

Medieval Inscriptions in the Vicinity of Antioch on-the-Orontes

by

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The inscriptions published here (with the exception of Nos. X, XI, XII, and XIV) were found either during the preliminary work in the late summer of 1962 or during the process of excavations carried out from June 11 to July 14, 1963, in an eleventh century medieval Georgian church located in the southeastern part of Musa Dag in the western end of the Black Mountains, 25 km west of Antioch on-the-Orontes.¹ Nos. X and XII were located and copied in the summer of 1924 by the present director of the French archeological institute in Beyrouth, Professor Henri Seyrig. The first was found in a grotto situated in a ravine westward of the town Kaboussie northeast of Seleucia Pieria; the second in the above mentioned Georgian church. The copies of both inscriptions, which are now destroyed, were kindly put at my disposal by Mr. Seyrig.

Nos. XI and XIV I found during the excavation in the monastery of S. Barlaam on the eastern slope of Mount Casios, located southwest of Antioch-on-the-Orontes. The first was found in a burial chamber, located south of the basilical church of St. Barlaam on the 26th of July 1963; the latter in the basilica itself on the 26th of August 1963.

All the inscriptions except Nos. III₃, XIII and XIV (which are Greek) are Georgian. Nos. VI to IX were executed simultaneously in the late thirties or early forties of the eleventh century; the rest range from the middle of the eleventh to the twelfth century, except No. XIV.

The inscriptions are divided into two parts. The first part deals with Georgian, the second with Greek inscriptions. In the text published here the brackets indicate a lacuna; the dots within them indicate the approximate number of letters that have been lost. The damaged or incompletely restored letters are placed in a small half square bracket on the top of the restored letters. A parenthesis is employed to resolve the abbreviations. In cases where the photograph is inadequate, the copy of the text is furnished, which was executed at the place in original size to facilitate the reading of the inscriptions. The exact dimensions of the letters are also offered except for Nos. VII and VIII. The phonetical system was adapted for the transcriptions of the Georgian text.

¹ On archeological activities in this church see my "Vorläufiger Bericht über Grabungen und Untersuchungen in der Gegend von Antiochia am Orontes" in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts in Istanbul*, Vol. 15, 1965.

Georgian inscriptions

The majority of inscriptions are grafitti which were found in one very limited area, 3.00×4.00 m in front of the southern entrance to the church. Most of the grafitti are extremely low or obliterated through natural causes to such a degree that in some cases it is impossible to restore the original text. This is particularly true of those which are badly damaged and distorted by scratches or irregularities, but since these grafitti are usually very short and of invocational character, in some instances the restoration of the original text is possible, which I have subsequently offered only when the remaining traces were relatively certain.

In all cases the inscriptions are executed on the smooth surface of square or rectangular limestones. On one block inscriptions were found on two adjacent sides, evidently a cornerstone. The grafitti are executed in so-called *nuskhuri* or minuscule and in certain instances reflect the sure hand of a trained calligrapher. Although the inscriptions are executed on a relatively hard material, in some instances the inclination of the scribe to ligate the words, is observed (for instance No. II). Since the relatively hard material (limestone) does not offer natural possibilities for ligation, in at least three instances the traditions of manuscripts can be detected, but the ligation appears rather artificial. Since some stones contain more than one grafitti, I employ Roman and Arabic numerals; the first indicate the stone, the second the number of inscriptions on the surface of this specific stone block.

The second group of inscriptions are executed in accurate calligraphic concave *mrgwelowani* letters. They display characteristic paleographic features (triangular and rhomboidal endings) widely used in Georgian epigraphy during the first half of the eleventh century.

I₁

The inscription is executed by one scribe in calligraphic *nuskhuri*. Originally it consisted of four lines of which the fourth is almost completely obliterated. From the first three lines only a few letters can be identified:

1. ქე წდა უფის ძე ბუ ///
ქ(რისტ)ე წ(მი)და უფ[ლ]ის ძე
ბუ
2. მა
3. ქე შე
ქ(რისტ)ე შ(ეიწყალ)ე

1. "Christ, son of the Holy Lord ...
bu"
2. ma
3. Christ have pity ..."

The second letter of the first line “ე” is very elongated (0.05 m) and larger than the following letters, which vary from 0.014 to 0.007 m. The elongation of the first letter confirms my observation, supported by other cases, that the inscription could have been executed by a person trained in manuscript writing.

I₂

The inscription is executed in *nuskhuri* writing; length: 0.095 m; height varies from 0.025 to 0.06 m.

ქე კპრიაღე
ქ(რისტ)ე კ(ვ)პრიაღე

“Christ, Kyprian...”

I₃

This inscription is located beneath I₂. The stone is badly weathered and the inscription obliterated. This is particularly true of the second line. The still detectable length: first line 0.95 m, the second 0.99 m; the height of the letters is 0.02 m.

1. იეს ქე მწიგრი გი ///
ი(ეს)მ ქ(რისტ)ე მწიგრი გი[ორგი]
2. ბთ ... თრა ///

1. Jesus Christ, stranger Giorgi...

2. bth ... thra

A peculiarity from the paleographic viewpoint is the letter ზ, on the right side of the inscription the traces of two letters survived: r and i (რ, ი).

I₄

The inscription is in *nuskhuri*. It is badly damaged and chipped through irregular scratches.

ღთო მე დვალო
ღ(მერ)თო მ(ეიწყალ)ე დვალო

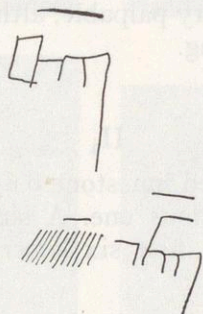
“Lord have mercy upon Dvali!”

In this instance, the most peculiar paleographic characteristic by which it differs from all other grafitti, is the writing of (d); i.e. the neck of "d" does not rise from the middle line of the circle as usual, but from the right side, and the line on the top of the neck is not horizontal, but tapering from left to right. A similar paleographic characteristic is also observed in the Georgian MS S 1698 (end of XI century)² which contains commentaries of the S. Matthew's Gospel.

This is the second time that the name Dvali is mentioned in almost the same place, but clearly distinguished paleographic characteristics confirm that it was executed by two different hands. In regard to the identification of Dvali we are in the same position as in another grafitti.³ One may assume a priori that one of the Dvalis mentioned in the grafitti could be associated with the modest name of "Monk Dvali" which appears in MS A 484 copied in 1054 in this very monastery where the grafitti were found.

I₅

The two separated abbreviated words are executed in *nuskhuri*. Both are the same in size: length 0.032 m; height 0.025 m.



² The majority of the manuscripts quoted herein are presently in the Institute of Manuscripts of K. Kekelidze in Tbilisi except No. 76, which is in the University of Kutaisi and P 3 in Leningrad. Two manuscripts, No. 45 and No. 84 are in the monastery of Iviron in Athos.

The photocopies of the colophons (Anderdzi) of the Institute of Manuscripts in Tbilisi I obtained from the director of the same institution, Prof. Dr. Ilija Abuladze and Prof. Dr. Helen Metreveli. To both scholars I express my sincere thanks for their kindness.

The manuscripts Nos. 45 and 84 from the monastery of Iviron [P. Blake, Catalogue des Manuscrits Géorgiens de la Bibliothèque de la Laure d'Iviron au Mont Athos, in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, IX (XXIX) 1933-1934 pp. 238, 239, 267, 268] I studied personally and photographed them in 1963 and 1964 while visiting the monastery. I express in this place the Igumen of the monastery, Father Athanasius, who generously placed the above mentioned manuscripts at my disposal, my gratitude.

³ *infra*, inscription II₁.

1. $\overline{\text{თე}}$
 $\overline{\text{თ(ეოლორ)ე}}$
 2. $\overline{\text{იხე}}$
 $\overline{\text{ი(ოვა)ნე}}$

1. Theodore (= Theodor)

2. Iovane (= John)

We have no additional clues whatsoever to the identification of these laconic names. There is a manuscript copied in the scriptorium of this very church in 1040, in which both "Brothers Theodor and John" are mentioned.⁴ Besides, in the *vita* of George Athonite we read a very interesting passage which may throw light on the problem of the identification of Theodor. This passage tells us that one of his students named Theodor was sent by the famous George Reclus from the Black Mountain to the Georgian monastery, Iviron, in Mount Athos with a message to his student George Athonite. This event could have taken place in the early forties of the eleventh century, around 1042-43, in the period when George Athonite was engaged not on literary activities,⁵ but on hard and humilitating labor. In addition to the MS P 3 mentioned above, John appears as a scribe of MS A 484 copied in 1054. If we keep in mind that the documents mentioned above are very close chronologically, and that they are executed at the same place, then the identification of Theodor⁶ and partly that of John is very palpable, although dependable and direct historical evidence are lacking.

II₁

Evenly cut smooth surfaced limestone $0.65 \times 0.66 \times 0.54$ m found at the same place as the previous one. A single inscription in *nuskhuri* 0.195 m long; height of the first six letters 0.07-0.08 m; the rest ca. 0.015 m.

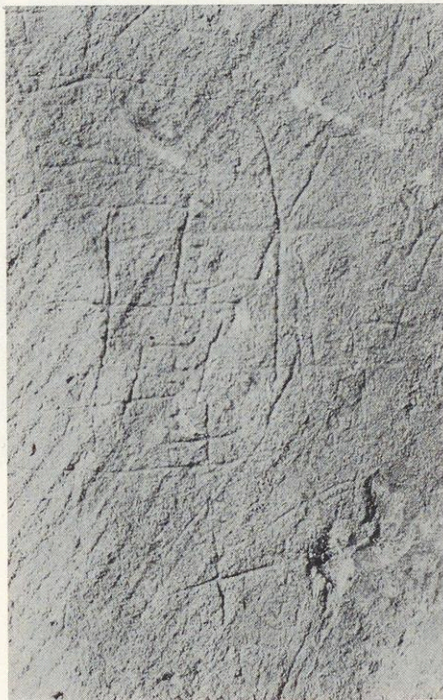
ჰე შე კე დვალი თე' სელიკელი
 ქ(რისტ)ე შ(ეიწყალ)ე კ(ვრიკ)ე
 დვალი თე' სელიკელი

ჰე შე კე დვალი თე' სელიკელი "Christ have mercy upon Kvirike
 ქ(რისტ)ე შ(ეიწყალ)ე კ(ვრიკ)ე Dvali from Theselika"
 დვალი თე' სელიკელი

⁴ MS P 3; the manuscript is not paginated.

⁵ P. Peeters, *Histoires monastiques géorgiennes*, in *Anal. Boll.* Vol. XXXVI, XXXVII, 1917-1919 (1922), p. 93₅₋₁₀, p. 94₄₋₈. In regard to the date see K. Kekelidze, *History of Georgian Literature* (in Georgian) I, Tbilisi 1951, p. 195.

⁶ Cf. *infra*, inscription III₂.



Oben: I,1
Unten: I,4

Medieval Georgian Inscriptions near Antioch on the Orontes

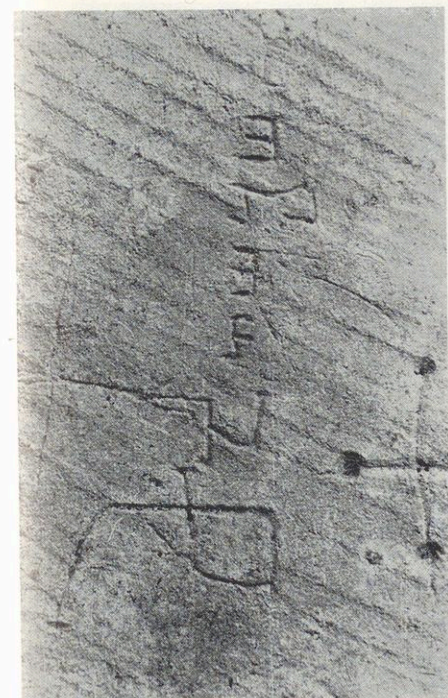
Oben: I,2/I,3
Unten: I,5



II, 1



III, 1



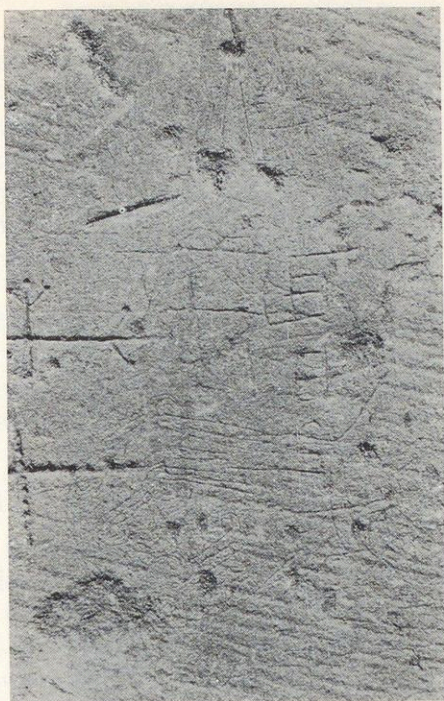
Oben: III,²
Unten: IV

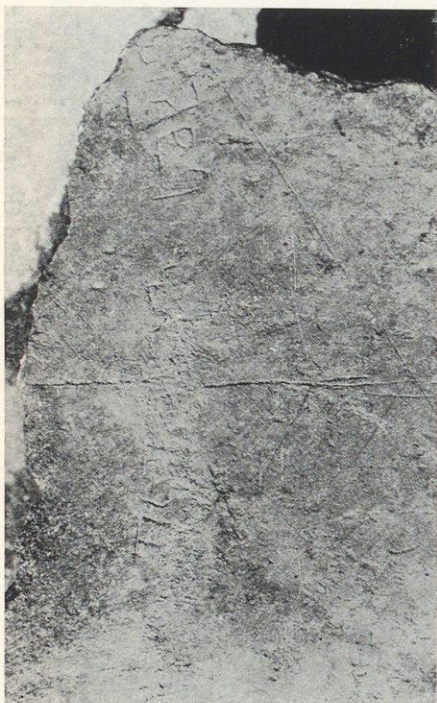


Oben: III,⁴
Unten: V



Medieval Georgian Inscriptions near Antioch on the Orontes





Oben: VI
Unten: VIII



Oben: VII
Unten: IX



Oben: VII
Unten: IX

Medieval Georgian Inscriptions near Antioch on the Orontes

The abbreviated first name ($\overline{\text{კ}}\overline{\text{ვ}}$) I read as *Kvirike*, because this name is more common, although it could be any other name starting with კ (k) and ending with ე (e) as for instance *Kvile*.

We do not have any document which mentions Kvirike Dvali in the Black Mountain or any other Georgian monasteries in the vicinity of Antioch. The testament of the Georgian MS A 484 copied in 1054 mentions Dvali among other copists or scribes, although his first name is not Kvirike but John.

Among prominent personalities in the Georgian monastery in the Black Mountain we see *Kvirike Beri* (Monk Kvirike), but without a surname, which is no help to us; although some possibility exists that the name *Kvirike Beri* could be identical with Kvirike Dvali.

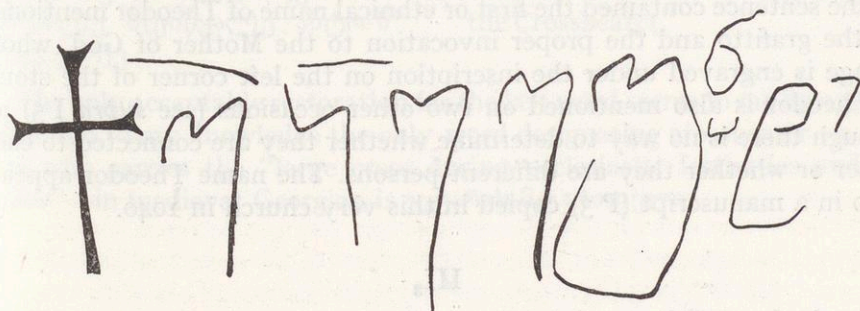
III

Evenly cut stone $0.495 \times 0.535 \times 0.660$ m found in the southern portico seventeen cm under the ground level. The inscriptions are executed in *nuskhuri*. On the lower left corner the image of the Mother of God, in half size and placed in a half circle, is engraved. The surface of the stone front is accurately and smoothly shaped, and has besides twenty one crosses of various sizes and shapes inscribed on it.

III₁

The *nuskhuri* inscription is engraved on the upper left corner of the stone. With its broken lines and unacademic peculiar calligraphy it differs from other, more accurately executed inscriptions. On the other hand, this is one of the few exceptions where the reading of all the letters is certain.

Length of the inscriptions is 0.152 m; height of the letters varies from 0.05–0.06 m except two ბ , ა (n, a), which are 0.01 m high and are added in vertical position between g and t.



$\overline{\text{ქ}}\overline{\text{ე}}$ $\overline{\text{შ}}\overline{\text{ე}}$ ეგნატო

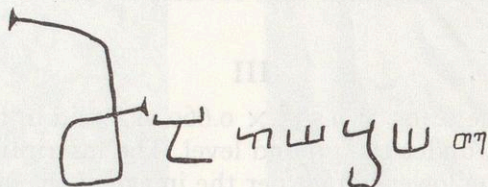
$\overline{\text{ქ}}(\text{რისტ})\overline{\text{ე}}$ $\overline{\text{შ}}(\text{ეიწყალ})\overline{\text{ე}}$ ეგნატო

“Christ have mercy upon Egnat”

From the colony of Georgian monks established in the Black Mountain, Miraculous Mountain, and Mount Casius, we know only of one Egnat, who is mentioned once in the testament of the Georgian MS A 484, copied in the Georgian monastery of the Mother of God in Calipos. In this manuscript Egnat is mentioned as one of the three commissioners of the manuscript.

III₂

Nuskhuri inscription engraved on the right middle part of the stone. Length of inscription ca. 0.083 m; height of the first letter is 0.035 m, second and fifth 0.017 m, the rest 0.01 m.



მარია თე///

მ(არია) ლ(მროთისმშ)ობ(ელ)ო თე
[ოდორე შიიწყალე]

“Mary, Mother of God, have mercy
upon Theodor”

The last two abbreviated shallow letters (თ, ე) are smaller and less deeply cut than the preceding ones; they are placed also slightly lower than the preceding letters. This distinction may indicate that it is not an original part of the sentence. But if we disassociate them from the whole, then the remaining six letters will be incomplete and senseless.

Another difficulty concerning the reading of this inscription consists in the fact that the sentence discontinues due to natural damages, although we have some extremely poor traces of letters still barely visible, but it is impossible to reconstruct them. The number of the lost letters could have been six to eight. It seems plausible to suggest that the lost part of the sentence contained the first or ethnical name of Theodor mentioned in the grafitto and the proper invocation to the Mother of God, whose image is engraved under the inscription on the left corner of the stone.

Theodor is also mentioned on two other occasions (see *supra* I 5) although there is no way to determine whether they are connected to each other or whether they are different persons. The name Theodor appears also in a manuscript (P 3) copied in this very church in 1040.

III₃

In the lower left corner is the engraved image of the Mother of God. She wears the usual *mandilion* and is represented in three-fourth position in half figure. The whole image is placed in a circle of 0.086 m in diameter.

On both sides of the image is the corresponding monogram in Greek:
 ΜΡ ΘΥ

III₄

On the adjacent side of the same stone is an inscription in two lines; the first is 0.115 m, and the second is 0.057 m in length. The height of the letters is 0.016 to 0.005 m.

✠ 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000

1. ქე შე ზოსმე კრხი
 ქ(რისტ)ე შ(ეიწყალ)ე ზოს[ი]მე
 კ(უ)რ(თ)ხ(ე)ულო
 2. მწყრს ძე
 მწყ(ე)რ(ად)ს ძე

1. "Christ, have pity upon blessed
 Zosime,
 2. Mcqeraisdze."

IV

The slightly weathered, but still clearly legible inscription is located upon the stone (in *situ*) in the south wall 0.535 m east from the eastern wall of the southern portico, on the third row from the ground level. The surface of the stone is 0.533 × 0.635 m; the inscription is located on the upper right corner of the stone. The length of the inscription is 0.058 m; the height of the letters is 0.008 m.

✠ 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000

ქე შე ანტონ'ნ' მეჯ[...]
 ქ(რისტ)ე შ(ეიწყალ)ე ანტონ'ნ'
 მეჯ[უარ]ე

"Christ, have mercy upon Anton
 the Crossbearer"

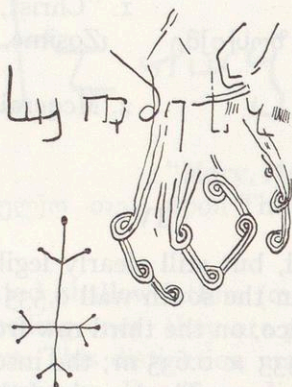
The only acceptable restoration for the last word seems to me მეჯუარე, although to my knowledge the only word designating crossbearer—a person who carries the "large cross during ecclesiastic festivities and lit-anies"—in medieval Georgian is ჯუარის-მტვრთველი.

V

This inscription is placed on the narrow side of the block which was evidently a cornerstone of the south portico. The inscription is 0.09 m long and 0.035 m high. The surface of this stone is very instructive in

some ways. First, there are not less than nine crosses engraved in different sizes and various fashions, never repeating the same type. Secondly, the inscription in relation to the crosses, is upside down, which suggests the possibility that the inscription was executed during the process of construction of the church, before the stone was placed in its proper position. The possibility that the inscription could have been added later—after the destruction of the church—is ruled out, because the stone was found under the debris of large blocks, 1.5 m deep on the groundlevel of the church. On the right side of the inscription there is an intricate ornamental motive of unique character for this place, possibly a preliminary study of the architect. This interlace is repeated in slight modification in the ornamentation of the lower belt of the drum.

The inscription is clearly legible:



სულძე ს[.]ბ[.]
სულ(აბს)ძე ს[ა]ბ[ა]

“Sulaisdze Saba”

Our attention is attracted by the ligation of the first two letters (su and la) which indicate that the author could not have been an inexperienced person, but rather, a trained calligrapher, one of the prominent members of the monastic colony. Indeed, Ephrem the Small, who by his contemporaries was regarded as one of the most renown men of letters in this area, writes in one of his original works that: in his youthful years he was taught by the famous monk from the Black Mountains—Saba Sulaisdze Tukhareli. We do not have the exact date as to when this schooling took place, but since Ephrem died before 1103, this training “in my youthful years” should have occurred around 1050, which leaves a short chronological margin between the construction of the church when our inscription was engraved, and the schooling of Ephrem. Therefore it would not be mistaken to assume that the person mentioned in our inscription and by Ephrem could be identical, since we have the coincidence of both, the first name and the surname. Unfortunately, the manuscripts written

in the monastery of Calipos, which are at my disposal, are silent about Sulaisdze. Although MS P 3, written in 1040 in the monastery of Calipos, mentions Sulamaize (not Sulaisdze), his first name is Theodor. I might add that the first name, Sula, is mentioned twice in manuscripts copied in the monastery of Calipos, in P 3 and A 484, fol. 313 v.

VI

An extremely instructive inscription was found on the upper part of a pendentive cut out of solid stone which was located in the interior of the church near the south east pier. The inscription in one line containing two words is executed in rather large *mrgwlowani* letters. It starts approximately from the middle of the surface and runs to the right edge. The lateral sides of the pendentive are roughly picked. The upper part, however, where the inscription is located, is well smoothed. The frontal part is decorated with a vivid plant ornament growing out of a vase, demonstrating the high skill and accurateness of workmanship.

The middle part of the first word is partly covered with a thin lime deposit, under which some traces of letters can be detected. The first word is in full, the second abbreviated, which is confirmed with the adequate sign of abbreviation clearly visible on top of the letter ბ (b) and რ (r). The length of the sentence is 0.40 m; height 0.07 m, incision 0.0015 m deep.

ეკლესიაში ს(ა)მხროთ

ეკლესიაში ს(ა)მხროთ

“(in the) church (toward) south”

The first five letters and the last of the first word are easily legible, but the identification of the rest of the letters within the word (three in number) is a matter of some difficulty due to their unorthodox shape. The overelongated upper part of ი (i) and ს (s) which is like მ (m) are puzzling, but basing on the first legible five letters ეკლეს (ekles) and the last letter ი (i), there is no alternative but to reconstruct the first word as ეკლესიაში (in the church).

This inscription, no doubt, is the mason's mark indicating the place of the pendentive for which it was destined. Since all key parts of architecture and structurally important parts are cut with extreme accuracy and superb precision to fit each other, using only a very thin layer of fine mortar, this kind of marking is necessary. This is indicated by the extensive use of mason's marks on surviving architectural fragments of the church and by Georgian letters in the lower belt of the drum. Since ornamental blocks were not covered with frescoes, the esthetical factor

and optical effect required utmost precision in the planning and execution of architectural parts.

The three remaining pendants were spotted 1.5 miles west in a town called Yogun Oluk, in the eastern part of a basilical church, converted into a coal deposit. (The western part of the church is used as a Mosque.) These three pendants, along with other ornamental stones originating from the church of the Virgin in "Calipos", are placed in the apsis. After cleaning the barely visible ornamental blocks of black dust and a very thick layer of whitewash, I was amazed at the wonderful assortment of ornamental motifs, among which I found also the three pendants. The removal of the pendants embedded in the wall of the apsis and their examination may offer additional proof for our conclusion that the inscription in the pendant is the marking of the architect.

Since the inscription was cut by the mason, it is contemporary with the church. This is also evident by the use of triangular ends on both sides of the abbreviation sign, a phenomenon which is also manifested by other inscriptions. Naturally, the quality of the letters is much lower and the technique of execution differs from other inscriptions, but this is explained by the purpose of the inscription. This inscription was seen in 1935 and consequently published by the distinguished scholar, P. Peeters, without photographic reproduction or by a detailed account. He reads the inscription as follows ეკელეგი არს ს[ო]მხ[უ]რო //⁷ and offers also its translation: «L'église est aux Somkhurs».⁸ Even before starting my expedition to the Black Mountain, I was puzzled by the strange inscription and by Peters' conclusion. Based on his own reading, which is obviously incorrect, Peeters assumed that the church was built by chalcedonic Armenians. This erroneous assumption, which was occasionally reiterated by the author, is based not only upon the incorrect reading of the inscription itself, but it lacks real factual evidence and reveals methodological weaknesses. First of all, why should Armenians have used Georgian letters to announce that the church was built by themselves? And why should they have "hidden" the inscription high in the masonry? If they needed it, as Peeters thinks, as evidence against the possible danger of confiscation of the church by the Greeks, they could have never shown it to their opponents without destroying the church itself. Besides, what documentary value would two Georgian words have for the Armenians? Even if one recognized its documentary value, who could have remembered its existence after a few generations? On the other hand, the incorrect grammatical structure of the inscription and the use of the Armenian word ეკელეგი for church instead of the Georgian ეკლესია supported Peeters' assumption that the church was Armenian.

⁷ P. Peeters, *Le tréfonds Orientale de l'Hagiographie Byzantine*, *Subsidia Hagiographica*, 25, 1950. p. 162.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Finally, according to Peeters' reading, the Georgian inscription should have contained three words comprising fifteen letters. Since the last word ს[ო]მხ[უ]რო (as Peeters reads it) is divided from the preceding (second) word არს, it would be normal to expect that similarly the (second) word არს, should have been separated from the preceding (first) word ეკელეცი, which is technically impossible, because the amount of letters given by Peeters simply will not fit in the 0.40 m space allotted to the inscription. Furthermore, Peeters' reading of the Georgian inscription is not only wrong, but also incorrectly translated by the author through his faulty reading. If we want to translate the Georgian inscription as "the church belongs to the Armenians", then the last (third) word in the Georgian sentence should not be სომხურო but სომეხთა.

It is obvious that one cannot depend on the farreaching theories about Georgian monastic colonies on the Black Mountain—developed by Peeters—which are based on a confusing translation of an incorrectly read Georgian inscription.

VII

On the frontal part of the northwestern inner buttress of the church at a height of ca. 1.50 m, I found, after cleaning the wall of the bushes which had grown about it, a very accurately executed, although slightly damaged, but clearly legible inscription in *mrgwlowani*. Length 0.17 m, height 0.032 m, depth 0.005 m.



ქე მყე ბსილო

ქ(რისტ)ე მ(ეიწ)ყ(ალ)ე ბ(ა)სილო

"Christ, have mercy upon Basil"

The skilled workmanship, preciseness, and highly developed esthetical qualities make this inscription very important for the study of Georgian epigraphy, and it possesses valuable historical importance for the study of Georgian monastic colonies established in the vicinity of Antioch and particularly in the region of the Black Mountain. Certain stylistic characteristics strongly indicate that this inscription should have been executed in the first half of the eleventh century. It would be safe to assume that it is contemporary with the church.

For this assumption we have two dependable reasons: the first is the peculiar epigraphic style, and the second, its relationship with two fragments of an inscription originating from the same church. The characteristic and very distinguishable phenomenon for this inscription is the application of triangular cuneiform endings at the edges (ends) of the

letter and on both ends of the abbreviation sign. In some instances arrowshaped triangles are placed inside of circular shaped letters as in ♂ (t) for instance. By the use of these signs, the letters are breaking the barriers of restrained coolness and evoke illusions of vivacity. A certain contrast is manifested between the monotonous fluidity of clam lines and sudden curves, endowing the inscriptions with effects of impulsive movements and organic life.

Evidently this epigraphic novelty was established in the very beginning of the eleventh century and was applied to architectural monuments almost to the end of that century, although surviving specimens of this style demonstrate that it was more extensively used in the first half of the same century. For instance:

1. The inscription of Bishop Melchisedek I in the portico of the Cathedral in Mtskheta (1010-1029)
2. Several inscriptions in the church of Manglisi (first quarter of the XI century)
3. The inscription of Bishop Melchisedek I upon the columns in Shio Mgwime (first quarter of XI century)
4. The inscription of Ilarion Tschortschaneli in the church of Samtavisi (1030).

Additional examples are to be found in inscriptions of *Samtavisi* (1030), *Khvizi* (1002), and *Katskhi* (1010-1014). Since all these examples are found in eastern Georgia (*Kartli*) it may indicate that this calligraphical school emerged in this very province.⁹ If this proves to be true, then we may have one or more indications for our hypothesis that the architect of the church of the Mother of God in Calipos came from *Kartli*.

Additional proof that the Basil's inscription was contemporary with the church is supported by two fragments of limestone with a badly chipped inscription in semicircular form, evidently the fragment of the arch of the western portico. The measurements of these fragments, their relation with certain ornamental slabs, and their parentage with the decor used in the church, confirm that Basil's inscription is contemporary with the church.

Identification of Basil

The only accessory which we have for the identification of Basil is his first name, which makes it difficult to arrive at a satisfactory final answer. Yet there are some specific factors which may lead our inquiry to at least a partial success. The fact that only one monumental inscription was cut

⁹ To the same group belongs a beautiful, but little known fresco inscription executed in 1036 in the dome and apsis of the church of Oshki, which I visited briefly on July 28, 1964.

on the interior wall of the church is a definite indication and palpable possibility that Basil was a prominent personality and one of the most honorable organizers of this monastic colony, or the immediate superior of this new monastic center. This argument is supported by the skill and high quality of the inscription, which was evidently cut by a specialized craftsman during the construction of the church, a possibility which is supported also by the stylistic and paleographic similarities between the inscription of Basil and these of the portico. In any event, this Basil should have played a very important role in the early stages of this monastery. This is confirmed by the manuscripts which were copied in the scriptorium of this very monastery in the eleventh century. For instance, the testament of the MS A 484 copied in 1054 mentions among the spiritual fathers Egnat, Anton, and Basil. According to the testament, the second MS N 76, written in 1050, was copied by Basil Thorel-Kophili (Basil having been Thoreli). The third MS, A 384, copied in the middle of the eleventh century, mentions "Basil Superior of the monastery of Calipos", who ordered this manuscript for the monastery of the "Holy Mina".

Since all the manuscripts implying the name of Basil in some form were copied before 1060 or in the very beginning of the monastery's existence, it will be safe to assume that the Basil inscribed in the church and mentioned in the testaments of these manuscripts is the same person.

VIII-IX

On the path leading to Suruthme and Suwaidiye, 1.5 km west of the Georgian church, in the small town called Yogun Oluk, an Armenian barn church (Hallenkirche) is located. This church is now divided into two compartments; the western half is used as Mosque, while the eastern part is converted into a coal depot. Here, on July 12, 1963, in the eastern half of the northwestern end of the semicircular apsis, ca. 0.50 m from the floor level, I found the fragment of an arch built into the wall.

On the exterior of the arch on the evenly cut, curved flat rectangular moulding (width 0.065 m, length 0.775 m) that follows the shape of the arch, is located a Georgian inscription executed in excellent *mrgwlowani* letters. The letters, 0.041 m in height, are accurately placed between two narrow strips of the moulding. The beginning and the end of the inscription is broken off. The length of the remaining two incomplete, separated words is only 0.35 m. In two instances the signs of abbreviation are still visible. The interval between the words is 0.0333 m.

I found the second architectural fragment in the southeastern part of the Georgian church during my first visit to the church on October 15, 1962. The comparison in measurements, shape, ornamental motives, as well as characteristic features of this fragment with the previous one (no. VIII) confirms beyond a doubt that they are inseparable parts, and

that both pieces were executed by one single hand and evidently once, with other similar fragments now lost, were embodied in the western portico of the Georgian church.¹⁰ The only departure from the general rule can be detected in the first two letters (წ, ყ) of the last word of the second fragment. These two letters are the longest (0.053 m) and narrowest (0.017 m). In both fragments the free space between words varies from 0.031 to 0.04 m.

Despite the severe mutilation inflicted upon the inscription, it is easy to detect definite epigraphic characteristic, which place this monument among the best achievements of Georgian epigraphy and at the same time facilitate the dating of the inscription. This inscription belongs, together with no. VII, to the late thirties of the eleventh century. The carefully rendered, sumptuous letters and the masterful combination of curved and straight lines evoke the sensation of calm, dignified tension as well as of restrained balance. Triangular and rhomboidal accents at the end of the letters endow this remarkable monument with refreshing esthetic qualities, complementing the diversified and rich architectural program.

The analysis of the text indicates that the fragment from Yogun Oluk precedes the second, although there is no unmistakable proof for such an assumption. In the above suggested chronological order the inscription reads:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. [...]თესთა გლბთ ^ა [...]
[უზ(ე)შ]თ(ა)ესთა გ(ა)ლ(ო)-
ბ(ა)თა [...] | 1. "The supreme hymns |
| 2. [...]დთ 'ღს'ა და 'რ'ა წყრო
[...]
[უგ(ა)ლ(ო)ბ]დ(ო)თ ღ(მერ)თ-
(ს)ა და რ(ათ)ა წყრო[მა] | 2. chant to God in order that
wrath..." |

"Chant the supreme hymns to God, and in order that wrath ..."

The direct origin of this incomplete inscription can be hardly detected. On the other hand, we know that in some cases in Georgian churches the porticos and annexes upon the lintels of arches bear inscriptions which are not precisely copied, but that are abbreviated and modified compilations of two merged verses of psalms.¹¹ If this rule could be valid for our church, it is not difficult to realize that our inscription reflects the free interpretation or adaptation of the idea conveyed in psalms II, 11-12.

¹⁰ *supra*, note 1.

¹¹ For the verification of my reading I am indebted to Prof. Th. Barnaveli.