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Topoi in Old Georgian Prose

The use of repeated motifs or "commonplaces" is frequently found in the texts of old Georgian literature - hagiographic, historical, secular works. This rule is especially topical in the literature of the 5th-12th centuries, although the mentioned rhetorical device is not alien to texts of the later period too.

"Commonplaces" or topoi, as Ernst Robert Curtius called them, take on canonical form in hagiographic literature. Topos creates a stylistic background of the literary work. It is a special form of speech, figure the unexpected appearance of which changes and activates the course of reasoning and thought.

In Old Georgian writing, topos is a rule of narration, part of a canon, compositional detail. In this respect, it is a unit carrying a poetic function. Although, at the same time an aesthetic function, that serves the focusing of attention, mobilization, freedom of perception and feeling, establishment of stylistic integrity stands out in it.

In the author's hands, the topos, as a figure of speech, is a signal, means of expression that creates a contrasting background in the text in order to highlight what is to be said, to turn thought and details into the main episode. Topos as a "commonplace" is a stylistic necessity. Where a topos is, there is a style, or "fact of style."

The chronotope of Old Georgian prose is typologically very close to the biblical chronotope. Here memory fixes the unity of event, place and time.

Time and space in Old Georgian prose is an image and repetition of the biblical time/space prototype, which is an eternal substance from which more and more times and spaces flow and repeat. For instance, Grigol Khandzteli's deed is an emanation of the eternal labor which is biblical Abraham's merit. The protagonist's life and work is presented in the biblical context. Biblical time and space in a literary work or historiographical text turns into a "commonplace" with a predetermined, easily identifiable sign.