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# On the Origin of the Name K'art'li, Pitiaxēs Ousas' Intaglio and Karchēdoi Iberians

Nicolas Preud'Homme

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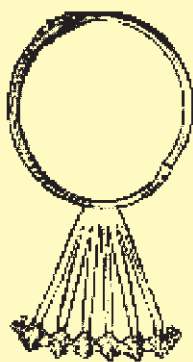


# იბერია-კოლხეთი

საქართველოს კლასიკური და ადრემედიევური პერიოდის  
არქეოლოგიურ-ისტორიული კვლევანი

## IBERIA - COLCHIS

Researches on the Archaeology and History of Georgia  
in the Classical and Early Medieval Period



№ **14**

**2018**

საქართველოს ეროვნული მუზეუმის  
ოთარ ლორთქიფანიძის არქეოლოგიის ცენტრი  
GEORGIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM  
Journal of Otar Lordkipanidze Centre of Archaeology



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თბილისი 2018 Tbilisi

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## შინაარსი CONTENTS

დარეჯან კაჭარავა, სულხან ხარაბაძე, ახლად აღმოჩენილი სამარხები ვანიდან, II ნაწილი (№ 22 სამარხი). (Darejan Kacharava, Sulchan Kharabadze, <b>RECENTLY FOUND GRAVES FROM VANI</b> , Part II (grave N 22)) -----	5
ანა ჭყონია, ბერძნული მითოლოგიური სიუჟეტის ანარეკლი ვანის ოქროს ბალთაზე. (Anna Chkonia, <b>THE REFLECTION OF GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL THEMES ON VANI GOLDEN BUCKLE</b> ) -----	64
გოდერძი ნარიმანიშვილი, აღმოსავლეთ საქართველოს ძვ.წ. VII – ახ.წ. VII სს კერამიკა (II ნაწილი). (Goderdzi Narimanishvili, <b>POTTERY OF 7<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BC-7<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AD FROM EAST GEORGIA</b> , (part II)) -----	77
თინათინ ჭანიშვილი, სარკე - საქართველოს არქეოლოგიური ძეგლებიდან. (Tinatin Chanishvili, <b>MIRRORS (From the Archaeological sites of Georgia)</b> ) -----	145
თინათინ ჭანიშვილი, სავარცხელი საქართველოს არქეოლოგიური ძეგლებიდან. (Tinatin Chanishvili, <b>COMBS (From the Archaeological sites of Georgia)</b> ) -----	155
ნინო ერქომაიშვილი, ალიზი (ისტორია, მოვლა და კონსერვაცია). (Nino Erkomaishvili, <b>ADOBE (History, Care and Conservation)</b> ) -----	160

\*\*\*

### რეცენზიები:

რეცენზია, გოგიტა ჩიტაიას ნაშრომზე „ხობის სიძველენი“ (ხობის მუნიციპალიტეტის კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის ობიექტები), ლერი ჯიბლაძე. (Review of the work of Gogita Chitai, “Antiquities of Khobi” (Cultural Heritage objects of Khobi municipality), <i>Leri Jibladze</i> ) ---	173
---	-----

\*\*\*

### PAPERS IN ENGLISH:

Gela Gamkrelidze, Vakhtang Shatberashvili, Marine Pirtskhalava, <b>FOR THE MILITARY HISTORY OF GEORGIA OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD</b> -----	177
Nicolas J. Preud’homme (Sorbonne Université, Paris), <b>ON THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME K‘ART‘LI: PITIAXĒS OUSAS’ INTAGLIO AND KARCHĒDOI IBERIANS</b> -----	212

\*\*\*

<b>SUMMARIES</b> -----	224
შემოკლებების განმარტება/Abbreviations -----	231
ინფორმაცია ავტორებისათვის -----	232

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# ON THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME K'ART'LI, PITIAXĒS OUSAS' INTAGLIO AND KARCHĒDOI IBERIANS

Nicolas J. Preud'homme (Sorbonne Université, Paris)<sup>1</sup>

A sardonyx intaglio preserved in the Department of Medals, Coins and Antiquities of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris represents the portrait of a man surrounded with a Greek inscription: “OYCAC ΠΙΤΙΑΞΗC IBHPΩN KAPXHΔΩN”, “Ousas, pitiaxēs of the Karchēdoi Iberians”<sup>2</sup>. The head of the pitiaxēs is adorned with thin mustache, long braided hair, a carefully trimmed beard and an earring, whereas a tight garment dresses his body. The size of this object (40 x 32 mm) shows that this intaglio served as a seal and not as a ring. In the same collection was registered a sardonyx ring (20 x 15 mm), which is now lost<sup>3</sup>. The ring has no inscription on it, but the similarity of both portraits shows that it belonged to the same pitiaxēs.

The name Ousas is commonly related to Ašušay, another Iberian pitiaxēs who would have lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, appearing in the *Martyrdom of St Šušanik*<sup>4</sup> and in the *History of Łazar P'arpec'i*<sup>5</sup>. However, the character appearing on the gem probably lived one or two centuries earlier: based on stylistic considerations, Giorgi Kavtaraze comes to date Ousas' intaglio at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>6</sup>. The origin of this name is undoubtedly Iranian, as attested by several equivalent forms: Usan in Avestic, Kawa Usa and its derivatives Kaos, Kāūs; it would mean “mighty”<sup>7</sup>.

The term of pitiaxēs transliterates in Greek an official title well known in the Iranian world. Strabo, the first source evoking the institutions of the Iberian kingdom, doesn't mention the function of pitiaxēs, but evokes the role occupied by the “second” of the royal lineage who “makes justice and command the army”<sup>8</sup>. This prince related to the king thus occupied the second place of the kingdom by playing a role equivalent to those combined of a prime minister, a Supreme Court judge and a joint staff chief. This concentration of sovereign powers conferred on this character a particular authority over the administration, a preponderant influence on the court and royal entourage, as well as a particular legitimacy which made him the principal lieutenant of the sovereign and his potential successor in the event of a failure. The need for substantial resources to perform such a function suggests that this prince should be in charge of the royal house while supervising his own property. However, an etymological argument makes it possible to establish a link between the second of the Iberian kingdom evoked by Strabo and the documents relating to the pitiaxēs of Iberians: the term *bidaxš* in Pahlavi may indeed be derived from Old Persian \**dvi-tiyaxšaya*, “second ruler” or “viceroy”<sup>9</sup>, that corresponds entirely to Strabo's description. The stele of Pitiaxēs Šargas' victories is the first epigraphic testimony of this function namely presented, by the Aramaic form *pythš* (פִּיטְחִשׁ)<sup>10</sup>. The bilingual inscription of Sērapeitis

<sup>1</sup> Revised and corrected working paper, dated January 16, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Chabouillet A. 1858: n. 1385. Cf. plates I and II below. “ΟὔσαC πιτιάξης Ιβήρων Καρχηδών”.

<sup>3</sup> Chabouillet A. 1858: n. 1386.

<sup>4</sup> Iakob C'urtaveli, *Martyrdom of St Šušanik*, §1, I. Abulaze (ed.), 115.7. Aršušay is an Old Georgian variant of Ašušay. Rapp S. 2014: 38.

<sup>5</sup> Łazar P'arpec'i, *History of the Armenians*, §25 and §27, G. Tēr-Mkrtč'ean and S. Malxasean (eds.) 52, Thomson (transl.), 91. Rapp S. 2014: 43.

<sup>6</sup> Kavtaradze G. 2008: 209-210.

<sup>7</sup> Justi F. 1895: 334-336 s.v. “Usan”; MacKenzie D. 1986: 62: Pahlavi *oz* [ʾwc], “strength, power”.

<sup>8</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, XI, 3, 6 : “ὁ δὲ δεῦτερος δικαιοδοτεῖ καὶ στρατηλατεῖ”.

<sup>9</sup> Hinz W. and *alii* 1969: 149-153 ; Szemerényi O. 1975: 361-366. The etymology chosen by Garsoian N. 1989: 516, which derives the Pahlavi term *bitaxš* from Old Iranian *axš*, “observe”, and *paiti*, “chief” will not be retained.

<sup>10</sup> Altheim F. and Stiehl R. 1961: 173.

establishes an equivalence between the function of “master of the house” or “chief of the court” (תַּרְבִּיץ, *rb trbs*) and the title of pitiaxēs (Greek *πιτιάξης* corresponding to Aramaic *ܒܬܗܫܐ* *bṭhš*)<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, the functions of pitiaxēs, chief of the court, intendant and governor tended to be intertwined without being totally confused, insofar as other characters as the pitiaxēs could perform these functions in the kingdom. The pitiaxēs thus appears as the second character of the Iberian kingdom, sharing with the king all his powers, having to answer for his action only before the latter.

The ethnonym “Karchēdoi” presents difficulties for identification. An ancient hypothesis, raised by Ennio Quirino Visconti and pursued in part by Victor Langlois, consists in considering Karchēdoi as an old version of the geographical name of Gugark<sup>12</sup>. Seductive about the criterion of localization, however, this interpretation is linguistically lacking, because the advanced toponymic arguments aren’t convincing<sup>13</sup>. Cyril Toumanoff, retaining the idea of Gugark’ principality, translates the Greek name *Καρχηδών* by its first meaning, “Carthage”<sup>14</sup>. Giorgi Kavtaradze reiterated this literal meaning by translating this ethnonym into “Carthaginian Iberians”, while acknowledging the embarrassment of assuming such a connection between a city in North Africa and a Caucasian people who had nothing in common<sup>15</sup>. To understand the meaning of the word *Karchēdoi*, Cyril Toumanoff and Giorgi Kavtaradze resort to the incipit of Pseudo-Sebeos’ *History* (7<sup>th</sup> century), which refers to the fall of the Arsacid dynasty in Armenia by evoking the people of “Kark’edovmayi (Կարքեդովմայի) principality”<sup>16</sup>. In the logic of narrative, the term would logically designate Sasanian Iran, but the strangeness of the noun raised a debate between philologists. Gevorg V. Abgaryan thinks that this word results from a corruption of *č’ar k’awdeayc’* (Չար Բաւդեայց), “the bad Chaldeans”<sup>17</sup>, whereas David Frendo sees there a confusion between Karkemish and Carthage<sup>18</sup>. It is nevertheless possible to justify a link between Kark’edovmayi and Iran, based on a very close association in the Armenian version of Daniel’s Seventh Vision<sup>19</sup>. Stephen H. Rapp Jr. sketches the hypothesis of an Irano-K’art’velian people who would have composed the ancient kingdom of Aryan K’art’li mentioned in the *Mok’c’evay K’art’lisay*, and whose confused memory would have subsisted through the Karchēdoi Iberians in Ousas’ intaglio<sup>20</sup>.

This hypothesis identifying Karchēdoi Iberians with a hybrid population of Iberians and Iranians causes a problem for being based on sources that diverge from both origin, nature and date: *Karchēdoi* is an administrative term Iberian of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, while Kark’edovmayi has a literary coloration and is included in texts written in the Christian context of medieval Armenia. The connection with Iran is thus fully understandable in the Armenian texts, but not in the particular case of Ousas’ intaglio. Of course, other testimonies, such as the bidaxš Pābag’s dish<sup>21</sup>, attest to the close ties between

<sup>11</sup> Ceret’eli G. 1942: 16.

<sup>12</sup> Langlois V. 1852: 532. Visconti E. 1811 II: 269-272.

<sup>13</sup> The city of Carcathiocerta appearing in Strabo, *Geography*, XI, 14, 2 and in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, VI, 26, has nothing to do with Gugark’ since this locality is in Sophene.

<sup>14</sup> Toumanoff C. 1963: 188-189.

<sup>15</sup> Kavtaradze G. 2008: 208-210. However, the Greek adjective for Carthaginian is *Καρχηδόνιος*. On a purely linguistic level, it is therefore impossible to translate *Karchēdoi* by “Carthaginians”. Source: the Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon, University of California, Irvine, consulted on Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Pseudo-Sebeos, *History*, [VII / 64], R. Thomson (transl.), p. 1, modified : “When the time of Arsacid rule declined in Armenia and the reign of King Vramšapuh [Armenian king from 401 to 417] came to an end, the people of the Kark’edovmayi principality ruled over it. He undertook a terrible and dreadful plan, in concert with the venomous and most important Chaldeans and all the leading nobles of his kingdom, to remove the fruits of piety from the land of Armenia”. See also n. 3 p. 1 in this edition.

<sup>17</sup> Pseudo-Sebeos, *History*, G. Abgaryan (ed.), 1979: n. 118 *ad loc.*

<sup>18</sup> Frendo D. 1985: 6, n. 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ankanon Girk’ I*, 244. Macler F. 1895: 63. Kark’edov is associated with Persia.

<sup>20</sup> Rapp S. 2014: 124.

<sup>21</sup> Amiranachvili C. 1959. Brunner C. 1974: 110.

the Iberian and Sasanian ruling elites, and pitiaxēs Ousas’ portrait testifies to a deep Iranian influence in aristocratic culture. It can even be imagined that an Iberian principality particularly influenced by Iran may have been at the origin of the Aryan K’art’li mentioned in Georgian sources<sup>22</sup>, but it is not in the word Karchēdoi that this Iranian influence can be read.

This problem of identifying Karchēdoi, apparently pointing to a part of the Iberians, could find its solution in the Semitic etymology of the word. In Hebrew, *ḵireyah* (חִרְיָה), with *ḵērēt* (חֵרֶת) as a late poetic form, are words designating the city<sup>23</sup>, a meaning which can be found in the names of other cities such as Cirta in Numidia and Carthage, the latter deriving from *Ḷeret Hadešot*, “New City”<sup>24</sup>. The Iberian elites, mastering the use of Aramaic, had to give the term a referential value other than that of a mere toponym. Since there is no town with a name approaching Karchēdoi, it is probable that this ethnonym, in Iberian minds, refers to a generic term, “the Iberians of the city”. For Giorgi Kavtaradze, this city can only refer to the capital of the Iberian kingdom, Armazi, where the use of Aramaic was widespread in royal epigraphy<sup>25</sup>.

**Figure 1 – Armazian inscription engraved on a wall in Armazi acropolis (Baginet’i)<sup>26</sup>**



Among the Aramaic inscriptions found on the ancient acropolis of the Iberian kings, one of them particularly draws the attention. It is a few words carved on a stone from a wall of the hill of Baginet’i (figure 1). The photography of this epigraphic document was published by Giorgi Ceret’eli, without a translation being proposed so far. It is possible to read the letters *ḵrḥ p* (כִּרְח פּ), which can be developed (*ḵrḥ(h) p(hnt)*), which can be translated: “here (the store of) the citadel”<sup>27</sup>. This would testify the importance of the royal warehouses for the storage of foodstuffs, weapons and artifacts necessary for the life of the court and the defence of the acropolis. Unfortunately, Giorgi Ceret’eli does not specify the context of the discovery of this inscription or even its exact location on the site of

<sup>22</sup> Rapp S. 2014: 121-124.

<sup>23</sup> Robinson E. 1906: 900.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, I, 1854: 529-530. See also Solinus, *De mirabilibus mundi*, XXVII, 10 : « *Urbem istam [...] Elissa mulier extruxit domo Phoenix et Carthadam dixit* ».

<sup>25</sup> Kavtaradze G. 2007: 273.

<sup>26</sup> Drawing by Nicolas J. Preud’homme from a photography presented in Ceret’eli G. 1948: figure 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ceret’eli G. 1948, figure 1. Hoftijzer T. and K. Jongeling, II, 1995: 1032: *ḵrḥh*: acropolis, citadel; 92-93, 899 and 906: *p* as an abbreviation of *pḥnt*, which is itself a simplified form of *’p ḥnt* or more likely *p ḥnt*, *’p* representing an adverb of emphasis (“also, even, certainly”), while *p* (or *p’*) could be understood as an adverb of place (“here”). The adverb could be attached to the implied noun *ḥnt*, designating the vaulted room serving as a store. Another possible translation would be: “here, the citadel”, if *p* wasn’t to be considered as an abbreviation of *pḥnt* but simply as the adverb *p* (or *p’*).



Baginet'i Acropolis. The fact remains that the Iberians officially used the word *krhh* to refer to their capital city.

Thus, the Aramaic words *krhh* (קררה) and *krt* (קרת), meaning citadel, city or acropolis<sup>28</sup>, may well have been at the origin not only of the word Karchēdōn on the Ousas' intaglio, but also of the name "K'art'li" (ქართლი), which is the one by which Georgians name the territory corresponding roughly to former Iberia<sup>29</sup>. This name of K'art'li which originally concerned the royal residence in Armazi would thus become the name of the whole country, still surviving today through the name of Georgia, Sak'art'velo (საქართველო). In spite of their semantic and phonetic resemblance, this etymology of the name K'art'li should not be confused with that of the Georgian word 'city' (*k'alak'i*, ქალაქი) with its Armenian equivalent *k'alak'* (քաղաք). Traditional opinion in linguistics derived these words from a proper name appearing in the Bible, the city of Calah or Kaluh, today Nimrud, ancient Assyrian metropolis in northern Mesopotamia (XIV<sup>th</sup> – VII<sup>th</sup> century BC)<sup>30</sup>. While the name of K'art'li was formed from a common noun, the term city in Armenian and Georgian languages derived from a proper noun.

This Aramaic designation for the main citadel of Iberian kingdom finds its equivalence in the other onomastic testimonies contained in the literary sources. The Harmozikē of Strabo akin to the Harmastus of Pliny the Elder, to the Harmaktika of Ptolemy and to the Acropolis of Cassius Dio<sup>31</sup>, can be read as the transmission of a Caucasian name, *Armazis c'ixe*, or more commonly in Georgian *Armazc'ixe* (არმაზცხე), "the Fortress of Armaz", capital of the Iberian kings<sup>32</sup>. While most sources refer to K'art'li by exonyms developed in both Greek (Ἰβηρία), Latin (Hiberia), Parthian (wyršn, Wiržān), Middle-Persian (wlwc'n, Wiruzān) and Armenian (land of Virk') languages, there are few traces that could testify to the way by which the ancient Iberians were designated themselves and their country<sup>33</sup>. It is significant that no Armazian inscription mentions the ethnicity of the Iberians, unlike many of their Greek counterparts, when they relate to public monuments visible to all, especially foreign visitors. The kings established in Armazi seem to have conceived their power more as a family heirloom managed by strictly dynastic logics rather than as the sovereignty of a ruler over a people or territory whose collective identity would be expressed in his person. If the designation of "King of the Iberians" appears in the official terminology, it would be by reflecting the image returned by an outward look on the ethnicity of a royalty which conceived itself secondarily as Iberian. Neither Iberia nor the Iberian people appear as such in the account of the victories of Šargas, which describes the conquests of King Mihrdat as the addition of cities, fortresses and peoples belonging to the "domain of the reign" (זי מרות מלך, *mwl zy mrwt*)<sup>34</sup>. Ancient royal powers in Caucasia did not base themselves in the anachronistic idea of unified nations, but aimed to maintain their ability to win and preserve their domain constituted by various properties, cities, lands and peoples.

<sup>28</sup> Hoftijzer J. and Jongeling K., II, 1995: 1032, 1037, s. v. « qrhḥ » : acropolis, citadel ; « qrt<sub>1</sub> » : city, acropolis.

<sup>29</sup> Kavtaradze 2007: 273.

<sup>30</sup> In Genesis 10: 11, the hero Assur built Nineveh and Calah. Dalalyan T. 2011: 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, XI, 3, 5 : Ἀρμωζική ; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, VI, 30 : *Harmastus / Hermastus*; Ptolemy, *Geography*, V, 10, 3 : Ἀρμάκτικα (variants: Ἀρμάκτικα, Ἀρμάκσικα, Ἀρμακτικά, Ἀρμακτικά, Ἀρμάστικα); Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, XXXVII, 1, 3-4 : Ἀκρόπολις.

<sup>32</sup> *Life of the Kings* (in *K'art'lis C'xovreba*) Simon Qauxč'išvili (ed.), 98: « ცხევედ არმაზცხე ». The simple form Armazi (არმაზი) is more widespread in Georgian chronicles contained in *K'art'lis C'xovreba* and *Mok'c'evay K'art'lisay*. Baginet'i (ბაგინეთი) is the name of the hill on which is located the citadel. Lordkipanidze O. 1991: 159. Lordkipanidze O. 1996: 272-274. Nyberg H. 1946: 228-229.

<sup>33</sup> Rapp S. 2014: 19-29; Rayfield D. 2012: 12; Ceret'eli K. 1993: 146-147.

<sup>34</sup> Stele of Pitiaxēs Šargas' victories, l. 4. Altheim F. and R. Stiehl 1961: 173.

A late evidence is given by the author of the *Conversion of K'art'li by Nino*, a medieval chronicle contained in the Georgian corpus *Life of the K'art'li*, which narrates how the holy woman, survivor of the Hripsimians' martyrdom, meets a group of shepherds grazing their sheep in the mountains of Ĵavaxet'i, on the bank of P'aravna river. These shepherds, according to the chronicler, worshipped the gods of K'art'li, Armaz and Zaden. One of them spelled the Armenian language and was thus able to respond in this way to Nino's question asking him where he and his colleagues came from: "the villages of Elarbini, Sap'urc'le, K'inžara, Rabati and the great city of Mc'xet'a where the gods reign and where kings rule"<sup>35</sup>. This testimony strongly emphasizes the geographical perception of metropolitan functions played by the main city of the Iberian kingdom. The editor living during 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century was aware of the territorial specificity of the Armenian-K'art'velian marchlands as well as circulation currents animating the daily life of the populations in South Caucasia. The perception of the royal domination put in the mouth of a Caucasian shepherd of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, expressed probably by a chronicler of Mc'xet'a during Bagratid age, was not that of a national state or the leader of a united nation, but more that of a leader established on a cosmopolitan metropolis governing a marquetry of diverse territories. This source suggests that the K'art'velian royal power was not claiming its ethnic identity, but building its legitimacy on its connection with large transnational entities: empires, religions, trades. The most peculiar character of Iberian rulers is not to have confined themselves to Iberian affairs, but to have exploited the resources of various territories to build a leadership certainly limited essentially in the Caucasian world, but very transcultural in its nature.

Why, however, specify on Ousas' intaglio the Iberian ethnicity of the 'Karchēdoi' which the pitiaxēs rules? Probably it was to clarify a term that could be confused with its homophone designating Carthage for a Greek speaker. Nevertheless, in view of the cosmopolitan nature of the capital and the diversity of the trading communities that were associated with it, this indication of Iberian ethnicity could mean that the jurisdiction of the pitiaxēs would apply only to the indigenous population living in the city – Iberian citizens in other words, while foreign communities would have depended on an autonomous jurisdiction more or less ruled by a regime of self-government. A distant echo of this distinction between Iberian citizens and foreign residents can be found in the narrative of the *Life of Nino* contained in *K'art'lis C'xovreba*, through the proposition that King Mirian offered the saint to make her a "resident of Mc'xet'a (*mkwdr Mc'xet'as*)"<sup>36</sup>. This idea of a system of legal plurality is, at the moment, only a hypothesis remaining uncertain due to the lack of sources.

The ethnic factor certainly had a role in the construction of Caucasian identities, but it was clearly not a simple dichotomy between Iberians and non-Iberians. Ousas would designate itself as the pitiaxēs of the Karchēdoi Iberians, living in the Armazi-Mc'xet'a and the surrounding country, thus distinguishing itself from other Iberians and peoples inhabiting the kingdom or its neighborhood: Moschian land, Chotene Armenia, Gugark', Alazani valley, Cambysene plain and Caucasian highlands. The Greek, Latin, Armenian and Georgian sources make us aware of several ethnic groups, tribes and peoples, mostly mountaineers, maintaining links as closely as variable with the neighbouring Caucasian

<sup>35</sup> *Conversion of K'art'li (K'art'lis C'xovreba)*, Simon Qauxč'išvili (ed.), 85-86 : "დაბით ელარბინით და საფურცლით, და ქინძარელნი, რაბატელნი დიდისა ქალაქისა მცხეთისანი, სადა ღმერთნი ღმერთობენ და მეფენი მეფობენ" ; Robert W. Thomson (transl.), 95. Melik'išvili G. and Lordkipanidze O. 1989, 1: 352.

<sup>36</sup> *Conversion of K'art'li by Nino* (in *K'art'lis C'xovreba*), Simon Qauxč'išvili (transl.), 106<sup>19</sup> « და გყო შენ მკვდრ მცხეთას შინა ». Robert W. Thomson (transl.), 115, renders this passage by « *let you dwell in Mc'xet'a* », while Medea Abashidze, Arrian Chant'uria and Dmitri Gamq'relidze (transl.), 57, translate მკვდრ by « *inhabitant* ». Sardshweladse and Fähnrich 2005: 727, s. v. « მკვდრ-ი », « *Einheimischer* ».

kingdoms: Suani, also called Soanes or Svans<sup>37</sup>, Moschians or Mesxians<sup>38</sup>, Lēgai or Leks, Sodi, identified either with Cunt‘a, Cona or with Soji<sup>39</sup>, Lupenii or Lpink<sup>40</sup> are among the least poorly known<sup>41</sup>. It is thus possible to see in the Iberian state of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries a kingdom of consociation, where ethnic groups of roughly equivalent importance were gathered in a single state and share power<sup>42</sup>. The leaders of these tribes and Caucasian principalities exercised a powerful counterweight to the sovereign. However, Iberia can also be seen, especially in the cities lying on the middle course of the Kura-Mtkvari river, as an immigrant society which, due to the situation of the commercial crossroads, fixed several communities of foreign residents: Iranians, Armenians, Aramaic, individuals from the Roman Empire, not to mention the peoples from Northern Caucasus and Pontus Euxinus. This explains the etymology of the name Mc‘xet‘a, which would mean “the establishment of foreigners” according to Constantine B. Lerner’s interpretation<sup>43</sup>.

Far from being an absolute royalty, the power of Iberian king was circumscribed by his belonging to the aristocracy, endowed with power and legitimacy too important to be neglected by the sovereign. A subtle balance had to govern the relations between the centrifugal forces of the princes and a king occupying an arbitrator position. The mutual recognition of social rank according to the place that Iberian dignitaries occupied in the hierarchy of honours was the ritual expression of a social and political system recognizable in many features in other parts of the Iranian world. From this perspective, the pitiaxai buried in the tombs of Armazisxevi necropolis would belong to this princely line established on Karchēdoi Iberians, as well as Šargas, Zeuachēs the Younger, Publicius Agrippa and Yodmangan illustrated by the official epigraphy in the capital city<sup>44</sup>. It is therefore not necessary to seek to identify absolutely the domain of Pitiaxēs Ousas with the Armeno-K‘art‘velian march of Gugark‘-Somxit‘i<sup>45</sup>. The domain conferred to a pitiaxēs did not necessarily cover regions of confines, but could also to integrate territories located in the heart of the kingdom. Šargas claiming himself as the one who “governs the city”<sup>46</sup>, the pitiaxēs of Karchēdoi Iberians should perform the duties of a mayor or a city governor: the demographic and commercial weight held by the agglomeration of Armazi-Mc‘xet‘a was to justify

<sup>37</sup> Lordkipanidze O. 1996: 188.

<sup>38</sup> Lordkipanidze O. 1991: 146-147; Lordkipanidze O. 1996: 141-152.

<sup>39</sup> About Soji : Mouraviev S. 1996: 46-49; Lerner C. 2004: 32-36. Based on Ptolemy, *Geography*, V, 11, 2-3, it can be said that the Soji tribe occupied a fairly extensive territory in the middle course of the Iori River on either side of the two shores, from Kacaret‘i to the north-west to Bodi or Bodbe to the east and to the river Kura to the south.

<sup>40</sup> About *Lupenii* : Hewsen R. 1989: 14 ; Traina G. 2003: 321-326. The people occupied the upper part of the basin drained by the Alazani River at the foot of the Great Caucasus.

<sup>41</sup> Mouraviev S. 1996: 46-47 identifies Caucasian peoples appearing in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, VI, 29-30 : *Silui* would refer to Čilbk‘, *Lupenii* to Lpink‘, *Diduri* to Didoy and Cez, *Sodi* to C‘unta, or, in the case of Soni, to Sona, *Valli* to Dvalebi or Tualta, *Suani* to Svanes.

<sup>42</sup> Walzer M. 1997: 14-36.

<sup>43</sup> Lerner C. 2004: 98.

<sup>44</sup> Braund D. 1994: 212-215.

<sup>45</sup> Named Gogarene in Strabo, *Geography*, V, 13, 9, Gugark‘ would have formed from about 200 BCE one of the four vitaxats defending the borders of Artaxiad Armenia. Located on the march of the Moschi, this territory would incorporate according to Toumanoff C. 1963: 467-475, the whole of the districts that the *Ašxarhac‘oyc‘* (the Armenian Geography often attributed to Ananias of Širak) attributes to the land of Gugark‘, namely the nine regions of Jorop‘or, Kolbap‘or, Cobop‘or, Tašir, T‘rełk‘, Kangark‘, Upper-Ĵawaxk‘, Artahan and Kłarjk‘ or Kłarjet‘i. According to the theory of Cyril Toumanoff, the kingdom of Iberia could have attracted this march in its orbit in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE, as well as between 363 and 387. The question of the evolutionary territorial composition of the Somxit‘i-Gugark‘ marchland, with several changes of allegiance, successive territorial expansions and retractions, would require further development. A synthetic overview on the territory of Gugark‘ is given by Hewsen R. 1992: 200-203 and by Lordkipanidze O. 1996: 84.

<sup>46</sup> Stele of Pitiaxēs Šargas’ victories, l. 5 : « *tryšyt kzy ‘nh šrgs py[ħ]š lkd̄m šħr’ hwyn ky[n]* ». Altheim F. and Stiehl R. 1961: 173.

an urban government handed over to the second ruler of the kingdom. Thus, Ousas' intaglio appears as a remarkable document for understanding the functions of pitiaxēs and the complex ethnic representations prevailing in the official terminology of the Iberian kingdom.

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Plate I



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**Plate II**



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## ADDENDUM

I no longer support my reading of the short epigraphic document inscribed on a stone from Armazi proposed in this paper as a support of the demonstration. On the one hand, the term *qrh* is not found in other Armazic documents from Iberia, insofar as the stele of Šargas preferring to use the synonyms *byrt* and *tqn* to designate fortresses.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, purely graphic considerations regarding the analysis of this brief Armazi inscription suggest that the second letter is more a yodh, because of its more rounded curve than that of the *rēsh*. Furthermore, the almond shape visible on the foot of the last sign could have a different meaning than that of the hat of a letter *pē*, which has since become ghostly. The foot of the third letter descending lower, so it would not be a *ḥēth*, but a *ṣādhē*. As a result, there would only be three letters in this inscription, which would then read through a single word, *qys*. Due to the homonymy concerning the term, three translations are therefore possible: an adjective *qs<sub>3</sub>* meaning ‘deficient, imperfect’ in Official Aramaic, a very inconclusive reading here; a verb ‘to collect the summer fruits’ derived from the noun *qs<sub>1</sub>* meaning ‘summer’ or ‘summer fruit’, also unlikely here, except to imagine the hypothesis of a food warehouse; finally, the third hypothesis, which seems to me the least improbable, would put forward a possible Caucasian variant of the form *qsh*, designating the border or the limit in Palmyrenian.<sup>2</sup> If this latter translation turns out to be the correct one, the stone would therefore designate a monument marking an administrative or religious boundary within the capital of the Iberian kingdom, without explicit reference to the citadel in this case. In spite of these uncertainties of reading weakening the contribution of this epigraphic testimony in this demonstration, there remains the hypothesis according to which the Iberian Karchēdoi, about whom Ousas designates himself as their *pitiaxēs*, could be those who would inhabit the citadel of Armazi and the surrounding country.

Nicolas Preud’homme, July 5, 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Stele of Šargas, l. 7, 9, 10 and 11. Hoftijzer & Jongeling, 1, 1995, s. v. *byrh*, pp. 155-156. Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, 2, s. v. *tqn<sub>2</sub>*, p. 1229.

<sup>2</sup> Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995, 2, pp. 1009 and 1020-1021, s. v. *qys*, *qs<sub>1</sub>*, *qs<sub>2</sub>*, *qs<sub>3</sub>* and *qsh*.