

# Identifying Cultural Intersections in the Works of Shota Rustaveli and Nizami Ganjavi



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## PREFACE

Georgia has a long tradition of Rustvelological research; however, each new era presents the country's intellectual legacy with new problems. Rustvelology, like any other field of research, makes progress and requires new visions, broader horizons, and conceptual and structural innovations. Identifying relations between national literatures within the world literary arena is the most important aspect of modern international philological research. This is particularly true of the progressive countries in the post-Soviet camp, as they want to interpret their national literatures within the context of the international literary process and free from ideological clichés and frames.

This is precisely the task faced by the authors of monograph – **Shota Rustaveli and Nizami Ganjavi. Identifying Cultural Intersections** – to conduct research in the most important work in Georgian literature - *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* - within the context of medieval oriental literature or, more specifically, Rustaveli's contemporary great oriental poet Nizami Ganjavi. The objective of the research is to show the fundamental problems raised in the works by Nizami Ganjavi and Shota Rustaveli, the typological essence of similarities between them as well as the historic, cultural, literary, and aesthetic factors that make their works differ. This objective implies a theoretical re-interpretation of the process and social actualisation of the problems under research, which are known to be among the main trends in modern academic research.

During the long and fruitful research on Rustaveli's poem some complex questions have remained unanswered up to now: What place does the world literary process occupy within the Georgian and Eastern literary model, and how did Georgian literature, placed on the crossroads of different cultural and literary processes, become an organic and influential part of the world cultural and literary tradition (in this case, the oriental tradition)?

Rustaveli's philosophy reflects progressive medieval Christian problems and the religious and philosophical views in his work are based on trends

characteristic of the European civilisation of the Late Middle Ages. However, no research on the work can be complete without taking into account its relations with oriental poetry.

The research is intended to outline the role of the literature of the Caucasus region in the history of world medieval literature. The involvement of foreign researchers will facilitate the incorporation of Georgian literary criticism (Rustaveli studies in particular) into the global literary and philological dialogue.



**RUSTAVELI AND NIZAMI:**  
**STUDIES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

# ON THE HISTORY OF STUDYING THE TOPIC

LIA TSERETELI

(GEORGIA)

The history of studying the works of Shota Rustaveli and Nizami Ganjavi has a splendid tradition, not only in Georgia but also outside its boundaries. The parallels between the artistic thinking, worldview, aesthetics and poetics of Nizami and Rustaveli are made evident in the works of N. Marr (1864-1934), I. Marr (1893-1935), N. Nikoladze (1843-1928), A. Khakhanashvili (1864-1912), P. Ingorokva (1893-1983), K. Kekelidze (1879-1962), A. Baramidze (1902-1992), S. Nutsubidze (1888-1969), I. Abuladze (1874-1962), D. Kobidze (1906-1981), K. Paghava (1919-1994), E. Metreveli (1917-2003), G. Imedashvili (1906-1995), M. Todua (1927-2016), E. Bertels (1890-1957), Z. Gulizade (1932-2021), M. Rafili (1905-1958), M. Dadash-zade (1904-1975), N. Conrad (1891-1970) and others who confirm the creative relationship between these two humanists.

As early as 1890, a paper from Giorgi Tsereteli (1904-1973) entitled “Nizami and Rustaveli” was published in three issues of the magazine *Novoe Obozrenie* (1884-1905), although Giorgi Tsereteli used *Leilmajnuniani* (Layla and Majnun), translated by the Georgian King Teimuraz I for his comparative study, which misled him into thinking that Teimuraz had translated Nizami’s poem.

G. Kikodze's (1886-1960) article, “On the Brink of a New Culture” (Journal *Sabchota Khelovneba (Soviet Art)* 1936, N3), which was dedicated to the topic of our analysis stated:

“Even though Iran’s influence on Georgia was immense, yet, Georgian culture still did not submit to the style of Iranian-Arabic culture ... Shota Rustaveli and Nizami were probably contemporaries ... Undoubtedly, they understood each other’s poetic language very well, but it is enough to compare *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* to *Layla and Majnun* in order to

see clearly the great difference between their respective authors' worldviews and beliefs. The Iranian poet remains a mystic in the expression of real feeling, such as the love between a young woman and a man ... As is well known, Nizami's *Layla and Majnun* ends with the mystical vision of the Muslim otherworld, where lovers finally obtain the happiness previously denied them by worldly life. Rustaveli, on the contrary, tries to remain a romantic-realist in describing such mystical objects as the kingdom of Kadjis, while the love between a young woman and a man for him is a torment tempering both body and soul, which culminates in earthly happiness. The activity of a woman and a man, their indifference to fortune, the strength of their willpower, the subjugation of passions to reason, all these distinguish Rustaveli's heroes from the world of the Iranian poet and bring them closer to the poetic world of medieval Europe" (Kikodze, 1936, 28).

Korneli Kekelidze touched upon the issue of analysis in detail in the second volume of his *History of Old Georgian Literature*.<sup>1</sup> To demonstrate the range of Rustaveli's education and to substantiate the fact that the poet was "incomparably knowledgeable" of both his country's literature and "Eastern-Iranian literature", that "he reads this literature and, if necessary, even reflects his acquaintance with it in his poetry" (Kekelidze, 1981, 127). Kekelidze cites several literary parallels, including Nizami Ganjavi. The scholar argues with relevant arguments that Rustaveli was undoubtedly familiar with Nizami's work "in Georgian, or at least in Persian":

1. The prologue to *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* preserves all the elements that we encounter in the introduction to *Layla and Majnun*: an appeal to God, making a reference to the king, mentioning his own name, and discussions about the skill of a poet and of love;

2. In terms of content, these two poems have many features in common:

- A) Qays' father is "capable, virtuous, content, merciful, strong, gracious as a caliph; he is blessed with good fortune, like a nutshell filled by its kernel; he was disturbed by the fact that he had no son. This is echoed by the description of King Rostevan, who was worried about "having no son".

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<sup>1</sup> See also: Kekelidze, Korneli. 1967. "Georgia and Nizami Ganjavi". In *Etudes from the History of Old Georgian Literature*. Vol. 4, 81-89. Tbilisi: TSU Press.

B) The beauty and grace, on the one hand, of Layla and Majnun, and on the other hand of Nestan and Taniel and Avtandil and Tinatin, are described by both poets with similar words, metaphors and expressions.

C) The feeling of love between Layla and Majnun as well as between the characters of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* awakens in their childhood, during their shared upbringing.

D) Layla's parents keep her in a tent hidden from the eyes of strangers. Likewise, Nestan, from the age of seven, lived in a house especially built for her where "no one could see her".

E) The spiritual suffering of Qays and Taniel is the same; they continue until they lose consciousness, so "Majnuni-Mijnuri" (maddened by love) is their common name. Love for them means unceasing suffering and shedding tears. Life is their torment; it shows them no mercy. They do not expect to be reunited with their loved ones in this world and they long for death, so that "the lovers separated in this world should be reunited there".

F) Qays and Taniel, inflamed with the fire of love, flee into the desert and „wander around" there together with the wild beasts.

G) Majnun's father visits him in the desert and begs him to come back home. Similarly, Avtandil finds Taniel, who has fled from the cave to the desert and beseeches him to return to the cave; they both refuse. Both poets envisage almost identically the character and tone of their appeals, as well as their motives for rejection.

H) Both Majnun and Taniel are sympathetic to the beasts in whose society they have to live. The beasts remind them of their lovers. Taniel - the tiger, Majnun - the baby deer, and a deer, whom he will redeem and set free, and whose eyes reminded him of the eyes of his lover.

I) The correspondences between Layla and Majnun and between Nestan and Taniel also resemble each other. Layla, estranged from her husband, feels trapped in her husband's house and suffers. Nestan is also imprisoned in the Kadji castle. They treat their love letters in the same way. Taniel put Nestan's letter "above his eyes", on the other occasion he put the "book" sent to him from the Kadji castle "above his mouth" and immediately lost consciousness. The same actions are performed by Layla and Majnun.

J) The two poets describe alike some of the negative feminine qualities; according to both, woman is ruthless, "whatever she knows she

declares, she tells every secret”; she has a “treacherous and venomous tongue”.

K) Nizami's Navfal - an incomparable knight, who completely sacrifices himself to the interests of his friend, Majnun; he is desperately looking for and trying to connect with the lost lover, for which he tries to overcome many obstacles. He reminds us of Avtandil's commitment to Tariel (Kekelidze, 1981, 134-136).

Apart from the similarity of the general elements of the story, which undoubtedly proves that Rustaveli knew Nizami's *Layla and Majnun*, the following sententiae bring these two works even closer:

### Nizami

“The field of words must be wide  
open / for the rider on top to gain  
great renown.”

“The Shah is the one who gives  
away his treasure in its entirety”.

“The moon was in the dragon's  
throat”.

“Great generosity will soften the  
hearts of all men”.

“Love is a large mirror, illuminated  
by a ray, / There is a great distance  
between passion and love.”

“Even the beast obeys the rule of  
love”.

### Rustaveli

“Like a horse running a great race on a  
long course, like a ball-player in the  
lists striking the ball / even so it is  
with the poet who composes and  
inscribes long poems” (20)<sup>2</sup>.

“What thou givest away is thine; what  
thou keepest is lost” (50).

“How pitiable is the full moon  
swallowed by the serpent!” (1208)

“The generous binds the free, and he  
who is already bound will willingly  
obey” (49).

“True love is something apart from  
lust, and cannot be likened thereto”  
(9).

“Thou didst create love, Thou hast  
decreed its law” (791).

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<sup>2</sup> In any case we cite the text: Shota Rustaveli. 1966. *The Man in the Panther's Skin*. A close rendering from the Georgian by Marjory Scott Wardrop. Tbilisi: Literatura da Khelovneba.

In the article “Rustaveli and Nizami Ganjavi” the scholar focuses on an episode of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* in which Avtandil brings to Tariel a letter from Nestan wrapped in the edge of his veil. Rustaveli says about the fainting Tariel: “Neither Caen nor even Salaman could bear sorrows like his” (1316). According to K. Kekelidze, the “Caen” mentioned here refers to Nizami’s Qays, while “Sala” refers to Layla’s husband Ibn-Salam, who died of his love for Layla (Kekelidze, 1936, 158).

The closeness between the Nizami Ganjavi’s and Rustaveli’s poems, substantiated by K. Kekelidze, paved the way for further observation and research by scholars over the idea that Rustaveli was familiar with the works of Nizami Ganjavi.

A. Baramidze has expressed his views regarding the topic of our research several times.<sup>3</sup> In his book *Shota Rustaveli* (1975) the scholar reviews in great detail the recent predecessors and contemporaries of Rustaveli in world literature (pp. 211-272) and contemplates especially on Nizami Ganjavi’s poems *Layla and Majnun* and *Khosrov and Shirin*. According to the scholar, Nizami and Rustaveli pay great attention to “the description of the spiritual life and the psychological aspects of the characters; the metaphorical system of artistic thinking is significant for them, they possess similar sententiae and aphorisms” (Baramidze, 1975, 233). The scholar compares Majnun with Tariel, he agrees with the Azerbaijani academic M. Rafili’s opinion and notes that Majnun was torn apart by love, he lost his willpower and was driven to true madness. In the case of Tariel, however, love gave him wings, elevated him, and enabled him to commit heroic deeds (Baramidze, 1975, 239).

The same has been said by A. Baramidze while drawing parallels between Nestan-Darejan and Layla. He discusses the letters of Layla and Nestan, the similarities between which have been pointed out by numerous scholars. Alexander Baramidze thinks that it is true that Layla’s letter is full of great love, yet “Layla failed to rise above the level of feminine sensibility. Her letter lacks the halo of magnificence which is characteristic

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<sup>3</sup> See Baramidze, Alexander. 1952. “Nizami and Rustaveli”. In *Essays*, vol. III, 209-229. Tbilisi: TSU Press; Baramidze, Alexander. “The idea of fellowship and friendship between peoples according to the poems by Nizami Ganjavi and Shota Rustaveli”. *Journal Literary Researches*, No. X (1956): 173-185.

of the letter sent by Nestan from the Kadji castle” (Baramidze, 1975, 242). In his opinion, neither the circumstances in which these letters are written, nor the characters of the protagonists, are similar: in Layla’s words, Alexandre Baramidze sees “eloquent admonition, empty didactics, a doctrinal-sermonizing tone, an abstract moralistic philosophy”. We can also read in her words “an awareness of hopelessness, preaching the need to submit to the misfortunes of life, a preference for the passive expectation of death in the hope of an otherworldly reward” while Nestan’s letter shows the main female character as rebellious, unyielding, confident, and determined. The scholar concludes that “Rustaveli is a poet-genius expressing an optimistic worldview, while Nestan is an immortal image based upon this worldview” (Baramidze, 1975, 243-245).

According to Alexander Baramidze, another important element is contained in Nizami’s work *Khosrow and Shirin*. While *Layla and Majnun* idealizes an abstract, mystical, Sufi style of spiritual adoration, the motives of carnal desire, intense passion, and bare eroticism prevail in *Khosrow and Shirin*. The scholar finds it impossible to compare the fraternal relationship between Khosrow and Shapur (and equally that between Navfal and Majnun) with that of Avtandil and Tariel. He discusses the brightest image in the poem – Shirin, who is a native of the Caucasus.<sup>4</sup>

A. Baramidze concludes that the essential difference that distinguishes Rustaveli’s worldview from that of Nizami is that “mysticism is foreign to Rustaveli, its heroes live and fight for worldly ideals, for earthly love. By overcoming the legendary obstacles, the heroes of Rustaveli have achieved the realization of human ideals here on earth. Rustaveli’s love celebrates victory on earth, while Nizami’s love awaits the otherworldly reward” (Baramidze, 1975, 249).

D. Kobidze’s paper “On the relationship between Rustaveli and Nizami” was published in the third volume of the journal *Literary Studies*

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<sup>4</sup> There is a difference of opinion in the special literature regarding Shirin’s nationality. Rafili considers her to be Azerbaijani (Rafili, Mikael Gasan Ogly. 1947. “Nizami Ganjavi and his Oeuvre”. In Nizami. Vol IV. 48-52. Baku: Goslitizdat), some scholars believe that Shirin’s image is inspired by Tamar (Y. Marr, A. Boldirev, K. Kekelidze), especially since according to Nizami, the land of Shirin’s aunt, Banu Shamira (whose prototype is considered by the same scholars to be Georgian Queen Tamar’s aunt, Rusudan) included part of Georgia (Abkhazia).

(1947).<sup>5</sup> The scholar notes the similar elements (the upbringing of Tariel and Khosrov, Avtandil and Shapur, the roaming of Tariel and Farhad in the wilderness, and the similarities of some of the aphorisms), and differentiating elements, chiefly the distinctive ethical and religious views highlighted in both *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and *Khosrow and Shirin*. At the end of the article, the scholar even suggests that Rustaveli and Nizami knew each other personally and that Nizami might have even taken part in a poetry competition held at Tamar's royal chambers (Kobidze, 1946, 214). The publication of the article prompted a heated debate. G. Natroshvili's (1910-1998) response was published in the March issue of the newspaper *Literature and Art* (March 21, 1948), in which the author called Kobidze's article a "meaningless, pointless speculation". He also strongly criticized K. Kekelidze's *History of Old Georgian Literature*, which was published in 1941 in an updated and revised form. According to G. Natroshvili, "K. Kekelidze tries to prove that *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* is an original Georgian work, but in the process of substantiation and proof, he creates a self-contradictory picture. According to K. Kekelidze, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* was influenced by *Visramiani*, *Layla and Majnun*, *Shahnameh*, *Vamegh* and *Azra*, *Amirandarejaniani*, *Tamariani*, *Abdulmesiani* ...". According to Natroshvili, these influences are so exaggerated by Kekelidze that *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* only seems to be a simple compilation of these works (Natroshvili, 1948, 3). K. Kekelidze responded to this review and called it "premature and unfair". The scholar considers the reviewer's accusation groundless and writes:

"D. Kobidze seems to be trying to place Rustaveli and Nizami in opposition to one another. In fact, there is no confrontation, but rather a comparative study of the works of these two poets, which is a legitimate and standard procedure in academic literature" (Kekelidze, 1947, 3).

Simon Chikovani (1902-1966) also participated in the discussion. He agrees with G. Natroshvili, who negatively assessed D. Kobidze's work.

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<sup>5</sup> The scholar further extended his discussion on this issue in his book *Georgian-Persian Literary Relations* published in 1969. The author notes that in terms of the use of poetic thinking, artistic images, comparisons-metaphors, Rustaveli reveals the greatest kinship with Nizami.



“Rustaveli and Nizami with their poetics and worldviews are representatives of different poetic worlds...the theme of both is love, the poetic images and metaphors are similar, but the content of Rustaveli's poem avoids any mysticism and is immensely optimistic. There is a good deal of mysticism in Nizami's creation; the end of this worldly life, as expressed in his works, is misfortune, while the heroes of Rustaveli obtain happiness in this world (Chikovani, 1947, 2).

This topic of research has entered a new phase since the 1960s. The highlight, in this context, is the publication of Nizami Ganjavi's *Khosrow and Shirin* in 1964, translated by Ambako Chelidze (1878-1940), included in the collection *Iranian Classics*, with the introduction, commentaries and notes by Magali Todua. In his introductory letter the scholar points out that some of the details of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* are similar to those of Nizami (artistic images, realities, sententiae). Yet he also notes that “we need to be more careful when referring to such details and motifs from Eastern culture and literature ... It is difficult to attribute oriental poetic figures to a specific author. They often re-emerge in the works of different writers” (Todua, 1964, 23). For example, Todua criticizes Alexander Baramidze, who drew a sharp line between the characters of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and *Khosrov and Shirin* - Tariel / Avtandil and Khosrov / Shapur - and notes that in comparing them, the comparisons should not be based on their hierarchical position or moral stance, but “the function that these characters bear in those poems”. Without them, Tariel would not acquire Nestan, nor Khosrov Shirin. Doesn't Shirin resemble Nestan when she calls Khosrow: Go, get the throne and then shake it? Don't we hear the words of Tariel in the angry grumble of Khosrow: “a woman urges me to fight?” To say once again: by this we do not prove anything, we only point to their kinship and not to the nature of this kinship” (Todua, 1964, 25).

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of the periodical *Matsne* in 1972, Maia Mamatsashvili published her research “Chanting to the Seven Stars in Nizami's *Layla and Majnun* and *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*”. The general stages of the development of astronomy and astrology from ancient times to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and Asia were discussed. The author notes that astronomical knowledge about celestial orbs was shared by both Christianity and Islam. The model of the structure of the universe is

equally represented in both religions. In describing the starry night in *Layla and Majnun* Nizami reveals his knowledge of astronomy and astrology and uses it as a poetic background to dispel his theological conception. He describes within the zodiac belt the picture of the medieval sky and the movement of the supreme light of the Muslim world - the deity of the moon. For the first time in Oriental poetry Nizami gives the poetic model of supplication to celestial orbs. Majnun asks the lights and then God to assist him in his love. In Rustaveli's poem Avtandil also addresses the whole starry sky with petitions - the seven celestial orbs. This petition is of an astrological nature. Each light is characterized by its nature and sign (Mamatsashvili, 1972, 41-81).

Guram Asatiani expressed an interesting opinion on the research topic in his book *From The Knight in the Panther's Skin to Bakhtrioni* (1974). The author believes that one of the motives of the *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (the captivity of a woman and her release) may have been used in Nizami's *Iskandarnama*. One episode is discussed: Alexander defeats a man-monster, who then brings a woman-Nestan Darjikhhan. She had been captured by the master of the monster. "There was probably a mythological source that both Nizami and Rustaveli used", - writes the author (Asatiani, 1974, 16-17).

The point of view of the Georgian emigre scholar Victor Nozadze (1893-1975) is important regarding the topic of our research. In all the books of his *Judgments*, the scholar quotes the relevant passages from Nizami Ganjavi's poetry on one issue or the other, and analyzes them in great depth. For example, in his *Significance of Astronomy and Astrology in The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (Santiago de Chile, 1957) he mentions Majnun's prayer to the stars along with the prayer of Avtandil (Nozadze, 2005, 213-215). Nozadze highlights the artistic functions of the celestial orbs, specifically the sun and the moon, in *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (astronomical - for poetic comparison; aesthetic - a symbol of beauty used to depict the magnificence of the heroes) and concludes that in Nizami's poetry the moon often replaces the sun; "Most frequently it is referred to as an illustrator of beauty and brilliance... while in Georgian literature, the moon occupies a secondary place". The sun is resting on the throne of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*" (Nozadze, 2005, 152-153). In his *The Metaphorical System of Colours in The Knight in the Panther's*

*Skin* (Buenos Aires, 1953) Victor Nozadze reviews in detail all the separate cases of the metaphorical use of precious stones by Rustaveli and Nizami and concludes that with Rustaveli, as well as with Nizami, “precious stones i.e. gemstones are used mainly for artistic purposes. The artistic purpose is to show colours and to depict beauty through the display of these colours” (Nozadze, 2004, 358). In particular, the scholar speaks in great detail about the symbolic meaning of pearls (Nozadze, 2004, 358-385) and in this respect draws a parallel between *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* and Nizami’s writings. The scholar notes that like Rustaveli, Nizami also uses pearls in his poems as a symbol of beauty (of words, poetic eloquence, verses, tears, teeth, mouth, ears, etc.), but, in addition, pearls are also used by Nizami to describe sexual intercourse, while in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* the pearl is limited only to the symbol of marriage (Nozadze, 2004, 372-381). Victor Nozadze’s *The Metaphorical System of Lovers in The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* (Paris, 1975) merits a special mention regarding our topic of research. He discusses the institution of lovers in Arabic-Persian-Turkish literature in detail (motifs, forms of expression, etc.) and especially dwells on the parallels between Nizami’s *Layla and Majnun* and *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*: “Qays flees the village and lives in the desert, wanders around with the wild beasts and protects them (While Tariel leaves the village, but kills the beasts); Tariel and Qays are knights-errant, roving far away from populated areas, but the motives for their escape and their roaming are totally distinct modes of love. Qays’s lover is there, in his parents’ tent, while Tariel’s lover is lost, and no one knows her whereabouts. Qays prays for the defeat of Navfal, Tariel and his friends conquer the Kadji castle. Qays’s love is defined by being a “majnun” (maddened-lover), while Tariel’s love is limited to being a “mijnuri” (lover). There is a sharp distinction between *majnun* and *mijnuri*. Intimacy is condemned in the religion of love - it is to be a *majnun*. The love between Tariel and Nestan is a burning long for intimacy and union, whereas the path of love of Qays and Layla, according to Iranian mysticism, follows the “religion of love”; they may embrace one another only in the transcendental realm; these lovers believe that death alone will open the door to that reality, for which their soul is longing throughout the whole of this life. According to mystics, the final union of lovers in this

world is impossible. Suffering frees a loved one from their shackles ... This is a true Sufi concept. Majnun runs away from Layla, turns away from her, because his love for her is greater than just love ... i.e., Nizami's form of madness is the fruit of mysticism, while for Rustaveli madness is down to earth, and real. *Majnun* comes from Arabic-Persian and Sufi culture, *mijnuri* is Georgian and Christian" (Nozadze, 1975, 119-122).

Petre Sharia (1902-1979) does not share the theories according to which Nizami is a follower of Sufism. In his work *Some Issues of Shota Rustaveli's Worldview*. He notes that nowhere in Nizami's poetry do we find an apology for apostasy from worldliness. In his opinion, there are great similarities between the general ethical views of Rustaveli and Nizami: both poets are humanists, both defend human dignity and consider a human being as the highest value. Nizami is very advanced in his treatment of women and thus comes close to Rustaveli, but he still cannot defeat entirely the Eastern tradition in the matter of men's relationship with women. These two poets are related to each other in acknowledging the uplifting power of love; in understanding the essence and nature of poetry. There are great similarities between these poets also in terms of poetics. Both poets avoid the praising-panegyric style, but Nizami pays tribute to the naturalistic tradition of Oriental poetry, which is foreign to Rustaveli (Sharia, 2019, 148-158).

Irina Kiladze's dissertation (2001) is dedicated to the typological interrelationship between Nizami's *Khosrow and Shirin* and Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*.

"The study presents the theoretical views of both authors about love and the artistic reflection of these theoretical views in the feelings and emotions of the characters. The motives of their love are analysed in detail: the motives of the emergence of love, roaming the wilderness, separation, sadness, the calling and duty of the lover, etc. ... The issue of typological interrelationships of the topic of the romantic relationship is established in both poems, and similarities and differences are presented in this regard... The comparative analysis of the fictional language of the authors highlights the specific character of the poetic language of both authors. It is noted that the stories and worldviews of these two poems are characterized by common typological features, reflected in wise sayings and aphorisms" (Kiladze, 2001, 142-148).

Foreign scholars also devoted numerous papers to this topic of research.

The newspaper *Literaturuli Sakartvelo (Literary Georgia)* published an article by a Czech academic, Ivo Vatsulin(1931-2020), about *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. The author notes that the Rustavelian era was a very important period for the development of the Georgian state and its culture, which historians call the Golden Age. He talks about ancient Georgian culture and literature, and emphasizes the fact that in the Rustavelian era the country was embraced by the spirit of the so-called Eastern Renaissance. The high level of development of ancient philosophy and science in Georgia at the time provides the author the justification for his argument. I. Vatsulin calls *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* the most remarkable monument of medieval Transcaucasian literature, adding that this work can only be compared to the creations of Nizami (Vatsulin, 1967).

Azerbaijani scientist Dilara Aliyeva (1929-1991) has made a significant contribution to the study of Nizami and Rustaveli. In her book *From the History of Azerbaijani-Georgian Literary Relations*, published in Baku in 1958, the author mentions that Shota Rustaveli recalls the characters of Nizami Ganjavi's poem *Layla and Majnun* and *Salaman Ibn Salam* ("Neither Caen nor even Salaman could bear sorrows like his" (1316)). The scholar adds that Rustaveli was familiar with Nizami's works and had read *Layla and Majnun*, she also notes that similar motives are found in the works of these two great poets, their characters are imbued with high intentions of friendship and respect for people (Aliyeva, 1958).

In a paper called "Woman - the Main Protagonist" (an expression of the aesthetic ideal in the works of Nizami and Rustaveli) published in 1983 in the journal *Mnatobi* (N 9), the author compares the philosophical beliefs and aesthetic views of Nizami and Rustaveli and notes that the works of both are manifestations of the cultures and worldviews of the epoch. They have in common the ideal of humanism and nobility. The wisdom and generosity of heroic women, devotion and love, and service to the homeland, are paramount in the work of both poets. The author also discusses the similarity of their aphorisms. The cult of woman and the humanism characteristic of the *Renaissance* with both poets are represented primarily in the images of women. Aliyeva notes that "Nizami and

Rustaveli treat women with equal respect and reverence, and their views and opinions are based on a proper understanding of the role of women in society” (Aliyeva, 1983, 151-155).

Another article by Dilara Aliyeva “On the Role and Significance of the Artistic Creativity of Nizami and Rustaveli” was published in the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of *Literaturnaya Gruzia* in 1984. Here she discusses the common literary motives of these two authors and the similarity of views about the purpose of the literary work in the edification of human beings and in the formation of their ethical-moral qualities. In addition, the author reviews the prologue of Rustaveli’s poem, and one of the chapters from Nizami’s poem *Treasury of Mysteries*, in which the authors talk about the nature and purpose of poetry. The author of the article believes that Nizami and Rustaveli are like-minded in terms of their theoretical understanding of poetic creativity. They share the same philosophical and aesthetic views (Aliyeva, 1984, 168-174).

Dilara Aliyeva dedicated the third chapter of her dissertation *Nizami and Georgian Literature* (Aliyeva, 1984, 29-45) to the creative relationship between Nizami Ganjavi and Shota Rustaveli. The scholar discussed the following issues: the basis of the humanistic concept of Nizami and Rustaveli; Nizami and Rustaveli on the role and purpose of the artistic word; the concept of love in the works of both poets, the role of women, the aesthetic ideal of the poets, and the problem of the perfect human being.

The Soviet Scientific Conference “The Role of Nizami in the Development of Lyrics in World Literature and 800 Years Since the Creation of *Khosrow and Shirin*” was held in Baku on November 22-23, 1984. Inga Kaladze's article “On the Epic and the Lyrical in the Works of Nizami and Rustaveli” is published in the conference proceedings, in which the scholar describes Nizami Ganjavi as a poet and thinker of such a great stature that the main inclinations of the artistic thinking of the whole epoch were reflected in his work. In this sense, Nizami’s work is related to the thought of Rustaveli, the second great thinker of the Middle Ages. The system of artistic representations of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* as well as the images of tropes suggests that Rustaveli uses ready-made formulae and clichés in drawing his deeply individual and psychologically charged characters, which, in fact, derive from Persian poetry. It is also

mentioned that the lyrical passages of Nizami's Divan and Rustaveli's poem speak not only of the high lyrical talent of these authors, but also of a completely new artistic phenomenon, found in the reflection of human physical and spiritual life within the romantic epic (Kaladze, 1984, 19).

Z. Kuli-Zade In his work "Theoretical Problems of the History of Oriental Culture and Nizamiology", while analyzing Majnun's literary image, points out that in his personal unity, and his indefinite spiritual greatness, Qays can be compared only to Iskandar. Therefore, the scholar does not consider it advisable to draw parallels between Majnun and Tariel of the *Knight in the Panther's Skin*. According to him, Tariel's grief and despair are related to the real human being, Nestan-Darejan, and moreover, before marriage, while Majnun's mourning embraces the universal sorrow and it expresses the lover's protest against the evil that prevails in this world (Kuli-zade, 1987, 160).

Donald Reyfield, professor of Russian and Georgian at Queen Mary University of London, thinks that:

"Rustaveli may have known Nizami of Ganja's more tragic romance of obsessive love "Leila and Majnun" in Persian, for his prologue, with its invocation of the deity, the monarchy, poetry, and love, in that order, is identical in structure with Nizami's. The development of Leila and Majnun's love from childhood intimacy parallels that of Tinatin and Avtandil and Nestan and Tariel; likewise the cult of altruistic friendship between the infatuated Majnun and the knight *sans peur et sans reproche* Nofal sets the pattern for Rustaveli" (Rayfield, 2014, 81).

A conference entitled "Comparative Literature and Culture: The Starting Point of National Culture" was held at the Baku Slavic University in 2015, where Gaga Lomidze presented a paper on "Two Perceptions of Love" (Nizami Ganjavi's *Layla and Majnun* and Shota Rustaveli's *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*). It is mentioned in the work that Shota Rustaveli is familiar with Nizami Ganjavi's poem *Layla and Majnun* as *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* mentions Majnun's real name, Qays. The focus is placed upon the different perceptions of love in the works of these authors. The Freudian concepts of the pursuit of death and the will to live are employed in this regard. The author notes that Rustaveli's and Nizami's perceptions of love reveal the difference between the medieval

and Renaissance visions of this concept. Love is governed by basic human aspirations: will to death (*Layla and Majnun*), which is more medieval; And the will to live (*The Knight in the Panther's Skin*), which marks the end of the medieval era and the beginning of the Renaissance. The first of these is closer to the asceticism of Sufi philosophy, the second to the Thomistic model of the enjoyment of earthly life, which implies the two natures of God - that He contains equally both earthly and divine aspects.

At the same conference Ivane Amirkhanashvili also presented his paper "Poetic Law as a Character (Nizami and Rustaveli)", which was dedicated to the review of Nizami's and Rustaveli's poetic eloquence. The author notes that both poets share metaphorical thinking and a hyperbole of ideas. This is mainly manifested in lyrical episodes, insertions and descriptions. The principle of maximizing artistic expression is implemented. Nizami and Rustaveli liberate the psychological and mental aspects of the poetic language as far as possible, and thus create the law of monumentality. They increase the distance between the real and the imaginary, the conscious and the unconscious. In the process of hyperbolization, objectivity is not lost, but becomes more convincing, because it does not even change the subject and the event, but transforms them. Ivane Amirkhanashvili considers this poetic law as a meta-language, which is used by Rustaveli and Nizami with a peculiar imagination and the principle of building an intellectual structure unique to them. Hyperbolization of the subject creates an artistic generalization of a higher aesthetic and mental level. If in aesthetics it is possible to have such a notion as character, then it must be possible to understand this poetic method as a manifestation of aesthetic temperament.

In 2020, an article by Irma Ratiani and Maka Elbakidze "Rustaveli – Nizami's Contemporary: revisiting some poetic and aesthetic principles" was published in the international anthology *Interpretation of Nizami's Cultural Heritage in the Modern Period*. The article discusses the application of the aesthetic and ethical concepts of Rustaveli to the relevant problems of Western European on the one hand, and to the medieval literature of the Middle Ages, on the other. Special attention is drawn to the concept of Rustaveli's concept of love, in which the authors see the motifs characteristic of both courtly novels and Oriental poetry (namely, Nizami's poems), that are mostly conventional. Therefore, in *The*



*Knight in the Panther's Skin*, they are found in the form of ready-made formulae and presented with different interpretations. The authors conclude that the attempt to reconcile Western and Eastern literary models sets the first precedent for the encounter of two different cultural worlds in the Georgian literary environ, while granting *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* the status of a unique text. It is with this synthesis that Rustaveli's novel enriches and expands the world literary process of the late Middle Ages: if for the Western Christian world of that period Weltliteratur is a concept uniquely equated with European space and culture, in Georgia it also follows the principles of Eastern literary law.

The present book continues the almost century-old tradition – the study of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* in the context of medieval Oriental literature, in particular, the work of Nizami Ganjavi, the great Eastern poet. The book presents the main problems of the work of these two poets and thinkers, the typological essence of their coexistence, as well as the historical-cultural or literary-aesthetic factors that lie behind the differences in their views. This task has been achieved by rethinking the theoretical aspect of the process and the social actualization of the research problems, which is one of the main trends in modern academic research.

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# ON THE HISTORY OF STUDY OF NIZAMI GANJAVI AND SHOTA RUSTAVELI IN AZERBAIJAN

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Spiritual and cultural ties between Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples have been linked for centuries. The creativity of such great Azerbaijani poets as Abul-ula Ganjavi, Khagani Shirvani, Feleki Shirvani, Mekhseti Ganjavi, Nizami Ganjavi, also famous Georgian poets like Chakhrukhadze, Shavteli, Khoneli, Shota Rustaveli and others is a vivid example of the relationship between Azerbaijani and Georgian literature of the 12th century.

Professor Dilara Aliyeva noted:

“Azerbaijani-Georgian literary ties are a core part of a large sphere of literary studies. The history of literary relationship between the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples is rich as their culture. The origins of these relations take us to the era of our ancestors, their echoes come to us through fairytales, legends, bayats and songs, Ozano-Ashug’s music” (Aliyeva, 1984, 9).

It should be mentioned that themes, subjects and philosophical thoughts of Nizami deeply influenced Georgian literature. Many orientalists have confirmed that “the Georgian public of the XII-XIII centuries was closely familiarized with Nizami’s creativity either from the original or from the translated version” (Aliyeva, 1984, 225). Nizami’s poems “Khosrow and Shirin” and “Layla and Majnun” were translated into Georgian during Nizami’s lifetime.

During the celebration of the 840<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi (October 6-9, 1981) in Baku, the Secretary of the

Board of the Union of Writers of Georgia Roman Miminoshvili noted: "General interest in Nizami has not weakened in Georgia since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We are proud that our literature is rich in old translations of his works. Shota Rustaveli also studied the work of Nizami and perfectly expressed his attitude towards his older contemporary in artistic images. Their poetic roll-call will continue for thousands of years." (Almanac, 1984, 40).

In Georgia, as in Azerbaijan, scientific work has been carried out for a long time to study the creative heritage of Nizami Ganjavi. Periodically, Georgian scientists N. Marr, K. Kekelidze, A. Baramidze, A. Gvakharia, K. Pagava and others collaborated with Azerbaijani specialists in Nizamiology such as: H. Arasli, M. Rafili, M. Jalal, M. Jafar, R. Aliyev, G. Aliyev, D. Aliyeva, A. Rustamova and others.

Since the 1940s of the 20th century, scientists have considered the problem of humanism in the works of Nizami and Rustaveli as a phenomenon of the Caucasian Renaissance. Such prominent scientists as Hamid Arasli, Mamed Amin Rasulzade, Mikael Rafili, Yevgeny Bertels, Nikolay Marr, Shalva Nutsunidze, Azada Rustamova, Rustam Aliyev, Dilara Alieva, Khalil Yusifli and others expressed their opinion. Studies related to the humanistic concepts of Nizami and Rustaveli are concentrated around such problems as the idea of social justice, utopian society, human rights, code of ethics, and the Renaissance worldview.

Studying the problem of *Nizami and World Literature*, special attention was paid to the influence of Nizami's works on the culture of the peoples of the world, as well as the origins of spiritual development of the poet. In the Azerbaijani literary criticism, the study of this problem began in two parallel directions:

- 1) Nizami and Oriental literature (this includes identification of the main sources of classical oriental poetics before Nizami, the study of literary ties with contemporaries and poets of subsequent eras, as well as the influence of poets on them);

- 2) The Origins of Nizami's connection with the Western European Renaissance.

To date, a number of significant studies have been carried out in both directions.