

History

Georgian Collections in St Petersburg Museums

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In order to analyze the value of the Georgian movable heritage in general, it is necessary to carry out scientific research on objects not just in Georgian museum collections but also abroad, particularly in Russian museums. The present study aims to explore Georgian collections in the museums of St Petersburg (e.g., The Russian Museum of Ethnography, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography/ The Kunstkamera, The State Hermitage Museum, The State Russian Museum, etc.), which have been brought in since the 19th century. These collections include both artifacts unearthed during archeological excavations at different sites in Georgia and also the occasional discoveries, ethnographic materials which reflect the regional diversity of Georgia (national costumes, jewelry, carpets and rugs, woodcarving and ceramic ware, crafts tools, etc.), fine art objects, arms and weapons, religious objects, festive and day-to-day utensils, manuscripts and many other types of rarities. Together with classification and typological research to systematize these collections, the aim of the present project is to create a virtual anastylosis (from the Greek word *αναστήλωσις* which means “bringing together the separated parts of the piece to reconstruct its authentic image”) with similar materials kept in Georgian museums. By bringing together virtually the collections as well as pieces of single objects, which now are kept in different museums, the present study intends to give us a broader outlook and enrich our scientific knowledge about the Georgian movable heritage in general. © 2021 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Heritage, museum, archaeology, ethnography, anastylosis

There are thousands of Georgian movable heritage objects of greater cultural and historical importance in St Petersburg’s museums which are still largely unknown to Georgian scientific circles as no systematic studies have been carried out in this area. The search for these materials, their study and comparative analyses against similar materials kept in Georgian museums (e.g., The Georgian National

Museum, Georgian State Museum of Folk and Applied Arts, Kutaisi Historical Museum, Telavi Historical Museum, etc.) and other private collections give us the possibility to emphasize their cultural and scientific importance. Not only are these collections expression of Georgian cultural diversity, but they also reflect the multicultural synthesis of the region located at the

meeting point of Europe and Asia. These objects show how oriental and western traditions are mingled with local national features, which in turn, gives them the greater significance for the study of the broader cultural, historical and socio-political context.

Formation of Georgian Collections in St Petersburg Museums

Georgian materials have been accessioned by St Petersburg's museums throughout different periods and via different means. After the abolition of the Georgian kingdoms after 1801, when Georgia was converted into a governorate of the Russian empire, the outflow of cultural property beyond the nation's borders became a continuous process. Together with private traders and individuals, Russian exarchs, Viceroy of Caucasus and many other statesmen of the Russian Empire were involved in the process. The Caucasian Museum, established in Tbilisi by the Russian Imperial Geographic Society in 1852, was the nation's first museum institution; it was obviously forced to follow the Russian policy targeted toward the integration of the Caucasian countries in the Empire and therefore, Russian museums were "abundantly supplied with museum objects from Georgia" [1:175].

The first Georgian collection in St Petersburg's museums were accessioned through the imperial collections – the precious object collected by the Russian royal family, which were intensively acquired after 1830 due to the fact that Caucasus (and particularly Georgia) "in Russian internal policy was considered as a special focus for the ruling dynasty" [2:73]. This collection has been further enriched through the diplomatic gifts brought to the royal court by Georgian nobles. This is actually how the collections in Tsarskoe Selo, Peterhof, the Kunstkamera, Gatchina, the Winter Palace and the Anichkovo palace were formed. These collections afterwards were granted to various museums in St Petersburg [3:81]. Together with the abovementioned process, additional

collections were acquired during the scientific expeditions in different regions throughout Georgia. These include variety of Georgian archeological, ethnographic and other materials.

The outflow of museum objects and other Georgian cultural property also continued during the Soviet period. Thus, the Georgian collection in St Petersburg museums have been acquired since the 19th century; during the period of the Soviet Union, and since then up to recent times (e.g, antiquities taken illicitly from Abkhazia). The majority of these materials are kept in the museum storage facilities to which there is no public access. Only a limited number of objects are displayed to the wider public; therefore, they are still little known to the scientific circles in Georgia.

Archeological Collections

Archaeological objects unearthed in Georgia (dating from the 3rd millennium BC to the 1st century AD) acquired from the end of the 19th century up to the beginning of the 20th century are mostly kept in the State Hermitage Museum collection. Among them there are the artifacts from different regions of Georgia: objects unearthed in 1867 in the Samtavro necropolis; the entire collection excavated by N. Marr and E. Takaishvili in 1890 at Vornak necropolis in Debeda gorge; and the accidentally discovered objects from Bori necropolis (gold and silver tableware, objects of everyday life dating back to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD). These materials as well as the silver goblet with a hunting scene discovered in 1871 in the rich Mtskheta necropolis (dating back to the 3rd century AD), the ox-head gold-plated silver rhyton found in Kazbegi (Hellenistic period; 3rd-2nd centuries BC) all were acquired in the 1880s by the State Hermitage Museum via the Russian Imperial Archeological Commission.

Obviously, the archeological collections in the State Hermitage Museum have numerous parallels among the objects unearthed at Mtskheta, Armaziskhevi, Zghuderi, and other archeological

sites across Georgia and quite often are part of the same collections. For example, the Kazbegi hoard (6th-5th centuries BC) is divided between the State Hermitage Museum, the State Historical Museum of Russia in Moscow, Kutaisi Historical Museum and the Georgian National Museum. The last-named owns only a small part of this particular treasury [4:739]. The elaborate techniques applied in some of these archeological objects kept in St Petersburg museums (e.g., the silver bowl with the image of a horse in front of a sacrificial altar) reveal close ties with both the ancient oriental and the western civilizations, while at the same time bearing local features that testify their local provenance.

Ethnographic Collections

Ethnographic objects from Georgia (from the 18th to 20th century) are kept in the State Hermitage and Kuntskamera, the largest collection (more than 7000 pieces) is, however, to be found in The Russian Museum of Ethnography. Among them are various materials from the 19th century, including the rich collection of typical costumes from different regions of Georgia (some of them accompanied by all necessary accessories; e.g., female clothing from Khevsureti); rugs and carpets (from the eastern Georgian mountains), traditional “Blue Tablecloths,” embroidery, ceramic items, (jugs, bowls, marani type connected vessels, Gori glazed ceramics, etc.), wood-carved object (chairs, chests and boxes, etc.), traditional musical instruments (from Adjara, Lazeti, Meskheta and 19th-century Tbilisi), silver and gold jewelry, belts and weapons, silver wine vessels (kakarasi, twisted neck jugs, azarpeshas, bowls, etc.), which were made by members of the old Tbilisian silversmith guilds and belong to the Tbilisian School of silverwork [5:8].

Furthermore, the Russian Museum of Ethnography houses various ritual objects used during Christian rites and half-pagan folk festivals and ceremonies (e.g., ritual objects from local

shrines in Abkhazia and Khevsureti, masks from local fertility-related ceremonies like the berikaoba, wedding crowns, amulets, etc.). Among the outstanding examples is the silver cup with an accompanying inscription containing a prayer to St. George. This particular type of ritual vessel was used in rituals at local cult shrines in the mountainous parts of Georgia [6:250]. These were used during the ceremonies with beer, which was considered to be a sacred drink in the mountains (there are two similar cups in the collection of the Georgian National Museum).

Collections of Medieval Metalwork

Medieval Georgian metalwork objects are largely displayed in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum. These objects are diverse and show different artistic tendencies revealed in various modes of expression [7:19]. Among the outstanding medieval objects in the State Hermitage collection are: two 11th-century plaques executed by the goldsmith Ioane Monisdze featuring saints and angels in medallions; 7 fragments of the 11th-century frame of the famous Zarzma Icon of Transfiguration; pieces of the icon made by the 16th-century goldsmith Mamne, which were considered as lost for years, the quadrifolia and 11th-century cloisonné enamel medallion with the image of St George, fragments of the cover of the Vardzia Gospel, etc. There are very few intact medieval metalwork objects in the State Hermitage collection such as the 15th century (?) icon of St George Defeating the Dragon, which the clergy of Zugdidi offered as a gift to Emperor Nicholas I in 1837, and the 11th century processional cross (made by the master Giorgi), which shares similarities with the Tsaishi processional cross (1001-1108).

In general, the medieval metalwork collection is largely composed of small fragments of various precious religious items, which have been acquired, presented or sometimes looted from Georgia (e.g., the icons of the archangel Michael and Gabriel, looted from Jumati Monastery). Due to these

circumstances, information about these objects in the museum was quite often scanty and without attribution. The identification of the provenance of these fragmented objects could be done mostly through the study of old descriptions and photographs [8:183], as well as their detailed investigation and comparative analyses with their possible origins.

Other Collections and Archive Materials

Among other Georgian collections in St Petersburg's museums there are the 11th- to 15th-century stone carved reliefs and sculptural fragments from Sapara, Kintsvisi, Ananuri, Gudarekhi and other churches (the State Hermitage Museum); and the 18th- and 19th-century arms and weapons (swords, rifles, guns, and warrior armory adorned with niello and gold inlay etc.), which belonged to the Georgian nobility (the State Hermitage Museum, The Russian Museum of Ethnography, the Military Historical Museum of Artillery). There are also unique photo collections which date to the end of the 19th century, with images captured during Russian researchers' scientific expeditions in Georgia; these are in the *Kunstkamera*, the Russian Museum of Ethnography, the State Russian Museum and in the Exhibition Centre ROSPHOTO). In addition, there

are manuscripts, ethnographic drawings and other archival materials in the Russian Museum of Ethnography, the Russian Museum, and the Scientific-research Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts.

The easel paintings in the collection of the Russian Museum are noteworthy, among which is "The Feast of the Nobles" by Niko Piroshmanashvili. Together with works by other Georgian painters of the 20th century, the same collection houses some interesting pictures executed by Russian artists (e.g., I. Mashkov, L. Lagorio, V. Vereshchagin, G. Gagarin, et al.) on Georgian themes and scenes. Among these, there is Nikanor Chernetsov's "View of Tbilisi" (1832), together with the preliminary drawings for this picture which, together with its artistic value, is of a great importance in terms of its historical significance in reconstructing the urban structure of old Tbilisi at the beginning of the 19th century.

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ისტორია

ქართული მოძრავი კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის ნიმუშები სანკტ-პეტერბურგის მუზეუმებში

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**საქართველოს ეროვნული მუზეუმი, თბილისი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის რ. მეტრეველის მიერ)

ქართული მოძრავი კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის ფასეულობის სრულად შესაფასებლად აუცილებელია იმ ნიმუშების მოძიება და შესწავლა, რომლებიც წარმოადგენს საქართველოს მუზეუმებში დაცული ეროვნული საგანძურის ნაწილს და გაბნეულია საზღვარგარეთისა და, მათ შორის, რუსეთის მუზეუმებში. კვლევა შეისწავლის და აანალიზებს რუსეთის იმპერიის ყოფილი დედაქალაქის, სანკტ-პეტერბურგის მუზეუმების (რუსეთის ეთნოგრაფიული მუზეუმი, კუნსტკამერა, სახელმწიფო ერმიტაჟი, რუსული მუზეუმი და სხვ.) ფონდებში მე-19 საუკუნიდან დაგროვილ სამუზეუმო კოლექციებს და მათ შემადგენლობას. ეს კოლექციები მოიცავს როგორც საქართველოს ტერიტორიაზე ჩატარებული არქეოლოგიური გათხრების შედეგად და შემთხვევით მოპოვებულ მასალებს (მოყოლებული ბრინჯაოს ხანიდან შუა საუკუნეების ჩათვლით), ასევე, საქართველოს სხვადასხვა კუთხისათვის დამახასიათებელ მრავალფეროვან ეთნოგრაფიულ ნივთებს (ეროვნული სამოსელი, საიუველირო ნაკეთობები, ხალიჩები და ფარდაგები, ხისა და სამეთუნეო ნაწარმი, ხელსაქმის ნიმუშები და სხვ.), სახვითი ხელოვნებისა და საომარი აღჭურვილობის ნიმუშებს, რელიგიურ-საკულტო, სადღესასწაულო, საყოფაცხოვრებო და სხვა დანიშნულების საგნებს, ასევე ხელნაწერებს და სხვადასხვა სახის რარიტეტებს. სანკტ-პეტერბურგის მუზეუმებში დაცული ქართული კოლექციების რაოდენობრივი და თვისობრივი მახასიათებლების დადგენასთან, კოლექციების კლასიფიკაციასა და სისტემატიზაციასთან ერთად, კვლევის მთავარი მიზანია ვირტუალური ანასტილოზის (ძვ. ბერძნ. ἀναστήλασις - ავთენტური განცალკევებული ფრაგმენტების ხელახლა შეერთება) პროცესის განხორციელება საქართველოს მუზეუმებში დაცულ ანალოგიურ მასალებთან, რაც შეავსებს ქართულ მოძრავ კულტურულ მემკვიდრეობაზე არსებულ ინფორმაციას და ახალი ცოდნით გაამდიდრებს ეროვნულ სამეცნიერო სივრცეს.

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