

**The Georgian National Academy of Sciences (GNAS)  
and  
its First President**

*On 10 February, 2011 70 years had passed since the establishment of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences, and 120 years since the birth of its First President, Academician Nikoloz Muskhelishvili. It is envisaged to mark these significant dates by convening International Scientific Conferences.*

**It is common knowledge that the development of scholarly and creative thought in Georgia has a rich past, as reflected in the highly intensive and fruitful activity of the Georgian people in the field of spiritual culture. Many centuries ago, outstanding figures of Georgian culture created remarkable translations and original works at enlightenment and scholarly seats, as the Philosophical-Rhetorical School in Colchis (4<sup>th</sup> c.), Centres of spiritual culture in Palestine (5<sup>th</sup> c.), Syria (6<sup>th</sup> c.), Greece (10<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> c.) and Bulgaria (11<sup>th</sup> c.). It was at these seats that the best representatives of our nation familiarized themselves with Christian, as well as Oriental culture, scholarship and literature, paving the way for setting up of world-famous Gelati and Iqalto Academies in Georgia.**

**The existence of hearths of higher education in Georgia is attested in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (and even earlier). These hearths were centres resting on advanced Hellenistic traditions of the time, offering Eastern and Western philosophy covering all the principal spheres of progressive scholarship and education of the day and pointing to the stable statehood and high cultural level of this country.**

**Old Georgian culture is an expression of Hellenistic culture – a symbiosis of East – West Cultures – the culture of a country lying at the crossroads of the East and West traditionally uniting in itself streams of Eastern and Western civilizations.**

**But this ancient Georgian classical culture and education came to an end owing to the invasion of foreign forces, hampering for a long time the development of progressive culture & scholarship and obliterating the traditions of Classical Education.**

**These traditions were restored in this country on the basis of European education, science and scholarship by the establishment of a Georgian Higher Education Centre – the Georgian National University. Herein lies the major historical significance of our National University; it is from this standpoint that Ivane Javakhishvili's contribution to the Georgian culture and the Georgian people, as a whole, should be assessed; the**

**establishment by Professor I.Javakhishvili of a new seat of Higher Education restored, as it were, the continuity between Classical Georgian Hellenistic Education and modern Georgian national education, science/scholarship, and culture.**

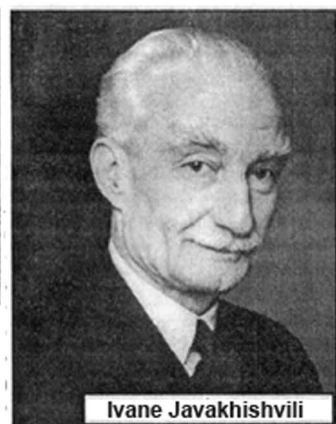
**Significantly enough, the restoration of independent Georgian statehood in 1918 coincided with the restoration of the seat of higher education in Georgia; the founding of the Georgian National University at the same time meant the cultural-scientific ensuring of Georgia's state independence – being one of its basic guarantors.**

**From the day of its foundation, a strong core of Professors was formed at Tbilisi State University. The first College of Professors consisted of members who had received training at Western and Russian Universities.**

**It was the Professorate of the First Georgian University that subsequently founded the «Georgian Academy of Sciences».**



**A Group of the Academy Founders**



**The Georgian Academy of Sciences – as an organizational form of uniting Georgian scholars and scientists – was established by the Decision of the Georgian Government taken on 10 February, 1941. This was a major development in the cultural life of the Georgian people. As noted above, the history of the Academy of Sciences began here along with the First Georgian University. The Georgian Academy of Sciences is thus a successor and continuer of the traditions of the seats of ancient Georgian education and culture – *Gelati* and *Iqalto Academies*; that is why the emblem of our *National Academy of Sciences* is *King David the Builder* with a model of *Gelati* in his hand.**

**The following outstanding scholars and scientists were the founding members of the Academy: *Giorgi Akhvlediani, Ivane Beritashvili, Kiriak Zavriev, Filip Zaitsev, Aleksandre Tvalchrelidze, Korneli Kekelidze, Nikoloz Ketskhoveli, Taras Kvaratskhelia, Nikoloz Muskhelishvili, Dimitri Uznadze, Akaki Shanidze, Arnold Chikobava, Giorgi Chubinashvili, Giorgi Khachapuridze, Simon Janashia, Aleksandre Janelidze.***

**On 26 February 1941 at the organizational session of the General Meeting of the Georgian Academy of Sciences the outstanding Georgian Mathematician Nikoloz Muskhelishvili was unanimously elected as President of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.**

**On 27 February 1941, in his inaugural address, the First President of the Georgian Academy of Sciences stressed I.Javakhisvili’s contribution to the foundation of *Tbilisi State University*, and, as a result, its successor Georgian Academy of Sciences. He wound up his speech with the following words: “On this festive day we are all saddened at the absence among us of the Person who would be most pleased with this significant development, and I have no doubt that, while today I have the honour of taking up this**

high office, were Ivane Javakhishvili alive, it would be most appropriate that He should take up this Post”.

Since the day of its foundation the basic scientific directions at the Georgian Academy of Sciences have developed in conformity with the tasks of the country’s cultural and economic construction, with account of the high traditions established over the years in individual fields of science and scholarship.

In the 1960s almost all branches of modern science were represented in the system of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, which is largely credited to its first President Academician Niko Muskhelishvili who, proceeding from his broad scientific and public interests, gave considerable attention to, and care for, the development of all branches of knowledge in the system of the Academy.

Academician N.Muskhelishvili was not only an eminent scientist, but a great teacher, as well. Many generations of Georgian mathematicians, physicists and engineers were trained at his brilliant lectures at *Tbilisi State University* and the *Georgian Polytechnical Institute*. His books in theoretical mechanics and analytical geometry were considered for years to be models of textbooks for higher educational institutions.

The Academy of Sciences, directed by Muskhelishvili for over 30 years, attained significant results in the fields of modern mathematics and mechanics, physics and astronomy, physiology and biology, chemistry and geology, linguistics and Oriental studies, history and archaeology, philosophy and psychology, etc. All this earned a name for the Georgian Academy of Sciences worldwide, being ranked among the best known scientific centers in the world.

As is known, the Georgian National Academy of Sciences that is described in the «Law on the Georgian National Academy of Sciences», as a “Scientific Adviser to the Georgian Government”, underwent significant structural changes undertaken in the country’s Higher Education system. As a result, it differs significantly from the traditionally existing structure, coming thus closer to the systems of various Western Academies, where Research Institutes come directly under Higher Educational Institutions and Universities, while an “Academy” constitutes usually an elite Association of outstanding scientists and scholars, with specific structural units dealing with assessment and certification of the research work done in the country at various Research Institutions. Best studies (accomplished at such Institutions) are published in Journals of high rating, as well as prizes named after outstanding scientists and scholars are awarded to the best scientific or scholarly works produced in different fields of knowledge over the past five years, and young researchers are awarded bonuses and monetary incentives, etc.

It is important for the Academy that the former Research Institutes of the Academy for the time being included into different Universities preserve the high academic potentials they had within the framework of the Academy; this will substantially contribute to the security and further cultural and scientific development of our country.

In place of the Research Institutes detached from the «Academy of Sciences» two major Scholarly structures have entered the Academy with the status of autonomous units: «*The Main Scientific Board of the Georgian Encyclopedia*» and «*The Committee for Editing the Academic Text of “The Man in the Panther’s Skin” (“Rustaveli Committee”)*». Both these structures are engaged in important scholarly and editorial work. In recent years such significant publications came out under the aegis of the «Georgian Encyclopedia» as “*The Georgian Language*”, “*The Georgian Writing*”. At present, work is underway on a multi-volume «Georgian Encyclopedia», to be completed in a few years.

The «Rustaveli Committee» continues its work on establishing the academic text of the Old Georgian Epic «*The Man in the Panther’s Skin*», with detailed comments and a vast vocabulary, and on «*The Thesaurus of the Georgian Language*», whose electronic version is under intensive preparation; it will present the entire stock, arranged chronologically, of all documentarily recorded possible word-forms of the Georgian language (from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> c. inclusive), with illustrative textual material; such a “Dictionary” will reflect the rich centuries-old lexical stock of the Georgian language, being “The Lexical Treasury of the Georgian language”, analogous to the well-known «Thesauruses» of the Greek, Latin, English, German, Hebrew and some other languages.

The ten «Scientific Departments», presently functioning at the Georgian National Academy of sciences, essentially cover all the fields of modern fundamental and applied sciences. At the same time, a number of “Commissions” and “Committees” have been set up, directed by Members of the Academy, such as, e.g., “*Commission for the Georgian Language and Literature*”, “*National Committee of Georgian Historians*”, “*Commission for the Complex Study of Problems of Georgia’s Mountain Regions*”, “*Commission on the Sources of Georgian History*”, “*Commission of History and Ethnology*”, “*Commission for Scholarly Cooperation with Caucasian Countries*”, “*Working Group for the Study of Problems of Nanotechnology*”, etc. Special mention should be made at this juncture of the “*Commission for Christian Theology and the Study of the History of Religion*”, headed by the *Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II* – an Honorary Academician of the «*Georgian National Academy of Sciences*».

**Defence of theses to obtain the «Degree of Doctor of Sciences» in relevant scientific fields is envisaged at the aforementioned “Commissions” and “Committees” (as different from the degree of “Academic Doctor” awarded at Higher Educational Institutions).**

**At expanded public Sessions of the “Academic Council”, often attended by Members of the Georgian Parliament and the Government, apart from purely scientific problems, issues of the security and further development of our Country are discussed, such as “Ensuring the Energy Security of the Countries of the Black Sea Basin”, “Earthquakes and Seismic Risks”, “Floods and Engineering Ecological Measures for Combatting them”, “Conception of the Development of Agriculture in Georgia”. Recommendations worked out by the “Academic Council” are submitted to relevant Governmental Structures.**

**«The Georgian National Academy of Sciences» is a Collective Member of a whole number of International Academic Associations, such as “The All-European Association of Academies” (ALLEA), “Association of the Academies of Asia and Africa” (AASA), and others. Many Members of our Academy are simultaneously Foreign Honorary Members of the most prestigious European and American Academies and Universities. On the other hand, many outstanding foreign scientists and scholars are Foreign Members of the «Georgian National Academy of Sciences», which they appreciate as a great honour.**

**Future developments will probably show the results of the structural changes effected at our Academy – their positive and negative aspects. At present, one may say with certainty that the «Georgian National Academy of Sciences» will continue to hold high the banner of Georgian Science and Scholarship – of fundamental and applied sciences – that had always stood at the level of the International Science, itself determining this level in many fields of knowledge.**

*Academician Thomas V. Gamkrelidze*  
*President of the Georgian National Academy*  
*of Sciences*