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RENDERING THE NAME OF EREKLE II ON THE ROYAL SEALS

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the variations in the writing of Erekle II's name on royal seals and numismatic materials. The research is based on more than 10,000 documents preserved in the Georgian archives and the seals found on them. Eight identified seals have been analyzed, which chronologically cover the period from 1729 to 1797. These seals differ both in form (octagonal, rectangular, oval), as well as in size and imagery. The first seal belongs to 9-10-year-old Prince Erekle (1729), while the rest appear on various documents issued throughout his reign.

It should be emphasized that the king's name is written on two seals in Asomtavruli script as “*ᲠᲚᲗᲗᲗᲗ*” (Erekle), on three seals in Mkhedruli script as “Erekle” and on one seal in Asomtavruli as “*ᲠᲚᲗᲗᲗᲗ*” (Irakli). Particularly remarkable is the five-language seal (N7), in the center of which “Irakli” is written in Asomtavruli, while around it the same name is rendered in four languages (Latin, Greek, Armenian, Persian). It is also interesting that on all copper coins, the king's name is indicated as “Irakli”. In historical documents (e.g., the Treaty of Georgievsk) and in the memoirs of close relatives (Alexandre Orbeliani), the king is frequently mentioned by the name “Irakli”.

The study also reviews relevant scholarly literature. Notably, M. Barataev, E. Pakhomov, D. Kapanadze, and N. Tarkhnishvili read the name “Irakli” on coins and seals but write “Erekle”. The only exception is Ana Bakradze, who accurately rendered the name as “Irakli”.

The research demonstrates that Erekle II's official name, especially on documents and coins, should properly be recognized as “Irakli”. This issue truly requires consideration and verification of existing information.

KEYWORDS: EREKLE II, SPHRAGISTICS, ROYAL SEALS, NUMISMATICS, NAME SPELLING.

1. Octagonal seal, size: 10 x 11 mm. Asomtavruli legend in the center “Batonishvili Erekle” (ႠႢႣႥႦႧ ႨႩႪႫႬ ႭႮႯႰႱ) “Batonishvili Erekle”. Erekle is 9-10 years old at the moment, chronologically this is his first seal. Seen on the Deed of Mercy of 1729 and 1739 years, document N556 (See Figure N1).



Charagma on this seal is read as follows:



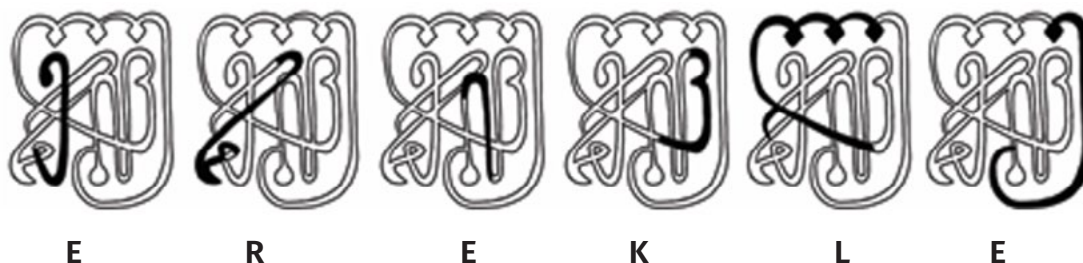
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2. Rectangular seal, size 11 – 12 mm. Mkhedruli (Georgian script) in the center “Erekle” (see Figure N2). This seal can be found on economic-type documents from 1738 to 1796yy.



Figure N2

Caligraphy signature (Khelrtva) on this seal is read as follows:

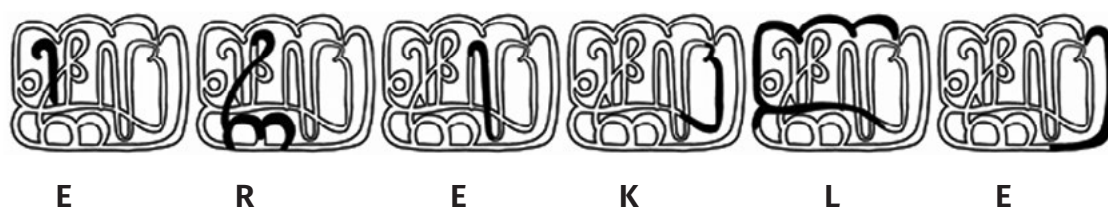


3. Rectangular seal, size 17 – 15 mm. Surrounded by a mkhedruli inscription: „სული შენი მომბერე კლებულს იესო“ / “Jesus, bestow your spirit to the deprived”, Asomtavruli Charagma “” is placed among last two word (deprived – Jesus) evidently, date with K’oronikon. Mkhedruli letters “Erekle” in the centre “Erekle” (See Figure N3). This seal is on various documents from 1749, 1743 and 1781 years. Documents: 187, 507, 511, 2428.



Figure N3

Caligraphy signature in the middle of the seal is read as follows:

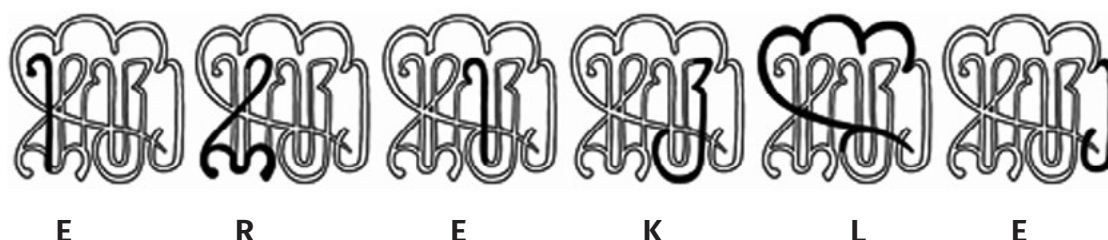


4. An octagonal seal, size: 23 – 22 mm, surrounded by the Mkhedruli inscription: „ქნარს მიცემს, დავით მიწმობს ძედ კახეთის მეფედ ცხებულს“ / „He gives the harp, David call upon me anointed as king of Kakheti“. This seal can be seen from 1744 to 1797 and documents of different types and purposes (documents 583, 5532, 512, and many others).



Figure N4

Caligraphy signature in the middle of the seal is read as follows:



5. Octagonal seal, size: 20 – 18 mm. Surrounded by a military inscription: „მე ფეხთ განბანილთა მიერ ეკლესია ვადიდე“ / „I glorify the church by means of those whose feet have been washed“. the Asomtavruli Charagma “Erekle” in the center (see Figure N5). This seal is found from 1750 to 1797 and is affixed to various purposes (documents 169, 87, 125 and many more).

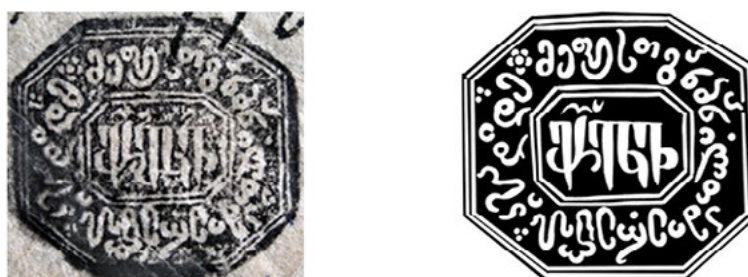


Figure N5

Caligraphy signature in the middle of the seal is read as follows:



6. Oval seal, size 34 – 27 mm. Surrounded by a mkhedruli inscription: “ძე ცხებულისა უფლისა მეფის თეიმურაზისა [მეფ]ე ერეკლე” / “King Erekle, son of the anointed lord king Teimuraz”. The royal coat of arms is depicted in the center, showing a crown, two lions, arrows and a bow (See figure N6) The seal was used twice in total, in 1746 (Documents 162 and 1317).



Figure N6

7. Octagonal ring with the legend in five languages. Size 15 x 17 mm. King’s name “Irakli” in four languages.

Latin inscription: “HEPCLUS” “Irakli”.

Greek inscription: “HRKS” “Irakli”.

Armenian inscription: “ՀԵՐԱԿԼԷ” Hirakli.

Armenian inscription: “ՀԵՐԱԿԼԷ” Armenian caligraphy signature (Khelrtva) is read as follows: (See the figure 7a) “Herakli” same as Irakli.



Figure N7a

Persian inscription: “مونا مني ايراکلی” / “Irakli, his servant”, “مونا უფლისა ირაკლი” / “Servant of the Lord, Irakli”.

The text reads as follows: (Figure 7 b).

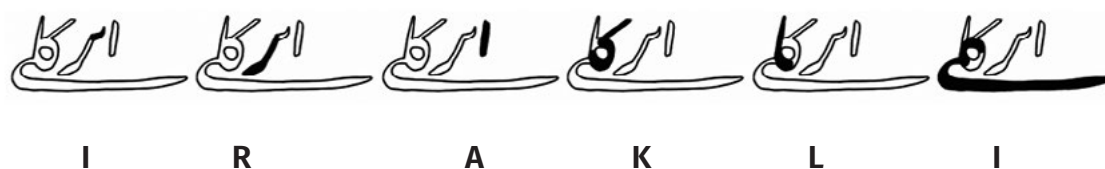


Figure N7b

Asomtavruli ქარაგმა in the center: “irakli” („ირაკლი“) „Irakli“ (Figure N7). This seal, along with other seals, is depicted on the letter written by King Erekle to Tekla Batonishvili, in 1781 (Col. 1448, document 189). The central Asomtavruli charagma of the ring is boldly and unquestionably read as “irakli” („ირაკლი“) “Irakli” (Figure 7c).



Figure N7

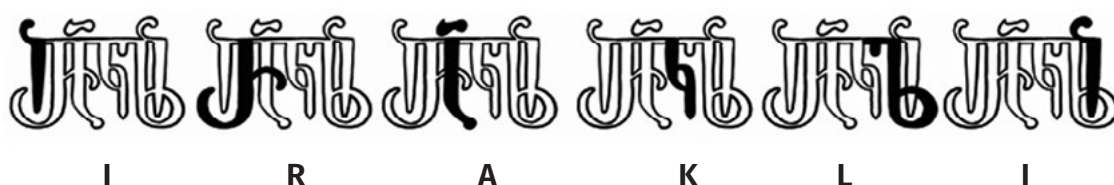


Figure N7c

8. Rectangular seal. Size 13 – 11 mm. Persian inscription in the center: „îĈÂGnéqjâDÂ,, “მოწმე მისი ირაკლი” / “Irakli, his witness”, “მოწმე უფლისა ირაკლი” / “Irakli, witness of the Lord”. The seal, along with other seals, is depicted in the letter written by King Erekle to Tekla Batonishvili, in 1789 (Col. 1448, document 189), (Figure N8).

In this case, too, the king’s name is undoubtedly read as Irakli (see Figure 8a).



Figure N8a



Figure N8

ჩვენი ბატონი ერეკლე
ერთი პატარა კახია
ჯაჭვის პერანგი ჩააცვებს
გაკრა ხელი და გახია.⁵
(ხალხური)

Little Kakhi is another name for King Erekle, which is often seen in folk poems and legends. The king is not mentioned by this name (nickname) in any personal letter, state document, or deed of any kind.

We find the name of King Irakli on quite serious documents, for example, the treaty of Georgievsk (“აზრითა ამით სიმდაბლედ შთამოსრულმან თხოვასა ზედა უგანათ ლებუღესისა მეფისა ქართლისა და კახეთისა ირაკლი თეიმურაზოვიჩისა...” / “With the intention, having descended in humility upon the request of the most enlightend king of Kartli and Kakheti, Irakli Teimurazovich...”).

On all the copper coins of Erekle II, the Asomtavruli charagma “irakli” („ირაკლი“) is read as “Irakli” (see Figure N9).



Figure N9

Charagma on the coins are read as follows:



5 The folk story tells of a little Kakhetian warrior (Erekle) who, when dressed in chain mail, demonstrated such strength that he could split it with his hand.

Erekle II is also often referred to as Irakli by close relatives. Tekla Batonishvili's son, Alexander Orbeliani, writes in his memories: "Before the age of 16, my mother wore man clothes and her father, King Irakli, took her with him."

On the eight seals described above, the name Erekle is engraved in the Asomtavruli alphabet on two of them: Picture N1 and N5, and on the three seals – in Mkhedruli caligraphy signature Figure N2, N3 and N4: The king's name "Irakli" is engraved with Asomtavruli charagma on Figure N7. Around it, there is King's name in four languages – Greek, Latin, Armenian and Persian. Also on the seal N8 the name of the king "Irakli" is depicted in Persian (see Table 10).

Writing	Asomtavruli charagma	Mkhedruli caligraphy signature (Khelrtva)	Asomtavruli charagma	Latin	Greek	Armenian	Persian
King's name	Erekle	Erekle	Irakli	Irakli	Irakli	Irakli	Irakli
Quantity	2	3	1	1	1	1	2
Seal N	N1. N5.	N2. N3. N4. N6	N7.	N7.	N7.	N7.	N7. N8.

Table N10

It is quite difficult to say with certainty which of the above names of the king is most frequently mentioned in documents, seals, or personal correspondence, because of the stereotype around the name of the king, scientists, scholars and readers also read the name "Irakli" and write Erekle. An example of this is M. P. The first study on Georgian numismatics published by M.P. Varataev – „Нумизматические факты Грузинского царства“⁶. There is also a discrepancy between reading the name and writing it e.g. In Pakhomov's work

„Монеты Грузии“⁷ and in D. Kapanadze work "Georgian Numismatics"⁸. We face a similar problem with N. Tarkhnishvili above-mentioned article – "Seals of King Erekle II"⁹. Only Ana Bakradze has read correctly the Central Asomtavruli dialect of the seal and wrote the name "Irakli"¹⁰ correctly. Because of it, there is a need to verify the read information and spend time on it.

I hope that King Erekle II will appear again in Persian or any other foreign language seals, as scholars still have a lot of work to do in the field of sigillography.

I thank to Mr. Giorgi Kalandia for his collegial support.

6 Нумизматические факты Грузинского царства", Разряд IV. Санкт – Петербург 1844, ст.11-12.

7 Е.А. Пахомов. Монеты Грузии. Тбилиси 1970, р. 261.

8 D. Kapanadze, "Georgian Numismatics". Tbilisi 1969, pp. 151-152.

9 N. Tarkhnishvili (Archival Division under the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR, Scientific-Informati – on Bulletin N13-14), p. 12.

10 A. Bakradze "Materials for the History of Georgian Sphragistics", Book I. Tbilisi 1978. p. 39. Cat. N55.

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