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Scientific Legacy of Ivane Javakhishvili

Ivane Javakhishvili was a famous Georgian historian, activist and a founder of the first Caucasian university, Tbilisi State University. Mainly, it was his effort that succeeded in establishment the first Georgian university. Tbilisi State University was the first university not only in Georgia but across entire Caucasus. Now as we all know, this university is named after Ivane Javakhishvili. When established, Caucasus was under the Russian control. As we know, the Russian government did not allow depended nations to create their national university. This policy was strict and it was maintained throughout the 19th century when Georgia was under the Russian control.¹

The idea of establishment of the national Georgian university was old enough, but the realization of this project was due to the effort of Ivane Javakhishvili. The goal was already achieved in 1917 after the Russian Revolution of February 1917. The new government replaced the Tsar's regime in the Russian Empire. The new leaders were ready to accept willingness of national minorities to enforce the education in local languages, including the opening of university. This was obvious political setback of the Russian leaders in favor of national minorities, but since the October Revolution Russia was involved in bloody civil war between opponents and supporters of this new Revolution. This was moment for enforcement of the will of the Georgian people to receive higher education in their national language. Ivane Javakhishvili made all efforts for the organization of the first university in Georgia and set the date for the establishment of the first Caucasian university in Tbilisi. The commemorative day of David IV the Restorer was chosen as the

¹ The paper was presented at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Faculty of Humanities Institute of Georgian History International Scientific Conference “Ivane Javakhishvili – 145”, December 28, 2021. See the program of this conference.

day of opening of the first university. David the Restorer is credited with opening the Academy of Gelati and the Academy of Ikalto in Georgia, hence he was acknowledged for his patronage of education. The date of establishment of the university was a symbolic act that underlined the long lasting tradition of the higher education in Georgia. Tbilisi State University was meant to be the continuation of this tradition.

As a historian, Ivane Javakhishvili was the founder of the history school at the same university. The first cohort of the students were his pupils under his supervision. The big names beside Ivane Javakhishvili are as follows: Simon Janashia, Nikoloz Berdzenishvili, Simon Kaukhchishvili etc. This group of people lay foundation to the history school of this university. The first representative and the founder of this school, as well as the first head of the history department of the same university was Ivane Javakhishvili himself.

Ivane Javakhishvili already distinguished himself as a historian. His major book, “The History of the Georgian Nation” was published during the imperial rule in the beginning of the 20th century. Since that time it became the most popular history book about the Georgian history. Surprisingly enough, this is the most popular history book in Georgia though it is an academic research, which contains Javakhishvili’s research mostly on the political history of Georgia (Generally, most popular books are non-academic works or History textbooks). Despite the fact that the book is academic work on the large period of the Georgian history, it became popular among the Georgians and was issued several times. At least four academic editions were published, three of them after Javakhishvili passed away. Non-academic editions were published more often, especially after Georgia gained independence in 1991. Several hundred thousand copies of this book was published since the first publication.

“The History of the Georgian Nation” is the first and yet the last academic work on the political history of Georgia that examines a political history of Georgia from ancient times to the end of middle ages and is written by a single author in Georgian language. Before that Marie-Félicité Brosset was the only author who undertook a similar mission and wrote the History of Georgia or namely, Introduction to the History of Georgia in French. Javakhishvili was very much influenced by the outstanding work of Brosset. Javakhishvili had a goal to write the complete Georgian history from old times to the present. It was also intended to update and supplement the earlier work of Brosset on the political history of Georgia. In “The History of the Georgian Nation” a political history is enriched with historical geographic description of

Georgia. A history of the Georgian culture is also outlined. This book became not only the most popular history textbook for the broader public, but also a pattern for writing the academic research in Georgia. The outcomes of the book are still present in history textbooks at secondary school or university levels. It was a symbolic work that shaped the modern Georgian historical thought. Scientific accuracy, scrutiny and rejection of Marxist-Leninist ideology while writing on the political history of Georgia made a strong impact on the Georgian historiography. Many historians tried to avoid the Marxist-Leninist ideology, they were motivated either by academic honesty or sometimes by patriotic feeling. “The History of the Georgian Nation” was written without Marxist-Leninist approach. The popularity of this book during Soviet-era was very much defined by the ignorance of imposed ideas of the Soviet regime. Ivane Javakhishvili almost never cited obligatory literature of Marx, Engels and Lenin while narrating the history of Georgia. Javakhishvili’s works in the 12 volumes were prepared mostly during the Soviet period it took more than 22 years to publish all these volumes from 1976 to 1998, but most of these volumes were prepared for the publication during Soviet-era. All volumes were published as intended in the framework, which was prepared in 1970s, during the Soviet period. Only the last the 12th volume was enriched by some more materials which was not included in the initial framework of this huge project.

Scientific legacy of Ivane Javakhishvili is still very important, even today. Preparation of one more edition of his complete works for the 150th anniversary from the birth of Ivane Javakhishvili is an evidence for above-mentioned statement (recently announced mutual plan by the officials of Tbilisi State University and National Centre of Manuscripts). Publication Ivane Javakhishvili’s “The Works in Twelve Volumes” was a recent and very successful project. I think, no duplication is necessary, now it is more important to publish unpublished works of Ivane Javakhishvili and to continue the set of volumes that was prepared as the 12 volumes and we definitely need to supplement those books with unpublished materials. These will help and unite the Scientific legacy of Ivane Javakhishvili bringing together all his works whether published or unpublished.

Here I will list all those 12 volumes published as “The Works of Ivane Javakhishvili in Twelve Volumes”:

The First Volume – “The History of the Georgian Nation”

The Second Volume – “The History of the Georgian Nation”

The Third Volume – “The History of the Georgian Nation”

The Fourth Volume – “The Georgian Economic History”

The Fifth Volume – “The Georgian Economic History”

The Sixth Volume – “A History of Georgian Law”

The Seventh Volume – “A History of Georgian Law”

The Eighth Volume – “A History of Old Georgian Literature”

The Ninth Volume includes three books – “A Georgian Metrology and Numismatics”; “A Georgian Diplomatics or Study of Documents”; “A Georgian Palaeography”

The Tenth Volume – “The Origins and Genetic Relationship of the Georgian and the Caucasian Languages”

The Eleventh Volume includes three more books – “Historical-Ethnographic Problems of Georgia, Caucasus and Near East”; “The Old Armenian Historical Writing”; “The Main Issues of History of the Georgian Music”

The Twelfth Volume includes various articles and short books. One is about social movement in the 19th century Georgia; this volume also contains his short book on the Georgian historical borders; one more book on the kingship in Georgia, which is also included in his “History of Georgian Law”; the same volume covers incomplete part of “The History of the Georgian Nation”, which is about the Russo-Georgian relations. It was previously unpublished; his early student work on Christianization of Georgia, reviews and many more are also included.

Nowadays, what should be done in the future. The unpublished third and fourth volumes of “The Georgian Economic History” is must. The publication of those two volumes are important despite the fact they are incomplete. His bibliography and the list of works on Ivane Javakhishvili should be published as separate volume. Some books that he co-authored were published by his disciples posthumously, they should be taken into consideration as well, even though we know that some of those books are textbooks and his co-authors changed a lot. These were mostly history textbooks for the secondary schools and co-authors, Simon Janashia and Nikoloz Berdzenishvili, edited them accordingly. Some of those deviations obviously were not consulted with Ivane Javakhishvili. However, history books are good source for understanding the new reality of Georgia that was established in 1921 after Sovietization, which reshaped the direction of the Georgian historiography. Nevertheless, Ivane Javakhishvili always stood for writing unbiased and true history without exaggeration and falsification.