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Ethno-linguistic Aspects of Svan Religious Vocabulary²

ABSTRACT

This paper presents general conclusions considering the ethno-linguistic aspects of Svan (pagan and Christian) religious vocabulary. Since the primary aim and objective of our research was to conduct, as far as possible, a systematic analysis of numerous linguistic data embedded in ethnographic texts and containing diverse ethnocultural information, as well as to compile these units comprehensively, we used as illustrative material found in “**Chrestomathy of the Svan Language**” and “**Svan Prose Texts**” (all four volumes), both based on ancient Svan sources; M. Kaldani and V. Topuria’s “**Svan Dictionary**”; B. Nijaradze’s “**Georgian–Svan–Russian Dictionary**”; As. Liparteliani’s “**Svan–Georgian Dictionary**” (Cholur sub-dialect); and Al. Davitiani’s “**Svan Proverbs**”. These materials were compared with the relevant **Georgian-Zan** linguistic data. Through the use of various research methods (**descriptive, historical-comparative, contrastive**, etc.), we identified both **Common Kartvelian** elements and materials borrowed from different languages (from Georgian-Zan directly or indirectly, as well as from Greek, Hebrew, Russian, etc.). Naturally, Svan material itself was separately identified. Although no correspondences are found in other Kartvelian languages, it is particularly valuable from a general linguistic perspective, as even minor details play an important role in presenting the most complete picture of ancient worldviews and beliefs. The results of our research are also important from the point of view of teaching Svan, which will contribute to improving the quality of teaching Kartvelian languages, training highly qualified specialists, and developing relevant fields.

keywords: Vocabulary, Ethnology, Phonetics, Semantics, Borrowing

Introduction

The dialects-sub-dialects of Svan are quite rich in religious (pagan and Christian) lexical units, the main stock of which comes from Kartvelian language. However, alongside this material, Svan also contains a large amount of vocabulary borrowed from Georgian (and not only Georgian), the complete documentation and structural-semantic and etymological analysis of which, despite the great interest in religious vocabulary in the linguistic community, has unfortunately not been carried out to date. The study of Svan

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vocabulary from the perspective of various semantic groups, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the lexical richness of the language and the corresponding social realities, is clearly very important and necessary, especially in light of the serious warning issued in 1978 by the patriarch of Kartvelology, Academician Ak. Shanidze: **“We can still catch and document the materials of folk speech, which belong to sub-dialects.”** This is especially true for Svan dialects, which due to the fast pace of modern life and the recent intense movement of the population inside or outside the country, are strongly influenced by both related and unrelated languages. The severance of the linguistic connection between the generations derives certain threats to the viability of Svan, so it is important to work on the lexicology of Svan, in particular on the diverse archaic religious (pagan, Christian) vocabulary, taking into account ethno-linguistic aspects. The main task and novelty of our work is to systematically research as much linguistic data as possible, containing a lot of ethnocultural information, stored in ethnographic texts, and to fully collect these units. Over time, lexical items reflecting forgotten religious (pagan or Christian) rituals, which are preserved, fossilized, and often used solely to perform rituals, have been gradually disappearing and are at risk of being lost entirely.

Research Methods

The specific research we conducted, based on extensive Svan textual and lexicographic material, involves various types of scholarly activities, including: the comprehensive documentation of borrowed religious lexical units and the identification of the circumstances, pathways, and chronological layers of their borrowing from different languages (Georgian-Zan, Greek, Hebrew, Russian, etc.); the phonetic–phonological and semantic analysis of this vocabulary with consideration of ethnographic materials; the phonetic–phonological, semantic, and etymological analysis of Common Kartvelian lexical items, likewise drawing on ethnographic sources; the structural–semantic and etymological analysis of Svan material itself; the structural–semantic and etymological analysis of archaic Svan (pre-Christian) lexical items; and the extraction of empirical data from various types of texts (ethnographic, dialectological, folkloric, etc.), dictionaries, ethnological studies, and related sources.

Naturally, in order to carry out these activities, the study employed various research methods, including the **descriptive method**, **historical-comparative** and **internal reconstruction methods**, the **contrastive method**, and others. Illustrative material will be taken from the data collected over the years with strenuous efforts of A. Shanidze, M. Kaldani and Z. Chumburidze based on ancient Svan texts published in **“Chrestomathy of the Svan Language”** and **“Svan Prose Texts”** (all four volumes), **“Cholur Prose Texts”** which is already prepared to be published (by the Head – Nato Shavreshiani and coordinator –

Medea Saghliani of the submitted project), "**Svan Dictionary**" compiled by M. Kaldani and V. Topuria, "**Georgian-Svan-Russian Dictionary**" compiled by B. Nizharadze, "**Svan-Georgian Dictionary** (Cholur sub-dialect)" compiled by As. Liparteliani, "**Svan Proverbs**" compiled by Al. Davitiani and so on. The research will also use the fieldwork material collected by us in Mestia and Lentekhi districts over the years. Svan dialectological material (pagan, Christian) used for illustration will be compared to Georgian-Zan linguistic data, which will allow us to identify material borrowed from both Common Kartvelian and different languages (Georgian-Zan, Abkhazo-Adyghean, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, Pahlavi, etc.). Naturally, the specifically Svan material was also treated separately. Although it has no equivalents in the other Kartvelian languages, it is highly valuable from a general linguistic perspective, since even the smallest details are significant for reconstructing as complete a picture as possible of ancient worldviews and beliefs. As V. Bardavelidze noted, these elements "are capable of restoring and clarifying important aspects of traditional ritual and belief" (Bardavelidze 1939: 7).

Given the specificity of the material, the study required a **theoretical–methodological** framework within ethnolinguistics. Since Svan **religious** (pagan and Christian) **vocabulary** and the ethnographic material associated with it **have not previously been the subject of specialized linguistic research**, we attempted to address this gap by applying a complex analytical approach grounded in an appropriate theoretical–methodological base. In this work, we took into account both ethnological and linguistic studies on archaic religious lexical units by various researchers, including V. Bardavelidze, N. Berdzenishvili, R. Kharadze, J. Oniani, Ak. Shanidze, T. Mibchvani, Sh. Chartolani, M. Makalatia, O. Oniani, A. Gelovani, Z. Chumburidze, K. Tuite, I. Chantladze, E. Gazdeliani, A. Arabuli, R. Topchishvili, N. Tserediani, N. Gabuldani, M. Saghliani, R. Gujejiani, and etc. The comparative analysis revealed similarities and differences both among the Svan dialects themselves and between Svan and other Kartvelian and foreign languages (from which various borrowings have entered). We believe that the results of our research, as well as the material collected, will have significant scientific value not only for linguistics, but also for theoretical linguistics, ethnology, cultural studies, and other fields of the humanities and social sciences. Most importantly, they will be of interest to researchers studying the history of the Caucasus in general, since a detailed diachronic study of the lexical composition of Svan reveals numerous notable facts about the prehistory of Western and Central Caucasus, the past in general, and the cultural and economic connections of the ancestors of the Svans both with other Georgian-speaking communities and with neighboring peoples. **The results of the research will contribute to improving the quality of Kartvelian language education, training highly qualified specialists, and developing the relevant fields.**

Research results

The study of Svan archaic (pagan or Christian) religious vocabulary from the ethno-linguistic perspective, which we conducted on the basis of simple roots and composite materials, using data from the traditionally known dialects of Svan (Upper Bal, Lower Bal, Lashkhian, and Lentekhian) and from Cholur speech, enabled us to draw several important and interesting conclusions. Based on the comparison of the illustrative Svan dialectological material with **Georgian-Zan** linguistic data, we identified both **Common Kartvelian** elements and **borrowings** from various languages (from Georgian-Zan—directly or indirectly, as well as from Greek, Hebrew, Russian, and others). Naturally, Svan material itself was also separately identified; although it lacks equivalents in other Kartvelian languages, it is of particular value from a general linguistic perspective.

Borrowed vocabulary: Since foreign religious lexical units occupy an important place in the lexical stock of Svan, and since they have undergone significant phonetic–phonological and semantic adaptation in the process of borrowing, we examined them separately, taking into account the various phonetic processes occurring during borrowing and relying on data from the dialects and subdialects of Svan: **Borrowed religious lexical units that are phonetically completely unchanged or phonetically modified; stems with final-consonant truncation (in the auslaut); consonant alternation in the auslaut of borrowed religious lexical units; stems that have undergone umlaut; vowel length phenomena; vowel reduction; consonant and vowel alternation according to their type** (voicing, devoicing, aspiration, assimilation, affrication–deaffrication, alternation of consonants and vowels, alternation of the sonorant consonants /m/n/r, insertion or loss of sounds, vowel aspiration, metathesis...); **composites containing borrowed religious lexical units; religious lexical units containing borrowed verbal roots; borrowed religious vocabulary formed by Svan morphological system; borrowed religious lexemes that are semantically identical or modified with semantic nuances, etc.**

As it turns out, the roots of foreign lexical units in Svan are attested in a phonetically and semantically unchanged form (e.g., **აიაზმა aiazma** (US.) < Geo. aiazma (< Gre. **αγιασμός** “blessing”) “holy, blessed water”; **კალანდა kalanda** (Lent.) < Geo. (Gur.) kalanda (< Lat. **calendae** “the first days of the month”; “New Year”; **მეტანია metania** (US., LS.) < Geo. metania (< Gre. **μετάνια μετάνια** „regret; repentance”) “kneeling and bowing down to the ground or floor during prayer or supplication to God”; **საყდარ saqdar** (Lash., Chol., Ushg.) < Geo. sakdar-i “church, temple”; **ტრაპეზ trapez** (US., LS.) < Geo. trapez-i (< Gre. **trapeza** “table”) 1. “the altar throne in a church; the same as the altar” 2. “table, feast”, 3. “feast, dinner, party”; **ქრისტე kriste** (LB., Lent., Chol.) < Geo. Kriste (< Gre. **χριστός** “anointed”) “Jesus

Christ"; **ხსნილ** *xsnil* (Lash., Chol.) < Geo. *khsnil-i* "the period during which the eating of animal products (meat, eggs, dairy products, etc.) is permitted", and also in various phonetic variants (e.g., **წნგ[ტ]ლებ/წნგლობ** *äng{w}lez/änglöz* (UB., Lent.)/**წნგლებ** *änglez* (LB.)/**ანგლობ** *angloz* (LB., Lash.)/**წნგტლეჯ** *ängwleč*/**ანგტლებ** *angwlez* (Chol.) < Old Geo. *angeloz-i* (< Gre. *ἀγγελος* "messenger; envoy; apostle ...") 1. "an incorporeal being represented as God's messenger", 2. fig. "an embodiment of goodness, beauty, tranquility, and gentleness"; **დრკუენ** *dikwen* (UB.)/**დრკონ** *dikōn*/**დრკუან** *dikwan* (Lash.) < Geo. *diakon-i* (< Gre. *διάκονος* "servant") "assistant of the priest, - deacon"; **თანაფ** *tanaf* (US., LS.) "Easter" < Zan (Meg.-Laz) *tanafa* 1. "Easter", 2. "dawn"; **კირტენ** *kirwen* (US., Chol.)/**კირონ** *kiron* (Lash.)/**კირენ** *kiren* (Lent.) "a large wax candle (lit for the deceased)" < Old Geo. *kereon-i*, *kerovan-i* "a large wax candle"; **მარხტ** *marxw* (US., LS.) < Old Geo. *markh-v-a* (< *pāhr* > *parx* > *markh* through metathesis from Pahl. *pāhr-*) 1. "religious rule that prohibits the eating of meat and dairy products", 2. "the period during which this rule was kept..."; **მეისრობ** *mejsārob* (UB.) "festival dedicated to the strength and multiplication of cattle" < Geo. (Lech.) *meisroba* "religious festival, prayer"; **ეფისკოპოზ** *jepiskopoz* (UB.) < Geo. *episkopos-i* (< Gre. *ἐπίσκοπος*) "The head of the diocese or his assistant, High priest"; **სამეთხ** (UB.)/**სამეთხტ** *sametxw* (Ushg.) < Geo. *samotkhe* "the Garden Created by God, orchard"; **სამრკტ** *samrāk* (US., Lent.) < Geo. *sa-m-rek-l-o* "the tower in which the church bells hang"; **ტეთხთაჲ** *wetxṭaw* (Ushg.) < Geo. *otkh-tav-i* "it's the same as the gospel"; **ფერცტლობ** *percwlob* (UB., US.)/**ფერცლობ** *perclob* (UB.)/**ფერცლაბ** *perclab* (LB.)/**ფერიცტალობ** *pericwalob* (Chol.) "religious holiday; a holiday for horses" < Old Geo. *fer-is-tsv-al-eb-a* "Lord's feast"; **შობ** *šob* (US., LS.) < Geo. *sh-ob-a* 1. "birth, Christmas", 2. "religious holiday celebrating the birth of Christ"; **ცოდ** *cod* (US., LS.) < Geo. *tsod-v-a* (< Oss. *cawd* "bad, wicked") "disobedience to the will of God, offense against God's moral law"; **ცხონაბ** *cxonab* (Lash., Chol.), cf. US. **ცხონაბ** *cxonāb* < Geo. *tskhon-eb-a* "the soul's eternal bliss in the afterlife" **წირ** *čir* (US., LS.) < Old Geo. *tsir-v-a* "the main Christian liturgy"; **ხატ** *xāt* (US., Lent.)/**ხატ** *xat* (Lash., Chol.) < Geo. *khat-i* (< Arab. *xat* "line; drawing") "image of a deity or saint"; {ჰეშმაჲ} *[h]ešmäj* (UB.) "demon, evil spirit, devil" < Old Geo. (< Pahl. *hešm*, *hišm* "evil, wicked, rabid, furious") "same as the devil"...) or in the case of data altered by semantic nuances (e.g.: **იურდან** *iwrđän* (LB.) "holy water" < Geo. *iordane* (< Old Hebr. *יֹרְדָּן* "river, flowing") "one of the rivers of Palestine"; **უჩმ** *wič* (US., Lent., Chol.)/**უჩმ** *učm* (Lash.) 1. "fast; the Nativity fast (Advent fast)", 2. "the month of the Nativity; December" < Old Geo. *u-chm-i*, *u-chm-eb-a* "not eating", *u-chm-el-i* "one who fasts"; **წყლიან** *čqiliän*/**წყვლიან** *čqalžän* (US.)/**წყილან** *čqilän* (LB.)/**წყვლიან** *čqaljan* (Lash., Chol.)/**წყვლიან** *čqaliän* (Lent.)/**წყილიან** *čqilian* (Ushg.) "holy, pure, immaculate; innocent" (literally _ *tskl-ian-i* (watery))" <Geo. *tskal-i* "a colorless, transparent liquid _ a chemical compound of

hydrogen and oxygen"...))

In the analyzed material, the following phonetic processes are most prominently observed: voicing, devoicing, aspiration, assimilation, affrication–deaffrication, consonant and vowel alternation, alternation of the sonorant consonants **l/m/n/r**, insertion and loss of sounds, vowel aspiration, metathesis, etc. Some of the borrowed roots have been “svanized,” i.e., they contain the morphophonological features characteristic of Svan, such as palatal, velar, or labial umlaut (e.g., მაცხუარ macxär, მოძღუარ mozywzär, საყდარ saqdar, უფალ upäl, ჯუარ žwär; სუინა swinäj, უსხუა usxwäj, {ჰ}ემმა {h}ešmäj; ბარძიმ bärzim, სხსნილ säxsnil, ფარსეთელ pärisewel; ზედაშ zedäš, იურდან iwedän; ანგ[უ]ლეზ äng[w]lez, კირუენ kirwen, მირუენ mirwen; დესასწაილ dyesasçäwil, მოცქილ mockwil, რჯილ rçwil, საუიჭმ säwiçm; ანლაბ anyläb, განცხადაბ gancxadäb, ზირაბ ziräb, ფერცლაბ percläb...), long vowel (e.g., დიკუენ diḱwen, ზირებ zireb, მაცხუარ macxwär, პარპოლდაშ pärpöldäš, საკმელუ sakmēlw, ჭიმკარობ čimḱarob; თარინგზელ ḱaringzel; ამენ amēn, მეისარობ mejsärob, ყუელიერ qweliēr, ჭანტილობ čāntilob...), anaptyxis (e.g., გერცამ gercäm, ლაზენგლაზ lazəngläg, ლიწერული liçærweli, საღერმათ/საღერმათ dsayərmaṭ/säyərmaṭ, წყელაძან çqeljän...) and etc., which serves as a kind of guide in determining the geographical direction of borrowings.

Observation of the material revealed that most of them seem to have been borrowed from Georgian (e.g., სამება sameba, სანთელ sanṭel, ყუელიერ qwelier, ჯუარ žwar...), while some of them seem to have been borrowed from other languages, namely: Greek (e.g., აიაზმა aiazma, ქრისტე kriste, იურდან iwrdän, ანგ[უ]ლეზ äng[w]lez, მირუენ mirwen...), Latin (e.g., კალანდა ḱalanda/კანდა ḱanda...), Pahlavi (e.g., ბარძიმ barzim, მარხუ marxw, ჭაბგობ čabgob...), Arabic (e.g., ხატ xat...), etc. through Georgian-Megrelian.

The roots of foreign religious lexical units in Svan appear to be primarily borrowed from Georgian–Zan (directly or indirectly), and they have undergone significant phonetic–phonological and semantic changes following their adoption. In many cases, naturally, we are dealing with rather complex phonological transformations, which, from our perspective, indicate very old borrowings. Clearly, other phonetic processes also operate in bringing borrowed religious lexical units into their own forms (consonants and vowel alternation, alternation of the sonorant consonants **l/m/n/r**, insertion and loss of sounds, vowel aspiration, metathesis, etc.), detailed analysis of which will be presented in the forthcoming monograph: “Ethno-linguistic Aspects of Svan Religious Vocabulary”.

Common Kartvelian material: Based on the comparison and contrast of Svan religious lexical units with their corresponding Georgian–Zan roots, we identified a number of newly reconstructed Common

Kartvelian archetypes. The Georgian–Zan contrastive material known from etymological dictionaries was supplemented with Svan correspondences revealed in our study. To identify the most ancient archetypes, as previously mentioned, we employed various research methods (**synchronic–diachronic, descriptive, historical–comparative, internal reconstruction**, etc.) and, relying on extralinguistic materials, presented a discussion of the customary and ritual aspects of Svan folk festivals (e.g., **დულობ** *dulob* (US., LS.) “a tabooed festival of Svan women”; **უწონაშობ** *uḥonaḥob*/**უწონაშ** *uḥonaḥ*/**უწენაშ** *uḥenaḥ* (US.) “eating a specially sacrificed animal or a round loaf of bread within the family without anyone outside seeing it”; **უყლარობ** *uq̄larob*/**უყლა** *uq̄la* (LB.) “eating within the family of a specially sacrificed animal or cake in such a way that no one outside sees or hears it.” **ლალყაჯ** *lalq̄aǰ* (LB.) “a forbidden offering that was not permitted to be seen by anyone except the family members”... **დულ{ტ}** *dul{w}* (US.)/**დულ** *dul* (LS.) “a cheese-filled ritual round loaf of bread /khachapuri baked by a woman in secret from the other members of the family”; **უწონაშ** *uḥonaḥ*/**უწენაშ** *uḥenaḥ* (US.) “ritual round loaf of bread which were forbidden to be eaten or seen by people outside the family”; **უყლა** *uq̄la* (LB.) “forbidden food (bread, meat, etc.) for people outside the family”; **ლალყაჯ** *lalq̄aǰ* (US.)/**ლეღყაჯ** *lelq̄aǰ* (UB., LS.)/**ლალყაჯ** *lalq̄aǰ* (Lash., Chol.)/**ლეღყაჯე** *lelq̄aǰe* (Lash.) “a forbidden/taboo sacrificial pig for certain family festivals, either whole or in parts—its head, lower jaw, belly, internal organs, blood, bones, kemp-hair, etc.”... **ლემზირ** *lemzir* **ღუინძილ** *ywinzil* (UB.) “a cheese-filled ritual bread baked by women and sacrificed to the earth”; **კიხ** *kixw* (LB.)/**კიხე** *kixe* (Chol.) “ritual bread”...; **ლიცხტი** *licxti* (LB.)/**ლიცხტ** *licxät* (UB.)/**ლიცხატ** *licxat* (Lash.)/**ლიცხტენი** *licxteni* (Lash., Chol.) “sacrificing/offering (land, livestock, etc.) in the name of a deity or a saint”; “declaring land to be a sacred/protected site, a place of worship”...), as well as certain archaic lexical units of Svan pantheon of deities (e.g., **აბრაშ** *abrāx*/**აბრახ** *abrax*/**აბრაჰ** *abrāh*/**აბრაჰ** *abrah* (LB.) “Patron deity of sheep”, **აბერჰამ** *abərham* {detsesh} (US.) 1. “Deity of the sky / sun,” “Deity of livestock and their caretakers,” “Deity who heals eyes”), **ლაპატრა** *lapatra* “Patron deity of pigs”; **უეხტარ** *weḥxtär* “the name of one of Svan gods”...)

From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the study of this ancient Svan ritual and ceremonial vocabulary allowed us to identify a number of archaic forms, most of which (e.g., **აბრაშ** *abrāx*; **უეხტარ** *weḥxtär*; **ლაპატრა** *lapatra*) have been forgotten today, while others have undergone significant change. In the context of contemporary globalization, we believe it is particularly important to study and identify those ancient, relic folk festivals (pagan or Christian) and tabooed lexical units that have undergone remarkable transformations from the most ancient times to the present.

We conducted a detailed study of Svan lexical units related to fasting and communion, taking into

account both religious and folk motivations, and examined the material borrowed from Georgian-Zan (directly or indirectly) (e.g., ზირაბ *zirāb*/ზირებ *zīreb*/ზიარებ *ziareb*/ზირაბ *zirab*/ძიარება *ziareba*/ზაძრება *zjäreba* “communion — one of the rites of the Christian Church: the reception (drinking and eating) of the so-called consecrated wine and portion of the communion bread”; ლიმარხულე *limarxule* “fasting, keeping the fast, observing the rules of fasting”; მარხუ[ა] *marxw{a}* “fasting”; მარხუობ *marxwob* “fasting, keeping the fast, observing the rules of fasting”; ლიუტქმალ *liwčmāl*/ლიუტქმელ *liwčmel*/ლიუტქმალ- *liwčmal*/ლიუტქმალ *liwčmāl*/ლიუტქმალ *liwčmāl* “fasting; the Nativity Fast”; ლიუტქმი *liwčmw*/ლიუტქმე *liwčme* “fasting” ლიურწყუი *liurcqw*/ლიურწყუეუი *liurcqwewi*/ლიურწყუეუი{ი} *liurcqwew{i}*/ლიურწყუეუი - *liurcqwewi*/ლიურწყუეუი *liurcqwewi*/ლიურწყუეუი *liurcqwewi* “fasting as a sign of mourning”; საყსნილ *saqsnil* /საყსნილ *saqsnil*/სახსნილ *saxsnil*/სახსნილ *saxsnil* “permitted food for non-fasting days; non-Lenten food”; ლიტმე *litme*/ლიტამე *litäme* “fasting; hunger”...), in parallel, we identified both Common Kartvelian ... (e.g., ლილჩალ *lilčal*/ლილ *lin*/ლილჩალ *lilčal*/ლილჩალ *lilčal*/ლილჩალ *lilčal*/ლილჩალ *lilčal* -ლილჩალ *-lilečal* “keeping, fasting”), and Svan material itself (e.g., ლიშრაუი *lišrāwi*/ლიშრაუი *lišrawi*/ლიშრაუინე *lišrāwine*/ლიშერაუი *lišerāwi*/ლიშრაუე *lišrawe* 1. “breaking the fast (eating the permitted food)”; 2. “the liberation of the soul; the opening of the hand”; ლიშრაუინალ *lišrawīnāl* “breaking the fast after mourning (on the third day)”; ბაპა ჟაგი ლიმნე/ლიყმუნე *bapa žagi limne/liqmüne* (Ushg.) “communion (literally — eating the priest’s consecrated bread”); particularly interesting was the issue of differentiating the most ancient sacred terms denoting fasting (e.g., ლიუტქმი *liwčmi*/ლიუტქმე *liwčme* “ecclesiastical fast” and ლიურწყუი *liurcqw*/ლიურწყუეუი *liurcqwewi* “fasting as a sign of mourning”), which was determined by the nature of the fast. From a chronological perspective, some terms (e.g., ურწყუ *urcqw*, მუტქუმი *muwčwmi*, ოხთრის *oxtris*...) appear to be quite old borrowings, while others (e.g., მარხუ *marxw*, ხსნილ *xsnil*, სახსნილ *saxsnil*...) are relatively recent. The aforementioned vocabulary has naturally undergone appropriate phonetic changes corresponding to the phonemic structure of Svan, including: reduction, vowel length, auslaut simplification, umlaut, metathesis, affrication, glottalization, assimilation, bilabial modification, vowel alternation, sound loss... and other phonetic processes

Svan material itself: those phrases (e.g., ბაპა ჟაგი ლიმნე/ლიყმუნე *bapa žagi limne/liqmüne* (Ushg.) “communion (literally — eating the priest’s consecrated bread”)...) and lexical units (e.g., ჯეჯგლბ *žəžgləb*/ჯეჯგილ *žəžgil* “Deity of pigs”...), which have no correspondences in other Kartvelian languages, were naturally considered as specifically Svan forms. Despite their small number, they are particularly valuable from a general linguistic perspective.=

Conclusion

In the ancient customs and rituals we studied, numerous archaic motifs have naturally been preserved, many of which are distinguished by the richness of facts of sacred significance. In the context of contemporary globalization, we believe it is particularly important to study and identify those ancient, relic folk festivals (pagan or Christian) and tabooed lexical units that have undergone remarkable transformations from the earliest times to the present. The results of our ethno-linguistic research will contribute to further studies of the phonetics, phonology, grammatical system, and lexicology of Svan, as well as to its ethnological aspects. At the same time, it will be useful to specialists in Kartvelian languages, students in the humanities at higher education institutions, master's and doctoral students, and, more broadly, to all Kartvelologists interested in linguistic studies.

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