

NANA KHABULIANI

THE LIFE OF ARSEN IQALTOELI (ARSEN OF IQALTO)

The 11th century is regarded to be the period of greatest development of the Georgian Christian philosophy the major figure of which is Arsen Iqaltoeli (Arsen of Iqalto).

There were several men named Arsen at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries: Arsen Iqaltoeli, Arsen the son of Vache and Arsen Kaliposeli (Arsen of Kalipos). Authentic data on these persons are not available; we can only state that Arsen Iqaltoeli is not the same person as Arsen Kaliposeli. The latter, presumably, was named as Arsen Kaliposeli due to his work as a man of letters at Kalipos Monastery near Antioch, while the Arsen Iqaltoeli was one of the prominent Georgian figures, a translator, encyclopedist, hymnographer and philosopher.

In the process of nation-building David the Great King strived to find the outstanding representatives of “the Georgian gene” scattered in the most advanced progressive countries of his contemporary world in order to entrust them with a task of restoring and establishing an important philosophical school; Arsen Iqaltoeli was one of the representatives of this school whose purpose during his work in eastern Europe was to reflect the laws of the universe through the prism of unified Christian philosophy. He believed that Georgia was worth having the Pazisi school and agreed with David the Builder to move to Gelati Lavra.

The prominent school established by Arsen Iqaltoeli and Ioane Petritsi still needs further investigation.