

Влияние иврита и самоидентификация в иудео-грузинском языке и в Кавказской «Горе языков»

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Кавказский регион называют «Горой языков». Историки, начиная с Геродота 2500 лет назад и до настоящего времени, дают разное количество языков, например греческий географ и историк Страбон (64 г. до н.э. - 21 г. н.э.) утверждал, что более 70 племен говорят на разных языках, Плиний писал, что римляне использовали 130 переводчиков при торговле. В настоящее время на Кавказе говорят более чем на 50 языках (Catford 1977: 283). Иврит является древним языком для всех двенадцати колен Израиля, также после раздела Земли Израиля в 927 г. до н.э. на Северное царство Израиль с десятью коленами и Южное царство, Иудею, с двумя коленами. Ассирийские цари изгнали израильтян, например, Салманасар в 722 г. до н. э. Эти десять племен вскоре утратили свой язык и идентичность. Южные племена, Иудеи, были изгнаны вавилонским царем Навуходоносором между 606-586 гг. до н. э., когда был разрушен Храм в Иерусалиме (586 г. до н. Э.).

Ключевые слова: Влияние иврита, иудео-грузинский язык, гора языков, Кавказ.

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Hebrew Influences and Self-Identity in the Judeo-Georgian Language and in the Caucasus “Mountain of Tongues”

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The Caucasus region has been called the “Mountain of Tongues”. History writers from Herodotus, 2,500 years ago, until present time have given different numbers of languages, e.g. the Greek geographer and historian Strabo (64 BCE- 21 CE) claimed more than 70 tribes speaking different languages, Pliny stated that the Romans used 130 interpreters when trading. At present more than 50 languages are spoken in the Caucasus (Catford 1977: 283). Hebrew is the ancient original language for all the twelve tribes of Israel, also after the division of the Land of Israel in 927 BCE into the Northern Kingdom, Israel, with ten of the tribes and the Southern Kingdom, Juda,

with two tribes. The Israelites got exiled by the Assyrian Kings, e.g. Shalmaneser in 722 BCE. These ten tribes soon lost their language and identity. The southern tribes, Juda, got exiled by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar, between 606-586 BCE, who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem (586 BCE).

Keywords: Hebrew Influences, Judeo-Georgian Language, Mountain of Tongues, the Caucasus.

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Nonetheless, Hebrew continued to be the prayer language for all Jews in the world and is now fully revived in Israel. In the diaspora, Jews spoke the local languages, but among themselves these languages became mixed with Hebrew expressions. According to Kahn & Rubin (2015), these “Jewish languages”, e.g. Judezmo, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and later Yiddish etc., all with the presence of Hebrew lexical elements and morphological and syntactic characteristics differing from the local non-Jewish language (Kahn & Rubin 2015: 3-4).

The Georgian Jews and the Judeo-Georgian language

The official Georgian Jews once numbered more than 100,000, but today the number is estimated to be 13,000 remaining in Georgia (Sloame 2020). The earliest history of the Georgian Jews is uncertain, but the Bible gives a clue by telling that Israelite tribes passed and even stayed in the Caucasian border areas of the Assyrian Empire, especially in the area of the Medes, where many stayed after being exiled by the Assyrian Kings, (e.g. Shalmaneser in 722 BCE). The Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli says and other researchers, that the first Jews only came to Georgia after the Babylonian exile of Judea, by King Nebuchadnezzar (Lerner 2004: 60, Krikheli 2017: 288, Sloame 2020).

The earliest archaeological evidence of Jewish life that has been found near the ancient capital city, Mtskheta. Tombstones from the 3rd – 5th centuries CE bear inscriptions both in Hebrew and in Aramaic (Ben Oren 2017, Lerner 2017). New Jewish refugees arrived in waves due to persecutions. In Georgia Jews became serfs and became often traders, craftsmen and peasants. When Georgia became a Christian nation (officially in 326 CE), the Georgian Jews were not forced to convert to Christianity opposite to the case in the Roman Catholic world. Many Jews converted voluntarily and were called *huria-kopili* – “a former Jew” (Mamistvalishvili, 2014:132-133). Even in Georgia, most of the converted Jews knew their Jewish roots. The common Georgian family name *Ebreilidze* (Jewish son), indicates that Georgians with this name are likely to have Jewish origin (Ben Oren 2003, Sloame 2020). The officially Jews were called *Uria* or *Huria* in Georgian, but in the 19th century the term was replaced by *Ebraeli*, as the term *Uria* became pejorative for Jews. The Jews refer to themselves also as *Israelebi* (Ben Oren 2015, Mamistvalishvili 2014:38, Sloame 2020). According to Ben-Oren & Moskvich (1982:19), the Georgian Jews refer to their speech as normal Georgian, while Enoch (2015) says that Jews refers to their speech as *čveneburul-i* from the Georgian word *čvenebur-i*, meaning ‘ours’, ‘our own’ (Enoch 2015:180) and that is a way for the Georgian Jews to express their “self-identity”, depending on if they will stress their belonging to the Georgian society or emphasizing their Jewish identity.

Ch. Rabin claims that the definition of a Jewish language is “one which is used in diglossia with Hebrew” (Moskvich & Ben-Oren 1982:19). Hebrew has been the written prayer language (high variety) for the Jews living in Georgia. In particular Jewish traders developed the dialect, *Qivruli* (vernacular, low variety) consisting of many Hebrew words and many call it a Georgian dialect, and is also considered to be the Judeo-Georgian language (Ben Oren 2003, Sloame 2020). Not many publications exist in Judeo-Georgian. Mainly the older Jewish generations are keen on maintaining Jewish languages (Haarmann 1986:79).

The Judeo-Georgian language is a typical Jewish language, yet rather similar to the standard Georgian speech despite of numerous Hebrew and Aramaic elements. Although, the syntax in Georgian and in Hebrew largely differs and Hebrew pattern of morphology and syntax are rare in Judeo-Georgian. One can find Hebrew words mainly within religion and in Bible translation, in vocabulary of everyday life and in the jargon. The jargon of Jewish traders includes much Hebrew vocabulary and became unintelligible to Georgians. There are even components and archaic from Old Georgian, which are preserved only in Judeo-Georgian speech (Ben-Oren & Moskvich 1982:19, 23, Enoch 2015:190). Yet, other elements in modern Georgian are used with a different meaning in Judeo-Georgian. Moreover, a need to express a Jewish way of life, religion, tradition and identity has created another additional Judeo-Georgian vocabulary. For example, the verb *gaḳašreba* means ‘to make kosher, ritually pure’ and is derived from the Hebrew word *כָּשֵׁר* *ḳašer* (Ben-Oren & Moskvich 1982:22-23, 1987: 104, 107).

Finally, new lexical items have been created mainly by adding Georgian prefixes and suffixes to Hebrew words, like Hebrew loanwords ending with the Georgian noun marker *-i* are; *ḳaleb-i*, ‘dog’, derived from the Hebrew noun *כֶּלֶב* *ḳalev* (Enoch 2013: 407), *gadol-i* ‘big’ from *גָּדוֹל* *gadol*, *ḥatan-i* ‘bridegroom’ (*חָתָן* *ḥatan*) and *ḳaṭani* ‘small’ (*קָטָן* *ḳaṭan*). There are examples of Hebrew words, which have undergone semantic changes, e.g. the Hebrew *סֵפֶר* *sefer* means ‘book’ but in Judeo-Georgian also ‘document’, ‘ticket’ ‘passport’. (Ben Oren & Moskvich 1982: 22, 1987: 113). In Hebrew *זָקֵן* *zaqen* means ‘old-aged’, but in in the speech of Georgian Jews *zaqeni* means ‘bad’ (Enoch 2015:189).

Judeo-Tat language of the Mountain Jews

The mountain Jews are called “горские евреев” *gorskie evreev* in Russian, mainly residing in Daghestan and also in Azerbaijan. They call themselves “*džuhur*” meaning ‘Jew’ in Judeo-Tat. (Danila, 2014:171, Shalem 2018: 313). The Judeo-tat language (*Juhuri*) is considered to be an Iranian language derived from New Persian with influences of Azeri Turkic languages. The name of the language Judeo-Tat, indicates the relationship with the Tat language, spoken in the same region by the Muslim group Tat of Iranian origin (Shapira 2006: 586, Shalem 2018: 313). In a similar way as with the Judeo-Georgian language, the Judeo-Tat coexisted with Hebrew in a diglossic system. The Mountain Jews also used a secret code-language to prevent others, “gentiles” from understanding conversations between Jews. Hebrew and also Aramaic are used as sources for the vocabulary, however according to Shalem, the number of Hebrew loanwords are not numerous, while function words (pronouns, morphology, syntax) came from the vernacular language (Shalem 2018: 326-327)

As examples, some words related to everyday life are *şulhan* derived from the Hebrew שולחן *şulhan* meaning ‘small table’ and *hovir* הבר *havir* means ‘friend’. The Judeo-Tat word *poşut* means ‘simple’ and the Hebrew word פשוט *paşuṭ* has the same meaning. The word *hoçmo* from Hebrew חכמה *hoçmā* means ‘mind’, ‘wisdom’, but could even be used in the meaning of a ‘fool’, an ‘idiot’. *Giro* ‘money’ is taken from Biblical Hebrew גרה *gerāh* meaning ‘20th part of a shekel’. Related to ethnicity the Judeo-Tat word *şoril* is used when speaking about an ‘Christian’, derived from the Biblical ערל *şārel* ‘uncircumcised’ (Shalem 2018:328, 342).

Israelites and Jews in other parts of the Caucasus

Through history, in the Caucasus Jews have been forcibly converted to both Christianity and later to Islam. In 737 CE the Muslim hero Abu Salim began to convert Jews with force to Islam, something that Jews experienced different years to come (Avichail 2012:187). Several scholars (Kasdai, Altschuler and others) believe many of the Caucasian peoples Ossetians, Chechens, Mingrelians, Lezgins and others are descendants from the Israelite ten tribes from the time of the first exile. Today, according to Avichail many of these descendants do not keep any traditions from their Israeli origin (Avichail 2012:188). In Armenia, the vast majority in earlier times were Israelites. Although all of them, escaping from persecution and forced assimilation, migrated northwards to Georgia, the North Caucasus, Dagestan, and southwards and south-east to Persia and Azerbaijan (David 1989:67)

Traces of Hebrew loanwords in other East-Caucasian languages

Certainly, a written language tradition helps to preserve a language. Early Bible translations also serve as ancient witnesses to otherwise lost forms of languages. In early Soviet years, new alphabets were created for many indigenous Caucasian languages who lacked written forms following the Soviet “nativization” policy of ethnic groups. Several of the Daghestanian languages are endangered and some of them did not have any written tradition until the 1990s (e.g. Andi, Bezhta), when efforts were made to create alphabets and translate some parts of the Bible (Ataev 2015: 212). The East-Caucasian or Nakh-Daghestanian language family is indigenous in the mountain regions of the Caucasus. Nichols among others, argues that the many loanwords from ancient Mesopotamia entered early into these languages (Nichols 1997). Many loanwords have entered e.g. from Arabic (through Islam), Turkic languages and Persian, and the neighboring languages Georgian and Ossetic have also influenced on the North Caucasian languages (Gamkrelidze & Gudova 2016).

An example of possible Hebrew influence in East-Caucasian languages

One interesting area of possible Hebrew influence is related to domestic animals. The Hebrew word צֶנֶז *zon* includes small domestic animals “small cattle” e.g. ‘sheep’, ‘goat’, ‘ram’, ‘deer’ etc. This word is common in the Bible when speaking about sacrifices: “And if his offering be of the flocks [*zon*], namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish.” (Leviticus 1:10) Klein suggests that this Hebrew word *zon* might derive from the base צָצַ *yeze* ‘to go out’, and the literally meaning is then ‘the animals going out’ (Klein 1987: 539). In the East-Caucasian languages Schulze suggests eight types of terms meaning ‘goat’, of which here only follows three of these types. The type ca-n is found in the Tsezic branch of the East-Daghestanian languages; in Bezhta can, Hinukh can, Hunzib can, Khvarshi can, while in Tsez (Dido) can-ilu means ‘female kid’. The type čan-ya is found in Tsez (Dido) Schulze (2014: 260). In these languages, there are also other different types of vocabulary meaning ‘sheep’ and in Lak č’an means ‘sheep’, ‘ewe’ (Schulze 2014: 258), which is similar to the Hebrew *zon*. Schulze claims that terms in the group where the Lak term č’an is found, cannot be derived from an underlying, common form. Nonetheless, Schulze concludes that all the terms in the group determining ‘goat’ go back to a common Proto East Caucasian word form (Schulze 2014: 259-260). According to my own observations, all these terms pointing to the original Hebrew word *zon* meaning both ‘sheep’ and ‘goat’. Even Arabic adopted a form originated from the Hebrew root *zon*. In many Semitic languages sound changes has occurred of *z*, *s*, *š* into e.g. *d*, *z* and *t*, why *dān*, in Arabic means ‘sheep’. Interestingly, in the East-Caucasian languages, there are several other terms related to animals like sheep, goat etc. indicating Hebrew origin.

Written sources (in this case the Bible), national identity, common history, all are important factors when keeping the identity and the language. In opposite, when an ethnic group (here the Israelites) loses their language due to assimilation, other political systems, cultures or languages the own language and identity disappears.

The question arises how did these most likely Hebrew loanwords enter into these Caucasian languages? One is curious to find Paleo-Hebrew inscriptions in archeological sites or in grottos giving certain proof of Israelite and especially Judean presence in the Caucasus. Another way to proof early presence could be by DNA-screening, other ways are research of historical tales and traditions and not least research within the linguistics.

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