, the more so that at the time the book was published David was in Russia and it may be presumed that he may have cooperated with the translator. G. Javakhishvili supposed that "the prince published the letters in Russian under someone else's name and made the translator write such an introduction which would create an impression that it was a romantic work in the form of letters".¹¹ It was the author's purpose to have it easily passed by the Tsar's censor; this is why he supplied it with the introduction and notes which would make it difficult to understand the real essence of the work".¹² G. Kikodze was of the same opinion; he thought, "that the introduction was written only to conceal the religious-moral tendency of the novel".¹³

It should be noted that when speaking about the plot of "The New Shikh" scholars either did not focus on the origin of the plot or made wrong conclusions, as for instance T. Rukhadze, who considered that Shikh Sanain was an invented name (by the one, who invented it, he means either the author or the translator).¹⁴ But the fact is that Shaykh Sana'ān was very well known not only in the East and particularly in Iran, but in the eighteenth-nineteenth century Georgia as well and his story was resorted to more than once in Persian (Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār's "The Conference of the Birds"), Turkish (Alisher Navaī's "The language of Birds", Golshahr's "The Conference of the Birds"), and Kurdish (Pākī Tehrānī's "Shaykh Sana'ān") languages.

In as early as the twelfth century Shaykh Sana'ān's story was given as "Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzāq Sana'ān's Story" in Mohammad Ghazzālī's "Tuhfat al-Muluk". If Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzāq was a historic person he must have lived before the twelfth century for Mohammad Ghazzālī's work was written in about 1100. Shaykh's name comes from the town of Sana' in Yemen - Sana'ān means "from Sana'". A Turkish poet Golshahr, who translated 'Attār's "The Conference of the Birds" into Turkish gave this part the following title: "The Story of Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzāq". The Persian scholar Mojtaba Mīnovī asserts that he failed to find a person of this name in the books on history, though he adds that there is a famous *muhadis* (narrator of *hadises*), 'Abd al-Razzāq Ibn Hamamī Sana'ān by name, who lived from 126 to 211 by the Hijra (747-832 A.D.).¹⁵ Others identify Shaykh Sana'ān with the sixth (eleventh) century fakir Ibn al-Saqā who, as the tradition has it, fell in love with a Christian girl in Rum.¹⁶ According to Poruzanfar, a Persian scholar, Ibn al-Saqā's story, his romance with a girl from Rum, his having abandoned Islam and adopting Christianity were so popular that Khāqānī, a Persian poet, in his *qasīda* mentions his name: "I will tie up my heart with the belt like Ibn Saqā".¹⁷

The story of Shaykh Sana'ān was especially popular in the thirteenth century Iran, namely in the Persian Sufic literature where it occupied a very significant place because

¹⁰ T. Rukhadze, *The Georgian Epos in the Literature of the Transitional Period* (Tbilisi, 1939, in Georgian), p. 65.

¹¹ G. Javakhishvili, On the so-called "The New Shikh" by Prince David (unpublished work, K. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, G. Javakhishvili's fund, no 127-128, in Georgian).

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ G. Kikodze, *History of Georgian Literature, Nineteenth Century* (Tbilisi, 1947, in Georgian), p. 16.

¹⁴ *History of Georgian Literature*, vol. II (Tbilisi, 1966, in Georgian), p. 698.

¹⁵ Mojtaba Mīnovī, *Az Khazā'en-e Torkīye, Majalle-ye Dāneshkade-ye Adabīyāt, Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān*, vol. VII, no 3 (1340 / 1961), p. 13.

¹⁶ Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār, *Mantiq al-tayr*, ed. Sādeq Gauharīn (Tehran, 1342 / 1963), p. 322; Fātima Sana'atī Niyā, *Maākhez-e 'Attār* (Tehran, 1369 / 1990), p. 137.

¹⁷ Mohammad Mo'īn, *Farhang-e Fārsī*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 1375 / 1996), p. 1037.

it was a striking example of the main idea of Sufism: the fusion of the individual "ego" with the cosmic "ego". The great mystic poet 'Attār used the plot in his poem "The Conference of the Birds" dedicating 400 *bayaths* to the shaykh enamoured with a Christian girl. This is the climax of the poem and at the same time its independent part in spite of its being directly connected with the main line of the plot. In the opinion of E. Bertels, "in the East they were aware of the independent character of the story, that is why Shaykh Sana'ān's story was very often copied in the collections separately from the poem".¹⁸ When comparing 'Attār's "Shaykh Sana'ān's Story" with the corresponding passage in Ahmad Ghazzālī's work scholars came to the conclusion that there was no difference between them and both books were based on the same story.¹⁹ As for the other poetic versions they are mainly translations from 'Attār's poem or its remake. Hence when discussing "Shaykh Sana'ān's Story" I take 'Attār's version as a starting point.

This is a story of a shaykh who many years ago lived in the city of Mecca in Arabia. He dedicated 50 years of his life to serving his religion and with his 400 (in some versions 700) disciples - *murids* spent days in praying. Those coming to Mecca went to visit him. Even his breathing cured the sick. One night the shaykh saw a beautiful girl in his dream. When he woke up his heart prompted him to go to Rum together with his disciples. When approaching the suburbs of Rum they heard singing and at the church window, they saw a Christian girl as beautiful as the sun. The shaykh fell in love with her at first sight and spent the whole night under her window. His disciples tried to bring him to his senses but all was in vain. The girl posed him with four conditions: to worship an idol, to burn the Qor'ān, to drink wine and to abandon his religion; but she has allowed to choose one of these four conditions. The shaykh preferred to drink wine. He was taken to the Zoroastrian temple²⁰ and in front of his weeping disciples he took a cup from the hand of his lover and drank it. Then he took off his *kherqe*²¹ and girded himself with a *zonar*.²² However, the girl wanted more and demanded that the old man pay a lot of bride-money or look after the pigs. The shaykh fulfilled all her demands. Some time later the disciples again tried to bring him to reason and returned to Rum together with the shaykh's closest disciple.²³ On seeing them, the shaykh was so ashamed that tore his clothes, then performed a ritual ablution. He put on his *kherqe* and headed for Hijaz. When left alone the Christian girl heard a divine admonition. She regretted her behaviour, followed the shaykh, and adopted Islam. However, unable to overcome the excitement caused by seeing the shaykh, she collapsed and died in his arms.

This is the essence of 'Attār's version of the Shaykh Sana'ān's story. It was almost word for word repeated by Navaī with the only exception that he added some details: the description of the monastery, the festive ceremony of the shaykh's abandoning Islam with the burning of the Qor'ān and other facts of a similar nature. Navaī somehow aggravated the sin of shaykh adding to his looking after the pigs in the daytime his tending the fire in the "Āteshgāh" at night.

¹⁸ E. Bertels, *Selected Works. Sufism and Sufic Literature* (Moscow, 1965, in Russian), pp. 75, 79, 400-401.

¹⁹ Mohammad Mo'īn, *op. cit.*, p. 1038.

²⁰ The mixture of Christian and Zoroastrian terms is common in Moslem literature. See: E. Bertels, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

²¹ *Kherqe* (*khirka*) - rugs; old, torn clothes, garments of a Dervish, an ascetic.

²² *Zonar* - a belt of rough fur, obligatory for the non-Moslem subjects (e. g. Christians) of the Moslem ruler.

²³ In the works dedicated to the explanation of the Sufic terms Shaykh Sana'ān is often considered to be the teacher of 'Attār and it is noted that he is meant by the disciple who finally saved the shaykh. See: Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār, *op. cit.*, p. 320 (commentaries by S. Gauharīn).

Apart from what has been said above, there is also a folk version of the Shaykh Sana'ān's story called "The Three Shaykhs".²⁴ Here the shaykh is shifted to the background (his adopting Christianity is mentioned only casually) and the main attention is paid to the adventures of his disciples.

A distant echo from "The Shaykh Sana'ān's Story" is Prince David's "The New Shikh" as well. Proceeding from the introduction, the title and the facts gleaned from between the lines the following development of the plot can be outlined: the events take place in the Caucasus; the Persian Shikh (Shaykh) Sanain falls in love with a Georgian peasant girl Peria. Initially there were some relations between them so that Peria even made a vow to him and it was the breaking of the vow that the shikh reproved the girl about. It is clear from the novel that Peria broke her vow not according to her own wish but under the influence of some "evil men" and by some other people's challenge. "You were misled by someone else's persuasion", the shikh rebukes her. This is how the third character of the novel emerges, he is an invisible person whose "sweet behaviour and smooth speech succeeded in misleading and charming the girl". The shikh calls this man "a Cyclops", "a Satan", or "a bull" ("instead of choosing a nightingale to be the master of your rose you have chosen a bull"). The shikh tries to get the girl back and sends her love letters. Peria at first refuses him, but gradually she is mollified and falls in love with the shikh. So in the Georgian version nothing is said about the shikh's having abandoned the Moslem faith; more than that, judging by the introduction he refuses Peria's demand that he should drink wine and tries to make her love him by means of the letters. The author ignores those details of the shikh's life, which are accentuated in the Oriental versions: abandoning Islam, adopting Christianity, etc. It is quite natural for it was not Prince David's aim to repeat the "Shaykh Sana'an's Story". He only used this Oriental story to express what he wanted to say, in order to overcome the obstacles set up by the Russian censorship.

According to G. Javakhishvili, it was the Russian introduction that misled A. Khakhanashvili and made him suppose that "The New Shikh" was a love novel²⁵. The mistake was subsequently repeated by K. Kekelidze and T. Rukhadze. In G. Javakhishvili's opinion, it is "an allegoric and propagandistic" correspondence where by the shikh the author means himself and by Peria he means Queen Darejan (in the novel the shikh calls her Daray)²⁶ in particular and Georgia in general. G. Javakhishvili thoroughly discusses the passages which corroborate his surmise and comes to the conclusion that "The New Shikh" is a political correspondence between David himself and his opponents who remained in Georgia.²⁷ I will not dwell in detail on the arguments which confirm the allegoric character of the novel, I will only add that the allegoric character of "The New Shikh" is not unexpected proceeding from the whole creative work of Prince David. Let us look at his lyrics, which abounds in allegorical images, for instance his poem "My Bird of Joy Has Flown Away" in which by "the bird of joy" he means the lost independence of Georgia. Georgia proper is represented as the moon "which is on the wane". "The New Shikh" in this respect bears resemblance to

²⁴ The story has survived in eighteenth-century Persian manuscript, which is kept in the St Petersburg Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies of Russian Academy of Sciences (no B 256). See Russian translation in: *Nine Meetings. Anonymous Persian Stories*, trans. N. Tumanovich and I. Petrova (Moscow, 1988), pp. 195-232.

²⁵ G. Javakhishvili, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁶ Queen Darejan was the widow of King Erekle II. According to Erekle's will, after George XIII his younger brother, Darejan's son Yulon was to ascend the throne, but King George violated the will and in his lifetime handed the crown over to his elder son David. The death of George was followed by the confrontation between David and Queen Darejan and her supporters, which the Russian Empire took advantage of.

²⁷ G. Javakhishvili, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Persian literature on the one hand and to Rousseau's "The New Heloise" on the other. The use of the language of romance in order to express the concealed ideas is common to the Medieval Persian literature and it is the most significant characteristic feature of the mystic trend of Sufism, which was domineering at that time. As for "The New Heloise", it is clear from Rousseau's "The Confessions" that the novel is the sublimation of his love affair with Madame D'houde toe. The author's transformation into his heroes, his closeness to them indicates that they declare his ideas. The same is true to Prince David's novel as well.

One more problem, which the researchers into "The New Shikh" are interested in, is Prince David's choosing a Persian as a hero for his novel. A. Khakhanashvili explained it by the impact of Montesquieu's "Persian Letters".²⁸ The eighteenth century Western literature, which exercised influence on Prince David's work, shows great interest in the Oriental world: "Byron acquainted Europe with the Orient from a new angle: he revealed the excess of the Asian passion and love's deep melancholy, and the Oriental phlegm and content appeared in Goethe's "Westöstlicher Divan" with all their charm and singularity".²⁹ Certainly, Prince David who was keen on French literature and who translated Montesquieu, was well aware of this interest and there is no doubt that he was acquainted with "The Persian Letters" as well, hence it would not be right to ignore the influence of this work; but is it necessary to look only for such indirect ways of influence of Oriental culture in the eighteenth century Georgian literature which had a longstanding tradition of using Oriental plots? Besides, at that time Shaykh Sana'ān was popular enough in the Caucasus and in Tbilisi in particular for Prince David to know his story very well and to use it in his work. It is characteristic that for his novel he did not simply choose the Persian Shaykh Sana'ān, but the Persian shaykh "who lived in Georgia".

Shaykh Sana'ān and his story were very well known in Tbilisi in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. Here actually a local popular version of the story was developed. According to this version, events took place in Georgia and the Christian maiden was Georgian. The end of the story is different as well. Christianized shaykh died in Tbilisi and was buried in the courtyard of the Church of St David (*Mamadaviti*), on the slope of the Mt. Mtatsminda (Holy Mount) near the city. Moreover, in folk conception Shaykh Sana'ān was identified with St David of Gareji (Davit Garejeli), sixth-century monk, who came to Georgia from Syria and lived first on the Mt. Mtatsminda and than in Gareji desert. According to the information of nineteenth century authors, in the nineteenth century Mt. Mtatsminda was a venerated site both for Christian and Moslem inhabitants of Tbilisi. For the Moslems Shaykh Sana'ān's tomb was a place of pilgrimage. Mīrzā Hosayn Farāhānī, a Persian, who visited Tbilisi in 1885 writes the following in his *Safarnāme* ("A Book of Travels"): "In the midst of the city, on the southern summit of a mountain, there is a church at which the tomb of Shaykh San'ā is said to be. The Georgians believe strongly in Shaykh San'ā and it is a place of pilgrimage. Once each year, most of the people of the city and the surrounding villages come in truly huge crowds on pilgrimage to the Shaykh's shrine, making vows and supplications".³⁰ Approximately the same information is provided by a Persian general Majd al-Saltaneh who, in 1894, visited Tbilisi (Tiflis) and described it. He writes: "At the foot of a mountain there is a church; nearby is a tomb of the well-known Shaykh Senan. This grave is the place of worship both for the Moslems and Christians. Even now people revere it

²⁸ A. Khakhanashvili, *op. cit.*, p. 580.

²⁹ V. Kotetishvili, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

³⁰ *Safarnāme-ye Mīrzā Hosayn Farāhānī*, ed. Hāfēz Farmānfārmāyān (Tehran, 1342 / 1963), p. 85; *A Shiite Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1885-1886. The Safarnāme of Mirzā Mohammad Hosayn Farāhani*, ed., trans. and annot. Hafēz Farmayan and Elton L. Daniel (University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990), p. 82.

and consider it to be a holy place".³¹ In the commentaries to the Georgian translation of the work of Majd al-Saltaneh, M. Mamatsashvili noted, "Shaykh Senan is the same person as Father David. As the Moslem tradition has it Shaykh Senan fell in love with a Georgian woman, adopted Christianity and became a clergyman - Father David of Gareji".³² In the introduction to the book, it is said that "as it seems at the end of the nineteenth century still lived a legend which associated Shaykh Senan's name with Father David of Gareji".³³

Shaykh Sana'ān's name was so closely connected with Georgia and Tbilisi that the eighteenth century Azerbaijani poet Mollā Panāh Vāqif (1717-1797) enamoured of Georgian women, compared himself with the shaykh:

" I, Vāqif, having seen her eyes and her charming body,
 Forgot about minbar and mihrab, the faith of all the Moslems.
 Only now did I realize what had happened with Shaykh Sana'ān;
 Either I will flood Tiflis with my tears so overwhelmed with grief I am,
 Or she will come quietly out of the church imbued with love for me".³⁴

In the notes to the Georgian translation of this poem, it is said: "as the Moslem tradition has it Shaykh Sana'ān fell in love with a Georgian woman, abandoned Islam, adopted Christianity, and became a clergyman, Father David of Gareji by name".³⁵ D. Alieva makes the same commentary on this poem with the only difference that she does not touch upon the identification of Shaykh Sana'ān with St David of Gareji.

Shaykh Sana'ān's connection with Georgia is also reflected in the poetry of Abū Nasr Fathollāh Ibn Mohammad Kāzem Sheybānī Kāshānī (1825-1890), a poet of the Qajar period. In the poem dedicated to Georgia, the eulogy to the Georgian woman is based on Shaykh Sana'ān's story:³⁶

"In this world wisdom comes from Tabris
 And beauty comes from Georgia,
 How beautiful is the city, which has both
 Wisdom and beauty.
 The wisdom and beauty of such divine brightness
 Is only where Paradise is.
 So today the only place where Paradise is
 Is Tiflis,
 Here beauty is trapped and wisdom reigns.
 Old Shayban remembered the times of
 Shaykh Sana'ān and wished he be appointed
 To tend the pigs by the beauties
 Let him slowly ascend to Heaven
 For tending the pigs of the beauties...
 In order to come close to Jesus in Heaven

³¹ Majd-os-Saltaneh, *Description of the City of Tbilisi*, ed., trans. into Georgian and annot. M. Mamatsashvili (Tbilisi, 1971), p. 40.

³² *ibid*, p. 52, notes 95-96.

³³ *ibid*, p. 10.

³⁴ Mollā Panāh Vāqif, *Sicilmiş Eserleri (Selected Poems)*, ed. Hamīd Mehmedzāde (Baku, 1968, in Azerbaijani language in Arabic alphabet), p. 138; Vāqif, *Selected Poems* (Moscow, 1949, in Russian), p. 163; *Reader in Armenian and Azerbaijani Literature* (Tbilisi, 1968, in Georgian), p. 288-289. About Vāqif's above-mentioned poem also see: D. Alieva, *On the History of Azerbaijani and Georgian Literary Relations* (Baku, 1958, in Russian), p. 38; G. Bellingeri, La poesia "georgiana" di Vāqif, *Georgica I*, a cura di L. Magarotto e G. Scarcia ("Quaderni del Seminario di Iranistica, Uralo-Altaistica e Caucasologia dell'Università degli Studi di Venezia", 22) (Roma, 1985), pp. 86, 89.

³⁵ *Reader in Armenian and Azerbaijani Literature*, p. 289, note 1.

³⁶ I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Grigol Beradze for supplying information about the poem.

You should bend your head before Christians
 In this world.
 I would send these words to the Christians of Tiflis,
 If I were not scared of Azerbaijanian Turks.
 Because they will say about me that I,
 An old man, have abandoned Islam,
 Secretly nurturing love for a Christian woman.
 He was found by a beautiful Christian girl,
 Who made him look after her pigs.
 You, there, tell the people of Tabriz, who are not
 Aware that a Christian girl robbed me of my mind and soul.
 In the daytime, I tend her pigs, at night
 I guard her door shedding tears of blood.
 I worship the cross and go to the church,
 Sometimes secretly, hiding from the Moslems,
 And sometimes openly...
 I will selflessly sacrifice my soul
 To my Christian sweetheart,
 Because she, like Jesus, gives her heart to her lover".³⁷

As we see, in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries the story of Shaykh Sana'ān's love was well known in Georgia. It may have been one of the reasons why Prince David thought it unnecessary to provide the Georgian text of "The New Shikh" with the background of the plot; unlike Russians, Georgians were well aware of Shaykh Sana'ān's story without an introduction.

The identification of the Shaykh Sana'ān with the Saint of the Georgian church in Tbilisi is very interesting in itself. It very vividly reflected the climate of tolerance and mutual confidence, peculiar to the eighteenth-nineteenth century Tbilisi multi-ethnic and multi-confessional urban community. There is no doubt that the identification of the Christian Saint with the shaykh (though Christianized), so highly revered by the Moslems, may have happened only in society alien to acute religious confrontation and intolerance.

The fact that Shaykh Sana'ān was identified with the sixth century, i.e. before Islam saint clearly refers to the folk roots of the legend. Of course, this legend was never accepted on the scholarly level either by Christians or by Moslems.

What may have served as the concrete basis for this identification? Some similar biographical details may have had certain significance: St David and Shaykh Sana'ān came to Georgia from the far-off countries of the Near East (the first from Syria, the latter - from Yemen or Hijaz). Another factor may have been the legend about St David of Gareji and a woman. According to this legend, undoubtedly belonging to a later period (it can be found neither in the short, nor in the metaphrastic redactions of St David's life, in written form it is attested only in the nineteenth century),³⁸ the fireworshippers, bothered by St David's preaching and his growing influence, decided to taint his reputation among the faithful and blamed him in having made pregnant one of the nuns who they had bribed. Before the whole congregation, St David played a miracle and

³⁷ Montakhabi Sheibani, Imprimé par Mirza Riza Khan (Istanbul, 1308 / 1890-91, in Persian), pp. 3-4. It is noteworthy that Mīrza Rīzā Khān Dānesh Arfa' al-Daula (1853-1937) who edited and introduced the selected poems by Sheybānī was the Consul General of Iran in Tbilisi (Tiflis) in 1888-1894; on this person see: Mehdī Bāmdād, *Sharh-e hāl-e rejāl-e Īrān dar qarn-e 12 va 13 va 14 hejrī*, Vol. I (Tehran, 1347 / 1968, in Persian), pp. 507-512; J. Giunashvili, On the Persian Inscriptions of "Firuza" in Borjomi, *Istochnikovedcheskie razyskaniia (Source Study Essays): 1982* (Tbilisi, 1985, in Russian), pp. 244-248.

³⁸ *Sakartvelos Samotkhe (Paradise of Georgia)*, ed. Gobron (Mikheil) Sabinin (St Petersburg, 1882, in Georgian), pp. 268-269.

made the child in the woman's womb tell the truth. The indignant people stoned the woman leaving the body "among the stones" (*Kvata shua*, hence Kvashveti - the name of the church). According to another version, the people heeded St David's entreaties and pitied the woman, but instead of a child, she gave birth to a stone (*Kva shva*, hence the name Kvashveti).³⁹

This legend and Shaykh Sana'ān's story have nothing in common except the fact that "the sins" of both religious persons are associated with a woman. It is difficult to believe that this detail could have been that fertile grain which sprouted into a legend of Shaykh Sana'ān's becoming St David of Gareji. However, as it seems there really was the grave of some Christianized shaykh in the courtyard of St David's church on Mt Mtatsminda, which was associated with Shaykh Sana'ān by the Moslem tradition. The fact that a grave was in the church courtyard and St David's grave was not there may have prompted Tbilisi Moslems to identify these two persons. The legends about their having been tempted by women may have served as an additional factor. Of course, there are many inaccuracies connected with the question both in the works of Persian travelers and in the popular traditions: according to Majd al-Saltaneh, "this grave is a place for worship and supplication both for the Moslems and Christians". It is hard to believe that Moslems and Christians could have had the same place for worship whom ever the grave may have belonged. Another traveler Mīrzā Hosayn Farahānī is more cautious when speaking about the religious allegiance of the pilgrims to Sana'ān's grave calling them "Georgians" in general. The fact that the grave was in the church courtyard means that it must have been the grave of a Christian (or a Moslem who had adopted Christianity). But if it was a Christian's grave why should Moslems go there? May be because they knew the end of the Oriental version of Shaykh Sana'ān's story, according to which the shaykh returned to his religion; the travelling general was aware of this end and the Moslem's worshipping the shaykh's grave is his surmise. But how did he explain the fact that the grave was in the church courtyard? Though it is quite possible that the grave was not in the courtyard proper but close by, "somewhere near" as Majd al-Saltaneh says.

This article is not intended to be deep in above-mentioned aspects. I only wanted to demonstrate that Shaykh Sana'ān was very popular in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Georgia and Georgians not only knew his story but even associated him with Georgia. As the title "The New Shikh" shows, Prince David was acquainted with and used it as the plot for his novel.

It is not only the plot that attests to the Oriental influence in "The New Shikh". Prince David, who tried to promote the spreading of the Enlighteners' ideas in Georgia, to eliminate the Oriental influence and introduce Europeanism, and who was a staunch opponent of admiration for Persian literature by Georgian writers and fought against "the complicated florid style", could not avoid resorting to grandiloquence in his work. The letters are written in the emotional flowery style characteristic of Persian literature. They abound in figurative expressions and images, which are very far from reality. The narration is overloaded with hyperbolic similes and metaphors. Special mention should be made of chains of metaphors. Here is a typical example of such a chain from "The New Shikh": "You were the rose of my heart and I was thy nightingale, you were a cypress blown for me and I was thy dove..., you were my candle and I was thy moth..., you were my sun and I was thy sunflower".⁴⁰ In such chain metaphors, consisting of two or more components, no separate one has an independent meaning, its essence being revealed only in the interrelation between them. In the above example, the shikh is compared with the nocturnal moth only because Peria is compared with a candle etc.

³⁹ K. Tsintsadze, *The Church of Kvashveti in Tbilisi*, ed. M. Kavtaria (Tbilisi, 1994, in Georgian), p. 118, note 2.

⁴⁰ Prince David, *The New Shikh* (manuscript), p. 19.

Persian literature abounds in such chain similes and metaphors. For an example let us look at Vis's (the female character) letter from the twelfth-century Georgian translation of Gorgani's poem "Vis o Ramin": "I am May and you are a spring, you are a partridge and I am the rock you need, I am a sea of tears and you are a fish..., you are a red rose and I am a yellow one".⁴¹ The most widespread pairs in Prince David's chain similes and metaphors, such as a rose - a nightingale, a rose - a canary, a rose - May, a candle - a moth, a cypress - a dove, had very often been used in Persian literature and especially in poetry.

In "The New Shikh" there are many tropes created by means of proper nouns, but in contradistinction with Persian poetry, Prince David mainly uses the characters of Classic mythology. Instead of referring to the "flowers and wines" so popular in Orient, he mentions Circe, Apollo, Cupid, Jason, Pluto, and others. Very often, the Classic and Oriental onomastics are combined within one sentence: "You may think yourself to be in Elysian Fields, you may determine yourself as being in Paradise, you may imagine you are in Asphodel or it may seem to you that you are in the gardens of Rizuan".⁴²

Particular mention should be made of the abundance of Russisms in "The New Shikh": *minuti* (минута - minute), *kanareyka* (канарейка - canary), *pyataki* (пятак - a five-kopeck piece), and many others.

The novel is overloaded with maxim-aphorisms in the Oriental style: "a fowl trapped once will hardly be caught again, a man killed once cannot be brought back to life, a dried-up tree will never blossom again, a sparse vineyard will not yield abundant fruit, a withered rose retains only thorns..,"⁴³ or "a snake's bite can rather be cured by herbs, than by sugar"⁴⁴, or "even a lion can be killed by a small animal, iron can be worn away by poison"⁴⁵ and many others. Almost all these aphorisms have analogues in Persian literature. For instance, in "Vis o Ramin" the following maxims occur: "a fowl that has escaped cannot be trapped again",⁴⁶ "however sweet sugar may be, a poisoned man should be better cured by medicine",⁴⁷ etc.

In "The New Shikh" alongside with such aphorisms there are many philosophical maxims derived from the ideas of French Enlighteners, namely from Voltaire's and Rousseau's deistic theory, according to which the right morals are based on the correct perception of nature. For instance, "where the laws of nature are not acknowledged there is no conscience, where the laws of nature are not followed there is no room for honesty".⁴⁸

Even this brief review shows the historical significance of "The New Shikh". There are not so many works, which so vividly reflect the spirit of the age. It reflects the ideas and aspirations of Georgian intellectuals standing at the crossroads of the Medieval Oriental and Modern Western cultures. It is noteworthy that the Orient penetrated into the work of this "great Voltairian" both directly, from Persian literature, and indirectly, from the Georgian literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the one hand and from the works of the eighteenth century European writers on the other. Within the framework of one literary work there is the Oriental plot and the favourite genre of European sentimentalism, an epistolary novel; the deistic theory of the French Enlighteners and the Oriental tunes of "nightingales and roses"; the heroes of the Moslem literary world and the Western ideas; and the letters echo sometimes those of Vis and

⁴¹ *Visramiani*, ed. Al. Gvakharia and M. Todua (Tbilisi, 1964, in Georgian), p. 242.

⁴² Prince David, *The New Shikh* (manuscript), p. 12.

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ *Visramiani*, p. 245.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 241.

⁴⁸ Prince David, *The New Shikh* (manuscript), p. 12.

sometimes those of Heloise. Prince David adjusted all this to the traditions of the Georgian literature and created a unique work, which occupies a singular place not only in Prince David's literary heritage, but also in the early Modern Georgian literature in general.