



Section 4. Philology

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GREEK-BASED MODELLED FORMS – LEXICAL-TRANSCRIPTIONAL BORROWINGS IN THE GEORGIAN METAPHRASTIC (GELATI) REDACTION OF THE LIFE OF THEODORA OF ALEXANDRIA

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyse lexical-transcriptional borrowings influenced by Greek in the Georgian translation of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria*, specifically in the Gelati redaction. The article seeks to identify the linguistic mechanisms through which Greek Christian terminology enters the Georgian text and becomes integrated into the system of Old Georgian hagiographical language. The corpus comprises the Gelati redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria*, where Greek-origin lexical items identified as transcribed entries have been analysed. In such cases, the Greek words are transferred into Georgian through phonetic and morphological adaptation, without translation or semantic modelling. These forms differ from both morpho-syntactic and semantic calques and are direct borrowings from Greek ecclesiastical vocabulary.

The article analyzes ten lexemes presented in the Georgian text in transcriptional forms of Greek terms: **ebistole** (ἐπιστολή), **eparkhozi** (ἑπαρχος), **amba** (ἄββας), **nepsiti** (νήψις), **sunidisi** (συνείδησις), **geenia** (γένενα), **mogvoba** (μαγεία / μάγος), **lavra** (λαύρα), **martyli** (μάρτυς), and **angelozi** (ἄγγελος). Each example is discussed in terms of the phonetic-morphological adaptation of the Greek form, its semantic function in the text, and its conceptual significance within Christian discourse.

Keywords: *Greek-Georgian translations; lexical-transcriptional borrowings; Christian terminology; hagiography; Life of Theodora of Alexandria; Gelati redaction*

Introduction

The analysis of this material allows us to determine the role of transcriptional borrowings in a Georgian hagiographical text and

how they reflect the linguistic and cultural interaction operative in the process of Greek-Georgian translation.

The modelling of forms in the Gelati redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria* takes place on the morphosyntactic, semantic, and theological levels.

Morphosyntactic modelling refers to the process by which a translation takes the principles of the morphological-syntactic organisation of the source language as a model and, according to this model, creates constructions by means of its own grammatical resources. That is, the translation imitates the original language in the implementation of principles governing the organisation of grammatical structures. This, in turn, means that translation is not a mechanical but an intellectual and creative process. More specifically, the grammatical structure of the target language – root/roots + derivational element + case marker – corresponds to the same structure in the language of translation.

From the semantic point of view, modelling refers to such a process whereby a language, by means of its own native resources, creates a form that reproduces the structure of meaning found in the source language and delimits a specific semantic field; that is, the principles governing the organisation of meaning are taken into account. For example: σωζόμενος → **tskhovnebuli** (“romlisa meokhebit’a meqavn chuentsa tskhovnebultha natsilisaganad qop’ai madlit’a da kat’thmoq’varebit’a krist’es ch’eshmarit’isa ghmr’t’isa chuinesait’a” [K4, 140r]): verbal root + participial suffix/suffixes + case/number marker – σωζ – μεν – ος / οι; cf. Georgian: **tskhovn – eb – ul – i/ni**. Thus, in the process of semantic modelling, the Georgian language incorporates the conceptual categories of Greek theological language into its own morphosyntactic system, preserving the structure of meaning while employing its own resources.

Research method

In the case of theological modelling, the language of translation reproduces not only the meaning of Greek terms but also the entire soteriological and eschatological vision within its own linguistic system. Here, translation is no longer merely a linguistic act; it becomes a means of conveying the essence of doctrine. In Christian theology (especially in patristics), several fundamental princi-

ples are established: 1. salvation (σωτηρία) is a process and not merely a result; 2. the human being is an entity in process (on a journey); 3. eschatology is a process that has begun but is not yet completed (for the issue, see: Kekelidze, 1960; Chikobava, 1964; Haugen, 1950; Weinreich, 1953).

In addition to the foregoing, the text also attests a type of terms that are lexical-transcriptional borrowings and that differ fundamentally from the above-mentioned methods of modelling. In this case, the translator chooses an entirely different strategy: whereas in modelling the Georgian language creates forms through its own morphological-syntactic resources that imitate the structural principles of the source text, in lexical-transcriptional borrowing, the Greek word is formally transferred into Georgian; that is, such borrowings preserve the source form in the Georgian text and undergo only a certain phonetic adaptation. This mainly concerns theological and ecclesiastical terminology, since these concepts are already part of the Christian theological terminological system, and their use in translation is a natural process insofar as it ensures the accurate rendering of the original text and avoids those semantic changes that might arise if a new equivalent were created. Thus, if modelling represents the translator’s creative process, in which Georgian repeats the structural principles of the Greek text by means of its own resources, lexical-transcriptional borrowings demonstrate another strategy, the direct integration of Greek terminology into the Georgian text. It is precisely the interaction of these two processes that determines the linguistic specificity of the Gelati redaction and creates that harmonious system in which Georgian grammatical form and Greek theological terminology function jointly.

Results analysis

Let us consider specifically which forms of this type are attested in the Gelati redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria*.

Ebistole (ἐπιστολή, ἡ – “letter” – “parulad tsinamdzhurisa tsnobisagan ertsasadame shorielta monastretagansa tsargzavnes igi kheltd’ebita ebistolisait’a” [K4, 132v]), in this context, the borrowing functions in exactly the same sense as it does in the Greek origi-

inal: it denotes a written communication, an official message, and carries a more formal, ecclesiastical-documentary connotation than the neutral content of a letter. Accordingly, the borrowing fulfils not only a lexical but also a stylistic function. The internal semantic structure of the Greek form has not been transferred into the Georgian translation (which would have been possible through the form “letter”); on the contrary, the translator preserves the Greek form, which is adapted in Georgian phonetically and morphologically (ἐπιστολή → **ebistole**).

Likewise, the form **eparkhozi** (ὑπαρχος, ὁ – “governor of the city” – “vinaī esoden sashinel uchnda sopelta mat dzviri igi, vidremdis tvit eparkhozsatsa kalakisa sa, ese igi grigoli iyo, mkhedrobani daeskhnes adgilsa mas” [K4, 132v]) functions with the same meaning it has in the Greek original: it denotes the civil ruler of a city or administrative unit. This lexeme is not translated in the Georgian text by a semantic equivalent (“ruler,” “chief”); rather, the Greek term is transferred into Georgian in a phonetically and morphologically adapted form (ὑπαρχος → **eparkhozi**). The use of borrowing is motivated not only lexically but also from a stylistic-conceptual point of view: in the late antique Greek administrative system, **eparkhozi** carries a specific connotation and lends the text historical and social precision that a general Georgian equivalent could not provide. At the same time, the internal semantic structure of the Greek form is not modelled in Georgian; there is neither semantic nor morphosyntactic modelling. Accordingly, **eparkhozi** is a typical example of lexical-transcriptional borrowing that has both a nominative and a stylistic-conceptual function in the Georgian translation.

Amba (ἀββᾶς – Aramaic *abba* – spiritual father; abbot of a monastery; entered Georgian through Greek: “kholo tsamqvanebelni: ese ars, – metq’odes, – ese ars amba teodore, romelsa daets’ama brali sidzvisaī...” [K4, 136r] is a phonetically and morphologically adapted unit of the Greek ἀββᾶς, used in the text to denote monastic authority, a spiritual father, and a person possessing ascetic experience. In the translation, the lexeme is not replaced by the general Georgian equivalent – “father,” “abbot.” The preservation

of the Greek form is conditioned by the fact that **amba** denotes not only a hierarchical office but also a spiritual father, a relationship founded on obedience, and a particular authority established within monastic tradition. Such semantic complexity could not have been conveyed by a neutral Georgian word. Accordingly, the internal semantic structure of the Greek lexeme has not been transferred into or reworked within Georgian. By introducing a term that marks a high ecclesiastical-ascetic register, the author places the reader within the framework of monastic discourse. Thus, **amba** is a typical example of lexical-transcriptional borrowing that, in the Georgian translation, fulfils both nominative and stylistic-discursive functions and links the text to early Christian and monastic tradition.

Nepsiti (νήψις, -εως, ἡ – sobriety, spiritual vigilance; entered Georgian through Greek – “aramed aghirchia esevit’arisa sirtskhvilisa upat’ioebaī, raīta raī-igi mnebelman kmna bilts’ebaī, kualad nepsitit’a sirtskhvilit’a daparos” [K4, 135r]) represents a phonetically and morphologically adapted term of the Greek νήψις, functioning in the text with the same primary meaning it has in the Greek original: spiritual vigilance, inner mobilisation, and control of passions. The lexeme is not translated by descriptive Georgian forms (“vigilance,” “wakefulness”), which indicates its terminological and conceptual weight. The internal semantic structure of the Greek lexeme is not modelled in Georgian; the translator preserves the term with its original meaning. This choice is due to the fact that, in the patristic tradition, νήψις conveys not a general psychological state but an ascetic-theological concept that implies vigilance, control of spiritual balance, and a firm stance of the human being toward sin. In theological-conceptual terms, **nepsiti** is connected to the Eastern ascetic tradition of spiritual struggle and constitutes one of the fundamental virtues that accompany repentance, fasting, and prayer. In the present context, **nepsiti** is linked with shame and self-control: after the commission of sin, it appears as an inner mechanism by which a person attempts to protect himself or herself from further fall. Thus, here **nepsiti** is not merely the expression of a state, but

of spiritual action and personal-volitional choice; in the Georgian translation, it fulfils terminological, stylistic, and conceptual functions and directly links the text to the Greek patristic ascetic discourse.

Sunidisi (συνείδησις, -εως, ἡ – conscience, inner awareness, moral self-knowledge; entered Georgian through Greek – “... da mashin’gha itsnoba ts’midisa gan vinaobaī mosrulisaī da tsmasnili siveragisaī mis zeda mravalsakheobiti” [K4, 136r]; the Georgian form **sunidisi** represents a phonetically and morphologically adapted unit of the Greek συνείδησις and is used in the text with the same meaning it has in Greek patristic discourse: it denotes the human inner moral consciousness, the force that evaluates one’s own actions. The lexeme is not translated by a descriptive Georgian equivalent (“knowledge of the heart,” “inner feeling,” etc.), which indicates its terminological status.

The internal semantic structure of the Greek form is not reworked in Georgian; the translator preserves the term with its unchanged meaning. In this way, a lexical-transcriptional borrowing is created that functions in the Georgian text as an already established theological-anthropological concept.

From a theological-conceptual point of view, in patristic tradition **sunidisi** is not merely a psychological phenomenon. It is regarded as the human being’s inner witness before God, an “inner judge” that exposes sin, arouses repentance, and participates in the human being’s spiritual struggle. In the present text, **sunidisi** is presented as an active force rather than a static moral category. Its use in the text clearly shows that the Old Georgian translation is integrated not only linguistically but also conceptually into Greek patristic thought, conveying an understanding of conscience within Christian anthropology. The Holy Fathers consider it in the context of moral self-knowledge, the inner judge, and the human being’s inner accord with God’s law. In their view, conscience acts even when no external laws exist, because conscience is the place of inner law within the human being, the space in which a person exposes himself or herself.

The Greek γέεννα (*Gehenna*) in the New Testament and patristic texts denotes the place of final punishment, hell. The term in Greek is borrowed from Hebrew: גֵּהֶנְנִים

(*Ge Hinnom*), “the Valley of Hinnom,” a place near Jerusalem associated in Old Testament texts with idolatry and sacrifice (see Jer. 7:31). It was precisely on the basis of this historical-toponymic context that the term acquired in Christian tradition its eschatological meaning, the place of eternal punishment.

In Old Georgian, the Greek γέεννα is rendered as *geenia*, a lexical-transcriptional borrowing. The form is phonetically and morphologically adapted into the Georgian theological system (γέεννα → **geenia**), while preserving the structural identity of the Greek form. This lexeme is not translated semantically (e.g., “place of punishment”); it is conveyed through phonetic adaptation, indicating that the term is a doctrinally codified and liturgically normalised form.

In our text, the term occurs in the following context: “kholo igi sit’q’uebsš amas da sazrzenelebsa shisha geeniisa sa da dghesa sasjelisa sa tsinadadgebda” [K4, 128r]. Here **geenia** has a sharply eschatological context and functions not merely as a lexeme designating a space, but as a symbolic-dogmatic category of final divine judgment and eternal sentence. In this phrase, **geenia** does not denote only a local topos, but expresses an eschatological dimension that functions as a measure of moral responsibility and a mechanism of spiritual self-control.

From the semantic point of view, in Georgian **geenia** constitutes a strictly specialised theological term. It does not cover the general meaning of fire, a place of torment, or hell, but is connected specifically with the biblical-eschatological context. Unlike the word “hell,” which in Georgian has a broader meaning and sometimes even a metaphorical load, **geenia** preserves in the text a doctrinally elaborated and strictly religious meaning.

From the theological-anthropological point of view, in this case **geenia** bears the eschatological context of human free will and moral responsibility. It is not only the place of punishment, but also the final result of personal choice, a symbolic-dogmatic category of divine judgment and eternal sentence. Therefore, in patristic tradition, the phrase “fear of Gehenna” is understood not as a passive state of fear but as a driving force of spiritual vigilance and repentance. Thus, the correspondence γέεννα

→ **geenia** should be assessed as a lexical-transcriptional borrowing fully integrated into the Georgian theological-ecclesiastical system while preserving the precision of the biblical-theological concept. It does not represent semantic modelling or a descriptive translation, but rather an eschatological term transferred transcriptionally and assimilated as a lexeme.

Mogvoba (μαγεία, ἡ / μάγος, ὁ – sorcery; magic, magician): “ese sit’q’uaī miit’atsa ertman metq’uelta matganman shesamat’eb-lad borotisa, mqonebelman **mogobisa** khelovnebisaman” [K4, 134v]; a lexeme of Greek origin that entered Georgian through Greek ecclesiastical discourse (and not from the semantic field of folk magical terminology), which determines its theological connotation. It constitutes a semantically precise and phonetically adapted rendering of a lexical-transcriptional borrowing. μάγος / μαγεία initially referred to Eastern (Persian) priestly traditions, but in Christian texts it acquires a sharply negative connotation – it is used not for general sorcery, but specifically to denote demonic powers. In patristic language, μαγεία signifies opposition to divine power, relations with demonic powers, and an active, deliberate form of sin. Here, too, the translator does not resort to descriptive forms (“sorcery,” “magic”) but uses a term established in the Georgian theological terminological system and connected with Byzantine patristic thought.

The text attests a number of terms designating monastic space; among them, a lexical-transcriptional borrowing is **lavra** (λαύρα, ἡ) – a large monastery, a monastic complex that comprises a certain number of churches and a large brotherhood: “monazonni mets’xrisš lavrisani, romelta sidzvisa aghceraī sheakhes net’arsa skhuatave tana q’ovelta dedakatsobisa tsa misisa umets’arta, ats mokene ikmnes monastrisa tsinamdzhurisa mimart” [K4, 137r]. This form, too, functions in the Georgian text with the same meaning it has in the Greek original: it denotes an organised space of monastic life, specifically a particular type of monastery, a *lavra*. This lexeme is not translated by the general Georgian equivalent “monastery”; rather, the Greek term is transferred into Georgian in a phonetically and morphologi-

cally adapted form (λαύρα → **lavra**), which is motivated by the desire to preserve stylistic and terminological precision: **lavra** denotes not just any monastery, but a specific monastic structure especially characteristic of the Palestinian-Athonite monastic tradition. Such semantic specificity could not be conveyed by the neutral Georgian form “monastery.” Accordingly, the internal semantic structure of the Greek lexeme is not modelled in Georgian either morphosyntactically or semantically, and thus it represents a typical example of lexical-transcriptional borrowing, one that, in Georgian translation, fulfils not only a nominative function but also a role within a particular historical and ecclesiastical tradition.

From hagiographical-ecclesiastical terminology, the text also attests the form **μάρτυς**, which in Greek has a dual meaning: *martyr*, a person who is a legal witness in court; and *martyr*, a person martyred for the Christian faith, who bears witness through his or her own life to the certain and true religion.

In Old Georgian, there are two distinct lexemes corresponding to the Greek μάρτυς: **martuli** and **motsame**. **Martuli** is a theological-ecclesiastical term that, in the Georgian cultural sphere, has already become semantically specialised, meaning “one martyred for the faith,” and is widely used in both hagiographical and liturgical texts.

In the Georgian translation, the semantic field of the Greek term, legal witness and one martyred for Christ’s faith, is reduced, and only the narrow religious connotation remains: martyr, witness of God. Accordingly, in Georgian, the term appears as a doctrinally and liturgically elaborated and normalised lexeme. In our text, the Georgian rendering of the form μαρτύρων reproduces precisely the syntactic function of the Greek genitive plural: “amatthys raī vhkit’xevd tsamqvanebels, myis mts’q’obri tsinatsarmet’q’uelta, motsik’ulta da martultaī (μαρτύρων) skhuata tana martalta mechueneboda me” [K4, 139r]. In the present translation, it functions as an established ecclesiastical equivalent, a borrowing in a broad diachronic sense, and not as an accidental transcription. Given the restricted semantic field and terminological normativity, the correspondence μάρτυς → **martuli** may be considered a theological-

terminological equivalent of specialised meaning that directly and adequately realises, in Georgian, the semantic and conceptual weight of the Greek Christian term. This correspondence does not represent merely a lexical transfer. It reflects the theological concept in the patristic tradition, in which *μάρτυς* denotes not simply a witness but a person who, by means of his or her life, suffering, and death, confirms union with Christ. For this reason, in Christian anthropology the **martuḡni** are considered alongside prophets and apostles, and martyrdom is perceived not as suffering, but as a special degree of sanctity within the hierarchy of saints of the Church, as the highest manifestation of spiritual perfection, of the human being's identification with Christ and state of eternal communion with Christ.

Another theological term occurring in the text is **angelozi** (ἄγγελος): “vinaī mkurnalman sulta shemusviltaman angelozi movvli-na mas gankharvebad ichvisa shemats'ukhebelisa” [K4, 131r]. Here again, the Georgian translator does not resort to semantic translation through equivalents such as “messenger” or “bearer of good tidings,” but preserves the source term. This type of borrowing is important not only linguistically, but also from a cultural-theological point of view. In Christian tradition, the word ἄγγελος denotes not merely a general “messenger,” but carries a distinctly religious-dogmatic charge. Therefore, transcribing it into Georgian preserves the term's specific theological content. The translator's aim here is not merely to convey information; he seeks to introduce the ecclesiastical terminology of the source text into the new linguistic environment with its conceptual meaning unchanged. Precisely for this reason, transcriptional borrowing appears to him more effective here than a free translation.

The linguistic analysis of the Gelati redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria* clearly shows that the influence of the Greek original upon the text is multifaceted. In the case of lexical-transcriptional borrowings, the translator adopts a different strategy and directly establishes Greek terms in Georgian in phonetically and morphologically adapted forms. The examples identified in the text (**ebistole**, **eparkhozi**, **amba**,

nepsiti, **sunidisi**, **geenia**, **mogvoba**, **lavra**, **angelozi**, etc.) make clear that such borrowings are primarily connected with ecclesiastical-administrative, monastic, and theological terminology. Their use is determined not only by lexical necessity, but also by the fact that these terms are already established and doctrinally normalised concepts in the Christian theological system. For this reason, the translator often refuses semantic or descriptive translation and preserves the Greek form, which functions in Georgian in an adapted guise. Particularly important is the fact that, once established in Georgian, such lexemes become integrated into the morphological system of the Georgian language and function as full lexical units.

Conclusion (discussion)

The present study has shown that, in the Gelati redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria*, Greek-origin terminology is integrated into the Georgian text through various linguistic strategies. In the material examined, a group of lexical-transcriptional borrowings was identified, in which Greek words enter Georgian primarily through phonetic and morphological adaptation while preserving the structural foundation of the Greek form. The examples analysed in the article demonstrate that lexemes of this type belong mostly to the sphere of Christian theology and ecclesiastical life. Their use in the transcriptional form indicates that the translator deliberately preserves Greek terminology when a full semantic equivalent has not yet been formed in Georgian, or when the text's conceptual precision must be maintained.

Thus, the linguistic structure of the Gelati metaphrastic redaction of the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria* clearly demonstrates that the Georgian translation is not just a mechanical transfer of a text from one language to another. It reflects a complex, multilayered process involving strategies of modelling, semantic adaptation, and lexical-transcriptional borrowing occurring simultaneously. It is precisely the combination of these processes that shapes the distinctive character of Old Georgian ecclesiastical language and its organic connection with the Greek Christian cultural sphere.

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