

[\[back\]](#)

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CAUCASIAN ALBANIAN (ALUAN)

The Language of the 'Caucasian Albanian' (Aluan) Palimpsest from Mt.

Sinai

and of the 'Caucasian Albanian' inscriptions

A tentative interpretation of 2 Cor 11,25-27 (specimen of the Caucasian Albanian (Aluan) Lectionary) and of the Aluan inscriptions

[Based on the transliteration by [Zaza Aleksidze](#), re-read and corrected by © Wolfgang Schulze and © Jost Gippert 2003]

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[1. Introduction](#)

[2. Specimen of the text](#)

[2.1 Linear version](#)

[2.2 Glossed version](#)

[3. Analysis](#)

[Addendum: The 'Caucasian Albanian' \(Aluan\) inscriptions](#)

[References](#)

1. Introduction

See <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/armazi/sinai/2kor.htm#start> for the documentation of the original text, Zaza Aleksidze's interpretation, and for background information.

See <http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/~wschulze/Uog.html> for a description of Udi as the descendant of the language of the Caucasian 'Albanians' (or: Aluans).
<http://www.lrz.uni-muenchen.de/FGU.htm> for details on the Udi

Udi represents an endangered language of the Southeast Caucasian (Lezgian) language family. Currently, it is spoken by some 4.000 people in the village of Nizh (*ni%z^*) in Northern Azerbaijan as

well as by some 50 people in the neighboring village of Oguz (formerly Vartashen). In addition, a significant number of Udi speakers (~ 200) dwell in the village of Okt'omberi in Eastern Georgia, a settlement founded by Vartashen emigrants in 1922. Since long, Udi has met the interest of both linguists and historians. On the one hand, the language is marked for a number of typologically salient features (see Schulze 1982, 2000, Harris 2002, Schulze (forthcoming)). Historians usually consider the speakers of Udi as the descendants of one of the peoples of Caucasian Albania, a 'kingdom' located in the northern and western regions of now Azerbaijan (100 BC – 700 AD).

A famous passage in the Armenian *patmowt'iwn (ašxarhi) alowanik* (History of the Albanians) by Movsēs Kałankatuac`i (or Dasxowranc`i; 7th century (?)) tells us that the Armenian scribe, monk and (later) missionary Mesrob Mašt`oc` (362-440) has “created with the help [of the bischop Ananian and the translator Benjamin] an alphabet for the guttural, harsh, barbarious, and rough language of the Gargarac`ik`“ (Pat.Ał. Book II, 3, compare Dowsett 1961:69). The Gargarac`ik` represented one of the peoples of the kingdom of Albania the name of which is already attested in Strabo XI,5,1 and which can be associated to the Armenian toponym *daštñ Gargarac`owc`*, a region southeast of the central part of the Kura river (compare the contemporary river name *Gargar*, a tributary to the Araxes). Most likely, the Gargarac`ik` whose habitat was located to the east of the Aluan province Utik` played a crucial role in the state's administration at least by the time of conversion to the Christian faith. Although the 'Albanian' state started to disintegrate soon after 705, the Aluan script seemed to have been in continuous use until at least the 12th century. For instance, the Kilikean historian Haython (Hethum), a nephew of the Kilikean king Hethum I (1226-1269), reported in 1307: “Literas habent Armenicas, et alias etiam, quae dicuntur Haloën” (*Haythoni Armenii historia orientalis, quae eadem et De Tartaris inscribitur*, Coloniae Brand. 1671:9). The existence of an Aluan alphabet has been confirmed by two (re-copied, in parts corrupt) alphabet lists that have survived in medieval manuscripts (now kept in the Matenadaran museum, Erevan; M 7117, f 142 and M 3124, see Abuladze 1938:70, Kurdian 1956). In addition, a small number of inscriptions on candleholders, roofing tiles and on a pedestal found since 1947 in Central and Northern Azerbaijan (see below) illustrate that the Aluan alphabet had in fact been in use.

Until 1996, little had been known about the language used in connection with the Aluan alphabet. The earliest word said to be 'Albanian' or Aluan documented so far stems from the fragment of a lexical list ascribed to a certain Heracleides. This list is included in the so-called Oxyrhynchis Papyri (100-200 AD). The relevant passage reads: *μιληχ γενειον υπο Αλβανιων των ομορουνητ[ω]* (,milēkh – beard according to the neighboring Albanians', Pap. Oxy. 1802⁶⁵ (Grenfell & Hunt 1922:158), I thank Bill Judge for this reference). Although the word at issue has a Lezgian 'look' (compare Archi *muz`ur*, Tabasaran (Dübek) *midz`ri*, Rutul *me`c`ri*, Lezgi *c`iri* (> Kryts *dz`iri*), Tsakhur *muc`ri*, Budukh *mic`er*, Khinalug *mic`äs`*), it is difficult to relate it to any of the candidate languages (in Udi, the Lezgian term has been replaced by *k`adz`ux*). A list of so-called Albanian month names surviving in a number of medieval manuscripts gave the first clue to the language of the Aluan. Basically, we have to deal with the manuscript 'Paris Arm 114' (Brosset 1832), a list of month names compiled by par Anania Širakac`i, variants which occur for instance in manuscripts by Hovhannēs Imastaser (~ 12th century,

Armenian) et Sulxan Saba Orbeliani (18th century, Georgian), see Schulze 1982:284-5 and (more importantly) Gippert 1987 for details. Obviously, at least parts of the month names are clearly related to Udi. As a result, the long-standing hypothesis has emerged according to which the language of the Aluan people represents an older variant of Udi.

This hypothesis has been supported by a number of co-arguments. For instance, the Udi are the only Christian group in Azerbaijan. According to their own tradition, they once had been part of the Albanian Church which had been abolished by Tsarist authorities in 1836 (re-established in 2003). In addition, names obviously related to the ethnonym *udi* had been constantly referred to by ancient sources when speaking of the Caucasian Albanian region. This region had been known in Classical times under the name Ἰαβανία or Ἰαβανίς, in the Armenian tradition the term Աղուանիք (*alowanik`*) had been used (Georgian რანო (*ran*), probably derived from Arabic الران (*ar-rānu*), which again had been borrowed from the Armenian toponym Արան (*āran*)). Caucasian Albania represented a rather heterogenous 'state' that had been christianized as early as the 2nd or 3rd century (according to the tradition by Elišē (Eleusius), said to be ordained by James, the brother of Jesus, see Mämmädova 2003). One of the provinces of Aluan had been Uti, the population of which is referred to by the name *Udini* (or *Utidors*) in Latin sources, and by the name Ούίτιοι in Greek sources. In Armenian, the terms Ուտիք (*owtik`*) or Ուտիաչիք (*owtiaçik`*) had been used. The province of Owtik` was located between the middle course of the river Kura and the Mountain Qarabakh region, thus south of the actual habitat of the contemporary Udi speakers. Most likely, the inhabitants of Owtik` at least in parts spoke a language related to or equal to that of the Gargarac`ik`, mentioned above.

It should be noted, however, that none of the three names (Udini ~ Ούίτιοι ~ Owtik`; Ἰαβανία ~ Alowanik`; Γαργαροί ~ Gargar(ac`i)k`) can be safely etymologized with the help of contemporary Udi. There is a slight chance to relate the term *udi* (also used as a self-denomination of the contemporary Udis) to the ethnonym *qūtīm* which labels a gentile group having ruled over Central and Southern Mesopotamia (2200-2100) and said to stem from the northern regions of the Zagros mountains. Urartian sources mention a river *Uduri* said to be located at the border of the land *Etiu* (e.g. Meščaninov 1978:319), and it may well be that one of the two ethnonyms can be equaled to the term *udi*. The term Ἰαβανία ~ Alowanik` probably reflects a form **aluan* which is sometimes paralleled to both the name of a village in the Shah-Dagh mountains (*Alpan*) and to the name of a pre-Islamic deity in Lezgistan (*Alpan*). However, this proposal neglects important historical facts and should be taken with great caution.

In sum, both direct and indirect evidence suggest that the 'major' language of Aluan (i.e. the language of the Gargar(ac`i)k`) must have been an early variant of Udi. This assumption saw confirmation in 1987, when the Georgian scientist Zaza Aleksidze discovered a palimpsest stored in the Mt. Sinai monastery.

In 1996, the Georgian scientist Zaza Aleksidze – while doing documentary work in the St. Catherine monastery on Mt. Sinai – discovered two Georgian palimpsest manuscripts (conventionally labelled N/Sin-13 or M13 and N/Sin-55 or M55) that contain in their lower, heavily washed layer texts in Albanian script (see Aleksidze & Mahé 1997, 2002 for a detailed presentation of the manuscripts and a preliminary discussion of the language of the lower layers, <http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/armaz3.htm> for a presentation of the Sinai project). Meanwhile, the pioneering work of Aleksidze has been continued by Jost Gippert (Frankfurt) and Wolfgang Schulze (Munich). For the time being, nearly the totality of the readable folios of both manuscripts has been deciphered and interpreted. Aleksidze's assumption that we have to deal with a rather old lectionary used in the Holy Service turned out to be correct. For copyright reasons, I cannot go into the details of the whole corpus (see the projected publication in Aleksidze & Gippert & Mahé & Schulze (forthcoming)). Hence, I have to restrict myself to more general remarks.

In sum, the two manuscripts consist of roughly 180 folios (recto/verso), in parts heavily distorted and only fragmentary. They show the Aluan text in horizontal lines crossed by the upper layer of Georgian text in vertical lines (see <http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/sinai/albanica/m13.htm> for images). The Aluan text is strongly washed out. Its characters have (in major parts) merged with the Georgian letters of the upper layer. The original Albanian text was written in two columns (22 to 23 lines per page) which 15 to 20 characters per line. In addition, smaller characters were used to add commentaries relevant for the use of the lectionary in the Holy Service. At the end of M13 n63, the scribe seems to have added a 'personal note'.

The bulk of the lectionary is preserved in M13, whereas M55 is much smaller and more fragmentary in nature. It is not quite clear whether both manuscripts had been written at the same time. Perhaps, M13 is older stemming from the 5th or 6th century, whereas M55 has been written in the 8th century (see Aleksidze 2002). Nevertheless, it comes clear that both manuscripts originally represented a single 'book' which contained passages from the New Testament as well as at least one passage from the Old Testament.

2. The Specimen

The following passage from Sinai M13 n75 (Folio 76r-77v, column B) helps to illustrate the language of the Palimpsest (original reading of lines 6-22 by Zaza Aleksidze; re-read and corrected by W. Schulze and J. Gippert):

2.1 Linear version

- (1) owq'abiyayza(x) : Xib
- (2) omn%az^iz^acEhE

- (3) zowgⁱowns^{ow}bAwg^a
(4) (y)~ig^{ox}marg⁽ⁱ⁾zowhE
(5) Laq'mox avelomc^{ar}
(6) marak'esownowxt'ow^r
(7) moxoc
(8) Marak'esownowxab^a
(9) zak'owg^{ox}oc : mar
(10) ak'esownowxC'inow
(11) xocma(r)ak'esownow^x
(12) het'anosowg^{ox}oc
(13) marak'esownowxkala
(14) kamarak'esownow^x
(15) k'%abanamarak'e
(16) sownxc'ayah : ma^r
(17) ak'sownowxa[c/]pE
(18) is^ebaxoc : marak'e
(19) sownowg^{on}ownbo^r
(20) zownowg^[on]nowg^{ow}^r
(21) bowres[ownenav]elom
(22) c^{ar} : bowsinown(i)gⁱ

2.2 Glossed version

This passage contains a translation of 2 Cor 11,[2]5-2[7]. A linguistic interpretation of (16) is given below. Note that the glosses are derived from the system applied to Udi by Schulze (forthcoming). A preliminary translation of 2 Cor 11,26-27 had been prepared by Zaza Aleksidze. Here, a revised interpretation is given on the basis of the corrections and additions proposed by W. Schulze and J. Gippert):

<25>

[...1] *xib*-[2]*om n%azⁱiz^a-ac-E h-E*
three-coll shipwreck-lv:pass-perf lv-perf
'Thrice I suffered shipwreck'

[3] *zow gⁱ own s^{ow} bAwg^a* [4] *(y)~i-g^{ox} marg⁽ⁱ⁾-zow-h-E*
I day and night middle-dat depth(?):dat2 suffering-1sg-lv-perf2
'A night and a day I have been in the deep.'

<26>

[5] *Laq'-m-ox avel-om c^{ar}*
way-pl-dat2 much-coll fold

'Often on the roads'

[6] *marak'esown-owx t'(=k ?)owr-[7]m-oxoc*
danger-dat2 river-pl-abl
'in danger of rivers'

[8] *marak'esown-owx aba[9]zak'-owg^oxoc*
danger-dat2 thief-pl-abl
'in danger of thieves'

ma[10]ak'esown-owx C'inowx-[11]oc
danger-dat2 compatriot-abl
'in danger of the compatriots'

ma(r)ak'esown-owx [12] het'anos-owg^oxoc
danger-dat2 gentile-pl-abl
'in danger of the gentils'

[13] *marak'esown-owx kala[14]k-a*
danger-dat2 town-dat
'in danger in the town'

marak'esown-owx [15] k'%aban-a
danger-dat2 desert-dat
'in danger in the desert'

marak'e[16]sown-owx c'ayah
danger-dat2 sea:dat2
'In danger in the sea'

ma[17]ak'esownowx a[c]pE [18] is^eb-axoc
danger-dat2 false brethren-abl
'in danger of false brethren'

<27> *marak'e[19]sown-owg^on own borz[20]own-owg^[-on]*
danger-pl-erg and labor-pl-erg
'with dangers and labors'

nowg^owr [21] bowr-es[own-en av]el-om [22] c^ar
wake stand-masd-erg much-coll fold
'in watches often'

bowsin own ig^(e)
 hungry and thirs[ty]
 'in hunger and thirst...'

3. Analysis

<i>(y)~ig^(-)ox</i>	'depth, deep', dat2	Udi dat2 <i>-ox</i>
<i>a[c]pE</i>	'false'	Udi <i>apc^i</i> 'liar'
<i>abazak'-owg^(-)oxoc</i>	'thief' (pl., abl.)	Armenian <i>abazak</i> , Udi pl. <i>-ux</i> , abl. <i>-oxo</i>
<i>avel-om</i>	'much' (ordinal form)	Udi ordinal <i>-un</i> < * <i>-um</i>
<i>bAwg^(-)a</i>	'in the middle'	Udi <i>be^%g^(-)</i> , dat. <i>-a</i>
<i>borz-own-owg^(-)on</i>	'load' (pl., erg.)	Udi plural <i>-ux</i> , erg. <i>-on</i>
<i>bowski-n</i>	'hunger' (instr.)	Udi <i>busa</i> 'hungry', erg./instr. <i>-in</i>
<i>bowr-es-own-en</i>	'stand' (masd., erg.)	Udi masd. <i>-esun</i> , erg. <i>-en</i>
<i>c^ay-ax</i>	'sea' (dat2)	Arm. <i>cov</i> 'sea' (?), Udi dat2 <i>-ax</i>
<i>c^ar</i>	'fold'	?
<i>C'in-owxoc</i>	'compatriot'	Udi abl. <i>-uxo</i>
<i>g^i</i>	'day'	Udi <i>g^i</i> 'day'
<i>h-E</i>	'be' (perf2)	Udi perf2 <i>-ey</i>
<i>het^anos-owg^(-)oxoc</i>	'gentile' (pl., abl.)	(Greek >) Arm. <i>hetanos</i> 'gentile', Udi pl. <i>-ux</i> , abl. <i>-oxo</i>
<i>ig^(e)[...]</i>	'thirst'	?
<i>is^e-b-axoc</i>	'brethren' (pl. tant., abl.)	Udi abl. <i>-axo</i>
<i>k^%aban-a</i>	'open field, desert' (dat.)	Udi <i>k^%ava%n</i> 'wilderness, open field', dat. <i>-a</i>
<i>kalak-a</i>	'city' (dat.)	Arm. <i>k^alak^</i> , Udi dat. <i>-a</i>
<i>Laq'-m-ox</i>	'way' (pl, dat2)	Udi <i>yaq^</i> , pl. <i>-m-</i> , dat2 <i>-ox</i>
<i>marak'-es-own-owx</i>	'suffer-see' (masd., dat2)	Udi <i>ak^sun</i> 'to see', dat2 <i>-ux</i>
<i>marak'-esown-owg^(-)on</i>	'suffer-see' (masd., pl. erg.)	Udi <i>ak^sun</i> 'to see', pl. <i>-ug^(-)</i> , erg. <i>-on</i>
<i>marg^(-)i)-zow-h-E</i>	'suffering' (1sg, perf2)	Udi 1sg <i>-zu</i> , perf2 <i>-ey</i>
<i>n^%az^iz^(-)ac-E</i>	'shipwreck' (mp, perf2)	Udi mp:past <i>-ac-</i> , perf2 <i>-ey</i>
<i>nowg^owr</i>	'awake'	Udi <i>mog^or</i> 'awake'
<i>own</i>	'and'	Udi <i>q^a-n</i> 'and'
<i>s^ow</i>	'night'	Udi <i>s^u</i>
<i>t^ (=k?)owr-m-oxoc</i>	'river' (pl, abl)	Udi <i>kur</i> , pl. <i>-m-</i> , abl. <i>-oxoc</i>
<i>xib-om</i>	'three' (coll., ord.)	Udi <i>xib</i> , ord. <i>-un</i> < * <i>-um</i>

ADDENDUM

The 'Caucasian Albanian' (Aluan) Inscriptions

(© Wolfgang Schulze 2003)

There exists a small corpus of so-called Caucasian Albanian or Aluan inscriptions the most famous of which is the Mingecaur inscription found in 1949 during excavations in the Mingecaur region in Central Azerbaijan (see . Although we cannot exclude the possibility that one or two of the (often fragmentary) inscriptions are fakes, we can still maintain that the major part of this corpus is related to and stems from the Old Udi period. Basically, we have to deal with three types of inscriptions: a) a longer, running text on a pedestal; b) short texts on candleholders and roofing tiles, c) parts of Aluan alphabet lists. None of the texts has been safely read and interpreted so far. Nevertheless, those parts that are open to a linguistic interpretation clearly show that the underlying language is a variant of Old Udi. The following documentation of the inscriptions does not aim at a full interpretation. Rather, I will refer to those parts that evince an Udi origin (see Murav'ev 1981 for a description of the corpus).

T 1 (= Mingecaur Pedestal, serving to carry a cross (Schulze) or throne (Gippert)) [ca. 60 x 60 cm];
Probably 7th century AD.

See Gippert (in press) for the most recent and most detailed analysis.

1 *(q')iyas BE be(s)(i)(n)?o(l)o arah/c^Ene ei/n*
?:dat3 God:gen ?:gen LOC *verb:lv:perf2:3sg* ?
'For the X of God LOC X placed(?)'

2 *h/c^AI yE owsena xosroo(w)_*
? 27 year:dat Khosrow[:gen]
'[...] in the year 27 of Khosrow'

3 *serb[au]*
 firs[t]
'[.....] firs[t.....]'

4a *Aw/s. h/c^os/b/% (i)(n=p'?)isk'ap'osen bi*
PN bishop:erg make:past

4b *yayn*

part:past:3sg

The present reading deviates in minor parts from the up to now most comprehensive and most reliable interpretation of the Mingečaur inscription (Gippert (in press)) which also aims at situating the contents of the inscription into the clerical history of Albania. Here, I cannot discuss in details Gippert's highly promising and methodologically well-founded approach. Nevertheless, the reader should note that Gippert's analysis for the first suggests an interpretation that seems to be coherent with both historical data and the findings related to the language of the Palimpsest. The following segments of the Mingečaur inscription can be safely related to Udi or to the language of the Palimpsest:

<i>q'iyas</i> (Gippert: <i>miyas</i>)	Obviously the now lost Old Udi <i>-s</i> -Dative ('DAT3')
<i>BE</i>	Abbreviation of 'god' or 'lord' (= Palimpsest)
<i>-hEne</i> (?)	= Palimpsest <i>h-E-ne</i> (be-PERF2-3SG:FOC)
<i>owsena</i>	= Udi <i>usen-a</i> 'in the year'
<i>[s]er[b]-</i>	= Palimpsest <i>serbaown</i> 'first'
<i>-en</i>	= Udi ergative <i>-en</i>
<i>biyay</i>	= Palimpsest <i>biyay</i> (do:PAST)

T 2 (Candleholder, Mingečaur) [8 x 5 x 5 cm]

(Trever 1959:Tabl.35, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

	I	II	III	IV
1	zayo			
2	ggo			
3	kar(x)	Xena	ibow	b~E et'
4a				owXbe(c)
4b	e			g^ahak'
5	hAwk'e	q'a(k').(x)bi	yay	

The four sides of the candleholder are not fully aligned. Hence, the restoration of the original lines is somewhat problematic. Nevertheless, a possible reading is:

za yog gokar(e)XE naibow b~E et'owX be(c)e
l:dat ? be=ungodly:perf2 servant God:gen this(?):dat2 beg:perf(?)
g^ahak' hAwk'e q'a(g^).(x) biyay
? joy:3sg ? make:part:past

The following elements can be identified:

za = Udi *za* 'l:DAT'
gokar(e)XE = Palimpsest *gokarXE* (Perf2), derived from Pal. *karXesown* 'to save', meaning of the proverbially

	marked form probably 'ungodly' or 'humble' (< 'not saved' ?).
<i>naibow</i>	= Palimpsest <i>naibow</i> 'servant, slave'
<i>b~E</i>	Abbreviation meaning 'god' or 'lord' (genitive or ergative)
<i>hAwk'</i>	= Palimpsest <i>hAwk'</i> 'joy'
<i>biyay</i>	Palimpsest <i>biyay</i> (do:PAST)

T 3 (Fragment of candleholder (?), Mingečaur) [16 x 4(,5) cm]

(Murav'ev 1981:275, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

- 1(?) *zow va ba(l)a oa*[____?]
 I you:sg do:part:fut ?
- 2(?) *.....biya(y)* [____?]
 ... do:part:past
- 3(?) *?iye bowq'ana* [____?]
 love

Old Udi segments are:

<i>zow</i>	= Udi <i>zu</i> 'I'
<i>va</i>	= Udi <i>va</i> 'you:SG:DAT'
<i>bala</i>	= Udi/Palimpsest <i>b-ala</i> 'do-FUT2'
<i>biyay</i>	= Palimpsest <i>biyay</i> (do:PAST)
<i>bowq'ana</i>	= Palimpsest <i>bowq'ana</i> 'beloved'

T 4 (Candleholder, Mingečaur) [18 x 11 x 10 cm]

(Murav'ev 1981:279, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

zow ki(W)pe

I burn(?):lv:perf

The meaning of *ki(W)pe* [phonetically *ki(dz)pe*] is obscure. Obviously, we have to deal with a 'simple' perfect (-e) added to the light verb *-p-*. The initial form *zow* corresponds to Udi *zu* 'I'.

T 5 (Roofing tile (?), Mingečaur) [10 x 10,5 cm]

(Murav'ev 1981:273, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

- 1 *zow m*[____]
 I ...
- 2 *bAwg'a*[____]
 in=midth ...
- 3 *h~k'e zow*[____]
 because I...
- 4 *(b). hel(i)*[____]
 [do] soul:gen ...

(x) [_____]

This fragment shows the following correspondences with (Old) Udi:

zow = Udi *zu* l'
bAwg^a Palimpsest *bawg^a* 'in midth' (Udi *be^%g^* 'middle')
h~k'e = Palimpsest *h~k'e*, an abbreviation meaning 'because'.
hel = Palimpsest *hel* (> Udi (pl.tant.) *el-mux*) 'soul, spirit'

T 6 (Roofing tile (?), Mingečaur) [16 x 4 cm]

(Murav'ev 1981:281, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

mana (k')? [_____]

[Personal name?]

The interpretation of this passage remains unclear.

T 7 (Candleholder, Mingečaur) [11 x 7 x 7 cm]

(Murav'ev 1981:277, new reading © W. Schulze 2003)

	I	II	III	IV
1	ab	g(d)	ezE	Ytč'
		i(s)i		g^ar

This inscription contains the first 10 letters of the Aluan alphabet. In addition, two words appear in vertical lines. *i(s)i* remains unclear, whereas *ğar* undoubtedly means 'son, child' (= Udi/Palimpsest *g^ar*).

T 8 (Tablet, Verxnyj Labkomaxi) [10 x 5 cm]

(Alphabet; Murav'ev 1981:283; perhaps a fake)

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[\[top\]](#)

[\[back\]](#)