

Iza Chanrladze (Kartvelologist, Ilia Chavchavadze State University Professor Emeritus, Doctor of Philological Sciences)

The Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics Director's Adviser  
Tbilisi - Georgia

### **Towards the Relationship of Abkhaz and Svan Languages in the Kodori (resp. Dali) Gorge**

Sometimes instances of interference change the image of a concrete linguistic space to the extent that differentiate according to dialects or local speech variants becomes extremely difficult. This is true in the case of the Abazian language (especially of Tapantian speech – K. Lomtadze). An approximately the same situation is observed in Kodorian Svan, too.

The object of our study is mixed (Svan-Abkhazian) families. Clearly, Abkhaz daughters-in law have well mastered the host language, but they still encounter difficulties in understanding forms containing features of specific Kartvelian phonotactics or grammar. These include pharyngeal consonants, the so-called neutral vowel, formation of compound numerals, inclusion-exclusion, verb categories, orientation, the reported speech, etc. They experience difficulties in the formation of complex syntactic constructions (hypotaxis, complex-compound sentence).

The best understood phenomenon is Svan umlaut (despite its specific features) which, most probably, is assisted by the existence of palatal sounds in their own language.

The Svan speech of Abkhaz ladies normally contains grammatical forms and lexemes of the elders of the family; however, one also finds elements of their children's speech or the data common to other dialects (e.g. LB. **axalgazrdol** ("young people") for **maxeywažär**, or **sakäcx** ("a stretcher") for **sakärcx** attested in all the dialects).

Despite living in a Svan family for over half a century, Abkhaz Mary Arshba cannot pronounce a glottal pharyngeal stop **q**, which could be caused by the change of the same phoneme into a **specific laringial spirant**  $\tilde{x}$  in her own language (according to S. Janashi a's study **q** is an active phoneme). Therefore, instead of **qän** ("bull"), **qamša** ("strength"), **qarq** ("glottis"), **qelmčif** ("king"), etc. we find **xän**, **xamša**, **xarx**, **xelmčif**, etc. in the respondent's speech. Contrary to the the same **q > x** processes observed in Ibero-Caucasian languages, the opposition **q > x** is still active in Svan, even in the speech of young people.

The speech of Kodorian Svans (resp. Dali) is characterized by less significant influences of the neighboring Megrelian and Russian languages than the Svan speech of their Abkhaz daughters-in-law.

Svan-Abkhazian mixed families are very interesting from the culturological point of view (Abkhaz daughters-in-law change their national clothes for Svan wear, follow Georgian traditions, use mixed terminology of cooking, hunting taboo, and so on).