

THE INFORMATION OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC CHARACTER IN THE OLD GEORGIAN WRITTEN SOURCES OF 5TH-12TH CENTURIES

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RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta uma análise de fontes escritas de georgiano dos séculos V ao XII, que mostra que como língua de um povo cristão do Oriente, o georgiano estava em competição com o grego, uma vez que a legitimação do primeiro como língua sagrada foi prejudicada por Bizâncio. Isto explica por que, segundo o autor, línguas vernaculares do Oriente e do Ocidente se tornaram línguas literárias e oficiais em momentos e situações diferentes.

ABSTRACT: This article presents an analysis of Georgian written sources of the 5th-12th, which shows that as a language of a Christian people of the East, Georgian was in competition with Greek, since the legitimation of the former as a sacred language was hindered by Byzantium. This explains why, according to the author, vernacular languages in the East and the West developed into literary and official languages at different times and in different situations.

The Eastern-Christian tradition considers all languages equal before God unlike the Western-Christian tradition that considered only Hebrew, Greek and Latin to be sacred languages. Eastern Christianity fed Copts, Goths, Syrians, Georgians, and Armenians, later on Slavs, and also the Christians of Persia and Arabia. In spite of the fact that languages were recognized to be equal, the languages of the Eastern Christianity peoples came across many difficulties in competing with the Greek, as Byzantium prevented their legitimatization in every way. However, these languages managed to find their place against Byzantium's will, turning this process into a struggle for their national cultures and national rights in general.

Typical specimen of such struggle is a poetical work of Constantine-Cyril, a public man of the last quarter of the 9th century, a converter of

The literature of the first period of old Georgian literature, i.e. the literature of the old feudal period, was being created at the time when Kartli had to fight simultaneously for national and cultural independence first against Mazdeian Persians, and then against Mohammedan Arabians. In addition to it, the country had to wage a confessional, dogmatic-philosophic war against paganism and various Christian sects (Aryanism, Nestorianism, Antichalcidice-Monophysite teaching, Pavlikianism). These fights resulted in the formation of the old Georgian culture that is the synthesis of the best eastern and western literary and life traditions [Kekelidze 1933:19, Kekelidze 1951: 36].

Four motives are presented in Ioane Sabanisdze's hagiographic work "The Martyrdom of Abo Tpileli" of the period of Arabs' domination (7th, 8th centuries AD) to reveal national merits: 1. We, Georgians, live "at the outskirts of the world", i.e. at the outskirts of the cultured world (Romans and Greeks live in the cultured world) and defend Christianity all by ourselves". Reproach seems to be expressed towards Greeks in these words. 2. The Georgians adopted Christianity over five hundreds years ago. "It is more than five hundred years that the Georgians have adopted Christian faith". 3. If Greece is the centre of Christianity, Georgia is its end, and yet it is no worse than Greece is: "It is not only Greeks who have adopted this faith of God, but so have we, people living far from Greece". Here I. Sabanisdze quotes: "they have come from the East and the West and take their origin from the realms of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". 4. Kartli is the homeland of saints. In short, defending Christianity at the outskirts of the cultured world, the honor of the ancient Christian country, being equal to Greece, the homeland of saints – these are the merits of Kartli, the foundation of national consciousness (Siradze 1987:46-54)]. It is to be taken into consideration that I. Sabanisdze expressed these ideas at the time of Arabs' terrible domination, when the catastrophe of denationalization awaited Georgians. Thus, the author was fully conscious of the fact that Georgia could save herself only by reviving the national-Christian culture under the eegis of her own church. It is also noteworthy that Sabanisdze wrote "The Martyrdom of Abo Tpileli", by the request of Samoel, the catholicos of Kartli. It shows that those ideas were not patriotic rhetoric; they fed the Christian elite of Kartli. It finally ends by the information given by Giorgi Merchule in "The life of Grigol Khandzteli" which establishes the inner measure of fixing the borders of Kartli with precision. "Kartli is reckoned to consist of those spacious lands wherein the service is celebrated in Georgian tongue"; i. e. Kartli embraces the territory where liturgy and divine service, in general, are performed in Georgian. It is a statement suitable to the eastern Christian

1. The codification of the georgian language, based on the idea of its being equal to greek

The Georgian literary language became more perfect by competing with Greek, by fighting for being equal to it. Old Georgian literary schools aimed at being deeper integrated into the eastern-Christian world. They thought it expedient to master the Greeks' cultural achievements as much as possible for this purpose. This was mostly revealed in translation.

The literary school united around a certain codifier (as E. Haugen understands it 1972:168), or a person who was an arbiter, a legislator, an authority and worthy not only for this school but also for the educated public in general. According to Christian authors' belief, the Lord prepared such future to His chosen one in advance, thus, it was the ability, bestowed by God (see about it, discussed in detail by Boeder 1983). For instance, such was Eptvime of Mtatsmida in Ivron. "And when the brilliant luminary, relation of ours, great Eptvime began to shine, to our joy, glory and crown, he made us wise and removed the mist of ignorance from our minds and, being enlightened by God, showed us the drawbacks of our language by means of sacred books translated by him, and perfected our language. And we, who were considered to be barbarians by the Hellenes for our ignorance and illiteracy, were made equal of them by him" (Giorgi Mtsire 1967:108). According to the quoted excerpt, the merit of Eptvime of Athos is the following: A) by translating sacred books from Greek he removed the veil of ignorance from the Georgians' minds, and freed their spirits from the mist of ignorance from the Georgians' minds, in this way freeing his people from the destructive name of barbarians, given to them by the Hellenes, and b) he made the Georgians (and the Georgian language respectively) equal to the Greeks (and the Greek language).

This deed of Eptvime was recognized and appreciated, this is the reason he is called a brilliant luminary, glory and a crown, the man who brought wisdom to Georgians. These features of his character fully coincide with E. Haugen's description of a codifier. He (the codifier) is "an arbiter of fashion, a national hero, for he brought honor to his language and country..." It is blessed Eptvime whose name solely is sufficient to prove the greatness of his merits. "He appeared to be a jewel of our kin, and like sacred apostles, enlightened the Georgian language and the country of Georgia" (Giorgi of Mtatsmida 1967:41). Eptvime is appreciated not only in Georgia; he is esteemed in Greece as well. "[Eptvime's] merits and deserts spread all over Georgia. And not only Georgia, all over Greece as well, and that was the reason a great many worthy and saintly people came to see him to be enlightened by seeing him" (Giorgi of Mtatsmida 1967: 95). Here is another excerpt, "His fame spread wide, and both the

Constantine Dukitsi had in mind – though Giorgi of Mtatsmida was a barbarian (Georgian) by birth, he was educated in the way the Greeks were, and, therefore, he was their equal. By learning and erudition they meant the knowledge of Greek and the Holy Writ. It can also be seen from the conversation of Patriarch Tevdosi and the monks from the monastery of st. Svimeon, rivals of Georgians, that while posing a question who was a scholar, knowing Greek and the Holy Scripture among Georgians, they themselves had to admit that there was a certain monk, a grammarian who translated Greek books into Georgian (Giorgi Mtsire 1967:15). Even the Svimeontsmindelisi, who had a great mind to eradicate the Georgians, acknowledged Giorgi of Mtatsmida to be a learned man, knowing Greek, i.e. they distinguish him from barbarians. In spite of the fact that the Greeks thought themselves to be superior to other Christian peoples of their times, for the monks of Athos being bilingual by no means meant diglossia, i.e. Georgian and Greek are not two functionally differentiated languages, but languages with equal rights (Boeder 1983:86). The term diglossia denotes the situation in which there is a public agreement, concerning the status of a certain language, i.e. which of the two languages by their social and cultural significance has an “upper” and “lower” status between functionally differentiated codes (Ferguson 1959: 325 – 340; Fishman 1970). Of course, Greek was a language of an “upper” status, but Georgian does not have a “lower” status either, for it obtained the function of defending itself from aliens in alien surroundings (Boeder 1998:64).

While determining the language status, we depend on the principles defined by Paul Garvin: a) internal qualities of the language, b) its functions, and c) the attitude of the speaking community to the given language (Garvin 1959:28-31). The internal qualities of the Georgian language strengthen its wish to be equal of Greek. These are – flexible stability that allows the modification equal of cultural changes in the language, and intellectualization, as a codified version of the Georgian language into which the Holy Scripture and theological literature are translated and in which original works are written, differs from Georgian everyday speech by a high degree of artificiality. Gospels and other parts of the Bible translated into Georgian guaranteed a normative stability of the Old Georgian language by its constant ecclesiastic use in the service and in other forms of spiritual life. The native language is a cognized norm for the Georgian scholars, working in the cultural centers abroad and they make a standard. Besides that, the Georgian obtained the functions of uniting the collective body speaking this language, and at the same time, of separating from the communities speaking different languages and also the function of self-protection long ago which is the cause of

2. The mission of the georgian language (the georgian nation)

The Georgians and the Greeks were in strong opposition to each other in monastic centers abroad. Full of envy and spite, the Greeks used every kind of means and tricks to drive the Georgians out of the monastic centers (Kekelidze 1951:53). On their part, the Georgians did their best not to have any Greeks in their cloisters.

The commander-in-chief Tornike, after defeating Barda Sklyaros in 979, decided to found a Georgian cloister with independent autonomous rights for the Georgians, oppressed in Athanasius' Lavra, with the enormous loot, obtained in the war. "Tornike's wish was that the Georgians be the only inhabitants of the monastery, but as it was impossible to do it, they were obliged to let the Greeks in too. Whether they wanted it or not, they had to take them in [the Greeks]" (Giorgi of Mtatsmida 1967:49).

After Eptvime's death, Father Giorgi "became fond of the Greeks, brought many of them in, and took their side; as to the Georgians, he rejected them as unreliable, and reduced their numbers" [6,92]. The Greeks took advantage of this situation and "did their best to drive the Georgians out of this monastery... They appropriated the mountain and won the nobility of Greece over to their side and created numerous obstacles to us" [6,93]. In these circumstances, the Georgians thought a kind disposition towards the Greeks to be a betrayal of the holy place. It was considered to be a sin equal to giving out the land of the holy mountain, for instance. The manger (economos) of the monastery who was to blame for increasing the number of the Greeks, or somebody else, would utter an eternal curse: "Let those that betray our Lord Jesus Christ be cursed by the holy cross and God's grace, and be anathematized and excommunicated from Christianity and be condemned as evil" [6,98-99].

The Georgians had to prove permanently that they were neither barbarians, nor heretics. The dialogue between Giorgi of Mtassmida and Patriarch Tevdosi is very interesting from this point of view. The Georgian monk says, "Holy Father, those that consider us to be ignorant and light and yourselves to be wise and heavy: there was a time when orthodox Christianity did not exist in the whole of Greece and Ioane the bishop of Gutha was sanctified in Mtskheta as is written in the great Svinaxar"(Giorgi Mtsire 1967:155). These words make the patriarch draw back, for Giorgi of Mtatsminda brings a historic fact as a proof. Joane, bishop of Gutha, mentioned by him, left Constantinople because of iconoclasm raging there and was sanctified by Cathalicos Ioane in Svetitskhoveli in Mstkheta on June 26, 758. This signifies that the Bishop of Gutha was to obey Mtskheta

also Gamsakhurdia 1991:22). Hence we can understand the quotation in the following way: the Holy Spirit will perform His mission when judging the mankind at the time of the second coming by means of the Georgian language, i.e. by the Georgian nation. According to the Christian eschatology, during future cataclysms some nations will perish, they will be razed to the ground, some will survive. A prophetic optimism was needed in this case, and Ioane-Zosime reveals it while encouraging his compatriots, saying that the Georgian nation will survive, exist until the day of the Second Coming [Gamsakhurdia 1991:6–7, Fishman 1970]. Thus, the Georgian language [and the Georgian nation] adopts a specific religious consecration – as it becomes the language of the Judgement Day and carrier of divine mysteries – the function which, in Ioane-Zosime’s opinion, was imposed upon Georgian by biblical prophecy. The declaration of Georgian as the last language is the opposite of frequently expressed idea about the priority of some language – the attribute by means of which Ioane-Zosime placed Georgian in a hard competitive situation with sacred languages – Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Boeder 1998:66). But it is not an unconquerable competition, for “Praise” declares Georgian and Greek to be sisters – “these are two sisters like Mary and Martha, and he said friendship because all mysteries are hidden in this language”. This is the beginning of the period when the Georgians became equal of their opponents – they obtained the function of the Greeks in the East and tried to appropriate and to protect the Greeks’ inheritance.

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