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SOME ASPECTS OF GREEK-GEORGIAN CULTURAL DIALOGUE

A significant part of Greek religious and philosophical writings were translated into Georgian as early as between the 6th and 12th centuries and no surprise that the Georgian literary language could have been influenced by Greek. Indeed, Georgian vocabulary, syntax and phraseology were subject to a significant influence, which resulted in the adoption of infinitive and participial structures unnatural for Georgian, a specific use of the conjunction *kai* (and), etc. It should be noted that Semitic paronomasia – use of the same word or the same root in different syntactic functions in one sentence – is believed to be borrowed via Greek: e. g. “μη θησαυρίζετε θησαυρούς”, “nu iunjebt saunjesa” which literary means: “do not treasure your treasure” (*Matt.*, 6.19); “ἀλι ἀλισθήσεται”, “marilita dai-marilos” – “salted with salt” (*Mark.*, 9.49) and many other. However, Professor I. Imnaishvili, an old Georgian specialist, argues that paronomasia, which is aimed at rendering the intensity of action, reiteration and duration, has been employed in Georgian literary language since very early times and that the rhetorical figure is quite common for Georgian and its dialects.

When the Hebrew *Old Testament* was translated into Greek and afterwards the *New Testament* was written in Greek, many ancient Greek words acquired new senses. Naturally, a number of Hebrewisms and Arameisms entered Georgian via Greek¹ – specifically, measurement and monetary units. They are:

¹ Danelia, K., *Some Aspects of the History of Georgian Written Language*, TSU, 1983; see also Sarjveladze Z., *An Introduction to the History of Georgian Literary Language*, Tbilisi 1984 (*in Georgian*).

1. μόδιος (Georg. *modi*), meaning “measure”, “measurement”, and corresponding to approximately 26 liters. Ephraim the Lesser uses *modi* in the meaning of measurement, meter, an important piece, something outstanding.

2. σίκλος Georgian *sik'ila* or *sk'ila*, which is the same as “didrachma”, is rendered in the *New Testament* as “statir” or “mna” (*Matt.*, 17.27; *Luke.*, 9.16-18).²

3. μνά “mna”, a golden or silver coin, a monetary unit mentioned in the Georgian versions of the *Old* and *New Testaments*, which has the following definition: “... mna is one litra and a half of the second litra” (“mnai ars lit'rai erti da lit'ris meorisa nats'ili”). Normally, metric units tended to be changing historically, each having different values at different times – sometimes more, sometimes less.

4. γόμορ (Georg. *gomori*), a Hebrew word borrowed into Georgian via Greek, meaning the measure for liquid and grain. All these words entered Old Georgian from Greek almost without translation.

Linguistic contacts and interaction influences the structure and vocabulary of the languages. Two type of influence has been observed: unilateral and mutual. The first one normally occurs at the level of vocabulary and results from literary and cultural borrowing as well as direct linguistic contacts.

Linguistic contacts are accompanied by cultural contacts.³ When these two factors coincide, the interaction of two cultures in the same geographical environment results in the adoption by one community of what they lack as compared to the other. The so-called lexical hiatuses are filled in with borrowings, which at the time is essential for the language. What I mean is that the intensive study of the origins of Ancient Greek culture, started in the late 19th century, raised the question of Pre-Greek settlements. Many of the issues remain unsolved, but it has been established that ancient Greeks were comers to the Aegean region.⁴ It has also been discovered that at that time the Balkan Peninsula, the eastern shore of Asia Minor, and the islands in the Aegean Sea were inhabited by tribes of advanced culture. This Pre-Greek population was called the

² The last two redactions of the Georgian Gospel with comments were prepared by I. Imnaishvili, Tbilisi 1979; Also see Melikishvili G., *The Earliest Population in Georgia, Caucasus and the Near East*, Tbilisi 1965, 219-220 (*in Georgian*).

³ Gamkrelidze E., *Foreign Vocabulary in Latin*, Tbilisi 2002, 19 (*in Georgian*).

⁴ Gordeziani R., *The Iliad and Some Questions from the History and Ethnic Genesis of the Aegean Population*, Tbilisi 1970, 197-198 (*in Georgian*).

Mediterranean or Aegean population. In the 3rd-2nd millenniums BC their cultural advancements reached an exceptional height on the Cretan island.

Authors of antiquity point out that the earliest Aegean peoples were non-Hellenic, but were eastern tribes coming from Asia Minor. They settled the following territories: Thessaly, Peloponnese, the island of Crete, the islands in the Aegean Sea and Asia Minor. Scholars focus on the linguistic points of the tribes. As early as the 19th century, linguists paid attention to the words in Greek vocabulary that could not be explained in the European linguistic context.⁵ Ancient Greek dialects contain a great number of roots that are not likely to be Indo-European. Though Georgian abounds in Greek borrowings, it cannot be denied that ancient Greek language too must have adopted many words from common Kartvelian. All the more so that quite a number of points in ancient Greek phonetics, morphology and syntax still remain unaccounted for. In P. Kretschmer's work published in 1953, the whole Pre-Greek substratum is believed to be non-Indo-European and closely related to the Caucasian languages. Likewise, the well-known scholar, Schachermeyr⁶ argues in favor of the affinity of the Aegean and modern Ibero-Caucasian languages and finds plausible the Caucasian linguistic affiliation of the former.

The Greek language, with over 3000 years of recorded history, completed and enriched its vocabulary with borrowings from non-Indo-European and Indo-European languages for centuries. Therefore, the study of its lexical composition and attempts to shed light on a number of Greek roots unaccountable for in a European context requires taking into account the linguistic evidence of the Pre-Greek population as well as of Ibero-Caucasian languages, which in the early period were in close contact with the languages of the peoples fashioning ancient civilization.⁷

Some scholars point out typological parallels between Kartvelian and Indo-European languages, which may invite several different explanations: first, the remote linguistic affinity; second – centuries-old contacts;

⁵ Urushadze A., *Some Questions from the History of Greek Language, Historical and Philological Studies*, Tbilisi 1980, 193 (*in Georgian*).

⁶ Schachermeyr F., *Prähistorische Kulturen Griechenlands.*, RE XXII (XLIV Halbb), 1954; One of the chapters of the work dealing with the Aegean substratum of Greek was translated into Georgian (TAU Bulletin of Scholarly Bibliography, 1963, annex #1.

⁷ Meillet A., *Aperçu d' une Histoire de la langue Grecque*, Paris 1936, 23; See also Urushadze A., *Op.*, cit., 226 (the work implies the language of Pre-Greek and Anatolian inscriptions (Pelagian, Lycian, Lydian, Karian, etc.).

third – mere typological isomorphism without any common origins or points of intersection.⁸

Arnold Chikobava writes in his *Introduction to Linguistics*: “the languages of ancient civilization are neither Indo-European nor Semitic. Both the morphological structure and the cultural and historical context suggest the historical affinity of ancient Near Eastern and Ibero-Caucasian languages.”⁹ Thus, the question of the genetic affinity of the Ibero-Caucasian languages with the tribes building ancient civilization still remains relevant in historical and cultural as well as linguistic terms.

When working on Ancient Greek-Georgian Dictionary and the Greek and Georgian versions of the Bible, my attention was attracted by the word *p'uri* (“bread”). *πυρός* ὁ is “wheat”, “ear”, “bread”. This form, as well as the forms *πύρονος*, *πυρίνος* are attested in several Books of the *Old Testament* (Ruth, Jove, The Exodus), in several Psalms and in the works of ancient Greek authors: Homer, Thucydides and Herodotus (*πύρονος*, η, ὄν a species of wheat (ἕξειαι σιτώδεις *Od.*, 15, 312, 17, 12; *Od.*, 4, 604). *πυροὶ καὶ κριθαί* (ἕξειαι) *Od.*, 9, 110. *πυροφόρος*, ὄν *Ep.* *πυρηφόρος* (*πυρός*, φέρω) *Hom., Her., Eur.*).

It is assumed that the word *πυρός* ὁ (pl. οἱ *πυροὶ*) and *πυρίνος*, (“bread”, “wheat bread”) must have entered Greek from Pelasgian. According to G. Rogava, a Georgian Caucasiologist, one of the grain species in Georgian is the version of the Zan-Svan *p'os* (“bread”). The alternation of the Georgian *l*, *r* with the Svan *sh* is of morphological character. The root inflects by taking a determinant. The word has the root *p'*, which indicates that the word *p'ur* is Kartvelian and is not a borrowing.¹⁰ Some interesting evidence can be found in the Biblical texts as well, which suggests that *p'uri* must have entered Greek from the Pre-Greek, specifically, Kartvelian.

Here are some examples from the *Old Testament*:

1. καὶ ἐψώμισεν αὐτοῦ ἐκ στέατος πυροῦ, *achama mat sip'okhisagan ipqlisa* (“He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat”) (*Plasm.*, 80.17)

⁸ Tsereteli G., On the Theory of Sonants and Ablaut in Kartvelian Languages, Introduction in: Gamkrelidze T., Machavariani G., The System of Sonants and Ablaut in Kartvelian Languages, Tbilisi 1965 (*in Georgian*).

⁹ Chikobava A., Introduction to Linguistics, Tbilisi 1957, 378 (*in Georgian*).

¹⁰ Rogava G., Some Remarks on *pur*- Stem, Bulletin XII #10, 1951, 635-640 (*in Georgian*); see Urushadze A, op. cit., 220; Melikishvili G., Some Remarks on the Ancient Population of Georgia, Caucasus and the Near East, 1965, 219-220 (*in Georgian*).

2. ὁ δὲ πυρός καὶ ἡ ὀλύρα οὐκ ἐπλήγη, *kholo ipkli da asli ara iguema* ("But the wheat and the rye were not smitten") (*Exod.*, 9. 32)

3. γῆ πυροῦ καὶ κριθῆς, *kueqanasa mas saipklesa da sakrtilesa* ("A land of wheat, and barley") (*Deut.*, 8.8)

πυρός and πυρίνος can also be found in *The Antiquities of the Jews* by the 1st century historian Flavius: *πυρίνων ἀσσάρωνας δύο μετὰ ζύμης γεγενότων asaronta orta p'urad kmnilt sapuravisa* ("a loaf, made of wheat flour, of tenth deals, with leaven") (III, 10, 6, 252).

In the *New Testament*, the meaning of "bread" is rendered by a word ἄρτος, which collocates with "sacred, holy" – ἱερός ἄρτος ("holy bread"), ἄρτος Θεῖος ("divine bread"). The word also has the meaning of meal and often refers to the same as the word δεῖπνον, which means "dinner", "supper". The same meaning is conveyed by the words μᾶζα, ἡς, ἡ ("paste, bread, matzah) and σῖτος, ον, ὁ Georgian: *ipkli, xuarbali, dik'a*¹¹ ("wheat") and *sach'meli, saipkle* (meal) in general (*Luke.*, 16.7; *Psalm.*, 64.14).

Here are some examples from the *New Testament*:

1. λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασε, καὶ δοὺς τοῖς μαθηταῖς, εἶπε, λάβετε, φάγετε ἵνα τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ σῶμα μου *miigho iesu p'uri, ak'urtxa da ganf'ekha da mista mots'apeta tvista da hrkua: miighet da ch'amet, rametu ese ars khortsi chemi* ("And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed [it], and brake [it], and gave [it] to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body") (*Matt.*, 26.26 DE).¹²

2. μὴ ἐσθίῳν ἄρτον μήτε πίνων οἶνον, *artsa ch'amda p'ursa, artsa sumida gvinosa* ("[For John the Baptist] came neither eating bread nor drinking wine") (*Luke.*, 7.33)

3. τὸν δὲ σῖτον συναγάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου, *kholo ipkli igi shek'ribet saunjesa chemsa* ("but gather the wheat into my barn") (*Matt.*, 13.30)

Bearing in mind that lexical meanings can be infinitely diverse and that the central functions of synonyms are specification and substitution, in this particular case we can conclude that *πυρός* and *πυρίνος*, were borrowed by Greek from Kartvelian, were replaced by their semantic equivalents – ἄρτος, σῖτος, μᾶζα, δεῖπνον. The central meaning of *πυρός* and *πυρίνος* were narrowed and the mentioned four words came to

¹¹ Sul Khan Saba Orbeliani defines *dika* as "wheat sawn in spring" (*Joel.*, 1.11); see Georgian dictionary, edited by Prof. Ioseb Kipshidze and Prof. Akaki Shanidze, Tbilisi 1928.

¹² The last two redactions of the Georgian Gospel, the text and scholarly comments prepared by I. Imnaishvili, Tbilisi 1979; Septuaginta, editio Alfred Rahlfs, Stuttgart 1979.

function as their synonyms, at the same time introducing new meanings, such as “dinner”, “wheat”, “meal”, “sacred bread”, “divine bread”. These synonyms of “bread” were established in the Books of the *New Testament*. Thus, *πυρός* and *πυρίνος*, are the words of a very early period as they are attested in the *Old Testament*. It can be argued that they must have been among the earliest Kartvelian borrowings “naturalized” in Greek. As mentioned, the word (*πυρός*) is attested in the works of ancient Greek authors (8-4th BC) and also in some of the Books of the *Old Testament*. Afterwards they were replaced by *ἄρτος*, *σίτος*, *μᾶζα* and *δειπνον*. In the *New Testament* *πυρός* is not used any more, giving way to its synonyms.