

**The Ethic Boundary of the Abkhazians and the Georgians (Megrelians)  
and Some Problems of Samurzaqano Toponymy**

Summary

At the end of the 17th century, as a result of occupational wars, the political/territorial border of the Abkhaz Principality moved from the Kodory River southwards, to the Enguri River. Irrespective of great endeavours to totally settle ethnically the newly-annexed territories, only Abzhua was made totally Abkhazian, and in Samurzaqano the native population maintained its own language and traditions. Both throughout the 19th century and nowadays the ethnic/linguistic border between the nationally Abkhazians and the nationally Georgians (from the ethnographic-linguistic standpoint — Megrelians) passes the left bank of the river Ghalidzga to the river Okhurei (except seaside villages).

The conemporary toponymic situation is as follows:

The names of Samurzaqano rivers and their main arms are only Megrelian, which indicates to their antiquity (a part of these hydronyms have been attested in Georgian and foreign historical sources). The names of the small arms of these rivers, in the highlands of Samurzaqano and at the above mentioned ethnic border, are mainly Abkhazian, as they have emerged later. Generally speaking, at this ethnic border on half of oikonyms and hydronyms is Abkhazian, and the other is Megrelian. Abkhazian vocabulary prevails in highland microtoponymy (this is understandable, as the Abkhazian were mainly involved in cattle-breeding). But to the south of the Okhurei River, that is on the territory of Gali District, the picture changes abruptly: only 5% of oikonyms and 15-20% of microtoponyms of the villages of the highland zone are Abkhazian (according to villages; the so called insular settlements of the Abkhazians were situated in these villages). As for the villages on lowland, southward from the Okhurei, the number of Abkhazian microtoponyms considerably decreases, and they do not occur on the left bank of the Enguri River.

All Abkhazian place-names and microtoponyms of Samurzaqano are a superstratum, they have emerged throughout the last 2-3 centuries, and they cannot serve as an argument for the ancient settlement of the Abkhazian in this region.