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## Discovery and Decipherment of Caucasian Albanian Writing

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**ABSTRACT.** Albania, together with Georgia and Armenia, was another civilized country on the territory of present Azerbaijan in the Caucasus in antiquity and early Middle Ages. From the 10th century this state disappeared, so that only vague memories about its writing, literature and language were left in the sources. In 1975 fire ruined the floor of one of the chapels of the St. Catherine Monastery on Mount Sinai and numerous (1100) manuscripts, being sunk into oblivion for more than two centuries, written in different languages were discovered in the lower depository. Among them 141 Georgian manuscripts and large numbers of fragments were found. Among the newly discovered manuscripts two items are of special importance for international scholarship (N/Sin-13, N/Sin-55), which represent Georgian-Albanian palimpsest. The lower, Albanian text of the manuscripts (might comprise two parts of the same manuscript) was washed out in the 10th century and overlapped by Georgian alphabetical Patericon. Below follows the story of the discovery and deciphering of the Caucasian Albanian Lectionary. © 2007 *Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

*Key words:* Albanian script, palimpsest, Sinai.

Albania, together with Georgia and Armenia, was another civilized country on the territory of present Azerbaijan in the Caucasus in antiquity and early Middle Ages. From 10th century, due to the strong influence of neighbouring countries, nomadic tribes and the Caliphate, this state disappeared, so that only vague memories about its writing, literature and language were left in the sources.

On September 28, 1937 among the Echmiadzin (Yerevan) manuscripts Ilia Abuladze discovered a 15th century manuscript that represented a textbook of different languages and writings. Albanian writing was found in this manuscript [1]. The very alphabet was studied by A. Shanidze. He concluded that the successors of the Albanians must have been a small nation, living on the territory of Azerbaijan and by that time even on the territory of Georgia, known as Udis whose language belonged to the Southern Dagestanian group of Languages of the Caucasus [2]. In 1948-1949, during the Mingechaur excavations several inscriptions and graphites were found. However, they failed to be deciphered by means of the alphabet given in the manuscript.

In 1975 fire crashed the floor of one of the chapels of the St. Catherine Monastery on Mount Sinai and numerous (1100) manuscripts, being sunk into oblivion for more than two centuries, written in different languages, were discovered in the lower depository, among them 141 Georgian manuscripts and large numbers of fragments were found [3].

Among the newly discovered manuscripts two items are of special importance for international scholarship (N/Sin-13, N/Sin-55), which represent a Georgian-Albanian palimpsest (with two layers of writing). One of them (N/Sin-13) is better preserved, while the other one is severely damaged by fire. The sheets of the second manuscript (N/Sin-55) stuck together due to the intense heat, and only with the effort of the team of restorers of the Institute of Manuscripts were separated without any loss. It has been ascertained that the lower text of the manuscript could be better detected due to the fire impact [4].

The lower, Albanian text of the two manuscripts discovered on Mount Sinai (the two manuscripts might constitute two parts of the same manuscript) was washed off

in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and replaced by a Georgian alphabetical Patericon. It was made possible to read and copy approximately 100 out of 300 preserved pages of the lower text by means of the then available resources (ultraviolet illumination and filming).

From the very beginning while being at the site (in St. Catherine's Monastery) I started to clarify the codicological issues that could play an important role in the identification and dating of the text.

It was determined that the Georgian manuscript was bound on the basis of doubly folded Albanian manuscript sheets. The size of the Albanian manuscript sheets was 19.5 cm x 22.4 cm. The Albanian text was written with carefully traced out capital letters in brown ink, in two columns, perpendicularly to the Georgian text. There were 22 lines in each column and 44 lines altogether on a single page. The spaces between the columns as well as the margins were rather vast. The free spaces in the manuscript were used for the content-related adscripts. To comply with symmetry the manuscripts were ruled on a wet parchment. For separation of the large portions of the text the capital letters were used, while two straight and short dotted parallel lines separated comparatively smaller fragments of the text.

All the above given information indicates that Albania was a well developed country economically (the parchment was rather expensive). The codicological and paleographical level of Albanian writing was high, being apparently archaic.

The paragraphs starting with capital letters, abbreviation markings, division of some sections of the text by double dots, repetition of the same words as well as entire phrases made it possible to divide the text into words.

Approximately 80 % of the new Georgian Collection of Mount Sinai has practical purpose and is liturgical in character. The sources state the existence of translation of only Biblical books (Prophets, the Gospels and Apostle) during 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The circumstances lead to the following assumption: the nation that has Old and New Testament books translated into its own language might and must have such an essential work for liturgy as Lectionary.

Liturgical books and especially Lectionaries were the first ones among other works of ancient Christian literature that went out of use. If a Lectionary was damaged in any way, even due to some mechanical reasons, it would never have been copied; as for further use, it anyway had to undergo modifications. The early Lectionaries tend to be modified rather frequently. The very knowledge argued in favour of a Lectionary, when reflecting about the Albanian palimpsest.

Having accepted the credibility of Lectionary, I decided first to typologically compare it with the Georgian and the Armenian tradition. As a starting point I collected the most apparent data for observation.

In my opinion, the sentences written in small letters had to serve as a key to the text. These kinds of sentences, as compared to the main text, had one peculiarity: they had initial capital letters that served as a tool for separation of several following sections (probably words). I had to suppose that these sentences could be the titles of some parts of the text and the capital letters separated words from each other.

While comparing it to the Georgian, material similarities were established with the so-called Khanmeti Lectionary, which is dated by specialists back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There the headpieces of readings are given with relatively smaller graphemes than the main text. I also used for comparing purposes the two well preserved but rather later Armenian lectionaries from the collection of the Institute of Manuscripts that represent exactly the same features as witnessed in the Albanian palimpsest: the titles of readings are written with small-sized graphemes and the words in titles are separated from each other by capital letters. This similarity paved the way to consider that the sentences written in small-sized letters in the Albanian text were the titles of a Lectionary. Now it made sense to commence rewriting and deciphering the lower layer of the Albanian text that was overlain by the Georgian Patericon. The Albanian text had one formal feature that was not traced in either Georgian or Armenian, namely a similarly small sized text placed on the left margin as well as between the columns.

It took me several months of hard work, using different kinds of illumination, magnifying tools as well as computer technique to rewrite about forty titles of the text with more or less entirety.

First of all I started to look for familiar anthroponyms and toponyms. Out of forty titles I could be certain of only one word  $\text{ՅԵՆԴԴՕՎԿԵԼ}$  "tesalonike" because all the letters, both graphically (with some unessential differences) and as phonemes, coincided with the alphabet letters. It was evident that I had to read this word as "Thessalonians" (unless there was a fatal coincidence) and as far as the word was given in the title it was obvious that this was Apostle Paul's Letter to Thessalonians. It was also probable that in the case of Apostle Paul's letters the first word in the titles would be a toponym or anthroponym; the first word of the next sentence reads as  $\text{ՀՕՎԿԻՆՏ}$  "ko-inta". According to the Albanian alphabet, the grapheme between letters  $\text{Օ}$  "o" and  $\text{Դ}$  "i"  $\text{Վ}$  must be "k". Following the alphabet the word should be read as "kokinta" but a meaningful word as well as analogy with  $\text{ՅԵՆԴԴՕՎԿԵԼ}$  "tesalonike" presupposes to read "korinta" (meaning Corinthians). It is noteworthy that the Albanian alphabet (based on the Armenian manuscript) does not have letter "r", which is unbelievable for the Caucasian languages, whereas the letter "k" is represented thrice, a fact that raises doubts.

The first word of the following sentence was even more difficult. Only Ե—Ձ “e - a” could be read for certain. The second letter in the word is the grapheme Է, which stands second in the alphabet and reads as “Odet” – “o”.

Some specialists considered that the second letter of the alphabet had to be “b”, likewise in all other alphabets. Besides, this grapheme (phoneme) does not appear in the Albanian alphabet (of the Armenian manuscript) at all and it is difficult to imagine any Caucasian language not having this consonant. Its trace becomes evident from the name of the thirteenth letter of the alphabet: “Irb”.

The third letter in the word is the afore-mentioned one – Լ (“k” according to the alphabet), which is thought to be “r”. If we follow the alphabet, then it will read as “eoka” which has no meaning but is just a cluster of graphemes. But I myself was already aware that the first word in the title had to be a well-acknowledged place name or proper name. If we consider for a moment that the corrections to the alphabet we have done are right, than it would read as “ebra”.

The first word of the following ԵԿԵԻՁ- sentence is again more or less easily legible. It stands for “epesa-”. Only the grapheme Կ “p” is somehow different from that of the alphabet, though there is no doubt about their similarity. ՋԿՆՕԴԻ “Titos” and ՋԿԼՕԳՅՕԻ “Timoteos” were also easily identified. There is some difference between the alphabet’s and text’s graphemes though.

It became evident that this group of readings was from Apostle Paul’s letters and the reading of the entire text had to be approached from this point of view. Thus, Apostle Paul had to be mentioned somewhere in the title. There has to be given Paul’s name in the titles. And in fact, in some titles the third word and occasionally the fourth one were read as “pailosi”. The third letter in the word ԳԶԻՕԻԿԿ according to the alphabet should be Ի “i” (Iaig) which means that the word read as “pailosi”. At the same time it was evident that the third letter represents part of Օ “u” digraph (analogously to “u” in Greek, Georgian and Armenian alphabets) stands for an independent grapheme Դ “w” and thus the word reads as ԳԶԻՕԻԿԿ “Pawlosi”.

Now I had to consider why the word ԳԶԻՕԻԿԿ “Pawlosi” was sometimes the third and sometimes the fourth component in different sentences.

As soon as I looked through all the epistles’ titles I noticed that ԳԶԻՕԻԿԿ “Pawlosi” is the third in the headlines which deal with one part of the epistles (such as to Ephesians, Titus and the Hebrews) and it is the fourth when it concerns Paul’s first and second group of epistles (they are: to Corinthians, Thessalonians and Titus).

After comparing all the texts I came to the conclusion that the second group of Paul’s letters exceeds the

first group only in the second word. It is clear that this word must be “first” and “second”. The words based on the so far gained knowledge easily read: ԽԵԼԵՁՕԴԿ “serbaun” and ԳՕԴԼԶԿԿԿ “puranin”, but which of them was “first” and “second”? In modern Udi language the word “sa” stands for “first” and “pa” stands for second. Thus, it becomes clear that ԽԵԼԵՁ-ՕԴԿ “serba-un” must mean “first” (“un” ending, that is a relative case ending, in Udi stands for an ancient ordinal suffix, which still exists, though being altered by widely spread Azerbaijani “-umji-”), and ԳՕԴԼԶԿԿ “puran-in” – second (compare Udi “puran” means *again, repeatedly*). In modern Udi suffixes “-nin”/“-in” also stand for a relative suffix, which was supposedly used as a denomination of an ordinal numeral, likewise “-un”). However, this assumption still needed examination.

At this point I recollected the context where one and the same phrase was repeated nine times. This text appeared under the title, which I had read as ԼՕԼԿԿԳԶՕԴՏՕԻ “korintaughoy puranin”, and I considered it to be “Second Corinthians”.

Thus, finding this paragraph in the Second Corinthians was no more a difficult task. It appeared to be chapter 11. 25-27 where Apostle Paul speaks of his sufferings which he had undergone in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from his own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, etc.

ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ ԶՕԴ<sup>↓</sup>  
 Գ ԾՕԻՕԴ :  
 ԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ ԶԵ<sup>Ձ</sup>  
 ԵԶԶՕԴՏՕԻՕԴ-ԳԶԼ  
 ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ ԳԿԿԿ  
 ԻՕԴ-ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ<sup>†</sup>  
 ԵԶԶԿՕԻՕԴՏՕԻՕԴ :  
 ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ ԼԶԶ<sup>†</sup>  
 ԼԶ : ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ<sup>†</sup>  
 ԶԵԶԵԶԿ : ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵ  
 ԻՕԴԿԿ ԶԶԶԿ : ԳԶԼ  
 ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ ԶԿԿԿ  
 ԿԶԵԶԻՕԴ : ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵ  
 ԻՕԴԿԿՏՕԻՕԴԿԿ ԵՕ<sup>↓</sup>  
 ԵՕԿԿԿԿ ԿԿԿԿԿ<sup>↓</sup>

Fig. 1. II Corinthians 11, 26-27.

The main phrase, which is repeated nine times in this paragraph, is ԳԶԼ ԶԶԵԻՕԴԿԿ “mar akesunukh”. In



modern Udi “mar” means “pus” and “akesun” - “seeing, experiencing”. Suffix “ux” in modern Udi represents plurality, which evidently enough was the same in Albanian. This expression is rendered in Georgian with exactly the same collocation: ჭიორთა ნახვანო “seeing (experiencing) straits (disasters)”.

In Apostle Paul’s list of dangers we come across some words, which also exist in modern Georgian, Armenian and Udi languages. Thus, the reading of these words is no longer difficult or doubtful. They are as follows:

1. ԶԵՉՉԶՇ “abazak” – bandit (it is the same in modern Udi), which is “avazak” in modern Georgian and Armenian.

2. ՆՅՋԿՕՒ “hetanos” – (is the same in Armenian - հեթանոս) Gentile, Heathen, Barbarian. It makes me think that the 23<sup>rd</sup> letter of the alphabet Ն, which is completely different from the same grapheme given in the Albanian text, is “h”.

3. ԿԶԿԶ “kalak” – city. It is the same in Georgian and in Armenian with some phonetic difference (The word is read as քաղաք “kaghak” in Armenian since the 9<sup>th</sup> century); it is obvious that the graphic sign Կ that represented “q” in Georgian and Armenian, being differently written in Armenian manuscript is certainly “q”.

4. ԵՕԴԻ-ԿԿ “bus-in” – from hunger: “busa” means “hunger” in modern Udi.

Now let’s go back to Apostle Paul’s letters. I will illustrate it on the example of the reading from the epistle to the Ephesians as they seem identical unless taking into consideration the addressee: ԵԿԵՒԶՕԶՕԴ ԻԿԿՕԴԻՕԴ ԳԶԴԴՕՒԿ ՆՅԿԿ ԶԴՕՂԶ ՕԿԵԵՕԿ “epesaughoy dipnukhots pawlosi hebi aioia upesun”. This sentence then I translated in the following way: “From the Epistles to Ephesians by Apostle Paul. Alleluia is performed.” Identifying ծ “gh” in ԵԿԵՒԶՕԶՕԴ “epesaughoy” caused problems. The alphabet contains a grapheme that is very similar to that of the ԵԿԵՒԶՕԶՕԴ “epesaughoy”, these are the 37<sup>th</sup> grapheme of the alphabet “kham” and 41<sup>st</sup> one – “pes”. Of the two phonemes “pes” is more similar to the one evidenced in ԵԿԵՒԶՕԶՕԴ “epesaughoy”, I read it exactly the same way. But later the plurality formant in Udi “ukh” had to be considered, which in different positions (mostly between the vowels) reads as “-ugh-”. In another part the plurality formant “ukh” in a similar position was represented by another grapheme (compare, ԻԿԿԿ-ՕԴԻՕԴ “dipn-ukh-okhots”).

Analysis of II Corinthians 11. 2 made me absolutely certain about the fact that we are dealing with “gh” and not “kh” or even “p”. Apostle Paul states that he had spent *day and night* on a sea bottom, analogous Albanian ծԿ ՕԿԿ ԼՕԿ “Ghi un shu”, if we read the grapheme under consideration as “gh”. ծԿ ՕԿԿ ԼՕԿ “ghi and “shu” mean *day and night* respectively in Udi.

It has to be considered that “gh” is not represented in the alphabet of the Armenian manuscript while Կ “kh” is given as the 17<sup>th</sup> letter. Thus the 37<sup>th</sup> letter is “gham” rather than “kham”. It could not be recorded by an Armenian writer due to the fact that there was no such grapheme (before the 9<sup>th</sup> century) in Armenian.

The form “pesun” also exists in modern Udi and it means “to do, to perform” something. After it became possible to read the entire text in Albanian it became evident that (V. Shultze, J. Gippert) ԶԴԵՒՕԿԿ “Alleluia” is given in full form while in the titles being written as “aioia” which in fact has to be ՆՅԿԿ “hebi” (apostle) affixed formant.

5. ԻԿԿԿ “dipn” (it could be a contracted form and in nominative case it is likely to be “dipun”) is sure to have designated the word “epistle”. We can say for sure that ԻԿԿԿ-ՕԴԻՕԴ “dipn-ukh-ots” indicates plural ablative if we compare the already familiar phrases from II Corinthians 11. 26: ԶԵՉՉԶՇ-ՕԴՏ-ՕԻՕԴ “mar akesunukh abazak-ugh-okhots” (dangers from bandits), ԶԶԶ ԶՇԵԴՕԿԿԿ ԵԿԵՒԶՕԶՕԴ-ՕԴՏ-ՕԻՕԴ “mar akesunukh hetanos-uhg-okhots” (dangers from the Gentiles).

6. ՆՅԿԿ “hebi” means Apostle.

In the Albanian palimpsest the following titles have been read: from the New Testament – Matthew, Luke and John chapters; Acts of the Apostles and Epistles – Peter, Jacob and John Epistles, Paul Epistles – I and II Corinthians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus and Hebrews.

Identification of the beginning of chapter 1 of Apostle Jacob offered us interesting results: ԴՉԼՕԵ ԵՒՂ ՕԿԿ----ԴՒԿ ԿՒՂ “yacob b~y un y~si q~i” (Jacob of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ). This excerpt has finally solved the unresolved problem: the abbreviation ԵՒՂ “b~y” is certainly ԵԿԿԿ-ՕԴՏՕԴ “bikhaj-ugh-oi” (of God, -ugh plural marker).

ԵԿԿԿ-ՕԴՏ “bikhaj-ugh” is abbreviated in different ways in the Albanian texts. The nominative case is ԵԿԿԿԿ(ՕԿ)Տ b(ixaju)gh. The abbreviations of Christ in different cases could be explained the same way: Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)Ւ q(risto)s, Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)Ւ q(ristos), Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)Ղ q(ristos)ax, Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)Ղ q(ristos)a, Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)ԿԿ q(ristos)en, Կ(ԿԿԿՕՒ)ԿԿ q(ristose)n.

The reading of the title from the Gospels proved more difficult, but personal names in the genitive case, such as ԶԶԶՕՒԿ “Mateosi”, ԴՕԶԶԿ “Lukasi”, ԿՕՆԿԿԿԿԿ “Iohananesi”, were easily identified.

With the existing technical means it was very difficult to read the small-sized marginal remarks written along the titles, though it became evident that in most cases the abbreviated titles are placed along the text in order to be traced easily. For instance: ՕԿԵԵՕԿ ԴՉԼՕԵԿ ՆՅԿԿ ԶԴՕՂԶ “upesun yakobi hebi ayoya” (perform Apostle Jakob), ՕԿԵԵՕԿ ԳԵԵՂՕՒԿ Ե-ՇՏՕԴ “upesun Petrosi b-ghoy” (perform II Peter). But readings of Gospels have

much longer texts as marginal remarks, and they sometimes contain an indication of Psalm reading (𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 “salmos”). Nowadays these marginal notes are completely read (V. Shultze, J. Gippert).

All materials that had been already read showed that in case of abbreviations the separate respective word should not be searched. For instance, the word 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 “upesun” is written both in full form and abbreviated (𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 “upes~n”), the same could be deduced about 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 “puranin” > “puran~n. Thus, the Sinai palimpsest’s -𐌆𐌆𐌆 “-s~n” is “-s(u)n” and -𐌆𐌆𐌆 -n~n – -n(u)n.

After reading and deciphering several titles and readings it has not been very difficult to identify letters, their meanings and relevant graphemes based on well known toponyms and anthroponyms, their use in Greek, Georgian and Armenian and in Udi words. The parallel texts gave me the opportunity to determine that the Albanian language is closely related to Modern Udi in terms of lexical, phonetic and grammatical forms.

Thus, the read part and the titles of an Albanian manuscript indicated that we were dealing with an Albanian Lectionary. A Lectionary is a collected liturgical work of church readings based on the Old and New Testament; it is performed during ecclesiastic feasts within a year. To compile a Lectionary, it is essential to have the complete translation of the Bible in the target language. Sources



Fig. 2. Photo. II Corinthians 11, 26-27.

report that in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Caucasian Albania had already used translations of that kind. Now we may assert confidently that soon after the adoption of Christianity there was the complete translation of the Bible in Albanian and a Lectionary had been compiled.

Only the Albanian Lectionary, out of all existent ones, is equipped with liturgical remarks written in small sized letters on the margins next to the titles.

Comparison of the extant Lectionaries makes it possible to single out liturgical commentaries traced out in small letters on the margins of the Albanian Lectionary, next to titles of readings. The fact should be typical either of the Albanian Lectionary only or originating from a source that has not been preserved. The margins also display figures written in very small sized graphemes that must be the stichometric division of the New Testament texts.

It is also noteworthy that some readings of the Albanian “Lectionary” are not witnessed in any of the oldest surviving Lectionaries. This fact could indicate that the Albanian “Lectionary” was not merely translated but created on the existing Biblical Books that already had been translated into the native language, but designed according to an unknown model. The vocabulary of the Lectionary, apart from Albanian words, contains foreign (Greek, Syriac-Hebrew, Georgian, Armenian) proper names, words and forms spread in other languages as well, which makes it impossible to identify the origin of the Albanian Lectionary (it is another matter to establish the language from which the Albanian Bible has been translated). All these words in the given forms were apparently spread in the Albanian world before translating the New Testament.

Traditionally Lectionaries developed from simple to complex. At first, it contains readings for 12 divine feasts only, with psalms and alleluias enclosed (4<sup>th</sup> century). Subsequently, Lectionaries became more complicated by readings for other religious feasts, remembrances of outstanding church figures and martyrs, references to Holy places of Jerusalem, where the procession had to stop to read appropriate fragments from Holy Scripture, profuse hymnographic material (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries). After a certain lapse of time, Lectionaries became so complicated that compilers had to issue separate annual hymnographic collections.

The Albanian Lectionary, discovered in the St. Catherine monastery of Sinai, is the earliest stage in the development of Lectionaries. Typologically it is closer to the Georgian Khanmeti Lectionary which survived in the form of incomplete fragments. According to the content, the Albanian Lectionary could be dated back to the period before the 6<sup>th</sup> c. The Jerusalem Lectionary may be regarded as an ancestor of all surviving Lectionaries. Has the Albanian Lectionary any relation

to this kind of Lectionaries? Was it created in Palestinian environment? Are there any indications in the text to back up the idea?

The Albanian church regarded St. Elise (Elishe), one of Christ's 70 Apostles who came to Albania from Jerusalem and was ordained by Our Saviour's brother Jacob, as its Enlightener. The sources report that there were numerous Albanian churches and cloisters in early medieval Jerusalem.

In the Albanian Lectionary the proper name «John» is used in its Jewish-Syriac form «Iohanan» only that may indicate the pronunciation of it used by the Albanian community of Palestine. The Albanian manuscript was discovered in Palestinian environment, on Mount Sinai. Based on this, I assume that the Albanian Lectionary was created in the Palestinian environment and belongs to the earliest type of Jerusalem Lectionaries [5].

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Soon after the involvement of well-known specialists of Udi language and language typology (Jost Gippert and Wolfgang Schulze) in the study of the Albanian texts and after Volkswagenstiftung purchased for the Institute of Manuscripts equipment for reading the lower texts of the palimpsests with the relevant program installed (MuSIS), it was made possible to completely read the Albanian text, fully identify the graphemes and reconstruct the grammatical structure of the Albanian language. The facsimile of the Albanian manuscript, text given in Albanian graphemes with transliteration, transcription, translation, parallel texts in Greek, Georgian, Armenian, etymological vocabulary, study and comments will be published in 2008 by Brepols Publishers in the Ibero-Caucasica Series (Editors: Z. Alexidze, J. Gippert, J.-P. Mahé, and W. Schulze).

ისტორია და ფილოლოგია

## კავკასიის ალბანეთის მწერლობის ძეგლის აღმოჩენა და გაშიფვრა

ზაზა ალექსიძე

აკადემიის წევრი, კ. კეკელიძის ხელნაწერთა ინსტიტუტი, თბილისი

ალბანეთი იყო კავკასიის ტერიტორიაზე მესამე ცივილიზებული სახელმწიფო ანტიკურ ხანასა და ადრე შუასაუკუნეებში დაახლოებით თანამედროვე აზერბაიჯანის ტერიტორიაზე. X ს-დან მოკიდებული, მეზობელი ქვეყნების, მომთაბარე ტომებისა და არაბთა სახალიფოს ძლიერი გავლენების შედეგად იგი სრულიად გაქრა ისტორიის ასპარეზიდან.

1937 წლის 28 სექტემბერს ერზაიძის (ერევანში) ხელნაწერებს შორის ი. აბულაძემ მიაკვლია XV ს-ის სომხურ ხელნაწერს, რომელიც წარმოადგენდა სხვადასხვა ენებისა და დამწერლობის სახელმძღვანელოს. ამ ხელნაწერში აღმოჩნდა ალბანური ანბანიც. ანბანი შეისწავლა ა. შანიძემ და დაასკვნა, რომ ალბანების მემკვიდრეები უნდა ყოფილიყვნენ აზერბაიჯანის ტერიტორიაზე და ნაწილობრივ საქართველოში მცხოვრები მცირერიცხოვანი ხალხი უდიეები, რომელთა ენა კავკასიური ენების სამხრეთ დადესტნურ ენათა ჯგუფს ეკუთვნის. დაახლოებით ათი წლის შემდეგ აზერბაიჯანის ტერიტორიაზე მინგეჩაურის გათხრების დროს აღმოჩნდა ალბანური დამწერლობით შესრულებული რამდენიმე წარწერა. იმედი, რომ ი. აბულაძის მიერ აღმოჩენილი ანბანით გაშიფრებოდა ეს წარწერები, არ გამართლდა.

1975 წელს სინას მთაზე, წმ. ეკატერინეს მონასტერში ერთ-ერთ სათავსოში გაჩენილი ხანძრის ჩაქრობის შემდეგ აღმოჩნდა 1.100 ხელნაწერი და უამრავი ფრაგმენტი. 1982 წლიდან ცნობილი გახდა, რომ მათ შორის იყო ქართული ხელნაწერებიც. 1990 წლიდან დღემდე მათ შესასწავლად ხელნაწერთა ინსტიტუტმა ხუთი ექსპედიცია მოაწყო. დაფიქსირდა 141 ქართული ხელნაწერი და დიდი რაოდენობის ფრაგმენტები.



ახლად აღმოჩენილ ხელნაწერთა შორის საერთაშორისო მეცნიერებისათვის განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობა აქვს ორ ხელნაწერს, რომლებიც წარმოადგენს ქართულ-ალბანურ პალიმფსესტს (ორჯერ დაწერილი ტექსტი).

სინას მთაზე აღმოჩენილი ორი ხელნაწერის ქვედა, ალბანური ტექსტი გადარეცხეს X ს-ში და ზევიდან დააწერეს ქართული ანბანური პატერიკი. ალბანური ხელნაწერის კოდიკოლოგიური სახის განსაზღვრა ადგილზევე მოხერხდა. ამან, ზოგ შემთხვევაში, შესაძლებლობა მომცა ორად გაკეცილი და სხვადასხვა ადგილას მოხვედრილი ფურცელი წარმოსახვით გამეერთიანებინა და შემდეგ კომპიუტერში მისი პირვანდელი სახე აღმედგინა. გამოირკვა, რომ ალბანური ტექსტი ნაწერია ორ სვეტად, ვერტიკალურად და თითოეულ სვეტში 22 სტრიქონია. გაირკვა ფურცლების ფორმატი, არეების ფართობი და განისაზღვრა არეებზე გაკეთებული მინაწერების ადგილი.

გაბმულად ნაწერი ტექსტის სიტყვებად დაშლის შესაძლებლობას მაძლევდა სხვა ძველი მწერლობების მსგავსად მოზრდილი აბზაცების დაწყება საზედაო ასოთი, დაქარაგმებული სიტყვები, გარკვეული მონაკვეთების ერთმანეთისგან გამოყოფა განკვეთილობის ორი წერტილით, გამეორებული ერთი და იგივე სიტყვები და მთელი ფრაზები.

თეორიულმა გათვლებმა და ტექსტის გარეგნული სახის ტიპოლოგიურმა ანალიზმა მიმიყვანა დასკვნამდე, რომ ალბანური ტექსტი უნდა ყოფილიყო მთელი წლის საღვთისმსახურო წიგნი „ლექციონარი“. ამის შემდეგ დადგა ამოცანა სხვა ენებზე არსებული ლექციონარების შესატყვისი ადგილების მოძებნისა ალბანურში. ზანგრძლივი და ტექნიკურად რთული სამუშაოს შესრულების შედეგად მოხერხდა იმ, შედარებით წვრილი ასოებით ნაწერი წინადადებების გადმოწერა, რომლებსაც თეორიულად ლექციონარების საკითხავთა სათაურებად მივიჩნევდი. ერთ-ერთი ასეთი სათაური გაიშიფრა და იგი აღმოჩნდა პავლე მოციქულის ეპისტოლე თესალონიკელთა მიმართ.

სათაურების ამოკითხვისა და გაშიფვრის შემდეგ საჭირო იყო საკითხავების იდენტიფიკაცია ნაცნობ ენებზე არსებული ლექციონარების საკითხავებთან. ალბანური ტექსტის ის მონაკვეთი, რომელშიც ერთი და იგივე ფრაზა ცხრაჯერ მეორდებოდა, აღმოჩნდა ნაწევრები პავლე მოციქულის მეორე ეპისტოლეებიდან (ახალი აღთქმა) მე-11 თავის 25-27-ე მუხლები. გამოირკვა, რომ ქართულ, სომხურ და ბერძნულ შესატყვის ტექსტებში გამოყენებული ლექსიკა ზოგ შემთხვევაში თანხვედრა ალბანურს. ასეთ სიტყვებში გამოყენებულ გრაფიკა (ასოთა) ფონემური (ბგერითი) მნიშვნელობის ზუსტად დადგენა ძნელი აღარ იყო. პარალელურმა ტექსტებმა საშუალება მომცეს, აგრეთვე, დამედგინა ალბანური ენის რამდენიმე გრამატიკული კატეგორია, რამაც კვლავ დიდი სიანხლოვე მაჩვენა თანამედროვე უდიურთან. გამოირკვა, რომ ალბანური ანბანი გრაფიკულად ახლოს არის ქართულთან, სომხურსა და ეთიოპურთან.

ალბანური ლექციონარი შედგენილი უნდა იყოს პალესტინურ სამყაროში. ახალი აღთქმიდან საკითხავები უჩვენებს განსხვავებებს სხვა ენებზე არსებულ ახალი აღთქმის ტექსტებთან და ადასტურებს, რომ ამიერკავკასიის ხალხთა ენებზე არსებული ბიბლიის ტექსტების გარეშე წმიდა წერილის არქტიპის აღდგენა არ იქნება სრულყოფილი.

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