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Dies ist eine Internet-Sonderausgabe des Aufsatzes  
„The Albanian Inscriptions Revisited“  
von Jost Gippert (2014).

Sie enthält zahlreiche Korrekturen gegenüber der Originalausgabe in  
The European Azerbaijan Society,  
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which was printed without the figures and of which the author did not see any proofs.

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Jost Gippert, Frankfurt 2017

## The Albanian Inscriptions Revisited

*Jost Gippert*

0.1 With the decipherment of the palimpsests found in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai,<sup>1</sup> both the language and the script of the Caucasian Albanians have become available to linguistic and historical investigations, not only into the texts of the palimpsests proper. The decipherment has proven beyond doubt that the Albanian language was, if not the ancestor, an extremely close relative of the modern Udi language and that the script used for writing down the palimpsests was specifically invented to meet the requirements of this language, covering its sound system in a near to perfect way. The decipherment of the palimpsests therefore also paved the way for a successful decipherment and analysis of the few inscriptions that had been supposed to be written in the Albanian language and script before the detection of the palimpsests, mostly on the basis of the alphabet list preserved in ms. 7117 of the Yerevan Matenadaran, a collective codex of encyclopedic character which also contains alphabet lists of Greek, Latin, Old Georgian, and Coptic, as well as other specimens of Oriental languages and scripts (on fols. 144r-147r;<sup>2</sup> Fig. 1 displays the Albanian list on fol. 145rv). After the decipherment of the palimpsests, the 52 letters of the Albanian alphabet can be arranged, together with their

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the edition by Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009.

<sup>2</sup> A new pagination has been applied to Cod. Mat. 7117 after the detection of the lists in 1937; the respective folios referred to in older publications are 141r-144r. Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-1 with n. 1 as to bibliographical and other details concerning the Matenadaran codex and the Albanian alphabet list.

Roman transcription and their presumptive names,<sup>3</sup> as outlined in Table I.

ᲀ	ᲁ	ᲂ	ᲃ	ᲄ	ᲅ	ᲆ	ᲇ	ᲈ	Ᲊ	ᲊ	᲋	᲌
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>ž</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ć</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>ẓ</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>alt</i>	<i>bet</i>	<i>gim</i>	<i>daṭ</i>	<i>eb</i>	<i>zarl</i>	<i>ēn</i>	<i>žil</i>	<i>tas</i>	<i>ća</i>	<i>yowd</i>	<i>ža</i>	<i>iʳb</i>
Ა	Ბ	Გ	Დ	Ე	Ვ	Ზ	Თ	Ი	Კ	Ლ	Მ	Ნ
<i>ʳ</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>nʹ</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>dʹ</i>	<i>ç</i>	<i>ẓ̌</i>	<i>ḳ</i>	<i>lʹ</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>q/x</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>ć</i>
<i>ʳa</i>	<i>lan</i>	<i>inʹa</i>	<i>xʳēn</i>	<i>dʹan</i>	<i>çar</i>	<i>žox</i>	<i>kʳar</i>	<i>lʹiṭ</i>	<i>hēṭ</i>	<i>qay</i>	<i>ār</i>	<i>ćoy</i>
Პ	Ჟ	Რ	Ს	Ტ	Უ	Ფ	Ქ	Ღ	Ყ	Შ	Ჩ	Ც
<i>č</i>	<i>*cʹ</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>q̣</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>*žʹ</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>*ẓ̌</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>ṭʹ</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ẓ</i>	<i>č</i>
<i>či</i>	<i>cʹay</i>	<i>maq̣</i>	<i>q̣ar</i>	<i>nowc</i>	<i>žʹay</i>	<i>šak</i>	<i>žayn</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ṭʹay</i>	<i>fam</i>	<i>zay</i>	<i>čaṭ</i>
Წ	Ჭ	Ხ	Ჯ	Ჰ	Ჱ	Ჲ	Ჳ	Ჴ	Ჵ	Ჶ	Ჷ	Ჸ
<i>p̣</i>	<i>ḡ</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ś</i>	<i>ü</i>	<i>çʹ</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>k</i>
<i>p̣en</i>	<i>ḡēs</i>	<i>raṭ</i>	<i>sēk</i>	<i>vēz</i>	<i>ṭüwr</i>	<i>śoy</i>	<i>üwn</i>	<i>çʹaw</i>	<i>cayn</i>	<i>yayd</i>	<i>püwr</i>	<i>küw</i>

Table I: The 52 characters of the Albanian alphabet with their transcriptions and names

0.2 A first attempt to reanalyse the inscriptions on the basis of the alphabet as established in the decipherment of the palimpsests was published in the introduction to the Caucasian Albanian language provided in the edition.<sup>4</sup> Of the total of ten artefacts dealt with there, seven were examined in greater detail by the present author in the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Baku, during a stay in 2011; for some of the remaining inscriptions, new insights have recently been gained via scholarly communication. In the following pages, all ten inscriptions will be revisited in order to illustrate the present state of knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the reconstruction in Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-4–6. Characters that are not attested in the palimpsests are marked with a grey background in the Table.

<sup>4</sup> Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-85–94 (4.3 The Caucasian Albanian Inscriptions).

<sup>5</sup> The inscriptions are arranged in the order of their treatment in Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009.

### 1. The Mingëçaur [Mingəçevir] pedestal

The longest inscription in Caucasian Albanian known so far was found during excavations near Mingəçevir (Mingëçaur), Azerbaijan, in 1948, running around the four faces of the upper part of a cube-shaped pedestal measuring ca. 70 × 70 cm which is now preserved in the Baku Museum (cf. Figs. 2a-d). Older pictures show that the inscription was still more complete when the pedestal was unearthed,<sup>6</sup> but even then, most of the text of the third face was missing. Meanwhile, important parts from the other faces have been lost, too, as documented in Figs. 3a-d below. The essentials of the inscription have nevertheless been established with confidence: it commemorates the erection of a cross, obviously on the pedestal itself, by a bishop in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of a king Khosrau. Considering the fact that the Albanian church gained its autocephaly in the year 552 CE, the king in question may well have been Khosrau I Anushirvan, the ruler of the Sasanian empire from 531–579; the event would in this case have taken place in 558.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the name of the king, still readable as *xosroow* in a photograph of face 2 published in 1959<sup>8</sup> (of which *xosro* has remained today, cf. Fig. 3b), the name of the bishop is anything but certain. The proposal to restore the beginning of face 4 as *[ab]ās*, thus matching the name of the Albanian patriarch *Tēr Abas* who, according to Armenian sources, transferred the ecclesiastical throne from Derbent to Partaw under Khosrau I,<sup>9</sup> must now be given up as the last character cannot be maintained to be an *s*. Instead we seem to read *-āy* at the given position, which would best be taken to represent the common pronominal (“referentialised”) genitive plural ending (more precisely *-āȳ*, with an abbreviation mark);<sup>10</sup> the word the ending pertained to must be left open. Another slight difference as to the reading published in the edition concerns the right-hand part of face 1 where in-

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the images printed in Trever 1959, Tables 28 and 34, reproduced as Figs. 1–12 in Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-85–86.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gippert 2004, 117–8 as to details concerning this identification. The second Sasanian king of the same name, Khosrau II Parviz (ruled 590–628), might also be taken into account; in this case, the year in question would be 617.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Trever 1959, Table 34; Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-85, Fig. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gippert 2004, 118–9.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-29–30.

stead of *arahēne*, past tense form of an otherwise unattested verb *\*ara-ihesown* with the meaning ‘to be erected’, it now seems more likely that we have to read *ala hēne*, with *ala* representing the postposition *hala* ‘(up)on’. Third, it seems clear now that the final word of the inscription, comprising the four letters added on the surface of face 4, reads *biyayn*, not *biyayne*, thus lacking the final *-e* as part of the third person clitic marker which usually appears as *-ne*. The meaning remains the same though (‘he made it’). The resulting reading is displayed, together with a close transliteration, a simplified transcription and an English translation, in Table II.<sup>11</sup>

1	Ⲛⲓⲩⲁⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ	<i>çiyasžē(be[š]i)[ys]iol[o]&lt;h&gt;alahēneei</i>
2	ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ	<i>hāl yē owsena xosroow&lt;i&gt;</i>
3	ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ	<i>... .. serb&lt;aown&gt; ... ..</i>
4	ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲉ	<i>...ās čo<sup>5</sup>in iskaḡosen bi</i>
	ⲛⲉⲛⲉ	<i>yayn</i>
1	<i>çiyas žē beši ysi olo hala hēne e i/hāl</i>	In the name of our Lord Jesus!
2	<i>yē owsena xosroowi</i>	On the pillar was (erected) this c ross
3	<i>... .. *serbaown ... ..</i>	in the year 27 of Khosrau
4	<i>..āy čo<sup>5</sup>in iskaḡosen bi/yayn</i>	... .. first ... ..
		of the ... The bishop of Čoḡ malde (it).

Table II: Reading of the Mingečaur pedestal inscription

Another remarkable feature of the Mingečaur pedestal is the image on its front side, which exhibits two peacock-like birds facing each other with a plant stalk between them. Based upon a comparison with peacocks on a silver bowl detected in 1947 at Bartym in present-day Bashkortostan (Fig. 5),<sup>12</sup> K. Trever considered a Sasanian background for this symbol,<sup>13</sup> which would well agree with the Sasanian king being mentioned in the inscription. However, the Christian embedding

<sup>11</sup> In the following transcripts, characters that were still discernible in older photographs are marked with a light grey background in the original script and with round parentheses in the Latin transliteration; characters that are barely readable in any photograph, by a dark grey background in the original script and with square brackets in the Latin transliteration. Characters that are supplemented in toto are printed white on a black background in the original script and in angle brackets in the Latin transliteration.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Bader 1949 with Figs. 19a and b.

<sup>13</sup> Trever 1959, 318 with n. 2 referring to Bader 1949, but also to I.A. Orbeli and L.A. Maculevič who proposed a Transcaucasian origin.

of the Mingečaur pedestal suggests another origin. It has been noted for long that the symbol of two facing peacocks with a plant or a flower basket between them appears as a decorative element in ancient Gospel manuscripts, more precisely, on their introductory pages comprising the Eusebian canon tables together with the letter to Karpianus as a “prologue”; this is true, e.g., for the oldest Armenian Gospel codexes (cf. Fig. 6 showing fol. 1r of the Etchmiadzin Gospels of 989).<sup>14</sup> In other Gospel manuscripts of Caucasian provenance, similar symbols (with peacocks or other birds) appear also on top of the “portals” to the individual Gospels as in the case of the Georgian Gospel codex of Vani (12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> cc., cf. Fig. 7) or on miniatures displaying the evangelists as in the Gospel codex of Žruči (12<sup>th</sup> c., cf. Fig. 8).<sup>15</sup> In one of the oldest Greek Gospel manuscripts, the Vienna Cod. gr. 847 of about the 6<sup>th</sup> century from Ravenna, the peacock symbol occurs even more prominently on its initial page preceding the Eusebian prologue, in a decorative ornament with a cross inside (cf. Fig. 9).<sup>16</sup> All this suggests that the image we see on the Mingečaur pedestal was meant to symbolise the Christianisation of the Albanians via the introduction of the Gospels as the principal texts of Christian faith.

## 2. Yog’s candleholder

The second longest Albanian inscription is engraved in several lines on the four sides of a clay candleholder, measuring ca. 8 cm in height. The content of the inscription has been confirmed by and large during the inspection of the artefact in the Baku Museum in 2011; it memorialises a certain Yog who obviously was its engraver: *z(o)w yog gokarxē nai<sup>š</sup>ow bē eṭowx belega-haḱe e hüwḱen aḱowx-biyay* ‘I, Yog, the sinful servant of God, have made this appear with the heart as it is decent.’ In contrast to the published edition,<sup>17</sup> a minor correction concerns

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Nordenfalk 1938, 99 (as to the Etchmiadzin Gospels); Kouymjian 1993, 128 (as to the Queen Mlk’ē Gospels of 862 and the Lazarian Gospels, Moscow, of 887); Kouymjian 2011, 91–122. For the Etchmiadzin Gospels cf. the facsimile edition Macler 1920.

<sup>15</sup> Figures 7 and 8 are reproduced from Karanaze et al. 2010, 51 and 43.

<sup>16</sup> Drawing reproduced from Nordenfalk 1938, 157–8 and 190. – Cf. also Fig. 22 showing a relief plate from the Early Christian Basilica of Vravrona (Brauron), Greece.

<sup>17</sup> Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II–88.

the arrangement of the lines across the four faces (cf. Figs. 10a-d), caused by the fact that the individual *e* character on the front face has now been identified as pertaining to the verb form *beleḡa*, a hitherto unattested present tense form with *l*-infix<sup>18</sup> of the verb *beḡesown* ‘must, have to’.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the *e* assumed in the third line within the verbal form *karxē* (quasi *\*karexē*) has turned out to be a mere scratch. The corrected reading is illustrated in Table III.

	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
1	𐤔𐤕𐤓𐤕				<i>z~w yo</i>			
2	𐤔𐤔𐤕				<i>g go</i>			
3	𐤕𐤔𐤕	𐤕𐤕𐤕	𐤕𐤕𐤕	𐤕𐤕𐤕	<i>kar</i>	<i>xē na</i>	<i>i'ow</i>	<i>b~ē eṭ</i>
4				𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕				<i>owx bele</i>
5a				𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕				<i>ḡahake</i>
5b	𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕	𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕	𐤕𐤕𐤕		<i>hiwke</i>	<i>n ak[ow]xbi</i>	<i>yay</i>	

Table III: Reading of Yog’s candleholder inscription

### 3. Potsherd inscription

For the defective inscription on a potsherd of ca. 10.5 × 10 cm (Fig. 11),<sup>20</sup> the inspection has brought about only little new insight. It now seems more likely that the first character is not a *ḡ* (of *ḡowm* ‘palace’) but the *z* of the personal pronoun *zow* ‘I’, which is then followed by an *m* as the initial letter of a personal name, given the similarity with the fourth letter of line 3. Of the name itself, the remnants of an *a* as its second letter seem discernible at the right-hand edge. For the first character of the fourth line, it has become slightly more probable that it is a *b*, thus yielding the (abbreviated) form of the genitive of the word for ‘God’, *bē* = *b(ixaḡowḡ)ē*. There are no traces of a sixth letter in the same line. Cf. Table IV for the revised reading of the inscription, which might mean something like ‘I, M(a)…, who was pledged ..., with the hope of God ...’.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-44.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, IV-8 as to *beḡesown* 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-88–9.

1	ᠰᠣᠪᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>zow m[a]... ..</i>
2	ᠪᠢᠣᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>büwga... ..</i>
3	ᠬᠢᠶᠡᠭᠠᠨ	<i>hke-zow ... ..</i>
4	ᠪᠢᠣᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>[b]ē he[l]... ..</i>

Table IV: Reading of the potsherd inscription

#### 4. Candleholder foot

The reading of the inscription on two faces of a lengthy, slightly pyramidal clay artefact of ca. 16 × 4.5 cm that is likely to have been the foot of a candleholder<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 12) has been slightly improved, at least in its first part, which presumably mentions the addressee of the text. Instead of *niqe* or the like, we now seem to read *kiye* as the person's name. It is true that *kiye* is not attested as a personal name elsewhere but occurs as an adjective meaning 'rich, wealthy';<sup>22</sup> in the present context, however, it might also be a vocative form of the underlying noun, *ki* 'wealth' (in the sense of 'darling').<sup>23</sup> This is suggested by the word following it if this is the vocative form *bowqanayo* 'beloved one!' as proposed now, instead of the syntactically unmotivated attributive form, *bowqana*. For the second part of the inscription, there are no new insights available; it seems clear though that the text means something like 'Darling, beloved, I made the candle(holder) for you'. Cf. Table V for the present reading.

1	ᠰᠣᠪᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>[k]iye bowqan[a]</i>
2	ᠶᠣ	<i>yo</i>
3	ᠰᠣᠪᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>zow va bala...</i>
4	ᠪᠢᠣᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>biya&lt;y&gt;</i>

Table V: Inscription on the two faces of the candleholder foot

<sup>21</sup> In Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-89 erroneously described as two separate feet of the same size.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, IV-23.

<sup>23</sup> The noun *ki* itself is not attested but contained in the privative formation *ki-nowt* 'poor', lit. 'wealthless' (cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, IV-23). – Alternatively we might read *hiye*, which is not advantageous as this form is unknown elsewhere.



## 5. Candleholder with defective alphabet

For the inscription on a quadrupedal, slightly conical candleholder (Fig. 13a-d), which consists of ca. 16 characters of the Albanian script in alphabetic sequence,<sup>24</sup> no new insights have been gained. There is a slight chance that the two characters missing between *ć* (no. 10, last character in the horizontal row) and *i* (no. 13, first character clearly visible on the foot below *d*), *y* and *ž*, may once have been present at the bottom of the foot before the sequence *iʒ*. The distribution of the characters is illustrated in Table VI.

I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
ᲗᲑ	ᲙᲙ	Თ-ᲗᲚ	ᲙᲗᲗ	<i>a b</i>	<i>g d</i>	<i>e z ē</i>	<i>ž t ć</i>
	ᲗᲙᲗᲗ		ᲙᲙᲗ		<i>iʒ</i>		<i>ćpr</i>

Table VI: Candleholder with alphabet inscription

## 6. One-line candleholder inscription

For the one-line inscription running up vertically on one side of a candleholder of a height of ca. 18 cm (Fig. 14),<sup>25</sup> the inspection has brought about an improved reading. The sentence *zow kin-pe* proposed now might be understood as ‘I made it by hand’, with *kin* representing the regular instrumental case of *kowl* ‘hand’,<sup>26</sup> even though a compound verb *kin-pesun* ‘make by hand’ is attested in neither Albanian nor Udi. The proposed reading is illustrated in Table VII.

ᲗᲙᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗ	<i>zow kin pe</i>
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Table VII: Candleholder with one-line inscription

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-90.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-91.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, IV-42.

## 7. One-name potsherd inscription

For the potsherd inscription consisting of a single name (Fig. 15), the reading *manas* (standing for the beginning of a name like *manase*) proposed by G.A. Klimov as early as 1967<sup>27</sup> seems now preferable to the alternative reading *manan* (standing for a name like *manana*);<sup>28</sup> cf. the rendering in Table VIII.

ՄՆՄՆ

*manas...*

Table VIII: Potsherd with one-name inscription

## 8. The Derbent wall inscription

Since its first publication, the inscription discovered in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the northern wall of tower ‘B’ of Derbent (Fig. 16a) has been supposed to be Albanian,<sup>29</sup> and there were even attempts to read it.<sup>30</sup> With a recent article in a Derbent newspaper (Musaev et al. 2011),<sup>31</sup> the view that the inscription might be Albanian has become obsolete. Instead, we may now gladly accept the proposal by A.R. Šixsaidov quoted in the article, according to which the inscription represents a fragment from sura 2, verse 255 of the Qur’an,<sup>32</sup> written in a Kufic ductus of about the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the basis of photographs that have meanwhile become available, we can restore the text as outlined in Table IX; it is important to note that the inscription must be turned by 180° as against its present position in the wall (cf. Figs. 16b-c).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Klimov 1967, 78: “чтение хорошо известного из истории Агвании собственного имени Manase «Манасэ»” (“reading of the personal name Manase, well-known from history”).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-91.

<sup>29</sup> Barxowtareanc‘ 1893, 119: “Հաւանական է որ լինին Աղուանից լեզուի գրերից...” (“It is probable that it is (written) in letters of the Albanian language”).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Murav’ev 1981, 281–283 / Murav’ev 1998, 53–55; Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-92.

<sup>31</sup> My thanks are due to T. Maisak who made the article accessible to me on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Actually, the verse fragment in question occurs elsewhere in the Qur’an, too (e.g., sura 4.42); however, 2.255 is the most probable on statistical grounds (L. Kalus, personal communication of 21<sup>st</sup> Nov., 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Photograph kindly provided by T. Maisak, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2011.

*allāhu lā ilāha illā huwa al-ḥayyu al-qayyūmu.*

*lā tā'ḥuḍuhu sinatu" wa lā nau-*

*mu" lahu mā fī al-samāwāti*

*wa mā fī al-arḍi*

الله لا إله إلا هو الحي القيوم

لا تأخذه سنة ولا نو

م له ما في السموات

وما في الأرض

‘Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence.

Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep.

**To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens**

and whatever is on the earth.’

Table IX: Sura 2.225 as represented in the Derbent wall inscription

## 9. The Upper Labko tablet

It has for long been proposed that the inscription engraved on both sides of a flat stone tablet found in Upper Labko in Daghestan and published in 1971<sup>34</sup> is a fake, the sequence of letters it contains being a mere calque of the alphabet list of the Matenadaran, beginning with the second page of the list (cf. the images contrasted in Fig. 17ab).<sup>35</sup> The proposal can be maintained, all the more since there are neither up-to-date photographs nor other new insights available that would contradict it.

## 10. The Txoba-Erdy plate

It has been disputed for long as well whether the five characters discernible on the fragment of a clay plate found in Upper Ingushetia in 1901 (cf. Fig. 18)<sup>36</sup> can be considered as Albanian or, rather, Georgian (*Asomtavruli* majuscules); however, no trustworthy interpretation has been possible so far.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note, then, that the fragment bears the relief of two deer facing each other, with a (date?) tree in between, an image in some way reminding us of the peacock symbol on the Mingečaur pedestal (cf. 1. above). Indeed, the image of two

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<sup>34</sup> Arslanbekov 1971, 70–2.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-92–3 for details.

<sup>36</sup> Photograph reproduced from Trever 1959, Table 29; drawing reproduced from Murav'ev 1981, 293, Fig. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-93–4 for details.

deer is known in Christian contexts as well, taken to symbolise Psalm 42.2 (“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God”) as on the roof of the church of Gethsemane in Jerusalem (cf. Fig. 19). The image of two deer was also used as part of illuminations in Gospel manuscripts, in a similar way as the symbols comprising peacocks or other birds;<sup>38</sup> the “portals” of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Gospel codex no. 182 from Kutaisi (Fig. 20a-d) give an idea of this even though they contain other animals.<sup>39</sup> It thus becomes conceivable that the “unintelligible” characters on the Txoba-Erdy plate might represent not a name<sup>40</sup> but elements from the Eusebian canon tables; cf., e.g., Fig. 21 which shows an extract from the table comprising the second and third canon from the Kutaisi Gospel codex no. 76 (fol. 4r). However, the character sequence visible on the Txoba-Erdy plate remains unidentifiable so far.

11. Summing up, we may state that the closer inspection of the artefacts containing Albanian inscriptions has brought about considerable new insights into their contents and background. However, many a riddle has still to be solved, and we cannot but hope that more material of this kind will come to light one day.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Nordenfalk 1938, 244–5.

<sup>39</sup> The portals pertain to the Gospels of Matthew (fol. 6r), Mark (81r), Luke (129r), and John (206r).

<sup>40</sup> I.A. Orbeli proposed to regard the five letters as rendering the personal name *gotarz* in Georgian *Asomtavruli* script (ႠႢႣႤႥႦ, i.e., abbreviated *gotrz*); cf. Gippert, Schulze et al. 2009, II-94 with n. 208.

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## The Albanian Inscriptions Revisited (Jost Gippert): Figures

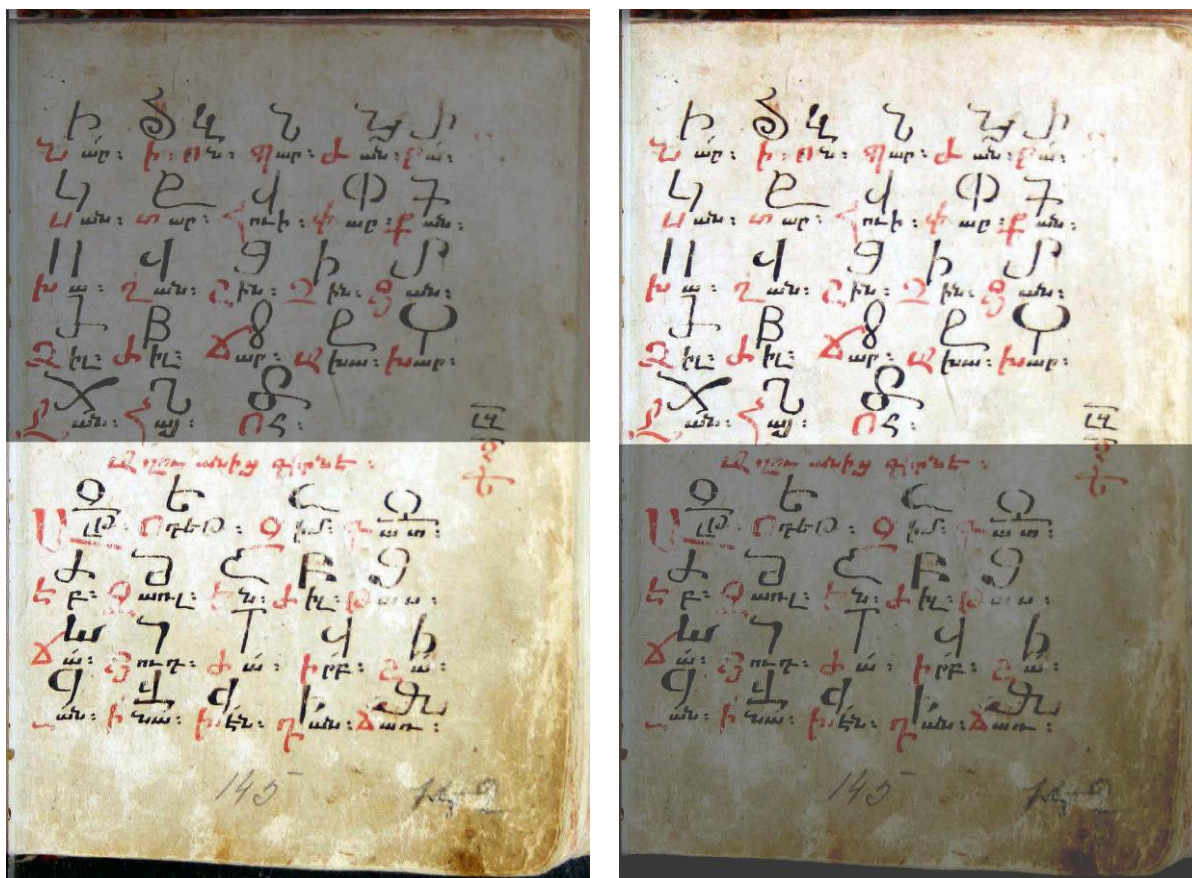


Fig. 1: The Albanian alphabet list in Cod. Mat. 7117, fol. 145rv



Fig. 2a-d: The four faces of the Mingecaur pedestal





Fig. 3a-d: The inscription on the four faces of the Mingečaur pedestal in its present stage



Fig. 4: The front face of the Mingečaur pedestal



Fig. 5: The silver bowl of Bartym (reproduced from Bader 1949, Fig. 19a).



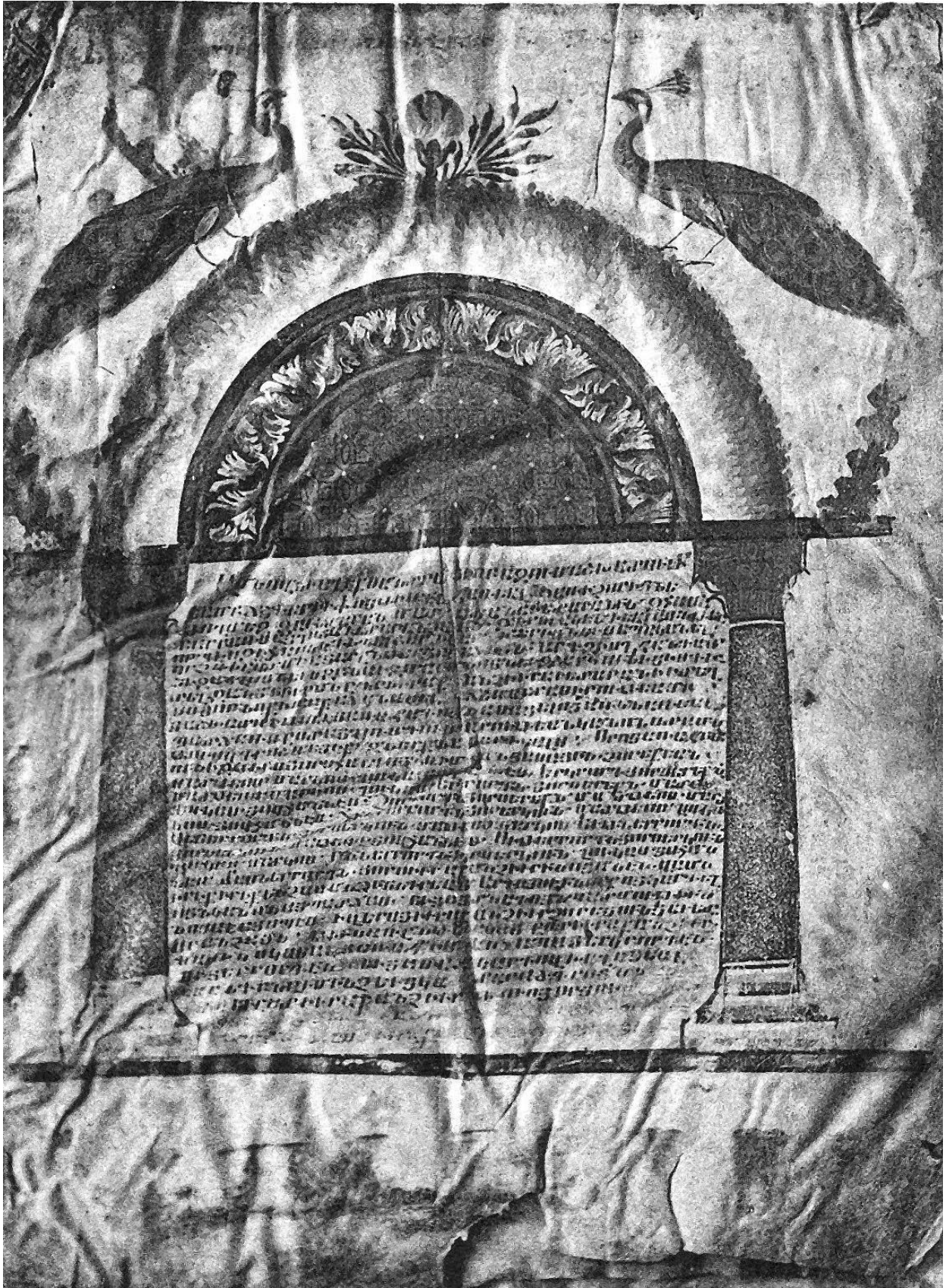


Fig. 6: The Etchmiadzin Gospels of 989, fol. 1r: Eusebian prologue with peacock symbol



Fig. 7: Vani Gospels, peacock symbol on the portal to the Gospel of Mark





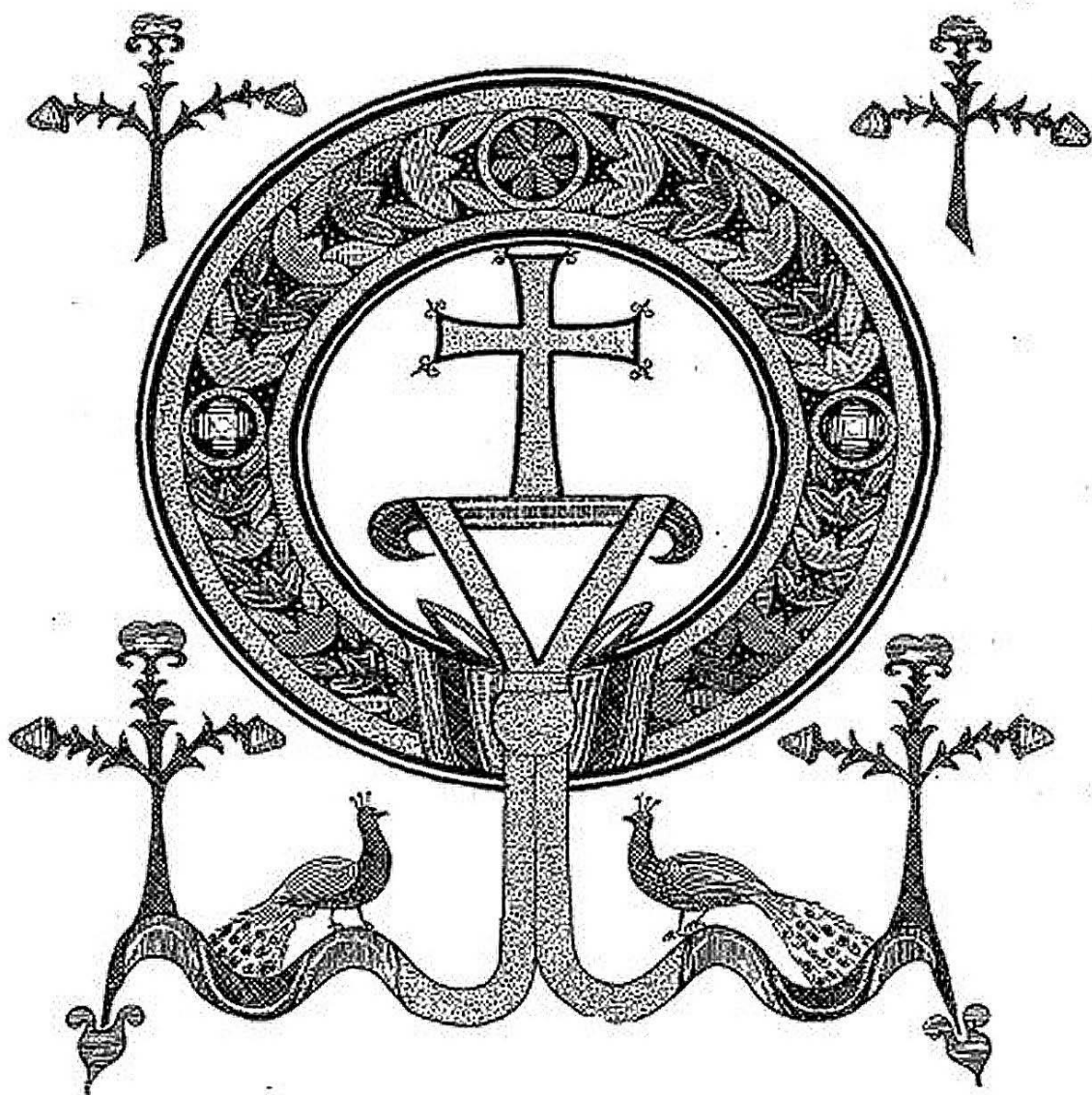


Fig. 9: Initial page of Cod. Vind. gr. 847 (reproduced from Nordenfalk 1938, 157)







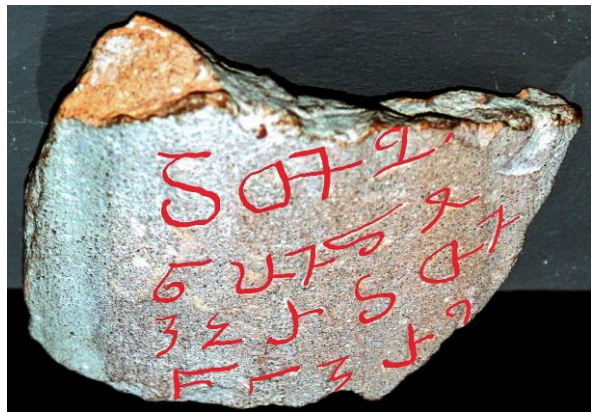
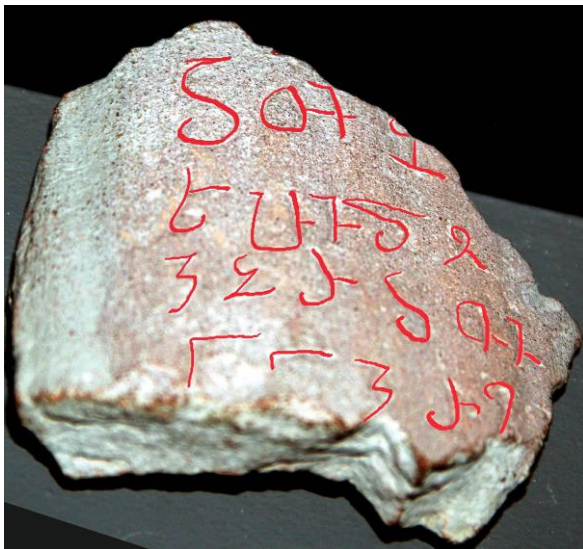


Fig. 11a-b: Potsherd inscription (twofold view)

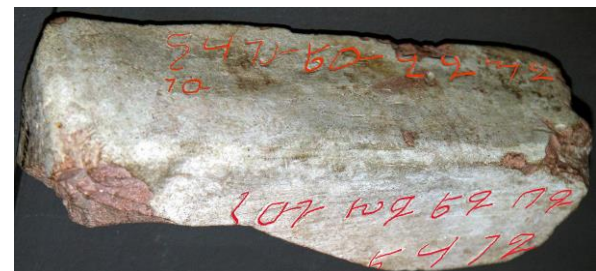


Fig. 12a-b: Inscription on the two faces of the candleholder foot





Fig. 13a-d: Candleholder with alphabet inscription



Fig. 14: Vertically applied one-line inscription on candleholder



Fig. 15: One-name inscription on potsherd



Fig. 16a: The Derbent wall inscription (drawing reproduced from Barxowtareanc' 1893, 119).



Fig. 16b-c: The Derbent wall inscription as of today (current view / turned by 180°)





Fig. 17a-b: The Upper Labko tablet (contrasted with the alphabet list)



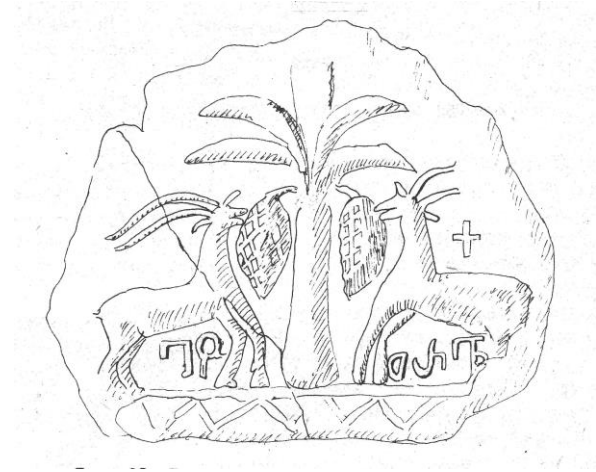


Fig. 18a-b: The Txoba-Erdy plate (photograph / drawing)



Fig. 19a-b: The deer symbol on the roof of the church of Gethsemane, Jerusalem



Fig. 20a-c: Gospel portals with animal symbols from Cod. Kut. 182





Fig. 21: Canon table from Cod. Kut. 76, fol. 4r



Fig. 22: Relief plate from the Early Christian Basilica, Vravrona, Greece