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THE CLASSICAL RHETORIC IN OLD GEORGIAN TRANSLATIONS (BASED ON DAVID TBELI'S TRANSLATIONS OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS' WORKS)

The 4th century, when the classical pagan and Christian cultures blended together, is one of the most important stages in the development of the Byzantine Christian literature.¹

During the initial period of the expansion of Christianity the Christians denounced everything pagan and refused outright to have anything to do with it. From the standpoint of the Christians the overall pagan world with all its way of life, art and literature, was oriented towards carnal, worldly existence with its transient pleasures, while a true believer was supposed to aspire for Heaven and the imitation of permanent categories by renouncing and putting out of his mind everything earthly. The denial of the pagan world by the Christians following from the Christian ideology was quite understandable. In the times of the relentless persecutions of the Christians this unyielding opposition to the pagan world was an inevitable (and almost the sole) condition for the survival of the new religion.

Later, when the atrocities of Diocletian and other tyrants were past history, and Christianity achieved a legal status in Byzantine empire, it faced a new problem. One might say an intellectual war was declared against Christianity. The war was waged by pagan thinkers, as well as by numerous heretics who had sprung up inside the new religion. Throughout the centuries they had fought the Christian doctrine with the power of the word, the refined eloquence of their rhetoric, which posed a more serious threat to Christianity than the physical destruction of its followers. It was time for certain changes to take place. First of all Christianity had to revise its attitude to the pagan world.

The rapprochement between Christianity and the civilization of classical antiquity was a gradual process. Even as early as the time when the Christians put up a fierce resistance to everything pagan, little by little elements of the pagan world started to penetrate into the Christian culture. The foregoing is evinced by three quotations from the classical Greek literature (the works of Euripides or Menander, Aratus and Epemened poet) in St Paul's epistles and the Acts.² In the course of time the influence of the classical antiquity on Christianity grew stronger. This was facilitated by the fact that Christianity was no more the religion of only the lowest strata of the society. The number of the highly educated Christian Byzantines of the upper classes had increased. These learned men were now the pillars of the young Church. They realized full well the expediency for the Christians of the acquaintance with the pagan literature. They knew that engaging in the struggle with the enemies of Christianity without a proper secular education amounted to going to war unarmed, and that instead of shunning pagan education one had to extend one's knowledge in order to use it one's interests as the best means of defending the truth.

St Aurelius Augustine was the first to point out in his *De Civitate Dei* the importance of making use of certain methods of the pagan literature; as a result the number of direct quotations from classical literature and the elements of rhetoric increased in the writings of the Christian authors. But the final and real fusion of the Christian and pagan cultures took place in the 4th century in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers – Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, where the pearls of

¹ On the relations between Christian and Pagan cultures see Jaeger, W., *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, Cambridge, Mass. 1961.; - Chadwick, H., *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, NY, 1966; Kustas, G.L., *The Function and Evolution of Byzantine Rhetoric*, in *Viator (Medieval and Renaissance Studies)*, Berkley, LA, London, 1970, vol.I; Weitzman, K., *A Shadow Outline of Virtue: The Classical Heritage of Greek Christian Literature (Second to Seventh Century)*, in *Age of Spirituality: a Symposium*. (ed.K.Weitzman), NY, 1980.

² Renehan, R., *Classical Greek Quotations in the New Testament*, in *The Heritage of the Early Church, Essays in Honor of... G.V.Florovsky*, Rome, 1973 (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, CXCIV), pp.17-46.

classical pagan rhetoric and Christian ideology and content merged in perfect harmony for the first time.

Gregory of Nazianzus had received a broad pagan education. He had spent seven years in Athens studying classical Greek Rhetoric under the guidance of the famous pagan Greek rhetoricians Hymerius and Proaeresius. These years had a great influence on Gregory. All his works show the influence of classical rhetoric. But what was Gregory's attitude to classical rhetoric?

The works of Gregory of Nazianzus abound in passages where he expresses his attitude to rhetoric and classical education.³ His attitude to rhetoric (like that of the other Church Fathers') is dual in nature and depends on the context. The rhetoric and the culture of the classical antiquity is rejected and belittled when compared to the Christian culture and rhetoric. But when a passage deals with making use of the classical examples as the best form for the expression of Christian ideas, the author expresses a high opinion of them.

Gregory of Nazianzus discusses the point in question in most detail in or.4, in his first speech to denounce Emperor Julian the Apostate.

At this point we would like to draw attention to quite an interesting feature: In his notorious edict, which filled the Christians with indignation for fifteen centuries, Julian the Apostate prohibited one thing – he forbade Christian teachers to teach rhetoric to their students, in other words he forbade them to teach what they themselves had no faith in; but Gregory Of Nazianzus equated the edict to the prohibition of education as such. In our opinion, the above shows what importance Gregory of Nazianzus attached to the art of rhetoric. What really mattered was for the Christians to be able to differentiate right from wrong in the pagan culture and make use of the right to benefit themselves and their Church.

A. David Tbeli's Attitude to Rhetoric and Pagan Education.

The creation of the Georgian corpus of Gregory of Nazianzus' works began in the 10th century. The foundation to the corpus was laid by the great Georgian man of letters Euthimius the Athonite towards the close of the 10th century when he started a systematic translation of Gregory of Nazianzus' works. It took more than a century to finally make up the corpus,⁴ the contribution of David Tbeli, an 11th century worthy, being one of the most important. David Tbeli translated Gregory of Nazianzus' twelve works into the Georgian: ten homilies (or.or. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 24, 28, 34, 36), an epistle (Epist.101), and "the Teaching". A careful study of these translations and the comparative analysis of the translations and the original has shown that David Tbeli with his method of translation is the heir of the Old Georgian translators and the Athonite scholars. David Tbeli is a reader-oriented translator; he tries to translate the original in a maximum understandable way making a dynamic translation of the original, in other words by extending, making insertions into, detracting from, contracting, or paraphrasing the text. But the translator uses these means with moderation, without violating the authors right, and keeps close to the text.⁵ According to the changes introduced by David Tbeli into the translations we can judge about his attitude to, or his opinion of some of the passages in the original. It presents a certain interest to see how he translates those passages of Gregory of Nazianzus' homilies, which deal with rhetoric and pagan education.

Several of Gregory of Nazianzus' works translated by David Tbeli (or.4, 36, 8) feature episodes related to the foregoing theme. But the 4th homily, the first denunciation of Julian, in which, as we have already mentioned above, Gregory of Nazianzus discourses at his lengthiest upon the Hellenistic education at large and its importance, is the most significant of them all. His reflections on the subject run through about ten chapters (§100-§110; PG 35; 633 C 16 – 648 B 9) and form one of the most remarkable passages not only of the 4th homily, but of Gregory of Nazianzus' entire creative heritage. This

³ Guinet, M., *Saint Gregoire de Nazianze et la rhetorique*, Paris, 1911, pp.43-70.

⁴ On the history of creation of the Georgian corpus of Gregory of Nazianzus' works see Metreveli, H., Introduction for - Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni opera, Versio iberica, Orationes I XLV, XLIV, XLI, H.Metreveli (ed.) et K.Bezarashvili, etc. (in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 36, Corpus Nazianzenum 5*), Turnhout, 1998.

⁵ David Tbeli's translational method is discussed in the following literature: M.Matchavariani, *David Tbeli's Translations of The Works of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Synopsis of the Thesis for the degree of Candidate of the Philological Sciences in the subject of Georgian Language and Literature, Tbilisi, 1999 (in Georgian and in English); idem, Reflection of Gregory of Nazianzus' Style in David Tbeli's Translations (some issues), Session dedicated to the memory of Ivane Javakhishvili, K.Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts, Tbilisi, 1996, pp. (in Georgian); idem, Three Georgian Translations of Gregory of Nazianzus' Second Homily, in *Philological Researches, II* (K.Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts of Georgian Academy of Sciences), Tbilisi, 1995, pp.201-225 (in Georgian); idem, Some Peculiarities of David Tbeli's Translational Method, in *Mravaltavi* (Philological-historical searches, K.Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts of Georgian Academy of Sciences), XVII, 1992, Tbilisi (in Georgian).

treatise is extremely interesting for both its content and form, being a brilliant Christian apology built according to the rules of classical rhetoric.

It is noteworthy that David Tbeli did not include the discourse into his translation, skipping it altogether and substituting it with just a few sentences: "They (your thoughts) are bad and vain, and you cannot sacrifice them (you cannot act to please the devils), for I do not think that the language and the faith could be the same to the Hellenes; but if sciences belong to faith, then it must be proper for us to abstain from learning them, for the practices inspired by your faith are repulsive and man should forbear from them, for the vaunted preachings of your faith and your priests are sodomy, harlotry and all kinds of depravity"(or.4; §103).

We can see that David Tbeli had actually summed up Gregory of Nazianzus' lengthy discourse leaving out one of his most important arguments – faith has nothing to do with language, education and culture; pagan faith is unacceptable to a Christian, but this does not refer to language and education, because they are not the accomplishment of pagan faith. Pagan faith is unacceptable and is to be denounced, but faith has nothing to do with either language or culture.

The study of the foregoing passage and of many other resembling passages from David Tbeli's translations evinces his disregard for the value Gregory of Nazianzus attaches to pagan rhetoric. For David Tbeli rhetoric is part of pagan culture and cannot be acceptable for Christians. His negative attitude to rhetoric is, from a certain standpoint, also confirmed by the fact that David Tbeli, if he can help it, never renders passages dealing with the classical world into his translations of Gregory of Nazianzus' works. We might as well assert that everything connected with the pagan world is generally reprehensible to David Tbeli, be it pagan faith, or pagan culture. He does not see the point of Gregory of Nazianzus' definition of difference between culture and religion, and is equally ill-informed about the Church Fathers' antinomic attitude to classical Greek rhetoric and philosophy.

As we have stated above classical Greek rhetoric exerted great influence on Gregory of Nazianzus, which is perfectly obvious in all his writing, both in the composition of his works and their literary form. Rhetoric is such an essential and inherent part of his creative work that it becomes impossible to draw a boundary between his style and the content of his works.

One is tempted to ask if Gregory of Nazianzus' style is reflected in the translations of his works. We have already stated that David Tbeli is more or less opposed to rhetoric. But how does he translate Gregory of Nazianzus' works? Can he, in spite of his attitude to rhetoric, translate Gregory of Nazianzus' works without rendering their characteristic stylistic features? We undertake to examine David Tbeli's translations of Gregory of Nazianzus' works with this very point in mind. For this purpose we will produce a certain number of devices characteristic of the art of classical rhetoric manifest in Gregory of Nazianzus' works, and observe how these figures of speech were reflected in David Tbeli's translations. We have provisionally divided the rhetorical devices into two parts: one group comprises lexical and syntactical devices, such as, e.g. alliteration, paronomasia, pleonasm, etc. These devices are mostly based on play on words and combination of sounds inside words, and stay on the lexicological level. The other group comprises devices based on meaning, such as, e.g. comparison, metaphor, ekphrasis, etc. The same distribution pattern will be used to demonstrate the rendering of Gregory of Nazianzus' figures of rhetoric in David Tbeli's translations.

B. The rhetorical devices characteristic of Gregory of Nazianzus' works reflected in David Tbeli's translations.

1. Lexical and syntactical devices

As we have already mentioned, the lexical and syntactical devices comprise the so-called minor rhetorical figures, which are based on the distribution of sounds within a word and the arrangement of words inside a sentence. In his translations of Gregory of Nazianzus' works David Tbeli commonly fails to render the cases of *alliteration*,⁶ *paronomasia*⁷ (union or juxtaposition of words of the same root), *pleonasm*⁸ (expressing the same phenomenon by means of a number of synonymous words or by those of differing meanings), *hyperbaton*⁹, *epanaphoros*¹⁰ (repetition of the same word at the beginning

⁶ Guinet, 1911, St.Grégoire..., pp.96-104. Campbell, J.M., The Influence of the Second Sophistic on the Style of the Sermons of St.Basil The Great (*The Catholic University of America, Patristic Studies*) vol.II, Washington D.C., 1922, p.34-38.

⁷ Guinet, 1911, St.Grégoire... *ibid.*; Campbell, 1922, The Influence..., pp.39-40.

⁸ Guinet, 1911, St.Grégoire..., pp.86-89; Campbell, 1922, The Influence..., pp.27-28.

⁹ Guinet, 1911, St.Grégoire..., pp.91-92; Campbell, 1922, The Influence..., pp.65-66.

¹⁰ Guinet, 1911, St.Grégoire..., p.89; Campbell, 1922, The Influence..., pp.32-35.

of every other phrase), *symmetry of period*. But at the same time there are cases when he uses the same rhetorical figures in passages whose corresponding sections in the original feature no such figures of speech at all, i.e. independently of the original, e.g.:

ζῆν ὑπὲρ τὰ ὀρώμενα, καὶ τὰς θείας ἐμφάσεις ἀεὶ καθαράς ἐν ἑαυτῶ φέρειν ἀμιγῆς τῶν κάτω χαρακτήρων καὶ πλανωμένων (or.2; PG 35, 413 C 4-6)¹¹

და ცხორებად ეგრეთ მას შინა უადრეს ხილულთადა და საღმრთოთა მათ ხილვათად [უხილავად უხილავისა მისთა უხილავითა მით] მარადის წმიდად და შეუმრღვე-ველად შეკრძალებად და დაცვად შეურევნელად ქუემოთა ამთგან სახეთა საც-თურებისათა (or.2; §7).

The cited example of the Greek original features neither *alliteration* nor *paronomasia*, while David Tbeli, with a virtuosity matching Gregory of Nazianzus', creates beautiful examples of those from the root of *ხოლვ*. He also uses triple alliterations of the syllable *შე*, and the adverbial instrumental case suffix *-ად*. Other examples display a similar picture:

a) *alliteration, paronomasia*

καὶ γυμνοῖς ὀμιλήσαι τοῖς ἀσωμάτοις (or.28; PG 36, 44 A 13)

რადთამცა უცხორცოდ უცხორცოთა მათ და უნივთოდ უნივთოთა მათ მიეახლა და ეზრახა იგი (or.28; §13).¹²

b) *pleonasm*

Πέτρον ὕστερον, τὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἔρεισμα (or.9; PG 35, 820 B 2).

პეტრეს, საფუძველსა და სიმტკიცეს ეკლესიისა (or.9; §1)¹³.

c) *symmetry of period, epanaphoros*

(the use of *epanaphoros* here creates a well balanced symmetry of the period).

τὸ μὲν τοῖς πολλοῖς | καὶ κάτω μείνουσι, |

τὸ δὲ τοῖς ὀλίγοις, | καὶ ἄνω φθάνουσιν (or.28; PG 36, 29 A 1)

რამეთუ ერთი იგი მრავალთათვის არს | და რომელნი ქუემო დაშთომილ იყვნენ, | ხოლო მეორე იგი მცირედთათვის არს | და რომელნი ზემომიმწთომელ იყვნენ (or.28; §2).

In this example David Tbeli's inserted verb-predicates emphasize the symmetry all the more. The translator also renders Gregory of Nazianzus' crossed rhyme: *τοῖς πολλοῖς – τοῖς ὀλίγοις* (მრავალთათვის არს – მცირედთათვის არს), *μείνουσι – φθάνουσιν* (დაშთომილ იყვნენ – ზემომიმწთომელ იყვნენ).¹⁴

2. Devices based on meaning

a) *The trope – comparison*

Gregory of Nazianzus' works display a frequent use of comparisons of various kind. According to Maxime Guinet, the French researcher into Gregory of Nazianzus' creative work, such a frequent use of comparisons is usually characteristic of sophists. The main body of the comparisons used by Gregory of Nazianzus, like those of the sophists, are grouped around the two themes considered classical for pagan rhetoric: these are comparisons with the forces of nature (sun, sea, wind, fire, plants, etc.), while comparisons with technical skills comprise episodes related to seafaring, art of war, athletic games.

David Tbeli is rather cautious about rendering similar comparisons into his translations. He translates part of the comparisons related to technical skills, leaving out the rest. Thus e.g. in or.28 he translates the episode about arresting one's loquacity compared to bridling a horse (or.28; PG 36; 53 B 7-9). He also renders the horsemanship-related comparison of an enraged man likened to an unruly colt (or.2; PG 35; 440 A 4-9), but he leaves out the comparison of an almost similar nature in or.24 of a man given to carnal pleasures compared to an unrestrained colt (or.24; PG 35, 1177 C).

The study of the comparisons related to nature and natural phenomena has shown that most of them were not translated, while those that were, were only rendered in a rather contracted form. Thus e.g. all

¹¹ In all the quotations extracts of the Greek text we are using *Patrologia Graeca* of Migne. In the references for the Greek text we show the number of the sermon, number of the volume, column, division of the column and the line; as the Georgian translations are not published, we show only the number of sermon and number of the chapter (we have divided Georgian translations into chapters in accordance with the Greek original).

¹² See also: or.2; Gr. PG 35, 472 A 8-9 – Iber. or.2; §61; Gr. 421 A 12 – Iber. or.2; §12, etc.

¹³ See also: or.8; Gr. PG 35, 793 C 16 – 796 A 1 – Iber. or.8; §5; or.24; Gr. PG 35, 1173 B 1-2 – or.24; §3, etc.

¹⁴ See also: or.4; Gr. PG 35, 633 C 4-6 – Iber. or.4; §99; etc.

of chapter 85 is omitted in David Tbeli's translation of or.4 where the hatred of the Christians buried deep in Julian's heart is likened to the fire deep inside the volcano on Mt Etna, which strives to erupt and with a rumble reminds people of its existence (or.4; PG 35, 613 A 1 – B 6). On the whole, Gregory of Nazianzus makes a particularly frequent use of nature-related comparisons in his first denunciation of Julian; most of these were not translated by David Tbeli.

b) The trope – ekphrasis

Ekphrasis is the category of a narrative style, a narration with a purpose to present the story as a vivid picture to the reader/listener by means of breaking it up and detailing. Ekphrasis did not only use to be the favourite device of the rhetoricians but of their listeners as well. The trope was also widely used by Christian authors, as it was an excellent means to create an expressive image and to display the author's virtuosity.

Gregory of Nazianzus, too, makes quite a frequent use of ekphrasis, for this trope suits perfectly his artistic nature. By means of ekphrasis he creates profoundly impressive descriptions making the story more graphic. The trope recurs so often in Gregory of Nazianzus' writings that it is absolutely impossible to avoid them. Thus e.g. or.28, the second theological sermon, which, in fact, is a true hymn to the Lord's creation, is basically constructed with ekphrases. Translating the homily David Tbeli follows the original quite closely (the translation of this homily is closer to the original than those of the other homilies, which could be explained by the theological nature of the homily), consequently rendering almost fully Gregory of Nazianzus' lengthy and figurative ekphrases into his translations.

Ekphrases also occur in David Tbeli's translations of the other homilies.

However, the analysis of his translations shows that, like in the case of the comparisons, David Tbeli often tries to avoid rendering the ekphrases, or contracts them. It should suffice to cite a single, dry sentence in his translation – "The main concern of the shepherd is to find a shade, play his pipe and sleep in the (same) shade" – which substitutes for the description of the carefree life of a shepherd in or.2 (or.2; PG 35, 417 B11 – 420 A 4). In or. 28 he does not translate the ekphrasis from Chapter 25 about the honeycomb made by the bee and the web spun by the spider (PG 36, 60 C 5-9), etc.

c) Rhetorical questions

The abundance of rhetorical questions is one of the characteristic features of Gregory of Nazianzus' style. Remarkably, in some of the cases David Tbeli avoids translating the questions, offering the reader ready answers. We come across a striking example in the 36th homily, where Gregory of Nazianzus discourses on the changeable nature of man's perception depending on his condition. He says:

"Is he the ground stable for those who are giddy? Do the drunk know that the sober are sober and don't walk topsy-turvy, or sway from side to side? Doesn't the honey, which is not bitter, seem so to those who are sick and have lost their taste?" (or.36; PG 36, 273 C 1-5).

David Tbeli translates this passage as follows: "And I shall say, for those, who are in the normal condition, this world is stable and steady; and for those, who are drunk, [the world] seems to sway from side to side. And honey is not bitter, but very sweet. And there exists an illness, named Icterio. When one gets sick of this illness, for this person honey turns to be bitter. And its not like this in reality but for the sick person it seems to be so" (or.36; §7).

As we can see, David Tbeli does not only change the mood, he extends the story with additional information, as well, by naming the illness that deprives a man of his taste, and expounding once more that the sick man loses the taste precisely for his illness.

Thus, the material discussed has clearly demonstrated that David Tbeli does not often render the rhetorical figure used by Gregory of Nazianzus in a certain passage, but the same figure may crop up somewhere else in David Tbeli's translations, in a section which has no corresponding place in the original (the passage being an addition, or an extension by the translator). What should it all mean?

In our opinion this situation has resulted from David Tbeli's peculiar method of translation. The translator, as we have indicated above, creates a translation dynamically equivalent of the original, with a purpose to make the text as clear to the reader as possible. The formal characterizers of the text, or, in other words, lexical and syntactic devices of Gregory of Nazianzus' rhetorical style and their rendering in his translations are unimportant to David Tbeli. But all the same, he is a real and true translator described by Ephrem Mtsire with the epithet "great".¹⁵ He has a thorough knowledge of the matter to be translated; Gregory of Nazianzus, writings, their style, artistic value affect him deeply, he gets the feel

¹⁵ Manusc. A 292, 215v; Description of the Georgian Manuscripts containing works of Gregory of Nazianzus, Descriptions, Introduction and indexes by Th.Bregadze, Tbilisi, 1988, p.171 (in Georgian).

of the writing and its style, and so much so, that he spontaneously uses Gregory of Nazianzus' favourite rhetorical figures. Therefore, regardless of the fact that David Tbeli does not, in every concrete case, render the rhetorical figures used by Gregory of Nazianzus, he generally preserves and demonstrates the peculiarities of Gregory of Nazianzus' style in his translations.

At the same time, it must be borne in mind that the figures we have surveyed as devices typical of Gregory of Nazianzus' style remained as such only in the 4th century. The Cappadocian Fathers subjected rhetoric to Christian ideology and brought it in conformity with it, laying the foundation of Christian rhetoric. Consequently the figures characteristic of Gregory of Nazianzus' style – alliteration, paronomasia, pleonasm, symmetry of periods, comparison, ekphrasis and others – began to be widely used in Christian Greek literature from the 4th century onwards, and through translation spread to the literatures of other countries. Hence, we can assume that, in addition to the influence of the original text, Gregory of Nazianzus' rhetorical style was more or less preserved in David Tbeli's translations owing to the fact that by David Tbeli's time rhetorical devices had become an indispensable attribute of Christian literature. The best example of the foregoing is the metaphrastic literature in general and Simeon Metaphrast's creative work in particular. Simeon Metaphrast had undertaken to edit the old lives and stories of martyrdom of the saints with a view to improving their style, and it is noteworthy that in addition to translating Gregory of Nazianzus' homiletic works David Tbeli also translated Simeon Metaphrast's lives of the saints. Consequently the rhetorical style characteristic of the hagiographic and homiletic genres should not have been unfamiliar to him, though (unlike Gregory of Nazianzus' 16 sermons by Ephrem Mtsire) David Tbeli never took a special care to render the rhetorical style.