

### **An Unknown Manuscript or Fraud?**

Several years ago a prominent Georgian geologist David Arevadze told and wrote me a letter afterwards about an old story that puzzled him at the time.

During an expedition in southeastern Turkey eight years ago he was notified about an old Syrian manuscript which was accidentally discovered. Mr. Arevadze complained that despite his endeavors, he was not able to evoke the interest of the relevant circles of scholars regarding this fact.

The facts narrated by Mr. Arevadze might be hiding some fraud. However, we might be dealing with an unknown old Syrian Christian manuscript indeed.

For this reason, we have decided to publish the materials in order to spread this fact through scholarly circles.

The fact we intend to publish about is quite old and may have already been discussed by foreign researchers. On the other hand, it is also possible that this fact was not adequately analyzed as the region indicated by Mr. Arevadze is characterized by complicated geopolitics. Hence, we are publishing the correspondence of the geologist with the editorial team of the journal as well as some excerpts from the video material sent by him without any additional comments.

*The Editor*

Mr. Elguja

*I was an expert geologist in Şemdinli, the extreme southeastern region of Turkey, September, 2011. Two young local citizens were introduced to me. They told that they had found, in a secret hiding place, a stone sarcophagus with texts on a calf-skin and some drawings.*

*At their request to accompany them and evaluate the artifacts they found, I replied that I was neither an archaeologist nor a manuscript expert. I advised them to transport the sarcophagus to the building, take pictures and videos of it in order to show them to experts and publish it in the press. The same young persons visited me two weeks later to tell me that the sarcophagus was taken into the parking place and a video was made, then they offered me to purchase the artifacts for two million dollars. I refused but brought a video to Georgia and showed it to an eminent linguist, a member of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences Mr. Zaza Aleksidze, who in turn, sent the video to a prominent scholar and an expert of Aramaic alphabet and Syriac texts from Oxford University, UK – Sebastian Brock.*

*I am sending the correspondence between Mr. Aleksidze and Mr. Brock:*

Mr. David

*Excuse me for not being able to keep in touch with you for a long time. It was difficult to send all the data by e-mail. Then I managed it with the help of my son. I returned from Vienna yesterday, where I met my friend Sebastian Brock, the greatest expert of Syriac and Syrian-Aramaic at present. Knowing we would meet in Vienna he did not respond quickly. He told me that he had deciphered one paper to find the text was Syrian from tGospel of*

*Matthew. He dates the text back to the VIII-IX centuries. While discussing, we both came to a conclusion that the whole text was the Gospel, or – the New Testament (it is hard to say, based on the size). So far, this is all.*

*Regards,  
Z. Aleksidze*

*2013/11/2  
zaza\_alexidze@hotmail.com*

*Dear Zaza,*

*It was very good to see you in Vienna! Of the images you forwarded to me, I was able to identify one of them as Matthew 5:10-12 – the others have proved not clear enough to read enough text to identify them. The hand certainly looks old, maybe around 8-9<sup>th</sup> cent., plus or minus. The time ran out before I had a chance to look at them again properly.*

*With all best wishes,  
Sebastian*

*D. Arevadze  
05.05.2019*



