

THE
ANNUAL
OF THE
SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF CAUCASIA

NUMBER 3

1991

have to run around the ravines and look for a haven among people unsubdued by our Government. Having received a most gracious pardon from our monarch you shall live wherever you like and any enmity to you by your ill wishers [*tvoikh nedobrozhelatelei*] will be silenced in front of our Sovereign, the Emperor's pardon.

5. From Shamil to Klugenau (not later than 24 September [6 October] 1837)

I consulted all the 'ulama and elders of my realm [*nakhodiatsia v moem vedenii*] and told them all you had told me, and even more — how beneficial it would be for me to go to Tiflis with you. But they did not agree to it, expressed their displeasure and finally, swore that if I really intended to go to Tiflis, they would most certainly kill me. Not even one among them agreed [with me]. Therefore, it is impossible for me to do as you have proposed [and] come with you. [But] I advise you that with the exception of this issue I shall do anything you command me to, in accordance with our mutual trust. Do not blame me, because it has been impossible for me to do as you proposed. Therefore, I am asking you to postpone it, and to order [me] to do anything else concerning my benefit...

ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE ETHNONYM /ÁPŠWA/
'ABKHAZ'

Vyacheslav A. Chirikba

Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, Faculteit der Letteren

One of the most frequently attested etymologies is the derivation of the notion 'man,' 'human' from the notion 'mortal.' As an example of such idiosemanic development in Northwest Caucasian¹ languages a Common Circassian example can be taken: /λ'ə/ 'man' < *'mortal,' cf. /λ'a-n/ 'to die' (Colarusso 1989, p. 41, §74). One can easily find typologically similar examples in many languages, e.g., O(ld) Ind(ian) *mārta-* 'man,' Av(estan) *maša-* 'id.,' Arm(enian) *mard* 'id.,' all from the I(ndo)-E(uropean) verb **mér-* 'to die,' 'to vanish,' cf. the alternate developments OInd *mārtya-* 'mortal,' Av *marəta-* 'id.,' Old Persian *martiya-*, Gr(eek) *μορτός* 'id.,' Arm *meřanim* 'I die,' Lat(in) *morior* 'I die,' Old Church Slavonic *mrěti* 'to die'; cf. also Old Irish *duiné* 'man' (as mortal), Old Hittite *danduki-* 'mortal, man,' Gothic *diwans* 'mortal,' *daups* 'dead,' Arm *di* 'corpse,' Old English *dēad* 'dead,' all from the IE verb **dey-* 'to vanish, to die' (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 475). On the other hand, many ethnonyms can in turn often be derived from the words denoting 'man, men,' 'people,' as is reflected for instance in the autoethnonyms of such people as the Ainu, Ket, Nivkh, Eskimo, Aleut, Chukchee, Mari, Udmurt, Komi, Nenets, Nganasan, and many others. The self-designation of Abkhazians (/ápšwa/)² has, to my mind, a similar etymology.

The Bzyp dialect of Abkhaz preserves a somewhat more archaic phonetic form of this word: /apš-wa/ with /š/ being a 'semi-chuitante' spirant, an apical-alveolar, similar in pronunciation to Basque /š/ (spelled 's' in Basque orthography, as oppsed to plain /s/ which is spelled 'z') or Amsterdam Dutch /š/. The stem /apš-/ is in all probability connected with the root of the verb /a-pš-ra/ 'to die,' and in this case the above-mentioned ethnonym could originally have meant 'mortal (man),' in full accordance with the Circassian examples, /λ'ə/, /λ'a-n/ above. The stem initial vowel /á-/ in /ápš-wa/ can be linked with the deictic /a-/ , a definite article in Proto-Abkhaz and, paradoxical as it

may seem, further transformed into an indefinite article in Modern Abkhaz. Its definite meaning is preserved only in Abaza.³ This /a-/ may be compared typologically with the deictic /fié-/ in the Common Andi (a NEC language) designation of 'man,' */fié-k'wa/, its etymology being 'the existing (one)' from the verb (with a grammatical class prefix) /bé-k'wa-/ 'to be, exist' (Alekseev 1988:67). We can propose a final vowel in the original Abkhaz form of the stem /apš-/ on the basis of such forms as /apš-š'a-la/ Abkhaz-language-instrumental = 'in the Abkhaz language,' /də-pšə-wa-wəp'/ (s)he-Abkhaz-suffix-be = '(s)he is Abkhazian,' /apš-wa-k'/ Abkhaz-ethnic suffix-one = 'one Abkhazian,' Abzhwa Abkhazian /apsa-c'á/ Abkhazian-plural = 'Abkhazians,' Ashkharwa⁴ /apsá-wa/ Abkhazian-suffix = 'Abkhazian.' The original stem final vowel was probably the stressed /ǎ/. We can therefore reconstruct for Proto-Abkhaz the form */a-pšǎ/ 'man,' its literal meaning being 'the mortal,' which is homonymous with the contemporary Abkhaz noun /a-pšə/ 'dead, corpse,' now with the indefinite article /a-/. The presence of the assumed deixis in the proto-form could mark the semantic difference between /a-pšǎ/ '(mortal) man' and /pšə/ 'dead, corpse.'

The designation of men as 'mortals' had in ancient times its own ideological significance: all the world according to this archaic world view was separated into 'earthly' and 'heavenly' components, and all the beings therein were separated into 'mortals' and 'immortals,' i.e., gods. Thus, in the IE dialects the class of men was characterized by the epithet 'mortal, earthly' as opposed to the 'immortal,' 'heavenly' gods or divinities (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984:475). The same ideology evidently underlay the Abkhaz and Adyghe designations for 'man' (*/a-pšǎ/ 'man' < */a-pš-rá/ 'to die,' /λ'ə/ 'man' < /λ'a-n/ 'to die,' respectively), with the original sense being 'mortal, earthly.'

The transformation of the word */a-pšǎ/ 'man' into an autoethnonym, which, as I have already suggested, is from the typological point of view a very common phenomenon, was achieved in the following way. Simply, the form */a-pšǎ/ was given a suffix of ethnical identity, /-wa/, cf. Abkhaz /á-zəx'-wa/ 'Circassian,' /á-tərk'-wa/ 'Turk,' /á-gər-wa/ 'Mingrelian,' /á-kərt-wa/ 'Georgian.'

I now turn to the problem of the forms of designation for 'Abkhaz' as attested in ancient written sources. We find M(iddle) Ass(yrian) *abešla* (12th century BC), Lat *gens Absilæ* (1st century A.D.), Gr Ἀψίλοι (2nd century A.D.), Arm *apšel-k* (7th century A.D.), Geo(rgian) *apšil-* (7th century A.D.). The Assyrian form was presumably assigned to the ancestors of the Abkhazians in Asia Minor (Melikišvili 1954). The grapheme <e> in MAss *abešla* may bear witness to an original vowel in the root /-pš-/ < */-pəš-/ (?), though such writing could as well be explained by other reasons (say, by articulatory conventions of Assyrian speech, or by the peculiarities of their cuneiform writing). The hissing quality of the spirant /š/ in the Armenian and Georgian forms, on the other hand, could well be a reflex of the archaic "semi-chuitante" sibilant /š/ preserved only in Bzyp Abkhaz. The more recent transcriptions of Abkhaz speech made by a well-known Turkish traveller, Evliya Çelebi (17th century A.D.) also render this sounds by means of a letter for /š/ (ش).

It is more difficult to explain the final *-la* in all these ancient forms. It is possible to assume that *-la* was added to the stem /apšǎ-/ by some other language, through which intermediary this ethnonym was further transmitted to other languages. I would prefer, however, to see an explanation of this *-la* in Abkhaz itself. The element */-la/ in the hypothetical old Abkhaz form */apšǎ-la/ might be identical to the now unproductive suffix /-la/ which expresses a relation to something or somebody, cf. such words as /a-g'ǎ-la/ 'neighbor' (/a-g'ǎ/ 'heart'), /áca-la/ 'bride in relation to (an)other bride(s) in the family' (/áca/ 'bride'), /á-mah'ə-la/ 'bridegroom in relation to (an)other bridegroom(s) in the family,' (/á-mah'ə/ 'bridegroom'). Thus, the form */apšǎ-la/ could mean 'related to the mortals.'

There is yet another possibility to explain this /-la/, which might be more plausible. We should perhaps see in this /-la/ an old marker of plurality which has not been preserved with this meaning in modern times. On the one hand we might see it in an Abkhaz marker of duration and intensity, /-la/, cf. /wə-ca-lá/ you(masculine)-go-intense = 'you go (regularly!),' /k'rǎ-fa-la/ much-eat-intense = 'Do eat! (categorically).' Suffixes of intensity and plurality can often be

interdependent, cf. within Abkhaz the link between the plural suffix for humans, /-c^wa/ (/apsa-c^wa/ 'Abkhazians') with the suffix /-c^wa/ expressing excessiveness, /k^rə-s-fa-c^wa-yt'/ much-I-eat-intense-past = 'I ate much,' this latter suffix showing a cognate Ubykh form, /-c^wa/ as in /a-s-f-aw-c^wa-n/ it-I-eat-progressive aspect-intense-present = 'I am eating much.'

On the other hand the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, which many view as distantly genetically related to Abkhaz and its sister languages, have an affix /-la/, which serves as a marker of both duration or plurality. This may be a cognate with the suffix -la found in the old forms for the ethnonym 'Abkhaz' and would support the possibility that this was an old Abkhaz marker of plurality.

Whatever the case with the old forms of 'Abkhaz' may be, the etymology of the Abkhaz autoethnonym /ápšwa/ < */a-pšə-wa/ as a substantiated participle meaning 'mortal' is much more plausible than previous attempts to find an etymology for this name: connecting the stem /apš-/ with Proto-Abkhaz-Abaza */pšə/ 'water' (Uslar 1887:78; Inal-Ipa 1971:4; Kvarčija 1973:95), with an old ethnonym /həbaš/ 'Abyssinian' (Dirr 1925:120), or with Iranian /aps/ 'horse' > 'horsemen' (O. Bgažba and I. Voronov, personal communications), cf. also Dirr (1908:205), Deters (1954:329), X. Bgažba (1974:150). Note as well a very popular folk-etymology of /apš-nə/ 'Abkhazia' as 'Country of the Soul,' (/nə/ 'country, habitat'), and of /ápš-wa/ 'Abkhazian' as 'man of soul,' both based upon the erroneous conflation of the stem /apš-/ (> /aps-/ in most dialects), with /-psə/ 'soul.' Bzyp bears out the difference by its preservation of the apico-alveolar spirant in /ápš-wa/ 'Abkhaz,' /apš-nə/ 'Abkhazia,' /apšá-dgə/ Abkhaz-land = 'fatherland,' but by having the lamino-alveolar spirant in /a-psə/ 'soul.'

Finally, I might add that the auto-ethnonym /ápšwa/ has no connection whatsoever with the Abkhaz ethnonym /a-wáps/ 'Ossetian,' as has been proposed (Marr 1922:2-3; Dirr 1925:120; Inal-Ipa 1965:101). The latter ethnonym is connected with Megrelian /ops-i/, Georgian /ovs-i/ > /os-i/ 'Ossetian.' Also, much further work is needed before the name /ápšwa/ can in any convincing way be connected with another designation of Abkhazians, namely Gr Ἀβασγοί, Lat Abasgi,

Old Russian /obézŭ/, Arm /apxaz/, Georgian /apxaz-i/ > Modern Russian /abxaz/ (cf. Bgažba 1974:150; Inal-Ipa 1976:253).

NOTES

¹Abkhaz and Circassian are Northwest Caucasian (NWC) languages. The family consists of Abkhaz, Abaza, Adyghe, Kabardian (the latter two labelled in the Western linguistic tradition as West and East Circassian, respectively), and the nearly extinct Ubykh, found now only in Turkey. The NWC group is one of the two branches of the North Caucasian (NC) linguistic family, its other branch being Nakh-Daghestanian. The latter one, also called Northeast Caucasian (NEC), includes about 30 languages of the Central Caucasus and Daghestan. Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Megrelian, Laz, and Svan) represent another linguistic family found in the Caucasus and not related genetically to the NC family.

²A small indigenous people of the Western Caucasus, living along the northeastern coast of the Black Sea. Their total number in the USSR is 105,000. About 200,000 Abkhazians are now living in Turkey as a result of the Caucasian wars, waged in the 19th century by Tsarist Russia. Small groups of Abkhazians are also living in some Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, Jordan, etc.

³Apart from rare instances where the original definite function is preserved, e.g., /maršán-k'/ M.-one = 'one of the Marshans' (a family name), as opposed to /á-maršan/ the-M. = 'the Marshan'.

⁴Abkhaz and Abaza are closely related. Abkhaz has four dialects: Bzyp in the north, Abzhwa (Samurzakan) in the south, Ashkharwa in the mountains to the northeast, and Sadzwa, now spoken only in Turkey, but originally geographically falling between Bzyp and Ubykh.

REFERENCES

- Alekseev, M. E. 1988. *Sravnitel'no-istoričeskaja morfologija avaro-andijskix jazykov*, Moscow: Nauka.
- Bgažba, Xuxut S. 1974. *Ob abxazskix plemenax i dialektax*. In X. S. Bgažba (ed.) *Ėtjudy i issledovanija*. Suxumi: Alašara.
- Colarusso, John 1989. *Proto-Northwest Caucasian (or How to Crack a Very Hard Nut)*. In Howard I. Aronson (ed.), *The Non-Slavic Languages of the USSR, Linguistic Studies*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society. Pp. 20-55.
- Deeters, Gerhard 1954. [review of] Max Vasmer. *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Indogermanische Forschungen, Bd. 61.
- Dirr, Adolf 1908. *Die heutigen Namen der kaukasischen Völker*. Petermanns Mitteilungen. Bd. 54.

- _____. 1925. Zum Ethnicon "Abchas." Caucasica, 2. Leipzig: Verlag der Asia Major.
- Gramkrelidze, Tamaz and Ivanov, Vjačeslav V. 1984. Indoevropskije jazyki i indoevropejcy. Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press.
- Gan, K. F. 1909. Opyt ob"jasnenija kavkazskix geografičeskix nazvanij. Sbornik materialov dlja opisanija mestnostej i plemen Kavkaza. Tiflis. Vyp. 40, otd. 3.
- Inal-Ipa, Š. D. 1965. Abxazy. Suxumi: Alašara.
- _____. 1971. Stranicy istoričeskoj ètnografii abxazov (Materialy i issledovanija). Suxumi: Alašara.
- _____. 1976. Voprosy ètnokul'turnoj istorii abxazov. Suxumi: Alašara.
- Kvarčija V. J. 1973. Reflections about Some Historical Monuments of Abkhazia. Suxumi: Alašara. No. 11. [In Abkhazian].
- Marr, Nikolai 1922. Kavkazskie plemennye nazvanija i mestnye paralleli. Petrograd. Melikišvili, G. A. 1954. Nairi-Urartu. Tbilisi.
- Uslar, P. K. 1887. Ètnografija Kavkaza, I, Jazykoznanie, Abxazskij jazyk. Tiflis.

THE KARABAGH DEMONSTRATIONS: VISUAL AND VERBAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY¹

Stephanie Platz
University of Chicago

In February of 1988, the Karabagh Movement and the Karabagh Committee emerged from a series of public demonstrations which had been organized to show support for Armenians who were being persecuted in Azerbaijan. The political agenda embedded in this movement, begun in Erevan, the capital of the Armenian Republic, regards a historic dispute between the Soviet Union Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, both of which claim rights to the Autonomous Region (oblast) named Nagorno-Karabagh. While the demonstrations in Erevan have specifically addressed claims to this region and grievances against Azerbaijan and the Soviet central authorities, examination of the images and language used in posters, banners, and monuments exhibited publicly during protests reveal a dialogue surrounding Armenian ethnic identity. Anonymous artists and authors of posters use the rhetoric of *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and the official Soviet press as a medium for pointed criticisms of contemporary sociopolitical and economic conditions in the Soviet Union. These criticisms are predicated upon the construction of a particular representation of Armenian history, which in turn, articulates a particular Armenian identity. In the posters, visual references to historical events, and the juxtaposition of linguistic codes, constitute a canonical vision of Armenian ethnicity. Different aspects of Armenian experience are powerfully condensed into symbolic images and words which, in the context of public demonstrations, are effective as symbols in the social world.

Although Karabagh is officially a constituent part of Soviet Azerbaijan, it is populated by a majority of Armenians and a significantly smaller number of ethnic Azerbaijanis. Throughout the Soviet period, Armenians had been variously migrating from Karabagh to other Azerbaijani cities, such as Sumgait, claiming that Karabagh had been intentionally underdeveloped by the Azerbaijani government.² However, at the end of February, 1988, after ethnic hostilities and