

On Somatic Words Denoting Kinship in Georgian

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(Language: English)

Uses of somatic words to denote the idea of relationship (kinship) is a universal phenomenon. This semantic turn can be easily explained: my part – heart, blood, liver, flesh, etc. > my relative, a person close to me. But different languages choose different somatic words denoting relationship (kinship). These somatic microfields differ in number and function of lexical units included. E.g. Georgian language uses blood, heart, liver, flesh, seed, etc. Flesh, skin, semen, foot, liver and vein carry the meaning of kinship in Abkhazian. Similar to Abkhazian, vein also refers to kinship in Megrelian. In Latin and Russian languages knee can be found among the somatic kinship terms. The different choice in different languages is supported by the habits, mythological background and folklore traditions of the groups of people speaking these languages.

Language influences received can expand somatic microfields denoting kinship. In modern Georgian there are two basic ways to denote relationship by blood:

blood brother, blood son, etc.

liver brother, liver son, etc.

But it is noteworthy that there is no evidence of using blood for blood relationship in old Georgian texts. It seems that initially Georgian lexeme for blood did not carry this meaning. Mainly the lexemes meaning semen and flesh referred to blood relationship in old Georgian. Presumably the meaning for kinship for blood in Georgian is of later origin.

The paper also focuses on the uses of the lexeme denoting liver in Georgian (Kartvelian) and Caucasian languages and shares the opinion that Caucasian and Kartvelian languages essentially used liver for expressing the idea of blood relationship, while Indo-European languages used blood.