

History

Euthymius the Athonite: A Call to Rethink the Great Heritage

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ABSTRACT. It took a millennial stay as “the most popular book” until “Barlaam and Josaphat” was comprehended as the first step on the long journey to the European Enlightenment and the authorship of the Georgian-Greek writer, scientist, philosopher and theologian Euthymius the Athonite was finally recognized. This fact reunited great Georgian-Greek tandem “Balavariani” – “Barlaam and Josaphat” split over centuries in consequence of misunderstanding. Seemingly, the moment came to broadly discuss the role of the tandem in European literature. However, current surge of research is mainly confined to the spheres of influence of “Barlaam and Josaphat”. Focusing on the Byzantine context over centuries postponed comprehensive analysis of the Georgian background of “Barlaam and Josaphat”, the urgency of which greatly increased with the final attribution of the novel. Euthymius the Athonite, the recognized leader of cultural and educational activities in Mount Athos Iviron Monastery, made decisive contribution to multifaceted progress of Georgia in the 11th-12th centuries. Through his titanic efforts he enriched Georgia with the advances of the civilized world and managed to feedback, the millennial echo of which is now heard worldwide. In the paper the attempt is made to show that the Georgian phase in the activity of Euthymius the Athonite is the key to understanding the phenomenon of “Barlaam and Josaphat”. Related hypothesis about Georgian-Byzantine Project “Buddha-Iodasaph-Josaphat” allows to reach concordant interpretation of seemingly contradictory facts. © 2015 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: Euthymius the Athonite, Barlaam and Josaphat, Balavariani, Georgian-Byzantine relations.

General Historical Background

Quite rarely, the moment still arises when the cumulative effect of the research moves a scientist to appeal directly to the society. In November 2012 Silvia Ronchey published the article “When Buddha was a Christian saint” in the newspaper La Stampa [1]. Ronchey wrote about the great novel “Barlaam and

Josaphat”, whose civilizational role is not yet sufficiently pronounced. In the general context, it refers to a much-discussed problem of the civilizational consequences of adaptation of the Buddhist spiritual and philosophical heritage to Christianity.

The problem of authorship of “Barlaam and Josaphat” remained unsolved for centuries. Recently,

Robert Volk definitively established the authorship of the Georgian-Greek writer, scientist, philosopher and theologian Euthymius the Athonite [2: vii-viii, 3: 1-95]. The research is based on the hypothesis of Korneli Kekelidze about metaphrastic style of the novel and possible participation of Simeon Metaphrastes in its creation [4: 167]. The hypothesis was previously developed by Elgudja Khintibidze [5: 269], and finally by Robert Volk, who fundamentally examined nearly all the manuscripts of the novel, based on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

This important event reunites great Georgian-Greek tandem “Balavariani” – “Barlaam and Josaphat” split over centuries in consequence of misunderstanding, revealing its basic role in European literature of the second millennium. The role of the Georgian culture becomes worthy of increased attention.

The process of consolidation of Georgian principalities into a centralized monarchy mainly completed by the end of the 10th century. Georgian kingdom reached a peak of economic and military power by the end of the 12th century, under de facto cover of the Crusades, distracting the main real enemies from Georgia for a century. The country gained clear signs of the early Renaissance in Europe, however, the process was interrupted by the Mongol invasion.

Comprehensive progress of the country was based on a strong system of intellectual and educational support developed by the Georgian Christian Church in the early medieval centuries.

Ivane Javakhishvili writes about the foreign constituent of the above system [6: 407]: “Numerous cultural, educational centers existed in the monasteries abroad, beginning from the south – Sinai, Palestine, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Black Mountain near to Antioch, Romana near Constantinople ending by Mount Athos, Chalcedon Peninsula, where the whole galaxy of famous Georgian translators, philosophers and other scholars worked, enabling Georgian educated public to be acquainted with the fundamental things created in Byzantium, Near East and the whole Christian World. In addition, due to close relations to

Arabic and Persian cultural trends and their literary heritage Georgia acted as mediator between the Muslim East and the Christian Greek - Roman West, the two religiously diverse worlds”.

Further ceaseless foreign invasions cut off Georgia from European way of development and prevented it from feedback the major achievements. At the same time, in the 9-11th centuries, as if prior demonstration of the forthcoming breakthrough, Georgian intellectuals adapted humanistic trends of Buddhism to Christianity with tangible long-term consequences in terms of pan-European civilizational processes.

Assumably, the most important stage of this process was the Georgian-Byzantine Project “Buddha-Iodasaph-Josaphat” initiated by Euthymius the Athonite in order to reproduce Georgian experience on Christianization of the Buddha’s biography (“Balavariani”) [7] and the canonization of Iodasaph [8: 34] in Byzantium. The key element of the Project was the novel “Barlaam and Josaphat” which was destined to become the cornerstone of European literature of the second millennium. Below we will try to strengthen this hypothesis with concrete arguments.

The leading role in the project played the Athos Iviron Monastery founded by the great Georgian trio as the main center of the Georgian development.

Ioane-Tornike Chordvani, Euthymius’s uncle, a great commander and further a monk, left Mount Athos and led the expeditionary corps of 12 thousand Georgians sent by David III of Tao-Klarjeti to reinforce the imperial army against a large rebellion of Bardas Sclerus (wherever the source is not specified, historical dates correspond to the encyclopedia Britannica) in 979. For the great victory the commander-monk was thanked generously, including gold trophy, which was invested in the construction of the Iviron Monastery.

Ioane-Varazvache Chordvani, the father of Euthymius, the former noble courtier and prominent military man, longstanding leader of the Monastery and a great contributor to Georgian progress.

Euthymius himself was a well-educated young

man, future great thinker and writer, an inspirer of civilizational advancements in his homeland and in Byzantium.

Later, the father and the son were canonized by the Georgian and Byzantine churches.

Deep examination of Georgian track of the Project requires broad consideration of Georgian historical sources, especially those concerning Georgian-Byzantine relations. The same applies to the personality of Euthymius.

Researchers of the problem [1-3, 9-10] unanimously emphasize the immensity of the spheres of influence of the novel. They talk about the need of wide exploration of these spheres.

Meanwhile Ronchey gave brief remarks about known literature generated by “Barlaam and Josaphat” [1,10]. The list of addressees of influence is quite impressive: 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, Hermann Hesse, urban medieval French literature, French and German medieval epic, the 18th - 19th century European literature.

The novel is translated to more than sixty languages of Europe, Christian East and Africa. Its impact has penetrated into the Islamic world and even in the countries of traditional Buddhism.

“The flower of the sacred poetry,” Heinrich Heine wrote about the novel [11].

In recent years there is a significant increase of interest in the novel.

Cordoni [12] studied the role of “Barlaam and Josaphat” in French, Provençal, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, Scandinavian and British literary and folk traditions. Ribas [13] discusses some aspects of the imperial and religious politics of Byzantium of the late 10th and early 11th century, as reflected in the novel. Lopez Jr. and McCracken [14] consider the novel in terms of processes of sharing the ideas be-

tween the religions born thousands of miles away from each other.

A qualitatively new stage can be seen in the recently published extensive collection of studies [15]. Though the focus is mainly on the spheres of influence of the novel, two dozen researchers from several countries and even the title of the collection clearly demonstrate rapidly changing situation around the novel as a whole.

Nevertheless, referring to the rapid rise in the status of the novel on the international scene, we certainly understand that comprehensive assessment of the unprecedented in terms of influence literary phenomenon is not a matter of the near future. The same can be said about the author of the novel, especially since the ambiguity with the authorship often led to a discussion of the novel without regard to its Georgian background and personality of the author.

Euthymius the Athonite still remains as notably undervalued historical figure of the medieval Europe. The process of revising the historical assessments is only at the initial stage.

Tao-Klarjeti – Konstantinople – Mount Athos

When Varazvache Chordvani, prominent noble and military man in Tao-Klarjeti, Georgia, took the monastic vows his relatives sent his nine-year old son as a hostage to Constantinople, without even informing him. Several years later he managed to pick up his son from Constantinople and finally together with him went to the Great Lavra of Athanasios on Mount Athos [16: 16].

Given his son’s brilliant education, Ioane-Varazvache focused his activities on translation of Greek sources. Euthymius starts titanic work to enrich Georgian culture by the achievements of European civilization, culminating in translation of more than 160 books.

Apparently, his translation work, in the strict sense of the term, prevented Euthymios from realization of his huge potential to influence Georgian de-

velopment much more actively. The key to success in overcoming this challenge lies in his specific method of translation with extensive additions and cuts, often turning into free translation [17: 212].

Georgian book “the Hodegous (For the Faith)” [18] providing a free compilation of several Greek sources, mainly the works of John of Damascus, can serve as an example.

Here are the comments of Chikvatia to the edition [18]:

“The composition, choice of material and arrangement clearly demonstrate the literary-ideology aspiration of the compiler. Therefore, “Hodegous” is so specific that it could be considered to be not simply translated work, but an original text of Euthymius which has no analogue in Byzantine literature” [18: 142]. “Most frequently and systematically the translator extends the text” [18: 147]. “The extension of the text clearly reveals the personal attitude of translator towards certain questions, his position, as a thinker and writer, concerning a number of religious and theological problems. In other words, each addition expresses the writer’s literary or confessional views. In each case the addition to the text has its specific motivation, which on the whole creates Euthymius the Athonite’s literary creed, and his attitude towards translation, the unique style of his creative work [18: 147]”.

“Hodegous” is also important in terms of the attribution of the novel. As established by Miminoshvili [19: 145], the texts of John of Damascus are presented in “Barlaam and Josaphat” not directly from the original works but in the refined form just corresponding to Georgian “Hodegous”. Numerous parallels are revealed between the novel and Georgian “Hodegous”, divergent from the original sources. The author justly assesses these parallels as another serious philological argument in favor of the authorship of Euthymius. Unfortunately, the lack of exchange of information has prevented timely consideration of these results by Western historians.

Thus, formally translating the Greek sources, in

reality Euthymius only partially did it. A significant portion of the Georgian texts expressed his personal ideas, considerations and estimates, addressed to Georgian reader. Given the huge amount of translated sources, we can easily imagine how significant was his immediate appeal to Georgians.

An approach to the Apocrypha is also noteworthy [17: 195]. On the one hand, Euthymius sent to Georgia a list of Apocrypha impermissible for Orthodox Church. On the other hand, along with plenty of his translations of canonical texts, he found necessary to bring a number of the Apocrypha to Georgian reader. He translated “The Letters of Christ and Abgarus”, “The Life of the Virgin” of Maximus the Confessor, apocryphal acts of John the Evangelist (by Prochorus), Peter the Apostle, Andrew the Apostle, some parts of the apocryphal collection “The Hymn of the Pearl”.

By the way, Georgian translation is the only source which preserved the Life of the Virgin of Maximus the Confessor. The publications of this cultural monument are translated from Georgian, to say, the world is familiar with it in literary interpretation of Euthymius [20: 475].

In such a manner, informing about unacceptable to the Orthodox Church writings, Euthymius the Athonite did not mean to block the path to them. He regarded the Georgian reader as a thinking partner, worthy to have complete information for independent judgment.

Euthymius did not refuse contacts with Latin monks although there were already tensions between the eastern and western branches of Christianity. He approvingly referred to the activities of the Benedictine Order, translated the biography of St. Benedict into Georgian [5: 225].

The manifestations of free thinking sometimes met criticism. The opponents became particularly active after his death. The criticism was sharp up to charges of heresy [21: 134].

All above highlight outstanding personal qualities of Euthymios. He appears as a strong-willed, free-

thinking, greatly educated figure focused on the fundamental progress of the country by ensuring future generations of the educated Georgians to think independently to rely on extensive knowledge with minimum dogmatic restrictions.

The basis for Georgian breakthrough of the 11th–12th centuries was created by the generations of intellectuals. At the same time, Euthymius the Athonite was the singular figure in the process. At the head of the Mount Athos literary school he made an extraordinary input to Georgian progress. As pointed out in the encyclopedia Britannica, his “propagation of Greek culture and Eastern Orthodox tradition generated the golden age of Georgian education and literature”.

Developing his great endeavor further, the Georgian philosophers adhered to the most advanced ideas of the epoch. In the 11th century Ephrem Mtsire translated the *Corpus Areopagiticum* and *The Fount of Knowledge of John Damascus* [22: 178]. Giorgi the Hagiorite translated the writings of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus, and others [22: 136]. In the 12th century, Arsen Iqaltoeli compiled the *Dogmatikoni* in Georgian, including 16 key authors, among them Anastasius of Sinai, John of Damascus, Michael Psellos [22: 290].

Prominent Neoplatonist Joane Petritsi translated the basic work of Proclus “The Elements of Theology” and provided it with extensive comments, representing original philosophical work. The Petritsi’s philosophy pronounces the ideology of Georgian Renaissance [5: 133, 22: 213].

Following the philosophical thought, qualitative changes occurred in Georgian literature, which in the 12th century was enriched by creations of secular literature [23: 457].

Georgian literature never distinguished by lack of attention to earthly life, human feelings, passions and weaknesses. Even the first-preserved literary work of the 5th century, *The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik* by Iakob Tsurtaveli greatly goes

beyond of hagiographic narrative skillfully describing nuances of human relationships.

The preserved creations (*The Amirandarejaniani*, presumably, by Mose Khoneli, *The Visramiani*, Georgian version of the old Iranian love poem, rendered in prose by Sargis Tmogveli, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* by Shota Rustaveli) are virtually free of religious content and describe the material world, people, human life and ideals. They are imbued with the sentiments of the Renaissance. *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, a great hymn to humanism, love, friendship and human dignity claims to be the first great masterpiece of the European secular literature.

Along with the flourishing philosophy and literature, the country is introducing the elements of secularism. Since the Ruisi-Urbnisi famous Church meeting held in 1103, the great reformer of the Georgian state David IV the Builder strongly restricted the age-old domination of the Church in all spheres of life [23: 373]. Ongoing changes reflected in wide utilization of the parallel alphabet, “Mxedruli” (“Military”), mainly in the state documents, secular activities and literature [23: 288].

Masterpieces of the world architecture of that era, been erected by Georgian builders, are still blending with the beautiful landscapes of Georgia.

Tracing back to the development of Georgia in the 11th – 12th centuries, it becomes clear that the process launched by Euthymius the Athonite put Georgia among the leaders of European progress. However, local and peripheral character and relatively short duration of Georgian breakthrough to some extent prevent the Western historiography to fully appreciate the scope and level of Georgian achievements.

When comprehensive evaluation of Georgian breakthrough, its main inspirer and designer Euthymius the Athonite appears among the leaders of civilizational developments in medieval Europe. Georgian phase of his activities is the key to the phenomenon of “Barlaam and Josaphat”.

Buddha-Iodasaph-Josaphat: Strategies and Chronology

Attaching titanic efforts to the development of Georgia, Euthymius the Athonite cannot get away from the ambition to use his outstanding creative potential, erudition and experience to generate significant civilizational feedback, the more so the Georgian cultural heritage offered some serious grounds. Here we mean the adaptation of the Buddhist heritage through creation of the Christianized biography “Balavariani” and the canonization of Iodasaph by the Georgian Church. The reproduction of this experience in Byzantium just might be like a feedback.

Presumably, the idea took shape after his succession to the status of the Epitrop of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos in 1000. This status was the final step on the way to the highest personal credibility of Euthymius in Byzantium allowing him the access to the very top of the Byzantine Church and the Empire. Simultaneously, the new status obliged him to prove himself on the Byzantine scene.

Meanwhile, Euthymius actively promoted the canonization procedure of Iodasaph by the Georgian Church, apparently paving the way for realization of the above idea.

According to Jghamaia [8: 34], the Georgian Church canonized Iodasaph at the end of the 10th or early 11th century. Georgian hymn in Iodasaph’s honor from the Jerusalem collection of manuscripts corresponds to the extended version of the Balavariani. In her opinion, the hymn could be written by Euthymius. At the same time, she pays attention to the fact that the author of this hymn is not specified in Georgian sources. That is why more surely she emphasizes the leading contribution by the circle of the Athos figures in the canonization of Iodasaph.

Further, Euthymius could initiate confidential consultations within the Byzantine tops, taking care primarily about justification of the effectiveness of the novel in terms of strengthening the important imperial and ecclesiastical interests of Byzantium.

This aspect of the problem was analyzed by

Khintibidze [24: 75]. He showed that during the reign of Emperor Basil II (976-1025) the promotion of an inspirational story about a christened prince, the struggle of Christianity and paganism, and absolute triumph of Christianity represented an effective ideological tool for overcoming the most pressing problems of the Orthodox Empire, especially, on its north-eastern borders. These findings seriously underpin the authorship of Euthymius the Athonite.

The conclusions [24] were supported by Ribas [13]. Analyzing “Barlaam and Ioasaph”, he wrote: “Essential aspects of this context are: the strengthening of the Byzantine imperial power; the competition with the Latin West for the evangelization of the borderline regions between the two Christianities; the significant presence of pagans in the boundaries of the Empire, featuring the Russians; and the threat of heretic groups of dualistic character, such as Paulicians and Bogomils” [13: Abstract].

Apparently, important stage of consideration was completed before 1012, when Euthymius abandoned the position of the Hegumen of the Iviron Monastery and decided to focus on literary activity. Probably, he received the highest approval and proceeded with finalizing the novel.

According to [3: 94], Euthymius worked on the novel twice. Presumably, treating it for the second time after his father’s death (998) he introduced a reference to John Monk in memory of his father. As is known, afterwards just this link became the basis for ascribing the authorship to John of Damascus.

The option of the work on the novel twice fits into the concept of the project.

First time, during the lifetime of his father, Euthymius might translate “Balavariani” as an outstanding literary monument, which was not related to the future project. The second time, most likely, he proceeded with its refining and redeveloping in accordance with the project objectives.

As for the reference to John Monk, we offer another interpretation.

The matter is that in the real situation of Byzantium of that period the Georgian background of the project could become a real factor of its failure. Not only it was the risk of unfavorable interpretation of borrowing by the great Byzantium a small vassal state's experience.

Unfortunately, shortly after his succession to the status of Epitroph of the Great Lavra, traditionally favorable Byzantine-Georgian relations deteriorated rapidly.

After the death of David III of Tao-Klarjeti, in 1001 [6: 128]), a large part of South Georgia immediately moved to Byzantine Empire, which led to a long period of confrontation with the recent vassal [6: 323]. Taking advantage of the beginning of the Byzantine-Bulgarian war (1014), the King of Georgia Giorgi I regained the disputed territories by military force. Failing non-military means, in 1021 the Empire began the war against Georgia, victoriously completing it in 1023. Georgia accepted defeat only for a short time. The next war occurred in 1028 and ended with the same result. Gaining strength *de facto* independent Georgian Kingdom made up the losses of that period only several decades later.

It was also no coincidence that in that period the relations between the Greek and Georgian monks, which was never good, particularly strained on the mount Athos [21: 136].

In such a situation of open enmity the publicity of Georgian background greatly reduced a chance to realize the project.

Apparently, Euthymius was forced to carefully hide all signs of the Georgian background of the project. For this reason a misleading legend on the genesis of the novel was introduced. Also the author used an almost standard medieval method of veiling, an allusion to the authorship of some suitable ancient figure, in this case, just John of Damascus. Probably, the wide involvement of his heritage in the novel could pursue the same goal.

There was also a need for some measures to ensure confidentiality of Euthymius activities within

the project.

This conclusion echoes the remark by Metreveli [21: p. 137] on some controversy between the message the Synaxarion biography about continuation of intensive translation work including from Georgian into Greek, "up to the Euthymius's death" and the lack of information about the results.

Volk first noted the possibility of hiding the authorship by Euthymius himself [3: 94]. He wrote: "You could actually get the impression that he wanted to conceal his person and the circumstances of the genesis of the legend". Ronchey also shares this reasoning [25: Ixxxii]. However, these inferences were not developed, most likely, not seeing the rational motivation of such concealment.

We hope, the above deductions arrange all the known facts in a logical chain.

Now, about the strategy of the project, in terms of long-term effects of the novel.

Apparently, given the outstanding erudition and experience in the design of Georgian civilization processes, Euthymios the Athonite realized that promotion of "Barlaam and Josaphat" and the canonization cannot be reduced only to legitimization of the biography of the Buddha. This process would pave the way for penetration of the Buddhist philosophy, associated with Christianity on humanistic tendencies, but less dogmatic and scholastic, much more tolerant of free thinking. Presumably, initiation of above fundamental shifts was his main goal within the project.

At the same time, the "theological strengthening" of the novel, compared to "Balavariani", requires proper explanation.

In our opinion, "theologizing" of the novel also was a kind of strategy. Apparently, Euthymius foresaw serious opposition to the purely literary part of the novel, the carrier of the new worldview tendencies, and tried to soften similar reaction by wide representation of traditional Christian values. In other words, he designed the novel in the form of charged by new tendencies literary core placed into a power-

ful theological protective shell.

Significant expansion by quotations from the Bible and the texts of the Church Fathers, inclusion of the apology of Aristides and similar appends correspond to this logic.

Apparently, this strategy stood the test of time. The theological armor providing a certain security for centuries did not prevent the novel from becoming a cornerstone of European secular literature contributing to the European Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Thus, summing up, we cannot fail to note consonant interpretation of many seemingly contradictory historical facts within the hypothesis of Georgian-Byzantine project “Buddha-Iodasaph-Josaphat”.

Concluding Remarks

The great thinker Euthymius the Athonite enriched his home country with the achievements of European civilization, renovated and strengthened Georgian literary language and laid foundation for comprehensive advancement of the country.

Civilizational code set by him led to the development of philosophical thought and secular literature. It brought some elements of secularism in the country’s life. Architectural masterpieces of that era are still blending with the beautiful landscapes of Georgia. The Georgian literary creations enriched the world’s treasury, though with a delay. Among them, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* claims to be the first great masterpiece of the European secular literature. Georgia emerged among the leaders of European progress. However, the process was interrupted by

the Mongol invasion.

Local and peripheral character and relatively short duration of the Georgian breakthrough somehow prevented the Western historiography from full appreciation of Georgian cultural advancements. When comprehensive evaluation of the Georgian breakthrough, its main designer Euthymius the Athonite appears among the leaders of civilizational processes in medieval Europe.

We tried to show that the first, Georgian phase in Euthymius the Athonite’s activity gives a genuine insight to the second, the Byzantine phase.

Following the titanic efforts in order to develop Georgia in the most efficient manner, Euthymius the Athonite readdressed his enormous creative potential and extensive knowledge to generate civilizational feedback. He based such a feedback on the Georgian experience on adaptation of the Buddhist heritage through creation of “Balavariani” and the canonization of Iodasaph.

Within the Georgian-Byzantine project “Buddha-Iodasaph-Josaphat”, he was able to combine fundamental interests of the Byzantine Empire and the Orthodox Church with a certain pan-European civilizational momentum.

As far as we were able to show, the project allowed the consonant interpretation of many seemingly contradictory facts related to creation of “Barlaam and Josaphat”.

Rethinking of the great heritage of Euthymius the Athonite is just beginning. Hopefully, the presented findings will contribute to this important process.

ისტორია

ექვთიმე მთაწმინდელი: დიდი მემკვიდრეობის ხელახალი გააზრების ამოცანა

ი. შეყრილაძე

საქართველოს ტექნიკური უნივერსიტეტი

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის როინ მეტრეველის მიერ)

ათასი წელი დასჭირდა “ყველაზე პოპულარულ წიგნად” ყოფნა “ვარლაამ და იოასაფს”, ვიდრე მას ევროპული განმანათლებლობისაკენ მიმავალ გრძელ გზაზე პირველ ნაბიჯად გააზრებდნენ. ქართველ-ბერძენი მწერლის, მეცნიერის, ფილოსოფოსისა და თეოლოგის ექვთიმე მთაწმინდელის ავტორობის საბოლოოდ დადგენამ ხელახლა გააერთიანა ხანგრძლივი გაუგებრობების შედეგად გახლეჩილი დიდი ქართულ-ბერძნული ტანდემი “ბალაგარიანი” – “ვარლაამ და იოასაფი”. ექვთიმე მთაწმინდელმა, ათონის მთის ივირონის მონასტერში საქართველოს სულიერ, კულტურულ და საგანმანათლებლო განვითარებაზე გამიზნული საქმიანობის დიდმა ლიდერმა, გადამწვევტი წვლილი შეიტანა XI-XII საუკუნეების საქართველოს ყოველმხრივ წინსვლაში. ტიტანური ძალისხმევით, მან არა მარტო საქართველო გაამდიდრა ცივილიზებული სამყაროს მიღწევებით, არამედ ისეთი უკუგებაც განახორციელა, რომლის ათასწლოვანი ეზოც დღეს მსოფლიოს მოედო. ჩვენ შევეცადეთ გვეჩვენებინა, რომ “ვარლაამ და იოასაფის” მოვლენის გააზრების გასაღებს ექვთიმე მთაწმინდელის მოღვაწეობის ქართული ფაზის ამომწურავი ანალიზი წარმოადგენს. შესაბამისი ჰიპოთეზა ქართულ-ბიზანტიური პროექტის “ბუდა-იოდასაფ-იოასაფის” შესახებ ერთი შეხედვით წინააღმდეგობრივი ფაქტების მწყობრი ინტერპრეტაციის საშუალებას იძლევა.

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