

26 The Importance of Terminological Research

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Abstract

The rapid pace of the modern digital world often leaves scientific research behind, as such work demands considerable time and specialized qualifications. Without thorough historical and etymological investigation, it is frequently challenging to compose accurate dictionary entries, define terms precisely, or establish appropriate correspondences between concepts and terminology. This challenge is especially pronounced in the field of Georgian ecclesiastical terminology. Since modern standardized terminology has yet to be fully developed, the study of the historical evolution of Georgian church terms remains particularly demanding. Researchers in this field must possess a deep understanding of both linguistic and theological symbols, be well-versed in the history of the Greek language, and carefully navigate the intricate nuances of Greek-Georgian linguistic and cultural interactions.

0 Introduction

Ten years ago, the Department of Bilingual Dictionaries and Scientific Terminology at the Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics, TSU, initiated a Georgian-English-Russian glossary of church terms. A substantial amount of data was collected; however, without thorough analysis and scrutiny, writing precise definitions remains frequently impossible, and establishing the etymologies of these terms is also necessary.

To address the challenges encountered in the study of Georgian church terminology, we organized the terms thematically and divided them into the following categories for clarification and further development:

- 1) **Church vestments** – including priestly garments (both everyday and festive), categorized by clerical rank and monastic use;
- 2) **Church architecture and liturgical objects** – covering the parts of the church, sacred items, and utensils;
- 3) **Theological literature and terminology** – encompassing theological works as well as liturgical and hymnographic terms.

1 Research issues of Georgian church terminology

Georgia's proximity to Byzantium facilitated Georgian involvement in Greek educational and scientific activities. In the tenth century, a Georgian monastery was established on Mount Athos. It is known that during the tenth and eleventh centuries, Georgian translators working at their monasteries in Jerusalem, the Black Mountain, Athos, and elsewhere founded the Georgian translation school and laid the foundations for Georgian terminology (Karosanidze 2019). Georgian-Greek linguistic relations have been particularly significant in the context of Byzantine linguistic studies. Based on well-known research, it was through Georgian manuscripts that the study of Byzantine pronunciation and phonetics, as well as the broader reconstruction of the language, became possible (Makharadze 2010: 486–545).

Georgian church terminology is largely derived from Greek, although early Georgian terminological schools developed native equivalents shortly after the translation of the Gospels (Melikishvili 1988, 1999). For instance, early Georgian texts include the term *shesakrebeli* (შესაკრებელი) as an equivalent of the Greek word for “church,” representing a precise semantic match. Similarly, eighth-century texts attest to the use of *sakhareba* (სახარება) as the Georgian equivalent of “evangelion,” a term still in use in modern Georgian. However, unlike *sakhareba*, the word *shesakrebeli* did not gain lasting traction, and the Greek-derived *ekklesia* became the standard term.

As is well known, in the early years of Christianity, there was no clear distinction between sacred and secular vestments. However, beginning in the fourth century, with the rise of monastic life, specific sacred vestments were developed. While these garments shared general similarities and symbolic meanings, they varied over the centuries and across different regions.

Today, establishing a canonical template or definitive definitions for the term remains challenging. Studying the historical development of such terms allows for various conclusions; however, reconstructing this centuries-old history is inherently difficult and naturally gives rise to differing interpretations.

It is also known that even during the earliest years of Christianity's spread, the vestments worn by clergy often differed from one country to another. The emergence of sacred vestments in Georgia is most likely associated with the work of the Thirteen Assyrian Fathers. The uniqueness and character of the Georgian nation, as well as its spiritual heritage, are clearly reflected in the embroidery of ancient Georgian sacred vestments. The influence of the Russian Orthodox Church has also been evident in Georgian vestments.

According to recent research, elements of Russian and Greek Orthodox clerical attire predominantly characterize contemporary Georgian clergy vestments, while the traditions of ancient Georgian clerical vestments have largely been lost (Karosanidze & Giorgadze 2023).

Overall, it remains difficult to establish canonical templates and precise definitions for these terms. Working on their historical development enables numerous insights, though reconstructing this extensive history is challenging and naturally leads to differing scholarly opinions.

1.1 The term *Anaphora*

"Anaphora" is a Greek word often mistakenly interpreted as meaning "tattered," "worn," or "faded." In ancient times, it was precisely such worn-out garments that monks—and later the broader clergy—were said to wear in church (Lursmanashvili 2006). However, the Greek word *ράσον* (*ráson*), meaning "untidy," "tattered," or referring to a nun's outer garment, is the term that conveys the connotation of something old and worn—not *anaphora* (Sophocles 1900). In fact, the word *anaphora* does not denote a garment in Greek, nor is it found with this meaning in ancient Georgian sources. In Greek, the term for a priest's daily robe is *ράσον* (Μαλαβάρη 1951; Χαραλαμπίκης 1997), and it entered Russian as *ряса* (*ryasa*).

This raises the question: when and how did the word *anaphora* acquire a meaning in Georgian that differs from its original Greek usage?

The 20th-century Georgian scholar Korneli Kekelidze suggested that the Greek word *anaphora* adopted an additional meaning in Georgian and came to denote a type of clothing (Kekelidze 1908). Another hypothesis concerning the etymology of *anaphora*—as it came to be understood in Georgian—was proposed by the 19th-century lexicographer Niko Chubinashvili. According to his interpretation, the Georgian usage does not derive from Greek *ἀναφορά* (*anaphorá*, meaning "a carrying back" or "a reference"), but rather from the Greek terms *ἐπᾶνοφόριον* (*epanophorion*) or *ἀπᾶνοφόριον* (*apanophorion*), both of which refer to upper garments such as cloaks or coats (Chubinashvili 1961).

The source on which Chubinashvili based this hypothesis is currently unknown. Nevertheless, due to the phonetic similarity between *anaphora* and these Greek garment terms, *anaphora* acquired an additional, localized meaning in Georgian. From this evolved the word *ანაფორიანი* (*anaphoriani*), a Georgian term used as a general designation for a clergyman.

1.2 The term *K'unk'uli*

The headscarf, shaped like a baby's hat, worn by the Assyrian Fathers who arrived in Georgia in the 6th century, has a long and complex history. In some traditions, this head covering is attached to a mantle; in others, it has evolved into a hood, while in some cases it has remained a distinct cap, undergoing changes in form over time.

In Georgian dictionaries, the term კუნკული (*k'unk'uli*) is generally regarded as a word of Greek origin. However, further research into its etymology suggests otherwise. According to Sophocles' dictionary, the Greek word κουκούλιον (*koukoulion*) is itself borrowed from the Latin *cucullus*, though its precise origin remains unclear (Sophocles 1900). In Julius Pokorny's dictionary, the Latin word *cucullus* is traced back to Proto-Indo-European roots (Pokorny 1959).

It appears that *k'unk'uli* is an ancient term, the precise origins of which are difficult to reconstruct. Based on Georgian liturgical sources, the word *k'unk'uli* has been documented in numerous texts. It refers to a “chastity hood” — a head covering that resembles a baby's bonnet in form. The resemblance between this hood and infant headwear, as a symbol of chastity, is far from accidental. According to tradition, Pachomius the Great was instructed by an angel that he and his monks should wear a hood without a clasp, marked by a purple cross (Pachomius the Great 1892). Other early Christian fathers also interpret the *k'unk'uli* as a sacred garment imbued with symbolic meaning.

“We also wear a cowl as a symbol of modesty. In adulthood, a person typically does not wear a cowl, as it is associated with the innocence of infancy. Yet we wear it because, as the Apostle said, ‘Do not be children in your thinking; be infants in regard to evil, but in your thinking be mature.’ What does it mean to be an infant in regard to evil? When an innocent child is wronged, he does not respond with aggression; when honored, he is not proud; when deprived of something, he does not grieve — for he is untouched by evil. He neither seeks revenge for offenses nor pursues glory. The cowl represents God's grace. Just as a bonnet covers and warms an infant's head, so too does divine grace protect the mind. As the holy fathers have said: ‘The cowl is an image of God, our Savior — an image of grace that shields the mind and preserves our Christlike youthfulness from the demons who ceaselessly oppose us and seek our downfall.’

(Abba Dorotheus 2012:39)

Ancient Georgian liturgical sources attest to expressions such as *k'unk'ulis axda* (“to uncover the cowl”) and *k'unk'ulis dadeba* (“to place the cowl”). Following the baptismal rite, which involved the cutting of a child’s hair, a Christening bib was placed upon the child (lit. “a bib was laid on”). For seven days, the child was required to wear a hooded cowl and attend all services with a covered head. On the eighth day, after receiving a blessing from the abbot, the cowl was ritually removed in the presence of the assembled brethren.

In Greek, the term *κουκούλιον* not only refers to the current item known as *επανωκαλυμαύχον*—a cloth attached to a monk’s hat—but also serves as a hymnographic term, functioning as a synonym for *προοίμιον*: *κουκούλιον ἢ προοίμιον αὐτόμελον* (Τωμαδάκης 1965; Shamanidi 2009). In Georgian, however, *k'unk'uli* does not appear with this hymnographic meaning.

The shape of the cowl has undergone multiple transformations over time. Two principal forms are commonly identified: the so-called simple type, which resembles a bonnet, and the twinset type, cylindrical in shape, with an attached cloth.

In contemporary Georgian, the term *k'unk'uli* refers specifically to the simple, bonnet-like cowl, which takes the form of a hood with elongated ends. The term *q'abalaxi* (*bashlyk*), a traditional Georgian hooded cloak designed to wrap around the head, represents an ancient garment that may originally have been known as *k'unk'uli* before assuming a non-Georgian designation during the Middle Ages—an era marked by such shifts in terminology across various cultural artifacts.

As for the etymology of the word, its preservation in related Kartvelian languages—*k'unk'uli* denotes a hood in Megrelian and a particular type of hat in Svan—along with the existence of Georgian surnames such as *Kukulashvili* and *Kukuladze*, and the word *dak'unk'ulebs* (used to describe a child’s quick, unsteady tottering), suggest a plausible Georgian origin for this so-called “roaming” word. Nevertheless, this hypothesis requires further linguistic investigation (Karosanidze & Gvazava 2013).

1.3 The term *Enkeri*

Enkeri, or epigonation, is a lozenge-shaped cloth used as a liturgical vestment. It symbolizes the towel that Jesus Christ used to dry His disciples’ feet after washing them at the Last Supper—an act that represents humility and servanthood, and which serves as a powerful example for the faithful. Beyond this symbolic function, the epigonation also represents a spiritual weapon—the Word of God—by which hierarchs are empowered to combat sin and impurity.

In early Christianity, this vestment was conferred exclusively upon hierarchs. Over time, however, its use expanded, and in the Greek, Russian, and Georgian churches, it came to be awarded to bishops, archimandrites, and senior priests. The epigonation is worn suspended from the belt on the right side, and its vesting is accompanied by the prayer: “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh...”—a reference to Psalm 45:3, signifying spiritual readiness for battle.

The Georgian term *enkeri* derives from Greek, where it literally means “something to be held in the hand.” In ancient Greek usage, the word carried two primary meanings: (1) sword, and (2) kerchief (Sophocles 1900). In Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s Georgian Dictionary, *enkeri* is defined as a kerchief (Orbeliani 1928), while in Niko Chubinashvili’s dictionary, it is described as a quadrangular vestment worn on the right side by bishops, archimandrites, and others—a vestment equivalent to the palitza (Chubinashvili 1961).

“Vestment, used in church rites, which is quadrangular and surmounted by a cross, and which is worn by the first chief priest, archimandrite, abbot, and bishop during the liturgy: “It is mentioned in the Psalm: *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one*. This should be garment for a bishop to let know heretics and enemies of Christ and the like that this is similar to an actual sword, that is, this is against those who oppose the church.”

(Batonishvili 1990)

The correct Greek term for the vestment is *epigonation*, not *encheirion* (Μαλαβιάκη 1951). Nevertheless, *encheirion* is an ancient term that still appears in Georgian ecclesiastical terminology. A notable example is found in a 10th-century Palestinian manuscript (dated 968), which contains The Life of John Chrysostom—a text attributed to George of Alexandria. In this manuscript, the term *enjeri*, a phonetic variant of *enkeri*, is attested. This variation is likely the result of phonological adaptation influenced by the linguistic environment of Palestine (Gvaramia 1986: 24–28).

There remains much to explore regarding ecclesiastical terms found in both concise and bilingual Georgian dictionaries. Particularly noteworthy are the Georgian terms appearing in 19th-century bilingual dictionaries, which often reflect the influence of Russian ecclesiastical language. Following the annexation of Georgia by the Russian Empire in 1801 and the subsequent abolition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church, significant changes were introduced into Georgian liturgical practice.

One such example of Russian ecclesiastical influence is the term *bedenik'i* (набедренник), denoting a component of clerical vestment—specifically, a square or rectangular cloth worn by Russian Orthodox priests (Giorgadze & Khuchua). This vestment continues to be used in the Russian Church today. The term *bedenik'i* and the vestment it describes entered Georgian ecclesiastical practice under the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, as this item is not found in the traditions of other Orthodox churches. Characteristically, it features a central cross and is worn suspended by a long cord on the right side. When a priest is also entitled to wear an epigonation, the *nabedrennik* is worn on the left side, with the epigonation positioned on the right.

Like the epigonation, the *nabedrennik* is regarded as a spiritual weapon—an embodiment of the Word of God as revealed in the four Gospels, and a symbolic instrument by which a priest combats godlessness, heresy, sin, and impurity. Its rectangular shape reflects the four Gospels, reinforcing its theological and symbolic significance.

The Georgian term *bedenik'i* is a modified form of the Russian word *набедренник*. Lexicographic sources suggest that it was initially adopted in Georgian as *nabedrenik'i*. Over time, likely due to imperfect command of Russian and the natural linguistic tendency to simplify or adapt foreign words, *nabedrenik'i* evolved into *bedrenik'i*, and eventually *bedenik'i* (Giorgadze 2021).

The practice of wearing a *nabedrennik* appears to have been in effect within the Georgian Church from the early 19th century—following Russian annexation—until approximately the 1990s. However, determining the exact time and reasoning behind its abandonment remains difficult, as no official church documentation regarding the decision has yet been found. According to informal oral accounts gathered from members of the clergy, the Georgian Church ultimately deemed it inappropriate to maintain two similar ecclesiastical awards, opting instead to retain the epigonation as the more traditional and symbolically resonant vestment (Karosanidze & Gvazava 2013).

At present, the *nabedrennik* is no longer used in the Georgian Orthodox Christian Church; nevertheless, confusion persists in terminology, as the terms *enkeri* and *bedenik'i* are frequently used interchangeably, despite denoting distinct liturgical vestments. To further investigate this ambiguity, we consulted staff at the Patriarchate of Georgia's official sewing workshop, *Shesamoseli*, and presented them with an image of a *nabedrennik*. Their response was: “Sagverduli [*nabedrennik*] is the same as *enkeri* [*epigonation*], that is, a symbol of a spiritual sword. This particular shape is not used in Georgia; here, the vestment

is lozenge-shaped.” This conflation of terms is also reflected in various dictionaries, where the two are either equated or not clearly distinguished. Such inconsistencies further underscore the need for a precise, historically grounded, and standardized ecclesiastical terminology in Georgian.

For instance, An Abridged Explanatory Glossary of Church Terms states that საგვერდული (sagverduli, ‘nabedrennik’) is “a decoration of a priest who is awarded for his dedicated service” (Megrelishvili 2003). However, the entry for enkeri makes no mention of sagverduli or bedenik’i (‘nabedrennik’), nor does it provide clarification regarding their relationship. This is only one example illustrating the variation, ambiguity, and semantic overlap surrounding the usage of sagverduli/bedenik’i. The disappearance of the bedenik’i from use in the Georgian Orthodox Christian Church has led to an expansion of the meaning of its Georgian counterpart sagverduli, which is now often treated as a synonym for enkeri. To avoid further confusion and ensure terminological accuracy, it is essential to clearly differentiate between these related terms and concepts. Their precise documentation in specialized glossaries will facilitate a more accurate understanding and help standardize their usage within ecclesiastical, academic, and liturgical contexts.

The Georgian Orthodox Christian Church restored its autocephaly in 1990; however, there still is no canon in the Georgian Church to be abided by a priest in his vestments. Presently, priests of the Georgian Church either dress themselves according to their ‘taste’ or wear Russian or Greek garments. Substantially, this may not change the essence of liturgy; however, Georgian uniqueness is being lost. 2011 saw the publication of the book *Georgian Embroidery*; the book deals with techniques of Georgian church embroidery, ancient and unique artifacts of Georgian embroidery: communion chalice cloths, curtains, epimanikia, epigonations, antimins, epitachelions, omophorions. Obviously enough, it is possible both to reconstruct the ancient Georgian tradition and to establish details of clerical vestments (Baratashvili et al. 2011).

The antiquity of the Georgian Church has endowed it with a rich reservoir of linguistic and terminological resources. However, when the Church regained its influence in recent decades, Georgian lexicography was not adequately prepared to meet the associated challenges. The Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics at Tbilisi State University (TSU) has been actively working to address this gap. It is our hope that a comprehensive trilingual glossary of ecclesiastical terms will be published in the near future. It should also be emphasized that representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Christian Church are well aware

of the importance of preserving and standardizing church terminology. From the outset of our work, bishops, priests, and monastics have shown their support, actively participating in and facilitating the development of this field.

The case of Georgian church terminology illustrates the broader challenges associated with the development of Georgian terminology as a whole. This underscores the critical importance of strengthening terminological research, fostering the next generation of scholars, and ensuring their active engagement in contemporary terminological endeavors.

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