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ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՃԱՐՏԱՐԱԴԵՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆ ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՈՂ ԳԻՄՆԱԴՐԱՄ
RESEARCH ON ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE

VARDZK

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Sargis Israelian
PAGES FROM MY DIARY



p. 1

Armen Ter-Stepanian
**LAPIDARY INSCRIPTIONS IN MANUSCRIPTS
 KEPT IN MESROP MASHTOTS RESEARCH
 INSTITUTE OF YEREVAN**

Յամի եղծնարիւրերորդի քառամներ
 որդի ուծերորդի թուաբերութեան յայտոց՝
 աարտեցար յեկեղծութիւն երջանիկ նաշա
 տակին յովհայ յայ լայն յայ ժամանակ և
 տեղի զանազան գրչաւք ի գաւառիս կիկի
 կեցոց հորդ յանատիկ դշտակաբար ճրկո
 ջեցեալ ի դատնագոյն ժամանակի յորում
 յոյժ զգոյմք յանարիւնաց յըջադտեք
 ի սմանեզերախտատրս և զըջխատեալի
 սմա յիշեցորի տրևորութիւն յիշխբարիս աղջ
 անեղն յատեանն:

p. 14

Samvel Karapetian
REVIEW & CRITICISM



p. 56



N 8 2013

**ԳԼԽԱՎՈՐ ԽՄԲԱԳԻՐ
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Review & Criticism

Samvel Karapetian, review of *The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia, book 1: Kvemo Kartli* [გაგოშიძე გ., ჩანტლადე ნ., მონოფიზიტური ძეგლები საქართველოში, I კვემო ქართლი] by Giorgi Gagoshidze and Natia Chantladze (Tbilisi, 2009)

In 2009 Giorgi Gagoshidze and Natia Chantladze published their joint research entitled *The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia* (Tbilisi, 178 pages), which contains 128 photos, numerous measurements of architectural buildings and tracings of lapidary inscriptions¹ (editors: Zaza Alexidze, Professor of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia, and Professor Dmitri Tumanishvili, Dr. of Historical Sciences).

At first sight, this work looks quite impressive as it is evident that it was prepared not in a warm cosy office, but through long-lasting hard field work, which shows that the authors did not avoid walking tens of kilometres to reach the monuments to be studied.

However, regretful as it is, closer acquaintance with the contents of the book reveals the biased attitude with which its authors have treated the collected scientific material. In fact, this research was initiated only with the intention of “settling” certain political issues which are easy to predict.

Actually, the main goal of the authors, acting under the veil of “scientific research,” was the appropriation of numerous Armenian religious monuments preserved in a number of districts of Gugark Province of Historical Armenia (Tzobopor, Boghnopor, Kveshapor, Kangark and Mangleatspor) which are within the borders of the present-day Republic of Georgia. They have been guided with subjective approaches that have nothing to do with science and have flagrantly neglected a great number of primary sources and historiographical records that could be of no help to them for the development of their self-concocted theories. Moreover, they have deliberately distorted the decipherments of inscriptions, all this reducing the scientific value of the work.

After this general assessment, we would like to dwell on the major falsifications found in this book.

Let us start with the very title of the work: *The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia*, whereas in fact, it treats the monuments of only 4 administrative districts (Bolnis, Dmanis, Tetri-Tzegharo and Marneul), as well as some others located in Lori Region of the Republic of Armenia. This is transgression of elementary professional ethics as the Republic of Armenia is a state other than Georgia.

According to the renowned Armenian *Geography* of the 7th century, these 4 administrative districts are identical to the aforementioned districts of Gugark Province of Armenia Maior. After the fall of the Kyurikian Kingdom, in the early 12th century, they passed into the possession of the Seljuks whose reign over them was followed by Georgian domination.

The region remained within the possession of different Georgian kingdoms, at intervals, until the establishment of Russian rule and the collapse of Georgian statehood in 1801.

It is interesting to note that the very Georgian sources attest that the Armenian districts in question, situated in the south of the Georgian kingdom, were conquered from Armenia. Thus, Prince Ioane Bagration (1772 to 1839), the son of Georgian king Giorgi XII, writes the following in his work entitled *Kalmasoba*:

...the lands [of Armenia] are partitioned among Turkey, Persia and Georgia, but there are also some unoccupied places that are completely free and inaccessible thanks to mountains and narrow roads which make them impregnable for enemies. Arzrum, the first city of Armenia, belongs to Turkey now; Yerevan, the capital of Asian Armenia, is under Persian domination, although it pays some tribute as a city seized from the king of Georgia...²

It is noteworthy that these districts of North Armenia, which were annexed to the Georgian kingdom, were known by the name of *Somkheti* (Armenia as translated from Georgian) for centuries; moreover, the Georgian sources of the 17th to 18th centuries clearly differentiated between Georgian-dominated Armenia (Somkheti) and Irevan Somkheti (Armenia of Yerevan): the former was never identified with neighbouring Kartli.³

After Georgia's annexation to Russia, the Russian authorities retained the name of the region, *Somkheti* (throughout the 19th century, one of the deaneries of the Armenian Consistory of Georgia and Imeret was known by this very name).

Ignoring all these facts, the authors of *The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia* consistently avoid the toponym *Somkheti* (beginning with the introduction to

¹ We are grateful to one of the co-authors, G. Gagoshidze, for presenting us with a copy of this work.

² **Մելիքսեթ-Բեկ Լ.**, Վրաց արքայությունը Հայաստանի և հայերի մասին [L. Melikset-Bek, Georgian Sources about Armenia and Armenians], vol. 3 (Yerevan, 1955), 252.

³ Sekhnia Chkheidze states in his *History of Kings* that in 1732 the Lezghins entered Somkheti and approached Samshvilde (Melikset-Bek, 26). Another author, Papuna Orbeliani, writes in his *The Events of Kartli* (1759) that in 1739 the Lezghins devastated Somkheti and approached the castle of Dmanis (ibid., 117). According to the *New History* (1814) by Prince David Bagration, in 1789 the Lezghins kept ruining Kartli and Somkheti (ibid., 190, 201). Another prince, Bagrat Bagration (1769 to 1841), states («Նոր պատմութիւն» [A New Narrative], 1824) that in 1801 Emperor Alexandre I recognised Tppghis as a province and separated Kartli, Kakhet and Somkheti from each other (ibid., 229).



The regions established within the Russian Empire prior to 1828, with the borders of Somkheti clearly specified

the book), which is so frequently found in different Georgian sources, thus exposing the historical truth. Instead, they use a name specially concocted for this region, Lower Kartli, which has absolutely nothing to do with it and merely denotes an administrative-geographical unit that is its northern neighbour.

How can this be explained? By these scholars' ignorance? No! Simply the point is that they pursue not scholarly, but political goals, thinking that they can easily appropriate and Georgianise part of Armenia by calling it Georgia, in other words, by renaming Somkheti *Lower Kartli*.⁴

In the second paragraph of the introduction to the book, the authors make the following allegation:

When speaking about the miaphysite part of Georgia's population, we generally mean the old neighbours of Georgia, the Armenians. However, we should not forget the

ethnic Georgians who converted to the Armenians' faith between the 17th and 18th centuries under certain well-known circumstances...⁵

Indeed, such absurdities are beyond any comment, and we would have perhaps abstained from any interpretation, if the work in question had not been published under the editorship of Dr. D. Tumanishvili (Professor) and Z. Alexidze, a Professor in Georgia's Academy of Sciences.

Thus, the authors and editors of the book hold that in the 17th to 18th centuries, the "ethnic Georgian" inhabitants of the region of Somkheti, which was within the kingdom of Georgia, renounced their faith *under certain well-known circumstances* and became followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

This allegation immediately gives rise to several questions: firstly, how could the ethnic population of a country having statehood (a king, army, diplomatic levers, etc.) renounce their faith in large numbers and adopt the religion of a neighbouring nation that had long been stripped of statehood and just somehow con-

4 In fact, Lower Kartli constitutes the lower lands of Kartli, including the neighbourhood of Metskhet and reaching the approaches to Tqghis. Like Kartli, it has its middle (with the districts adjacent to Gori) and upper regions (comprising the regions neighbouring Suram and reaching the approaches to Borzhom). In this way, given the natural environment extending from the watershed ridge of Javakhk to the river Kur, Somkheti may be divided into at least upper and lower parts, which cannot be confused with, or identified to, the neighbouring region.

5 გაგოშიძე გ., ჩანტლაძე ნ., მონოფიზიტური ძეგლები საქართველოში, I ქვემო კართლი [Giorgi Gagoshidze, Natia Chantladze, The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia, book 1: Kvemo Kartli] (Tbilisi, 2009), 5.



Cemetery of Bolnis-Khachen Village: Sourb Kiraki (Holy Sunday) Church and its belfry from the south-east

tinued its existence under the cruel or merely tolerable reign of foreign rulers? This statement becomes even more unreasonable with reference to Somkhети, which was subject to the Georgian state.

Secondly, how could the Georgians,⁶ forming a national minority in Somkhети (it was within the borders of Georgia), be tempted into repudiating their mother church, which was far stronger and boasted state support? How could they become adherents of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which was deprived of such patronage and somehow preserved its existence through donations received from its communities? Is it not as clear as day that the Georgian citizens of the kingdom of Kartli could not have had any such imaginary motives? On the contrary, history knows a spate of cases when some princes, communities and even entire districts tributary to the Georgian state were re-baptised according to the ritual of the Georgian Church.

⁶ According to Prince Vakhushy Bagrationy's work entitled *A Description of the Kingdom of Georgia (Geography of Georgia)*, the area from the Debed to the small mountain in the west of Bolnis and from the river Ketsi to Mount Lalvar-Loki was then called Somkhети. The inhabitants of these places were Armenians by faith, a small part of them being adherents of the church of Kartli (**Melikset-Bek**, 81).

Moreover, there are evident theological differences between the doctrines of the Armenian Apostolic and Georgian Orthodox Churches, because of which, Georgian clergymen always treated the Armenian Apostolic clergy and believers with unhidden contempt (this attitude was inculcated in the minds of Georgians in general). For this reason, Georgian clerics could not ever put up with the renouncement of their flock and its embrace of the Armenian Apostolic faith, which was always humiliated in their midst.

In addition to all this, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Somkhети was subjected to such tumult and turmoil that almost its entire population was reduced to refugees. After the deportation of the natives of the region, launched by Shah Abbas, it was invaded by the Turkic tribe of Borchalu, this being followed by the successive devastating Lezghin invasions throughout the 18th century.⁷ All this comes to attest that during

⁷ Below follows a chronology of the Lezghin invasions of the 18th century as selected from only Georgian sources:

In December [1732] the Lezghins devastated Somkhети... (Melikset-Bek, 26).

[In 1734] the Lezghins kept ravaging... Somkhети-Sabaratio... (ibid., 172).

[In 1735] Tamaz Khan reached the land of Ghars... On 10 July the Lezghins depredated Somkhети... (ibid., 26).

[In 1744] the Lezghin troops attacked Somkhети and seized the Melik's estates... (ibid., 118).

the period specified, the “ethnic Georgians,” constituting a national minority in Somkhethi, could not have been re-baptised into the bosom of the Armenian Apostolic Church *under certain well-known circumstances* so that this statement is too unfounded and primitive to be truthful.

The third paragraph of the introduction clearly shows why the authors gerrymandering history and the professors sharing their viewpoints have avoided calling the region Somkhethi⁸ and why they consider its population “ethnic Georgians” who became followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It turns out that they needed the aforementioned concoctions just to substantiate another falsification, namely that the Armenian monuments, and particularly, churches preserved in the districts of North-Eastern Gugark were mostly built not by the Armenians but by the “ethnic Georgians” who had become adherents of the Armenian Church. According to them, in a broader sense, these churches are monuments of Georgian and not Armenian culture:

The miaphysite population of Georgia and its cultural heritage are identified with Armenians and their culture. This is rather a delicate issue for the Armenians. It has been studied for quite a long time and it remains actual nowadays. Scholars make biased statements regarding the dating of his-

torico-cultural monuments; the available data are erroneously interpreted, and this issue often becomes a subject of political manipulation.⁹

The authors of the book conclude that all the churches of the region, which lack *documented evidence*,¹⁰ were thus unjustly considered as Armenian monuments and they found it their duty to study the monuments of “Lower Kartli” one by one in the work in question to reveal the “historical truth.”

The statements and conclusions made with regard to different monuments contain flagrant falsifications and biased, non-scholarly comments (thus, the inscriptions of the 10th to 13th centuries have been deciphered with “innocent” mistakes, as a result of which, they have been attributed to the period between the 17th and 19th centuries) so that we are obliged to dwell on at least some of them.¹¹

Thus, some crying distortions are found in the construction inscription of the church of Sourb Kiraki (Holy Sunday)¹² located in the cemetery of Bolnis-Khachen¹³ Village, Bolnis District, with an adjoining belfry (it is preserved on a finely-dressed stone set above a window opening from the eastern facade of the church). Particularly wrongly deciphered are the name of its architect and the year of its construction: «Շիւնեցաւ ձեռամբրն Նասարդայ ք(հ)վ ՌՃ (1651)»¹⁴ transl.: *Built by Navad in the year 1100 (1651)*.

In fact, the inscription reads:

Շիւնեցաւ ձեռամբրն | Նասասարդայ¹⁵, քվ(հն) ՌՃԴ (1655):

Transl.: *Built by Navasard in the year 1104 (1655)*.

[Between 1747 and 1748] *the Lezghins kept ravaging Somkhethi and even the gorge of Dmanis, taking the spoils to Samshvilde* (ibid., 125).

[From 1747 until 1748] *the Lezghin army came from Samshvilde and devastated the gorge of Somkhethi, taking trophies to the castle of Samshvilde. The gorge of Somkhethi, namely the local people, were in a grave situation, no longer able to continue living in their houses. Among those being deported was the Melik of Somkhethi together with all his household and serfs, as well as the Arghutasshvili, the entire gorges of Sanahin and Haghbat. They got to the city (Tprghis), whence they moved to Mukhran together, its lord providing them with refuge and a place of living on his own land. No standing buildings could be seen anywhere throughout Somkhethi, except Bolnis and Samtzevris. The Orbelians' homeland was so heavily ravaged that no surviving structures could be found anywhere except Dmanis and Pitaret* (ibid., 125-126).

[Between 1750 and 1752] *the Lezghin troops left Somkhethi with large spoils...* (ibid., 139).

[In 1754] *the Lezghin army entered Somkhethi... They passed through it and reached Haghbat, whence they ascended the mountains of Ghazakh and descended to Gyanja...* (ibid., 143).

[As of 1754] *Somkhethi-Sabaratashivilo was being depredated, teeming with enemies...* (ibid., 143).

[In 1755] *the Lezghin troops entered the caves and woods of Somkhethi and Sabaratshivilo and thence began ravaging the villages adjacent to the city (Tprghis)... In the shroud of night, the Lezghins climbed up the castle of Samtzevris with ladders...* (ibid., 145).

[As of 1770] *Tashir, Gujaret and Somkhethi, a large populous country, all lay ruined and devastated, only one of every forty having survived in Somkhethi...* (ibid., 157).

[In 1789] *the Lezghins kept ruining Kartli and Somkhethi...* (ibid., 190).

⁸ With this respect, they may be compared with the Turks who have invented a “safer” name for Western Armenia, *Eastern Anatolia*, although a spate of Ottoman maps called it *Ermanistan* for many centuries.

⁹ **Gagoshidze, Chantladze**, 5.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ In this review we offer verified decipherments for only those lapidary inscriptions which are included in the book in question. The ancient sites of the region abound in epigraphs which we have not found it expedient to present here.

¹² Evidently, the authors do not know the name of the church (see **Ջալալյանց Ս.**, *Ճամապարհորդութիւն ի Մեծն Հայաստան [S. Jalalians, A Journey to Greater Armenia]*, vol. 2 (Tprghis, 1858), 87).

¹³ Apparently, the authors of the book are unaware of the fact that part of the Armenians of Khachen District of Artsakh took up living in Bolnis, headed by Melik Abov, only in the late 1770s; therefore, they should not have questioned the trustworthiness of the archive record of 1700: *The document mentions Bolnis, but probably, it should have been Bolnis Khachen (Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 27)*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The scholarly community knows some other monuments built or renovated by architect and mason Navasard, who was from Arij or Arinj by birth. Among them are the southern arch (1656) of Sourb Nshan Church of Haghpat (Դիվան հայ վիճագրության, պրակ IX [A Corpus of Armenian Inscriptions, vol. 9] (Yerevan, 2012), 133); the building of 1662 erected in the site of present-day Sourb Nshan Sourb Nikoghayosi Church, Tprghis, as well as the main church (1663) of the Great Monastery of Bnidzor. For further information about this, also see **S. Karapetian**, *Sourb Nshan Sourb Nikoghayosi Church* (Yerevan, 2012).



The book contains another inscription from the same site, an epitaph in the decipherment of which the authors again proved unable to tolerate the personal name recorded in it and distorted it as follows: «*սն Քստորչանի, | ք(ի)վ ՌՃԽ (1691)*»¹⁶ transl.: ...*Bahtorchani, in the year 1140 (1691)*.

In reality, the inscription reads:

(Այս է սասյ)ան Քահ(ս)տոր(ի), | ...անի, քվ(իս) ՌՃԽ (1691):

Transl.: *In this grave reposes Bahatur... in the year 1140 (1691)*.

Next comes the 4-line construction inscription (1237) of St. Sargis Church of Darpas Village, Bolnis District, engraved on the tympanum of its northern entrance. With just a stroke of the pen, it has reached from the 13th to the 19th century, being presented as a lapidary record of 1857.¹⁷

Below follows what the authors of the book were able to “decipher” from the actually quite intelligible inscription:

*Ի ք(վ)ի(ն) ՌՉՉ¹⁸ (1306=1857) կամանն ա(ստու-
ծո)յ եղբարքս Գրիգոր, Քարստեղ եւ Ծերիկ ի հայալ |
(...) սերոյ: Շինեցաք զեկեղեցիս յիշատակ սնգ եւ*

16 Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 27.

17 Regretful as it is, this reveals that both Natia Chantladze, an expert in Armenian Studies who is responsible for the decipherments of the inscriptions included in the book, and its editors, professors engaged in the same field, are extremely incompetent in the decipherment of Armenian epigraphs. The writing peculiarities of the inscription did not tell anything to these “scholars,” who made elementary mistakes while decoding the year.

18 Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 28. It is difficult to understand how an Armenologist having at least some skills in the decipherment of Armenian epigraphs could have read the year ՌՉՉ (687+551=1237) as ՌՉՉ, without even knowing that a hundred

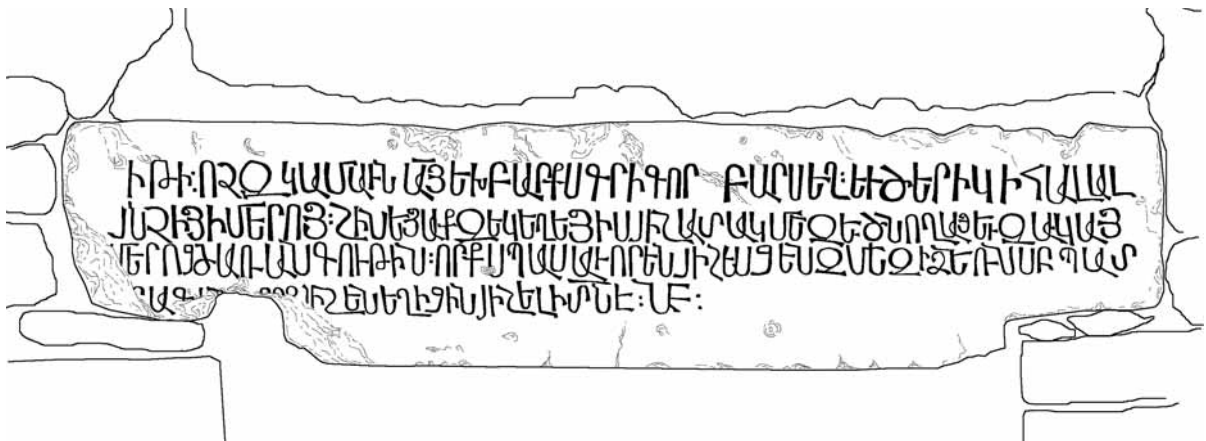
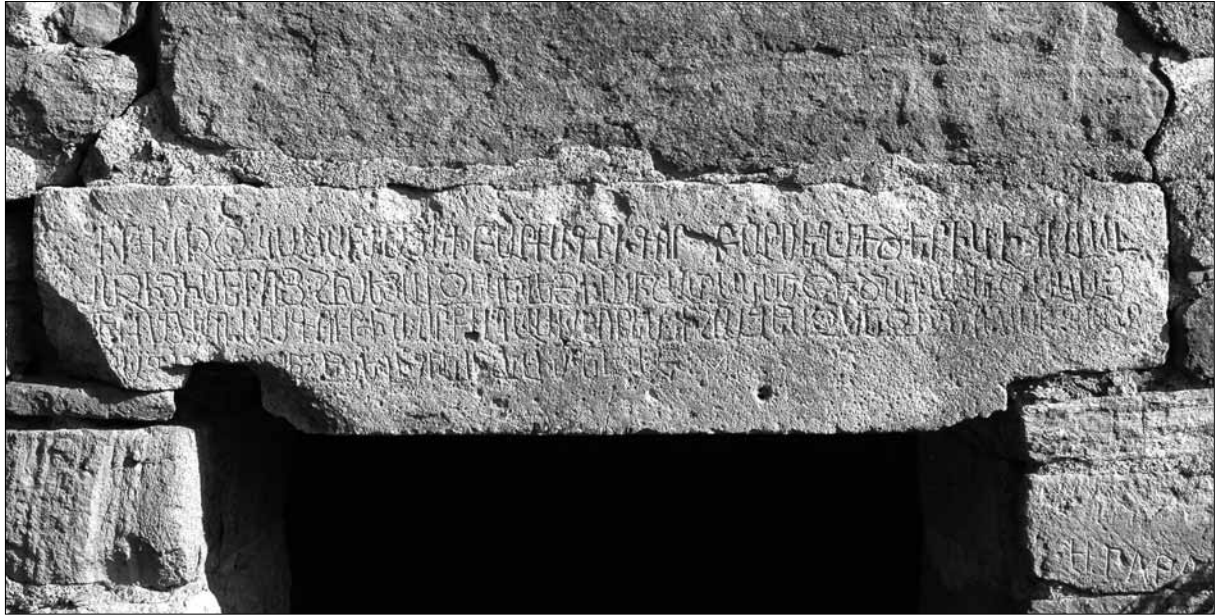


St. Sargis Church of Darpas Village from the north-east

*ծնողա(ց) եգակայ եւ (...) ժստանգութի(ւն)ս որք | վ
պ ա ս ր ե ն ր ե ն ք հ ա ց ե ս զնեգ ի | ազ (...) ի հե-
նեղի (...) (...) (...):*

cannot be followed by another hundred. Perhaps, this is just a deliberate “mistake” made out of a strong desire to reduce the age of the medieval church and bring it to the mid-19th century... This desire, which is strongly manifest in the whole book, is also clearly seen in the following fabrication regarding another monument: *The idea of building this church was born approximately in the times of Timur, who had cleansed that area of Georgians. In the 15th century, it passed on to the Armenians. In the days of Alexandre I the Great (1412 to 1442), Kvemo Kartli was re-inhabited by Armenian immigrants (ჯავახიშვილი ივ., თხუვეჯ-ბანი თორმეტი ტომად [Iv. Javakhishvili, Collected Works in 12 Volumes], vol. 3 (Tbilisi, 1982), 259).*

Presumably, it was during this very period that the church of Darbaz belonged to the Armenians (Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 31). These are the “fruits” of the work of the Georgian co-authors and their editors boasting lofty scholarly titles: first they present the church of 1237 as a building of 1857 and then they declare that the Armenians appeared here only after Timur’s invasion, prior to which, the region was allegedly populated only by Georgians. After all this, we can only cry out: “Woe betide you, historical science, if these are your workers...!”



Transl.: *In the year 1306 (1857), by the grace of God, we, the brothers Grigor, Barsegh and Tzerik, with our honestly-earned... built this church in our parents' and our memory... legacy...*

In fact, the inscription reads:

Ի թի(ւն) ՈՉԶ (1237) կամանն ա(ստուծոյ), եխ-
բարքս՝ Գրիգոր, Բարսեղ եւ Ծերիկ, ի հալալ | յնշից
ի մերոց շինեցաք զեկեղեցիս յիշատակ մեզ եւ ծնո-
ղաց եւ զաւակաց | մերոց ժառանգութի(ւն)ն, որք
սպասատրեն, յիշեսցեն զմեզ ի ձեռն ս(ուր)բ պա-
տ/(ար)ագ(ին եւ որք) յիշեն, եղիցին յիշել ի տ(եառ)-
նէ, ամէն:

Transl.: *In the year 686 (1237), by the grace of God, we, the brothers Grigor, Barsegh and Tzerik, built this church with our honestly-earned means in our parents' and our memory, to hand it down to our children. May those who serve it remember us during divine services and may those who remember us be remembered by the Lord. Amen.*

The book further discusses two lapidary inscriptions (1461 & 1643) belonging to Amepesar's Sourb

Astvatatzin Cloister, which is located a km south of Darpas Village.

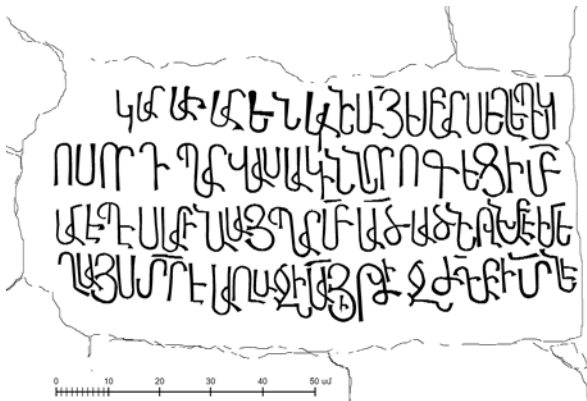
The first of them commemorates the repairs of the cloister church in 4 lines engraved on one of the revetment stones of its southern wall:

Կամաւ ամենակալին ա(ստուծոյ) եւ՝ Բարսեղ
եպիսկոպ(ոս)ոս, որդի պար(ոն) Վասակին, նորոգեցի
Ս(ուր)բ | Ամէպէսարի անայպատ Ս(ուր)բ Ա(ս-
տուա)ծածին, ով խաբանէ, իմ մեղացս տ(է)ր է
առաջի ա(ստուծոյ), քվի(ն) ՉԺ (1461), դատի ի
տ(եառ)նէ:

Transl.: *By the grace of Almighty God, I, Bishop Barsegh, the son of Mr. Vasak, renovated Sourb Astvatatzin of Amepesar Cloister in the year 910 (1461). May those who pose any obstacles atone for my sins before the Lord and may they be judged by Him.*

Below follows what the authors of the book were able to understand from this inscription (p. 31):

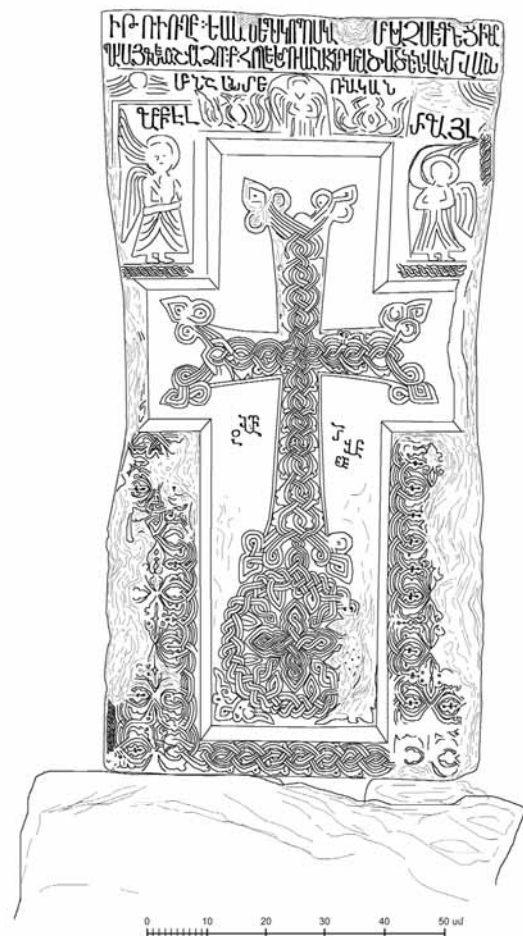
Կամաւ ամենա(յ)նի ա(ստուծոյ) եւ Բարսեղ
եպիսկոպոս | որդի պար(ոն) Վասակին նորոգեցի |
ս(ր)բաւէպէս ամիանայպար(տ) ս(ուր)բ Ա(ստուա)-
ծածին ովն խաբէ | մեղացս տ(է)ր է առաջի ա(ստու-
ծոյ) ք(ի)վ ՉԺԴ (1465) ս(ուր)բ է ի տ(եար)նէ:



Transl.: *By the grace of God..., I, Bishop Barsegh, the son of Mr. Vasak, renovated... Sourb Astvatzatzin... in the year 914 (1465). May those who deceive atone for my sins before the Lord...*

As is evident, apart from some minor errors, the authors of the book failed to clearly read the name of the religious centre. Besides, they perceived the first letter («*դ*») of the word «*դաստի*» as part of the numeral and attached it to the year, thus making a mistake in its decipherment. As a result of this, the monument was made four years younger although this is almost nothing as compared to the former church, the construction of which was traced forward by exactly 620 years. What is even more important, the specialist engaged in the decipherment of Armenian inscriptions does not know that letters having numerical value are always written separately and are not ever attached to nearby words.¹⁹

¹⁹ Indeed, any specialist is an ordinary mortal who cannot avoid making mistakes. Simply the point is that the work in question does not contain a single flawlessly deciphered epigraph (we shall get more substantiation for this further in this review), a discrediting fact which could have been prevented if the co-authors had manifested enough sense of responsibility. After all, even if there was not a Georgian specialist with sufficient skills and experience in the decipherment of Armenian inscriptions, the Armenian experts of the field would have helped them by all means. Some years ago, when we were preparing *Javakhk* for publication, we turned to Georgian expert Valeri Silogava for the decoding of Georgian epigraphs and he willingly edited that part of our work (although our research team also included Al. Kananian, who has quite sufficient professional skills in this area).



Below follows the Georgian authors' decipherment of another inscription of 4 lines engraved on an ornate cross-stone of 1643, which is still preserved in situ:²⁰

Ի թուին Ռ-ՂԸ եւ Սա... սրսն... ս(ուր)ք խաչս (կան)զնեց ի Դարսասս այգին եւ ... ս(ուր)ք Ա(ստուա)ծածին վախս վասն փրկութե(ան) հոգյ իմոյ / Սուրք նշան տերունական / Գարրիէլ...:

Transl.: In the year 1092, I, ... erected this holy cross in a garden in Darpas and donated it to Sourb Astvatzatzin for my soul's salvation. The Lord's Holy Sign. Gabriel...

In fact, the inscription reads:

Ի թուի(ն) Ռ-ՂԸ (1643), եւ՝ Սարգիս եպիսկոպոս, կա(ն)զնեցի ս(ուր)ք խաչս եւ զնեցի Դար/սասի այգին եւ Տաշտաձոր :Բ: (2) հող եւ ետու Սանահնու Ս(ուր)ք Ա(ստուա)ծածնին վախս վասն / փրկութե(ան) հոգյ իմոյ: / Ս(ուր)ք նշան տերունական, / Գարրիէլ, Միգայէլ, / կազմող Մ...:

Transl.: In the year 1092 (1643), I, Bishop Sargis, erected this holy cross and purchased a garden in Darpas together with two plots of land in Tashtadzor and donated them to Sourb Astvatzatzin of Sanahin for my soul's salvation. The Lord's Holy Sign. Gabriel, Michael. Engraved by...

Distortions are also found in the decipherment of an inscription of four lines²¹ belonging to a church preserved in the ancient village site of Kirakos (or Porport), which is located south-east of Poladauri Village, Bolnis



The church of the village site of Kirakos from the north-west

District. It is carved on the tympanum of the only entrance of the monument opening from its western facade and commemorates an act of overhaul carried out in the ancient church in 1539 by a certain Priest Serob.

The authors of the book failed to read the name of the clergyman; moreover, they ignored the unit of the numeral thus making a mistake in the decipherment of the year and getting 1531 instead of 1539.

Below follows a truthful decipherment of the inscription:

²⁰ Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 32.

²¹ Ibid., 49.



ԹՎԻ(ն) ԶՁԸ, յանուն յա(ստուծոյ) եւ՝ Սէր/ոք էրեց, վէրսաին / նոր(ոգ)եցի զեկեղեցիս եւ / կանզնեցի զխաչս:

Transl.: In the year 988 (1539), in the name of God, I, Priest Serob, again renovated this church and erected this cross.

The authors of the book state the following with regard to St. Gevorg Church of Mashavera (historically: Gorenjuk) Village (Dmanis District), which is still purely inhabited by Armenians:

Supposedly, the lower stratum of St. Giorgi Church may be traced back to the High Middle Ages. The Georgian miaphysites who took up living here in the 18th century repaired it, using the stones of the old Georgian church.²²

We wonder what other myths the authors of these lines would have concocted (thank God they are generous enough to admit that the Armenians whom they label as *Georgian miaphysites* lived in this village at least in the 18th century, prior to which, it was allegedly inhabited by Georgians!) if they had been more attentive while watching the church walls and had noticed the numerous, exceptionally Armenian, inscriptions close to the cross reliefs commemorating acts of donation (the dated ones trace back to 1510,

²² Ibid., 60.



St. Gevorg Church of Mashavera (Gorenjuk) Village from the south-west

1514, 1520 & 1533). And what would have been their next fabrication if they had bothered themselves to visit the medieval cemetery of the village extending north-west of the church? It retains a spate of tombstones of the 15th to 20th centuries, the epitaphs reaching the 1920s being only in Armenian (one of them dates from 1659). It also preserves pedestals of numerous cross-stones part of which were perhaps used in the last overhaul of the church probably implemented in the early 18th century: they were thrown out in 1999, when the elevated bema of the church, one of the essential features showing its Armenian origin, was being destroyed.

Similarly distorted is the inscription of the renowned 10th-century cross memorial of Samshvilde (Shamshulde), which has been ascribed to the 17th century (1621).²³

²³ Ibid., 74-75.

It should be noted that from the mid-19th century onwards, numerous attempts were made to decipher the remarkable inscription of this cross memorial (it was so famous as a sacred site that in the 18th century a small church, Sourb Astvatzatzin (Holy Virgin), was erected over it). Although none of the scholars endeavouring it (M. Brosset, S. Jalalians, A. Araratians, S. Kamalians, L. Melikset-Bek)²⁴ proved completely successful, their publications show that they at least manifested certain professional skills and competence while trying to decipher it. None of them made so many mistakes as the authors of the work in question and their editors holding scholarly titles. Moreover, their mistakes are so flagrant that one involuntarily wants to explain them not by the scholars' incompetence but by

²⁴ "Кавказ" [*Kavkaz*], no. 69, 1854, 275; **Jalalians**, 79; «Մերո չայաստանի» [*Meghu Hayastani*], no. 22, 1874, 3; «Արձագանք» [*Ardzagank*], no. 41, 1884, 601; **მელიქსეთ-ბეგო ლ.**, მეგალითური კულტურა საქართველოში [**L. Melikset-Bek**, *The Megalithic Culture of Georgia*] (Tbilisi, 1938), 91.



The cross-stones placed in front of the bema of St. Gevorg Church of Mashavera (Gorenjuk) Village (photo by S. Darchinian, 1976) and their fragments as thrown outside after its sanctuary had been levelled to the ground (photo by S. Karapetian, 2007)



their wish to settle the political issues put before them, that is to say, to present the medieval and early medieval monuments preserved in the districts of the historical Armenian province of Gugark, at present within the borders of the Republic of Georgia, as late medieval or even 19th-century specimens of material culture (for instance, the 1237 construction inscription of St. Sargis Church of Darpas is ascribed to 1857) through different fabrications, under the veil of “scholarly” research. Meanwhile, they incessantly underline the Georgian origin of the earlier monuments, and it is only in several cases that they reconcile themselves to the Armenian origin of certain monuments, and that attributing them to *Georgian miaphysites*, a newly-concocted term.

The 15-line inscription, carved on the west-directed face of the cross memorial of Samshvilde, reads:

ՆԺ (961) թն(իին) հ(այոց), ս(ուր)բ խաչս / տ(ե)ր
 Յ(իսու)ս Զ(րիստո)ս ա(ստու)ծ / մեր եւ յո(յ)ս է /
 զՎարդ զարարող խաչիս յիշեն(ս)ջիք / եւ զարբայրն
 / իմ զծանա / Զ(րիստո)սի: Խաչ Զ(րիստո)սի է /
 փրկող Ս(ւ)բ/աստա իշխանաց / իշխանի:

Transl.: *In the year 410 (961) of the Armenian calendar, this holy cross, our Lord Jesus Christ and hope.*



May you remember Vard, who created this cross, and my brother, who is Christ's servant. Christ's saving cross for Prince of Princes Smbat.

The book in question presents it as follows:

Թ(իվն) Ռ-Հ (1621) սուրբ խաչս / նճ (նուածող?) /
 տր Յս Զս ած / մեր եւ յոժէ / զՎարդ զարարող
 խաչիս յիշեսջիք / եւ զ(ե)րբայրն / իմ զծանա/յն
 Զ(րիստո)սի, խաչ Զ(րիստո)սի է / փրկող
 սմբ/աստայ իշխանաց / իշխանի:

Transl.: *In the year 1070 (1621), this holy cross... Lord Jesus Christ... our... May you remember Vard, who created this cross, and my brother, who is Christ's servant. Christ's saving cross. Prince of Princes Smbat.*

Given the stylistic and artistic value of the cross memorial and the exceptional importance of its inscription, we should not confine ourselves to presenting only the verified version of its decipherment: it could be easily done by any specialist having at least some competence in the decipherment of Armenian epigraphy as the inscription is engraved with all the classical patterns regularly occurring in lapidary records of the 9th to 11th centuries.

As is apparent, the meaning of the first two letters of the inscription was simply ignored,²⁵ whereas in fact, they have numerical value, being differentiated by dots, and denote the year (the letter Ճ, marking the ten, is engraved in a slightly leaning position, as a result of which, some of the former researchers took it as Գ, thus erroneously deciphering it as 100).

The next two letters, քն, have a contraction mark above them and are separated from the text by two dots, simply marking a contraction of the word քնիկն (*in the year*). Such contractions are often found in Armenian inscriptions of the 10th century. Another letter, separated by a dot, is հ, which denotes a contracted word, հայոց, namely *Armenian* (this is not a rare example of such cases).

Thus, «ՆՃ քն. հ.» should be perceived as «961 (410+551=961) քնիկն հայոց» (*in the year 961 (410+551=961) of the Armenian calendar*). The authors of the book, who evidently have a strong desire to reduce the ancient age of everything Armenian, “cut” «Թ Ռ-Հ» from all this, eventually getting the year 1621.

However, the decrease of the age of a lapidary record by 660 years is not the only funny absurdity in its decipherment. It ends mentioning Prince of Princes Smbat,²⁶ something that should have “sobered up” the Georgian scholars harnessed to the “study” of Armenian monuments. The point is that they have completely neglected the historical fact that the Armenians did not have Princes of Princes from the 13th century onwards: in the 17th century, they had meliks of villages, cities or districts who perhaps could be called princes but not ever princes of princes.

Finally, we would like to note that the stylistic and artistic peculiarities of the cross relief adorning the memorial of Samshvilde are fully enough to exactly date the monument, which has parallels elsewhere. Indeed, this requires not only sufficient professional skills and experience, something the authors of the book evidently lack, but also scholarly conscientiousness, which is not discerned at all (at least for the monuments discussed).

25 Apparently, the Georgian co-authors settled the issue of these two letters quite easily: *Turning to the letters ՆԳ, found in the second line of the inscription, it should be stated that their meaning remains obscure. We can only suppose that they might mean conqueror (the Armenian equivalent of this word is «նվաճող»)*. For some reason or another, the inscription is not complete (**Gagoshidze, Chantladze**, 76). It should be noted that the imaginary letters ւճ are engraved not in the second, but in the very first line of the inscription. Besides, the word նվաճող (the equivalent of *conqueror*) could not have been contracted like that (Armenian philology does not know any such cases).

26 At first the year of the inscription was not properly decoded and specialists could not find out the identity of Prince of Princes Smbat. At present it is fully deciphered and we hold that the reference may be ascribed to Ashot III the Merciful’s son, who started sharing the royal throne with his father in 958 and participated in the reign over the country. In 977 he assumed throne as King Smbat II Master of the Universe.

It should be noted that the city site of Samshvilde, and particularly, the adjacent sites retain a spate of medieval Armenian inscriptions which were not included in the work in question (we shall dwell on them on other occasions).²⁷

Another important site treated in the book is the Great Monastery of Bnidorz, the surviving lapidary inscriptions of which were published not in 1901 by Yer. Lalayan,²⁸ but in 1884 by S. Kamalian²⁹ (S. Jalalians presented only an incomplete publication of a single epigraph).³⁰ A comparative study of the publications of the first two scholars shows that Lalayan simply republished Kamalian’s decipherments, without examining the inscriptions himself and without referring to the original publisher.

As for the decipherments of the Georgian authors, they contain fewer errors, perhaps thanks to the existence of the former publications. Below follow two epitaphs from the cemetery of the Great Monastery of Bnidorz:

Ես ի սս|զէն Ծ|ովսանչե|ցի| ան|ւն իւ՝ Թ|ամազ կ|ոչի, որ | շիւնեցի ս(ուր)բ եկ|եղեցիս յիշ(ա)տալկ ինձ եւ | ծնող|աց իմոց:

Transl.: *I am from the Tzovanshetsies’ family and my name is Tamaz. I built this holy church in memory of my parents and me.*

Այս է տապան Ասլամազի որդի Արթանդիլին, | որ ի ազգէն Ծովսանչեցի, որ փոխեցաւ առ ա(ստու)ծ, քվին Ռ-ՃԼԵ (1686):

Transl.: *In this grave reposes Aslamaz’s son Avtandil from the Tzovanshetsies’ family who departed this life in the year 1135 (1686).*

As can be seen, both the epitaphs say that the deceased were from the Tzovanshetsies’ family (the builder or one of the builders of the monastic church descended from the same family), whereas the Georgian authors have changed its name into a toponym:

I am from Tzovansheli District...³¹

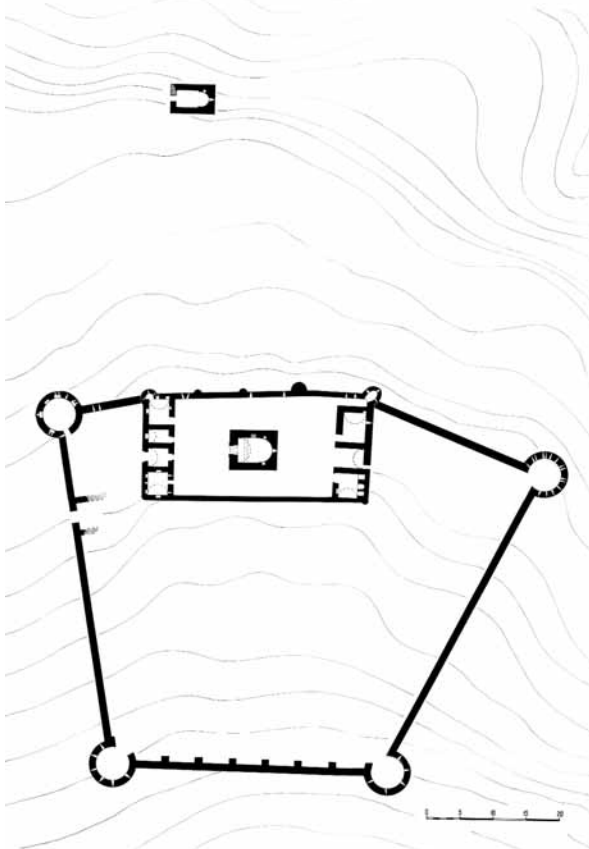
27 Our readers can get acquainted with a complete collection of the Armenian epigraphs of Samshvilde and numerous other sites in our forthcoming work on the Armenian inscriptions of Georgia.

28 **Լալայան Ե.**, Բորչալուի գաւառ [Yer. Lalayan, “Borchalu District”], «Ազգագրական հանդէս» [*Ethnographical Journal*], vols. 7-8 (Tiflis, 1901), 332.

29 **Քամալեան Ս.**, Ճանապարհորդական յիշատակարան [S. Kamalian, “Travel Notes”], «Արձագանք» [*Arzagank*], no. 42, 1884, 613.

30 **Jalalians**, 80.

31 **Gagoshidze, Chantladze**, 87. Indeed, the co-authors of the book do not know that there is no such a district, and a village site of the same name used to be situated within hardly a kilometre of the Great Monastery of Bnidorz. This is attested by folklorist Sargis Kamalian: *The first, most excellent and powerfully impressive of them, boasting an unmatched, glorious position, was Tzovansh or Tzovashen lying between the village of Siptak, towering on the slope of the Khachyal, and Dzorashen. All the villages lived side by side in peace and tranquillity. The monastery of Tzovashen was built in 1112 (1663) of the Armenian calendar...* Another record states: *That gorge was like a sea, very populous and teeming with fruits and various cereals. It abounded in*



The main church of the Great Monastery of Bnidor in the 1900s (photo by Hayk Ashtaraketsy) and its general plan (measurement by S. Karapetian, 1990)

The four cryptograms engraved beneath the construction inscription of the tympanum of the church may be decoded as follows:

- a. Karaypet³²
- b. Tamaz³³
- c. Navaysart³⁴
- d. perhaps, Hazare.³⁵

The authors of the book also speak about the renowned quadrilateral stele of Brdadzor, which has been moved to Tbilisi. In fact, they do not say anything essential regarding the monument, but they do not forget to underline its “Georgian origin”³⁶ probably, merely for the reason that it is kept in one of the museums of Tbilisi and not Yerevan.

everything and for this very reason, it was called Tzovashen [tzov is the Armenian equivalent of sea - translator] (Museum of Art and Literature, list 2, section VI, file 12, pp. 2-3).

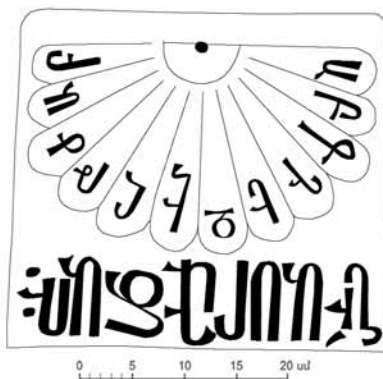
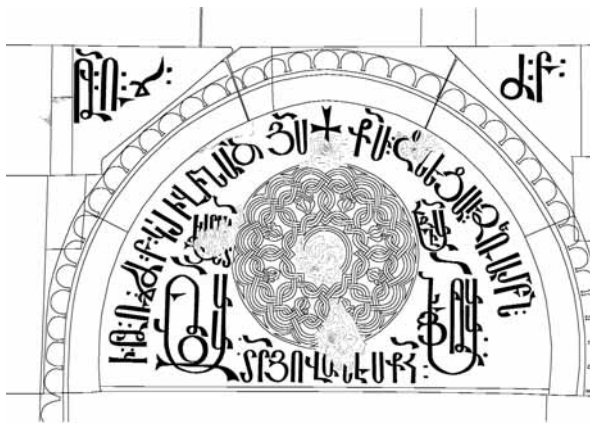
³² The name was not deciphered as it was partly damaged.

³³ **Gagoshidze, Chantladze**, 85.

³⁴ *Ibid.* As in Bolnis-Khachen, here the name of Navasard (Navaysart) is erroneously presented as Navata, a personal name that does not exist at all. An inscription engraved close to a sundial preserved on the southern facade of the church reveals that Navasard is the architect of the church (as already mentioned above, other churches erected or repaired according to his plans include Sourb Nshan (1655) in Haghpat; Sourb Kiraki (1656) in Bolnis-Khachen and Sourb Nshan Sourb Nikoghayosi (1662) in Tpghis).

³⁵ The encoded name has been deciphered as *Hatsavet (Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 85)*, but there is no such a personal name. We offer the version of *Hazare*, although we are not sure about its authenticity.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-91.



Inscriptions engraved on the tympanum and sundial of the main church of the Great Monastery of Bnldzor

Touching on the epigraphy of Shahumian (Great Shulaver, historically: Sheghver) Township, the authors of the book pretend not having noticed the 18th-century epitaphs of its cemetery and present only a single one dating from the 19th century. However, their decipherment of this epigraph again contains mistakes as they have increased the age of the burial house of 1864 by 60 years (at least the century remains the same), ignoring the noble title of its builder. The actual epitaph reads:

Այս մատուռն պատկանի կանն... պրապօրչիկ ազնիւ Գրիգոր պէգ Բալանթարովին, 1864, յունվարի 10:

Transl.: *This chapel belongs to... Ensign Grigor Bey Kalantarov of noble origin, 10 January 1864.*

Instead of this, the Georgian authors have read the following:

Այս մատուռը պատ...նի կան... ք ...պրապօրչիկ ... Գրիգոր պէգ Բալանթարովին, 1804, յունվարի 10³⁷:

Transl.: *This chapel ... Ensign... Grigor Bey Kalantarov, 10 January 1804.*

It should be noted that this epitaph was published some years ago together with 43 others found in this cemetery,³⁸ but the Georgian authors of the book were probably unaware of this.

According to the authors of the book, the construction inscription (1615) of one of the two Armenian churches of Gorel (it had already disappeared as of 1990) used to be located in the “Georgian church” of the city site. Failing to find any other records regarding the personalities mentioned in this epigraph, they declare it as gerrymandered:

D. Muskhelishvili holds that Armenian Melik Atabek, who is mentioned in the inscription, is known from Hovsep Tbileli’s “Didmouravie,” but it remains obscure who Miriman Baghdad Khan was: generally speaking, no traces of such a family are preserved either in the place of the epigraph or anywhere else in Armenia. For this reason, we regard this inscription as a fabrication: we cannot understand who concocted it and how it appeared in Goruli.³⁹

It goes without saying that the Georgian authors have distorted certain personal names found in the inscription, which actually reads as follows:

Թ(վիւն) ՌԿԴ (1615). ես պ(ա)ր(ոն) Մամքան/ս⁴⁰, շինեցի ս(ուր)ք եկ(ե)ղ(ե)ցիս | վ(ա)ս(ն) փրկութի(ւն) հ(ո)գոյ իմոյ, | ունէի Զ (6) որդի, մեծն՝

37 Ibid., 95.

38 Ասլանյան Ս., Կարապետյան Ս., Շուլավեր [S. Aslanian, S. Karapetian, Shulaver] (Yerevan, 2002), 47.

39 Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 97. Should we be guided by this illogical “logic,” we would have to regard a considerable part of both Armenian and Georgian epigraphs as falsified, for they remain the only sources on many historical events and personalities.

40 The book under review offers the erroneous version of Mavkos (p. 96). Generally speaking, Mamkan is known as a female name.



սյ(ա)ր(ան) Աթաբեկ⁴¹, որ երկրիս մէջիք էր, Միրիմանն՝ Բաղդաստ խանն էր, Ասլանն զխազունն, սյ(ա)ր(ան) Մանթաշ⁴², Քամա[զ]⁴³:

Transl.: *In the year 1064 (1615), I, Mr. Mamkan, built this holy church for my soul's salvation. I had 6 sons, the eldest of whom was Mr. Atabek, the Melik of the land. Miriman was a khan in Baghdad; Aslan in Zagum [Zakam], Mr. Mantash, Kama[z?].*

Gagoshidze and Chantladze have read only the first line of a three-line inscription⁴⁴ engraved on an ornate

In this case, it is either used as a male name or is an address form of respect used with reference to a woman (like mister used for men): such forms of address were widespread amidst the Armenians of New Jugha.

41 Probably, the inscription means the famous prince of Somkhethi, Atabek, mentioned by Davrizhetsy: one of his brothers, who was held captive by the Persians, adopted Islam and changed his name into Tahmazghuli: ...*Prince of Somkhet Atabek's brother, whose name was Tahmazghuli (Առաքել Գաթրիճեցի, Գիրք պատմութեանց [Arakel Davrizhetsy, History] (Yerevan, 1990), 61.*

42 Mr. Mantash is also mentioned in the 1657 construction inscription of the church of the adjacent village site of Zargyar.

43 Most presumably, one of the descendants (probably, the grandchild) of this family was Kyamar or Kyamaz Bey, the Governor of Somkhethi who is mentioned in the *History of Kartli* by Vakhushy Bagrationy in 1687 (...*The Melik of Somkhethi was Kyamar Bey*) and 1719 (...*King Vakhtang arrested Melik of Somkhethi Kyamaz Bey, who was shot to death*). See *Melikset-Bek*, 64-65. At least the initial four letters of this name are clearly intelligible, whereas the co-authors have invented the letters Քն, which say absolutely nothing.

44 For the first publication of the inscription, see *Aslanian, Karapetian*, 56.



The construction inscription (1615) of one of the churches of Gorel City Site (photo by S. Darchinian, 1976) and its tracing



A cross-stone (1651) in the cemetery of the Small Monastery of Bnidzor (photo by S. Karapetian, 1984)



A cross-stone of 1651 that was moved from the cemetery of the Small Monastery of Bnidzor to Sourb Astvatzatzin Church of Shahumian (Great Shulaver) Township in 1988 (photos by S. Karapetian, 1984 & 2007)

cross-stone which was moved from the graveyard of the Small Monastery of Bnidzor to Sourb Astvatzatzin Church of Shahumian (Great Shulaver) Township in 1988. Allegedly, the year is not found on the khachkar.⁴⁵

Below follows a complete decipherment of the inscription:

*Մ(ուր)ր ի(ս)չս բարեխ(աւ)ս է Բշենց Խ(ա)չ(ա)-
ար(իւ) | եւ իր կ(ողակ)ցի(ւ), | թվ(իւ) Ռ-Ճ (1651):*

⁴⁵ Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 101.

Transl.: *May the holy cross protect Bshents Khachatur and his spouse. In the year 1100 (1651).*

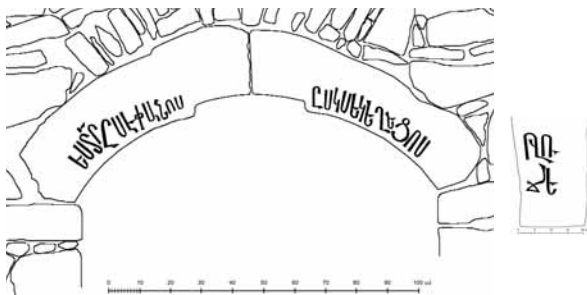
The inscription commemorating the foundation of Sourb Astvatzatzin (Holy Virgin) Church of Zargyur Village Site is presented as follows:

*Թվ(իւ) Ռ-ՃԵ, եւ ս(է)ր ...սէնան ... ըսկս(եցի)
եկեղեցու⁴⁶:*

⁴⁶ Ibid., 104.



Sourb Astvatzatzin (Holy Virgin) Church of Zargyar Village Site from the north-west (photo by S. Karapetian, 2012)



Transl.: *In the year 1105, I, Father... began ...of the church.*

In fact, it (a single line on the arched front of the entrance and two others in the door arch) reads the following:

Ես՝ տ(է)ր Ըստէփանոս⁴⁷, ըսկս(եցի) եկեղեցոյս (շինութիւնը), | թվ(ին) Ռ-ՃԵ (1656):

Transl.: *I, Father Stepanos, began the construction of this church in the year 1105 (1656).*

⁴⁷ The cemetery of Zargyar Village Site retains the epitaph of Father Stepanos' spouse Tamam: Այս է տապան Թամամին, կոյղ(ա)կ(ց)ին տ(է)ր [տր] Ըստէփանոսին, թվ(ին) Ռ-ՃԻ (1671) transl.: *In this grave reposes Tamam, the spouse of Father Stepanos. In the year 1120 (1671).*

The year 1656 is also carved on the keystone of a window opening from the same facade of the church.

Another, 6-line, inscription engraved on a stone set above the window of the church recounts the complete story of its construction and commemorates its accomplishment in 1657:

Ի թվին Ռ-ՃԶ (1657), ի թագաորութիւն) պարսից | Շահապագին, իշխանութիւն) Բար(ր)ատ(ու)ն(ե)սց Ուրըստամին, ի հայրապ(ե)տութե(ան)⁴⁸ տ(եառ)ն Յակոբին, առ(ա)ջն(ո)ր(դու)թի(ան) Սարգիս արհեպ(իս)կ(ոպո)սին, մեր աս է՝ շալեցի Մանթաշը⁴⁹, Ուլխանը⁵⁰, Սարգ(ի)ս, Հաթերց, միաբանութ | շինեցինք Ս(ուր)բ Ա(ստուա)ծածինս, յիշատակ ծնողաց եւ որդոց մեր:

⁴⁸ In the Georgian translation of the inscription, հայրապ(ե)ս (hayrapet, literally: *supreme father*) in the word հայրապ(ե)տութե(ան) is rendered as *patriarch*, which is wrong, as *hayrapet* is the equivalent of *catholicos* (Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 103).

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ Shaluk's sons Mantash and Ulkhan are buried in the cemetery of Zargyar Village Site. Their tombstones have the following epitaphs:

Այս է տապան Շալուկի որդի պարոն Մանթաշ(ին)...

In this grave reposes Shaluk's son, Mr. Mantash...

Այս է տապան Շալուկի որդի պարոն Ուլխան(ին), թվ(ին) Ռ-ՃԻԹ (1680):

In this grave reposes Shaluk's son, Mr. Ulkhan. In the year 1129 (1680).



Transl.: *In the year 1106 (1657), under the reign of Persian Shah Abas and Rustam the Bagratid, in the days of Catholicos Hakob and Primate Sargis, an archbishop, we, Mantash, Ulkhan, Sargis and Haterts from Shal, built Sourb Astvatzatzin with united efforts in memory of our parents and sons.*

Next the authors of the book speak about a cross-stone confusing its location as it is situated not in the church they mention,⁵¹ but within 300 metres of it, in another church (together with several other khachkars) rising at a mountain top in a site called Aghkend by the people of the neighbourhood.

The book further discusses a site which should not have been included in a work entitled *The Miaphysite Monuments of Georgia* for the simple reason that it is situated in Lori Region of the Republic of Armenia⁵²: it is the village site of Khendzorex lying in a plot of land belonging to Jiliz Village and retaining the semi-ruined monastery of Shikero St. Sargis, which consists of two adjoining churches and annexe remnants. The Georgian authors have neglected an important donation inscription which is older than the construction inscription of the northern church (the standing one) of the monastery, although they speak about its existence.⁵³ It comprises 6 lines engraved on a fallen finely-dressed revetment stone (44 x 38 cm):

Կամսա բարերարին. ես՝ Բախտատորս, միաբար-
(նե)ցա ս(ուր)ք ուխտիս եւ ետուն ինձ ժամ զՆոր
Կիրակէն, ով խափ(ան)է, նզ(ովեալ եղիցի), ՈԾԷ
(1208):

Transl.: *By the grace of God, I, Bakhtavor, reached an agreement with the holy monastery and was given an hour [of a divine service] on New Sunday. May those who hinder this be cursed. 657 (1208).*

Another inscription of 9 lines, engraved on the tympanum of St. Sargis Church of the monastery (stone dimensions: 200 x 75 cm) and divided in two parts by its contents, has been deciphered with almost no mistakes. However, the authors were unable to read the name of the monastery, as a result of which, they have burdened the text with “scholarly” meditations:

Ի թվի(ն) ՈԿԸ (1213) յանուն ա(ստուծո)յ որդիքս
Քարթւելին՝ Գրիգոր ու Սարգիս, միաբարանեցաք
ս(ուր)ք ուխտիս Սուրբ Սարգսի, սպարապետու-
թե(ան)ն/ հա(յ)ոց Շահնշահի որդո Չաքարե(ն), ա-
ռաջնորդութե(ամ)ք Սարկաւա/զ վարդապետի շի-
նեցաք զեկեղեցիս եւ ետուն մեզ ժամ սուրբ Խաչա-
(տու)ր(ն), | զեկեղեցիքս :Բ:(2)՝ ինձ՝ Սարգսի, :Բ:(2)՝
Գրիգորո, :Բ: (2)՝ աղբե(րց...):

Յանուն ա(ստուծո)յ ես՝ Դեդս Քառաշանց, որդի
Հաղսանայ, միաբարանեցա ս(ուր)ք ուխտիս Շիկե-
րոյս ընձաիւք առաջնորդութե(ամ)ք Սարկաւազ
վարդապետի եւ այլ եղբարցս եւ ետուն ինձ ժամ |
զեկեղեցիքս Համբարձման, արդ ով խափանե,
նզոված է:

Transl.: *In the year 662 (1213), in the name of God, Kartvel’s sons Grigor and Sargis, reached an agreement with the holy monastery of St. Sargis. In the days*

51 Gagoshidze, Chantladze, 107.

52 At least the title should have been expressed in some other way.

53 Ibid., 122.



The uni-nave church of Aghkend Village Site from the south-east and the cross-stone in question (photos by S. Karapetian, 1992)

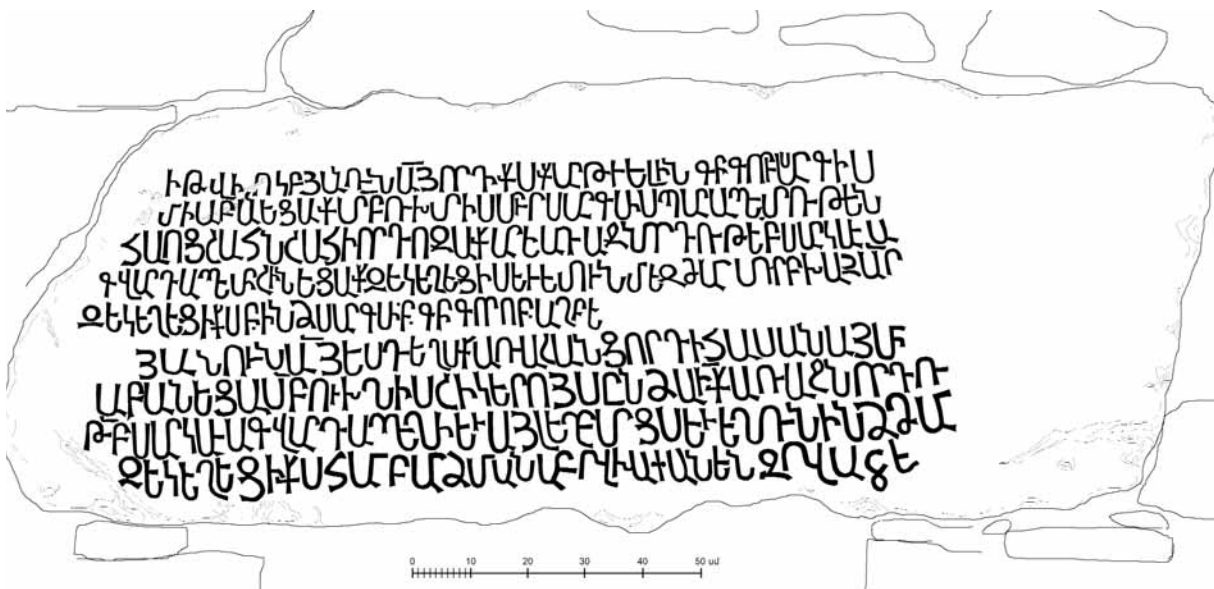
of Armenian Commander-in-Chief Shahenshah, Zakare's son, and Prior Sarkavag, an archimandrite, we built this church and were promised divine services on the feast of St. Khachatur, 2 hours for Grigor, 2 for our brothers and 2 for me (Sargis)...

In the name of the Lord, I, Degh Karashants, Hasan's son, agreed with the holy monastery of Shiker... in the days of Father Superior Sarkavag, an archimandrite, and other brethren, being promised an hour [of a divine service] on the feast of the Ascension. May those who impede this be cursed.

Gagoshidze and Chantladze also speak about Sourb Nshan (Holy Sign) Church of Khozhorni, which was in fact “studied” for a single, already trite, conclusion repeatedly found on numerous pages of the work:

...both Khozhorni and its neighbourhood were densely populated by Georgians.⁵⁴

To summarise, we would like to underline that even this brief analysis of the work in question revealed a spate of errors and omissions which are simply unbecoming to a scholarly research. It is very regretful that the work carried out loses its importance and value because of restricted and biased approaches, observations and conclusions. Its authors have not attached importance to the comprehensive study of monuments of material culture in compliance with scientific norms: they have adopted the regretfully anti-scholarly, futile and trite tactics of somehow substantiating the desired “Georgian roots” of certain lands on the basis of so-called scholarly research.



⁵⁴ Ibid., 130.

RAA NEW PROJECTS

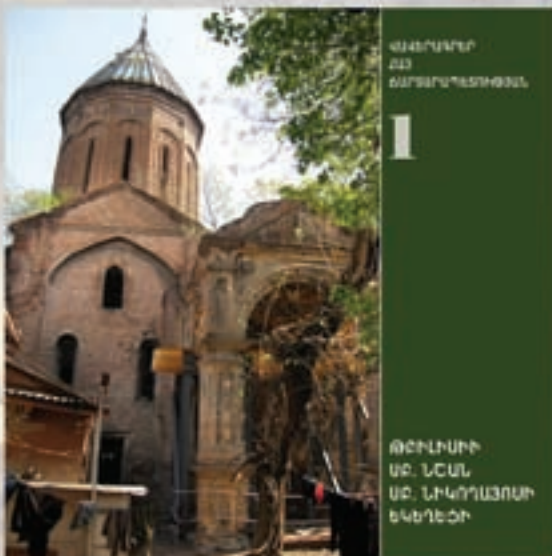
In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Great Armenian Genocide of 1915 and in token of deepest respect of the memory of its innocent victims, the RAA intends to complete its decades-long research in Western Armenia in 2015 and present the history of its over 70 districts in 36 volumes.



The members of the RAA are also preparing a series of publications on the history and material culture of the towns and villages of Artsakh.



RAA NEW PUBLICATIONS



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