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The inscriptions of the Georgian Monastery in Bi'r el-Qutt and their chronology

The article analyzes the chronology of the inscriptions discovered on the site of the excavations of St. Theodore Georgian monastery in Bi'r el-Qutt near Jerusalem. Three inscriptions in Georgian and one in foreign (Greek or Latin) language were dated to the V–VI centuries by different researchers. The reason for this dating was the fact of mention in the inscriptions the names of famous people, in particular the church figure Peter the Iberian (411–489), his grandfather Bakur (+416), the father Buzmir (+438) and Abba Anthony the companion of the Saint Simeon Stylites (VI century). Based on known historical data, the author has revised the chronology and proved that the inscriptions belong to different periods of the Byzantine period. Namely, inscriptions №1 and №4 refer to the first half of the VI century. The inscription №2, where the living king of Iberia Buzmir and his son Peter the Iberian is mentioned, was made in the late 30-ies of the V century. The inscription №3, where is mentioned alive and without any regalia the grandfather of Peter the Iberian, the famous Roman military dignitary and later the king of Iberia Bakur the Great can be attributed to 388–392 years, i.e. to time of the founding of the St. Theodore Monastery in Bi'r el-Qutt. In addition, the article focuses on the problem of clarifying the secular name of Peter the Iberian before monastic tonsure in various editions of the life encountered as Nabarnug and Murvanos. Thus, in the inscription №2 name Maruan is fixed which is probably the ancient Arabic equivalent of the Greek word «petros» (stone, rock), that can be explained by the influence of people speaking on the Syro-Arab koine.

Keywords: Georgian inscriptions, Jerusalem, Bi'r el-Qutt, Peter the Iberian, Bakur.

The archaeological excavations headed by Virgilio Corbo in the 40–50-ies of the previous century on the place known as Bi'r el-Qutt resulted discovery of remains of Georgian Monastery which had not been known before. Although there had been surveyed only the half of the referenced archaeological site by then, outcomes of excavations were found out to be still significant for the specialists. This interest was conditioned because of the reasons as follows: 1. The Monastery with attributable economic lifestyle that had not been known before was discovered. 2. Three archaic Georgian inscriptions executed in Asomtavruli script and one fragment of foreign inscription were discovered. 3. Out of discovered four inscriptions two were considered and announced to be the most ancient Georgian inscriptions belonging to the end of the 1th half of V century by chronological standpoint. 4. There were identified four people out of 6 ones referenced in the inscriptions, with consideration of the data of written sources, had been identified. 5. One of the persons mentioned in the inscriptions was identified with the prominent church figure – Peter the Iberian. 6. Process of archaeological excavation coincided in time with issuing of Nutsubidze-Honigman Theory on identity of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite with the Peter the Iberian.

Bi'r el-Qutt archaeological excavations could not be left beyond the interest of Georgian scientists due to identified outcomes and they responded to this discovery in an active manner. Before that Virgilio Corbo entrusted Michael Tarkhnishvili - Georgian scholar who had been conducting the scientific activities in Vatican by that time, to decipher newly discovered Georgian inscriptions and survey the referenced ones from scientific point of view (Tarkhnishvili, 1994 P. 336-344). A little bit later, these inscriptions were made to be the subject of special survey by Giorgi Tsereteli (Tsereteli, 1960 P. 94). Conclusions of the scientists basically were in compliance with each other, however there were noted some differences among the nuances. All of the scientists had the feeling that the issue of Monastery dating itself depended much on the referenced inscriptions along with the number of historical-cultural issues connected with it. V. Corbo did not take a part in discussions over the chronology of the inscriptions. Based on the archaeological material excavated on site he dated the Monastery to be in general of VI c, whereas as the date for destruction of the monument he pointed at starting period of Arabs domination (VII–VIII cc). His conclusion was somehow impacted by mentioning of Abba Anthony in one of the inscriptions discovered on the site, representing clear argument for approving existence of the Monastery in VI c (Corbo, 1955 P. 110-140).

Summarizing of opinions of the scientists over this issue and based on innovative analysis of archaeological material, discovered by Virgilio Corbo on site, requirement for further specifying-revision of history of Bi'r el-Qutt Monastery and chronology of its inscriptions became essential. The present survey represents the attempt to address the issue of chronology of the referenced inscriptions along with the historical-cultural problems connected.

As it was noted above excavations of Bi'r el-Qutt conditioned discovery of four inscriptions: one – complete, second – lacking the starting point, third – lacking the end and the fourth one – as a small fragment only. The referenced inscriptions and respective historical-cultural aspects will be reviewed separately below (numbering of inscriptions has been developed by us – B. Kh.).

The present five-line inscription executed by refined Asomtavruli script is under permanent exposition of Franciscan Archaeological Museum of Jerusalem nowadays and V. Corbo discovered it on the floor of the Frater. The text is easily

readable and it has the signs of inkling on three sections; The inkling is provided under the word „შეიწყალუნ” (Mercy them), traditional name of Our Savior and the name of the Saint after whom this Monastery was built. The names of the persons (Abba Anthony, Josiah) mentioned in the inscription are provided with no inkling. Out of paleographic features of the inscription it shall be noted that the Letter “B” is represented with the closed head, while the Letter “Sh” on the contrary is open (Tarkhnishvili, 1950 P. 249–260; Chachanidze, 1974 P. 36–37, 92–95).

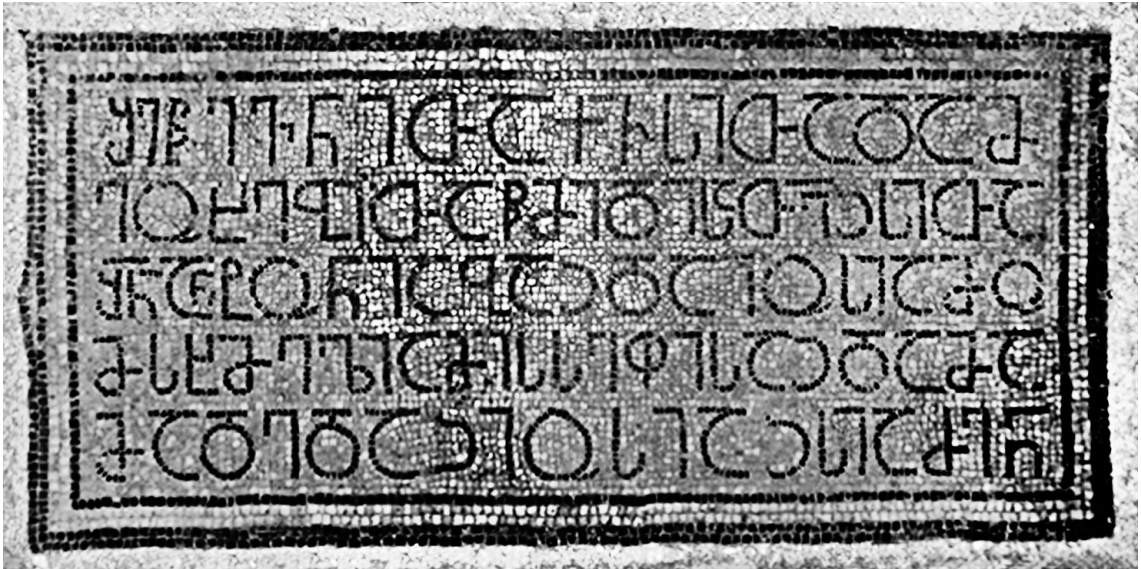
The word „სეფი” (Sephi) is met in the inscription with the significance of the pebble-work (mosaics) and specialists connect it with Syrian „Sep” or Greek „Psephos” – pebble, small stone, dressed stone, or stone used in mosaics (Hachlili, 2009 P. 2–3; Bromiley, Friedrich & Kittel, 1985 P. 1341). There is mentioning of some Josiah in the inscription who is referenced as „სეფის მამსმელო”, i.e. master of mosaics. The name “Josiah” is unknown for Georgian nomenclature of that time. It is the Jewish personal name, represented with the Greek form (Chachanidze, 1974 p. 94). The name having the referenced name is not known by other sources; It seems that he is a Christian and is mentioned in the inscription together with his parents especially because of his feat. Some scientists consider that “it is more presumable Josiah to be the person who provided the funds for mosaic floor arranging” (Danelia, Sarjveladze, 1997 p. 31).

The title of Anthony mentioned as “Abba” in the inscription is an Aramean-Syrian word having significance of the “Father” and by its slightly altered version (Abba, Amba, Anba) it is met in Greek, Latin, Coptic and Ethiopian languages. This term as the title for the head of the Monastery – Father Superior, Archimandrite, had been spread throughout Christian Orient since IV c. This word with the same significance was used also in Georgia of early Christian period (e.g. Tsilkani tomb inscription, “Life” of Assyrian Father – Joseph Alaverdeli etc.). It was determined as the form of respectful reference to the monks and nuns, which for the first time was mentioned by St. Ephrem the Syrian, prominent theologian of the IV c.

Abba Anthony was justly identified by scholars with the Georgian priest Amba Anthony (+596) who had been mentioned for several times in the “Life” of St. Martha – Mother of Svimeon Stylite (Garitte, 1968 P. 61–67). Based on the “Life” of St. Martha it is clear that between the years 532–552 Anthony was in Jerusalem, in particular in Georgian Monastery (Nutsbidze, 1966 P. 112; Metreveli, 1976 note 8, P. 138). Part of specialists consider that here is meant to be the cloister which was excavated by V. Corbo in Bi'r el-Qutt (Chachanidze, 1974 note 8, P. 93; Goiladze, 2013 P. 25–50). There is an assumption also that the mentioned Monastery was referenced by Procopius of Caesarea as the “Monastery of Lazians in the desert of Jerusalem”. According to the data of Byzantine chronicler together with the “Monastery of Iberians” of Jerusalem it was repaired in the 30–40ies of VI century by assistance of Emperor Justinian the Great (Procopius of Caesarea, 1965 P. 223). Based on the referenced as the date for making of mosaic inscription and in general renovation of the Monastery of Georgians was defined to be 532–552 (Qaukhchishvili, 1959 P. 052–062; Tsereteli, 1960 P. 15–17; Kekelidze, 1960 P. 89).

It is known that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem Peter addressed to the Justinian the Great for financial support to be rendered for restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and other damaged Churches-Monasteries after the famous rebellion of Samaritans dated 529. The process of restoration

Inscription №1



„შეწევნითა ქ(რისტ)ესითა და მეოხებითა წმიდისა თ(ეოდორ)ეასითა შ(ეიწყალე)ნ ანტონი აბაÁ და იოსია მომსხმელი ამის სეფისაÁ და მამა დედაÁ იოსიაÁსი ამენ“

„With the help of Christ and at the intercession of Saint Theodore, God have mercy on Abba Anthony and on Josiah the layer of this mosaic and the father and mother of Josiah, Amen”

of damaged cloisters and construction of additional new churches started very soon. On November 20, 543 newly built grand basilica “Nea Theotokos” was sanctified in Jerusalem. It is clear that restoration of old and damaged cloisters of that time could not take more time. It shall be taken into consideration as well that in 541-542 the epidemic plague was spread in Palestine because of what numerous Monasteries were destroyed and some of them became even deserted. This misfortune was followed by destructive earthquake dated July 9th, 551. Respectively if it is presumed that the cloister discovered on the site of Bi’r el-Qutt is really the “Monastery of Lazians” then its renewal along with development of the inscription was to take place in the 530-ies, about which G. Tsereteli was also indicating.

However, it needs to be noted as well that the idea of identity of the cloister discovered on the site of Bi’r el-Qutt and “Monastery of Lazians” is not shared by all scientists (Tarkhnishvili, 1994 P. 343). It is the fact that the friend of Peter the Iberian – Mithridates (John), based on the data of the sources, was from Lazica by origin and location of the “Monastery of Lazians” as per Procopius (“Desert of Jerusalem”) does not contradict with the location of Bi’r el-Qutt Monastery, but the Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter the Iberian (V-VI cc) states that he built lots of Churches-Monasteries in the villages adjacent to Jerusalem. Scientists consider that along with Bi’r el-Qutt, remains of the Monasteries discovered in Beit Safafa and Umm Leisun belong to the mentioned

number of monasteries. The “Desert of Jerusalem” referenced by Procopius of Caesarea means that line of the Judean dessert, which borders Bi'r el-Qutt from South-East. Some scientists mistakenly identify the Bi'r el-Qutt former monastery with the monastery mentioned in Georgian edition of the “Life” of Peter (XIII c) which according to the hagiographer, was located in the dessert being at the banks of Jordan River (Text states: “At the site of desert being on the bank of Jordan”). Bi'r el-Qutt is in a quite far distance from the right bank of Jordan River and to be more precise it is located more at the edge of Judea desert than within its borders.

The Monastery, which is the subject of our interest as per the inscriptions discovered on site, was named after Saint Theodore. This was the name of the mentioned cloister in V–VI cc. It was known with the same name at the beginning of VII c when it was visited by John Moschus, author of famous “Leimon”. Georgian edition of the “Life of St. Martha” mentions the Monastery of Jerusalem at which Abba Anthony was conducting his activities and generally, it is indicated as the cloister, which belonged to Georgians. Greek-Roman equivalent of ethnonym “Georgian” was “Iberian” in that time. There is no reference of the name Mithridates-John the Lazian in Bi'r el-Qutt inscriptions that are known to us. It is difficult to say whether it was referenced or not in any other, still undiscovered inscription being there. There exists the opinion also about later alteration of final three lines of Abba Anthony inscription; in particular, some scientists think that the first two lines of this inscription are to be dated prior to VI c, while the following three ones are presumed to be made in the period of Abba Anthony leadership (Nutsbidze, 1966 P. 112). The “Life” of Martha gives no reference on any churches-monasteries being under construction by Abba Anthoni in Jerusalem. Respectively Abba Anthony could have been only the restoring (or renovating) head of the Monastery, not the founder of it. As for his inscription, it is dated quite justly with the 30-ies of VI century.

The present inscription executed in Asomtavruli script, having vanished as of today without any trace was discovered at the end of the corridor (colonnade) adjacent to the yard of the Monastery being under an open air. The inscription consisted of five lines, out of which only the first one has been preserved completely, the second one has survived in slightly damaged form and the third one – as heavily damaged; there was left one Letter-mark out of the fourth line, whereas the fifth one was completely deleted. This inscription attracted special interests of the specialists because of the following names referenced under it: Maruan, Burzn (მარუან, ბურზნ) [...]. At the starting stage of survey the specialists connected these names with the secular names of the Peter the Iberian and his father, however this issue was put under question as well (Gatserelia, 1977 P. 583; Danelia, Sarjveladze, 1997 P. 30; Bogveradze, 1999 P. 76–78).

Secular name provided under Georgian edition of the “Life” of the Peter the Iberian was represented as “Murvanos”, while of his father “Varaz-Bakur”. This edition is of the late period (XIII c.) and names of the persons we are interested in is clearly disfigured. Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter (VI c.) provides their names as “Nabarnugios” and “Buzmarios” (Raabe, 1895 P. 4; Chabot, 1895 P. 367–397). It is assumed that these names in Assyrian edition have the Greek ending “-os”, originated from the original of the “Life”. Buzmar is the same as Buzmihr. After the inscription, we are interested in, was discovered in Bi'r el-Qutt the part of the specialists concluded that full name of the father of Peter (as well as of his grandfather) was to be “Burzen-Mihr”. As for “Varaz-Bakur”

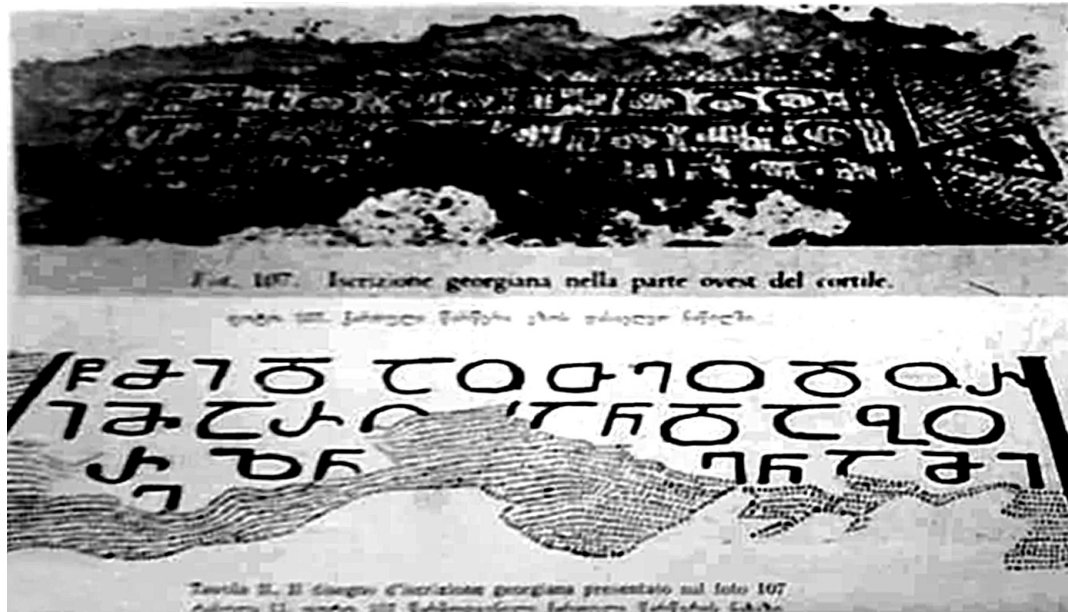
it definitely represents the mistake made by the author of Georgian edition of the “Life” – Makari Meskhi (Bogveradze, 1999 P. 52–53, 57–58). It seems that he failed to identify precisely Buzmar given in the original with the kings mentioned in Georgian historical sources, among which there is no mentioning about the referenced name; He also failed to distinguish “Bakur the Great” (grandfather of Peter as per the line of the mother) mentioned in the “Life” of Peter from father of Peter and by applying of general similarity of names as the father of Murvanos he considered mistakenly to be the king Varaz-Bakur mentioned in Georgian historical sources.

There has been preserved only the first part of the name – “Burzn” (<Burzen) in the inscription and following letters are deleted. “Burzen” represents the Parthian form and is represented with various forms in different sources: Burzin, Burz (>Buz), Borzin, Barzi, Barzen, Baraz, Barza (Hoffmann, 1880 P. 281–293; Darmesteter, 1880 P. 149–156; Mole, 1967; Boyce, 1975 P. 454–465; Boyce, 1982 P. 472–473). With consideration of the fact that the word does not have the inkling on top, vowel “E” is illogically taken out of the base of the given name. It is not excluded as well that here we have the simplified version of the name with no suffix (average Persian “Burz” – high), whereas the Letter “N” to be the starting sound of the following, deleted word. This name lacking the end starts from the end of the second line and continues on the third one. Comparison of two upper lines of the lacked spot with respective area asserts us in the fact that in the inscription there are missed at least three or four letters-marks after the word “Burzn”. G. Tsereteli was considering that there was to be the name of the father of Peter the Iberian – Buzmir under the mentioned name and was filling this defect with the word “Mir//Mihr”. After adding the Letters “EN” in front there is still the space for one Letter. We consider that there should have been the letter “Sh”, which together with the following two marks make the stereotyped allegory for the word “შეიწყალენ” (Mercy them) dedicated to St. Theodor (similar stereotyped version to this word is also met without the sign of inkling in another inscription of Bakur and Gri-Ormizd – B. Kh.). In its turn, it is followed by starting sounds of the new word: “ამი...” (Ami...). Despite the fact that the beginning of the following line has been deleted, it is definitely for sure that as the first mark there should have been the letter “ს” (S), hence the word “ამის” (of it) gets restored (it was exactly how G. Tsereteli was restoring this word). In its turn, together with the union with the deleted word it was representing either determinant pronoun or an adverb.

The inscriptions made on cult monuments mainly represent the commendation-memorial monuments dedicated to their authors, having legal contents as well. In particular, they were expressing the right of their authors to be mentioned in the inscriptions in return for conducted activity (deed) (Corpus of Georgian Inscriptions 1, 1980 P. 21). According to the mentioned in the first version after the pronoun “ამის” (him/his) there should have been definitely named the type of the object and character of conducted action. After presumable “S” on the fourth line there may be missed one mark, following letter of which is partially preserved and may be read as “E”. Afterwards the whole line as well as conclusive fifth string is completely destructed and acceptable option of the preserved text may be read in as follows: „წმიდაო თეოდორე, მარუან და ბურზ(ე)ნ[მიჰრ] [შ](ეიწყალ)ენ ამის[ს] [?]ე[...].“

The opinion on identity of the names: Maruan and Murvan(os) was expressed in the scientific literature since the beginning. Similarity of the names was so noticeable that it became almost impossible to separate them from the

Inscription N°2



„წმინდაო თეოდორე, მარუან და ბურზნ[...]ენ ამი[...] ე[...]“

“Saint Theodore, Maruan and Burzn[...]en ami[...]e[...]”

person of Peter the Iberian and there was established the general opinion that this was the secular name of Peter, however the issue was still under question. Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter represents different version of secular name of Peter – John Rufus mentions Peter in the text as “Nabarnugios”. It is for sure that contemporary and follower of Peter was certainly aware of what the real name of his spiritual confessor had been prior to becoming the monk.

Aimed at overcoming the referenced inconveniency some scholars presumed that Nabarnug was conditioned because of misinterpretation of Maruan-Murvan of Greek text of the “Life” whilst it was translated into Assyrian. Concurrence with this opinion is impossible as the writing of John Rufus represents the Peter with this name for many times and the second reason is that the mentioned name has explanations in Old, as well as in Medium and New Persian languages. We are facing the two-member Persian composite (in Iberia which was under political orbits of Sasanian Persian the locals and especially representatives of local aristocracy frequently had Persian composite names, e.g. name of Vakhtang Gorgasali – “Varan-Khosro-Tang” etc. – B. Kh.), in which the first member “Nabar” is the term for determination of the tribe, family, kin, origin, descendants, while the second member is the old Persian term “Niaka” which signifies Grandfather and the matter concerns the later edition. Hence the name Nabarnug is deciphered in Persian as the descendant of the generation or tribe/family with the generation or name of an ancestor/grandfather (Chkheidze, 1984 P. 53).

With this regard we expressed our position before. In particular, we presumed that secular name of Peter could be represented by three-member Persian composite what actually represented the attempt of coinciding the differentiated data of above referenced sources. Then we assumed that the complete form of the secular name of Peter was to be “Mirvan-Nabar-Nug” (Khurtsilava, 2006 P. 101-114). Fact of similarity of “Maruan” with “Mirvan” was noted independently by other researchers too (John Rufus, 2008 P. 21).

Connection of identity of Peter with Maruan referenced in the inscription has the significance by which it becomes possible to identify chronology of the inscription itself and chronology of St. Theodore Monastery too. The date for creation of the referenced inscription was determined exactly from this standpoint earlier. One part of scholars were reviewing this issue on the following way: if Peter the Iberian was referenced under the inscription by his secular name, it could signify that the inscription itself had been made before Peter entered the monkhood and replaced his secular name by the Church one. Based on the data of the “Life” of Peter as such date was determined to be 30–40-ies of V c (not later than 444). According to the mentioned, specialists deemed the referenced inscription to be the ancient Georgian inscription, however the other part of scientists expressed differentiated opinion, in particular they considered hardly possible Peter as a Church person to mention himself by his secular name (Gatsrelia, 1977; Danelia, Sarjveladze, 1997 P. 30; Papuashvili, 2010).

In the process of working on the present letter, we returned once again to surveying of the mentioned issue and unexpectedly found out the new significant material what made us reject the conclusions made by us on the same issue in the past. We consider that the opinion accepted by scientific literature on identity of the names “Maruan” and “Murvanos” needs to be maintained as effective, however we prevail the first one from the standpoint of reliability because of the reason as follows: from chronological standpoint the inscription of the Monastery belongs to the Byzantine period, it is met on the territory of Georgian monastery and is executed by the ancient type of Georgian writing – Asomtavruli script. Georgian edition of the “Life” is quite far from the standpoint of time by Peter the Iberian. It is late by eight centuries and there are noted lots of lapses concerning names (there is not mentioned even the secular name of John the Lazian – “Mithridates”!); in addition it shall be noticed that Assyrian edition of the “Life” confirms the secular name of Peter to be “Nabarnugios”.

Name Maruan is unknown for Georgian nomenclature. It appears in neither Old nor Medium Persian, not in Greek and Latin; It does not appear in Aramaic, Syrian and Jewish as well, but as the name of the male it is largely met in Arabian by the names as follows: Marwan, Maruan (Jagurov, 1987 P. 215). The base of the name is “Maru/Marw” and it signifies solid (hard) stone, rock, quartz and from metaphoric standpoint – solid basement. The famous thinker Al-Biruni from Khorezm of X–XI cc. in his “Mineralogy” provided the same term by means of “White Stone” given as the Arabian equivalent to flint (Al-Biruni, 1963 P. 210–211). It needs to be emphasized that this name is from the Old Arabian vocabulary prior to Islam.

If we remember that Greek “Petros” signifies exactly the stone, whereas “Peter” means the rock we have the justification to attest that in case of Maruan the matter concerns the Arabian synonym of “Peter” – Church name of Nabarnug. It is interesting what John Rufus writes on this issue: “The homeland of blissful Peter was the famous country of Iberians...in the language of that country the original name of our confessor was Nabarnug, but when he became

worthy of being clothed up in saint cloth defined for monk, instead of the mentioned name he was called as Peter after Peter – First Apostle...to compete with him [Peter Apostle] in actions, skills and customs and gladness of faith granted by the God. This is why the Apostle was named by the God as Peter, i.e. rock on which the faithful Church was established. That is why the God told him: you are the rock and my Church will be built upon this rock.../Matthew 16, 18–19/ (Life of Peter the Iberian, 1988 P. 80). In Gospel of John /1, 142/ as an Aramaic or Syrian equivalent to Greek word “Petros” (rock, stone) we have the term “Kepha” (i.e. Cephas) and this word is paired with the Greek term “Peter” – rock (For different opinion see Van der Hoeven, 2011 P. 2–45). Sometime this term is translated with the sense of “stone” instead of meaning of “rock”. For example it is in this way in Slavonic translation of the gospel. Also Armenian author of IX c. Anania Sanahnets’i was translating it as term “Vem” with a meaning of “stone” (for providing this information we express gratitude to Prof. Bernard Outtier – B. Kh). It is interesting what kind of situation we have from this standpoint in Arabian text of the Gospel. Canonical Arabian version of the Sacred Writing was created only in XIII c. based on Coptic Bible due to availability of lots of different versions. In the context we are interested in there is provided the term “Sakhra”, while the apostle is called as “Boutros”. The specialists consider that none of Arabian versions of the Sacred Writing that have reached us, were prior to Islam, however there exists the verbal tradition that the Sacred Writing was translated into Arabian language in Byzantine period (IV–VI cc) (Krachkovski, 2015 P. 178–184). Mentioning of the name of Peter the Iberian by Old Arabian Synonym in mosaic inscription of Georgian Monastery is interesting from the standpoint of above referenced opinion too.

We are not aware the author of the inscription attested the church name of Iberian prince with Arabian synonymous name either by influence of written source (above referenced context of the Sacred Writing) or it was conditioned more because of impact of verbal sources. But the fact that Maruan of the inscription signifies exactly Peter the Iberian and not anyone else is confirmed by Georgian edition of the “Life” of Peter, author of which presumably (translator or editor of the text) considered slightly altered Arabian name (Murvan<Marwan/Maruan) mistakenly to be the secular name of Peter.

It is interesting that the referenced name is provided by Greek “-os” ending in Georgian edition. If it is not conditioned because of the reason of later editor then there may be presumed that such writing of the name may be based on archetype of the “Life”. If the Church name of Peter the Iberian had been represented in Assyrian edition of the “Life” by an Arabian equivalent then it could have been explained by Arabian origin of the author of original – John Rufus, however the thing is that we have it in Georgian edition only. In contradiction with the Assyrian edition, here is no mentioning why the young man from Iberia was christened as Peter. The survey of interrelation issue between Assyrian and Georgian editions of the “Life” does not represent the objective of the present Letter. We would like to note only that scientific literature contains the opinion as though Zachariah the Georgian (resp. Iberian) to be a fictitious person and Georgian edition of the “Life” may represent significantly remade version of the composition, developed by John Rufus. The scholars sometimes identify Zachariah the Georgian with Zachariah Rhetor//Scholasticus (Lang, 1951 P. 158–168; Life of Peter the Iberian, 1988 P. 58–75; Horn, 2006 P. 47–49). It is even more complicated to determine the reason conditioning mentioning of the name of Peter by Arabian synonym in the inscription.

According to the “Life” of Peter the Iberian, it is clear that together with Georgians there were the monks of various nationalities at the Monasteries, founded by him. Such monks including Arabs were among the followers of Peter. Moreover, there were sparsely scattered nomadic as well as inhabiting Arabian tribes on the Holy Land of that period. Among the signees of the Decree of the Third World Church Session held in 431 in Ephesus there was the Arabian sovereign Peter (“Assab el-Beit”) referred to as the “Bishop of the Camp” (gr. “Episkopos Parembolon”; arab. “Uskof Al Madhareb” – bishop of the bedouins). The referenced person was appointed by Patriarchate Jubenal of Jerusalem of that time specifically as a spiritual shepherd for a bedouin tribe, which became Christian in 425 and built its tent in the area between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Based on the data provided by John Rufus it becomes clear that Peter who left from Egypt for Palestine built a lot of churches and monasteries in about 465–483 in the villages adjacent to Gaza, Caesarea and Jerusalem up to the “State of Arabia”. Hence, appearance of his name with Arabian version in above referenced inscription may be explained somehow according to the mentioned.

It is obvious that concurrence being between Bi’r el-Qutt inscription and Georgian edition of the “Life” of Peter should have had the general source, however they cannot depend on each other at the same time. As we have noted above none of editions of the “Life” of Peter has reached us as original. John Rufus wrote his composition in Greek and we know his text only via its Syrian translation, while original of Georgian edition, if we trust the Testament by Makari Meskhi, was depicted by Zachariah the Georgian in Assyrian language (Makari Meskhi, 1982 P. 59). As we have already mentioned above John Rufus was Arab by origin and he received initial education in Beirut and then was conducting his activities for a long period of time in Syria, Antioch about what his name provides some information as Beit-Rufin was the name of one of the Monasteries of Antioch. In Syria and especially in the districts located to the West of Mesopotamia there were lots of Arabs who were followers of Monophysitism. Antioch and Edessa (Urha) became the camp for the Monophysitism in the 2nd half of V c (Segal, 1970). Prominent representative of this direction was Peter the Fuller too who was the Patriarchate of Antioch of that time (Honigman, 1955 P. 68–69). The language of writing and liturgy for Monophysit and Nestorian Arabs was also Syrian (Assyrian) at that time. The philologists have noted for many times that Arabians and Syrians were applying so-called Syrian-Arabian Koine whilst having direct relations between each other. Hence if in above referenced episodes of Gospels of Matthew and John, Syrian was translating the name of “Peter” (stone, rock) as the “Kepha” into his own language then the Arab too could use his native language and translate it as “Maruan”. Attesting of the name of Peter with Arabian synonym in Bi’r el-Qutt inscription may be connected with Syrian-Arabian circle applying Koine. Against above referenced context it is interesting that Peter the Iberian was mentioned as from Urha (Urfa/Edessa) in Arabian Synaxarion of Jacob the Persian.

The referenced inscription was dated in past as of 30–40-ies of V c. because the scientists were considering “Maruan” to be the secular name of Peter the Iberian. The other scholars were strictly against the referenced opinion (Gatserelia, 1977 P. 583; Papuashvili, 2010; Bogveradze, 1999 P. 52–53, 57–58). Although the representations of scientists on biographical chronology of Peter is differentiated, approximate date of his transformation into ecclesiastic person is known. Based on summarizing of Assyrian and Georgian editions of the “Life” of Peter it became clear that there was not big gap from the standpoint of time

constraints since his entering the monkhood up to being sanctified as the priest. The specialists state that the date of his sanctification as a priest was the year 445, while either 437 or 438 is considered to be the date when he became the monk (Devos, 1968 P. 337–350). It is obvious that the inscription could not be developed prior to above mentioned dates as it mentions Nabarnug by his church name (Petre//Maruan) already. Due to deleted lines of the ending of the inscription to be reviewed it is obscure which form the author applied whilst mentioning Maruan and Burzn[...]. If restoration of the word “*მეიწყალენ*” (Mercy them) of the inscription is correct then we can presume that Peter and the person mentioned together with him were alive while the inscription was being made.

The objective of the present Letter is not surveying of biographical chronology of Peter, however as the date of Peter entering the monkhood is more or less specified it would not be excessive to remember the mandatory requirement of Archieratikon who determined the age of 30 as the lower edge for the candidacy selected to be the monk. With consideration of the referenced principle the upper chronological limit goes for the year 415 (by that time Peter was to be more than 30 years old – B. Kh.). While if we presume that Peter entered the monkhood in 437/438 and consider also the information of the Georgian edition of his “Life” that at that period of time he was to be 25 years old (pursuant to Assyrian edition – 20 years), then his date of birth will come close to the year 412/413. In scientific literature, scholars frequently indicate the year 491 as the death date of Peter the Iberian. Pursuant to John Rufus by that time he had achieved 80 years and it adjusts well to the presumption that his birth date was at the beginning of the 410-ies.

According to the Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter, Nabarnug was 12 years old when was sent for Byzantium by his father. This fact confirms that in 424/425 Buzmir was alive (Bogveradze, 1999 P. 51). By that time he should have been about 50 years old as we know that his father, senior Buzmir who was serving at the Military Service of Romans (at Ammianus Marcellinus: “Barzimeres”) died in 375 during one of the confrontations against the Goths. The mentioned confirms also that senior Buzmir has never been the king of Iberia. Some scientists also exclude the kingship of junior Buzmir as according to Strabo they consider him to be the “second person after the King”, Spaspet or Pitiaxes (Peeters, 1932 P. 5–66; Toumanoff, 1963; Bogveradze, 1999 P. 51; for different opinion see Flusin, 1991–1992 P. 365–368; Kofsky, 1997 P. 210; Horn, 2006). It is difficult to determine whether by 437/38 when Peter was ordained a monk Buzmir was junior alive or not. When John Rufus talks about the letter which was sent out by King Archil to Peter being in Jerusalem by that time, he does not mentioned Buzmir. Then by means of the other notification of the same writer we learn that already widowed mother of Peter – Bakurdukhtia decided to visit her son in 444. According to the specific data we consider that time for creation of the inscription representing the subject of our review is to be within 437–444. According to one notification of Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter, King Archil was still alive at the edge of 437–438 (Javakhishvili, 1951 P. 237; Bogveradze, 1999 P. 75; Gatsrelia, 1977 P. 583). If the Burzn[...] of the inscription definitely signifies the father of Peter then as the date for creation of the inscription is to be presumed to be the end of the 430-ies, prior to Buzmir’s death. We would like to add to the referenced also that according to one of the notifications of the Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter, Nabarnug who had just left from the kingdom of Byzantine prior to entering Jerusalem visited the Nabateans and went to see

one ascetic monk who was on the Prophet Moses Mountain (Mount Nebo in Transjordan). Peter himself says that by that time he was still the young secular person called as Nabarnug. As according to the data of written sources, young Nabarnug was eye-witness of the preaches by Patriarchates Nestorius, Procles and Maximianus in Constantinople in 428–436, it is obvious that he could reach the Holy Land only afterwards (Gatsrelia, 1977 P. 583). In spring of about 438 he clothed up as the monk and was called as Peter hereinafter.

In case the inscription is dated the end of the 430-ies, there emerge the logical questions as follows: was it possible the Monastery to be built in Bi'r el-Qutt by Peter the Iberian in such a short period of time? Can we assume Peter to be the founder of this Monastery or shall we consider him to be the renovator or restorer of the cloister which had existed before that? Narration of John Rufus hardly assists us in responding to above given questions, however due to his data we learn that the first cloister founded by Peter on the Holy Land was the "Monastery of Iberians" being in the vicinity of David's Tower in Jerusalem. Information on construction of the Monastery by Peter on the site of Bi'r el-Qutt is neither met at his "Life" nor in other sources. Several scientists consider that Peter the Iberian was only the renovator (or restorer) of this Monastery. This opinion logically signifies the fact of existence of the Monastery in Bi'r el-Qutt prior to that time, i.e. before Peter the Iberian appeared in Palestine, however the fact that the name of Peter is provided in the inscription by means of Arabian synonym complicates possibility of this inscription to be dated with the referenced time. The whole review provided by us is based on identity of Burzn[...] with Buzmir. If this identity becomes questionable then the date for creation of this inscription will go deeper from the standpoint of time.

This inscription executed with Asomtavruli script was discovered to the West of the colonnade of central yard. The letter-marks were arranged within three squares (there is the assumption that starting square is missed here) with black pebbles on white background.

Due to the manner of writing this inscription seems to be older than the other ones and it was noted by the specialists since the beginning. The calligraphy of the inscription also differentiates from the other ones; the letters are comparatively rough. The Letter-marks „B” and „Y” have closed heads, while the letter-mark „Sh” has closed head what was characterizing for an early stage of the Asomtavruli script. Inscription with paleographic marks was dated by M. Tarkhnishvili as of VI c. As an additional argument M. Tarkhnishvili was considering mentioning of the name "Ormizd" in the inscription. In particular M. Tarkhnishvili was assuming that one of the persons referenced in the inscription (Georgian noble person as per him) could be named after the King of Persia – Hormizd III (457–459) or Hormizd IV (579–590). Agreement with these "arguments" is quite difficult because of many reasons. The fact is that the upper arc of the letter „Sh” is met in a closed as well as open position on the monuments of V c already. It is represented with the closed head in one of the inscription too dated VII c. Correspondingly making of general conclusion with regard to the arcs of above referenced letter "Sh" is not possible as in written monuments of the same period of time they are represented in closed as well as in open positions (Chubinashvili, 1940 note 1, P. 72; Silogava, 1994 P. 71). Opinion expressed by M. Tarkhnishvili is also unconvincing when he says that the name Gri Ormizd mentioned in the inscription was given to him after the king of Persia. The scientist was mistaken in general when he was dividing the two-member Persian composite (Gri Ormizd) into two different names (in accordance with him these

names were Gregory and Ormizd). Later G. Tsereteli showed convincingly that Gri Ormizd was the name of one specific person, however opinion of M. Tarkh-nishvili saying that this unknown person belonged to the aristocratic layer of Iberia is quite acceptable. This is confirmed also by the fact that Gri Ormizd is mentioned in the inscription along with Bakur and is referenced as being grown up by their common fosterer.

The text of the inscription is short, but an interesting thing is that out of two persons mentioned in the text the name of one of them repeats the name of prominent grandfather of Peter the Iberian (Bakur). The second person (Gri Ormizd) mentioned in the inscription is not known amongst closed relatives of Peter and it means that this Inscription was not made as per the order of Peter. Notwithstanding the identity of the persons mentioned there in the beginning part of the inscription, it seems that the inscription together with them was dedicated exactly to Bakur and Gri Ormizd. It is confirmed by the fact that the own children („ნაშობთა“) of fosterers are mentioned at the end of the inscription anonymously. The rarely used word „ძუძეული“ (Foster Mother) in Georgian written sources indicates at the fact that Bakur and Gri Ormizd have the same „მძუძენი“ (Fosterers), i.e. they were friends who grew up together. One more important nuance which was mentioned by the specialists is in the fact that the persons mentioned in the inscription and their unknown fosterers were alive whilst the inscription was being made (Metreveli, 2007 P. 236). According to the mentioned, it becomes impossible to declare Peter the Iberian as the person who ordered the inscription. As Bakur – King of Iberia, grandfather of Peter died in 416, upper chronological threshold for inscription making is to be made by that threshold, however this may not be deemed to be the final conclusion on above mentioned issue. The referenced inscription becomes significantly antiquated because Bakur under it is mentioned with no title.

In ancient Georgian written sources there were mentioned several kings of Iberia by the name of “Bakur”. With consideration of the Byzantine period and concerning the subject of our survey, only one of them may be deemed to be interesting for us – grandfather of Peter the Iberian as per the line of the mother – “Bakur the Great”. It is important that exactly Bakur is mentioned in Syrian edition of the “Life” of Peter the Iberian and only he is the person who bears this name amongst the closest ancestors of Peter. From documentary standpoint, he is the only one who is connected with the Holy Land. As of today, main stages of life-activity of the mentioned person are identified in the following sequence: In 368 Bakur as an Iberian Prince together with the accompanying retinue leaves the homeland for Constantinople against background of contradiction being between the Persian and Eastern Roman Empires aimed at obtaining impact over Iberia (Nikolozishvili, 2010 P. 123–136). At first, he became the member of personal guard of the Emperor and then he was promoted as the head of this guarding detachment; later in 382–394 Bakur is seen as the Dux of Palestine. According to the data of Greek-Roman writers (Ammianus Marcellinus, Gelasius of Caesarea, Tyrannius Rufinus, Socrates Scholasticus, Zosimus) of IV–V centuries, Bakur the Iberian was participating actively in all significant wars during the period of reign of Emperors Valens and Theodosius the Great. The “Palestinian page” of his biography seems to be a little bit obscure, but fragmental data of the writers of that time still reveal many important facts about him. E.G. Gelasius of Caesarea met with Bakur personally in 390 and recorded the history of Christianizing of Iberia from him. According to him by that time Bakur had been known as the “prominent one among the Iberians”. Tyrannius Rufinus resid-

ing in Roman Monastery being on Mount of Olives in 380–397 says that Bakur was living with them (i.e. Monastery residents) in compliance with them and was taking care equally of belief and of truth simultaneously. After the death of Emperor Theodosius I (+395), Bakur returned to the homeland and soon became the king of Iberia up to his death (+416). Pursuant to the Assyrian edition of the “Life” of Peter, Bakur as the king was continuing his life by applying of rules characteristic for ascetic monkhood. John Rufus gives number of specific examples in his composition. Now we will report of how all the mentioned is connected with Bi’r el-Qutt.

As we have already seen from above, Bakur is mentioned in one of the inscriptions of the Monastery. Moreover he is mentioned not as the grandfather of Peter, but as the one who together with his friend had been brought up by the persons unknown to us. The inscription itself was made in respect to the educators-educated ones while they were still alive. If this inscription had been made while Bakur was the king of Iberia then it would have had mentioning in accordance with the kingship status and not simply along with the foresters and a friend of his age. Moreover, Bakur was 45 years old when he became the king and it is doubtful that his foresters had been alive by that time. However this obstacle may be overcome if we consider the time for foundation of Bi’r el-Qutt Monastery to be the period prior to his kingship, i.e. when he was still the Dux of Palestine, lived in Jerusalem and was in close relationship with the residents of cloister founded by his Senior – Melania the Elder.

During the period of 425–529, there were several strong earthquakes near Bi’r el-Qutt (beforehand there was the similar earthquake in Jerusalem dated 419 followed by serious destruction – B. Kh.). G. Tsereteli was assuming that the mentioned earthquake was the reason of destruction of the Monastery, followed by its further renewal (Tsereteli 1960 P. 28). Sh. Nutsubidze was writing directly that Peter the Iberian renewed on this site the cloister which had been founded by his famous grandfather – Bakur in IV c (i.e. Opinion that the Monastery of Bir el Qutt has existed there prior to appearance of Peter the Iberian is not the new – B. Kh.) (Nutsubidze, 1966 P. 112). Now we would like to notify of how the archaeological findings discovered by V. Corbo on site complies with the mentioned opinion.

It shall be noted that V. Corbo was very careful with regard to dating the monastery excavated by him. His survey made it clear that Bi’r el-Qutt site had already been settled in Roman-Byzantine periods. According to observations of V. Corbo, monks of the Monastery together with the local construction material used the material taken out of older structures too. The archeologist was considering that the latter was to be brought from the remains of Bethlehem Birth Basilica from the period of Constantine the Great (Temple was collapsed due to the fire during the rebellion of Samaritans dated 529). As an argument there is provided the fact that these stones were processed similarly to the ones that are met in the arch of Khirbet Siyar el-Ghanam dated VI c. Virgilio Corbo noticed the facts of re-using the old stones in various dwellings of the Monastery. There were identified also the Roman columbarium characterizing for the Antic period and burial ground with the ceramics of the Heroides period re-consumed by monks. V. Corbo was dating St. Theodore Monastery with about the half of VI c, providing as arguments the inscriptions discovered on site and as per him the stones which had been bought from remains of Bethlehem Nativity Basilica. In accordance with him, “if these reused stones are similar to the ones of St. Theodore Monastery which is mentioned by Procopius as the

Monastery of the Lazians in the dessert of Jerusalem, then we have one more basis as the date of this Monastery to be accepted VI c. It would be confirmation of the fact that the material of Bethlehem Basilica by Constantine was used again for construction material purposes” (Corbo, 1955 P. 130). We consider that the more important in all above mentioned is the fact that we have the practice of reusing the stones dated the fourth century in Bi'r el-Qutt. V. Corbo was presuming that these stones were of similar type to Bethlehem Church of the Nativity what gives the grounds for assuming to belong them generally to the fourth century, notwithstanding the fact that they are bought from Bethlehem Church of the Nativity or not. The stones may belong also to the building of local, old structure of the Monastery if we take into consideration that Bi'r el-Qutt is located in the vicinity of Bethlehem. In the past L. Matsulevich emphasized the fact of identity of Bi'r el-Qutt and Pitsunda Temples as per mosaic art and architectural features. He was considering that the referenced monuments had such characterizing features that it was impossible they to belong to the era of Justinian and to be dated later than V century (Matsulevich, 1961 P. 138–143).

The situation becomes even more complicated concerning ceramic material excavated on site. The specialists are still facing the problem while dating them with the early (IV–V cc.) or later (VI–VII cc.) periods of Byzantine time, however the numismatic material excavated on site provides the grounds for making of interesting conclusions. Archeological excavations conducted by V. Corbo on the territory of the Monastery identified the coins of four categories, chronology of which comprises the period from the end of IV c up to the middle of XIII century. These coins are as follows: 1. The Coin of West Rome Emperor Valentinianus II (375–392); 2. Coin of the Emperor of Byzantine Anastasius I (491–518); 3. Coin of the Emperor of Byzantine Constans II (641–668); 4. The Coin dated with the period of Ayyubids. G. Tsereteli concluded that the first two types of coins are specifically in compliance with the date when Georgian inscriptions were made (Tsereteli, 1960 P. 29). The same scientists together with Shalva Nutsbidze was assuming existence of this Monastery by the end of the fourth century (Tsereteli, 1960 p. 29; Nutsbidze, 1966 P. 112–113). Sh. Nutsbidze was connecting its foundation directly to prominent grandfather of Peter the Iberian – Bakur, whose biographic chronology by that time had not been specified wholly. Nowadays we are aware that Bakur was serving at the Military Service of Romans

Inscription №3



„[...] და ძუძეულნი მათნი ბაკურ და გრი
ორმიზდ და ნამობნი მათნი ქ(რისტე)
შე(იწყალენ, ამენ“

„[...] and their alumni Bakur and Gri Ormizd and
their children, Christ, have mercy, Amen”

in 368–394, while in 382–394 he was the Dux of Palestine and respectively had close relationship with Jerusalem and even lived there. The coin issued after the name of the Emperor Valentinianus II and found out in Bi'r el-Qutt is of that period of time. The coin is dated with 383–388. It is clear that this type of

Inscription №4



„[?] ...B or U...T [...] C C or O [...] M C O [...]”

money which had been in use a half century before, could not have any relation with the activity of Peter the Iberian on the Holy Land. We consider that this money is connecting with foundation arranging for the Monastery on Bi'r el-Qutt site, headed by Bakur the Iberian and his close surroundings. Bakur himself was directly involved in the war conducted in 388 against Magnus Maximus who was the rival of Emperor Valentinianus II.

The Monastery according to the inscriptions, was built after Christian Martyr of IV c Theodore Tyrone (+306). This was the Saint who was martyred in the period of Emperor Galerius, remembering day for whom the Orthodox Church celebrates on February 17th as per the Calendar of Julius and the first Saturday of Great Fasting. He was from Town Amasia of Ponto by origin. He was serving at one of Roman armies (his title “Tyrone” signifies the new person, newcomer serving at the army). Great Martyr Theodore became famous among believers very soon. On the first Saturday of big fasting, so called “Saturday of Theodore” has been celebrating

at Oriental Church since the period of Emperor Julian Being Aside and documentary it is testified in one of the speeches by Archbishop of Constantinople Nectarius (381–397). The cult of Theodore the Tyrone was especially respected among the militaries; he was considered to be the protector of them. This latter nuance gives some logic explanation to the opinion saying that Bakur serving at Roman Military Service could have established the Monastery on Bi'r el-Qutt site. Putting of questions in that direction makes more interesting not only the chronology of the above-mentioned Monastery and inscriptions excavated within it but also the ancient Georgian inscription that has preserved and reached us and as some specialists (G. Tsereteli, Sh. Nutsidze) were noting the chronology of its making was to fluctuate between IV–V cc. Now we are able to confirm more firmly that the referenced inscription is dated with the date when the Monastery started functioning and it was in approximately 388–392. It clearly signifies that Georgian alphabet had already existed by that time. There is the opinion also in scientific literature that Georgian alphabet was made exactly in that period of time on the Holy Land and these processes were led by famous grandfather of Peter the Iberian – Bakur who was serving at Roman Service at that period of time (Khurtsilava, 2009 P. 9–226; Seibt, 2011 P. 83–90; Codoner,

2014 P. 138).

This inscription was found out to be at the Western part under an open sky. There have been preserved only the starting letters of only five lines of the inscription. The inscription is almost deleted and reading out of the text on it is practically impossible. In accordance with the preserved letters there was either Latin or Greek inscription. The size of the letters of this inscription exceeds the size of the letters of the remainder inscriptions. This along with the fact that the inscription was made at Georgian Monastery in foreign language points at specific significance of it, however the opinion that it was comprising "all essential notification about the authors of this monument and creators of this site" (M. Tarkhnishvili) against background of lack of additional material, remains as an assumption only. Determination of the language of the text which has not been preserved to date, is complicated by the fact that all preserved letters-marks are general for Greek and Latin languages. Considering the inscription as of to be Greek seems to be more logic (this idea was stated by the professors Leah di Segni and Jerzy Linderski in a personal conversation – B. Kh.). if we envisage that Greek Language in Palestine of Byzantine period was representing the Lingua Franco and inscriptions made by applying of it were met at various places of that period of time (In Jerusalem: YMCA, Atrium of the Virgin Mary Temple, Beit Safafa), with which the Georgians had some connection in the past, whereas the corps of Latin inscriptions of the Holy Land had been very scanty by that period of time and practically disappeared since the end of IV c. If the matter concerns the "Monastery of Lazians" mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea then the efforts made by Justinian for restoration of this cloister had to be noted by creation of special inscription on site, however we are not able to confirm anything because of destruction of the text of the inscription. The only thing we would like to note is that the "Life" of St. Martha provides no mentioning about it. As for the opinion of M. Tarkhnishvili stating that this could be the Georgian text written by Latin transcription we consider impossible to agree with (Chachanidze, 1974 P. 97).

Thus, survey of Bi'r el-Qutt Monastery inscriptions and historical-cultural issues connected with the referenced inscriptions has confirmed once again that chronology of these inscriptions are differentiated and they create the following three groups in accordance with chronological sequence. These groups are as follows: 1. Inscription of Bakur and Gri Ormizd (N^o3) – 388-392; 2. Inscription of Maruan and Burzn[...] (N^o2) – end of the 430-ies; 3. Inscription of Abba Anthony and Josiah (N^o1) and the fragment of foreign (Greek or Latin) inscription (N^o4) – first half of VI c.

The Conclusion on foundation arranging at the Georgian Monastery in Bi'r el-Qutt in IV c logically arises the questions as follows: is there mentioning of this cloister in any other edition of the "Life" of Peter, or did Peter have any connection with this Monastery, built by his grandfather? The fact that Nabarnug who left for Jerusalem visited at first the Monastery of Monks being at the Mount of Olives, does not exclude existence of Georgian cloister in Bi'r el-Qutt at that time. The Monastery established by Melania the Roman was practically within the city against background of Jerusalem which was found out to be without the gates. At the same time it needs to be noted that Georgians had not had their own cloister in Jerusalem prior to Peter. Bi'r el-Qutt was not located in far distance from the city of God, but it was not considered to be within its borders. In addition, Peter who escaped from hostage, preferred to be initially hidden in Jerusalem. It may be considered as one of the reasons why he did not leave

for the Monastery, established by his grandfather upon entering the Holy Land. John Rufus himself states that he does not narrate everything out of Palestine biography of Peter. The fact is that none of the editions of the "Life" mentioned the name of St. Theodore Monastery, however there is named anonymously one such Monastery at which Peter the Iberian and John the Lazian were serving for some period of Time. Corresponding to the narration provided under Assyrian edition of the "Life" after they spent all their saved money to arranging of shelter for pilgrims and beggars, they listened to the advice of Abba Zenon and returned to the monkhood lifestyle and had been at the "Holy Monastery" until as per the sanctification of Zenon himself, returned to the Holy Land. Because of appearance of the Queen Eudokia in Jerusalem, Peter together with John left finally the Holy Land and resettled to the new settlement located between Gaza-Mayuma (Life of Peter the Iberian, 1988 P. 118–120). As per the data of Georgian edition of the "Life", mentioned monastery anonymously was "near Jerusalem" (Makari Meskhi, 1982 P. 39). These data make it clear that the Monastery at which Peter and John were living for some period of time, was neither the cloister of Melania the Roman located on Olive mount nor the Monastery of Iberians being at the Tower of David; It was not definitely any of cloisters in the vicinity of Zenon dwelling (within Village Kephars-Seatra Gaza), but it was located in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Already monk Peter and John had been within the walls of the mentioned Monastery prior to 443, i.e. before Eudokia appeared to Jerusalem, meaning that they had had to be there within 438–444 (maybe it was why the Queen Eudokia who entered Jerusalem at first in 438 and was there up to Spring 439 had never met with Peter the Iberian – B. Kh.). We consider that the Monastery which was beyond the borders of Jerusalem but in the vicinity of it, to which Peter the Iberian, as a Georgian and a grandson of Bakur, could have easier access, could have been Georgian St. Theodore cloister which had been functioning since the end of IV c exactly on the site of Bi'r el-Qutt. The referenced formulation of the issue makes identity of Bi'r el-Qutt and "Monastery of Lazians" questionable. Similar opinion may be expressed concerning Peter assuming him as the church warden of Bi'r el-Qutt Monastery as in the best case he could have been only the renovator of this Monastery as a confirmation to which there has been preserved the referenced memorial inscription.

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Надписи грузинского монастыря в Бир эль-Куте и их хронология

В статье анализируется хронология надписей, обнаруженных на месте раскопок грузинского монастыря святого Феодора в Бир эль-Куте близ Иерусалима. Три надписи на грузинском и одна на греческом и латинском языках были датированы различными исследователями V–VI вв. Причиной такой датировки послужил факт упоминания в надписях имен известных лиц, в частности церковного деятеля Петра Ивера (411–489 гг.), его деда Бакура (+416 г.), отца Бузмира (+438) и аввы Антония, сподвижника преподобного Симеона Столпника (Нового) (VI в.). Основываясь на известных исторических данных, автор пересмотрел хронологию и доказал принадлежность надписей к различным отрезкам времени византийского периода. А именно надписи №1 и 4 относятся к первой половине VI в. Надпись №2, где упомянут живым царь Иверии Бузмир и его сын Петр Ивер, сделана в конце 30-х гг. V в. Надпись №3, где живым и без всяких регалий упомянут дед Петра Ивера, известный в свое время римский военный сановник и позже царь Иверии Бакур Великий, можно отнести к 388–392 гг., т.е. ко времени основания самого монастыря святого Феодора в Бир эль-Куте. Кроме того, в статье обширное внимание уделяется проблеме уточнения светского имени Петра Ивера до монашеского пострига, в различных редакциях жития встречаемого как Набарнуг и Мурванос. Так, в надписи №2 зафиксировано имя Маруан, которое, скорее всего, является древнеарабским эквивалентом греческого слова «петрос» («камень, скала»), что можно объяснить влиянием людей, говорящих на сиро-арабском койне.

Ключевые слова: грузинские надписи, Иерусалим, Бир эль-Кут, Петр Ивер, Бакур.