


Phytotoponyms- Chronicler of Local Flora

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Abstract

Toponymy is a distinctive field of language vocabulary. Taking into account the conclusions obtained on the basis of its scientific study is the best way to fully understand the nature, landscape, historical past, migration of ethnic groups of a particular country, since the adventures of the country and the peculiarities of its nature are most succinctly conveyed by toponyms. In Kartvelology there are a number of valuable scientific works in the field of toponymy. We consider it necessary to include toponymy achievements in educational programs of general schools. It will be useful in many ways to make it interesting.

Keywords: Phytotoponyms, flora, Dzelkva, Georgia

Introduction

Students are particularly interested in place names derived from plant names. They know such toponyms well, list them with pleasure, ask questions, express their own opinions, and turn to folk etymologies. Properly selected, diverse material for phytotoponym analysis provides students with interesting information and knowledge in a number of areas (linguistics, botany, ecology, geography, traditional life, beliefs, etc.). The motivation behind the names of these phytotoponyms, along with the relationship between the designated geographical objects, can transform students' perception of their native environment, prompt them to consider the unfavourable state of ecology, and guide them towards necessary conclusions. We introduced the students to appropriate plants and their unique characteristics. This will facilitate a better understanding of various geographical objects and their respective locations. When discussing issues and presenting a proper presentation, it is necessary for students to get acquainted with certain terms, such as toponym, microtoponym, toponymy, phytotoponymy, name motivation, relict, endemic, "Red Book," and others. In this case, we are talking about phytotoponymy in detail, and we will give appropriate examples.

Phytotoponyms are toponyms that arose on the basis of plant names. The names of plants form the basis of phytotoponymy, which, in turn, represent a rich, diverse, and multi-layered area of the language's vocabulary. The use of plant names to designate territories dates back to ancient times. Phytotoponyms are the result of deep thinking, observation, and many years of experience with a particular ethnic group. The analysis of phytotoponyms determines numerous factors, such as the flora of a particular geographical area (even in the distant past), the economic and cultural existence of the population, religious destinations, the boundaries of ancient settlements, migrations, and internal migrations, among others. We draw attention to the fact that the Georgian language reveals rich and diverse possibilities in the linguistic design of phytotoponyms, which we make visible to students by giving relevant examples. This time, we will take the following presentation material (phytotoponyms) as an example: Dzelkviani is the administrative unit of Kutaisi municipality since 2014; Dzelkviana is one of the districts of Ofshkvit village, Tskaltubo municipality; Dzelkvebi is a plain place in the village of Zeda Kldeeti, Zestafoni Municipality; Dzelkva is a sowing place in Lanchkhuti municipality; and Dzelkvavenakhi is a vineyard in the village of Lower Sazano, Zestafoni Municipality.

When analysing phytotoponyms, it is necessary to discuss more than one issue in a certain order.

1. Linguistic analysis

First, we perform a linguistic analysis of the given material – phytotoponyms.

Dzelkva - simple noun, nominative case, singular; Dzelkv-eb-i - simple noun, nominative case, plural; Dzelkv-ian-a - derived name, dzelkv- stem, ian-a – complex suffix; Dzelkvavenakhi (< dzelkva+venakhi) - a complex name.

The stem of these names is divided into dzelkv-/dzelkva. This is the name of one of the trees (Georgian ძელქვა [Dzelkva], English "Caucasian elm" or "Caucasian zelkova"). Based on this, the motivation of the name of the given geographical objects is determined - the presence of the mentioned tree in these places.

Here, we will draw the students' attention to the unfortunate fact that, with one exception, there are no longer any Caucasian zelkova trees on the mentioned geographical objects.

II. Getting to know this plant

We try to show and introduce students to this tree from different angles: botanical description, distribution, use, origin of its international nomenclature name, ecology, etymology of the name, etc. For this, we actively use appropriate visual material.

“Zelkova is a genus of six species of deciduous trees in the elm family Ulmaceae, native to southern Europe, and southwest and eastern Asia. They vary in size from shrubs (*Z. sicula*) to large trees up to 35 m (115 ft) tall (*Z. carpinifolia*)”.

Common species in Georgia is *Zelkova carpinifolia* (Pall.) K. Koch. It is a tree up to 25-30 m tall with grey-green thick dense bark, growing in moist forests, coastal plains and lower mountain belt. In Georgia, it is common in Samegrelo, Imereti, Guria and Kakheti (Babaneuri nature reserve). It is a relic of the Tertiary period and is included in the "Red Book" of Georgia (Gagnidze et al., 1975).

III. Distinctive properties and use of the plant

Caucasian zelkova (*Zelkova carpinifolia*) is a fast-growing, rare and beautiful ornamental tree. In many countries it can be found in parks and squares. Zelkova trees live for centuries.

Caucasian zelkova has hard, elastic, highly durable wood, which is superior to oak wood in terms of technical properties. It is a valuable building material, it withstands moisture. In Western Georgia, houses and wooden churches, as well as fences, were built from it. The wood was also used in carpentry and furniture production, they also made work tools.

IV. The name „Zelkova“ in the International Botanical Nomenclature

The establishment of the name of Georgian origin (*Zelkova*) in the international botanical nomenclature has an interesting history: In 1771, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, I.A. Gldenstedt traveled to the Caucasus on a special assignment. In Georgia, near the city of Kutaisi, he noticed an unknown tree and called it *Rhamnus ulmoides*. Gldenstedt wrote in his diary: “...The bumps forced me to have a rest day on August 23rd. Here I saw a tree which I had never seen before, and which is here called Zelkva... I described it under the name of *Rhamnus ulmoides*.” (Gldenstedt, 1962).

In 1788 P. Pallas described this plant and called it *Rhamnus carpinifolia*, in 1819 M. Biberstein called it *Planera Richardi*. In 1841, E. Spach named the genus *Zelkova* after the Georgian "Dzelkva", and named the species *Zelkova crenata*. In 1892 L. Dippel called this species *Zelkova carpinifolia*. Today this species is presented in the international nomenclature of plants as such *Zelkova carpinifolia* (Pall.) C. Koch.

Here we provide students with information about who Johann Anton Gldenstedt was and for what purpose he traveled to the Caucasus.

Anton Gldenstedt (1745 - 1781) was a naturalist, a doctor of medicine, a true member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He participated in the expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences of 1768-1774, which served the subjects of the conquest of Russia. His two-volume work contains a faithful account of his journey.

V. Georgian scientists about Caucasian zelkova („Dzelkva“)

This plant, common in the wild nature of Georgia, has always attracted the attention of Georgian scientists. They recorded the places where this tree grew, described it, wrote interesting information about the tree, for example: „...According to the legend recorded in Tsaisi, the Genoese, who discovered hot springs, erected three Zelkova in this place in honor of this, two of which are still alive today.” (Chitaya, 2001).

„Zelkova is one of the oldest plants on our planet... This means that it was widespread in the past geological era. There must have been its large forests in the Caucasus as well... The fact that it was widespread in Georgia, apart from its fragmented area, is also confirmed by the fact that the remains of stone slabs from Shirak and Meskheta (Kisatibi fossils) are often found... Around Lanchkhuti there is a shrubbery, in Adjara there is no more of it, in Imereti - Ajametsky reserve we have more or less a good

grove. Even more of them have been preserved in yards, under vineyard fences, in cemeteries... In the Terzholiy district, in the area of Ishkhneli, there is a unique stone pillar, the thickness of which reaches several meters... In the forest of Babaneuri there are several very large... Zelkova tree. One of them, a good man from Babaneur, Dimitri Gaurashvili, called this tree the head of the forest; He tried to save the tree. On his initiative, Babaneuri Dzelkviani was declared a nature reserve since 1965" ([Ketskhoveli, 1980](#)).

VI. Zelkova in Georgian beliefs

We are talking about the tree cult in Georgian folk beliefs. We note here that along with other iconic trees (oak, lime...) in Georgia, Dzelkova was also considered a sacred tree and was worshiped. We introduce the students to appropriate ethnographic material, including the ones we obtained during field work.

VII. Why is this tree called "Dzelkva"?

The dendronym ძელქვა (Zelkva) is a complex word and consists of 2 nouns: ძელი (dzeli) + კვა (kva). „The name Zelkova derives from the native name of *Z. carpinifolia* in the Georgian language – one of the Kartvelian languages spoken in theCaucasus, as shown by the Georgian name, ძელქვა (dzelkva), from ძელი (dzeli) meaning 'bar' or 'pillar', and კვა (kva) meaning 'rock', 'stone' The tree was often used for making rock-hard and durable bars for building and furniture “.

Thus, the semantics of this name is related to the strength and durability of the tree's wood.

VIII. The meaning of the name „Dzelkva“in Georgian. As a result of the research, it turns out that „Dzelkva“in Georgian is not only the name of *Zelkova carpirifolia*, but it refers to other trees as well: In dialects of the Georgian language, it can refer to *Celtis caucasica* (Kartl.) or *Acer platanoides* (Mtiul., Rach.). „Dzelkva“is confirmed in the old Georgian texts of the Bible, in the new Georgian translations of which we have Plane tree (rarely, maple, chestnut, elm, ash tree, white poplar) as equivalent to Zelkova. In the old Georgian dictionaries (XVII-XIX centuries), Plane tree and Zelkova are also presented as synonyms. (Compare also: „Of the valuable trees that grew in the valleys, we can point to... Dzelkva or planertree, which is already rare and superior in quality to all other local tree species” ([CGS, 1866](#)).

R. Eristavi (19th century) made a breakthrough in the definition of Zelkova and he wrote the name of this tree in his dictionary with international nomenclature ([Eristavi, 1884](#)).

Thus, "Dzelkva" in Georgian is: 1. The official (scientific) name of a certain plant genus (*Zelcova*) and one of its species (*Zelkova carpirifolia*); 2. The name of Plane tree (sometimes also of other trees) in old Georgian; 3. The name of some trees of another genus (*Celtis caucasica*, *Acer platanoides*) in dialects; 4. The general name of trees with strong wood in dialects.

Here, we remind the students of R. Eristavi's famous poem and explain that he was not only a poet and public figure, but also a scientist and lexicographer.

After the presentation, a field study is planned, where the students will see the pillar in nature. This can be Tbilisi Botanical Garden, Babaneuri Reserve or any of the above-listed places where you can still see this tree.

Conclusion

Teaching with project models turned out to be an effective way to learn about Georgia's toponymy. For a student, it means not only repetition and reconciliation of the knowledge acquired so far from different subjects, but also enrichment of this knowledge, and, what is especially important, the opportunity to see a number of issues in a new way.

The students realized after learning about and discussing the presented issues that phytotoponyms store valuable information and can be considered chroniclers of the local flora.

For the teacher, it becomes clear that finding and analysing appropriate toponyms when familiarising oneself with a number of issues makes the learning process more interesting and effective. Teachers across various subjects will utilize this resource.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contribution

N.K. and D. T. conceived of the presented idea. N.K. took the lead in writing the manuscript. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

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