

Georgij Andreevich Klimov *Etymological Dictionary of the Kartvelian Languages* [Mouton de Gruyter, 1998] — reviewed for *Anthropological Linguistics* vol 42 #4 (2000)
by Kevin Tuite, *Université de Montréal*

Well-stocked university libraries will soon, if they don't already, possess two or even three distinct etymological dictionaries of the Kartvelian languages. For a quarter of a century, the only such work was Klimov 1964. In 1990 H. Fähnrich and Z. Sarjveladze published a new Kartvelian etymological dictionary, the German version of which appeared in 1995. The work under review here, it must be emphasized at the outset, is not a mere translation or update of Klimov's earlier dictionary, but a completely revised and expanded new edition. Sadly, its author did not live to see it in print. Georgij A. Klimov passed away in the spring of 1997, leaving many projects uncompleted. The *Etymological dictionary of the Kartvelian languages* [EDKL] was prepared for publication by GK's widow, the Iranianist Dzhoy Edelman, two other Moscow colleagues, and the historical linguist Werner Winter. It represents the fruit of a lifetime of research by one of the finest Caucasologists of recent times. Scholars interested in the Kartvelian languages or in the history of the Caucasus and the Near East will find it a valuable resource, if they take care to avoid the pitfalls lurking in the fault-laden English text.

§1. The Kartvelian or South Caucasian language family comprises four languages, spoken in the Republic of Georgia and regions adjacent to it: Georgian, with a continuous written tradition dating back to the 5th century AD; and the unwritten languages Svan, Laz and Mingrelian. The last two languages, which are closely-related enough that some linguists consider them dialects of one language, are commonly grouped together under the designation "Zan". Georgian and Zan (especially Mingrelian) share so many readily recognizable isoglosses and grammatical features that their genetic relationship was noted already in the 18th century, without the aid of historical linguistics. Svan shares far fewer cognates with the other Kartvelian languages (of 1400 entries in EDKL, 1200 include Georgian-Zan correspondences, compared to 480 Georgian-Svan and 415 Zan-Svan correspondences) and is considerably different in terms of phonotactics, morphophonology and inflectional morphology. It is the consensus view among Kartvelologists that Georgian and Zan form a single branch of the family; the ancestor of Svan is believed to have split off from the proto-language — labelled "Common Kartvelian" [CK] by Klimov — as early as the beginning of the 2nd mill. BCE (Klimov 1964: 34-5; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1984: 880-1).

The phonological systems of the attested Kartvelian languages are notably less exuberant than those of the two North Caucasian families. Vowel inventories are mostly in the range of five (Georgian) or six (Zan); distinctive vowel length is limited to two Svan dialects. Most stops and affricates come in triplets: voiced, voiceless aspirated, and glottalized. The most striking phonetic features of North Caucasian languages — lateral affricates, pharyngealized consonants and vowels — are absent from all attested forms of the Kartvelian languages. Most of the sound correspondences are unproblematic, save a handful involving the sibilants and affricates. These latter have led some linguists to reconstruct series of phonemes for CK which are not preserved in any living Kartvelian language. Beginning with G. Mach'avariani in the late 1950s, the majority of Kartvelologists--including Klimov, Fähnrich, and Sarjveladze -- have postulated three series of sibilants and affricates, to account for three series of phonological equivalences: I. a "hissing" series (e.g.

Georgian sam-, Zan som-, Svan sam- < *sam- "three"); II. a "hushing" series (e.g., Georgian šwid-, Zan škwit-, Svan i-šgwid- < *šwid- "seven"), and III. a third series of uncertain phonetic nature, usually designated "hissing-hushing" (e.g. Georgian svan-, Zan šon-, Svan šwan- < *s₁wan- "Svan"), (Gamq'relidze and Mach'avariani 1965). The third series is conventionally marked by a subscript "1". As has been noted since the hypothesis was first proposed, it presupposes common innovations — the shift of the original hissing-hushing series to hushing, and of the hushing series to clusters including a velar stop — in two Kartvelian languages belonging to separate branches of the family. Gamq'relidze and Mach'avariani suggest that these consonant shifts spread in an ancient West Kartvelian dialect area, which included Svan and Zan but not Georgian. At about the same time Schmidt (1962) proposed an alternative reconstruction, also shown, to which we will return later.

§2. EDKL has over 1400 entries, 20% more than Fähnrich/Sarjveladze 1990, 1995 (the Georgian and German editions are essentially identical), which in turn had 20% more entries than Klimov 1964. These increases reflect the active work of numerous Georgian and foreign linguists, although not all published etymologies have made their way into EDKL. Proto-forms are reconstructed for CK, should a Svan cognate be identified; otherwise they are only attributed to Proto-Georgian-Zan (GZ). Despite its larger size, it is evident that EDKL is in fact an incomplete work. The introduction is far shorter than in the 1964 dictionary (6 1/2 pages compared to 40), with brief discussions of the sound correspondences, the nature of the reconstructed vocabulary and its implications for the study of Kartvelian prehistory. There is insufficient, or no, treatment of such significant matters as: exceptions to the sound laws, the possible phonetic content of certain reconstructed phonemes, the motivation of what are evidently ancient vowel alternations (some labelled "ablaut" (pp. 16, 331), others "non-functional" (e.g. pp. 69, 211, 308)), or changes in some reconstructed forms since Klimov 1964. To my surprise, and dismay, inflectional morphemes are not included in EDKL, although the other dictionaries list at least three dozen such morphemes which can be reliably reconstructed for CK. As it turns out, the preface to a collection of papers dedicated to GK's memory in a recent issue of *Voprosy jazykoznanija* (1998 #4) makes mention of a manuscript left incomplete at the author's death, entitled "Outline of a comparative grammar of the Kartvelian languages" (*Očerok sravnitel'noj grammatiki kartvel'skix jazykov*; see Klimov 1998). The collection includes an excerpt from this work, dealing with some exceptions to the Zan vowel shift. If one assumes that the detailed treatment accorded this particular question is representative of what the monograph as a whole would have turned out to be, the "Comparative grammar" would have more than compensated for the above-mentioned deficiencies of EDKL. I sincerely hope that this manuscript, if it is sufficiently complete, will be prepared for publication as soon as possible, if only as a companion volume to the etymological dictionary. On the positive side, special attention is accorded in EDKL to the identification of ancient isoglosses shared by CK and its neighbors, especially Indo-European and Semitic. GK conducted valuable research in this area, especially with regards to the origin of the CK number names (e.g. Klimov 1985), and possible traces of IE laryngeals in Kartvelian borrowings (e.g. CK *γweb- 'to weave, wattle' possibly borrowed from PIE *Huebh- (Klimov 1994)). GK noted in his preface to EDKL that such isoglosses "support claims of early contacts between Kartvelian and IE languages and the hypothesis that the IE Urheimat should be located to the south of the historical homeland of the Kartvelians", which GK

locates somewhat to the south of of their present distribution (p. xii). The location of the IE homeland, of course, is that presented in Gamq'relidze and Ivanov (1984), a work Klimov endorsed on several occasions. The EDKL also contains much evidence for early loans to or from Armenian or the Northeast Caucasian languages. It is interesting to note that many of the possible Georgian or Zan loans to Armenian contained in the EDKL are expressives (e.g. pp. 22, 31, 108, 303, 324, 327). The Kartvelian-Northeast Caucasian isoglosses include several lexemes related to the cultivation of cereals (e.g. 40, 117-8, 132-3), which might reflect the role of Daghestan as a center of early agriculture in the Caucasus.

Kartvelologists will note the relatively frequent derivation of what are unitary lexemes in the modern Kartvelian languages from ancient compounds of a root followed by a “verbal extension”, which typically undergoes vocalic alternation (e.g. CK *c'ur- ‘press, squeeze out’, contained in the ablauting GZ roots *c'r-ex-/ix- ‘twist, weave’; *c'r-ed-/id-/d- ‘filter, strain’). The possible presence of such suffixes was first signalled by H. Vogt (1947), and further developed by Gamq'relidze/Mach'avariani 1965. While, on the one hand, they bear a resemblance to the stem formants proposed for PIE by Émile Benveniste and others, a good proportion of the suffixes identified by GK occur in stems of a distinctly onomatopoeic or expressive nature (e.g. GZ *px-ek' /-ik'- “scrape”, *dyl-ez/-iz “tear, rend (roughly)”), and as such might be more usefully compared to the “athematic metaphors” postulated for English by Richard Rhodes & John Lawler (1981) (e.g. snatch < *sn-* ‘quickly’ [cp. snap, snag, snip] + *-atch* ‘come to hold’ [cp. catch, latch]). In general, GK has paid greater heed than his predecessors to expressives, which make up a significant proportion of the vocabulary reconstructed to the GZ level in EDKL (e.g. pp. 37, 43, 76, 193, 200, 204, 267), and to the sound-symbolic shifts of voice and glottalization characteristic of these stems.

§3. Regrettably, I must temper my highly positive evaluation of the EDKL's contribution to Kartvelian studies with an expression of my disappointment at the poor quality of the English text. Awkward or ungrammatical phrases abound on every page, and some expressions are nigh uninterpretable unless back-translated to Russian. Far less easy to pardon are translations that are simply wrong (e.g. an Old Georgian quotation on p. 129 is rendered “my yoke is easy”; in reality it corresponds to the following phrase: “my burden is light”), or egregiously inadequate. The CK kinterms *s₁i₃l₁e- (p. 181) and *kwis₁l- (p. 217) are glossed “son-in-law, bridegroom” and “brother-in-law” respectively. In fact, the former term can refer to either daughter's husband or sister's husband (or more generally, a man marrying a woman from my family, village or clan), and the latter denotes specifically “wife's sister's husband”. The existence of these lexemes in CK can be of invaluable help in reconstructing aspects of early Kartvelian social structure. The English equivalents given in EDKL, however, are useless, and even misleading. I doubt very much that a scholar as punctilious as GK would have allowed the dictionary to go to press in this state, had he lived long enough. (I note, for the record, that all of the examples given here are accurately translated in Klimov 1964). One would have expected far better quality control in the production of a book that retails at over US\$200.

§4. Where do we go from here? Shortly after the initial presentation of Mach'avariani's reconstruction of the CK consonants (subsequently incorporated into Gamq'relidze/Mach'avariani 1965), K-H. Schmidt (1962) proposed a quite different phonology for the proto-language, similar in important respects to that of the modern Zan languages (according to his hypothesis, the CK antecedents for the three series of cognates given above would be something like *sam- "three", *škwid- "seven", and *šwan- "Svan"). Schmidt's proposal has the virtues of not requiring a third series of sibilants and affricates unattested in any Kartvelian language, and of fitting the family tree without recourse to an early West Kartvelian dialect area, for which there is little corroborating evidence. The implications of this reconstruction have yet to be adequately explored, either for our understanding of the history of the Kartvelian family or for its contacts with other speech communities in the past. Manaster-Ramer (1994) has pointed to the potential relevance of Schmidt's work to research on the Nostratic hypothesis. (Also worthy of a closer look are the palatalized stops reconstructed for CK by Schmidt (op. cit.), and the laterals reconstructed by Fähnrich 1992). Another path of inquiry which has been underutilized, in my view, is internal reconstruction, especially of the outlier Svan. Even in those cases where no cognate has been identified in Georgian or Zan, I would include the roots of Svan ablauting verbs, for example, in a Kartvelian etymological dictionary. Their archaic root structure, reflecting the phonotactic constraints reconstructed for CK, implies strongly that they hark back at least to an early stage of Proto-Svan, and perhaps further (Tuite 1997: 36).

References

Fähnrich, Heinz and Zurab Sarjveladze

1990 kartvelur enata et'imologiuri leksik'oni. Tbilisi: Tbilisi Univeristy Press. [German version: Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Kartwel-Sprachen. Handbuch der Orientalistik, 24. Bd. Leiden: Brill, 1995].

Fähnrich, Heinz

1992 Eine Abweichung von den kartwelischen Sibilantenentsprechungen. *Diachronica* 9: 139-144.

Gamkrelidze, T. and V. Ivanov

1984 *Indoeuropejskij jazyk i indoeuropejcy*. Izdatel'stvo Tbilisskogo Universiteta.

Gamq'relidze, T. and G. Mač'avariani

1965 sonant'ta sist'ema da ablaut'i kartvelur enebši: saerto-kartveluri st'rukt'uris t'ip'ologia. Tbilisi: Mecniereba. [German version: Sonantensystem und Ablaut in den Kartwelsprachen, W. Boeder, tr. Tübingen: Günter Narr, 1982].

Klimov, G. A.

1964 *Etimologičeskij slovar' kartvel'skix jazykov*. Moscow: Nauka.

1985 Zu den ältesten indogermanisch-semitisch-kartwelischen Kontakten im Vorderen Asien. *In Sprachwissenschaftliche Forschungen. Festschrift für Johann Knobloch*, edited by H. M. Ölberg & G. Schmidt, 205-210. Innsbruck: Amos.

- 1994 Kartvelian evidence for the Indo-European laryngeal? *Indogermanische Forschungen* 99: 62-71.
1998 Fragment iz neokončenoj monografii "Očerk sravnitel'noj grammatiki kartvel'skix jazykov". *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 1998 #4: 5-12

Manaster Ramer, Alexis

- 1994 Clusters or affricates in Kartvelian and Nostratic? *Diachronica* 11: 157-170.

Rhodes, Richard & John Lawler

- 1981 Athematic metaphors *CLS* 17 : 318-342.

Schmidt, Karl Horst

- 1962 Studien zur Rekonstruktion des Lautstandes der südkaukasischen Grundsprache. *Abhandlung für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XXXIV #3*: 1-160.

Tuite, Kevin

- 1997 *Svan*. Munich: LINCOM Europa.

Vogt, Hans

- 1947 Les suffixes verbaux du géorgien ancien. *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap XIV*: 38-82.

Kevin Tuite 514-343-6514 (bureau)
Département d'anthropologie 514-343-2494 (télécopieur)
Université de Montréal
C.P. 6128, succursale centre-ville
Montréal, Québec H3C 3J7 tuitekj@anthro.umontreal.ca
Notre site Web: <http://www.fas.umontreal.ca/ANTHRO/>
