

Новые переводы письменных памятников Кавказской Албании: историко-филологический анализ

Махмудова С.М.

Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0220-6216>, e-mail: mahmudovasm@mgppu.ru

Мурадян А.А.

Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1897-7736>, e-mail: muradyanaa@mgppu.ru

Долгие века история древнейшего государства Восточного Кавказа была предана забвению, не было никаких исследований Кавказской Албании, никаких упоминаний о том, что у албан была своя письменность, что царь Албании чуть ли не первым в мире принимает христианство в качестве официальной религии, хотя об этой стране писали еще греко-римские источники (Страбон, Плутарх, Плиний Старший, Арриан и др. Истории известны войны Албании с Помпеем, Траяном и Александром Македонским. Однако история Кавказской Албании не может уйти в небытие, так как монументальные памятники архитектуры еще стоят в современном Азербайджане, Карабахе, в Эрети и Дагестане. Наша работа будет посвящена анализу некоторых письменных источников и артефактов, содержащих надписи на албанском языке.

Ключевые слова: Кавказская Албания, история Кавказской Албании, кавказско-албанская письменность, артефакты, содержащие письменные памятники, поднос, найденный в Рутульском районе Дагестана, попытка дешифровки албанских надписей.

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New Translations of Written Monuments of Caucasian Albania: Historical and Philological Analysis

Svetlana M. Makhmudova

Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia,
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0220-6216>, e-mail: mahmudovasm@mgppu.ru

Ayarpi A. Muradyan

Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia,

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1897-7736>, e-mail: muradyanaa@mgppu.ru

For many centuries, the history of the oldest state in the Eastern Caucasus was forgotten, there were no studies of Caucasian Albania, no mention of the fact that Albanians had their own written language, that the king of Albania was almost the first in the world to adopt Christianity as an official religion, although Greco-Roman sources (Strabo, Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, Arrian and others) wrote about this country. History knows Albania's wars with Pompey, Trajan and Alexander the Great. However, the history of Caucasian Albania cannot fade into oblivion, as monumental monuments of architecture still stand in modern Azerbaijan, Karabakh, Eretia and Dagestan. Our work will be devoted to the analysis of some written sources and artefacts containing inscriptions in Albanian.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, history of Caucasian Albania, Caucasian-Albanian writing, artefacts containing written monuments, a tray found in the Rutul district of Dagestan, an attempt to decipher Albanian inscriptions.

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It is believed that the borders of Caucasian Albania stretched from the Kura River to the Samur River. However, Samur (the ancient name for Albania) could in no way be the northern border because the Rutuls — one of the main tribes of Caucasian Albania — lived around Samur: the southern Rutuls lived south of the river through Mount Deovgai, the northern ones — north of Samur, the river itself turned out to be in the middle. In addition, there is every reason to believe that not only Lezgin tribes were part of Caucasian Albania. On the territory of modern Azerbaijan, the settlements of the Dzharo-Belokan Avars have survived to this day, in the Tlyaratinsky district of Dagestan there is a place that has retained the name Albania; Pliny the Elder writes about the Didurs who were part of the 26 tribes of Albania [Plinius]. And the Didur / Dido or Tsez are included in the Avar-Ando-Tsez group of languages. Here are some more ancient Avar symbols — petroglyphs:

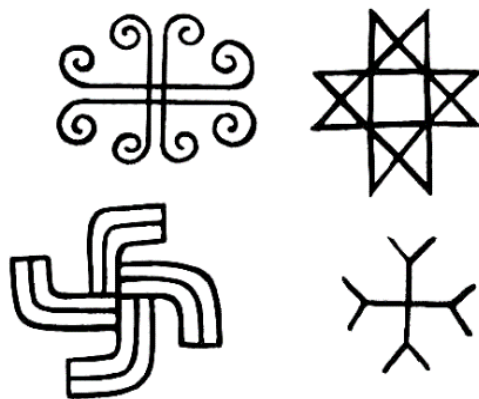


Fig. 1. Ancient Avar petroglyphs

By comparison, here are the Rutul petroglyphs of the Christian period:



Fig. 2. Rutul petroglyphs (Christian period)

Datun church is known too. It is an ancient Christian temple located in modern Shamil Dagestan area where Avarians reside. It was erected in the X — XI centuries¹.

In Dargin villages, petroglyphs indicating Christianity are also found — a stone tablet was found near the village Upper Labkomakhi of the Levashinsky region, on which the alphabet from the Matenadaran manuscript is reproduced, which suggests that the northern borders of Caucasian Albania are not quite correctly established.

Albania (or Caucasian Albania, as it is commonly called to distinguish it from the Balkan countries), is the first country to adopt Christianity under the leadership of the king Urnair in 313 AD. It is interesting that Elisha, the apostle of the brother of Jesus Christ, as early as 70 AD builds the first church, called the "Mother of the Churches of the East", in the village of Kish near the city of Sheki [Palimpsests: xv].



Fig. 3. “Mother of the Churches of the East”

If we bear in mind that this church was built only 37 years after the resurrection of Christ, then the conclusion suggests itself about Caucasian Albania as the source of the spread of Christianity in the East. The apostle *Elisha* stood at the origins of the Christianization of Albania, which is why the Church began to be called Apostolic. The name Elisha was preserved in the Rutul language as *Yerish*. In Rutul name Jesus hasn't been preserved, but there is a word *Иеccu* [Iessi] instead, which has the semantics of "Master" in the modern Rutul language. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is addressed this way.

“The history of the scientific study of the Caucasian-Albanian alphabet, created more than one and a half thousand years ago, is less than a century. This alphabet appeared around 422, when Christianity had already become the official religion of Caucasian Albania (the Albanian king

¹ <https://sobory.ru/article/?object=45792>

Urnayr was baptized at the end of the 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century)”, according to T.A. Maysak [13].

On November 30, 1971, the Church of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai burned down, during the repairs a secret room was discovered, in which more than 1100 ancient manuscripts remained intact [Palimpsests: xx]. The Georgian scientist Zaza Aleksidze in 1996 revealed among them palimpsests with an entry in Albanian, designated as N / Sin-13 or M13 and N / Sin-55 or M55). Then, together with Z. Aleksidze, Jost Gippert, Wolfgang Schulze and J-P. Mahe, they put a lot of effort to decipher and interpret the manuscripts. *“The assumption of Aleksidze that we are dealing with a rather old lectionary used in worship, proved to be correct,”* — says W. Schulze.

Attempts to determine the phonetic meanings of Albanian letters were also made by scientists before the discovery of Sinai palimpsests by Z. Aleksidze (A.G. Shanidze, A.G. Abramyan, V.L. Ghukasyan, G.A. Klimov, S.N. Muravyov). However, there is still no established version of the interpretation of the letters. According to T.A. Maysak, *“out of the 52 Caucasian-Albanian letters, the phonetic meanings of 29 letters can undoubtedly be identified ... For the remaining 23 characters, the definition of meanings is less obvious, since they are absent in borrowings and words with Udi equivalents, have no correspondences in Armenian and Georgian alphabets, are rare (three letters are not marked in palimpsests even once), and, besides, some of the “problematic” letters are too similar and not always distinguishable in the manuscript. Most of these 23 letters are supposed to be affricates, velar and uvular fricative, “secondary” (pharyngalized?) vowels and pharyngeal consonants, palatal (palatalized?) stops and sonants, and some others”* [13].

Researchers believe that the "Lezgin character" of the Caucasian-Albanian language *"is beyond any doubt"* [2, p. 20]. According to the opinion of J. Gippert and W. Schulze, the Caucasian-Albanian language from phonological and lexical points of view *“retained the original Lezgin (more precisely: East Samur) features much better than the modern Udi”* [Alikberov: 25; Gippert J., Schulze W.: 207], nevertheless, when decoding the Sinai palimpsests, the Udi language was taken as the defining language.

The Udins lived side by side in the territory belonging to Caucasian Albania with the Rutuls and the Tsakhurs in the west, with the Kryz and the Khinalugs (kets) in the east. And, if we agree with the conclusion of J. Gippert and W. Schulze about the dominant East Samur features of the Albanian written language, then it should be recognized that when analyzing the Sinai palimpsests, one should refer to all languages of the Lezgin subgroup. The study of manuscripts should involve not only Udi, but also other languages of the Lezgin subgroup of the Nakh-Dagestan languages — Rutul, Tsakhur, Kryz, Khinalug, Budukh, Agul, Tabasaran, Lezgin, Archin and, in our opinion, Ingiloy.

This work is an attempt to explain some Albanian inscriptions from the point of view of the Rutul language.

Sheki (in the Rutul language the city of Sheki still has the name Nukha or Nakhudik) is the city where the Rutuls (the Khnov-Borchinsky dialect of the Rutul language) lived and live — one of the tribes of Caucasian Albania, they also owned all the settlements around Sheki — Gakh, Shorsu, Hirsu, Dash-yuz. Kainar, Amsar, Gay-by lakh, Ak-by lakh, Shin, Kish. Nukha (Nakhudik // Sheki) was the capital of the southern Rutul area. The northern area of the Rutul, including 22 villages had Rutul for the capital. Apparently, it was an extensive state formation, since according to the "unique information" of the Armenian Catholicos (898-924) Johannes Draskhanakertsi, he visited *"the possessions of the king of Albania (Shaki-Hereti)"* [3: 145], that is, the possessions of the king of Albania stretched from Sheki to Hereti. It should be noted here that these possessions are called **Gal** by the Rutuls, — this is how the

settlements of Sheki and all the Rutul villages around it, named in this work, are still designated.

The Rutuls and the Tsakhurs (the southern capital — Ilisu, the northern capital — Tsakhur) have stayed in the southern part (modern Azerbaijan) in winter since ancient times, in the summer in the northern part (modern Dagestan), twice a year moving cattle across the pass: cattle grazed in the northern part in summer, and this way, the pastures in the southern part remained untouched, in winter they went to their southern territories, where the cattle got their own food, untouched in the summer. The Rutuls and the Tsakhurs had their villages and their homes here and there, sometimes even these villages were called the same: the village Amsar is both in Azerbaijan and Dagestan, as well as Mishlesh, Kalyal, Mukhakh, and others. In Bash-Mukhakh and Bash-Kalyal, the prefix *bash* "head" (Turkic) means that these villages were the main residences, and the namesake villages on the territory of Dagestan — Kalyal and Mukhakh — were summer residences, dachas, even the architectural appearance of which residents did not attach much importance. This fact also explains why there are so few Albanian monuments on the territory of modern Dagestan. For the Albanians, the Dagestan lands are only alpine pastures, where they brought their cattle for the summer. The Albanians lived, created and built in Albania instead.

The old territory of the Rutuls, called Gal, is a part of the historical territory of the ancient state of Caucasian Albania, which the Rutuls called "**Aran**" (this is how the Rutuls still call the territory of northern Azerbaijan based on the mountains dividing modern Dagestan with Azerbaijan).

This work is an attempt to explain some of the facts of the Albanian language from the point of view of Rutul, since the Rutul language (along with Tsakhur and Udi) is one of the languages that could be the basis of Albanian.

The word *ayoya* in Palimpsest is deciphered as Hallelujah. However, according to the materials of the Rutul language, the conclusion suggests itself that the word should be read as an archaic version of the word *гъядаа* "since; later; from there", which in some dialects of the Rutul language sounds like *hajaa*, since in the Rutul language there is no bow before the vowel [a], as, for example, in Russian: in the Rutul language, the sound [a] can be pronounced with a bow — [ʔa], which means "there is, to have, to be", and without a bow, then the sound acquires the semantics "this, the one that is near the listener". The second sound is the initial of the word *hajaa*. In the word *owpesown*, the part *ow* in the modern Mukhad dialect of the Rutul language passed into the sound [a] or [y], however, the sound [ow] was preserved in the Borchin-Khnov and Ihrek dialects, compare *aa сукъус* or *уу сукъус* "sit down, sit on" in the Muhad dialect and *ов сукъус* — in Ihrek dialect. In addition, one of the interesting features of the Pralezgin languages should be vowel nasalization, preserved in the Lezgi language, lost by other Lezgi languages. With a given pronoun, we tend to consider the sound [n] at the end of the word *owpesown* as a pronoun that does not have meaningful semantics.

In this case, the part of the sentence *pawlosi hebiy ayoya owpesown* should be translated as **Paul the Apostle then says // will say**. Thus, the word *hebi* is translated as "apostle". The proper name Abiley // Abil // Ebil [Habiley // Habil // Hebil // Habi // Hebi] is widespread in the Rutul language. The semantics of the word is lost, but according to palimpsests, it means "apostle" [31: xxii].

However, if the given lexeme Habiley // Habil // Hebil // Habi // Hebi has, according to Palimpsests, the semantics of the *apostle*, then questions arise about deciphering another translation of the Albanian text. In 1948 (as part of the archaeological expedition of the Museum of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan) on the left bank of the Kura River in the city of Sudagilan on the territory of a destroyed Christian temple of the 7th century, R. M. Vaidov finds a square stone with a text in Albanian [1: 39-40], which also depicts two peacocks facing each other, and between them is the tree of life:



Fig. 4. Two peacocks and the tree of life

A.G. Abrahamyan deciphers the inscription. The decryption is given below:

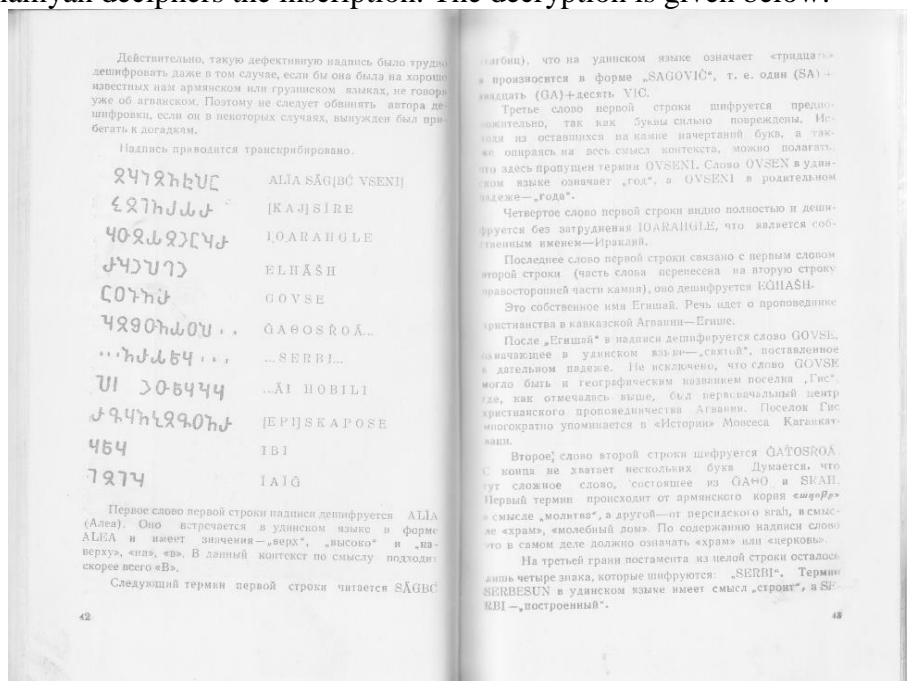


Fig. 5. Decryption

On pages 42-47 of his monograph A.G. Abrahamyan deciphers the inscription on the stone, which comes down to the following:

In the thirtieth [year of the reign] of Heraclius, a temple (in the name of) Saint Egishe (or Egishe Gis) was built ... in memory of Bishop Ovel.

If we take into account the achievements of A.G. Abrahamyan and go further in deciphering, taking into account the grammar of the Rutul language, this inscription is read a little differently:

Алиа сар "*from top to bottom*"

Кайсеpe tsar // *Caesar in the ergative case* (-pe is the ending of the ergative case)

Иракле — Irakli (-e — *the ending of the ergative case*)

Эляс — to the people (Эл — "people", -a — insertion of an indirect stem, -с — the ending of the dative case)

Говсе — Govs / Gos / Gosh / Gish / Kish is the name of the first-capital Christian village in Caucasian Albania, where the Rutuls lived, (-e — the end of in-essev — case denoting being inside)

ГьатЮсро – гьатЮс "*to convey the order through the ambassador*"; -po - pa is the end of the present tense or an imperfective participle.

А — "*this / these; there is*"

Шерби - шер / шегьер — city (-би may be the ending of the plural, which is still present in the Khnov dialect of the Rutul language and in the Tsakhur language. In the Muhad dialect of the Rutul language, this ending later added the element -р: *быр*)

The eighth line of the inscription, given by A. G. Abrahamyan, contains the word ... **ай** with a gap in front of it. We tend to think that the letters **ha** are missing.

Гьяъай — let him/her do / let them do (imperative form with the -й suffix)

нобили — proper name - Гьялбилиий

Ерискапос — As Bishop

Э — to be

Иби — perhaps here the semantics are "to be", then there must be *go*, in any case, the meaning of the sentence implies *go*.

ЙАЙГЪ — day. (In modern Rutul language — *йыгъ*)

Thus, we get quite understandable coherent text:

From above Caesar Heraclius gave the order "In the cities of Kish, let Abiley be made bishop" day.

However, with this interpretation of the text, as well as with the interpretation of A.G. Abrahamyan, the question remains: if **нобили** should be understood as an *apostle* in the Albanian language, as suggested in the deciphering of the Palimpsests, then the translation by A.G. Abrahamyan should be read as "**make the apostle a bishop,**" which is unlikely to correspond to objective reality. In our proposed translation [19] **нобили** is interpreted as Abil — a proper name, perhaps it is rising to the word "apostle".

"*The Caucasian-Albanian manuscript does not contain a colophon or any other information that would allow it to be dated unambiguously. The upper limit of dating can be determined by the Georgian layer of the palimpsest, which was created no earlier than the X — XI centuries. An indirect indication of the lower chronological limit is given by the mention of the dinar in John 6: 7 — the name of the coin, which is a hapax and, unfortunately, is not fully read there, looks like zaizowzn'a*" [Maysak]. Further, the author writes that W. Schulze traces the name of the dinar to the name of the Byzantine emperor Moesia, or the name of Mzhezhi Giuni, the Western Armenian king whose name could be reflected in the name of the coin. In our opinion, the given word requires further analysis, since in the Rutul language the name of money is preserved — *шигъи* [shih], and the phonetic appearance of the word cannot in any way be related to the above interpretation, especially as the word is hapax, which does not provide other evidence of the given interpretation.

The problem of deciphering Albanian epistles is currently attracting close attention of historians and linguists in connection with the Sinai palimpsests introduced into scientific use and new

searches in the field of Albanian studies.

We published earlier a photo of a copper tray with undoubtedly Albanian inscriptions and symbols, found in Rutul [19]:



Fig. 6. Copper tray

Third figure depicts a Griffin — an ancient symbol of a victorious ruler, it guards some secret knowledge and the path to immortality, represents the sun.

Fourth figure is the so-called Moon chariot depicted on the seal of the king of Albania Asvagen, however, science knows this symbol in the following form:



Fig. 7. Moon chariot

The "Rutul" version of the Lunar Chariot is slightly different from the one given.

Fifth figure is an incomprehensible sign, similar to the Tree of Life.

Sixth figure is an ancient symbol, now known as the Star of David, however, it is found in many places in the historical territory of Caucasian Albania, as well as throughout the world.

All these symbols have a sacred meaning — the connection of two worlds, the heavenly and the underworld, power over earth and heaven, the star of Isis, the personification of the god Ra, etc. And their appearance all together was supposed to mean a symbol of power. In our opinion, this tray had a meaning itself, since the letters on it are also not very clear.

R. Lolua, a well-known Georgian expert on ancient Caucasian writing, kindly agreed to analyze the inscription, he says: “As for the inscription: yes, **these are indeed Albanian letters** (emphasis added – S. M). *The phonetic meanings of the Albanian letters are as follows (starting from a letter similar to the Latin S): з - н - о - ч - ? (horizontal eight — a symbol of infinity?) - чь (velarized) - ль - оь (pharyngealized) — (symbol of infinity?) - w (short y — the second part of the digraph, denoting the sound y) - ц - р - (symbol of infinity?) — the letter of the Matenadaran manuscript No. 7117 called "tea" (not found in palimpsests) — "джаѡ" (not found in palimpsests) - c - nI or a - u.*

There is no meaningful text. It seems to me that there is some kind of symbolism. Note that the letters in the upper part are grouped according to the principle of three by three and are highlighted with characters similar to the "horizontal eight". There are also nine characters at the bottom. The images are also interesting — they can be the key to reading. It seems to me that they can be Christian symbols. The griffin can symbolize evil (although it may well be a Sassanian sign), a staircase with a tree on the left side can symbolize Calvary, the sign of David is also used in Christianity. I am not familiar with the upper sign (the symbol of the Holy Trinity?)” (From private correspondence).

Academician W. Schulze, Professor of the Department of General Linguistics named after Ludwig-Maximilian at the University of Munich, a specialist in the Udi language, which is considered the literary language of Caucasian Albania, a recognized specialist in Albanian writing, who was part of the group of researchers of the Sinai palimpsests, together with the Georgian academician Z. Aleksidze, the French linguist Mahe and Gippert, also deciphered the inscription on the plate, however, he doubted the authenticity of the inscription.

Professor W. Schulze writes:

I have tried to read it in Old Armenian, Old Georgian and Caucasian Albanian. The alphabet of neither Armenian nor Georgian, however, offer enough correspondences to interpret the lines accordingly. As for Caucasian Albanian, things are slightly different: In fact, one might try transliterating the signs accordingly. The result would look somehow alike the following (see picture below).

TOP # (left-to-right) *ž_v_ś_k'_?_?_Ś_čj'_o_n_?_Š_p'_d^jof_l^j/ć_c^j_ś_r*

You will immediately see that in which direction soever you try reading this line: It hardly represents something like sensible language. There are simply too few vowels in there (in fact only one). Even if we assume that the text has been written (in the Arabic tradition) without vowels, all this doesn't make sense at all.

Another point is worth being mentioned: The letters come rather close to the highly distorted signs in the Caucasian Albanian alphabet list. The form of these signs is documented only in this alphabet list (manuscript copy of the 14th century or so). The original signs as documented in the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests and stone inscriptions differ considerably from the form of these letters in the alphabet list. Given the fact that the alphabet list is quite known also by local artists or so, we can assume that the person who has produced the letters on the plate has simply referred to the letters of this list for either ornamental purpose or in order to produce a fake (since the discovery of the first Caucasian Albanian inscriptions (in 1948) there have been some fakes like that ben produced especially in Southern Dagestan.

As a conclusion I would dare saying that the inscription on the plate is not something, old '(or Caucasian Albanian), but something that has been produced more recently. This goes together with the rather fictitious ornaments and symbols in the middle of the plate. I do not know of any parallel emblematic patterns documented for Early Medieval times in the Caucasus.) (From private correspondence).

To his answer, prof. W. Schulze also attached a transliteration of the inscription:



Fig. 8. Schulze's transliteration

Both experts agree on one thing — the inscription is undoubtedly made in Albanian letters, and even if it is a fake, then it belongs somewhere in the XIV century, as it was previously dated by prof. W. Schulze.

The arguments in favor of the authenticity of this inscription are as follows: the Rutuls, who this tray belonged to, are one of the Albanian peoples, until the nineties of the twentieth century they still used their historical lands in modern Azerbaijan as their pastures, and they still live there. In this case, did they have a need in the XIV century to prepare fictitious documents, while even the Albanian Apostolic Autocephalous Church was liquidated by the tsar's decree much later — during the Caucasian War, in 1836?

The second argument: the tray was found in a deplorable state — all covered in green rust, as happens with copper objects (Figure 9), only later it was cleaned in the most barbaric way — using a welding flame. This allows us to think that even if the inscription in the Old Albanian language is a fake, then it was done several centuries ago, since modern Rutuls until very recently did not remember that they had a written language, as well as that they had such a powerful state, and even more so they could not write letters. The conclusion is that either it is original and not a fake, and then the inscription refers to the most ancient, old Albanian, period of the written tradition, or — in the XIV century the Rutuls still owned the original Albanian script and knew the alphabet.



Fig. 9. Green rust

We tried to decipher this inscription on the basis of the Rutul language, as it was found on the territory where the Rutuls lived. Considering that the inscription consists of only consonants, it should be concluded that this is a form of ancient writing, when vowels were omitted. However, one vowel — **O** —

is given in the inscription, apparently, being important for understanding the meaning of what is written. Our version of deciphering gives reason to assume that the infinity sign, which is present three times in the inscription, means only the statement of what was said, as if a seal, the fastening of what was said.

The first three letters — *ž _ v _* — can mean *зов* — an archaic form of the pronoun of the 1st person "I" in the nominative or ergative case, since not all dialects of the Rutul language have a personal pronoun in the form of an ergative case, as, for example, in *Ihrek*. Letters *cj _ _ ś r*, in the end of the inscription may mean *кайсар* "king, ruler", a word spoken in Rutul with abruptive to I of . 8 - j / h, 9 - o and 10 - n / r can mean *Чор* — the ancient Albanian name of Derbent, which for some time was the capital of Albania, in the Rutul language the ancient name of Derbent in the *Джал* transcription was preserved. The rest of the inscription cannot be deciphered yet.

The first tray (Figure 9), was found in a burial ground, the other — (Figure 10) (and also roughly treated with a flame (Figure 11)), was found during the repair of the Mukhrek mosque, known as the oldest Muslim mosque in the entire Caucasus, however, these artifacts lead to the conclusion that the mosque was built even earlier and before that still served as a church.



Fig. 10. Tray



Fig. 11. Tray

This tray also has two easily distinguishable inscriptions on the top and bottom of the equilateral cross in the middle (Figure 12), where the letters are more similar to the Phoenician or Greek [23: 227], there are also early Christian symbols — a sign of a ladder and a cross in a circle.



Fig. 12. Two inscriptions

R. Lolua says that "Despite the presented material, there is reason to believe that the Udi

language is not a “descendant” of the Caucasian-Albanian dialect in which Albanian textual and epigraphic monuments were created ...” [11].

“Due to its very tragic fate, the Albanian cultural heritage with its ancient writing, autocephalous church tradition that claimed to be of apostolic origin, many temples not only in the Eastern Caucasus, but also Jerusalem, educational centers and original book culture, monuments of architecture and archeology, etc. deserves a much more delicate, careful attitude towards itself,”
А.К. Аликберов says [2: 24].

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Информация об авторах

Махмудова Светлана Мусаевна, доктор филологических наук, профессор кафедры «Лингводидактика и межкультурная коммуникация» института «Иностранные языки, современные коммуникации и управление», Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0220-6216>, e-mail: mahmudovasm@mgppu.ru

Мурадян Айарпи Андраниковна, кандидат филологических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры «Лингводидактика и межкультурная коммуникация» института «Иностранные языки, современные коммуникации и управление», Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1897-7736>, e-mail: muradyanaa@mgppu.ru

Information about the authors

Svetlana M. Makhmudova, Doctor in Philology, Professor, Department “Linguodidactics and Intercultural Communication”, Institute “Foreign Languages, Modern Communication and Management”, Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0220-6216>, e-mail: mahmudovasm@mgppu.ru

Ayarpı A. Muradyan, PhD in Philology, Senior Lecturer, Department “Linguodidactics and Intercultural Communication”, Institute “Foreign Languages, Modern Communication and Management”, Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1897-7736>, e-mail: muradyanaa@mgppu.ru

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