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DISCOVERY OF UNKNOWN SCRIPT SIGNS IN GEORGIA: THE BASHPLEMI LAKE TABLET

Abstract: In 2021 a basalt tablet bearing an inscription in unknown script was discovered nearby *Bashplemi Lake* (Dmanisi municipality, Georgia). This book-sized tablet bears 60 signs, 39 of them are different. The archaeological context of the finding may be dated back to the Late Bronze/Early Iron Ages. The basalt seems to be of local origin, the signs have some similarities with over 20 ancient scripts from the Near East and Mediterranean.

Keywords: *Unknown script, Inscription, Bashplemi, Georgia.*

INTRODUCTION

Late in the autumn of 2021, a tablet was discovered in *Dmanisi Municipality* (historical *Dbaniskhevi*), Georgia, nearby *Bashplemi lake*. While fishing in the artificially impounded water body in the interfluvium between the right tributaries of the *Mashavera river*, some locals came across an engraved tablet. This book-sized tablet bears 60 signs or characters, 39 of which are different from one another. The engravings leave the impression of an unknown script (Fig. 1).

SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS

Lake on a volcanic plateau

The archeological and historical site that is a point of our interest includes an artificial body of water and its vicinity (Fig. 2). It is located on a *Dmanisi volcanic plateau* (Fig. 3) between streams called *Mamutli* and *Karaklisi*, *Dmanisi Municipality*, South Georgia (latitude: 42° 29' 41.15" N; longitude: 45° 05' 46.33" E). *Bashplemi Lake* is the name given to the water body by the locals. The artifact was found in late autumn, when the level of water was the lowest. The lake, surrounded by hills, is located at 1,647 m above sea level and is abundant in fish (Fig. 4).

Road described in historical records

The road to *Bashplemi Lake* runs along *Tbilisi-Sadakhlo* main road and then turns to the right, southwestward. A few kilometers right of the latter village, northward, begins the road leading to the plateau. The first few hundred meters are paved with flat stones, followed by a section where the completely damaged pavement disappears. Thereafter, a well-preserved section of the road begins, which is a few tens of meters long. It is a heavy road. The

road is an artery described in Georgian historical records¹, which began at Kldekari pass of Trialeti range and connected Shida Kartli, by means of its western, eastern, and southern branches to Armenia as well as other southern countries. It is believed that the road was paved in the medieval period.

Geological structure and tectonics

Geomorphologically, according to the tectonic layout scheme of the territories of Georgia (Gamkrelidze 2000), the Bashplemi Lake and its surroundings are located in the Gektapi subzone of the Lok-Karabakh zone, the folded system of Lesser Caucasus (Anti-Caucasus). The territory is built of Upper Pliocene – Lower Quaternary (N³-Q) volcanogenic rocks: continental sub-alkali basalts, andesite porphyres, andesite basalts and andesites.

We examined both a sample taken from the inscribed tablet and rock samples from the lake surroundings. Finally, we conclude that the samples of the basalt structures around the Bashplemi Lake and the inscribed tablet are identical: Visually, as well as in their mineral and chemical composition, they represent intact volcanic basalt rock.

THE REGION'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Brief history of the region

The first source in which *Mashavera gorge* and *Dbaniskhevi* appear is a list of Georgian clergymen participating in a Church Council held in 506².

Archaeological evidence suggests human settlements on Dmanisi territory since the Early Bronze Age³. Archeological discoveries have verified the presence of well-developed metallurgy in the Late Bronze Age. In this respect, the existence of Taguti mount and a village with a similar name seems to be quite interesting. In proto-Georgian language, the word *tagi* means copper slag and has been maintained in contemporary Zan languages.

Christianity spread here in the same period as in other parts of Georgia. During the sixth to eighth centuries, Dmanisi was a diocesan with a functional cathedral. The city of Dmanisi first appears in sources dating to the ninth century, a period of Arab dominance. However, a new power appears in the 1080s, the Seljuk Empire. In 1123, David IV the Builder completely redeems Dmanisi. In 1125, it was subject to complete royal control, which boosted the advancement of the city during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries: increased trade, the development of crafts and mintage. The caravan route to Anatolia and Western Asia ran across these places. It was also called the Camel Road, hinting that the ultimate destination was in Central Asia, far beyond Western Asia. It may be considered as a section of the Great Silk Road.

At the end of the fourteenth century, Dmanisi was invaded by Tamerlan and, by 1486, by Yaqub Khan's forces. From the sixteenth century, the city was on the decline, its economic and cultural life destroyed. In the late sixteenth century, Dmanisi was conquered by the Ottoman Empire for a brief period and, in the early seventeenth century, by Persia. In

the eighteenth century, the city was finally devastated and emptied. In the nineteenth century, migration processes began, mostly from the neighboring countries and regions.

History of the archeological excavations conducted in the region

Excavation works in Dmanisi started in 1936⁴, which revealed the city gate, some paved streets, a tunnel leading to the river, and numerous ruins of houses. Abundant local ceramics dating back to the ninth to eleventh centuries, and especially the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, coins belonging to the period from the eleventh to thirteenth century (mostly Georgian), tools, weapons and jewelry made of gold and silver were also discovered⁵.

During works conducted to pull a fiber optic cable into a duct at a location called Nagzauri, between Gantiadi and Nusi villages, a few kilometers to the north-east from Bashplemi Lake, an early medieval settlement and a church complex were found. Approximately 170 artifacts and fragments with carved images of humans, animals, and birds were also found. Embossed and carved Georgian *Asomtavruli* inscriptions are preserved on a stone cross and its fragments from the same territory⁶.

In the 1980s, archeologists discovered animal bones, including remains of extinct rhinoceros—*Etruscan rhinoceros*⁷ characteristic of the Early Pleistocene. The first stone tools were discovered in 1982.

In 1999 and 2001, excavations conducted in Dmanisi region revealed hominid skulls and jaw bones. Their age was determined as 1.8 million years⁸. Later, they were named *Homo Georgicus*⁹. These facts provide evidence of the continuous existence of ancient settlements in the region till the Late Middle Ages.

Vicinity of Bashplemi Lake

The upper reach of the Mashavera river basin and vicinity of Bashplemi Lake have never been studied from the viewpoint of archaeology. It is plain at a glance that the territory is interesting. A close look at the white stones scattered around the uninhabited area distinguishes geometrical figures such as rectangles, squares, circles, ellipses, semicircles and sectors. In certain parts of the territory, there are small mound-like hills with apparent vegetation.

During the very first expedition, surface artifacts such as fragments of pottery and a stone mortar (Fig. 5) were discovered. The obsidian lamellae with serrated edges and a scraper with some apparent signs of use were found there too.

Drone research (Fig. 6) revealed that the area of approximately 4 km² is divided into geometrical shapes contoured by means of white stones brought from somewhere else. Special, in-depth studies showed entire sets of regular circles that could be burial mounds; the rectangular, semicircular and combined geometric figures could be the remains

4 MUSKHELISHVILI 1938.

5 JAPARIDZE 1966 JAPARIDZE *et alii* 1978.

6 KAKHIANI *et alii* 2012.

7 VEKUA 1983.

8 VEKUA *et alii* 2002; RIGHTMIRE *et alii* 2006.

9 LORTKIPANIDZE *et alii* 2013.

1 BERDZENISHVILI 2014.

2 BERDZENISHVILI 2014.

3 JAPARIDZE 1966.

of houses, defense structures and places of worship. We find interesting the rectangle with a circular inset in the upper right corner. It is a replica of the shapes of the Didnauri Settlement discovered by K. Pitshelauri in Shiraki, in the interfluvium of the Iori and Alazani rivers, dated back to the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC.

THE CONTEXT OF CAUCASIAN SCRIPTS

Sources by Apollonius of Rhodes (Apoll. Rhod. Arg. IV, 277–281), John of Antioch (FHist. Gr.IV. 548), Charax of Pergamum (FHist. Gr.II. 492–493), Palaephatus (Palaephati. Π ; π , XXXI.) and others provide data about the existence of written language in ancient Colchis.

Chrysography, writing in gold, is a term used by Charax of Pergamum to denote this script. Referring to this fact, in his Description of the Golden Fleece, St. Eustathius of Thessalonica (Eust. Dion. Per. 689) says: “*The purpose of the Argonautic expedition was to learn the method of the Golden Script*”. Apparently, the Golden Script was a special, peculiar art of writing, applied in Colchis.

Notwithstanding numeral ancient sources, Georgian historiography remains traditionally silent about the Colchis script. The unnatural fact that the Colchis script appears in none of ancient Georgian sources calls for explanation. The primary reason why the samples of the script haven't been preserved is that, according to all the above-mentioned authors, Colchis used bio-organic writing materials which could have hardly been preserved in the climatic conditions of west Georgia. It is also worth noting that on the territory of Colchis (west Georgia) hundreds of mounds (probably of Bronze Age), the so-called “Dikha-gudzubas” are not studied yet.

Historically, only three Caucasian nations had written languages of their own: Georgians, Armenians and Albanians. Albanian belongs to dead languages. However, the Udians living in Azerbaijan and Georgia today, regard themselves as heirs of this ethnic group.

The present paper properly discusses signs and groups of signs discovered on the territory of present-day Georgia, mostly Late Bronze period and antiquity, and unified under the name of a *Proto-Georgian script* by various researchers like¹⁰ or under the name – *Colchian runes*¹¹.

Georgian, Armenian and Albanian scripts in fact are attested only after the spread of Christianity. There is a reasonable doubt that inscriptions and manuscripts written in the pre-Christian versions of these scripts were destroyed as a result of Christian domination. In the near vicinity of *Nekresi Church*, east Georgia, was discovered a fragmentary inscription dated back by the researcher who found it by the first to the third century AD, much earlier than the official recognition of Christianity in eastern Georgia¹². In accordance with Georgian historical tradition (Georgian medieval historical manuscripts) Georgian literacy was established in the third century BC, by king Pharnavaz.

There are three types of Georgian alphabet attested in

10 APAKIDZE 1963; FÄHNRIK 2013; LORTKIPANIDZE 2002; LICHELI 2001; SHENGELIA 2010; GIGAURI 2010.

11 KVRIVISHVILI 2010.

12 CHILASHVILI 2000.

different historical periods: *Asomtavruli*, i.e. *Mrgvlovani* (since the fifth century), *Nuskhuri* (since the ninth century) and *Mkhedruli* (since the eleventh century). The first two types appear in hundreds of thousands of rather well-studied Georgian manuscripts and epigraphic monuments, while the last one is an alphabet used by contemporary Georgian language.

ANCIENT SCRIPT STUDIES IN GEORGIA

The history of studying pre-Christian scripts in Georgia begins with the archeological studies of the ancient city of *Mtskheta*, which was the capital before the fifth century. In the 1920s–1950s period, 10 ancient epigraphic monuments were discovered there (five Greek, two Hebrew, one Pahlavi (Middle Persian), and one Aramaic). P. Ingorokva traces the influence of Georgian language in these samples¹³. In addition, one Greek-Aramaic bilingual stele was found there. A fragmentary inscription of pre-Christian period was found in *Nekresi Monastery* (extreme east of Georgia) and city ruins.

Over the last two or three decades, attention has been paid to the so-called cryptographic images discovered in the territory of Georgia (especially in the mountainous regions). These images have been intensively gathered and studied¹⁴ (Great Catalogue of Petroglyphs of Georgia 2010). Regarding their fragmented nature, they are unreadable; however, the question of their origin and graphical similarity to some other scripts has also been debated¹⁵. It is highly likely that these stones were reused: The oblong ones, mostly, were built into the walls of Christian chapels and household units constructed later, which complicates the research.

The eleventh to ninth century BC image on the altar discovered on *Graklian Hill*, Shida Kartli¹⁶, seems to be an inscription. It has not yet been deciphered. It is short and differs from the scripts (Fig. 7). The seals discovered in different regions of Georgia are noteworthy. Scripts on them (mostly intaglio) undoubtedly contain certain information and could belong to an ancient script¹⁷. In this respect, the sealing plates discovered in the 1950s in *Khovle* (9–8 centuries BC) (Fig. 8) and *Tskhinvali* (Fig. 9) are remarkably interesting. The signs on them are rather numerous, more than 20 on each. The Tskhinvali sealing plate was discovered by accident and, due to the absence of archeological context, it is difficult to date. Signs on it seem to be more systematic and, compared with the other seals, it looks more like a script (Fig. 10). On the seals discovered in *Didnauri*, in the burial of twelfth to thirteenth cal BC, we found a sign that resembled the Linear A and B scripts, which commonly denote wine. This seal, we believe, belonged to a tax gatherer, based on the small bone seals discovered there with symbols denoting crops and quantities.

Quite interesting opinions have been offered on the ornaments of the ancient pottery discovered in *Vani* (west Georgia) and *Dablagomi*. These ornaments are believed to

13 APAKIDZE 1963.

14 GIGAURI 2010.

15 SHENGELIA 2010.

16 LICHELI 2020.

17 LORTKIPANIDZE 1969; SHANSHASHVILI/SHERAZADISHVILI 2013.

be informative¹⁸, and some scientists¹⁹ even regard them as fragments of the ancient *Colchian script*, the existence of which was believed by Greek and Roman authors (Diodorus of Sicily, Charax of Pergamon etc., CA, v.1). Moreover, these authors clearly point out to the existence of the Colchian script in the period when it was unusual to nations. However, no actual and reliable traces of the Colchian script have yet been discovered. This is due to inappropriate scales and depths of archeological excavations on the territory of historic Colchis, and the possibility that ancient Colchians mostly used biodegradable materials (wood, leather, etc.) to write on them. The local humid climate and soil should also be considered.

In an article T. Parchukidze²⁰ writes about the inscription (the so-called *Rhodope inscription*) near Petritsoni Georgian Monastery (Bachkovo, Bulgaria), which, according to legend, was deciphered in the twelfth century by Georgian philosopher Ioane Petritsi, to the astonishment of his contemporaries. Some characters in this inscription are somewhat analogous with the Bashplemi inscription (Fig. 11).

THE TABLET FROM A TECHNICAL VIEWPOINT

Artifact authenticity

It is quite natural that while studying any accidentally discovered artifact, the first question that arises is whether it may be faked. This problem has numerous aspects; however, the shortest way to resolve the issue is to find a similar artifact or even a much smaller and insignificant one either in the same area or in its vicinity. It is understood that our research is mostly focused on this aspect along with the clarification of the general archeological context.

According to the currently available data, the situation may be assessed as follows:

1. Signs on the basalt tablet show similarities with several ancient scripts, and it requires vast knowledge and experience to compile them.

2. People who found the artifact are ordinary peasants, and it would be illogical to think of them as falsifiers. Their financial incentive was insignificant.

3. When those people saw the artifact for the first time, to 'see the inscription better,' they scrubbed the surface with something made of iron (presumably a nail). Fortunately, the scratches caused no changes. Their depth is 0.36 mm, while the depth of carved signs is 1–3 mm. No falsifier would ever do anything like this and render the authenticity of an artifact questionable.

4. Microscopic examination revealed that the inscription technology coincided with the age of inscription, although it is rather developed and refined.

5. The territory adjacent to the lake seems to be quite rich from the viewpoint of archaeology. Drone photographs and a survey of the area evidence the fact. Fragments of pottery, a stone mortar and pieces of obsidian (artifacts) found in the surface layer, at first glance, bring us closer to the Bronze Age.

We believe that at this stage, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the artifact.

Technical characteristics of the tablet

Tablet dimensions: 24.1 × 20.1 cm; surface and edges unprocessed, naturally irregular and waved; thickness: 0.8–1.8 cm; color: greyish with pale insertions, and the central part of the reverse is of reddish color; density: 2.6 g/cm³. The tablet was subject to optical and electronic microscopy at Georgian Technical University (Prof. N. Jalabadze) and examined at the Mineralogy Laboratory (Prof. N. Poporadze). It was proved that the tablet was made of vesicular basalt, which is common in the area.

Inscription techniques

A detailed visual examination revealed notched points in the depth of the carved characters.

Basalt is a strong and hard-to-cut material. The initial notched contours of the characters were made using a conic drill and were then connected using some smooth and round-head tool. A deep, pointed notch made using a conic drill was left at the bottom of a linear groove (Fig. 12).

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE BASHPLEMI TABLET

Description of the inscription

The signs carved into the tablet can be conventionally divided into seven registers: Register 1 at the top and Register VII at the bottom (Fig. 13). Part of this tablet has been broken off, particularly on its left side. It is difficult to say how large the missing part was; however, as a rule, the upper first registers of inscriptions, which are shorter and contain some introductory (title) information, are center aligned. According to this logic, not much of the text was lost: the five-member sequence of signs is complete on both sides. However, on the left side, an artifact can be seen: an incomplete arc and an inclined horizontal line that could imply that the register continued slightly further. The last, Register VII, seems to be a complete one, although it could be continued to the right. We could talk about a certain degree of damage. No answer to the main question has yet been found: Was the original tablet given a rectangular or elliptical shape, or was the inscription made on a stone of natural shape?

There are 39 unique signs on the tablet. Some of them are repeated and in total, there are 60 signs on the stone. They are distributed through seven lines or registers. We count them from left to right:

0 is the number of the extreme-left artifact and it cannot be compared with any other symbols due to suspected damage of the edge.

The first register includes six signs (numbered from 1 to 6). The fourth sign vertically aligned three points must be a dividing mark in a phrase or a numeral.

The second register includes 12 signs (numbered from 7 to 18). No. 9 is a full stop; Nos. 13 and 14 were believed to be separate signs but they reappear together in the fifth register (Nos. 48 and 49). It is a set of signs in which sign No. 14 (No. 49), a short vertical line, might have some auxiliary function; the long vertical line (No. 39) must be a separate sign. At the end of this register, there are three upside-down,

18 LORTKIPANIDZE 2002; LICHELI 2001.

19 KVRIVISHVILI 2010.

20 PARCHUKIDZE 2019.

angle-shaped signs. Regarding the graphical differences, we suppose that No. 15 is a separate sign, while Nos. 16 and 17 could be components of a single sign. However, considering the lowest positional location of this sign (No. 17), it could be an auxiliary to the sign (Nos. 27 and 28) of the third lower register (e.g., a determinative). The register ends with a point.

The third register includes 13 signs (numbered from 19 to 31). The three-point sign (No. 25) appears here again. It was difficult to make out the signs in the end (Nos. 29, 30 and 31), either because they were carved later or because they simply wore out under physical impact. They are hardly legible. Additionally, the graphics of sign No. 31 are different. Perhaps No. 30 had to be considered together with the lower No. 31. These three signs create a particularly dense cluster.

The fourth register includes 12 signs (numbered from 32 to 43). The three-point one appears here again (No. 40). The register ends with a hardly visible worn-out sign (No. 43).

The fifth register includes 11 signs (numbered from 44 to 54). Nos. 47 and 54 are aligned in the upper part of the register and are of particular interest.

The sixth register includes only three signs: Nos. 55, 56 and 57.

The seventh register includes three signs: Nos. 58, 59 and 60.

The distribution of signs is as follows:

1. Twenty-one unique signs: 9, 11, 12, 15, 21, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 50, 54, 57 and 59.

2. Thirteen signs appear twice: (1–53); (2–22); (3–42); (6–56); (7–58); (10–38); (13–48); (14–49); (16–17); (19–27); (20–60); (24–52) and (34–51).

3. Three signs are repeated three times: (4–25–40); (8–23–37) and (30–35–55).

4. The full stop is the only sign repeated four times: (5–18–44–46).

Directionality of the inscription

The directionality of the inscription is unclear. It is either left to right or vice versa. It might also be boustrophedon. If we assume that the first register includes an address or an addressee and the three-point sign marks the end of the phrase, the writing direction might be right to left to separate the addressee (deity, king, etc.) from the rest of the text; then comes the part written in the same direction, or boustrophedon. If it were a complete boustrophedon, the same sign in different lines should have different orientations. Signs No. 10 in Register 2, No. 38 in Register 4 and No. 50 in Register 5 might be an example of boustrophedon, but signs No. 13 and 14 in Register 2 as well as signs No. 48 and 49 in Register 5 do not fit this assumption.

Comparative analysis of the graphical representation of signs

To examine the signs on the stone discovered at Bashplemi Lake, we used the comparative method, with due regard to globally recognized classification and approaches²¹

²². Applying modern computer methods adapted to our purposes would also be of interest²³.

Generally, the Bashplemi inscription does not repeat any script known to us; however, most of the symbols used therein resemble ones found in the scripts of the Middle East, as well as those of geographically remote countries such as India, Egypt and West Iberia. The shape of certain signs is reminiscent of the *Proto-Kartvelian* script²⁴ that, according to V. Licheli, appeared in the late fourth millennium BC on Colchian and Iberian territories²⁵. Similarity with the seals of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages found in Georgia is also worth mentioning.

The histogram summarizing graphical similarities between the Bashplemi inscription and other ancient and actual languages (Fig.14) shows that the graphical shapes of the Bashplemi inscription mostly resemble the signs of the *Proto-Kartvelian* script²⁶.

There are some similarities with the still-undeciphered symbols on the seals discovered on the territory of pre-Christian Georgia, the so-called *Colchian runes*, *Grakliani Hill* signs, and the graphics of Georgian *Mrgvlovani/Nuskha-Khutsuri* alphabet.

In Bashplemi signs we can easily see the so-called *end-points* either at the beginning or at the end of a shape-round, wide notches that could simply be related to the method and style of carving. We regard as very interesting the three-line inscription on the stone built into a newer wall of the so-called *Red Church* (eleventh to thirteenth century) on the left side of Pinezauri River, near Dmanisi²⁷, in which some letters and straight lines have the end points, i.e., they repeat the style, or techniques used with Bashplemi stone (Fig. 15). *Red Church* is located a few kilometers from Bashplemi.

Some similarities with Phoenician, Aramaic and Greek alphabets are not surprising as their role in the region and their relations to local scripts are well-known²⁸. Other matches may be coincidental and require further research.

To establish the graphical shapes and phonetical values of the signs used in different epochs and regions, we resorted to the scientific literature^{29 30} as well as special resources in social networks (Tables 1, 2, and 3).

The script, some of whose 39 characters are numbers and punctuation marks, may have been an alphabet.

The local origin of the stone and the similarity of a large part of the signs with the signs of various Caucasian scripts may indicate the local origin of this inscription and the script itself.

Contents of the inscription

Given that the inscription is made on a hard-to-work material, and that some frequently repeated symbols may be

21 DANIELS/BRIGHT 1996.

22 COULMAS 2003.

23 GILLAM 2003.

24 FÄHNRIK 2013.

25 LICHELI 2020.

26 FÄHNRIK 2013.

27 BERDZENISHVILI 2014, 153.

28 GAMKRELIDZE 1989.

29 VOGT 1955.

30 DZIDZIGURI 1978.

numbers, it may represent military spoils (i), an important construction project (ii), or an offering to a deity (iii).

CONCLUSION

1. The graphical shapes of the tablet discovered are samples of a script. The signs on the tablet undoubtedly represent a script. 39 original signs reappear so as to give 60 signs altogether;

2. According to mineralogical analysis, the inscription is made on basalt of local origin. The method of inscribing on a basalt stone is original to a certain extent. The inscription was made by means of drills, presumably two different types, and some abrasive material;

3. Graphic comparison of the characters with tens of syllabic and alphabetic scripts identified relative, not full, similarity with each one. Similarities were mostly identified while comparing the characters from Bashplemi inscription with Caucasian scripts (Georgian Mrgvlovani, Albanian, proto-Georgian). Similarities with Northern, Brahmi and Semitic scripts were also revealed. The direction of the inscription is horizontal, from-right-to-left or vice versa. According to the analysis of the sequence of characters, it's less likely that it's a boustrophedon;

4. At this point, it is impossible to date back the tablet; however, taking into consideration the graphical shapes of the inscription and the artefacts discovered during shallow studies of the area where the tablet was found, the inscription may be dated back to the Late Bronze/Early Iron Ages.

5. Archaeological excavations carried out at this archaeologically abundant location will provide answers to all other questions.

Deciphering the inscription discovered in historical *Dbaniskhevi* can become a remarkably interesting and significant event and this can possibly change the stereotypes about certain historical phenomena, as well as key aspects of the origination and development of the scripts in Caucasus.

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Fig. 1. Bashplemi tablet (special illumination).



Fig. 2. Bashplemi Lake location.

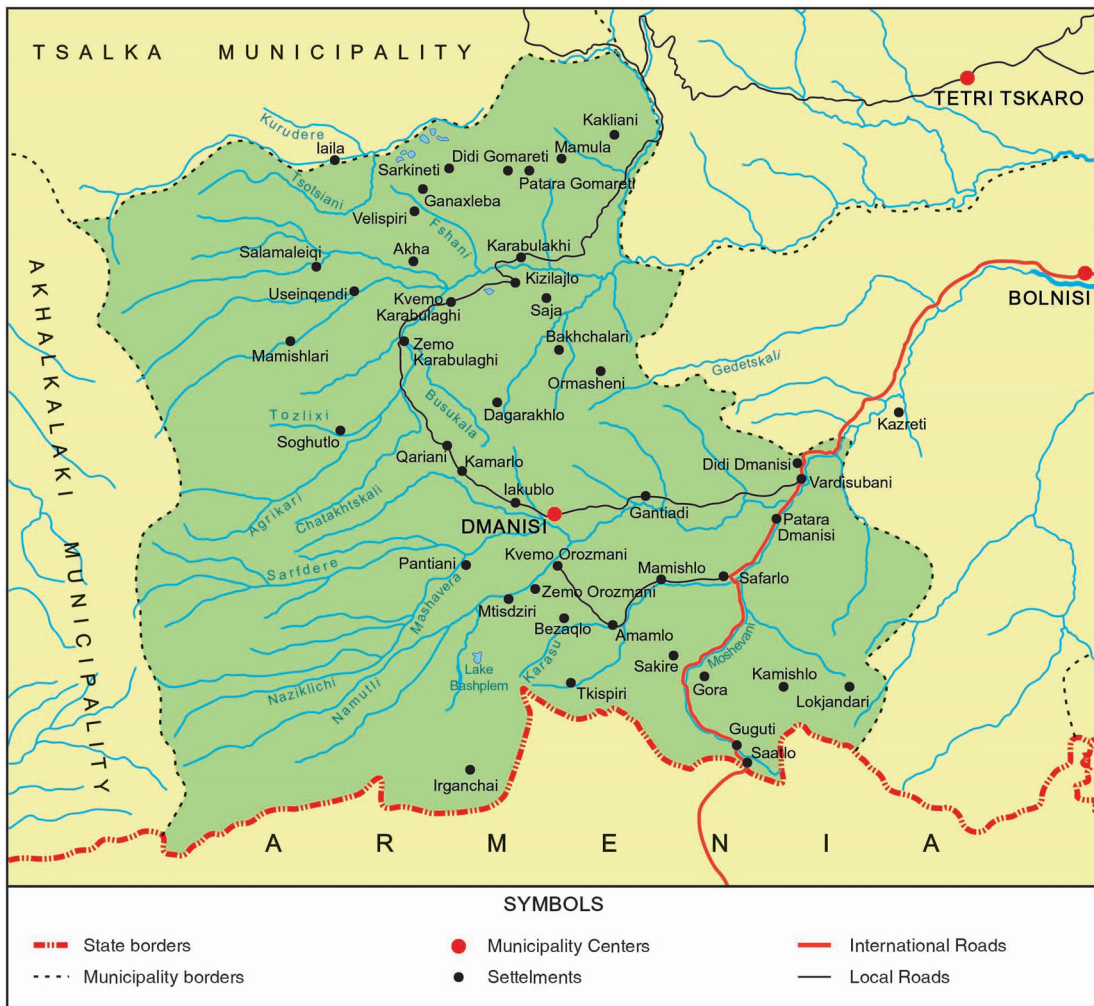


Fig. 3. Map of Bashplemi Lake and its surrounding area.



Fig. 4. Aerial photos of Bashplemi Lake shore.



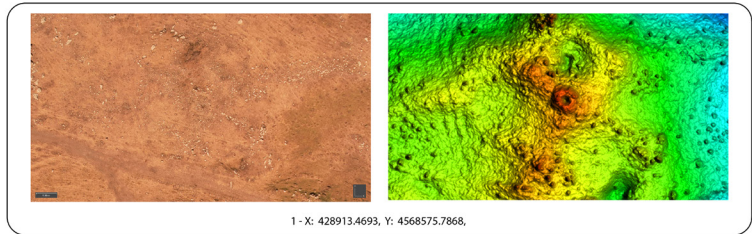
აეროფოტო

რელიეფი

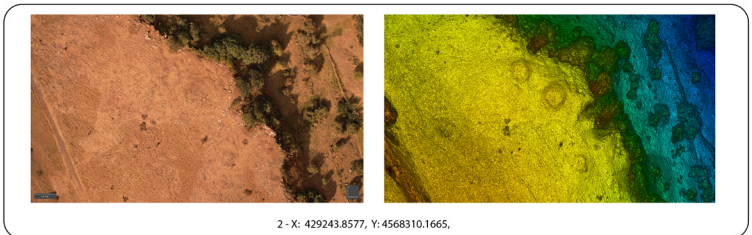


Fig. 5. Stone mortar discovered on the shore of Bashplemi Lake.

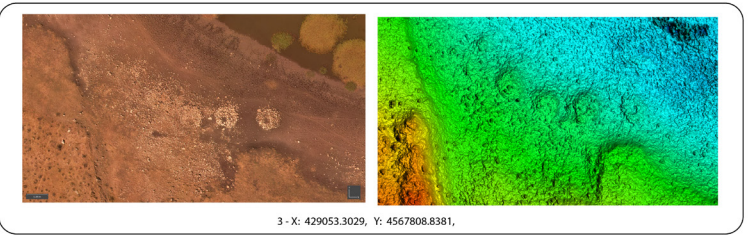
1



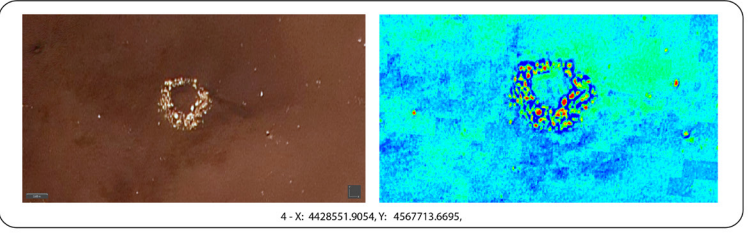
2



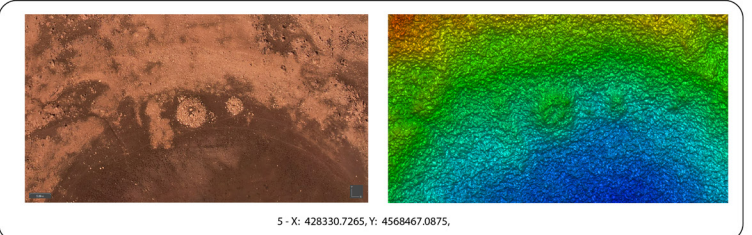
3



4



5



Coordinate System
WGS 84 | UTM zone 38N | EPSG:31438

Fig. 6. Drone views surroundings of Bashplemi Lake.

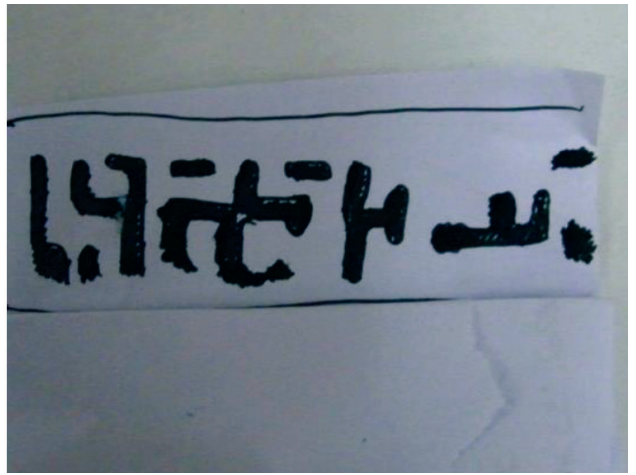


Fig. 7. Inscription on the altar discovered on Graklian Hill (12 BC).

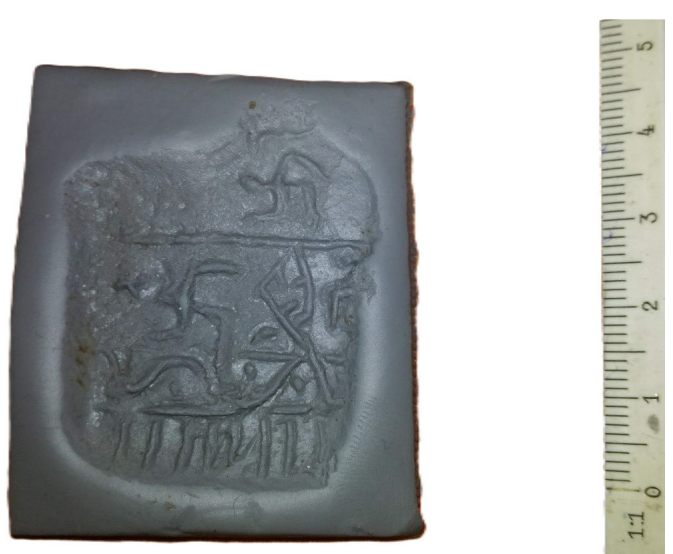


Fig. 8. Khovle plate and its print (9 BC–8 BC).



Fig. 9. Tskhinvali Plate (supposedly Bronze Age).



Fig. 10. Shiraki (South-east Georgia) seals (13 BC–11 BC).

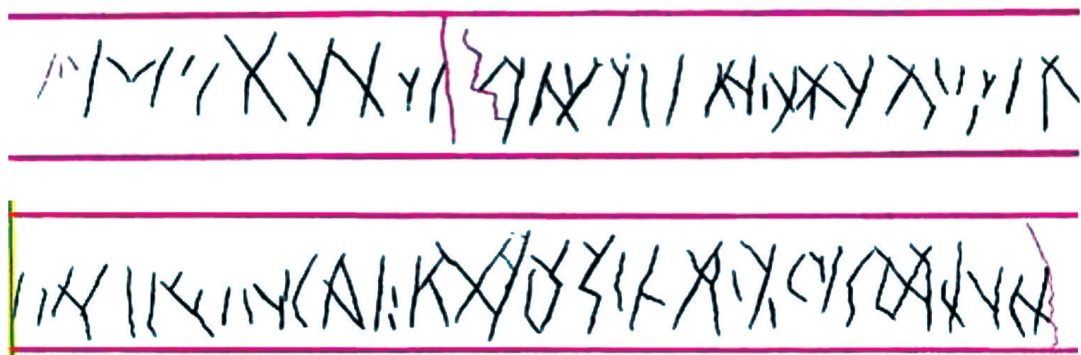


Fig. 11. 'Rhodope' inscription, near Petritsoni Georgian Monastery (Bachkovo, Bulgaria).



Fig. 12. Graphic representation of Bashplemi inscription. Circles within character contours represent pointed notches.

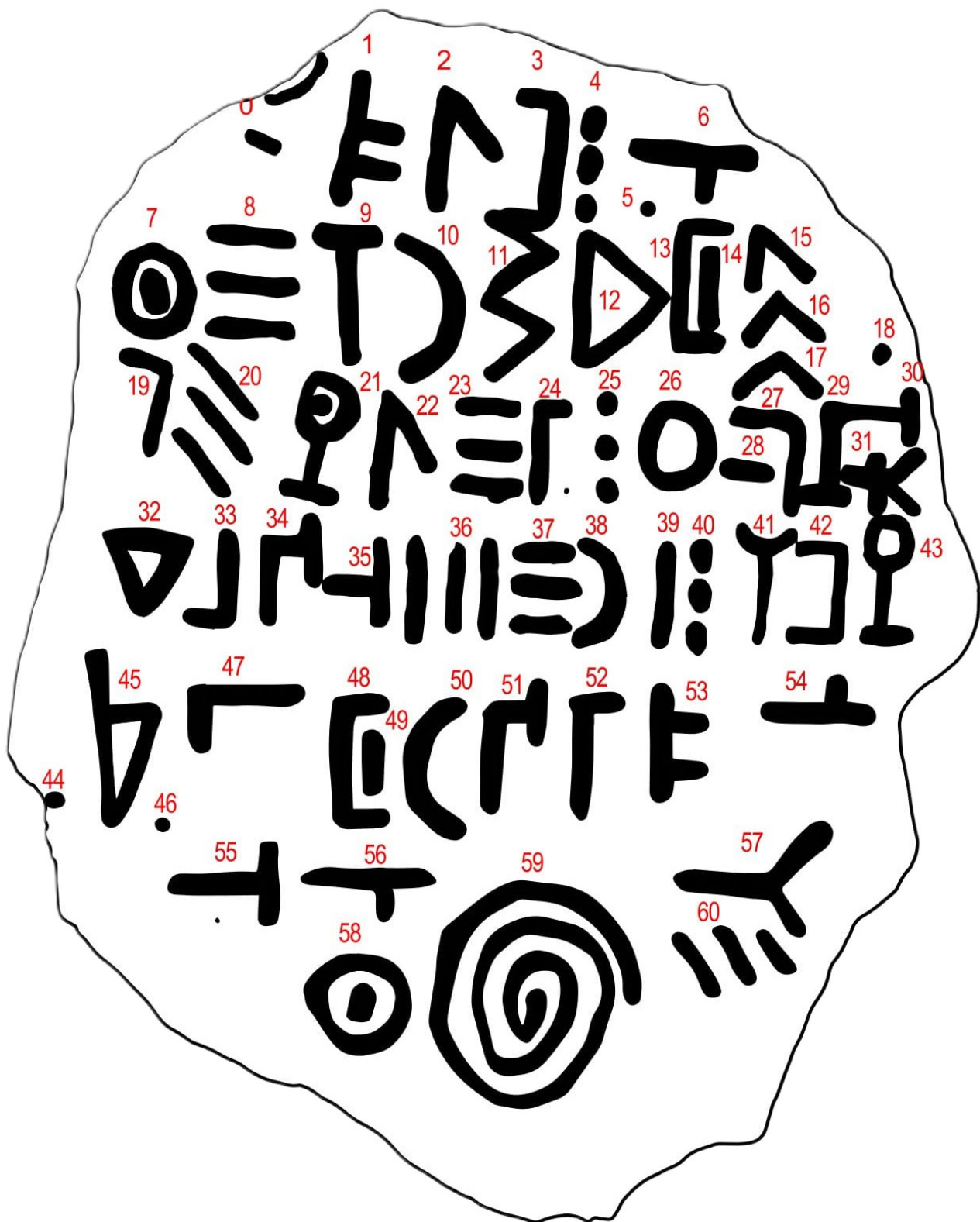


Fig. 13. Graphic representation of Bashplemi inscription characters and their numbering.

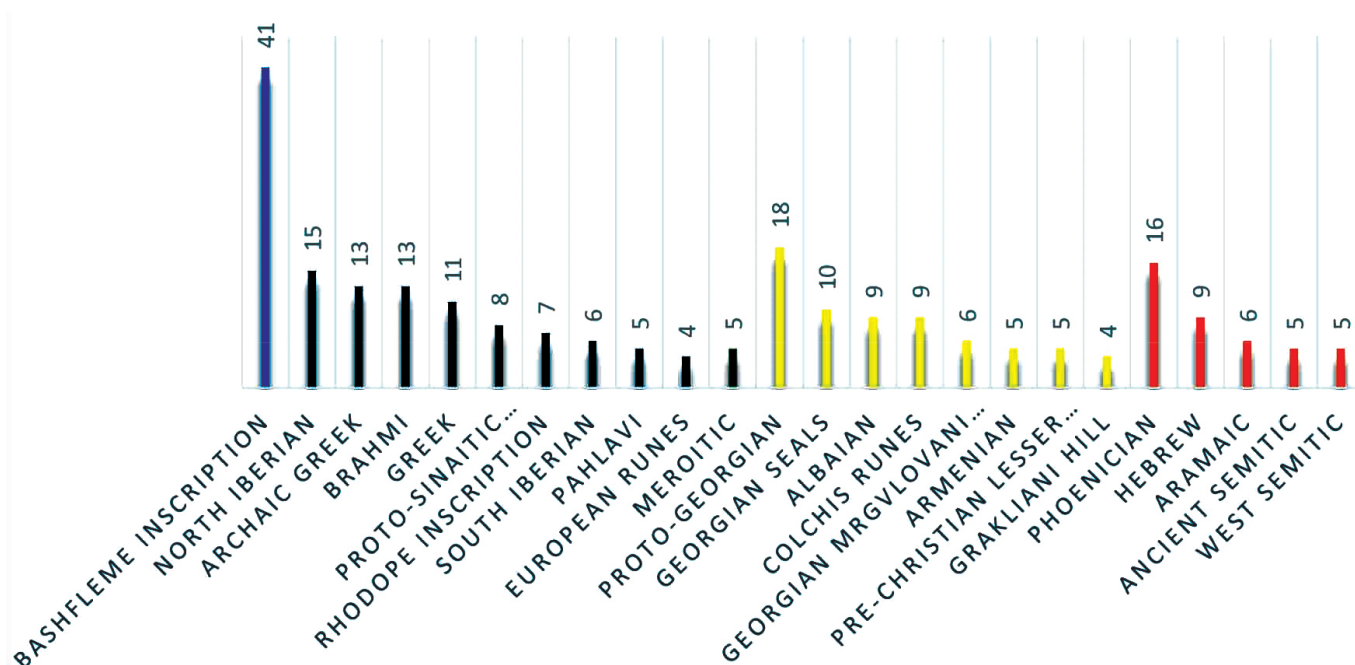


Fig. 14. Comparative analysis of Bashplemi inscription and other scripts. Number of characters on Bashplemi tablet (BT) is regarded as 100% and percentage of the characters like BT in other scripts is given in the columns of distinct colors. Number of the characters on Bashplemi tablet is highlighted in blue, those of Semitic languages – in red, scripts of Caucasian languages and those revealed on the same territory – in yellow and others – in black. It should also be noted that the mirror images were considered to be similar characters.

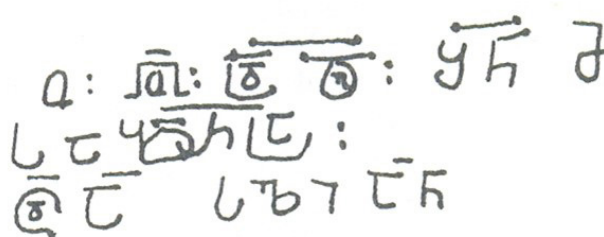


Fig. 15. Inscription on the stone built in the 'Red Church' wall. In the upper line, the middle letters and horizontal lines have endpoints.

Semitic and Greek scripts

N	Bashflami plate	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
		Phoenician	meaning	Greek	meaning	Archaic Greek	meaning	Sabean (West Semitic)	meaning	Proto-Sinaitic	meaning	Aramaic	meaning	Hebrew	meaning
1	𐤀	𐤀	H			𐤀	E					𐤀	H		
2	𐤁	𐤁	G									𐤁	G		
3	𐤂													𐤂	B
4	⋮														
5	•	•	†												
6	𐤃														
7	⊙			⊙	th	⊗	th			⊙	W				
8	≡			≡	E										
9	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄								
10	𐤅							𐤅	M	𐤅	R		𐤅	S	
11	𐤆	𐤆		𐤆	S	𐤆	S	𐤆	§	𐤆	§				
12	𐤇			𐤇	D										
13	𐤈												𐤈	H	
14	𐤉														
15	𐤊														
16	𐤋		•	𐤋	L	𐤋	L				•				
17	𐤌	𐤌	N					𐤌	T	𐤌	G	𐤌	v	𐤌	J, M
18	𐤍														
19	𐤎	𐤎	q			𐤎	Ph								
20	𐤏			𐤏	G	𐤏	P								
21	𐤐	𐤐	•	𐤐	○	𐤐	○	𐤐	F	𐤐	•	𐤐			
22	𐤑														
23	𐤒														v
24	𐤓														
25	𐤔														
26	𐤕	𐤕	△	▽	A	△	A								
27	𐤖	L	L									L	I		
28	𐤗					𐤗	G								
29	𐤘														
30	𐤙														
31	𐤚	I	E	I	I							I	Z		
32	𐤛	Y	W	Y	U	Y	U			Y	H				
33	𐤜							𐤜	Z	𐤜	W				
34	𐤝														
35	𐤞														
36	𐤟					C	G								
37	𐤠														
38	𐤡														
39	𐤢														

Table 1. Semitic and Greek writings: Phoenician, Greek, Archaic Greek, Old Semitic, West Semitic (Sabaean), Proto-Sinaitic (Canaanite), Aramaic.

Key to table:
 † Separation sign
 ‡ Unknown script
 § Nuskhuri alphabet

Caucasian scripts

N	Bashflami plate	8		9		10		11		12		13		14	
		Albanian	meaning	Georgian Mrgolvani	meaning	Colkhis Runes	meaning	Georgian Broze Age Seals	meaning	Proto-Georgian	meaning	Grakliani	meaning	Rhodope	meaning
1	⌒					⌒	‡			⌒	‡				
2	⌒	⌒	Z	⌒	E	⌒	‡								
3	⌒														
4	⋮	⋮	†							⋮	‡				
5	•							•	‡	•	‡				
6	⌒														
7	⊙														
8	≡									≡	‡				
9	⌒	T	th			⌒	‡								
10	⌒			⌒	i			⌒	‡	⌒	‡				
11	⌒					⌒	‡							⚡	‡
12	⌒					⌒	‡			⌒	A				
13	⌒	⌒	E	⌒	§ T			⌒	‡			⌒	‡		
14	⌒														
15	⌒					⌒	‡			⌒	‡				
16	⌒					⌒	‡			⌒	G			⌒	‡
17	⌒	⌒	i	⌒	i										
18	⌒														
19	⌒														
20	⌒														
21	⊙	⊙	o							⊙	‡				
22	⌒														
23	⌒	⌒	N												
24	⌒	⌒	Q												
25	⌒							⌒	‡			⌒	‡		
26	⌒							⌒	‡						
27	⌒			L	S										
28	⌒														
29	⌒													⌒	‡
30	⌒					⌒	‡			⌒/⌒	‡			⌒	‡
31	⌒							⌒	‡						
32	⌒									⌒	‡				
33	⌒	⌒	D							⌒	‡				
34	⌒														
35	⌒														
36	⌒			⌒	A			⌒	‡					⌒	‡
37	⌒														
38	⌒							⌒	‡						
39	⊙							⊙	‡						

Table 2. Caucasian writings: Georgian Mrgvlovani (Asomtavruli) and Nuskhuri, Albanian alphabet, Armenian alphabet (Erkatagir), pre-Christian signs found on the territory of modern Armenia, the “Colkhis runes”, seals of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages of Georgia, “Proto-Georgian script”, The linear signs on the Rhodope Rock, Grakliani Mount signs.

Various scripts

N	Bashfla mi plate	15		16		17		18		19		20		21	
		Pre-Christian Armenia	meaning	Egyptian Meroitic	meaning	Brahmi	meaning	European runes	meaning	Pahlavi	meaning	Northern Iberia	meaning	Southern Iberia	meaning
1	F	F										F	E	≠	O
2	↑					↑	G	↑	U			↑	i		
3]														
4	⋮					⋮	j/T								
5	•	‡													
6	┐			┐	2000										
7	⊙	⊙	‡			⊙	tha					⊙	te/de		
8	≡														
9	┘											T	M		
10	⌋									⌋	R				
11	⚡											⚡	S		
12	▷					▷	E					▷	R		
13	[[h-	[P						
14															
15	^													^	i
16	^			^	1000	^	T					^	i	^	ka/ga
17							kh								
18	≡			≡	600										
19	⊙											⊙	R		
20	○	○	‡											○	E
21	┘					┘	kh								
22	—														
23	┘					┘	H								
24	┘														
25	⌋														
26	▽														
27	┘					L	U			J	G/H				
28	┘											┘	bi		
29	┘														
30	≡			≡	300										
31					100		o		i		i		ba		
32	┘											┘	M		
33	⊙											⊙	R	⊙	6
34	┘									+	M				
35	┘	┘	‡												
36	⌋					⌋	T	T	T						
37	┘									→	G/W				
38	┘														
39	⊙														

Table 3. Various writings: Egyptian: Demotic and Hieratic (Meroitic), South Iberian, North Iberian, Brahmic Script, European Runes, Pahlavi Script.