

Medieval Georgian tradition of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*: in honour of Korneli Kekelidze's publication of 1960

More than fifty years have passed since Korneli Kekelidze's publication¹ of the Georgian text of the *Martyrdom of St Philotheus of Antioch* from the collection of the Patriarchal library of Jerusalem.² The Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is somewhat unique as there are no other manuscripts or versions of this text in Georgian hagiography, apart from two canons in honour of St Philotheus preserved in four different manuscripts.³ In the accompanying article Kekelidze discussed the problem of the relationship between the Georgian and Coptic versions of this text. This problem has not been fully solved so far.

Kekelidze suggested that its translation into Georgian was made directly from Coptic. In 1976 this hypothesis was challenged by M. van Esbroeck, who insisted that even though some phrases and whole episodes in the Georgian text coincide verbatim with the Coptic version, direct translation could hardly be possible. He suggested a now lost Greek original of this legend, probably of Palestinian provenance. Until recent van Esbroeck's theory seemed to be the most convincing; in any case, lack of verifiable data prevented scholars from identifying with any certainty the language, place or date of the composition of the source text. However, recent publications of the liturgical collections from Sinai shed new light on the possible provenance of the original text. This paper will discuss the relationship between the Coptic and Georgian versions of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in the light of this evidence and the possibilities of re-dating of the existing versions. The second part of the paper will examine the hymnographic tradition of St Philotheus in Georgian and Coptic and difference in the development of his cult in medieval Egypt and Georgia.

¹ K. Kekelidze, Fileteosis Martviloba [Fileteosis martviloba] in *etiudebi Zveli qartuli literaturis istoriidan* [Etiudebi dzveli kartuli literaturis istoriidan], v. 6 (Tbilisi, 1960), pp.81–102.

² R.P. Blake, *Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la Bibliothèque patriarcale à Jérusalem I* (Paris, 1924–1926), p.52–53.

³ Kekelidze, op.cit., pp.98–102; N.I. Marr [Н.Я. Мара], Описание грузинских рукописей Синайского Монастыря (Москва, 1940), pp.100, 136; G. Garitte, 'Le ménée géorgien de Dumbarton Oaks' in *Le Muséon* 77 (1964), pp.29–64.