



St. Grigol Peradze
Professor of the University of Warsaw

ST. GRIGOL PERADZE (1899-1942)
PROFESSOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW (1933-1942)

Grigol Peradze was born in the village of Bakurtsikhe (Kakheti province) in Eastern Georgia. His father, Romanoz Peradze, was a priest. In 1918 Peradze graduated from the Tbilisi Theological Seminary, and afterwards studied at the Tbilisi State University until 1921. On February 25, 1921, Georgia was occupied by Soviet Russia. Grigol Peradze went into exile in Germany in November the same year. In 1926 he graduated from the University of Bonn (Germany).

In 1927 he received a PhD degree in History (the title of his PhD thesis was "History of the Georgian Monasticism from its creation until 1064". From 1927 to 1932 Peradze was an Associate Professor at the University of Bonn. From 1933 to 1942 he was a Professor of Patrology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Warsaw, in Poland. In 1931 Grigol Peradze was ordained a priest in the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of London; in 1934, he received the rank of Archimandrite. In 1931 he founded the Georgian St. Nino Orthodox church in Paris. In the same year he began to publish a Georgian scientific journal titled "Jvari Vazisa" ("Cross of Vine").

In the 1930's Peradze discovered numerous important written manuscripts of Georgian Christian culture in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Germany and Austria (Georgian manuscripts of the Typicon of the Georgian Petritsoni Monastery [Bachkovo, Bulgaria], the so-called Tischendorf manuscripts of the Apagae of the Monastery of the Holy Cross at the University Library in the University of Leipzig, Germany, etc.). The invasion of Poland by German troops in 1939 made Peradze's position precarious. For him being in solidarity with Jews in peril went without saying; that's why he helped them wherever he could. He didn't hesitate to visit the imprisoned Polish Metropolitan Dionysios. These activities were viewed with growing suspicion by the Nazi occupiers and Peradze's fruitful ecclesiastic and scientific activities were brought to an end in 1942 when, on May 4, he was arrested by the German Gestapo.

On December 6, 1942, Grigol Peradze was killed in the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau when he entered a gas-chamber instead of a Jewish prisoner who had a large family. Main fields of scientific activity of Grigol Peradze were: the history of the Georgian Orthodox and Apostolic Church, source studies of the history of Georgia and the Georgian Church, Patrology, history of Georgian literature, Rustvelology. Grigol Peradze was canonized by the Georgian Orthodox and Apostolic Church in September 1995. The Feast Day for St. Priest Martyr Grigol is December 6.



Portrait of Circassian, 19th century.

“The desert again.

It was after ten, dark. Suddenly we saw a stone mark which indicated that there were one hundred and twenty kilometres left to Aleppo. I sighed heavily. One of the Arabs sitting opposite of me was watching me and said, “Khavaja zabakhtan,” which meant “You have been forsaken.”

Christ used the same expression during His greatest suffering on the cross, “Eli, Eli, lamma sabachtani!” I was glad that the word was still alive that I had heard it just a moment ago from that uneducated man, probably a craftsman. I was overcome with joy; so my journey through this Dantean night had a purpose!

Still, we were very far from the direct destination of our journey.

A city again. It was Homs, i.e. the ancient famous city of Emesa. One of its famous residents had been the Neapolitan Nemesius, the author of the philosophical treatise on human soul. (...) A not very tall man came over to me. I had the impression he was one of the passengers.

–“The elderly woman who travels with me noticed that,” the stranger continued. “I call her my aunt because of her age, although she is not exactly my aunt. She is leaving for Turkey tomorrow, and I am escorting her to the train station in Aleppo. She noticed you at once,” he continued after the introduction, “and told me you could not be an Arab because you were not doing any fuss here and you had a kind heart, because you gave figs to the boy.”

“What nationality are you?” I asked him.

“I am Circassian,” he said and, seeing my astonishment, he added at once, “We have physically deteriorated in this land, among these people. There are no such handsome men, as the legends tell, left among us. Still we are superior to others in our spirit, cunning and intelligence.

I told him that I also came from the Caucasus, from Georgia, and that I currently lived in Warsaw.

“I have a friend there,” he interrupted me, “editor Baytugan. I have not met him personally; we used to write to one another. I used to receive the magazine for Caucasian highlanders, Şimali Kafkasya, which he was the editor of. I gained three new subscribers for the magazine several years ago. Then I was ill and I could not send the money and I have not received the magazine for a long time now.”

I promised I would settle the matter in Warsaw and the magazine would be sent to him.

“I have also,” he continued, “written an article about Circassian horses for the magazine. However it has not been printed.”

Such a man, who worked far away on site, had to be encouraged, so I assured him that his work would be taken into consideration.

He had much information about our Caucasian federation and he had contacts among various Circassians holding important posts here.

There were many senior officials among them. Nearly the entire French cavalry here, various posts in the army, police and gendarmerie were staffed by Circassians. (...)

The Circassian issue is very interesting and it is impossible to study it during one night. It will be worthwhile to come here again for that purpose and devote more time to this important issue. New great prospects open up to this nation, and we must help it achieve that. Once, when the nation ruled in Egypt and Asia Minor, it did much good for the Georgian culture since it patronised Georgian monasteries and monks in those countries. I even have unknown documents which show how the Muslim Mameluks made contributions for Georgian monasteries.

Now it is our turn! Whose? Our emigration’s... I suddenly stopped my train of thought. It was so nice and marvellous here! We seemed to be going through a paradise; the sea was on the right hand, and the mountains, villages and blooming gardens on the left. (...).”

The fragment of the story „The Roses of Jericho. Diary of a Journey the Holy Land and Syria (5 July-28 September 1936)”, in from St. Grigol Peradze’s diary under the title „Alepo”.