

The Heritage of Georgian Literary Centers of Palestine

(The Premises and Development of Old Georgian literary law)

Abstract: The liturgical literature was the core element for the literary school of Palestine. These types of liturgical texts were created, compiled and translated according to the requirement of particular churches/lavras/monasterial complexes. First of all, texts included The New Testament, scripts from The Old Testament and various types of Typicons and Miscellanies. At the same time, monks translated and composed hymnographic compilations. The language, terminology, style and grammar norms must be researched and investigated separately. Only the conclusion of the research will make it possible to discuss about literary traditions of Sinai-Palestine or of their influence on the Georgian literary language and law's formation.

Key words: Old Georgian literary law, literary traditions of Sinai-Palestine

4th Century AD should be taken as the reference starting point for dating translated or original Georgian literature, despite the references in the Georgian Chronicles (Kartlis Tskhovreba) and recent Grakliani discoveries, since tangible literary material dates back to this period. Literary schools in Georgia, as well as abroad, were associated with monasteries and they have immense role in the development of Georgian thinking, culture, religious development. Palestine-Antioch is rightly considered as the mother of Georgian church, since clergymen were sent from this church after the declaration of Christianity as state religion in Georgia, in 326. Hence, it is not surprising that earliest cultural-religious traces of Georgians are observed in Syria-Palestine. Naturally, Georgian religious figures turned to this region for mastering Christian doctrine and ascetic-monastic life. The work of Georgians here was not fragmented or private, or based on private initiative of individual clergymen; rather, it was part of a unified and solid action plan of the Georgian church and monkhood. Georgians worked in monasteries founded by the Greek, as well as in Georgian monasteries, towards meeting practical needs of the Georgian Church. Exactly these monasteries promoted ascetic life in Georgian church, monkhood and cultural fields (which refers to arrival of Syrian fathers) and enriched Georgian Christian life and literary law. At the same time, the typology of these activities significantly determined Georgian Christian culture's orientation, trends, translations and the following development – Georgian Christian law and the development of its perspectives. As far as Georgian Christian literary tradition is the one that has survived to our day and the history by Leonti Mroveli is the unique source about the literacy of Pharnavaz King, also Christianity was adopted by Palestine-Antioch, we must consider that in the first place exactly this culture influenced Georgian literature. To inspect the essence of the monuments translated or created in Palestine's Georgian monasteries, we must observe works referred to them. The observation in the chronological setting will make obvious the change, that historical fate had prescribed the literature that was created or translated in Georgian cloister of Palestine. It should be mentioned, that after gaining the autocephaly the function of Palestine to Georgian literature had decreased and it was replaced by Sinai and then by Athos.

When we talk about the literary school in general, it is necessary, that the works created / translated / compiled in this school manifest the signs, which are common to this particular cultural center. Accordingly, because there is no doubt in existence of Sina-Palestinian literary school, there should be features that are common in this particular literary school despite the abundance of translators and editors: apart from geographical-chronological unity, we mean the goal, set of typology, translations, style and grammar and terminology characteristics, literary genres, which were in the interest of the monks, and in some cases even paleographical signs. To promote grammatical, terminological and stylistic issues is a separate point of issue.

And because in this case the geographical-spatial area is defined (Sinai-Palestine), the goal is clear – the satisfaction of the Church’s practical needs, what is obvious only to glance at the production created here. Accordingly, genre affiliation of works in this literary school is limited: The main focus has been moved to fill the liturgical books (the liturgy of the Old and New Testament texts, psalms, hymns, at this stage – simple (keimenon) hagiography and as it comes to the monastic complexes, of course, typicons too). Let’s observe and discuss in details.

Life by Peter Maiumeli (Peter the Iberian), works by Byzantine authors – The Church History by Rufinus and For Buildings by Procofi of Kesariya also provide references to Georgian monasterial settlements in the 5th century in Palestine. According to all early references, Peter the Iberian had built “Guest House” for Georgian and Greek monks in Jerusalem, as well as Georgian monastery on the bank of the River Jordan. Presumably, Procofi of Kesariya is referring to this monastery as the monastery of Iberians. According to the Life written in 530’s by Theodosi Kvinobiarch, a Greek father, founder of the great monastery in Jerusalem, Georgians had their own church in Theodosius Great Monastery and conducted services in Georgian. Palimpsest papers dating to 5th-6th centuries are preserved in Georgia, at the National Center of Manuscripts, as well as abroad, in libraries of Austria and the Great Britain, but the place of their origin is unknown.

The work of Georgian monks in Saint Saba (Saba Gantsmendili) great monastery near Jerusalem was of special importance for Georgian monastic life and written tradition. Hundreds of Greek, Syrian, Armenian monks served at this great monastery founded in 480’s. Georgians came here early, and their number during the first decades of the 6th century increased so much that they even had their own church, where some of the religious books were read in Georgian. In the 8th-9th centuries, Saints Saba Monastery Edition of the Scripture was created in the Saint Saba Great Monastery. The monasteries of Tao-Klarjeti, and, in general, Georgian monasteries of that period had close links with the Sabatsminda Monastery. It is known from the Life of Gregory of Khanzta that the father based in Tao developed the canons of the Khanzta Monastery based on the Saint Saba typicon. Although, following the conquering of Palestine by Muslim Arabs, followed by Turkish Seljuqs, and the harassing of the Sabatsminda Monastery, Georgian monkhood settled in the Sinai Saint Catherine Monastery, without ceasing the relations with the Sabatsminda Monastery. Majority of Georgian manuscript books copied in Sabatsminda were later taken to Mount Sinai. These books are Sinai Miscellany, papyrus-parchment (tchil-etrat) compilation, Ascetic-homiletic collection Paradise, collection of works by Eprem the Syrian, and others.

Palavra was significant among the centers of Georgian writing (Father Chariton founded this monastery in the 4th Century), where, in 968, John of the Saphara copied the work by George of Alexandria -- The Life of John Chrysostomos; Golgotha, out of the manuscripts created there the collection of chants, Lenten menaion, works by Gregory the Theologian, etc. have survived. Great Monastery of Georgians – Jvari Monastery led by George Prokhore was of special importance. He contributed to the translation and copying of all of the significant novelties, dissemination of these books not only among the monkhood serving in Palestine, but also in churches and monasteries of Georgia. Jvari Monastery, like Iverioni, became a cultural-educational center. Palestine Patericus comprising of the lives of prominent figures of Palestine, was created in Jvari. This book has special importance in the research of the history of Medieval Eastern Christianity.

Mount Sinai Saint Catherine Monastery is also an important literary center of the early period. Georgian scholars and scribes working in Mount Sinai, firstly, retained the Jerusalem tradition of compiling and producing manuscript books, and secondly, enriched and complemented it according to new, Constantinople demands of the church and theology. Saint Catherine Monastery was the dwelling place of fathers not only from Sabatsminda, but also from Tao Klarjeti. Georgian manuscripts of the Sinai Collection indicate that in

the 2nd half of the 10th century Michael Katamoneli, Ioane Zosime, Kvirike of Midznadzor Ezra and other Georgian monks served on Mount Sinai. Sinai Collection is home to considerable number of manuscript books copied and produced in different literary centers of Palestine, e.g., first dated Georgian manuscript – 864 Sinai Miscellany, papyrus-parchment (Iadgari of tchil-etrat) compilation copied in the 10-11th century in Sabatsminda, several pages of which are palimpsest, as well as hymnographic collections. It is known that Georgian monks serving on Sinai were associated under artisanship groups: one was in charge of adorning parchment, another was writing manuscript, third was drawing, and fourth was in charge of dressing (sometimes all of these functions were performed by a single individual). It can be said that the Georgian literary and church center on Mount Sinai had not only religious and educational (we mean 980's), but state importance. This was a sign of a solid political status of Georgia in the midst of Eastern and Christian countries of the West.

Thus, Sinai-Palestine is the first known Georgian literary center outside the boundaries of Georgia. Its geographic area is defined, as mentioned above, the goal - clear and distinct: to serve the Church and equip / supply it with liturgical texts in the first place. It is cognizant to scientific communities and it can be assumed, that the character of translations is more likely referred to content not adequate-literal or segmented, in terms of genre – In spite of biblical and liturgical texts (text and directions for the liturgy) geographical and hymnographical texts were created and translated too, However, they were composed to be involved in the worship. We have typicons and miscellanies, it can't be said that the authors' interest in the exegetical literature is not as big, but exactly this is the picture given by the oldest available texts, that preserved to us. As we see, the liturgical literature was the core element for the literary school of Palestine. These types of liturgical texts were created, compiled and translated according to the requirement of particular churches/lavras/monasterial complexes. First of all, texts included The New Testament, scripts from The Old Testament and various types of Typicons and Miscellanies. At the same time, monks translated and composed hymnographic compilations. The language, terminology, style and grammar norms must be researched and investigated separately. Only the conclusion of the research will make it possible to discuss about literary traditions of Sinai-Palestine or of their influence on the Georgian literary language and law's formation.

Lastly, it can be presumed that the nature of the Georgian Culture would have been different without significant influence of the Palestine Literary School.

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