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On the Etymology of an Agricultural Term¹

Annotation

In the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language*, the lexeme *gelazi* is defined as “a large, round stone used for pressing oil; a millstone.” Illustrative examples include: *ჭაბუკი წყალში შეცურდა, მიდის და მიუხაროდა, ცალ მკლავზე გელაზი ეცვა, მარჯვენას ისე ხმარობდა* “The youth slipped into the water and went along cheerfully; he had a *gelazi* fastened on one arm and used the other accordingly” (folklore); *(გიორგიმ) მოთხარა, ამოაბრუნა რამდენიმე გელაზი* “George dug up and overturned several *gelazi*-s” (Barnov, V.); *არ გინახავს ჩვენს ეზოში გელაზები?* “Have you not seen *gelazi*-s in our yard?” (Leonidze, G.); *უდგათ ზარფუში და ზედადგარი, წისქვილის გელაზს კლდეებში თლიან* “They set up a metal vessel and a trivet; the mill’s *gelazi* is hewn out of the rocks” (Gegechkori, G.) (*Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language*, 1993).

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani defines *gelazi* as “a stone used for pressing oil” (Orbeliani, 1993).

In Abaza, a lexeme of the same phonetic structure, *გელაზლარა*, is attested with the meaning “to stand / to rise.” We propose that the original meaning of the word *gelazi* is preserved precisely in this Abaza lexeme. During the process of borrowing, the form appears to have undergone a corresponding phonotactic transformation, whereby the element *-lara*, in the affix *ზლარა* producing masdars, was truncated: *გელაზლარა* > *გელაზ(ი)*.

As noted in descriptions of the operation of the *gelazi*: *უღელში შებმული გამწვევი ძალა ურმის თვალვიით ცერზე შეყენებულ ბორბალს კალოს ირგვლივ აგორებდა* “the traction force harnessed in the yoke would roll a wheel, like the wheel of a cart, around the threshing floor”. This particular nuance—namely, “like the wheel of a cart,” that is, in a state of standing or upright positioning—may constitute the semantic determinant underlying this designation.

Since a definition of *gelazi* can be sought in Abaza, we assume that the term is of Abaza origin and was subsequently adopted into Georgian. It is also possible that *gelazi*-type implements were produced in the basalt formations of the North Caucasus, and that the name of this agricultural tool entered Georgian together with the object itself from Abaza.

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