

ლიტერატურა და ლიტერატურის თეორია  
Literature and Literary Theory

*Visramiani* in the English Language

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*Medieval novel Visramiani (12<sup>th</sup> c.) is the prose translation of verse romance Vis o Rāmin by Persian poet Faḡr al-Din As'ad Gorgāni. The first translation of Visramiani in a foreign language was made in English and it belongs to Oliver Wardrop (1864-1948). The article discusses the editions, composition, preface and reviews of O. Wardrop's translation.*

**Key words:** *Visramiani, O. Wardrop, English translation.*

In 2018, the book *Oliver Wardrop. Visramiani. The Story of the Loves of Vis and Ramin. A Romance of Ancient Persia. Translated From the Georgian Version (Classic Reprint) [Visramiani 2018]* was published in London in the series *Forgotten Books*. This was the third (reprinted) edition of the book after the editions of 1914 and 1966.

The re-edition of the book translated by British Kartvelologist Oliver Wardrop a whole century ago in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (in addition, the third edition) is already a clear confirmation of the special importance of this book not only from the viewpoint of popularization of Kartvelology, as the English translation of *Visramiani* is in most cases a noteworthy literary source to be reckoned with for scholars interested in problems of Oriental Studies as well.

The medieval novel *Visramiani* is the prose translation of verse romance *Vis o Rāmin* by Persian poet Faḡr al-Din As'ad Gorgāni. Literary tradition ascribes the Georgian version of this work to the 12<sup>th</sup>-century figure Sargis Tmogveli. The work in the Georgian language was published for the first time in 1884, under the editorship of I.Chavchavadze, Al. Sarajishvili and P.Umikashvili [*Visramiani 1884*]. Interest of foreign figures in this text is linked exactly with this first edition. The first translation of the work in the foreign language was based on this edition.

The first translation of *Visramiani* in a foreign language was made in the English language by Oliver Wardrop (1864-1948), great benefactor of English Kartvelology, scholar and translator. As is known, siblings Marjory and Oliver Wardrops made a great contribution to the popularization of Georgian literature in the English-speaking world. Oliver Wardrop translated into the English language *The Book of Wisdom and Lies* (1894), *Visramiani* (1914), *The Laws of Giorgi the Brilliant* (1914), he described the Georgian manuscripts of the British Museum (1913), published the book *The Kingdom of Georgia* (1888), etc.

It turns out that as soon as *Visramiani* was published in the Georgian language, O.Wardrop became interested in translating the book in the English language. This is confirmed by the communication of his sister Marjory Wardrop with Georgian figures: from Marjory's letter sent to Olgha Chavchavadze on January 5, 1899 we learn: "Oliver translated half of *Visramiani* and he likes the book very much. Every day we read in Georgian", whereas after a year, in January 1900, Marjory wrote to A.Khakhnashvili: "My brother almost finished *Visramiani*".

O.Wardrop's such interest in the text of *Visramiani* was to a certain extent also determined by the fact that his objective was to draw the attention of the Iranists to the Georgian translation so as to clarify finally the issue of interrelation of *Visramiani* and the Persian original. For this purpose, in 1902 he published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in London the study *The Georgian Version of the Story of the Loves of Vis and Ramin* [Wardrop 1902: 493-507] and fragments of translation. And in 1914 the same *Royal Asiatic Society* published in London as a separate book the English translation of *Visramiani* by Wardrop: *Visramiani. The Story of the Loves of Vis and Ramin. A Romance of Ancient Persia. Translated From the Georgian Version by Oliver Wardrop* [*Visramiani* 1914]. In 1966 the translation was reprinted by the *Oriental Translation Fund. New Series. Volume XXIII. Visramiani (Loves of Vis and Ramin). O. Wardrop* [*Visramiani* 1966], and in 2018 the book was published once again in the series *Forgotten Books: Oliver Wardrop. Visramiani. The Story of the Loves of Vis and Ramin. A Romance of Ancient Persia. Translated From the Georgian Version (Classic Reprint)* [*Visramiani* 2018].

The first edition of the translation of 1914 opens with a preface [*Preface (Visramiani* 1914: v-viii)]. The translator briefly introduces to the English-speaking readers the contents of *Visramiani*, tells the story of translation and printing of the text in the Georgian language. He touches upon separately the edition of 1884 of the work. He notes that the text is translated from this edition and as an illustration inserts in the English preface the following in the Georgian language: „ვისრამიანი – რედაქტორობით ილ. ჭავჭავაძის, ალ. სარაჯიშვილის და პეტ. უმიკაშვილის. ტფილისი. ექვთიმე ხელაძის სტამბა. 1884“ [ვისრამიანი 1914: vi]. In the preface, which begins with the words: "THIS book is an elaborate study of a woman whose whole life was dominated by love. It is certainly one of the oldest novels in the world" - [*Visramiani* 1914: v], - the significance of *Visramiani* is highlighted in the history of Persian literature and culture. According to the author, this text gives the picture of the life, manners, and morals of old Persia. It is noted that unfortunately the original of the work has not survived but the Georgian translation has remained, the translator of which is considered Sargis Tmogveli, contemporary writer of Queen Tamar, which is attested by Shota Rustaveli in his immortal *Vepkhistqaosani (The Man in Panther's Skin)*. The Persian-language editions of the work and scholars working on the problems of *Visramiani* are also mentioned (R.Stakelberg, N.Ethé, N.Marr, and others). At the end of the preface O. Wardrop extends his gratitude to Georgian scholars: Mikheil Tsereteli and Tedo Sakhokia, who assisted him during the work on the translation [*Visramiani* 1914: vii-viii].

As was noted, the English translation of *Visramiani* is based on the Georgian edition of the work of 1884. This is the full translation of the text, from which it is evident what an excellent command of the Georgian language the translator had and how he tried not to lose for the text the charm which distinguishes Georgian *Visramiani*. For illustration we cite titles of a few chapters: Chapter I. The Beginning of the Story of Vis and Ramin (pp. 1-3); Chapter II. The Story of Vis and of Ramin and his Eldest Brother, Shah Moabad (4-7); Chapter III. Moral – the Decree of God and Its Application (8-10); Chapter IV. The Letter Written by the Nurse of Vis to Shahro, the Mother of Vis (11-12); Chapter V. In Which They Bring Vis From Khuzstan into the City of Hamian (13-15); Chapter VI. Here is the Wedding of Vis and her Brother Viro and the Coming of Moabad's Brother Zard as Envoy (16-24); Chapter VII. Here Shah Moabad Sets Forth to Fight Viro (25-26); Chapter VIII. Here is the Great Battle Between Moabad and Viro (27-31); Chapter IX. The Investment of Viro's Castle by Moabad, and the Discourse of Vis (32-40); Chapter X. Moabad's Letter to Shahro (41-44); Chapter XI. Viro Learns of the Abduction of his Wife, and his Mourning Thereat (45-46); Chapter XII. Ramin Becomes Enamoured of Vis (47-49) [*Visramiani* 1914].

The text is accompanied by a scholarly apparatus. On almost every page there are extensive footnotes, from which the English-speaking readers are given an opportunity to get acquainted more profoundly with the translation and the problems related to the text. At the end of the book a quite extensive and detailed index is attached. This index is noteworthy also due to the fact that along with

personal, geographical and ethnic names, it contains indexes of flora and fauna, music and sport, minerals and metals, medicine and folklore, index of Georgian words, index of parallels with *Vepkhistqaosani*, etc. [Visramiani 1914: 397-409].

Publication of O. Wardrop's English translation was followed later by numerous reviews both in Georgia and abroad. The first review belongs to Tedo Sakhokia, who was involved in the process of translating the text into English from the very beginning: "Oliver Wardrop is considered a connoisseur of the English language in his homeland, and it should be said to his credit he has translated Visramiani with the same accuracy as his late sister dedicated *The Man in the Panther's Skin* to the English public... – numerous footnotes, offered for scholarly interpretation and explanation of one or another word, demonstrate the translator's diligent attempt to convey accurately the author's message to the English reader. The language of Visramiani is rightly considered a model of Georgian eloquence in our country, and, fortunately, its English translation is also a model of such beauty of this language" [Sakhokia 1915]. In 1925, Niko Marr published a work in which, along with a favourable assessment of the translation, he noted the inaccuracies found in Oliver Wardrop's English translation of Visramiani due to the misunderstanding of some parts of the Georgian text [Marr 1925: 111-138]. It is noteworthy that the famous Iranist Mojtaba Minov, a researcher of the Persian text of Vis o Ramin, translator and publisher in English, specially noted that Wardrop's English translation "proved to be very useful for the establishment and correction of the Persian text". Information about O. Wardrop's translation of Visramiani and an fragment from the preface were included by D. Lang in his book *The Georgians: To give some idea of the emotional force of this classic work, we cite Ramin's lament over the body of the departed Vis, in the fine translation by Sir Oliver Wardrop: O beloved friend, more to be desired than life! Thou art gone, thou hast forsaken me completely, and hast left me heart-branded, consumed, weary of the world... But as I know thy heart, certainly thou didst not deceive me. It is evidently Fate that has betrayed me, and from it this is no marvel. To whom has it fulfilled good from then till now? The earth is emptied of joy by thy departure, thou hast taken everything good with thee. How can I endure the plague of old age and feebleness, as well as the sadness of being bereft of thee? Or how can I live and endure the thought of this? Grief is added to grief! I lying on a throne, and thou in the earth – I cannot think of it!* [Lang 1966: 168]. In 1973, an article by Luxembourg journalist Rosemarie Kieffer was published in French, in which the author notes the importance of the Georgian Visramiani for Late Medieval European literature [Kieffer 1973: 6-7], etc.

In 1996, the Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature published Ketevan Vashaqmadze's book: *Visramiani in English* [Vashaqmadze 1996]. The author's goal is to study the Georgian version of Visramiani and O. Wardrop's English translation, to conduct a textual comparison and analyze its results. The second chapter of the book – *The English Translation of the Georgian Version of Visramiai* is entirely devoted to the comparison and juxtaposition of the original and the translation, in which the author offers a number of interesting conclusions [Vashaqmadze 1996: 19-107].

Recently, Tamar Lekveishvili's research has shown interesting results – comparison of O. Wardrop's English translation with the text established by Al. Gvakharia and M. Todua [Gvakharia... 1962, 1964], as a result of which inaccuracies which had found their way into the English text from Georgian were corrected [Lekveishvili 2004; 2005; 2007; 2016].

Although, as was mentioned, the third edition (2018) of O. Wardrop's translation of Visramiani was published in the *Forgotten Books* series, time has shown that this translation is still interesting for English-speaking readers, especially for Iranists. We believe that in the process of translating Visramiani into English, future translators should be guided by academic editions of the text [Gvakharia... 1962, 1964] and should take into account the corrections and clarifications confirmed by recent research.

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## დარეჯან მენაბდე

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## „ვისრამიანი“ ინგლისურ ენაზე

აბსტრაქტი

შუასაუკუნეების რომანი „ვისრამიანი“ (XII) არის პროზაული თარგმანი სპარსელი პოეტის, ფახრ-უდინ-გორგანელის, პოემისა „ვის-ო-რამინ“. „ვისრამიანის“ პირველი უცხოენოვანი თარგმანი შესრულდა ინგლისურ ენაზე და ეკუთვნის ოლივერ უორდროპს (1864-1948). სტატიაში განხილულია ო.უორდროპისეული თარგმანის გამოცემები, შედგენილობა, წინასიტყვაობა და გამოხმაურებები

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** „ვისრამიანი“, ო.უორდროპი, ინგლისური თარგმანი.

**რეცენზენტი:** პროფესორი იან აიდუკოვი