

MIDDLE AND CLASSICAL PERSIAN LITERARY TRADITIONS IN DAGESTAN AND SHIRVAN

Middle Persian inscriptions, Pahlavi patterns book, Zoroastrian sources, coins, ostraca, parchments are found throughout a vast territories of Central Asia, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Caucasus, etc. These sources present a variety of subjects and contents, which give an idea of secular, spiritual and cultural life of the people and ethnic groups and unities, lived in those areas. The areas in question (Dagestan, Shirvan) were ancient multiethnic regions located in a territory stretching over the current borders between southern Dagestan and Azerbaijan. As various nations and civilizations have coexisted abreast, it is evident and quite reasonable that eclectic cultures and language situation must have been dominated in those territories. Caucasian and Near-Caspian regions, including Ardabil, Guilan and Maznadaran ostans in Iran, have always been boiling centers beginning from the very ancient periods. These regions have been always united under cultural, religious and ethno-demographic common processes and traditions, which were full of archaic accumulations and ancient appearances. In the northern Iran a certain isolation of Near-Caspian inhabitants has been expressed in successful attempts for creating own literary traditions. It is significant that the first translations of the Koran were carried out, alongside with Persian, in Tabari as well, the language spoken in Mazandaran nowadays.⁸³⁹ Among new Iranian dialects Tabari, in fact, is the second after Persian, having early literary fixation.⁸⁴⁰

Derbend⁸⁴¹ is one of the oldest cities in Russian Federation, in Dagestan Republic, situated in the narrow pass between Caspian Sea and the Caucasus. The city, built in the 5-th century, is settled in the region of Caucasus mountain chain, where the northern tribes were invading the Caucasus and Iran. In the Middle Ages the city was affixed with gates and had permanent armed forces. It is well known, that the toponym Derbend has Iranian roots; it means “gates of chains, or closed gates” in Persian (der- “door” < dar- > OP *dwara- and -band > OP *banda- “to bind, to close”, cf. Av. banda- “chain”, ni-vanda- “captivity”, etc.). As the archeological excavations have proven, first settlements and fortifications were founded in Caucasian Albania area in early bronze epoch - at the end of 4,000 B.C. Its ancient name is Caspian Gates, which is first attested in 6-th century B.C.

During various periods different Iranian-speaking peoples invaded the Caucasian regions sharing their cultural and linguistic features with the inhabitants. In the first half of I century B.C. a branch of Scythians intensively penetrated into the Caucasus and got in contacts with the ancient population of Dagestan. Diverse historical monuments and sources testify about the contacts between Scythians and Caucasian autochthonous peoples: Scythian arrowheads belonging to the VII-IV centuries B.C., different objects of worship and images on rocks found from Derbend.⁸⁴² As a result of long relations and coexistence, a number of names and terms of

⁸³⁹ Асатрян Г., Этническая Композиция Ирана, От “Арийского простора” до Азербайджанского мифа, Ереван, 2012, с. 20.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴¹ Cf. Арм. Ճըրի Գըրի Գըրի:

⁸⁴² Марковин В., О некоторых находках скифо-сарматского времени с территории Северо-Западного Прикаспия// Древности Евразии в скифо-сарматское время, Москва, 1984, с. 179; Гасанов М., Из истории связей

Iranian-speaking Scythians were included in the word baggage of Dagestan peoples. Afterwards, Ossetic language, being the continuation of Scythian, left its obvious grammatical and lexicographical tracks on the languages of Dagestan, as well as the Nart epos made deep influence on the mythology of Dagestan peoples.⁸⁴³ The ancient population of Dagestan supported communications with the states arisen in the territory of Iran. Thus, Caspi, Albanians and other near-Caspian peoples were included in the borders of Median Empire, which played an intermediary role in trading communications of Babylonia with near-Caspian areas. During the Achaemenid reign a part of Caucasian regions entered in a satrapy union of the Iranian rulers, as the fact is mentioned in the historical annals of Herodotus.

Researchers had no doubt that a unique system of Albanian writing had existed. However, the mentioned system had a long time been considered to be lost. In 1937 Prof. Ilya Abuladze discovered the Albanian alphabet contained in an Armenian manuscript from the 15-th century AD (preserved in Matenadaran, Armenia). This Albanian alphabet was depicted in a series with other alphabets, including Arabic, Greek, Syrian, Latin, Georgian, and Coptic. As the Armenian historic Koryun states, the monk and creator of Armenian letters Mashtots renewed the alphabet of Albania and taught the new alphabet. It is worth to mention that many scholars refer to this statement of Koryun. The phrases “renewed the alphabet” and “new alphabet” used by Koryun, indicate the fact that an older version of Albanian alphabet and writing existed previously. Unfortunately, there are no evidences of ancient Albanian writing but, due to opinions of scholars, Albania used Aramaic script and language that functioned as *lingua franca* in Middle East. As it is obvious, the majority of Middle Iranian languages was written and scribed on the basis of Aramaic script as well. Aramaic script was also in use in Armenia and Iberia. As we can notice, there existed writing and script common traditions in the Caucasus and Iranian world, which, obviously, gives the awareness of the fact that the people living neighborly were in close relations with each other and shared common literary and writing appearances. It is possible, with the establishment in Albania of Arsacid Parthian dynasty,⁸⁴⁴ that the language and literature of administration and the record-keeping of the imperial chancellery for external affairs, naturally, became Parthian, the writing system of which is based on a version of Aramaic script as well.⁸⁴⁵ Beginning from the Achaemenid period, Aramaic language was in great use; it was an international language and was generally utilized in chancellery and administration. The result of this usage of Aramaic language was, then, the involvement of Aramaic ideograms in Middle Iranian texts.

It is fairly evident that Pahlavi or Middle Persian language, both in oral and written appearances, had official status in early medieval Albania. As it is noticed by M. Gadjiev, probably the Middle Persian inscriptions of Derbend, both informal and official, which were made on behalf of Darius, a high official, or *amargar*,⁸⁴⁶ of the region *shahr Adurbadagan*, refer to an area that included Albania (and all the Caucasus provinces that belonged to Sasanian empire) in the

Дагестана с иранским миром (в древности и раннем средневековье), Ирано-дагестанские культурно-исторические связи, Махачкала, 2006, сс. 10-11.

⁸⁴³ Абаев В., Осетинский язык и фольклор, М-Л., 1949, сс. 92, 190.

⁸⁴⁴ A branch of Arsacid dynasty began to rule in Armenia beginning from the first century AD.

⁸⁴⁵ Gadjiev M., The Writing of Caucasian Albania, Facts and Falsifications, in: *Archaeology in the Construction, Commemoration, and Consecration of National Pasts, Selective Remembrances*, 2007, p. 105.

⁸⁴⁶ The word 'hmrkr - /ahmārkar/ “accountant, teller” is attested both in Middle Persian and Parthian sources: Nisa ostraca; Paikuli inscription of Narseh, etc. (Diakonoff I. M., Livshits V. A., Parthian Economic Documents from Nisa, CII, v. 2 Parthian, 1977-2001, p. 184; Humbach H., Skjærvø O., The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli, Pt. 3.1, 3.2, Wiesbaden, 1983, p. 42, 79). Borrowing in Armenian *hwtlup* “account”.

sixth century.⁸⁴⁷ Several articles have been published, which discuss the Middle Persian epigraphic objects found from Derbend. The objects bear Iranian administration words, as well as names and place names, for example *amargar*, *Dariuš*, *Mōšīg*, *Adurgušnasp*, *Adurbādagān*, and the epigraphy has been done during the construction works, without any order or system along a northern defensive wall, when Sasanian royalty was building fortifications and walls in Derbend. As it is noticed in the articles by M. Gadjiev and Kasumova, the inscriptions of Dariuš are inspectoral and memorial in character.⁸⁴⁸ Their place in the masonry system proves that Dariuš controlled the building of the northern city wall from the beginning to the end. At the same time the inscription No 3, bearing a date, fixes the final date of wall construction, not an intermediate point. Some regularity is to be seen in the citadel inscriptions No 14-21 with names of architects or high rank supervisors Mōšīg and Adurgušnasp. Their inscriptions were carved on the blocks before they were placed into the wall masonry. The above mentioned words, attested in the epigraphic remnants of Albania, are given in a number of Middle Persian and Parthian sources, found from different regions of Middle-aged Iranian world.

In Middle Iranian period, taking into consideration the Parthian and Sasanian reigns in Caucasian regions, Iranian language and cultural traditions in Dagestan and Shirvan are of high use and great importance. Topography concerning the mentioned place names is given in Middle Persian and Parthian inscriptions. The passage from the Shapur's inscription, stated below, includes the places and regions which were conquered by the king during the third century. As we can follow the development of the war events, Shapur subordinated to his domination the vast territories involving the places in question Arran, Balasagan and Adurbadagan.

... [W HHSNW-m]

... [ud dārām]

hštr p'rs prtww hwzstn myšn 'swrstn ntwšrkn 'rbystny 'trwptkn
 šahr Pārs Partaw Xūzestān Mēšān Asūrestān Nōdšīragān⁸⁴⁹ Arabestān Ādurbādagān
 'rmny 2. wyršn sykn 'rd'n bl'skn HN prhš 'L kpy TWR' W
 Arman Wir(a)žān⁸⁵⁰ Sīgān⁸⁵¹ Arrān⁸⁵² Balāsagān⁸⁵³ yad frahaž ō Kāf kōf ud
 'l'n TR' W hmk pryšhwr TWR' m'd wrkn mrgw hryw W hmk
 Alānān kōf ud hamag Parišxvār⁸⁵⁴ kōf Mād Vurgān Marg (Marv) Harēv ud hamag...

The Christian gem-seals of the fifth and sixth centuries, stored in the collection of the National Library in Paris, have a Middle Persian cursive inscription, which includes the toponyms Albania and Balasagan as well. As Prof. Gadjiev mentions, it is worth emphasizing that the official

⁸⁴⁷ Gadjiev M., *opt. cit.*, p. 104.

⁸⁴⁸ More detailed see - Гаджиев М., Касумова С., Среднеперсидские надписи Дербента VI века, РАН, Дагестанский научный центр, Институт истории, археологии и этнографии, Москва, Восточная литература, 2006.

⁸⁴⁹ = Adiabene, Arm. Նոր-Շիրակաւ:

⁸⁵⁰ Georgia - wir(a)žān < Arm. * vir-ac' (վիր-աց-) + Iranian -ān (Huyse Ph., Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šabuhri I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ), CII, Bd. 2, 1999, s. 18, 20)

⁸⁵¹ Arm. Մյուսիք, Միսակաւ (Huyse 1999, s. 23-24):

⁸⁵² Arm. Միսակաւ:

⁸⁵³ A province in the reign of Sasanian empire, situated in the North of Iran, which included the Caspian regions of Media (nowadays in Guilan province). *Balāsagān*, as a separate region, is attested in the Nagsh-i Rostam inscription of Shapur. In the Armenian sources the place is called *Միսակաւ* (more detailed - The Cambridge History of Iran, vol 3 (2), The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods, 1983, p. 765-766).

⁸⁵⁴ M.P. padašxvārgar, padašxvārgar kōf (mountains in Tabaristan and Guilan), Arm. Պատիժուար գուլար, Պարսի (Hübschmann H., Armenische Grammatik, Leipzig, 1897, s. 66).

seal of the chief Christian Catholic Church of Albania was inscribed with Middle Persian writing, which itself demonstrates the political and cultural influence of Iran. There existed religious relations and influences as well: the central image of a Christian symbol, a cross, is coupled with the Zoroastrian symbol (*neshan*), a half moon and a six-ray star.⁸⁵⁵

Indeed, this domination couldn't help spreading influence over different spheres of life in Dagestan and Shirvan: administration, spiritual and material culture, writing and literary systems, etc.

Afterwards, during Classical period of Persian language and literature, Iranian thinkers and literature figures spread their activity in those regions as well. Poets like Nizami Ganjavi, Khaqani Shirvani, Falaki Shirvani, Abu 'Ala Ganjavi, Ezz ad-Din Shirvani, Jamal al-Din Khalil Shirvani, Mahasti Ganjavi, Shams Ganjavi, etc., lived a long time in Derbend, Shirvan, Ganja where they created a considerable part of their poems and, indeed, provided the continuity of Persian literary traditions. These prominent poets and literature personalities repeatedly state their Iranian origin in their works presenting satisfaction and gratitude of being thinkers of great civilization. Even a number of literature schools have been established in Dagestan, Shirvan and Ganja where the dominant language for literature was Classical Persian or Farsi-e Dari.

The processes of tyurkization of Iranian poets began in 1930-s, the background of which had political motivations to show the speculative identity of nowadays Azerbaijanis in the ancient Shirvan and Arran regions. And the central figure of this literary expansion was, indeed, Nizami Ganjavi. In 1939, on the front pages of Azerbaijan newspapers a provocative heading was published saying: "Com. Stalin presented us with great Nizami!" In a while, Azerbaijani researchers were encouraged to follow the Soviet Union leader's baton of nationalization of foreign cultural values. However, if Stalin was eager to create common Soviet fraternal relations on the basis of historical and cultural heritage and USSR was engaged in nation-building policy, new-established Azerbaijan Republic adopted the course to assimilate ancient traditions and cultural appearances, as it continues up to dates towards autochthonous people of ancient Caucasian regions. And there was a vast expansion and assimilation of cultural and literary heritage of people, occupied at various times territories which only in 1918, due to Turkish military support and political conjecture on the one hand, and Bolshevik Russia consent and some agreements with Turkey on the other hand, have been united by force under the artificial name Azerbaijan.⁸⁵⁶ In the 20th century it was invented an anachronistic term "Azerbaijani School of Persian poetry" or "Azerbaijani style of Persian poetry" whereas Nezami Ganjavi, Mujir ad-Din Baylaqani, Dhulfiqar Shirvani and other poets of the area have never used such a term.⁸⁵⁷ As shown, such a term is not encountered prior to the 20th century and it was solely invented for partition of Persian poetry along politically contrived basis. The poetry of these Persian poets indicates that they referenced their own style as the historical term of 'Iraqi Style'.⁸⁵⁸

Mediaeval Arran and Shirvan have been homelands for a huge number of thinkers, poets, philosophers, historians, who had close and understandable connections with these lands, nature, peoples in the respective period, when neither Azerbaijan nor Azerbaijanis existed. For instance, Jamal ad-Din Khalil Sharvani's "Nuzhat al-Majalis", an anthology of the 11th-13th century Persian literature, includes the works of 114 poets from Aturpatakan, Shirvan and Arran. More distinguished poets of Classical period Nizami Ganjavi and Khaqani Shirvani, having been born in

⁸⁵⁵ Gadjev M., *opt. cit.*, p. 104.

⁸⁵⁶ More detailed on Shirvan, Ganja, Arran concerning the matters above see - Бартольд В., Место прикаспийских областей в истории мусульманского мира. Сочинения, т. II, ч. 1, Москва, 1963, с. 703.

⁸⁵⁷ Lornejad S., Doostzadeh A., On the Modern Politicization of the Persian Poet Nezami Ganjavi, Yerevan, 2012, p. 1.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the territories of Arran and Shirvan, created their word-art treasures exclusively in Persian, which had unique, outstanding and, even, sacral meaning for the poets concerning their thoughts. Thus, world views, ideology and self-consciousness of these personalities are absolutely connected with Iranian world. Their poems are more than evident proof of the above mentioned.

Nizami claims:

همه عالم تن است و ایران دل
 hame 'ālam tan ast o Īrān del
 نیست گوینده زین قیاس خجل
 nīst guyande zīn qiās xajel
 چون که ایران دل زمین باشد
 čūn ke Īrān del-e zamīn bāšad
 دل ز تن به بود یقین
 del ze tan beh bovad yaqīn.

The whole world is body, but Iran – the heart,
 There is no shame for the speaker to compare,
 As Iran is the heart of the Earth,
 For sure, body is worse than heart!

Nezami Ganjavi in his own work called “Khusraw o Shirin” has mentioned the queen Mahin Banu as the ruler of “Arrān o Arman” while mentioning Adharbāyagān⁸⁵⁹ in the same epic poem, which clearly shows these were separate lands.⁸⁶⁰ In one of his *ghazals*, Nezami mentions his land as Arrān:

مرا غلط مکن، ار تو ز شهر ارانی
 marā yalat makon, ar to ze šahr-e Arrāni
 نظامی، ای صنم از روستا نمی آید
 Nezāmi, ey sanam az rustā nemiāyad!⁸⁶¹

Do not be unjust to me, if you are from the lands of Arrān,
 Oh idol (beauty), Nezami does not come from the outskirts!

Nizami in a beyt of his poem dedicated to the deeds of Alexander the Great expresses his adoration and delight towards Persian language:

چو در من گرفت آن نصیحتگری
 čū dar man gereft ān nasīhatgari

⁸⁵⁹ The name Azerbaijan has an Iranian root and derives from the name of Iranian satrap Atropates (means “holder of fire”). In the older new Dari-Persian form, the term is given as Ādharbādḡagān / Ādharābādḡagān which is used by Nezami like Adharbāyagān. The modern Persian form is pronounced as Āzarbāyjān. In the 12th century, the name Azerbaijan was almost unanimously used for the geographical region of North Western Iran the boundary of which in the north was with Arran (including Ganja), Shirvan and Armenia. The adoption of the name “Azerbaijan” in 1918 by the Mussavatist government for classical Caucasian Albania (Arran and Shirvan) was due to political reasons (on this issue see Matini Djalal, “Azarbaijān kojāst”, Irānšenāsi, vol. 1/3, 1989, pp. 443-462; Minorsky V., “Ādharbaydjān”, Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Ed., vol. 1, 1960, pp. 188-191; Бартольд В., *opt. cit.*; Дьяконов И. М., Пути истории: от древнейшего человека до наших дней, Москва, 1994).

⁸⁶⁰ Lornejad S., Doostzadeh A., *opt. cit.*, p. 9.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*

زبان برگشادم به دُرّ دری
zabān bar gošādam be dorr-e dari.⁸⁶²

As those advices made impression on me,
I opened my tongue to spread Persian (dari) pearls!

In his verse Khaqani Shirvani tells the reader of his grief and sorrow about the conquest of Persian world by Turks, comparing ancient Iranian cultural and traditional realities with foreign appearances.

ملک عجم چو طعمه ترکان اعجمی است
molk-e 'ajam čū ta'me-ye torkān-e e'jamī ast
عاقل کجا بساط تمنا بر افگند
'āqel kojā basāt-e tamannā bar afganad
تن گر چه سو و اکمک از ایشان طلب کند
tan gar če sū o akmak az īšān talab konad
کی مهر شه به اتسز و بغرا بر افگند
kī mehr-e šah be Atsez o Boyrā bar afganad
زال ار چه موی چون پر زاغ آرزو کند
Zāl ar če mūy čūn parr-e zāy ārzū konad
بر زاغ کی محبت عنقا بر افگند
bar zāy kī mohabbat-e 'anqā bar afganad.

As Persian earth is now plunder for the Turks speaking thickly,
Where the sage can throw his rug for longing (lust) ?
Though the body begs for bread and water from them,
Is it possible to love Atsez and Boyrā more than the [Iranian] shah?
Though Zal is eager to have black hair like crow,
Is it possible to love the crow more than the Firebird 'Anqa?

Ideas and thoughts like these are a huge majority not only in the poetry of Nizami and Khaqani but also in the literature heritage of many poets who have written their works in Dagestan, Shirvan, and Ganja.

Thus, as a result of long-term existence of Iranian realities as well as lasting relations between Iran and the regions in question, Iranian spiritual and material culture, literary traditions have made great influence both on Dagestan and Shirvan and on the surrounding territories.

**ՄԻՋԻՆ ԵՎ ԴԱՍԱԿԱՆ ՊԱՐՄԿԵՐԵՆԻ ԳՐԱԿԱՆ ԱՎԱՆԴՈՒՅԹՆԵՐԸ ԴԱՂՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ
ԵՎ ՇԻՐՎԱՆՈՒՄ
Թաղևու Չարչյան
(Ամփոփում)**

Վաղնջական ժամանակներից կովկասյան տարածքջանը, ինչպես նաև մշակութապես մերձ հարավկասպյան իրանական տարածքները, գտնվել են էթնիկ-մշակութային ակտիվ զարգացումների կիզակետում: Դադստանը և Շիրվանը հնագույն բազմէթնիկ շրջաններ են, որոնք պատմական զարգացման ընթացքում մշտապես եղել են իրանական էթնիկ, մշակութային, քաղաքակրթական ազդեցությունների ներքո, այստեղ

⁸⁶² Nafisi S., Divān-e qasāyid va qazaliyyāt-e nezāmi ganjavi, Tehran, 1959, s. 35-37.

համաբերվել են թե՛ տեղական՝ կովկասյան, թե՛ իրանական լեզվական իրակությունները: Առավել սերտ հարաբերություններ են ձևավորվել մ.թ. 3-րդ դարից սկսած՝ Սասանյանների օրոք: Դերբենդից են գտնվել միջին պարկերեն վիմագրային կոթողներ, որոնցում առկա են իրանական ստուգաբանությամբ անձնանուններ, տեղանուններ, վարչական անուններ: Հողվածում քննության է ենթարկվում խնդրո առարկա տարածքներում պարսից լեզվի շարունակականության հետագա ընթացքը, որն ապահովվեց արդեն պարսից դասական շրջանի մտածողների, բանաստեղծների կողմից: Ի հեճուկս 20-րդ դարի 30-ական թվականներից սկիզբ առած պարսից բանաստեղծների թյուրքականացման ադրբեջանական քաղաքական գործընթացի, պարսից դասական պոետները՝ Նիզամի Գյանջավին, Խաղանի Շիրվանին, Ֆալլաքի Շիրվանին, Էզգ ադ-Դին Շիրվանին, Ջամալ ադ-Դին Խալիլ Շիրվանին, Մահասթի Գյանջավին, Շամս Գյանջավին և այլոք, ապրելով և ստեղծագործելով Դերբենդում, Շիրվանում, Գանձակում, իրենց տողերում բազմիցս նշում են իրենց իրանական պատկանելությունը՝ գովաբանելով լեզուն, մշակույթն ու իրանական արժեքները: