

An Unknown Autograph of Akaki's One Letter

Abstract: This work reflects some of the issues of creative history of Akaki's known publicist letter "From the Experience of our Past". This letter is distinguished by an acute national and political tone. However, the finale of the letter which ends with the praise to Vorontsov and his policy has been dropped out of the whole context of the paper. However, an unknown autograph of Akaki Tsereteli's one letter which ends with the praise to Rustveli and his aphorism and not to Vorontsov has shed light on this ambiguity. The author of the work concludes that the change of the finale of the letter occurred because of considerations concerning censorship. That is why the printed version of the paper does not express the author's will. We consider that in a new academic 20-volume edition while selecting the main source the unknown autograph #279 must be taken into account.

Key words: Akaki, textology, autograph.

In 1911, the newspaper "Temi" (#14) published Akaki Tsereteli's letter "From the Experience of our Past" which is distinguished with sharp national tone and is of great importance to understand the poet's world outlook in many political issues.

Both in the mentioned paper and in the whole creative works Akaki constantly analyzed the policy applied by Russia for enslavement of Georgia. The viceroy Vorontsov's "pseudo-friendly", expansionistic and hypocritical tendencies do not escape his attention. Akaki always sadly drew a parallel between Georgia's empirical past and current poor state of the country and blamed Russian policy for this.

There are many such passages in the mentioned letter "From the Experience of our Past": "I oppose those who deny nationality"... "The leader of people, the landlord or *tavadis*, of course, should not be inherited... The one who will come in due time, be ready to lead the people. It does not matter of which strata he comes...". Don't deprive me of my dream that I still worship the cemeteries of my forefathers. They worked hard and made a great contribution to the homeland. Those buried there, worked hard in their lifetime and did much for the motherland". "They had brought with honour the Cross of Jesus Christ to the gates of the nineteenth century. They looked around and casted their gaze northward, to the country of the same faith, and appealed to her". When entering into alliance with Russia, King Erekle's intention was joint actions against external enemies but non-interference in domestic affairs. "Today we woke up and found ourselves completely deceived... We did not break the will of our ancestors... We believe in their will: language, religion and nationality".

Each phrase of the letter is an evidence of Akaki's attitude to Russo-Georgian relations, the state of the country and, naturally, the goal of writing this letter. However, the finale of the letter seems a little bit strange which is dropped out from the whole content of the paper and leaves an impression of ambiguity. The letter ends with the praise to Vorontsov and his ideas: "So we are pressed between two and wise Vorontsov's politics: A Georgian must be Russianized by soul and heart, to be politically Russian but by appearance, i.e. language, religion, national color must stay Georgian again in order to strengthen the incorporation with Russia. Today nobody remembers this... Time will come when this statement will be justified but it will be late".

The finale of the letter seems a little bit strange because of Russia's policy, sometimes fierce and sometimes desperate lines of Akaki's poems after several disclosures of Vorontsov's methods. The only autograph of the printed source which is indicated in Akaki's XIV volume (p.637) and kept in the archive of the National Centre of Manuscripts under #242 testifies this version of the letter but doubts disappeared when we have found out several novelties during the work in Akaki's fond – the unknown autograph of the mentioned paper and completely unknown letters of the poet. The unknown autograph is kept in the archive of the National Centre of Manuscripts under #279. The changes in it are almost absent, it contains five pages of notebook, at the end it has a signature "Akaki".

The letter "From the Experience of our Past" is found neither in printed source, nor in its known autograph (#242). The unknown autograph (#279) is titled by the poet as "Thoughts".

According to the newly found autograph, it becomes clear that the above mentioned letter had quite different finale. Akaki writes: "If we are destined to perish, let's remember Rustveli, "Better a glorious death than life dragged out in shame!" ... i.e. instead of praising Vorontsov who was not in the least associated with the thoughts on Georgia's past and present, the author found the finale of the letter saturated with optimal and heroic spirit that was targeted to make an impact on the reader and exactly suited the purpose of writing this letter. The poet strongly criticized the Russian policy, the dreamy state of his own people, moral degradation, denies reconciliation with destiny and his protagonist like his ancestors requires action and fighting. Just this is meant in the final words of the unknown autograph which sound like an appeal. "If we are doomed to death, live as slaves, we prefer a glorious death!" Akaki wished to finish this letter with these words but in conditions of severe censorship the mentioned paper would share the same fate as many other works of the poet. Therefore, bypassing censorship Akaki made use of approved means, by praising Vorontsov in the end of the letter saved the letter from banishing but artificially changed finale put an imprint on it. Newly found autograph clarifies misunderstanding of the strange finale.

An opinion that Akaki changed the finale of the letter because of the fear of its banning is supported by unknown papers "Georgian Theatre", "Old Upbringing" and "Truth", the critical tone of which made them unpublished. The poet corrected a "mistake", collected thoughts and conclusions expressed in the banned letters in the paper "Taking into Account our Past" in which he softened the tone, expressed his thoughts more in a hidden form than in previous works and thus saved the letter from the clutches of censorship. Passages and phrases of the printed and banned letters more or less coincide with each other both semantically and in form.

As an example it is enough to mention the issues of incorporation of Georgia with Russia. For instance, in newly found unpublished paper "Georgian Theatre" Akaki writes: "All this belong to the past time when the enemies were going to kill us in flesh, and today nobody touches the flesh, the fighting strategy has been changed: they stifle our souls. This tactic brings its fruit and today's Georgian resembles his ancestor, as the ghost to sickle. At one glance today's Georgia almost does not exist, poor thing!... There are not only the signs of life, but no awakening too!".

Another Akaki's banned paper "Truth" begins with the same phrase: Today, a Georgian resembles his ancestor, as a ghost to a living thing expressing it". The same thoughts continue the mentioned letter: Shah Abbas was the first who realized that it was difficult to conquer the people who identify their nationality with religion. Shah resolved to exterminate all the Georgians, the captured Georgians were sent to Persia and in their places Kizilbash tribes were settled. Kartl-Kakheti was reduced but those who left tried to preserve their identity... In addition to this, Istanbul set its sights on the west Georgia".

In the "Truth" there are also strong passages: "Over the last 100 years, Georgia had been gradually falling into Russia's hands. Russia saw that it was impossible to enslave people who identify religion with nationality... It is hard to subjugate until religion is not deprived and the people morally fall. This was the intention of the tsarist regime and favorable conditions were created for this. The tsarist Russia became dominant in the country. Russia pursued a policy of national oppression. Administration and legal proceedings were conducted in Russian. The Georgian language was forcibly ousted from political and cultural life. Everything was done to wash out religion, upbringing and traditions, to kill the spirit of the

people. Georgia was caught in a trap for entrusting her destiny to Russia. The policy of russification also envisaged demographic changes: the replacement of Georgians and settlement of Russians in their place.

The letter "Truth" also ends with Rustaveli's aphorism: "Better a glorious death than life dragged out in shame!"

Exactly with the same aphorism ends the unknown autograph found out by us. This version of the letter "From the Experience of our Past" failed to come out and Akaki had to resort to tricks due to the censorship. The difference between the mentioned letters and newly found letter is only in the tension of expressing the thoughts. By softening the tone of the letter and change of its finale Akaki managed to publish his composition although its printing in such form was against his will.

Therefore, we consider that during selection of the body text of the mentioned letter for the new academic 20-volume edition the newly found autograph #279 must be taken into account.