

BRIEFLY ON GEORGIA-FEREYDAN RELATIONS

ABSTRACT

Fereydan is one of the regions of Iran where the descendants of Georgians live, those who had been exiled from Georgia by Abbas I of Persia, the Safavid Shah of Iran in 1610s. They have maintained their identity and the Georgian language to the present day.

Two major periods could be identified in the relations between Georgia and Fereydan:

I - From 1870s, i.e. from the initial emergence of the Fereydanians in Georgia (1871-1922) to 1990s, i.e. prior to the restoration of Georgian statehood.

II – From 1990s until today when, for the first time in the centuries-long history of Iran-Georgia contacts, the relations were built on equal rights (1992).

Atam Onikashvili was the first Georgian from Fereydan who arrived in Georgia in 1871. This was the fact of great importance: Georgian public became aware of the truth about the Georgians living in Fereydan. Since then, many of the Fereydanians visited Georgia over the years. During 1970s and 1980s, up to twenty families from Fereydan arrived in Georgia to make it as their permanent home. For a similar purpose, a number of Georgians left for Fereydan.

It could be argued that the relations between Iran and Georgia over the first period were limited to a certain extent; this resulted from the ideological confrontation between Iran and the Soviet Union. As for the second period, the character of the relations was distinguished by greater freedom; Following the restoration of Georgian statehood and the establishment of unprecedented Iran-Georgia relations that appeared to be based on equal rights, the relationship between Georgia and Fereydan has completely changed. That happened for the first time in the centuries-long history of Iran-Georgia relations that originates from the establishment of the state of Iran, i.e. in the 5th c. BCE.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was one of those first countries which recognized territorial integrity and statehood of Georgia. This marked the beginning of a completely new period in Georgia-Fereydan relations. The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Georgia was opened in 1993, followed by the embassy of Georgia to the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1994.

Future connections have been expanded; both official and unofficial visits to Fereydan have become possible. Today, Fereydan serves as a bridge between Iran and Georgia.

Keywords: Fereydan, Georgians of Fereydan, Iran-Georgia relations.