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Saint Hripsime and her Companions according to Georgian Narrative Sources

St. Gregory, the Illuminator of the Armenians, St. Trdat, the first Christian King of Armenia, and St. Hripsime, the Roman missionary woman who came in Armenia with a group of virgins played a pivotal role in the process of conversion of Armenia. Though the contribution of these persons is incomparable, the merit of Saint Hripsime still seems special. Her martyrdom can be considered as a turning point in Armenian history. Therefore, it is very important scientific task to represent details of her biography.

The fifth century author with a pseudonym “Agathangelos” narrates about the deed of Saint Hripsime and her companions. The account is designed in full accordance with the hagiographic cliché. The presence of a cliché by itself though does not imply that one is dealing with literary fiction, it should alarm researcher and give to him/her motivation to check the reliability of information through the study of other sources.

For checking can be used the “Conversion of Kartli” – an outstanding monument of Georgian historical literature in the Late Antiquity. The archetypal text of this monument was created in the second half of the fifth century, however, without any doubt its constituent parts were written earlier this date.

The “Conversion of Kartli” includes historical chronicle and two recensions of the Saint Nino’s *Vita* – a shortened and lengthy

¹ “Kartli” is an antient designation of Georgia and Georgians.

ones. Both recensions of Saint Nino's *Vita* contain information about Hripsimiantz. Even more: Saint Nino - the Illuminatrix of Georgians - is presented as one of Saint Hripsime's companion. Information on Hripsimiantz is scarce, but it is worthy of attention as far as Georgian source concerns all principal topics and provides unknown from other sources details of Hripsimiantz' history. The differences concern number of virgins came in Armenia, the day and the month of the beginning of their journey, the day and the month of their martyrdoms. And what is most important: the "Conversion of Kartli" implies different historical context and different motivation for the virgins' initiative to reach Caucasia.

Despite this the valuable information kept in the "Conversion of Kartli", it had never been used for the representation of Hripsimiantz' history. The reason of ignoring of the "Conversion of Kartli" was the incorrect conclusions made by many scholars, among them founding fathers of Georgian studies, concerning the identification of the epoch of the monument's creation. However, after establishing the early date for the emergence of the "Conversion of Kartli" in result of modern inquiries, the above attitude should be changed. And the Georgian source should be used for representation of the history of Saint Hripsime and her companions.

In the presentation at first I will display the data available in the "Conversion of Kartli" about Hripsimiantz. Then I will juxtapose the evidences fixed in the "Conversion of Kartli" with information kept in Agathangelos concerning the same issue and, finally, after discussing obtained data I will try to represent the story of Hripsimiantz enriched with new details and accents.