

History

Eqvtime Atoneli (Euthymius the Athonite): Reintegrated Great Mosaic

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ABSTRACT. A belated surge of interest towards the great Georgian-Greek tandem “Balavariani” - “Barlaam and Josaphat” and the historical figure of the 10-11 centuries Eqvtime Atoneli (Euthymius the Athonite, Euthymius the Hagiorite...) was only partially associated with long delay with attribution of the Barlaam novel. Another obstacle was serious shortcomings in medieval literary studies, because of which the fundamental role of the novel in European progress became the subject of analysis only in the 21st century. The reintegration of the tandem due to finalizing the attribution restores the entire chain from the origins of the Buddhism and the Arabic Islamic “Bilauhar and Budasaf” to the Georgian Christian “Balavariani” and further to Byzantium, highlighting the contribution of Georgian culture to the Millennial process of rapprochement between East and West, peoples and religions. Inquiry into the extraordinary role of Atoneli in the brilliant conclusion of the great global movement will inevitably take account of his decisive role in the Georgian civilizational breakthrough of the 11-12 centuries. The value of the reintegrated great mosaic cannot be reduced to arithmetic sum of the values of the pieces: we will inevitably witness the emergence of Atoneli to a completely new historical dimension. Below we will try to outline possible ways of evolution of such a process. © 2017 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: Eqvtime Atoneli, Bilauhar and Budasaf, Balavariani, Barlaam and Josaphat

Millenium of Atoneli and New Stage in Medieval Literary Studies

Very late, after a thousand years of silence, two important events made the half-forgotten figure of 10-11 centuries the object of close attention of researchers of the history of European civilization.

The first event was the resolution of the centuries-old problem of the attribution of the novel “Barlaam and Josaphat” through confirming authorship of Eqvtime Atoneli by Robert Volk [1: vii-viii, 2:

1-95] in the wake of the Elguja Khintibidze’s studies [3: 192-291, 4]. Although with delay, conditions were created for reintegration of all fragments of Atoneli’s deeds into the great mosaic.

The second event was the beginning of the new stage in the medieval European literary studies aimed at overcoming the fundamental shortcomings of the last century [5-6]. This beginning has already been marked by the proclamation of Barlaam’s novel as the first step in a long journey to European renaiss-

sance and enlightenment [7],

These events were accompanied by an expanding flow of research [8-18].

Prominent Georgian-Greek philosopher, scholar, writer and theologian Eqvtime Atoneli is mentioned in different sources under a record number of surnames (Eqvtime Mtatsmindeli, Euthymius the Athos, Euthymius the Athonite, Euthymius the Hagiorite, Euthymius the Georgian, Euthymius the Abazgian...). In the expanding process of the reflection of his great heritage the need arises to uniquely identify this historical figure.

Here we offer to give preference to Georgian religious and secular tradition and accept for common use the identification: Eqvtime Atoneli. This is how he is named in the church calendar as the saint of the Georgian Orthodox Church. That is the street name in the Georgian capital.

While we return to the particular reasons of the aforementioned belatedness, we should pay attention to one fundamental circumstance.

The great legacy of Atoneli, both Georgian and Byzantine (with international extensions), rests on very broad and authentic documentary base reflecting his life, activities, creativity and impact.

The Georgian part of the documentary can be safely called "The Atoneli Corps." It contains many dozens of manuscripts translated from Greek, redeveloped and supplemented by extensive original comments and digressions, his biographies with contemporaries' assessments, the correspondence.

The works of Atoneli covered practically all fields of theological writings, philosophy, law, metaphrastic and apocryphal literature [19]. Through titanic efforts, literally from the zero mark, he formed a Georgian library, quite advanced for the European medieval society.

The Byzantine and international part of the documentary is formed around the Balaam novel and includes translations into many dozens of languages, the results of a thousand-year profound influence on the literatures and folklores of European nations

and other countries.

Leading researchers [1, 2, 7, 20] unanimously note the immensity the spheres of influence of the novel. An example is extensive study by Constanza Cordoni of the role the novel in the Western European advances, including French, Provencal, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, Scandinavian and British literary and folk traditions [9].

Given that investigation the spheres of influence is far from over. Silvia Ronchey [21] gives a list of addressees of influence of the Barlaam novel: "Rudolf von Ems, Catherine of Siena, Jacobus de Voragine, Gui de Cambrai, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderon de la Barca, Aleph of Borges, Marcel Schwob, Vincent of Beauvais, Jacopo da Varazze, Baudelaire, Tolstoy, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Herman Hesse, urban medieval French literature, French and German medieval epic, the 18-19 centuries European literature".

So, if we dare to call the Georgian part of the documentary the "Atoneli Corps", then the case can even reach the "Atoneli galaxy" on global scale.

Now we are ready to pose an important question: why did the well-documented most influential literary phenomenon of medieval Europe remain beyond the scope of comprehensive research until the 21st century?

An exhaustive answer to this question is given in the program article launching the new stage in medieval literary studies [5: 8]. Taking into consideration the narrow focus of the previous studies, including the lack of transnational and pan-European perspective, the article puts forward the problem of "reshaping the study of medieval European literatures by disclosing patterns, connections and themes which have remained uncharted or unseen in existing frameworks".

Also exhaustive, but more direct answer is given in the article [6: 62] evaluating the state of the Byzantine studies by the end of the 20th century as "the scientific and ideological impasse".

By the way, these conclusions can be supple-

mented by a remarkable fact: Not so brief article “Barlaam and Josaphat” in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium [22] (the edition claiming to sum up the achievements of the Byzantine studies of the 20th century) is absolutely silent about the literary merits of the novel and its role in European advancements!

The new stage of research aims to overcome not only the narrowness of the view of a particular literary work, but also substantial contraction of the very sphere of research by cutting off due to rigid genre categories, marginality of the language or anonymity, underestimation of a literary artwork due to religious function or translation and compilation aspects and so on.

By the way, the religious mission and translation aspect sometimes served as an excuse to downgrade the Barlaam novel. Actually, the importance of such aspects should be related to artistic merits of a literary work: the higher the literary value of a work, the lower the significance of the similar aspects. As regards the assessment of the literary masterpiece, the role of such matters becomes simply negligible. After all, in fact, no one qualifies “Siddhartha” by Herman Hesse as translation and compilation of numerous biographies of the Buddha.

Finally, the merits of a literary work are to be summarized in long run by its role in the historical literary process, its influence on the further historical developments. Just a thousand-year triumphal procession of the Atoneli’s novel served as the basis for Sylvia Ronchey when assessing it as the first step in a long journey to European renaissance and enlightenment [7]. By the way, the Barlaam novel turned out to be the only artwork mentioned in the above program article.

It should also be noted that, despite of particular importance, the aforementioned reform program does not yet have general support and, apparently, has opponents too. In other words, we are dealing with a normal picture of the process of radical renewal, which always meets difficulties and never proceeds quickly.

From Pieces to the Whole Picture

The situation to the millennium of the Barlaam novel is quite specific. The novel with a huge thousand-year cultural background suddenly acquired a “legitimate owner”, forgotten for centuries.

In reality, of course, some temporary gap is needed for the full involvement of the real author’s personality and other deeds in the research process. Besides, it cannot be ruled out that his “other deeds” will prove to be no less significant part in the history of European civilization.

The life path of Atoneli may become the unique example in the eternal debate about the role of the personality and accident in the history.

From the very beginning, an exceptionally gifted boy unexpectedly is sent as a hostage to Constantinople, instead of a direct offspring of a noble house, in defiance of a purely human duty to his father, who was not even aware.

Further, the life of the young man, who received brilliant Byzantine education, but practically forgot his native language, makes a new turn: he again finds himself in the Georgian environment as an associate of his uncle and father in the foundation of the Iveron monastery on Athos.

Eqvtime’s father, Ioane Atoneli, the abbot of the Iveron monastery guides him: “My son, the land of Kartli is very poor in books and many books are needed, I see what God has given you, and then act so that you multiply your reward from your God” [23: 43]. As if by the will of Providence, the mission was entrusted to the personality of titanic potential, able to create the whole Georgian Christian library almost from scratch, turning it, by substantial processing of Greek originals, into an instrument of unprecedented progress of his distant homeland.

Modern historians have the opportunity to comprehensively explore the richest and most diverse legacy of that era. With regard to the current situation, we can only rely on the basic facts.

We have every reason to believe that all significant changes, exceptions and additions against the

Greek originals led the country to the most optimal path of development. We also know about the substantial progress of Georgia in the 11-12 centuries [24].

Agreeing with the encyclopedia Britannica about the generation by Atoneli “the golden age of Georgian education and literature”, we have every reason to extend this conclusion to all aspects of the “Georgian miracle” of the 11-12 centuries.

Here, we should especially mention the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church which in medieval Georgia was the major designer of any reform. Of course, the Atoneli project also fit into this general scheme, especially since it touched upon important aspects of religious life.

As an example, we can refer to the book “Odegos (For the Faith)” [25], one of the foundations of the Christian public consciousness. Atoneli not only made very significant deviations from the Greek originals, but also complemented the book with extensive original texts [25: 142].

The Byzantine Church assessed these changes as unacceptable: at their insistence, the Greek originals were again translated into Georgian twice [25: 14]. The Georgian church was also very serious: the copying of the Atoneli’s “Odegos” continued until the 18th century [25: 27], i.e., almost to the very end of the existence of the Georgian Church in its initial autocephalous form.

Apparently, the Georgian Church, not objecting directly to the new translations (they were made by its prominent representatives), in fact stood at the positions of Atoneli until the very end.

The full evaluation of the overall role of the changes remains a matter of the future. Can we talk about a special Georgian model of the Orthodox Christian Church? The question remains open.

Ultimately, the most important measure of Atoneli’s innovative efforts is the final outcome of his project: comprehensive progress of the country in the 11-12 centuries. Just purposeful renewal of the spheres of education and literature, the religious life,

the subsequent improvement of economic activities, military power and the state supervision led to the great breakthrough.

Contemporaries unprecedentedly appreciated the deeds of Atoneli, assessing him as the illuminator of the nation and the creator of the new literary language [26: 108,333].

Having enriched his country with the achievements of the civilized world, Atoneli set a goal to implement a decent reverse impact. He continued construction of the great bridge from the origins of the Buddhism to the Christian West, started by the creation of the Georgian “Balavariani”, the first Christian biography of the Buddha, and the canonization of Iodasaph.

Having created great Greek novel “Barlaam and Josaphat” based on the “Balavariani” and a number of other sources, Atoneli combined the fundamental interests of the Byzantine Empire and the Orthodox Church with a powerful pan-European civilizational momentum. In this way Atoneli was able to accomplish the great feedback, millennial echo of which is now heard worldwide.

Orientation for mutual enrichment of different cultures was historically characteristic for Georgia, located at the crossroads of Eurasia. Atoneli raised this orientation to the level of an instrument for the all-round progress of his country, and later directed it on initiation of civilizational shifts in Europe.

It is not by chance that the heroes of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” Shota Rustaveli, the peak of the Georgian poetry and the crown of the Atoneli epoch, are representatives of various nations, and finally the unified army of the three main world ethnoses, the Indians (Indo-Europeans), Arabs (Semites) and Chinese (Han people) destroys the forces of the world evil.

Why not a hymn to the great future of mankind - globalization?

Concluding Remarks

- The millennium of the Atoneli epoch is marked by a

number of important events that led to a surge of interest in his great heritage. Among these events the most important is the final definition of the authorship of the novel “Barlaam and Josaphat”, with a huge delay, but still allowed the reintegration of the great mosaic of his deeds.

- Another important event is the beginning of a new stage of European literary studies, aimed at overcoming the fundamental shortcomings of the past century. The beginning already is marked by the assessment of the Barlaam novel as the first step on the long journey to the European renaissance and enlightenment. Further, no doubt, the expanding flow of research will end the practice of the previous period of studying the role of the Barlaam novel in the European advances without regard for the personality and other activities of its author.

- The real dimension of the historical figure of Atoneli will be fully disclosed through the unified consideration of his Georgian and Byzantine civilizational activities in the framework of thousand-year processes of mutual enrichment and rapprochement of cultures, peoples and religions. It can be assumed that the rising rating of Atoneli will increase the interest of researchers to the role of Georgian culture in this process and the “Georgian miracle” of the 11-12 centuries as the remarkable part of the history of European civilization.

- The return of Atoneli to the international scene after a thousand years of silence makes him an active participant in the world events of the third millennium. This is especially true for Georgia, as for the second time, Atoneli is trying to give her new strong impetus to the third millennium.

ისტორია

ექვთიმე ათონელი (Euthymius the Athonite): გამთლიანებული დიდი მოზაიკა

ი. შეყრილაძე

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დიდი ქართულ-ბერძნული ტანდემის “ბალაგარიანი” – “ვარლაამი და იოასაფი” და მე-10-11 საუკუნეების ისტორიული მოღვაწის ექვთიმე ათონელის (ექვთიმე მთაწმინდელი, Euthymius the Athonite, Euthymius the Hagiorite ...) მიმართ დაგვიანებით აღმოცენებული ინტერესის ტალღა ვარლაამის რომანის ავტორობის დადგენის დაგვიანებას მხოლოდ ნაწილობრივ უკავშირდება. არანაკლებად შემაფერხებელი ფაქტორი იყო შუა საუკუნეების ლიტერატურული კვლევების სერიოზული ხარვეზები, რომელთა გამოც რომანის ფუნდამენტური როლი ევროპულ წინსვლაში ანალიზის საგანი მხოლოდ 21-ე საუკუნეში გახდა. ავტორობის დადგენის შედეგად ტანდემის აღდგენამ არა მარტო სრული ჯაჭვი გაამთლიანა ბუდიზმის სათავეებისა და არაბულ-ისლამურ “ბალაჰვარ და ბუდასაფიდან” ქართულ-ქრისტიანული “ბალაგარიანისა” და შემდგომ ბიზანტიისაკენ, არამედ აღმოსავლეთისა და დასავლეთის, ერებისა და რელიგიების დაახლოების ათასწლოვან პროცესში ქართული კულტურის როლიც გამოკვეთა. გლობალური მოძრაობის საბოლოო წარმატებაში ათონელის განსაკუთრებული როლის კვლევა მე-11-12 საუკუნეების ქართულ ცივილიზაციურ გარღვევაში მისივე გადამწყვეტი წვლილის გათვალისწინებაც გახდის აუცილებელს. გამთლიანებული დიდი მოზაიკა არ შეიძლება ფრაგმენტების არითმეტიკული ჯამის ტოლი აღმოჩნდეს. ჩვენ გარდაუვალად გავხედებით მოწმე ექვთიმე ათონელის ისტორიული ფიგურის სრულიად ახალ განზომილებებზე აღმასვლისა. ჩვენ შევეცდებით ასეთი პროცესის განვითარების შესაძლო გზები გამოვკვეთოთ.

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