In common with other language-traditions of late antique and medieval Christianity in the near east and beyond (Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, etc.), Georgian manuscripts reveal, in the colophons and notes of scribes and subsequent readers (and owners), a number of common topoi, such as prayer-requests, self-deprecation, and curses on those who would misuse the books. In addition these notes paint a picture of the histories of individual codices from copying to manuscript migration, and they sometimes even relate historical details for the places and the communities in which the books were made and used. Based on a small, but rich, corpus of Georgian biblical manuscripts, this presentation offers a survey, supported by many examples, of how scribes thought about their copying work and how readers and owners related to their books.

1 Introduction

The purpose of the following survey is to show how manuscripts, in this case Georgian1 copies of parts of the Bible from the tenth to the fourteenth or fifteenth century in the collection of Saint Catherine’s Monastery in Sinai, may be a repository of much more than copies of their intended text. The manuscript corpus from which I have taken the examples that follow is the old part of the Sinai collection, the biblical manuscripts in particular. Digitized microfilms of the manuscripts of this collection, many of which go back to the tenth century, are available through the Library of Congress;2 access to the new finds is not—not yet, at least—so freely available. We have an excellent catalog for the old collection by Gérard Garitte.3

A list of the manuscripts in my corpus with a few details follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelfmark</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Script*</th>
<th>Biblical contents</th>
<th>Garitte, Cat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Gospels</td>
<td>pp. 46–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Gospels</td>
<td>pp. 49–53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1074</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Gospels</td>
<td>pp. 53–58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>10th/11th</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Psalter</td>
<td>pp. 58–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>asomtavruli</td>
<td>Psalter</td>
<td>pp. 66–69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+38</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>asomtavruli</td>
<td>Gospels</td>
<td>pp. 69–71,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>asomtavruli</td>
<td>Acts, Epist.</td>
<td>pp. 144–52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>asomtavruli</td>
<td>Psalter</td>
<td>pp. 156–58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58+31+60</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>asomtavruli</td>
<td>Acts, Epist.</td>
<td>pp. 156–58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>12th/13th</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Gospels</td>
<td>pp. 253–58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>pp. 258–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>14th/15th</td>
<td>nusxuri</td>
<td>Psalter</td>
<td>pp. 262–63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This group of twelve manuscripts offers a reasonable sampling of the kinds of things beyond the main copied text(s) that we may find in Georgian manuscripts, biblical and otherwise. Indeed, an analogous study of Georgian hagiographic

---

1 Georgian is classified with Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan in the Kartvelian language family. Within Old Georgian, attested in inscriptions and manuscripts from roughly the fifth to eleventh centuries, there is some variation, and the language continues to change into Middle (twelfth—eighteenth centuries) and Modern (eighteenth century to the present) Georgian; cf. Fühnrich 2012, 500–10. For a brief overview of some instrumenta studiorum, etc., available for Old Georgian, see McCollum 2014, 344–73, here 346–49.


3 Garitte 1956. The body of the catalogue is in French, with some Georgian parts of the manuscripts, including colophons and notes, translated into Latin. On the old and the new collections of the Georgian Sinai manuscripts, see further below.

4 There are three distinct Georgian alphabets: asomtavruli, nusxuri, and mxedruli. The first, a bold majuscule, is used in inscriptions (from the fifth century) and the oldest manuscripts. Manuscripts of religious content (Bible, liturgy, hagiography, etc.) are written either in asomtavruli or nusxuri, a minuscule used at least up to the eighteenth century, while secular texts (e.g. poetry, history) especially were written in mxedruli, first known from the eleventh century. For an introduction to Georgian paleography and codicology, see Birdsall 1991, 85–128, Gippert 2015, 175–86, and Pataridze 2015, 292–96. The entire volume is available at https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/comst/publications/handbook.html [accessed 27 June 2018].

5 End material in nusxuri.
manuscripts has revealed much the same types. In addition, this Georgian data fits squarely within other scribal and reading traditions of Eastern Christianity, especially Syriac and Armenian, as well as Greek. From these Georgian biblical manuscripts I demonstrate a typology of scribes' and readers' interactions with (biblical) manuscripts.

Georgians at Saint Catherine's reached in the ninth and tenth centuries a period of high literary and scribal activity and the sixteenth century as the end of particularly notable Georgian presence there, although even after that time some Georgians continued to visit the monastery. Archbishop Porphyrios Uspensky (1804–1885) visited the monastery and noted that there were Georgian manuscripts there, but it was not until the work of Alek'sandre C'agareli, who visited the monastery in 1883 and later published a catalog of 93 manuscripts, that the collection became more accurately known. Nikolai Marr and Ivane Javaxišvili both visited the monastery in 1902 but their catalogs were published posthumously only some decades later: Marr's appeared in Russian in 1940 and Javaxišvili's in Georgian in 1947. These catalogs each cover only 44 manuscripts, and they note that some of the manuscripts that C'agareli had seen were no longer present or available. The Library of Congress sent an expedition to the monastery in 1950, and Gérard Garitte worked on the Georgian manuscripts, which were microfilmed at the time. His excellent catalog of the literary—i.e. non-liturgical—manuscripts, thirty-eight in number, from the collection was published in 1956, and he also published some of the texts available in these manuscripts. As mentioned above, the whole collection, as scanned bitonal microfilms, is freely accessible online through the Library of Congress.

2 The ways that scribes and readers interact with manuscripts

Although the terms “colophon,” “note,” “scribe,” and “reader” will be well-known to those interested in manuscripts, since we will often use them below, brief definitions for the words as used here are in order for greater clarity and certainty.

1 A scribe is a person who writes down a text for the first time or, using a previously written down text, makes another copy of the same, with the intention that the copied text be available to the scribe or to other people for reading.

2 A reader is a person who uses—in the broadest sense—a manuscript's text(s), such as by reading for oneself, reciting to a group of listeners, or even briefly perusing various pages of a manuscript. Manuscript owners, too, may fall into this category.

3 A colophon is a place, usually at some logical division in the text being copied, where scribes may record their names, give thanks to a deity, note when and/or where the text in question was completed, for whom

6 Some such examples will be found in McCollum 2013, available at https://www.academia.edu/8469094/1_I_have_written_this_holy_book_with_my_grossly_sinful_hand_An_Orientation_to_Georgian_Manuscripts_through_Hagiographic_Literature (accessed 16 November 2017).


8 I do not discuss here the textual situation of the Bible in Georgian: the various translations, the Vorlagen, etc. Some places to begin for the study of these matters are Childers 2012a, 162–78, Childers 2012b, 293–327, and papers in Amphoux/Elliott (eds.) 2012.

9 Two other recent studies of Georgian colophons, both more general than this one, appeared after this paper was essentially completed: Asatiani 2016 and Shurgaia 2016. The latter includes many samples from Georgian colophons both in Georgian and with an Italian translation.

10 He brought some manuscripts from Sinai back to Georgia, such as the manuscript now known as H 2123, a ninth-century collection of hymns. Cf. Garitte 1956, 405.

11 C'agareli 1888.

12 Marr/Javaxišvili 1940.

13 Javaxišvili 1947.

14 A host of new manuscripts were found in 1975, but they were not studied in detail until the 1990s. On these see especially the introductions (in Georgian, Greek, and English) of Alek'size et al. 2005. These new finds amount to 99 parchment books or parts thereof, 33 paper manuscripts, and 10 scrolls (6 of them on parchment). As with the old collection, a number of the manuscripts are from the ninth and tenth centuries. While we call these finds "old" and "new," they are really one collection, and there is a close connection between them, that is, missing parts in one group are often filled out by the other. The result is that one must study the two catalogs, Garitte's and the new one, side-by-side. Needless to say, there is ample room for Georgian scholars to continue working on the Sinai manuscripts, from both the old and new finds, with promise of good fruits for various avenues of research. (And indeed, beyond Georgian: Sin. Geo. N 13 and N 55 are palimpsests which continue to be studied as witnesses in the under-text to Caucasian Albanian.)

15 As will be seen below, I have borrowed the term from the Georgian lexicon: მსახურება.

16 The catalogs of Georgian manuscripts in some cases include colophons or parts thereof. A collection of Georgian colophons (with English translation) is available in Jobaže 1976. See the study of a single colophon in Peeters 1932, 358–71. Specifically for the colophons of Ep'rem Mc'ire, see T'valt'važė 2009, the texts of which are available online through the TITUS Project at http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etca/cauc/ageo/orilgit/efrem/efrem.htm (accessed 16 November 2017).
the text was copied, etc., as well as mention things less directly related to the act of copying itself. The colophon is, in short, the place (or places) in a manuscript where the scribe steps out from his copying work and speaks as an extra.

(4) A note is either something written in a manuscript by someone other than the scribe (i.e. a reader), or something written by the scribe, but not in a place typical for colophons, that is, somewhere other than the end of a text or section of text, or something that is not usual colophon material, which is outlined in the previous definition. In the case of a scribal note, I have in mind here mainly just written remarks recorded here and there in margins, or perhaps something non-colophonic recorded on an endpaper, or similar.

This means, of course, that notes and parts of colophons may be very similar in type, regardless of who, scribe or reader, writes them.

A further word must be said on the distinction between colophons and scribes, on the one hand, and notes and readers on the other. In analysis the two sides might be opposed to each other and made to be different classes. At least in terms of the definitions given above and of the categories as presented below, though, there are close similarities between these two potentially distinct sides. That is, a Venn diagram of the two would have a broad overlapping area. A case can be made for not drawing a hard and fast line between note and colophon, or to state it differently, the more suitable distinction might be formulated as being between copied text, on the one hand, and everything else (embracing both what might be called colophon and notes), on the other. One advantage of such a linked treatment of the conventional categories of colophon and note is that it allows a researcher to study the book, at a particular point in time, as an artifact of book history with a clear grasp of the especially unique parts of the book as a copy of another text. These unique parts are those that are not as such in other copies (real or theoretical) of the text in question.

Notes or parts of colophons sometimes have seemingly little to do with the text they accompany, and we seem to be missing some context for better understanding them. In the Gospel manuscript of Kuraši, for example, we have these two notes:

f. *111v ობ(ჰოფოლი) დომ(ნი) ოღონ(ი) ორ(ი)

If you like, (write down)\(^{17}\) the alphabet: a, b, g, d.\(^{18}\)

More often, however, notes and parts of colophons fall into recognizable categories. In what follows we present examples in Georgian from the Sinai manuscripts, accompanied here and there by analogous examples from other languages, according to these categories: prayer-requests, self-deprecation, copying details, historical details, curses against thieves. Following these five categories, I share a few more notes that do not easily fit into this categorization. This is not, of course, the only way to classify these and similar notes, and there is also some overlap among them. For example, a scribe might request prayers of forgiveness for his shoddy success as a scribe, something both a prayer and self-deprecation, or a scribe might mention the commissioner for the copying of a manuscript, which is both a historical and a copying detail.

2.1 Prayer-requests

Scribes and readers often pen prayer-requests for themselves, their family members, their spiritual companions, and sometimes those who aided the scribe in producing the manuscript in question. From the old Sinai collection we have, as expected, many examples.\(^{20}\) Scribes and readers especially record prayer-requests for themselves, for family members, and fellow monks. From no. 15, f. 138v:

Zakaria, give me your army.\(^{19}\)

The holy Gospel, the book of Mark the holy Evangelist, is finished. The writer of this [book], Iovane, very much a sinner, my parents, and brothers are entrusted to you in your holy prayers. Forgive me everything I lack!

---

20 These main Georgian excerpts are given transliterated into mxedruli. The English translations are my own, although I have consulted Garitte’s Latin renderings, too. The very frequent use of abbreviations, not only for nomina sacra but for many other word-types, is a main characteristic of Georgian scribal practice. For the excerpts from the old Sinai collection given here, these filled out abbreviations are indicated in parentheses.
21 In the manuscript the first three letters of the word were written, then the whole word written again.

\(^{17}\) With გამოწერა understood.
The scribe of the manuscript now no. 38 calls for readers to pray for himself, his family, and other loved ones (f. 98v):

Remember in your prayer the scribe of this [book], Iovane, very much a sinner, and my parents and brothers, and all my living and dead [relations], spiritual and physical.

In addition to the scribe and family members and fellow monks, prayers may be requested for other participants in the making of the book. In no. 38, f. 143r:

Christ, have mercy on the scribes, helpers, and purchasers of this holy book, and on the readers and hearers.

And in no. 39, f. 128v:

Christ, have mercy on Michael, the purchaser of the book, on Iovane the scribe, on my elder Basil, and on all my brother and teachers: Iovane, Giorgi, Kvirike, Gabriel. Pray!

The setting of later notes is especially not always known, as in this generic prayer-request (no. 38, f. 144v):

In that time I wrote this when the Turks sent away. I, someone unworthy, beg you: pray!

Scribes were aware that their work would outlast them, and that the results of their scribal labors may someday rest in the hands of future readers, readers to whom some scribes addressed prayer-requests. In no. 39, f. 132r a note reads:

The word here, an adjective, is not known to me. Garitte also apparently found it unusual, but he renders it with “desiderati.”

22 The word here, an adjective, is not known to me. Garitte also apparently found it unusual, but he renders it with “desiderati.”
23 Or “May God...”
24 Not Iovane Zosime.
And now I beg you, all the friends of God, priests, and those who will use these holy books, remember the souls of us all in your holy prayers, ... and forgive all that is too little, and turn it to prayer, and may God make the prayer of all of you heard, and may he accept our commemorations.

Similar notes are found in manuscripts no. 58, 31 and 60. A note in no. 60, f. 12r says:

Now, beloved brothers, those of you who become worthy after us to use and read this holy Gospel preached by Paul the Apostle, when you read, remember our souls and the souls of our parents in your holy prayers accepted by God, that we might become worthy at the right hand of Christ on the day of judgement, and may the Lord also have mercy on you.

Finally, this same sense of a manuscript’s survival beyond the life and labor of the scribe meant that scribes could see the manuscripts they copied as a lasting memorial, not only for themselves, but for anyone they might name, in the mouths and hearts of those same future readers just referred to. In no. 15, f. 292r, at the end, after the Gospel of John, following a lengthy list of intercessors, a scribe explains:

And we offered it there on holy Mount Sinai, the refuge of holy Moses, for prayer and for a memorial for our soul[s], and those of our parents, brothers, teachers, and all our people and generation, living and dead.

And in no. 39, f. 132r, the scribe indicates that he undertook the work:

... at the command of the worthy priest, Michael, the deacon, for the commemoration of, and prayer for, our soul and the soul of our parents, brothers, and all our departed, and of my elder, Basil.

Outside the Sinai collection, in Paris, BnF, géo. 8 (twelfth century) we have these simple examples (both in mxedruli):

f. 60r ყოველის ქანძალის ლოცვა, მაცხოვრე ანუკა
All you worthy saints, save me, the sinner Anuka!

f. 96r ქრისტე, ოღონდ, ღმერთო, ბატონი კათალიკოსი თიოვანე დიასამისზე.
Christ! Glorify, O God, the lord katholikos Iovane Diasamisze.

Commemorations like this are not at all uncommon.\(^28\) They are sometimes worked into colophons themselves by the scribe, as here from Paris, BnF, géo. 9 (eleventh century), f. 65r:

... at the command of the worthy priest, Michael, the deacon, for the commemoration of, and prayer for, our soul[s], and those of our parents, brothers, and all our departed.

... the king of everything eternal, protect in spirit and in body Leonti the archbishop! Amen.

The same manuscript offers us a prayer-note from the hand of a later reader named Onop’r’e (f. 121r):

Lord, have mercy on Onop’re, formerly of Tp’ilisi, son of the duke [erist’avi].

2.2 Scribe self-deprecation

Christian humility, whether real or feigned, led scribes to describe themselves in terms less than flattering. From the old Sinai collection, we begin by pointing out that one of the very common ways for a scribe to refer to manuscript copying is to use the root ჩხრეკ-\(^29\). The verb ჩხრეკა means “to scratch, poke, smear,” and by extension, “to scrabl, write poorly.” (We also see the verb with a preverb: დაჩხრეკა.) For “(bad) scribe, scrawler” with this root we also have the nomen agentis მჩხრეკალი. The less marked root for “to write, copy” is წერ-\(^30\), such as in the verbs გარდაწერა, დაწერა, and in the nomen agentis მწერალი.

\(^{27}Garitte\text{ has} \text{ წვრელა(ქიობილი).}\)

\(^{28}\) Another manuscript now in Paris (BnF, géo. 4, thirteenth/fourteenth century), a synaxarion, is replete with such notes.

\(^{29}\) On which see Fähnrich 2007, 549–50.

\(^{30}\) Cf. German kratzen and kritzeln.
No. 19, f. 53v reads:

Forgive me for the ignorant scrawling!31

Similarly, still referring to bad writing, yet with different language (no. 81, f. 255v):

Glory to God! The holy Gospel – four parts in full and a collection in full – is finished. Pray in the love of God, and do not curse me on account of the writing, it being bad: poor me, I knew nothing more. To whosoever hand it will (eventually) remain after me, pray much!

References to scrawling may be combined with mention of poor health, including some degree of blindness. No. 38, f. 115r:

I scrawled this holy book … and all this other guidance 32 by my own very sinful hand, right in the days for the evil of my old age while I was very sick and blind.33

Sometimes scribes just affirm the poor state of their bodies. In no. 15, the famous Iovane Zosime writes on f. 292, after the Gospel of John,

The Lord made me, this worst servant of God, worthy to copy this holy Psalter.

This feature of scribal self-deprecation is not unique to Georgian, but a characteristic that spans the centuries of Christian scribal activity. For example, "one who is far from good things, and close to evil things,"36 "in name a monk and elder, in deed more evil than the devil,"37 and "the scribe Astuadzatur the presbyter, who am called a priest in name, but am not such in deed."38 Longer examples across the language-traditions are plentiful, but I give only one more example in Armenian: "I beg you to remember in the Lord, Ezekiel, a dead spirit, void of good and empty of grace, and to be indulgent of my rude penmanship and of my blunders, because of the great sorrow which has befallen the Armenian nation."39

2.3 Copying details

Copying details are perhaps the most immediately thought of parts of a colophon: when the book was finished, where it was copied, for whom it was copied, the scribe’s name, and whatever may be lacking on my part, forgive, because I was a stupid scrawler, and, God knows, exceedingly sick in body, and may the Lord God be with you all the time. Amen.

31 Cf. also no. 85, f. 43r ღ(მერთმა)ნ დაგაჯეროს და შემინდვეთ უცბად ჩხრეკისა თჳს ქართულად

32 That is, the divine guidance in Scripture.

33 Cf. also no. 60, f. 12r: და შე ი(ო)ვანეს წერად წ(მიდა)ჲ ესე სახ(ა)როდ ჴელითა ჩემ ჴელითა ჩემ

34 The notion is biblical, of course. See, for example I Tim. 1,15.

35 A different Iovane than Iovane Zosime.

36 Jerusalem, Monastery of St. Mark, 58, p. 378.

37 Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, 73, p. 541.

38 Translated from the Armenian by Conybeare (1913, 294).

39 Conybeare 1913, 196.
etc. These parts of colophons may include indications of very particular writing circumstances.

A hallmark of copying details is the giving of the completion date of a manuscript. Here are some examples from the old Sinai collection.\(^{40}\) No. 15, f. 292r has:

\[
\text{ოდეს ესე დაიწერა ჴელითა ი(ოვა)ნე ფ(რია)დ ც(ო)დ(ვი)ლისა ი(ოვა)ნე ზ(ო)ს(ი)მ(ი)სითა დ... ...წელნი იყვნეს ხფპბ და ქ(რონი)კ(ო)ნი იყო ...}.
\]

When this was written on holy Sinai by the hand of Iovane, very much a sinner, Iovane [...], the years were 6582 and the chronicon was [...].

No. 38, f. 139v:

\[
\text{ოდეს ესე დაიწერა ჴელითა ი(ოვა)ნე ფ(რია)დ ც(ო)დ(ვი)ლისა დაჲთა ქრ(ო)ნ(ი)კ(ო)ნი იყო ქ(ა)რთ(უ)ლად რჟთ და ბე(რ)ძ(უ)ლ(ა)დ პზ.}
\]

When this [book] was written by the hand of Iovane, very much a sinner, the chronicon was, according to Georgian reckoning, 199 [= 979 c.e.], and according to Greek reckoning, 87.

No. 60, f. 12r has:

\[
\text{დას(ა)ბ(ა)ჲთ განნი წელნი იყ(ვ)ნეს ხფპა და ქ(რონი)კ(ო)ნი იყო როზ და ლ(ო)ც(ვა) ყ(ავ)თ}
\]

The years [as counted] from the beginning [of the world] were 6581 and the chronicon was 197 [= 977 c.e.]. And pray!

And later in the same manuscript, f. 143r:

\[
\text{დ(იდე)ბ(ა)ჲ ღ(მერთს)ა სროჳლმყოფელსა ყ(ოვლ)ისა კ(ე)თილის(ა)სა ღირს ვიქმენ მე ოჳრბნ(ე)ლ მთ(ა)ვ(ა)რების(კ)ო პ(ო)სი ვლასი შეკაზმად წ(იგნ)ისა ამის წიგნისა ს(ა)ნატრ(ე)ლისა რ(ომელი) ჟ(ა)მთა სიგრძის(ა)გ(ა)ნ გ(ა)ნრყოჳნილ48 და უჴმარ ქმნილ იყო და ჩ(უე)ნ ახლ(ა)დ ბრძ(ა)ნ(ე)ბითა და ჯ(ე)რჩინ(ე)ბითა49 მ(ა)მისა ჩ(უე)ნისა ტფილელ მთ(ა)ვ(ა)}
\]

Sometimes the scribe comments on the available writing materials, and even on the exemplar used. In no. 38, f. 141r, the scribe complains of a lack of parchment and the small writing of his exemplar:

\[
\text{დ(ა)ბ(ა)ჲ დიად მრ(ა)ვ(ა)ლი განგებ(ა)ჲ ვერ დ(ა)ვწ(ე)რე მრ(ა)ვლისა მიზეზისა გ(ა)ნ და ეტრატისა არა ქონებითა.}
\]

And I did not write much other guidance for several reasons, including my not having parchment. What I did write [...], I scrawled in blindness. The exemplar was written with small writing.

Oppositely, the following scribal note praising the available paper is written along the outer margin of no. 81, f. 231v:

\[
\text{კარგი ქაღადი გაჰმარჯჳ ო(ჳფალ)ო წერაჲ უცთომელი}
\]

I have labored on good paper, Lord, [suitable as to receive] flawless writing.

As examples from another tradition, I give four Armenian notes from the fifteenth century in this category.\(^{43}\) “... because of the severity of the winter, the darkness during the daytime, and from the lightning at night... do not blame me, for this is the best I could do, because this place was dark and it was wintertime”;\(^{44}\) “Now, this [book] was written ... in bitter and evil times, at the end of my transient life”;\(^{45}\) “... because I wrote this at night under a lamp; every night I copied eight folios, but during the day only two or three folios”;\(^{46}\) and finally, “a mouse urinated on the margin.”\(^{47}\)

Finally, we may point out that, not scribes, but owners and readers may tell us something of the book’s later history. We know, for example, that Paris, BnF, géo. 28 was rebound two times. The first time was by an archbishop named Vlase (or Vlasi); we find the handwriting of this same Vlase also in Vind. geo. 4, which he rebound in the year 1570. His note begins (f. 305r):

\[
\text{დ(იდე)ბ(ა)ჲ ღ(მერთს)ა სროჳლმყოფელსა ყ(ოვლ)ისა კ(ე)თილის(ა)სა ღირს ვიქმენ მე ოჳრბნ(ე)ლ მთ(ა)ვ(ა)რების(კ)ო პ(ო)სი ვლასი შეკაზმად წ(იგნ)ისა ამის წიგნისა ს(ა)ნატრ(ე)ლისა რ(ომელი) ჟ(ა)მთა სიგრძის(ა)გ(ა)ნ გ(ა)ნრყოჳნი}
\]

41 Ms. ოიდება.

42 Ms. ოტომანურა.

43 Armenian colophon excerpts cited in this format are from Xač’ikyan 1955 and 1958, with English translation from Sanjian 1969. For more on Armenian colophons, see the items listed in Thomson 1995, 105–6.

44 No. 69a in Xač’ikyan 1955, 63-64/Sanjian 1969, 22.

45 No.199 in Xač’ikyan 1955, 186-87/Sanjian 1969, 127.


48 Ms. გუმბათობით.

49 The writer left the abbreviation mark off.

\(^{40}\) On date-reckoning in Georgian manuscripts, including the use of the chronicon, see Birdsall 1991, 102–3, and Müller 2007, 521–22.
2.4 Historical details

Here in view may be references to more or less well-known historical figures, the recorded witnessing of some local event, notices of the history of the text being copied (e.g. its translation), or day-to-day activities within the community where a text was copied. These historical particulars, then, touch not only on events, great or small, but on literary and textual history, such as translation and where and when certain texts were available to readers.\textsuperscript{50}

From the old collection of the Georgian Sinai manuscripts, let us begin with references to the “new translation,” the text revised by Giorgi,\textsuperscript{51} also mentioned in the new collection (no. 19, f. 53v).

\begin{quote}
ἀὕτω τοῦτον ὑποδέχομαι γὰρ ἔναν διαφόρων καὶ διάφορων διάδοσεως \\
ὡς ἐκποιητήν καὶ διοικητήν αὐτῶν
\end{quote}

We have translated from the new translation, and it is quite proper [to serve] as an exemplar.

The same is again on f. 262r and followed by

\begin{quote}
ἀὕτω δὲ ὑπὸ ἡμῶν ἔργον ἡ ἡμῶν σοφίας ὑπὸ διδασκάλου ἑπιτελεῖται αὐτὸ ὑπὸ ἡμῶν
\end{quote}

Some expressions are not found in the old Gospels.

Similar notes are in no. 81, ff. 68v, 169r, and from the new collection, in Sin. Geo. N 12 (254–256/383–384),\textsuperscript{52} we have another reference to the “new translation.”

\begin{quote}
50 Not surprisingly, remarks about translation appear in the colophons and notes of other scribal traditions, too. Just from Ga’az, for example: London, BL, Or. 692, f. 96r, “’Abd al-Masīḥ translated it from Arabic to Ga’az,” and London, BL, Or. 686, f. 27r, “This book was translated from Coptic to Ga’az.” For these manuscripts, see Wright 1877, 165–66.

51 On the revisions of Giorgi (d. 1065) and Ep’em Mc’ire (d. ca. 1094), see Childers 2012b, 316–20.

52 References to the new collection of Georgian manuscripts at Sinai include page numbers for the Georgian and English parts of Alek’size et al. 2005, the latter being the source of the English translations given here.

\begin{quote}
53 In the new collection, Sin. Geo. N 19 (265/392), gives us another scribal reference to translation:

Ῥο[[[μ]]]]ηρο[[[σ]]]ὶ ἰδίᾳ συγκαταλείποντα τὸν ἐν οὐσίαν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Σαρακέννῃ ἐν αὐτο[[[]]] ἑαυτό[[[]]] ἑω[[[[]]]] θό[[[]]]δε διδασκαλεύσεως τοιὰς ὡς ἐν Σαρακέννῃ τὸν ἐν Σαρακέννῃ ἑω[[[[]]]] θό[[[]]]δε διδασκαλεύσεως τοιὰς αὐτο[[[]]] ἑαυτό[[[]]] ἑω[[[[]]]] θό[[[]]]δε διδασκαλεύσεως τοιὰς ὡς ἐν Σαρακέννῃ τὸν ἐν Σαρακέννῃ ἑω[[[[]]]] θό[[[]]]δε διδασκαλεύσεως τοιὰς αὐτο[[[]]] ἑαυτό[[[]]] ἑω[[[[]]]] θό[[[]]]δε διδασκαλεύσεως τοιὰς ὡς ἐν Σαρακέννῃ τὸν ἐν Σαρακέννῃ
\end{quote}

54 See Childers 2012b, 315–16.

55 Or “May God ...”

The famous Euthymius (Georgian: Ek’vt’ime or, as below, Ep’t’wime) the Athonite (d. 1028) translated Revelation into Georgian,\textsuperscript{54} as clearly stated in a memorial and prayer-request in no. 85, ff. 42v–43r:

\begin{quote}
Those of you who might read this wonderful book [Revelation], pray—God will\textsuperscript{55} make you content!—for poor Ep’t’wime, translator of this book, and those of you who might copy it, do not forget to write my name at the end.
\end{quote}

Further historical particulars appearing in these Georgian biblical manuscripts have to do with books and
the presence of specific people at the Sinai Monastery. While these names of books and people may or may not have immediate interest for big-picture history, for the local history of the monastery, and in broader prosopography and book history, they do offer something of value. Within a lengthy prayer request in no. 60, f. 11v, we read:

I was made worthy to purchase this holy book of Paul and the apostles, I, Kwirike, an elder of the mountain.

And on the next page of the same manuscript (f. 12r):

Further similar examples are the two following:

Now, too, O king, have mercy on the maker of this book, the priest Kwirike, and Iovane; he has gotten eleven such books on the mountain for the mention of his soul.

From other language-traditions we have mention of well-known events and leaders. For example, in a fifteenth-century Armenian colophon Qara Yūsuf, leader of the so-called Black Sheep Turkomans at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, is named and praised, sort of: “during the reign of the great Iwsuf [Qara Yūsuf], the brave and valiant godless one. Although he is a Muslim [yuluzgi], he is kind toward the Christians, the priests, and the churches.”

From a little over a century before, in the long colophon of Jerusalem, Monastery of St. Mark, 109, a manuscript finished on “Saturday the nineteenth of Ādār [March] of the year 1611 AG [= 1300 CE], in the middle week of the Holy Forty(-day) Fast, in the holy church of the Theotokos, Mary, in Gāzartā of Qardu,” the scribe relates how Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) crossed over the mountains from Persia and saved the Christians “from the hand of our Pharaonic enemies,” referring to the Egyptian Mamlukes.

Secondly, readers may sometimes make notes of local weather events and the like. Jerusalem, Monastery of St. Mark, 211, f. 241r has meteorological reports from 1814 AG (= 1502/3 CE) and 1882 AG (= 1570/1 CE), and at the end of a Pentateuch in East Syriac script copied in 1963 AG...
(= 1651/2 CE), Mardin, Chaldean Cathedral, 40, f. 206v, there is a brief mention of snowfall in 2156 AG (= 1844 CE).65

Finally, to return to Georgian, for comparison with the evidence about local community activities in the old collection, here from the new collection, in Sin. Geo. N 2 (247/375), we read of a specific architectural endeavor, with the addition of an obviously stated social viewpoint:

And by the will of God [I have come] to this holy mountain, the spiritual harbour. And by the grace of God I have built a [small] church outside the doors of the Great church. And [also] I have [built] houses for the Arabs to stay there and to pray for my [soul]. [Earḷer (?) the holy church was the place to stay there and to sleep at night. And the holy[ly] church was [def[i]led at night by their foul stench; therefore I [have now] made their abode and their staying-place outside. By the [com]mand of God and with his aid, as a result of my diligence and the toil of [belo] ved God-loving and worthy priests, I have acquired books for the Holy Mount.

2.5 Curses against thieves

Curses against would-be book thieves—penned by scribes or by subsequent owners—are especially rich across several language-traditions,66 and the sentiment to warn people against messing with one’s copying work with divine retribution is, no surprise, older than manuscripts, as Akkadian colophons bear witness.67

From the old Sinai collection in Georgian, there are not many such warnings, but we do have a very memorable curse likening the accursed person to heretics and to Cain (no. 60, f. 11v!)

Now no one has the right to remove this holy book from this holy Mount Sinai, and if someone should dare and begin to take this book away from this holy place, the holy Moses the prophet becomes his soul’s adversary before the Lord on the day of judgement, and that person is cursed like Arius and Nestorius, like all the heretics, and like Cain the brother-killer. And whoever should again make peace [with respect to the book]69 will find peace before Christ forever. Amen.

And while not itself in Georgian, a waqf-note in Arabic by “John the Georgian” (Yūḥanná al-ǧurǧānī) in no. 81, f. 4r, concludes with,

Let whoever wishes read in it. Cursed be whoever removes it from here, steals it, or pawns it.

For comparison, we may turn very briefly to other languages and collections. First, Jerusalem, Monastery of St. Mark, 55 (dated 1170), f. 213r, offers a Syriac example that puts the book-thief into the same group as Judas71 and others:

The curse [him] with a terrible, unappeasable curse, show him no mercy his whole life, remove his name and his seed from the land, [and] cast his flesh into the mouth of a dog” (5 iltāmān ṣa šāmē li raṣīlāt-šu ilānāt šu ma-a-dī umāt-ta kal-ṭu a-la tī ṣu-ri ša re-e-[ma] 7 Šum-šu zēr šu ina māt li-šē-šu-ri šīrāt-i ṣīlāt ina pi-i ṣa kal-bi šī-kun-[nu]).

Garitte has ძმისმკლფე ჩამოწერილი.68 And the well-known69 magical spell from the court of Dayr al-Za'farān 162.
Let him be cursed by God, let his portion be with those who crucified Christ, and let him inherit the snare of Judas and the leprosy of Gehazi!72

The aforementioned Syriac manuscript Jerusalem, Saint Mark, 109 has a long warning that links a book-thief not only to Judas, but to Caiaphas and Annas (see Ioh. 18,13). In other curses, the 318 fathers of the Council of Nicea are invoked to excommunicate anyone who might mess with a book, as in Mardin, Chaldean Chatedral, 74, f. 134r:

No one has the authority to seize, steal, or remove [this book], and whoever transgresses the[se] conditions and limits, let him be excommunicated, damned, and cursed, let him be under the agreement of the 318 fathers, and let the heavenly and the earthly say Amen.

In Armenian, there is a warning to those who might remove not the book itself, but the colophon: “Whoever dares to mutilate or efface this colophon, let his name be effaced from the Book of Life.”73

2.6 Other notes

Finally, here are few notes of other kinds from the old Sinai collection of Georgian manuscripts.74 I have divided these into three subtypes: devotional declarations, explanatory glosses, and what seem to be divinatory notes.

2.6.1 Devotional declarations

Readers’ devotional declarations are simple statements of praise to, or trust in, God, the cross, or the like. We find these adorning manuscripts, as in no. 42, f. 235v, at the end of the Psalter:

̣

Glory to you, Christ, my light!

Specific focus on the cross appears in no. 16, f. 6v (similarly in other manuscripts, e.g. no. 19, f. 54r):

The holy cross is the hope of believers. Christ, have mercy on Daniel!

And again, in no. 81, f. 170v, on a page with a large cross:

The tree of the cross of Christ our God, persecutor of demons.

2.6.2 Explanatory glosses

Some manuscripts may offer commentary-like glosses in the margins at specific verses. These are merely very brief explanations of particular words; they are nothing at all like even a minimal marginal commentary as seen in some biblical manuscripts. No. 16 has a few of these gloss-notes.

f. 60v (on Matth. 17,23) დიდრაქმაჲ არს სასწორი სამისა დრაჰკნისაჲ
A didrachma is a stater of three drachmae.

f. 63r (also no. 19, f. 20r) ტ(ა)ლ(ა)ნი არს ას ოცდაათი ლიტრაჲ
A talent is 130 pounds.

f. 97v (on Marc. 1,6) მკალი დანაკისკუდი არს ებრ(ა)ზ(ი)ო(ნ)ა ელითა ენითა
A locust is a date in Hebrew.

2.6.3 Divinatory notes (?)

No. 86, rather later than the other manuscripts treated here, has some notes relating to specific psalms, notes that seem to have served for readers some kind of divinatory use. Textual divination—that is, a kind of cleromancy in which one uses texts to obtain guidance for a particular (usually personal) enquiry—is well known in prior centuries among Christians, Jews, and others.75 As with divination more generally, the questioner, or seeker, apparently trusts that signs—in this case, the sounds or words of a revered text—are embedded in the sensibly perceptible

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72 For Gehazi’s leprosy, thanks to a curse from the prophet Elisha, see II Reg. 5,27.
73 Conybeare 1913, 193–94.
74 The notes that follow in the next three subsections are not all of the notes that are present among the manuscripts in our corpus. There are others, but they are not always easy to read in the microfilm scans, especially because they are generally written in a rather small script.
75 See van der Horst 1998, 143–74. For earlier divination in Greek (and Mesopotamian) realms see Beerden, 2013.
and intellectually knowable world and that these signs have a knowing wisdom to impart that can and should be heeded. Whereas a question posed in prayer to a deity may, if answered at all, take some time to be answered, with textual divination the assumed answer is immediately available, as soon as the text with its accompanying interpretation is read (or heard). The most well-known such kind of textual divination is the so-called *sortes biblicae* (with accompanying varieties for the texts of Homer and Vergil), where the verses on which one’s attention falls are thought to stand as especially pressing guidance.

In the case of the manuscript in question here, we have notes off to the side of specific verses in the Psalter. Without any further evidence for this manuscript, or for the possible practice of text divination in Georgian at this period (I do not know of any), we cannot definitively say what these notes mean, but it is possible, if not probable, that these verses with their accompanying marginal interpretations served as prognostications and counsel for enquiring readers or listeners. It is, for example, easy to imagine someone wondering about an impending journey and coming to this Psalter. If the questioner’s eyes fall upon Ps. 38 on f. 88v, s/he might cancel the trip, while if they fall upon Ps. 40 on f. 94r, s/he might proceed, and with confidence:

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**f. 88v (Ps. 38):** Don’t do this thing, because it is not good.

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**f. 90v (Ps. 39):** They shall be glad in you, because everything is good.

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**f. 94r (Ps. 40):** Don’t worry, because that thing will be done well.

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**f. 96r (Ps. 41):** Beg God, the strong and living, and he will save you.

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**f. 103v (Ps. 44):** Do that thing. It is good.

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### 3 Concluding remarks

The scribes and readers of this small corpus of Georgian biblical manuscripts have left their marks in the books by putting in writing their prayers and wishes, their records of copying activity, the location and ownership—perhaps protected by a curse—of the book, and more, such as expressed devotion, piecemeal exegetical explanation, and (perhaps) divinatory guidance. As seen from the comparanda from other manuscripts, the notes and colophons in these Georgian biblical manuscripts do not really differ from those found in manuscripts of other genres and in other languages within the broader ambit of the Christian East.

In all these cases, colophons and notes—that is, the extra-copying and extra-reading written acts of scribes and readers—raise the level and value of a codex above that of a copy of this or that text that the scribe presumably intended especially to reproduce. These copies have a superadded value, not only in terms of the physical book itself with all its codicological and paleographical data, but in the form of additional records for the transmission...
of texts; for the histories of monastery, churches, and villages; for spiritual belief and practice; and for the self-representation of these scribes and readers. These colophons and notes show scribes and readers making something akin to soliloquies. They have stepped out of their usual and expected role of copyist or reader and reciter to add something more, something not found in other copies of the same book, something unexpected, something that, had they not so departed from their usual role, would be missing something. Thanks especially to these extras, these and similar manuscripts bear a kind of commemorative power, when they have a specific call from the note-writer that they be remembered, but even when there is no such explicit demand for remembrance. Like Jim Croce, with his “I Got a Name,” these scribes and readers, even when they are asking for prayer or highlighting their sinfulness and skilllessness, show themselves, and later readers or students who go through these manuscripts cannot but help remembering the people that included them. These handwritten books, then, become something much more than just repeated writing: they are copies, indeed, but more than copies. As is clear especially from places where these note-makers have used words like “for prayer for, and for a memorial of (...)” and “to remember” (საჴსენებელად), and places where scribes address those who will in the future use (მხატვრობა) the manuscripts before them, these books are vehicles for the remembrance of each book’s existence and use, from the copying itself to their copying or reading, and the circumstances in which these additional notes of various kinds in the course of their copying or reading, and the circumstances in which they wrote them. These handwritten books, then, become something much more than just repeated writing: they are copies, indeed, but more than copies. As is clear especially from places where these note-makers have used words like “for prayer for, and for a memorial of (...)” and “to remember” (საჴსენებელად), and places where scribes address those who will in the future use (მხატვრობა) the manuscripts before them, these books are vehicles for the remembrance of each book’s existence and use, from the copying itself to the last reader who made the effort to record something in the book’s blank spaces.

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