

Translation from Georgian into German, 1991 to date

A study by Next Page Foundation in the framework of the Book Platform project

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During investigation I have been using the depositories of national library, Humboldt Library, website [Georgien: Bibliographie des deutschsprachigen Schrifttums](#), internet, guided by consultations with translators, authors, literary agents, publishers. We should also mention the book of Steffi Chotiwari-Juenger „Die Literaturen der Völker Kaukasiens (Neue Erzählungen und deutschsprachige Bibliographie)“ and “Georgian literature in European Science”, edited by Elgudja Khintibidze.

Introduction

According to words of Georgian kartvelologist Heinz Faehnrich, “Georgian literature belongs to the number of the greatest, richest and well-developed literatures...It deserves of standing side by side with French, Greek or German literatures”.

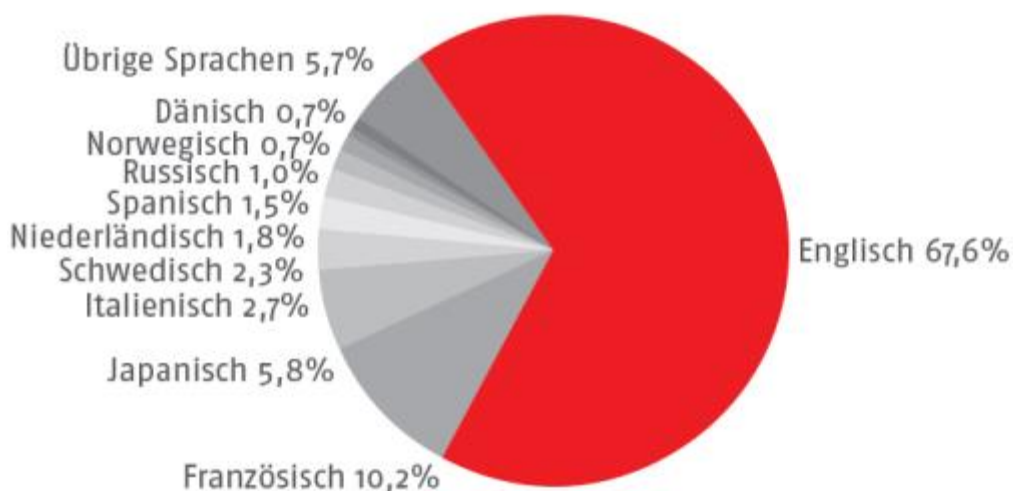
Georgian literature has never been closed in itself, in geographic, ethnographic or political borders of the country. It always had concrete or historical-typological, simple or complicated creative contacts with the literatures of other nations. Georgian literature had relations with German literature as well. Georgian masters of belles-lettres borrowed progressive ideas and artistic images from German literature, worked out similar subjects, translated texts, which corresponded to their working principles and aspirations to a certain extent. At the same time, Georgian theme, Georgian historical material, images or realities were expressed in German texts to some extent as well. To prove it, it is enough to name the greatest poet and playwright of baroque Andreas Gryphius, working in the seventeenth century, who wrote the tragedy “Katharina von Georgien” (“Catherine the Georgian”) in 1647, in which one episode of Georgian people’s century-old struggle against Iran is described, when Georgian queen Ketevan (the same Catherine) was tortured in Persia.

Interest in Georgian literature and first translations from it appeared in German-speaking world from the end of nineteenth century, and it was the merit of such people as Austrian Franz Karl Alter, who is considered to be the founder of Kartvelology in Germany and Europe, Berta and Arthur von Suttners, Arthur Leist, who made a valuable contribution to the popularization of Georgian literature with his translations (of works of Shota Rustaveli, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Grigol Orbeliani and others), or works in literary criticism. In this respect the work of Georgian emigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century (Grigol Peradze, Mikheil Tsereteli, Grigol Tsereteli, Zurab Avalishvili, Mikheil Tarchnishvili, Grigol Robakidze, Kita Chkhenkeli) is also worthy of note, Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani’s “Wisdom of Fancy”, Grigol Robakidze’s “The Snake’s Skin” and other works were translated and published. It must be especially noted that “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” in European languages was first translated into German (Arthur Leist, 1889). Bertha and Arthur Suttners, Hugo Huppert, Martin Rene

(extracts were published in Berlin in 1974), Marie Pritwits, Mikheil Tsereteli, Hermann Budensig, Rot Neukom, N. Janelidze and Lidia Pepe Gedevanishvili² worked on the translation of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” from time to time.

According to the data of 2012 of **Association of exchanges of literary production** (Börsenverein des deutschen Buchhandels), the largest amount of translations made from other languages into German, 67,6%, are translations from English, then comes French, Japanese, Italian etc. Literature translated from Georgian into German is likely on the one of the last places in the category of “other languages”, though good tendencies have been observed for the last years, about which it will be mentioned below.

Herkunftssprachen der Übersetzungen (Erstauflagen) ins Deutsche 2012



Quelle: Deutsche Nationalbibliografie, VLB 2012

If we look over the history of translation from Georgian into German, we’ll get the following general picture.

1. The beginning of the nineteenth century - the first third of the twentieth century before the start of the Second World War. It should be noted, that two original monuments of the old Georgian clerical literature were translated into German at the beginning of 20th century: “Torturing of Evstati Mtskheteli” and Ioane Sabanisdze’s “Torturing of Abo Tbileli”. Translation of Hagiographic works continued later on and Jakob Tsurtaveli’s “Torturing of Shushanik”³, Giorgi

² In this connection see German translators of Shota Rustaveli’s *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*: Arthur Leist, Hugo Huppert, Ruth Neukom, Mikheil Tsereteli, Hermann Budensig, Marie Pritwits, Compiler and publisher Badri Sharvadze, Privatausgabe, Tbilissi 2003

³ *Torturing of Shushanik* in six languages (Latin, Russian, English, French, Italian, German), Compiler and editor Otar Egadze, translator into German Neli Amashukeli, „Khelovneba“, Tbilisi, 1983

Merchule's "Life of Grigol Khantseli" and Mose Khoneli's "Amiran-Darejaniani" were also translated, such an important masterpiece of old Georgian literature as "Visramiani" was published twice, as well as Megrelian, Swan, Lazic, Abkhasian fairy tales.

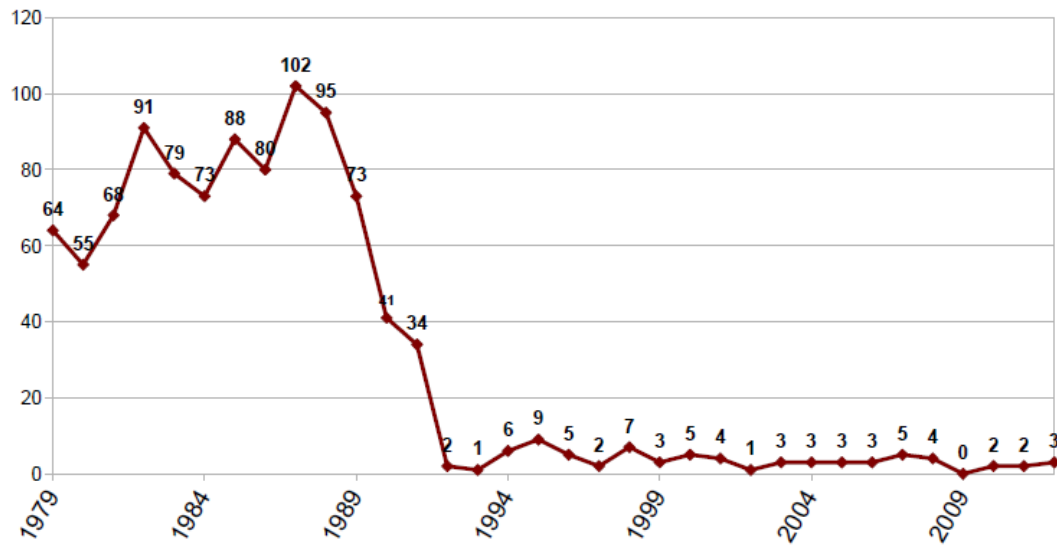
2. Translations and studies were not published during the Second World War, excluding G. Robakidze's essays on Hitler and Mussolini, as well as German-English phrase book for soldiers.

Since the end of the forties important change took place, caused by formation of German Democratic Republic after the war, which was included into the same socialist camp as Georgia. Close connections, cultural, and among them, literary relations were established among the countries of this camp. Many works of classical or modern writers were translated and published, although often through the mediation of Russian language, and incompletely. Most of Georgian literary translations were published in the eastern part of Germany at abovementioned period. Only some translations were published in the western part of Germany, Soviet union, Switzerland and other countries. This period lasted till the 90-ies and reached its pick in 70-80-ies. Board of literary translation under the direction of Otar Nodia, existing at the Union of Georgian writers, where a large group of professional translators gathered, played a certain role, making word for word and artistic translations. The great merit of foreign researchers of Georgian literature and Kartvelologists, such as R. Bleichsteiner, Gertruda Paetch, Heinz Faehnrich, Steffi Chotiwari-Jünger, Ruth Neukomm, Reiner Kirsch, Elke Erb should be especially noted, whose translation and scientific activities predetermined introduction of Georgian literature to the German-speaking world.

And finally, the literature, translated since 90-ies up today. In order to see clearly what events have developed since 90-ies in respect to translation of Georgian literature, we will present one graphic presentation⁴:

⁴ Rachel Gratzfeld Literary Agency Translations of Georgian Literature Worldwide in the Recent Past and Today Quantitative Survey, Literary Forum Dialogue Tbilisi, May 2012

Number of Translations 1979-2012



As we see, general picture of translation of Georgian literature is given here. If we take only literature translated from Georgian into German, we will get the following picture:

In 1990-2013, 9 pieces of modern poetry and 11 pieces of classical poetry, as well as 7 pieces of modern prose and 8 pieces of classical prose were translated from Georgian into German. The number of humanitarian scientific works is 26, only one play (of Lasha Tabukashvili), one essay (D. Barbakadze's "Passion of Martyrs"), 2 works of hagiographical literature (Giorgi Merchule's "Life of Grigol Khantsteli", Giorgi Mtsire's "Life of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli"), 2 pieces of children's literature were translated, 9 anthologies were published, works of several Georgian authors were published in 2 multinational collections, samples of folk were translated and published in 6 books.

Several books became bestsellers and were published twice, such as: Mikheil Javakhishvili's "Kvachi Kvachantiradze", Shota Rustaveli's "Knight in the Panther's skin", Tamta Melashvili's "Gatvla" ("Counting out"). Often one and the same work and translation are published in different collections and anthologies. Anthologies, which get readers acquainted with Georgian writers for the first time, should be appraised especially. Such are anthologies of men and women authors compiled by Manana Tandashvili and Jost Gippert and edited by Naira Gelashvili.

Among Georgian authors Dato Barbakadze is published most frequently, who, in his own words, does not resort to the special efforts for that and watches how his texts pave the

way to the German-speaking literary stage against the background of that, that this author doesn't take part in the literary life of his country on principle.

In general, despite that in mentioned period the translations of such classical or modern writers, such as Shota Rustaveli, Giorgi Merchule, Mose Khoneli, author of Visramiani, Vazha-Pshavela, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Galaktion Tabidze, Symbolist poets, as well as Beso Khvedelidze, Anna Kordzaia-Samadashvili and others, were published, translation of Georgian literature mainly occurs from time to time and doesn't have systemic character.

Publishing houses, which published translations from Georgian into German:

Die Suhrkamp Verlag GmbH & Co. KG is one of the largest and most important publishing houses in Germany. According to the data of 2011, its annual turnover is equal of 39 Mio Euro. Publishing house works in many directions, but for us it's interesting that it actively publishes literature of Eastern Europe.

The priority of publishing house Reclam-Verlag Leipzig, Ötigshausen & Neumann is humanitarian scientific literature (philosophy, literary criticism, culturology, psychology, musical art, pedagogy). Publishing house has its own typography and its annual turnover consists of 200 books.

Pop-Verlag, Ludwigsburg - was created in 2003, publishes German and foreign language literature. It is of great interest that it started the Caucasian series, the second volume of which was given to Dato Barbakadze, the third - to Irma Shiolashvili.

Der Münchner Piper Verlag was founded in 1904, publishes belles-lettres and special literature, annual turnover is 200 books.

Der Schaker-Verlag - was founded in 1986 by Ch. Shaker. It is basically oriented on scientific literature, mainly on typing theses and monographs.

The history of Eugen-Diederichs-Verlag starts in 1886. From the beginning its priority directions were: wisdom of the world people, tales, accounts from remote countries. Its aim is comprehension foreign cultures and extension of mental spaces.

Unionsverlag and Manesse Verlag Zürich, SCHERZ - are small Swiss publishing houses, but after publishing Tamta Melashvili's "Gatvla" ("Counting out") by Unionsverlag (translation Natia Mikeladze-Bakhsoliani) and its success (the book got very prestigious award of German Youth Book), this publishing house will have more motivation for publishing Georgian literature.

Books published in Tbilisi: Publishing house "Siesta" has published Davit-Dephy Gogibedashvili's short novel, three poems by Vazha-Pshavela ("Aluda Ketelauri", "Host and Guest", "Snake Eater") in three languages (German, French, English), as well as Giorgi Kekelidze's three-language video-book. Badri Sharvadze has collected all German

translations of “The knight in the Panther’s Skin” and published it at his own expense. Manana Paichadze translated Nino Bakanidze’s two stories, which were published in the publishing house “Meridian”. Vazha-Pshavela’s “Wedding of Jays” was also published in Tbilisi in the publishing house “Chronograph”. Scientific edition of Shota Rustaveli’s “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” (rediscovered historical translation by Maria Pritwits), edited by Steffi Chotiwari-Jünger and Elguja Kintibidze, was published in 2005 in Tbilisi.

As for periodicals, several German -language journals were being issued during this period.

Journal “Georgica” plays very important role in reproducing Georgian scientific thought in German. It is a joint scientific journal of Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili University and Jena University. It should be noted, that it is the only scientific journal in Europe, which is merely Kartvelological one. In Europe, four journals were issued under the same name time from time. Journal “Georgica” first was founded in London in 1935-1937. Only five issues were published during three years, and it was a great success. Under the name “Georgica” two big collections were issued in Italy, namely

Venice, eight numbers in Amsterdam, issued by means of Archil Bagrationi Fund. Its publication was stopped a few years ago. Scientists think that journal “Georgica”, which is being issued, is more successful, than its predecessors. It was founded by the Kartvelologist Hainz Faehnrich, who was post graduate student in Tbilisi state University and worked under the leadership of Akaki Shanidze. Steffi Jünger occupied the post of editor of this journal after him, at present its editor is Irma Berscheid-Kimeridze. Works of Georgian and German Kartvelologists and Caucasologists, as well as Kartvelologists and Caucasologists from all over the world are published in journal. Articles are chosen by the Georgian side under the guidance of Marika Lortkipanidze. The following journals connected to Georgia are also worth of noting: „Mitteilungsblatt der Berliner Georgischen Gesellschaft“ (from 1992), „Mitteilungsblatt der Vereinigung der Freunde Georgiens in der Schweiz“ (1997-2007), „Nachrichten aus Georgien“ (1994-2005). In 2011 Lia Zizagi-Wittek, scientific worker of Berlin Humboldt University had an attempt of issuing scientific-popular, well-illustrated journal “Kaukasus” experimental number of which had been even published, but Georgian side didn’t express any interest and it was stopped.

In spite of these difficulties, certain positive tendencies have been observed lately, which we have already mentioned above. But first it would be interesting to find out what possibilities are in Germany in this respect.

Translators’ associations, houses, institutions, book fairs

There are some professional associations of translators in Germany, among which the following are the most important:

1. The union (VDU) of German -language translators of literature and scientific texts/the translators section (VS) of German writers union - is a professional organization which unites the largest part of professional translators of Germany.

Its tasks are: improving of working conditions for translators, getting acquainted their works with the society and their popularization, issuing of journal “Der Übersetzer”, consultations on professional questions, specifying and renewing data of actual translators, co-organization of the courses of improvement of professional skills.

2. **The fund of German translators (Deutsche Übersetzerfond)**, aim of which is strengthening scientific profile of translation studies and interpreting studies, assisting of self-understanding of sphere on national and international levels, unification of teaching programs of “translation and interpretation” at universities, organizing of scientific sectoral conferences and seminars, measures for improvement of professional skills.
3. Board of European translators Nordrhein-Westfalen in Straelen - [Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium Nordrhein-Westfalen in Straelen e.V.](#) - international working centre of literary translators, distributing scholarships all over the world, translators have at their disposal living rooms, working space, rich library, seminars on improvement of professional skills and translation workshops for authors and translators are held here as well.

Scholarships and subsidies

There is a well-organized system of scholarships and awards for translators in German-speaking countries. Scholarships are mainly of four kinds:

1. Working scholarships

The list of working scholarships for translation from other languages into German is very big. These scholarships are distributed by the fund of German-speaking translators, cultural boards of nearly every land of Germany, Straelen’s international translation board, Robert Bosch Fund, Loren’s translation house and etc.

2. Being at the place

Translators can spend a certain period of time, work and rest in the translation houses all over the world according to obligation of being at place.

3. Travelling

Partial or full defrayal of expenses of travelling connecting to profession.

4. Translation workshop

Berlin translation workshop.

The necessary condition for getting all these scholarships is to sign a contract with the publishing house on the translation of book, although there are scholarships for the novice translators as well.

Berlin literary colloquium (LCB) plays a great role in the assistance of translators, where workshops, meetings and seminars are held for translators, as well as authors from different countries are invited. From Georgia Dato Barbakadze, Zaza Burchuladze, Anna Kordzaia-Samadashvili, Ekaterine Togonidze, Tamta Melashvili were there. Otar Chiladze was invited together with his translator (Cristiane Lichtenfeld) earlier.

Swiss fund **ProHelvetia** and Department of Cultural Relations of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria have got big programs for assisting translators.

Book Fairs

Book Fair of Frankfurt, which generally takes place in October, is notable for its importance and scale. Leipzig Fair, which is held in March, comes after it, and, besides, there are comparatively small fairs, for example Bonn Book Fair, where migrant and intercultural literature is exhibited, there are also regional fairs. Different arrangements, meetings, presentations are held at these fairs, the aim of which is selling copyrights and licenses. Special awards are given there as well. Buch Wien, BuchQuartier are the most important fairs in Austria, and BuchBasel - in Switzerland.

As for positive changes, which took place in the sphere of translation from Georgian to Germany, first of all, five year attempt of Georgian government has completed successfully and Georgia has become honorable guest of the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2018. This fact itself means activation of translation activity and creates corresponding expectation of it. Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection announced in 2011 “Assistance Program for Translating Georgian Literature into Foreign Languages”, by means of which 32 translations have been financed up today, six of them into German.

Goethe Institute has been conducting Georgian-German (head Rosemary Titze) and German-Georgian (head A. Kartoziya) creative workshops. One of the results of the work of this workshop is translation into German of Anna Samadashvili-Kordzaia’s book “I, Margaret” (book was published in 2013). Translator Sibilla Heinze is the participant of this workshop. This year analogous workshop is going to be held first outside Georgia, namely, in Straelen.

Georgian association of comparative literature (Gekla) and Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature joined the professional development programs. In 2012 the international summer school of artistic and scientific translation from Georgian was first held by financing of Georgian scientific fund, as a result of which website www.translationlab.ge was created where collecting and systematization of artistic and word for word translations from Georgian into foreign languages started.

The fact, that one more nomination has been added to literary award Saba, seems to be also useful to us. This award is given for the best translation made from Georgian into foreign languages.

We were speaking about the merit of Georgian emigrants above and we must note Manana Tandashvili's contribution in the popularization of Georgian literature. She started Georgian literary evenings in 2009 and in 2010 she founded saloon of Georgian literature, which is known as "Frankfurt Literary Saloon Euterpe". In order to activate translation work in Germany, she organized association of translators and literary lecturers at the saloon in 2011, and has been publishing Georgian literature in German together with German kartvelologist Jost Gippert.

Recommendations

- ⇒ Prof. Irma Ratiani considers that Georgian literature, like Japanese and Chinese literatures, could use intermediate languages to make great breakthrough on the first stage.
- ⇒ In opinion of prof. Zaza Abzianidze, the library of the word for word translations done on the highest level should be founded and placed on the corresponding website, to make publishers interested in it. Translator Maia Nachkepia supposes that legislative change is needed to ensure that fees got by translators from foreign funds not to be subjected to income tax.
- ⇒ Prof. Alexander Kartoziya thinks that the way out of situation are tandems of translators (Georgian and foreign).
- ⇒ General recommendations are the following:
- ⇒ Creation of state translation politics is necessary that means financing not only separate translations, but managing of the whole process which consists of the following components:
- ⇒ Broadening of financing of translation programs from Georgian into foreign languages;
- ⇒ Conducting of translation workshops;
- ⇒ Summer translation schools for foreigners;
- ⇒ Systematic functioning of website;
- ⇒ Setting of translation house for foreign and Georgian translators;
- ⇒ Creation of translators unions;
- ⇒ Working out laws and norms of payment, approximation to the corresponding norms of EU;
- ⇒ Creation of system of ranging according to competence and productivity of translators, or some other parameters;
- ⇒ Make young people, who study at the foreign universities, interested and attracted;
- ⇒ Coordinated work of diaspora and diplomatic corps, in order to open the courses in foreign countries for those interested in translation of Georgian literature;
- ⇒ Placing of translated fragment of work of a certain author and short estimation of qualified literary critic, characterizing genre, style, trend of this work, together with biography facts of corresponding author on website that will simplify choice for literary agents and publishing houses.