

New Russian Translation of “The Life of Grigol Khandzteli”

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Abstract: The first editor of *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* Nicholas Marr accompanied work with an entire volume of Russian translations along with researches and the diary about the journey in Tao-Klarjeti and Shavsheti. It was the start of the Giorgi Merchule's story narrated in a foreign language. Very soon in 1917-1919 the Latin translation of the *Life of Grigol Khandzteli* was performed by Paul Peeters and in 1922-1923 along with other important Georgian works was published (*Vie de St. Gregoire de Khandztha*). Later, in 1956, „Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints“ by David Marshall Lang with English translation of the *Life of Grigol Khandzteli* performed by Lang was published. (“The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta”: *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, London 1956, pp. 155-65); in 2015 an American scholar of Norwegian origin Theophane-Erik Halvorson introduced a new English translation of *The Life* accompanied with the pictures captured in Nikozi. Before it in the December 1999 the 42nd edition of Russian journal Symbol located in Paris published new Russian translation of *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* [9, pp. 245-341] made by Jozeph Zeteishvili. In 2008 Moscow publishing house CRITERIUM re-edited this masterpiece of Georgian Hagiography in the series named „mother of the Saints“. The present work is dedicated to the Russian translation made by Archpriest Ioseb Zeteishvili.

Key Words: *Giorgi Merchule, Grigol Khandzteli, Gregory from Khandzta, Ioseb Zeteishvili, Joseph Zeteishvili*

In autumn of 1902 a half-destroyed, 12th-century manuscript was discovered in the library of the Monastery of the Cross of Jerusalem. In “Georgian Mravaltavi” (N2) preserved in the vault the members of the scholarly expedition were able to detect a hitherto unknown text called *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta* (“Works and Labors from the Worthy Life of Our Holy and Blessed Father

Archimandrite Gregory, Builder of Khandzta and Shatberdi and a Remembrance of the Many Blessed fathers Who Were with him”) [7].

The manuscript was first seen by Niko Chubinishvili in 1845. Later, the notes assembled by him were published by Aleksandre Tsagareli in 1894 (Сведения, III, pp. 49-50) [20, 98], however the story was introduced to the reader only in 1911 after Nicholas Marr published Georgian and Russian texts in his series of publication “Тексты и разыскания по армяно-грузинской филологии” [4]. It is certain that the works as well as the story about the flourishing era for Tao-Klarjeti had been unknown.

The fact that the works had been unknown before is proved through the words uttered by Platon Ioselian in 1853, the author of “The history of Georgian Church” saying he was not aware of the saint whose name is commemorated by Georgian the Church in the 5th of October. He said, “I was able to find the name of Grigol Khanzokhat living in 1411 solely in Armenian chronicles”.

Regarding the fact ten centuries had passed after Grigol Khandzteli, no wonder the fact was unknown to him. In the 10th century, the followers still lived in the monastery and even Giorgi Merchule himself would complain by saying „Now instead, their wonders have been long forgotten from much time having passed“ [14, p. 249].

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It was the start of the Giorgi Merchule’s story narrated in a foreign language. Very soon, 1917-1919 the Latin translation of the *Life of Grigol Khandzteli* performed by Paul Peeters was translated and in 1922-1923 along with the books about *The Life of John and Euthemeous*, Giorgi Mtatsmindeli and Serapion Zarzmeli was published in 36-37th volumes (Vie de St. Gregoire de Khandztha (pp. 207-309);

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named „mother of the Saints”. The present work is dedicated to this work of Archpriest Ioseb Zeteishvili.

As already noted above the translation by the deacon Ioseb Zeteshvili was first published in the journal “Symbol”. The journal was founded in 1979 by Paris Slavic Library to promote Western-Eastern artistic dialogue (source: <http://sfoma.ru/publisher/journal-symbol>) and it published a lot of philosophical, Christianity and artistic works of many authors including the best literary works of old Georgian literature such as, Tbel Abuseride’s “Miracles of St. George” (№32), Giorgi the Athonite’s *The Life of Our Fathers John and Euthymius* (№34-35), Giorgi Mtsire’s *The Life and Acts of our Holy and Blessed Father, Georgie the Athonite* (№38), unknown author’s *The Martyrdom of St. Eustace of Mtskheta* (№44), Ioane Sabanisdze *The Martyrdom of St. Abo Tbileli* (№44), Iakob Tsurtaveli *The Passion of St. Shushanik* (№45), David Aghmashenebeli’s *The Prayers of Remorse* (№41), *The Georgian Chronicle, the Period of Giorgi Lasha* (№46-47), *The Life of the King of Kings David* (№40), abovementioned *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli*, and *Hymn of the Living Pillar*.

Some articles preceding each translation of the story are also presented. The author of the new Russian translations is a Georgian Deacon Joseph Zeteishvili, living and working in Latvia. He was the leader and the member of the council of Visaginas temple of the Virgin and Panteleimon, located in the North-East of Latvia.

The first edition of the new Russian translation of *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* is preceded by inspiring words of the author under the name “About the *Life of Grigol Khandzteli*” (“О Житии Григола Хандзтели”) [4, pp. 48-50]. This version is titled as „the builders of the God’s city” in the rendered edition. The author talks about the importance of the literary work, its history and expresses wishes to represent the life of the saint as the most prominent episode in the history of the Georgian Court.

Maka Elbakidze’s version of the translation of the letter was published in 2001 in the journal *The Kartvelologist*, edition 8. Joseph Zetiashvili notes that by creating the book about the great priest, the author was able to save his name from being lost. While by publishing the story at the beginning of the century Nicholas Marr was able not only to emphasize the merit of Grigol Khandzteli and his followers but also to reveal spiritual, political, national and cultural basis for the prosperity of the country of the 7-12th century. this work turned out to be a rich compilation of images, significant facts and an insight into ascetic life [6, p. 249]. The translator refers to the Klarjeti deserts and the monastery complexes as Georgian Atlantida. But first of all it should be noted that in 1902 a brilliant work of Georgian spiritual writing was discovered. Several epithets such as “a

person of delicate and gentle taste, the most prominent poet, a genuine artist, a flawless writer”, were used by Ivane Javakhishvili to describe Giorgi Merchule. Simple and clear style of writing imbued with honourable accent creates the impression of poetic narration; we can easily call it hagiographic, historical or even eloquent work the style incessantly enchanting the reader,” - says Pavle Ingorokva, [5, pp. 152-153].

We are fully aware of the fact that there are two opposite views about the literary translation: one, accurate with lack of artistic approach and the other one is artistically strong, however, diverted from the main path of the content of the origin. Theoretically the syntheses of these two views and assuming the most accurate and artistically strong work as one of the best is very easy, however, practically fulfilling this task is almost impossible. The main aim of the translators is to create so-called identical translation revealing its real values to the readers. However, it should be noted that two totally different languages employ radically different instruments of expressing ideas which is the reason why the literal translation of the word fails to have the same artistic impact on the reader. [2, p. 80]. Talking about the translation of *The Life of Gregory of Khandzta* we would definitely like to be sure the effect will be the same as that of the origin.

The first obvious difference between these two translations of *The Life* is the literary style. Nicholas Marr narrates the story in Russian literary language characteristic to the end of the 19th century. The main purpose of inserting the Russian translation of the text in its first edition was to make the text available for non-Georgian readers rather than fully following its original version.

N. Marr notes that there is no way to copy the lexical essence in full due to the influence of Iranian, Armenian and Byzantine languages. [4, LV]. Along with old Armenian influence (the form of the name Abraham, some Armenian words) a lot of Iranian words are also detected. There are several cases when Greek forms are used for the Biblical terms.

These challenging combinations of the words have created a lot of obstacles for the translators. In order to reveal their attitude towards these obstacles and the parallelisms in the translation, I would like to introduce some examples. These are the cases demonstrating the terms with the same meaning old and new, Georgian and Persian, Georgian and Greek words are juxtaposed.

- о достойном юноше Ефреме. (23, 27, p. 104) -
თარგმნის ნ. მარი და სინონიმების ერთ შესატყვისს იძლევა.
- о преподобном отроке и юноше Ефреме [გვ. 275] -
აზუსტებს იოსებ ზეთეიშვილი.

2. შორის წმიდათა შენთა მარტულთა და მოწამეთა (X, 27)

- среди твоих мучеников (94)
- среди твоих свидетелей и мучеников (265)

In this case the parallelism is created through loan words from Greek and its corresponding meaning from Georgian. As we already know, a Greek word *martyre* means a witness, giving a rise to the Georgian Word Motsame 17] "in Russian it sounds like *мученик* [16, 326]. A word *martvila* has been translated following its original Greek meaning by Zeteishvili. A Russian word *свидетель* also follows the parallelism from the origin. Both translations are accompanied by the list of Georgian names mentioned in the story along with Russian equivalents: Анатолэ - Анатолия, Теместия - Феместия, Иованэ - Иоанн, Габриэл - Гавриил, Теодорэ - Феодор, Саба - Савва, Григол - Григорий, Христофорэ - Христофор, Эпофанэ - Епифаний, etc. J. Zeteishvili provides only the names of the people (27 in total) [6, p. 252], N. Marr gives Geographical names as well [4, p. 206]; he gives his preference to Russian equivalents while Zeteishvili prefers the version resembling the Georgian sounding of a word.

The first publication of the Russian translation of *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* by Zeteishvili is accompanied by the author's comments, 285 in total [6, pp. 325-334] mostly related with translational activities. In some cases, the author introduces a translation of a single phrase, sentence or a word by N. Marr enabling us to place the new and the old passages in juxtaposition with each other. Whenever the literal translation of the text seems to be impossible, Zeteishvili introduces some comments containing the literal translations without giving any explanation why he gave his preference to them rather than the ones given in the text (comments: 50, 67, 70, 90, 91, 281). He leaves analyses to the reader. Some of the comments concern the titles. J. Zeteishvili provides their translation accompanied with their Georgian corresponding words with Latin transcription. For example, the word *nobleman* is represented as *дворянин* (279) and *вельможа* (50) as well. *Eristavt-eristavi* is translated as княз-князей (281). The relevant comments are as follows: *eris-mthavari* (n. 61), *aznauri* (n. 46), *eristhavth-eristhavi* (n. 136, 245) etc.

N. Marr avoids translating names of civil servants. The text says: азнауры (XXVII Chapter, 9-10 verse., pp. 108; XXVIII chapter, 49, 116; LXII Chapter, 4, 134; LXXXIII Chapter, 13, 149), мтавар (X, 38, pp 95), мампал (XLII, 14,

pp. 119), эрис-тавомъ эрис-тавовъ (XXVIII, 38; LXXXIII, 7, 148), эрис-мтаваръ (XI, 6, 95). In order to enable Russian readers to understand, N. Marr provides the translation with a dictionary [4, pp. LXIII].

In the work of Nicholas Marr the difference between the origin and the translated version in terms of dividing the text by verses is minimal. As for Zeteishvili, he avoids dividing the story in verses. The chapters in both versions are distributed according to that of Georgian.

J. Zeteishvili accompanies the translation with the same type of comments amounting to 40. Clearly his translation tends to be more accurate and coherent. It should be mentioned that we find more differences between these two texts such as parallelisms, proper names etc. Regarding the fact Zeteishvili tends to follow the grammatical and stylistic norms typical to that of old Slavic and Russian language, N. Marr prefers to write meeting the norms of 19th century literary Russian suggesting the narration style typical to other translators. Then, raises a question, what was the reason he highlighted approximately 40 sections with comments? Based on the example provided, Georgian passages included in the comments called for more interpretation. Pointing to the relevant passages, the author of the new translation enables us to clearly see that Zeteishvili approaches the nuances and details in a totally different way as opposed to N. Marr.

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