

## Vakhushti Bagrationi Institute of Geography

The Institute of Geography was established on March 16, 1933 at Tbilisi State University by the initiative of the founder of Georgian Geography School, Academician Alexandre Javakhishvili. He was the first director of the Institute and supervised it for 29 years (1933-1962).

In 1962-1979, the director of the Institute was Acad. Feofan Davitaya; in 1980-1981 – Acad. m/c, Prof. Alexandre Aslanikashvili; in 1982-1991 – Doctor of Geological-Mineralogical Sciences Tamaz Kiknadze; in 1991-1993 – Doctor of Geographical Sciences, Prof. Roman Kverenchkhiladze; in 1993-2005 – Acad. m/c, Prof. Zurab Tatashidze; in 2005-2006 – Doctor of Geographical Sciences, Prof. Ramin Gobejishvili; since 2007 to present – Geography Acad. Doctor Nana Bolashvili.

The Institute has had several deputies, including David Tsereteli, Alexander Aslanikashvili, Roman Kverenchkhiladze, Revaz Khazaradze, Nodar Elizbarashvili, Nana Bolashvili and Zurab Janelidze. Currently, Elene Salukvadze is a deputy director.

The following employees worked as scientific secretaries: Ioseb Kurdiani, Ivane Charkviani, Ilarion Jibladze, George Chirakadze, Shalva Kipiani, Tamar Nutsubidze, Alexander Aslanikashvili, David Ukleba, Guram Dondua, Tinatin Gabrichidze, Natela Gvasalia, Vasil Kandelaki, Jemal Kapanadze, Nana Bolashvili, Elene Salukvadze, and Nino Lomidze. Mariam Tsitsagi currently holds the position of a scientific secretary.

A rich and diverse scientific literature of the Institute's Scientific Library (Heads: Elene Sakvarelidze, L. Mgaloblishvili, M. Mirzoeva, V. Zaalishvili, Mariam Sharashidze, Tsiala Tsinadze, Eter Eliozashvili and now–Mariam Beburishvili) counts 120 000 units; it includes the manuscript collections, Georgian, Russian, English, French, German, Armenian, Azerbaijanian literature, etc.

Over the period of its 90-year activity from 1933 to 2023, the Institute conducted extensive scientific research that focused on complex geographical

studies of mountainous regions, including those in Georgia and the Caucasus.

The scientific activity of the Institute was dedicated to the physical-geographical and economic-geographical study of Georgia and publications of papers.

The Institute of Geography was incorporated into the Academy of Sciences of Georgia on March 9, 1945, as stated by the Praesidium of the Commissars Council of the Georgian SSR. On December 6 of the same year, the Institute of Geography was officially designated with the name of the esteemed Georgian scholar Vakhushti, as stated in the Decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR. Following the transition of the Institute to the Academy System, three distinct departments were established: the Department of General Geography, the Department of Regional Geography, and the Department of Cartography. During WW II, a comprehensive and regional analysis of Georgia's natural and economic features was conducted through a geographical survey.

Famous scientists worked at the Institute in different periods: Academicians of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia: Alexander Javakhishvili and Feofan Davitaya; Academy member-correspondents: Alexander Aslanikashvili, Vakhtang Jaoshvili, Zurab Tatashidze and Archil Kiknadze; Professors: George Gekhtman, Luarsab Karbelashvili, Levan Maruashvili, David Tsereteli, Mitrophan Kordzakhia, George Gvelesiani, Lev Vladimirov, Grigol Zardalishvili, Vsevolod Zenkovich, David Ukleba, Nikoloz Astakhov, Konstantine Gogishvili, Shota Javakhishvili, Roman Kverenchkhiladze, Demur Tabidze, Emil Kobakhidze, Vladimer Gvakharia, Alexander Motserelia, Tamaz Kiknadze, Lidia Koghoshvili, Natela Gvasalia, Elene Sokhadze, Givi Gvineishvili, Jansugh Kekelia, Besarion Kavrishvili, Iase Shakarishvili, Shalva Gogebashvili, Boris Klopotovskii, Shalva Kipiani, Simon Nemanishvili, Nodar Nachkhebia, Guram Dondua, Katevan Kavrishvili, George Changashvili, Boris Gergedava, Ilya Apkhazava,

Garsevan Kurdghelaidze, Tengiz Lashkhi, Tinatin Gabrichidze, Revaz Shengelia, Vladimer Kakabadze, Nino Klotovskaia, Karlo Liponava, Arsen Okrojanashvili, Nana Mamatsashvili, Irakli Matureli, David Matkava, Zinaida Bondireva, Rostom Chekurishvili, Anatoli Kukushkin, Akaki Makacaria, Omar Cheishvili, Robinzon Bazerashvili, Ioseb Kartvelishvili, Otar Samadbegishvili, Merab Tvalchrelidze, Tsisana Zhorzhikashvili, Nata Ghogheridze, Ala Chigiri, Nugzar Zakharashvili, Omar Erkomaishvili, Shalva Jaoshvili, Nikoloz Shurghaia, Tengiz Minashvili, Zurab Tavartkiladze, Levan Mikeladze, Aleqsandre (Sandro) Javakhishvili, Igor Bondyrev, Ramin Gobejishvili, Emil Tsereteli, Koba Kharadze, Nino Machavariani, Givi Gagua, Dali Mumladze, Vajha Neidze, Mikheil Khabazishvili, etc.

Since the 1970s, the Institute's scientific research topics have widened. The main attention was given to the study of mountainous geographical regularities. In this regard, the institute works brought great authority to the Institute and it was considered among the states of the former Soviet Union the leading scientific institution in researching geographical problems of the mountainous countries. The international authority of the Institute of Geography is confirmed by the fact that during this period, a number of national and international conferences, congresses and symposiums were held in Georgia. Prominent Soviet scientist, Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, I. Gerasimov noted: "It can be said that in Georgia was established one of the strongest schools of the modern geographical

science". Recognition of the Georgian geographical school was the fact that in Montreal in 1972 and in Moscow in 1976, the Vice President of the International Geographical Union was elected the Institute Director, Academician F. Davitaya.

Many problems and themes were developed in the institute that were related to the study of water resources of Georgia, as well as the hydrology, limnology and glaciology, the pollution of atmosphere and modification of its air composition, palaeoclimatology, natural processes forecasting methods, theoretical problems of geography, etc. The remote sensing method of research on environmental pollution developed at the Institute has been successfully used in cosmic space research.

Important and successful studies were conducted in geomorphology, speleology and landscape science, and geoecological studies and elaboration of environmental measures were conducted in the direction of constructive geography.

In 1950-1989, the whole series of complex economic, geographical and physical-geographical studies of the regions of Georgia (Shida and Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Zemo and Kvemo Imereti, Guria, Samegrelo, Svaneti, Samtskhe - Javakheti, Adjara, Abkhazia and eastern Caucasus), Tbilisi and the industrial centers were created, which were published as collective monographs. A total of over 200 monographs and 80 collected papers were published, along with atlases and maps, many of which received several prestigious awards. These publications include:

- *"Geomorphology of Georgia", 1971, in Russian (the principal author and editor Prof. L. Maruashvili was awarded the N. Przhevalski Gold Medal of the All-Union Geographical Society, 1972);*
- *"Agroclimatic and water resources of the regions of development of virgin and rested lands" (the author F. Davitaya was awarded the Alexander Voeikov Prize in 1956);*
- *"Development and distribution of Socialist production in Georgian SSR" (G. Gvelesiani, 1965, was marked by Al. Javakhishvili Prize, 1978);*
- *"Population of Georgia", 1968, in Russian; (Prof. V. Jaoshvili, the member correspondent of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia was awarded the P. Semionov-Tian-Shanski Gold Medal of the All-Union Geographical, 1970);*
- *"Cartography, issues of the general theory" (Al. Aslanikashvili, 1968, was awarded the State Prize, 1971);*

- “Natural landscapes and physical- geographic regions of eastern Georgia’s mountainous areas”, 1974 (the Vakhushti Bagrationi Prize to Prof. D. Ukleba, 1987);
- “Water balance of Georgia” (L. Vladimirov, G. Gigineishvili, A. Javakhishvili, N. Zakarashvili, 1974, in Russian, were awarded the Al. Javakhishvili Prize, 1993);
- “Georgia’s Brown and meadow brown soils”, 1977 (Doctor of Geographical Sciences E. Nakaidze was awarded the Williams Prize, 1979, in Russian);
- “Anthropogenic Landscapes of Georgia” (D. Ukleba, 1983, was awarded the Vakhushti Bagrationi Prize, 1993, in Russian);
- “Geographical problems of transport of Georgia”, (R. Kverenchkhiladze 1986, in Russian, was awarded the Al. Javakhishvili Prize, 1989);
- “Economic - Geographical study of Tbilisi”, 1989 (V. Jaoshvili, E. Kobakhidze, V. Neidze and R. Kverenchkhiladze were awarded the Vakhushti Bagrationi Prize, 1993);
- “Modern climate change in Georgia, radiatively active small atmospheric admixtures” (K. Tavartkiladze et al., 2005., in English, K. Tavartkiladze was awarded the National Prize of Georgia in 2009 for this and other works dedicated to climate change);

#### **Atlases:**

- Atlas of Georgia (Georgian and Russian versions, 1964; Al. Javakhishvili, F. Davitaya, Al. Aslanikashvili, G. Gvelesiani, M. Kordzakhia, L. Vladimirov and V. Jaoshvili were awarded the State Prize of the Georgian SSR in 1971);
- Atlas of resorts and resort resources of Georgia, 1989 (E. Kobakhidze was awarded the State Prize of Georgia in 1993);
- Study Atlas of Geography of Georgia, 1992 (R. Kverenchkhiladze, T. Kiknadze, D. Ukleba and I. Kartvelishvili were awarded the State Prize of Georgia in 1994);
- Atlas of Georgia by Vakhushti Bagrationi, 1997;
- Atlas of Georgia, 2012.
- National Atlas of Georgia, 2018 (in English), (N. Bolashvili, V. Neidze, A. Dittmann and L. King were awarded the Vakhushti Bagrationi Prize, 2023.
- Georgian Geographical Atlas, 2018

The Institute employees participated in the compilation of:

- Climatic Atlas of the USSR (3 volumes, 1960, in Russian), second time F. Davitaya was awarded the Voeikov Prize in 1966;
- The National Atlas of Cuba (1970, in Spanish, in Russian) was prepared and published by the direct involvement of Georgian geographers; F. Davitaya was awarded the USSR State Prize for compilation and publication of the atlas in 1973;
- Atlas of the snow and ice resources of the World (it was prepared and published with the direct participation of the Georgian geographers, 1997, in Russian);

Employees of the Institute of Geography give lectures in the different high educational institutions and public schools; many of them are the authors of textbooks.

In 1972, in the Institute, a laboratory of the coastal zone was created (Heads: A Kiknadze in 1972-2002 and V. Zenkovich in 1975), and in

1981, for the first time in our country under the leadership of A. Kiknadze, the great scientific-industrial union “Sakzhvanapirdatsva” was created (Director General A. Kiknadze), the work of which gave very useful and fruitful results. As a result of joint scientific and practical industrial activities, an important part of the Black Sea

beaches survived the washing-off. Laboratory work was carried out to obtain the full picture of coastal dynamics of the sea of Georgia and based on it for specification of its development prognosis (K. Liponava, Sh. Jaoshvili, J. Mamaladze, G. Tsenteradze, L. Tigishvili, V. Kandelaki, N. Dzidzikashvili, G. Ruso, I. Gelovani, I. Papashvili, G. Lominadze and others).

The Institute of Geography was actively involved in the process of developing the Colchis utilization problem of national importance, which was reflected in the collective monograph "Colchis lowland. Scientific preconditions of utilization" (1990, Moscow, in Russian) dedicated to the complex-geographical research of Colchis lowland.

Important works were carried out to reveal the territorial regularities of the elements of atmospheric precipitation runoff and the water balance. Fundamental works were created dedicated to the water balance, river runoff, water resources, lakes of the Caucasus, evaporation from mountain reservoirs, solid runoff and other important issues. Very important were the elaboration of methods and principals of calculation of water balance in the conditions of high mountain volcanic and karst relief, mapping of natural landscapes, research of caves, physical-geographical zoning of mountain areas, study of factors and problems of distribution of industrial sectors, urban and rural population, and specification of economic-geographical structure issues and economic-geographical zoning principles.

The Institute had great achievements in karstology and speleology. The discovery and study of the Akhali Athoni Cave System is the greatest merit of Docent Sh. Kipiani, Prof. Z. Tatashidze, A. Okrojanashvili, J. Jishkariani, B. Gergedava and others, which was marked by the State Prize of the USSR (1977). For the first time in the former Soviet Union, the International Symposium of Speleologists was held in Tbilisi on the basis of the Institute of Geography (1987). It

was important to discover the Tskaltubo (Kumistavi) Cave System (J. Jishkariani, T. Kobulashvili, A. Jamrlishvili and V. Kapanadze) in 1984.

In connection with the reorganization of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, in 2006, the institute was granted the status of a Legal Entity of Public Law and went under the Ministry of Education and Science (Government Regulation №74), and in 2010, according to the Statement of the Government of Georgia (№278), it joined the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University as an independent research institute.

The Institute of Geography is a national research institution, and its main directions of study and research are as follows: physical geography (landscape science) of mountainous areas, economic and human geography, rational use of natural resources, geocology (environmental protection), natural – hazardous processes, glaciology, karstology - speleology, modern climate change (global warming and desertification), hydrology, natural and anthropogenic landscape transformation, environmental analysis, ensuring the sustainable development of industry and population, tourism geography, compilation of geographical maps and atlases, and historical geography and toponymy issues, which are reinforced by the application point of view of constructive geography. These problems are studied in the Departments of Geomorphology and Geocology (Head – Dr. George Lominadze), Physical geography (Head – Dr. Mariam Tsitsagi), Hydrology-Climatology (Head – Dr. Tamaz Karalashvili), Human Geography (Head – Dr. Marine Bokeria) and Cartography–Geoinformatics (Head – Dr. Guliza Liparteliani).

The research being conducted in the Institute scientific Stations is supervised by Doctor of Phys.-Math. Sciences, Kukuri Tavartkiladze in Batumi, Geography Doctor Merab Gongadze in Zemo Khodasheni and Geography Doctor Tamaz Karalashvili in Sioni.

The employees of the Institute actively participate in a wide range of international projects, as well as in funds provided by the Georgian National Science Foundation. They also contribute to workshops, symposia, conferences, and seminars.

The Institute of Geography employs numerous talented young scientists who will carry on the legacy of distinguished academics with honour in the future.

***Dr. Nana Bolashvili***  
*Director of VBIG*  
*Section Editor-in-Chief*

