

History & Philology

A Recently Discovered Greek Inscription from Georgia

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ABSTRACT. Greek inscriptions from Georgia are important sources for exploring our past. The history of corresponding studies counts more than one century in our country. Recently a damaged Greek inscription was discovered near the village of Kavtiskhevi. Based on various facts, it is dated to the 2nd-3rd cc A.D. The restored text reads as follows: ‘Kathas put (it) up in my memory (to remember me), (placed me) on the desk as usual and all this was done by a hired man, but if anyone (of the visitors) hesitates, (it should not make him feel disappointed – or it should make him feel respectful). © 2007 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: Georgia, Greek inscription.

Greek inscriptions found in Georgia have not been specially studied till the mid-twentieth century, although European, Russian and Georgian scholarly works offer appropriate notes of different precision and character. In this respect, among Georgian scholars particularly noteworthy are Pl. Ioseliani, Dim. Bakradze and Ek. Takaishvili. Though in terms of epigraphy their works focus on Georgian inscriptions, they did not neglect Greek pieces if the latter were found next to Georgian ones. In I. Pomyalovski's work *Sbornik grecheskikh i latinskikh nadpisei Kavkaza*, published in 1881, ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine and New Greek inscriptions are compiled all in one line. Anapa, the Kuban, Mtskheta – all are ‘Kavkaz’ for the author. He refers to main Russian and European sources mostly without comments; citations make up the whole work. The author does not offer his own opinion about the inscriptions. Despite rather harsh comments on the part of its critics basically on the account of the above-mentioned drawbacks, I. Pomyalovski's work was the first in this field and served as a guide for all interested in studying Greek inscriptions from Georgia.

Among Russian specialists, particularly remarkable is V. Latyshev, whose works – collections called *Sbornik grecheskikh nadpisei khristianskikh vremyon iz yuzhnoi*

Rossii, 1895 and *K istorii khristianstva na Kavkaze. Grecheskie nadpisi iz Novo-Afonskogo monastyrya*, 1911 are very important contributions to epigraphic studies in general and to the analysis of Greek inscriptions from Georgia in particular. I say nothing about other highly important works by V. Latyshev.

In the period following 1920, when the prominent hellenist Gr. Tsereteli assumed authority in the field of classical and Byzantine studies in the newly opened University of Tbilisi, it was decided to thoroughly investigate Greek inscriptions found in Georgia.¹ In 1928, A. Amiranashvili published 8 Greek inscriptions kept at the Tbilisi State Museum. Remarkably, they were obtained at different places of the Soviet Union and were ultimately deposited for protection in the Museum of Georgia (their greater part had been published earlier). The same is not certainly true about the well-known Vespasian inscription

¹ Grigol Tsereteli was asked to take up the task, but he did not get down to studying closely Greek inscriptions from Georgia evidently because he had already started working on the multivolume collection of papyri. He copied down the Gremi wall inscription, which he did not publish himself. He also recorded part of the Svetitskhoveli wall inscriptions in Mtskheta, which are at present kept in the archive of the Institute of Manuscripts.

found near Mtskheta, which had been treated in quite a number of scholarly works.

Greek inscriptions discovered as a result of intensive archeological excavations on the Georgian territory since the 1940s were published by Akaki Shanidze, Simon Kaukhchishvili and Giorgi Tsereteli. In 1944, the Directorate of the Institute of Language, History and Material Culture and the Department of Source Studies of the same Institute assigned me to study Greek inscriptions found on the Georgian territory. I examined all of the pieces onsite and apart from the relevant published comments, consulted also the specialists of adjacent disciplines (mostly art critics) in order to find out what other material observed at the sites was to be considered.

In 1951, my book *Greek Inscriptions from Georgia* was published. It compiles material dating back to the period from the 5th-4th cc. to the 19thc. The drawback of the work is the way of presentation of the inscriptions, it lacks photographic material. In fact, I drew the inscriptions myself (most probably, not quite successfully). What accounts for this is the hard post-war period and almost unendurable working conditions.

As a result of large-scale archeological excavations started in 1951 in Georgia, many other Greek inscriptions

were discovered. Most of them were published by me. In 1999-2000 three volumes of *The Corpus of Greek Inscriptions from Georgia* came out. The work is attached with an ample German afterword. In 2004, the same work was published as a one-volume piece completed with Greek inscriptions discovered in the meantime and furnished with V. Vashakidze's well-accomplished graphics. The existing texts were revised. However, the number of photos attached was quite small.

At present, Greek inscriptions found in Georgia are being studied by young researchers R. Margishvili, M. Nasidze, G. Kajaia, whose scope of analysis and research activities are quite promising.

In summer 2006, a restorer Revaz Tskhadadze discovered a limestone slab bearing a Greek inscription (Fig. 1). The item was found near a church in a place called Kataula, located in the village of Kavtiskhevi, Kaspian region. He took the find to the S. Amiranashvili Museum of Art of Georgia. The slab is 4-5 centimeter thick, its maximum width being 40 centimeters and height – 38 centimeters. Its upper and right-hand edges are almost completely ruined and its lower edge is obviously broken off; its surface, which bears the inscription, is damaged; however, the latter still remains readable with more or less accuracy.

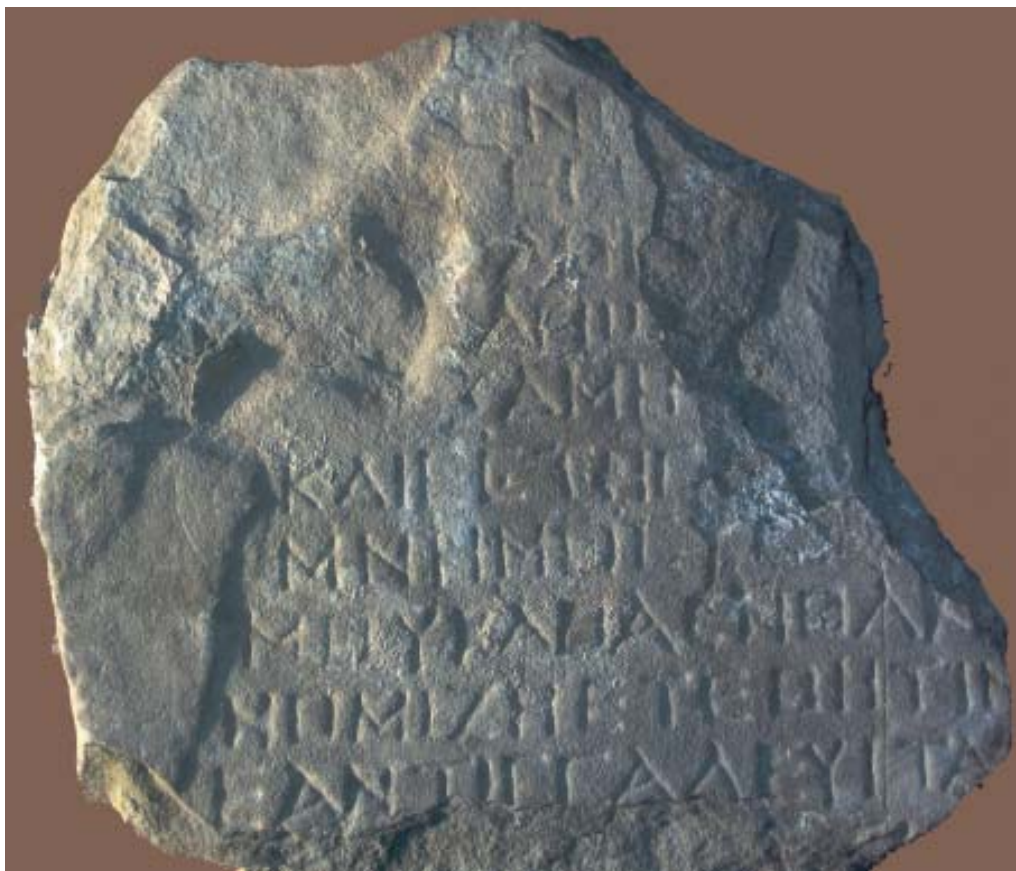


Fig. 1. Inscription.

The graphical copy of the inscription was made by Giorgi Gagoshidze and the photographic image by Besarion Matsaberidze.

I was given both copies to read the text (see the photo).

Letters of the inscription are carefully traced as if between preliminary drawn two parallel lines. The letters are 2½ centimeter high and 1½ centimeter wide. The first five lines survived as several isolated letters, which made it impossible for me to restore the meaning of the lines. These letters are:

- I ENI
- II EΓI
- III AΠI (?)
- IV AΠF
- V =IAMH

From line 6 the inscription reads as follows:

- VI KAIEI THi
- VII MNHMHi Y
- VIII MHYKA I Ai EΠI I AK
- IX NHMIZHETE IHTIN
- X EANTIi i AΛEYITA

Here is the completed version of the text:

καὶ ἔστησε μνημόστυον μου Κάθα,² ἐπὶ θάκῳ
 γ νομίζεται (?)³θητικὸ, γ ἐάν τι, σαλεύεται γ...

I have already mentioned that the restored text lacks the beginning. If compared to other inscriptions, it could possibly have started with ἀγαθῆ τύχη (“with kind wishes” or “wish you to have luck” – the English translation has more words but renders the sense accurately), with the names of the individual who ordered the job and who accomplished it and with the date. These details normally close an inscription but can as well start

it. We should not suppose that all the above-mentioned information was necessarily there; however, on the other hand, it should not be ruled out that the beginning of the inscription included part of the details.

As mentioned above, the text translates as “Kathas put (it) up in my memory (to remember me), (placed me) on the desk as usual and all this was done by a hired man, but if anyone (of the visitors) hesitates, (it should not make him feel disappointed – or it should make him feel respectful).” If my translation and comments are accurate, the text says that Kathas has set up a memorial to a respectable person, has placed a sedentary statue on it and asks passers-by to pay tribute to his memory. The slab with the Greek inscription is evidently a tombstone fixed to or projecting from the desk or the seat where the statue was placed.



Fig. 2. Letters.

As concerns its linguistic properties, attention should be paid to itacism, characteristic of the Greek language at the turn of the new era. The inscription has two such cases: νομιζη (line 9) = νομίζει (by that time, both η- and ει- diphthong were pronounced as i-) and σαλεύεται in line 10 (=σαλεύεται γ. Analogically, ει- diphthong in σαλεύεται corresponds to ι-). Other ancient Greek norms are also observed – the person who made the inscription obviously had good command of Greek; however, we should also bear in mind that at that period Kathas could not be familiar with Georgian inscriptions, while since the 4th century B.C. Greek inscriptions were already widespread in the eastern part of the civilized world of those times. Greek language and inscriptions are found in Georgia throughout the whole period starting with the mentioned times and up to the late Middle Ages, even though there was a large number of Georgian inscriptions and manuscripts; anyway, this fact has different grounds: they belong to

² There is no name Κάθα, in the Georgian onomastikon. It is mentioned in L. Zgusta's work Κάθαί" Parnouvgou (#659) as part of the Olbia inscription. Scholars consider it to be an Iranian-Ossetian borrowing. Since t and # are phonetically interchangeable, the name can be related to those mentioned in Bosphoric inscriptions: Κάτται, Κατίων (2nd c.), Κάτοκα" (2nd-3rd cc). As concerns their etymology, specialists think that they are of mixed Iranian-Ossetian origin (Cf. L. Zgusta Die Personennamen griechischen Städte der nördlichen Schwarzmeerküste, Praha, 1955). Anyway, no one considers them Greek-Roman. The Kavtiskhevi inscription suggests nothing about the nationality of its writer. I would like to mention here Agathias' note although it belongs to a much later period (6th c.) than our inscription – Kaqarov" a river in Colchis (it has the same root). Cf. the place-name Kataula. It is located near Kavtiskhevi where our inscription was found. It has to be an ancient toponym, as it is mentioned in Georgian inscriptions in 8th c. (N. Shoshiashvili, Corpus of Georgian Inscriptions I, Tbilisi 1980, pp. 39, 118-123).

³ Or nomivzh ejteovn – So I find it true. I believe so. It is normally so.

the Christian period (various Greek inscriptions are found on slabs, objects, and frescoes; there are also Greek manuscripts).

Another central problem related to this inscription is its dating.

As mentioned before, the inscription is carefully and painstakingly traced out, which suggests that the writer should have cared a lot about the shape of letters. ι , E, 1, H are similar in type. As concerns, ι and E, such shapes are found in the inscriptions belonging to many diverse periods and countries. 1 and H shapes are very rare (rhombic 2 and # are much more frequent in early inscriptions of various countries). In order to determine the shape of 1 and H, I studied thoroughly our contemporary corpora and the publications of inscriptions from individual countries (most of them being attached with the copies of original inscriptions)⁴ and received the following result: 1, H shapes are in fact very rare. I will cite all the examples: *Studia pontica*, III includes the following piece: #19d (the Amisos inscription, p.32). It is not dated, but the publisher refers to Augustus and Strabo – i.e. it dates to the first centuries. The inscription is cruciform and there is even one round Θ (rest of θ s are square).

The Claudiopolis Inscription #64 (p. 72); it does not have letter o at all, θ is angular 1, it is a burial inscription and is dated to 193-4.

#146a (p. 162), an inscription engraved on a slab dedicated to Artemis, Apollo, Leto (the text mentions the names in this very order). The inscription refers to Julius Severus and consequently, it dates back to the

3rd century. The inscription has no θ ; square H is written six times.

A damaged marble stele from Pontic Galatia (p. 230, # 259a). Two of its columns have the letters shaped as H, 1 (θ is damaged). The rest of the characters are likewise angular: E, ι , M, F and others. The publishers of the inscription date it back to the Roman period in general.

So, these are the only samples from the territory south to Pontus.

The Guarduci volume 3, p. 446 offers a mosaic inscription $\text{HPAKAITOI HPFAI ATH}$ ('Heraclites made') dated back to 125-130, and $\iota \text{SKPATHI A1HNAIHI}$ ('Socrates of Athens'), 3rd c. also mosaic, p. 454; Volume 4, p. 508, has inscription #155 from Italy made on a sarcophagus ('here lie' ...). The engraved letters are quite coarse. The inscription is dated back to the 4th-5th cc. The letters are shaped as H, 1, S, E, ι , etc. They all are of the same type.⁵

So, the scanty material mentioned above enables to make the following conclusion: letters shaped as 1, H and systematically used in the Kavtiskhevi inscription are found, although rarely, in the inscriptions discovered in the countries south to the Black Sea. They mostly date back to the 2nd-3rd centuries - with the exception of the Italian examples that belong to the 4th-5th cc. In my opinion, the whole material suggests that the Kavtiskhevi inscription (like the above-mentioned ones) dates back to the 2nd-3rd cc. and the personal name it mentions, as well as the text itself, seems to have nothing in common with the Christian religion confessed later.

⁴ Guarduci, M. *Epigrafia greca*, Roma, I-IV, 1969-78.

Mihailov, G. *Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae*, Sofia 1956-1970.

E. Solomonik. *Novye epigraficheskie pamyatniki Khersonesa*. Kiev. I – 1964, II – 1973.

Nadpisi Ol'vii (1917-1965), Leningrad, 1968.

Studia pontica, publiées par Anderson, Cumont, Gregoire, Bruxelles, 1910.

Korpus Bosporskikh nadpisej, Moskva-Leningrad, 1965.

L. Zgusta, *Die Personennamen griechischer Städte der nördlichen Schwarzmeerküste*, 1955 and others.

⁵ I should mention two relatively sizeable mosaic inscriptions from Cyprus included in the Guarduci vol. 4 (#122, p. 418 and #123, p. 420), where letters are shaped in exactly the same way as in the Kavtiskhevi inscription (H, 1, ι , E, S), are dated to the 4th-5th cc.

In my opinion, the shape of the letters is dictated by a comparatively large size of the text and by the important and conspicuous place they were engraved on; evidently, such a shape of letters fitted that kind of texts. The inscription on the Kavtiskhevi limestone slab is carefully traced out – apparently, it aimed to capture visitor's eye.

ისტორია და ფილოლოგია

ახლად აღმოჩენილი ბერძნული წარწერა საქართველოდან

თინათინ ყაუხჩიშვილი

აკადემიის წევრი, საქართველოს მეცნიერებათა ეროვნული აკადემია

2006 წლის ზაფხულში კასპის რაიონის სოფ. კავთისხეში, ეკლესიის მახლობლად არქიტექტორ-რესტავრატორმა რევაზ ცხადაძემ იპოვნა და საქართველოს შ. ამირანაშვილის სახელობის ხელოვნების მუზეუმში მიიტანა კირქვის ფილა, რომელზედაც გამოყვანილია ბერძნული წარწერა.

წარწერაში ასოები საგულდაგულოდ არის გამოყვანილი თითქოს წინასწარ დახაზულ 2 პარალელურ ხაზს შორის. ასოების სიმაღლეა $2\frac{1}{2}$ სმ., სიგანე $1\frac{1}{2}$ სმ. ის, რაც მოღწეულია პირველი 5 სტრიქონიდან, მხოლოდ ცალკეული ასოებია, რის მიხედვითაც ტექსტის აღდგენა ვერ შეეძელი. ეს ასოებია:

I ENI

II EΓI

III AΠI (?)

IV AΠF

V =IAMH

VI სტრიქონიდან ასე იკითხება წარწერა:

VI KAIEI THi

VII MNHMHi Y

VIII MHYKA I Ai EΠI I AK

IX NHMIZHETE IHTIN

X EANTII i AΛEYITA

წარმოდგენილი ტექსტი შევსებული სახით ასე წაიკითხება:

καὶ ἔσθησεν μνημόσυσιν μου κάθια, ἐπὶ θάκωυ νομίζεται(?) θητικὸ,υ ἔαν τι, σαλεύεται...
წარწერას, როგორც აღვნიშნე, აკლია დასაწყისი.

ტექსტი, რაც აღვადგინე, ასე უნდა ვთარგმნოთ: “დადგა ჩემს სამახსოვროდ (ან მოსაგონრად) კათასმა, (მომათავსა) მერხზე ჩვეულებსამებრ და ეს ყოველივე გააკეთა მუშაკმა, რომელსაც საფასურს ვუხდით (ან — უხდის), ხოლო თუ ვინმე ყოყმანობს (მნახველთაგანი), (მას ამან არ უნდა აღუძრას უკმაყოფილება — ან მას უნდა აღუძრას პატივის მიცემის სურვილი)“. თუ ჩემი თარგმან-კომენტარი სწორია, კათასმა პატივსაცემ პირს დაუდგა ძეგლი, ზედ მოათავსა მასზე მჯდომი გამოსახულება და გამვლელთ სთხოვს, ამ პირის ხსოვნას პატივი სცენ. ჩანს, ეს ბერძნულწარწერიანი ფილა საფლავის ქვა ყოფილა, ხოლო ეს ფილა მერხზე, თუ საჯარძელზე, სადაც მიცვალებულის გამოსახულება იჯდა, ზედ იქნებოდა მიმაგრებული ან გამოყვანილი.

ენის თვალსაზრისით აღსანიშნავია ახალი საუკუნეების მიჯნაზე ბერძნულში გაჩენილი იტაცისმი. ამისი 2 შემთხვევაცაა წარწერაში: νομίζη (IX სტრ.) = νομίζει (ამ დროისთვის η-ც და ει- დიფთონგიც გამოითქმის i-დ), და X სტრიქონში — სალეუიტა (=σαλεύεται. აქაც იგივე მდგომარეობაა: σαλεύεται-ში ei- დიფთონგი არის i-). ძველი ბერძნულის სხვა ნორმები დაცულია. წარწერის შემსრულებელი აშკარად ბერძნულისმცოდნე პირია.

წარწერა საგულდაგულოდ არის გამოყვანილი და ამიტომ ასოთა მოყვანილობა მისი შემსრულებლისთვის შემთხვევითი და სასხვათაშორისო არ უნდა იყოს. ასოები: I, E, I H ერთი ტიპისად არის ნაწერი. I და E ამ მოხაზულობის ბევრ სხვადასხვა დროის და ქვეყნის წარწერაში გვხვდება, ხოლო I და H ძალიან იშვიათად (გაცილებით ხშირია რომბისებური Z და # — სხვადასხვა ქვეყნების ადრეულ წარწერებში).

ამ მცირე მასალის საფუძველზე შეიძლება დავასკვნათ, რომ 1, H მოხაზულობის ასოები, რაც სისტემატურად იხმარება კავთისხევის წარწერაში, იშვიათად, მაგრამ მაინც, გვხვდება შავი ზღვის სამხრეთით მდებარე ქვეყნების ტერიტორიაზე. თარიღი ძირითადად II-III სს-ია, თუმცა ბოლო მაგალითები იტალიიდან IV-V სს-ით არის დათარიღებული. მთელი მასალის გათვალისწინებით, ჩემი აზრით, კავთისხევის წარწერა II-III საუკუნეებით შეიძლება დათარიღდეს და იქ მოხსენიებულ საკუთარ სახელს და ტექსტსაც თითქოს არაფერი აქვს საერთო უფრო გვიან მიღებულ ქრისტიანულ რელიგიასთან.

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