

Marjory Scott Wardrop and Early Twentieth-century Georgian History

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**Abstract:** In her article "Marjory Scott Wardrop and Early Twentieth-century Georgian History" Shorena Stoyer presents documents and translations of Marjory Scott Wardrop (1869-1909), of hitherto unpublished manuscripts archived in the Wardrop Collection of the Oxford Bodleian Library. The manuscripts attest to Wardrop's role as an outside observer of matters Russian and Georgian in the early twentieth century and show her commitment to support the aspirations towards freedom by the Georgian people against tzarist invasion. Wardrop's manuscripts reveal valuable information about Russian and Georgian history, as well as Wardrop's views from a British angle. Thus, the Wardrop manuscripts are important for the study of Georgian and Russian politics and history including social and church history.

**Shorena STOYER**

### **Marjory Scott Wardrop and Early Twentieth-century Georgian History**

English-Georgian literary contacts have never been as intensive, multilateral, and interesting as in the nineteenth century. The initiation of diplomatic relation between these two countries began with the appointment Sir John Oliver Wardrop (1864-1948) as a first British Commissioner of Transcaucasia. He helped to set up the Georgian Committee in London, founded the Georgian Historic Society, which published its own journal *Georgica*. He was the founder of the Wardrop collection of Georgian books and manuscripts in the University of Oxford Bodleian Library (see Barrett). John Oliver Wardrop visited Georgia and consequently published in 1888 his first book, *The Kingdom of Georgia: The Land of Women, Wine and Songs*. He learned Georgian and became a translator of Georgian literature and author of scientific works. However, here my focus is on his sister Marjory Scott Wardrop: after reading her brother's book, she, too, visited Georgia and met the poet Ilya Chavchavadze, who, introduced Wardrop to Shota Rustaveli's twelfth-century long poem *Vepkhistkaosani* (The Knight in the Panther's Skin). Filled with admiration for the work, she threw herself into study of Georgian language and in 1912 Rustaveli was brought to English readers in a prose translation. She worked on it for eighteen years and it is the first translation of the text to English, still considered as one of the best among four versions. Wardrop visited Georgia in 1894-95 and in 1896 and kept contact with her friends there until she deceased in 1909. Among her publications of Georgian literature are *Georgian Folk Tales* (1894), *The Hermit: A Long Poem* by Ilia Chavchavadze (1895; for a review of the translation, see Gale), and *The Life of St. Nino* (1900). She was collecting books, magazines, and journals from close friends in Georgia and always knew what was happening there not only from Georgian, but from English and Russian newspapers and magazines and she was translating newspaper articles from Georgian to English with personal comments and notes about her views (on Wardrop, see, e.g., ALM [Mikaberidze, Alexander L.]; Donkin; Nasmyth; Odzeli; Odzeli, Khintibidze, Tkhinvaleli; Sharadze).

Wardrop's letters and translations I am discussing here were issued between 1900-1909 during the Russian occupation of Georgia. The manuscripts indicate that her political and personal views were on the side of Georgia and against the politics and practices of the Russian empire. In the following, I present selected texts from the Marjory Scott Wardrop manuscript collection in the Oxford Bodleian Library's Wardrop Collection — established by John Oliver Wardrop, who also established the Wardrop Fund at the University of Oxford — and I begin with the letter "Memoir concerning events in Georgia in 1906": it is an important text as it includes her personal views and comments on matters Russian and Georgian. The text is of seven handwritten pages and describes the rebellion of Georgians against the Russian invasion and its aftermaths: "Russian women! Do you not hear the sobs and groans of Georgians? Do you know what is being done to your sisters in beautiful Georgia? The whole country enveloped in flames — the newish method of pacification — women are subjected to outrage. None are spared — old women, children, school-girls ... Horror and madness have seized the land. And this happens every day in every corner of Georgia. For two months women and children have been fleeing to forests and mountains hiding them from the punitive division, but even there they are not safe from the unbridled brutality which seeks them out ... How many children of tender years have died, victims of violation" (Wardrop Collection D 20). Further, the political situation of Georgia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is described in Wardrop's translation of an article published in the Georgian magazine *Tsnobis Purzeli* 3035 (24 March 1906). The text, although not a complete translation of the magazine article, contains ten handwritten pages. Wardrop's interest extended not only to describing the conditions of peasants' lives but to higher society and she notes in several of her translations how the middle and upper classes were persecuted for only expressing their will for freedom.

A further article of interest is Wardrop's translation of "Queen Mariam's Petition to the Emperor Alexander I at the Time of Her Removal from Tiflis to Voronezh" describes the treatment of the widowed first lady of the last king of Georgia and her children by Russian soldiers. The backdrop of the queen's story is that the Russians wanted to abolish the reign of the Georgian Bagration dynasty and to put their own governors as administration of Georgia. The letter contains valuable information about Georgian history and it is interesting also to philologists. The letter was written in Russian by the imprisoned queen and she describes how she was forced to leave her home wounded by general Ivan Petrovich Lazarev (died in 1803) known to have been killed by queen

Mariam of Georgia (see, e.g., Lang). The queen depicts the sequence of events how she, members of her family, and the servants of the household were treated and consequently exiled:

The next day was Sunday. At down of the day the bell of the church sounded, and [general] Lazarev came again with Cossacks and entered my room with four officers. He quickly dismissed all my servants and told me that Tsitsishvili had sent saying that I must rise immediately and with my children set out on a journey, for which he had brought a vehicle. When I reproached him, demanding why he had not told me last night, he replied that yesterday he had not received orders about me and that we must set out immediately. I begged that my son Okropiri, who was ill and whom Patri [father] Philipe was doctoring, might be left until he was better and then might be sent to me. Lazarev refused my request and said to me: "Again I repeat to you that you must not delay." In spite of such a cruel refusal I was still bold and entered one tower in which I might awaken my children that we might go together, but Lazarev would pay no attention to my demands, indeed he received my request as if it was an excuse to keep me from going away; thereupon he said that he would soon show me if I was going or not. When he had spoken thus he went out and returned immediately with thirteen or fourteen officers and Cossacks. He pointed to the bed on which I lay with my youngest child Irakli and commanded them to seize me and my daughter Tamara. The officers and Cossacks fell upon us: some laid hands upon me and some pulled me from the bed. On arriving at Voronezh, June 13, the governor declared to me the cruel orders by which we forcibly shut up in monastery and the door locked on us. Imagine, after having passed through so many grief and misfortunes, I was fallen into a more miserable condition; from this day was my country cut off from me, my native land was lost to me, which though it is small adorned with all beauty. I am far from my husband's tomb in Mtskheta, from my aged father, mother and of my brothers and nice mountains must I pass with will I reach my children, overwhelmed with woe — instead of good, misfortune only meets me. Oh woe is me! When they find witnesses to man who have murdered a thousand, me, a Queen whom they have wounded, insulted and with six of her children placed in dishonourable exile. Look upon me with grace, Oh King, look upon my state and have pit upon the woes which appears my innocent children. Until now I believed that I should be allowed to see you to tell you all, but hope has deceived me, therefore I write you this petition. My children and I with bent knees and weeping eyes entreat you that we may come to see your Highness. Examine into our accusation, judge who is guilty, but oh! punish not the innocent! Listen to my request and let us come to thee. ... Have not our petition without attention! How have our enemies slaughtered us. We call upon you, hear our prayer. [Wardrop's comment: "This petition of Mariam's, like many others received no attention and it was not until eight years later that she was released from the monastery at the request of her son Michael"]. (Wardrop Collection C 21)

Wardrop's translation of another article — "Arrest of Georgian Princess" published in the magazine *Rech* 70 (March 1909) — depicts the meeting of nobles in Kutais after many aristocrats and members of high society were exiled without any reason and explanation. The meeting did not have favourable results for those who took part in it as all were arrested. The article written by pencil is not finished (Wardrop Collection C 22). Wardrop paid much attention to the development of the history of the Georgian Orthodox Church. For example, her translation of an article — "Petition of the Georgian Church Presented to the Viceroy of the Caucasus" includes her personal comments: "For sixteen centuries the Iberian people [i.e., the Georgian Kingdom of Iberia] have worshipped the Holy Cross of Christ. Many severe trials and calamities have they suffered for the faith in their past history. During whole centuries they have groaned under the cruel yoke of Eastern conquerors, but the Iberian Church was unshakable and living, great (noble) was her spirit, mighty was her strength resting on the union of the shepherd with his flock; glorious was the path crimsoned by blood of martyr, by which she vigorously let the Georgian people, consoling, encouraging and guiding them to lofty aims and ideas of Christian, social and political life" (Wardrop Collection C 25). Although she knew how severely the Georgian people were punished for expressing their views and beliefs, Wardrop was not afraid to criticize Russian politicians and the Russian Synod for its practices against the Georgian Church: "a hundred years ago the government of the Georgian church passed into the hands of Russian Exarchs and what do we see? The faith of the Georgian people is slain, religious indifference has seized all layers of the population penetrating to the very heart of the masses, the churches are empty even on the great festivals ... What is the cause of this terrible fall of the Georgian Orthodox Church? What is the reason of disappearance of faith among Georgians ... Today the Georgian Church by the suppression of its lawful silly government has no head" (Wardrop Collection C 1). Further, in her translation of the article "The Persecution of Georgian Church" by Grigol Dadiani in 72 *Rech* (March 1909) she commented thus: "The Archimandrit Ambrose, the well-known preacher, has been degraded and exiled to a Russian Monastery, Bishop Kirion, the famous Georgian divine and paster reversed by all , already exiled to the desert of Kharkov was confined in the Sanakur Monastery.

On the way to Sanakur he fell ill and was lying a Moscow hospital. The aged invalid was dragged from his bed and in the frost sent on his way. A search was made on Bishi Leonide's house. The most esteemed of the Georgian hierarchies, a number of persons employed at the local Synodical office were dismissed" (Wardrop Collection C 29).

The condition of the Georgian Orthodox Church made Wardrop write her own letter — issued at Bucharest 15 April 1909 with an article written by Aleksandre Tsagareli and published in the newspaper *Slovo* and translated previously by Oliver Wardrop — to the Bishop of Gibraltar. She was sure that the bishop was acquainted with the members of English Church and they could keep contact with Russian Synod and thus she assumed perhaps they could manage to help their Georgian brothers:

Dear Bishop of Gibraltar, The sad news from Georgia of the persistent persecution of ancient Iberian Church and its clergy has moved me to appeal to you. I do not know if you personally are in touch with the Russian Synod but, in any case, no doubt you are acquainted with English churchmen who are I feel sure that you will use your influence to interest them in the spiritual state of their Georgian brothers and to try to obtain justice for them. Bishop Kirion after suffering degradation and exile has been imprisoned in a distant Russian Monastery. Although he is well up in years and in horrible health, he was forced to travel in the depth of winter and his request to be allowed to go to St. Petersburg to answer any accusation which might be against him was refused. He fell ill in Moscow but was drugged from the hospital by the police and made to continue his journey. He is the author of several literary works of merit and much beloved by the people. Bishop Leonid perhaps the most esteemed of the Georgian clergy was subjected to a domiciliary search and removed from his see. Archimandrite Ambrose, an eloquent preacher has been degraded and exiled to a Russian monastery and many of the local clergy have been dismissed and punished. The only reason for this persecution is that the Georgian clergy unanimously support the autocephaly of their church, which has existed for 15 centuries. The accusation of instigating the murder of the Exarch Nikon, brought against them by the notorious Russian reactionary, Purishkevitch is too fantastic and infamous to be considered. The great enemy of Georgian church, the missionary archipriest Vostorgoff, was in Moscow, heard to declare that he would "drown" Bishop Kirion and flood all Georgia with blood. He has recently received the order to St. Petersburg from the Tsar. This persecution of their church is alienating the people from the Orthodox faith. Many even discuss the advantages of changing religion. Two villages in Cakheti have become Baptists. This is a curious symptom in the people whose church has never known heresy or sectarianism. The whole Georgian nation is naturally roused to indignation. Meetings of the nobles have been held in which the fear expressed that the mass of the people would be alienated from the Orthodox Christian faith if the highest hierarchs continue to be arrested and exiled without trial. At Kutais, in the beginning of March some of the most notable men in the country were imprisoned and threatened with exile for the taking part in such a meeting, but I see from the latest Tiflis papers that several of them have now been revealed. From the enclosed translation of an article by Prof. Tsagareli of St. Peterburg University, a Priory Counsellor of the Empire you will see what an expert has to say about the autocephaly of the Georgian church. This Christian nation has hold last faith and freedom through centuries of invasion by Mongols, Arabs, Turks, and Persians is now like to lose both under the protection of the great Christian power to whom the voluntarily united herself a hundred years ago. I hear that these few facts give but poor ideas of the state of affairs, but I do not wish to weary you. Please forgive me for troubling you. I realise my utter helplessness, but I feel that must do what I can for the brave Georgian people whom I so much admire and love. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again soon. Yours sincerely, M.Wardrop. (Wardrop Collection C 25)

Wardrop also sent a number of letters to protect Bishop Kirion II of the Georgian Orthodox Church, who was also exiled and she may have played a role in the founding of the society for the defense of Kirion II. The Chief of Public Defense, Jorg Loran, requested on 10 March 1909 from Ex-State Chairman of Russia Khomiakov to avoid such torture. In another letter written to the bishop Wardrop mentions that bishop had organized a meeting with Mr. Birkback in St. Petersburg and they had a personal conversation about these issues. In consequence, Wardrop on her own decided to act as a diplomat and to express her resistance to the extinction of Georgian Orthodox Church by the Russian Synod: "Dear Bishop Gibraltar, Many thanks for your kind letter. I am most grateful of you what you have done and I am very sure that the Georgian Church would be grateful too if it knew. The fact that English Bishop has expressed an interest in the face of his young brothers should have a good effect on the Russian Synod. I sincerely hope that Mr. Birkbeck when we saw a little in St. Petersburg will use this influence with the Russian clergy. We were interested to hear of your wanderings and hope that they will bring you in due season to Bucharest. Until our kind regards, again thanking you for your kindness. Yours sincerely, M. Wardrop" (Wardrop Collection C 25). Wardrop did not write to the Bishop of Gibraltar only but engaged her friends,

privileges, and her knowledge to let everyone know about matters Russian in Georgia. Every article she translated she sent to Cecil Spring-Rice, *chargé d'affaires* in St. Petersburg and later British Ambassador to the United States (1912-1918). A letter she received on 23 February 1906 from Princess Barbara Bagration-Davitashvili included a letter written by Bagration-Davitashvili's cousin Princess Vera Chichevadze. Based on these sources, Wardrop describes the tragedy of Georgia based on events in the said letters to Spring-Rice:

I have not written to you for a long time, and since I wrote there have been many vicissitudes not only in our private life, but in the life of Caucasus in general. It is only two days since we arrived in Kutais after the terrible sack of B... and our subsequent wanderings in the villages. We are left without shelter and literally without property — real proletarians. The Social Democrats used to be very anxious that everybody should become proletarian, for in their opinion the class most to struggle energetically for political and economic freedom in the class which has nothing. But we did not belong to any party. David (the writer's husband) carried out to the best of his ability of his calling and the most searching inquiry cannot show that he took any active part in the movement, but we have suffered more than any. The invasion of Russia by Baty and of Georgia by Aga Mohammed Khan cannot be compared with what is going on here. As usual, in order to find out the whole truth one should learn it at first hand ... I wish to tell you in detail how they raided us. After the 27 Nov. When they raised barricades here [i.e., in Kutais], I was so frightened that I could not go out of the house and even when I heard people speaking loudly in the street I felt alarmed. I could not go out to B... because the house was not quite ready, but as soon as the glass was put in the windows and the paint was dry we went there — on the 30 Dec. Next day Masha arrived with the children. We thought we were going to be comfortable. But alarming rumors reached us — that the Suram tunnel was blown up and that collisions with the troops were taking place; All this produced a depressing effect on us. Afterwards we heard that the troops were going freely through the tunnel without meeting any resistance and that they were burning all stations, houses, shops etc. along the line. When this became known, the people began to pack and flee ... Then there was a long interval: GDT came ... we reassured all the people and persuaded them not to leave their homes, because there was no reason why B... should be sacked. Several followed our advice and remained, but many fled to the mountains. On the 10 Jan. we heard that half of Kutais had been burned because some of the shops had closed to show sympathy with the victims of the 9 Jan. of last year [The massacre in St. Petersburg]. Then there was panic and all the women and children fled. We were advised to hide but with a smile I replied that they would not come to us and if they did come they would only look for the leaders of the movement and those who had taken some part in it, and since we had nothing to do with it we were safe. I even told A... to clean out the rooms and take down the carpets and pictures next morning. I rose early in the morning of the 11th, but the children and D... were still in bed when Masha noticed a movement on the highroad from Kutais; the others got up and said the Cossacks were coming. I stopped doing up my hair and the children and D... began to dress. Our servant told me that it was a Sotnia (Russian army, one hundred people) accompanied by an officer. We now began to wonder why they had come and what they would do. Masha and I ran out to the balcony with filled glasses. We began to hear shots and to see the men of the township running in all directions and begin fired at. Within ten minutes we saw mounted Cossacks with an officer; they rode past and went into druggist's. The landlord came to us and said that we just had time to escape and that we should all go to Hospital. We dissuaded him and said that nothing would happen to him nor to us but if he had a rifle he should hide it. During my conversation with the landlord the Cossacks came out of the druggist's and came up to our house on foot. Masha said it was the surveyor, that he had an uniform like that, but when he came near we saw that he was an army officer in an adjutant's uniform. They were now all on the balcony and I opened the door and invited them to come in. The officer came in accompanied by four Cossacks with their rifles cocked and assuming a fierce expression he said we were to hand over at once all arms, otherwise in ten minutes we should all be shot. You can imagine what effect this had on us. D... said that we had no arms, I said that I had a lady's revolver which I would bring immediately and I called to the servant to bring it. He [the officer] turned to the boys and asked who they were, were they not students? M... replied they were. He said they should be immediately shot as he had been ordered to shoot two students who were in B... agitating. Masha began to cry but I said that it was not long since they had arrived and that they had not been agitating and that he ought to be ashamed of himself to frighten people in that way to no purpose. Then he asked their names, their university, when they left St. Petersburg and when they arrived here. Afterwards he told the Cossacks to start searching the menfolk and the house, while he himself began to brag that he had burned Kutais yesterday ... I begged him not to shout like that and frighten the baby, but to go with the Cossacks. I was afraid they would steal and I too went to open the sideboards, trunks, and presses; when the key could not be found at once they broke the thing open with the butt end of their rifles and ripped up dressing bags and traveling bags with daggers. Suddenly I heard "what is this?" Looking round I saw a rifle... Then I was startled and ran up; it was only then that I remembered the existence of this rifle ... It was an old sporting Winchester, rusted and without ammunition; it had been left with us for safe custody by our brother in law, the Inspector of Police, at the time when our people were attacking the Inspectors and killing them to get arms ... D... and I explained all this to the officer but he said the house was doomed to be burned and D... must follow him as we were not to be

trusted. When the search was over they ordered us all to go out of the house. I rushed at once to take my large writing case which contained bills of exchange and my rings, but they were not there, the Cossacks had taken them during the search. This upset me so much that I laid down on the chest of drawers with what I had in my arms ... they soaked the pillows of my bed in kerosene and benzine and set fire to them, they did the same in all the rooms and on both balconies. And I stood round so that nobody should put out the fire and did not go away until the roof had fallen in ... After the Cossacks had left we found that the market had been burned down and those shops which had not been burned had been looted; there were eight corpses, one burned to cinders, another scorched and several people wounded. They fired on those who ran away and shot all those who remained; they shot some because they took their things out of the burning shops and others because they tried to put out their burning houses. On their way back they burned all the houses along the road whether they belonged to peasants or nobles. In two or three hours they did all this harm and went away after robbing, killing and burning out so many people. A month ago a Russian family arrived from Abbas Tuman, the husband was a Joiner and his wife a laundress who happened to be ironing for us. That morning I soothed her and told her that since they were Russians they would not touch them — but I was wrong. When they set fire to the house in which they lived, the aged joiner, who was lame, rushed to take out his chest, they killed him in the doorway, smashed open his trunk for loot and fired on his little son who succeeded in escaping. After our catastrophe, when the laundress went out to look after her people she found only the bones of her husband ... In other places the same sort of thing is happening. They swoop down, burn, kill, violate the woman and depart. Cases like this happen: when they go up to burn somebody's house, one of the family goes out and begs them not to do so but to arrest anybody they may think guilty; they arrest some and as soon as they have taken them away beheaded or shoot them. It is the rule when they arrest not take the prisoners to jail but shoot them on the road; and this not only in the villages, in Kutais the corpses are left lying in the street. Not long ago they brought a party of prisoners from Senaki; when they got to the prison an officer shouted to them: why had they brought them all, they should have left at least half on the road. The guards ask when they are taking prisoners whether these are to be left on the road or to be delivered at the prison. The answer is "As you please." This is the same as saying they are to kill on the road. — In a word, each tries to outdo the other in brutality and cruelty: regular soldiers vie with the Cossacks, officers with the privates. This is our good and pleasant news! This is the pacification of the Caucasus! After such behaviour the Russians will still insist that in the war with Japanese they conducted themselves like Europeans and treated the prisoners well. As I write to you I feel as if I am living through it all again. I should be very grateful, if you have any acquaintances of whom you could inquire whether I could not get anything from the government or whether I could have that officer punished. The latter would be most agreeable to me. (Wardrop Collection C 21)

In conclusion, the above excerpts from Wardrop's manuscript collection represent texts about her commitment to the cause of freedom in Georgia and a valuable insight into the point of view of a British intellectual who commits to criticize the politics and doings of the Russian empire in territories and cultures the tzars invaded and annexed. My objective with this article about Wardrop's hitherto unpublished archival material is to encourage the publication of her letters and translations as an important step towards the documentation and analysis of early twentieth-century Georgian history.

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