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### GEORGIAN LANGUAGE AS THE BASIS FOR THE KULTURAL, NATIONAL, HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL UNITY

Georgia, as historical and political entity, has always been divided into more or less diversified speech areas. Linguists have identified these different speeches as related languages or dialects of the same language, yet without strict definition of difference among them.

Nowadays in political circles to make distinction between language and dialect on the basis of the rigorous definition has become an urgent issue. They have given rise to the tendency that declare speeches of rural variants as independent languages in their own rights. There are even attempts to disintegrate literary Georgian into tribal "Languages" and establishing schools and media in these "Languages" on the pretext of "preserving" small languages. One of the "doctrines" even says that: "There is no such entity as Georgian nation, but a conglomeration of separate tribes". The author of the doctrine is anonymous but he has quite a few followers. For instance Megrelian and Laz sub-dialects of Zan dialect have been declared as separate languages.

I think that linguistic qualification of the language must be drawn apart from the social function of the language. The status of the language is determined by the social and political function. Through the entire history of the Georgian nation the Georgian language enjoyed the social sanction of "all Georgians", and this sanction determined it as the cultural phenomenon in the process of formation of the Georgian nation and of the Georgian culture.

Alongside the common literary Georgian language there exist Zan (resp. Megrelian-Chan) and Svan that have been qualified as related languages and Kartlian, Kakhian, Imeretian, Acharian, Gurian, Khevsurian, Tushian, Ingiloian, Mokhevian, Meskhian, Javakhian, Pshavian, Fereidanian, Mtiulian, Gudamaqarian that have been regarded as dialects. The paper also has lengthy discussion of the functions of the Literary Georgian in the historic Lazeti.