

The Georgian Milieu and the Metaphrastic Menologion: Three Accounts about Symeon Metaphrastes

Abstract

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The article investigates the reception history of the Metaphrastic menologion in the medieval Georgian milieu. The Georgian literati were the first non-Greeks to translate the metaphrastic hagiographical literature. Soon after Symeon Metaphrastes (also called Symeon the Logothetes; end of tenth century) finished his literary project, the Georgian monks at the monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos started translating not only Symeon's saints' lives but also adopted metaphrastic method and applied it to other texts. The tradition set in motion at Iviron was successfully continued and cultivated by Georgians in various parts of the Byzantine Empire, mainly in Constantinople and at the Black Mountain near Antioch. The increased interest of the Georgian learned monks in Symeon Metaphrastes' saints' lives demonstrates the popularity of Metaphrastic menologion and success of Symeon's literary project. The article focuses on several extant Georgian sources that provide unique information about Symeon Metaphrastes, his project and re-writing method. The accounts by Ephrem Mc'ire, Theophilos the Hieromonk, and Ioannes Xiphilinos the Younger that survive only in Georgian, shed new light on the history and trajectory of the metaphrastic movement. The accounts include manuscript colophons, commentaries, and prayers for the rulers. These testimonies allow one to understand why Georgians wholeheartedly embraced literary trends set in motion in the center of the Byzantine Empire.¹

Symeon Metaphrastes, a Byzantine court official and a literatus, re-writer/author of 148 saints' lives, could not have envisioned that the project he initiated would find such a wide reception in Byzantium and even spread beyond the imperial frontiers. Euthymios the Athonite, a learned Georgian monk from the Iviron monastery, translated several metaphrastic hagiographical texts into Georgian either during Symeon's lifetime or soon after his death. Despite the Georgian monks' early interest in metaphrastic saints' lives, the entire corpus of Symeon's menologion was translated into Georgian

only towards the end of the eleventh century. At this point in time, translation of Symeon's saints' lives took place almost simultaneously in two different parts of the Byzantine Empire, namely in Constantinople, and at the Black Mountain near Antioch. The Georgian translators, Theophilos the Hieromonk from Constantinople and Ephrem Mc'ire and his team from the Black Mountain, left invaluable accounts about Symeon and his rewritten hagiographical texts. Ephrem and Theophilos were contemporaries, and both held Symeon Metaphrastes in high esteem. The fact that the metaphrastic menologion enjoyed wide reception and great popularity in the Georgian milieu further indicates the success of Symeon's literary project.

We shall take a look at the early activities of Euthymios around the year 1000 before directing our attention to the more complete translations of the Metaphrastic corpus towards the end of the eleventh century.

Euthymios the Athonite, the first Georgian to appreciate the literary merit of the Metaphrastic menologion, translated at least nine metaphrastic saints' lives a decade after Symeon's death.² During his long monastic career, Euthymios translated more than 120 works from all genres of ecclesiastic literature: exegetical, homiletic, dogmatic, and canonical texts. To better understand why Euthymios busied himself with the translation of metaphrastic hagiographical texts, it is essential to recall the milieu in which his views and literary taste were formed.

Euthymios was of noble descent; his father was a close associate of Davit III *kouropalatēs*, the ruler of Tao. Young Euthymios was sent as a royal hostage to the court of Emperor Basileios II (r. 976–1025) and spent his teen-age years in Constantinople, where he received an up-to-date education (*Life of Ioane and Eptvime* 43; *Georgian Monks* 56). Euthymios could have met with Symeon Metaphrastes. While he was a hostage at the palace, Symeon was the *logothetes tou dromou*, overseeing the empire's foreign affairs. It could be that among Symeon's duties was closely watching high-ranking imperial hostages, especially children of foreign rulers and influential aristocrats, to make sure that they received proper treatment and education. One may hypothesize that a personal acquaintance with Symeon and knowledge about his literary activities encouraged Euthymios to translate several hagiographical texts and pioneer in applying the metaphrastic method to the texts he translated from Georgian into Greek. A case in point is *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, the Christian life of Buddha, which became a bestseller in Byzantium and one of the

2. Euthymios translated the following metaphrastic texts: *The Martyrdom of Clement of Rome*, *The Martyrdom of Prokopios*, *The Life of Anthony*, *The Life of George*, *The Life of Mary of Egypt*, and *The Life of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Kekelidze, *History* 207).

most popular and widely read texts in the Middle Ages (Volk 127–34; Khintibidze 192–280; Papaioannou 18). *Barlaam and Ioasaph* was transmitted to Latin Christendom and even translated into Old Norse in the thirteenth century.

Euthymios' *Barlaam and Ioasaph* was not merely a Greek translation of the Georgian *Balavar and Iodasap*; it was a new text, significantly longer than the Georgian original and full of dogmatic-polemical elements (Khintibidze 242). *Barlaam and Ioasaph* has all the features of metaphrastic hagiography. It is rhetorically embellished and contains multiple layers of different Christian canonical narratives and theological passages (Khintibidze 249, 270). Another fundamental feature of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* is that it includes fragments from metaphrastic texts (Kekelidze, *History* 187). Thus, Euthymios can safely be considered a Metaphrast and one of the earliest pioneers to employ a strategy similar to Symeon's (Kekelidze, *History* 190; Høgel, "Euthymios the Athonite" 353–64; Grossmann 87–94). The correlation between Euthymios' narrative and the metaphrastic saints' lives may indicate that the Athonite monastery of Iviron owned manuscript(s) containing Symeon's works. It is well known that soon after its foundation the Iviron monastery was able to build up a rich library. One of the earliest dated Greek metaphrastic manuscripts, ca. 1042, originates from Iviron (Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* 132).

A couple of decades after Euthymios' first translations, Giorgi the Athonite followed the venerated Iviron monk's example and translated several metaphrastic narratives himself on Athos (Kekelidze, *History* 230). Like Euthymios, Giorgi became *hegoumenos* of the Iviron monastery and earned reputation and respect through his literary activities. Giorgi translated more than one hundred texts into Georgian and composed original hagiography, the *Life of Ioane and Euthymios the Athonites*, which earned him sanctity and canonization. Georgian narratives fashion Giorgi the Athonite as continuator of Euthymios' legacy.

Giorgi the Athonite arrived at the Iviron monastery from the Black Mountain, sent with a special mission by his mentor, a learned monk and translator, Giorgi the Recluse. According to Giorgi the Athonite's biography, Giorgi the Recluse urged Giorgi the Athonite to continue his career on the Holy Mountain and complete the works that Euthymios had left unfinished. Giorgi the Recluse was aware that the Iviron monastery needed learned men and skilled translators (*Life of Giorgi the Athonite* 122; *Georgian Monks* 110). The story about Giorgi the Recluse's eagerness to help the Iviron monastery indicates close literary and personal connections between the Geor-

gian monastic communities of the Byzantine Empire.

Theophilos the Hieromonk's Metaphrastic Manuscripts

The earliest Georgian source that preserves rich information about Symeon and his saints' lives is the manuscript Ivir. georg. 20 (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 63–79). The manuscript contains metaphrastic texts and homilies for the month of September translated by a Georgian monk, Theophilos, in the monastery of Theotokos Peribleptos (Triantafyllou) in Constantinople in 1081. Theophilos, in the first lines of the manuscript, claims that he has translated the first book out of twelve metaphrastic books and hopes to complete all “twelve metaphrastic books with divine support” (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 76). According to Theophilos, the Metaphrastic menologion counted twelve books and the first book contained saints' lives for September. Theophilos' testimony contradicts contemporary evidence which suggests that the Metaphrastic menologion comprised ten rather than twelve volumes/books (Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* 133).

The only thing known about Theophilos – that he lived in the imperial capital and was active in the 1070s and 1080s – comes from his colophon, where he presents himself as a disciple of Giorgi the Athonite. Based on this account, it seems that Theophilos lived or started his monastic career at Iviron when Giorgi the Athonite was *hegoumenos* of the monastery and likely came to master his translation skills there. Whether he was educated at Iviron or in Constantinople remains unknown.

Theophilos also translated metaphrastic hagiographical texts for November and December. The saints' lives for October are lost (Goguadze, “Two Athonite” 32–37). Although we know that the Iviron monastery library catalogue, checked in 1830 and now lost, listed a metaphrastic manuscript for October (Goguadze, “Interrelation” 6). It may well be that the saints' lives for October were penned by Theophilos.

Of all these manuscripts, Ivir. georg. 20 is by-far the most important for information on Symeon Metaphrastes. It is a well-preserved manuscript and contains: 1) a table of contents, 2) Theophilos' long prologue about Symeon Metaphrastes, 3) metaphrastic hagiographical texts for September and three homilies, 4) Theophilos' two short

original poems, 5) and his long colophon (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 63–79).

The table of contents of the manuscript starts with the following words: “This is the table of contents of the book of metaphrasis, written in Greek by Symeon the Logothetes [*i.e.* Metaphrastes] and translated into Georgian by the sinner Theophilos the Hieromonk” (“ზანდუკი რჩეული წიგნისა ამის მეტაფრასისაჲ, აღწერილი ბერძნულად სანატრელისა მიერ სვემონ ლოლოთეტისა, ხოლო თარგმანებული ქართულად ცოდვილისა მიერ თეოფილე ხუცესმონაზონისა”: Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 72). The manuscript contains twenty-seven texts: twenty-four metaphrastic hagiographical texts, and three homilies. Two homilies are by Ioannes Damaskenos, and one is by Basil the Great. The homilies appear at the end of the manuscript, right after the last metaphrastic text, the *Life of Gregory the Illuminator* (30 September). Theophilos says that he translated all saints’ lives, twenty-four in total, from one Greek manuscript, but he consulted other manuscripts for the homilies.

Theophilos sounds concerned that he had to place the homilies (readings for 8 and 14 September) at the end of the manuscript. In a marginal note, however, he urges the individuals who may copy his manuscript in the future to correct this discrepancy by moving the three homilies from the end of the manuscript and placing them where they belong (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 70). Theophilos, unfortunately, does not identify the manuscript from which he translated the homilies of Damaskenos and Basil and what other texts this manuscript contained. We know that the earliest dated Greek metaphrastic texts appeared in a mixed manuscript, which contained metaphrastic saints’ lives and a selection of other texts (Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* 130).

Theophilos the Hieromonk about Symeon Metaphrastes

Theophilos’ prologue in the metaphrastic manuscript for September is a rare source that provides valuable information about Symeon’s literary project. Biographical data about the author of the metaphrastic saints’ lives are scarce in Theophilos’ prologue, but he relates that Symeon was a high-ranking courtier and the logothetes during the reign of Emperor Basileios II (r. 976–1025). Strangely, this crucial information never appears in Michael Psellos’ long and rhetorical en-

comium about Symeon (Fisher 193–202). A Byzantine learned man like Psellos, who held a high position at the court under several emperors (Konstantinos IX Monomachos, Konstantinos X, and Michal VII Doukas), strangely fails to inform his reader under which ruler Symeon served. It could be that Psellos avoids naming Basileios II because he was sure that his audience, comprised of learned men, already knew whose contemporary was Symeon.

Theophilos' prologue aims to explain to the reader/audience why metaphrastic texts are unique. It contains priceless information about the method that Symeon allegedly used to improve saints' lives. Theophilos begins his discourse with a pre-Christian Roman history and elaborates on how justice and the court system worked in antiquity. He claims that each criminal case went through the courts in the Roman Empire and the defendant's words were thoroughly documented. When the emperors started persecutions, Christians were brought before the courts. Each interrogation and execution was recorded with great precision. Afterward, the documents containing authentic accounts of the saints' interrogations, tortures, and executions were stored in the imperial archives and libraries and kept there for centuries (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 74–75).

Theophilos then argues that most of the pre-metaphrastic texts composed after saints' torture and execution were deficient. The martyrdom narratives often failed to account for the events accurately. The reason for this was that the stories about the saints were composed by individuals who never witnessed their protagonists' trials and executions but had heard the stories from others. On the other hand, those authors who witnessed saints' trials and executions were not educated enough to produce reliable accounts. As a consequence, pre-metaphrastic saints' lives "resembled an icon drawn on the wall with charcoal", *i.e.*, distorted, and ugly (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 74–75).

According to Theophilos, some accurate and trustworthy accounts about the saints' martyrdoms were stored in the imperial palace. Throughout the centuries, no single person with the divine wisdom, grace, and determination showed up to use these precious documents to provide the church with improved and uncorrupted accounts about the saints. Only during emperor Basileios' II rule emerged an astonishing man, Symeon, adorned with divine and human wisdom. He decided to rewrite saints' lives, eliminate deficiencies and corrupted parts, and thus bring these texts to deserved perfection. Symeon was a high-ranking courtier, *i.e.*, a logothetes. His position at the court allowed him to use first-hand and reliable ac-

counts kept in the imperial palace for centuries. Theophilus refers to metaphrastic saints' lives as the "pearl of the church" and states that Symeon's texts in Byzantine churches and monasteries enjoy respect similar to the Holy Scripture (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 75–76).

Besides eulogizing Symeon and elaborating about the differences between pre-metaphrastic and metaphrastic texts, Theophilus projects himself as the first translator of metaphrastic saints' lives. He explains why no one has done this before him. "Someone may pose a question: 'If the twelve metaphrastic books are so special and desirable, why did our father Euthymios and Giorgi the Athonites not translate them?' I can give the following answer [...] they were busy with more pressing matters and left these texts untranslated" ("ზოლო უკუეთუ ვინმე იტყოდის, თუ ვინაძთგან ესოდენ საწადელ არიან ათორმეტნი ესე წიგნნი მეტაფრასნი, რად არა თარგმნეს წმიდათა მამათა ჩუენთა: ეფთვიომი და გეორგი? მე ვაუწყო ჭემმარიტი მიზეზი [...] რამეთუ უფრო საჭიროთაგან არა სცალდა და ამისთვის დამთეს უთარგმანოდ": Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 76).

In this passage, Theophilus seems to try to excuse his teacher, Giorgi the Athonite, and Euthymios – venerated as an exemplary translator, illuminator of the Georgian church, and a "new Chrysostom" – for failing to translate the entire corpus of metaphrastic texts. He reinforces the idea, however, that metaphrastic literature has great value and that it was essential to have it in a Georgian translation.

The Georgian Royal Court and Metaphrastic Saints' Lives

Theophilus the Hieromonk's long colophon in Ivir. georg. 20 is equally important for studying the reception of metaphrastic hagiographical texts in Georgia. Theophilus gives details concerning the place and date of the manuscript's composition and lists the individuals who supported his work.

This metaphrastic book was translated in the royal city of Constantinople, in the beautiful monastery of the Mother of God of Triantafyllou, by the unworthy monk Theophilus, year 6589 from the creation of the world, Byzantine indikton four [*i.e.*, 1081]; during the reign in the east of Giorgi kesaros [*i.e.*, kaisar] son of Bagrat, on whose order I translated this

work from Greek into Georgian, and during the queenship of Marta in Byzantium, the sister of Giorgi, and the kingship of Nikephoros Botaniates and Alexi Komnenos ... and in the time when Mariam, Bagrat's daughter, came to Constantinople from the east.

((ითარგმნა უკუღ წიგნი ესე მეტაფრასი ქალაქსა შინა სამეფოსა კონსტანტინეპოლეს, მონასტერსა შინა ყოვლადშენიერსა ტრიანდაფილვის დედისა ღთისასა, უღირსისა მიერ თეოფილეს რეცა ხუცესმონაზონისა და მათვე ხელთა მიერ დაინუსხა დასაბამითგანთა წელთა ექუს ათას ხუთას ოთხმოცდა-მეცხრესა, ინდიკტონსა ოთხსა ბერძნულად; მეფობასა აღმოსავლეთს გიორგი კესაროსისა, ბაგრატის ძისა, რომლისა ბრძანებითა და მოლუაწეობითა ვიწყე თარგმნად წიგნთა საღმრთოთა ელენურისგან ქართულად [...] ხოლო საბერძნეთს დედოფლობასა მართა მისვე გეორგის დისასა და მეფობასა ნიკიფორე ბოტანიოტისა და ალექსი კომნიანოსისასა, მას ჟამსა, ოდეს ბაგრატის ასული მარიამ დედოფალი აღმოსავლეთით კონსტანტინოპოლეს შემოვიდა) (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 79).

As Theophilos relates, he started and completed his hagiographical collection in Constantinople, during the kingships of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078–81) and Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118).

Without doubt, the most valuable information in Theophilos' colophon is his claim that he translated the metaphrastic collection by order of King Giorgi II (r. 1072–89). It may be assumed that King Giorgi and his entourage approached Theophilos through the intermediary of his sister, Empress Maria of Alania, known for her literary patronage of Georgian and Byzantine learned men, and requested translations of saints' lives. Theophilos was chosen for this significant project because of his reputation in Constantinople as an eminent translator. It is remarkable that King Giorgi II, residing at the very edge of the Byzantine oikumene, made this kind of request to a Constantinopolitan monk, Theophilos. One might ask if Giorgi II wished to have in Georgian translation precisely the collection of metaphrastic hagiographical texts and question the extent to which the Georgian royal court knew about Symeon Metaphrastes' literary project. If one considers the close ties of the Bagratid kings with the

imperial court of Constantinople as well as the degree to which Georgian ecclesiastical culture was influenced by Byzantine tradition, this possibility cannot be ruled out.

What can be claimed with a high degree of certainty based on Theophilos' colophon is that the translation of metaphrastic texts was a royal project. King Giorgi II possibly wished to have the entire corpus of Symeon's saints' lives in Georgian. In the prologue of the manuscript, Theophilos hopes with divine support to carry out his project and translate all twelve books of metaphrastic saints' lives. We know that after completing the first book in ca. 1081, Theophilos continued working on translations; several metaphrastic texts by him for November and December have come down to us. Despite the scarce evidence, Theophilos probably fulfilled his dream, expressed in the proem of the manuscript, and translated all "twelve books of metaphrasis," *i.e.*, 148 saints' lives, or at least all volumes until that covering the month of December.

It is worth noting that besides Giorgi II, Theophilos mentions two other Bagratid royal family members in his colophon: Queen Marta (*i.e.* Byzantine Empress Maria of Alania) and "Queen Mariam, Bagrat's daughter." Theophilos refers to the Byzantine empress by her Georgian name of Marta: "I translated this work from Greek into Georgian, and during the queenship of Marta in Byzantium, the sister of Giorgi, and kingship of Nikephoros Botaniates and Alexi Komnenos" (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 79). Marta's (Maria of Alania) mention before the emperors, Nikephoros III and Alexios I, is noteworthy. By ca. 1081, Empress Maria of Alania was at the zenith of her power in the empire. She was one of the masterminds of the *coup d'état* that brought Alexios I Komnenos to power. After dethroning Nikephoros III Botaniates, Alexios considered marrying Maria of Alania, but he was persuaded to abandon this plan. By placing Marta's name before the Byzantine Emperors' names, Theophilos affirms that around 1081, a critical period for Byzantine power politics, Maria of Alania exerted considerable influence.

A third member of the Bagratid family referred to in the colophon – "Queen Mariam, Bagrat's daughter" – is King Giorgi II's and Maria of Alania's young sister. According to the text, Mariam arrived in Constantinople "from the east" (*i.e.*, the kingdom of Georgia) ca. 1081. Apart from the colophon, Theophilos refers to Queen Mariam in his prayer inserted at the end of *Martyrdom of Niketas the Goth*. "Beloved by God, those who will come and take this holy book, please pray for Queen Mariam, daughter of Bagrat, because she had

paid for the parchment of this book” (“საყუარელნო ღმრთისანო, ვისაცა მოიწიოს და ვინცა მიემთხვნეთ წმიდასა ამას წიგნსა, ლოცვა ყავთ სანატრელისა მარიამ დედოფლისათვს, ბაგრატის ასულია, რამეთუ ამის წიგნისა ეტრატისა ფასი მ...”: Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 66). This account highlights that Queen Mariam was among the commissioners of the metaphrastic manuscript.

Although Theophilos’ metaphrastic manuscript for September was ordered by the Georgian king and could have been prepared for the Bagratid royal court, it ended up on Athos, at the monastery of Iviron. It is difficult to trace the history of the manuscript’s movement and there are two possible hypotheses. First, the manuscript commissioned by King Giorgi II and his sister, Queen Mariam, was never meant to arrive in Georgia, but was a royal gift to the Iviron monastery library. A second hypothesis could be that Queen Mariam took Theophilos’ manuscript to Georgia in 1081. It is not clear why Queen Mariam came to the imperial capital in such a tumultuous time and what her mission was. Either she was visiting her elder sister, Empress Maria of Alania, or she had a diplomatic mission to solidify the political and military alliance between the imperial court and the Bagratid kings. If we assume that Queen Mariam brought the manuscript back to Georgia, the Bagratid royal court could have donated it to the Iviron monastery two or more decades later. The exchange and circulation of manuscripts between Iviron and Georgia was common, and Iviron maintained a close connection with monastic centers in Georgia and the Bagratid royal court. The Bagratid monarchy supported Iviron, and the monastery’s well-being was the cornerstone of the royal court’s policy of patronage.

There are strong grounds to suspect that Theophilos translated metaphrastic manuscript for the Georgian royal court rather than for the Iviron monastery. In the colophon and marginal note discussed above, Theophilos never hints that the manuscript was supposed to end up at the Iviron. The author emphasizes the role of the Georgian royal court. He names King Giorgi as a commissioner of his manuscript and expresses gratitude to Queen Mariam for her financial support. Georgian monks and scribes often noted in their colophons or marginal notes if a manuscript composed at a specific location was intended for somewhere else. For instance, the eleventh-century renowned translator, Giorgi the Recluse, in his colophon, clarified that the manuscript which he finished at the Black Mountain was a gift for his peer monks at the Iviron Monastery. Giorgi the Recluse claims that when he learned that the Iviron library lacked several saints’ lives

he decided to prepare and send the manuscript to his brethren on Athos. Therefore, if Theophilos had translated hagiographical texts for the Iviron monastic community he would have indicated this either in his colophon or marginal notes.

Another argument for why metaphrastic manuscript was created specifically for the royal court is the way Theophilos elaborates on Symeon Metaphrastes' method of rewriting and discusses the origin of metaphrastic saints' lives. Iviron Monastery had a rich and unique library and was a hub of manuscript production and an important center of translating activities (Metreveli, "Role of Athos" 259–67). Learned monks at this monastery zealously translated all genres of Byzantine ecclesiastic literature and they would have been well-informed about Symeon and his literary project. Therefore, Theophilos' proem served to inform those who had limited knowledge about Symeon and did not understand the differences between metaphrastic and pre-metaphrastic hagiographical texts. Such individuals are more likely to have been Giorgi II and his courtiers rather than monks at Iviron.

Theophilos' self-representing strategy may also indicate that the metaphrastic manuscript was meant for King Giorgi II. In his manuscript prologue, Theophilos attempts to enhance his self-image as a learned monk by fashioning himself as a student of Giorgi the Athonite (Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 74). As already pointed out, Giorgi the Athonite was not just a monk, but in the strict sense of the word, a Byzantine literatus, educated at the imperial court. Like Euthymios the Athonite, Giorgi belonged to a Georgian aristocratic family and was a high-ranking hostage during his teen years in Constantinople. According to his biographer, prominent Byzantine learned men were his teachers and after he completed his studies, he was competent enough to polemicize with ecclesial officials, the patriarch of Constantinople, and the emperor (*Life of Giorgi the Athonite* 118; *Georgian Monks* 107). Giorgi's translated texts and commentaries confirm his biographer's claim about his exceptional talent and erudition. King Giorgi II would have remembered Giorgi the Athonite from his teen-age years. The Iviron monk had visited Georgia at the invitation of King Bagrat IV (r.1027–72) in the 1060s and spent a few years at the royal court. He even served as a tutor to Prince Giorgi for a short period and may have impressed the future king. The extent to which Theophilos knew that he and King Giorgi shared the memory of knowing the charismatic and celebrated Iviron monk is far from easy to ascertain.

Theophilos did his best to display his learning and literary com-

petence to impress King Giorgi and thus secure his good disposition to receive further requests to translate manuscripts. Unfortunately, due to the lack of evidence, we cannot elaborate further on whether translated metaphrastic hagiographical texts were read during the royal liturgies in the presence of the Georgian rulers or during certain royal ceremonies served either at the court or main cathedrals of the kingdom.

The Black Mountain and the Metaphrastic Menologion

A decade after Theophilos finished his manuscript, another learned Georgian monk and accomplished theologian, Ephrem Mc'ire and his peers, Davit T'beli, Stephanos Sananoisze, and Arsen of Iq'alto, completed the translation of Metaphrastic saints' lives from their base at the eastern periphery of the Byzantine Empire – the Monastery of Kalipos at the Black Mountain, in the vicinity of Antioch. Ephrem's and his peers' metaphrastic translations are preserved in five manuscripts (Goguadze, "Interrelation" 6–7).

Biographical data on Ephrem Mc'ire is scarce, but it seems that he was educated in Constantinople and afterward moved to the Black Mountain. The corpus of Ephrem Mc'ire's translated works is as impressive as that of Euthymios and Giorgi the Athonites. Like them, Ephrem translated more than one hundred texts, which include the oldest extant translation of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's philosophical treatises (Khintibidze 27; Kekelidze, *History* 255).

In addition, Ephrem is the author of an original historiographic and polemic text, *Report on the Conversion of the Georgians and Books in which this is Mentioned*, which tells the story of the conversion of Georgia and highlights the reasons why the autocephaly of the Georgian church is canonical (Bregadze, 24–33). Ephrem based his historical work on accounts by Late Antique ecclesiastical historians such as Socrates, Sozomen, Theodor of Cyrus, and Rufinus. Ephrem's narrative reflects a fierce struggle between the Georgian and Greek monks on the Black Mountain a couple of decades earlier. Giorgi the Athonite, who happened to be on the Black Mountain at that time, managed to defend the orthodoxy of the Georgians. He persuaded the patriarch of Antioch of the apostolicity of the Georgian church. It seems, however, that tension grew again between the Georgian and the Greek monastic communities dur-

ing Ephrem's lifetime.

Ephrem Mc'ire earned fame and respect because of his innovative translation method, which diverged from the approach taken by Euthymios the Athonite, also followed by the Georgian monks of the Byzantine Empire (Bezarashvili, "From the Old" 102–10). Unlike Euthymios and his followers, who applied a so-called 'free' and reader-oriented translation method, Ephrem thought that the Georgian text should follow the Greek original as closely as possible. He often commented on and explained his translation method for the reader in his marginal notes and colophons. Ephrem wanted to clarify for the reader why he translated some parts of the texts in a certain way (Kekelidze, *History* 253–254; Tvaltvadze 8–12).

The earliest metaphrastic manuscript from the Black Mountain – Tbilisi, Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (GNCM), S collection, No. 384 – preserves hagiographical texts for three months, September, October, and November, and dates to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. The manuscript is damaged, lacks the first and the last several pages. The saints' lives for the dates from 1 to 11 September and 28 to 30 November and the colophon of the manuscript copyist/compiler are lost. Nevertheless, it contains several prayers and marginal notes of the authors, translators, and scribes (Metreveli, *Description* 1959, 462). Particularly valuable is Ephrem Mc'ire's prayer for the Georgian kings, Giorgi II and his son, Davit IV (r.1089–1125), inserted at the end of the *Martyrdoms of Akindynos, Pegasios, Anempodistos, Apthonios, and Elpidiphoros* (2 November). The text says: "Christ [...] glorify both rulers crowned by you, shining and invincible king of kings Giorgi and great kaiser, and his God-given son Davit, king and panhypersebastos; make him strong and invincible in his struggle against his enemies" (იესუ ქრისტე [...] ადიდე ორკერძოფთავე დიდებითა შენ მიერ გვირგვინოსანი, ბრწყინვალე და უძლეველი მეფეთა-მეფე გიორგი და მაღალი კესაროსი, და განამრავლენ წელნი მეფობისა მათისანი ნებისაებრ მათისა და [შენ] მიერ მონიჭებული ძე მათი დავით მეფე და პანიპერ სევასტოსი ადიდე და მძლე ყავ ყოველთა ზედა მტერთა და წინააღმდეგობთა) (Metreveli, *Description* 1959, 466).

So far, this is the only metaphrastic manuscript from the Black Mountain that refers to members of the Georgian royal house and contains a prayer for kings. The appearance of Giorgi II's and Davit IV's names in this manuscript raises a question of whether Ephrem Mc'ire translated the collection of hagiographical texts for the royal

court. Ephrem could have learned about Theophilos' literary project and may have decided to follow in his peer Constantinopolitan monk's suit and prepare a manuscript for the royal family. One will never know if that was the case due to the loss of the colophon of manuscript, which would contain details about the manuscript commissioner/s and relate for whom it was prepared.

Nonetheless, it is known for certain that the Georgian royal court held Ephrem's name in high esteem. The *synodikon* of the church council convoked by King Davit IV to reform the Georgian church in 1105 commemorates Ephrem Mc'ire posthumously (Gabidzashvili 196). Ephrem's name in a document of this significance highlights the scale of his reputation and implies that his authority was respected beyond the Black Mountain. It is noteworthy that Ephrem's disciple, Arsen of Iq'alto, an eminent theologian and renowned translator, became King Davit's close associate. Arsen moved to Georgia from the Black Mountain at royal invitation and enjoyed Davit's support. Throughout his ecclesiastical career in Georgia, Arsen continued his literary activities. He translated an impressive number of Greek texts and metaphrased a Georgian hagiographical text, the *Life of Saint Nino* (Kekelidze, *History* 273–84).

A second manuscript from the Black Mountain, GNCM, S–1276, is a collection of homiletic and hagiographic texts, and dates to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries (Metreveli, *Description* 1961, 136–42). The first half of the manuscript preserves thirteen homilies (f. 1–115), the majority of which were translated by Ephrem Mc'ire (Metreveli, "Ephrem Mc'ire's Autograph" 115–25; Goguadze, "Interrelation" 7–8). The other part includes several metaphrastic saints' lives for October (f. 117–220).

Ephrem Mc'ire on Symeon Metaphrastes

A third metaphrastic manuscript, GNCM, A–90, translated at the Black Mountain, preserves saints' lives for November, December, and January. This manuscript has immense value because it contains Ephrem's literary piece, *A Brief Reminiscence on Symeon Logothetes and the Story of Those Responsible for the Translation of the Present Readings*, a rare source that tells essential information about the producer of the Metaphrastic menologion and his literary project. Ephrem's narrative about Symeon is the thirteenth text in the manuscript, following the *Life of Melania of Rome*, commemorated on

December 31 (Metreveli, *Description* 1973, 318).

Ephrem, in his encomium, says much more about the trajectory of Symeon's career than his contemporary, Theophilus, does. Although both Georgian monks state that Symeon was Basileios' contemporary, it is only Ephrem who relates that the producer of the Metaphrastic menologion earned fame in the sixth year of Basileios' reign, *i.e.* ca. 982. More importantly, Ephrem elaborates about circumstances that caused Symeon's downfall and led to the prohibition of his menologion in the entire empire. Ephrem states that the cause of Basileios' wrath was a particular passage in the metaphrastic version of the *Life of Theoktiste of Lesbos*, which stated that the glorious days of the empire were over after the death of Emperor Leon VI (r. 886–912). The hagiographical text allegedly implied that the Byzantine Empire had been in decline since Leon VI, which hurt Basileios II's ego. As Ephrem relates, Emperor Basileios II had manuscripts of the Metaphrastic menologion burned and prohibited their reading in churches and monasteries. During Basileios' rule, Symeon's lives were read in secret, predominantly in the houses. Churches and monasteries only resumed their use after Basileios' death (Kekelidze, "Symeon Metaphrastes" 224–25).

It is implausible that a passage in the metaphrastic *Life of Theoktiste of Lesbos* which did not reflect historical reality brought an end to Symeon's career. During the rule of Basileios II and his two predecessors, Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–69) and Ioannes I Tzimiskes (r. 969–76), the empire had regained the status of a supra-regional power and was at the zenith of its political and military might. Although Basileios faced challenges, and some may have doubted his leadership capabilities at the beginning of his reign, he proved to be one of the most impressive rulers in Byzantine history. In contrast, the empire of Leon VI was not a match for Byzantium as revived by Basileios II, Nikephoros II, and Ioannes I.

Ephrem does not say precisely when Symeon fell out of favor with the emperor. This may have happened after 985 as a consequence of Basileios the *parakoimomenos*' downfall. Up until 985, Basileios II was in the shadow of influential players, including Basileios the *parakoimomenos*, a high-ranking imperial official famous for his literary and artistic patronage. It is possible that Symeon was Basileios the *parakoimomenos*' protégé and lost favor after *parakoimomenos* was banished (Magdalino 123).

Ephrem would not have invented this story; without a doubt he based it on a contemporary account that seemed reliable to him. In

the eleventh century, Antioch was closely connected with the imperial capital, which facilitated the spread of news about significant events that happened in Constantinople. Nevertheless, the empire's periphery sometimes received distorted information.

It is worth re-emphasizing that Ephrem seems more informed on the trajectory of Symeon's career than his contemporary Constantinopolitan monk, Theophilos. It is difficult to suggest the reason why Theophilos never mentions the details outlined by Ephrem. The two Georgian accounts have one thing in common; neither of them relates that Basileios II commissioned Symeon's literary project. Furthermore, one cannot find a single marginal note or colophon in surviving Georgian manuscripts that would hint at Basileios II's involvement in the production of metaphrastic literature. The lack of this information in Theophilos' and Ephrem's narratives as well as in Georgian metaphrastic manuscripts further strengthens Høgel's belief that Basileios II did not support Symeon's work, which makes the imperial origin of the Metaphrastic menologion doubtful (Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* 129).

In his *Brief Reminiscence on Symeon Logothetes*, Ephrem characterizes Symeon as the most learned person of his time, well-versed in secular "pagan" and ecclesiastical wisdom. In contrast to Psellos' and Theophilos' accounts, which assume that rewriting the saints' lives was done at Symeon's initiative, Ephrem argues the contrary. He relates that "believers" used to beg Symeon – endowed with divine and human wisdom – to rewrite and improve the saints' lives. The main reason for this request to Symeon was that the saints' lives written in the past were corrupted by heretics and evil men and thus lost their firsthand simplicity and purity. After being persuaded, Symeon took it upon himself to rewrite the lives: "he put in front of him the old martyrdom acts, called *kimeni*,³ and metaphrased them" (Kekelidze, "Symeon Metaphrastes" 223). According to Ephrem, Symeon made two types of improvements: he cleaned deficiencies from the saints' lives – eliminating specific phrases and words – and introduced more elevated and rhetorical language. While Ephrem considers stylistic improvement as the main merit of Symeon's works, Theophilos argued that Symeon consulted reliable sources and documents stored in the imperial palace when rewriting the saints' lives. This is not to say, however, that Theophilos did not appreciate the high-register language and rhetorical style of the hagiographical texts.

Ephrem also emphasizes that Symeon's literary pieces enjoyed

3. *Kimeni*, borrowed from Greek κείμενον, was a generic term used by medieval Georgian monks and learned men to refer to pre-metaphrastic saints' lives.

great popularity in Byzantium and beyond. According to his account, the saints' lives were read in all the churches and monasteries of the empire: "And let it be known that his improved writings were accepted by all churches, across the borders and frontiers" (ხოლო ესე საცნაურ იყავნ. ვითარმედ ყოველნივე წერილნი, მის მიერ განკარგულნი, სრულიად უცთომელ არიან და შეწყნარებულ ყოველთა მიერ ეკლესიათა...: Kekelidze, "Symeon Metaphrastes" 224). Ephrem's statement concerning the wide dissemination of metaphrastic saints' lives in Byzantium is in line with Theophilos' prologue which states: "This illustrious man [Symeon] gave these twelve books of metaphrasis, a pearl, to the churches of Byzantium for free. And all churches are reading these texts and getting illuminated through them. These books receive the same honor and respect as Gospels" (ამან სანატრელმან აღუწერნა ქრისტეანეთა ათორმეტნი ესე წიგნი მეტაფრასნი, და მიანიჭა ეკლესიათა საბერძნეთისათა უსასყიდლოდ ესე მარგალიტი, რომლისათვისცა ყოველნი ეკლესიანი მას იკითხვენ და მითა განათლდებიან, და სწორად სახარებისა პატივ-სცემენ: Metreveli, *Description* 1986, 75–76).

Ephrem also thought it essential in *A Brief Reminiscence on Symeon Logothetes* to name the Georgian monks who had translated metaphrastic texts before him. From his account, we learn that Giorgi the Athonite and Davit T'beli had translated several metaphrastic saints' lives in the past. Strangely enough, however, Ephrem fails to mention Euthymios the Athonite and his contemporary, Theophilos, who, a decade earlier, had completed a metaphrastic manuscript, *Ivir. georg.* 20, by the order of King Giorgi II.

Apart from *A Brief Reminiscence on Symeon Logothetes*, Ephrem talks about Symeon and the metaphrastic method in his note inserted at the end of the *Life of Menas of Egypt*:

Holy fathers, the martyrdom of St. Menas had already been translated from kimeni – this is the name of the ancient book of martyrs described in simple language. And now it has been translated once again from a metaphrasis by the order of Basil, a leader of Kalipos, because ... he preferred to have the one by Symeon the Logothetes, embellished and ornamented which is called metaphrasis.

(წმიდანო მამანო, ესე წმიდისა მინაჲს წამებაჲ იყო ძუელადაცა თარგმნილი კიმენისგან, რამეთუ ესრეთი ეწოდების პირუჭელ ლიტონად აღწერილსა წიგნსა

მოწამეთასა, ხოლო აწ ესე ითარგმნა ახლად
 მეტაფრასისაგან ბრძანებითა კალიპოსელთა
 წინამძღურისა ბასილისითა, რამეთუ მას [...] ირჩია
 ლოლოთეტისა სვმეონის შეკაზმულისა
 მოწმეთადაგან, რომელსა მეტაფრას ეწოდების)
 (Metreveli, *Description* 1959, 467).

Symeon and the metaphrastic method are also mentioned in Ephrem's preface to manuscript, GNCM, A-24. The manuscript is not a collection of metaphrastic saints' lives but contains various theological texts. In the long preface to Ioannes Damaskenos' *Fountain of Knowledge*, Ephrem appeals to the reader/audience and warns them:

Do not expect this text to be as ornated and embellished as that of Symeon the Logothetes and other Byzantine learned men, who find the lives of martyrs, saints, or other stories written in a secular and straightforward language and improve on the words and use elaborate language. They called it metaphrasis, which means decorating, and they do it only when the author of the story was a simple and not an erudite man. Most of the accounts of martyrdom of saints had been written by men who have witnessed the events, and they stated the words which the martyrs had pronounced. Therefore, they neither added nor removed anything in their words. However, nobody dares to touch or change the words of the holy orthodox fathers, like those in the Gospels and in the epistles of Paul the Apostle, no matter how simple the language is.

(კვალად ესეცა საცნაურ იყავნ, ვითარმედ არა ჯერ-
 არს, რათა სხვსა ვისგანმე შეკაზმულად ვჰგონებდეთ
 წიგნსა ამას. ვითარ იგი გუასმიეს სვმეონ
 ლოლოთეტისა, და სხვადათა მეცნიერთა ბერძენთაგან
 კაზმვად, ანუ რომელთადა ულონოდ არს, რამეთუ იპოოს
 თუ ცხოვრებადა ანუ წამებადა ანუ რადცარადა ჰამბავი გინა
 მოთხრობადა სოფლურითა და უმუჭრითა სიტყვთა
 აღწერილი, მას სიტყვთა განაშუჭნებენ, გარდაჰკაზმენ
 და მეტაფრას უწოდებენ, რომელს არს
 გარდაკაზმული. და ამასცა მაშინ ჰყოფნ, ოდეს
 აღმწერელი ჰამბვისა მის ლიტონი კაცი იყოს და არა
 წიგნთაგანი: ვითარ-იგი უმრავლესთა წმიდათა
 წამებანი თანადახდომილთა მონათა ვიეთგანმე
 აღწერილ იყვნენ, მას შეჰკაზმავენ ესე-ვითარითა

სიტყვთა, რომელი მასვე პირსა იტყოდის და არა
შეჰმატებდეს არცა დააკლებდეს საქმეთა; ხოლო წ~თა
თქუმულსა და მართლმადიდებელთა მამათა
აღწერილსა ვერავინ იკადრებს შეხებად, ვითარცა წ~ა
სახარებასა და ებისტოლეთა პავლე მოციქულისათა,
რაოდენცა ლიტონითა სიტყვით აღწერილ იყოს...)
(Metreveli, *Description* 1973, 84).

Ephrem sets a strict limit on the use of the metaphrastic method. As he argues in this preface to a theological treatise by Ioannes Damaskenos, one should be careful when dealing with church fathers' works and canonical texts and never attempt to embellish them. Metaphrasing applies only to the lives of the saints and martyrs.

Based on the manuscript evidence from the Black Mountain and on Ephrem Mc'ire's accounts, it turns out that Georgian learned monks considered metaphrastic hagiographical texts an integral part of the ecclesiastical literature, the translation of which into Georgian was thought to be crucial. The program of reception of the Byzantine heritage set into motion by Euthymios the Athonite at Iviron was raised to a new level and was continued successfully by Georgian monks from the Black Mountain. Most of the metaphrastic saints' lives that emanated from the vicinity of Antioch were translated by Ephrem, and a few by Davit T'beli, Stephanos Sananoisze, and Arsen of Iq'alto, Ephrem's disciple who continued his legacy in the twelfth-century Georgian kingdom.

Ioannes Xiphilinos the Younger about Symeon Metaphrastes

Yet another source that contains essential information about Symeon the Metaphrastes and his Metaphrastic menologion is Ioannes Xiphilinos the Younger's hagiographic collection for the second half of the year (summer months). Ioannes Xiphilinos the Younger, a learned man and a nephew of Patriarch Ioannes Xiphilinos, rewrote and metaphrased the saints' lives which Symeon Metaphrastes did not manage to finish. Unlike Symeon's metaphrastic hagiographical texts, preserved in more than seven hundred Greek manuscripts, the original of Xiphilinos' work is lost, and it survives only in a Georgian translation. It is difficult to explain why Xiphilinos' literary project, which was meant to be equally significant as Symeon's, failed to enjoy a wide reception in the Byzantine Empire. While most of the sur-

viving Georgian metaphrastic manuscripts were produced in Constantinople, Athos, and the Black Mountain, Xiphilinos' corpus was most likely translated in twelfth-century Georgia at the monastic school of Gelati, the eminent center of scholarly and translating activities. Xiphilinos' translated hagiographical texts are preserved in late sixteenth-century manuscripts commissioned by Evdemon Čxetiṣe (1543–78), *katholikos* of Apxazeti (western Georgia). Evdemon collected hagiographical manuscripts scattered across western Georgia. With his financial support, a team of scribes compiled a new manuscript collection containing the hagiographical narratives for the entire year, including metaphrastic texts by Symeon Metaphrastes (Gogvadze, "The Commissioners" 160–65).

These sixteenth-century manuscripts contain not only Ioannes Xiphilinos' saints' lives but also his long colophon addressing Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118). The anonymous Georgian scribe thought it essential to translate and preserve Xiphilinos' encomiastic colophon.

Ioannes Xiphilinos' colophon consists of two parts. The first part, couple of lines, informs the reader/audience about the content and the author of the manuscript:

A wise philosopher Xiphilinos, the chief among the bookish men of the royal court, metaphrased (which means enlarging and embellishing) from old *kimeni*, which is also called *mraval-tavi*, martyrdoms, lives and deeds and achievements of the saints, commemorated during the seven months of the year that are: February, March, April, May, June, July and August.

(შუდთა მათ თთუეთა, რომელ არიან ფებერვალ:
მარტი: აპრილი: მაისი: ივნისი: ივლისი და
ავღუსტოსი. ამათ შინა მოკსენებულთა წმიდათა
ცხოვრებათა და მოქალაქეობათა. და წამებათა და
ღუაწლთა. ძუელისა კიმენისაგან. რომელსა ვიეთნიმე
მრავალთავადცა უწოდენ. გარდამეტაფრასმქნელისა.
ესეიგი არის განმავრცელებელისა და
შემამკობელისა. პალატისა მწიგნობართა უაღრესისა.
ყოვლად ბრძნისა ფილოსოფოსისა. ქსიფილინოსისა)
(Kekelidze, "Ioannes Xiphilinos" 235).

The second and the longest part of the colophon elaborates on several issues. In the first lines Xiphilinos addresses Alexios I Komnenos and states that he completed metaphrasing *i.e.*, enlarging and expand-

ing saints' lives for seven months with divine support. He presents his work to Alexios and asks him to evaluate it. Xiphilinos tells the emperor that he wholeheartedly follows the established practice according to which every author is obliged to mention a ruling emperor's name in his work to avoid accusations of disloyalty towards the basileus. After this statement, Xiphilinos embarks on praise for Alexios' military prowess and victories achieved through his leadership against his enemies. He claims that Alexios' stunning victories has secured peace and guaranteed stability and prosperity in the empire, creating a fertile environment for learned men to dedicate themselves to literary activities. Xiphilinos further relates that if Alexios had failed in his efforts to deal a severe blow to the empire's adversaries, he would not have finished the work which he now presents to the emperor (Kekelidze, "Ioannes Xiphilinos" 235).

After Xiphilinos ends lauding Alexios as a savior of the empire, he starts explaining the differences between pre-metaphrastic and metaphrastic hagiographical texts. He states that in the past, saints' lives – which had been read in the churches for centuries – were written by men who did not use ornate words and elevated language. Instead, they wrote brief texts about the saints in a simple way. Xiphilinos tells Alexios that in contrast to the older saints' lives, he offers him metaphrastic saints' lives, and explains the meaning of "metaphrasis" as rewriting and enlarging:

The present work of mine, o emperor, is a metaphrasis which means an expansion and enlargement of the short saints' lives from the books of *mravaltavi*. This work is different from the lives of saints (venerated and remembered every day in the catholic church) preserved in *kimeni*, composed by men in the past in a simple style, who did not bother to use high-register language.

(ხოლო არს ესე ნაშრომი ჩემი ჟ მეფე ძუელთა უკუე და პატოიხანთა ყოვლითურთ რწმუნებისა ღირსთა კაცთაგან...ენითა მსოფლელთაძთა შეწყობილთა საკითხავთა. კათოლიკე ეკლესიისა მიერ დღითიდღეთა ვსენებათა შინა პატივცემულთა ყოველთა წმიდათასა. ესეიგი არს მრავალთავად წოდებულსა წიგნსა შინა შემოკლებით და ლიტონად აღწერილთა წამებათა გარდამეტაფრასებად)(Kekelidze, "Ioannes Xiphilinos" 237).

After making a distinction between pre-metaphrastic – referred to in Georgian translation as *kimeni* – and metaphrastic saints’ lives, Xiphilinos switches to another topic and introduces Symeon Metaphrastes to Alexios. He presents Symeon as a learned court official and exemplary rhetorician, adorned with all virtues. Xiphilinos emphasizes that Symeon was the first man to have “metaphrased and enlarged” the saints’ lives through the thorough and correct interpretation of the sources that contained the ancient accounts about the martyrs. The colophon further contends that Symeon metaphrased saints’ lives to save them from neglect and oblivion. According to Xiphilinos, pre-metaphrastic saints’ lives had not enjoyed great respect among believers, who thought they resembled secular texts due to their poor language and style. The ‘grammarians’ were particularly critical and disrespectful of these texts (Kekelidze, “Ioannes Xiphilinos” 238). Like Psellos and Ephrem Mc‘ire, Xiphilinos accentuates that the literary qualities such as elevated and rhetorical language were distinctive features of Symeon’s hagiographical texts. Xiphilinos does not hide his intention to become equal to Symeon and fashions himself as a continuator of his legacy. He explains to Alexios that Symeon metaphrased saints’ lives only for the winter months, while he himself succeeded in rewriting lives for the rest of the year – February to August.

Of utmost significance in the colophon addressing Emperor Alexios I Komnenos is information about the audience and readership of the hagiographical texts. Xiphilinos makes a statement that he plans to give his saints’ lives to the churches and monasteries of the empire and before doing so he wants Alexios’ approval. Xiphilinos sounds confident that the collection of his hagiographical texts for the second half of the year will enjoy wide reception in the empire and be as widely read and used as Symeon Metaphrastes’ works (Kekelidze, “Ioannes Xiphilinos” 235–36). Based on the minimal manuscript evidence, however, it seems that his plan to make his metaphrased saints’ lives as popular as Symeon’s failed. Had his works enjoyed as wide reception as the author wished, more Greek manuscripts would be extant, but, as I have already pointed out, Xiphilinos’ metaphrastic corpus survives only in a Georgian translation. It is hard to know what hampered the popularization of Xiphilinos’ ambitious project. It is improbable that Emperor Alexios Komnenos, to whom the work was presented, disapproved of it. The fact that Xiphilinos’ work was translated into Georgian in the first half of the twelfth century, shows that metaphrastic saints’ lives for the summer months had some circulation in the Byzantine Empire and were not completely marginalized.

Conclusion

Learned Georgian men's interest in metaphrastic saints' lives in the tenth and the eleventh centuries demonstrates the scale of the reception of Byzantine ecclesiastical culture and literature in Georgian milieus. The fascination of Georgians with the metaphrastic saints' lives of Symeon Metaphrastes is clear, and Ioannes Xiphilinos shows that the literary trend set in motion in the very center of the empire through the intermediary of Georgian monastic communities throughout Byzantium was also transmitted to the Georgian kingdom. Euthymios the Athonite, an erudite Georgian theologian and translator, pioneered in translating several metaphrastic hagiographical texts, applying the metaphrastic method also to the Greek *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, thus becoming a Metaphrastes himself. Giorgi the Athonite continued Euthymios' legacy.

In the second half of the eleventh century, Theophilos the Hieromonk and Ephrem Mc'ire attempted to translate the entire corpus of metaphrastic hagiographical texts in two different parts of the Byzantine Empire, in Constantinople and at the Black Mountain respectively. Without a doubt, this inclusion of Symeon's Metaphrastic menologion into the Georgian literary world encouraged Georgian learned men to rewrite and paraphrase original Georgian hagiographical material.

Based on the scrutiny of various Georgian accounts about Symeon Metaphrastes and his menologion, it is apparent that Georgians started to consider metaphrastic saints' lives as sacred texts and part of the Byzantine holy canon. For this reason, the Georgian royal court took an interest in the Metaphrastic menologion and initiated its translation during the rule of Giorgi II. On the Black Mountain, Ephrem Mc'ire may have also translated metaphrastic texts for Georgian kings. His prayer for Giorgi II and his son, Davit IV, in a metaphrastic manuscript indicates a connection between the Bagratid royal court and the Georgian monastic community of the Black Mountain.

The translation movement that flourished among Georgian learned ecclesiastics in various parts of the Byzantine Empire in the tenth and the eleventh centuries had a clear-cut agenda. Many Georgians considered the translation of Byzantine texts into Georgian as a sacred mission. As highlighted by Giorgi Mc'ire in his hagiography, the *Life of Giorgi the Athonite*, the extensive translation and subsequent reception of these Byzantine/Christian narratives served to increase literacy and education among the Georgians and make them

as wise as Byzantines. In Giorgi's view, after the Georgians succeeded in embracing the Byzantine/Christian heritage, the Byzantines no longer had the right to call them barbarians (*Life of Giorgi the Athonite* 108; *Georgian Monks* 101).

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