

## AKLDAMA – ONE EXAMPLE OF THE GEORGIAN-JEWISH LEXICAL ENCOUNTER

აკლდამა - ქართულ-ებრაული ლექსიკური შეხვედრის ერთი მაგალითი

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## ABSTRACT

In Georgian archaeological terminology, the word *akldama* refers to a specific type of burial site—namely, a *grave either embedded in the earth or located beneath a church floor*, constructed in the shape of a house and serving as a collective tomb. The term *akldama* entered the Georgian language during the Christian era and derives from the Aramaic compound *ḥāqel dēmā*, which translates literally as “Field of Blood.” This term references the Gospel episode in which Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver—the price of betraying Christ—to the chief priests, who then used the money to purchase a potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. This site was henceforth known as Akeldama, or the “Field of Blood” (Matt. 27:3–8).

A question arises: who were the “foreigners” for whom the Jewish high priests designated the field bought with the silver paid to Judas?

This interpretation suggests a cemetery for those who had been executed or killed. But why specifically a cemetery? To understand this, one must consult a map of Christian monuments in Jerusalem. It becomes clear that , beyond the Gate of the Springs and near the royal gardens, in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom. According to the Old Testament, this place was called Tophet (tōphet, ṭāpht, ḥāqel gē’ ’ennom), a name which, in later periods, came to denote hell itself (Gehenna).

As for the choice to purchase a field specifically from a potter, beyond the fact that a “Potter’s Field” is marked near Akeldama on maps of the Jerusalem vicinity—as a clay deposit suitable for ceramic production—the metaphorical significance is also transparent: the potter represents a divine figure who fashions both humankind and the cosmos from clay.

In the worldview of ancient peoples, the afterlife was often conceived as a field—an estate, meadow, or pasture—and naturally, the same word was used to denote burial sites. But why does the name for such a burial site include the notion of “blood”? The idea of familial cemeteries has been present since early antiquity and was recognized among the peoples of the ancient world, including Georgian tribes. This is clearly confirmed by archaeological evidence, such as the collective familial barrow-graves (e.g., at Tqviavi) and stone-built family crypts (e.g., at Kiketi and Tamarisi) dating to the Early Bronze Age.

Moreover, in the languages of the ancient world, the term “blood” often intersected with both medical and kinship-related semantic fields. Christian Jews perceived themselves as a community united by blood—redeemed by the true blood of Christ—and thus, the concept of a communal burial ground would have held special significance. The notion that a faith-based community could be

understood as a blood-bound one is likewise affirmed in the Old Testament. The practice of collective burial as an expression of religious unity (for instance, burial alongside a saint as a form of communion with holiness) is not a New Testament innovation but a conscious continuation of long-standing tradition.

As for the term *Akeldama*, or “Field of Blood,” it is likely a calque coined in Aramaic during or even before the Old Testament period, signifying a familial, communal, or tribal burial ground. It conveys the specific meaning of a resting place for those united by blood in Christ. While the word *Akeldama* appears unchanged in all translations of the New Testament, Georgian is the only language in which this term evolved into a lexeme with an established place in the lexicon.

Georgian lexicography distinguishes between two forms: **Akeldama**—the biblical “Field of Blood,” and **akldama**—a burial site, grave, or resting place. This distinction suggests that the word likely entered the Georgian language through the influence of an Aramaic-speaking diaspora settled in Kartli. It is also plausible that **akldama** was used to refer to a familial or communal cemetery.

To summarize this discussion of the term **akldama**: **the word derives from the Aramaic compound ḥāqel dēmā, consisting of ḥāqel (“field”) and dēmā (“blood”). Literally, it translates as “Field of Blood” and conveys the meaning “resting place of those united by blood.” The Gospel interpretation of the term leans toward the understanding of it as a “resting place of faith-based unity,” associating it with Christian-era burial traditions.**

The lexical status and semantic range of the Georgian word **akldama** allow us to interpret it as denoting a communal or familial burial ground—a resting place for those united by blood. Since the word’s entry into Georgian is presumed to predate the official translation of the Gospels from Greek and is associated with an Aramaic-speaking population in Kartli, it can be confidently stated that the term originally carried the meaning of a burial site for those bound by both genetic and spiritual kinship—a unity in the blood of Christ.

**Keywords:** Familial cemetery; burial ground of blood-bound unity; Aramaic-speaking diaspora in Kartli; toponymy of biblical Jerusalem.

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#### აბსტრაქტი:

ქართული არქეოლოგიური ლექსიკა „აკლდამა“-ს უწოდებს სამარხის ერთ-ერთ სახეობას, კერძოდ - მიწაში ჩამარხულ ან ეკლესიის იატაკის ქვეშ მოთავსებულ სამარხს, რომელსაც აქვს სახლის ფორმა და კოლექტიურ საძვალეს წარმოადგენს. „აკლდამა“

ქართულში ქრისტიანულ ეპოქაში შემოსული სიტყვაა და მომდინარეობს არამეული კომპოზიტიდან - h<sup>3</sup>qal d<sup>3</sup>mā „აკლდამა“-ს სიტყვასიტყვითი თარგმანია „დაბაჲ სისხლისაჲ“ იგულისხმება სახარებისეული ეპიზოდი: იუდამ დაუბრუნა მღვდელმთავრებს ქრისტეს გამჟღავნების გასამრჯელო ოცდაათი ვერცხლი, ხოლო მათ ამ ფულით მეკეცისაგან იყიდეს მიწა (აგარაკი) „საფლავად უცხოთა“ და უწოდეს მას აკელდამა - „ველი სისხლისა“ (მთ..27-3-8).

ვინ მიიჩნევა უცხოდ, რომელთა დასაკრძალავადაც განაკუთვნეს იუდეველმა მღვდელმთავრებმა იმ ოცდაათი ვერცხლით (სასყიდელითა მის განსყიდულისადათა)შემქნილი მიწა? ეს ინტერპრეტაციაც გულისხმობს მოკლულთა, დასჯილთა სასაფლაოს. რატომ მაინცადამაინც სასაფლაოს? ამის გარკვევისათვის მივმართოთ იერუსალიმის ქრისტიანულ ძეგლთა რუკას. ირკვევა, რომ „აკელდამა“ არის რეალურად არსებული ტოპონიმი. ის არის იერუსალიმის სამხრეთ გარეუბანში, წყაროთა ბჰის მიღმა, სამეფო ბაღების მახლობლად, ენომის ძეთა ველზე მდებარე ძველი სასაფლაოს სახელწოდება. ძველი აღთქმის ტექსტის მიხედვით ამ ადგილს ეწოდება ტაფეთი tōphet, ṭapht, ḥāqel gē' 'ennom), რაც შემდგომში ჯოჯოხეთის სახელწოდებად იქცა (გეჰენა).

რაც შეეხება მაინცადამაინც მეკეცისაგან აგარაკის შესყიდვას, იმის გარდა, რომ იერუსალიმის შემოგარენის რუკაზე „აკელდამის“ მახლობლად დატანილია „მეკეცის აგარაკი“, კერამიკული წარმოებისათვის სახმარი თიხის საბადო, მისი მეტაფორული მნიშვნელობაც აგრეთვე ფრიად გამჭვირვალეა: მეკეცე - უფლის ხატია, რომელიც თიხისაგან ძერწავს ადამიანსაც და მთელ სამყაროსაც.

ძველი მსოფლიოს ხალხთა წარმოდგენით საიქიო სწორედ ველი იყო (დაბა, აგარაკი, მინდორი, საძოვარი). ბუნებრივია, რომ მათ სასაფლაოს აღმნიშვნელადაც იგივე სიტყვა ეხმარათ, მაგრამ რატომ ფიგურირებს იმავე სასაფლაოს აღმნიშვნელ სახელში სისხლი?

საგვარეულო სასაფლაოს ცნება ადრეული ეპოქებიდან არის ცნობილი და აღიარებული ძველი მსოფლიოს ხალხების, მათ შორის ქართველურ ტომთა მიერ, რასაც მკაფიოდ ადასტურებს არქეოლოგია: ადრეული ბრინჯაოს ხანიდან ცნობილია საგვარეულო კოლექტიური გორასამარხებისა (ტყვიავი) და ქვით ნაგები საოჯახო აკლდამების (კიკეთი, თამარისი) არსებობა. ამასთანავე, ძველი მსოფლიოს ხალხთა ენებში სიტყვა „სისხლის“ მნიშვნელობაში გადაიკვეთება სამედიცინო და ნათესაურობის შინაარსის მქონე სემანტიკური რკალები. ქრისტიანი ებრაელები თავს სწორედ სისხლით ერთობად აღიქვამდნენ, ქრისტეს მართალი სისხლით დახსნილთა ერთობად და, ბუნებრივია, რომ საერთო სასაფლაო მათთვის დიდი პატივი უნდა ყოფილიყო. სარწმუნოებითი ერთობაც რომ სისხლით ერთობის რანგისად გაიაზრებოდა, ამასაც ადასტურებს ძველ აღთქმა. რწმენითი ერთობის კოლექტიური სამარხი (წმინდანთან ერთად დაკრძალვა და ამით სიწმინდესთან ზიარება) ახალი აღთქმის ეპოქაში შექმნილი ინოვაცია კი არ არის, არამედ ტრადიციის შეგნებული გაგრძელება.

რაც შეეხება ტერმინს –აკელდამა/ველი სისხლისა, ეს უნდა იყოს ძველი აღთქმის ეპოქაში (და იქნებ უფრო ადრეც!) ჩამოყალიბებული ცნების-საგვარეულო, სათემო, სატომო სასაფლაოს აღსანიშნად არამეულში შეთხზული კალკი და მას აქვს კონკრეტული შინაარსი: ქრისტეს სისხლისმიერი ერთობის სასაფლაო. სიტყვა „აკელდამა“ ახალი აღთქმის ყველა

თარგმანში უცვლელადაა გადასული, მაგრამ ქართული ერთადერთი ენაა, სადაც ეს სიტყვა ლექსემად იქცა - **შევიდა ენის ლექსიკურ ფონდში**. ქართული ლექსიკოგრაფია განასხვავებს ორ ფორმას: აკლდამა - სახარებისეული სისხლის ველი და აკლდამა - სამარხი, საფლავი, განსასვენებელი. ეს ვითარება კი გვაფიქრებინებს, რომ მოცემული სიტყვა უნდა უკავშირდებოდეს ქართლში არამეულად მეტყველი დიასპორის სახლობას. ისიც სავარაუდოა, რომ აკლდამა-დ იწოდებოდა სათემო, საგვარეულო სასაფლაო.

რომ შევაჯამოთ ჩვენი მსჯელობა სატყვა „აკლდამის“ შესახებ, შეიძლება ასეთი დასკვნის ჩამოყალიბება: აკლდამა (h<sup>o</sup>qal d<sup>o</sup>mā) - არის არამეული კომპოზიტი, რომელიც შედგება ორი ფუძისაგან: **h<sup>o</sup>qal - ველი** და **d<sup>o</sup>mā - სისხლი**. სიტყვასიტყვით იგი ითარგმნება, როგორც „სისხლის ველი“ და ნიშნავს „სისხლით ერთობის განსასვენებელს“. ამ სიტყვის სახარებისეული ინტერპრეტაცია მიდრეკილია მნიშვნელობისაკენ - „რწმენითი ერთობის განსასვენებელი“, ანუ, ამ ტერმინს განაკუთვნებს ქრისტიანული ეპოქის სამარხებს. ქართული სატყვა „აკლდამა“-ს ლექსიკური სტატუსი, მისი სემანტიკური დიაპაზონი საშუალებას იძლევა მოცემული სიტყვა განეკუთვნოს სათემო, საგვარეულო სასაფლაოს, სისხლით ერთობის განსასვენებელს. რადაგანაც სიტყვა „აკლდამა“-ს შემოსვლა და დამკვიდრება ქართულში სახარების ბერძნულიდან ოფიციალურად თარგმნამდელი პერიოდისათვის ივარაუდება და უკავშირდება ქართლში მოსახლე არამეულენოვან მოსახლეობას, დარწმუნებით შეიძლება ითქვას, რომ ქართულენოვან სამყაროში მოცემულ სიტყვას თავიდანვე უნდა ჰქონოდა სამარხის, სისხლით ერთობის განსასვენებლის მნიშვნელობა. ჩვენს შემთხვევაში „სისხლით ერთობა“ გულისხმობს როგორც გენეტიკურ, ასევე სარწმუნოებრივ ერთობას (ქრისტეს სისხლისმიერ ერთობას).

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** საგვარეულო სასაფლაო; სისხლით ერთობის სასაფლაო; არამეულენოვნი დიასპორა ქართლში; ბიბლიური იერუსალიმის ტოპონიმია.

## Introduction

The contemporary Georgian archaeological lexicon defines *akldama* as a specific type of tomb, particularly one buried underground or located beneath the floor of a church, “*which takes the shape of a house and represents a collective burial site.*”<sup>1</sup>

The discussions surrounding this term in the specialized literature can be summarized in several theses:

1. The word *akldama* was introduced into the Georgian language during the Christian era.
2. *Akldama* originates from an Aramaic compound – *hʾakal dʾ mā*.
3. In Aramaic, this compound was introduced in the Christian era, referring to land (a farm, field, or area) acquired through the price of Christ’s blood, intended to be “the burial ground of strangers.”
4. According to Georgian lexicographical tradition, the literal translation of *akldama* would be “the field of blood” (or “the farm of blood,” “the field of blood,” “the house of blood”).
5. There are differences in the design and burial practices between Hellenistic and late antiquity tomb structures. However, in Christian *akldama* tombs, no such variations are observed.

## Discussion and Results

Let us examine some of these points and attempt to determine the validity of such terminology:

Every Georgian dictionary defines the word *akldama* as a type of tomb or grave, and in the process of etymological interpretation, it is often associated with the concept of the Holy Scriptures. Hence, it is translated as “the field of blood” (or “the blood’s farm,” “the blood’s field,” “the blood’s house”)<sup>2</sup>. This refers to the following story: Overcome by a guilty conscience, Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, who, with this money, purchased a piece of land (a farm) from a potter to be used as a burial site for strangers and named it *akldama*—the field of blood (Matthew 27:3-8). If we accept this explanation and use it as the basis for the etymological interpretation of the word *akldama*, then it also becomes necessary to clarify what is meant by “the burial ground for strangers,” and who are considered “strangers” for whom the Jewish priests acquired land with the thirty pieces of silver.

The story in the *Acts of the Apostles* diverges from Matthew’s Gospel: After Christ’s ascension, the Apostle Peter addressed the gathered people and disciples, saying: “*Among us was Judas, who bought a field with his reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all*

<sup>1</sup> (Grigol Rukhadze, G. Koplatadze (ed.), , 2008)

<sup>2</sup> See: Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, *Works IV1-2*; D. Chubinashvili, *Georgian-Russian Dictionary*; Nik. Chubinashvili, *Georgian Dictionary*; Il. Abuladze, *Dictionary of Old Georgian Language*; Kvatchadze, M., Natradze, N., Sarjveladze, Z., Chkhenkeli, M., & Khazhomia, T. (1988). *Kartlis tskhovrebis simfonia-leksikoni* [Symphony-lexicon of the Life of Kartli]. (Orbeliani, Sul Khan-Saba, S. Iordanishvili (editor), 1949); (Chubinashvili, 1984); (Abuladze, 1973); (Kvatchadze, M., Natradze, N., Sarjveladze, Z., Chkhenkeli, M., & Khazhomia, T., 1988)

*his bowels gushed out*” (Acts 1:18)<sup>3</sup>. Unlike Matthew, Luke emphasizes that Judas purchased the land with the thirty pieces of silver, but was unable to keep it; he was punished, and the *akldama*—the field of blood—was named after the cursed blood of the traitor. As we see, this interpretation is also based on the prophecy of Jeremiah, symbolizing the cemetery of the executed and those who perished<sup>4</sup>.

But why precisely a burial ground? Is this story a mere accident, or does it have some traditional basis? To explore this, we will refer to a map of Christian monuments in Jerusalem and see if *akldama* is a real place and where it is located. It turns out that “*akldama*” is indeed a real toponym: it refers to an old cemetery in the southern outskirts of Jerusalem, beyond the gate of the potter’s field, near the royal gardens, located on the Enomus (Gehenna) Valley. According to the Old Testament, this place is called *Tophet* (Tōfet, Taphēt, Bəqāl), which later became synonymous with Gehenna (Hell). It is likely that by the time the name Gehenna came to mean Hell, this place had already been cursed for the Hebrews (cf. “*Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon its inhabitants all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words*” (Jeremiah 19:11-12). Naturally, this conception was adopted by the New Testament period. Indeed, here is the “hill of evil council,” the residence of the high priest Caiaphas, the tomb of the high priest Annas (the *akldama!*), and, most significantly, the *Tophet* sanctuary, where the sacrificial blood of children offered to Moloch flowed.

By the time the prophecy of Jeremiah was written, the former Canaanite pagan site—*Tophet*<sup>5</sup>—and its surrounding area had become a cemetery, and it was called “the valley of the sons of Hinnom” (B<sup>3</sup>qāl Gehenna, in the Polyandron sense)<sup>6</sup>. The Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *B<sup>3</sup>qāl*—field (Syriac *Na Bāla*, Hebrew *Gei*)<sup>7</sup>, interpreted in Greek as *Polyandron*, denotes a gathering place for many men

<sup>3</sup> St. Mathew points out the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah: “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And I took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me.’” (Matt. 27:9-10). Generally, the text of Jeremiah’s prophecy contains a large amount of specific information about the subject of our interest. (Cf. also: “And their children shall be killed by the sword, and their houses will become desolate, for I am the one who searches the heart and reins and will give to each according to their deeds.” (Rev. 2:23); also: 1 Kings 16:7; Psalms 25:2; Jeremiah 11:20, and many others).

<sup>4</sup> The prophet Jeremiah says that the Jews earned the Lord’s wrath by following the ways of the Gentiles, erecting altars, offering sacrifices, and shedding blood, for which they would be punished, and their dwelling places and burial grounds would be turned into the graves of the condemned: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that this place shall no longer be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter.” (Jer. 19:6).

<sup>5</sup> *Biblical Encyclopedia*, p. 172.

<sup>6</sup> See: T.V. Gamkrelidze, V.V. Ivanov, *Indo-European Language and the Indo-Europeans*. Tbilisi, 1984, pp. 871-872. (T.V. Gamkrelidze, V.V. Ivanov, 1984). If this root can be linked to the biblical *Tophet*, its original meaning could be “sacrifice field” (i.e., “place of sacrifice,” “holy place”). This meaning of *Tophet* is still present in Jeremiah’s prophecy, but in a negative sense – “cursed place,” “place of the damned,” which is likely the result of an ideological battle. In later periods, this place is referred to as *Gehenna*, or “Hell.”

<sup>7</sup> When referencing Semitic language examples, we have followed the advice of Academician K. Tsereteli. We also extend our gratitude to Academician Gr. Giorgadze for his comments.



and, additionally, as a burial ground. The Georgian translation of the term *samravalkatso* // *mravalsakatso* also is a calque from the Greek<sup>8</sup>.

In other cases, the same *B'qāl* is translated into Greek as *Pharragos*<sup>9</sup>— (cf. “But the name of the city shall be called ‘the fall of the many, and the land shall be cleansed’” (Ezekiel 39:16)). Indeed, the graves cover the entire valley of the sons of Hinnom and reach the summit of the “hill of evil council.”<sup>10</sup> Here, one can find both individual rock-hewn tombs and collective ones.

Unfortunately, we do not have access to archaeological research data on Jerusalem and its surrounding areas to have a clear understanding of the typological and chronological composition of these burial sites. However, it is certain that by the time of the writing of the prophecy of Jeremiah, the former Canaanite pagan burial grounds and its surroundings had already become a cemetery, referred to as the “Field of the Sons of Hinnom,” or the “Field of the Three Sons of Hinnom.”<sup>11</sup>

It is evident that the transformation of the former Canaanite pagan burial grounds and its burial site’s name – *ge Ennom*<sup>12</sup> – into the designation of hell symbolizes the ideological conflict between

<sup>8</sup> No Georgian dictionary recognizes this lexeme, but it appears several times in the Old Testament text in the sense of “burial place”: “And let him be given a place to lie among the graves of the people of Israel, to the east of the sea...” (Ezek. 39:11); “And let them go to the graves of their fathers...” (Jer. 19:2), and others. A separate issue is whether this “Enom” name can be linked to the “Anamel” mentioned in the same prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 32:6), which is read in Hebrew as *Canaanite* (Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 619). As we know, the Lord, angered by the Jews who turned to idolatry, commands Jeremiah to purchase a field from his cousin, Anamel, with the right of first purchase, and indeed, Jeremiah paid Anamel seven shekels and ten pieces of silver in the presence of witnesses. If we assume there is a semantic and etymological connection between these proper names, we might suggest that *Enom* could mean “Canaanite burial place.” It is also interesting to note that the term “purchase” in Old Georgian literature is used as a metaphorical synonym for “dominion” or “sovereignty.” In the *Life of Grigol Khandzteli*, it is stated: “For seeking the purchase of a work, he grasped them, and with great wisdom, he offered continuous prayer in sacrifice...” (1.2); “The purchase of the work will not be accepted with grace, but with cooperation” (*Life of Grigol Khandzteli*, 6.2). This assumption is supported by a passage in the Acts of the Apostles, where Peter rebukes Ananias for lying: “Was it not your own property, and after it was sold, was it not in your control?” (Acts 5:4).

<sup>9</sup> Weisman, A. D. (1991). *Grechesko-russkiĭ slovar' [Greek–Russian dictionary]*. Moscow: Greko-Latinskiĭ Kabinet Yu. A. Shichalina. (Weisman, 1991)

<sup>10</sup> (Nikifor, 1882–1892, p. 276); (Nikifor, 1882–1892)

<sup>11</sup> *The Bible*. Moscow, 1968, Plan of Jerusalem, p. 1009; *Old Jerusalem and its Surroundings*. Moscow, 1873, pp. 275-278; *Complete Orthodox Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1-11. Moscow, 1889. Also: “Ben-Hinnom – a valley near Jerusalem, near the so-called ‘sun’ (‘midday’, ‘southern’) gate. (In the Georgian Bible text, this gate is called the ‘Gate of Ashes’. Cf. Ezra II.2.14). This valley starts south of Jerusalem and heads directly towards the southwestern part of Mount Zion, from where it bends east towards the Kedron Valley. Today, it is called Chadi er Ghababi. In the valley of Ben-Hinnom, there stood the idol of Molech, to whom the Jews sacrificed their children. The elevated area was called *Bamot ha Tophet*. The pious King Josiah banned the cult of Molech in Ben-Hinnom. According to commentators, *Tophet* is named thus because the loud noise of tambourines (tāf) was heard to drown out the cries of those being sacrificed. (Jewish Encyclopedia, St. Petersburg, 1903, vol. 4, pp. 147-148). We believe that an alternative interpretation of this name’s etymology may be possible: from Semitic *tāpah* meaning “sacrifice” – root (common Semitic *dabah* meaning “sacrifice,” “slay,” and *dibah* meaning “sacrificial animal” in Old Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> *Complete Popular Biblical Encyclopedia*, work and publication by Arch. Nikifor. Moscow, 1882-92, pp. 79-80. (Nikifor, 1882–1892) Also: “Even in the Talmud, the concept of life after death is expressed in a metaphorical

the ancient and new religious systems of that era (this is further confirmed by the very pathos of Jeremiah's prophecy). The same hypothesis can be applied to the New Testament era as well: according to the *Acts of the Apostles*, it was Judah who purchased a field from the potter, and on that land, his unholy blood was shed. So, should this land be regarded as accursed? In fact, the situation is quite the opposite – Akeldama, a Christian cemetery, is where Queen Helena herself is buried!

What's the reasoning behind this? The reason is that the New Testament not only does not oppose the Old Testament ideologically but rather represents an organic continuation of its doctrinal aims: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”* (Matthew 5:17). Therefore, according to the New Testament, this place, which was once the sacrificial land soaked in blood, purchased with thirty silver coins, is now designated for the repentance of sinners who, of their own free will, separate themselves from their sins. This is why, on the potter's field, side by side, we find the tombs of the high priest Annas and Queen Helena!

Based on the entire context of the prophecy of Jeremiah, this acquisition must be understood symbolically: the descendants of the Canaanites, who were punished for their idolatry and destined for the slavery of the Israelites, will again purchase and reclaim their ancestral land (Jeremiah 32:43-44; Zechariah 14:10-11), but for this acquisition, repentance of sins is necessary, and one must return to the path of holiness (*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”* — Psalm 51:17). The parable in the New Testament about the purchase of the potter's field and the execution of the sinner revives this idea, pointing to the fulfillment of what was prophesied by the Spirit through David: *“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns’”* (Psalm 68:26). This means that even though the sinner is punished, the land where his unholy blood was shed will be inhabited by his righteous descendants.

As for the purchase of the field from the potter, apart from the fact that on the map of Jerusalem's outskirts, near Akeldama, we find the “potter's field,” a clay pit for ceramic production, its metaphorical significance<sup>13</sup> is also clear: the potter is a symbol of the Lord, who shapes both man and the entire world from clay<sup>14</sup> (*“Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand”* — Jeremiah 18:6). It is easy to understand that the potter's field metaphorically refers to the Kingdom of God, which belongs to Judah and the people of Israel, with the seniority of their kinsfolk. And, in the context of the New Testament, it is precisely this land that was purchased with the blood of Christ, because by the true blood of the Savior, all human sin is redeemed. The potter's field, purchased with the price of thirty silver coins, is the rightful inheritance of the descendants of Adam. Henceforth,

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and symbolic manner, including references to *Gehenna* – this is the valley of Ben-Hinnom. It is a narrow gorge in Jerusalem. In ancient times, idol worshippers sacrificed their children in this gorge to the bloodthirsty Molech.”

<sup>13</sup> Incidentally, this clay is believed to possess miraculous properties, as it is said to decompose corpses within a few days. For this reason, many ships transported this clay to Greece at the request of Queen Helena. Even the tomb of Queen Helena itself is constructed and coated with this clay. *Biblical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Tokarev, S. A. (Ed.) et al. (Original work published 1980) *Mify narodov mira: Èntsiklopediya* [Myths of the peoples of the world: Encyclopedia] (Electronic ed.). Moscow: Sovetskaya Èntsiklopediya.



every person is responsible only for their own sins: “*In those days they will no longer say, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes – their own teeth will be set on edge*” (Jeremiah 31:29-30).

According to the prophecy of Jeremiah, as a result of the punishment of the Jewish people, this sinful place will no longer be called by its old name – the “Field of the Sons of Hinnom,” but rather the “Field of Slaughter”<sup>15</sup>. This suggests that although the term *Ḍʿqal dāmā // Ḍʿkal dāmā* – the “Field of Blood” – may appear to be a new creation in the New Testament era, the concept to which this term refers should not be understood as contemporary. Indeed, the Old Testament (specifically, the prophecy of Jeremiah) already refers to the place, which later became Akeldama, as the “Field of Slaughter,” or the “Cemetery of the Slain.”

It is well known that, in the ancient worldview, the afterlife was depicted as a field (a town, a farm, a meadow, a pasture)<sup>16</sup>. Naturally, the same word was used to designate a cemetery. But why does the name of this cemetery include the word “blood”? Is it only the cemetery in the “Field of the Sons of Hinnom” that bears this name?

It seems not! Recall that, according to the Old Testament, it was considered obligatory to acquire a piece of land for a cemetery by paying a price. Moreover, it was essential to bury the deceased in the family tomb: Abraham, for instance, bought a plot from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site (Genesis 23:20). Here, Abraham and Sarah are buried. Later, their son Isaac and grandson Jacob also firmly demanded to be buried in their ancestral tombs: “There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, Isaac and his wife Rebecca, and there they buried Leah” (Genesis 49:30). Likewise, David’s heirs followed suit: “And David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David” (1 Kings 2:10); “And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, his father’s city” (1 Kings 11:43)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> \* poluandrion thjs sfages, юдоль закланьных, уеј hahāyat, na Ḍla d’ Öatīlā

<sup>16</sup> Compare:

- a) Indo-European *éll* – “pasture,” “field,” “resting place of the deceased”;
- b) Ancient Greek *Elysion pedion* – “Elysian fields”;
- c) Ancient Greek *geimon* – “Hades,” “field”;

Hittite prayer: “O God, create this pasture (wellu)...” The afterlife was represented as a “pasture” where the souls of the deceased and sacrificed animals “rested” (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, forthcoming work, p. 823). A similar belief about the afterlife existed among the ancient Georgians, as evidenced by ethnographic and folkloric material. For instance, the folk saying “mist is the vapor of horses’ breath” and “horses are fed by water, and the riders are wanderers” (*Georgian Folk Poetry*, vol. IV, Tbilisi 1975, p. 67). This is further corroborated by the formation of the name “paradise” from the verb “to go” and place names derived from *soul-eth* or *sa-ik-yo*, referring to a place where souls rest.

<sup>17</sup> The Indo-European root *ũell* is adopted into Georgian as *ველი* (“field”). The Semitic root *Ḍakal* is connected to Indo-European *akro, agros, akr* (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, forthcoming work, p. 687). In Egyptian mythology, *Aker* (“land”) is a deity, believed to have been borrowed from Sumerian (*Agar*, meaning “irrigated land,” “field,” *Myths of the Peoples of the World*, vol. 1, p. 56). It is also worth noting that in the Bible, *Agar* is the name of Sarah’s rival, the servant woman who bore Ishmael.

Thus, the purchase of the land by Abraham from Ephron the Hittite laid the foundation for his descendants' family cemetery<sup>18</sup>.

The concept of a family cemetery was recognized and accepted by the peoples of the ancient world, including the Georgian tribes, as is clearly demonstrated by archaeology: from the early Bronze Age, collective family tombs (like those at Tkviavi) and stone family crypts (like those in Kiketi and Tamarisi)<sup>19</sup> are well-documented<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, in the languages of ancient peoples, the word for “blood” often intersected with medical and familial meanings<sup>21</sup>. Despite the fact that Semitic languages did not use the term *d̥m* // *d̥mā* for “blood” with a connotation of kinship, it seems natural, considering the importance of burial in the family tomb (i.e., “the cemetery of blood kinship,” “the field of blood”), that this concept would be expressed through such word associations in the ancient Semitic context<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> The Indo-European root *ũell* is adopted into Georgian as *ველი* (“field”). The Semitic root *D̥akal* is connected to Indo-European *akro*, *agros*, *akr* (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, forthcoming work, p. 687). In Egyptian mythology, *Aker* (“land”) is a deity, believed to have been borrowed from Sumerian (*Agar*, meaning “irrigated land,” “field,” *Myths of the Peoples of the World*, vol. 1, p. 56). It is also worth noting that in the Bible, *Agar* is the name of Sarah’s rival, the servant woman who bore Ishmael.

<sup>19</sup> Compare: **a**) A separate issue worthy of discussion in this context is the use of the term “city.” It is noteworthy that during the period in which the *Books of Kings* were written, the family tomb was referred to as a “city.” This naming convention may be explained by the widespread practice at the time, where kings, unlike ordinary citizens, were buried not in ordinary tombs, but in special structures (the royal tombs at Ur, dating to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, provide the most striking example). On the other hand, this trend may be linked to the extensive building activities of King David at the threshold of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC (historians assert that he was born in 1085 BC in Bethlehem; *Biblical Encyclopedia*, p. 179). **b**) In both cases, the term “city” is undoubtedly connected to “construction,” to building activity. The study of this issue would certainly shed light on a complex historical knot connected to the concept of the “city.”

<sup>20</sup> (Gotsadze, 1988), p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> It is also noteworthy that the location designated for burial is clearly an estate (a village, cultivated land, rather than barren land). (See M. Chirakadze, “On the Origin of the Term Related to Settlements,” *Scientific Research V*, Tbilisi, 1996, pp. 298-305). Additionally, it is certain that this land is purchased for the price of silver (compare: silver is associated with talent, purity, eloquence, spirituality, joy, and knowledge... Furthermore, the link between silver symbolizes the connection between the mortal and the eternal, originating from the navel of the world—*omphalos*). Therefore, purchasing a burial estate for the price of silver may signify the establishment of a connection between the mortal (sinners) and the eternal, i.e., the redemption of sins. If this hypothesis is correct, it becomes entirely clear why the parable of the purchase of an estate by the priest for silver in the Book of Jeremiah is significant.

<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, N. Marr’s interpretation of the terms “blood” (*sisxlisa*) and “womb” (*žmis*) is of particular interest with regard to their genetic association. He argues that although these terms do not originate from the same morpheme, they are semantically related. According to Marr, they share an ancient conceptual connection and designate the same social reality: they refer to individuals who are not descended from the same parents (i.e., not “of one blood”), yet who nonetheless belong to a single kinship group—individuals who are considered “of one blood, one flesh, and one womb.” (To support this viewpoint, N. Marr refers once again to the old formulation: “For you are of my womb and of my flesh” [cf. Gen. 29:14].)

As for Christian graves, which are specifically referred to as *tombs*, it could be said that Jewish Christians saw themselves as united by the blood of Christ, redeemed by His true blood. Therefore, it is only natural that they would regard the shared cemetery with the same respect and honor as Solomon regarded the burial place of his father, David, in the royal tomb.

The idea of spiritual unity also being understood as a “blood unity” is confirmed by the Old Testament: a prophet from Bethel was mauled by a lion while traveling, and an old man from the area buried him in his own tomb, following the ritual of mourning. He instructed his children: “When I die, bury me beside this holy man” (1 Kings 13:31-32), emphasizing the idea of being united with the bones of the righteous.

As we can see, the collective burial of the faithful (i.e., being buried together with saints and thus sharing in their sanctity) is not an innovation created in the New Testament era, but rather a conscious and worthy continuation of tradition. Regarding the term *Akeldama* – the “Field of Blood” – this should be understood as a term created in the Old Testament era (and perhaps even earlier!) to denote a family or tribal cemetery.

Why does the Gospel of Matthew attribute the purchase of this cemetery to the Jewish high priests, and what is meant by the “cemetery of strangers”?

If we recognize the organic connection and essential unity between the ideologies of the Old and New Testaments, we should understand that Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and the shedding of His righteous blood are similar to the earlier sin of the Jewish people – the raising of the idol of Molech and the sacrificing of children to it, for which they were severely punished. However, at the same time, this is the ransom for the redemption of His betrayer, and Judas’s lineage is not ultimately doomed – with sincere repentance, he can still obtain the “field of the potter,” which was bought once and forever by the true blood of Christ. It is precisely these sincere repentants who may be considered the “strangers” (*khvenios, strannik, akxenikh*), whose cemetery was bought with the price of Christ’s betrayal – the potter’s field.

Although the word “Akeldama” has remained unchanged in all translations of the New Testament, Georgian is the only language in which this word has become a lexeme – it has entered the language’s lexical stock. According to K. Gotsadze’s observation, Georgian lexicography seems to distinguish two forms: *Akeldama* – the Gospel’s “Field of Blood,” and *Akeldama* – a “tomb,” a “cemetery,” a “place of rest.” This situation suggests that the Georgians knew this word before the official translation of the Gospel text into Georgian from Greek, and its entry into the language should be associated with the settlement of speakers of non-Semitic languages in Kartli. It is also likely that *Akeldama* originally referred to a family or tribal cemetery. As a result of the narrowing of its meaning, in modern Georgian, this word now signifies a “tomb” (a “grave,” a “place of rest”).

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Marr notes that this connection is not only due to the fact that in one ancient language the word “žmas” meant “womb” and in another “blood,” but also due to the possibility that these words derive semantically from a shared archetype. Marr explains this phenomenon in terms of the polygenesis of semantics. According to his interpretation, polygenesis refers to a semantic unity whose constituent parts originate from different sources yet converge in meaning. (Marr, 1936) (Marr, 1936)

Since the early Semitic-speaking populations in Kartli spoke Georgian as their intermediary language, it is natural that this term, which denoted a significant concept for them, became widespread in Georgian with the spread of Christianity. Indeed, *Akeldama* is widely used in both literary and spoken Georgian, as well as in dialects. It can be found in the monuments of early Georgian literature starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> century (cf. “because the burial of other deceased was found three times within the gates of Akeldama...”)<sup>23</sup>.

In summary, regarding the word “Akeldama,” the following conclusion can be drawn: *Akeldama* (< *Ɖkal d mǎ*) is a non-Semitic compound composed of two roots: *Ɖkal* – field, and *d mǎ* – blood. Literally, it translates to “the field of blood” and signifies a resting place of blood unity. The Gospel’s interpretation of this term leans toward the meaning of “resting place of faith unity,” that is, it refers to Christian-era cemeteries. The lexical status of the Georgian word “Akeldama,” its semantic range, allows us to consider this word to denote a family or tribal cemetery, a resting place of blood unity<sup>24</sup>. Since the word “Akeldama” entered Georgian before the official translation of the Gospel from Greek, it can be confidently stated that in the Georgian-speaking world, this word must have originally had the meaning of a “tomb,” a resting place of blood unity. In our case, “blood unity” refers to both genetic and religious unity (i.e., the blood unity of Christ).

**What concept does the word “Akeldama” represent in Georgian archaeological lexicon, and what is its terminological status?**

If we compare the definitions in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language* and the *Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia*, we see that, despite superficial similarities, they are fundamentally different. According to them, the same term is used to refer to two different concepts, and therefore, it falls into two different semantic categories. According to the explanatory dictionary, *Akeldama* is a stone tomb, i.e., a variation of a tomb or grave, distinguished by the building material, while according to the encyclopedia, it is a type of burial structure, i.e., a variation of a tomb or grave, defined by its function. This polysemy (or ambiguity in the definition) is natural for a unit of the general lexicon – a word – but it is unacceptable for a professional lexicon term, which must be strictly unambiguous and precisely defined.

Let’s consider the term *Akeldama* in this regard, its equivalents, and contexts within the Georgian archaeological lexicon. the synonyms for *Akeldama* are: sepulcher, tomb, grave. In the *grave* category, the following lexical units are listed<sup>25</sup>:

- Akeldama; sepulcher; tomb; grave
- stone Akeldama; stone tomb; burial chamber

<sup>23</sup> From this perspective, attention should be drawn to the Megrelian toponym *Naakardamu*, which refers to one of the districts of the village of Ergeta and names an important archaeological site from the Bronze–Antiquity period (a tumulus!).

<sup>24</sup> M. Chirakadze, *On the Conceptual Boundaries of the Term. Arn. Chikobava’s Studies VII*, Tbilisi 1996, pp. 44–46.

<sup>25</sup> M. Chirakadze, *System of Basic Terms of Lexicography. SMAMN1563*, Tbilisi 1997, pp. 584–588.

- Akeldama in a mound grave, a burial in a mound (earth-filled, stone-filled tomb)
- stepped-arch tomb, a tomb with a stepped vault
- family Akeldama; family tomb

In the *Mausoleum* category, the following units are listed<sup>26</sup>:

- Akeldama; tomb; grave
- Lateral tomb; non-central grave
- Collective tomb; group tomb; Akeldama
- Midas's Akeldama
- Mycenaean shaft tomb, Akeldama
- Megalithic tomb, Akeldama
- Corridor tomb
- Sncestral Akeldama
- Family tomb
- shaft tomb

In the *Mausoleum* category, the following units are listed:

- Akeldama; resting place; tomb; burial site; cemetery
- Family tomb; family Akeldama; burial place
- Ancestral tomb; family burial site

Now, let us attempt to clarify the semantic range of each lexical unit and the relationships between them. The lexical units within *კლენი* are characterized by the following markers:

- Building material (e.g., stone Akeldama)
- Building form (e.g., stepped-arch tomb)
- Type of tomb (e.g., mound tomb)
- Ownership (e.g., family tomb)

In the *crypt* category, we find the following markers:

- Building material (e.g., stone tomb)

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<sup>26</sup> In this case, we will no longer discuss the terms *samare*, *saflavi*, *gansasvenebeli*, *sadzvale*—their lexical potential and terminological function were previously examined. These lexical units in modern Georgian are synonyms, used to refer to the burial place of a human being. Georgian archaeological terminology uses the term *samarxi* for a place of burial with this meaning. It is suggested that the aforementioned lexical units should be employed by archaeological lexicography as terms to represent various structural parts and types of tombs, within the corresponding terminological system. A separate discussion should be devoted to the terms *ekvderi* and *sakhli sakrdzavali* (cf. M. Chirakadze, *Principles of Formal Description of Archaeological Monuments, Dissertation Herald*, Tbilisi 1995). (Chirakadze, *Principles of Formal Description of Archaeological Monuments*, 1995)

- Shape of the tomb (e.g., shaft tomb)
- Type of structure (e.g., megalithic tomb)
- Structural features (e.g., corridor tomb)
- Ownership (e.g., family tomb)

In the *grave* category, the only marker is ownership (e.g., ancestral tomb).

Among these three lexical units, *Mausoleum* has the broadest semantic range. It can substitute for both *κλιπ* and *tomb*, *vault* in any context without altering the meaning (for example, *stone crypt* – *stone burial vault*; *tomb of Midas* – *burial vault of Midas*).

Its semantic markers, such as *ancestral* and *family*, can be applied to both *tomb* and *crypt* (e.g., *ancestral tomb* – *ancestral crypt*). Therefore, in this semantic series, *tomb* // *grave* represents the general concept, while *tomb* and *crypt* represent more specific, subordinate concepts. It is also known that a well-ordered, developed terminology excludes the existence of such doublets, which is why *Mausoleum* is not considered an archaeological term.

The terms *tomb* and *crypt* share certain common characteristics (materials of construction, type of burial, ownership), but also possess distinct, specific semantic markers. Therefore, one might assume that, within the system of archaeological terminology, these terms are independent and equivalent members of the same semantic paradigm. However, if we invoke the substitution method, it becomes evident that *tomb* can freely substitute *vault*, *crypt* in all contexts:

*stone crypt* ↔ *stone tomb*;

*domed crypt* ↔ *domed tomb*;

But not vice versa:

*lateral tomb* ≠ *domed crypt*;

*megalithic tomb* ≠ *megalithic crypt*.

As we can see, the semantic range of *tomb* is broader, thus it represents a general concept in relation to *crypt*, which, in turn, denotes a specific concept. Consequently, a hierarchical semantic relationship exists between the members of this synonym group:

*burial* ↔ *tomb*

↓ *tomb*

↓ *crypt*

Let us return to the Georgian equivalents of this synonym group, as represented in the “archaeological lexicon,” and observe how they correspond to the above-mentioned semantic categories. It will become clear that the Georgian terms *სამარხი* (“grave”) and *აკლდამა* (“mausoleum”) correspond to almost every unit within all three semantic categories. Moreover, *სამარხი* is a term denoting a general concept, while *აკლდამა* refers to a specific type of burial. Furthermore, *აკლდამა* corresponds to nearly all the units of the *κλιπ* category (e.g., *ქვის აკლდამა* [stone mausoleum], *გუმბათიანი აკლდამა* [dome-shaped mausoleum], *კამარიანი აკლდამა* [arched mausoleum], *საგვარეულო აკლდამა* [family mausoleum]), and these correspondences are confirmed in Georgian archaeological literature. An exception exists with the term *mound mausoleum*, which corresponds to *აკლდამა გორასამარხში* (“mausoleum in a burial mound, a chambered grave with



earth covering or stone lining”), which appears only in the writings of one Georgian author. If we disregard this exception, it could be stated that the Georgian term *აკლდამა* fully corresponds to the semantic range of *crypt* (or more accurately, covers it)<sup>27</sup>.

The same is true for the semantic category of *tomb*: there is no evidence in Georgian archaeological literature for the phrase “megalithic mausoleum<sup>28</sup>” (although dolmens are understood as such!). As we have seen, the meaning of the Georgian lexeme *აკლდამა* fully covers the semantic range of both *tomb and crypt*, with the only exception being its inability to convey the centrality or secondary nature of the burial. This concept is expressed by phrases such as “main burial” and “secondary burial.”<sup>29</sup>

What then, can be said about the semantic potential of the lexeme *აკლდამა* in Georgian archaeological literature? If we rely on K. Gotsadze’s interpretation, where *აკლდამა* is viewed as one specific type of burial—specifically, a constructed (built) burial that is buried underground or placed beneath the floor of a church, has a house-like form, represents a collective tomb, and belongs to the Christian era—certain semantic contradictions arise. To resolve these contradictions, let us separately examine the characteristics of the mausoleum as described: constructed, buried, house-shaped, collective, Christian.

- **Collectivity** – This is not a defining characteristic of a mausoleum, as both collective and individual mausoleums exist (e.g., the Atrevis mausoleum, the Midas mausoleum, and others)<sup>30</sup>.
- **Buried** – This is also not a defining characteristic of a mausoleum, as mausolea can be both buried (covered by earth or placed beneath the floor) and above-ground (e.g., the mausoleum of Mtskheta).
- **House-like Form** – This feature is likewise not defining, as mausoleums come in house-like forms (e.g., two-story, domed) as well as shaft- and pot-shaped forms<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> M. Chirakadze, *On the Conceptual Relationship of Terminological Synonyms, Way to Language*, Tbilisi 1998, pp. 184-198. (Chirakadze, *On the Conceptual Relationship of Terminological Synonyms*, 998)

<sup>28</sup> **Compare:** Special attention is drawn to stone tombs, or tombs. These types of tombs are widespread in Georgia both geographically and chronologically. Stone tombs are not uniform in construction; differences in structure may even lead to sharp typological distinctions, but the core remains unchanged: a construction of stone is created for the burial of the deceased. In conclusion, it should be noted that the discovery of a specific type of stone tomb—dolmens—has been made in the South Caucasus (O. Japaridze, *Archaeological Excavations in Trialeti*, Tbilisi 1969; *Essays on the History of Georgia*, vol. 1, p. 206).

<sup>29</sup> G. Gobejishvili, *The Tomb of Bedeni, Monument’s Friend*, N12, Tbilisi 1967, pp. 13-22. (Gobejishvili, 1967).

<sup>30</sup> O. Lortkiphanidze, *Ancient Archaeology*, Tbilisi 1977, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Since the peoples of the ancient world considered death as a continuation of life in the other world, it is natural that the dwelling place of the deceased would also be conceptualized as a home. Compare: “Their tombs were their homes forever, and their seeds remained as offspring to the end of time” (Psalm 48:11). Therefore, the tomb of every historical epoch, in form and structure, would replicate the dwelling that was typical for its time. For example: pit tombs and living pits with simple roofs; jar tombs and jar dwellings, etc. As for the mound (khorqan) which was raised above the tomb, B. Kuftin believed it should have been conceived as a temple. This idea was later more clearly articulated by M. Beriashvili. (M. Beriashvili, *Funerary Rituals among the Hittites, SSMM XXXVI-B*, Tbilisi 1982, p. 49). The further development of this idea would allow us to assert that every

- **Construction** – This characteristic is also not defining, as mausolea can be constructed from various materials, including both stone-built and rock-cut structures, and Russian archaeological literature also mentions “earthen mausolea” (gorund tomb).

- **Christian** – Mausolea are found from Christian, Hellenistic, and Bronze Age periods, both with and without inventory (e.g., 209 tombs from the Samtavro monastery)<sup>32</sup>.

As we have seen, none of the five key characteristics of a burial as an archaeological feature—**location, construction, composition, assembly, or inventory**—are definitively distinguishing for a mausoleum<sup>33</sup>. A burial described as a mausoleum can fall into any of the two opposing categories: above-ground and below-ground, simple and complex, made of stone or constructed, personal or collective, with or without inventory. A mausoleum does not distinguish itself from other types of burial based on structural characteristics—burial chamber, resting place, passage, circle, or structure—either. It appears that the term “mausoleum” does not possess its own, exclusively defining characteristics.

Thus, this term does not represent a relevant concept for archaeology and should not have a place in the system of archaeological terminology.

This would indeed be the case if we did not add another key characteristic of burial to the list—namely, the burial pathway. If we highlight this feature, we would then distinguish two categories of burials: single-use and multiple-use burials. It is for the latter category that the term *აკლდამა* could be used.

**Note:** The concept of “pathway” does not pertain to the concept of “composition,” which refers to the distribution of skeletons within the burial (with the label “main” or “secondary”) and determines its collectivity or individuality. Pathway concerns the structural distinction between single-use and multiple-use burials. From the perspective of “pathway,” the number of skeletons present in the burial is irrelevant: a mausoleum, designed for multiple use, may be used for a single individual’s burial or for multiple individuals (either simultaneously or at different times). The defining structural elements for the mausoleum’s designation will be those elements (e.g., doors, holes, dromoi) that reflect the burial’s intended multiple use.

Considering the above, *აკლდამა* (mausoleum) as an archaeological term is defined as follows:

*აკლდამა* – a category of burial that includes types of tombs designated for multiple burials. *აკლდამა* has a broad chronological, territorial, and structural range.

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upper detail of a tomb (mound)—a construction, a monument, a cairn—should be considered a singular function, while the burial of distinguished individuals in a building (i.e., a temple) would symbolize their deification. Interestingly, the same attitude should be applied to the burial of prominent individuals in churches (e.g., construction of underground tombs).

<sup>32</sup> Avdusin, D. A. (1972). *Polevaya arheologiya* [Field archaeology] (p. 75). (Avdusin, 1972)

<sup>33</sup> M. Chirakadze, *Principles of Formal Description of Archaeological Monuments (Dissertation Herald)*, Tbilisi 1995.

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