

## **NATIONAL FOUNDATION OF LAZ POETIC ASPIRATION**

### **ABSTRACT**

Disconnection of Lazeti from Georgian statehood for many centuries essentially led to the circumstances where the Laz, in fact, did not have professional writers until the past century, those who would express their ideas in the Georgian or Laz literary texts. From this perspective, the Laz folklore is in more favourable state since it is rather rich and diverse due to the Laz folklore texts.

As is commonly known, the majority of the Laz living in Turkey determine their own national and linguistic identity independently from the Kartvelian ethnic group. This is not the case, as the proposed paper aims to demonstrate in a well-argued manner, based on the poetic texts written by the Laz themselves, that the Laz population represents a vital part of the Kartvelian world, given their ethnic roots, language, coexistence in the course of the centuries, customs and traditions, as well as other parameters typical to the national identity. Despite the fact that most part of the Laz lives beyond the borders of Georgia, their national self-consciousness is still Georgian.

The folklore is of tremendous importance for manifesting the national consciousness of the Laz. From this perspective, interesting accounts are attested in the Laz folklore texts recorded by I.Kipshidze, G.Dumézil, G.Kartozia, I. Asatiani, T.Kalandia, Z.Tandilava, T.Shioshvili, Ts.Narakidze and other researchers, the texts whose authors and story-tellers/reciters (of folk poetry) passionately demonstrate several important features that define their national identity.

Even though the Laz authors mainly put special emphasis on their tragic historical destiny when conceptualizing their past, they still underline the fact that, despite everything, they managed to protect and maintain their national identity.

The idea of ethnic unity of the Laz and the Georgians has been manifested with even greater force in the poetry of Hasan Helimisi and Jacob (Yasha) Tandilava, the Laz poets who live in Georgia.

**Keywords:** Laz folklore, Laz poetry, Laz ethnic identity.