

## **Proto-Kartvelian and Proto-Indo-European plant-names (the conifers" fir, fir(-tree), pine(-tree))**

The study of grammatical, phonological and lexical isoglosses among dialects of a proto-language makes it possible to establish extra-linguistic factors. This trend in linguistics is called “linguistic paleontology of culture”, since its object of investigation is not only the proto-language but also the proto-culture of its speakers; what is reconstructed is not so much the language itself as the extra-linguistic world reflected in the linguistic data (Gamkrelidze 1990).

Reconstructing elements of the extra-linguistic world of daughter-language speakers in turn gives a clearer picture of the linguistic affinities among the daughter-languages and their development over time, i.e. of purely linguistic factors. This is particularly true of the semantic structure of languages, which simply cannot be studied in isolation from the external world that is reflected in the content plane of language.

The reconstructed forms and meanings may be grouped by lexico-semantic fields, which designate extra-linguistic classes such as animals, plants, handicraft tools, and others. Such a proto-linguistic lexico-semantic system can yield historical reality through typological comparison with the actual culture of the past and the present and especially with archeological facts, in verifying a reconstructed culture and, particularly, its material aspects (Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1986).

Today it is widely agreed that “culture” does not consist of things, people, behaviour or emotions, but of the forms or organization of these things in the minds of people. How can the organization of “these things” in the minds of people be discovered? The best means of discovery lies in the area of language, and there is a whole battery of linguistic tests which can be put to use to reveal different aspects of the organization of the universe in the minds of people (Wierzbicka 1996).

The apparent discovery of ethnobiological universals and the ensuing debate have further stimulated interest in the conceptualization of plants and animals, and they are largely responsible for the key position of this conceptual domain in current anthropology.

At first sight, it seems that studying the corpus of plant names does not give us the possibility to reconstruct models such as we have for kinship or for colour-term systems, and that only these latter provide a history of a language with facts, or that plant names are useful only for the identification of biological units with their names. But exactly this kind of research fills our imagination and knowledge with the events of human cognitive mechanisms in order to clarify the nature of the human world through categorization.

As is known, the South Caucasus was the main importer and spreader of all achievements of ancient Near Eastern civilization from C6-5 BC in the whole Caucasus. This fact was the reason for the oldest areal contact of Kartvelian languages with Indo-European, Semitic and languages of the Caucasus.

The results of the research by Th. Gamkrelidze and G. Machavariani (1965), followed up by Gamkrelidze/Ivanov’s hypothesis (1984) about the location of the Proto-Indo-European homeland in Asia Minor near to the area where the Kartvelian languages were spreading - in particular, in the South Caucasus region - has materially confirmed C. Renfrew’s (1984) important archeological

investigations, which have stimulated many famous linguists to further research in this direction. A valuable work from this point of view is one of the latest investigations of G. Klimov (1994), where he tried to systematize and generalize the oldest Indo-European forms in Kartvelian languages.

There is no scarcity of data that testify to the Proto-Kartvelian and Proto-Indo-European speakers' areal contacts, but it is very difficult to separate borrowed forms from subtractive influences. To solve this problem the most important clue is the exact chronological stratification, which must in turn be based on further elaboration of the relative chronology of phonetic processes.

The general criterion for the definition of the chronological level of Kartvelian Indo-Europeanisms is the correspondence of the expression plane of forms with the historical phonetic processes of Kartvelian languages and also the correspondence to the semantics of the concepts and reality of the period.

The English Kartvelologist D. Rayfield (1988) has written that in the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European languages, dendrology and dendronisms are well studied, and that the work which was done by P. Friedrich (1970) and Th. Gamkrelidze (1989) for Indo-European languages when they gathered tree-names could be done for Caucasian languages too.

The Proto-Kartvelian arboreal system is more diverse than its Proto-Indo-European counterpart. This is natural, if we take into account the effect of migration and of ecological modifications connected therewith, which gave rise to changes in language forms, semantic shifts and other innovations.

While investigating the Proto-Kartvelian arboreal system, we have discovered new lexical roots, made more precise the old ones, revealed the borrowed forms on the proto-level and compared Proto-Kartvelian roots with the Proto-Indo-European and Caucasian data.

Revealing paleobotanical and in many cases paleolinguistic isomorphism between the Proto-Kartvelian and other Proto systems shows the similarities and differences on the basis of which these languages may (or may not) be considered to be of the same structural-typological (or genetic) class.

We try, in this paper, to examine this question on the basis of the results of the historical-comparative investigation of Kartvelian languages, using the example of Proto-Kartvelian names of the conifers: fir, fir(-tree), pine(-tree).