

Towards the Renewed Interest in the Martyrdom of Romanus the Neomartyr

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As justly indicated by the conference organizers, “the complex history of the Caucasus shows us that contact, being as a rule often quite problematic and conflictual, is indeed a major factor of development and mutual enrichments for all the individuals involved in it.” Among many other facts this is clearly visible in the age-old contact of Georgia with the Near Eastern region, including both, political peripetia and positive impact, cultural exchange. The given article deals with the literary contacts between the Georgians and the Arabic speaking Christians, more precisely, with the Martyrdom of Romanus the Neomartyr.

The Martyrdom of Romanus the Neomartyr was probably written between the saint’s execution in 780 and 787. The Martyrdom survived only in Georgian. It is clear that the Georgian version is translated from Arabic, although nowadays the Arabic text doesn’t come to light. Probably the work never existed in Greek

The Martyrdom of Romanus the Neomartyr is an important monument for several reasons, among them: it describes the condition of Christians in Baghdad in the 8th century, proves the spreading of the Arabic language among the Christians, including the intellectual circles of the famous monasteries, like that of St. Sabas, development of translatory process from Arabic into Georgian in the field of ecclesiastical literature.

The Georgian version of the Martyrdom of Romanus the Neomartyr is preserved in two Manuscripts: 1) MS Tbilisi, Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts – Georg. A 95, fols. 440v-454r (11th c.); 2) MS Mount Athos, Iviron Monastery – Georg. 8 (57) (10th c.), fols. 273v-293r. In the early 20th c. the Georgian text was published only from one manuscript, then appeared Russian and Latin translations.

The present article aims at the publication of the critical text of the Martyrdom according to both manuscripts, providing it with the English translation, analysing all the data about the monument itself, its author, content, etc., presenting the work in the light of modern achievements in the field of Arabic-Georgian literary contacts.

I would like to deliver my talk in English and to publish the full text of the article also in English.