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## **A PHONETIC TRANSFORMATION – FACILITATING CONDITIONS FOR DIACHRONIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE SEMANTICS OF A NOUN STEM**

The paper discusses linguistic potentials of a noun stem expressed at different hierarchic levels. It also examines how the stem maintains a linguistic nature throughout its history.

The paper deals with a Georgian root - ოძ upon which a number of stems of geographical nouns are based. The discussion touches upon the history of its phonetic transformation reflected in various toponyms. In addition, I emphasize the equivalents of the root in Svan and Colchian and their phonetic alterations accompanied by semasiological deviations.

The data are analyzed within the historical-comparative framework. A view of the reconstruction of a prototype on the chronological level of the common Proto-Kartvelian language is put forward.

**KEYWORDS:** diachronic phonetics, semasiology, Kartvelian Languages.

In a word structure, the stem is separated as a semanticized unit which has an ability of inflection. In its turn, the stem is not a simple linguistic unit because it is a compound of two morphemes – a root and an affix. The characteristics of the stem can serve as an identity of any language. These individual features may distinguish the language from the systems and structures of other languages. The priority of the stem lies in the fact that it takes on the function of affixation when there are no means of morphological expression (declension, conjugation). In addition, it compensates the absence of case markers with flexion and in this way contributes to the morphological process of declension. As is known, this feature is typical for the Semitic languages.<sup>1</sup>

In this present paper, I pay attention to those linguistic capacities of the noun stem being a meaningful element that are more or less pre-

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<sup>1</sup> Chikobava 2008, 190-91.

served throughout the whole history. The extralinguistic reasons can de-semanticize the word under variability conditions of the phonetic form. The root that was part of the primary lexicon is subject to this linguistic process either by changing its content or expressive part, or by changing both of them.

I examine the stems that are derived from the root **dm-** in Georgian. The primary meanings and etymological origins of the stems are unknown. It is evident that there are some effects of phonetic processes that give rise to diachronic changes from the perspective of effectiveness (consecutiveness). According to the collected data, we do not meet these words in the spoken language. However, they are used as geographical proper names. Below I focus on the cognitive reasons and conditions creating the need for the realization of the root **dm-**.

When forming the geographical nouns, the root **dm-** utilizes the derivative affixes: /-an/, /-al/, /sa-el/.

The determinant /-an/ forms the stem of the toponym **Dmanisi**<sup>1</sup> that can be broken down as the following: **dm-an-is-i..**

We encounter the stem *dman* with a phonetic variation in another toponym (Dmenisi)<sup>2</sup> in Shida Kartli: *dmenisi* < *dmanisi* where the transformation **e<a** can be explained by means of distant, regressive and partial assimilation.

The same stem is in **Dvani** which must have been received as a results of sound alternation **m>v** (w):\**dmani* > *dvani* (*dwani*).

The root **dm-** is found in the geographical names of western Georgia. The inflection is diverse, for example, in the name of the village *Sadmeli*<sup>3</sup> in Racha the root is phonetically not changed but the stem is affixed by /sa-el/: **sa-dm-el-i**.

The root **dm-** in other toponyms in western Georgia is characterized by a kind of phonetic process: the consonant complex of a CS-structure is split up by an anaptyctic vowel: **dm** > **dV<sub>u</sub>m** for instance, **dim-i**<sup>4</sup>. In this case, the root and the stem coincide.

Sometimes the anaptyxis is occurs by the vowel  $\eta$  (u) possibly owing to the influence of the sonant /m/: **dm** > **dV<sub>u</sub>m**. Apparently, the root of the hydronym *dumala*<sup>5</sup> is transformed in this way. The stem of the hydronym is formed by the determinant /-al/: **dum-al-a**.

1 Dmanisi is a town in Kvemo Kartli. Didi Dmanisi and Patara Dmanisi are villages in Kvemo Kartli.

2 Dmenisi is a village in the Patara Liakhvi gorge, Ksuisi community (Gori municipality), occupied by Russia.

3 *Sadmeli* is a village in the Rioni gorge (Ambrolauri municipality).

4 *Dimi* is a village in Imeteri, the Khani gorge (Bagdati municipality); its adjacent village is called Zeda Dimi.

5 *Dumala* is a river in Imereti, it meerges with the river Dzirula near the Village of Boriti (Kharagauli municipality).

The toponym **dunta**<sup>1</sup> in upper Imereti seems to be very interesting. The suffix **/-ta**<sup>2</sup> is singled out in the stem: **dun-ta**. The root, in its turn, is phonetically modified: **dunta** < \***dumta** where the transformation **n**<**m** can be explained by means of contact, regressive and partial assimilation provoked by **/t/**. The same root-stem **dum-** is in the composite toponym **du-macxo**<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the toponym can be found in Shida Kartli.<sup>4</sup> However, the nominative case marker **/-i/** added in intervocalic position induces the development of the sound **v (w)** separating the vowels: **dumacxoi** < **dumacxovi**.

The toponym **Dumanisi**<sup>5</sup> is formed by the root **dum-** the structure of which is similar to that of **Dmanisi**.

With respect to the history of the root **dm-**, in eastern Georgian another geographical name **Dona**<sup>6</sup> turned out to be very interesting. I suppose that this form has been received as a result of the following phonetic process: **dona** < \***dwana** < \***dmana**. The transformation **m**>**w** was presumably performed first and then the sound complex **wa** found in the stem, fused together.

It seems that in the Georgian toponymy the root **dm-** and the stems derived from it are very often realized; it is necessary to investigate the semantics of the root and its cause-and-effect linkage with the naming of geographical space.

We encounter the word **dube** in Saba's dictionary. The word is explained as "a low place".<sup>7</sup> Besides, this form is preserved in Imeretian and, according to Gachechiladze, it denotes "lowlands surrounded by hills".<sup>8</sup> Putkaradze notes that the word carries the same meaning in Acharian (Muhajirs speech).<sup>9</sup> This form was presumably derived later on going through the following phonetic process from the root **dm-**: **dm** > **dum** > **dub**.

I proceed with further investigation of the lexicon of the Kartvelian languages, taking into account each possible phonetic transformation of the root and the rules of sound correspondence. In this respect, the data from Colchis and Svan are of interest.

Colchis, in the Laz dialect, has the word **dumburi** which, according to

1 Dunta is a village in the Kvirila gorge, near Mount Chikha (Sachkhere municipality).

2 The same suffix is in the Imeretian and western Georgian geographic nouns: **xsal-ta**, **kalo-ta**, **kobal-ta**, **ago-ta** etc.

3 Dumatskho (phonetic: **dumacxo**) is a village in Gudamakari (Dusheti municipality).

4 Here I mean village Dumatskhovi (Khashuri municipality).

5 Dumanisi is located in Kvemo Kartli (Tetritskaro municipality); the village was named Jvara on the 6th of October (see decree N515).

6 Dona is a village in Lagodekhi municipality.

7 Orbeliani 1949, 172.

8 Gachechiladze 1976, 67.

9 Putkaradze 1989, Georgian Dialect Corpus: [www.corpora.co/#/dictionaries](http://www.corpora.co/#/dictionaries).

Tandilava, denotes “a coarse soil hard to dig”.<sup>1</sup> The word will be split up as the following: **dumb-ur-i**, where the stem marker is the suffix **/-ur/**. In its turn, the root **dumb-** seems to be modified and presumably it was developed from the form **\*dum:** in Laz the development of **b** after **m** is not an abnormal phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

The word *dube* can be traced in Megrelian which, according to Kobalia’s explanation, denotes “a mountain gorge; a low and a sunken place; a guilder rose”;<sup>3</sup> we can assume that it came from Georgian<sup>4</sup>.

Svan has the lexical unit **ṭwib** denoting “a valley”<sup>5</sup>. The appearance of word is not original proved by Georgian-Colchian evidence. In anlaut the dissimilative transformation **\*d>ṭ** occurred, whereas in inlaut the diphthongization **\*u>wi** took place.<sup>6</sup> These phenomena are not uncommon in Svan.

It is noteworthy that in Cholurian a new stem *ṭwibra* (“a stream”) is formed.<sup>7</sup> The same root participates in the formation of the Svan geographical names: **ṭwib**<sup>8</sup>, **ṭwiber**<sup>9</sup>...

As it is obvious from the discussed data above, the root has been found in the three Kartvelian languages. In spite of the fact that the root can be characterized by the phonetic diversity, it is possible to reconstruct the primary form taking into consideration the following conditions:

Geo: **dum-** // **dub-** // **dm-** // **dw-** “lowlands surrounded by mountains and hills”

Col: **dumb-** “a coarse soil hard to dig”

Sv.: **ṭwib-** “a valley, a stream”

a) In case of anlaut, Georgian and Colchian maintain primary forms, whereas the Svan form is modified.

b) Among the forms revealed in Georgian, the root forms of a CVS-structure are primary and the disappearance of vocal elements is secondary.

c) The vocal element of the primary root is not supposedly kept in any example except in the root-stem *Dimi* of only one geographical noun. The vocal element might be an anaptyctic vowel having a weak position in the word and triggering the fusion of the sounds. The assimilation of the vowel occurred owing to the sonant **/m/**.

1 Tandilava 2013, 228.

2 Compare Kutelia 2005, 118-20.

3 Kobalia 2010 ([www.ice.ge/liv/liv/megr.php](http://www.ice.ge/liv/liv/megr.php)).

4 The assumption is strengthened by the circumstances that the word *dube* remains in the western Georgian subdialects.

5 Topuria & Kaldani 2000 ([www.ice.ge/liv/liv/svanur1.php](http://www.ice.ge/liv/liv/svanur1.php)).

6 Compare Zhgenti 1949, 109-11.

7 Liparteliani 1994, 265.

8 Tvibi is a village in Kvemo Svaneti, Choluri community (Lentekhi municipality)

9 Tviberi is a glacier on the Caucasus Mountain Range in Svaneti, also it is a village in Zemo Svaneti, Tskhumari (Mestia municipality).

d) The diphthongization is definitely secondary, namely it is a Svan phenomenon, as we have a lot of cases of sound alternation **u>wi** (for example, gušgwey > gwešgwey...) in Svan. The basis of its implementation comes from the proto-language and the diphthong /**wi**/ presumably reflects an interim phase of the transformation: \*dim>dwim>dum.

e) The semasiological frames – “a valley”, “a stream”, “lowlands amidst mountains”, “a coarse soil” are an indicator of causality and proximity.

f) The Georgian toponyms (Dvani, Dmanisi, Dmenisi, Dumanisi, dumacxo, dumacxovi, Dunta, Sadmeli) derived from the root **dm-** correspond to the perceptual naming of a piedmont, lowlands amid hills, and a stream (in case of the hydronym Dumala) from a physical-geographic perspective.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, I consider it relevant to reconstruct the structure of the root \***dim-** “lowlands amidst mountains” on the chronological level of the common Proto-Kartvelian language.

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