

*Tedo Dundua*

## **Gaius the Iberian – First ever recorded Georgian to be baptized\***

(Summary)

With the Apostles scattered everywhere, the Christian institutional structures started to work. With the lower classes pouring into, they became very much socialized. With becoming so socialized, Christianity shaped itself as a real danger to the constitutional order. An immediate solution of the problem combined both, administrative measures and mystification. The latter was that of Mithraistic.

Socialistic upstart, but then being put totally under the state-control thus passing the red colour towards recently emerged Christianity, Mithraism was destined to lure proletariat to enter its well-censored ranks. Even Mithras' birthday was fixed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December to strengthen that confusion between Christianity and Mithraism.<sup>1</sup>

Then Mithraistic evidences from a site also carry a possibility of Christians being well-established right there. For Lazica at the East Black Sea Coast with St. Andrew moving across Greek and Georgian narrative account and besides – a plenty of Mithraistic artefacts. Mithras as equestrian from Trapezus was worshiped there mostly.<sup>2</sup> With also St. Andrew's tale but already an apocriphic one, Iberia (East and South Georgia) still possesses somewhat not very clear Mithraistic evidences.<sup>3</sup> More

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\* December 2008. Warsaw. Doroczna Miedzynarodowa Sesja Kaukazologiczna im Sw. Grzegoza Peradze. University of Warsaw. Paper.

<sup>1</sup> T. Dundua. Christianity and Mithraism. The Georgian story. Tb. 1999.

<sup>2</sup> G. Dundua. Money circulation and economic relations in Pitius in the 2nd c. B.C.- 4th c. A.D. Great Pitius (in Georg.). Tb. 1975, pp. 280-429.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

arguments are needed for Early-Christian communities being active there. We have one, perhaps, also sophisticated. Bronze plate from Platea, Central Greece, offers 40 male names, mostly Greek, few Graeco-Roman. The positions are only for some of them and all they are Christian – πρεσβύτερος, ἀναγνώστης (reader of the Holy books).<sup>4</sup> 11. 2,7,8,16.

2, Διονυσόδωρος πρ(εσβύτερος)

7, Εὐτρόπιος πρ(εσβύτερος)

8, Φιλοκράτης ἀναγνώ(στης)

16, Φίλων πρ(εσβύτερος)

The plate, now in the National Museum at Athens, is thought to present Early-Christian Community of Platea. The date corresponds to the verge of the 2nd-3rd cc.

For two persons we have special ethnic indicators.

11. 4 and 12: Κάιος ὁ Ἰβ(ηρ) and Ἀθηνόδωρος Ἀρμ(ένιος).

So, Gaius the Iberian – was he Iberian born, only then removed from the country, and thus bilingual? Perhaps, not. He bears Latin praenomen, nobody had it in Georgia. Then how had he found his way to Greece; and who was he socially? Too many questions. Gaius' case is more Graeco-Roman, than Georgian. But he is still "Iberian", not completely assimilated thus claiming for himself to be first ever recorded Georgian as Christian. The whole country will follow him soon.

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<sup>4</sup> M. Guarducci. *Epigrafia Greca*. IV. *Epigrafi sacre pagane e Christiane*. Roma. 1978, pp. 335-336.