

Which language has the Georgian *Acts of the Apostles* been translated from?

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Abstract: The provenance of the Georgian biblical text today too remains one of the cardinal issues of Georgian studies. Many Georgian and foreign researchers have dealt with the question of from which language the oldest Georgian recensions of the biblical books were translated. The research was conducted not in a complex way but involved separate books or recensions. In European Oriental Studies, and partly in Georgian Philological circles the idea became gradually popular which, on the basis of an analysis of concrete sources carried out by N. Marr, I. Molitor, R. Blake and others considers the Armenian trace to be a revision of the subsequent period. This idea is based on the view held in Medieval Georgia, facts of the earliest theological – philosophical terminology, the most recent philological analysis of the *khanmeti* fragments of biblical texts, the evidence of the historical process of Armenian-Georgian ecclesiastical and cultural relation. Bernard Outtier's present essay deals with this issue. In particular, it gives a critique of the view on the Armenian provenance of the oldest Georgian recension of the Acts of the Apostles and concludes: "the idea of Prof. Garitte, widely agreed upon in Western Europe, that the Georgian *Acts of the Apostles* was translated from the Armenian, does not seem true".

The editor

Key Words: *Acts of the Apostles, G. Garitte*

Prof. G. Garitte edited in Louvain the old Georgian redaction of the *Acts of the Apostles* based on two manuscripts from Mount Sinai, in 1955. At that time, he had not seen the edition by I. Abuladze (Tbilisi, 1949).

In the introduction to his edition, Prof. G. Garitte writes: "The interest of the Georgian version appears immediately in a great number of noteworthy readings, such as the following":

I 26 თანაშეერაცხა ათერთმეტთა მოციქულთა მეთორმეტედ connumeratus-est undecim apostolis ut-duodecimus; compare St. Augustin, *Contra Felicem manichaeum* I 4 (J. H. Ropes,

The Text of Acts, p. 11) simul deputatus est cum undecim apostolis duodecimus.

VIII 27 ინდოი indus and ინდოეთი India for Αιθιοψ and Αιθιοπων; peš. ܐܝܬܝܘܦܝܘܬܝܐ Aethiops and ܐܝܬܝܘܦܝܘܬܝܐ Aethiopia; Arm. Vulgate եթովպացի Aethiops and եթովպացաց Aethiopia. But in the Commentary by Ephrem, preserved in Armenian, ed. N. Akinian, Vienna 1921, p. 19, l. 5: հոգայն որ ի Հնդիկս գործէր the Spirit who worked in India.

VIII 35 წიგნთა ამთ გან from the books, for: απο της γραφης ταυτης; compare Arm. Vulgate ի գրքս յայցանէ from these books.

IX 11 ტაძართა მათ იოჯდამსთა in the temples of Judaea for εν οικια Ιουδα; compare Arm. Vulgate յապարանսն Յուդայ in the mansions of Judas (plurale tantum).

X 43 ჳელითა მით სახელობა მისხამთა by the hand of his name for δια του ονοματος αυτου; Arm. Vulgate անուամբ by the name; peš. ܐܢܘܡܝܘܬܝܐ by his name.

XV 26 თავნი თვსნი მისცნეს they gave themselves, for παραδεδωκοσι τας ψυχας αυτων; Arm. Vulgate մասնեցին զանձինս իրեանց they gave their souls; peš. ܐܢܝܡܝܘܬܝܐ they gave their souls.

XVI 21 ფრომნი Romans: Observe this very old form of the Georgian word ჳრომი Roman; it is found in the Adysh manuscript of the Gospels (Jo XIX 20; Lk XXIII 38).

We intend to submit elsewhere a detailed study of the origin of the Georgian text of the *Acts*. Nevertheless, the following conclusions may already be drawn:

- 1) The old Georgian version of the *Acts* was translated from Armenian.
- 2) The Armenian text, which was the basis for the Georgian version, is not the Armenian Vulgate which we have now (its manuscripts are not older than the 13th century).
- 3) The old Armenian text (lost) from which the older Georgian version originates seems to have been modeled on an old Syriac version (different from the Peshitta).
- 4) The Georgian version translated from the Armenian may have undergone revisions, so as to be consistent with the Greek text.

The history of the Georgian version of the *Acts of the Apostles* thus appears in all respects similar to the history of the Georgian version of the Gospels (see Lyonnet, *Les origines de la version arménienne et le Diatessaron*, IInd part, chapter 4, *The Georgian version*, p. 144-165, Rome 1950)".

What we deal with here is the generally prevalent opinion in Western Europe that the Georgian Bible was translated from a lost Armenian model, and that this very Armenian was translated in turn from a lost Syriac model. Methodologically speaking, it means adding an assumption to an assumption: can the result be sound?

Well, let us consider Prof. G. Garitte's arguments one by one.

I 26: here Prof. G. Garitte just pointed out that the Georgian text belongs to an old recension, since the same variant is present in St. Augustine's text. But a very interesting fact is not taken into consideration: in Georgian, we read თანა-შე-ერაცხა, that is the verb has a double preverb. In Greek too, the verb has a double preverb: συν-κατ-εψηφισθη. Double preverbs did not exist in Syriac, nor in Armenian when the Bible was translated. This means that the model for the Georgian was Greek. Moreover, there are other such instances in this book: Acts 3, 18 წინადასწარ-აღ-უთქუა: προ-κατ-ηγγειλεν; 12, 25 თანა-წარ-ოყვანეს: συμ-παρα-λαβοντες; 15, 37 თანა-წარ-ოყვანა: συμ-παρα-λαβειν. This is noticeable because it is not an «evidence» taken from biblical redactions, it is a pure linguistic fact. I elaborated more on this in a contribution to a book dedicated to Zurab Sardjveladze, and, for the book of *Acts*, a more comprehensive study has been done by Agnès Ouzounian.

VIII 27 Indian, India: in the ancient world as a whole, it was commonly held that the entire waterside of the Indian Ocean was "India", up to Ethiopia. This is the case in the Greek, Syriac, Armenian and Georgian literatures.

VIII 35 For "Book", we have only here the singular in Greek and plural in Georgian. We have twice the singular both in Greek and Georgian: 1, 16 and 8, 32. Since the Armenian has the plural in 8, 32, it cannot be the model.

IX 11 Once more, we have seven times the singular in both Greek and Georgian, but a plurale tantum in Armenian: 11, 11; 17, 5; 18, 7 (twice); 21, 8 and 23, 35. I think here, as for VIII 35, the following statistics will not be out of place: the Hirmoi (ძღობპირნი)

have been translated into Georgian directly from Greek (there is no Armenian translation, anyway). Using the critical edition by Elene Metreveli (Tbilisi 1971), I found 93 times a plural translating a Greek singular (and უბლო is one of these) and 30 times a Georgian singular rendering a Greek plural. We have to conclude that this kind of argument does not lead to tangible evidence.

X 43 "By the hand", instead of "by", is very common in the literary tradition of the Bible, beginning with Greek: see, for instance, Acts 11, 30: δια χειρος, for: by.

V 26 "his head", is the regular reflexive in Georgian, whereas Greek, Syriac and Armenian have: "his soul".

XVI 21 This is no argument for an Armenian model, since this form does not occur in Armenian and comes from Iranian.

So, the idea of Prof. G. Garitte, widely agreed upon in Western Europe, that "the Georgian *Acts of the Apostles* have been translated from Armenian", does not seem to be true.

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