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## **SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND RARE BOOKS OF THE AKAKI TSERETELI STATE UNIVERSITY**

Akaki Tsereteli State University Library is one of the most important repositories of early printed books and rare bibliographic publications in Georgia, which was founded in 1933 by Academician Giorgi Akhvlediani. Nowadays, the book fund includes the library collections of N. Muskhelishvili State Technical University and Sukhumi State Teaching University of Subtropical Agriculture, educational-scientific literature, periodicals, unique manuscripts, early and rare editions, memorial items, etc. The Rare Books Collection of the library consists of various books of history, geography, travel, fiction, medicine, hagiography, religion, law, philosophy, astrology, mathematics, 1,000 Georgian, 800 foreign (Latin, English, French, German, Polish, Czech, Russian, etc.) rare, printed books of XV–XIX centuries. Many, but certainly not all, of the items in the Rare Book Collection are books. We also have antiques, artwork, artifacts, letters and photographs.

The Akaki Tsereteli State University library administration continues its tradition of enriching its collections; during past fifteen years, the university has acquired nearly 50 books printed in Europe and Georgia before 1600.

In 2018, a new library building was opened, where the above-mentioned collections were placed in warehouses in accordance with modern standards. At the same time, library staff started re-inventorying early printed and unique books, compiling bibliographic index, placing them in an electronic catalog and digitalizing. During the process, they discovered books; there were no records or descriptions of them in the library database or in the inventory documents. This treasure was indeed unexplored. Gradually, with the involvement of the relevant academic disciplines, the process of studying books and working on texts began. For example, professors of the Department of Classical and Roman Philology of the Faculty of Humanities of Akaki Tsereteli State University started studying the

philological-textological, literary and historical features of Latin books. An object of similar research is early printed Polish-language books.

The settlement of Poles in Georgia began at the end of the 18th century. This process became more intense in the early 19th century, after Poland and Georgia came under Russian rule. The reasons for the arrival of Poles in Georgia were, in some cases, political or missionary objectives, sometimes military commitments, sometimes commercial interests, or the search for better housing.

In the 1640s, the first Polish missionaries appeared in Georgia, who were also engaged in diplomatic activities. Among them were Vecherkovsky and Krushinsky, who later published papers on their missionary achievements in the South Caucasus. Their writings contain important information about Georgia. In the 18th century, the Polish missionary Jan Rota worked in Georgia.

The city of Kutaisi has long been a center for Catholic missionaries. Back in 1644, at the request of King Alexander III of Imereti, the Theatine monk Cristoforo Castelli arrived in Imereti from Samegrelo, whom the king and the people of the city met with great honor. Soon he was granted a church and several houses. Capuchin monks had already been working in Kutaisi in 1770, and they had their church in Mtsvanekvavila. Even later, in 1800, according to the deeds issued first by King Solomon II of Imereti and then by Queen Mariam, the lands around the Catholic Church were granted to them. Finally, in the 19th century, Catholics built a large church of Virgin Mary in Kutaisi. In 1740, they opened a school next to the Catholic Church with the help of the kings and nobles of Imereti. In 1810, Russian self-rule abolished the Kingdom of Imereti and established its rule there. Next to the Catholic Church, Russians found a parish school. This school was only abolished in 1820 but was later rebuilt in 1850.

In our opinion, the school had its own library. If we assume that the first libraries were related to churches and monasteries, it is easy to imagine that most of the early printed and unique foreign language books of the library of Akaki Tsereteli State University, including Polish-language books, must have been their property. The inscriptions and stamps on the books (Pic. 1, 2, 3, 4) confirm it. At the same time, I found interesting information about the Kutaisi Catholic Church in foreign travelers' works. I would like to mention Maurice Wagner, a German traveler, geographer and naturalist who visited Kutaisi in 1854. Later, he published his work "Journey to Colchis and the German Colonies beyond the Caucasus", where he describes above-mentioned church and notes that the Catholic Church has a big Library.

Distinguished intellectuals and affluent citizens of Kutaisi donated their own library to the newly established University (1933). Among them was the public figure and philanthropist Pavle Tumanishvili (1872–1935), whose wife was the Polish noblewoman Yadviga Shishko, the daughter of General Caesar Shishko, com-

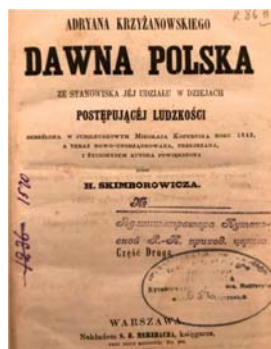
mander of the Zhitomir garrison. Until 1930, Pavle Tumanishvili had been the President of the Georgian-Polish Society in Warsaw for several years (Pic. 5).

Distinguished Polish professor Nikoloz Dubrovski (1874–?) made a great contribution to the establishment and development of Akaki Tsereteli State University. Nikoloz Dubrovsky holds an honorable place not only in the history of our university, but also in the history of the Georgian high school. He graduated from Kutaisi Classical Gymnasium in 1897. In the same year, he continued his study at Warsaw University, specializing in History and Philology. Due to a political party confrontation, he was forced to leave Warsaw and return to Georgia. At some point in his life he worked in Baku, where he took an active part in the establishment of the Polytechnic Institute. He was the Dean of the Faculty and the Rector in the above mentioned institute. On November 15, 1933, Nikoloz Dubrovsky began working as the Head of the World History Department of the newly established Kutaisi State Pedagogical Institute. He was the head of this department until 1943 and generally, he lived in Kutaisi. Nikoloz Dubrovsky donated his rich personal library to the Kutaisi Pedagogical Institute Library, the Akaki Tsereteli State University Library today. Unfortunately, the document with the list of books he donated to the library has not been preserved. In the repository of rare and unique books, we found books with his personal signature and stamps with the following inscription “Ex Libris Ник. Дубровский”. It gave us a unique chance to identify them (Pic. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

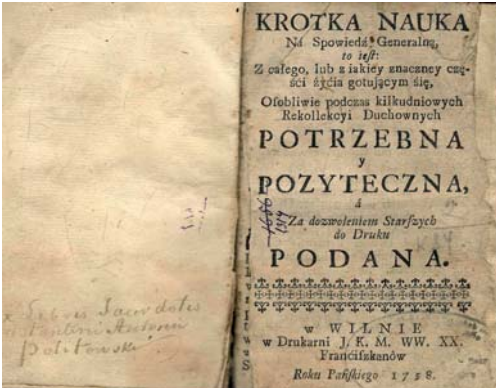
I have already mentioned above that an interdisciplinary study of early printed and unique books preserved in the ATSU Library is necessary, which can bring a lot of clarity to both Georgian and Western understanding; to review and re-analyze Georgian-European relations; add new features to the history of Catholicism, Georgian-Polish relations, etc. At the same time, it is necessary to translate and publish books which have not yet been translated in Georgian, e.g., Ten volumes of “History of Polish Literature” by the famous Polish philosopher, psychologist and literary historian Mikhail Vishnevsky; as well as the work of the famous Polish poet and prose writer, Mikolaj Rey, “The Life of a Sincere Man” etc.



1. Ks. Dionizy Bączkowski, „Historija Kościoła Katolickiego...”, Warszawa 1908 (1868–1953)



2. Adryan Krzyżanowski (1788–1852), „Dawna Polska ze stanowiska jej udziału w dziejach postępującej ludzkości...”, Część 2, Warszawa 1857



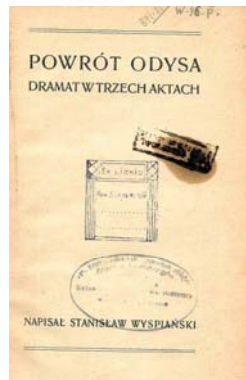
3. „Krótką nauką na spowiedź generalną...”, Wilno 1758



4. „Pontificale romanum Clementis VIII et Urbani VIII...”, Tom 2, 1818



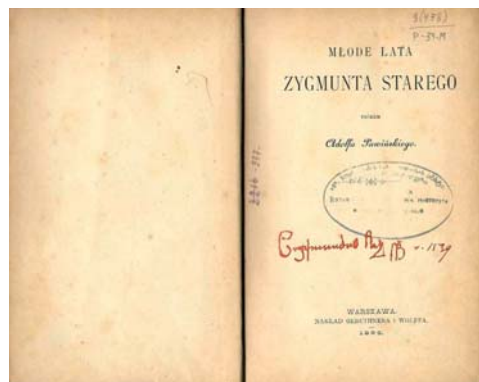
5. „Histoire de la Georgie...”, St. Petersburg 1851



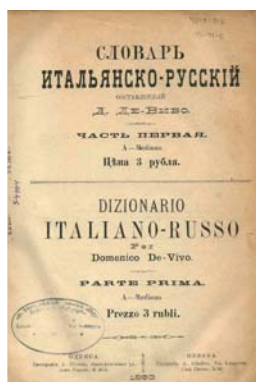
6. S. Wyspiański, „Powrót Odysa. Dramat w trzech aktach”, Kraków 1907



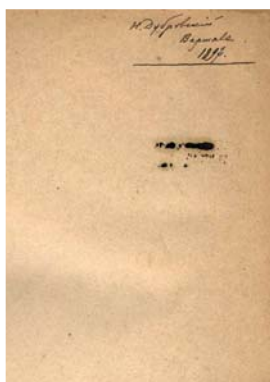
7 Adolf Pawiński, „Młode lata Zygmunta Starego”, Warszawa 1893, strona przedtytułowa



8. Adolf Pawiński, „Młode lata Zygmunta Starego”, Warszawa 1893, strona tytułowa



9. D. de Vivo, „Slovar italansko-russkij”, Czast pervaja, Odessa 1893



10. D. de Vivo, „Slovar italansko-russkij”, Czast pervaja, Odessa 1893, autograf wlaściciela



11. E. Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Leipzig 1908

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**ZBIORY SPECJALNE I RZADKIE KSIĘGI W BIBLIOTECE  
PAŃSTWOWEGO UNIWERSYTETU IM. AKAKIEGO CERETELEGO**

**Streszczenie**

Biblioteka Państwowego Uniwersytetu im. Akakiego Tseretelego zawiera bardzo bogate zbiory wczesnych druków i rzadkich publikacji bibliograficznych. Wiele z nich jest w języku angielskim, włoskim, polskim, rosyjskim. W rzadkich księgozbiorach znajdują się książki i czasopisma z okresu od XV do XIX wieku, obejmujące różnorodny temat z zakresu humanistyki. Ten historyczny skarb nie został do tej pory zbadany. Naszą misją jest badanie, gromadzenie i przechowywanie materiałów dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz udostępnianie ich społeczeństwu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Biblioteka, zbiory specjalne, rzadkie książki, polscy misjonarze, misjonarze katoliccy, Kutaisi.

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**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND RARE BOOKS OF ATSU**

**Summary**

The Library of Akaki Tsereteli State University contains a considerable collection of early printed books and rare bibliographic publications. Many of them are in English, Italian, Polish, Russian, and other languages. Rare books collections contain books and periodicals dating from the 15th to 19th century and cover a variety of subjects from the humanities. This ancient treasure has not been studied so far. It is our mission to study, collect and preserve cultural heritage materials and make them accessible to the public.

**Keywords:** library, special collection, rare books, Polish missionaries, Catholic missionaries.