

## MIKHEIL LABADZE

### VOWEL SYSTEM OF LAZ DIALECTS

Laz dialect vowel system is simple. Like literary Georgian the three identified Laz dialects have five cardinal vowel phonemes: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/. In addition to this Athin-Artashen sub-dialect has neutral which is realized as an allo-phoneme of /u/, and /o/ vowel extension that has not a phoneme status.

Some students of Laz dialects (N.Marr, S.Zhgenti, N.Kutelia,..) identify palatalized vowels: /ja/, /je/, /jo/, /ju/. These, I think, are ordinary rising diphthongs and not vowels.

S.Zhgenti also identifies vowels with aspirated rise: /ha/, /he/, /hi/, /ho/, /hu/. Neither in Laz speech nor in any other Karvelian language unit vowels with aspirated rise do not function as independent phonemes.

In addition to S.Zhgenti thinks that vowels with palatalized rise: /'a/, /'e/, /'i/, /'o/, /'u/ are separate individual phonemes. N.Kutelia calls them pharyngeal vowels but supplies with comment that 'the distinction does not involve any phonological value'.

I have observed the vowels with the similar coloring in some speeches of Vits-Arkabian dialect. However, I think that their pharyngeal coloring results from /q/ reflex, which is mainly characteristic of mountainous region Laz speech.