

კვლევები: ქართული ლიტერატურა
STUDIES: GEORGIAN LITERATURE

The Path of *The Man in a Panther-Skin* to England and English Historical Sources

Elguja Khintibidze

Professor, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Abstract: This paper examines the information emerging in the English historical literature and primary sources concerning the origin of Shah Abbas' Georgian Christian wives, which has not yet been discussed in Georgian historical writing. Specifically, English diplomat and traveller Sir Anthony Sherley, at the end of the 16th century, and Sir Thomas Herbert, an English attaché to Iran in the early 17th century, note in their books published in the 17th century that Abbas married the daughters of King Simon of Kartli and King Alexander of Kakheti.

English historical writings and sources indicate that the English diplomat Sir Anthony Sherley and his colleagues were assisted by the Christian wives of the Shah at the end of the 16th century. This statement reinforces the view that the story of the MPS known to a group of the early 17th-century English playwrights, and Shakespeare himself, became known through the cooperation of prominent ethnic Georgians, promoted at the Court of Abbas, with Sir Anthony Sherley.

Key Words: *The Man in a Panther-Skin, Thomas Herbert, English dramaturgy, Shah Abbas*

While searching the trace of *The Man in a Panther-Skin's* plot in the English dramaturgy, I got interested in the stories related to Georgians promoted on the Court of Shah Abbas I in Persia; mainly,

in the fact of the collaboration between the Georgians promoted on the Shah's Court in the late 16th century, Alaverdi Khan in particular, and the team of English diplomats led by Anthony Sherley at the end of the century.

The first foreigner to pay attention to my research about the plot of *The Man in a Panther-Skin* as a literary source of the English dramaturgy at the beginning of the 17th century was an English writer and a scholar Anthony Anderson. While conversing with him about the issues for the first time, he mentioned that he had read from some sources that Anthony Sherley received some support from the Christian wives of Shah Abbas. He once again mentioned this fact during the presentation of my book ("*Medieval Georgian Romance The Man in a Panther-Skin and Shakespeare's Late Dramaturgy*") in November 2018 at the London Royal Asiatic Society.

This fact provoked some questions such as where might my English colleague have read about this fact? Is this information based upon any primary sources or it is just a conjecture? Who were those two Christian wives mentioned by Anderson? Were they Georgians? According to the old Georgian traditions, the book of *MPS* was one of the most valuable components of a dowery for Georgian brides.

I, along with my students and colleagues, have actively been involved in the research of the issue since last year. The outcome was prompt. My PhD student Nino Jighauri and I found the article dedicated to Anthony Sherley in the *Dictionary of National Biography* that reads the following: "The two favourite wives of Shah Abbas were Christians and they procured for Shirley a very promising reception. He won, too, the regard of Aly-verd Beg, the chief of the army, and the rank of mirza, or prince, was conferred upon him" [4].

I carried on my research by studying the references indicated in the article dedicated to the biography of Anthony Sherley. These literary sources also referred to other records describing Sherley's voyage in Persia. The article about the Sherley family, by General Briggs [2, pp. 77-104] turned out to be of the greatest importance in terms of the issue posed above. The Shah's Christian wives who

helped Anthony Sherley were Georgians. Records about Shah's two favourite wives – Georgians by nationality and Christians by religion – are also mentioned in the volumes of the 18th century English Universal History [8]. The question remains: what was the source supporting the notes permeating the English literature of the 17th and 19th centuries', according to which the expedition led by Sherley was supported by the two Christian wives on the Court of the Shah.

English historical surveys, while discussing the issue, refer to Thomas Herbert, an English attaché on the Court of the Shah. Thomas Herbert issued two books on Persia in the 17th century. Besides these books, regarding the issue, I studied the book by Anthony Shirley, describing the Author's travel to Persia [9], published in London in 1613.

The facts concerning Shah's two Georgian wives are more or less in accordance with one another and require detailed study in terms of detecting the Georgian trace on the Court of Shah Abbas.

Anthony Sherley about the Shah's Georgian, Christian wives. Sir Anthony Sherley was a prominent English diplomat and a traveller of the 16th-17th century. At the end of 1598 he, accompanied by the delegation of 26 people, visited Shah Abbas's Court. He contributed to the growth of the hostile attitudes toward Turkey in Persia. Sherley stayed there for 6 months and later was able to visit many European countries in the rank of the Persian ambassador.

Sherley was unable to return to England since his diplomatic mission to Persia was not agreed with Queen Elizabeth I. Besides, the Earls sponsoring him were uncovered and punished for plotting against the Queen. Despite the fact that the political situation in England drastically changed after the death of the Queen, he failed to obtain permission to go back to his country. Anthony Sherley, who had a good command of several languages, was an intelligent person. He and the Earls sponsoring him had tight contacts with The Royal National Theatre in England. According to one English author of the 19th century, Sherley provided the plot for the Royal Troupe; besides, by exaggerating certain facts, the author states that even

the early drafts of the Shakespeare's late period plays were created by Sherley himself [11].

It is believed that Sherley definitely exaggerated his personal merits and contribution in the book printed in London in 1613, while describing his travels to Persia. However, the most important is that he narrates the facts he was the eyewitness of and presented the historical facts in the way they permeated the elite circles of the Shah's court. Therefore, it can be assumed that his narrations, regarding these facts, which were not directly related to his personal merits, were not exaggerated.

There are only two wives of the Shah mentioned by Sherley and both of them are Georgian Christians. According to the author, the first one is the daughter of the King of Kartli – Simon. As Shirley puts it [9, pp. 44-45], Shah Abbas claimed the Georgian Princess, the daughter of the King of Kartli Simon (according to Sherley, the princess was ready to provide the love required). A little below, the author returns to this topic and writes that the Queen escorted by 2000 horsemen and her brother, the prince *Byraike Myrza*, arrived at the Shah's court. Soon the marriage took place and both parties provided adequate ceremonies for the wedding. The God blessed both of them and in less than a year they had their firstborn son, Prince – Sophir Mirza who was still alive.

According to Sherley, the story related to the second wife is linked to the death of the first one. Following the narration of some episodes from Shah's life, he describes Abbas's visit to one of the Khan's land. To alleviate his boredom, the Shah spent either eight or ten days hunting. However, he abandoned the place as he heard the news about his wife's death of a sudden and severe illness. The Shah returned to Ispahan where he spent several days in pain and sorrow because of the immense loss he had suffered. Afterwards, he sent a messenger to another King of Georgia, Aleksandre, making a marriage proposal for his daughter with the intent to maintain the relationship that might disappear after the passaway of the Queen. The person sent to the Georgian king was Xa-Tamas Coolibeague,

who, returned to the Shah together with the lady mentioned above in several months [9, p. 57].

Thus, Anthony Sherley, in his vast review of adventures in Persia, mentions only Shah's two wives – two Georgian Christian Princesses, the daughters of the Kings (according to Persian Court title – the daughters of Georgian *Khans*).

Two Georgian Christian wives supporting Sherley mentioned in English historiography, are those princesses noted by Sherley himself in his survey described above. Furthermore, these historical surveys are not solely based on the notes provided by Sherley. These sources mention the names of the princesses and tell the stories of their offsprings as well.

The English historiography about the Shah's wives, who assisted Sherley. Shah's favourite Georgian, Christian wives assisting Sherley during his travel are mentioned by a distant descendant of the Sherley family, Evelyne Philip Shirley in her historical review of the Sherley family (*Shirley Evelyn Philip* – 1812-1882): "Sir Anthony Shirley's favourable reception at Kazveen, by Shah Abbas the Great, at this period King of Persia, has been ascribed by Major General Briggs, in his interesting Memoir on the Shirley Family, to the influence possessed by the ladies of the Court, (his two favourite wives being Christian) over that celebrated monarch" [10, p. 19].

General Briggs writes in his brief review "A Short Account of the Sherley Family": "The favourable reception of Sir Anthony Sherley and his company in Persia may be accounted for by the great toleration of Shah Abbass towards Christians, owing, perhaps, to the influence possessed by the ladies of the court over that monarch. Sir Thomas Herbert thus quaintly describes this circumstance; and no greater proof of their influence could be afforded than that of Georgians receiving the title of Khan and Mirza at the king's hands – titles which are now strictly confined to Moslems.

'Abbass had several wives, who had several children, for whose education neither cost nor care was spared. Of the most

promising he loved were Ismael, Tophy Mirza, Kodabunda Sultan, and Iman Kooly, The two first by Gordina, daughter of Simon Khan, and the two latter by Martha, daughter of Scanda Mirza, both Georgians, both Christians; and so dear to Abbass' "that is seemed he had then got the elixir of earthly happiness' " [2, p. 88].

The 17th century *Universal History* (the reference made above) reveals similar facts, naming Thomas Herbert as its primary source. The story starts with the treacherous deeds by the Shah towards his offsprings and develops as follows:

"*HERBERT*, who travelled into Persia in the reign of *Shâh Abbâs*, gives a different account of this affair. He says, that *Abbâs* had four sons, the eldest *Ismael*, *Sofi Mîrza*, *Kodabânda Soltân*, and *Emangoli*. The two first born of *Gordina*, daughter of *Simon Khân*: the two latter of *Martha*, daughter of *Skander Mîrza*, both *Georgian* Christians. *Ismael*, giving jealousy by his delighting in arms, was poisoned. *Sofi Mîrza* (who is the *Safi*, or *Sefi*, of *Olearius*), although extolled, at first, for revealing a conspiracy, was at length thrown down, and crushed to death by *kâpiji*. *Emangoli* (or *Imâm Kûli*), upon being told by a witch, that he should not live long, grew fearful of his father's temper, and died of melancholy. *Kodabânda Soltân*, surnamed *Sofi*, now the only son living, was a prince of great endowments; and had signalized himself so much in the wars, that his father doted on him, and the people admired him: but this popularity made *Abbâs* resolve to destroy him" [8, p. 443].

Thomas Herbert about Shah Abbas's Georgian Christian Wives and their offsprings. Thomas Herbert, on whose information the English Historical Writing relies upon when stating facts about the Shah and his two Christian wives and their offsprings, was a prominent politician of the 17th century English Court. He served as an English attaché on the Persian Court during the Shah's late years. Therefore, his records can be considered as the primary source for studying the history of the Safavid Dynasty. Thomas Herbert is the author of two books on the History of Persia. I got acquainted with the book "A Description of the Persian Monarchy" published in

London, in 1634. The book provides a separate chapter on the topic of Georgian-Persian relationship under the name of “A Late Tragically History of the Georgians, Christians” [7, pp. 72-82], describing hard times the King of Kakheti – Aleksander, his son Konstantine and King Teumuraz had to go through. The book does not provide any notes concerning the Shah’s Georgian wives. The second book *The Travels in Persia* revised by Thomas Herbert himself was published four times during his life in 1634, 1638, 1665 and 1677.

In 1928, in London Sir William Foster released a critical edition of Herbert’s publication of 1677 with his Introduction and notes. This edition is a little shorter version of the original text. According to the publisher, he ruthlessly excised the descriptive passages of the places Herbert had never visited as well as some ideas of other authors and facts with no historical value [6, XII]. At the moment I have the publication of the critical text issued in 2014 in which on the pages 160-167, the author starts the story of the Georgian Christian wives of the Shah Abbas as follows (there are multiple citations of the beginning of this story found in English historical writings):

“Abbas by diverse wives had several children, for whose education neither cost nor care was spared. Of most hope were Ismael, Soffy-mirza, Codobanda-Sultan, and Emangoly, four brave young Princes. The two first were begot on Gordina, daughter of Simon-cawn; the latter two of Martha, daughter of Scander-mirza, both Georgians, both Christians. The first lady was brought thence by Kurchiki-cawn, the other by Shaw-Tamas-Coolibeg, both being Persians, both favourites: all of them so dear to Abbas that it seemed he then had got the elixir of earthly happiness: his wives were so incomparably beautiful, his favourites so exactly faithful; and his sons so lively the characters of his person, policy, and courage – reciprocally joying the aged King, and overjoying the warlike Persians” [6, pp. 160-161].

Afterwards, Herbert narrates about the Shah’s treacherous deeds towards his sons: Ismail and Sefi-Mirza died upon the consent of their envious father at the age of 19, as the former was famous for

his military skills and the latter - for his loyal service to the Court. Emangoly, who, according to a horoscope was predicted to have a difficult life and who dreaded his treacherous father, died of deep melancholy.

Then the author develops a detailed narration concerning the tragic story of Kodabunda Sultan (later called Seffi). He gained respect for his commitment to the country and the Shah. With his courage and experience as well as his military skills, he was able to gain the recognition and the respect of the Oriental World. His jealous and envious father first slew his mentor and then blinded his wounded son, who came to the rescue of his mentor. Blinded Seffi was unable to reconcile himself with his fate, and following the steps of his father's brutality, strangled his daughter Fatima (a favourite granddaughter of elderly Abbas) to revenge on his father, and then killed himself. Herbert narrates the stories emotionally through philosophical explanations.

The author's notes regarding the late period of the Shah's life are considered as the significant primary source for studying the issues. Generally, Herbert's notes are confirmed by the historians studying Georgian trace on the Court of the Shah, however, they refer only to his book – *A Description of the Persian Monarchy* [14, p. 10; 17, p. 105; 18, p. 82]. However, amongst the studies by Georgian scholars dedicated to this issue I was unable to find any reference to the Book – *Travels in Persia*. I hope that the notes about the two Georgian wives of Shah Abbas and their sons, preserved in the primary sources mentioned above will become the main subject of the critical study by Georgian historians and these versions will be placed in juxtaposition with the notes about the Shah's sons preserved in Persian, Georgian, Armenian and other sources. At this point, I find it reasonable to go back to the main topic of the research question.

Comments on English Original Sources. The cited notes on the primary sources of the English historiography concerning the Georgian trace at the Shah's Court, compared to the opinion

permeating into Georgian literary circles, evince not only novelties but also differences.

According to the dominant opinion in the Georgian literary circles, Shah Abbas's four wives, (a sister of Andukhpar Amilakhvar – Tamar, Pakhrijan-Begum – The King Simon's sister. Elene – Teimuraz's sister and Lela – Luarsab's sister) were Georgians [21, p. 198; 17, p. 109]. The notes in the English historiography are not in accordance with those presented in the Georgian historiography. These details require some critical analysis on our part and there are several circumstances we should pay more attention to.

Different viewpoints of various primary sources on the Shah's Georgian wives are not surprising at all. Non-Georgian authors, Persians amongst them, learnt about the names of these ladies through various social, religious, and cultural circles. It is understandable that the authors of various reports and some researchers not expressing any particular interest in the subject, refer to the Shah's wives by one name only (given in the Persian environment). However, Georgian sources identify the Georgian brides mostly through Georgian names.

According to Georgian as well as foreign historical sources, at the request of the Shah Abbas's father Mohammad Khodabanda, the King of Kartli-Simon and the King of Kakheti –

Aleksander sent their daughters to Persia to marry the Persian Prince Hamza-Mirza [20, p. 271; 13, p. 99; 19, p. 42; 15, p. 47]. Prince Hamza-Mirza died in 1587, which led to the enthronement of Shah Abbas. We should also consider the fact that, according to the Muslim tradition, brothers often married the wives of a deceased brother. Olga Pashan Khanum, one of the widows of Hamza-Mirza is referred to as one of Shah Abbas's wives by the English Wikipedia in the article on Shah Abbas [1].

Unlike the Georgian historical sources, the same article from the English Wikipedia refers to *Fakhri-Jahan Khanum* – the daughter of The King of Kartli Bagrat VII and *Fatima Sultan Begum* the daughter of the Peykar Khan of Kakheti (“alias Peri Lala, née Tinatin, daughter of Peykar Khan of Kakheti”) as Shah Abbas's wives. These

data are also confirmed by the Georgian article about Shah Abbas from Wikipedia. The King of Kartli George X is referred to as the father of *Fatima Sultan Begum* [12].

One of the most compelling facts different from the ones publicized by Georgian scholarly circles, regarding Shah Abbas' Georgian wives, has been revealed by the English historiographical notes according to which, Shah's wives, the daughters of the Kings Simon and Aleksander, are without any doubt referred to as the Shah's Georgian, Christian wives. This would not lead us to thinking that they (the Georgian brides) were Christians only by origin. I assume that this emphasis on their Christianity refers to the fact that they maintained their Christian faith even after marrying the Shah. This fact is surprising indeed as all Christians (with some exceptions), sojourning the Shah's court were converted to Islam immediately on their arrival. This categorical implication to Christianity of these two wives by English historiography was not accidental. In the episode discussing the Shah's wives, Thomas Herbert mentions two Mahmadian servants of Shah Abbas –Kurchik-Khan and Shah-Thamas-Khulibeg, referring to them as Persians as if in contrast with the two Christian wives mentioned in the same passage (While, – Shah-Thamas-Khulibeg was a Georgian Christian by origin converted to Muslim [9, p. 73]. Apparently, these two wives remained Christians and were not converted to Islam at the Shah's Court.

Marrying Christian wives without converting them to Islam would be one of the most important political and state strategies of Shah Abbas that became apparent at the turn of 16th-17th centuries, when the Shah, along with European Monarchs attempted to create a coalition against the Turks. He did his best to prove his loyalty and sympathy to the Christians. This idea was many times reinforced on the basis of numerous facts throughout the history.

This period coincides with the reception of a big group of English travellers at the Shah's court and the same period is reflected in the records by Anthony Sherley concerning the Christian wives of the Shah. Shah Abbas sent Anthony Sherley as a Persian ambassador to Europe in May of 1599. Anthony Sherley delivered the

Shah's letters to the Pope of Rome and to many European Monarchs as well as to a lot of Counts and Earls.

Along those letters, Sherley carried a diplomatic list emphasizing Shah's benevolent and merciful attitude towards Christians that was reinforced by the Shah's marriage to the daughter of the Georgian Khan Simon [3, p. 78; 16, p. 200]. *The Chronicle of the Carmelits* has retained a note from the letter sent by the Pope of Rome Climentes VIII to the Shah's Christian wife in February of 1601, referring to her as a *Beloved Sister in Christ*. In this letter the Pope reminds her of the words from The Epistles of Paul according to which a pagan spouse can be purified by a Christian spouse, and urges her to serve the Christian religion with loyalty and commitment [13, p. 103].

Finally, there are several discrepancies between the English original sources and the common opinions concerning the issue of the Shah Abbas's Georgian wives. According to the English sources, the Georgian Christian wives of Shah Abbas are considered to be the daughters of the King Simon and the King Aleksander; however, Georgian historiography fails to name the daughters of the two Georgian Kings – Simon and Aleksander to be the Shah's wives.

As already mentioned above, Simon and Aleksander sent their daughters (who later became the wives of the prince Hamza-Mirza) along with their sons to Persia upon the demand of Shah Abbas's father – Mohammad Khodabanda. The ladies mentioned by Sherley and Thomas Herbert are definitely not the wives of the Prince Hamza Mirza. One of Hamza Mirza's widow Olgan Pasha Khanum is referred to as the Shah's wife by the English Wikipedia; however, Shah-Abbas's Christian wives were a lot younger than Olgan Pasha Khanum. Sherley narrates the stories regarding the Shah's wives as if these were the events taking place during his stay at the Shah's Court (around 1598-1601). The same idea was supported by the diplomatic list delivered by Sherley to Europe (1599) which mentioned the Shah's Christian wife and the letter of the Pope sent to her in 1601. Finally, Thomas Herbert, in the context of the Shah's Christian wives, mentions the advanced age of the Shah.

Gordina, the Shah's wife, mentioned by Thomas Herbert was identified by Sir William Foster – the publisher of Herbert's book – *Travels in Persia* (1928). He writes in the commentaries [5, p. 320]: "Herbert's 'Gordina' was apparently Thinatin, younger sister of Luarsab II, King of Kartli (Georgia)". The English wikipedia mentioned *Tinatin*, (along with another name – *Alias Peri Lala*), as a maiden name of the Shah's wife – Fatima Sultan Begum – in the biographical review of Shah Abbas I. This Princess was considered a daughter of Peykar Khan of Kakheti. According to the Georgian Wikipedia, Fatima Sultan Begum is Elene Bagrationi – a daughter of The King of Kartli Giorgi X. She must be Lela, mentioned by me above, the youngest sister of Luarsab II.

Changing a Georgian name of a daughter of the King Giorgi X at the Shah's Court should not be surprising at all, however, the fact that Herbert calls her *Gordina* (repeated by English surveyors of Sherley's biography) does raise some questions. Should we assume that the name (*Gordina*) is just a mispronunciation of the Georgian princess' nickname *Gorgina* (perhaps *Georgian*) permeating at the Shah's court or among the group of Englishmen sojourning at the Court at the time?

The most challenging is the question why the daughter of Giorgi X and the sister of Luarsab II, sent to the Shah's Court is referred to as a daughter of the King of Kartli– Simon I. We should not assume that this is the mistake made by Herbert. Even Sherley regards this lady to be a daughter of King Simon. Anthony Sherley's book is not the only source Herbert relies upon. It is apparent that he bases himself upon some other sources as well.

It is more reasonable to study this issue along with another discrepancy revealed in the notes provided by both Thomas Herbert and English historical literature. Thomas Herbert, as well as Shirley, consider the other Christian wife of the Shah – Martha to be the daughter of King Aleksander. However, according to all of the sources discussed above, Martha is regarded to be a sister of King of Kakheti – Teimuraz and a daughter of King of Kakheti–David I. She is a granddaughter of King of Kakheti Aleksandre II. Besides, the Shah's

Christian wife referred to as Gordina by Herbert must be a granddaughter rather than a daughter of King Simon – the King of Kartli.

It is less likely that this is the mistake made solely by Sherley and Herbert. The diplomatic list delivered by Sherley to Europe mentions the fact that the Shah married a Georgian, Christian Princess, a daughter of the Georgian Khan – Simon. [3; 16, p. 200].

It is more likely that these Georgian Bagrationi princesses from Georgia, sent at the request of Abbas, to the Shah's court by Kings of Kartli and Kakheti Simon and Aleksander, were considered to be the daughters of the Kings. Indeed, they were Princesses and daughters of the Kings, however, the Kings who sent them were their grandfathers and not their fathers.*

Thus, the peculiarities of English original sources on Georgian Christian Princesses can be fully explained, however, there are some other details in the narration of Sherley and Herbert that still need more elaboration and critical discussion. It is possible that Sherley himself was the witness of only one Princess' arrival at the Court. We

* It is possible that the arrival of Princess Lela, a granddaughter of King Simon, at the Shah's court coincided with the time when King Simon was already imprisoned by Turks and father of the Princess, Giorgi (Simon's son) was then King of Kartli (approximately in 1599). It is likely that another Georgian Princess Martha, a granddaughter of King Aleksander arrived at the Shah's court in the period her father David (the son of King Aleksander) was enthroned in Kakheti (1601-02). In addition, the following circumstances should be considered: in order to prove the religious tolerance of the Persian Ruler, the highest Christian Circles of Europe (the Pope, European Monarchs and Great Counts) were informed about the fact that Shah Abbas had married Christian princess of the Georgian Royal Court. English historical primary sources (Anthony Sherley, Thomas Herbert) allude to the fact that the princess (the daughter of Simon I) was rather young (Anthony Sherley: "he required the daughter of Simon Can, one of the Princes of the Georgians, to wife, which was, with as ready an affection performed, as demanded" – however the Shah, not many years after this marriage, was rather aged. (Thomas Herbert: "his wives were so incomparably beautiful ... joying the aged King"). Therefore, it was better that the princesses sent by Georgian Kings (Simon and Aleksander) were proclaimed and presented as daughters rather than granddaughters of the kings.

should not exclude the possibility that he may have tried to explain some fact relying upon his conjecture as well.*

Shah Abbas' Georgian Christian Wives and a Path of *the Man in a Panther-Skin's* to England. The English original sources, concerning the trace of Georgians in Persia at the turn of the 16th-17th century provide a substantial proof that the English mission, visiting the Shah's Court in the late 16th and early 17th century (a delegation led by Anthony Sherley, Robert Sherley's family, Thomas Herbert) had close connections with the Georgian circles at the Shah's Court (Alaverdi Khan and his family, Shah's Georgian wives, Shah-Thamaz Khulibeg, Konstantine Mirza...). My interest in the issue mentioned above is closely linked to my research regarding the path through which the plot of the MPS penetrated the English dramaturgy circles in the early 17th century. The visit of the English delegation led by Anthony Sherley and their relationship with high-ranking Georgians sojourning the Shah's Court provides a substantial and reliable evidence for the assumption with regards to the penetration of the plot of the MPS in the circles of the English dramaturgy.

The English historical writing describing Sherley's travels asserts that the Shah's two Georgian Christian wives provided a substantial assistance to Sherley's delegation. Even Sherley himself, in his book about his travells, published in London (1613), mentions these two wives with great sympathy and respect.

More detailed notes regarding the Shah's two Georgian Christian wives and their sons were provided by Sir Thomas Herbert, an English military attaché in Persia 1627-29. The reason the notes about the two wives provided by Herbert are the most significant is that his narration is based on the information provided by Robert Sherley, Anthony Sherley's brother who was a direct witness of the events taking place at the time in Persia. Thomas Herbert visited Persia with Robert Sherley and his family. He also accompanied

* For example: he explains the Shah's decision to marry another Georgian Christian wife by the fact that his previous wife had died.

Robert Sherley at a several-day feast arranged by Alaverdi Khan's son Imam-Khuli Khan (Georgian with origin). Thus, his notes and his interest in these two wives and their offspring are presumably related to the stories about the Sherley family.

Thus, presumably, the Georgian Christian wives of the Shah were among all highranking Georgians assisting and consulting Sherley and his companions with regard to the rendering the plot of the great Georgian Romance *The Man in a Panther-skin* from Georgian into English. The establishment of the close relationship between English intellectuals interested in literary, folk and historical tales, with Christian Princesses having just arrived from Georgia, once again confirms the conjecture that these intellectuals were the ones to spread the great epic by Rustaveli among the English circles.

The fact that the MPS was one of the most valuable token in the dowery of Georgian brides in old times has been cautiously retained in the memory of every Georgian. It is highly likely that the Georgian princesses, the brides of the Shah, having abandoned their homeland forever carried not only the MPS as the part of their dowery but also the affection for the story of the Georgian Love Romance.

Bibliography

1. Abbas the Great: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbas the Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbas_the_Great). (The page was refreshed on July 20, 2020)
2. Briggs (Major-General), "A Short Account of the Sherley Family": *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 6, #1 (1841).
3. *The Chronicle of the Carmelits and Papal mission in Persia XVII-XVIII centuries*, v. I. London 1939.
4. *Dictionary of National Biography*, v. 52, Djvu/132,1897.
5. Foster W., "Notes": Tomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, London 2014.
6. Herbert Thomas, *Travels in Persia. 1627-1629*, abridged and edited by Sir William Foster, C.I. E. with Introduction and Notes, Broadway House, London 2014.
7. Herbert Thomas, *A Description of the Persian Monarchy*, London 1634.

8. *The Modern Part of a Universal History* (from the Earliest Account of Time. Compiled from Original Writers. By the Authors of the Antient Part), vol. V, London 1759.
9. Sherley Anthony, *His Relation of his Travels into Persia...*, London 1613.
10. Shirley Evelyn Philip, *The Sherley Brothers* (an historical memoir of the lives of Sir Thomas Sherley, Sir Anthony Sherley, and Sir Robert Sherley, knights. By one of the same house). Chiswick: Press of C. Whittingham 1848.
11. Scott Surtees, *William Shakespeare of Stratford-On-Avon. His Epitaph Unearthed, and the Author of the Plays Run to Ground*, London 1888.
12. აბას I: [https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/აბას I](https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/აბას_I_(ირანი)) (ირანი). (The page was registered on March 19, 2019).
13. Gabashvili V., "From the History of Georgian Diplomacy": *Materials for the History of Georgia and Caucasus*. Part 31, Tb. 1954 / გაბაშვილი ვ., „ქართული დიპლომატიის ისტორიიდან“: მასალები საქართველოსა და კავკასიის ისტორიისათვის, ნაკვ. 31, თბ. 1954.
14. Giorgadze B., "Preface": *Don Pietro Avitabile, Evidence on Georgia. "Metsniereba"*, Tb. 1977. / გიორგაძე ბ., „შესავალი“: დონ პიეტრო ავიტაბილე, ცნობები საქართველოზე, XVII ს. (ბ. გიორგაძის გამოცემა), თბ. 1977.
15. Maeda H., *Georgians in Safavid Iran*. Tb. 2008. / მაედა ჰიროტაკე, ქართველები სეფიანთა ირანში, თბ. 2008.
16. Pavliashvili K., "The English Brothers Antony and Robert Sherley in the Vatican-Iran Diplomatic Arena": *Georgian Diplomacy*, 4. Tb. 1997. / პავლიაშვილი ქ., „ინგლისელი ძმები ენტონი და რობერტ შერლები ვატიკან-ირანის დიპლომატიურ ასპარეზზე“: ქართული დიპლომატია, №4, 1997.
17. Songulashvili A., On the footprints of Georgians in Iran. Tbilisi, 2005. / სონღულაშვილი ა., ირანში ქართველთა ნაკვადეზზე, თბ., 2005.
18. Stefnadze J., "Preface and notes": Falsafi N., *The Life of Shah Abbas the First* (translated from the Persian by L. Zhorzholiani), Tbilisi University Press, Tb. 2003. / სტეფნაძე ჯ., „წინასიტყვაობა და შენიშვნები“: ნასროლა ფალსაფი, შაჰ-აბას პიხველის ცხოვრება (სპარსულიდან თარგმნა ლ. ჟორჯოლიანი), თბ. 2003.
19. Phatemi M. Mahdi, *Persian materials on XVI-XVII centuries Georgian figures*. Tb. 1982. / ფათემი მორთეზა მეჰდი, სპახსური მასალები XVI-XVII საუკუნეების ქართველ მოღვაწეთა შესახებ, თბ. 1982.
20. Javakhishvili I., *History of the Georgian People*, v. IV, Tb. 1967. / ჯავახიშვილი ი., ქართველი ეხის ისტორია, IV, თბ. 1967.

21. Jamburia G., "The struggle of the Georgian People against foreign Invaders": *History of Georgia*, v. III. Tb. 2012. / ჯამბურია გ., „ქართველი ხალხის ბრძოლა უცხოელ დამპყრობელთა წინააღმდეგ XVII საუკუნის პირველ მეოთხედში“: *საქართველოს ისტორია* (ოთხ ტომად), ტ. III, თბ. 2012.