

## To the history of an Argument: Ketevan Lomtadze V.S. Georgiy Serdyuchenko

**Avtor:** Teimuraz Gvantseladze - Sokhumi State University

Georgia, Tbilisi, Politkovskaya 61

**E-mail:** [gvantseladzet@gmail.com](mailto:gvantseladzet@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Academician Ketevan Lomtadze happened to work under the politically and ideologically extremely difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, she was still very young when became one of the leaders in the linguistics of Caucasian Studies. In 1949-1955 she had acute arguments with prof. Georgiy Serdyuchenko, an adept of the communist ideology.

Georgiy Serdyuchenko started studying the Abaza dialects in the 30<sup>th</sup> of XX century. Soon he became an influential person and would control the linguistic situation in the North-West Caucasus. In 1945 G. Serdyuchenko started to work at the Institute of Russian language, in Moscow where he with prof. Fedot Filin and others persecuted those scientists, who were suspected in “cosmopolitanism” and recognized the findings of “bourgeoisie linguistics”.

In 1948 G. Serdyuchenko was appointed as the head of department of Caucasian languages at Moscow State University. After the notorious linguistic debates unleashed in 1950, he as the persecutor of common sense, was removed from Moscow University and transferred to the Institute of Asian Peoples.

G. Serdyuchenko had claims to be the most outstanding expert in the study of Abaza dialects. He was the one who K. Lomtadze happened to have principal disagreements with and opposed in 1944. She gave a negative assessment to one of G. Serdyuchenko’s articles and noted that the author did not have enough competence to perceive the Abaza dialects, its word structure and even the elementary linguistic phenomena properly.

In 1949 K. Lomtadze wrote a critical review of G. Serdyuchenko's three articles in Russian and sent it for the publication in the XXIII volume of Works of the Institute of Abkhazian language, Literature and History in Sokhumi. The review proved the ignorance and plagiarism of the author of those works. This review had a strange fate: the first edition of the collection of scientific works was issued but the book was arrested, as for K. Lomtadze, she was summoned to Abkhazia to meet the first administrative body of the Autonomous Republic, Akaki Mgeladze. As K. Lomtadze recollected later, A. Mgeladze told the scientist that he believed that she was correct, but they had been unable to leave the article in the book. He added that it was dangerous both for her and for them too. He said: I offer you such way out, we would give you the printed copies of the review and you distribute them; as for the collection of works – it would be published without the above mentioned review.

The scientist accepted this proposal. The author was given the offprints, which were sent to scientific centers of the USSR by her; its effect resembled the blowing of a bomb. That review brought K. Lomtadze a great respect in the whole Soviet Union.

At the end of the 40<sup>th</sup> of the previous century, a special commission exposed G. Serdyuchenko in plagiarism and acquisition of the monography written by prof. Anatoliy Genko. That case literally ruined his authority.

In 1955 G. Serdyuchenko published an extensive work under a very pretentious title: “The Abaza language (general information about Abaza, their dialects, phonetics, morphology, texts and vocabulary)” (in Russ.). The author showed up K. Lomtadze, her husband prop. Giorgi Rogava and acad. Arnold Chikobava. G. Serdyuchenko blaming the scientists from Tbilisi on “misuse” of the term *Abkhaz-Adyghe Languages* and on outlining only three languages (Abkhazian, Adyghe and Ubykh), as for Abaza and Kabardian, they according to his claims were factually ignored by Georgian scientists and were not considered as independent languages (G. Serdyuchenko, 1955, pp. 4-6, 33-35). The most dangerous was the following accusation of a political character: *K. Lomtadze, G. Rogava and A. Chikobava deprived Abaza the right of existence as an independent nation and as for the Abaza language, the right to exist as a language*. The administration of that time could easily use these accusations for the repression of scientists from Tbilisi.

Not with standing this attack from G. Serdyuchenko, K Lomtadze would remain on her position: in special cases, she would often resort to a terminological syntagma *the Ashkharua and the T'ap'anta dialects* instead of the term *Abaza language*. The term *Abaza language* was registered in K. Lomtadze publications only since 1971, as for the term *Abkhaz – Adyghe languages*, it had never been ignored either by her, G. Rogava or A. Chikobava.