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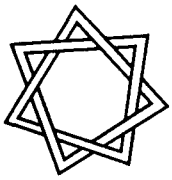

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PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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AN ILLUSTRATED COPY OF A GEORGIAN TRANSLATION OF "KALILA AND DIMNA"*

The first Georgian manuscript was brought to Russia in 1773. This unique manuscript is, in essence, an entire collection of materials on the history of Georgia. The copyist entitled the collection "A Small 'Life of Georgia'". The manuscript was given as a gift to the Russian Academy of Sciences by Academician J. Güldenstedt [1]. In 1818, when the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences was formed, this manuscript was among the first items in the manuscript collection of the Museum, which later constituted the base for the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies holdings. Subsequently, the number of Georgian manuscripts increased, and at present the collection contains some 500 manuscripts in the Georgian language; earlier they belonged to Georgian and Russian scholars and bibliophiles and were given to the Academy of Sciences.

Two manuscripts of "Kalila and Dimna", represented in this Georgian collection, occupy a special place. Like other items in this collection, both entered it as gifts. One manuscript M53 is from the collection of M. Brosset; the second was presented to the Asiatic Museum in 1839 by a corrector at the Synodal printing-press in Moscow, the bibliophile Pyotr Ivanovich Kebadze. We do not discuss manuscript M53 here, although it is of considerable interest for the history of translations of "Kalila and Dimna" into Georgian. Our concern is the second manuscript (call number P2), which contains a completed version of the text present in manuscript M53. What is particularly interesting with regard to this manuscript is that, as we know, it was ordered from copyists and artists by the Georgian King Vakhtang VI (1675—1737) as a display manuscript. So far, a facsimile copy of this manuscript has not been published. The present article is devoted to this manuscript.

The triumphal success of the original work which acquired the title "Kalila and Dimna", as well as its wide spread in the Near East and Europe, are well known. After appearing in ancient India around 1000 B.C., the edifying stories and tales which make up the heart of the collection were slowly transmitted in oral form, acquiring new plots and details. Many of them became a part of *jātaka* collections, the canon of the Jains, and literary works of ancient and medieval India. It is possible that their first codification in the collection *Pañcatāntra* ("Five Books") should be dated to the fourth century A.D. [2]. The name of the compiler is not known.

According to Indian tradition, the *Pañcatāntra* was viewed as "instructions on wisdom", a "textbook" for heirs to the throne, as we learn from the introduction to the collection. Several versions of the *Pañcatāntra* are known — Kashmiri, Jain, and Buddhist. In the eleventh — twelfth centuries A.D., the Sanskrit version was translated into numerous New Indian languages.

The spread of the *Pañcatāntra* beyond the borders of India dates to the sixth century A.D., when the Persian ruler Khusraw Anūshīrwān ordered it translated into Pahlavi. In the same century, a translation was made from Pahlavi into Syriac; in the eighth century, 'Abdallāh b. al-Muqaffa' translated it into Arabic. In the process of numerous translations from one language into another, the work acquired a new title: "Kalila and Dimna". This is first attested in the Arabic translation. Kalila and Dimna are the names of two wily jackals who plot and cause conflict, ignoble deeds, and various foolish acts in people and animals. Their names arose through a distortion of the Sanskrit names for the jackals in the first book of the *Pañcatāntra*: Karaṭaka (lit. "dark-red") and Damanaka (lit. "suppressor").

Only in the late fifteenth — early sixteenth century was the *Pañcatāntra* translated from Arabic into New Persian; it spread further under the title *Anwār-i suhaylī* ("Luminaries of Kanop"). Its translator and literary editor was Ḥusayn Wā'iẓ Kāshifī. This translation served as the basis for the Georgian version, as is indicated by its title:

კარი პირველი. ქილილა და დამანასი. სპარსულისაგან ქართულად ნათარგმანები. მეფის ვახტანგისაგან

"First chapter. [Beginning of the] "Kalila and Dimna", translated from the Persian into Georgian by King Vakhtang" [3].

* The description of Georgian manuscript P2 which forms the basis for this article was prepared in the early 1960s by the late Rusudana Rubenovna Orbeli, a member of the Institute of Oriental Studies, for the book *Gruzinskie rukopisi Instituta Vostokovedeniia* (Georgian Manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies), fasc. 2. The work was never published. R. R. Orbeli's materials were here employed and published for the first time by M. I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya.

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Fig. 1

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Fig. 2

Fig. 3

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Manuscript P 2 contains the third, final version of the third Georgian translation of the "Kalila and Dimna". The first translation of the "Kalila and Dimna" into Georgian, carried out in the eleventh — twelfth century, has not come down to us. Neither the name of a translator nor the language from which the translation was made are known. The second translation (from New Persian) appeared at the end of the sixteenth century. Its author was the king of Kakhetia David. His translation remained incomplete. Manuscripts with this translation have been preserved in collections in Georgia. Subsequently, the Georgian king Vakhtang VI employed it for a new, third translation (in the first version). It has also been preserved in Georgia. This third translation is known in four eighteenth-century versions and one from 1839. The three basic full versions date to the period from 1712 to no later than 1724. Vakhtang VI worked on the first version with two assistants from 1712—1714 in Isfahan. Between 1714 and 1716 Vakhtang translated the entire book anew in Kerman. This second work was entirely in prose (except the first eight verses); the remaining verses present in the original text were merely marked by Vakhtang with the word "verse".

The third version which belongs to Saba Sulhan Orbeliani (1659—1725), a statesman, poet, and translator, took shape on the basis of the second Vakhtang's translation and was executed at the latter's request. In all likelihood, Saba Sulhan Orbeliani worked on his translation from 1717 to 1724 in Georgia. This translation retains the division of the text into 14 chapters. All of the verse sections of the text — and they make up a considerable part of "Kalila and Dimna" — were this time executed in verse. The prose section was reworked in literary fashion. The style of this third translation, represented in our manuscript (P2), is distinguished by the poetic nature, ease, and clarity of its exposition. In addition to our manuscript, there are also six copies in Georgian collections, although not all of the copies are complete and not one of them is adorned with miniatures.

Manuscript P2 from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies contains valuable information on the history of the text preserved in the manuscript. The work's 14 chapters are prefaced by: 1) introductory strophes by Vakhtang VI, left unchanged by Sabo Sulhan Orbeliani (fol. 2a; we note that these were the strophes that Vakhtang translated for the second version); 2) a foreword from *Anwār-i suhaylī* (fols. 2a—6a), which confirms that it was precisely this Persian translation which served as the basis for the Georgian translation; 3) a foreword by Vakhtang VI himself, called "Testament" in the text (fols. 6b—7b); 4) a table of contents to the book's 14 chapters (fol. 8a). At the end of the text (fols. 332b—333a), we find concluding strophes translated by Vakhtang VI and his note that Sabo Sulhan Orbeliani took part in editing the translation.

But what is exceptional about manuscript P2 is that it is lavishly adorned with all sorts of miniatures; 334 folios contain 804 miniatures. In effect, each tale is illustrated by an entire series of miniatures grouped in blocks. Each block presents the development of the tale's plot and consists of 4—6 illustrations or even more. The illustrations betray the strong influence of the Persian school of miniature painting. The manuscript was possibly adorned by two artists. The miniatures in the first half appear more sophisticated; in the second half of the manuscript, they are less vivid and sometimes seem uncompleted. Besides, the miniatures bear traces of later work: in some, the background is covered with black paint, which was not originally used by the artists; black paint sometimes covers entire miniatures (miniatures on fols. 58b, 91b, 92b, 164b, 175b, 177a, 178a, 180b, 197a, 234a, 263a, 282b, 305b). Some years ago, one of the manuscript's Georgian readers suggested to us that these alterations may have stemmed from a desire to block out certain inscriptions which displeased the manuscript's owners. But a close analysis of the miniatures shows that there is no text beneath the black paint.

It is interesting, folio 3a contains a portrait of Vakhtang VI and Saba Sulhan Orbeliani. Moreover, depictions of Vakhtang adorn many other folios of the manuscript, mainly in illuminations to specific chapters. The names of the artists and place where the miniatures were executed remain unknown.

Another characteristic of the manuscript is its outstanding calligraphic hand — small *mkhedruli*. The manuscript was copied in black Indian ink; headings and first words are highlighted in red Indian ink. The manuscript's copyist was Melkhisedek Kavkasidze. He worked on it between 1724 and 1737. The following facts indicate this. The portrait of Saba Sulhan Orbeliani was apparently painted from life; in all likelihood, the copying of the manuscript began in Georgia in 1724. It is unlikely that this occurred later, in Astrakhan, to which Vakhtang and Saba Sulhan Orbeliani repaired after 1724. The latter died in 1725. The completion of copying took place no later than 1737, for Vakhtang, who paginated the entire manuscript, died on 26 March, 1737.

The manuscript is copied on glossy paper and the folio dimensions are 40.0×26.5 cm. There is a gold border on the leaves; there are traces of a watermark, but it has been badly damaged. The manuscript bears double pagination. One was carried out in the hand of the copyist himself in Georgian *mkhedruli* letters. The second, by page, in Arabic numerals, is in the hand of Vakhtang VI. Folio 2a contains a note in French in the hand of M. Brosset; it runs that the prose was translated by Vakhtang VI, and the verse by Saba Sulhan Orbeliani. The manuscript is held in a wooden binding covered in embossed leather; there are also traces of three metal clasps.

The copy originally belonged to Dimitri Bagrationi (1746—1826), a poet and translator (a note by him is found on fol. 333a). It was then acquired by Pyotr Kebadze, who gave it as a gift to the Asiatic Museum.

Part of the manuscript's Georgian text — the introductory and concluding strophes and foreword by Vakhtang — was published in Tbilisi in 1947 [4]. A Russian translation of the Georgian version was published as far back as 1878, but was most likely based on some other version which differs from that present in our manuscript [5].

Surely, this is but a very brief information on the precious Georgian manuscript from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. It is interesting primarily because of the abundance of illustrations and, of course, because of their special qualities. It is the miniatures that await first of all their researcher. Despite an evident influence of the Persian school of painting, one can consider the miniatures as a precious product of the Georgian art of book painting. The portraits of Vakhtang VI and of Saba Sulhan Orbeliani are also of interest as reflecting a trend of miniature portraying. There is a great temptation to connect somehow the appearance of

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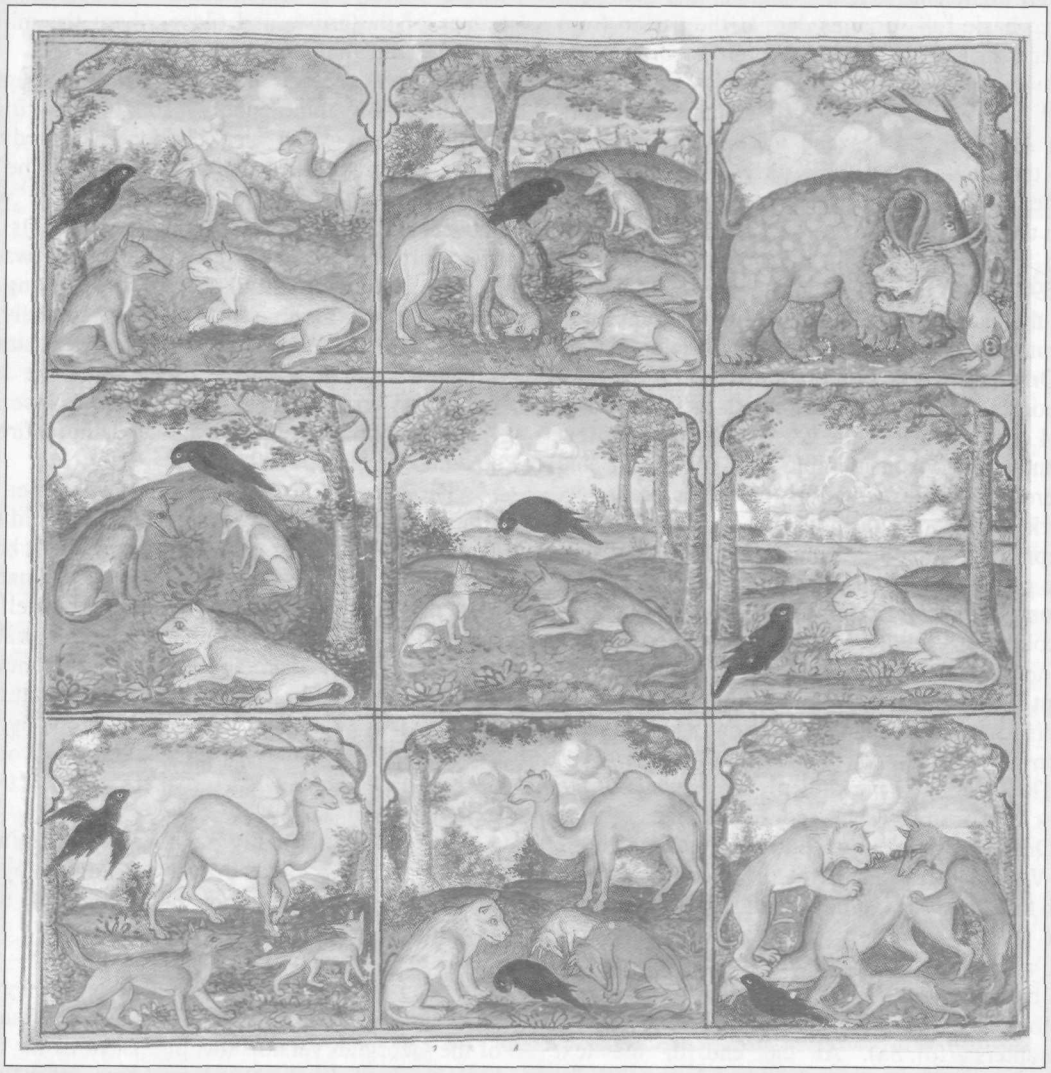

Fig. 4

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Fig. 5

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these portraits in the Georgian manuscript with a piece of painting art by Joseph al-Muṣawwir, who richly illustrated a manuscript containing the Arabic text of Matthew Kigalas's chronicle, also in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. True, it is not easy to trace a direct link between the manuscripts and their paintings. Nevertheless, the presence of portraits of the outstanding history figures of Eastern Christendom in both of them makes us remember an indisputable, though indirect, tie of Joseph al-Muṣawwir with Georgia. A suggestion with strong prove exists that Joseph al-Muṣawwir was well acquainted with Paul of Aleppo, a translator of Kigalas's work into Arabic. And there is a suggestion that al-Muṣawwir's manuscript was with Paul of Aleppo in Georgia while he was returning to his homeland from Russia. In any case, the manuscript with al-Muṣawwir's painting found its way into the hands of Vakhtang VI. That he indeed possessed the manuscript illustrated by Joseph al-Muṣawwir is attested by the translations into Georgian of the Greek inscriptions in it. A palaeographic investigation by R. R. Orbeli showed that these notes belonged to Vakhtang VI [6]. Thus, the manuscript of al-Muṣawwir might serve as a model to the painter who adorned manuscript P 2 with the portraits of Vakhtang and Saba Sulhan Orbeliani. All which is related to the origin of the portraits in the manuscript lies in the sphere of suggestions, and the circumstances observed above pose some questions which need special research.

Notes

1. See R. R. Orbeli, *Gruzinskie rukopisi Instituta Vostokovedeniia* (Georgian Manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies), fasc. 1: history, geography, travels, archaeology, legislation, philosophy, linguistics, bibliography (Moscow—Leningrad, 1956), p. 23.
2. *Panchatantra* (*Pañcatāntra*), trans. from the Sanskrit by A. Syrkin (Moscow, 1962), p. 23.
3. "Kalila and Dimna", manuscript P 2 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 2a.
4. Vakhtang VI, *Sobranie sochineniĭ. Stikhi i poėmy* (Collected Works. Poetry and Poems), ed. and annot. by A. Baramidze (Tbilisi, 1947), pp. 51—5.
5. *Kniga mudrosti i lzhi* (*gruzinskie basni i skazki XVII—XVIII stoletiĭ*) *Savvy-Sulkhana Orbeliani* (The Book of Wisdom and Lies: Georgian Fables and Tales of the 17th—18th Centuries by Saba Sulhan Orbeliani), trans. with explanations by Al. Tsagareli (St. Petersburg, 1878).
6. For more details, see A. I. Mikhaylova, "An illustrated Arabic manuscript of a translation of a seventeenth-century Greek chronograph", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, IV/1 (1998), pp. 58—64. This article contains several reproductions of miniatures.

Illustrations

Front cover:

Portrait of the Georgian translators of "Kalila and Dimna", king Vakhtang VI, and of the poet and scholar Saba Sulhan Orbeliani. Manuscript P 2 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 3a, 22.0×19.0 cm.

Back cover:

Illustration to the story "Disservice", the same manuscript, fol. 97a, 19.0×22.5 cm.

Inside the text:

Fig. 1. Illustration to the tale of the foolish monkey, the same manuscript, fol. 48b, 19.0×21.5 cm.

Fig. 2. Illustration to the tale of how a young hare vanquished a lion, the same manuscript, fol. 68a, 20.0×6.5 cm.

Fig. 3. Illustration to the tale of three fish in one pond and the fishermen, the same manuscript, fol. 71a, 20.0×10.5 cm.

Fig. 4. Illustration to the tale of how a camel, a leopard, a raven, and a jackal were in a lion's service, the same manuscript, fol. 83b, 19.5×20.0 cm.

Fig. 5. Illustration to the tale of the crow, the jackal, and the cock, the same manuscript, fol. 102b, 19.5×16.5 cm.