

SOME PARALLELS IN THE WORKS OF AKAKI TSERETELI AND ADAM MITSKEVICH

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Abstract

This paper presents research on the closeness of poetic world that developed between most prominent poets Akaki Tsereteli and Adam Mitskevich. Namely, an emphasis is placed on spiritual closeness of Georgian and Polish peoples. Some general parallels between Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* and Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* which intensify patriotic spirit are extensively considered in the work. A review of existing scholarly literature is presented and conclusions based on biographical data of two great creators are offered.

Keywords: General parallels, Akaki Tsereteli, Adam Mitskevich

Introduction

The outstanding feature of the 19th century was the creation of nation-states in Europe. It should be noted that the formation of nation-states in Europe was accompanied by a rather complex process of democratization of civil society. European literature reflected these sweeping changes in political, economical and social life in its own way and, at the same time, gave direction.

The role of fiction in the formation of a public opinion in European countries grew considerably in the first half of the 19th century. The works of Byron, Hugo, Heine, Schiller, Petefi, Mitskevich, Pushkin and Gogol contributed to awakening of patriotic spirit, peoples self-identification, their strife for the formation of national state and, what is important, preparation of the European society for democratic changes.

The works of the classics of European literature did a great impact on 19th century Georgian literature. In our view, it may be said that the beginning of this influence is to be sought in substantial similarity of the stereotypes of European and Georgian-Caucasian mentality in general.

While studying the peculiarities of Akaki Tsereteli's historical poems, our attention attracted the supposition about the kinship between Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* (1875) and Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828) that was put forward by a well-known scholar of the first half of the 19th century Sergi Gorgadze. Namely, he pointed out that Mitskevich devoted to him (Konrad Wallenrod) the whole poem which was created under Byron's influence. Akaki himself must have written the poem *Bagrat the Great* under the influence of this poem [1]. Sergi Gorgadze expressed this supposition in the letter devoted to Akaki's life and creative activity that was published in volume II of Akaki Tsereteli's selected works.

Sergi Gorgadze, as is seen, just supposes about the existence of a certain relation between *Bagrat the Great* and *Konrad Wallenrod*. In our view it is likely that A.Mitskevich's poem gave certain stimulus to Akaki's creative mood.

It should be mentioned from the very beginning that the Polish people were highly respected by the Georgians and generally, Caucasians. It should be noted that in the thirties,

forties and sixties of the 19th century lots of Polish participants of the uprising and members of a secret patriotic organizations took refuge in the Caucasus, namely Georgia. The majority of them were noble educated people. Thus, in the first half of the 19th century rather close relationship was established between the Georgians and Poles. As it turns out from Akaki Tsereteli's autobiographical novel "The Story of My Life", his teacher Kazimir Rodziewicz a political refugee from Poland had a wide influence on the formation of his consciousness and civil morality [2]. In his novel Akaki criticizes the teachers of the Kutaisi Gymnasium of that time and then continues: "It is clear that the younger generation enforced to study in such conditions would fail to get proper education in this gymnasium, if there were not at least one bright spot in this darkness. And this was a Pole Rodziewicz" [3].

According to Akaki's narration Rodziewicz taught him Mathematics but he paid special attention to general education of his students as well. "He talked about other things and tried to awaken us," recalls Akaki [4]. As we know, Akaki wrote an essay in the gymnasium in which he criticized king's officials. The teachers meeting disapproved of his essay. Rodziewicz was the only person who supported the daring student. He asked the Gymnasium board to offer the study of Latin to Akaki, as a brilliant student, so he could later continue his studies at the University.

In "The Story of My Life" Akaki tells us one extremely important story. Once, by chance, he witnessed a frank conversation between a French teacher Monsieur Teresis and Rodziewicz remembering the great French revolution and heroic history of Poland. Rodziewicz wished he chose a military carrier and served his homeland as *Konrad*. This conversation seems to have great impression on Akaki. He writes: "Once I heard this, I just didn't feel like myself! I could not sleep that night... I immediately left the Gymnasium that surprised everyone, and from morning till night I followed Rodziewicz everywhere. I stayed with him for four months, but these four months were more fruitful for me than eight years spent in the gymnasium" [5].

Thus, we can assume that it was Rodziewicz from whom Akaki had learnt about the name of the main character of Adam Mitskevich's poem - *Konrad*, the fighter for independence of his native land. As Akaki himself mentions, he spent four months with Rodziewicz. It is impossible to imagine that Polish teacher would not talk about great Polish writer Adam Mitskevich and his creative works with his disciple. However, it can be also assumed that Akaki became familiar with Mitskevich's poem from the journal "Sovremenik" because according to Niko Nikoladze's memoirs the teacher of Zoology in Kutaisi gymnasium N.S.Lezhava founded the library for senior students. Thanks to this library the students got familiar with progressive journals, including "Sovremenik". It should be noted that it was in the literary journal "Sovremenik" (#69, 1858) that *Konrad Wallenrod* translated by Shershenevich was published. This is considered the most perfect translation of all other translations. Generally, translation of Mitskevich into Russian and Georgian languages has rather interesting history on which we are going to focus our attention later.

Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* and Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* are narrative poems based on historical chronicles. The main purpose of both Georgian and Polish poet was to display a hero who struggles for freedom and independence of his native country. When remembering heroic past, both writers tried to inspire hope for future in people. Both heroes became role models for future generations, and the struggle for independence is understood in these poems as main designation of man's life.

The plot structure of Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* is rather complicated. The writer shows Konrad's biography, his personality from various angles and does not follow chronology in rendering the events development. Thus, the reader's impression of Konrad is formed gradually.

It is interesting to note that both Adam Mitskevich's and Akaki Tsereteli's ancestors directly participated in the struggle for independence in Poland and Georgia, respectively. Adam Mitskevich's father, Mikołaj Mitskiewich, was a comrade-in-arms of the national hero of Poland, Tadeusz Kustiaszko (1746-1817). Akaki Tsereteli's ancestors both from father's and mother's line were the representatives of the old noble Georgia family.

Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* is a piece that evokes strong emotions. As was mentioned above, the writer develops the plot in a very complicated and interesting way.

While in Kaunas, Adam Mitskevich collected different kinds of historical materials. In the postscript to *Konrad Wallenrod* he stated: "We have called our story historical, for the characters of the actors, and all the more important circumstances mentioned therein, are sketched according to history" [6].

It should be mentioned that there is much confusion in historical sources, namely, Konrad Wallenrod's background is not known and his death is also wrapped in mystery.

Historical materials about Konrad are contradictory. Some sources characterize him as an arrogant and severe man, others – as a kind, clever and brave person.

From historical sources, it is still unclear what Konrad Wallenrod's great authority was based on in the Teutonic Order of German Crusaders and why he behaved so strange during the struggle with Lithuanians, etc.

In Mitskevich's opinion it is possible to recognize Konrad's Lithuanian background and then it will become clear that he had entered the Order to take vengeance on it. As is known, the poem *Konrad Wallenrod* was finished by Adam Mitskevich during his exile in Russia. It is interesting to note that this poem with patriotic sentiment he devoted to the Decembrists Galinsky and Zaleski [7].

When we talk about Adam Mitskevich's and Akaki Tsereteli's creativity, one cannot but remember the following fact. While in Odessa, Mitskevich visited Mikheil Vorontsov, who then was governor general of Novorosiysk. The Polish poet deeply sympathized with him. As is known Akaki also had great respect to Vorontsov because he considered him a progressive statesman.

In Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* historical events are rendered according to the data preserved in old Georgian sources. Akaki did not make corrections in the development of historical events.

Mitskevich wrote the poem *Konrad Wallenrod* in 1826-1827. This piece of work belongs to the so-called "poetic narration" genre. The origination of this genre in Polish literature is associated with Adam Mitskevich himself with his first poem *Grazyna* (a heroic narrative of a Lithuanian woman) which was published in 1823.

The poem *Konrad Wallenrod* depicts the struggle of Lithuanians against the German oppressors. The action takes place in the 19th century.

As an epigram to the poem *Konrad Wallenrod* is a motto drawn from the work of the well-known Italian thinker and politician Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) *The Prince*: "You shall know that there are two ways of fighting – you must be a fox and a lion".

In the first lines of the poem introduction makes possible to determine the time of the events development described in the poem:

*A hundred years have passed since first the Order
Waded in blood of Northern heathenesse;*

As Lithuania is known to have been a target of raids conducted by the German Crusaders - Teutonic Order since the 13th century, naturally, we may suppose that the events described in the poem take place in the 14th century.

In a preface to the poems *Grazyna* and *Konrad Wallenrod* the author indicates a well-known historical fact that the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Mindaugas adopted Christianity in

1252 and soon was crowned King of Lithuania with permission from the Roman Pope. It should be noted that the anointment of the first King of Lithuania occurred in the town of Novogrudok. It was near this town that farmstead where Adam Mitskevich was born [8].

Thus, the reference to the Lithuanians as pagans in the 14th century can be considered as anachronism.

According to Adam Mitskevich's poem, despite the fact that Konrad Wallenrod is a stranger, the Teutonic Order nominates him Grand-Master.

One of the main characters of Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* is the Lithuanian Wajdelote or bard, the monk Halban who is presented by the author as a major character helping Konrad in the formation of patriotic sentiments. Halban had been long in German captivity and they used him as a translator since that.

Konrad himself sings old Lithuanian songs. When Grand-Master of the Teutonic Order flies into a rage, only Halban's songs calm him down. Mitskevich depicts an old Halban as a strong person who loves his motherland infinitely and whose poetry inspires Konrad on heroic deeds.

At nights the Grand-Master Konrad usually listens to the songs of a solitary, mysterious maiden in a tower and re-sounds them in a foreign language. As was mentioned above, this poem by Adam Mitskevich has rather complicated plot frame which arouses certain interest in the reader. The conversation with an unknown woman in a foreign language indicates that there is some big secret associated with Konrad Wallenrod.

The poet gives a description of a grand repast on the festival day of the patron saint of the Teutonic order – on 23 April where an unknown old Lithuanian bard performs his songs before the German knights.

The old Wajdelot is singing a new ballad on the new tune for the German knights. The song begins with the victory of the Lithuanian troop over Germans. Two Germans – a young man and an old one flee to flee to be received at the castle of the Lithuanian Duke Kiejstut.

The younger does not know his surname and background. He just remembers that his house was in a Lithuanian city, the German lose, the people were perished and the small boy was kidnapped. The boy was raised by the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Vinrich as his own son. The boy was called Walter and nicknamed Alf. As was mentioned, Mitskevich's version concerning Konrad's background was invented by the writer himself.

It is true compared with Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod* Akaki Tsereteli's *Bagrat the Great* is a small size work but historical event described in the poem – how Timur Leng captured the king Bagrat the Great, is an event equivalent to the struggle of the Lithuanian people against Teutonic Order. At the same time with the aim of developing the plot of Akaki's poem he did not change historical accounts related to Bagrat the Great. Actually Akaki gives poetic form to the story narrated in the *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (The Life of Georgia) and adds new color to the scanty reports of the chronicle.

Adam Mitskevich displays an old bard Halban as one of the main characters of *Konrad Wallenrod* who brought up a Lithuanian boy Walter Alf and kindled in him vengeance with Lithuanian songs. The old Lithuanian singer narrates that Wajdelote calls already grown up Walter to patience, tells him to learn the Germans' war-craft well and gain the Order's confidence. In one of the battles having heard the Lithuanian marching song Walter's heart broke down and together with old Wajdelote goes on the side of Lithuanians.

Walter falls in love with Lithuanian ruler Kiejstut's daughter, Aldona. Adam Mitskevich describes with special poetic feeling how Walter is listening to the words of his native Lithuanian language. He tells Aldona about Christian faith. Walter woos Aldona and makes a beautiful garden for her. Aldona's father the Duke Kiejstut likes Walter because he is educated, valiant and skilled, rampart mounds. With his blessings they get married.

The old minstrel hunter tells the Germans that this is not the end of the story and goes on with Walter's adventures. In the spring when Germans again march on Lithuania, besiege Kowno (Kaunas), then destroy the walls of the town, rob the town and burn it. The Lithuanian army retreats. Walter holds discourse with Kiejstut and his devoted friend Halban, and then opens his secret plan to Aldona. Aldona retires to a solitary tower of Christian monastery on the banks of the Niemen. The content of an unknown old man's Lithuanian song unfolds to the reader the mystery of Konrad Wallenrod's behavior. Adam Mitskevich makes the reader a participant of the final resolution of the narrative plot, prepares in advance to comprehend the act of the protagonist's sacrifice.

In Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* as was already mentioned literary invention, nuances created by writer's imagination have little place. The poem is mainly focused on the king's sacrifice. At the same time, of special importance is the fact that Akaki tries to put into the mouth of the enemy Timur Lang positive characteristics of the Georgians. We consider this literary device to be skillfully used by Georgian poet because the praise expressed by an enemy is far more important than the praise performed by own bard. This device once more emphasizes Akaki's great talent and poetic taste.

The old Lithuanian Wejdelote continues his song and tells that after that night Walter Alf and his devoted bard Wajdelot Halban disappeared. At the end he asks if all these sacrifices were in vain.

After the feast Great-Master Konrad Wallenrod himself is singing the ballad taught in Castile about heroic deeds of the Moors' king Almanzor. The ballad tells about the Spaniards struggle against the Moors. Only one city – Granada resists the Spaniards. Finally the Spaniards crumble its walls too and erect a cross on the minaret. Plague will spread in Granada.

The Moors' king Almazor flees. The Spaniards are feasting when a strange knight comes. This knight is the defeated Arab King Almanzor. He sues for peace and surrenders to the Spaniards, agreeing to serve their God and visits their captain in the tent.

The Spaniards are seduced with these words and embrace him. Only then does Almanzor confess that he has the plague. Thus the Arab avenged himself. The victory of the Spaniards changes into grief because the plague is spreading in their army.

Konrad Wallenros addresses the German knights who gather around the table – what if some day the Lithuanians come to mingle the poison in the wine. The Germans were amazed with Grand-master's wrath but they thought that the old Lithuanian singer made him angry. The knights failed to find Wajdelote.

The Germans could not grasp the meaning of the ballad about the Moors king Almanzor sang by Konrad.

The murderous war between Lithuanians and Germans starts. The war drags on and because of intense cold German Crusaders could not fight. Everybody blame Konrad for defeat because he failed to take Wilna (Vilnius). Konrad returns defeated.

The secret tribunal of the Crusaders of the Teutonic Order accuses Konrad Wallenrod of treason. The tribunal has found out that every night Konrad hold a conversation in the language of Lithuania with the maiden shut up in the tower. He has secretly plotted with Witold and betrayed Germans. The main thing that the tribunal has discovered was that Konrad accompanied Count Wallenrod in Palestine, killed the Count and gained fame as Wallenrod. From Palestine he reached Spain and struggles with the Moors.

In the meantime, Konrad again hurries to the white tower, and calls his dear Aldona. He asks Aldona to descend from the tower and run off with him, but she refuses his request, and she has sworn an oath to God. Konrad returns to the castle.

The final of the poem is tragic. Konrad, locked in a chamber with Halban, drinks poisoned wine and then, offers it to Halban. Weijdelts refuses to drink poisoned wine and tells Walter/Konrad Wallenrod:

“No, no, I will survive even thee, my son!
And live, so that the glory of thy deed,
I to the world may tell, to ages show”.

Konrad and Aldona die simultaneously, Konrad in the fortress and Aldona in the white tower.

As was mentioned patriotic aspiration of Akaki Tsereteli’s poem *Bagrat the Great* and Adam Mitskevich’s poem *Konrad Wallenrod* and the main purpose to inspire the reader with the wish to struggle and hope for victory, create a certain attitude brings these two works together. At the same time, it is to be taken into consideration the fact that as is known, Adam Mitskevich’s creative work made certain influence not only on Polish but generally on ideological development of the European civil society, its literary taste. Mitskevich’s popularity in Russia would give the Georgian reader an opportunity to become familiar with his creativity.

Akaki Tsereteli’s poem *Bagrat the Great* renders historical fact which is rather briefly described in the *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, namely the writer gives an account of the Georgian king Bagrat V named Bagrat the Great, who reigned in 1360. Georgian historical writers refer to Bagrat as Great. In 1386 Timur Leng captured King Bagrat. It should be mentioned that along with Bagrat, the Mongols took prisoner Queen Ana and her younger brother David. Thus, King Bagrat’s decision to convert to Islam and then take vengeance really demonstrates his persistence and courage because his wife and son were with him.

Unfortunately the autograph of Akaki Tsereteli’s poem *Bagrat the Great* does not exist but its publication has an interesting history. The poem was first published in the newspaper *Droeba* in 1875 (#41). It is noteworthy that in the same year in *Droeba* #28 and #29 there was published a letter of a well known Georgian public man, pedagogue and historian, Dimitri Janashvili *Bagrat the Great*. The scholars consider that it was Dimitri Janashvili’s letter that inspired Akaki to write the poem.

The editor of the *Droeba*, a well known Georgian journalist, Sergi Meskhi used unusual way for that time, he devoted the issue of the newspaper totally to Akaki’s poem *Bagrat the Great* and printed the newspaper with special advertisement –“ an extraordinary issue” [9]

In 1875, April 7, Sergi Meskhi sent one copy of the newspaper *Droeba* to his bride Keke –Ekaterine Tumanishvili who went to Switzerland at that time for study. He was so much impressed with this poem that devoted the whole newspaper solely to this poem and asked for his bride’s opinion.

As is seen in the history of Georgian journalism the poem *Bagrat the Great* is connected with extremely interesting fact associated with the form of publication of literary work.

We should mentioned that as Ioseb Grishashvili found out Akaki’s poem *Bagrat the Great* prior to publication was read at the first literary party (more precisely at charitable party of literary reading, M.Q.) held in Tbilisi on 4 April, 1875. The participants of this party were: Dimitri Kipiani, Akaki Tsereteli, Ilia Chavchavadze, Rapiel Eristavi, David Eristavi, Petre Umikashvili. The total sum of this party was given in favor of Georgian scene [10].

Akaki’s appearance in the charitable party found resonance in the literary magazine “Kavkazi”. In response to unjustified criticism in *Kavkazi* Akaki published a letter in the *Droeba* of 1875 #42 where he underlined that Georgian society who laughed at clerk’s lack of talent reflected in satirical scenes, listened to historical poem Bagrat the Great with big interest.

In the *Bagrat the Great* Akaki idealizes both the main character – King Bagrat and the whole Georgian people. Such well-pronounced idealization was generally characteristic for the literature of those peoples who were oriented at the creation of national statehood. The idealization of the past both for Akaki Tsereteli and Adam Mitskevich was one of the most important means for rising morals of the contemporary society.

It is known that Adam Mitskevich wrote ballads on the motive of Polish folk poetry. Like Akaki's creativity, in Mitskevich's poetry the influence of the folklore is well-pronounced. "In the opinion of Polish critics with positive attitude, Mitskevich raised Polish literature and gave it true Polish form", wrote well known Georgian scholar professor Mikheil Kveselava [11].

As a well-known Russian scholar V.Stasevich stated, for creation of Konrad Wallenrod Adam Mitskevich used various kinds of Polish Lithuanian and German historical sources, the samples of folklore. At the same time he used the compositions of Diusberg and Kotsbsu [12].

Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* is a very dynamic composition. Akaki gives laconic characterization of the time of Bagrat V's life and activity.

According to Akaki Tsereteli's poem the monk Isaak is opposed to Bagrat's decision to renounce Christ and convert to Islam:

"But if one cannot sacrifice to homeland, he is not a patriot" [13].

It is a historically known fact that after taking Bagrat in prison Timur Lang again marched on Georgia with his troops. Mongols burnt people in Kvabta gorge church alive, and destroyed Svetitskhoveli and other churches.

It should be mentioned that Akaki explains Timur Leng's unheard-of cruelty by his envy. Akaki uses really great literary device convention – with the mouth of the enemy praises Georgians. In fiction praise to the positive features of the defeated people by the winner is undoubtedly effective method.

In the "Life of Kartli" the chronicler gives scanty description of Bagrat's heroism but at the same time he renders king Bagrat's thoughts about vengeance [14]. In our opinion, these words may have been preserved as rendering and the chronicler made use of them in his work later. Akaki's Bagrat is represented just as such courageous and cheerful man.

Conclusion

Thus, in our view Akaki Tsereteli's poem *Bagrat the Great* (is an original work and it is not created under the influence of and Adam Mitskevich's poem *Konrad Wallenrod*. However, as we mentioned above, common attitude and the purpose of creation to arise patriotic feelings in people is common for both works. The intensification of patriotic feeling is essential for creation of national state of modern European type both in Georgian and Polish society.

Generally, the demonstration of a great respect for the Polish people and, particularly Adam Mitskevich, is Akaki's appeal to the Poles in 1908 at the party arranged for the celebration of his jubilee in Baku: "I felt drawn to write at the age of 12. There appeared some force which drew me forth to the bright ideas. This awakening force was breathed by a wizard and this wizard was your favorite writer Adam Mitskevich. Due to this, I recall with deep respect not only the great writer but those people who brought him up.

Tough history of his homeland made close for Akaki the world of the great poet of Poland whose pain and joy resonated deeply with him.

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