

Ivane Javakhishvili - The Founder of the University

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Ivane Javakhishvili

The Founder of the University



In the dark epoch of the tsarism, when the king's faithful servants did their best to banish all that was Georgian in Georgia, Ivane Javakhishvili managed to surround himself with the young scientists, who had got their education in Petersburg, and to lay the foundation for the Georgian National University. It meant to preserve Georgian nation's originality.



Ivane Javakhisvili won not only over Russia, but over the Georgian nihilism as well, or in other words, over those people who did not believe, that the university would be established.

The idea of founding a university was based on the strong roots, due to the fact that the Georgian educational tradition originated in the Rhetoric and Philosophic schools of Kolkheti (IVth century), in the Gelati and Ikalto Academies(XIIth century), and also in the (Vth century) Georgian Monastic-Educational centers of Palestine, (VIth century) of Syria, (X-XIth century) of Greece and of Bulgaria (XIth century).

In result of the enemies' invasions and political-economic collapse they ceased functioning in the XIVth century. Georgia became the colony of Russia and this in turn caused putting an end to the existence of the national educational institutions.

"In 1830 Tbilisi Gymnasium was opened, and the aim was not just to prepare young people to enter the university. In 1835 after French and German languages were introduced to be learned the graduates of the Tbilisi Seminary were allowed to enter the high school" (S. Jorbenidze "The Short History of Tbilisi University", 1988).



Just the same year five graduates were sent to the University of Russia. Since that the youth of Georgia went to Russia to get education. Their main part learned in

one of the well-known in those time Saint-Petersburg University, Moscow University, Tartu University under the Russian Empire, University of Novorosia etc. Those institutions of the higher education were the next best greatest European universities.

Roin Metreveli, a famous Georgian Academician and a historian, was the first elected rector of the Tbilisi State University, after Petre Melikishvili and Ivane Javakhishvili. He was a major editor of the Georgian Encyclopedia.



Roin Metreveli is the author of more than 300 scientific publications and books about Georgian history and Caucasology. For several years, he was member of the Georgian Parliament. He was Chairman of the Board of Rectors of all Georgian Universities.



According to Roin Metreveli: "Ivane javakhisvili had the idea ab initio to establish the first university in Georgia. After graduating from the University Ivane

javakhisvili was allowed to learn further to become a professor. And later he became the Private-docent for the Petersburg University”.

Ekvtime Takhaishvili and Ivane Javakhishvili

In 1907 Ivane Javakhisvili’s companion-in-arms and follower Ekvtime Takhaishvili established “Historical and Ethnographical Society of Georgia” in Tbilisi. This was the first academic institution in Georgia, which carried out great things from the point of view of uniting Georgian noble, intellectual people. In that Academy there were read scientific reports, there were held scientific-archeological expeditions under the egis of this Society and were collected old items.



Due to the activities of this Society there were issued two journals: “The Antiquities of Georgia” and “Ancient Georgia”. In the former there were published some articles and in the latter - the old documents. In this way the Georgian society was preparing to establish the institution of higher education. At the same time the work was carried on in Petersburg as well.

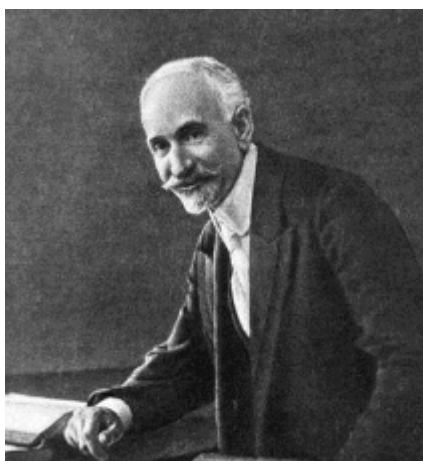


In 1917 Ivane Javakhishvili started taking his first real steps. He assembled Georgian scientists in his flat. Namely: Ioseb Yhipshidze, Akaki Shanidze, Shalva Nucubidze and others. At the meeting they put the question of founding the university. Some of the scientists welcomed the idea, though there were such people who were against it. At last the idea of founding the University won.



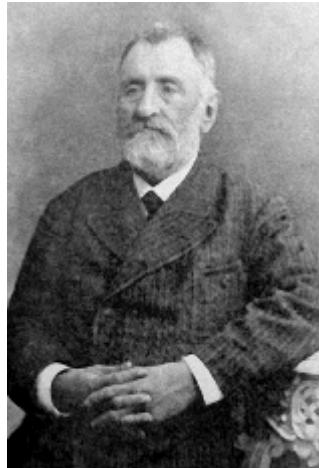
The Campaign of Founding a University

The campaign of establishing the university started all over Georgia: the charity activities began, the Financial Commission was founded. It was a good stimulus for moral support. Not only the Georgians, but the foreigners as well sent big amounts of money. Ovanes Tumanian, an Armenian public figure is famous in this regard.



Ilia Chavchavadze, Iakob Gogebashvili and Ivane Javakhishvili

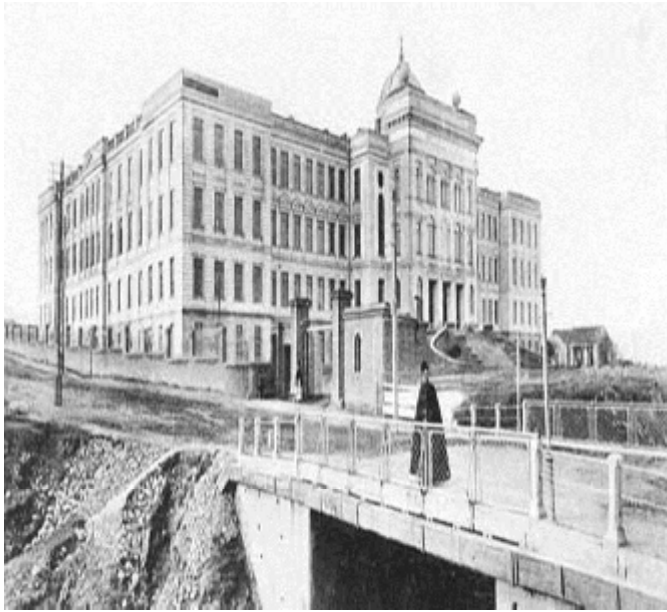
On 17 May Ivane Javakhishili went to Kutaisi and he held the meeting there and had a great support. The basis for founding the University had already been carried out while constructing the Tbilisi Gymnasium. This was the Nobles' Gymnasium, (The current general building of the University), which was thought ab initio as the Georgian University by Ilia Chavchavadze, Niko Tskhadadze, Iakob Gogebashvili and the other Georgian figures built under the leadership of Niko Tskhadadze. Some rooms were separated out of the Tbilisi University building.



They needed at least 4 faculties to open the perfect University: Historic-Philological, Mathematic-Biological and the Faculties of Law and Medicine. At the meeting which was held on 9 November, 1917 it was decided to establish only one, the Philosophical faculty with the following divisions: 1) Humanitarian Sciences (which was the same as the Faculties of Historic- Philological and Eastern Languages of Petersburg University) 2) Math and 3) Biology. Concerning the Medical Faculty, it was decided, “To request the Georgian Doctors’ and Biologists’ Society and the Moscow University Docent Gabriel Ghambarasvili to think on the issue on when it is possible to establish the Medical Faculty”. (S. Jorbenidze “The Short History of Tbilisi university; Tbilisi; 1988).



On 26 January, 1918 at 20 minutes past one the first Georgian University in the building of the Tbilisi Gymnasium was opened. This event was called “*Restoration of the Mind Sovereignty*”. The University was blessed by the Catholicos Patriarch Kieron II.



The first Rector Petre Melikishvili, Professor Ioseb Yhipshidze and the representatives of the Georgian, Armenian, Russian and Polish cultural organizations read their greeting letters at the opening ceremony.

At this time Ivane Javakhisvili himself became the Dean of the only Faculty of the University – The Faculty of Philosophy.

The first lecture was read on 30 January, 1918 by the historian Ivane Javakhisvili on the following issue: "A Man's Personality and its Significance on the old Georgian-historic-philosophic Writing and Life".

According to the University Regulations, any citizens of both genders could become students, despite their nationality and religion, in case if they had finished a school. There were 369 students and 89 free listeners and the number of the professors and teachers amounted to 18. The lectures were held in Georgian.



On 30 May, 1918 the highest Body of the Board of Administration – The Professors' Board -discussed especially the issue of the relations of the University with the Government. This Board ascertained that after the University became the National University, it should have the full autonomy. The Government should only have the right of drawing the estimate and control..."

Roin Metreveli: *"When a foreigner comes and asks the following questions: "Does this country have a university? Does this country have an encyclopedia?" And if the replies are positive, it means that this country is developed. And thus Georgia has formed a line with the well-developed countries owing to the opening of the University".*



After establishing the university, a completely new cultural era began, and it was headed by Ivane Javakhisvili – a man who was a unique event not only in the history of Georgia, but in the history of the mankind as well!”.