

The Migratory and Linguistic Crossroads of Kvemo Kartli

When analyzing the migratory profile of Kvemo Kartli, a diverse and multidiversal reasons and processes emerges. Given that Kvemo Kartli was one of the main centers of Georgia's historical hardships, invasions, and expeditions, migratory changes in this region date back to historical periods. At times, parts of the villages and towns of Kvemo Kartli were completely destroyed and deserted, followed by processes of resettlement. In addition, Kvemo Kartli has been a central point of migratory policies or experiments. Besides Georgian rulers, various colonizers of different eras, including Iran, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union, planned and directed internal and external migratory processes here. During the Soviet period, Kvemo Kartli became a testing ground for planned migratory processes. Successful or unsuccessful migratory experiments continued during the independence period as well.

The ethnic landscape of Kvemo Kartli has particularly changed over the past two centuries, during which the polyethnic nature of this region has taken shape. Over time, alongside the Georgian language, other languages such as Armenian, Azerbaijani, Turkish (Urum Turkish dialect in Tsalka), Greek (Pontic Greek dialect), Russian, German, Kurdish, Aramaic, Ukrainian, and Romani have coexisted in Kvemo Kartli. Due to historical changes, some languages no longer exist in Georgia's linguistic reality, although their traces can still be found in toponymy and vocabulary.

In addition to linguistic diversity, Kvemo Kartli also presents a rich dialectological picture. Throughout history, various migrations from the eastern mountainous regions, Shida Kartli, Imereti, Racha, Adjara, and Svaneti have taken place in the almost deserted Kvemo Kartli, leading to the dialectal diversity of this region. Some dialects adapted to the local Georgian speech and remained only fragmentarily, while others are still alive today, showing peculiarities at different levels of speech.

In the second half of the 20th century, several migrations took place in the region from western Georgia. One of the most large-scale and well-planned migrations involved the resettlement of populations from various villages in Imereti and Racha to former German colonies. The main reason for the resettlement was to populate the villages vacated by Germans with a Georgian population, especially given the conditions of a multinational region. The population of the small landholdings in Imereti and Racha viewed the prospect of fertile lands as a means of improving their living conditions, especially since these migratory processes were accompanied by propaganda and various promises.

The dialectal landscape changed as a result of migrations, and the contacts, development, and changes of dialects are particularly characterized by a sociolinguistic profile. Often,

linguistic changes are driven by sociolinguistic factors. Unlike dialectological processes conditioned by geographical reasons, the changes in migrated dialects are more intense and are distinguished by many conditions and details.

The migrated Georgian dialects in Kvemo Kartli encountered different conditions and environments. In some regions, such as the villages vacated by Germans, there was no contact with the Kvemo Kartli dialect of the Kartli dialect. In other villages, these dialects had to develop in the environment of other languages (Azerbaijani, Armenian), which led to intense connection and identification with the literary Georgian language for the purpose of self-preservation. In some geographical points, conditions were created for the contact between Imeretian and Kvemo Kartlian dialects. It is noteworthy that Imeretian and Kartlian dialects have historically neighbored each other (e.g., the Kartlian dialect of the Borjomi Gorge). It was interesting to see how the historical neighbourhood and the "new neighbourhood" created by migration influenced the changes and tendencies of self-differentiation in dialect contacts.

The Kvemo Kartlian variations of mountain dialects, Kartlian, Imeretian, and Rachian dialects, the Adjarian dialectal variation, the peculiarities of Svan dialects and Svan migrants' Georgian speech in Kvemo Kartli, and the linguistic coloration of other ethnic groups' Georgian speech present a diverse picture of the crossroads of dialects and languages. We will attempt to present this picture in our report.