

PROTO-KARTVELIAN PLANT NAMES AND PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH SEMANTIC RECONSTRUCTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Plant names, their meanings, and the botanical realities to which they correspond, are assumed to constitute a set of interdependent systems. The nature and interdependencies of these systems can only be discovered and interpreted by conjunctive approach (Friedrich, P., 1970).

The conjunctive approach seeks all relevant evidence to get the complete information about the historical existence of the speakers, which includes the ecological environment (fauna, flora, geographical surroundings, climate) and human habitation and migration in the environment, as well as culture in the broadest sense (including both material and spiritual culture), (Gamkrelidze, T. V., 1999).

For exact semantic reconstructions of the proto-forms it is necessary to gain the scrupulous etymological analysis of reconstructed stems towards the proper lexico-semantic groups, which gives us opportunity to restore the initial meanings of the stems in the systems, to explain the words transitions from one lexical subsystem into another and etc.

By such approach we can not only explain semantic changes, but preliminarily define the direction and way of these changes. To establish the criteria for verification of semantic changes is as necessary as a phonetic one. Phonetic reconstructions are based on ranges of phonemes' corresponding to comparable languages. Semantic reconstructions are difficult because there are diverse semantic nuances; the set of semantic positions is complex and its frequency is less than phonetic one's. Practically each phonetic usage of words is a separate semantic position and usually there isn't enough data to build the ranges.

The simplest way in such investigations is to fix the moves of similar meanings in different languages, which would help us to restore the exact proto-meanings.

Key Words: Historical-Comparative Method. Semantic Reconstruction. Proto-Kartvelian Plant Names.

“Sprachforschung, der ich anhängen und von der ich ausgehe, hat mich nie in der Weise befriedigen Können, daß ich nicht immer gern von den Wörtern zu den

Sachen gelangt ware; ich wollte nicht bloß Häuser bauen, sondern auch darin wohnen”.

J. Grimm

Language system may be analyzed on the basis of different methodologies. The Comparative-historical method seems to be the classical one which has not lost its actuality up to now.

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 speakers. What is reconstructed is not so much the language itself as the extra-linguistic world reflected in the linguistic data (Gamkrelidze, T.V., 1999).

Reconstructing elements of the extra-linguistic world of the daughter-language speakers give in twin a clearer picture of the linguistic affinities among the daughter-languages and their development over the time, i.e. of the purely linguistic factors. This is particularly true of the semantic structure of the languages. The semantic structure cannot be simply 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 lexical-semantic fields, which designate extra-linguistic classes such as animals, handicraft tools and others. Such a proto-linguistic lexical-semantic system can give historical reality through typological comparison with the actual culture of the past and the present and especially by the archeological facts, in verifying a reconstructed culture and particularly, its material side (Gamkrelidze, T.V., Ivanov, V.V., 1986; 1995).

Today it is widely agreed that “culture” doesn’t consist of things, people, behavior or emotions, but of the forms or organization of these things in the mind of people. How can the organization of “these things” in the mind of people be discovered? The best way of discovery lies in the area of the 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, A., 1996).

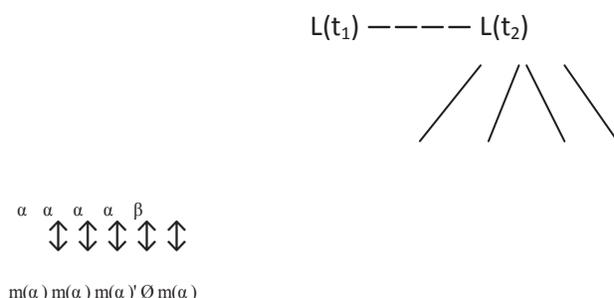
Now the scientists pay a great attention to semantic problems and the questions concerning language and thinking, “Language Weltanschauung”, “things” constructions of the mind of people, “language intuition” and others, rise again; i.e. the way of investigation of the semantic level of language directs from formal linguistics to content researches.

We can get complete information about various aspects of given objects only through studying them cross-linguistically, on the basis of different

languages comparison that is used to solve not only linguistic but also cultural-anthropological issues.

The semantic and pragmatic levels of the language system are the most complex and complicated from understanding point of view. We can analyze them only on the basis of investigation of surface linguistic forms. Theoretically, the different semantic interpretations of a language system can be achieved through the usage of various algorithms. We must not forget that every language system builds the world picture specifically and the strategies of structuring and algorithms defined the conceptualization processes are different for them. (Comp. color terms and corresponding various linguistic models of the system).

Let us suppose language system (L) and α -element from L ($\alpha \in L$) in $[t_1, t_2]$ time segment. If we denote the meaning of α -element by $m(\alpha)$, theoretically there would be following possible meaning-changes:



Explanation of origins of the changes and clarification of their means are necessary premises to restore exact semantic reconstructions for each comparable language, and the Kartvelian languages as well. The above stated facts define the importance of the topic.

The general reason of the destruction of the regular correspondences between the daughter-languages is considered to be a result of the unexplained lexical exceptions. It implies neither deficiency of the exams nor the breach of the regularity. On the contrary, the reason for the destruction of the regular correspondences is the «intersection» of the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors.

In such cases, the existence of duplicate forms can be suggested that doesn't break a solidity of the proto-language.

Reasons for derivations of duplicate forms could be: stylistic variation, social stratification, influence of colloquial forms on the literary language, the compatibility of the data of proto-languages with the local language subgroups and so on. Comparative reconstructions also reveal examples when some roots with similar meanings are reconstructed.

In certain linguistic groups, there usually exist stereotypes according to which one part of a word's meaning is considered as positive while the other as negative. The differences in development of meanings can be regarded as the origins of taboos and euphemisms in natural languages.

At the first view, it seems that an investigation of plant names corpus doesn't give us such interesting reconstructed systems as in case of kinship or color-terms (Berlin, B.- Kay, P., 1969; Soselia, E., 1979; 1999); and it helps us just to identify some biological units corresponding to their names. But exactly such a kind of research fills our imagination and knowledge about the events of human cognitive means to clarify the nature of the human world through categorization.

Tree names are paradoxical. On the one hand, they are basic-semantic primitives, but, on the other hand, tree names, because of the peculiarities of their referents, are sensitive to ecological changes and migration processes of speech community. The P. Friedrich's opinion about the Proto-Indo-European arboreal system may be spread over the whole corpus of plant-names. Thus, plant names, their meanings and the botanical realities to which they correspond are assumed to constitute a set of interdependent systems. The nature of such systems can only be discovered and interpreted on the basis of conjoined approaches, or analytical systems (Friedrich, P., 1970). The first approach is linguistic-phonological: morphological parameters constitute *the linguistic system*. The second is semantic approach: semantic features which define morphemes, words and word-families sets constitute *the linguistic system*; And the third approach is lexical: the reconstructed lexicon may relate to data and systems that are neither linguistic nor semantic (e.g., archaeological, paleo-botanical data). Such kind of information constitutes *the external system* (see Friedrich, P., 1970, 1-4).

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G. Klimov, who gave high estimate to *“Etymological Dictionary of the Kartvelian Languages”* by H. Fähnrich and S. Sarjveladze (Fähnrich, H.-Sarjveladze, S., 1990; 1995; 2000) mentioned: like every important research this monograph clearly shows the range of problems of comparative study of Kartvelian languages and etymological investigations deciding which becomes more and more urgent.

First of all, we must mention the task of the adequate semantic reconstructions of the archetypes. This task is complicated in the conditions of the boundary language groups. It seems that the lack of scientist's attention to that direction rise the reason that some authors regret the proto-semantic reconstructions. There is still a lot to have to do in this sphere (Klimov, G., 1993; 1998).

English Kartvelologist D. Reifield wrote: “While the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European language, the dendrology and dendronims are so well elaborated, as well phughing field. The work which was made by Friedrich and Gamkrelidze for Proto-Indo-European languages when they have gathered tree-names would be done for Caucasian languages too”... (Reifield D., 1988).

The presented theoretical basis lead us to reveal the new Proto-Kartvelian plant names roots, make a more precise analysis of old ones, to expose an existence of borrowed forms on the Proto-level, to compare Proto-Kartvelian arboreal system with the Proto-Indo-European and Caucasian plant names data to show the similarities and differences. All these make possible to classify languages: they can (or can not) be considered as an entities of the same structural-typological (or genetic) classes.

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