

In the Wake of the Manuscripts of Bernarde of Naples

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Abstract: The paper deals with the history of the manuscript materials of Bernarde of Naples, a Capuchin monk on a mission to Georgia in 1670-1677. In particular, it has transpired that originally the materials were preserved in the library of the monastery of Capuchins, and on 7 February 1936 they were moved to the National Royal Library (at present National Library of Naples), where they are preserved to the present day, under the call number "XX. 122". A study of the lists drawn up by various scholars in the 18th-20th centuries, has shown that in 1886-1936 one Georgian manuscript of Bernarde of Naples was lost, which contained the "Romance" or the Georgian Fairy Tale "Baama", an earliest, forty-page fragment of the so-called chronicle of "One Hundred Years" of the "Zhamtaaghtsereli", and "A small poem "Reskariani".

Key words: Bernarde of Naples, Georgian manuscript, the library of the monastery of Capuchins

While working on an annotated biobibliography of Academician Hellen Metreveli in Tbilisi in the summer of 2007, the late Professor Valeri Silogava showed me an old fragment of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* in two pages (H-1076), namely of the "Chronicle of one Hundred Years" by an anonymous author. It had earlier belonged to the Italian monk Antonio Cioffi who had sojourned in Kartli in the 1670s. The fragments had been brought to Georgia by Mikheil Tamarashvili from the monastery of Franciscan Capuchin monks at

Torre del Greco close to Naples. Mr. Silogava suggested that, upon my return to Italy, I should look for the remaining part of the cited fragment. According to Tamarashvili, the fragment in question was comprised of 40 pages.

Upon my return to Italy I began to search for the manuscript. It transpired that the Torre del Greco Monastery of Franciscan Capuchin monks had been closed down, and part of its library transferred to the municipal library of the same commune.

In February 2008 I visited the municipal library of Torre del Greco and familiarized myself with the books of the Capuchin monastery, numbering up to three thousand printed volumes, most of them dating from the 16th-17th centuries. At the time of my visit, two thousand books were kept in a special facility: only 956 of these volumes were catalogued; the remaining books and fragments of MSS were scattered about in another room. I looked through each of them in the hope of lighting upon the MS of our interest in some volume. Unfortunately, all my attempts failed: neither the fragment H-1076 of the work of the Chronicle of One Hundred Years nor the archive of the monastery could be found. I conjectured that, upon the closure of the monastery, the MSS might have been moved to the central historical archive of the Order of the Capuchins. While searching for the archive of the Torre Capuchins, I addressed the Institute of the History of the Capuchins for assistance. The archivist of the Institute's Archives, Father Alexander Horowski sent me an E-mail on 4 May 2008, saying: "I have studied our general archive (of the order), but the MSS of Bernarde Maria of Naples [or of Antonio Cioffi – *G. Sh.*] were not to be found here. In the section assigned to the Catholic Mission [sent to Georgia] we have only copies of the documents that are preserved in the Archive of the *Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide*. The archive of the Monastery of Torre del Greco may well have been abolished in the 19th century – in Napoleon's time or later. In Italy, the provincial archives of the Capuchins prior to the 19th century are kept in the archive of the Milan province, while other materials are scattered throughout [Italy's] state archives or in Paris".

The reply of the archivist convinced me once again that in order to trace the MSS in question it was necessary to make a thorough study of the history of the Monastery itself and to identify the person of Antonio Cioffi, the more so that the time of his stay in Georgia coincides directly with the period of activity in Georgia of Bernarde of Naples, well known to the Georgian community.

The research carried out by me to date along these lines has led me to the following conclusions:

1. The Torre del Greco commune is first mentioned on a parchment dated 23 May 1019. In 1568 the Municipality of Torre del Greco bought a plot of land from Tommaso Cuciniello and Ferdinando Brancaccio, turning the plot over to Capuchin monks as a gift. In 1574 the monks built a monastery and the church of the Annunciation here. The monastery played a significant role not only in the life of Torre del Greco but, in general, in the cultural life of the entire south Italy and the missionary activity of the Catholic Church. Following the fall of the Pontifical's state in 1861 and the unification of Italy, according to the law passed on the closing down of the monasteries, the monastery of the Capuchin monks was officially abolished. In 1867 its building came under the management of the town council of Torre del Greco, and in the same year the latter turned it over to the Holy Trinity Asylum for Homeless Children. The Asylum was not under the guardianship of the Franciscan monks of Alcantara, as was hitherto believed by researchers, but under the trusteeship of the Franciscan monks of the Stigmata Order of St. Francis of Assisi. None of the Stigmata monks held a teacher's diploma. Hence, later, on 11 September 1879, in conformity with the then legislation on education, the Order was stripped of the right of trusteeship of the asylum for homeless. This is how the Franciscan monks of Alcantara became the trustees of the asylum, fulfilling this mission to the end of the 1976-1977 academic year.

2. Antonio Cioffi, the same Cioffo (1628-2.02.1697), born in 1628 in Naples, ministered in the monastery of Torre del Greco. He took the monastic vows on 14 January 1653 under the name of Bernarde Maria. It can be said with certainty that this is the same

Bernarde of Naples, well known to the Georgian public as a missionary who resided in Georgia in 1670-1677. He mastered the Georgian language perfectly and left behind unique material in the Georgian and Italian languages about the Georgia of that period. His correspondence in this country with his spiritual children and acquaintances and friends shows that he did not sever contacts with his spiritual children and friends following his return to Naples (1677) and after his election (in 1686) as governor (head) of the Naples province of the Order of the Capuchins.

3. In 1896 the major part of the library of the Capuchin monastery (2649 printed books, according to the catalogue of Francisco Castaldi, a Torre historian) was moved first to the city hall of Torre del Greco, and later to the communal library of Torre del Greco. As to the Georgian MSS of Bernarde Maria of Naples, these – as the most valuable part of the Capuchin library – were left under the care of the Mother-Superior of the nunnery of Alcantara. On the basis of the decision of the Italian Ministry of National Education of 20 November 1935, the City Hall transferred these MSS to the National Royal Library of Naples (today Naples's National Royal Library), where they are kept to the present day (call number "XX. 122").

4. The Georgian public learnt about the existence of the Torre del Greco MSS in 1896, when the well-known Austrian Kartvelologist Hugo Schuchardt published the Georgian version of his article "Torre del Greco's Georgian Manuscripts" in the journal *Iveria*, printed in the same year in the German newspaper *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*. Georgian society is also aware of Mikheil Tamarashvili's list of the above-noted MSS, compiled later. Yet, to date the brief descriptions that pre-date Schuchardt's description and those compiled after Tamarashvili's listing, which are of considerable value in shedding light on moot questions connected with the MSS under study, are unknown.

5. The first reports on the works of Bernarde of Naples are to be found in a hitherto unpublished work written by Emanuel of Naples in the mid-18th century, entitled "Historical-chronological

Evidence on the Junior Capuchin Brethren of the Naples Province". However, specialists first learnt about this work in 1873 thanks to Rocco de Chesinalle, historian of the Order of Capuchins. In volume three of his "History of the Capuchin Mission" special attention is given to Bernarde of Naples, his erudition in philosophy and theology is noted, the story of his fruitful missionary activity is told, and seven works are named, written by him in Georgian, translated or simply listed. It is on the evidence of these two historians that the book "The Library of the Capuchin Brethren of Naples Province", printed by the Capuchin monk Apollinare of Valence in 1886, is based. The latter book names eleven archival units of the MSS under study, and highly noteworthy codicological data on them are cited. The list of Apollinare of Valence contains not only all the works named by Rocco da Chesinalle, but other works as well that are given in books and MSS printed in Georgian and Italian. H. Schuchardt had not seen the work of Apollinare of Valence. As he himself notes, it was after he familiarized himself with Rocco da Chesinalle's "History" that he studied the collection of the Archive of the Monastery of Capuchins in the spring of 1896.

6. After Apollinare of Valence lists of the MSS in question were compiled by: Hugo Schuchardt, 1896 (11 titles), Mikheil Tamarashvili, 1902 (13 titles), anonymous Italian archivists in the second half of the 19th century (15 titles) Vincenzo Di Donna, priest of the Gaeta eparchy, 1912 (15 titles), as well as by an anonymous Italian archivist (15 titles), a copy of whose brief description is preserved in the Aleksandre Tsagareli *fonds* of the National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi. Of the above MSS 15 archival units were transferred by the President of the Holy Trinity Asylum of Homeless Children Vincenzo Balzano and the Secretary of the Asylum Vincenzo Avernia to Professor Raffaele Cantarella, official representative of the National Royal Library of Naples, Head of the Bibliographic Department, by a deed dated 7 February 1936.

7. The number of MSS differs in lists compiled by various scholars, which must be due to the fact that some scholars name only Georgian MSS, while others the other-language MSS as well. In some

cases the difference is due to the naming of works as MS, i.e. an archival unit as a separate MS. For example, observation of the descriptions compiled after Mikheil Tamarashvili, in the list compiled by him the numbers 2, 3 and 13. "Romance or the Georgian fairy-tale "Baama", "Kartlis Tskovreba" and "The renowned short poem of Reskariani", respectively, are actually included in one MS.

8. Notwithstanding some imprecisions, the list of the Deed of transfer of the MSS under discussion to the National Royal Library of Naples in 1936 reflects precisely the present situation. This means that since then the library has not received any other Georgian MSS, nor has any MS been lost. At the same time, it can be determined precisely which MS was lost in the 1886-1936 period. Only one Georgian MS is lost, i.e. the one that contained "The Romance or Georgian Fairy-tale "Baama", the above-noted fragment of "Kartlis Tskhovreba" and the "Short Poem of Reskariani".

9. The following materials are preserved in the Neapolitan National Library under the call number: XX.122. a) The "Short Catechism" of Cardinal Bellarmino, translated from the Italian into Georgian by Bernarde of Naples, printed in Rome in 1681; b) 12 fairytales recorded in Georgian by Bernarde of Naples; c) two "Prayer-books" in Armenian, bound together, printed in Rome in 1666-1667; d) an Italian-Georgian dictionary, compiled by Bernarde of Naples; e) a list of 17th century historical persons, copied by him in a manuscript notebook; f) several letters of several persons; g) "Paul's letters" and the "Acts of the Apostles", copied by Bernarde of Naples; h) a theological treatise on the descent of the holy spirit, compiled in dialogue form by him in Georgian and Italian; i) letters written by various persons to Bernarde of Naples and his translation from Italian into Georgian of the "Order of Life"; j) his own calligraphic specimens, done to practice his hand: the Georgian Alphabet, the phonological values of graphemes and joining of letters; k) the "Great Catechism" of Cardinal Bellarmino, translated into Georgian from Italian by Bernarde of Naples; l) his translation of "Catechism" or "For Christian Meditation from Day to Day to a Month" from Italian into Georgian; m) his translation from Italian into Georgian of

“Philothea” or “Devout Life” by St. Francis of Sales; n) “A Georgian-Italian Dictionary”, compiled by him. o) The “Four Gospels”, copied by him.

10. The archival materials preserved at the Neapolitan National Library help us form an idea about the identity of the scholars who became interested in the study of the *fonds* under discussion.

I have already compiled a comprehensive description of the MSS under study in Italian, which will be printed in the near future in Italy. Besides, I have copied the theological treatise on the descent of the Holy Spirit, compiled in dialogue form in Georgian and Italian by Bernarde of Naples. At present I am working on the philological and theological commentaries of the text. At the same time I have traced and am preparing for publication the originals of the copies of the correspondence of 17th century historical figures, made by a Capuchin monk. As to the early fragmentary MS of the so-called “Chronicle of One Hundred Years”, for which I engaged in this research, I shall consider it finally lost only after I acquaint myself with the comprehensive manuscript material of Bernarde of Naples in several more archives, and in private collections of MSS, which I have so far failed to do for various reasons.