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# Theoretical Aspects of Rendering Kartvelian Verb Stems in the Georgian-Megrelian-Laz-Svan-English Dictionary

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## Abstract

The paper addresses principles of classification of Kartvelian verb forms featured in the Georgian-Megrelian-Laz-Svan-English dictionary. Voice being the main morphological category of verbs in the Kartvelian languages, the distinction based on active and passive forms was deemed the most relevant criterion for the description of verb forms. Such description also enabled to determine the possibility of derivation of active and passive forms from one and the same stem and to establish the presence of common or different voice-related morphological patterns and markers in the Kartvelian languages.

The verbs presented in the dictionary can be classified into *native* and *borrowed* stock of words. Most of the loanwords in Megrelian and Svan have origins in the Georgian language, while Laz appears to have borrowed largely from the Turkish language. In the Kartvelian languages verb forms may derive either from verb stems proper or nominal stems.

Verb forms in the Kartvelian languages are modelled according to essentially the same principle and are characterised by common morphological features. Sound correspondences are evident in the case of vocalic prefixes (Geo/Svan a-; Megr./Laz o-). Diachronic and synchronic linguistic evidence reveals asymmetry of passive voice formants between literary and non-written languages (Georgian -d; Megr./Laz/Svan i-).

**Keywords:** Kartvelian; lexicography; verb

## 1 Background

Lexicology has always played a pivotal role in the study of Kartvelian (South Caucasian) languages, namely Georgian, Megrelian, Laz and Svan. Apart from Georgian scholars, this field of study benefited from the contributions by foreign researchers, travellers and public figures whose interest in the customs, languages and dialects found in Georgia was not incidental. As we know, even the most basic linguistic competence proves helpful when communicating with foreign culture representatives. Among those who showed keen interest in Kartvelian peoples from early times onwards note must be made of the Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi (17<sup>th</sup> century) and the Catholic missionary Arcangelo Lambertini (17<sup>th</sup> century). The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the growing attention to the field of comparative study of the Kartvelian languages, which is attested in the works by G. Rosen, F. Bopp and R. Erkert. Studies in this field are pursued at the centres of contemporary Kartvelology abroad by distinguished Kartvelologists H. Fähnrich, W. Boeder, A. Harris, J. Gippert and K. Tuite.

As is generally known, among the Kartvelian languages it is literary Georgian that has always maintained the status of the language of the Church, literacy and education. However its comprehensive study would be impossible without taking into consideration the evidence of other Kartvelian languages and Georgian language dialects. As early as the beginning of the previous century Georgian students in St Petersburg formed a circle with the purpose of conducting complex studies, the task later pursued at the Tbilisi State University. Together with I. Javakhishvili, I. Kipshidze and A. Shanidze, scholars such as N. Marr, A. Tsagareli, P. Tcharaia, B. Nizharadze and I. Nizharadze, G. Akhvlediani, A. Chikobava, V. Topuria, M. Kaldani, T. Gamkrelidze, G. Machavariani, T. Sharadzenidze, Z. Tchumburidze, T. Gudava, I. Melikishvili, M. Shanidze, T.

Uturgaidze, A. Oniani, G. Kartoza, K. Danelia, I. Kobalava, O. Kajaia, I. Asatiani, Z. Sarjveladze and I. Chantladze made valuable contributions to this field of study. Along with academic purposes, the study of the Kartvelian languages served the centuries-old goal of the consolidation of the Georgian nation and the formation of the national worldview.

## 2 Importance of the Pentalingual Dictionary

The Kartvelian languages continue to be a subject of major scholarly interest at research centres of Georgia, notably at the first Georgian University. The publication of the Georgian-Megrelian-Laz-Svan-English Dictionary was timely and served two purposes: firstly it vividly demonstrates the linguistic unity of and similarities among Kartvelian peoples and secondly, reveals the influence of non-related languages (i.e. Russian, Greek and Turkish). The dictionary is remarkable for its presenting side-by-side the parallel lexical units from all the Kartvelian languages and provides their English translations. Of the Kartvelian languages Georgian is presented as the first entry, which is then furnished with the parallels from other Kartvelian languages and an English translation. The dictionary hence serves the needs of a wider readership both in Georgia and abroad.

## 3 Composition of the Dictionary

The dictionary features approximately 6,000 lexical units of different origins characterised by a variety of forms and meanings. Georgian dictionary indices are compiled according to the eight-volume Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language (1950-1964) and the Georgian Dictionary (2014). The loan words that entered the Kartvelian word-stock centuries ago are not provided with etymologies, e.g. Gr. *μωρός* → Megr. *boro* “stupid”. The relatively recent borrowings are supplemented with the language of origin even if the lexeme is not present in the respective language, e.g. Arabic-Turkish *zamani* (*zaman* “time”) in Lazi (Tandilava 2013:281).

As is generally known, the Kartvelian languages are rich in local dialects and sub-dialects. Although the dictionary fails to fully encompass such a variety of forms, the evidence was selected by taking into account certain principles: Svan linguistic evidence is based on Upper Bali dialect (primarily Ushguli sub-dialect) marked for its highly archaic character. In many instances, the dictionary also provides, either in addition or independently, more widely spread Upper Svan grammatical forms or lexemes from Mestia-Mulakhi sub-dialect. Examples from other dialects are also presented to display subtleties of meaning and ensure full correspondence with Georgian and English equivalents. The vocabulary of the Megrelian language is presented according to all three areas (eastern, central and western), however preference is given to Zugdidi-Samurzakano dialect since it has best preserved the original vocabulary. The lexemes borrowed by Megrelian from Georgian fully reflect the phonetic processes that took place in Megrelian, such as metathesis and sound development; verb patterns have undergone less transformation (i.e. iotation and loss of l phoneme:  $l > j > \emptyset$ ). The finite form of the present tense Georgian verb is rendered by the inclusion of -tm- particle characteristic of Senaki sub-dialect (eastern area). The Laz evidence is principally based on the Sarpi oral speech variety of Khopa dialect, since it best presents elements it has in common with Georgian; in addition to this, the preservation of *q'* sound is essential for the comprehensive presentation of the lexical unit. The sound is retained in Khopa dialect before and between vowels, while in other local varieties it is either preserved in a transformed way or is lost entirely.

## 4 Theoretical Considerations of Rendering Verb Stems in Kartvelian Languages: Goals and Objectives

Verb is a basic unit of a sentence. Only a verb is capable of forming one-word sentences. This explains why major theoretical considerations relating to the rendering of lexical units in the dictionary are primarily concerned with verb stems. The dictionary being multilingual, it is also

possible to display a genetic affinity of word-stocks of the Kartvelian languages as well as the path of their transformation through translation.

The paper deals with the grammatical models of synthetic and analytic constructions of Kartvelian verbs. Voice is the main morphological category of verbs in the Kartvelian languages and is associated with different sets of classifications or grammatical patterns. Therefore distinction based on active and passive forms was considered the most relevant criterion for describing similarities and differences between verb forms. It also sought to determine possibility of derivation of active and passive forms from one and the same stem and establish the presence of common or different voice-related morphological patterns and markers in the Kartvelian languages.

The verbs presented in the dictionary can be classified into *native* (Common Kartvelian) and *borrowed* stock of words. Most of the loanwords in Megrelian and Svan have origins in the Georgian language, while Laz appears to have borrowed largely from the Turkish language. In the Kartvelian languages verb forms may derive either from verb stems proper or nominal stems.

Verb forms can be classified into several groups according to respective principles.

#### Description of Group 1 Verb Forms.

Group 1 verb forms outnumber those belonging to other groups; although they easily form active and passive voices, the dictionary shows only active bi-personal forms; tri-personal forms are evidenced in the cases when either bi-personal forms are absent or they are artificially formed. For example, *vedreba* “to pray” (*avedrebs is mas mas* “he/she prays to somebody for somebody”); *izuleba* “to induce” (*aiizulebs is mas mas* “he/she induces somebody to do something”); *dabužeba* “to numb” (*daubužeb is mas mas* “he/she/it will make somebody’s something (e.g. leg) go numb”); cf.: *bi-personal* \**daabužeb* “he/she/it will numb it”.

#### Native Verb Stems<sup>1</sup>

(1) Geo *tesva* (*tes-av-s*): Megr *tasua* (*tas-un-s*): Laz *otasu* (*tas-up-s*): Svan *lilāši* (*a-lāš-i*) “to sow” (“sows”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p. 117).

(2) Geo *teneba* (*a-ten-eb-s*): Megr *gotanapa* (*o-tan-u-an-s*): Laz *otanu* (*o-tan-up-s*): Svan *lirhe* (*a-rh-e*) “to be awake all night” (“is awake”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p.117).

#### Borrowed Verb Stems

(3) Geo *dasačukreba* (*daasačukrebs*): Megr *zǰveniš meǰala* (*zǰvens meuǰans*), Laz *sačukari mečamu* (*sačukari mečaps*): Svan *lisčkwāri* (*čwasčkwāri*) “to reward” (“will reward”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p. 82).

(4) Geo *dakvriveba* (*daakvrivebs*): Megr *darkviba*<sup>2</sup> (*daarkviens*): Laz *ṭuli dosḳidu* (*ṭuli dosḳidun*): Svan *likwriwe* (*čwākwriwe*) “to widow” (“will widow”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p.86).<sup>3</sup>

Structure of Group 1 verb stems can be of synthetic or analytic formation. Different models of synthetic construction are present:

<sup>1</sup> For native verbal stem correspondences see Fähnrich, Sarjveladze 1990:147, 148

<sup>2</sup> This form reveals a metathesis between consonants (kvr>rkv) as a phonetic process typical of Megrelian and involves “r” consonant in stems borrowed from Georgian (for more detailed analysis see Kipshidze 1914:09; Danelia 1980)

<sup>3</sup> In the *-u-an* sequence –an segment is a theme marker (Gudava 1984:74).

- vocalic prefix+stem+theme marker (Geo *a-ten-eb-s*: Megr *o-tan-u-an-s*: Laz *o-tan-up-s* “is awake”).
- vocalic prefix+stem+screeve marker (Svan *a-rh-e* “is awake”, *a-lāš-i* “sows”).
- stem+theme marker (Geo *tes-av-s*: Megr *tas-un-s*: Laz *tas-up-s* “sows”).

The analytic forms are constructed by means of a nominal stem and an auxiliary verb. The cross-linguistic analysis of the data of the Kartvelian languages demonstrates alternation of synthetic and analytic formation:

- Geo *daasačukrebs*: Megr *zǰvens meuǰans*:<sup>4</sup> Laz *sačukari mečaps*: Svan *lisčkwäri (čwasčkwäri)* “will reward”.

Description of Group 2 verb forms.

The verbs belonging to Group 2 are presented in passive forms in the dictionary because of their limited ability to take active voice (or because they take artificially formed active voice). Such verbs more naturally express what is being done to the subject of the action.<sup>5</sup>

(5) Geo *aburcva (a-i-burceba)*: Megr *ešabarua (ge-i-šebaru)*: Laz *oburcinun (d-i-burcanen)*: Svan *lizūgwe (i-zūgwi)* “to blister” (“will blister”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p.13).

(6) Geo *gagareuleba (gagareul-d-eba)*: Megr *gaṭqareba (geṭqarebu <\*ga-i-ṭqarebu* <sup>6</sup>): Laz *jabani oxvenu (jabani iqven)*: Svan *kaligage (kāngägi)* “to become wild” (“will become wild”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p. 31).

The Structure of Group 2 verb stems is characterised by *i-* prefix as well as *-d* suffix; the morphological equivalent of both markers in other Kartvelian languages is a vocalic prefix. This further confirms that suffixal derivation is not typical of non-written languages (at synchronous level it is considered to have derived from Georgian) (for more detailed analysis see Danelia 1976; Topuria 1967).

Description of Group 3 verb forms.

Group 3 verbs in the Dictionary are represented in active and passive finite forms. Only a small number of such forms has been evidenced. These verbs are based on noun stems:

(7) Geo *dačaobeba (da-a-čaobebs, dačaob-d-eba)*: Megr *danoqeba (da-a-noqens, denoqebu <\*da-i-noqebu)*: Laz *očenču (d-o-čenč-up-s, d-i-čenčoren)*: Svan *ličwibe (čwadčwibne, čwadčwibi)* “to bog up” (“will bog up”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p.97);

(8) Geo *dačkvianebeba (d-a-ačkvianebs, dačkvian-d-eba)*: Megr *dačkvareba (da-a-ačkvarens, dečkvarebu(n) <\*da-i-čkvarebu(n))*: Laz *onoseru (d-o-noser-ap-s, d-i-noseren)*: Svan *ličkwiani (čwadčkwiani, čwadčkwiani)* “to become clever” (“will make smb. clever, will become clever”) (Pentalingual Dictionary, p. 97).

<sup>4</sup> Synthetic construction of the same meaning can also be found in Megrelian: *dasačukr-en-s* “will reward”

<sup>5</sup> However in few cases, unlike Georgian, the non-written languages Svan and Megrelian also form active voice from one and the same stem, e.g. Megr. *gaṭqarens* : Svan *k'agage* = Geo *\*gaagareulebs* “will make wild”

<sup>6</sup> Cf.: *gaṭqurdeba* “will become wild”

Structure of Group 3 verbs.

Group 3 verbs also use a dynamicising vocalic prefix and a theme marker, or only a theme marker for active voice formation (see Description of Group 1 Verb Forms).

Description of Group 4 verb forms.

Group 4 verb forms are characterised by suppletive distinction of voice forms, namely alternation of verb stems is necessary for distinguishing active and passive. This is typical of all the Kartvelian languages. The dictionary presents the words of such pairs separately:

(9) Geo *agdeba* (*aagdebs*) - *avardna* (*avardeba*): Megr *e'otama* (*geio'otans*) - *elapa* (*geiolu*): Laz *jestomilu* (*istomes*) - *jelapu* (*jelaps*): Svan *žiliḳwāne* (*ž'akwāne*) - *žilišqed* (*ž'äšqedeni*) "to throw up" ("will throw smth. up") - "to rush up" ("will rush up") (Pentalingual Dictionary, pp. 13-14).

(10) Geo *daḟoveba* (*daḟovebs*) - *darčena* (*darčeba*): Megr *doḟeba* (*kodḟens*) - *dosḳilada* (*dosḳidu*): Laz *meškvinu* (*naškumes*) - *doskidinu* (*doskidun*): Svan *čulicwre* (*čwäcwre*) - *čulised* (*čwäsdeni*) "to leave" ("will leave") - "to stay" ("will stay") (Pentalingual Dictionary, pp. 83-84).

Group 4 verb forms tend to be characterised by a mixed structure: in order to form passive stems verbs take both vocalic prefixes and thematic suffixes; Georgian shares the prefixal-suffixal pattern of passive formants with the rest of the Kartvelian languages (see Structural Analysis of Group 1 and Group 2 Verbs).

Group 5 Verbs are identified and described due to the presence of number-variable verbs in Georgian. Here also two forms are provided according to the variation of the number of the subject agreed with the verb. In many cases, the plurality of the subject requires a verb take a plural form, mainly in the literary language.

(11) Geo *vardna* (*vardeba*) - *cvena* (*cviva/cvivan*): Megr *gimalapa* (*gimalu(n)*) - *gimocuma* (*gimacens*): Laz *melapa* (*melaps*) - *dobgapa* (*dobgaps*): Svan *lišqed* (*šqedni*) - *lišde* (*šadni*) "to fall" ("falls") - "to fall down" ("makes smth. fall down") (Pentalingual Dictionary, pp. 107, 220).

## 5 Conclusion

Verb forms in the Kartvelian languages are modelled according to essentially the same principle and are characterised by common morphological patterns, while morphemes - vocalic prefixes - are characterised by sound correspondences (Geo/Svan a-; Megr./Laz o-). Taking into consideration diachronic and synchronic linguistic evidence, asymmetry of passive voice formants between literary and non-written languages (Georgian -d; Megr./Laz/Svan i-), which is not regular, could be foreseen.

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