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Translation and Political Address: Adamantios Korais and Alexander Chavchavadze in the Balkan-Caucasian Periphery

Abstract: This article examines translation as an instrument of deliberate political address in two peripheral European regions during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the Greek Balkans under Ottoman administration and the Georgian Caucasus under Russian imperial rule. It focuses on Adamantios Korais (1748–1833), whose 1802 and 1823 translations of Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* were addressed to strikingly different political constituencies, first to the newly founded Greek Septinsular Republic, later to "the future judges of the Greeks" during the War of Independence. This shift in dedication shows how a single translated text could be redeployed to articulate an evolving national political vocabulary. The article places Korais's case alongside Alexander Chavchavadze (1786–1846), a central figure of Georgian romanticism, whose 1804 translation of a Rousseauian tract on property and tyranny, composed in prison after an anti-Russian uprising and dedicated to a fellow participant in that uprising, offers an unusually direct instance of translation as political testimony in a different imperial context. Treating the Balkan-Caucasian region as a coherent cultural zone, the study argues that translation functioned not as peripheral literary borrowing but as a strategic mechanism through which small nations negotiated cultural modernization and forged national consciousness under conditions of limited sovereignty. The comparison reveals both convergences, translation's association with political philosophy and the formation of a national intelligentsia, and differences of scale and register shaped by distinct political horizons.

Keywords: translation; Adamantios Korais; Alexander Chavchavadze; national identity; Balkan-Caucasian periphery; Enlightenment; political vocabulary; Beccaria; Rousseau.

Introduction. The Balkan-Caucasian Periphery and the Politics of Translation

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed, across the Balkan and Caucasian regions of Europe, a distinctive phenomenon: the emergence of literary translation as a consciously deployed instrument of national self-definition and political aspiration.

Greece and Georgia, situated at the margins of continental European political power, each under the rule of a vast imperial system, the Ottoman and Russian empires respectively, nevertheless participated intensely in European intellectual currents, particularly the Enlightenment (Cassirer, 1951). This engagement, however, was mediated through translation, which served not as a neutral transfer of texts but as a deliberate act of cultural and political positioning.

The question that animates this essay is deceptively simple: why, precisely when a nation's political autonomy was most constrained, did intellectuals and writers invest such energy in translation? The answer, which unfolds across the two cases examined here, suggests that translation could function as a form of political speech when direct political speech was unavailable or dangerous. A translated text, presented with a new dedication or reframed preface, could address an imagined national community and articulate visions of justice, enlightenment, and self-governance that the political sphere itself could not accommodate.

This essay takes Adamantios Korais as its primary subject. The Greek scholar's two successive translations of Cesare Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*, separated by two decades and addressed to different political addressees, offer an unusually explicit and well-documented case of this phenomenon. The article then turns to Alexander Chavchavadze as a comparative figure, examining how translation functioned analogously, if with important differences, in the Georgian literary context. Together, these two case studies suggest the possibility of a broader Balkan-Caucasian pattern, the strategic deployment of translation as a mechanism of national modernization and political articulation in regions where formal political power was substantially curtailed, a possibility that future comparative research across a wider range of peripheral literatures may further substantiate.

This analysis draws on, and contributes to, the broader field of translation studies, which since the 1990s has emphasized the ideological and cultural dimensions of translation rather than treating it as a transparent linguistic operation. Lawrence Venuti's account of the translator's structural invisibility (Venuti, 2008), and his call for a more visible, foreignizing translation practice, helps explain why Korais's and Chavchavadze's repeated, visible acts of dedication and reframing carry political weight rather than passing unnoticed as mere linguistic transfer. Susan Bassnett's articulation of the "cultural turn" in translation studies (Bassnett, 2014) similarly supports treating translation as a form of cultural and political negotiation. André Lefevere's concept of

translation as a form of "rewriting" shaped by ideology and patronage (Lefevere, 1992) is especially apt for both cases examined here: Korais's shifting dedications and Chavchavadze's position within an aristocratic patronage network both illustrate how institutional and political forces shape the meaning a translated text is made to carry. Mona Baker's work on the narrative dimensions of translation (Baker, 2006) further suggests how translators construct and circulate new collective narratives through their choice and framing of source texts. Read through this theoretical lens, the Balkan-Caucasian cases examined below appear not as isolated instances but as local variants of a more general phenomenon that translation studies has increasingly sought to theorize.

The Balkan-Caucasian Periphery: A Region in Transition

Before turning to the individual figures, it is necessary to sketch, however briefly, the shared historical and cultural situation of the Balkan and Caucasian regions in this period. Despite obvious differences, Greece was inhabited by an ancient, classically educated diaspora with strong ties to Western Europe; Georgia possessed a Christian kingdom with centuries of literary tradition but was less directly connected to Western intellectual centers, both regions occupied a similar structural position in European politics and culture. Both were territories of vast empires (Ottoman and Russian) whose rule constrained formal national political autonomy. Both possessed educated elites with multilingual competence (Greek, Italian, French, Russian, Turkish, Persian). Both experienced, in the same historical period, a surge of interest in their own classical and medieval literary pasts. And both saw, precisely in this moment of imperial constraint, an intensification of literary translation and education as instruments of national self-definition.

The term "Balkan-Caucasian" is not meant to erase historical specificity, but rather to identify a regional pattern. What linked these literatures was not immediate mutual influence but rather a shared confrontation with comparable challenges: how to modernize a literary language and sensibility without losing national distinctiveness; how to absorb European Enlightenment thought without capitulating to European political domination; and how to forge a modern national identity in the absence of a modern nation-state. Translation was one crucial answer to all three questions.

Empire, Language Policy, and the Preconditions of Literary Translation

The capacity of translation to function as political speech in this period cannot be separated from the specific language policies of the Ottoman and Russian imperial administrations. Ottoman rule over the Greek-speaking populations of the Balkans operated largely through the millet system, which granted the Orthodox Church substantial authority over communal, educational, and legal matters internal to the Greek community, while leaving broader political sovereignty firmly in Ottoman hands (Kitromilides, 2010). This arrangement created a paradoxical space: cultural and linguistic life retained a degree of communal autonomy, even as formal political self-governance remained unavailable. It was precisely within this space, neither fully suppressed nor fully free, that Korais and his contemporaries could pursue an ambitious program of linguistic and educational reform without directly confronting Ottoman political authority.

The Russian imperial context differed in important respects. Following the Treaty of Georgievsk (1783) and the subsequent annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in 1801, Georgia was incorporated progressively into the administrative structures of the Russian Empire, its traditional aristocracy partially absorbed into the imperial nobility even as its political institutions were dismantled (Abzianidze, 2012). Unlike the Ottoman millet system, Russian administration in Georgia after 1801 permitted considerably less institutional autonomy; Georgian aristocrats such as Chavchavadze occupied an ambiguous position, simultaneously integrated into Russian imperial and military service and attached, through family, sentiment, and cultural memory, to a specifically Georgian literary and social world. This structural difference, a more corporate, semi-autonomous Ottoman millet system as against a more thoroughly incorporative Russian administrative model, helps explain why Korais could address an explicit, if precarious, public political entity (the Septinsular Republic), while Chavchavadze, lacking any comparable public entity to address, translated his political statement into an intensely direct but strictly private register: a personal dedication to a single, named fellow conspirator, rather than a published address to an emerging civic public.

Adamantios Korais: Translation as Political Redeployment

Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) was born in Smyrna, then part of the Ottoman Empire, into a prosperous merchant family. His education took him to Amsterdam and Montpellier before he settled permanently in Paris, where he spent the latter part of his life as a scholar, editor, and translator. By the time of his residence in Paris, Korais had absorbed deeply the intellectual currents of the French Enlightenment, the thought of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the *Idéologues*, and had resolved to dedicate himself to the cultural and intellectual regeneration of Greece, which he believed was a prerequisite to its political liberation (Kitromilides, 2010; National Library of Greece, n.d.).

In 1802, Korais published a Greek translation of Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* (originally published in 1764), one of the most important works of the Italian Enlightenment. Beccaria's treatise argued for a rationalization of criminal law based on utilitarian principles: punishment should be proportionate to the crime, aimed at deterrence rather than retribution, and grounded in the social contract rather than royal prerogative. The work was revolutionary in its implications, attacking the arbitrary violence of *ancien régime* justice and proposing instead a system of law grounded in reason and the interests of the greatest number.

Korais's Greek translation, titled *Peri Hamartematon kai Poinon Politikos Theoroumenon* (Concerning Crimes and Punishments, Considered Politically), was dedicated "to the newly founded Greek Septinsular Republic."¹ The Ionian Islands, which included Corfu, Cephalonia, and Zante, ceded from Venetian to French control by the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), had passed under joint Russo-Ottoman military control by 1799 and been established as an autonomous state, the Septinsular Republic, by the Treaty of Constantinople (1800). The dedication was thus not merely courteous; it was a direct address to an actual, if precarious, Greek political entity. The message was clear: here is the intellectual foundation for a modern, rational system of justice, suitable for a free Greek republic.

Two decades later, in 1823, Korais published a revised edition of this same translation. By this time, the Greek War of Independence, which had begun in 1821, was underway. The Ionian Republic no

¹ The Septinsular Republic (1800–1807) was an autonomous polity comprising the Ionian Islands, established under joint Russian-Ottoman protection following the Treaty of Constantinople (1800); it is generally regarded as the first internationally recognized autonomous Greek political entity of the modern period.

longer existed in the form it had when Korais first translated Beccaria. But more significantly, the political horizon had changed. Korais revised his dedication. The new edition was addressed not to an existing political entity but to a future one: "to the future judges of the Greeks." This rhetorical shift is profound. Korais was no longer addressing an established, if fragile, republican government. He was addressing an imagined future, a Greece that would be free and would need judges educated in the principles of rational, enlightened jurisprudence. The translation of Beccaria became, in effect, a political address to the emerging Greek national consciousness.

What is remarkable about this case is its explicitness. Korais did not merely translate Beccaria; he repeatedly reframed the translation to address different political moments and imagined audiences. The dedication was not incidental to the translation; it was, in a real sense, the translation's political meaning. By changing the dedication, Korais was not changing the text, Beccaria remained Beccaria, but was changing what the act of translation itself meant, what political work it performed.

Korais and the Project of Linguistic Reform: Translation as katharevousa

Korais's translation activity cannot be fully understood in isolation from his broader program of Greek linguistic reform, generally associated with the term *katharevousa* ("purifying [language]").²³ Korais advocated a middle path between the fully classicizing Atticism favored by some conservative scholars and the vernacular Demotic Greek spoken by the broader population, proposing instead a "corrected" (*diorthomeni*) form of the spoken language, purged of what he regarded as excessive foreign borrowings and brought into closer alignment with its classical antecedents (Kitromilides, 2010). This linguistic project

² *Katharevousa* (from Greek *katharos*, "pure") remained a contested register of written Greek, existing alongside Demotic Greek, until the language question was formally resolved in favor of Demotic in 1976. Korais is more accurately described as a forerunner of the *katharevousa* movement than as the originator of the term itself, which gained wider currency later in the nineteenth century.

³ The uprising of the Aragvi valley highlanders (Mtiuleti, with related unrest in Pshavi and Khevsureti) began in September 1804, led by Prince Farnaoz Batonishvili, a member of the deposed Georgian royal family, against the consolidation of Russian administrative and military control following the 1801 annexation of Kartli-Kakheti. It was suppressed within weeks; Chavchavadze, who had joined the uprising on 14 September at age eighteen, was captured and imprisoned in Tbilisi before his exile to Tambov in November 1805.

was not merely philological; for Korais, the reform of the Greek language was inseparable from the reform of Greek political and civic culture, since a people could not be trusted with self-government until it possessed a language adequate to rational, enlightened discourse.

Viewed in this light, Korais's translation of Beccaria performed a double function. On one level, it introduced a specific body of Enlightenment legal thought to a Greek readership. On another, subtler level, it served as a practical demonstration of *katharevousa* in action: a text of considerable conceptual difficulty, rendered into a form of Greek that aspired simultaneously to intelligibility and to classical dignity. The translation thus modeled, in miniature, the kind of linguistic and intellectual maturity that Korais believed the Greek nation would need to possess before it could respond adequately to a political vocabulary of judges, laws, and republics. This linkage between language reform and translation practice is a further, and previously undeveloped, dimension of the political work performed by Korais's successive dedications of Beccaria, and it suggests a still closer parallel with Chavchavadze's own contribution, examined below, to the modernization of literary Georgian.

Alexander Chavchavadze: Translation as Direct Political Testimony

Alexander Chavchavadze (1786–1846) lived in a different imperial context and operated within different institutional and social constraints, yet his engagement with European literature, and particularly his translation practice, addressed comparable problems of national literary modernization. Born in Saint Petersburg into one of Georgia's highest aristocratic families, Chavchavadze was educated partly in Russia, was fluent in French, German, and Russian, and spent an extended period in Paris during and after the Napoleonic campaigns of 1813–1814, where he served in the Russian army and was awarded the French Legion of Honour. Like Korais, Chavchavadze had direct, sustained exposure to European, and particularly French, intellectual and literary culture.

Chavchavadze is recognized by Georgian literary historians as the founder of Georgian romanticism (Abzianidze, 2012; Evgenidze, 1982). His literary career, however, began nearly four decades before his mature romantic poetry, with a very different kind of text. On 14 September 1804, at age eighteen, Chavchavadze joined Prince Farnaoz Batonishvili's uprising against Russian rule in the Aragvi highlands;

captured with other participants, he was imprisoned in Tbilisi and, in November 1805, exiled to Tambov for three years. It was during his imprisonment, before this exile, that Chavchavadze translated into Georgian a French philosophical-political tract under the title "The Man Pursued at Close Range," which he dedicated to Farnaoz. Decades later, in the 1840s, Chavchavadze also translated a substantial body of French classicist drama, including works by Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire, intended for private theatrical productions at his household; these later, classicist translations are examined separately in section 4.4 below.

"The Man Pursued at Close Range": A Rousseauian Critique of Property and Tyranny

The French-language source translated by Chavchavadze under the title "The Man Pursued at Close Range" has not been definitively attributed to a known author. Its content, however, is unambiguous: the text develops an argument about the origins of social inequality and oppression that closely parallels, at points almost paraphrasing, the central argument of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Rousseau, 1755/2009). Like Rousseau's discourse, the translated text locates the root of human suffering in the institution of private property, and singles out the enclosure of land as the founding act of a social order built on domination rather than natural equality. The text further extends this critique explicitly to the register of political rule, describing rulers who overstep the very borders they themselves established and invade neighboring lands by fire and sword, driven by insatiable ambition.

Rather than attempting to identify the specific French original, which remains a task for future philological research, the more productive approach is to read the Georgian translation together with its dedication as a single political document. The dedication, addressed to Farnaoz Batonishvili as a fellow participant in the recently suppressed uprising, offers Chavchavadze's translation as a modest tribute to a trusted and enlightened prince; a short verse appended to the translation states that a prisoner, having witnessed a fellow prisoner's labor, was moved to compose it. Read in this context, Chavchavadze's choice of a text that indicts private property, unrestrained rulers, and the invasion of neighboring lands is difficult to read as anything other than a deliberate political statement, addressed to a co-conspirator, in the immediate aftermath of a failed anti-imperial rebellion.

Rousseau's Second Discourse and Its Georgian Refraction

Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, published in 1755, argues that natural human equality was destroyed by the institution of private property, and that ruling structures arose to protect the interests of those who had already enriched themselves at others' expense (Rousseau, 1755/2009). The translated text Chavchavadze rendered into Georgian develops this argument in strikingly similar terms, contrasting the natural freedom of animals with the condition of a man who, as the text puts it, can find no free place to stand because all land has already been claimed by another. This places the text at a considerable distance from the moralistic essay tradition of self-examination exemplified by La Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère (La Rochefoucauld, 1959; La Bruyère, 1970), which addresses the private cultivation of virtue rather than the political and economic structure of domination as such.

The translated text does not merely restate Rousseau's argument; it extends it into an explicitly anti-colonial register largely absent from Rousseau's own text. Where Rousseau's *Discourse* addresses the origins of social inequality in general terms, the Georgian translation adds a passage condemning rulers who cross the very borders they themselves established, invading neighboring territories by fire and sword out of unrestrained ambition. In the context of 1804 Georgia, recently annexed by the Russian Empire, this passage could scarcely have been read by its intended reader, a prince who had just led an uprising against that same imperial rule, as an abstract philosophical statement.

The text's argument is also explicitly economic, in a way that speaks directly to the conditions of early nineteenth-century Georgian serfdom. It describes the laborer as bound to surrender the fruit of his labor to the wealthy for almost nothing, unable to escape the bondage prepared for him even at the cost of his own life. Whatever its precise French source, the text Chavchavadze chose to translate, and to dedicate to a fellow rebel, offered its Georgian reader a systematic critique of the very social and political order Chavchavadze had just taken up arms against.

Rhetorical Strategy: A Political Argument, Not a Disguised One

Unlike a text that encodes political meaning beneath a moralistic surface, Chavchavadze's 1804 translation requires no elaborate argument to reveal a political dimension. Its central claims, that property is the origin of oppression, that rulers who exceed their own borders act out of illegitimate ambition, and that the laborer is bound to a system

that consumes his freedom, are stated as direct propositions, not encoded in allegory or indirection. What requires rhetorical analysis, following the classical framework of ethos, logos, and pathos (Aristotle, 2004; Quintilian, 2001), is not the presence of political content but the specific persuasive strategy by which that content is delivered to its intended reader.

The text's argument follows a discernible structure: it opens by describing a state of natural freedom, in which even the humblest creatures possess a liberty no human being any longer enjoys; it then identifies the enclosure and claiming of land as the specific act that ended this natural condition; and it concludes by extending the resulting logic of domination from private property to political rule itself, condemning sovereigns who transgress their own borders in pursuit of further domination. This structure closely tracks the argumentative sequence of Rousseau's *Discourse*, while the concluding move against expansionist rulers represents a Georgian addition, or at least a marked emphasis, suited to its dedicatee.

The translation's persuasive force also depends on its emotional register. Its opening image, contrasting the free breath of a worm born on a single leaf with the condition of a man who can find no free ground to stand on, works through pathos rather than argument, inviting the reader's indignation before the text's political claims are fully stated. The verse appended to the translation, describing a prisoner moved by witnessing a fellow prisoner's labor, further frames the entire text as a testimony written from within captivity, addressed to a reader, Farnaoz, who shared that captivity's political cause.

The date and circumstances of the translation are themselves significant. On 14 September 1804, the eighteen-year-old Chavchavadze joined the uprising of the Aragvi valley highlanders under Prince Farnaoz Batonishvili against the consolidation of Russian rule that followed the 1801 annexation of Kartli-Kakheti. The uprising was suppressed within weeks; Chavchavadze was imprisoned in Tbilisi and, in November 1805, exiled to Tambov for three years. His father's petition to the Russian emperor attributed his son's participation to fear of Farnaoz rather than conviction, but the content of the translation Chavchavadze produced during his imprisonment, and its dedication to Farnaoz as a trusted friend, suggest a more deliberate political commitment than his father's petition allowed.

Differences in Rhetorical Strategy: Korais's Institutional Address versus Chavchavadze's Testimonial Address

Both Korais and Chavchavadze deploy rhetoric as a central instrument of their translation practice, yet the register and target of their rhetorical address differ significantly. Korais employs what might be called political rhetoric, his dedications to the Septinsular Republic (1802) and to "the future judges of the Greeks" (1823) directly name political entities and constituencies. The text of Beccaria becomes, through these dedications, a form of address to the nation or its imagined future. The rhetoric is juridical and civic in character: it addresses the reader as a future citizen-judge who must be equipped with rational principles of law.

Chavchavadze, by contrast, deploys what might be termed testimonial political rhetoric. Writing from prison, in the immediate aftermath of a failed uprising, and addressing a fellow participant in that uprising, Chavchavadze's translation speaks less to an imagined national public than to a specific, shared political experience. The address is to the reader as a co-conspirator and fellow sufferer, not to the reader as an abstract future citizen. Where Korais's dedications look forward, imagining a nation not yet fully formed, Chavchavadze's translation looks backward and inward, to a rebellion just suppressed and a captivity currently endured.

Yet both strategies serve comparable functions within their respective imperial contexts. Both use translation to introduce European intellectual frameworks, juridical rationalism in Korais's case, a Rousseauian critique of property and domination in Chavchavadze's, into contexts where direct political speech is constrained. Both employ rhetoric not merely to convey information but to constitute new forms of political subjectivity (the citizen-judge, the imprisoned co-conspirator addressed as a rational equal) that negotiate, and in some measure resist, imperial domination. The difference lies in the scale and mode of address: Korais addresses an emerging nation through print and public dedication; Chavchavadze addresses a single, named fellow rebel through a private, manuscript gesture.

Where Korais's dedications named a public political entity, first a nascent republic, then an entire national judiciary in waiting, Chavchavadze's dedication named a single individual: a specific prince, a specific co-conspirator, addressed by name. The political work of Chavchavadze's translation was thus not diffuse but intensely personal and immediate, even as its scale of address remained far narrower than

Korais's public, print-mediated gesture. Both, nonetheless, used translation to say something about property, domination, and rule that could not safely be said in the translator's own voice, under the translator's own name, in the translator's own political circumstances.

More broadly, over the following four decades, Chavchavadze's translation practice served to introduce a wide range of European literary and intellectual currents, from the political philosophy of his youth to the classicist and romantic drama of his later career, into Georgian literary language. His household in Tbilisi functioned as a meeting place for Georgian, Russian, and Polish intellectuals, and his translations circulated within this educated elite. Unlike Korais's dedications, Chavchavadze's early translation did not address the nation directly by name; rather, it operated as an intensely personal political statement between two participants in a shared rebellion, one that nonetheless anticipated the broader literary and cultural modernization Chavchavadze would pursue across his later career.

Translation as Cultural Transfer: Rousseau in a Georgian Political Register

The significance of Chavchavadze's translation lies not primarily in identifying its precise French source but in demonstrating how a specific strand of European Enlightenment political philosophy, Rousseau's critique of property and domination, was received, translated, and in the process transformed by its Georgian translator. The translation functions as a document of cultural and political encounter: it shows how a young Georgian nobleman, writing from prison after an anti-imperial uprising, engaged with, and extended, a French philosophical argument to address his own immediate political circumstances, in a manner consistent with what Ricoeur describes as the hermeneutic and cultural, rather than purely linguistic, work of translation (Ricoeur, 2006).

What Chavchavadze's translation adds to Rousseau's argument, rather than what it merely transmits from it, is the clearest evidence of this transformative, rather than purely transmissive, work of translation. The passage condemning rulers who invade neighboring lands by fire and sword has no direct equivalent in Rousseau's own text; it represents, at minimum, a significant amplification of an implication latent in Rousseau's argument, and quite possibly a deliberate addition suited to its Georgian context and its intended reader.

The specific identity of the French source, or sources, from which Chavchavadze translated remains to be determined through future textual and archival scholarship; the resemblance to Rousseau's Discourse

may reflect direct translation, adaptation of a Rousseau-influenced intermediary text, or independent convergence on shared Enlightenment arguments about property and inequality. What can be established with reasonable confidence is that the Georgian translation engages, closely and pointedly, with Enlightenment arguments about the origins of inequality and the illegitimacy of arbitrary rule, and that it does so at a moment, and in a dedication, that make its political intent difficult to discount.

More broadly, Chavchavadze's early translation practice, and the political philosophy it carried into Georgian, anticipated the broader project of literary and cultural modernization he would pursue across the following four decades. His household in Tbilisi functioned as a meeting place for Georgian, Russian, and Polish intellectuals, and his later translations and original poetry circulated within this educated elite. Unlike Korais's dedications, Chavchavadze's 1804 translation did not address the nation directly; it operated as an intensely personal, and intensely political, act of address between two participants in a shared and recently defeated rebellion. In this respect, the translation becomes a record of the political and intellectual work performed by a young translator under conditions of imperial constraint and personal captivity (Vepkhvadze, 2022).

Chavchavadze's Broader Translation Corpus: From Classicist Convention to Romantic Sensibility

"The Man Pursued at Close Range" offers the clearest documented instance, within Chavchavadze's corpus, of translation functioning as an immediate and pointed act of political address; it represents, however, only the earliest strand within a considerably wider and longer translation practice. Over the following four decades, Chavchavadze translated or adapted works by Voltaire, Racine, Corneille, La Fontaine, Hugo, Goethe, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Zhukovsky, a range that spans French neoclassicism, German and Russian romanticism, and, in Voltaire's case, Enlightenment satire (Evgenidze, 1982; Makharadze, 1967). This breadth is itself significant: it situates Chavchavadze not as a translator committed to a single school, moment, or aesthetic, but as a literary intermediary who returned to translation at different points across his career, for evidently different purposes.

Georgian literary historiography associates Chavchavadze's classicist translations, of Racine and Corneille in particular, with the 1840s, several decades after both his 1804 prison translation and the mature

romantic poetry for which he is chiefly remembered; these later translations are generally understood to have been intended for private theatrical production within his own household (Abzianidze, 2012). Read across his career as a whole, this sequence, an early and urgent act of political translation, followed by a long central period of original romantic poetry, followed in turn by a late return to classicist dramatic translation for domestic performance, suggests that translation served Chavchavadze not as a single developmental phase but as a recurring resource, taken up at different moments and for different purposes across a long literary life. This is a further point of contrast with Korais, for whom translation, and specifically the repeated retranslation of a single text, remained a sustained, continuous political project across little more than two decades.

Comparative Analysis: Rhetorical Strategies and Political Horizons

Placed in comparison, these two figures reveal both significant convergences and instructive differences. Both Korais and Chavchavadze were formed intellectually through direct contact with France and French culture. Both belonged to literatures situated at the periphery of European political power. Both selected, among available European texts, works associated with Enlightenment rationalism, civic reflection, and the critique of arbitrary authority. Both operated in contexts where direct political speech about national autonomy and self-government was constrained or dangerous. And in both cases, translation functioned not as a peripheral literary activity but as a deliberate mechanism of national and cultural positioning.

Yet the differences are significant and revealing. Korais's dedications explicitly named public political addressees and articulated public political messages. His translation of Beccaria was offered to an actual republic and then to an imagined future republic of judges. The political work of the translation was transparent, intentional, and public. Chavchavadze's translation, by contrast, was no less intentional or political, but its address was private and singular: a dedication to one named co-conspirator, circulated, if at all, within a narrow aristocratic and political circle rather than published for a national public. The political significance of his translation lay not in a lesser degree of political intent but in a fundamentally different scale and mode of address.

Toward a Typology of Peripheral Translation

The comparison developed here also invites a more general typological reflection on the relationship between translation and peripheral political status. Building on the distinction between an institutional-programmatic mode and a network-based mode introduced below, it is possible to propose, at least provisionally, three variables along which cases of politically inflected translation in peripheral or imperially constrained contexts might be compared: (1) the explicitness of the addressee, a named political entity, as in Korais's dedications, versus a single named individual, as in Chavchavadze's case; (2) the genre of the source text, jurisprudential and civic, as with Beccaria, versus philosophical and testimonial, as with the text translated by Chavchavadze; and (3) the institutional channel through which the translation's influence was extended, formal editorial and educational projects versus informal networks of literary sociability.

These variables are not exhaustive, and their interaction is likely to prove more complex across a larger comparative sample than the two cases examined in this article can establish. Nonetheless, even this preliminary typology suggests that "translation as political address" is not a single, uniform phenomenon but a family of related strategies, whose particular configuration in any given case depends on the specific structure of imperial rule, the resources available to the translating intellectual, and the genre conventions of the source text selected for translation. Situating Korais and Chavchavadze within such a typology, rather than treating them simply as two instances of a single pattern, may ultimately offer a more defensible basis for the broader Balkan-Caucasian comparison this article has proposed.

Why this difference? Part of the explanation lies in the distinct political horizons available to each writer at the moment of their work. Korais translated Beccaria in 1802, when the Ionian Islands existed as an autonomous Greek state, however fragile. This gave him a concrete public political entity to address, and his translation could be presented as intellectual preparation for republican governance. Chavchavadze's translation came during his imprisonment after a failed rebellion (1804), in a context where no such public political entity existed or could safely be addressed. Under these circumstances, the translation could not function as a public political address; it operated instead as a private, testimonial one, a text whose full political charge was legible only to its single named recipient and to those who shared knowledge of the circumstances of its composition.

A second difference concerns the type of text selected for translation and the political register it establishes. Korais's *Beccaria* is jurisprudential, a treatise on criminal law and the social contract, addressed to the reader as a future citizen-judge. Chavchavadze's translated text is more directly philosophical in the Rousseauian mode, addressed, in the first instance, to the reader as a fellow victim of the very domination the text describes. Both deploy rhetoric toward political ends, but Korais's is civic, juridical, and public, while Chavchavadze's is testimonial, personal, and private. This difference reflects the different political possibilities available: Greece, even as an Ottoman subject, possessed diaspora communities in Western Europe and, briefly, an autonomous territory; Georgia, more thoroughly incorporated into Russian imperial administration after 1801, lacked such external political reference points, leaving translation's political work to operate at the scale of the individual rather than the nation.

Reception and Institutional Legacy

The political work performed by translation in both cases did not end with the act of translation itself; it was extended, and in important respects transformed, through institutional reception. In Korais's case the reception history is unusually well documented. His editorial project, the Hellenic Library (*Bibliothiki Ellinikē*), a long series of annotated editions of ancient Greek authors accompanied by prolegomena addressed directly to a contemporary Greek readership, provided an institutional and pedagogical afterlife for the linguistic and civic program first modeled in the *Beccaria* translation (Kitromilides, 2010). Korais's prolegomena circulated widely among Greek schools and diaspora communities in the years before and during the War of Independence, and his linguistic proposals became, however contested, a reference point for the language question (to glossiko zitima) that would occupy Greek intellectual life for the following century.

Chavchavadze's institutional legacy operated through different channels. His household in Tbilisi, noted in Georgian literary historiography as a salon in which Georgian, Russian, Polish, and, at times, French-speaking intellectuals gathered, functioned as an informal but consequential institution of literary transmission (Abzianidze, 2012). Through this milieu, and through his position as one of the most prominent literary figures of his generation, Chavchavadze's translation practice and his broader engagement with European letters influenced the subsequent generation of Georgian romantic poets, several of whom

were connected to his household by kinship, patronage, or direct literary apprenticeship. Unlike Korais's relatively centralized and programmatic linguistic reform, Chavchavadze's influence was diffused through networks of personal and literary association, a difference that itself corroborates the broader argument, developed throughout this article, that Chavchavadze's political and cultural work operated through indirection rather than explicit institutional program.

These divergent modes of institutional legacy, Korais's programmatic, publicly circulated editorial project as against Chavchavadze's more informal, salon-based network of literary influence, offer a further point of comparison for future research. They suggest that the Balkan-Caucasian pattern proposed in this article may need to be refined, in subsequent work, into at least two distinguishable sub-patterns: an institutional-programmatic mode, in which translation is extended through formal editorial and pedagogical projects, and a network-based mode, in which translation's influence is transmitted more informally through literary sociability and patronage. Distinguishing these sub-patterns across a wider range of Balkan and Caucasian cases would considerably sharpen the comparative claims advanced here.

Conclusion: The Balkan-Caucasian Pattern and Directions for Future Research

The comparison of Adamantios Korais and Alexander Chavchavadze suggests that the Balkan-Caucasian region, understood as a coherent historical and cultural zone rather than as two separate national literatures, may have exhibited a distinctive pattern in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a possibility that the present comparison of two cases can only indicate, and that further cross-regional research would need to confirm. Translation functioned in both cases as a mechanism for negotiating modernization, the absorption of European Enlightenment thought, the creation of modern literary languages, the forging of national identities, under the specific constraint of peripheral position within imperial systems.

This putative pattern differed from translation in the metropolitan centers of Europe, where translation operated within established publishing markets and literary traditions, and from translation in other peripheral regions. On the evidence of the two cases examined here, the Balkan-Caucasian pattern appears distinctive in linking translation explicitly to questions of national identity, language reform, and political aspiration, and in deploying translation as a form of political address,

whether to an imagined national community or to a single trusted individual, in contexts where direct political speech was constrained. The strategies varied, Korais's public political dedications versus Chavchavadze's private, testimonial address to a fellow conspirator, but the underlying function appears to have remained comparable across both cases: translation as a substitute for, and preparation for, political autonomy.

Future research might extend this comparison to other literatures of the region, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Armenian, to test whether the pattern identified here holds across a broader range of cases. Additionally, careful textual analysis of specific translations (not merely the facts of their existence and dedication, but their actual rendering choices and rhetorical structures) would illuminate how translators navigated the double obligation to be faithful to the source text while adapting it to the political and linguistic needs of their own national context. Finally, attention to the reception and circulation of these translations, how they were read, debated, and deployed by subsequent generations of intellectuals, would reveal the long-term consequences of translation for the formation of national literary canons and political vocabularies.

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