In his paper the author reconstructs for the first time the Indo-European term for 'Sambucus nigra L.' and discusses phonological and semantic aspects of this proposal. The original meaning of the archetype *₃₂k₆wā is preserved not only in the Baltic languages such as Latvian (a gloss *fjāle 'beak', i.e. 'elder') and Lithuanian (*sēvū–medis, sēvū–medis 'elder–tree'), but also in Greek and Dacian. In Armenian this appellative means 'ash–tree', whereas in Albanian and in Bessan it has probably undergone a deeper semantic divergence: 'Sambucus nigra' > 'Ilex aquifolium' > 'Tussilago farfara'.

1. Possible Evidence

Evidence for I.E. *₃₂k₆wā is seen, according to my opinion, in Greek ἀκτέα f. 'elder', also ἀκτέος (m.), Attic ἀκτῆ f. 'id.' (whence Lat. acte) with a secondary contraction, Armenian hac'ī (gen. pl. hac'eac') 'ash', Dacian seľă, secă f. 'elder', Latvian *fjāle 'Sambucus nigra' and Lithuanian sēvū–medis, sēvū–medis 'elder' (cf. médis 'tree'). It cannot be excluded that two other cognates (Bessan *sasă, Albanian ashë 'Ilex aquifolium, Tussilago farfara') belong here as well.
2. REMARKS ON GREEK ἀκτέα

So far no etymology for Gk. ἀκτέα has been proposed, see, e.g., Boisacq (1950:39), (Friak 1960:60-61), Chantaine (1968:52). However, if this word belongs to the Greek arboreal vocabulary of Indo-European origin, the etymology presented here for the first time may become an important achievement in research. The Greek term requires no additional comments, because the derivation of Gk. ἀκτέα 'elder' from IE. *ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wā 'id.' presents no phonological difficulties, and, on the other hand, the semantic aspects are unquestionable. Thus the Greek word for 'elder' seems to be the basic reflex of the Indo-European etymon.

3. A CONTROVERSY ON THE ORIGIN OF ARMENIAN hac'i 'ash'

Traditionally, Indo-Europeanists have compared the Armenian term for 'ash', hac'i, with Germanic *a스크az/*a스크iz m. 'id.', Albanian ah (from IE. *oskos f. 'ash'), Indo-Aryan *askā- and *ahkan- by metathesis of -sk- 'a kind of deciduous tree' and Greek ᾃδη, ἀδη f. 'beech' (Pokorny 1959:782; Friedrich 1966:20, 1970:92-98), but this connection is unsatisfactory account of the unexpected a-vocalism in the Armenian word and because of the presence of Arm. c' indicating a consonant group with the Indo-European palatal *k, namely -sk-, -ks- and k-, whereas the Indo-European name for 'ash', Frazinus contains the Indo-European velar stop *k (see Mann).1

1 Cf. Osl. aскр. m. 'ash-tree; ashwood spear, ship', lat. askur, Norw. ask, OSwed. asker, Swed. Dan. ask 'ash', OE. ask 'ash; ashwood spear, boat' (all from Gmc. *aскaz m.) and OHG. asc, OSax. ask (both from Gmc. *aскiz m.). See especially De Vries (1961:15), s.v. aскр.

2 Cf. Skt. aскr- 'the tree Elaecarpus ganitrus', Nepali ḍhī 'the tree Creton oblongifolius' (16), Modern Singhalase ḍhī 'the tree Terminalia bellerica' (Turner 1966: No. 22). The Etrusco-Punic terms for 'elm, ash' (Mord. usko, us 'elm, Ulmus; ash, Frazinus excelsior'; Chen. ask 'ash, poplar', dial. askh 'black poplar', Rešev 1980:92) are clearly borrowings from Indo-Aryan (cf. Pokorny 1959:782; Rédei 1986:55) and they might conceivably belong here as well. It should be added that the metathesis of -sk- > -ks- is also attested in Gk. ἤδη, ἤδη f. 'beech, Fagus' (as if) from IE. *oskawā/*oskēwā f. 'ash, Frazinus'.

3 Georgiev (1981:145) explains the development of IE. *o to Arm. a, suggesting that hac'i-'ash' belongs to the Mycian component of the Armenian vocabulary. Unfortunately, the thesis about the existence of two components in Armenian is in the air and can be hardly accepted.

Indo-European *ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wā 'elder, Sambucus nigra L.'

1984–1987:894, s.v. oskos), perfectly attested in the Albanian and Indo-Aryan forms. In other words, the Armenian word hac'i 'ash' (with an irregular h- as in the case of hum 'ram' or hot 'odour', cf. Schmitt 1981:47) cannot be derived from IE. *oskēwā (cf. Gk. ἄδη 'beech' with the metathesis of -sk- > -ks-) since one would expect to find Arm. *osē and perhaps *ušā, and therefore it seems preferable to posit IE. *ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wā (]='ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wōs) as the source form of Arm. hac'i which closely resembles the source form of Gk. ἀκτέα (άκτες) 'elder'. Thus both the Greek and Armenian nouns trace back to the same Indo-European protoform *ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wā (='ʂ₂kʰɛ̀wōs) 'elder, Sambucus nigra L.' with a rare consonant group -kʰ.3

ADDITION: Having written this paper I found that the Greek word ἄδη 'beech' can be exactly connected with Arm. uš 'a kind of tree', dial. hosī 'a particular bush' (Džaukjan 1967:255). In respect of its shape, the correspondence of Arm. uš (and hosī with an irregular h-) and Gk. ἄδη 'beech' (both from IE. *oskēwā f.) is quite analogous to some other Greek–Armenian names of deciduous trees and plants, for instance, (a) Arm. hac'i 'ash' = Gk. ἀκτέα / οάκτες 'elder'; (b) Arm. teli 'elm' = Gk. πτελέα, Mcc. pie-re-wa 'id.' (see 3.5); (c) Arm. mori = Gk. μορέα f. 'mulberry-tree' (see 3.6).

4. THE ARBOREAL TERMINOLOGY BEGINNING WITH IE. *ʂ₂- AND THE SUFFIX -ɛwā (–ɛwos)

The initial Greek ἄ- and Armenian ha (if h is of a secondary origin) can reflect the "prothetic vowel" *ʂ₂, which occurs in other Indo-European

1 An unexpected vowel lengthening before -i- is frequent in Armenian, e.g.
(1) Arm. ēsi (gen. sg. էսու) 'ass, donkey' < IE. *έσως m. 'horse', cf. Skt. ձան, Avestan aspa-, Lat. equus 'id.'
(2) Arm. գիշեր (‘stem’) 'evening, night' < IE. *wékʰes m. 'evening', cf. Gk. ἀνατολή, Lat. vesper (as if from Osco-Umbrian), OIr. feasaer, Welsh acher (all from IE. *wékʰes 'morning' 'evening (Illić-Svrljić 1978:155, fn. 21).

2 This consonant group appears in the most ancient Indo-European terminology, such as IE. *h₂kʰos 'bear', *h₂kʰos 'bear, Ursus' (cf. Gk. ὑπερχος, Arm. աղ 'bear', OIr. ear, Lat. ursus 'id.') and *h₂kʰeranu 'bear' (Arm. բեր 'bear', cf. OIr. beren).
names of deciduous trees and plants, e.g.

4.1. Gk. ἄρειος f. ‘pear-tree’, ἄριαν n. ‘pear [fruit]’; Lat. *prunus, also prīna f. ‘pear-tree’, prīnum n. ‘pear [fruit]’; Iranian *pisū- ‘pear [tree and fruit]’; *pishā ‘peach [tree]; e.g., Wakhhi pēṣu, whence Burushaski phēṣa, Wurchikwar phēṣa ‘id.’ (all trace back to IE. *pēsīos f. ‘pear-tree’, *pēsimn n. ‘pear [fruit]’).

4.2. Gk. ἀστάραγος, Attic ἀσφαράγος m. ‘young shoot’, also ‘stone sperage, Asparagus aequilobus’; Skt. *śparjāh m. ‘the plant Diospyros embryopteris’; Avest. spāraγa ‘a prong’, Wakhki spāraγ ‘flower’; Lith. spārągas m. ‘shoot, sprout, bud, frigde’ (all come IE. *śpṝṣas m. ‘a sprout’).

4.3. Gk. ἄφθονη ‘tare, Vicia angustifolia’; Alb. *bathē f. ‘beans’ (both from IE. *bhākātī f. ‘a leguminous plant’).


The suffix -eōn (eōnos) appears regularly in the Indo-European arboreal terminology (not in the word *σῆκφέω ‘elder’) and may be found in such words as, e.g.,


4.6. Gk. Attic μορέα, Ionic μπρέα f. ‘mulberry-tree’, Modern Greek μούρια ‘id.’; Arm. mori (gen. pl. mortar ‘bush of the mulberry’ (both from IE. *morēwā f. ‘mulberry-tree’; cf. also Gk. μορόν n. ‘mulberry’ beside
5.2. Jatv. szüssz 'six' (i.e. *šaśi) < Baltic *šeši, cf. Lith. šešė ‘6’.

On the other hand, however, the Baltic phoneme ŵ yields l [l] in Jatvian (e.g. in u-diphthongs), that is why we have the following notations:

5.3. Jatv. cauta 'guilt, sin' (gl. 'wina') instead of *kalti, cf. Lith. kalė ‘sin’ with the secondary shift to e-stem (both from Baltic *kaltā);

5.4. Jatv. sola 'sun' (gl. 'słońce') instead of *saua, cf. Lith. sūlė, Latv. sulīc ‘sun’, OPrus. saule;

5.5. Jatv. kauni (pl.) ‘mountains’ (gl. *gūra?) instead of *kali, cf. Lith. kailnas ‘mountain, hill’ (pl. kailnai), Latv. kalns (pl. kalni) < Baltic *kalnas ‘id.’ IE. *kalh₂n, cf. Gk. κολυμνος ‘hummock, tomb’;


In my opinion, the Jatvian word for ‘Sambucus nigra’ cannot be separated from Lith. seivā–medis, seiv–medis ‘elder’, a compound containing Lith. medis ‘tree’ (cf. Jatv. medjo ‘tree’, gl. ‘drzewo’, OPrus. median ‘forest’). Some doubts may be raised by the presence of an unexpected ei-diphthong in the Lithuanian term for ‘elder’; however, this can have arisen by folk-etymology (‘tree with holes’, cf. Lith. kiàur–medis, English hollow–tree, OHG. holun–tar, all meaning ‘elder’) on account of an analogy to the Lithuanian noun seivā ‘pipe, tubule’.

It is worth emphasizing here that the lack of “prothetic vowels” is quite regular in Baltic languages, e.g. Lith. bruvis, Latv. brvus ‘eyebrow’ < *brh₂rus f. ‘id.’, cf. Greek ὅριος f. ‘eyebrow’, Paleo–Macedonian ᾣβροῦτες (pl.) ‘eyebrows’.

6. NOTES ON THE ORIGIN OF DACIAN σέβα ‘elder’

The Dacian word σέβα, seva ‘Sambucus nigra L.’, mentioned by Dioscurides Medicus (1st century A. D.), may be connected to the Indo-European etymon "s₂ṣkē 'was hw f., if we accept the lack of the “prothetic vowel” a₂ in Dacian. It can be added that the correspondence between Dacian and Lithuanian names for ‘elder’ was found many years ago by Tomasek (1894:84), who notes on this tree that “the branches are full of pith and towards the tips

8For morphological parallels, see Ukrainian bez–derevo (XVIII century A.D.), literally ‘elder–tree’ (cf. Ukr. derevo ‘tree’), and also Skt. pīva–dāru ‘a comifer’ beside Gk. πέτρα f. ‘fir, pine, spruce’ (cf. Skt. dāru n. ‘tree’).

they are empty?” (Die Äste sind mit Mark gefüllt und werden zuletzt hohl), from this comes E. hollow-tree, OHG. holun–tar, German holunder–baum, Lith. kiāur–medis (cf. Lith. paškairtūs adj. ‘locke, lőcherig’), and also seivā–medis (i.e. ‘Spilchenbaum’ in Tomasek’s interpretation) from seivā ‘pipe, tubule’. His observation was continued by Detschev (1957:559), who derives Dacian σέβα, seva ‘elder’ from the Indo–European root *sēw– ‘to swell, vault, to be hollow’ (see Pokorny 1959:392f.), and independently by Georgiev (1964:11; 1977:196; 1981:122), who compares the Dacian word with Lith. šeivā f. ‘pipe, tubule’ deriving both from IE. *seivā (cf. also Neroznak 1978:63). Both etymologies cannot be maintained. Detschev’s explanation remains an example of a typical “Wurzeltypologie”, which does not meet the basic linguistic requirements, whereas Georgiev’s derivation from *seivā must be rejected for both semantical (? ‘pipe, tubule’) and phonological reasons (lack of the Dacian diphthong ei–).

The etymology suggested in this paper seems to be more reliable, because the Dacian name for ‘elder’ is clearly the exact equivalent, both as to the shape and meaning, of Greek ἀκτέο ‘elder’, Armenian hac’t ‘ash’ and Baltic *šēvā ‘elder’ (testified by Jatv. fiale and Lith. seivā–medis ‘id.’).

7. SPECULATIONS ON THE BESSAN AND ALBANIAN COGNATES

As far as I know, only one gloss, nominally described as belonging to the language of the Bessans, has survived in the ancient sources: āsō (formerly *āsō), i.e. ἄκροφυλλον ‘colt’s foot, Tussilago farfara’ (cf. Sotiroff 1963:105; Neroznak 1978:41). This gloss has an evident relation to the Albanian term ashē, meaning ‘colt’s foot’ on the one hand, and ‘ilex aequifolium’ on the other. This coincidence is striking both phonetically (Alb. ē is a middle vowel, not clearly articulated, resembling Rum. ă or Bulg. е) and semantically. Both terms seem to continue the Indo–European protoform *s₂ṣkē ‘elder’ as well. The phonological aspects are unquestionable here, whereas the semantic change ‘Sambucus nigra’ > ‘Ilex aequifolium’ > ‘Tussilago farfara’ is fully motivated by the similarity of sharp–pointed leaves of all

10Cf. Georgiev (1981:122). Quite an improbable etymology of Dacian σέβα, seva ‘elder’ was given by Friedrich (1970:31, note 9), who compares it with Gaulish *seosin ‘id.’, Slavic *žész and Latin sambucus ‘id.’. Later he adds also Bhittul sampakk ‘a caserole dish’ (ein Topfgehirn), the more limited meaning of which as a cooked food made of elderberries is far from established (Friedrich 1970a:149-150).
plants in question. Moreover, if the proposed etymology of the Bessan and Albanian words is correct, then their significant semantic similarity proves a genetic relationship between Albanian and the language of the Bessans. Stating this Bessan-Albanian lexical resemblance, one cannot overlook the great semantic and phonetic divergence between Dacian σέβα, seva f. ‘Sambucus nigra’ and the Bessan-Albanian term ṭσά/аше ‘*flex aequifolium; Tussilago farfara’, which speaks against the formerly suggested hypothesis about the Dacian origin of Albanian.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The lexical evidence given above indicates that the archaic lexeme *s₂kwé ‘eldér, Holunderbaum, czarny bez, Sambucus nigra L.’ also *s₂kwéos m. (< f.) ‘id.’. Gk. ἀκτέα f. ‘eldér, Attic ἀκτῆ (borrowed into Lat. acte ‘id.’); only once ἀκτέας m. // Arm. hac’i (gen. pl. hac’i:ac) ‘ash’ // Dac. σέβα, seva f. ‘eldér’ // ? Bessan ṭσά (formerly *ṭσά) ‘the plant Tussilago farfara’; Albanian ashe f. ‘id.; the tree *flex aequifolium’ // Baltic šewa f. ‘eldér’: Latv. ʃjale ‘id.’ (gl. ‘bez’); Lith. šievá-medis, šiev-medis ‘eldér-tree’ (cf. Lith. médís ‘tree’).

12 Probably the Bessan term ṭσά meant not only ‘cölт’s foot’ but also *flex aequifolium; the lack of confirmation of the latter meaning is easily explained by the incompleteness of the ancient data and by the accidental character of the bequested vocabulary.

13 The mode of presentation follows the principles worked out for a new Indo-European dictionary, prepared by a research group at the University of Lödž (see Danka & Witzczak 1990: 316-317). For reasons of convenience, we use the notations ź ą ę instead of the “hieroglyphic signs” ą ę ą (as in the traditional symbolization) to denote ę/-ę/-ę-coloured vocalized laryngeals.

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