

Donnergottes *Perkūno-s'*.
 ‚heiliger Feigenbaum‘, nind. *pargāi*
 ‚henmänner‘ (lat. Relikt?); *Nymphis*
 ‚eluse‘); lat. *quercus* f. ‚Eiche‘; ital.
 ‚celt. *Hercynia silva* ‚das deutsche Mi
 ‚*perkūniā*), cymr. *perth* f. ‚Busch, Hec
 (goidel.) in Hispania Tarrac.; aus *j
 ‚, ahd. *Fergunna* ‚Erzgebirge‘, mhd. *F*
 ‚ens‘, got. *fairguni* n. ‚Gebirge‘, ags. *f*
 ‚. *fereha* ‚Speiseeiche‘, aisl. *fjǫrr* m.
 ‚fer‘, ags. *furh*; aisl. *fura* f. ‚Föhre‘.

An Oak by Any Other Name

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ABSTRACT

Languages – and oak names – evolve like biological species evolve, following processes that for Darwin were “curiously parallel.” This survey covers vernacular names in the principal languages spoken in Europe today, analyzing the origin of the names and their relationships of descent from common ancestors, as well as the systems of folk taxonomy they reveal. Most of the European words for “oak” can be traced to four ancient roots. Species names, however, are more diverse and unrelated, especially in areas of higher species diversity in Southern Europe. The concept of oaks as a single genus is clear in the languages of Northern Europe, but it is weaker in the languages spoken in the south. To what extent does the currently accepted view of the genus owe its existence to the fact that our system of classification was founded by speakers of Germanic languages?

Keywords: folk systematics, folk genus, vernacular names, ethno linguistics, etymology, Proto-Indo-European

Introduction

Subscribers to this Journal are probably accustomed to reading about the processes of evolutionary biology that have led to the emergence of hundreds of oak species. In this article I will deal with similar processes, but rather than analyze the diversity and origin of oak species, I will analyze their common names. There are many parallels between the evolution of languages and the evolution of species. Linguists today apply techniques borrowed from biological sciences to understand how languages have changed over time, but in the past it was biology that borrowed from linguistics. Darwin first questioned the chronology of Biblical creation in 1837 based on his reading of John Herschel's deductions about how long it must have taken for Chinese and Caucasian languages to diverge from a common ancestor (Darwin Correspondence Project 2020). In *On the Origin of Species* (1859), he argued that our ability to order languages genealogically, despite their having changed and divided at different rates, shows that the same can be done for species (Whitfield 2008). And in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin noted that: "The formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel."

In 1786, William Jones, a British judge in India, observed similarities between Sanskrit and Latin that led him to conclude that they must have descended from a common language that had long before disappeared. Based on this theory, linguists have reconstructed this hypothetical language and called it Proto-Indo-European. It may be hard to believe that languages as different as Hindi, Greek, Spanish, and German may all share the same origin, but given enough time, small changes accumulate. Eventually, the versions of the original language spoken by separate populations differ to such an extent that speakers can no longer understand each other. The same happens when mutations alter genes in distinct groups and eventually members of different populations are no longer able to mate. A language is born just as a species is born.

Mark Pagel (2017) has listed the parallel elements that can be found in the two processes. Words are "discrete, heritable units" just as genes are, and whereas these are perpetuated by DNA replication, words are perpetuated by teaching, learning, and imitation. Mutations can incorporate changes in genes, and words are changed through innovations such as sound changes, introductions, and mistakes. Biologists call two genes homologous if they descend from a common ancestral gene, while two words in different languages that descend from a common ancestral word are called cognates by linguists. Concerted evolution refers to the phenomenon of nucleotide replacement taking place at a specific site in one gene and shortly after being repeated at the same site in other, usually related, genes. In the evolution of languages a parallel concept is known as regular sound change, where one sound changes to another in many words as languages evolve from their ancestor. For example, a *p* sound changes to *f* in several English words derived from a root shared by cognates in other Indo-European languages where the *p* is retained (*father* in English is related to *padre* in Spanish; *foot* is related to *pie*; *fish* to *pez*). Crosspollination amongst plants can be compared to the incorporation of vocabulary from one language to another through invasion or trade, as what occurred following the Norman conquest of England in 1066, when English gained many words of Latin descent or directly imported from French. However, despite these parallels, there are several differences between evolutionary biology and historical linguistics. The main one is that the molecular analyses and mathematical probabilities that back up

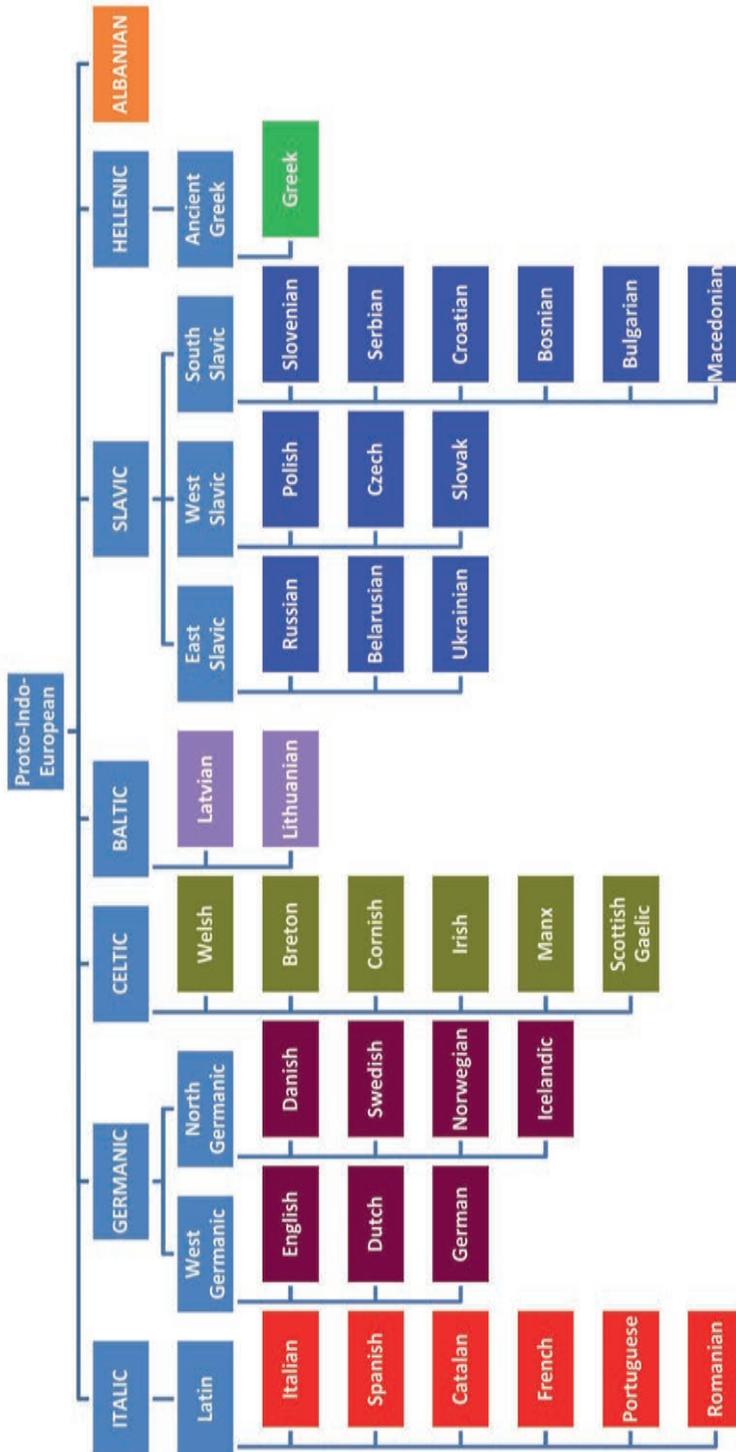


Figure 1/ Phylogenetic tree of the Indo-European languages chosen for this study. Other languages chosen do not descend from Indo-European. They include three Uralic languages (Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian), Turkish, Maltese, and Basque.

phylogenetic trees in biology are absent in linguistics. Despite the existence of ancient texts that can serve the same functions as fossils in the study of evolution, most ancient languages disappear without a trace and many derivations and hypothesized relationships are based on assumptions and can be a matter of opinion. Question marks abound and it is not uncommon to come across quite different roots proposed for the same word.

For the purposes of this article, I will focus only on common names for oaks in European languages, restricted to the principal languages spoken today and to the species that are native in the areas where the languages are spoken. The selection of languages is not based strictly on the languages with most speakers, but rather those that provide evidence of different branches of the phylogenetic language tree, so Breton is included as one of the few extant Celtic languages, while Luxembourgish, which has more speakers but is similar to German, is not. Many oak names are related through descent from common ancestors. Other names have different roots, especially in areas of high species diversity or where languages have been exposed to influences from other distantly related languages.

Languages and systems

Most European languages belong to the Indo-European family of languages and descend from Proto-Indo-European (PIE), a hypothetical common ancestor that is shared with many Asian languages including Iranian, Armenian, and Hindi. The major Indo-European families of languages spoken in Europe are Germanic (the Scandinavian languages, English, Dutch/Flemish, German), Romance (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Romanian), Balto-Slavic (Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish, Slovenian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Macedonian), and Celtic (Welsh, Cornish, Breton, Irish, Manx, Scottish Gaelic). Two other Indo-European languages are standalone: Albanian and Greek. Each is the only member of their branch of the Indo-European family (Figure 1). A few non-Indo-European languages can be found in Europe. They include the Uralic languages (Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian) – so called because this family of languages is thought to have originated in the area of the Ural mountains – Turkish, spoken in East Thrace or European Turkey, Maltese, a Semitic language, and Basque, known as a language isolate because it is not related to any other known language.

Common names for plants may not be subject to the Nomenclatural Code, but they do follow a system of classification that ethnobotanists refer to as folk systematics. Prescientific cultures came up with a classification of their biological universe that is systematic and to a large extent has a close relationship to the classification developed by scientists. Organisms are grouped on the basis of gross morphological similarities and differences. The concept of a genus is the basic unit and has been defined by botanist Harley Harris Bartlett as any class of organisms “which is more or less thought of as the smallest grouping requiring a distinctive name” (Bartlett 1940). Linnaeus may be credited for establishing binomial nomenclature, but the practice already existed in folk taxonomy: within a folk genus, when the distinction of several kinds is required, a modifier is added to create a binomial, e.g., sessile oak. In the case of *Quercus*, we generally accept the genus concept that includes all trees that bear acorns, but that is not always the case, especially in areas where there is a high diversity of oak species. Edward Lee Greene, in *Landmarks of Botanical History* (1909), claimed that we owe the

current genus concept of oaks to the early settlers of North America. When the Virginian colonists in the early seventeenth century encountered a large variety of unknown, acorn-bearing trees, they called them all oaks and assigned a modifier to create binomial names for them (white oak, red oak, post oak, live oak, etc.). As in their homeland there were only two closely allied species of section *Quercus* oaks (*Q. robur* and *Q. petraea*), it was quite clear to them that these new trees belonged to the group of trees that bear acorns. However, botanical treatises up to that date, from Pliny to Tournefort, restricted the name *Quercus* to deciduous oaks with sinuously lobed foliage. Evergreen oaks were in a different genus known as *Ilex*¹, while oaks of southern Europe with spongy bark were called *Suber*, and those with mossy-cupped acorns, *Cerris*. The generic idea of “oak” as held today was borrowed by systematic botany from the folk science of these English pioneers (Greene 1909). Their tendency to lump all the species of acorn-bearing trees into one genus owed more to the lack of diversity of oaks in their homeland than to any philosophical opposition to splitting.

Generic translators

Let us look first at the generic term for oaks in the principal European languages (Figure 2). The bulk of them can be traced back to four ancient roots. The Germanic languages all have names that have not changed a great deal from their common ancestor **aiks*², which may be derived from the PIE **h₂eyǵ-*:

German	<i>Eiche</i>	Danish	<i>eg</i>
English	<i>oak</i>	Norwegian	<i>eik</i>
Dutch	<i>eik</i>	Icelandic	<i>eik</i>
Swedish	<i>ek</i>		

Germanic languages are exposed to only two very similar native oaks, so the folk genus is practically monotypical. Interestingly, in Icelandic the term *eik* came to refer to any tree, as there were no oaks there when the original settlers arrived (Buck 1949).

The Celtic languages use terms derived from **daru*, a word which is thought to have meant “tree” as well as “oak”, descended from a PIE word, **dero* meaning “firm, true”. It is in fact the root of the English word *tree*, as well as *true* and – via Gaulish and French – *druid* (Matosovic 2009). The root is also associated with the concept of hardness and may be the origin of *duro* in Spanish (=“hard”) and *durable* and *endure* in English. Descendants of **dero* are also found in the word for oak in Greek and Albanian, which are only distantly related to Celtic languages.

Welsh	<i>derw</i>	Scottish Gaelic	<i>darach, darag</i>
Cornish	<i>derow</i>	Manx	<i>darragh</i>
Breton	<i>dervenn, dero, derv</i>	Greek	δρυς (<i>drys</i>)
Irish	<i>dair</i>	Albanian	<i>dushk or drushk, lis</i>

While the Celtic languages were also exposed to a very limited number of species, Greek and Albanian have a great diversity of oaks from the three sections found in Europe

1. The genus *Ilex* (hollies) was named for the evergreen oak, due to leaf resemblance.

2. The asterisk indicates the word is a hypothetical construct based on its descendants; there is no evidence this word existed.

(*Quercus*, *Ilex*, *Cerris*). In Greek a single generic concept appears to be retained under the name *δρυς* (*drys*); in Albanian, aside from a folk genus derived from **dero* (*drushk*) an alternative name is also used for oaks in general: *lis*, thought to be of Slavic origin and related to a word meaning “forest” (Elsie 1998).

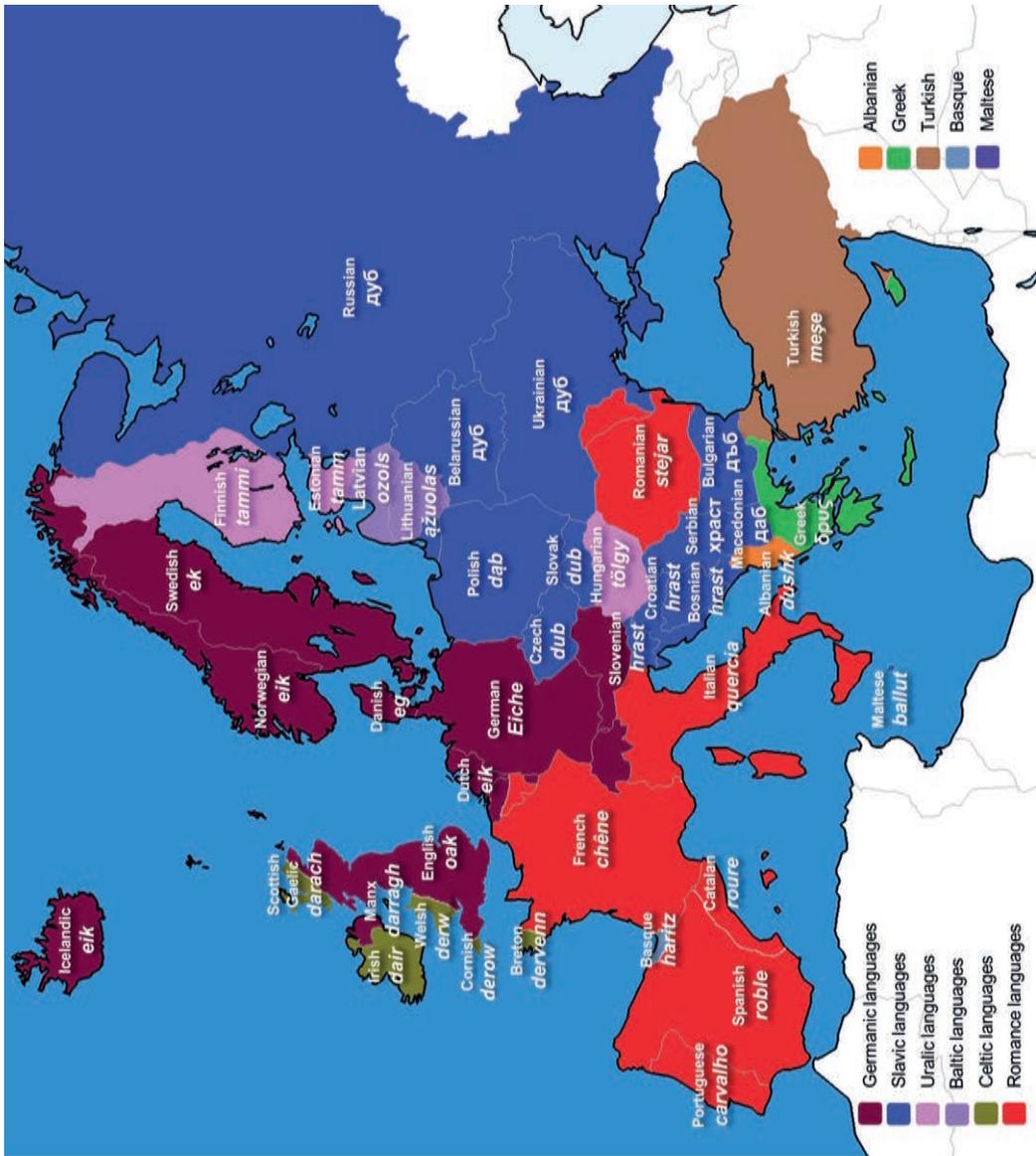


Figure 2/ The generic term for “oak” in each of the European languages selected for this survey, colored according to language family. The coloring indicates the approximate area where a language is spoken, following country borders, but in some cases more than one language is spoken in an area (e.g., Welsh and English are spoken in the area colored as Welsh).

The majority of Slavic languages use a name descended from the Proto-Slavonic reconstruction **dǫbъ*, which has been associated with a PIE root meaning “to build”, also the root of the Proto-Germanic **timrą* (“timber”). It is tempting to associate it with **dero*, but the origin is deemed to be uncertain.

Russian	ду́б (<i>dub</i>)	Belarusian	ду́б (<i>dub</i>)
Polish	<i>dąb</i>	Macedonian	даб (<i>dab</i>)
Ukrainian	ду́б (<i>dub</i>)	Slovenian	<i>hrast</i>
Czech	<i>dub</i>	Serbian	храст (<i>hrast</i>)
Bulgarian	дъб (<i>dǔb</i>)	Bosnian	<i>hrast</i>
Slovak	<i>dub</i>	Croatian	<i>hrast</i>

Some Slavic languages in the Balkans, where oak diversity is higher than in the north, adopt a different name: *hrast*, a word of unknown origin, which may be related to a Proto-Germanic word, **hurstiz*, meaning “bush, thicket, nest” (Derksen 2008), and to the Ancient Greek πρῖνος (*prīnos*, *Q. ilex*) via possible descent from the PIE **k^wres-*. Baltic languages derive their name for oaks from a common root in Proto-Baltic, **anžōl*, of disputed origin, but which may descend from the PIE **ayg*, the common ancestor of the Germanic name.

Lithuanian	<i>qžuolas</i>	Latvian	<i>ozols</i>
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In the family languages we have looked at so far, there is a certain consistency in the term used for “oak” in different languages within the group, save for rare exceptions in areas of higher oak diversity. This is not the case with the Romance languages, which despite their common origin from Vulgar Latin, use quite different words for “oak”.

Italian	<i>quercia</i>	Spanish	<i>roble</i>
French	<i>chêne</i>	Catalan	<i>roure</i>
Portuguese	<i>carvalho</i>	Romanian	<i>stejar</i>

The Italian *quercia* descends via Latin *quercus* from a PIE root **perkw*, the fourth main root of oak names, which according to Freidrich (1970) is associated with a wide spectrum of meanings that “range from ‘pine’ to ‘oak’ to ‘oak forest’ to ‘forested mountains’ to ‘mountain (range)’ to deities of oak and thunder, to abstract notions of ‘man, life, and the world.’” The change in the initial consonant may look strange, but such assimilation from *p* to *kw* is one of the regular sound changes encountered in the evolution of languages mentioned above. *Chêne* in French has been traced via similar words in Old French (*chesne*, *chaisne*, *chasne*) to a Gaulish word *cassanos*, of uncertain origin, possibly influenced by the root **tanno* (oak) that led to the name *tann* (*Q. petraea*) in Breton. Pierre Larousse (1866) makes a convincing case that the word may have derived from Latin *quercus*, via the adjective *quercinus*, which would account for the addition of the *s* sound, attested for by the circumflex accent in *chêne*. So it is possible that this word also descends from the PIE **perkw*. Portuguese *carvalho* seems quite different, but it is associated to a pre-Roman root **kar* also shared with *carrasca* in Spanish and *garric* in French (both names for *Q. coccifera*), and with *cerrus* in Latin (*Q. cerris*) (Corominas 1987). The initial consonant sounds (*k* and *r*) suggest an affinity with the etymologies for the genus names in Italian and French. The Spanish term, however, is unrelated: *roble* descends from the Latin name *robur*, which comes from a root meaning “red”, in reference to the color of the heartwood of the oak species it referred to (*Q. robur*) (Buck 1949). The Latin word is also the root of many words suggesting strength

and solidity (e.g., robust, corroborate), but that resulted from subsequent association with the qualities of the tree. The Spanish genus name is problematic because it is associated with the species it originally named in Latin and to other section *Quercus* oaks; this issue will be discussed in further detail below. Catalan also favors the Latin root *robur* for its designation of the genus, in the form *roure*, influenced by the nearby French. Romanian takes a different course, choosing an unrelated word, *stejar*, to name the genus. The etymology of the term is uncertain, but it is likely of Slavic origin. In Bulgarian, *стежер* (*stezher*) means “pole” or “mast”, and it is possible that in Romanian there was a shift form “oak pole” to “oak”. The word *stejar* would thus have the same PIE root as the English word *stake*.

Why should this multiplicity of words for oaks have occurred in Romance languages, in contrast to the uniformity seen in Germanic, Celtic, and Balto-Slavic languages? Haffter (1972) argued that the generic name taken by Roman soldiers encountered resistance in France from the Celtic name already in use in France (*cassanos*), especially regarding a tree that had such importance in the cultural life of the people there. In the Iberian Peninsula, the advance of the Latin term was halted by the Arab invasion. In Portugal the name adopted in the north (*carvalho*, from a pre-Roman root) became standard when the north reconquered the south. Similarly, in Spain, the Castilians lead the charge to oust the Arabs, and their adopted name for oaks, *roble*, borrowed from the Romans, was imposed. My own view is that the proliferation of different generic names in the Romance language is due to a combination of two factors: a) the diversity of original languages that lead to the creation of these languages, including Latin, Celtic languages, and Arabic, and b) the diversity of oaks in those regions, including oaks from all three sections found in Europe. Germanic, Celtic and Balto-Slavic languages, in contrast, derive their generic names more cleanly from their ancestral forms and in general were faced with fewer oaks to name, usually all from the same section (*Quercus*).

Turning to the few European languages that are not of Indo-European origin: the majority belong to the Uralic family, spoken principally in Finland, Estonia, and Hungary.

Finnish	<i>tammi</i>	Hungarian	<i>tölgy</i>	Estonian	<i>tamm</i>
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The terms for oak in Finnish and Estonian (*tammi* and *tamm*) are of unknown origin, but are related to other terms used in minor Uralic languages spoken in central and eastern Russia (Metsmägi et al. 2012). It is certainly very similar to the Breton *tann*. For some linguists, Uralic languages may have a distant relationship with Indo-European languages, through common descent from Nostratic, a hypothetical family of Eurasian families. This theory is controversial and not universally accepted. If there is a relationship between the Uralic *tamm* and the Celtic *tann*, they could either be cognates, i.e., linked by common descent, or a case of a loanword introduced from one language family to the other. *Tölgy* in Hungarian is thought to be a loanword from Ossetic, an Iranian (and hence Indo-European) language. This would be one of several borrowings from Ossetic to Hungarian, suggesting ancient contact between the two peoples. In this case, *tölgy* is thought to be related to the Ossetic *tulʒ/tolʒæ*, meaning “oak” (Loma 2006). As mentioned above, Basque is not known to be related to other known languages, but there is a plausible link between their word for oak, *haritz*, with the pre-Roman root **kar* mentioned above (Rodríguez et al. 2013). Turkish belongs to the Turkic family of languages, but its word for oak *meşe* is a borrowing from Iranian and related to a word

in Classical Persian: **بیشه** (bēša, “forest”). Iranian is an Indo-European language and cognates of *meše* are found in Slavic languages with similar meanings (e.g., Lithuanian *mēdis* (“tree”) and also in other languages taking on the meaning of “middle” (Latin *medium*, Ancient Greek μέσος (*mésos*). Maltese is a Semitic language, with mostly Arab influence, and its word for oak, *ballut*, derives from the Arabic **بَلُوط** (*ballūt*), the name for *Q. ilex*, which can be traced back to a word in Aramaic meaning “oak” and “acorn” (Löw 1928). This Arabic root also gave us *bellota*, the Spanish word for acorn, and *ballota* in Portuguese, due to the Arabic influence in the Iberian Peninsula, which was part of the Arab empire from 711 to 1492. Despite the fact that Arabic is a non-Indo-European language, there is surely a link, either as cognate or loanword, to the Ancient Greek word for acorn, βάλανος (*bálanos*) (Real Academia Española 2021), which is the origin of the English term *valonia*, meaning “dried acorn cups used in tanning or dressing leather” (Merriam-Webster.com 2021).

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
English	oak	pedunculate oak	<i>Q. robur</i>	Old English <i>āc</i> from Proto-Germanic * <i>aiks</i> , from PIE * <i>h₂eyǵ-</i>	-
		common oak			-
		sessile oak	<i>Q. petraea</i>		-
		durmast oak			dur from PIE * <i>deru</i> = oak?
Danish	eg	almindelig eg	<i>Q. robur</i>	Old Norse <i>eik</i> from Proto-Germanic * <i>aiks</i> , from PIE * <i>h₂eyǵ-</i>	common
		stillkeg			stalked
		sommereg	<i>Q. petraea</i>		summer
		vintereg	winter		
Swedish	ek	skogsek	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	forest
		vanlig eg			common
		sommarek			summer
		stjälkek	<i>Q. petraea</i>		stemmed
		bergek			mountain
		vinterek			winter
druvek	grape (form of acorn cluster)				
Norwegian	eik	sommereik	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	summer
		vinterek	<i>Q. petraea</i>		winter
Icelandic	eik	sumareik	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	summer
		vetrareik	<i>Q. petraea</i>		winter
Dutch	eik	zomereik	<i>Q. robur</i>	Middle Dutch <i>eike</i> from Proto-Germanic * <i>aiks</i> , from PIE * <i>h₂eyǵ-</i>	summer
		wintereik	<i>Q. petraea</i>		winter
		donzige eik	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy
German	Eiche	Stieleiche	<i>Q. robur</i>	Old High German <i>eih</i> from Proto-Germanic * <i>aiks</i> , from PIE * <i>h₂eyǵ-</i>	stalked
		Sommereiche			summer
		Traubeneiche	<i>Q. petraea</i>		grape (form of acorn cluster)
		Wintereiche			winter
		Flaumeiche	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy
		Zerreiche	<i>Q. cerris</i>		from Latin <i>cerrus</i>

Figure 3/ Oak names in Germanic languages, showing the likely origin of the folk genus and the meaning of the modifier used in the case of binomial names.

Keeping species simple in the north

When it comes to naming species within a genus, folk systematics indicates that this is achieved by using a modifier for the generic name, thus constructing a binomial. This is certainly the case for oaks in the languages found across Northern Europe. The Germanic languages (Figure 3) deal mostly with only two species, *Q. robur* and *Q. petraea*, and the modifiers focus on season (summer/winter), or a morphological feature (the presence

or lack of an acorn stalk, the clustering of acorns), or habitat (forest or mountain). In English an unusual modifier is used for *Q. petraea*: *durmast*. Its origin is unclear and may even involve a scribal error. One theory is that it originally was “dun mast” and referred to the acorns being of a different color than *Q. robur* (*dun* = a slightly brownish, dark gray color). This is the view taken by Loudon (1836): “What is called the durmast oak is merely a variety which produces mast or acorns of a dun colour.” (He goes on to say, however, that both species found in Britain produce acorns of the same dun color!). Britten and Holland (1886) prefer to see a Celtic origin in the first syllable (i.e., *dur* as a descendant of **dero*). In languages where *Q. pubescens* is native, the modifier is “downy” or something similar.

Curiously, *Q. robur* is claimed by at least two languages as their own, as it is known as *English oak* in English and *Deutsche Eiche* (“German oak”) in German³. Not to be outdone, the Irish grant *Q. robur* to the English, but claim *Q. petraea* as theirs: in Irish the name for sessile oak is *Dair ghaelach* (“Irish oak”) (Figure 4). Perhaps this arose by default, as the modifier used for *Q. robur*, *ghallda*, means both “English” and “foreign” – which gives a sense of the nature of Anglo-Irish relations through history. Other Celtic languages mostly use standard modifiers for their two oaks, along the lines of pedunculate/sessile. Breton, however, has a distinct name for *Q. petraea*, *tann*, which is the origin of the English word *tan* (to convert hide into leather) and the French word *tann* (a powder made from crushed oak bark for use in tanning). The French term is thought to derive from hypothetical **tanno* in Gaulish, a possible source for the modern term *chêne* (CNRTL 2021). A cognate is thought to have existed in Old Cornish, *tannen*, also a name for *Q. petraea*, but present-day Cornish, like Manx, appears not to distinguish the two species and uses the generic term for both.

Folk taxonomy is also straightforward in the Baltic languages and in the countries around the Baltic Sea that speak Uralic languages, especially in Finland where only one species is native (Figure 5). The alternative Finnish name for *Q. robur*, *metsätammi* (“forest oak”), is presumably influenced by neighboring Swedish, where one of the names for that species is *skogsek* (“forest oak”), in contrast to *bergsek* (“mountain oak”)

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Welsh	derwen	derwen goesog	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Proto-Celtic <i>*daru</i> , from Proto-Indo-European <i>*deru</i>	stemmed
		derwen mes cosyngog	<i>Q. robur</i>		stalked acorn
		derwen ddigoesog	<i>Q. petraea</i>		non-stemmed
		derwen mes digoes	<i>Q. petraea</i>		stalkless acorn
		derwen ddaildigoes	<i>Q. petraea</i>		stalkless leaves [sic]
Cornish	derowen		<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	-
			<i>Q. petraea</i>		-
Irish	dair	dair ghallda	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	English, foreign
		dair ghaelach	<i>Q. petraea</i>		Irish
Manx	darragh		<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	-
			<i>Q. petraea</i>		-
Scottish Gaelic	darach	darach-gasagach	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	stemmed
		darach neo-ghasagach	<i>Q. petraea</i>		non-stemmed
Breton	dervenn	dervenn, derv,derf, dero	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	-
	tann		<i>Q. petraea</i>		From Gaulish <i>tanno-</i> , from PIE <i>*tanno</i> (“green oak”)

Figure 4/ Oak names in Celtic languages. These languages have relatively few native speakers, but represent a separate branch of the Proto-Indo-European family tree.

3. In French, *Q. robur* is also often referred to as *chêne français* (French oak).

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Latvian	ozols	parastais ozols	<i>Q. robur</i>	Proto, *anžōl, of disputed origin, but which may descend from the PIE *ayg	common
		klinšu ozols	<i>Q. petraea</i>		rock
Lithuanian	ažuolas	paprastasis ažuolas	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	common
		bekotis ažuolas	<i>Q. petraea</i>		"handleless"
Finnish	tammi	tammi/metsätammi	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Proto-Finnic *tammi, unknown origin (cf. Breton <i>tann</i> ?)	-/forest
Estonian	tamm	harilik tamm	<i>Q. robur</i>	Idem	common
		kivitamm	<i>Q. petraea</i>		stone
Hungarian	tölgy	csertölgy, cser, cserfa	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	
		dárdáskaréjú (kocsánytalan) tölgy	<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	From Alanic *tulǰə, compare Ossetian тулдз (<i>tulʒ</i>), толдзæ (<i>tolʒæ</i> , "oak")	speared (sessile)
		Magyar tölgy	<i>Q. frainetto</i>		Hungarian
		kocsánytalan tölgy	<i>Q. petraea</i>		sessile
		molyhos tölgy	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy
		kocsányos tölgy	<i>Q. robur</i>		stalked

Figure 5/ Oak names in the Baltic languages and in the non-Indo-European Uralic languages.

for *Q. petraea*. The genus concept is paramount also in Hungarian, where several native oaks are named with binomials. Here is another instance of nationality serving as a modifier in the name for *Q. frainetto* (*Magyar tölgy*, “Hungarian oak”), in this case a modifier that is accepted in several other languages. Hungarian oak is in fact relatively rare in Hungary – according to Mauri et al. (2016) it is not even native there, but rather introduced and sporadic – and is found mainly in Balkan countries further south. The name dates from when the kingdom of Hungary was more extensive and covered a large part of the natural distribution of *Q. frainetto*. Languages where this oak is native do not use “Hungarian oak”. The fact that a vernacular name does not exist in Hungary, and the name “Hungarian oak” was imported from abroad, supports the idea that the oak is not native to Hungarian-speaking peoples.

Slavics wax prolix

In the Slavic languages of Central and Northeastern Europe (Russian, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Slovak), standard binomials are also the norm and follow the style of the Germanic languages (Figure 6). Folk taxonomy starts to get more complex as we sink further south into the Balkans. Czech already has some alternative names for its common oaks, in addition to the binomials based on *dub*. They are of uncertain origin and apparently do not have equivalents in other languages: *křemelák* for *Q. robur*, *drnák* for *Q. petraea*, and *šipák* for *Q. pubescens*. In the Slavic languages of Southeastern Europe (Slovenian, Bosnian, Serbia, Croatian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian) local names for oaks proliferate and the genus concept is at best fluid if not decidedly weak. While in some cases binomial constructs are found, many species are known by names of obscure origin and for the most part not related to names encountered in other non-Slavic languages. Taking *Q. petraea* as an example, there is evidence of at least nine names for this single species used in similar forms across the languages of this area: *gorun*, *graden*, *granítsa*, *kitnja*, *ljutik*, *ličnik*, *pisanec*, *medunac*, *beljik*. In Croatia the eight native oak species are known by over 50 names (Medved 2019). Some names refer to characteristics of certain

Following three pages: Figure 6/ Oak names in the Slavic languages. Transliteration of the names is shown for those languages that use Cyrillic script.

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Transliteration	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Russian	дуб (dub)	дуб австрийский/ кошенильный/турецкий дуб крупнопольниковый	dub avstriyskiy/ koshenil'nyy/turetskiy dub krupnopol'nikovyy	<i>Q. cerris</i> <i>Q. macranthera</i> <i>Q. petraea</i>	From Proto-Slavic * <i>dobbs</i> , possibly from Proto-Indo-European * <i>dem-</i> ("to build"). The exact etymology, however, is uncertain.	Austrian/cochinea/Turkish large-anthered rock furry
		дуб скальный	dub skal'nyy	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		pedunculate/summer/common English
		дуб пушистый	dub pushisty	<i>Q. robur</i>		rock
		дуб черешчатый/ летний/английский	dub chereschatyy/ letniy/obychnoyemuyu dub angliyskiy	<i>Q. robur</i> <i>Q. robur</i>		furry
		дуб пухлястый	dub pukhnasty	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		common/pedunculate
Ukrainian	дуб (dub)	дуб пухлястий	dub pukhnasty	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	idem	summer
		дуб звичайний/ черешчатий	dub zvychnyy/ chereshchatyy	<i>Q. robur</i>	idem	pedunculate sessile
Belarusian	дуб (dub)	дуб звичайны	dub zvychnyy	<i>Q. robur</i>	idem	From Latin <i>cerrus</i> yellow
		дуб летні	dub letni	<i>Q. robur</i>	idem	Balkan winter
Polish	dąb	дąb черашчатый	dąb chereschatyy	<i>Q. robur</i>	idem	downy summer
		дąb bezszypułkowy	dąb bezszypułkowy	<i>Q. petraea</i>	idem	summer
Slovak	dub	дуб žltkastý	dub žltkastý	<i>Q. cerris</i> <i>Q. dalechampii</i>	idem	From Latin <i>cerrus</i> yellowish
		дуб zimný	dub zimný	<i>Q. petraea</i>		winter
		дуб plstnatý	dub plstnatý	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		felted
		дуб jadranský	dub jadranský	<i>Q. virgiliana</i> (syn. <i>Q. pubescens</i>)		Adriatic
		дуб letný	dub letný	<i>Q. robur</i>		summer
Czech	dmák	дуб cer/slovenský	dub cer/slovenský	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i> /Slovak	
	šipák	дуб žlutavý	dub žlutavý	<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	yellow	
	křemelák	дуб balkánský	dub balkánský	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	Balkan	
		дуб zimní, dmák	dub zimní, dmák	<i>Q. petraea</i>	winter	
		дуб pýřitý, šipák	dub pýřitý, šipák	<i>Q. pubescens</i> <i>Q. robur</i>	downy summer	
Bulgarian	щеп	средиземноморски дъб/ палестински дъб	Sredizemnomorski dub/Palestinski dúb	<i>Q. petraea</i> <i>Q. pubescens</i>	Unknown origin Unknown origin, influenced by Serbian шипак (šipak, "briar")? Unknown origin	Mediterranean/Palestinian From Strandzha, mountain in southern Bulgaria
		дъб	дъб	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		From Proto-Slavic * <i>dobbs</i> , possibly from Proto-Indo-European * <i>dem-</i> ("to build"). The exact etymology, however, is uncertain.
		дъб	странджански дъб	Strandzha dúb		<i>Q. hartwissiana</i>
		дъб	зимен дъб/скален дъб	zimen dúb/skalen dúb		<i>Q. petraea</i>
		дъб	космат дъб/бял дъб	kosmat dúb/byal dúb		<i>Q. pubescens</i>
	дъб	летен дъб	leten dúb	<i>Q. robur</i>	hairy/white summer	
	щеп	македонски дъб	Makedonskiyat dúb	<i>Q. trojana</i>	Macedonian	
	щеп	щеп/щерак/щеровина/щеров	ser/cherak/serovina/ serovo/serka/seračka	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	
	меше	меше	meshe	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Turkish, "oak"	
	пърнар	пърнар	purnar	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Greek τριπύκος (tripinos)	
	благун	благун	blagun	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From бнар (blag) = "mild" in reference to taste of bark (Elsie 1998)	
	сладун	сладун	sladun	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From сладак (sladak, "sweet") in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?	
	лъжник	лъжник	luzhnik	<i>Q. hartwissiana</i>	Unknown origin	
	горун	горун	gorun	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin	
	граница	граница	igranica	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin; the word means "border"	

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Transliteration	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning	
Macedonian	даб	даб црника	dab crnika	<i>Q. ilex</i>	Unknown origin, also means <i>ilex</i> (holly)	Unknown origin, also means <i>ilex</i> (holly)	
		даб стежер	dab stežer	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Proto-Slavic * <i>dǫbъ</i> , possibly from Proto-Indo-European * <i>dem-</i> ("to build"). The exact etymology, however, is uncertain.	From Bulgarian <i>стежер</i> (<i>stezher</i>), "pole", "mast", shift from "oak pole" to "oak"	
		Македонски даб	Macedonski dab	<i>Q. trojana</i>	Macedonian oak	Macedonian	
		цер	cer	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>		
		прнар	prnar	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Greek <i>τροπικός</i> (<i>trinos</i>)		
		пласкач	ploskach	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	Unknown origin		
		горун	gorun	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin		
		благун	blagun	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From <i>благ</i> (<i>blag</i> , "mild"), in reference to taste of bark (Elsie 1998)		
		сладун	sladun	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From <i>сладка</i> (<i>sladka</i> , "sweet") in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?	Unknown	
		храст	храст китњак храст лужњак рани храст	hrast kitnjak hrast lužnjak rani hrast	<i>Q. petraea</i> <i>Q. robur</i> <i>Q. robur</i>	Proto-West Germanic * <i>hursti</i> ("thicket; wood; nest")? Cf. Basque <i>harritz</i> ?	Unknown early
		граница	граница крупна граница ситна граница	granitsa krupna granitsa sitna granitsa	<i>Q. frainetto</i> <i>Q. frainetto</i> <i>Q. pubescens</i>	Unknown origin	large small
		китњак	китњак	kitnjak	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		
Serbian	китњак	китњак	kitnjak	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin		
	белјик	белјик	beljik	<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	Unknown origin	Balkan	
	благун	благун	blagun	<i>Q. petraea</i>	белџа (<i>belja</i>) = "white"		
	брдњак	брдњак	brdnjak	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From <i>брџ</i> (<i>brag</i> , "mild"), in reference to taste of bark (Elsie 1998)		
	гњилец	гњилец	gnijelec	<i>Q. petraea</i>	After Mount Brdnjak in Serbia?		
	горун/грм/граден	горун/грм/граден	gorun/grm/graden	<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin		
	дуб	дуб	dub	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin		
	лужник/лужњак	лужник/лужњак	lužnik/lužnjak	<i>Q. pubescens/robur</i>	From <i>дуб</i> , "oak" in other Slavic languages		
	љутик	љутик	ljutik	<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin		
	магаричар	магаричар	magaricar	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin		
	медунац/медунец	медунац/медунец	medunac/medunec	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From "honey" (<i>med, med</i>), due to honeydew produced by this oak		
	оштрикар	оштрикар	ostricar	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From <i>оштрап</i> (<i>oštar</i> , "sharp")?		
Croatian	пласкач	пласкач	ploskač	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin		
	прнар	прнар	prnar	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From Greek <i>τροπικός</i> (<i>trinos</i>)		
	рошњак	рошњак	rošnjak	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>		
	црника	црника	crnika	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin		
	чёрмина	чёрмина	čermína	<i>Q. ilex</i>	Unknown origin, means "holly"		
	чрепњак	чрепњак	črepinjak	<i>Q. ilex</i>	From "holly", from <i>чешати</i> (<i>česhaty</i>), "to scratch"?		
		храст брдњак	hrast brdnjak	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin, cf. Czech <i>křemelák</i> ?		
		храст цер	hrast cer	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin	After Mount Brdnjak in Serbia?	
		храст гермесовас	hrast hermesovac	<i>Q. cerris</i>	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	
		храст коморовас	hrast komorovac	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown	
		храст китњак	hrast kitnjak	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	After Mount Komorovac in Croatia?	
		храст лузник/лузњак	hrast lužnik/lužnjak	<i>Q. petraea</i>	<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown	
	храст медунац	hrast medunac	<i>Q. robur</i>	<i>Q. robur</i>	From <i>med</i> , "honey", due to honeydew produced by this oak		
	храст оштрика	hrast ostrika	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From <i>med</i> , "honey", due to honeydew produced by this oak		
	храст сладунац	hrast sladunac	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>oštrika</i> = genus <i>Onosma</i> ; perhaps related to <i>oštrica</i> = blade?		
	храстovina tvrda	hrastovina tvrda	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From <i>sladak</i> ("sweet") in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?		
			<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	hard		

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Transliteration	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Croatian	kitnjak			<i>Q. petraea</i>		
		apeninski kitnjak		<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	Unknown origin	Apennine
		balkanski kitnjak		<i>Q. dalechampii</i>		Balkan
		dalešampijev kitnjak		<i>Q. dalechampii</i>		Dalechamps
		adras		<i>Q. ilex</i>	Unknown origin, possibly related to Berber <i>adran</i> , species of pine or oak (Groselj)	
		bjel/bjelčić/bjelik/bjelovina		<i>Q. petraea</i>	white	
		brdnjak/brdanjak		<i>Q. petraea</i>	After Mount Brdnjak in Serbia?	
		cer/ceric/cerovec/cevovina		<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	
		česvina/česmina/česmika		<i>Q. ilex</i>	Unknown origin, also means <i>Ilex</i> (holly)	
		črepinjak/črepinjak/golubnjak/gorun/gračuvina/gradun/ granik/granut/kestenjar/ljutik		<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin	
		črnika/čarnika/černika/črnika		<i>Q. ilex</i>	Unknown origin, also means <i>Ilex</i> (holly)	
		drobjak		<i>Q. petraea</i>	From PIE <i>*deru?</i>	
		dub/dubec/dubac/dubovina		<i>Q. robur</i>	From <i>dub</i> , "oak" in other Slavic languages	
		gričac		<i>Q. cerris</i>	Unknown origin	
Slovene		komorovac/komorac		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Croatian name of genus <i>Phillyrea?</i>	<i>divlja</i> = "wild"
		livadnjak		<i>Q. robur</i>	Influenced by <i>koromáč</i> , fennel?	
		lužnjak/lužnik		<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin	
		medunac		<i>Q. pubescens</i>	Unknown origin	
		melek/leljak		<i>Q. robur</i>	From honey (<i>med</i> , <i>međ</i>), due to honeydew produced by this oak	
		oštrika		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin. From Latin <i>mel</i> ("honey")?	
		prnar		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>oštrika</i> = genus <i>Onosma</i> ; perhaps related to <i>oštar</i> = sharp?	
		rast		<i>Q. robur</i>	From Greek <i>ῥαβδος</i> (<i>rábdos</i>)	
		sladun/sladunac		<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From <i>hrast</i> ("oak")	
		stežanj		<i>Q. robur</i>	From <i>sladak</i> ("sweet") in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?	
		svida/svidovina		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Bulgarian <i>crepek</i> (<i>stezher</i>), "pole", "mast", shift from "oak pole" to "oak"	
		hrast	nižinski hrast puhastega hrasta	<i>Q. petraea</i> <i>Q. pubescens</i>	Unknown origin	lowland downy
		dob	hrast doba	<i>Q. robur</i>	Proto-Balto-Slavic <i>*išwáršta</i> (?), cognate with Proto-West Germanic <i>*hursti</i> ("thicket; wood; nest")? Cf. Basque <i>harritz</i> ?	oak
	Bosnian	adras		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From <i>dub</i> , "oak" in other Slavic languages	Unknown origin, species of pine or oak
drobjak			<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin		
puhovca			<i>Q. petraea</i>	From PIE <i>*dera?</i>		
		hrast cer		<i>Q. pubescens</i>	Unknown origin	
		hrast crnika		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	From Serbo-Croatian word for holly (Croatia, Bosnia, used in Serbia in the form <i>črnika</i> for the holm oak), Unknown
		hrast kitnjak		<i>Q. petraea</i>		
		hrast lužnjak		<i>Q. robur</i>	From Proto-Balto-Slavic <i>*išwáršta</i> (?), cognate with Proto-West Germanic <i>*hursti</i> ("thicket; wood; nest")? Cf. Basque <i>harritz</i> ?	Unknown
		hrast medunac		<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From med, "honey", due to honeydew produced by this oak	oak
		hrast oštrika		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	sharp	sharp
		hrast sladun		<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From <i>sladak</i> (sweet) in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?	From <i>sladak</i> (sweet) in reference to sweet acorns used to feed livestock?
		trojanski hrast		<i>Q. trojana</i>	Trojan	Trojan
		bjelodub		<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	white	white
		gradun		<i>Q. dalechampii</i>	Unknown	
		česvina/česvina		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From "holly", from <i>česvati</i> (<i>chesaty</i>), "to scratch"?	
	oštrogun		<i>Q. trojana</i>	From <i>oštro</i> = hard, sharp		

oaks relevant to agriculture: *sladun* (*Q. frainetto*) likely derives from *sladac* (“sweet”) and refers to the sweetness of the acorns, which are used to feed livestock; *medunac* suggests a derivation from *med* (“honey”) in reference to honeydew, a sugar-rich sticky liquid secreted by aphids and some scale insects as they feed on tree sap, associated with *Q. pubescens*; *blagun* derives from *blag* (“mild”) in reference to the mild taste of the bark (Elsie 1998). Derivations can be hypothesized for a number of names: several terms for *Q. ilex* derive from the name for holly (*črnika česmina*, *česvina*); names for *Q. coccifera* can be traced back to *prinos*, the Greek name, or to a word derived from *oštro*, meaning “sharp”; a group of names suggest a shared origin with the PIE root **kar* (*grodun*, *graden*, *gračuvina*, *granut*, *grkac*, *гpm* (*grm*)), and thus may related to *garric*, *carrasca*, and *carvalho* from Romance languages; *stežanj* in Macedonian and *даб стежер* (*dab stežer*) in Croatian derive from a word meaning “post” or “mast” (as in the origin of *stejar* in Romanian described above). But many more names are of uncertain origin, suggesting that in this region the genus *Quercus* was not considered the smallest group of organisms requiring a distinctive name.

The name for *Q. frainetto* or *Q. petraea* in Bulgarian and Serbian, *граница* (*granitza*) is intriguing. The word means “border” in those languages (it may sound familiar to German speakers, where *grenzen* was borrowed from Polish). The word for oak in Turkish, *meşe*, and for *Q. frainetto* in Greek, *μεσές* (*mesés*), both derive from a root meaning “forest”, which in turn derives from a PIE root **med^hieh₂* meaning “middle” (Derksen). The Greek name *μεσές* also means “middle” in Modern Greek. Words in modern Slavic languages, descended from that same root, took on the meaning of “boundary or border”: *междá* (*meždá*, Bulgarian), *међа* (*međa*, Serbian), *меѓа* (*meѓa*, Macedonian). Could it be that the Greek/Turkish name *mesés/meşe* was heard by the Slavic language speakers, understood to mean “border”, and then translated into another word in their own language meaning “border”, perhaps influenced by similar names for oaks like *gorun* and *graden*? I have not encountered this hypothesis in etymological dictionaries, but it is certainly not implausible.⁴

Distant cousins

In Greek two generic terms are used, with some species receiving distinct names, especially those in sections *Ilex* and *Cerris* (*Q. ilex*, *Q. coccifera*, *Q. macrolepis*), but also *Q. robur* (Figure 7). *Δρυς* (*drys*) is used for all oaks in binomials: *βελανιδιά* (*velanidiá*) on its own refers to *Q. macrolepis*, but it also takes modifiers for other species. Several species are known by binomials based on generic names. Despite the proliferation of distinct names for several species, the generic concept appears to be strong, even if two different names are used for it.

Albanian has a complex oak nomenclature, made a lot easier to explore thanks to Robert Elsie’s detailed study *Dendronymica Albanica: A survey of Albanian tree and shrub names* (1998). Despite a reported generic term for oaks, *dushk*, derived from the same PIE root that gave rise to oak names in Celtic (**dero*), every species has its own distinct name, some influenced by neighboring Slavic and Greek, others derived from Latin. Some species have both a distinct name and a binomial, but the binomials are not based on the reported generic *dushk*, but rather on the alternative *lis* (from a Slavic

4. This sort of error in the evolution of a language is known amongst linguists as an “eggcorn”, derived from a case where a person heard the word “acorn” and interpreted it to be “eggcorn”. An appropriate term for this particular survey!

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Transliteration	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Greek	δρυς	δρυς η κηρύς	drys i kiris	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Ancient Greek δρῦς (<i>drús</i>), From Proto-Indo-European * <i>daru</i>	<i>cerris</i> , from Latin <i>cerrus</i>
		δρυς η κληθρόφυλλος	drys i klithrófyllos	<i>Q. alnifolia</i>		alder-leaved
		δρυς η Μακεδονική	drys i Makedonikí	<i>Q. trojana</i>		Macedonian
		δρυς η ποδιακοφόρος	drys i podiskofóros	<i>Q. robur</i>		pedunculate
		δρυς η βαφική	drys i vafikí	<i>Q. infectoria</i>		dyer's
		δρυς η κοκκοφόρος	drys i kokkofóros	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		grain-bearing oak
		άμισχος δρυς	ámischos drys	<i>Q. petraea</i>		sessile
		πλατύφυλλη δρυς	platýfylly drys	<i>Q. frainetto</i>		broad-leaved
		Τουρκική δρυς	Tourkikí drys	<i>Q. cerris</i>		Turkish
	Βρετανική δρυς	Vretanikí drys	<i>Q. robur</i>	British		
	βαλανιδιά	valanidiá	<i>Q. macrolepis</i>	-		
	βελανιδιά	ευθύφυλλος βελανιδιά	eftyfyllos velanidiá	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From βαλανιδιά (<i>valanidiá</i>), a diminutive of Ancient Greek βάλανος (<i>bálanos</i>), ultimately from Proto-Indo-European * <i>g^hel^h</i> -	hairy
		αγραβελανιδιά	agriovelanidiá	<i>Q. xrenata</i>		wild (cf. <i>Q. macrolepis</i>)
		απόδοσκος βελανιδιά	apódiskos velanidiá	<i>Q. petraea</i>		stemless
		ήμερη βελανιδιά	ímeri valanidiá	<i>Q. macrolepis</i>		tame (cf. <i>Q. xrenata</i>)
Μακεδονική βελανιδιά		Makedonikí velanidiá	<i>Q. macedonica</i>	Macedonian		
ποδιακοφόρος βελανιδιά		podiskofóros velanidiá	<i>Q. robur</i>	pedunculate		
αριά	ariá	<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Ancient Greek ἀρία (<i>ariá</i> , "Q. ilex") of unknown origin			
λατζιά	latziá	<i>Q. alnifolia</i>	Unknown origin			
μεσός	mesés	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	Influenced by Turkish <i>meşe</i> . In Greek, μεσός (<i>meses</i>) means "middle", ultimately from Proto-Indo-European * <i>méd^hyo</i> s ("between").			
πρίνος/περνιά/πουρνάρι	prinos/perniá/pournári	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Ancient Greek πρίνος (<i>prinos</i>) = <i>Q. ilex</i> , unknown origin, possible from root common to Proto-Slavic * <i>brins</i> ("farch")			
πρινάρι	prinári	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Colloquial form of <i>πουρνάρι</i> (<i>pournári</i>)			
ρένια	rénia	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Ancient Greek ῥάδις (<i>rhádis</i>)? Cf. Albanian <i>rëni#</i>			
ροτούκι	rotouki	<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin			
ρουπάκι	roupáki	<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin			
Albanian	dushk, drushk		<i>Quercus</i>	From PIE * <i>deru</i>		
	ballgun		<i>Q. frainetto</i>	From Slav. * <i>blag-</i> "mild" because of the mild taste of the bark		
	buçinë		<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Albanian <i>butë</i> "soft"		
	bujgër		<i>Q. trojana</i>	Related to Albanian <i>bung</i> (<i>Q. petraea</i>).		
	bung		<i>Q. petraea</i>	Disputed origin		
	bungebutë		<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From bung (q.v.) + Albanian <i>butë</i> "soft"		
	ilqe		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Latin <i>ilex</i>		
	lis	lis bujk	<i>Q. trojana</i>	From Serbo-Croatian <i>lis</i> ("coffin; (dial.) lumber, wood(s), forest"), from Old Church Slavonic <i>лѣсъ</i> (<i>lěsŭ</i> , "wood(s), forest")	Cf. <i>Q. petraea</i>	
		lis i bardhë	<i>Q. cerris</i>		white	
		lis i butë	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		soft	
	ngasje		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin		
	përnar/prall		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Modern Greek <i>πρινάρι</i> (<i>prinári</i>), from Ancient Greek πρίνος (<i>prinos</i>), <i>Q. ilex</i>		
	qarr		<i>Q. cerris</i>		-	
	qarr	qarr i kuq	<i>Q. trojana</i>		red	
		qarr i leshtë	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		wooly	
qarrabardhë		<i>Q. pubescens</i>		white		
qarrazi		<i>Q. trojana</i>		black		
qarrucë		<i>Q. coccifera</i>		diminutive		
rënjë		<i>Q. robur</i>	Related to Albanian <i>rënjë</i> ("root"), perhaps from Latin <i>radicia</i> ("root")			
shpardh		<i>Q. frainetto</i>	Related to Latin <i>sparus</i> , "short spear"			
valanidh		<i>Q. macrolepis</i>	From Greek βάλανος, from Proto-Hellenic * <i>g^halanos</i> , ultimately from Proto-Indo-European * <i>g^hel^h</i> - ("acorn")			
Turkish	meşe	Altuni meşe	<i>Q. alnifolia</i>	From Ottoman Turkish <i>ميشه</i> (<i>meşe</i>). Iranian borrowing, related to Classical Persian <i>بیشه</i> (<i>bēša</i> , "forest")	golden	
		Iran palamut meşesi	<i>Q. brantii</i>		Iranian acorn	
		Saçlı meşe	<i>Q. cerris</i>		hairy	
		Kermes meşesi	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		kermes	
		Macar meşesi	<i>Q. frainetto</i>		Hungarian	
		Istranca meşesi	<i>Q. hartwissiana</i>		Strandja	
		Mazi meşesi	<i>Q. infectoria</i>		gall	
		Anadolu palamut meşesi	<i>Q. ithaburensis</i>		Anatolian acorn	
		Lübanen meşesi	<i>Q. libani</i>		Lebanese	
		İspir meşesi	<i>Q. macranthera</i>		from İspir	
		Anadolu palamut meşesi	<i>Q. macrolepis</i>		Anatolian acorn	
		Sapsız meşe	<i>Q. petraea</i>		sessile	
		Tüylü meşe	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy	
		Saplı meşe	<i>Q. robur</i>		pedunculate	
Makedonya meşesi	<i>Q. trojana</i>	Macedonian				
Kasnak meşesi	<i>Q. vulcanica</i>	pulley (wood used in construction)				
Maltese	ballut	<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Arabic <i>بَلُوط</i> (<i>ballūt</i>), related to Ancient Greek βάλανος (<i>bálanos</i> , "acorn")?			
	siġra	siġra tal-ġandar/siġra tal-ballut	<i>Q. ilex</i>	Means "tree", from Arabic <i>سَجَرَة</i> (<i>šajara</i>)	acorn	
Basque	haritz		<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin (cf. <i>hrast</i> , Slavic?)		
	haritz	haritz ilaunduna	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy	
		haritz kanduduna	<i>Q. robur</i>		stemmed	
		haritz kangugabea	<i>Q. petraea</i>		sessile	
	arte		<i>Q. ilex/retundifolia</i>	Unknown origin		
	arte	artelatx	<i>Q. suber</i>	Unknown origin	rough-barked	
	arte-xarra	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin	bad		
ametz		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>	Unknown origin			
ametz	ametz ilaunduna	<i>Q. xsubpyrenaica</i>	Unknown origin	downy		
ametz	erkametz	<i>Q. faginea</i>	Unknown origin	central		
abaritz		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin			
txapar		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin			

Figure 7/ Oak names in standalone Albanian and Greek, and the non-Indo-European Turkish, Maltese, and Basque.

root meaning "forest") and *qarr* (a loan word from Latin, derived from *cerrus*). *Qarr* is used for *Q. cerris*, and it takes modifiers to name the closely related *Q. trojana* but also oaks from other sections: *Q. pubescens* and *Q. coccifera*. Elsie's analysis is thoroughly researched and documented, but oddly he derives the name for *Q. macrolepis*, *valanidh*, from the name of a city in Albania (Vlorë, formerly Valona). Several old sources, including *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), state that the term *valonia*, a name for the dried acorn cups of *Q. macrolepis* used in tanning, derives its name from Valona, because

the acorn cups were sourced from oak forests surrounding Vlorë.⁵ This is surely wrong: the name comes from the Greek name for the oak: βελανιδιά (*velanidiá*). It would be more plausible that the city were named for its oak, but according to Room (2006) its original name was Αυλών (*Aulón*), meaning “channel, glen”.

Turkish appears to be regular as far as folk taxonomy of oaks is concerned, with standard binomials based on *meşe* and modifiers similar to those used in other languages. Malta has only one native oak, *Q. ilex*, so the Arabic *ballut* is used on its own. As it is the only native tree that bears acorns it is also known simply as the acorn-bearing tree (*sigra tal-ballut* or *sigra tal-ġandar*). In Basque *haritz* is the generic term, but the genus in fact contains three quasi-generic terms: *haritz* for deciduous oaks, *ametz* for marcescent oaks, and *artea* for evergreen oaks. Each of these takes modifiers to name species within these groups. The distinction between deciduous and marcescent oaks appears to be unique amongst European languages. According to Francisco Garin (pers. comm.), only botanists use binomials to distinguish the deciduous species, while for the general public all three would be *haritza*. One of the names for *Q. coccifera*, *txapar* (*txaparra* when the definite article is added – “the oak”), is borrowed by Spanish as *chaparra* or *chaparro* and takes on a general meaning “of low stature”. It is the origin of *chaparral* (“low scrub”) – as in the television Series *The High Chaparral* – and also of the nickname of the notorious drug lord Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. It is interesting to note the similarity between *haritz* and one of the Slavic words for oak: *harst*. Basque is of course a non-Indo-European language and unrelated to any other known language, but it is tempting to imagine an ancestral link between these two words.

Romances lose the plot

The multiplicity of generic terms for oak in the Romance languages suggests that folk nomenclature and systematics are complex in the areas where these languages are spoken (Figure 8). Romanian is geographically isolated from other Romance languages and surrounded by either Slavic languages or Hungarian. The only oak name of Latin derivation in Romanian is *cer* for *Q. cerris*; the rest are all borrowed from Bulgarian. The genus concept is reasonably well established, with most oaks bearing names based on *stejar*, though some are known by distinct names only, as is the case with *Q. cerris* (*cer*), *Q. frainetto* (*gârniță*), and *Q. petraea* (*gorun*).

In Italian there is a clear folk genus, *quercia*, derived from the PIE root **perkw*. Other names derive from other roots, but they apply only to certain species, like *rovere*, which can be traced to a PIE root meaning “red”, referring to the color of the heartwood. A number of these distinct names are also modified to refer to related species. For example, *Q. robur* is known as *farnia*, and the diminutive form of the name, *farnetto*, is used for *Q. frainetto* (the epithet in the scientific name is in fact a misinterpretation of the common name in Italian); the name for *Q. pubescens*, *roverella*, is the diminutive of *rovere*, the name for *Q. petraea*; the name for *Q. suber*, *sughera*, is similarly modified to its diminutive, *sugherella*, to refer to *Q. ×crenata*, the hybrid with *Q. cerris*. In terms of folk systematics, *farnia*, *rovere*, and *sughera* serve as generic names, modified to name a similar plant in each case. *Quercia* is currently accepted as referring to the whole

Following three pages: Figure 8/ Oak names in the Romance languages.

5. Lacaita (1920) traced the origin of this hypothesis to Ottorino Parmigiani's *Vocabulario etimologico della lingua italiana* (1907) – and gave it short shrift.

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning	
Romanian	stejar	stejar brumăriu	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Bulgarian <i>стезхар</i> (<i>stezhar</i>), "pole", "mast", shift from "oak pole" to "oak"	greyish	
		stejar de carmaz	<i>Q. pedunculiflora</i>		kermes	
		stejar de Macedonia	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		Macedonian	
		stejar pufos	<i>Q. trojana</i>		downy	
		stejar turcesc	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		Turkish	
	cer	stejarica	<i>Q. cerris</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	like <i>stejar</i>	-
		cer	<i>Q. cerris</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i>	augmentative/like <i>cer</i>
		gârniță/gârneata	ceroi/ceretic	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Bulgarian name for this oak	-
		gorun	<i>Q. frainetto</i>	<i>Q. petraea</i>	From Bulgarian name for this oak	-
		sledun	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Slavic root meaning "sweet", via Bulgarian	-
Italian	quercia	tufan	<i>Q. pedunculiflora</i>	"shrub", from Latuan <i>tufo</i> , unknown origin	-	
		tufă raloasa	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	-	scabby	
	cerro	quercia verde	<i>Q. robur</i>	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Proto-Italic <i>*k^werkus</i> , assimilated from Proto-Indo-European <i>*perk^w</i> ("oak").	green
		quercia spinosa	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE <i>*h₂rewd^h</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	spiny
		quercia castagnara	<i>Q. virgiliana</i>	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> , origin uncertain	chestnut
		quercia da sughero(a)	<i>Q. suber</i>	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>ceruus</i> , unknown origin, perhaps from PIE <i>*kar</i> ("stone")	of <i>suber</i> (cork oak)
		cerro	cerrosughera	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>ceruus</i> , unknown origin, perhaps from PIE <i>*kar</i> ("stone")	combination with <i>sughera</i> ("cork oak")
		rovero/rovero	roverella	<i>Q. xrenata</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE <i>*h₂rewd^h</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	-
		sughera/subera/suvera	sugherella	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> , origin uncertain	diminutive
		farnia	farnetto	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> , origin uncertain	diminutive
French	chêne	chêne pédonculé/à grappe(s)/ blanc/femelle	<i>Q. robur</i>	Origin unknown, possibly related to <i>fraxinus</i> ("ash tree")	pedunculate/clustered/white/female	
		châgne	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>ilex</i> , name for <i>Q. ilex</i> , origin pre-Roman, unknown	-	
		chêne à large feuilles/à trochets/bâtard/des pierriers/mâle/noir/blanc/rouvre/-roure/sessile	<i>Q. petraea</i>	<i>Q. petraea</i>	From Latin <i>ilex</i> , name for <i>Q. ilex</i> , origin pre-Roman, unknown	large-leaved/cluster of fruits/mongrel/of stony land/male/black/white/robur/from Italian <i>rovere</i> /sessile
		chêne de Palestine/des garrigues/kermès	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Ancient Greek <i>βάλανος</i> , from Proto-Hellenic <i>*g^hslanos</i> , ultimately from Proto-Indo-European <i>*g^helhs²</i> ("acorn")	Palestine/of scrub land/kermes downy/black/truffle
		chêne pubescent/noir/truffier	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	brush?/of Pyrenees/from Angoumois (Angoulême)/black/sweet/tauzin (see below) false holly/green
	chêne	chêne brosse/des Pyrénées/angoumois/doux/noir/tauzin	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	hairy/of Bourgogne
		chêne faux houx/vert/à glands doux	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	<i>Q. ilex/rotundifolia</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	Algerian/of Canary islands/?
		chêne chevelu/de Bourgogne	<i>Q. cerris</i>	<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	hairy/of Bourgogne
		chêne d'Algérie/des Canaries/zéen	<i>Q. cerris</i>	<i>Q. canariensis</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	Algerian/of Canary islands/?
		chêne à feuilles de hêtre/du Portugal/portugais/faginé	<i>Q. robur</i>	<i>Q. faginea</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	beech-leaved/Portuguese/like beech
chêne-lige	<i>Q. suber</i>	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Vulgar Latin <i>*cassanus</i> , probably from Gaulish <i>cassanos</i> , possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar²</i>)	cork		

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
French	cerre		<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>cerrus</i> , unknown origin, perhaps from PIE <i>*kar</i> ("stone")	
	garric/garrouille		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin, perhaps from PIE <i>*kar</i> ("stone")	
	gravelin		<i>Q. robur</i>	Unknown origin, perhaps related to Portuguese <i>carvalho</i> ("oak")	
	drille/drillar(d)/durelin		<i>Q. petraea</i>	Unknown origin, perhaps from PIE <i>*dero</i> ("oak")	
	tauzin		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>	Unknown origin (cf. Hungarian <i>tölgy</i>)	
	drouis/druino		<i>Q. crenata</i>	From PIE <i>*dero</i> ("oak")	
	durier		<i>Q. suber</i>	Related to Spanish <i>corcho</i> ("cork"), from Latin cortex ("bark") or <i>quercus</i> ("oak")?	
	corcier		<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> ("cork oak")	
	sioure/surier/suve		<i>Q. cerris</i>	From Latin <i>dolcis</i> ("sweet"), acorns used for animal fodder	
	doucier		<i>Q. ilex/rotundifolia</i>	From Occitan <i>ieuse</i> , from Ancient Occitan <i>elēx</i> , from Latin <i>ilex</i>	
Portuguese		carvalho africano/-das-canárias/-de-Monchique	<i>Q. canariensis</i>		African/from Canary Is./from Monchique
		carvalho comum/-alvarinho/-roble/-vermelho	<i>Q. robur</i>	Origin uncertain, possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perkw</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar</i>)?	common/white/roble (see Spanish)/red
		carvalho-alvo/-branco	<i>Q. petraea</i>		white/white
	carvalho	carvalho-anão	<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		dwarf
		carvalho-cerquinho/-folhado/-português	<i>Q. faginea</i>		<i>cerquinho</i> (see below)/leafy/Portuguese
		carvalho-da-beira/-negra/-pardo/-pardo-das-beiras/pardo-do-Minho	<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		coast/dark/grey/coast grey/grey from Minho
		carvalho-dos-quermes	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		kermes
		carvalhoiga	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		similar to <i>carvalho</i> , diminutive
		carrasco/carrasqueiro	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		-
		cerquinho	<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		-
Catalan	cerqueiro-bravo		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE <i>*h₂erwd-</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	white/white
	roble	roble-alvo/-branco	<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		-
	roble		<i>Q. petraea</i>		-
	albarinho/alvarinho		<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE <i>*h₂erwd-</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	-
	ésculo		<i>Q. petraea</i>	From Latin <i>albus</i> ("white"). Diminutive	-
	sobre/sobreira(a)/sobre/sovereiro/sóvero		<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>aesculus</i> , name for oak with edible acorns? Possibly from PIE <i>*h₂eyǵ-</i>	-
	enzinho/azinha/azinheira		<i>Q. petraea</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> ("cork oak")	-
	sardão/sardoeira		<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>ilicina</i> , from <i>ilex</i>	-
	pedamarro		<i>Q. ilex/rotundifolia</i>	Unknown origin, Sardinian?	-
	roure/a		<i>Q. rotundifolia</i>	Unknown origin	-
Catalan	roure	roure pènel	<i>Q. robur/petraea/pyrenaica</i>		masthead
	roure	roure de fulla gran/de fulla grossa	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE <i>*h₂erwd-</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	large-leaved
	roure	roure de fulla petita/martínic	<i>Q. petraea</i>		small-leaved/see <i>martínic</i>
	roure	roure reboll	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		From Latin <i>robur</i>
	alsinera/ausina		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		-
	alzina/alzina		<i>Q. ilex</i>		-
	alzina	alzina del suro/surera	<i>Q. suber/ilex</i>		-
	alzina	alzina carrasca/vera	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>ilicina</i> , from <i>ilex</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i>
	alzina	alzina ravel	<i>Q. ilex</i>		From Latin <i>ceruss</i> /true
	ametzà		<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Basque ("marcescent oak")	From Latin <i>robur</i>
arbre surer		<i>Q. suber</i>	tree	From Latin <i>suber</i>	
bellotera	bellotera borda	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Arabic <i>ballut</i> ("oak")	red	
carrasca	carrasca surera	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		From Latin <i>suber</i>	
cascolli/coscolli/coscolis/coscona/cosco		<i>Q. robur</i>	Origin uncertain, possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE <i>*perkw</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE <i>*kar</i>)?	-	
cascolli	cascolli ver/roge/roger/roig	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		green/red	
casca/case		<i>Q. petraea</i>		-	
corroc/curoc		<i>Q. suber</i>		-	

Language	Folk genus	Folk species	Scientific name	Genus origin	Modifier meaning
Catalan	garric/garrich(s)	garriga/garriguella/garrins/garrinx/garroli(a)/gar(t)ulla	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	Unknown origin, perhaps from PIE * <i>kar</i> ("stone")	-
	garric	garric roig	<i>Q. coccifera/ilex</i>		red
	gla		<i>Q. robur/coccifera/ilex/suber</i>		-
	glan/gland/glanar/glaner/glans/agla/aglaner(a)		<i>Q. ilex</i>	From Latin <i>glans</i> ("acorn"), ultimately from Proto-Indo-European * <i>g^hel^h2-</i>	-
	glans	glans de suro	<i>Q. suber</i>		From Latin <i>suber</i>
	grana/graneta		<i>Q. coccifera</i>		red
	grana	grana bermello/d'escariata	<i>Q. pubescens</i>	For Saint Martin's Day, in November, when it produces acorns	-
	martinenc		<i>Q. robur/petraea</i>	masthead	-
	penol		<i>Q. ilex</i>		-
	rebroll		<i>Q. pyrenaica/coccifera</i>		-
	rebell		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		-
	rebell de fulla ampla		<i>Q. suber</i>		-
	siure(t)/sura/suret(a)/suro		<i>Q. xmarisii (Q. ilex x suber)</i>		-
	surolí	surera atlántica	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i>	Atlantic
roble		<i>Q. robur/canariensis/faginea</i>		-	
rebollo		<i>Q. faginea/pyrenaica</i>		-	
roullia		<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		-	
		<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		diminutive	
		<i>Q. petraea</i>		diminutive	
roble	robleidilla	<i>Q. robur</i>	From Latin <i>robur</i> , from <i>ruber</i> ("red"), from PIE * <i>h₁rewd^h2-</i> ("red"), for reddish color of heartwood	white/white/winter white/pedunculate	
	roble albar/pedunculado	<i>Q. canariensis</i>		Andalusian	
	roble carrasqueño/enciniego/valenciano	<i>Q. faginea</i>		like <i>carrasco</i> /like <i>encino</i> /from Valencia	
	roble negro/negral	<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		black/dark	
	roble pubescente	<i>Q. pubescens</i>		downy	
alcoroque		<i>Q. suber</i>	From Arabic, from Latin <i>quernus</i> ("oaken")	-	
corcoxu/corcu/cuerco/curco villano		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		-	
cajiiga/cajiiga		<i>Q. canariensis/robur/faginea</i>		-	
quejigo		<i>Q. canariensis/pyrenaica/faginea</i>		-	
quejigo	quejigueta	<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		diminutive	
quejigo	quejigo andaluz	<i>Q. canariensis</i>		Andalusian	
carba		<i>Q. petraea</i>	Origin uncertain, possibly from same root as <i>quercus</i> (PIE * <i>perk^w</i>) and <i>cerris</i> (PIE * <i>kar</i> ?)	-	
carballo/carvalho		<i>Q. robur</i>		dwarf	
carballo	carballo enano	<i>Q. lusitanica</i>		-	
carrasca		<i>Q. ilex</i>		black/?	
carrasca	carrasca negra/ciofoluda	<i>Q. coccifera</i>		diminutive	
carrasca(o)/carrasquilla/carrasquizo		<i>Q. coccifera</i>		-	
coscoja/coscoll		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>		-	
tocorno/tozo/tocio(e)/tociu		<i>Q. ilex/rotundifolia</i>		-	
encina(o)		<i>Q. rotundifolia</i>	Unknown origin (cf. Hungarian <i>tölgy</i>)	-	
encina	encina dulce	<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>ilicina</i> , from <i>ilex</i>	sweet	
suro		<i>Q. suber</i>	From Latin <i>suber</i> ("cork oak")	-	
marolo/melojo		<i>Q. pyrenaica</i>	From Latin <i>malum folium</i> ("bad leaf")	-	
matta	matta parda	<i>Q. rotundifolia</i>		grey	
matta	matarrubia	<i>Q. coccifera</i>	From Latin <i>matto</i> ("mat")?	blond	
chaparra(o)		<i>Q. ilex/coccifera/suber</i>	From Basque <i>txapar</i> (<i>Q. coccifera</i>)	-	
moheda		<i>Q. suber</i>	From Andalusian Arabic <i>mufída</i> ("scrub")	-	

genus and this is confirmed by the use of binomials with this generic term for species in all three sections. However, the use of other distinct names for other species, and their quasi-generic status, indicates that the generic concept was perhaps not always that clear. Haffter (1972) claims that *quercia*, originally used in only a relatively small area of Italy, became accepted throughout the peninsula thanks to widely read Florentine authors such as Dante. However, in his *Divine Comedy*, for example, Dante uses *quercia* and *cerro* distinctly to refer to *Q. robur* and *Q. cerris* (Cameron 2018).

The pre-Roman Celtic influence is evident in the French names for oaks, both in the transformation of the Latin *quercus* to *chêne*, as discussed above, and in the existence of names derived from the PIE root **dero*, the root prevalent in the Celtic languages (*dours*, *durier*, *durelin*, etc.). The genus concept, however, seems firmly established, for despite the abundance of distinct names for certain oaks, all species receive alternative binomial names based on *chêne*, even those in sections *Ilex* (*chêne vert*, “green oak”, for *Q. ilex*, *chêne kermès*, “kermes oak”, for *Q. coccifera*) and *Cerris* (*chêne chevelu*, “hairy oak” for *Q. cerris*). An unusual name for *Q. pyrenaica*, *tauzin*, also found across the Pyrenees in Spanish as *tozo*, is enticingly similar to the supposedly unrelated Hungarian *tölgy* and its Ossetian root *түлдз* (*tuldz*). A name for *Q. cerris*, *doucier*, derives from a Latin root meaning “sweet”, equivalent to *sladun* in Slavic languages; it probably indicates the acorns were sweet enough to be used as animal fodder.

In Portuguese *carvalho* seems to be reasonably well accepted as the folk genus. Most native oaks, particularly those in section *Quercus*, are assigned binomials of *carvalho* + modifier. Others have names that most likely are related to *carvalho* through common ancestors: *carrasco* or *carrasqueiro* (*Q. coccifera*), *cerquinho* (*Q. faginea*), and *cerqueio-bravo* (*Q. lusitanica*). These tree species also have binomial names that use *carvalho*. Other names, brought to the Iberian Peninsula by Roman soldiers, can be traced to Latin names for oaks, and have roots that are not related to **perkw* and **kar*, the PIE ancestors of *carvalho*. *Roble* derives from Latin *robur* meaning “red” and is used for *Q. robur* and *Q. petraea*; for the second species it can take the modifier *alvo* or *branco* (white), an etymological oxymoron (“the white red oak”), complicated further by the fact that *albarinho* (“little white one”) on its own is a name for *Q. robur*. *Quercus petraea* is also called *ésculo*, derived from the Latin name for *Q. petraea* (*aesculus*⁶, the origin also of the Italian name *eschio*). But two oaks have distinct names in Portuguese and are not known as a type of *carvalho*: *Q. ilex* = *azinheira* and *Q. suber* = *sobreiro*. *Azinheira* may seem a far cry from its Latin root *ilex*, but it really descends from Vulgar Latin, where the more common form was *ilicina*, from the term *arbore ilicina* (“the ilex tree”). This became *alzina* in Catalan, *encina* in Spanish, *yeuse* in French, and *azinha* in Portuguese. It also took on the meaning of “acorn” in Portuguese, and so the suffix *-eira* was added to *azinha*, to form *azinheira*, literally “the tree that bears the acorn” (Haffter 1972). A similar process led to *sobreiro*, derived from *suber* in Latin, which means both “cork tree” and “cork.”

Though *roure* appears to be a generic name in Catalan, the native evergreen species seem to be clearly distinguished as *alzina* (*Q. ilex*), *surera* (*Q. suber*) and *garric* (*Q. coccifera*), with many variations. Further nomenclatural diversity is caused by French influence, particular in names derived from *gland* (“acorn”), which are applied to several species, both deciduous and evergreen. These words share a common ancestor with the

6. While *aesculus* referred to a species of oak in Latin, suggesting it produced edible fruit, the word was chosen by Linnaeus to name the horse chestnuts and buckeyes (genus *Aesculus*).

Ancient Greek word for acorn, βάλανος (*bálanos*). One of the names for *Q. pyrenaica*, *ametzá*, is imported from Basque, from the other end of the Pyrenees. Another noteworthy name is *martinenc*, for *Q. pubescens*, derived from Saint Martin's Day, November 11, the date around which the acorns of this species ripen (Alcover and Moll 1930-1962).

The Spanish problem

Spanish names for oaks are legion, in part because *roble* – a name based on an attribute of a tree's wood and in its original language restricted to a distinct type of oak with sinuate lobes – displaced names with better credentials for generic status. According to the dictionaries, *roble* is the generic term for oak, but only section *Quercus* species are truly known by that term, and even within the section many species are popularly known by unrelated names. I learnt this through personal experience when I visited Parque de Ulía in San Sebastián, Spain, and asked a guide where I could find oaks, using the generic word *roble*. I was told there were no *robles* in the park. I found this hard to believe and when I spotted a *Q. pyrenaica* I smugly pointed it out to the guide. Nonplussed, he responded that that was not a *roble*, it was a *marojo*!

As in Portuguese and Catalan, *Q. ilex*, *Q. coccifera*, and *Q. suber* have their own names, quite distinct from *roble*. The most popular name for *Q. suber* is *alcornoque*, which derives from Arabic: *al* (the definite article in Arabic) + *quernus*, the adjectival form of the Latin *quercus* + *-occus* (a Hispanic suffix). This is as good an example as any of the linguistic mutations and crosspollinations that drive language evolution, as mentioned in the introduction above. Haffter (1972) argues that *roble* became standard because it was the term favored by the Castillians, the principal architects of the conquest of the former Arab territories in Spain. However, the name would have encountered resistance from other names like *encina* (*Q. ilex*) and *alcornoque* (*Q. suber*), especially given the cultural importance of *encinas* in the *dehesas*, where they are relied on for the rearing of pigs, and of *alcornoques* for the production of cork. The imposition of *roble* by the Castillians was apparently not as effective as their expulsion of the Moors.

As an indication of the weakness of the genus concept for oaks in Spanish, one can compare the case of Greene's Virginian settlers (see above) with their Spanish counterparts across the continent in California. For the English colonists every acorn-bearing tree was unequivocally an oak, the same way that to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The Spanish in California would have had no problem calling a *Q. lobata* a *roble*, thanks to its sinuously lobed, deciduous leaves, reminiscent of the true *robles* back home. But they would never apply that name to the evergreen *Q. agrifolia*, which was much closer to their *encina*. This distinction is borne out by the numerous place names in California derived from *roble* (Paso Robles, Robledo, Robles Way, etc.) and the equally numerous ones derived from *encina* (Encinitas, Encino, Encinal Beach, etc.). Further south in Mexico and Central America, the morphological diversity of oaks led to further confusion, so much so that in most of that area the generic term for oaks became *encinos*. Thus, as far as oaks are concerned, Spanish-speaking countries are divided by a common language: the generic term is *robles* in Spain and South America, but *encinos* in Mexico and most of Central America. In Mexico, according to Romero Rangel et al. (2015), some common names for oaks use *roble*, sometimes as a modifier for *encino* (*encino roble*) or even vice versa (*roble encino*). The authors of the *Quercus Propagation Manual* published in Spanish (Rodríguez Acosta and Coombes 2020), had to repeatedly

use “*encinos o robles*” in their text when referring to oaks.⁷ The weakness of *roble* as a generic term is evidenced by the fact that in Central and South America it is also applied to other trees. In Panama a *roble* is a tree with pink flowers, *Tabebuia rosea*; in order to refer to an oak, you must use the diminutive *roblito*, the name given to some Red Oak species there (Cameron 2017). In Argentina, *roble* is a common name for *Nothofagus obliqua*. The shallow etymological roots of the name are further evidenced in Albanian, where *rrobull* drifted over to *Pinus heldreichii* (Elsie 1998).

So what – and what if...?

A clear pattern emerges from this survey of common names for oaks in the principal European languages: the diversity of oak names increases as we move from the species-poor north to the species-rich south, to a greater extent than would be warranted by the larger number species to be named. Furthermore, folk systematics becomes more complex where different species – and especially sections – are found; the concept of genus, defined by Brent Berlin (1973) as “the smallest linguistically recognized class of organisms that is formed ... by multiple distinctions of appearance, habitat, and behaviour,” tends to be more restricted in these areas than the current view of *Quercus* sensu lato. In Southeastern Europe, we encounter a veritable balkanization of folk systematics, which creates a nomenclatural hotspot that exceeds in degree the diversity hotspot of oak species. Something similar occurs in Southwestern Europe. The linguistic history of the languages involved also plays a role in the diversity of names: areas where a mix of distantly related tongues contributed to the present day language, such as Iberia and Southeastern Europe, tend to have a greater variety of names than places with a more stable linguistic evolution, i.e., Northern Europe. An exception to this generalization would be the case of Turkish, where despite a linguistic history that involved intermixing with Arabic and Persian, and a high diversity of oaks, the genus concept seems unchallenged and the names for oaks relatively standardized.

When comparing folk systems of classification to scientific systems of taxonomy, Berlin (1973) classified them into three types: one-to-one correspondence, over-differentiation, and under-differentiation. Amongst European languages, it appears that Germanic, Celtic, Uralic, Turkish, and western and eastern Slavic languages have an approximate one-to-one correspondence with current scientific taxonomy, while southern Slavic languages, Albanian, Greek, and Romance languages tend to over-differentiate. But is this over-differentiation perhaps justified? And would the northern languages have also differentiated more if they had evolved in areas of higher oak diversity? Greene (1909) credits Virginian colonists for classifying oaks correctly before scientists did: “the unlettered men of field and forest arrive[d] at the proper delimitation of a genus of trees quite in advance of the professional taxonomists, and these last virtually adopted the genus, as we now have it, from the ruralists.” But was their prescience not a product of their particular language and culture rather than a virtue of universal unschooled intuition?

7. One way of resolving this issue would be to establish a new word to name all oaks in Spanish. A name etymologically associated with the whole genus, such as *carrasco*, might be a better option than *encino* or *roble*, which originally referred to a specific types of oak. Alternatively, the genus name in Latin could be converted to Spanish, following the pattern of other tree names, e.g., *pinus* → *pino*, *cedrus* → *cedro*, *fraxinus* → *fresno*. This would create *querco* (*kerko*) from *quercus*. Such a proposal was made at the 9th International Oak Society Conference (Cameron 2019).

Classical botanists consistently divided the current genus into several distinct genera of acorn-bearing trees (e.g., *Quercus*, *Ilex*, *Cerris*, *Suber*). The founders of modern botany were German (Otto Brunfels, Leonhart Fuchs, and Hieronymus Bock), and the founder of modern taxonomy was a Swede (Linnaeus). According to the concept of linguistic determinism, language and its structures limit and determine human knowledge or thought. Do we owe the currently accepted broad sense of *Quercus* to the fact that our classification was created by speakers of Germanic languages? Would current oak taxonomy be different if modern botany had been founded by native Italian or Spanish speakers, and their classification of New World oaks had been based on the reports of Spanish settlers in California and Mexico rather than English colonists in Virginia? The Tzeltal, a Mayan people of Mexico, classify their native oaks in two groups that correspond with modern sections of White Oaks (*jihte'*) and Red Oaks (*chikinib*), and then further subdivide the White Oaks into three subgroups: *tsa'pat jijte'* (“excrement-barked oak”), *sak yok jijte'* (“white-footed oak”), and *k'ewex jijte'* (“custard apple oak”) (Berlin et al. 1973, Polian 2020). What would they have made of European oaks if they had become the founders of modern taxonomy? Perhaps our current system of one genus, two subgenera, and strongly delimited sections (Denk et al. 2017), which in the case of European oaks follow the ancient distinctions, is an optimal synthesis of what folk systematics has provided – or would have provided, if these hypothetical situations had been the case.

Title-page image: excerpt from page 822 of Vol. 3 of *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* by Julius Pokorny, published in 1959 by Francke Verlag, Bern und München.

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