Philology

Stage-Stratal Method for Reading Manuscripts

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ABSTRACT. Speedy development of digital technologies enabled improvement of manuscript study methods. Sometimes, it is better not to stare at manuscript characters for a long time but to shift glance from passages that are difficult to read and to try to find a way out elsewhere – on other pages of the same document or beyond it. The method under discussion is not "aggressive" and does not need to overcome all difficulties at the same time. Stage-stratal method for reading manuscripts consists of six stages: direct identification, graphic comparison, identification of lexical units, contextual analysis, extratextual analysis and conjecture. Each of them envisages the use of various micro-methods to complete the tasks achievable at a concrete stage and one stratum of a manuscript is deciphered at the end of every stage, which does not necessarily imply deciphering a long uninterrupted passage. The read text may be scattered in different passages of a manuscript in the shape of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, words, and sometimes individual graphemes. The method makes the process of reading manuscripts much easier and more efficient. © *2019 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

Key words: manuscript studies, textual scholarship, complex method, Georgian studies

Speedy development of digital technologies enabled improvement of manuscript study methods. Sometimes, it is better not to stare at manuscript characters for a long time but to shift glance from passages that are difficult to read and to try to find a way out elsewhere – on the other pages of the same document or beyond it. The method proved to be quite useful. It was applied to read Georgian and Russian autographs by St. Gabriel the Small [1], Grigol Orbeliani [2], Nikoloz Baratashvili [3], Ilia Chavchavadze [4], Tsisperkantselebi (Blue Horns) [5], Galaktion Tabidze [6] and Guram Rcheulishvili [7]. Since the amount of the material is huge, the paper presents examples only from Ilia Chavchavadze's bilingual pocketbooks.

The method under discussion is not "aggressive" and does not need to overcome all difficulties at the same time. It is complex and consists of the stages, envisaging the use of various micro-methods to complete tasks achievable at the particular stage. One stratum of a manuscript is deciphered at the end of every stage, which does not necessarily imply deciphering of a long uninterrupted passage. The read text may be scattered in different passages of a manuscript in the shape of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, words, and sometimes individual graphemes.

The stage of direct identification and the first stratum. No matter what kind of cursive writing we may be dealing with, in most cases, it is possible directly to identify some graphemes. If we do not set the objective of reading the whole manuscript from the very beginning and try to read only those words or even individual graphemes, which are not difficult to read, this stage may easily be completed and at its end, we will have at least a small part of the text.

The stage of graphic comparison and the second stratum. Some authors have a very specific handwriting. Therefore, if we are not well familiar with it, we will find it difficult to read the autograph. There are writers, who mostly have a standard handwriting and write individual graphemes in a specific manner. It is possible to read most of the clean copies of such authors at the very first stage, but a small part of the text nevertheless remains unread and we shall need to study their handwritings carefully to read them. For example, Ilia Chavchavadze had a specific manner of writing of Georgian grapheme "უ", which looks very much like "ქ" in his autographs. As a comparison, take a look at the characters in the words "თუ" and "აადუღლის" . In order to be able to identify specific graphemes, it is necessary to be well familiar with the writer's handwriting or to have special tables reflecting specific letter forms characteristic of specific authors.

The method for identifying lexical units and the third stratum. If we deal with a rough copy with a cursive handwriting and characters linked to each other, individual graphemes often differ from not only standard forms, but even from the forms characteristic of the individual author. In such cases, being familiar with the handwriting of the author cannot be of any help. It would be much more useful to take a look at other graphemes of the same word identified at previous stages in order to

identify the whole word in a text that is difficult to read.

For example, we cannot read the word "ბაბილონი" without resorting to adjacent characters we have already identified, because the second "ბ" in it looks very much like "მ" (in the word "სიგმე"). We would be unable to read the word "წინ", because the grapheme "ნ" in it looks very much like the letter "ზ" . We would also be unable to read the word "დატრიალებს", because the grapheme "ი" in it looks very much like "თ" . We would be unable to read the word "მომყრელსა", because the second "მ" in it is very much like the grapheme "ბ" . We would be unable to read the word "მისვლა", in which the tie "ვლ" looks very much like "იღ" . We would be unable to read the word "გაუსყიდავობა", in which the tie "ზა" is very much like the tie "მა" . We would be unable to read the word "ყოველთვის" , in which the second "ვ" is more like the grapheme "ყ", which can be seen in the same word, than "ვ".

The contextual analysis method and the fourth stratum. The context a word may be used in is very efficient in reading difficult words. It is necessary to identify the part of speech that may be used in the context, what the case or time as well as the grammatical person or number of the word may be used in it.

In one of the Russian inscriptions in the po-cketbook, we failed to read the word coming after Митрофановское", which looked like this: Only the two letters in the middle of the word – "дб" – could more or less be identified for sure. Since the first word was a determinant and needed to be followed by a neuter noun, we suspected that it could be the word "кладбище", although it was unimaginable to

identify the remaining graphemes. We did research and found that in the 19th century, the Mitrophan cemetery was located precisely in the location, where the two streets mentioned in the same sentence from the pocketbook divided.

Extratextual analysis method and the fifth stratum. Some unread passages remain even after the first four stages of work on the rough copy of a manuscript. In Ilia Chavchavadze's pocketbooks, we very often encounter addresses of bookstores in St Petersburg and lists of books he wanted to order. Since people make most inscriptions in pocketbooks for themselves, they do not avoid cursive handwriting, shortened words, or mistakes that are not going to hinder them from reading the inscriptions.

The names of authors of the books listed in the pocketbooks are mentioned either at the beginning or at the end and sometimes, they are not mentioned at all. If we had more or less complete information about a book and just a couple of words remained unread in the title or the author's name, we referred to digital catalogues of the Russian National Library, which helped us to easily establish the identity of the author and the precise title of the book. For example, a very narrow line in a pocketbook carried *Саманното,* and the second line *левыя постройки,* with an inscription saying that it was a brochure [8]. Since the first line ended in a comma followed by a hyphen, it was considered that the words in the second line - левыя постройки - could be the title of the brochure having one of the two meanings - "enlargement on the left side of a building" or "illegal building". If this was the title, the first word was to be the author's name. We failed to find either the name or the title of the brochure in the digital catalogue. Only after it was supposed that the fourth grapheme in the first word could be „а", not „о", the phrase „Саманно-толевыя постройки" was found. It means construction made of mud brick and cardboard drenched with tar. It follows

that the hyphen at the end of the first word marked the division of the word on the lines and the author forgot to put a hyphen in the middle of the composite and wrote it as a solid word, which made the text difficult to read.

The same pocketbook comprises rules for making a medicine. It says that it is necessary to roast an egg, which is followed by a word with a preposition – *в золѣ*. As the group of scientists working on the text were well familiar with Ilia Chavchavadze's handwriting, they easily identified the preposition „въ" and the old ending of the genitive case „ѣ", but failed to draw any conclusion on the remaining three graphemes. Given the handwriting, the first letter could be „р", „з" or „ж"; the second could be „а" or „о"; and the third „и", „л", or „н". In addition, in every case, there could be some other letter, which the group of scientists had not encountered in such a form or had encountered it, but no longer remembered it. Since it was about roasting an egg, they decided that it could be a kind of old kitchenware, which they were unaware of. They searched in the Internet to find words in this context. Having looked through the search results, they encountered the form „в золе" and understood that it was the phrase mentioned in the inscription, which means that the egg was to be roasted not in a piece of kitchenware, but in ashes.

Family names are often spelt incorrectly in pocketbooks. For example, „Кнолер" is mentioned as the author of the book „Дѣтство и юность великих людей" instead of „Коле" and „Грудистон" is written instead of „Грудистов" in another passage.

Textual scholars have to read texts written on various issues in different eras and it is natural that they do not know some words mentioned in them. One thing to be avoided here is taking one word for another and violating the authenticity of the text. Extratextual research was of much help in the work. For example, on the page of Ilia Chavchavadze's pocketbook, which presents a list of domestic

animals with their numbers, was encountered the word „катеръ" [9]. Scholars working on the text did not know its meaning and failed to find it in any Russian-Georgian dictionary. At the end of long search on the Internet, they found a long list of animals in Russian (among them some old names too) and realised that it was a hybrid of a horse and donkey – a mule. This method broadens our opportunities to such an extent that it enables us to read even unknown words.

Last stage – conjecture. If some passages of a text are damaged or if unclear passages remain after all the aforementioned methods were used, we may resort to conjecture: we find a word that is suitable for the context and is the most precise as regards

the graphic side of a certain word. If such a hypothetical word is used, it should be put in square brackets.

This is the complicated process of reading manuscripts. The method described here makes the process much easier and more efficient. It is said that situational logic prompts methods. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that others also resorted to the similar method, but if there are people, who have not yet tried it, they are going to find this useful.

ფილოლოგია

ხელნაწერის ამოკითხვის ეტაპობრივ-შრეობრივი მეთოდი

მ. ნინიძე

ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, შოთა რუსთაველის სახ. ქართული ლიტერატურის ინსტიტუტი, ქართული ლიტერატურის განყოფილება, თბილისი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ე. ხინთიბიძის მიერ)

ციფრული ტექნოლოგიების სწრაფმა განვითარებამ შესაძლებელი გახადა ხელნაწერთმცოდნეობითი მეთოდების დახვეწა. ზოგჯერ უმჯობესია ტექსტის რთულად ამოსაკითხ ადგილებზე დაჯინებული მკერის ნაცვლად თვალი მოსწყვიტო მას და გამოსავალი სხვაგან ეძიო – იმავე ტექსტის სხვა ფურცლებზე ან თუნდაც მის გარეთ. განსახილველი მეთოდი არ არის „აგრესიული" და არ მოითხოვს ყველა სირთულის ერთად დაძლევას. ხელნაწერის ამოკითხვის ეტაპობრივ-შრეობრივი მეთოდი შედგება ექვსი ეტაპისაგან: პირდაპირი იდენტიფიკაციის, გრაფიკული შედარების, ლექსიკური ერთეულების იდენტიფიკაციის, კონტექსტური ანალიზის, ექსტრატექსტური ანალიზისა და კონიექტურისაგან. თითოეული მათგანი ითვალისწინებს იმ ეტაპზე განხორციელებადი ამოცანების შესასრულებლად სხვადასხვა მიკრომეთოდის გამოყენებას და თითოეული ეტაპის ბოლოს ხელნაწერის გარკვეული ნაწილის ამოკითხვას. ეს არ გულისხმობს აუცილებლად გაბმული ვრცელი

მონაკვეთის გაშიფვრას. ამოკითხული ტექსტი შეიძლება ხელნაწერის სხვადასხვა ადგილას იყოს გაფანტული აზზაცების, წინადადებების, ნაწყვეტი ფრაზების, სიტყვებისა და ზოგან ცალკეული გრაფემების სახითაც კი. განხილული მეთოდი მნიშვნელოვნად ამარტივებს და უფრო ეფექტურს ხდის ხელნაწერის ამოკითხვის პროცესს. ამიტომ ვისაც იგი ჯერ არ გამოუყენებია, აუცილებლად გამოადგება.

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