

For Correlation of Maccabees biblical books and Georgian translations of the hagiographic composition

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Abstract: *Books of the Maccabees* belong to the non-canonic books of the Bible. These books retell about heroic battles fought by Jews. On the basis of these stories hagiographic literature was created which deserves to be explored from a number of points of view.

Although the research of the *Martyrdom of t Maccabees* in Georgian has a certain history the monument has not yet been studied from the point of view of literary theory. The article raises the problem of interrelation between the *Martyrdom of Maccabees* and scriptural books. Based on the overview and study of the more or less complete collections of the Bible existing in our country from historical and philological stand points, we conclude that the *Books of Maccabees* have been translated much earlier than are currently believed. In particular, one of the Georgian manuscripts of the 10th century (K-1) confirms the existence of the work containing the *4th book of Maccabees*. According to the description, a similar text was maintained in the Georgian manuscript preserved at Bodleian Library, Oxford (Bodl. 1). Thus, we propose that these scriptural books were known in Georgia much earlier. Moreover, the *Maccabees* were translated before they were included into the list of *Bakar's Bible* (1743).

The Study of the *Books of Maccabees II and IV* confirm the opinion stated in the scholarly literature that the main content of the hagiographical work was taken from the seventh chapter of the Book II. In our opinion, the hagiographer took into consideration the *Book IV of Maccabees* to no less extent. Moreover, in the *Martyrdom* not only many stories and characters but even the phrases coincide with the Biblical text.

In the end of discussion of the above-mentioned issues, it is of interest to note that only the *Martyrdom* contains the name of the martyrs' mother. In our opinion, this fact provides a basis for the offer that the authors must have employed other sources as well and supposedly, this illustrates

that the stories of the martyrs were widespread and of great significance.

Key words: *Hagiography; The Bible; Books of Maccabees, the Martyrdom*

The common title of the *books of Maccabees I, II, III and IV*, which are outside of the Jewish law, must have been conditioned by the relationship of stories that are retold in them. Each of them describes the events of III-II centuries BC, Hellenization and heroic fight of Jews against the Seleucid invaders. Presumably, Jews, who were fighting for their homeland and religion, were referred to as Maccabees according to the nickname of the commander of the rebellion, Judas Maccabeus¹.

The fact that the literature about Maccabean battles was spread beyond Palestine is also quite interesting. The interest of Georgians in the stories of Jews fighting either physically or religiously can be confirmed by the fact that we have biblical translations of the *books of Maccabees*, (Bodl. 1; K-1; A-529; S-332) as well as a hagiographic composition reflecting the Martyrdom of the Maccabean infants and their mother (Sin-62; A-95). In addition, there is an abundance of hymnographic material about the above - mentioned martyrs, created and translated at different times (A-1; A-16; A-87; A-92; A-109; A-181; A-292; A-1338; H-2251; S-383; K-9; Jer-15; Jer-43).

As pointed out by Kurtiskidze [16, p. 52]. the biblical books of Maccabees most likely were not translated into the ancient Georgian language. The reason conditioning this opinion is that the books, which our ancestors translated and were guided by, did not contain information about *Maccabees*. Despite this, the researcher recalls the episode of *The Life of our Fathers John and Euthymius*, in which there is a list of books, which were gifted to big laurel by Athos fathers. Kurtiskidze argues that these books must have been written in the Greek language, otherwise, it is unclear what benefits would the workers of Laurel have found in books, written in Georgian. It seems that the „Old books” must have meant a collection of the books of the Old Testament, which did not contain the *Books of Maccabees* and therefore, it had become necessary to transpose them (Maccabees) as a separate book. At the

¹ There are different opinions about the meaning of this word. Some think that „Maccabeus” is an anthroponym whereas others believe that it is a nickname. There exists an opinion, according to which „Maccabeus” is an honorable title. As for the etymology of this word, opinions also differ: „Destroyer”, „The one with weird nostrils”, „The Chosen one”, „The Hammer” [1, p. 17].

same time, the question arises if the *books of Maccabees* were not translated into Georgian, Euthymius would'n have noticed this fact, moreover, would not he have filled this gap? [13, p.19].

We fully share the researcher's opinion, that *Oshki/Athos Bible* (978) may have contained the Georgian translations of *Maccabees* which were eventually lost (as well as some other books and „the Psalms“). In addition, it should also be noted that *Oshki Bible* contains all non-canoncial books, except the *books of Maccabees*.

The second full collection of the Bible – the so-called *Mtskheta Bible* (A-51), which we refer to as the *Saba Bible*: similar to the *Oshki Bible*, contains all the non-canoncial books except the *books of Maccabees*. It is interesting, that we can find the titles of the mentioned books in Sulkhan-Saba's *Samotkhis kari* (The Gate to the Paradise) In the Old Testament law, Saba mentioned the first two *books of Maccabees*, although said nothing about the 3rd *Macca-beans*.

According to Kurtsikidze's observations, by the law of the Catholic Church the *I and II books of the Maccabees* are non-canoncial, but the *III book* is not included into the Bible. Therefore. the researcher notes that Saba's definition of the Old Testament's law cannot have been accidental. It must also be noted that Sulkhan-Saba was not against Catholic Church. [13, pg. 32]. It is also well known, that the *books of Maccabees (I, II and III)* were already known from the *Bakar Bible* (1743) although it must also be mentioned that that Georgian versions of these Biblical books were known before, in particular, from the collection, copied in Moscow in 1735-1736 (A-529). All of the three *books of Maccabees* were translated from the Slavic language by King Archil and followed the text of 1663 year's Slavic edition. The revised list (A-529) is included in *Bakar's Bible*.

All of the non-canoncial books were included in the Bible published in 1743. This edition is preceded by foreword written by Bakar Batonishvili in which he talks about the contribution of King Archil to collecting, editing and translating of the Biblical books. Specifically, it is mentioned that a complete collection of the *Biblical books* did not exist in Georgian and some of them were even considered to be lost (e.g. Jso son of Zirak and *Maccabees*). Apparantly, Archil had to solve a number of problems when translating these books² due to the fact that their texts had been altered by the scribes. In addition, the Russian Bible was not translated from the Greek

² Both Ts. Kurtsikidze and N. Melikishvili remark, that Archil translated not only these 4 biblical books (Jso son of Zirak; *I, II, III Maccabees*) but 24 books in total [13, p. 38; 8, p. 279).

language and because of this , the amount of mistakes was quite prominent [8, p. 277].

As we mentioned in the beginning, four books with the name titled the *Maccabees* are known in Bibliology. All of them are present in a printed format, in the Bible published by the Georgian Patriarchy in 1989 (in New Georgian Language). It also turns out that similar to Greeks, the text of *IV Maccabees* was considered by Georgians as a hagiographic composition, and therefore, was included in *Mravaltavi* (Miscellany (Bodl. 1, XI c) [1, p. 25].

Nowadays, there are two manuscripts (Bodl. 1; K-1), presenting Georgian translations of the *IV* book of *Maccabees*. As pointed by Arabidze the book, known as *Maccabees IV* and philosophical work about a pious mind, which was included in Joseph Flavius's collection, presents one and the same text. Georgian translators, living in Russia, did not pay attention to this fact and David Inanashvili translated the text from Russian again.

We didn't have access to the manuscript kept in Oxford (Bodl.1). Therefore, having explored both Manuscript N K-1 and the description provided by Bodl. 1's [19, p. 312]³, we argue that both of these texts (*Maccabees IV*) in the last one and in the manuscript (K-1), which is kept in Kutaisi State Historical museum (with minor orthographic differences), are identical with minor orthographic differences. However, the manuscript, preserved in Oxford (XI c) must have been written earlier than Kutaisi's *Mravaltavi* (XVIc.).

It must be mentioned that Georgian Orthodox Church does not recognize any of *Maccabees books* as canonical, but like other churches, it publishes all of the four books of *Maccabees* under the name of non-canonical books.

Apart from fierce battles fought by Jews one can find stories about spiritual strength and sacrifices for religion in the *books of Maccabees*. In particular, in the *II and the IV books of Maccabees* there is a story about the Martyrdom of seven Jewish children and their mother.⁴

As it turns out, the Maccabean Martyrs were popular in old Georgia and their *Martyrdom* was also „translated”⁵

³ The electronic (pdf.) version of this description was sent to us by Natia mirotadze, my scholar - coworker from Korneli Kekelidze National Centre of Manuscripts, We are wholeheartedly thankful to her for this help.

⁴ According to the religious calendar, *Maccabees* were tortured 166 BC. As for their names, they are not mentioned in the Biblical books and “Martyrdom”, but we read their names in the calendar: Abim, Antonine, Guri, Eleazar, Evsevon, Alim, Markele [9, p. 225].

⁵ As pointed out by I. Arabidze *Martyrdom* language is translated into Georgian [1, p. 25], but he does not name the source (according to him, there are also translations of *Martyrdom* in Russian and Armenian

[1, p. 25]. In Korneli Kekelidze National Centre of Manuscripts there are reserved two manuscripts (Sin-62, X c; A-95, XI c.), which contain hagiographic texts about the Martyrdom of the above mentioned Martyrs. Prof. Ivane Imnaishvili dedicated special research to the correlation of these manuscripts. In conclusion, he points out that the text presented in Sin-62 and A-95 must belong to one and the same edition. Moreover, difference between them is so minor (lexical-grammatical and orthographic), that we can consider Sin-62 as the original of A-95 [5, p. 40].⁶

Korneli Kekelidze also discusses this issue and argues that the texts kept in Sin-62 and A-95 are of kimenic character, whereas texts in Bodl. 1 and K-1 are metafrastic [6, p. 132]. His opinion is shared by Enriko Gabidzashvili [4, p. 267-268].

Therefore it turns out that texts of *Maccabees Martyrdom* kept in Oxford and Gelati in fact are different editions of one and the same Georgian translation of Old Testament's *IV Maccabees*. [1, p. 25].

Despite the above mentioned scientists' authoritative researches and opinions, the literature reflecting Martyrdom of seven Maccabean children and their mother has not yet been studied. The subject of our article is to define relationship between Biblical and hagiographic compositions.

The *II and IV Biblical books of Maccabees* contain not only the literal description of battles, but stories of spiritual strength and legends about self-sacrifice of Mosaic Law's defenders.

The *II book* contains 15 chapters. The sixth chapter retells us about the martyrdom of Eleazar – Jewish Scribe, connoisseur of Law and Head Priest. In the seventh chapter the story about Martyrdom of seven Maccabean children and their mother is retold. From this chapter we learn, that „a handsome (II Mac. 6:18) [20], 90 years old scribe was forced to eat the forbidden meat and to worship the idols. Eleazar did not surrender due to his age, he thought that young people could follow him and therefore, he preferred a glorious death over a shameful life.

As for the Martyrdom of children, as we noted above, the seventh chapter fully describes their stories. Unlike the *IV book of Maccabees*, the *II book* briefly tells us about

languages), E. Gabidzashvili also thinks that *Martyrdom* was translated into Georgian [4, p. 267].

⁶ Iv. Imnaishvili also considers *Martyrdom* to have been translated into Georgian „We think our reasoning about grammatical forms and vocabulary of this script monument must agree with our tproposition, that it must have been translated earlier , than suggested by the date of copying this manuscript (X c, X-XI c). THis must have happened, no later than IX-X cc

their Martyrdom. The author tells us how mother was encouraging her children, who were doomed for torture and how the brothers were firmly defending the Law of their ancestors. Like the words of Eleazar the Head Priest, we can see here the address which is permeated by the idea of resurrection. [II mac. 7:14] [20]⁷.

From the brothers' reply we learn that the king fights not against them, but against the lord (II Mac. 7:19) [3], and who fights God, cannot remain unpunished. They are full of joy, because they are sacrificing themselves for the love of the God and they hope that they can redeem the sins of their brethren too. So their joy is special, because they expect the resurrection.

At the end of the story, the author focuses on the torture of the youngest brother and his speech towards the king. Despite the fact that Antiochus promised the seventh brother friendship and a high position in return of obedience to his orders, the Jewish child, after his mother's encouragement, answered him strictly. Because of this, he was tortured more severely than his brothers.

As for the mother of the children, according to the author "she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly endeavour, she said unto them" [II Mac. 7:21] [20]. Here is highlighted that despite the opinion that women were inferior to men, and possessing a merciful and compassionate character [7, p. 6], the parent of Martyrs strengthens her feminine way of thinking with a masculine soul, acts courageously and does not reveal her tender nature. On the other hand, nothing is said about the way she died. We know that after the torture of her children, she also passed away. ("Last of all, after the sons' death, the mother also died" [II Mac. 7:41] [20]).

This is how the *II book of Maccabees* represents the Martyrdom of Jews.

As for the *IV book of Maccabees*, it is lengthier. Besides that here is a detailed description of each child's torture, of a lengthy speech to the king and mother's admonitions. This book differs from the *II book* with extended philosophical reasoning about a pious mind before the Martyrdom.

The IV book of Maccabees consists of 18 chapters. The introduction is dedicated to the author's proclamation, according to which it is necessary to follow

⁷ The particular section from 12th chapter of *II Maccabees* is inspired by the idea of resurrection, from this we learn that Judas Maccabeus prayed for spirits of the dead [II Mac. 12:44-45] [20]. We think, that this must be the condition for the fact, that the books of Maccabees are under the name of „non-canonical“ but still printed in Bible.

Philosophy, „Because this subject is mandatory to everyone, who seeks knowledge, at the same time it contains praise to the highest virtue, such as reasonable thinking” [Mac. IV 1:2] [3]. The author tells us that the Maccabees neglected the lethal torture and with that, they confirmed that the mind is above the passion. Before that, he defines the meaning of the mind and the passion emphasising the multifaceted nature of the latter. In fact, the refrain of the whole book and the narrative is that a pious mind can defeat passions. [12, 243r]).

After this theoretical reasoning, the narrative goes to Seleucid King's and his son's – Antiochus Epiphanes' attitude to the Jews: how first the father and then the son fought against them, how they demanded obedience and rejection of their law and how they appointed ideologically likeminded High Priests.

In 5-6th chapters the author tells us about the Martyrdom of Eleazar the High Priest and then Praises him.

Generally, we must say, that the *IV book of Maccabees* is loaded with a dialogic form of narrative, which, with the increasing emotional background, also increases the size of the text. The author assesses the actions of connoisseur of the Law in this way “For like a most skilful pilot, the reason of our father Eleazar steered the ship of religion over the sea of the emotions”[IV Mac. 7:1] [3]. Therefore, he did not die, and will live on into God, like Patriarch Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [IV Mac. 7:19] [3].

The Martyrdom and Praise of Eleazar is followed by the scenes of the children's torture and encouragement of each other. (8-13th chapters). The author compares the sons and their mother to people gathered to feast. We learn that their parent is old right from the *IV book of Maccabees*. (IV Mac. 8:3; 8:20; 16:1) [3], and that they („recently“ - IV Mac. 8:5; 9:5; 16:15) [3] together witnessed the torture of Eleazar the High Priest (*II book* says nothing about this fact).

The IV book of Maccabees tells us about the mother of the martyrs. We may say, that this is not an ordinary narrative, it reminds us more of a hymn. The author occasionally provides the facts which are not present in the *II book*. For example, we know from these facts that some of the martyrs were married, some – not. (16:9) [3], but none of them left descendants. In addition, the author tells us that mother became a widow early (18:9) [3]. As for the death of a parent, we also know it from the *IV book*: as one of the guards says, when he intended to take the woman to kill her, she threw herself in the fire. (17:1)[3].

As we mentioned, the *IV book* is extended by dialogues, additional information and details of torture. Besides, the narrative is highly artistic and expressive here

and it affects the reader. This is not the case regarding the *II book*. In the *II book* the whole story, which is told in the *IV book*, is transmitted in only two chapters. (6th chapter – Martyrdom of Eleazar, 7th chapter – adolescents).

It is hard to answer the following questions: which Biblical book was written first – the *II or IV Maccabees*; did the author of one book know about the other book; or were both books written by one and the same author? If not, who wrote the other book? ⁸. To clarify these issues we must study each book from the point of view of the text which has not been done so far.

As for the “Martyrdom”, as remarked by Imnaishvili “General content” of hagiographic composition “is taken from the 7th chapter, the *II book of Maccabees*” [5, 39].⁹

We share this opinion, but would like to add, that after the comparison of texts, the author must have taken into account the *IV book of Maccabees*. Moreover, in “Martyrdom” there are many cases of identical artistic methods, phrases and etc. Which resemble the Biblical text of the *Maccabees*.

It is clear, that a hagiographic composition is not a simple reiteration of the biblical books of the *Maccabees* and it is methodologically unjustified to compare two different fields (Bibliology – hagiography) of religious literature, but in this case only tentatively we group the general information, which reveals similarities or differences of *Martyrdom* about the *Maccabees* in the Georgian language and Biblical books. We believe that this will help us to see how early Georgians knew about the martyrdom of *Maccabees* and, in general, about biblical books.

The author of *Martyrdom* provides no information about Eleazar the High Priest, he does not even mention him. If the reader does not know the bibliological material, he will not understand whether the mother was a widow or not, how she passed away and etc. Instead, only *Martyrdom* provided with the martyrs’ mother’s name – Solomonia (*Biblical books of the Maccabees* do not give us any information about the name of the mother).

⁸ The researcher Hugo Willrich in XX century argued that the author of *II and IV books of Maccabees* is the same person (Hugo Willrich, *Urkundenfälschungen in der hellenistisch-jüdischen Literatur*, Göttingen, 1924), but this opinion is not shared by everyone [1, p. 16].

⁹ The researcher remarks, that he is aware of the manuscript which includes *Maccabean Martyrdom* and was named by K. Kekelidze (Bodl. 1), but he himself could not reach it. The Scientist does not say anything about the manuscript K-1. We mentioned above, that we argue that K-1 and Bodl. 1 are one and the same text, *The IV book of Maccabees*. So, publishing this script monument, I. Imnaishvili considered only the *II book of Maccabees*.

As it was said, *Martyrdom* was considered as a sample of translated hagiography. However, we do not have any argument to prove this proposition.

For now we have many unanswered questions: when was the original manuscript written? Who translated the *Martyrdom* into Georgian and when? (If it was really translated from any language); Is Georgian *Martyrdom* inspired by the Biblical Maccabees, as an example of an attempt to remake the patreric books to materic (considering the character of compositions included in *Parkhali Mravaltavi* (A-95) enables us to maintain this opinion)?¹⁰ Of course, to display this script monument in its complete form, we need to analyze all of these issues, explore them and justify them by solid arguments. This is the work that must be done at the next stage of our research.

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¹⁰ The fact, that we have biblical material in the Georgian language about Maccabees in its earliest form from manuscript of XI, and of *Martyrdom* from X century. It makes us think, that there must be a script document about Maccabees in the Georgian language before that. Either way, we must have detailed information about their *Martyrdom* in Georgia.

„საქართველოს სსრ მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის გამომცემლობა“, თბ. 1957.

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