



**Inscription of the Milestone Discovered in Seid-Abadi  
Dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Hegira<sup>38</sup>**

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**Abstract**

The objective of the present article is to study the inscription of the milestone of the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Hegira, discovered in Seid-abadi. Our research is based on the materials available in the archives of Prof. Tsisia Kakhiani and analysis of other milestones found in the Near East.

It is noteworthy that this monument is one of the most ancient of the Arabic inscriptions of Georgia. The archives of Prof. Tsisia Kakhiani contain several notes regarding the milestone.

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As is known, erection of milestones and construction of roads were related to the organized planning of the postal service, which served the interests of the Caliphate rule.

According to V. Krachkovskaya, on the basis of the handwriting and content of the milestone found in Tbilisi, it can be dated to 100/718-719, maybe, to the 80s, and this inscription is undoubtedly one of the oldest in the South Caucasus that has reached us.

Discovery of a milestone in the given period near Tbilisi must indicate that the capital of Kartli was included in the trade network of the Caliphate and was situated on a significant arterial road.

**Keywords:** Prof. Ts. Kakhiani; Tbilisi; milestone; Arabic inscriptions.

### **Introduction**

The objective of the project financed by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia – *Arabic Epigraphic Monuments of Tbilisi* (FR -21-670) is to study, on the basis of the archival materials of Prof. Ts. Kakhiani, the Arabic epigraphic monuments of Tbilisi and, at the same time, to research into the newly discovered inscriptions.

The task of the present article is to study the inscription of the milestone of the 1<sup>st</sup> century of Hegira, found in Seid-abadi.

### **Methods**

Our research is based on the materials available in the archives of Prof. Tsisia Kakhiani and analysis of other milestones found in the Near East. The method of content analysis and comparative analysis is used in the research. Paleographic analysis of the inscription is carried out and they are compared with similar inscriptions of the same period. In addition, proceeding from the historical context, the significance of the inscription is analyzed for the history of the South Caucasus region as well as for the history of Tbilisi proper.

## Results

The archives of Prof. Tisia Kakhiani contain several notes regarding the milestone. In small folder #2 there is a photo of the milestone inscription (see annex #1) and one page, written in pencil, draft version (see annex # 2).

Prof. Ts. Kakhiani writes:

*“Milestone from Tbilisi. Three lines with six words, without a date. 699 Found by accident by Kiknadze in the ancient district of Tbilisi – Seidabadi. 31X45 cm. Kufic script, linear, angular, without diacritical marks.”*

بسم الله ثلاثة اميال من تفليس

*Contents: Basmala, indication of the distance from a settlement. The text, as compared with milestones, is laconic. 86/705 (?). It begins with basmala, includes two words without Allah’s epithets. The distance is indicated from the starting point من تفليس -Arabic name of Tbilisi. الي هاذا الميل is not indicated to the point of destination, which is to the name of ‘Abd al-Malik الي هاذا الميل - to this mile.*

*Three miles from Tbilisi, which is equal to six kilometers”.*

In the second note we read: *“Milestone (size 31X45) is currently preserved at Acad. S. Janashia Tbilisi State Museum. The inscription was studied by V. Krachkovskaya, who dates it to the 80-100s of the first century of Hegira (699-719 AD), regards it to belong to the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik and considers the handwriting as Kufic. In the opinion of I. Krachkovsky, this monument is a material proof of the Arab rule in Georgia at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century”.*

In the unpublished work dated to 1984 on Arabic inscriptions of Georgia, Prof. Ts. Kakhiani considers the milestone more extensively:

*“Three-line relief inscription, carved deeply, letters are of medium size, angular, carved on a milestone (size 31X45), which is damaged, it was found in Old Tbilisi, Seidabadi.*

*In the first line, four short perpendicular lines have survived, which are resting on a horizontal line. The letters س, ش, ب, ت, ن*

may have been written here. The following letters are not discernible. Even their trace has disappeared according to which it might have been possible to reconstruct the letters. Only *ل* and *ا* can be read. The second and the third lines were deciphered by G. Tsereteli.

ثلاث اميال من تفليس

*“Three miles from Tbilisi”*

*On the basis of paleographic evidence, G. Tsereteli dates it to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. of Hegira, i.e. the 8<sup>th</sup> c. AD.”*

Acad. G. Tsereteli writes about the milestone: *“In Tbilisi there exist locally created Arabic monuments belonging to the first centuries of Hegira. For example, the inscription of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. of Hegira, on the milestone which is dated to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. of Hegira, discovered in Old Tbilisi, Seidabadi من تفليس – ثلاثة اميال ... from Tbilisi”*(Tsereteli, 1947: 46).

V.Krachkovskaya writes regarding the milestone found in Tbilisi:

*“The small stone slab with an Arabic inscription, found by accident in Tbilisi, is noteworthy according to the character of the script as well as the contents. The slab is not large – 31X45cm. Its surface is uneven, edges – unequal. The short inscription consists of six words arranged on three lines, two words on each. In the inscription an important place is occupied by horizontal, greatly stretched ligatures. The handwriting of the inscription is strictly Kufic, linear and angular, without diacritical marks (punctuation). The inscription consists of two parts: short opening formula “basmala” on the first line and indication of distance in miles from a certain point – on the second and the third lines.*

بسم الله / ثلاثة اميال / من تفليس

*Translation: “In the name of Allah, three miles from Tbilisi”*In the work, V. Krachkovskaya also offers a more extensive paleographic analysis of the inscription (Крачковская, 1952: 88-89).

## Discussion

Inscriptions on milestones have been studied by many scholars. Prof. Abdullah bin Husayn Alkadi devoted 20 years to fieldworks, research and analysis of milestones of the early Muslim period. He especially focused attention on the Hijrah Route, migration of Prophet Muhammad and his early followers from Mecca to the North (about 450 km), in the direction of Medina. Prof. Alkadi knew that the historical sources contained information about milestones which helped pilgrims on this route, but apart from the approaches to the holy cities, along the route, no such stones have yet been brought to light and the sources provide little information regarding this road.

So far Prof. Alkadi located 63 milestones on a 430-kilometer stretch of the road. The distance between the mentioned stones according to the present-day measure of mile, which is 1609 meters, differs only in a few meters. He assumes the presence of another 133 milestones on this road.

Marking of paths and roads by means of stones was also used along other desert caravan routes in the Arabian Peninsula. Most of them were not monoliths, but conical piles of stones. The effort involved in extracting, transporting and erecting this basalt stone clearly indicated the importance of the task (Tawakel, A. 2021).

Fourteen milestones are available to us for comparison with the milestone discovered in Tbilisi.

**#1.** The milestone was found in the village of Fīq in Golan.

Location: Qazrin Museum, Golan.

Basalt slab, chiselled and cut on all sides to create a square building stone. Length - 28.5 cm; width - 28.5 cm; depth - 24.5 cm; average height of letters - 2.5 cm. The first line and the beginning of the second line are not discernible on the stone, the left half of the stone is completely broken off. The inscription is composed of six lines, written in Kufic script and dated to 85/704. The inscription was reconstructed and studied by A.Elad (Elad, 1999: 33-35).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لا اله الا الله لا شريك له محمد رسو  
ل الله امر بصنعة هذه الاميال عبد  
الله عبد الملك امير المؤمنين علي يدي  
مساور مولى امير المؤمنين في  
من سنة خمس و ثمنين من دمشق الي  
هذا اثنين و خمسين ميل

The translation of the inscription is:  
[In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate]  
[There is no god but God alone] no partner h [as He,  
Muhammad is the messenge]  
r of God. Has ordered the manufacture of th [ese milestones the  
servant of]  
God 'Abd al-Malik, the Commander of the Fa [ithful; (this was  
carried out) by]  
Musāwir, the mawlā of the Commander of the [Faithful, in the  
month....  
...] In the year five and eig [hty; from Damascus to]  
this (mile) two and fifty m[iles].

**#2.** The milestone was found in the village of Fīq in Golan.

Location: Qazrin Museum, Golan.

Size of the basalt slab: length - 80.5 cm; width - 39.5 cm; depth -  
23 cm; average height of letters - 3 cm. The upper right corner of the  
stone and left side about ¼ is broken. The inscription is composed of  
five lines, written in Kufic script and dated to 85/704. The inscription  
was reconstructed and studied by A. Elad (Elad, 1999: 36-37).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
لا اله الا الله لا شريك له محمد رسول  
الله امر بصنعة هذه الاميال عبد الله عبد ا  
للك امير المؤمنين علي يدي مساور مولى امير المؤمنين  
في شعبان من سنة خمسة ثمنين من دمشق الي هذا ثلاثة و جمسون ميلا

The translation of the inscription is:  
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

There is no god but God alone no partner has He, Muḥammad [is the messenger of]

God. Has ordered the manufacture of these milestones the servant of God [ʿAbd al-]

Malik, the Commander of the Faithful; (this was carried out) by Musāwir, the mawlā of the Commander of the Faithful]

in (the month of) Shaʿbān in the year five and eighty; From Damascus to this (mile) three [and fifty miles].

**#3.** This milestone was found in the woods next to Aqua Bella-ʿAyn Hemed on the road between Jerusalem and coast.

Location: The Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem

Size of the marble slab: length - 27 cm; width - 17 cm; depth - 9.5 cm. Only the lower left corner of the slab has survived, three lines with four words and two geometrical semicircles. The inscription is composed of three lines, written in Kufic script, undated.

من .....  
لميل خمسة.....  
ال.....

The translation of the inscription is:

.....From  
.....Five miles  
.....miles

K. Cytryn-Silverman offers an extensive version of the inscription and dates it to 65-86/685-705 (Cytryn-Silverman, 2007: 603-610).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
لا اله الا الله وحده لا  
شريك له محمد رسول الله  
صلي الله عليه وسلم  
امر بعمارة هذا الطر  
يق و صنعة الاميال عبد  
الله عبد الملك لمير ا  
لمؤمنين رحمت (!) الله عليه من

The translation of the inscription is:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

There is no god but God alone. He has no companion. Muhammad is the Messenger of God, may God bless him and give him peace.

Has ordered the repair of this road and the manufacture of the milestones, the Servant of God 'Abd al-Malik, Commander of the faithful, God's mercy be upon him.

From Iliya [i.e., Jerusalem] to this milestone there are 5 miles.

Prof. Paghava offers the following hypothetical reconstruction of the text of the inscription (Paghava, 2022: 102-103):

[الطريق و صناعة الاميال عبد الله عبد الملك امير المؤمنين رحمت الله عليه] من  
[إيليا الي هذا ا] لميل خمسة  
[اميال]

... [of this road and the manufacture of the milestones, the Servant of God 'Abd al-Malik, Commander of the faithful, God's mercy (be) upon him

From [Iliya] to this milestone there are 5 miles

**#4.** This milestone was found near the church of Abū Ghōsh.

Location: Not known.

Size of the stone slab: length - 40 cm; width - 30 cm; depth - 9 cm.

The two or four lines at the top of the inscription are missing, the upper right corner and the left part are broken. A plant ornament is depicted on the final line. The inscription is composed of six lines, written in Kufic script, undated. It was studied and dated to 65-86/685-705 by M.V. Berchem (Berchem, 1922: 19-20).



امر بعمارة هذا  
الطريق وصنعة الاميال  
عبد الله عبد الملك  
امير المؤمنين رحمت الله  
عليه من ايليا الي هذا الميل  
سبعة اميال

The translation of the inscription is:

[Has ordered the repair of] the road and construction of [the milestones];

Servant of God 'Abd [al-Malik],

Commander of the Faithful, [may God's mercy be on him].

From Iliya [i.e., Jerusalem] to this milestone (there are) seven [miles].

**#5.** This milestone was found in a ruin north of the watchtower at Bāb al-Wād on the road from Jerusalem to al-Ramla.

Location: Département des Antiquités Orientales, Musée du Louvre.

Size of the stone slab: length - 57 cm; width - 39 cm.

The ornamentation in the bottom of the slab is noteworthy that is unlike the simplicity shown in the earlier inscriptions. It has diacritical strokes for ن, ث, and ي, as seen in the last line. The inscription is composed of six lines, written in Kufic script, undated. It was studied and dated to 85/704 by M. Sharon (Sharon, 1999: 4-7).

امر بعمارة هذا  
الطريق وصنعة الاميال  
عبد الله عبد الملك  
امير المؤمنين رحمت الله  
عليه من ايليا الي هذا  
الميل ثمانية اميال

The translation of the inscription is:

[Has ordered the repair of] the road and construction of [the milestones];

Servant of God 'Abd al-Malik,

Commander of the Faithful, God's mercy be upon him.  
From Iliya [i.e., Jerusalem] to this milestone  
there are 8 miles.

**#6.** Marble milestone found at the cloister of Khozaiba near  
Deir al-Qalt on the Jerusalem – Damascus road.

Location: Museum Çinili Köşk, Istanbul.

Size of the slab: length - 39 cm; width - 31cm; the right hand  
side is broken off. The inscription is composed of seven lines, written  
in Kufic script, undated. It was studied and dated to 65-86/685-705 by  
M.V. Berchem (Berchem, 1922: 19-21).

امر بعمارة هذا الطريق  
وصنعة الأميال عبد  
الله عبد الملك امير  
المؤمنين رحمت  
الله عليه من دمشق  
الي هذا الميل  
سبعة اميال و مائة ميل

The translation of the inscription is:  
[Has ordered the repair of the road]  
[and construction of the milestones]. Servant of  
[God 'Abd] al-Malik, Commander of  
[the faithful], may mercy  
[of God be on him]. From Damascus till this  
milestone, (there are) 107(?) miles

**#7.** This milestone is from Khān al-Hathrūra, Palestine, on the  
road between Jerusalem and Damascus.

Location: Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (Turkish and Islamic  
Art Museum), Istanbul, Turkey.

Size of the marble slab: length - 39 cm; width - 31cm;

The marble slab contains seven lines engraved in bas-relief. The first two lines and the right side are broken off. The inscription is undated, written in Kufic script. It was studied and dated to 65-86 / 685-705 by Şahin (Şahin, 2009: 20-26).

وسلم امر بعمارة  
هذا الطريق و  
صنعة الاميال عبد  
الله عبد الملك  
امير المؤمنين رحمت الله  
عليه من دمشق الي هذا  
الميل تسعه و مائة ميل

The translation of the inscription is:

... and blessings [be upon him] ...

Has ordered the repair of the road and construction

of the milestones. Servant of

God 'Abd al-Malik

Commander of the faithful, may God's mercy be

on him. From Damascus till this

milestone, (there are) 109 miles.

**#8.** The milestone was discovered in the vicinity of the town of “Al-Manshiyah”.

Location: Not known.

Size of the yellowish slab: length - 62 cm; width - 45cm; depth- 8cm; the upper left part of the slab is slightly damaged; the lower right corner is broken off completely. The inscription is carved deeply, it has upper and lower sections, there are seven lines in total (after four lines there is free space). There are also traces of lines below the lower section of the inscription. It is dated to 135/735. According to the date, Kh. Al-Jabur assigns the inscription to the Abbasid period (Al-Jabur, 171-176).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له محمد  
رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم امر هذا

الميل المهدي  
[بإن عثمان في ذي القعدة سنة  
خمس و ثلاثين و مائة من  
اذرعات الي هذا الميل

The translation of the inscription is:  
In the names of God, the merciful  
There is but one God, who has no partner  
Muhammad is God's Messenger  
This milestone was ordered by al-Mahdi  
Bin 'Uthman in (thi al-Qi'da) in the year  
One hundred and thirty-five  
Adha'at to this milestone.

#9. The milestone was found in Saudi Arabia.

Location: Not known.

The inscription is composed of eight lines, of the Abbasid period, it is undated (A. Muslim, 2021).

هذا ما امر به ا  
لمهدي عبد الله  
عبد الله امير ا  
لمؤمنين علي يدي  
يقتين بن موسى  
هذا علي اثني  
عشر ميلا من بريد  
اسود العشارات (٩)

The translation of the inscription is:  
This is what ordered  
the Mahdi the Servant of God  
'Abd Allah Commander  
of the believers has ordered  
under the charge of Yaqtin b. Musa.  
This milestone twelve  
Miles from the postal stage

Of Aswad al-Usari(?)

**#10.** The milestone was found in al-Rabada.

Location: Not known.

The inscription is incised into a grey granite slab. Size of the slab: length - 28cm; width - 25cm; depth- 0.08 cm. The inscription is composed of three lines, undated. Al-Rashid attributes the inscription to the Abbasid period (Al-Rashid, 1997: 138-143).

عشرة ا  
ميال من  
البريد

The translation of the inscription is:

Ten

Miles from

The postal stage.

**#11.** The milestone was found in Iraqi Pilgrim route (Darb Zubayda).

Location: Department of Antiquites in Riyadh.

Size of the granite slab: length - 50 cm; width - 42cm; depth - 13 cm.

The inscription is composed of six lines, undated. Al-Rashid dates it to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Al-Rashid, 1997: 311).

ميل من  
البريد  
و هو علي ا  
ثنتين و ستين  
بريد من  
الكوفة

The translation of the inscription is:

One mile from

The postal stage.

and this is the

sixty second

postal stage from  
al-Kufah.

#12. The milestone was found in Saudi Arabia.

Location: Not known.

The inscription is undated, composed of four lines (الراشد ,  
1990:123-142).

اربعة ا  
ميل ثلث  
بريد  
من مكة

The translation of the inscription is:

Four  
mile a third (distance)  
postal stage  
From Mecca.

#13. The Milestone was found in Saudi Arabia, at an unspecified  
place.

Location: Not known.

The inscription is undated, composed of five lines. It was  
studied by A. Rashid (A. Rashid, 1997: 310).

ثمانية ا  
ميال و هو  
ثلي  
الطريق من  
الكوفة

The translation of the inscription is:

Eight  
Miles and this is  
Two thirds  
Of the way from  
Al-Kufah.

#14. The milestone found on the road to Mecca, Saudi Arabia,

Location: Louvre Abu Dhabi

The inscription is undated, composed of two lines (R. Mortel).

سبعة  
اميال

The translation of the inscription is:

Seven

miles.

### Conclusions

As is known, erection of milestones and construction of roads were related to organized planning of the postal service, which served the interests of the Caliphate rule.

At the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Muawiya, the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, organized postal courier service using the half-day system. The postal half-marhalah<sup>39</sup> was called al-barid, and this word is still used at present to refer to postal services in general. "Post stations" were set up every 19 kilometers. A courier delivered information to the next station and returned to his station on the same day—a round-trip, a day's ride with one marhalah. This was the distance which allowed a rider on camelback to deliver a message from one station to another and return on the same day.

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<sup>39</sup> Among the caravan routes an important unit of measurement of distance was the marhalah, equivalent to 24 miles. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic lexicographer Ibn Manzur explains that the word marhalah is related to rahilah, which refers to a pack animal and indicates when cargoes are set down for rest. It was possible for caravans to cover a marhalah conveniently before camping for the night.

Marhala also acquired religious significance and "was used to determine the exact minimum distance the faithful could travel on a journey in order to be able to shorten or combine prayer. The distance would also make travelers eligible for other dispensations, including [exemption from] fasting in Ramadan." To earn such dispensations, travelers were required to be on a journey covering at least two marhalah in the same direction.

Using the marhalah distance, the route from Medina to Mecca was divided into 11 days of journey, whereas the last day was six miles shorter (A. Tawakel, 2021).

According to V. Krachkovskaya, on the basis of the handwriting and content of the milestone found in Tbilisi, it can be dated to 100/718-719, maybe, to the 80s, and this inscription is undoubtedly one of the oldest in the South Caucasus that has reached us.

On the milestone from Tbilisi the date, the name of the Caliph and the supervisor of the works are not indicated. However, we can assume that the postal system created by the central administration of the Arab Caliphate functioned properly in the South Caucasus already at the early stage of the Arab rule, and one of the central arterial roads passed through Tbilisi. Historical sources confirm that from conclusion of the so-called *datsvis sigeli* ("charter of security") by Habib ibn Maslamah until the campaigns of Murvan Qru ("Marwan the Deaf") Tbilisi population fulfilled the agreement with the Caliphate administration centre and presumably was actively involved in the trade and economic life of the Caliphate.

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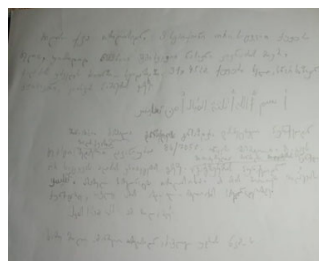
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Annex№ 1



Annex №2