

Marine Ivanishvili

Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

T. GAMKRELIDZE, V. IVANOV: THE SECRET OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN PRE-HOMELAND

Abstract

"The Secret of the Indo-European Pre-Homeland" – under this title, the journal *Nauka v SSSR* (No. 2, pp. 80-92) published an interview with T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov in 1981, three years before the release of their famous monograph *Indo-European Language and Proto-Indo-Europeans* (Гамкрелидзе Т.В., Иванов В.В., *Индоевропейский язык и индоевропейцы. Реконструкция историко-типологического анализа праязыка и пракультуры*, ТГУ, vol. 1-2, Tbilisi 1984). The authors were awarded the Lenin Prize for this work. Despite the fact that 43 years have passed since the interview was published, the ideas presented here remain relevant, and I believe it would be interesting to revive them. In the interview, T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov discuss in detail the historical-comparative method of reconstructing the proto-language, addressing the following questions: What is the proto-homeland? Who spoke these languages, and when? What did these people talk about? What is reflected in their language? What did they create, trade, and think about? What were their customs, myths, and so on? The authors explain the structure of a thematic dictionary compiled from the reconstructed words and texts of the Proto-Indo-European language, which includes three main groups of concepts: the living environment, material and spiritual culture, and social organization. Each concept presented in the dictionary is not limited to linguistic data; it is thoroughly explained, taking into account information from other fields such as paleobotany, paleozoology, history, mythology, archaeology, anthropology, etc. The migration routes of Indo-European tribes are also discussed, along with the reasons why the Indo-Europeans, descending from the mountains, did not stay at the foot but instead continued moving farther from the homeland of their ancestors.

Keywords: *Historical-comparative method; Proto-Indo-European language; Th. Gamkrelidze, V. Ivanov; Glottal theory.*

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150 years, many hypotheses have emerged, two of which have gained the most support: one group of scholars proposed that the coast of the Baltic and North Seas was the ancestral homeland of the Indo-Europeans, while the other suggested the northern shores of the Black Sea. Debates over the routes that brought the Indo-Europeans, along with their culture and language, to regions thousands of kilometers apart have continued.

In the interview, T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov discuss in detail the historical-comparative method of reconstructing the proto-language, addressing the following questions: What is the proto-homeland? Who spoke these languages, and when? What did these people talk about? What is reflected in their language? What did they create, trade, and think about? What were their customs, myths, and so on?

The authors explain the structure of a thematic dictionary compiled from the reconstructed words and texts of the Proto-Indo-European language, which includes three main groups of concepts: the living environment, material and spiritual culture, and social organization. Each concept presented in the dictionary is not limited to linguistic data; it is thoroughly explained, taking into account information from other fields such as paleobotany, paleozoology, history, mythology, archaeology, anthropology, etc. The migration routes of Indo-European tribes are also discussed, along with the reasons why the Indo-Europeans, descending from the mountains, did not stay at the foot but instead continued moving farther from the homeland of their ancestors.

It is worth separately mentioning the glottal theory of T. Gamkrelidze, which is recognized as one of the most important achievements in Indo-European comparative linguistics of the 20th century - comparable only to the laryngeal theory of F. de Saussure, developed in the 19th century. This new theory, or paradigm, which takes into account the advances of modern typological linguistics, radically changes previous ideas about the history and development of Indo-European languages. The presence of borrowed forms in the proto-language, supported by archaeological data, led the authors to conclude that the peoples who spoke Indo-European, Kartvelian, and Semitic proto-languages were in close contact with each other in the ancient past. Such contact could have occurred only if these peoples were the closest neighbors. It has been established that the Proto-Georgians lived in the southern Caucasus, the Semites in Mesopotamia and its west, and that the Indo-Europeans likely lived somewhere between the southern Caucasus, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

There are two groups of evidence suggesting that these three proto-languages (which are unrelated) and their dialects interacted with each other in the 5th-4th millennium BC. The first group consists of borrowings from one language to another, while the second is represented by the striking similarity in the structure of all three languages, which can be explained by the existence of linguistic connections.

The interview also discusses when the Indo-Europeans arrived in India and how their relations with the Dravidians living there developed. Today, Dravidian languages are spoken mainly in southern India, with only a small number of North Dravidian languages having survived. At that time, the cities of the Proto-Indian culture - Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa - existed in northern India. These cities disappeared around the turn of the 3rd to 2nd millennium BC, which may be connected to the arrival of the Indo-Aryans in the Indus Valley.

Experimental verification of the supposed migrations of the Indo-Europeans is possible through archaeological discoveries and the opening of ancient archives, which help fill in the gaps on the archaeological map. Accidental discoveries - for example, the Mut Mountain archive found in the 1930s and brilliantly deciphered by V.A. Livshits - have transformed our understanding of Iranian languages. It is also possible that the study of the Central Asian deserts will provide much new and valuable information. For instance, the names of the Central Asian rivers Sir Darya and Amu Darya are ancient Indo-European words meaning "river, water, flow". Excavations in the sand are difficult, but it is precisely in sandy regions that well-preserved ancient settlements and written monuments can often be found.

At the end of the interview, T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov express hope that joint research will enable linguists and archaeologists to clarify the nature of the Proto-Indo-European language and reconstruct a realistic picture of the routes along which the Indo-Europeans migrated.