ISSN 2410-0951

COMSt Bulletin

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies

Volume 12 • 1 • Special Issue • 2026

Edited by
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COMSt

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin is the biannual on-line and print-on-demand journal of the European research network Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies. Born in 2009 as a European Science Foundation Research Networking Programme, the network has been affiliated to the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/) since 2016.

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin welcomes articles, project descriptions, conference reports, book reviews and notes on all topics connected with the written cultures of the Mediterranean Near and Middle East and related traditions or offering a comparative perspective. Contributions should be sent to Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies, Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies, Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, Alsterterrasse 1, 20354 Hamburg, Germany; *eugenia.sokolinski@uni-hamburg.de*. For submission guidelines and former issues visit <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/comst/publications/bulletin.html>.

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Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy, EXC 2176 'Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures', project no. 390893796, at the University of Hamburg (2019–2025)

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Publication date July 2026

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ISSN 2410-0951

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Special Issue

Criticism of the Variant

edited by

Alessandro Bausi,

Christian Brockmann,

and Eva Wilden

Copyists Coping with their Models – A Case Study from Mt Athos

Jost Gippert, University of Hamburg

Based on colophons of Georgian manuscripts from the collection of Iviron Monastery on Mt Athos, the present case study examines the attitude of medieval scribes towards their models (*Vorlagen*, Georgian *deda* 'mother' or *nusxa* 'exemplar'), grappling with errors in the texts to be copied as well as defaults of the material carrying them; this also includes questions of the arrangement of (parts of) the texts. In some cases, a given fault or default is addressed explicitly in scribal notes added to the copy. The picture achieved witnesses lively reflections of the monks on their tasks and their working objects.

Since the introduction of autochthonous literacy in the course of the Christianisation of the Southern Caucasus in about the fourth century CE, the Georgian language has steadily been used in written form until the present day, with an uninterrupted production of manuscripts and inscriptions both within Georgia proper and abroad. One of the most remarkable collections of Georgian manuscripts is that of Iviron Monastery on Mt Athos, which was founded on the site of a former Greek convent by Georgian noblemen shortly before the end of the first millennium. The collection, which today comprises 93 codices, one scroll and several fragments,[1] covers a time span extending from about the sixth–seventh centuries up to the early twentieth century and bears, in the form of colophons, witness to an intensive preoccupation of scribes with the models they had to copy. In the following pages, I will provide a few examples to illustrate in which way readings could provoke criticism and how scribes dealt with them.[2]

The term that was most often applied by Georgians in the Middle Ages when talking about the *Vorlage* or model of what they were copying

1 For details on the monastery, which is named after its Georgian founders (Gk. Ἰβήρων 'of the Georgians'), and on the Georgian manuscripts it hosts cf. the *Catalogue of the Georgian Manuscripts* (hereafter: *Catalogue*; Gippert et al. 2022).

2 The present article is based upon the work on the *Catalogue* which was undertaken with financial support by the Volkswagen Foundation in 2015–2020; it is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 101019006) and from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy—EXC 2176 'Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures' (project no. 390893796). The research was conducted within the scope of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg.

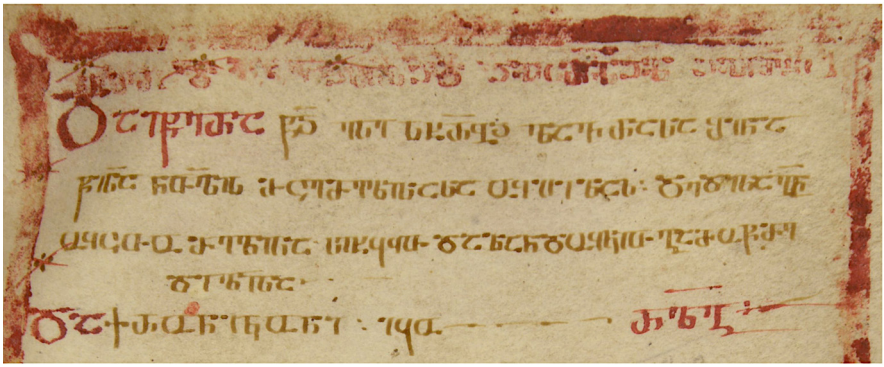


Fig. 1. Mt Athos, Iviron, georg. 83, fol. 249r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

is დედა (*deda*), a common word usually meaning ‘mother’. The term is already found in the colophon of the oldest dated codex of the monastery, the so-called Oṗiza Gospels of 913 CE (Mt Athos, Iviron (hereafter Ivir.) georg. 83), in which the scribe praises the quality of the ‘mother’ he had at hand (cf. fig. 1):[3]

> ... დაიწერა წმიდაჲ ესე სახარებაჲ ლავრასა შინა წმიდისა ნათლის მცემელისასა ოჯპიზას დედისაგან ოჯცთომელისა სიტყჳთ და ზანდოჯკით გამოწმედილისა –
> ‘These Holy Gospels were written in the Laura of the Holy Baptist in Oṗiza [*owṗizas* sic!], from a faultless model, precise (*lit*. purged) in (its) wording and content.’[4]

Another term that occurs quite often when scribes refer to their *Vorlagen* is ნუსხა (*nusxa*), a borrowing from Arabic (Persian) *nusḫa* which can denote both an ‘exemplar’ and a ‘copy’ or ‘apograph’;[5] in Georgian, it can even bear the meaning of ‘autograph’ as in the colophon of Ivir. georg. 55, a menaion (monthly collection of hymns for feasts and saints) for the month of February that is datable between 1080 and 1081 CE and relates to

3 In the following, Georgian text passages are quoted in a simplified rendering, with punctuation adapted to modern usage and abbreviations resolved. English translations are kept as close to the original as possible. Georgian manuscripts of the Iviron collection are named by “Ivir. georg.” and their respective shelf number.

4 Ivir. georg. 83, fol. 249r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 671–672.

5 The Arabic-German dictionary by H. Wehr (1985, 1268b) gives the meanings ‘Abschrift, Kopie; Exemplar (e-s Buches, e-r Zeitung usw.); Abdruck, Abzug’; for Persian, Steingass (1963, 1400a) mentions first ‘exemplar, prototype, archetype, a copy or model whence anything is taken’ and only secondarily ‘a manuscript-copy’.

the most productive writer of the monastery, George the Hagiorite (1009–1065). Here we read:[6]

> ... დაესრულა თუე ფებერვალი სრულად და უნაკლულოდ ჴელითა ჩემ საწყალობელისა და მწარედ ცოდვილისა ნიკოლა რეცა მონაზონისაჲთა. ხოლო დაიწერა მთა წმიდას ქართველთა მონასტერსა საყოფელსა წმიდისა ღმრთის მშობელისასა ნუსხათაგან წმიდისა მამისა გიორგი თარგმანისათა...
>
> '... Accomplished is the (menaion of the) month of February, completely and perfectly, by the hand of mine, miserable and very sinful Niḳola the monk as it were. And it was written down on Mt Athos in the monastery of the Georgians, in the abode of the holy Theotokos, from the autographs (*nusxatagan*) of the holy father George, the translator...'[7]

Both terms can also occur in combination as in Ivir. georg. 16, an undated codex commissioned by the eleventh-century bishop Leonṭi Mroveli (i.e. of Ruisi) which comprises the translation of John Chrysostom's Commentary on the Gospel of John by George's predecessor, Euthymius the Hagiorite (*c*. 955–1024); its colophon reads:[8]

> ოჳფალო ღმერთო შეიწყალე სული ესტატისი რომელმან აღწერა დედაჲ ამის წიგნისაჲ იჱრუსალემს შინა ნოსხად და ჩემ გლახაკისა მწერლისა მიქაელისთჳსცა ლოცვა ყავთ
>
> 'Lord, God, have mercy on the soul of Esṭaṭi who wrote the model (*deday*) of this book in Jerusalem as an autograph [*nosxad* sic!], and pray for me, the wretched scribe Mikael, too!'

In the colophon of Ivir. georg. 10, the third of three volumes containing Euthymius' translation of the Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew, as well by John Chrysostom, the word *nusxad* 'as an autograph' was obviously added secondarily, partly after, partly above the line together with some other elements, thus yielding an odd syntax (cf. fig. 2):[9]

> და აღე<ს>რჳ<ლა> თარგმანებაჲ ესე <ნუსხად> მათეს თავისაჲ სრულიად ჴელითა გლახაკისა ეფთიმესითა მთასა წმიდასა ათონას საყოფელსა წმიდისა ღმრთის მშობელისასა
>
> 'And completed was this commentary <as an autograph> of the Gospel of Matthew by the hand of wretched Euthymius on the holy Mt Athos, in the abode of the Holy Theotokos.'

6 Ivir. georg. 55, fols 219v–220r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 504 with Pl. LXIX.

7 A *nusxa* of George the Hagiorite is also referred to in the donor's colophon of Ivir. georg. 51 (see below), Fr. 11, fol. 5v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 475–476 with Pl. LXVIII.

8 Ivir. georg. 16, fol. 389v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 183 with Pl. LIX.

9 Ivir. georg. 10, fol. 337v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 130.

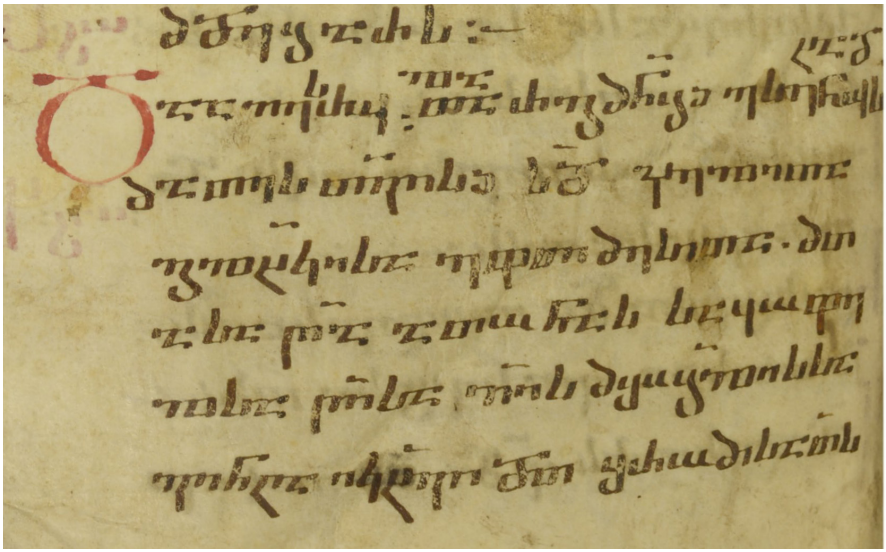


Fig. 2. Ivir. georg. 10, fol. 337vb, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

As a self-reference, *nusxa* appears in George the Hagiorite's colophon of Ivir. georg. 49, a collective volume containing, as an autograph, his translations of works by Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and other church fathers. At the bottom of fol. 108v, we read (cf. fig. 3):[10]

> დაესრულა ექუსთა დღეთაჲ წმიდისა ბასილისი ბრწყინვალედ და ღმრთივ შუენიერად მადლითა სულისა წმიდისაჲთა. ვინ სწერდეთ ნუსხასა ჩუენსა ნუ ესრე სწერთ ვითა ჩუენსა ნუსხასა რამეთუ ჩუენ პირუტყუ ვართ და სავსე ყოვლითა არაწმიდებითა. გარნა ესრეთ წერეთ ვითარმცა ახლად აღეწერა წმიდა ბასილის, რამეთუ ჭეშმარიტად დაღაცათუ მწიკულევანი ჴელი ჩუენი ნუსხვიდა და თარგმნიდა, გარნა თჳთ იგი იყო მნუსხველიცა და თარგმანიცა. თუარა ჩუენგან ამისი ჭჳრობაჲცა შეუძლებელ იყო არათუ თაგრგმნაჲ
>
> 'Accomplished is the Hexaemeron of St Basil, brilliant and embellished by God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Who(ever of you) will copy our autograph (*nusxasa*), do not write it as in our autograph (*nusxasa*), because we are (dumb like) beasts and full of impurity. Instead, write it as if St Basil had written it anew; for truly, even though our filthy hand wrote it down (*nusxvida*) and translated it, yet he himself was both a scribe (*mnusxveli*) and a translator, and if not, we would not have been able to inspect it nor translate it.'

10 Ivir. georg. 49, fol. 108v (cf. the *Catalogue*, 467); a copy of the colophon is found in Ivir. georg. 14 (a twelfth–thirteenth-century copy of Ivir. georg. 49) on fol. 316v (cf. the *Catalogue*, 175).

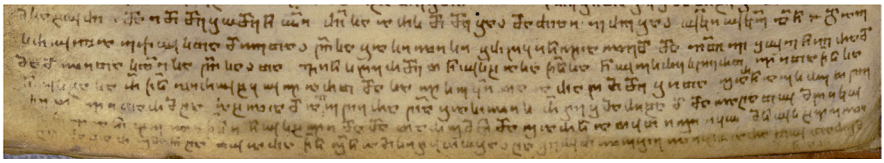


Fig. 3. Ivir. georg. 49, fol. 108v, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos

The colophons often state that the scribes intended to render their models as exactly as possible, as in Ivir. georg. 30, a copy dated 1071 CE of George's translation of the Great Synaxarion of the church of Constantinople, where we read:[11]

> ... დაღაცათუ ნაწერი უნდოჲ არს, გარნა სიმართლისათჳს და შეწამებისა მიზეზსა ვერავინ დასდებს, რამეთუ თჳთ წმიდისა მამისა გეორგის ჴელთა ნუსხისაგან დამიწერია. რაჲ დედასა მიპოვნია არცა დამიკლია და არცა რაჲ შემიმატებია...
> '... Although (my) writ is inadequate, no one can argue about its fidelity and trustworthiness, because I have copied it myself from the manual autograph (*lit*. hands' *nusxa*) of father George and I have neither omitted anything of what I found in the model (*dedasa*) nor added anything...'

Similarly we read in the colophon of Ivir. georg. 34, a copy from *c*. the thirteenth century of George the Hagiorite's version of the Pentecostarion:[12]

> ... წმიდანი ესე ზატიკნი წმიდისა მამისა გიორგი მთაწმიდელისა თარგმნილისაგან დაიწერნეს ფრიადითა იძულებითა და გამოწულილვითა რომელი ძალ-მედვა. ვითა დედასა შინა მიპოვნია არაჲ შემიცულია...
> '... This Pentecostarion in the translation of the holy father George the Athonite has been copied with great compulsion and scrutiny, as (much as) I was able. I have changed nothing as I found it in the model (*dedasa*)...'[13]

The Georgian term *deda* could also be applied to translation models as in the case of George the Hagiorite's colophon for his translation of the Menaion of January, which is contained in both his autograph (Ivir. georg. 65) and in a copy of it (Ivir. georg. 51, of *c*. 1080–1081); George states (cf. fig. 4):[14]

> ... ერთი დედაჲ პეტრე წმიდისაჲ მყვა ანტიოქით და ერთი სჳმეონ წმიდით, ორნივე ბერძულნი, სახელოანნი და წმიდანი

11 Ivir. georg. 30, fol. 427rv; cf. the *Catalogue*, 298 with Pl. LIV.
12 Ivir. georg. 34, fol. 234r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 330 with Pl. CIII.
13 A similar statement is found in a colophon of Ivir. georg. 84, a codex containing the Lives of St Martha and St Barlaam of Mt Casius (fol. 124r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 676).
14 Ivir. georg. 65, fol. 195r (*Catalogue*, 576–577) and Ivir. georg. 51, Fr. 11, fols 4v–5r (*Catalogue*, 475). A similar wording mentioning the same two monasteries is found in George's colophon for his menaion of June preserved in Ivir. georg. 56 (also of *c*. the eleventh century), fol. 189v (*Catalogue*, 512–513).

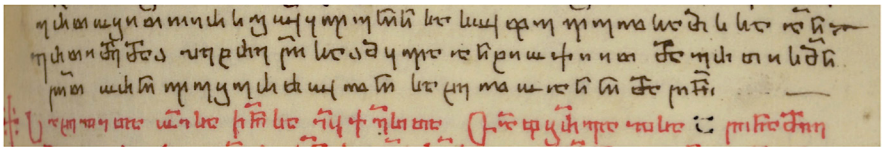


Fig. 4. Ivir. georg. 65, fol. 195r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

> '... One model (*deday*) I had from St Peter in Antioch and one, from St Symeon, both in Greek, famous and holy.'

Much more often than praising them, scribes complain about the bad quality of their models, including the mention of deficiencies and errors. Such statements can be rather general as in Ivir. georg. 12, a codex of *c*. the end of the tenth century containing the so-called Alphabetical Collection of apophthegms; in the first scribe's colophon, we read:[15]

> დიდებაჲ ღმერთსა! დაესრულა ესე ნაკუეთი ჴელითა ჩემ გლახაკისა სჳმეონისითა. შრომისათჳს ლოცვა ყავთ და ცთომისათჳს შენდობაჲ! წმიდაო მამაო, თუ რაჲ დაკლებაჲ იყოს შემინდვეთ, ანუ დედისაგან არს ანუ ეტრატისაგან. თუ არა მე ჩემდად ხარკებაჲ არა დამიკლია.
> 'Glory to God! Accomplished is the first part by my, wretched Symeon's hand. Pray for (my) labour and forgive (me my) error(s)! Holy father, if there is something missing, forgive me – it is due to either the model (*dedisagan*) or the parchment (*eṭraṭisagan*). If not, I have not diminished my effort.'

More explicitly, the scribe of Ivir. georg. 79, a multiple-text manuscript of the middle of the eleventh century containing hagiographical, homiletic and monastic texts authored or translated by Euthymius the Hagiorite, complains about the *Vorlage* he had at hand for one of the texts to be copied, namely, the *vita* of the Georgian saint Hilarion the Iberian (*c*. 822–875):[16] ღმერთმან დაგაჯეროს, შეუჯნდვეთ [sic!], საწყალისა დედისაგან დავწერეთ, უკეთესი არა გუქონდა. – 'May God assure you: pardon (me), we copied it from a poor model (*dedisagan*), we had no better one.'

In several cases, the scribes thematise the arrangement of text elements in their models rather than their quality. This is true, e.g., of George the Athonite who added to his menaion of February a set of extra vespers stichera, introduced by the following explanation:

> ესე სტიქაროონნი არა ეწერნეს ჩუენ რომელ დედაჲ გუქონდა და უკუანას ვპოენ და არავით-რე დავწერენ. კარგად ნახენ და შემდგომითი შემდგომად წერდი
> 'These stichera were not written in the model (*deday*) which we had, and I found them later and (so) I did not write them down in any way (where they belonged).

15 Ivir. georg. 12, fol. 210v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 163 with Pl. XIII.
16 Ivir. georg. 79, fol. 68v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 641 with Pl. XLIII.

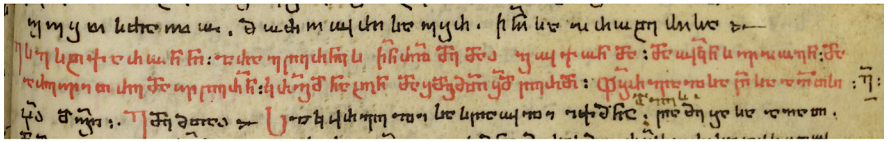


Fig. 5. Ivir. georg. 65, fol. 315r, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

> Look them up well and write them down one after the other (in their proper sequence).'

In Ivir. georg. 65, George's autograph, the sentence is inserted in red ink into the main text instead of a heading of the given set (cf. fig. 5).[17]

A similar problem of ordering is likely to have been present in George's autograph of his menaion of October. This is witnessed to by the scribe of Ivir. georg. 54, a copy of the menaion dated to 1076, who added the following colophon (cf. fig. 6):[18]

> ... მას ღმერთშემოსილსა მამასა გიორგის ესე სათუეოჲ დედისა ვერ ერთობით პოვნისა მიზეზითა არა მიწყებით დაეწერა. გარნა ჩუენ მისითავე მადლითა ვითარცა პატიოსანსა ნუსხასა შინა მისსა ვპოვეთ ყოველივე მიწყებით დაგჳწერია. ესე რომელ ოკდომბერისა წმიდათა გალობანი ბოლოსა დაგჳწერიან, არა თუ მისსა სათუჱოსა შინა ეგრეთ ვპოვეთ, არამედ თჳსაგან ერთობით დაწერილისაგან გამოვიხუენით...
> '... The godly father George, for the reason of not having been able to find a coherent model (*dedisa*), had not written this menaion down sequentially, but we, by his mercy, have written everything down sequentially as we found it in his precious autograph (*nusxasa*). The canon for the saints of October that we have written down at the end we did not find as such in his menaion, but we have transferred it together from where it was written separately...'

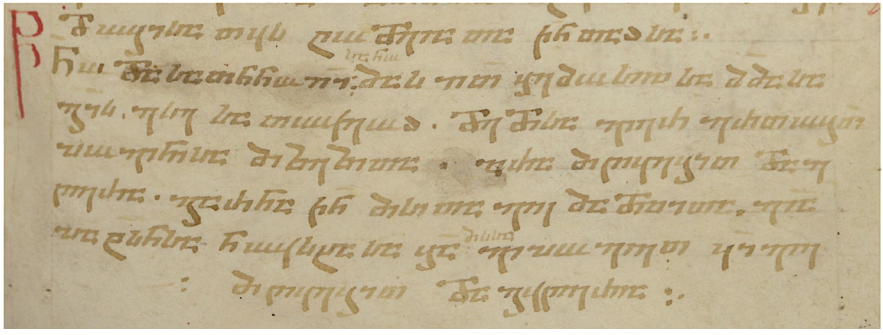


Fig. 6. Ivir. georg. 54, fol. 117r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

17 Ivir. georg. 65, fol. 315r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 577. On fol. 4r of his autograph, George provides the same information at the end of the introductory indexes of his menaion; cf. the *Catalogue*, 574.

18 Ivir. georg. 54, fol. 117rv; cf. the *Catalogue*, 498 with Pl. LV.

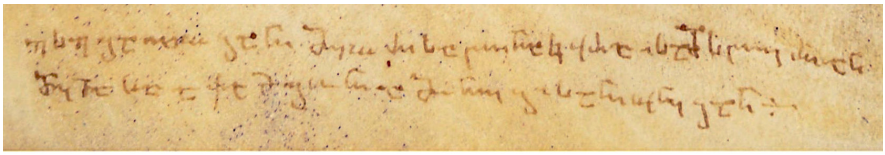


Fig. 7. Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 174r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

Similarly, the copyist of George's menaion of December as preserved in the eleventh-century codex Ivir. georg. 52 took the liberty to deviate from his *Vorlage*, as indicated in a marginal note of his which concerns the canon for the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ (cf. fig. 7):[19]

> ესე გალობანი მეორისა წინაკჳრაისად სწერიან დედასა. აქა მგონია მონებისანი უნებან
> 'These hymns are written as (if) for the 2nd Sunday before (Nativity) in the model (*dedasa*). Here, I think, they are required as (part) of the service.'[20]

Observations concerning the structuring of a given model were not restricted to George the Hagiorite, as we can see in Ivir. georg. 23, a fourteenth-century copy of the Asceticon by Ephrem the Syrian in the translation by the Georgian scholar Ephrem the Minor (or Lesser, in Georgian Eprem Mcire, †1101), whom the scribe quotes explicitly in a marginal note concerning the '100 chapters on how one will acquire humility':[21] აქაჲთგან რიცხჳ ვერ [ვ]პოვე დედასა. არა ვიცი თუ სადა გასრულდების ას თავად, იტყჳს ეფრემ თარგმანი – '"From here (*i.e.*, chapter 67) on, I did not find (chapter) number(s) in the (translation) model (*dedasa*), (and) I do not know how (*lit.* where) it continues up to the 100th chapter", says Ephrem the translator'. In Ivir. georg. 81, a horologion of *c.* the eighteenth century, the scribe justifies the fact that he completed the text of Mark 16.3–4 in the margin instead of the main text (cf. fig. 8):[22]

19 Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 174r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 488.

20 In another marginal note of the same codex (Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 276r), the copyist declares: ϑ მიუწდომელსა სრულიად ეწერა დედასა და სრულიად ჯამს – '(The hymn after the automelon) "Oh the unconceivable (kindness)" had been written in full in the model (*dedasa*) and it is appropriate (for it to be written) in full' (cf. the *Catalogue*, 489).

21 Ivir. georg. 23, fol. 160va; cf. the *Catalogue*, 246 with Pl. CXXII. The same note is also found in ms. A-1115 of the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, Tbilisi, on fol. 56r (see Sharashenidze 1954, 116) and in some other manuscripts, including remnants in the Georgian ms. no. 106 of the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem, fol. 220v (see <https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00271073112-jo/?sp=225>, last accessed 15 December 2025).

22 Ivir. georg. 81, fol. 102v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 663.

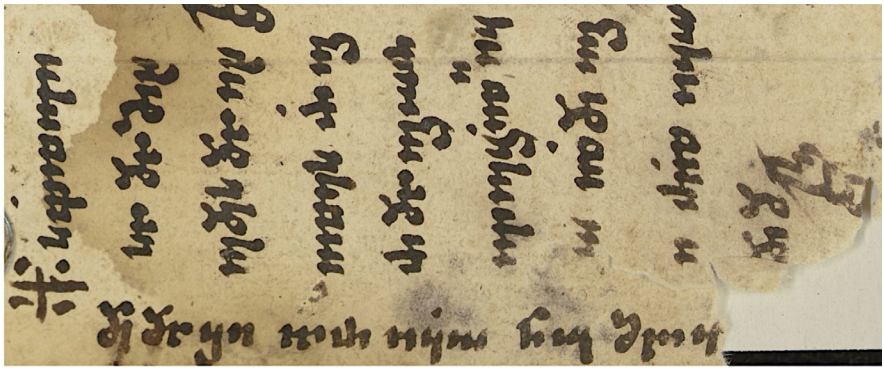


Fig. 8. Ivir. georg. 81, fol. 102v, left margin, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

დედაში არ იყო, ნუ მწყ<ევ> –
'It was not in the model (*dedaši*), do not cu<rse> me!'

As in the last case, scribes often refer in marginal notes to errors they found in their models and the corrections they deemed appropriate. In many instances, the actual errors are not indicated explicitly and can only be guessed at, if at all, by looking at the given context. This is true, e.g., of two notes in Ivir. georg. 6, a collection of *c*. the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries of homilies which were probably translated by Ephrem the Minor. The first one simply states ესთ იპოა დედასა – 'Thus it was found in the model (*dedasa*)',[23] with the reference being indeterminable due to the fact that only one column of the given page (fol. 2r, see fig. 9) has been preserved, with several lacunae, and that the text it contains, a homily by Severian of Gabala on John 7.15,[24] seems not to exist in other Georgian manuscripts.[25] The second note, on f. 72v, is likewise lapidary; it reads: დედასა ესრეთ ეწერა – 'Thus it was written in

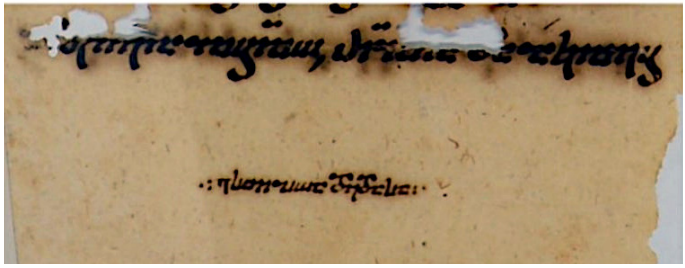


Fig. 9. Ivir. georg. 6, fol. 2r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

23 Ivir. georg. 6, fol. 2ra; cf. the *Catalogue*, 61.
24 Severianus Gabalensis, *In illud: Quomodo scit litteras* (*CPG* 4201; *PG* 59, 643–652).
25 Cf. the *Catalogue*, 56: text no. [16].

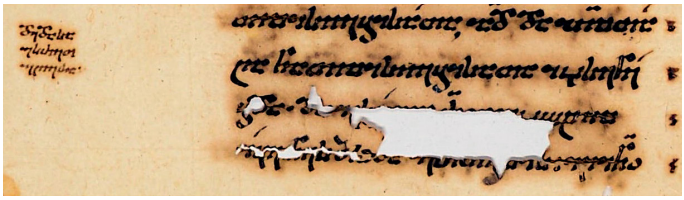


Fig. 10. Ivir. georg. 6, fol. 72v, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

the model'.[26] Even though the page in question is better preserved, the reference is unclear here, too; the position of the note, which faces the fourth- and third-to-last lines of the first column (cf. fig. 10), seems to indicate that it belongs to the sentence ამისთჳს და პავლე არა მხოლოდ შემდგომთა ნათლისღებისათა, არამედ და პირველთაცა ნათლისღებისათა ოჳსებებდა – 'Therefore also Paul mentioned not only those (sins) after the baptism but also those before the baptism', which corresponds to Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Παῦλος οὐ μόνον τῶν μετὰ τὸ λουτρόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν πρὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος ἐμέμνητο in the Greek *Vorlage* (a PseudoChrysostomian homily on the One owing 10,000 talents, Matthew 18.24).[27] However, there is actually no error discernible, if this is not simply about the repetition of ნათლისღებისათა (*natlisġebisata*) 'baptism' which is avoided in the Greek text by the use of the two synonyms λουτρόν 'washing' and βάπτισμα 'baptism'.

In other cases, the error alluded to in such notes can be inferred from corrections and additions that are discernible in the main text in their vicinity. This is true, e.g., of the lapidary note added by the scribe in the right margin of Ivir. georg. 12 (see above), which reads:[28] ცთომისათჳს შენდობა ყავთ! მე ვითა დედასა მიპოვნია დამიწერია – 'Forgive (me) for the error! I have written it as I found it in the model (*dedasa*).' This probably refers to the dative plural ბოროტთა (*boroṭta*) 'the evil ones', which at the given position (cf. fig. 11) was obviously corrected from the singular form ბოროტსა (*boroṭsa*), thus yielding the sentence რომელი ეძიებნ მოტევებასა ცოდვათასა, უყუარნ სიმდაბლჱ. ხოლო რომელი განიკითხავნ მოყუასსა თჳსსა, დაჰბეჭდის თავისა თჳსისა ბოროტთა. – 'He who looks for forgiveness of sins loves humility. But he who judges his neighbour seals his own evil (deeds).'[29]

26 Ivir. georg. 6, fol. 72v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 62.

27 *De decem millium talantorum debitore* (*CPG* 4368; *PG* 51, 17–30, here 27, lines 43–46).

28 Ivir. georg. 12, fol. 138r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 163.

29 The text in question is an apophthegm on Marcus Eremita (cf. the edition in Dvali 1974, 152, lines 25–26), of which no other witnesses or versions are known.

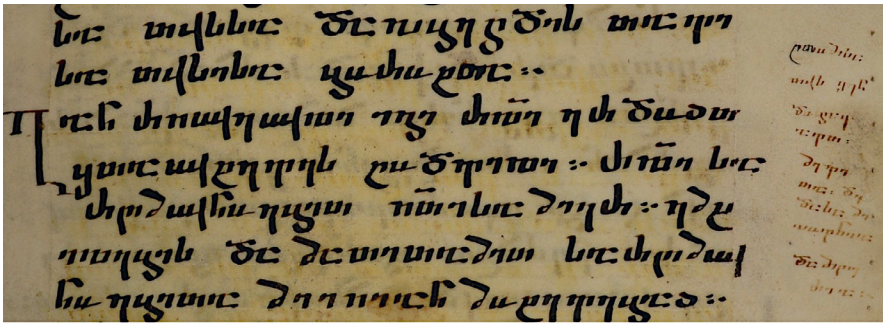


Fig. 11. Ivir. georg. 12, fol. 138r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

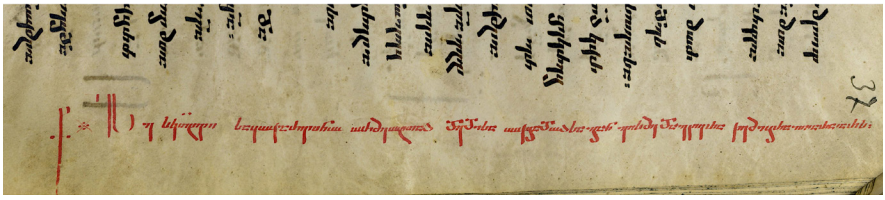


Fig. 12. Ivir. georg. 28, fol. 37r, right margin, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

More striking is the case of Ivir. georg. 28, a collection of translated hagiographical texts dated 1003, whose scribe notes with respect to the legend of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste:[30] ესე საკითხავი საყუარელნო ორმეოცთაჲ დედისა უბადოჲსაგან ვისმე დაეწერა, ჩემი ბრალი არა არს. – 'This lection, beloved ones, of the Forty someone had copied from a bad model, it is not my fault.' The note, which is applied in red ink bottom-up in the outer margin of fol. 37r (cf. fig. 12), obviously refers to the secondary addition of ტანჯვად (*ṭanǯvad*) 'to torture' above line 2 of the page, as missing in the sentence არა გაქოჳს ჴელმწიფებაჲ ჩუენ ზედა არამედ კითხვად 'You do not have power over us but to interrogate'; the intended reading, არა გაქოჳს ჴელმწიფებაჲ ტანჯვად ჩუენდა არამედ კითხვად 'You do not have the power to torture us but (only) to interrogate', appears as such in another copy of the legend, in the late tenth-century codex Ivir. georg. 8.[31] Similarly, the note ესე სიტყუა აქა არა ეწერა, მის დედისაჲ არს – 'This word should not have been written here, it is from its model (*dedisay*),' which was added by a second hand on fol. 309r of Ivir. georg. 40, an eleventh-century codex containing monastic and other texts in the translation by Euthymius the Hagiorite, likely refers to the postposition ებრ (*ebr*) 'as per, in accordance with', which was erased after ბრძანებისა (*brǯanebisa*) 'command' and in-

30 Ivir. georg. 28, fol. 37r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 277.
31 Ivir. georg. 8, fol. 182r, lines 18–21.

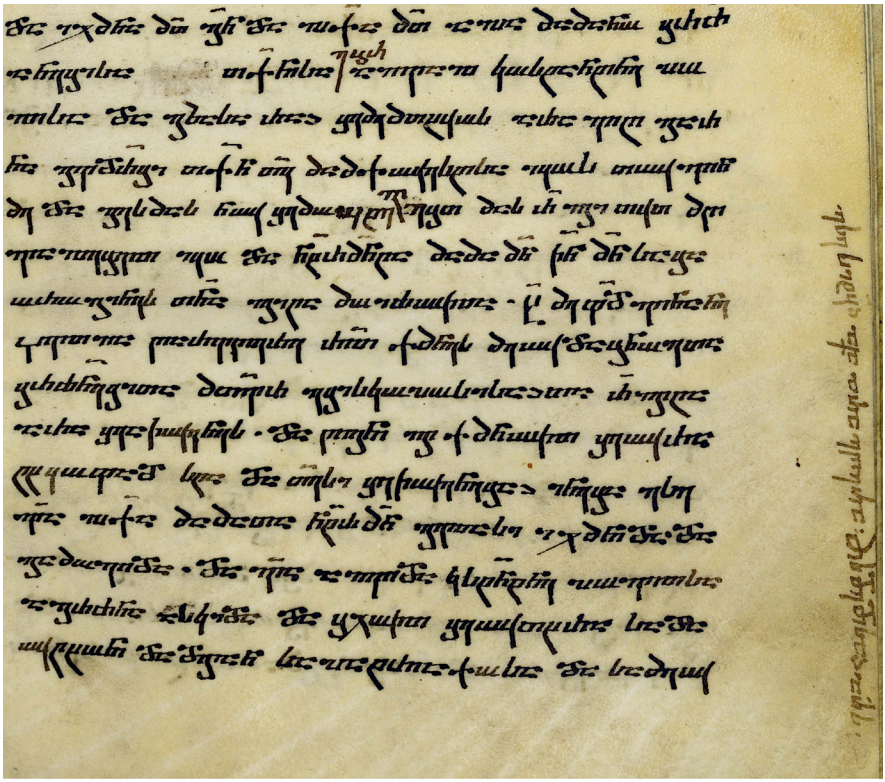


Fig. 13. Ivir. georg. 40, fol. 309r, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

serted after თქუენისა (*tkuenisa*) ‘your’ immediately afterwards (cf. fig. 13).[32] The resulting phrase ბრძანებისა თქუენისაებრ (*brʒanebisa tkuenisa-ebr*) is by no means more idiomatic for ‘in accordance with your command’ in Old Georgian than the original one (ბრძანებისაებრ თქუენისა, *brʒanebisa-ebr tkuenisa*); however, the second witness of the text in question, the *Vita Sabae* by Cyril of Scythopolis, shows that the ‘corrected’ version was indeed intended here.[33]

Only rarely do we find the cause of a scribe’s comment indicated explicitly in the note itself. Two such cases are found in the menaion codex

32 Ivir. georg. 40, fol. 309r, line 13; cf. the *Catalogue*, 386.

33 This is the eleventh-century codex London, British Library, Add. MS 11281, fol. 141v, lines 4–5; cf. the edition by Kekelidze (1946, 215, line 21). The original wording (*brʒanebisa-ebr tkuenisa*) appears, e.g., in the *vita* of Hilarion the Iberian in ms. A558 of the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (fol. 85r, lines 20–21; cf. the edition by Abuladze et al. 1967, 32, l. 21).

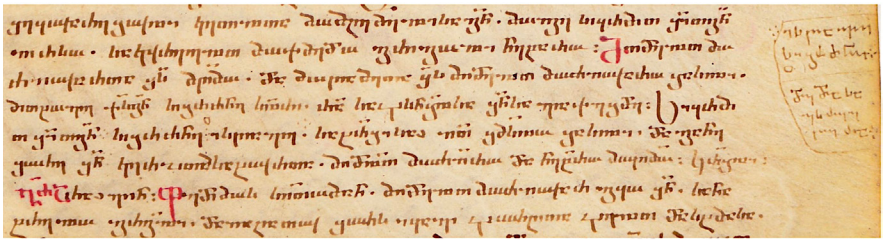


Fig. 14. Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 71r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

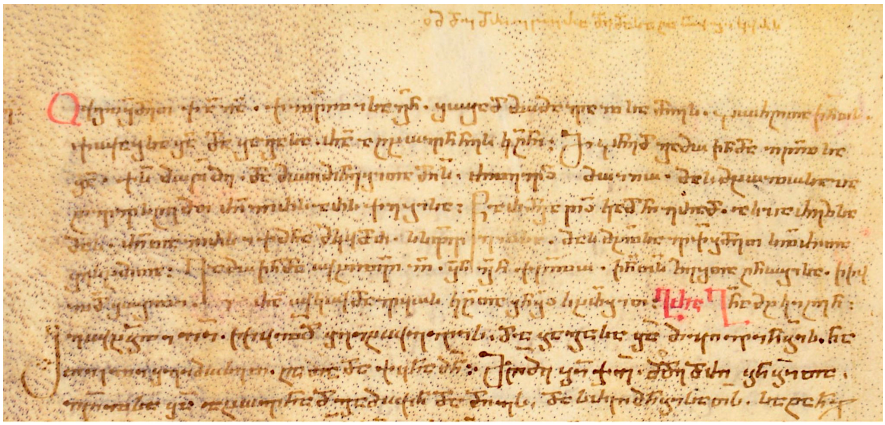


Fig. 15. Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 195v, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

Ivir. georg. 52 (see above). In the outer margin of fol. 71r, we read: ისწავე სიბრძნე. დედასა ესრე ეწერა – '"You studied wisdom": in the model (*dedasa*) it was thus written'.[34] The note clearly refers to line 27 of the page which shows the inverted order of elements (*sibrʒne isçave*, *lit*. 'wisdom you studied', instead of *isçave sibrʒne* 'you studied wisdom') as part of the verse სიყრმით ყოვლითგან სიბრძნე ისწავე – 'From youth up you always studied wisdom' from the canon in honour of Ss Gregory the Wonderworker and Basil the Great sung on 17 November. The reference is here indicated by a lozenge in form of four dots that introduces the note and reappears between the two words in question in line 27 with a circle above (cf. fig. 14). Similarly, the note მდედრი ეწერა დედასაცა, ნუ გიკვრს – '"Female" was written in the model, too (*dedasaca*), do not be surprised!' in the upper margin of fol. 195v is introduced by a circle which reappears on top of the word in question, მდედრი 'female', in line 9 of the page (cf. fig. 15), within the canon for St Anastasia the Roman.[35]

34 Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 71r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 487.
35 Ivir. georg. 52, fol. 195v; cf. the *Catalogue*, 488.

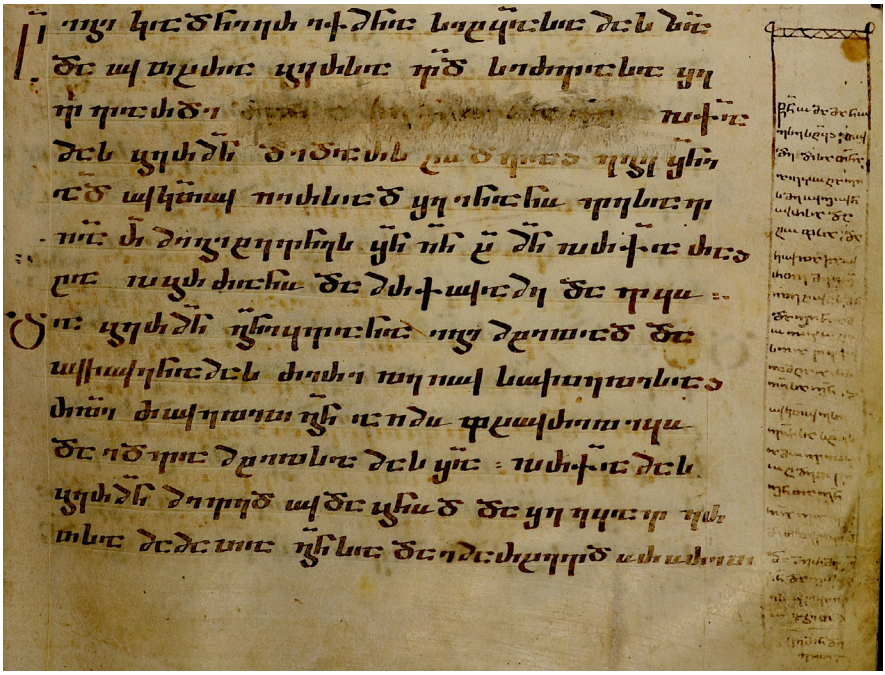


Fig. 16. Ivir. georg. 12, fol. 51r, detail, © Iviron Monastery, Mt Athos.

The most verbose argument concerning textual variation is found in a lengthy note added, in a rectangular frame, by a priest named Ṗavle (Paul) in the outer margin of fol. 51r of Ivir. georg. 12 (cf. fig. 16).[36] It reads:

> წმიდანო მამანო, ესე სიტყუაჲ თუ დედისა თანა აეჴოცა ვისმე უგუნურსა და ცოფსა, და კულა ჩაურთე მე, პავლე ხუცესმან. და ვინ ამოჰჴოცოსღა წყეულმცა არს ღმრთისაგან. უკუეთუ ესევითარსა სიტყუასა ამოვჰჴოცდეთ წიგნთაგან, ღმერთსა გა[უვე]დით უწყ[ალოდ] და მერმე [ღმერთი] ჩუენ დაგ[უ]შჯის უწყალოებით. შემინდევით!
> 'Holy fathers, this word, viz. "with the mother", was erased by someone stupid and crazy, and I, priest Paul, have added it again. And who(ever) will erase it again shall be cursed by God! If we erase such a word from the books, we turn out (to be) ruthless to God, and then He will judge us without mercy. Forgive me!'

The note no doubt refers to line 14 of the given page, where the words დედისა ჩემისა თანა (*dedisa čemisa tana*) 'with my mother' were erased after სიძვასა შევვარდი 'I have fallen into fornication'. The priest's attempt

36 Ivir. georg. 12, fol. 51r; cf. the *Catalogue*, 163.

to safeguard the original wording of the apophthegm in question[37] is all the more astonishing as the reason for the erasure seems obvious in a monastic context.

The examples adduced above can only give a vague idea of how Georgian copyists dealt with their models and the textual variation they found in them. In order to provide a more thorough picture, an investigation into the larger collections of Georgian manuscripts would be necessary, especially into those of the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre for Manuscripts in Tbilisi but also into those of Jerusalem, Mt Sinai, and St Petersburg; a huge task indeed!

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CPG = Geerard, M. 1974–1987. *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, I–V (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987); Noret, J. 2003. *CPG*, III, 2nd edn. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Geerard, M. and J. Noret, 1998. *Supplementum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); Noret, J. 2023. *CPG, Saeculum quartum* (*Patres Postnicaeni*)*, Scriptores Alexandrini et Aegyptii* (*CPG 2000–2684*), 2nd edn (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023).

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37 Apophthegm no. 10 concerning Zenon; cf. the edition by Dvali (1974, 62, line 20), which gives no indication of the erased phrase; there are no other witnesses or versions available for the given passage.

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