

## HOLY FATHER GREGORY OF KHANTSTA IN GEORGIAN MANUSCRIPTS

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The name of Gregory (Grigol) of Khantsta, Holy Father and great figure of the 8th-9th centuries, initiator of the monastic life in Tao-Klarjeti, despite his immense service before the Georgian church and the country, occurs in a small number of manuscripts. The oldest of these is the Synaxarion of the 11th c., A 97. The marginal note of one of its pages (6r) bears the following inscription written in minuscule nuskhuri script by the hand of the copyist: “and of our Holy Father Gregory of Khantsta”. In the Synaxarion of the 12th c., A 635 (15v), the commemoration is found already in the main text, but without offering the synaxarion life. The feast day in the majority of manuscripts is October 5, e.g.:

- A 97 (6r) – Synaxarion, 11th c.
- A 635 (15v) – Synaxarion, 12th c.
- A 426 (72v) – Feast Hymn Book, 16th c.
- A 111 (52r) – Gulani, 18th c.
- A 366 (66r) – Gulani, 1714.
- A425 (102r) – Redaction of Feast Hymn Book by Catholicos Domenti, 1718.
- A220 (71v) – Redaction of Feast Hymn Book by Domenti Jandierishvili, 1726.
- A 122 (66r) – Typicon, 1749.
- S 3269 (302v) – Collection of Catholicos Besarion, 1720s.
- Q 87 (315v) – Martvili Gulani, 1578–1605.
- Q 1053 (56r) – Typicon, 1760.
- Q 62 7(358r) – Selected Menaion, 18th c.
- H 1452 (145r) – Qanchaeti Horologion Gulani, 1674.
- H 1028 (32r) – Synaxarion, 19th c.

S 1464 (123v) – and other manuscripts of the redaction of Feast Hymn Book by Anton I.

The commemoration day of Gregory of Khantsta on October 6 occurs in several manuscripts, e.g.:

Q 1160 (202r) – Collection: Horologion, Feast Hymn Book, Paraklesis, 18th c.

Q 646 (7v) – Collection, 17th-18th cc.

A 911 (229v) – Horologion, 1813.

A 231(134r) – Horologion Gulani, 17th-18th cc.

The manuscripts mentioned above include only the commemoration, but in some of them small-sized hymns dedicated to Gregory of Khantsta were found, without the indication of authors. These are mostly the so-called common hymns, i.e. those in which the text is the same and only the names of saints are changed.

Before the period of Catholicos Anton I the Rite of Gregory of Khantsta did not exist. In the period of revival of Georgian Literature, in the 17th-18th cc., the Georgian church became interested in the national saints. That is exactly why Anton I composed the *Rite* of Father Gregory and entered it into his Feast Hymn Book. The acrostic canon and part of small hymns arranged for various voices belong to Anton, whereas authors of some small hymns are unknown (in general, Anton indicates in his Feast Hymn Book the identity of hymnographers, in case he knows the authors). The text of one small hymn is the last stanza of the Iambic, which was dedicated by Catholicos Anton to Gregory of Khantsta in the historical-bibliographic collection *Tsqobilsitqvaoba* (“Ordered Discourse”).<sup>1</sup>

The textological study of the Rite demonstrated that it does not contain any factual material, which confirms once again that the biography of Father Gregory was not known even to such a conscientious scholar and author with encyclopedic knowledge as Anton.

The only surviving manuscript (circa the end of the 11th c.), containing the *Life of Gregory of Khantsta* by Giorgi Merchule, written in the 10th c., is kept in the collection of Georgian manuscripts of the Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (N2). It was found in 1845 by N. Chubi-

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Bagrationi, *Tsqobilsitqvaoba* (“Ordered Discourse”), prepared for publication, furnished with a study, commentary and glossary by Ivane Lolashvili, Tbilisi 1980, p. 208–109 (in Georgian).

nashvili at the Monastery of the Cross near Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Al. Tsagareli, who worked afterwards on the collection of Georgian manuscripts of Jerusalem, did not notice the text of the *Life* there. Only in 1902, Niko Marr saw the text of the *Life of Gregory of Khantsta* at the Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and published it in 1911.<sup>3</sup> After that, the *Life of Gregory of Khantsta* was published several times and is studied well by scholars.

It may be said with confidence that because the text of the *Life* was not kept in Georgia, over the centuries the great service of Father Gregory although was not forgotten by his fellow countrymen and he was commemorated among the saints, but nothing much was known about him.

This is confirmed by a piece of evidence, preserved in one manuscript, On 41 E-106 (E-184), f.VI, of St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies (this is a document compiled by the support group and intended for Catholicos Anton I, which contains a calendar of Georgian saints).<sup>4</sup> Here we can read the following about Gregory of Khantsta:

“[October] E, of our Holy Father Gregory of Khantsta, Georgian. We know nothing about him”. Apparently, in Georgia, during the period of the revival of Georgian literature, there was not much known about Father Gregory of Kantsta.

The manuscripts also include two miniatures of Gregory of Khantsta. The first of these was published by Niko Marr in 1911.<sup>5</sup> This miniature is preserved in the Collection of Catholicos Besarion (S3269), in which colour images of several saints are presented. The miniature of Saint Gregory has the following inscription below: “The month of Octobere, of our Venerable Father Gregory of Khantsta, who was a Georgian”. Next to the representation of Gregory of Khantsta, free space is left for a small hymn, but obviously no such hymns were available to the compiler of the collection and his intention remained unfulfilled.

The second miniature of Gregory of Khantsta is kept in the redaction of Feast Hymn Book by Catholicos Domenti (A425 (102r)).<sup>6</sup> This

<sup>2</sup> A. Tsagareli, *Evidence on Specimens of Georgian Literature*, vol. I, SPB., 1889, p. 89 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> Giorgi Merchule, *The Life of Saint Gregory of Khantsta. The Georgian text. Furnished with an introduction, edited, translated by N. Marr, together with the Diary of the Journey to Shavsheti and Klarjeti*, ТРА-ΓΦ, VII, SPB, 1911 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> M. Kavtaria, *From the History of Old Georgian Poetry, 17th-18th cc.* Tbilisi 1977, p. 116 (in Georgian).

<sup>5</sup> Giorgi Merchule, *The Life of Saint Gregory of Khantsta. The Georgian text. Furnished with an introduction, edited, translated by N. Marr, together with the Diary of the Journey to Shavsheti and Klarjeti*, ТРА-ΓΦ, VII, SPB, 1911 p. LXXI.

<sup>6</sup> G. Mikadze, *Portrait of Gregory of Khandzta*, Mtsignobari, Tbilisi 1984, p. 240.

is a very noteworthy manuscript. It contains the Synaxarion readings of Georgian saints together with small hymns.<sup>7</sup> The commemoration of Father Gregory is entered on October 5, together with Martyr Charitina. The observation of this manuscript demonstrated that the compiler and redactor of the collection initially intended to illuminate the collection with illustrations, to offer the miniatures of the commemorated saints.

In the manuscript, at each day from September to February free space is left for miniatures. Only the month of October is illustrated, and even that partially, in September a few images occur, and after February illumination with illustrations is abandoned altogether.

On October 5, two illustrations are presented – those of Martyr Charitina and Gregory of Khantsta (unknown painter). This image of Saint Gregory does not bear portrait resemblance with the well-known miniature preserved in the Collection of Catholicos Besarion, and according to the artistic viewpoint is markedly inferior to it.

Thus, the name of Gregory of Khantsta occurs in Georgian manuscripts from the 11th c. The liturgical collections mainly include only the commemoration (in some manuscripts small hymns are also offered). The text of the *Life* of Father Gregory has come down to us in a single manuscript. In the 18th c., when the national-patriotic topics became one of the leading directions in Georgian ecclesiastical literature, in the redactions of Feast Hymn Books by Catholicos Anton I, there already appeared a whole *Rite* (9-Ode Canon with small hymns). In addition, Anton's *Tsqobilsitqvaoba* also includes an Iambic, dedicated to Gregory of Khantsta, whereas two liturgical collections of the same century contain two miniatures of the Holy Father. The number of the manuscripts, in which the name of Gregory of Khantsta is mentioned, is so insignificant, that it may be noted, that due to the separation of Tao-Klarjeti from the motherland, Holy Father Gregory of Khantsta was not duly valued in Georgia, at least until the publication of the *Life* at the beginning of the 20th c.

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<sup>7</sup> M. Kavtaria, *From the History of Old Georgian Poetry, 17th-18th cc.*, p. 81; Specimens of Old Georgian Hagiographic Literature, Book IV, *Synaxarion Redactions (11th-13th cc.)*, prepared for publication and furnished with a study by Enriko Gabidzashvili, Tbilisi 1968, p. 1963 (in Georgian).

## Holy Father Gregory of Khantsta in Georgian Manuscripts

The name of Gregory (Grigol) of Khantsta, Holy Father and great figure of the eighth-ninth centuries, initiator of the monastic life in Tao-Klarjeti, despite his immense service before the Georgian church and the country, occurs in a small number of manuscripts. The oldest of these is the Synaxarion of the 11th c., A 97. The liturgical collections mainly include only the commemoration (in some manuscripts small hymns are also offered). The text of the Life of Father Gregory has come down to us in a single manuscript. In the 18th c., when the national-patriotic topics became one of the leading directions in Georgian ecclesiastical literature, in the redactions of Feast Hymn Books by Catholicos Anton I, there already appeared a whole Rite (9-Ode Canon with small hymns). In addition, Anton's *Tsqobilsitqvaoba* also includes an Iambic, dedicated to Gregory of Khantsta, whereas two liturgical collections of the same century contain two miniatures of the Holy Father. The number of the manuscripts in which the name of Gregory of Khantsta is mentioned is so insignificant, that it may be noted, that due to the separation of Tao-Klarjeti from the motherland, Holy Father Gregory of Khantsta was not duly valued in Georgia, at least until the publication of the Life at the beginning of the 20th c.

Key words: Gregory of Khantsta, Georgia, Manuscripts.



Fig. 1. Saint Gregory of Khantsta, f.302v, MS S3269, 18th c. Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts.



Fig. 2. Saint Gregory of Khantsta and Saint Charitina, f.102r, A425, 1718. Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts.

