



ისტორია, პოლიტიკა, წყაროთმცოდნეობა  
HISTORY, POLITICS, PRIMARY SOURCE STUDIES

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**Great researcher of Georgian history and Georgian  
Oriental studies**

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**Abstract**

Today, numerous scholars and researchers are actively engaged in the development of Georgian Oriental Studies, particularly Tur-kology. It is my privilege to highlight the fruitful academic contri-butions of Professor Giuli Alasania, a distinguished researcher of the Middle Ages, modern, and contemporary history, politics, and civili-zation of the Near East and Georgia. Professor Alasania holds a doctorate in historical sciences and is a co-founder and former pre-sident of the University of Georgia, alongside Prof. Manana Sanadze.

For several decades, Prof. Giuli Alasania has been dedicated to teaching and research across various higher education institutions in Georgia, including Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, the International Black Sea University, and the University of Georgia. Her long and distinguished career has earned her deep respect, and colleagues. Through tireless dedication and exemplary professionalism, she has achieved significant milestones in the academic field. This is

evidenced by her extensive body of published works, including scholarly articles, research papers, and monographs. Many of these serve as indispensable resources for students, available in both Georgian and foreign languages.

While Prof. Alasania's primary research focuses on the medieval history of Georgia and the Near East, her academic interests extend to a broad range of topics. She actively participates in international scientific conferences, symposiums, and congresses, where she shares her expertise with Georgian and international colleagues alike.

Moreover, Prof. Alasania is a contributor to and author of numerous noteworthy grant projects. Her continuous commitment to exploring critical and controversial events in Georgian history enriches the scholarly community. Her work stands as a testament to the enduring impact of rigorous historical inquiry and the advancement of Georgian Oriental Studies on the global stage.

**Keywords:** Georgian Orientalist; Giuli Alasania; History of the Near East; History of Georgia; Collection of Articles; University of Georgia

### **Introduction**

The aim of this article is to highlight the significance and contributions of Professor Giuli Alasania, a distinguished scholar in Georgian source studies and Oriental Studies, particularly Turkology, to academic and public life. It also seeks to showcase her recent achievements and introduce readers to her monographs, scholarly works, and articles on topics such as the medieval, modern, and contemporary history of the Near East, the history of relations between Georgia and Islamic countries of the Near East. The presented information is both educational and informative, summarizing the accumulated knowledge on these subjects up to the present time.

### **Methodology**

This article is based on research methods widely recognized in the fields of social and humanities sciences. Methods such as historical

analysis, comparative analysis, cause-and-effect correlation, and discourse analysis were employed. A comprehensive library-based investigation was conducted, aiming to consolidate scholarly works (monographs, dissertations, articles) created in Georgia at various times into a unified framework. Additionally, the study utilizes methods of cross-referencing and synthesizing data from scientific literature.

### **Results**

One of the key outcomes of this article is the demonstration of Professor Giuli Alasania's recent accomplishments in the fields of Georgian history and Turkology, while also briefly revisiting her earlier contributions.

The research carried out within the framework of this article reveals that the tradition of studying the history of Georgia and the Near East, established in earlier periods, continues to thrive. This continuity represents a significant achievement for Georgian historiography, ensuring the ongoing development of historical science in the region.

### **Discussion**

It is an immense honor for me to discuss the recent achievements of a cherished mentor, esteemed colleague, and distinguished professor, Giuli Alasania. Before delving into her latest accomplishments, I would like to briefly introduce her biographical background to the reader.

Professor Giuli Alasania is the author of over 150 scholarly works and 14 books and is a member of the World Academy of Art and Science. Her primary research areas include the medieval history of Georgia, Turkey, and Islamic countries of the Near East. At the same time, she possesses profound expertise in contemporary history and modern political issues, as reflected in her scholarly output.

For several decades, Professor Alasania has been actively engaged in teaching and research in Georgian higher education institutions. She is the founder, president, and professor at the University of Georgia, as well as a professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of

the same university. In 1969, she graduated from the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), specializing in Turkish history. She earned her candidate of historical sciences degree in 1974, her doctorate in 1987, and her professorship in 1991.

Between 1969 and 1980, Professor Alasania worked as a research associate at the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. From 1980 to 1989, she continued her academic career there as a senior researcher. From 1990 to 2005, she served as a professor at Tbilisi Technical University, and from 2004 to 2023, she held a professorship at Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University. Between 1998 and 2014, she worked at the International Black Sea University, where she served as vice-rector from 2002 to 2014. Since 2004, she has been a founder and professor at the University of Georgia.

In addition to her significant contributions to Georgian universities, Professor Alasania has extensive experience collaborating with international academic institutions. In 1996, she participated in a two-month program at the University of Mississippi (USA) through a selection process by the American Councils. From January 4 to July 6, 1996, she served as a visiting scholar at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland.

In October 2000, she participated in a research program at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary. In 2001, she was selected by the American Councils to serve as the coordinator for the three-week South Caucasus School Directors Program in Washington, D.C., and Montana. Between 2004 and 2005, she led research projects at the Center for Transnational Crime and Corruption Studies, founded by Professor Louise Shelley at George Washington University. Professor Alasania has also delivered lectures at prestigious institutions such as Harvard University, the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, the Free University of Berlin, and the University of Pisa. Her extensive

academic experience and commitment to advancing historical scholarship continue to inspire and shape future generations of historians.

As previously mentioned, Professor Giuli Alasania has diverse research interests, as evidenced by her numerous articles and books in the fields of Georgian source studies, Turkology, and Georgian history. A significant milestone in Georgian historiography was her translation from Turkish of Katib Çelebi's (1609–1657) accounts of Georgia and the Caucasus, titled *Katib Çelebi's Information about Georgia and the Caucasus* (Alasania, G., 1978). This groundbreaking work was accompanied by annotations, commentary, and indexes. It was reissued in 2013 (Alasania, G., 2013) and again in 2023 in an expanded edition (Alasania, G., 2023). This text presents both firsthand descriptions and hearsay accounts recorded by Katib Çelebi about Georgia and the Caucasus up to the 17th century, serving as an invaluable source for the Georgian academic community.

In 1988, Professor Giuli Alasania, in collaboration with Professor Revaz Kiknadze, published a monograph titled *Theoretical Issues in Source Studies* (Alasania, G., Kiknadze, R., 1988). This work stands as a significant contribution to the field of source studies, an essential branch of historical sciences. Drawing on a broad range of historiographical materials, the monograph explores the primary theoretical challenges of contemporary source studies, their importance to historical science, and the state of their research in Georgia. These publications reflect Professor Alasania's commitment to advancing the understanding of historical source materials, ensuring their accessibility, and contributing to the methodological foundations of historical research in Georgia.

Among the sources analyzed by Professor Giuli Alasania, one of the most significant is *The Life of Georgia (Paris Chronicle)*, a scholarly-critical text based on a manuscript housed in the National Library of Paris. This work explores an 18th-century anonymous chronicle (1373–1683), offering hypotheses regarding its dating and structural composition (Alasania, G., 1980). The revised version of the

*Paris Chronicle* was reissued in 2023 (Alasania, G., 2023), supplemented with an introduction, annotations, and indexes by Professor Alasania. It is noteworthy that *The Life of Kartli (Kartlis Tskhovreba)*, a comprehensive collection of chronicles about Georgia written by various authors, likely includes this independently published and studied *Paris Chronicle* as a part.

In 2006, Professor Alasania published *Twenty Centuries of Christianity in Georgia* (Alasania, G., 2006), a book that was an integral part of the UNESCO-led project commemorating 2,000 years of Christianity in Georgia. This project also included a conference led by Academician Rismag Gordeziani and a folklore festival titled *Our Roots*. Initially published in three languages—Georgian, English, and Russian—the book was republished in an expanded edition later in 2006, adding Turkish to the language set. The final edition in 2010 (Alasania, G., 2010) further included a French version. The book chronologically narrates the history of Christianity in Georgia, starting from the birth of Christ to 1991, when Georgia regained independence from Russia. Recognizing its significance, UNESCO included the project *Twenty Centuries of Christianity in Georgia* in its list of the most important global events of 2004–2005.

Over the years, Professor Alasania has actively contributed articles to both Georgian and international journals, covering topics on the medieval, modern, and contemporary history of Georgia and the Near East, as well as issues related to geography, politics, and culture. In 2007, she published the *Historical Collection* (Alasania, G., 2007), featuring articles in Georgian, English, and Russian, along with reviews and their abstracts in English. The collection includes significant topics such as:

- The founding date of the Tbilisi Emirate (Alasania, G., 1999; pp. 21–27)
- The history of Georgian relations with the Danismendids (Alasania, G., 2002; pp. 21–27)

- The origins of the unified Georgian kingdom (Alasania, G., 2004; pp. 20–24)
- Establishing the date of the Battle of Basian (Alasania, G., 1975; pp. 89–92)
- Selim I's campaign in Georgia (Alasania, G., 2000; pp. 22–31)

The collection also features reviews of major works, such as Professor Gocha Japaridze's book *Georgia and the Islamic World of the Near East in the First Third of the 12th-13th Centuries* (Japaridze, G., 1995) and Ronald Grigor Suny's *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Suny, R.G., 1994). These topics and reviews represent substantial contributions to Georgian historiography and are frequently cited in other scholarly works.

Professor Alasania's meticulous research and publications continue to enrich the academic field, offering valuable resources and perspectives on Georgia's complex history and its interconnectedness with the broader Near East.

In 2007, under the editorial supervision of Professor Giuli Alasania, Professor Mikheil Svanidze published *The History of Turkey* (Svanidze, M., 2007), which spans the events from 1299 to 2000. This work stands as a significant contribution to Georgian Turkology, reflecting the depth and breadth of research in this field. As a source scholar, Professor Alasania has also contributed to the study of one of the most critical sources of Georgian history, *The Georgian Chronicles (Kartlis Tskhovreba)*, particularly in refining the text of the *Hundred Years Chronicle* by "The Chronicler" (Kartlis Tskhovreba, 2008; pp. 523–654).

Each of Professor Alasania's studies presents either groundbreaking discoveries or innovative perspectives enriched by extensive source analysis. Among her significant works is the monograph

*Georgia and the Pre-Islamic Turks* (Alasania, G., 2008), the first of its kind, published in both Georgian and Turkish (*Gürcüler ve İslam Öncesi Türkler*, ALASANIA, G., 2013, Trabzon) and later in English in the United States (*The Relations Between Pre-Islamic Turks and Georgians from the Third to the Ninth Century: A History of Byzantine-Persian Politics in the Caucasus*, Alasania, Giuli, 2014). This monograph explores the history of relations between Georgians and pre-Islamic Turks, including topics such as:

- The early alliances between Georgian and Turkic tribes in the Caucasus.
- King Vakhtang Gorgasali's relations with the Hun-Turks and the chronology of his death.
- Relations between Kartli (Iberia) and the Turks in the 6th century, as well as interactions with the Khazars in the first half of the 7th and 8th centuries.

The monograph also delves into the Caucasian policies of Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–641), focusing on relations between Georgians and Khazars. It examines Georgian-Byzantine-Khazar alliances during the formation of the "Kingdom of Abkhazia," the reign of Leon, and the struggle for Georgian independence against Arab forces in the late 8th century, highlighting the Khazar role in these events.

In addition to exploring pre-Islamic history, the book addresses the interactions between Georgian and Turkic-speaking peoples who remained outside the Islamic world, such as the Kipchaks.

The Georgian edition of the monograph received high praise from Professor Marika Jikia, who called it "a new chapter in Georgian Turkology" (Jikia, M., 2011; pp. 470–473). Its detailed analysis and wide-ranging themes have made it a cornerstone in the field,



providing valuable insights into the complex historical relationships between Georgians and Turkic peoples before the rise of Islam.

In 2011, a significant monograph titled *The History of the Near East and Its Relations with the South Caucasus (19th–Early 21st Century)* was published in Georgia. This 643-page work was co-authored by prominent experts in Eastern studies and history: Professor Giorgi Sanikidze, Professor Giuli Alasania, and Professor Nani Gelovani. The authors collaboratively explored themes related to the history of Iran, the Arab world, and Turkey. Professor Alasania specifically focused on the 19th and 20th centuries of the Ottoman Empire, covering significant events such as:

- The reign of Selim III (1789–1807),
- The reforms of Mahmud II (1808–1839),
- The Tanzimat era (1839–1876),
- Domestic and foreign policy issues of the time,
- Mustafa Kemal’s revolution,
- The foreign policy of the Kemalist Republic,
- The political system of modern Turkey,
- The role of the Turkish army,
- Turkey's relations with the European Union,
- Constitutional reforms during this period.

This monograph, funded by the Georgian Foundation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (Shota Rustaveli Foundation, Grant NA-20-09), is the first comprehensive study of its kind in Georgia. It is considered a flagship work for the study of the period in Georgian universities.

In the period between 2022 and 2023, Professor Giuli Alasania also published three important works, one of which is a first edition of *The Life of Georgia* by Farasadan Gorgijanidze (Gorgijanidze, F., 2022).

She meticulously prepared this text for publication, adding extensive research, notes, and indices. The work of Farasadan Gorgijanidze, a 17th-century Georgian chronicler, had already been used by various researchers for exploring different aspects of Georgian history. However, it had not been fully analyzed until now. The monograph makes a significant contribution to Georgian historiography, as it comprehensively examines the work of Gorgijanidze, which had been partially explored in earlier publications by scholars such as Mose Janashvili (1896), and later by Revaz Kiknadze, who produced several significant works on Gorgijanidze's texts.

Some of the key works by Kiknadze include:

1. *Parsadani Gorgidjanidze. History of Georgia* (R. K. Kiknadze, V. S. Puturidze, 1990),
2. *Essays on the Source Study of Georgian History. Parsadani Gorgidjanidze and "Kartlis Tskhovreba"* (R. K. Kiknadze, 1980),
3. *Parsadani Gorgidjanidze and the Historian Azman Sharaavandetani* (Kiknadze, R., 1975),
4. *Parsadani Gorgidjanidze and One Georgian Source* (Kiknadze, R., 1971).

Further studies on Gorgidjanidze's work were conducted by other historians such as Sargis Kakabadze, Ivane Javakhishvili, Carlo Tabatadze, and Davit Katsitadze. However, these studies mainly addressed specific fragments of Gorgidjanidze's work, and no comprehensive study had been undertaken until Professor Alasania's. Through her tireless effort and dedication, she has made a monumental contribution to Georgian historiography, fully exploring and analyzing Gorgidjanidze's text.

The final part of the text I would like to highlight is the second and third volumes of Professor Giuli Alasania's *Collection of Articles*, which include her articles published over the years in Georgian and international academic journals.

The second volume contains articles addressing the identity of historical figures, the role of Georgians abroad, the political life of Queen Tamar's aunt, Rusudan, and her significance in Georgian history—one of Professor Alasania's most important, recently published works. This volume also includes studies on the determination of the death date of King Tamar, an analysis of foreign sources related to Tbilisi, and the determination of King Bagrat V's death date—new contributions to Georgian history. In addition to medieval topics, the second volume covers modern political history, particularly Georgia's relations with Turkey. The volume addresses issues such as:

1. The relationship between the Georgian Church and state, from the introduction of Christianity up to the 20th century,
2. Georgia's relations with the West, from the 3rd century BCE to the present, including Georgia's role as a bridge between East and West, relations with the U.S., NATO-Georgia relations, the legal basis for Georgia-EU relations, European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), Eastern Partnership, the European assistance program of 2009, and Black Sea border cooperation (Alasania, G. 2023).

The third volume, unlike the second, includes not only articles but also reviews written by Professor Alasania on various Georgian and foreign publications. It also contains reviews by her colleagues about her work, including Professors Marika Jikia, Gocha Japaridze, Nani Gelovani, and Mzia Surguladze. Professor Alasania had a special talent for writing about her colleagues, often mixing professionalism with a friendly tone, as she maintained both collegial and personal

relationships with them. Therefore, she was often responsible for evaluating their work, sometimes for commemorations and other times as a tribute (Alasania, G. 2023).

In addition to her academic achievements, I would like to emphasize that Mrs. Guli Alasania is a consummate professional, a distinguished member of a renowned family of Orientalists, and a representative of this esteemed tradition. She stands out for her exemplary approach to her work, her attentiveness as a lecturer, mentor, and loyal friend. I cannot recall a single instance in which someone sought her advice and she did not offer her full and unwavering support, a fact I have personally experienced on numerous occasions. Mrs. Guli is always by the side of her colleagues, friends, and young scholars who are taking steps to contribute to the development of Georgian historical studies. Under her leadership, students have successfully defended their undergraduate, master's, and doctoral theses.

Mrs. Alasania has received numerous accolades, including an award in 2004 from the Turkish Language Society in Istanbul (Turkey) for her contributions to the field of Turkology. In 2006, she was named Person of the Year by the "Golden Wings" organization. In 2007, she was honored as a Peace Ambassador. In 2010, she received the prestigious academic honorary title of Ivane Javakhishvili, and in 2012, she was awarded the "19 May University" prize for her contributions to Turkish culture at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. That same year, the festival "Chveneburebi," led by Mrs. Guli Alasania, was presented with the Blessed John Paul II Peace Prize. In 2013, she was honored with the bronze medal of the Del Bianco Foundation (Florence), a rare distinction awarded to only five individuals.

For me, as a young historian, her guidance and counsel have been invaluable. I wish Professor Guli Alasania continued strength,

perseverance, and the successful accomplishment of many more great deeds for her country, a life in a just society, and endless success.

The above is a brief overview of Professor Guli Alasania's biography and scholarly work. To provide a thorough account of her professionalism, dedication to her craft, and the significant publications she has produced through her hard work would require many pages.

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