

**IRAKLI PAGHAVA**

Giorgi Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies,  
Ilia State University,  
Georgia  
mesefi@gmail.com

## **KHUAPI LAPIDARY INSCRIPTION (SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS OF PALEOGRAPHIC SIGNS AND TITLE)**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a supplementary analysis of a lapidary inscription from Khuapi in order to determine its dating and the identity of a person (or persons) mentioned in the inscription. The inscription created and discovered in Abkhazia, one of the coastal regions of Georgia, still remains on the occupied territory. Thus, I have scrutinized the inscription only by means of photographs. I studied the slab, the inscription engraved on it and the history of its study. There are three attributions: Leo Shervashidze and Lia Akhaladze consider that the inscription refers to Giorgi II Leonid and his daughter Gurandukht; to Valeri Silogava, it is Giorgi III Bagratid; however, Teimuraz Barnaveli states that the inscription refers to Giorgi I of the Bagratid dynasty, the Byzantine Emperor Basil I, and Catholicos Melchisedek. I have investigated all three arguments, the paleographic signs of the inscription, and the reliability of reference and non-reference to the official title as a chronological marker. I have refuted Barnaveli's version (as non-relevant with respect to the preserved fragments of the inscription). Moreover, I claim that Silogava's version is not reliable (based on the paleographic analysis). Besides, I virtually exclude reading the name of Gurandukht in the inscription (which, in its turn, would date the inscription to the reign of her father – Giorgi II Leonid). According to the paleographic analysis of epigraphic sources, I conclude that the monarch mentioned in the inscription is either Giorgi II Leonid or Giorgi I Bagratid.

**KEYWORDS:** Khuapi inscription, paleography, title, Gurandukht, King Giorgi.

**T**he Khuapi inscription is one of the most important artifacts of the medieval Georgian epigraphic heritage. Many publications have been dedicated to this lapidary monument created in Abkhazia, one of the coastal regions of Georgia. However, the content and dating of the inscription is still the matter of dispute. The purpose of this research is to provide an

additional analysis of the inscription.

According to the publications by V. Avidzba<sup>1</sup> and Leo Shervashidze, the circumstances of the findings are as follows: in the mountainous village of Khuapi, collective farm workers Mirod (Merod) Gozhba and Artem (Arsen) Ankvab found several stone fragments in one of the fellow-villagers' yard. There were some inscriptions and signs on the fragments. Later, they found additional pieces (but the place where the fragments were found is not specified in the newspaper article. We can only doubt that it was on the site of a former church). Finally, the villagers delivered all fragments to the D. Gulia Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences (Avidzba 1967; Shervashidze 1971, 94-97, 202-204).

The fragments piece up a quadratic slab; they were assembled and apparently exhibited. The inscription is kept in occupied Abkhazia; its direct examination by Georgian scientists is impossible. However, four photo images of the inscription are accessible:

- The newspaper article by V. Avidzba (which is of very bad quality, the left part of the photograph is cropped and darkened) (Avidzba 1967);
- Leo Shervashidze's article (the quality is satisfactory) (Shervashidze 1971, 94);
- Internet resource, Wikipedia; the photograph is taken in August of 2007,<sup>2</sup> in Sokhumi Museum ("Sukhum Museum") by a user - Alaexis (Alaexis 2007); The photo is achromatous but of rather high resolution<sup>3</sup> and enables us to work on it. The paper employs this particular photograph for illustration (figure 1);
- The photograph given in Yekaterina Endoltseva's book on plastic arts of Abkhazia; the slab is captured from above, but it is a high resolution image (Endoltseva 2020, 196).

I refer to the slab and the description of the inscription in figure 1. The slab has virtually an ideal quadratic form. According to the data of Yekaterina Endoltseva, its dimensions are 42.5 x 43,0cm; the height of the relief is 1cm; the size of the letters is 2 x 2cm (Endoltseva 2020, 196).

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1 I have not verified the identity of V. Avidzba. It is not clear whether he was V. Avidzba, a Soviet journalist, or V.D. Avidzba, who defended the dissertation to obtain a degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences at the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Georgian SSR under the following title: Implementation of the Peasant Reform in Abkhazia, Sokhumi, 1969 (in Russian). It is possible that the two are the same person.

2 According to the accessible photographs, the condition of the inscription within 1967-2007 did not deteriorate further.

3 As a matter of fact, a signboard in the Russian language installed on the wall accompanying the slab is clearly visible on the photograph "Façade stone with a construction inscription of King Giorgi II and his daughter Gurandukht (mid-10th century)".

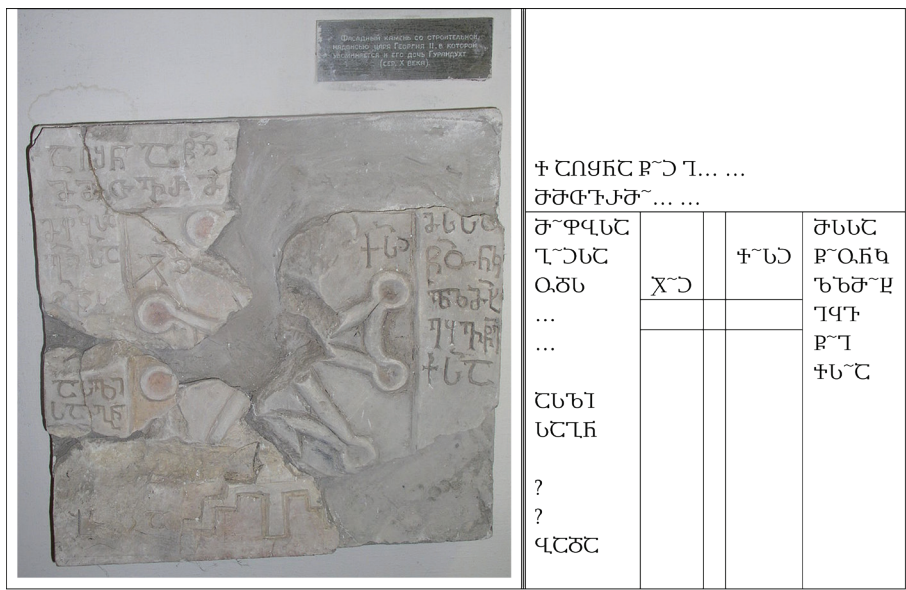


Figure 1

The central part of the slab is the Bolnisi cross (the cross pattée) on a stepped foundation which symbolically embodies Golgotha. The cross is embossed, the space around it is notched in comparison with the slab edging. The edges create a particular frame. The lower part of the slab is damaged, and it is impossible to ascertain whether the notched part is also quadratic as the slab or it is a vertically oriented rectangle the lower part of which is Golgotha. The photograph gives us an impression as if the notched part is quadratic. The Asomtavruli graphemes are on the left and right of the upper arm of the cross. Quite a big inscription starts in the upper part of the frame and seemingly continues first to the right part and then to the left one. The inscription in the upper part of the frame is given in two lines; three lines are in the right frame; afterwards, there is a damaged part where one or two lines could be placed; another two lines are easily readable and below we can see a damaged part; below of the damaged part, on the level of Golgotha we can distinguish a few Asomtavruli graphemes; the inscription ends in the right frame where there are only five lines (fully visible).

The inscription is in Asomtavruli script which tends to decorativeness. The graphemes are mostly limb-arrowy; the ending of some graphemes –

*jani, vini, kani, mani, yota* are forked, which is a characteristic feature of the Khuapi inscription. There are no signs of separation and space between the words. As for the abbreviation sign, it is lateral and sinuous having a limb-arrow line. Generally, despite the decorative elements the inscription is rather plain. Vertical and horizontal dimensions of the graphemes are significantly different from each other. We have an impression that the inscription is done by an unskilled artisan.

The Khuapi inscription has attracted much attention. Several publications have been dedicated to it in which authors expressed diverse opinions. At first, some V. Avidzba published the inscription as a brief information in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Abkhazia* on 7 October 1967; according to V. Avidzba, Leonide (Leo) Shervashidze read the inscription; a very low-quality photograph of the inscription with assembled fragments is given in this Russian-language article; in addition, it conveys Leo Shervashidze's interpretation of the inscription content (Avidzba 1967). In 1969, Leo Shervashidze himself published a brief information on the inscription. As we have already mentioned above, his research is accompanied by one small high-resolution image of the inscription on which every grapheme is easily readable (Shervashidze 1971, 94-97, 202-204). Later on, Valeri Silogava examined the inscription in his dissertation of 1972 (Silogava 1972b, 156-157, inscription 122), and reading it in a slightly different way in his corpus of Georgian lapidary inscriptions in 1980 (Volume II) (Silogava 1980, 142, inscription 164); Teimuraz Barnaveli discussed the inscription in 1981 (Barnaveli 1981), while Lia Akhaladze studied the inscription in her article in 1999 (Akhaladze 1999) and in her monograph of 2005 dedicated to epigraphy of Abkhazia (Akhaladze 2005, 147-154); in 2006, Valeri Silogava offered us a slightly different reading of the inscription (Silogava 2006, 282, inscription 20). Other publications are not original and are based on early interpretations and the dating of the inscription provided by Lia Akhaladze and Valeri Silogava (Mibchvani 1999, 65-66; Gamakharia 2009, 148; Vinogradov, Beletskiy 2015, 95-96; Endoltseva 2020, 196-197, 294).<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen on the figure, the inscription is deficient. Consequently, the recovery of its precise content has become the subject of study and discussion. There are three versions of the text and the dating of the inscription (within which the scholars fill in the missing parts differently).

1) According to the first version put forward by Leo Shervashidze, *Giorgi*

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<sup>1</sup> It is odd that without scrutinizing the issue Andrey Vinogradov and Denis Beletskiy in their book share Valeri Silogava's dating and refute Lia Akhaladze's argument allowing themselves to discuss the dating of the church. Generally, the study proposed by the Russian authors is very biased.

Besides, another Russian author, when examining the epigraphic monuments uncovered in Abkhazia, is "timid" to use the word **Georgian** and consistently employs the term "Asomtavruli" (however, sometimes mentions some "Greek inscriptions").

in the inscription is **Giorgi II Leonid**, a monarch of the west Georgian kingdom (“the Kingdom of the Abkhazs”). Besides, the inscription mentions his **daughter Gurandukht** (later, Bagrat III Bagrationi’s mother) (Shervashidze 1971, 94-97, 202-204). Leo Shervashidze did not publish the paleographic analysis of the inscription (he even did not convey the text of the inscription). However, he states in general that “paleographically the inscription belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> century”; to the author, the stylistic analysis of the cross relief leads to the same period (Shervashidze 1971, 94, 202). For Leo Shervashidze, paleographic and stylistic analyses are of primary significance; convincing him that the monarch in the inscription must be Giorgi II Leonid (Shervashidze 1971, 94, 202). The decipherment of the name *Gurandukht* is a result of the paleographic and stylistic dating of the inscription: the name Giorgi “in the 10<sup>th</sup> century... could have been only Giorgi II (929-957)... If it is so, several lower vague lines can be understood as a reference to Princess Gurandukht” (Shervashidze 1971, 94). A similar but inverted discussion is conveyed in V. Avidzba’s publication certainly inspired by Leo Shervashidze’s argument – “The proposition that the person indicated on the stone slab is Giorgi II Abkhaz is proved by the second name fragmentarily engraved on the slab. The name is Gurandukht” (Avidzba 1967).

Lia Akhaladze shared Leo Shervashidze’s version and strengthened it with relevant argumentation. Her argumentation was based on V. Avidzba’s publication and on verbal conversation with Leo’ Shervashidze (Akhaladze 2005, 148). Apparently, due to the occupation of Abkhazia, the scholar had no opportunity to observe the slab *de visu* (and used only low-quality images accompanying Avidzba’s article?) as she refers to the graphemes ႠႡႢႣ / ႠႡႢႣ in none of her publications. However, the graphemes are well visible on other photographs.

Lia Akhaladze relies on Valeri Silogava’s publication (see below) and restores the inscription in two ways.

In her early article published in 1999, Akhaladze refrains from restoring the name *Gurandukht*; the word „ႠႡႢႣ” is followed by „[...]” (Akhaladze 1999, 62):

[+] ႠႡႢႣႤႥႦႧ ႨႩႪႫႬ ႭႮႯ ႰႱႲ ႳႴႵႶႷႸႹ [...] ႺႻႼႽႾႿႠႡႢႣ  
 ႣႤႥႧ, [...] ႨႩႪႫႬႭႮႯႱႲႳႴႵႶႷႸႹ ႺႻႼႽႾႿ [...] ႠႡႢႣ  
 ႤႥႧႩႪႫႬ ႭႮႯႱႲႳႴႵႶႷႸႹ, ႺႻႼႽႾႿ / ႰႱႲႳႴႵႶႷႸႹ / ႺႻႼႽႾႿ

In Akhaladze’s monograph of 2005, the inscription is as follows (Akhaladze 2005, 148):

[+] ალ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მიღა)ღ ე[სე ეკდესიან] [...] მ(ა)მ(აღმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)  
 ხმ[ან], [.] მ(ე)ფ(მ)ბ(ა)სა გ(ომი)გ(ბ)სა / ოღ(ე)ს [გ(უა)ხ(ა)ნღ(ე)ბგ]  
 [ღანი] / ბაღა / [...] [...] მ(ი)სსა. /  
 წ(მიღა)მ ნ(ი)ვ(მ)ღ(მ)მ, მ(ე)მ / ე(ყა)ვ წ(ინაშ)ე / ე(ხისგე)სა

While ascribing the inscription to Giorgi II Leonid,<sup>1</sup> Lia Akhaladze takes into account the following (Akhaladze 1999, 63-65; Akhaladze 2004; Akhaladze 2005, 149-153):

a) the statement by Leo Shervashidze (V. Avidzba) about the name Guurandukht deciphered “fragmentarily” in the inscription;

b) the paleographic analysis: the author brings some arguments, according to which, the paleographic signs of the graphemes, limb-arrow signs in particular, do not contradict to the 10<sup>th</sup> century dating of the inscription (Akhaladze, 1999, 67);<sup>2</sup>

c) the title; she authored an orderly conception that the title “King of Abkhazs” first emerged during the reign of Bagrat III, after the unification of the country when this historical tradition actually originated; the monarchs of western Georgia (as well as the western part of Kartli and Javakheti) called themselves only “King”. Giorgi referred in the inscription is not called “King of Abkhazs”. Thus, he must be Giorgi Leonid.

d) Leo Shervashidze’s opinion that stylistically the cross relief on the slab belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Shervashidze 1971, 94, 202).

2) There is another consideration where *Giorgi* indicated in the inscription is **Giorgi III ოგრატიდ** (1157-1184). The author of this version is Valeri Silogava who dated the inscription to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and ascribed it to Giorgi III. The author does not provide a detailed argumentation. He only remarks that the inscription is produced in an “oblong ductus” and “limb-arrow scrip” (Silogava 1972b, 156, inscription 122; Silogava 1980, 142, inscription 164; Silogava 2006, 282, inscription 20). He seemingly never examined the slab *de visu* (employed a low-quality photo accompanying Avidzba’s newspaper article?) because never refers to the graphemes **სს** / **სს** in his publications, albeit they are visible on other photographs.<sup>3</sup> In each publication, the graphemes near the cross arms are read as **ჟ(უა)ღ ე(ხისგე)სღ**. The difference is in the decipherment of the main inscription. In the publications dated to 1972/1980, Valeri Silogava was

1 Lia Akhaladze is the author of a comprehensive study emphasizing the historical and historiographical importance of the epigraphic monument created on the territory of Abkhazia in the 10th century (Akhaladze 1999, 63-66; Akhaladze 2005, 149-154).

2 The author has also studied paleographic characteristics of the Georgian script in the epigraphy of Abkhazia (Akhaladze, 2007, 32-39).

3 However, it is obscure how Silogava determined the size of the graphemes expressly indicating - “the height of the letters is 2.5-1.7cm”.

the first who cited the inscription text in two versions: in its original form of Asomtavruli as well as in Mkhedruli transliteration. The third version of interpretation is presented in the publication of 2006:

In the version of 1972 (Silogava 1972b, 156, inscription 122) -

[+] აღ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მ)იღ(ა)დ ე[ს]ე ეკღესიად / მ(ა)მ(აღმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)ჰმ[ან] / მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა / გ(ო)მ(გ)დ(ს)სა / ოღ(ე)ს / [...] / [...] / [...] / [ღაი]ბადა [წახსამაჰთებდად ღღეთა] // [...] მ(ი)სსა.

წ(მ)იღ(ა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო)ღ(ო)ზ, მ(ე)ოხ / ე(ყ)ავ წ(ინ)აშ(ე) / ქ(ი)ს(გ)ც(ს)ა

It is not specified where the author places the two words [წახსამაჰთებდად ღღეთა];

In the version of 1980 (Silogava 1980, 142, inscription 164), the words [წარსამართებლად ღღეთა] are not present -

[+] აღ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მ)იღ(ა)დ ე[ს]ე ეკღესიად / მ(ა)მ(აღმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)ჰმ[ან] / მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა / გ(ო)მ(გ)დ(ს)სა / ოღ(ე)ს / [...] / [...] / [...] / [ღაი]ბადა // [...] მ(ი)სსა.

წ(მ)იღ(ა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო)ღ(ო)ზ, მ(ე)ოხ / ე(ყ)ავ წ(ინ)აშ(ე) / ქ(ი)ს(გ)ც(ს)ა

In the version of 2006 (Silogava 2006, 282, inscription 20), there is [სადღეგჰდეროდ] instead of the words [წახსამაჰთებდად ღღეთა] -

[+] აღ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მ)იღ(ა)დ ე[ს]ე ეკღესიად / მ(ა)მ(აღმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)ჰმ[ან] / მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა / გ(ო)მ(გ)დ(ს)სა / ოღ(ე)ს / [...] / [...] / [...] / [ღაი]ბადა // [...] [სადღეგჰდეროდ] მ(ი)სსა.

წ(მ)იღ(ა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო)ღ(ო)ზ, მ(ე)ოხ / ე(ყ)ავ წ(ინ)აშ(ე) / ქ(ი)ს(გ)ც(ს)ა

3) Giorgi indicated in the inscription is **Giorgi I Bagratid** (1014-1027). This version belongs to Teimuraz Barnaveli (Barnaveli 1981). The paper published in the *Bulletin* of the Georgian the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences has no photographs.<sup>1</sup> However, Barnaveli evidently examined the slab de visu or at least used a good photograph because he fully read the preserved graphemes of the inscription (among them the sign + in the first upper line of the fragment - we can see its right arm, and the graphemes ႠႢႦ / ႠႢႧ on the left). Teimuraz Barnaveli read the complex of graphemes ႠႢႦ / ႠႢႧ as [ბ-] / -აბ(ი)ღისავ(ა)ნ (assuming the existence of *bani* at the end of the previous line). Basil is considered as *Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*; because of the conjunction of Georgian King Giorgi and Caesar Basil, he came to a conclusion that the inscription mentioned Giorgi I and his defeat by Basil. As a result, by reading „ბოდა“ instead of „ბადა“ in the lower line, Teimuraz Barnaveli restored the text as „მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა გ(ო)მ(გ)დ(ს)სა, ოღ(ე)

<sup>1</sup> Apparently, it remained unknown to other authors who were examining the topic.

ბ [ო-] / [-გი კ(ეიხი)სა ბ-] / -ას(ი)ღიხაგ(ა)ნ / [ოგე-] / -ბოდა.“ In the upper line, the author restored the name of *forefather* as *Melchisedek* (then contemporary patriarch) while at the beginning of the right line he restored one more word „სურსა“: „[სურსა] / მ(ი)სსა / წ(მიღა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო)- / -ღ(ო)მ / მ(ე)მ / ე(ა)ვ წ(ინაშ)ე / ე(იხი)სა.“ Correspondingly, Barnaveli dated the inscription to 1021-1027<sup>1</sup> (Barnaveli 1981, 123-124).

Thus, Teimuraz Barnaveli restores the inscription as the following (Barnaveli 1981, 124-125):

+ აღ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მიღა)დ ე[სე ეკლესია] / მ(ა)მ(აღმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)მ[ან] / [მედქიხი] / მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)ს(ა) (sic) / გ(ო)მ(ი)გ(ა)ნ(ს)ა / ო(ე)ს [ო-] / [-გი კ(ეიხი)სა ბ-] / -ას(ი)ღიხაგ(ა)ნ / [ოგე-] / -ბოდა. // [სურსა] მ(ი)სსა / წ(მიღა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო)- / -ღ(ო)მ, მ(ე)მ / ე(ა)ვ წ(ინაშ)ე / ე(იხი)სა.“

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I will endeavour to **express my personal viewpoint** about the dating of the slab and its subject-matter.

First of all, I will discuss Teimuraz Barnaveli’s version. Generally, an attempt of restoring large fragments of a text leads to skepticism. The attempt always has to be treated with caution because the results are not always reliable. In this case, why the missing part on the left side has to be restored as „ბ-] / -ას(ი)ღიხაგ(ა)ნ“ but not as „ას(ე)ღი“ or „-ა ს(ე)ღი“ , while Barnaveli himself considers these variants of reading (Barnaveli 1981, 123). It is the only basis for Barnaveli’s logical structure. If it is ruined, the whole structure will be demolished as well.

The dating of a church construction on the territory controlled by Giorgi I by *his defeat*, namely, *his defeat by Caesar Basil* seems disputable. Any similar case in the Georgian epigraphy is unknown; the famous inscription from the Ateni Sioni Church mentioning Bugha the Turk and the martyrdom of Kakhay cannot be considered as analogous. The inscription is only a lapidary-chronographic notice and it does not represent the dating of any certain event by the expedition carried out by Bugha the Turk and by the martyrdom of the Georgian noble man (Javakhov 1912; Silogava 1974, 116). As for the Eredvi Church inscription, it corroborates a *successful expedition* of 914 in Hereti by Constantine, a monarch of the west Georgian state (Shoshiashvili 1980, 170-172, inscription 76).

Lastly, the inscription analysis totally and explicitly excludes Barnaveli’s reconstruction. The slab surface near the word „ო(ე)ს“ can be viewed well on the photographs, so that „[ო-]“ cannot be present there. It

<sup>1</sup> It would be more accurate to date the inscription directly to the period of conflict between Georgia and Bizantium.



can be placed on the following line (however, in contrast with Barnaveli, I consider that there was enough space to accommodate two lines and in case of abbreviating, „[ოგი კვისხისა ბ-]“ still can be well placed). As a matter of fact, it is more important that there is enough room for at least two lines between the words („-ახ(ი)ღისაგ(ა)ნ“ and „-ბოღა“) and only „[ოგი-]“ perhaps could not fill it up. Admittedly, „-ბოღა“ or „-ბაღა“ is written rather freely and a space is left between separate graphemes. Several questions arise concerning this issue, among them are the following: could „[ოგი-]“ take such a large space above them? Is it realistic that the word denoting the defeat of a certain monarch could have been written so distinctly? Are the graphemes with long intervals on the left side of Golgotha bottom part of a separate inscription which has no relation with the main inscription text? (as it is in case of an isolated inscription near the cross arms ჟ(უახ)ღ ქ(ხისგვ)სღ). And, on the contrary, above the word „მ(ი)სსა“ on the right side there is no space left for Barnaveli’s „[სურსა]“ (the same can be said about Silogava’s „[საღლეგხიქლოღ]“ or [წახსამათებღაღ ღლეოთა]). Therefore, the restoration carried out by the scholar does not correspond with the inscription ordonnance on the slab.

As given below, we cannot completely exclude that “Giorgi” in the inscription is Giorgi I. Nevertheless, this assumption is not based on Barnaveli’s argument. If *Gurandukht* could be deciphered in the inscription, we would indispensably ascribe the inscription to Giorgi II Leonid. Nevertheless, even a “fragmentary” decipherment of the name *Gurandukht* cannot be possible.

We can speculate that Leo Sharvashidze deciphered the graphemes ႁႁႁ / ႁႁႁ on the left side of the inscription as the following words ახ(უ)ღი and გ(უხა)ნ- / [-ღუხგი]. This gives rise to the tradition of reading *Gurandukht* in the inscription. However, this kind of interpretation of graphemes is quite a debatable issue. On the one hand, the phrase is not graphically coherent: ახ(უ)ღი- / -სა გ(უხა)ნ- / [ღუხგისა] [ღაი-] / -ბაღა. On the other hand, in those lapidary or hammered inscriptions where we have the name of Bagrat III’s mother, the abbreviation is different:

გ(უა)ხ(ან)ღ(უხ)გ in the inscription from Kumurdo (Silogava 1994, 48-49),

გ(უ)ხ(ან)ღ(უ)ხგ in the inscription on the Bedia Chalice (Silogava 2006, 313, inscription 2),

გ(უა)ხ(ან)ღ(უ)ხგ in the construction inscription from the Bagrati Temple (Silogava 1980, 52-53, inscription 33);

გ(უ)ხ(ან)ღ(უ)ხგ in the inscription from the Akhali Sopeli Church (at a distance of 7 km from Manglisi) (Shoshiashvili 1980, 258-259, inscription 143);

These abbreviations are different from გ(უარა)ნ[ღუხგ] in the Khuapi

inscription; this fact does not refute but minimizes the probability of the name Gurandukht to be mentioned in the Khuapi inscription.<sup>1</sup>

If the inscription commemorates *Gurandukht's* birth, it is not comprehensible why the text continues to the right side with the word „მ(ი)სსა“ – „[ღანი]ბაღა მ(ი)სსა.“ It is obvious that the text is disorderly.

Moreover, we are not sure that four Asomtavruli graphemes (to Barnaveli, „ბაღა“? or „ბოღა“ ) on the left side of Golgotha bottom are part of the main inscription. We come to this conclusion taking into consideration the following two circumstances: a) the distance between the graphemes is much bigger than in other parts of the frame; b) the artisan had enough space on the right frame (if he comprehended that on time) not to bring the inscription to the lower part of the right frame. Through this way, the inscription would be more balanced and elegant. Are the four graphemes part of a separate inscription, which is independent from the main inscription?

We can conclude that below on the left side the text is so damaged that any assertion in respect of its content must be regarded as unwarranted. We cannot entirely eliminate reading of the name *Gurandukht* in this part of the inscription. Nevertheless, this issue is very doubtful and any discussion based on it seems to be inappropriate.

Taking into account the aforementioned argument, one question can be raised: shall we ascribe the inscription to Giorgi II Leonid even refuting reading the name of Gurandukht but based on the title of “Giorgi”?

As it was already mentioned, we share the conception (vide supra) formulated by Lia Akhaladze that only Bagrat III obtained the title “King of the Abkhazs”. In the author’s view, non-reference to this title dates the inscription to the period prior to Bagrat III (Akhaladze 1999, 63-65; Akhaladze 2005, 149-153).

Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that the title of a monarch is not virtually indicated in the Khuapi inscription. In the collocation „მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა გ(იოხვ)მ(ს)სა“, the word „მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა“ is used with the meaning of *ქელმწიფობასა* as a chronological marker. In this case, the pivotal task for the person ordering this text was the *dating* of the church construction while the title of a ruling monarch was of secondary importance. We may introduce a similar example from the reign of a monarch who truly belonged to the Bagrationi dynasty, e.g., in the famous inscription (1066) of the Likhni Church (also in north-western province of Georgia) depicting the apparition of Halley’s Comet (a crowned star), Bagrat IV is referred to as the following: „მეფობასა ბაგრატ გიოხვის ძისასა“. To put it in another way, he is mentioned without any title (Siloga-

1 In the Zhibiani inscription written with Mkhedruli and Nuskhuri, Silogava interpretes „გნხვ“ as a complex „გ(უარა)ნ(ფე)ნ(ტ)ვ“ (Silogava 1980, 132, inscription 148).

va 2006, 198-201, inscription 1). If we perceive „მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა გ(ი)ორგ(ი)დ(ს)სა“ as the title of monarch Giorgi, we can still provide examples where Giorgi (I or II) Bagrationi of the 11<sup>th</sup> century carries the minimalistic title – king (მეფე).

In the Kaurma inscription, Giorgi I is referred to as „გ(ი)ორგ(ი) მ(ე)ფ(ე)“ („ქ(ი)სტ(ი)ანე, ად(ი)რე გ(ი)ორგ(ი) მ(ე)ფ(ე) და შ(ი)ვ(ი)დ(ი)ნი მ(ა)თ(ნ)ი“).<sup>1</sup>

Giorgi I/Giorgi II might have had longer titles in lapidary inscriptions:

In one of the Katskhi inscriptions, one more King Giorgi is mentioned but with an epithet *great*: „წ(მ)იღ(ა)ო ს(ა)მ(ე)ბ(ა)ო, შ(ე)იწ(ყ)აღ(ე) დ(ი)რე ბ[უ]რ(ი) გ(ი)ორგ(ი) მ(ე)ფ(ე)“ (according to Silogava, the inscription implies Giorgi I; no argumentation is given) (Silogava 1980, 56-57, inscription 37:2);

The Manglisi Sioni inscription referred to Giorgi Bagrationi in the following way: „... [მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა] ლ(მ)თ(ი)ვ-დ(ა)მ(ა)ნ(ი)ბ(უ)რ(ი)სა გ(ი)ორგ(ი), ყ(ო)ვ(ი)სა აღ(მ)სა[ვ(რ)თ(ი)სა] ...“ (most likely the monarch is not Giorgi I but Giorgi II, as it has been considered up until now).<sup>2</sup>

Giorgi III, in all lapidary inscriptions we are aware of, has a rather long and pompous title:<sup>3</sup>

The Samtavisi inscription (1168): „+ ს(ა)გ(ო) ლ(მ)თ(ა)ბ(ი)ს(ა)ო ად(ი)რე შ(ე)ნ მ[ი]რ(ი) / დ(ა)მ(ა)ნ(ი)ბ(უ)რ(ი) დ(ი)რ(ი) და უდ(რ)ვ(ე)რ(ი) ლ(მ)თ(ი) ვგ(ი) / -გ(ი)ორგ(ი)ს(ა)ნი ყ(ო)ვ(ი)სა აღ(მ)ს(ა)ვ(რ)თ(ი)სა მ(ე)ფ(ე)თ მ(ე)ფ(ე) გ(ი)ორგ(ი) ...“ (Sokhashvili 1968, 193, table VII; Sokhashvili 1973, 94-95, table 55);

The construction inscription of the Satkhe Church Iconostasis (1171): „... აღ(ვ)აშ(ე)ნ(ე) კ(ა)ნკ(ი)ლ(ი)ს(ე), დ(ა)მ(ა)ნ(ი)ბ(უ)რ(ი) ლ(მ)თ(ა)ბ(ი)ს(ა)ნი, მ(ე)ფ(ე)თა მ(ე)ფ(ი)სა გ(ი)ორგ(ი)ს(ა)ნი და ს(ა)წ(ი)ს(ა)დ(ი) ფ(ი)ს(ა)დ(ი) ც(ო)ვ(ი)რ(ი)სა ს(უ)რ(ი)სა მ(ე)ფ(ი)სა ...“ (Takaishvili 1951, 159-162; Gagoshidze 2019);

The Phitareti Church inscription (where Giorgi can even be Giorgi IV. So the inscription is dated to 1160-1223): „... მე, ქ(ა)ვ(თ)აქ(ი) ქ(ა)ტ(ი)ფ(ა) მ(ე)ფ(ე), ამ(ი)ჟ(ი)ბ(ი) თ(ო)მ(ა)ს(ი)ბ(ი)ბ(ი)ს(ა)ნი, / დ(ი)რ(ი)ს(ა)ნი, მ(ე)ფ(ე)თა მ(ე)ფ(ი)სა გ(ი)ორგ(ი)ს(ა)ნი ...“ (Silogava 2000, 226, 246-247, figure 26; compare Gagoshidze 2019, 57-58);

1 Giorgi is Giorgi I because in the inscription, in the immediate vicinity, carried out by the same handwriting Catholicos „მ(ე)ლქ(ი)ზ(ე)დ(ე)კ“ (Melchizedek) is referred (Tsiskarishvili 1959, 30-31; Javakheti Epigraphic Corpus 2012, 127).

2 An inscription belonging to Theodore Ghodomisdze is grooved on a wall of the later annex to the Manglisi Sioni which is plausibly dated by Tamaz Gogoladze to the reign of Giorgi II but not to that of Giorgi I (the inscription tells us about the contribution of “Constantinati” made by Theodore. This Byzantine coin did not exist until 1040 CE). Gogoladze associates it with an additional porch attached to the temple. By referring to the name Giorgi, the author deems the inscription (although carried out by another handwriting) on the porch to be a fragment of the construction inscription and dates it to the period after 1040 CE, that is, he ascribes it to Giorgi II (Gogoladze 2021b, 293-301; Gogoladze 2021a). I thank Tamaz Gogoladze for giving me a chance of discussing the issue with him in person.

3 I would like to cordially thank Tamaz Gogoladze for his reference to the inscription and relevant materials.

The Tsughrughasheni Church construction inscription made by Hasan Arsenidze (according to the estimation, the monarch in the inscription is not Giorgi IV but Giorgi III: „... მ{ვ}ფ{მ}ბ{ა}სა / შ(ნ)ა ღიღისა გ(ო)მ(გ)ი მ{ვ}ფეთა მ{ვ}ფისასა / მიწამ(ა)ნ მ{ვ}ფ{მ}ბისა მ{ა}თისამ{ა}ნ ახსენის / ძემ{ა}ნ, ჰასან ფ{ა}ვიწყე შ[ვ]ნ / -ებ{ა}ფ ...“ (Silogava 2000, 226-227, figure 27; compare Gagoshidze 2019, 57-58);

Thus, we can assume that it is impossible to ascribe the Khuapi inscription in any case to Giorgi II Leonid taking into account the existence and non-existence of a certain title, although most likely we should exclude Giorgi III and Giorgi IV Bagratids. As regards the title, Giorgi in the Khuapi inscription is either Giorgi II Leonid or Giorgi I or Giorgi II of the Bagratid dynasty.

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What do we have at hand in order to date the inscription and to verify the identity of “Giorgi”, apart from a stylistic analysis, which is probably incapable of to differentiating 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century reliefs from each other.

We can refer to only paleographic signs and their analysis.

In fact, Valeri Silogava based his conclusions on the paleography of the inscription attempting to prove that the inscription was grooved in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note that he had a limited access to the inscription; we can only assume what would have been his conclusions if he knew about the existence of a complex of graphemes ႁႃႆႇ / ႁႃႆႇ on the left side of the inscription. Moreover, Silogava did not virtually convey a paleographic analysis. Instead, he only says, as stated above, that the inscription is written with an “oblong ductus” and “limb-arrowy” script (Silogava 1972b, 156, inscription 122; Silogava 1980, 142, inscription 164; Silogava 2006, 282, inscription 20).<sup>1</sup>

I think that ascribing the inscription to the reign of Giorgi III on the basis of paleographic signs (there is not any argument against it) is highly disputable. The Khuapi inscription, at least partially, is performed with an “oblong ductus” but we come across the inscriptions with an oblong ductus from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, such as King Bagrat’s inscription in the Nikortsminda Temple dated back to 1010-1014 CE (Silogava 1980, 54-55, inscription 35, figure 30-35).

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1 Silogava, West Georgian X-XVIII Century Lapidary Inscriptions as a Historical Source. The dissertation submitted for a degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences. Addition. The Collected Works of Lapidary Inscriptions of Western Georgia (X-XVIII), 156, inscription 122; The Corpus of Georgian Lapidary Inscriptions, II, West Georgian Inscriptions. Part I (IX-XIII). Composed and issued by Valeri Silogava, 142, inscription 164; Silogava, The Georgian Epigraphy of Megrelia and Abkhazia, 282, inscription 20.

In the first place, the following circumstances draw attention during the paleographic analysis of the inscription: 1) the inscription is limb-arrowy and limb-forked; 2) the inscription is cut out without any separation signs or extra space between the words. These two circumstances create a certain foundation for dating the Khuapi inscription either to the 11<sup>th</sup> or at least to the 10<sup>th</sup> century but at any rate prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

As for limb-arrowy inscriptions, we should state that in his dissertation Valeri Silogava himself clearly formulated that “from the threshold of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries up until the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century the limb-arrowy script played a leading role” (Silogava sums up the characteristics of the classic monuments of limb-arrowy inscriptions) (Silogava 1972a, 60-82, cited page 82).<sup>1</sup> According to Nodar Shoshiashvili, “a slightly limb-arrowy script started from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century and from the 11<sup>th</sup> century it became already typical” (Shoshiashvili 1980, 33). It is true that we meet limb-arrowy epigraphic monuments also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, among them are the Tighva inscription, the Samtavisi inscription and the Anisi inscription (Silogava 1972a, 82). However, one of the characteristic features of these strictly dated epigraphic monuments is the presence of the separation signs and/or space between the words (Sokhashvili 1968, 193, table VII; Sokhashvili 1973, 94-95, table 55; Rcheulishvili 1960, 35-38, 96-97, table 27; Marr 1910), whereas Nodar Shoshiashvili argues that adding extra space and separation signs originate in the 9<sup>th</sup> century but “during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries inscriptions are still often without any separation signs and spaces between words. Separation signs and a space between words are established as a rule from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Shoshiashvili 1980, 32).

It is noteworthy that in the Khuapi inscription we do not meet other specific paleographic signs characteristic to later inscriptions (e.g., Samtavisi, Tighva, Phitareti, Tsughrughasheni), such as *cap-elevatedness of ani* or script *interwovenness or embededness*. Although the embededness is visible in the inscriptions of the Bagrati Temple and the Nikortskminda Temple, interwoven script mostly came into use later, i.e. “from the 12<sup>th</sup> century or particularly mid-12<sup>th</sup> century” (Silogava, 1972, 89-90).

Thus, it is difficult to date the Khuapi inscription to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and its second half based on the paleographic signs; the inscription must be older. But how old can it be? Is it possible to date the inscription to the earlier period than the threshold of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries? What kind of dating we get if limb-arrowyness of inscription is reckoned to be *terminus ante quem non*?

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<sup>1</sup> It is of interest that the Khuapi inscription in the index of the Corpus of Georgian Lapidary Inscriptions under the authorship of Valeri Silogava is designated as the inscription of Giorgi II (sic). However, the historiographical text accompanying the inscription (the reference to the reign of Giorgi III) does not leave any room for doubt that the author meant Giorgi III.

The earliest dated limb-arrowy epigraphic monument is a construction inscription from the Koteti Church dated back to 220 of Georgian Koronikon (i.e. 1000 CE) (Silogava 1980, 37-38, inscription 11). However, Nodar Shoshiashvili was thinking that a slight limb-arrowyness can be observed already from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Shoshiashvili 1980, 33). Some of the graphemes of one of the inscriptions of the Chkondidi Temple (the inscription around the Saviour, 996? CE, end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century) is limb-arrowy (Silogava 1980, 35-36, inscription 9; Silogava 2006, 53-54, inscription 3). Furthermore, there are already some decorative elements in the Kumurdo inscriptions of 964 CE; we mean the thickening of lines at the end(s) when graphemes have upper horizontal lines; the same happens (in case of *doni* having a horizontal line) in the inscription accompanying the image of Gurandukht (Silogava 1994, 39-46, 48-49). Is it the first stage of transforming to limb-arrowyness? When did limb-arrowyness spring up? Can we assume that it was established between 964-996 CE, that is to say, the third quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century?

Lia Akhaladze considers that the limb-arrowy script was born much earlier. According to her, “it is impossible to place limb-arrowyness within the boundaries of only one century because 11<sup>th</sup>-century monuments of this type already carry monumental and fully formed shape. We should contemplate that this field and the limb-arrowy calligraphic school in general were preceded by a certain forestage, a process of stylistic refinement of graphemes and of its formation as a school” (Akhaladze 1999, 65). In terms of epigraphic refinement of monuments written with the limb-arrowy script, we can identify the Khtsisi construction inscription of Archbishop Anania written in 1002 CE, the construction inscription of the Bagrati Temple of 1001-1008 CE, the Nikortsinda and Katskhi inscriptions of 1010-1014 CE, the inscription of Catholicos Melchizedek I from Svetitskhoveli (Silogava 1972a, 62-73). All of them are so exquisite that we cannot say this calligraphic direction sprang up all of a sudden and shortly reached new heights without any transitional period. As Akhaladze asserts, “the formation of school was running over a rather long period of time...during the 10<sup>th</sup> century or its second half. Therefore, the lowest chronological boundary for the limb-arrowy script is at least the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century (if not even earlier)” (Akhaladze 1999, 65).

Some kind of rudiments of limb-arrowyness in the Kumurdo inscriptions of 964 CE does not eliminate the probability that the script is born earlier. The thing is that we consider Silogava’s viewpoint very optimistic: “the stages of the development of the limb-arrowy script allow us to date other non-dated inscriptions written with the limb-arrowy scrip within 20-30 years or sometimes within decades” (Silogava, 1972a, 77). To my mind, it is not always possible to draw the line between handwriting peculiarities of a certain artisan performing an inscription and a paleographic tradition

typical of a certain period. Moreover, we can pose some questions: how fast were calligraphic innovations and trends spreading within Georgia (e.g., from Khuapi to Alaverdi or vice versa)? Is it possible that all of the artisans immediately took up innovations? The artisans representing different schools presumably were active in the same period. Valeri Silogava virtually assumes the same opinion: “from the threshold of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries until the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century and later on, we meet inscriptions written with regular and limb-spotty scripts next to limb-arrowy inscriptions (Silogava 1972a, 80, index 20).

I assume that the pace of dissemination and introducing of paleographic novelties in Georgia even within the boundaries of the West Georgian Kingdom was diverse. As a result, we need to be careful with respect to dating certain inscriptions only according to paleographic signs.

Concerning the Khuapi inscription, the contour of some graphemes attracts attention. Archaic signs, which are characteristic of the 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, are conspicuous (Silogava 1972a, 54-55, 57): *oni* with a hook, *ani* with a lateral line connected to the corpus of the grapheme without a neck. Furthermore, there are additional lines drawn near the upper vertical line of *gani-eni-vini-lasi* leading to decorativeness (inelegant limb-arrowyness and limb-forkedness). With these signs, the inscription expresses new trends which were born during the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, the engraving of letters separately and the absence of separation signs and space between words are characteristic of the same period.

It is noteworthy that *gani* used twice in the Khuapi inscription has a specific form, a very conspicuously elongated and bent leg. Similar *gani* is present also in other inscriptions: the Kumurdo inscription of *Gurandukht* (second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the lateral line endings of *doni* are decoratively thickened) (Silogava 1994, 39-46, 48-49); the Anukhva inscriptions in Abkhazia of *Giorgi, son of Basil* (signs of separation and limb-arrowyness) and *Archangels Michael and Gabriel* (no separation signs, one grapheme is limb-arrowy, in some parts the endings of graphemes are thickened). Valeri Silogava dates the second inscription to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while Lia Akhaladze dates it to the 14<sup>th</sup> century or to an earlier period (Akhaladze 2005, 161-163; Silogava 2006, 283, inscription 21).<sup>1</sup> Both authors date the first inscription to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Silogava 1980, 64-65, inscription 44; Akhaladze 2005, 155-158); the inscription of *Queen of Queens Sagdukht* from modern Gali, historical Samurzakano (separation sign, mostly limb-arrowy). Valeri Silogava dates it to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but Lia Akhaladze dates it to the first half of the same century (Silogava

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1 The inscription of Archangels Michael and Gabriel has no separation signs and space between words, no cap-elevated *ani*, embedded or interwoven graphemes; *gani* shows likeness to 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century epigraphic monuments. Is it possible to date the inscription to the earlier period than 12<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>+ century?

1980, 126-127, inscription 130; Akhaladze 2005, 75-83.); and one *inscription fragment of a priest* from Tskelikari (separation signs, mostly limb-arrowy, 11<sup>th</sup> century) (Silogava 1980, 153-154, inscription 177; Akhaladze 2005, 89-92). The same shape of *gani* is traced in the Peta, Shvila, Tevdore, Kvita and Grigol inscriptions from Zemo Krikhi (limb-arrowyness or separation signs are not present, Silogava dates them to the 10<sup>th</sup> century) (Silogava 1980, 39-41, 43, inscriptions 13, 14, 15, 16, 19); the inscription of *Gmirisdze* from Savane (Sachkhere municipality) (no excision signs, limb-arrowyness, Silogava dates it to the 11<sup>th</sup> century) (Silogava 1980, 108, inscription 105). It is tangible that in terms of the aforementioned criterion the Khuapi inscription looks like the inscriptions from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

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To conclude, we cannot date the Khuapi inscription to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century taking into consideration the paleographic analysis; the dating of the inscription by the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century seems to be doubtful as well; with respect to the paleographic analysis, we would better date the inscription either to the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century or to the second half of the same century; or, to the 1<sup>st</sup> third or half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century; the mentioned “Giorgi” must be either Giorgi II Leonid or Giorgi I Bagratid, respectively. At this stage, it is impossible to differentiate between the two monarchs.

As for the text of the Khuapi inscription, I restore it in the following way (although we abstain from restoring the text in the section of „ოდ(ე)ს ... მ(ი)სსა“, as the necessary information has been irreversibly lost):

† ႣႠႡႠႠ ႠႠႠ Ⴀ... ... ႠႠႠႠႠႠႠႠ... ...				+ ალ(ა)შ(ე)ნა წ(მიდა)ე ე[სე ეკლესიაჲ] მ(ა)მ(ადმ)თ(ა)ვ(ა)რმ[ან] ...			
ႠႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠ ... ...	ႠႠႠ	ႠႠႠ	ႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠႠ	მ(ე)ფ(ო)ბ(ა)სა გ(იორგ)მ(ს)სა ႠႠ(ე)ს ... ...	ႠႠ(უარ)მ	კ(რისტე)სმ	მ(ი)სსა წ(მიდა)ო ნ(ი)კ(ო) -ლ(ო)ზ, მ(ე)ოზ ე(ყა)ვ წ(ინა)მე კ(რისტე)სა.
ႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠ			ႠႠႠႠ ႠႠႠႠ				
? ? ႠႠႠႠ			? ? ႠႠႠႠ				

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