

THE SUBJECT OF HOLINESS IN GEORGIAN HAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS

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Received on 14 May, 2012; accepted on 21 July, 2012

Abstract. *The subject of our interest is consideration of the issue of sainthood in Georgian hagiographic texts, particularly in the classical specimen of Georgian literature—The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta from A.D. 951, which manifests four essential components of the hagiographical pattern: 1. Distinctiveness of a saint; 2. Consideration of the saint’s artistic image as a “spiritual hero” (In this case special attention is paid to artistic and aesthetic function of the miracle); 3. The main aspects of ascetic life; 4. The saint’s self-sacrifice, which once more approves the idea of the triumph of good over evil. The juxtaposition of The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta with Byzantine or Roman hagiographic texts leads one to the conclusion that definite stereotypes of the compositional pattern took shape at the dawn of Christian literature, with the Bible being their source.*

Keywords: *Georgian literature, hagiography, genre of the “Lives”, compositional pattern, saint, asceticism, miracles.*

Introduction

Hagiography—the most important genre in medieval literature—has a long history in Georgia. It emerged in the 5th century and continued to live on till the 18th century. Its classical period refers to the 4th and 11th centuries. The general aesthetic principle of this genre was as follows: the writers had to depict only an ideal person and show the ways to attain an ideal. However, there were two ways of reaching an ideal in hagiography: 1. blood sacrifice—the death of a martyr; 2. bloodless sacrifice—religious zeal. It is from this point of view that “Martyrdoms” differ from “Lives”.

The subject of our interest is consideration of the issue of sainthood in Georgian hagiographic texts of the genre of the “Lives”, specifically in the classical specimen of medieval Georgian ecclesiastical literature—*The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta*—written in A.D. 951 (full title: *The Work and Career of the Worthy Life of Our Holy and Blessed Father Gregory the Archimandrite, Builder of Khandzta and Shatberdi, and with Him the Commemoration of Many Blessed Fathers*). The main aspects and motives (clichés) of hagiographic narration used by Georgian authors, particularly by Saint Gregory’s biographer Giorgi Merchule, are the subject of the present article on the basis of the works of several Georgian scholars: Korneli Kekelidze, Revaz Siradze, Griver Parulava, Natela Sokhadze, Irina Javakhadze.

Before analyzing the issue, it is necessary to introduce the biographical data of St. Gregory and the main historical aspects of the text.

St. Gregory of Khandzta was born in A.D. 759. He was the son of distinguished, noble and pious parents and was brought up in the royal household of the *Eristavi* (governor) of Kartli¹ Nerses under the care of Nerses’ wife, who adopted him because he was her nephew. Gregory must have been about 21 years old (and he was also already ordained a priest) when he chose to leave Kartli (and its capital Tbilisi), the Arab zone of influence, and, “guided by the Lord,” arrived in Tao-Klarjeti, the south-western province of Georgia (present-day Turkey) to undertake his great mission—in the time of the Tbilisi Emirate to transform Tao-Klarjeti into a political, cultural and religious centre.

Tao-Klarjeti, where Gregory settled with his followers, presented at that time a picture of desolation and ruin. In reprisal for popular resistance to Arab rule, the Caliphs had sent expeditions to ravage the country; a cholera epidemic broke out soon afterwards. The revival began with the building of monasteries, which was followed by a cultural renaissance and later came political strengthening.

St. Gregory became Archimandrite of the monasteries in Klarjeti, five of which were built by him and others by his disciples. These formed a real monastic republic, with Gregory as their redoubtable president. So strong did he become that he was able to interfere effectively in the private life of the ruling king Ashot, and win for the monastic community a dominant position in public affairs.

1 Before receiving the name *Georgia* (*Sakartvelo* in Georgian), the country was referred to as *Kartli*.

Gregory lived to be a centenarian, dying in A.D. 861. His biography was written some ninety years after his death, in A.D. 951, by Giorgi Merchule, in consultation with the prior of Khandzta, Gregory's chief Monastery.

1. Compositional Pattern of *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta*

The compositional pattern of the hagiographic texts consists of four essential components: 1. Distinctiveness of a saint (he has revealed spiritual perfection since childhood); 2. A saint is a “spiritual hero” who overcomes carnal desires, i.e. “Satan” and performs miracles that set him above the laws of nature; 3. The saint's life in this world represents tireless service to God; for God's sake he submissively overcomes the heaviest tribulations typical for ascetic life; 4. The saint sacrifices his life for his goal.² In this case as was mentioned above, it does not matter whether it is blood sacrifice or bloodless (i.e. natural death or martyrdom). In both cases it is a triumph of good over evil. Correspondingly, the characters of hagiographic texts—the saints—represent image-ideas and not image-characters. This means that the saint is not characterized with his own concrete features, the details of his personal life are not specially described. He is an expression of a high goal, its symbol. He personifies high morality and moral perfection.

The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta manifests these four elements of hagiographical pattern. The generalization of the image of one concrete saint makes possible discussion of the idea of sainthood in general.

2. Distinctiveness of a Saint

As Giorgi Merchule recounts: “from the womb St. Gregory was dedicated by his mother to God's service, like the prophet Samuel.”³ This fact makes him different from his peers. “Just like the Baptist he grew up in fasting. From infancy, neither wine nor meat entered his lips, because he had set aside his soul as an abode for Christ; he put on the guise of monastic life, being free of youthful mischief and all human agitation. He dwelt by himself in his own quarters, so that people used to call him the Hermit.”⁴

His aptitude for learning was remarkable; He rapidly mastered the Psalms of David, studied all patristic literature in Georgian, learned to read and write in many languages

2 Kekelidze, K. *The History of Old Georgian Literature, II*. Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1981, p. 7.

3 One of the important motifs in hagiographic writing, on the basis of which the generalization of the images occurs, is the motif of similarity with Biblical prophets and early saints. “The ideal of the early saints even fulfills the role of Christ in hagiography. The wide dissemination of this motif occurred for an obvious reason: for each writer it was to be mandatory man's general ideal and such ideal appeared in the figures of the early saints” (Siradze, R. *The Issues of Old Georgian Theoretical and Literary Thinking*. Tbilisi: University Press, 1975, p. 168).

4 Hereafter the English translation of the text: Lang, D. M. *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*. New York: Crestwood, 1976, chapter 8.

and could recite devotional books by heart. In addition, he made a thorough study of the works of pagan philosophers (“the wisdom of the philosophers of this world”). Whenever he found there some excellent idea, he absorbed it, but he rejected the evil parts. His perfect attainments became universally renowned.

This distinctiveness that later would form the basis of Saint Gregory’s prolonged, tireless and multilateral activity (here along with the building of churches and monasteries, his concern for renovation and development of the country’s political image and nation’s moral values is also meant) is best formulated in the author’s assessment of the saint: “A man of heaven and an angel of the earth,” which, together with a special focus on Father Gregory’s spiritual values, also highlights the great importance of his earthly service.

3. The Holy Warrior

3.1. Like all other hagiographic works, the composition of Giorgi Merchule’s text is monothematic as it is dedicated to divine love. The main idea is that union with God, or *Theosis*, can be accomplished through asceticism. Gregory of Khandzta and his disciples are “holy warriors” fighting evil with ascetic rigor and thus attaining virtues. A holy image thus becomes revealed in the character of the monk.

Ascetic literature especially studied psychology and the ways of mastering passions. The bodily passions of gluttony, fornication, sloth were opposed to the corporal virtues of fasting, chastity, diligence; the spiritual passions of hatred, pride, avarice, and wrath were opposed to the spiritual virtues of love, humility, poverty, patience.⁵

Pride and arrogance are considered to be the most dangerous evils.⁶ In the characteristics given by Merchule from the outset, the emphasis is on humility and modesty, namely: “he was free of youthful mischief and all human agitation.” Young Gregory agreed to be ordained priest only because “the rulers, who had brought him up, as well as his estimable mother and the multitude of the people” asked him to do so. Owing to his youth, Gregory was overcome by misgivings, but his final decision was dictated and strengthened by Solomon’s words (“The honour of age consists not in longevity but in the intelligence of a man; a life of virtue constitutes mature years”), the Psalms of David (“who shall ascend into mountain of the Lord? and who shall stand in His Holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart”) and also by the fear of being disobedient. However, later he refused to become a bishop (because “he saw himself exalted in the flesh”) and decided to flee secretly from his homeland to undertake his mission—help in Georgia’s national revival by mobilizing the spiritual forces of the nation against the Arabs (it is significant to mention that God led Gregory away, like the

5 Parulava, G. *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli by Giorgi Merchule*. St. Grigol Khandzteli, Tbilisi: Artanuji Publishers, 2006, p. 67–68.

6 “Pride is the beginning of all sin, but the beginning of man’s pride is to become apostate from God” (Ecclus. X. 13, 12); “Whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23; 12).

patriarch Abraham, in order that “a light unquenchable might shine forth in the deserted wilderness”).

3.2. After this the image of Gregory of Khandzta can be imagined according to three symbolic features. These are: “path”, “desert” and “confessor-builder” that are linked with the four elements of the above-mentioned compositional template of hagiographic narration.

3.2.1. As was already mentioned, the distinctiveness of the saint from his youth provides in future his spiritual heroism which in the texts of the “Lives” is equivalent to the struggle with corporal temptations (victory over the devil) and is realized in the frames of ascetic activity. The latter is impossible to imagine without entering the path by a saint, i.e. without passing the way of personal perfection. Proceeding from St. Paul’s Epistle (“Fight the good fight of the faith”; 1 Tim. 6:12), in Christianity man is treated as a creature who follows a spiritual path. This is the path from “transient man” to “heavenly man.” Therefore, the process of spiritual elevation that is attained as a result of devotion to Christian faith is compared to pacing, walking. Hence, in medieval art, every path is symbolic and thus, physical passing of any road also means some kind of spiritual plane as well. The personality of Gregory of Khandzta is associated with several “paths”—the first and most important is the path from Kartli to Tao-Klarjeti that is traversed by Gregory and his disciples under God’s appeal. This path that can be also called the path approximating to an ideal gave rise to new paths: 1. the path to Constantinople, which is closely connected with Gregory’s goal and his spiritual mission—the introduction of new experience (novelty) of Christian countries to the churches and monasteries built by him, that was of paramount importance for the entire Georgian culture; 2. the divine path that means generally the path of the individual’s spiritual perfection in which the saint was guided by Christ.

3.2.2. At the beginning of the text, when it concerns St. Gregory’s first path Giorgi Merchule draws parallels from the Bible: “Gregory...decided to flee secretly from his homeland in accordance with divine summons which guided him like the patriarch Abraham,” but Gregory’s and Abraham’s “fleeing” from their homeland is based on different motivations: “But it was from a land of pagan tribes that God brought out Abraham, it was from a country of devout believers that He led Gregory away, in order that a light unquenchable might shine forth in the desert wilderness,”⁷

With the cited passage, the symbolic meaning of a “desert” is explained to a certain degree. According to the Bible a desert was regarded as a domain of chaotic forces, an environment lacking divine mercy, a place of devilish forces. Proceeding from this, a desert was also a place of solitude, self-immersion, suppressing evil, divine appearance and, at the same time, the site of temptation and test.⁸ The seclusion of monks and nuns into the desert has its origin in Bible—John the Baptist’s activity took place in the desert

7 “Neither do [men] light a candle and put it under the bushel measure, but upon the candle-stand, and it shines for all who are in the house” (Matt. 5:15); “I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

8 In the Old Testament, passing through the challenge of the desert was considered a necessary step on the way of a nation’s elevation (e.g. Moses led the Hebrews through the desert).

and Jesus himself dwelt in the desert for forty days. Hence, the desert turned out to be the site of solitude for monks and nuns and at the same time the arena of their spiritual challenge or activity.

3.2.3. The revival of the Klarjeti desert by Gregory of Khandzta and his disciples (who, due to the toughest natural or material conditions, was realized at the expense of great efforts), the foundation of monastic centres which are called by the author *udabnos khalakh-kopa* (transformation of the desert into a town) (binary opposition—desert/town—means introduction of order into chaos, the expulsion of devil forces and instead of it the establishment of spirituality) which aimed at spiritual revival of this spot, as a result of which *bad land* was turned into a *holy spot* and brought good fruit. Accordingly, the “builder”, or in Merchule’s terminology “*khalakh-mkopeli*”, that addressed St. Gregory is quite wide in its content, because it implies the activity both for the creation of material (building of churches and monasteries) and spiritual values (formation of political/religious and cultural centre).

It is against the background of this merit that the figure of Gregory of Khandzta as the nation’s confessor and spiritual father of Tao-Klarjeti’s desert unfolds. The mission of the confessor implied the unity of the highest spiritual categories (the infinite faith, moral pureness, keen intelligence, etc) by means of which the teacher shares to his disciple (nation) not only earthly knowledge but also the grace of divine truth. This grace sanctified by God from the beginning from the person destined to be confessor is revealed in immense, non-material light radiated by the saints and which rarely can be seen by ordinary mortals sometimes in the form of a heavenly halo and sometimes as a radiant column.⁹ The character of St. Gregory—like that of all true saints—is an embodiment of truthfulness, kindness and beauty. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, to be an image of God means to be beautiful. This beauty was perceived by medieval man as a light which gave the viewer calmness and cheerfulness and, hence, was regarded as a symbol of personal perfection and nobleness. Obviously, this view first of all concerned the saints. As Andre Vosh wrote: “A saint is a creature created from the light.” It is this beauty of soul, as previously stated, that emanates from St. Gregory of Khandzta. That’s why the space where St. Gregory prays becomes sacred and lit with an unquenchable light coming from his prayers. The light emanating from the spirit fills the “vessel” of a soul, the body and the space around.¹⁰

3.2.4. When we consider an image of a saint in this regard, i.e. from the viewpoint of the aesthetics of the light, naturally, a question arises about the artistic function of the miracle in hagiographic narration.

9 The plain attire worn by Gregory of Khandzta on his way to the Javakheti Assembly seems to be with a glowing light and his similarly plain hood appears “as adorned with precious stones and valuable pearls”; A man lying in ambush to kill St. Gregory sees him chanting a hymn of Ephraim the Syrian, surmounted by a pillar of light shining brilliantly and a cross giving out radiance all around “like a rainbow in showery weather.”

10 Cf. St. Clair’s case: “After praying her angelic face radiating happiness became even more bright and beautiful. With God’s grace the divine light illuminated from her wrapping everything around.” (Le Goff, J. *Civilizacija srebnavekovovo zapada [Medieval Civilization]*. Jekaterinburg: U-Faktorija, 2005, p. 408).

In Georgian hagiographic writing (as well as in the entire literature of this genre) a special place is given to the description of miraculous deeds. According to the *Dialogon* of Gregory the Great¹¹ the theory of miracles is as follows: a desire of likening the saints; miracles are not a privilege; their highest type is man's spiritual resurrection; minor miracles are also needed; a miracle must not be trumpeted by its worker; miracles worked by the dead prove the fact of the immortality of the soul; all miracles come from God and are realized by saints.¹² At the same time the miracles from the viewpoint of religion represented the same reality as concrete historical facts. The miracle actions were generally ideal—they attested man's super nature.¹³ Generally, miracles as one of the widespread motifs in hagiographic works, including the genre of *Lives*, have been classified and arranged according to the following groups:

1. Visions and divine appearances, which unite visions in reality, visions in sleep and visions at the time of death. The subgroup of visions in reality further includes miracles of the following type: beholding in a vision the place where a church must be built, miraculous appearance of saints in the public, appearance of the Lord to a saint not in a visible, but in a verbal form, divine miraculous visions, the vision on one and the same question be held by two different clergymen simultaneously and, finally, mystical miracles. Among visions in sleep, along with widespread miracles, cases of the appearance of a saint to several persons in order to entrust them with one and the same assignment also occur. Holy fathers have a vision before death, they also behold a vision at the time of the repose of other holy fathers.

2. The effect on human beings. This group unites facts of miraculous punishment of the wicked by saints, healing of the sick, casting unclean spirits out of men, facts of prophesying and performance of miracles by saints in their absence.

3. Miracles sent by the Lord without the participation of a saint, which unites natural calamities happening by the Lord's will as a punishment, the wrath of God befalling wicked people and the support shown to holy fathers.

4. The effect on the world of the dead, including miracles of tombs and holy relics (after the saints' death healing of people by touching holy relics, casting devils out of human beings; incorruptibility of the body of a deceased saint and rescuing of people and animals from death by saints), raising of a dead person by the saint and the prophecy of deceased saints about living people.

5. The effect on the material world, which unites cases of the hyperbolization of the saints' power, controlling-subduing of elements by saints, changing of the nature of elements, substances and objects, making a spring flow, multiplication of food and relationship with the animal kingdom.¹⁴

3.2.5. The miracles of all the above-mentioned semantic groups are presented in Giorgi Merchule's work: 1. the old hermit, Khuedios, saw a cloud of light in the form of a church and from the cloud there issued a powerful scent. He heard a voice: "On

11 *Dialogon* is a text of Pope Gregory I, a well-known 6th century Roman church figure.

12 Sokhadze, N. *The Dialogon of Gregory the Great*. Tbilisi: Kartvelologist, 2002, p. 188.

13 Siradze, R., *supra* note 3, p. 169.

14 Javakhadze, I. *Miracle types in Translated Hagiography of the Genre of Lives*. "Literary Researches", XXX. Tbilisi, 2010, p. 44.

this place a church will be built by the hands of Gregory the priest, the man of God and his disciples” (ch. 6); On the way back from Constantinople St. Gregory and his cousin Saba saw the former glory of Ishkhan monastery and the road leading to it. They were told that Saba would restore the monastery and become the bishop of Ishkhan (ch. 15); 2. Giorgi Merchule recounts that God granted St. Gregory with miraculous abilities in his lifetime and through his prayers the sick, demoniacs, the feeble (a two-year-old boy possessed by an evil spirit; healing of a woman suffering from bleeding, ch. 52-53) were cured. Especially impressive is an episode when a villain, who was sent to kill St. Gregory, saw him surmounted by a pillar of light and was seized with intense fear; as if the sinews of his arms had been dissolved, he fell on the ground in terror and implored him: “Have pity on your murderer, O man of God!” The saint mercifully made the sign of the cross over him and cured him of the many bodily ailments to which he was subject (ch. 70); 3. The vicious bishop of Anchi, Tskir, assembled the people of Anchi and sent them to destroy Khandzta. St. Gregory asked them to wait until the afternoon in order to get an opportunity to pray in the saint’s church and ask God to rescue the temple. His tearful pleas were heard by God and from St. Angel’s lips let him know that an evil man Tskir was killed by God’s wrath (Chapt. 71); During his lifetime Gregory of Khandzta did not give blessings to one whore who committed adultery with the sovereign and separated him with his wife. When this unworthy woman died they buried her at the Mere monastery near the nuns’ graves, but the earth did not accept her corpse. Father Gregory wrote a letter to the deceased nuns which was read at their graves and on the following day the earth took the corpse of the sinned women (Chapt. 57-59); a deer which was chased by hunters singled out among the monks Father Gregory, put its head on his hand and asked for deliverance. Through Father Gregory’s prayers the hunters had mercy on the animal (ch. 60); on a frozen slope, a large log slipping at high speeds stopped at St. Gregory’s prayers and an old monk walking through this road was miraculously delivered from death (Chapt. 52).¹⁵

Study of the miracles of *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta* and their comparison with hagiographic writings of Greek or Roman authors leads one to the conclusion that definite stereotypes of miracle-working took shape at the dawn of Christian literature, the Bible being their source. Use of these patterns and models became obligatory for all Christian writers, while the existing parallels point to the typological similarity of literary works.¹⁶

4. Tireless Service to God

As is mentioned above in the centre of hagiographic text (whether it is the genre of “Lives” or “Martyrs”) there is a person carrying the highest spiritual features. However

15 The 120 miracles presented in the *Dialogon* of Gregory the Great’s work are classified in the same semantic groups: action in the material world; action while dead (miracles of graves and relics); acting on man (altering man’s will, punishment of the unbelievers, healing the sick) visions and revelations (visions during sleep, visions while awake, visions at death) and mystic miracles.

16 Sokhadze, N., *supra* note 12, p. 188.

there exist sharp differences between the texts of these two genres according to the ways of attaining the lofty human ideal, perfection of a man. The passion for God is the highest human action in this world, but it is interesting to note how the meaning of the word “passion” is interpreted in the hagiography of the genre of “Lives.” Here man (the saint) deserves attention according to the merits and actions valued in society. This difference properly realized and originally treated in *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta*, in which we read that the merit of saint figures not only yields, but even exceeds the merit of martyrs, because the latter are tormented just once, while the former are all their life martyrs in the name of Christ. This supposition by the author Giorgi Merchule is theoretically grounded in David the prophet (“Yes, for your sake we are killed all day long” Psal: 43.22), that of Saint Paul the Apostle (“Even as it is written, ‘For your sake we are killed all day long. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’” Rom. 8, 36; “I protest by that glorifying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” 1. Cor. 15, 31) authority.¹⁷ Hence, it is the author’s wish the merit of those saint fathers who did not finish their life with the death of a martyr do not evaluate their earthly merit and their life to be considered as martyr’s sacrifice (In this case we mean such Christian virtues as tireless praying and fasting, meekness and love, kindness and freedom from malice, poverty and vigil, the habit of lying on the ground and sleeping in a sitting position). The same supposition is expressed by one of St. Gregory’s closest followers, Zenon, in connection to taking monastic vows according to which the solution taken by a man on his own will—voluntary refusal from all kind of property—is identical to blood sacrifice or to death for the pleasures of the earthly life¹⁸ (cf. Apostle Paul’s words taken from the Psalms: “for your sake we are killed all day long”). It is in this view that the essence of true Christian and especially monastic life is manifested (against the background of which the comparison of a believer with the sheep for slaughter in the mentioned epistle of St. Paul is quite natural) that is caused by self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ. Hence, it is the author’s wish that the merit of those saint fathers who did not finish their life with the death of a martyr do not evaluate their earthly merit and their life to be considered as martyr’s sacrifice.¹⁹ Such a viewpoint had a concrete goal—the author had to shift the main emphasis to the facts of suppressing the temptations (those of the devil) that naturally imply that the principle of ascetic life

17 Professor Revaz Siradze has established that the source of the above-mentioned Giorgi Merchule’s supposition is one reading of the important early church father John Chrysostom (c. 349-407), “Said by John About Saint Martyres,” that is also translated into Georgian and is included in the Sinai Homiliary (864). This fact is evidenced from the following circumstance: 1. In both cases the same passages from the Bible are cited (Ps. 43, 22; Rom. 8, 36; 1 Cor. 15, 31); 2. In John Chrysostom it is followed by the author’s commentary which is repeated almost unchanged by Giorgi Merchule (Siradze, R., *supra* note 3, p. 137).

18 Koplatadze, G.; Rukhadze, G. *Theology of Hagiography in the Life of Grigol Khandzeli*. St. Grigol Khandzeli. Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2006, p. 107.

19 Precisely this circumstance explains the fact of including numerous miracles (the initiator of which became Bagrat Eristavt-Eristavi) in *The Life of St. Gegory of Khandzta* later. Even a century and a half after the saint’s death, his authority was so great and the desire to approximate the height of saint martyrs was so keen that the descendants were not satisfied by Merchule’s account of Gregory of Khandzta’s contribution and enriched the account with new miracles.

in order for the reading society to see the only way for man's perfection not in practical activity but in everyday martyrdom of a hermit (which are evidenced from the miracles described in hagiographic texts. Though, as is justly remarked by Revaz Siradze, the practice of literary creative practice followed his own way. It was not satisfied just by the description of the facts of martyrdom and along with the theories established on the official Christian world outlook also found other ways to reach human perfection²⁰.

5. The Triumph of Good over Evil

5.1. In literary images of the heroes of hagiographic writing, the essential moment is created by the ability to take death. In this case it does not matter whether a saint reaches his goal through self-sacrifice, i.e. endures the death of a martyr or dies a natural death after an ascetic life. In both cases the saint by his death makes the triumph of good over the evil. The glory of sainthood seems to be given to a person for overcoming the fear of death. However, at such a price for yielding up life because of death, from the viewpoint of religious optimism, was the eve of true happiness. That is why in hagiography from the onset the tragic feeling of death was excluded.²¹ The reconciliation with death was evidence of a person's inner force. It represented a test for will. This was especially valued in man because it evidenced the firmness of their faith. According to these principles, the episodes of the hero's death were presented as a harmonious transition from one state into another. The grief associated with the death is not depicted almost in any of the works of hagiography.²² Giorgi Merchule renders the last days of life as: "In the blessed Gregory's heart there arose the desire to take leave of the flesh and depart towards God. The Lord told him that his wish would be fulfilled. He instructed the brothers to prepare candles for distribution to all the hermitages in the country round and told them on what day were to be lit and prayers offered up for him. Afterwards he said to the brethren who lived in Khandzta: 'If in the presence of Christ I find courage to speak, then His generous blessing will not cease to shower upon you in this world and the next. When death has parted me from you, remember me always in your prayers and commemorations and watch over the scene of my earthly pilgrimage. Until the Day of Judgment, my flesh will turn to dust, but may God receive my spirit.' While the blessed Gregory was speaking these words he appeared as lit up with the ineffable radiance of Christ because the angels surrounded him and the scent of frankincense filled the cell. He rejoiced with supreme happiness, and made the sigh of the cross over his monastery and uttered an everlasting blessing upon his disciples. He committed his soul to the Lord, and was united with the company of angels."

20 Siradze, R., *supra* note 3, p. 138.

21 The only exception from this viewpoint is *The Vitae of George the Hagiorite* (Giorgi Atoneli) which describes a rather impressive picture of lamentation for the dead St. George the Hagiorite—loud weeping, shedding blood instead of tears, which is compared by the author George the Minor (Giorgi Mtsire) with Jeremiah's weeping.

22 Siradze, R., *supra* note 3, p. 200–201.

5.2. In this passage of the text the following phrases deserve attention: “the voice of joy” (that is referred to the angels that penetrated into the cell), “go with joy,” “rejoice without end,” “be joyful for ages”(with which the angels address St. Gregory and inform him about the life of eternal glory), “rejoice with supreme happiness” (by which Gregory of Khandzta left this world) which simultaneously distinguish the joy of communion of a mortal man with eternal life as well as the scale of the saint’s (Gregory of Khandzta) contribution. According to the Christian world outlook, if a man does not improve his divine essence, if he does not make efforts and multiply what God granted him (Matt. 25, 15-28), he loses, impoverishes his divine nature. The episode of St. Gregory’s death evidences that he had fulfilled the divine mission of a man, a man banished from paradise again returns to divine paradise, where eternal blessing and “eternal joy” exist. Gregory’s fight with passions, which implies the rule that an ascetic’s life is finished with the saint’s victory, though it cannot be considered Gregory’s personal fight as an individual. The struggle of the good (Christian faith and merit) and the evil (temptations) shows once more the biblical truth—the spiritual victory of each saint is a precondition of God’s victory over Satan.

Conclusions

More than one scholar marked that the four above-considered elements of the hagiographic narration, according to which in the example of one concrete text we represent the pattern of an artistic image of a saint developed in hagiography, fails to exhaust solid motifs spread in the texts of such type, neither compositional templates through the unity of which the ideal of sanctity is formed. From this viewpoint, if we compare Georgian hagiographical texts with the specimens of Christian writing (at least Byzantine or Roman) the number of “compositional templates might increase in different cases from four to ten or twenty.”²³ Though the main and essential issue remains not a concrete number of patterns, but (in our opinion, additional templates about which the scholars refer to, may be united in four main items formulated by Korneli Kekelidze as their integral part) the fact that the main typological similarity between these written monuments is still in frequent quotation of the biblical text and description of miracles because all of them serve the purpose of a saint’s approximation to biblical ideal and following it. Due to the fact that “retrospectivity and traditionalism was a contemporary feature of the medieval thinking,”²⁴ generalization of the biblical ideal must be considered as the main requirement of general Christian (namely, Byzantine, Greek and Latin) and among them Georgian hagiographic writing, the best specimen of which in our view is Giorgi Merchule’s *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta*.

23 For example, Natela Sokhadze compared *The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta* with the Roman hagiographic specimen of the 6th century *The Life of St. Benedict of Nursia* and according to 16 cases of compositional coincidence revealed typological similarities between them.

24 Kuskov, V. V. *Istorija drevnerusskoj literatury* [History of Old Russian Literature]. Moskva, 1982, p. 11.

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ŠVENTUMO TEMA GRUZIJOS HAGIOGRAFINIUOSE TEKSTUOSE

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Santrauka. *Hagiografija – vienas populiariausių viduramžių literatūros žanrų Gruzijoje – didžiujasi sena istorija. Pagrindiniai šio žanro estetiniai principai šie: rašytojai tegalėjo vaizduoti idealų personažą ir rodyti būdus, kaip pasiekti idealą. Hagiografijoje nurodomi du keliai siekti idealo: 1. kraujo auka – kankinio mirtis; 2. bekraujė auka – religinis pasišventimas. Būtent šis aspektas skiria kankinių istorijas nuo šventųjų gyvenimų.*

Mus domina šventumo atskleidimas Gruzijos hagiografiniuose tekstuose, ypač kaip tai daroma „Šv. gyvenimų“ žanro kūriniuose.

Šio tipo tekstai kompoziciškai susideda iš keturių esminių elementų: 1. Šventojo išskirtinumas (jis nuo vaikystės praktikuoja dvasinį tobulėjimą ir tuo išsiskiria iš vienmečių); 2. Šventasis „dvasios“ herojus, jis atsispiria kūniškiems geismams, t. y. „Šėtonui“, ir daro stebuklus, kurie jam suteikia antgamtiškumo; 3. Šventojo gyvenimas šiame pasaulyje – tai nenuilstama tarnystė Dievui; Dievo vardan jis nuolankiai taikstosi su sunkiomis, asketo gyvenimui būdingomis, netektimis; 4. Šventasis aukoja savo gyvenimą savo tikslui. Šiuo atveju nebetaikomas ansktesnis skirstymas į kraujo ar bekraują auką (t. y. natūrali mirtis ar kankinio). Abiem atvejais gėris triumfuoja prieš blogį. Todėl personažai hagiografiniuose tekstuose – tai įvaizdžio, o ne charakterio išikūnijimas. Tai reiškia, kad šventojo paveikslas nėra atskleidžiamas asmeninėmis savybėmis ir nedetalizuojamas jo asmeninis gyvenimas. Jis yra aukšto tikslo išraiška, simbolis. Jis personifikuoja aukštąją moralę ir moralinį tobulumą.

Šiems išvardijimams iliustruoti pateikiame klasikinį pavyzdį – Gruzijos viduramžių hagiografinį tekstą – „Šv. Grigolo Khandzeli gyvenimas“, kurį surašė Giorgi Merchule 951 m.; tekste aptinkami visi keturi hagiografinio pavyzdžio elementai (ypač kreipiamas dėmesis į meninę ir estetinę stebuklo funkciją). Vieno konkretaus šventojo įvaizdžio apžvalga atveria galimybes aptarti šventumą apskritai.

Gruzijos hagiografinių tekstų studijos ir jų palyginimas su hagiografiniais graikų ir romėnų raštais leidžia teigti, kad krikščioniškos literatūros formavimosi pradžioje egzistavo tam tikri kompoziciniai stereotipai, kildintini iš Biblijos. Šių struktūrų ir modelių naudojimas tapo visų krikščionių rašytojų prievole, pasakojimų paralelės rodo literatūrinių kūrinių tipologinį panašumą.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Gruzijos literatūra, hagiografija, „Šv. gyvenimų“ žanras, kompozicijos struktūros, šventasis, asketiškumas, stebuklai.

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