

Linguistics

On Megrelian Verse

Apollon Silagadze

Academy Member, I. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

ABSTRACT. The versification system of Megrelian verse is identified and its specificity is shown. The place of Megrelian verse in Common Georgian versification is defined. Comparative analysis with other nonliterary language Georgian verse is offered. The relation of Megrelian verse with the stage of development of Common Georgian versification, reconstructed as the initial (pre-first) stage, is discussed. © 2012 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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1. The basis of Megrelian verse system is a binary structural unit, which consists of two segments, as differential elements. This unit can be considered in two ways. Either as a constituent of a line, as in binary unit, let us refer to it as a binomial (in this case, a line will be a two-binomial structural unit); e.g. (4+4) + (4+4) (Megrelian texts have been published repeatedly [1-5]):

p'at'onepi gamigonit ate čkimi guriš č'ua
"Gentlemen, please understand my heartache".

Or it can be considered as a line (in this case it materially coincides with a binomial; on this coincidence and the corresponding diachronic law, see [6:22-23]), e.g. 4+4:

p'at'onepi gamigonit
ate čkimi guriš č'ua

In the present article it will be considered as a line. Other, higher level units, in particular, stanza, will not be discussed here.

The structure of the main, basic binary unit is: $n+k$, where $n \geq k$. In Megrelian this $n+k$ is 4+4; it may be 4+3, which occurs more frequently in heterometric stanzas alongside 4+4; rarely there may be 4+2, and extremely rarely 4+1 and 4+0 (all three cases in practice belong to exceptions and atypical structures). In these records figures denote syllabic length of each constituent of a binary unit; + indicates rhythmic boundary between two constituents; rhythmic boundary is the main generating factor of the Georgian verse system.

In Megrelian verse 5+5 also occurs, but, firstly, it is very rare, and, secondly, it is not an organic element of the Megrelian system, being a result of the influence of Literary Georgian.

Thus, the first member in a binary unit is always 4, and the second – 4, 3, 2, 1 ($n+k$, where $n=4$, $k=4, 3, 2, 1, 0$).

At the same time, a conclusion can be made from the very beginning: the principal structure of Megrelian verse is identical to that of Literary Georgian

verse, in which units are of binary structure, including the smallest rhythmic unit (binomial), which has the following structure:

$$n+k \Leftrightarrow (n-2)+(k+2),$$

where $n \geq k$.

In this symbolic record, which reflects the Megrelian situation as well, it is noted that a binomial, along with the basic variety, also has an alternant, in which the rhythmic boundary is moved back by two syllables [6:31] as compared to the main variety (Silagadze 1987: 31). This phenomenon is recorded in Megrelian verse, in particular, the structure 4+4 is replaced by 2+6; e.g.:

vai iši mumašeni 4+4 "Woe to his father
mapaš mozoğuašeni 2+6 due to the arrival of the king."

All the above-mentioned is a conclusion of preliminary character, which needs correcting. Namely, the above-mentioned interpretation reflects the initial system of Megrelian verse as a member of the Common Georgian system; the system presented in this way in principle coincides with the common Georgian system.

The "initial system" in this case means that it was not realized in this form finally, in particular, it was corrected according to the peculiarities of Megrelian speech (in detail see below). As regards its definition in this form above, it is possible in two ways: a) taking into account some facts that represent statistical exceptions and ultimately do not reflect typical Megrelian verse (this refers to the constructions 4+2, 4+1, 4+0); b) with certain reconstruction.

The point is that the system of Megrelian verse by its essence is two-leveled: the initial system + local specificity.

2. As regards local specificity, it is entirely based on the fact that in Megrelian – ordinary speech – there are two optional variants/styles of pronunciation/speaking. This phenomenon is known and described, particularly – in detail see [5: 356-366].

The phenomenon lies in the fact that in Megrelian

speech there are doublets for the absolute majority of words/forms; what is most important, they are of different syllabic length.

Specifically, these are the following cases:

a) in the word auslaut after a consonant there may appear a narrow vowel *i*, *u* or the so-called neutral/irrational vowel. As a result, there are always two variants of a word, with two different number of syllables: *tak/taki* – "here", *č'aruns/č'arunsi* – "he writes", and so forth. b) the opposite phenomenon: if a word ends with a narrow vowel, it may always be used by the loss of this vowel as well, accordingly, it will be shorter by one syllable: *koči/koč* – "man," *doč'aru/ doč'ar* – "he wrote", etc. c) the so-called long, more exactly, double vowel optionally is always substituted by one vowel: *kovotxi/kovotxi* – "I lent smth to smb", *vaoko* → *vaako/vako* – "He does not want", etc.

In a phrase the above-discussed phenomenon yields a large number of different variants of syllabic length. For example, the phrase (see [5, 358]) "*žiri rčinu koči mursi*" (8 syllables) can be represented as follows: "*žir rčin koč murs*" (4 syllables), "*žiri rčin koč murs*" (5), "*žir rčin koči mursi*" (6), "*žiri rčin koči mursi*" (7).

In all the above-mentioned cases, as noted, there are two parallel forms for a word. This phenomenon in a verse creates an opportunity of different lengths and structures for a given line, one of which (maybe more than one) gives a marked form from the viewpoint of versification.

3. As mentioned above, the phenomenon of two styles is known and described. The objective is to determine how this phenomenon is activated in verse, in particular, what specific function it has.

In Megrelian verse, in contrast with ordinary speech, according to its function it is not a phenomenon of style, but that of metrics.

Thus, two styles of pronunciation create a certain regulatory mechanism in verse, the function of which is different depending on whether it functions in the first or the second segment.

Specifically, the following two rules can be identified.

a) In the first segment of a binary unit (line) (in n part of $n+k$ structure) this phenomenon, if necessary, regulates the number of syllables of the given meter. A positional variant of syllabic length of a segment is created, which is unique for the given meter and all other possible variants are excluded. Thus, in the first segment the functioning of this phenomenon is mandatory, otherwise, the metric scheme will be violated. For example:

5+4 → 4+4:
 xoḡi gilurcu didi kami → xoḡ gilurcu didi kami
 (“a bull is going with big horns”).

b) This rule is actual for the second constituent of a binary unit as well: here too, if necessary, it regulates the number of syllables. At the same time, we can formulate a rule which is specific to the second segment of a line (for k part of $n+k$ structure). In the second segment its functioning has the same character as in ordinary speech, where the use of parallel forms of words is optional. In particular, this time in verse more than one variants of syllabic length appear for the second segment, each of which is of equal force, none of them is rejected. This time the most important thing is not to violate the basic rule of a binary unit, according to which, the second segment should not be longer than the first one ($n \geq k$). In fact, in this way one of the main features of Megrelian verse is formed – that there are different optional variants for a meter given in it (see below).

Finally, in the first segment of the potential opportunities only one is activated – which is necessary for the structure; in the second segment several variants of equal force emerge.

4. The peculiar character of Megrelian verse is obvious at the time of its comparison with Literary Georgian verse.

It was noted above that in Georgian literary verse, as well as in Megrelian verse, the basic structural unit (binomial, line) is $n+k$ structure. The system of

this unit in Georgian verse is represented by three subsystems:

I	II	III
5+5	4+4	3+3
5+4	4+3	3+2
5+3	4+2	3+1
5+2	4+1	3+0
5+1	4+0	5+0

In Megrelian in place of the structure represented above there is only the following:

4+4
 4+3
 4+2
 4+1
 4+0

In other words: what in Literary Georgian versification is one subsystem within a system consisting of three subsystems, in Megrelian is a single system.

This situation in itself constitutes the specificity of Megrelian verse. But neither this formulation is accurate and reflecting fully the main characteristic of Megrelian verse. Obviously, the following provision may be formulated: the specificity of Megrelian verse is created by the fact that, unlike Georgian literary verse (as well as Georgian dialectal verse), in the Megrelian system practically one meter is represented 4+4 ($n=k$) with its allometres (as far as I know, this term is not used in scholarly circulation): 4+4, 4+3 (also 4+2, 4+1).

Such a conclusion is based on these arguments: a) in the Megrelian system $n+k$ is 4+k (i.e., the structure in which the rhythmic boundary is after 4 syllables); unlike the Georgian literary system, it is not familiar with structures 5+k and 3+k (i.e. those in which the rhythmic boundary is elsewhere – after 5 and 3 syllables). b) What is most important, the great part of Megrelian verse material shows specimens which can be optionally interpreted in two ways – as 4+4 and 4+3. When such specimens are discovered where one, autonomous structure of line is represented (4+4, more rarely 4+3), as a rule, inside them appear certain

fragments or separate lines which include parallel forms. (As regards 4+2 and 4+1 structures, they are rarely found, mostly next to 4+4; along with this, in some cases the analysis can reveal the initial structure 4+4).

Thus, the provision may be formulated that the Megrelian versification is based on one meter, which is represented by allometres (/alternants/particular manifestations). Allometres in this case means not variants conditioned by a certain mechanism, which have their space/position of use, but that these variants are applicable optionally/voluntarily.

If this conclusion is controversial because in the Megrelian verse text corpus there may be discovered some specimens (of insignificant quantity), which do not correspond to 4+4 structure, in particular, they correspond to 5+5 structure, then the provision can be formulated as follows: the initial system of Megrelian verse is based on one meter (4+4), i.e. the system which is typical and reflects the specificity of Megrelian proper, not innovations (on innovations, see below.).

This situation creates a fundamental difference from Georgian literary verse: where in Georgian literary verse (as well as in dialectal) there are autonomous meters 4+4, 4+3, etc., in Megrelian there is one meter with its alternants. This specificity of Megrelian verse is completely due to the peculiarity of Megrelian speech – two styles.

The picture of realization of Megrelian versification meter is as follows: on the one hand, we have verse specimens, based on some one binary structure (one allometre): 4+4 or 4+3 (as noted above, in such cases in some fragments of a given verse text parallel structures will be revealed as well). On the other hand, we have specimens that are interpreted optionally (/are read/comprehended) in the form of one structure as well as the other, – they may be interpreted either in one way or in the other.

The specificity of Megrelian verse that a verse text gives an opportunity to be read in several ways – two, three or more, is reflected in practice in the following way.

	I	
šio, čit' i, kopurini,	4+4	<i>“shoo, bird, fly,</i>
kemeuġi tena tisi,	4+4	<i>bring it to her,</i>
dio xesi kemeči do,	4+4	<i>first hand it to her,</i>
uk'ul kaaġudi p'isi.	4+4 (2+6)	<i>then kiss her on</i> <i>her mouth”.</i>
	II	
šio, čit' i, kopurin,	4+3	
kemeuġi tena tis,	4+3	
dio xes kemeči do,	4+3 (2+5)	
uk'ul kaaġudi p'is.	4+3 (2+5)	
	III	
šio, čit' i, kopurini,	4+4	
kemeuġi tena tis,	4+3	
dio xesi kemeči do,	4+4	
uk'ul kaaġudi p'is.	4+3 (2+5)	

Other variants are also possible when 4+3 is only in the third line.

At the same time, this variant is impossible:

šio, čit', kopurin,	3+3
kemeuġ tena tis.	3+3

This option is not possible, because the meter structure 4+k is violated in it.

Thus, the realization in verse of variants determined by different styles is limited to a certain degree (as compared with normal speech). The following limiting rule can be formulated (which is a concrete definition of the above-formulated rules). In general, functioning of the mechanism of two styles of speech in Megrelian verse is permissible only within the limits if the meter structure is observed/is not violated. In particular, a) in the first segment of a line (binomial) the four-syllable length (n=4) must be observed (not be violated); b) in the second segment of a line (binomial) free variation within the four-syllable length must be observed (not be violated) (k=4, 3). Finally:

n+k
where n=4, k ∈ {4,3},
accordingly, (4+4) ~ (4+3).

This symbolic record adequately reflects the specificity of Megrelian verse; cf. for Literary Georgian:

$n+k$

where $n=4$, $k=4,3,2,1,0$.

When defining the system of Megrelian verse, above all, the fact should be taken into consideration that there exists Literary Georgian versification (/Common Georgian versification) one of the realizations of which is Megrelian verse. From these positions, as noted above, in the system of Megrelian verse we should see two levels: the first – the initial system, which in principle is the same as the Common Georgian system; the second – the specificity which underlies the initial system.

The above-mentioned qualification and symbolic record reflect, on the one hand, the initial system, and, on the other, its correction, determined by the specificity of Megrelian speech.

The initial system of Megrelian verse is the system of the basic binary unit of Common Georgian, in particular, its subsystem which begins with 4+4: 4+4, 4+3, 4+2, 4+1, 4+0. Correcting, determined by Megrelian speech, is the action of two styles at the time of realization of this subsystem, which implies emergence of two parallel forms for every word, the difference between the syllabic lengths of which is one syllable; in verse, namely in the structure 4+4, this gives free alternation of the constructions 4+4 and 4+3 (difference in one syllable of syllabic length); as a result, the situation is created which neutralizes the metric opposition (4+4): (4+3), due to which the Megrelian system is not a system of independent meters 4+4, 4+3, but a single system with allometers: 4+4 ~ 4+3.

The reality of the described picture is indicated by the answer to the following question: Why were 4+2 and 4+1 (as well as 4+0) not included in the system? Again due to the factor of two styles of speech: on the one hand, for 4+4, as for the basic structure, a variant differing in one syllable will be 4+3, on the other hand, the constructions 4+2 and 4+1 create 2- and 3-syllable differences.

Specification of the symbolic record leads to the following principal conclusion: no matter what kind

of allometres a line includes (i.e., whatever the length of the second segment may be in conditions of the four-syllable length), this is the same meter 4+4. It makes no difference for bearers of verse speech whether at a given passage in a verse 4+4 or 4+3 will be read. In other words, as in Megrelian verse *koči/koč*, *č'aruns/č'arunsi*, etc. are the same, so in verse 4+4, 4+3 (as well as 4+2, 4+1) are the same.

The conclusion can also be formulated in the following way: when speaking about allometres we actually go beyond the reality of the Georgian literary (/Common Georgian) system. As regards the reality of Megrelian verse proper, here we have one meter at the time of implementation of which it does not matter by means of which “allometre” a given verse text will be interpreted. At the metric level the Megrelian system practically is familiar only with the rule $n=k$.

Finally, the meter functioning in Megrelian verse is 4+4 of the Common Georgian system, specifically realized in Megrelian.

The conclusion on the principled nature of Megrelian is interesting from the viewpoint of one question – the typological qualification of Georgian versification. Here the main point is that for Megrelian verse it does not matter how many syllables there are in a line (seven or eight), the most important is the position of the rhythmic boundary (after 4 syllables). This situation is one more argument for the fact that the typology of Georgian versification is determined by the rhythmic boundary (and not by the number of syllables, the more so – by stress; see [7]).

5. It may be noted that the existence of two styles in Megrelian is due to the fact that Megrelian is an oral language (not a literary language, written language), and as such (as a living language), it is not subject to the experience of standardization/normalization at all, and in particular by the literary way (written recording). The literary language for Megrelian is the Georgian literary language (which does not have the so-called literary dialect – personally for me this is an essential provision; it, as a single/common language, was

created in a far earlier period).

In the same context, the above-discussed peculiarity of Megrelian verse is due to the fact that it represents oral speech/folklore. Obviously the following general provision will be correct: folklore (in our case – folk verse), is a dialectal (i.e. non-literary language) form. Thus, Megrelian verse is folk/dialectal verse. It should be stressed that “dialectal” in this case does not refer to a dialect proper, but to a “non-literary” language, i.e. everything that is different from the literary language, whether it is a dialect proper, or, in the case of our reality, Megrelian, Laz and Svan, which can be called branches of common Georgian. In this case we have one opposition – the Georgian literary language: Megrelian/Laz/Svan/dialects.

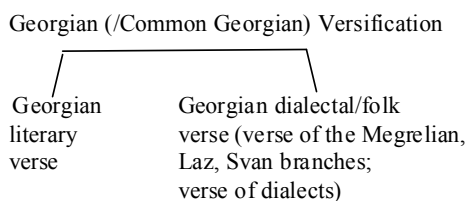
Megrelian verse typologically is Georgian folk/dialectal verse.

Folklore, as the so-called collective creation (see [8, 373]), along with everything else, differs from literary (i.e. individual) creation in that in it fewer forms are presented (quantitatively and qualitatively): folklore is a lesser form than literature, in this regard it is more stable (cf. [9, 91-92]); namely, folk verse, this is verse with a less form/less meter than literary.

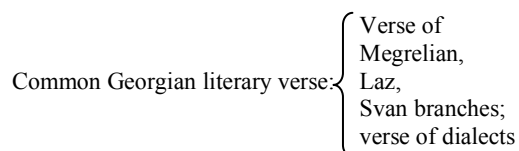
In this context the following provision can be formulated: Georgian literary versification is conventionally a complete system; Georgian folk/dialectal verse (including Megrelian) is incomplete.

This means that a single, Georgian (Common Georgian) system is considered.

The following provision is correct: there is one, Georgian (Common Georgian) versification – a single system that is implemented by the following representatives: Georgian literary verse, folk/dialectal verse (Megrelian, Laz, Svan verse, verse of the dialects of the Georgian literary language).



Within the diagram, the left side – Georgian literary verse – is opposed by the entire right side; at the same time, “Georgian literary verse” is Common Georgian literary verse (which is literary verse for branches and dialects):



In this case, the following reasoning is of principled character: for dialectal/folk verse there exists a single/Common Georgian literary verse. (Similar as there is, on the one hand, functionally one/common Georgian literary language, represented by full realization – in the form of the graphic/written language and in the form of the common oral language, and on the other hand, everything else – the Megrelian, Laz, Svan branches, dialects. Along with this, this language is also common because it is created by everyone, on the common basis; as far as I know, I. Javakhishvili was the first to express this view, see [10: 154]).

If we return to Megrelian verse, the following is noteworthy: Megrelian verse is a member of Georgian (Common Georgian) versification. Here the following reasoning is of principle: the language – in this case not as prosody, but text material – is not important: by the prosodic peculiarities that are characteristic of Megrelian, a member of the Common Georgian versification is created; or: this prosody serves to create a specific member of Georgian versification, because, as mentioned, we have a single Georgian/Common Georgian versification, evidenced by a certain number of representatives.

6. The fact that Megrelian verse is one of the representatives of Georgian versification is formally clearly demonstrated by the following experiment. Let us take again the basic system of Literary Georgian versification (that of a binomial, line) with three subsystems, and move it to Megrelian.

In Megrelian practice the first and third columns will make gaps. We can fill these gaps at the expense

of a certain transformation of some actually existing Megrelian verse text. For example, let us transform the stanza

iro mulas ič'aruki,	<i>"You always write that you are</i>
	<i>coming,</i>
iro mulas ičina.	<i>You always send word that you are</i>
	<i>coming.</i>
komic'ii, golvapiro,	<i>Tell me please,</i>
mužamiša gičina	<i>how long shall I wait for you"</i>

so that the first constituent of the line is 5-syllable, and the second – 3-syllable:

si iro mulas ič'aruk,	5+3
si iro mulas ičina.	5+3
komic'i, goluapiro,	5+3
ma mužamiša gičina.	5+3

Before us is a normal Georgian verse – normal Megrelian verse (for bearers of Megrelian verse speech, who at the same time are bearers of common Georgian verse speech, such a verse will be a marked form). This is 5+3, the so-called *low shairi* of Georgian versification. But at the same time it is a metric structure, which is not realized in Megrelian verse.

In the context of this experiment the following question can be posed: Which is the reality within which Megrelian verse should be considered? In other words, this is a problem of material: Which is the material that can be considered as a typical Megrelian verse and can be described and characterized according to it. The answer, apparently, is that it is the material/reality according to which Megrelian verse is described as a system, based on meter 4+4 (plus allometres) and on rules of its realization.

The point is that some specimens which exist in reality and are based on other metric structure (in particular, 5+5), firstly, show an insignificant number, secondly, they obviously reflect the situation of the new period and represent a result of the influence of Georgian literary verse. Most importantly, these are specimens in which the action of two styles characteristic of Megrelian speech is not reflected, in particular – free variation within the number of

syllables characteristic of the second segment of a line.

It is possible to draw a conclusion: the material that reflects typical Megrelian verse ends where the action of two styles ends, which creates in verse various free variants for one and the same metric structure.

As to the indicated rare specimens, they should be regarded as an attempt of filling the gaps which were discussed above. From the positions of principled reasoning, it is a conscious act in order to introduce innovations (innovations – on the basis of Georgian literary verse), – in fact, individual creation. In this way, it is possible to increase the number of Megrelian verse meters, but such specimens will not create typical Megrelian verse. More exactly: they do not belong to the initial system of Megrelian verse (i.e. the system which undergoes innovations). It may also be in this way: this is no longer a typologically folk/dialectal verse, i.e. Megrelian verse as a peculiar, original variant of Georgian versification.

In the above-mentioned context general reasoning is also possible. At present (in the conditions of the present-day general realities), the opposition folklore: literature (in particular, folk verse: literary verse) is transformed and is qualitatively different. From the viewpoint of forecast an opinion may be offered: the tendency to abolishing this opposition is developing.

7. For a full description it is interesting to discuss one more question – relation of Megrelian verse to other non-literary Georgian verse, in particular, to verse of the dialects.

Here the main point is that, unlike the dialects (as well as the Literary Georgian language), *low shairi*, based on 5+3 structure, is not realized in Megrelian.

The entire picture is as follows: in west-Georgian verse 4+4 (*high shairi*) is dominant, 5+3 is less used, which predominates in east-Georgian verse, along with this, in east-Georgian mountain verse actually only 5+3 is represented only. In Megrelian there is 4+4 (with its alternants), 5+3 does not occur at all. Thus, Megrelian opposes the overall picture: a)

opposes west-Georgian, b) strongly opposes east-Georgian, and c) completely opposes east-Georgian mountain verse (Khevsur, Pshavian).

By which feature can this situation be characterized? In this case, attention mostly attaches to one feature – 5+3 is a binary structure, based on the inequality of the constituents: the first constituent is longer than the second ($n > k$). As we can see, Megrelian verse rejects such a structure. In this context the important thing is that, on the one hand, in innovations Megrelian generally allows meters in which the rhythmic boundary is after 5 syllables, but introduces only those in which the first constituent is equal with the second 5+5 ($n = k$); on the other hand, it rejects such a structure having the same boundary which is based on the inequality of the constituents, in particular – in which the first constituent is longer than the second one ($n > k$) – 5+3.

8. This situation has a direct connection with one more question. This is the relation of Megrelian verse to the stage of diachrony of Common Georgian versification which is reconstructed as the pre-first (pre-fixed) stage in the development (here not the common-Kartvelian pre-system is implied, but exactly the stage which must have preceded all the known, confirmed stages in the development of Georgian literary versification).

Reconstruction shows here the following picture [6: 93-107; 11: 163-164]. The initial (pre-fixed) stage of Georgian versification is a state in which in a basic, low-level, binary unit of the system (as well as in binary units of all other levels) only the rule of two equal constituents $n = k$ is at work, i.e. the second rule

$n > k$ does not apply (finally, the universal rule $n \geq k$, formed later, does not apply), on the basis of which, e.g. *low shairi* having the 5+3 structure is constructed.

As regards Megrelian verse from this viewpoint, such a binary unit which is made up of two equal constituents functions (in a specific form) exactly in Megrelian.

In this respect, the fact is especially noteworthy that 5+3 with unequal constituents (*low shairi*) does not occur in Megrelian at all, a) which is dominant in east-Georgian verse, and is the only one in mountain verse; b) what is the most important, which is realized and is very popular at the first stage of the development of Georgian literary versification. Of these two meters, realized at the very first stage, united under the heading of “*shairi*”, Megrelian chooses the meter 4+4, based on the principle of equality $n = k$, and categorically rejects the meter 5+3, based on the principle of inequality.

The following conclusion can be made: 1) the situation confirmed in Megrelian verse (resp. in its initial system) directly reflects the state (stage) when in Georgian versification (being common) the principle of division into unequal constituents in a binary unit was not realized, only the principle of equal constituents functioned; 2) the rhythmic/metric form of Megrelian verse developed earlier than the east-Georgian state, based on the dominance of 5+3.

Thus, the reconstructed (initial, starting) stage of Georgian verse, based on the principle of two equal constituents, at the time of verification is confirmed by the versification picture of Megrelian verse, which reflects the oldest stage of the development of Georgian versification (versification proper).

ენათმეცნიერება

მეგრული ლექსის შესახებ

ა.სილაგაძე

აკადემიის წევრი, ი. ჯავახიშვილის სახ. თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

სტატიაში დადგენილია მეგრული ლექსის ვერსიფიკაციული სისტემა, ნაჩვენებია მისი სპეციფიკა. განსაზღვრულია მეგრული ლექსის ადგილი საერთოქართულ ლექსთწყობაში. მოცემულია შედარებითი ანალიზი სხვა არასალიტერატუროენოვან ქართულ ლექსთან. განხილულია საკითხი მეგრული ლექსის მიმართებისა საერთოქართული ლექსთწყობის განვითარებაში იმ საფეხურთან, რომელიც რეკონსტრუირდება როგორც ამოსავალი (პირველისწინა) საფეხური.

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