

An Exercise in Abkhaz Comparative Dialectology: in the Steps of N. Ja. Marr

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One of the multitude of languages in which the legendary (albeit, in terms of theoretical linguistics, eccentric) Scottish-Georgian philologist Nikolaj Jakovlevich Marr [Nik'o Iak'obis-dze Mari] (1864-1934) took an interest was the North-West Caucasian language Abkhaz, spoken to the (north-) west of both his birthplace (Kutaisi in Imereti(a)) and his maternal region of Guria; the province of Mingrelia (home to Georgian's sister-language, Mingrelian, the second most widely attested South Caucasian tongue) historically split Abkhazia from Georgian-speaking areas.

Abkhaz had first been studied in depth by the Russian soldier-linguist Baron P. K. Uslar, who is widely credited with having laid the foundations of North Caucasian linguistics. He produced monograph-descriptions of some seven North Caucasian languages, and Abkhaz was the first, the printed version of the work appearing in 1887. Uslar devised a Cyrillic-based script but did not manage to distinguish all the 67 consonantal phonemes of the northern, Bzyp dialect, on which he worked. Successive adaptations were introduced by I. Bartolomej, K'. Mach'avariani, the native Abkhazian D. Gulia, and finally in 1909 by another Abkhazian A. Ch'och'ua, whose version remained in use for some two decades. Pre-Soviet publications were few and included a translation of the Gospels (1912) and Ch'och'ua's own primer (1920). The early Soviets granted Abkhaz the status of a literary language, which guaranteed not only continuing and more widescale publication but also the possibility of teaching of and in the language.

As part of the 'latinizatsija'-campaign of the mid to late 1920s a Roman-based script was introduced for Abkhaz (as for all the USSR's so-called Young Written Languages). When the scripts for all such languages that retained their literary status were being shifted to a Cyrillic base in the years 1936-38, it was a Georgian-based orthography that was forced on Abkhaz (and the Ossetic of Georgia's South Ossetian Autonomous District) in 1938. After the death of Stalin in 1953 a new, once again Cyrillic-based script was created to represent Abkhaz, and, with minor adaptations, this still functions -- see Hewitt (1995) for a proposal to re-romanise.

Omitted from this list of writing-systems is an aberration of the mid 1920s. Marr published in 1922 his ideas for an alphabet designed to represent all the languages of the Caucasus in a move to help unify the region (see Cherchi & Manning Manuscript, and cf. Hewitt 1999 for a similarly motivated scheme). It was essentially this, eventually renamed 'Abkhaz Analytical Alphabet' of 75 characters that Marr employed in his 1928 Abkhaz-Russian Dictionary; it also served for the reverse Russian-Abkhaz Dictionary compiled and published the same year by V. Kukba and A. Khashba. The script also features in the posthumously published 'O jazyke i istorii abxazov' (On the Language and History of the Abkhazians) of 1938. Included on pp.163-4 of this work are four short texts, evidently collected in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) on 2nd December 1917 and transcribed in the Analytical Alphabet, which is an amalgam of Greek, Roman and Cyrillic letter-shapes plus a substantial number of diacritics, which all combine to present the reader with a challenging obstacle-course (even in the absence of printing errors!). Until the introduction of the Roman-based orthography, all Abkhaz publications had been in the Bzyp dialect -- the shift to Roman seemed to coincide with the emergence of gifted writers from the more southerly Abzhywa-speaking area, and it was at this point that the phonetically less complex Abzhywa (with a mere 58 consonantal phonemes) became the literary standard. Thus, Marr's 1917 texts, as might be expected, represent the Bzyp dialect. As the posthumous publication simply reproduced the basic texts, this article presents them, with translation and notes, together with their Abzhywa equivalents by way of a small contribution to comparative Abkhaz dialectology -- Text 2 (the proverb) was included and translated into Russian by Marr earlier in the book. Though native speaker, the late X^wəx^wət' Bɣaɣ^wba (Xuxut Bgazhba) transcribed Text 3 below and appended a Russian translation of it on p.378 of his 1964 'Bzybskij dialekt abxazskogo jazyka' (The Bzyp Dialect of the Abkhaz Language), and whilst Sergej Zyx^wba reproduced all four texts (No. 42 = Text 3; 44 = Text 4; 47 = Text 2; 84 = Text 1) in his 'Apswa fol'k'lor amat'erialk^wa (ak'ademik' N. I. Marr iarxiv aq'nət^w)' (Abkhaz Folklore Materials (from the Archive of Academician N.Ja. Marr)) of 1967, I am not aware of any other treatment or translation devoted to them.

One commendable feature of Marr's script is his marking by means of a grave accent of the stressed syllable, a feature which some argue (Hewitt 1995; 1999) should be present in any method of writing Abkhaz with its complicated patterns of movable stress. Bgazhba ignored this

aspect of transcription in his 1964 rendition of Text 3. Sometimes the stress assigned by Marr differs from its placement in (modern-day) Abzhywa -- it is not known how many such cases represent anything more than misprints, and only obvious slips are commented upon below.

Unlike Bzyp, Abzhywa has only one voiceless labialised fricative in the front-palatal (specifically palato-alveolar) region -- it is currently represented by the digraph \mathfrak{w}^{a} . Bzyp additionally possesses a voiceless labialised alveolo-palatal fricative [\mathfrak{c}^{w}]. Now, to represent the former phoneme Marr used the same basic Cyrillic character as found in today's standard Abkhaz but instead of the schwa for labialisation added a small circle to the rightmost upright. To represent the extra Bzyp fricative Marr took as base the Cyrillic character \mathfrak{w} , not employed in the standard Abkhaz orthography, and added the same circular diacritic. In our texts it is often difficult, especially but not exclusively in the presence of the labialisation-marker, to detect the descender of this latter graph, so that, if one did not know that Bzyp uses $/\mathfrak{c}^{\text{w}}/$ for pronominal reference to 2nd person plural entities, one might easily misread and be tempted to suppose that Marr was hearing the corresponding Abzhywa fricative $/\mathfrak{c}^{\text{w}}/$.

In the 1928 Dictionary a peculiarity occurs on pp. 141 ff. Under the heading of the graph 'd' with an underscored pointed circumflex (p. 141) one finds a number of entries for the phoneme $/\mathfrak{d}^{\text{z}}/$, the voiced palato-alveolar affricate. On p. 142 more items are introduced under a heading that differs from the one just described by having a descender to the right of the basic graph. Strangely, these items also illustrate the phoneme $/\mathfrak{d}^{\text{z}}/$. On p. 143 four entries occur under a heading that looks (in my photocopy of the original) exactly like that given on p. 141 but, to judge from the actual examples, would seem to be the same combination of basic character plus diacritic with an extra underscored macron between 'd' and pointed circumflex -- this combination represents the voiced retroflex affricate $/\mathfrak{d}^{\text{z}}/$. In the 1938 volume the chart that sets out the entire orthography (pp. 153-162) has this last phoneme represented by the superfluous mid-combination of the 1928 Dictionary, thereby eliminating the combination with the extra underscored macron. Underscored macrons remain as part-signallers of (a) the voiceless retroflex affricates (aspirate and ejective) and (b) Bzyp's two extra voiceless back fricatives (plain and labialised), which phonetically are either uvulars (if one takes

the standard back fricatives of Abzhywa to be basically velar -- as, for convenience, in the transcription below) or pharyngalised uvulars (if one takes the standard back fricatives of Abzhywa to be basically uvular, as phoneticians generally do); below they are represented as /χ/ and /χ^W/. The underscored macron is, bizarrely, also used with 'v' to represent the voiceless ejective labio-dental fricative found with some Abzhywa speakers (Marr specifies the argot of Mək^W) in just the one word /a'f'a/ 'thin', pronounced [a'p'a] by most Abkhazians.

Marr's transcriptions aim to reflect the flow of speech, which explains certain elisions, whereas the Abzhywa representations below are of words as they would rather be pronounced in isolation. Verbs ending in /-Cejt'/ [-Ce:t']¹, where C = any consonant, are often shortened to the vowelless [-Ct']², and we bracket the diphthong where shortening has occurred in Bzyp; the reduction of /-Cəjt'/ [-Ci:t']³ to [-Ct']⁴ is less common in Abzhywa.

The first text has the title 'Beginning of a tale in the K'aldax^Wara argot of the Bzyp dialect'.

Text 1. K'aldax^Wara Bzyp Original

1. a'hā.k'¹ 'də.q'a.n. 2. bɜ.ɥ pa.'tɕ^W(a)¹ 'jə.ma.n,
 'a.dz^Wə.j 'a.dz^Wə.j ej.'pɕə.m.k^W'a, a.dz^W də.w.(¹)ba.r²,
 a.dz^W də.w.'xa.ɕt.wa(n)³. 3. pħa 'də.j.ma.mə.z.t'¹. 4.
 wə.'brə.j a.tɕ'ə.t^W'¹ jə.'pħ^Wə.ɕ.ɕə² jə.r.'ɕə³
 ej.'ta.n.ej.'ta.s.wa a.n'tɕ^Wa 'jə.h^W.wa.n⁴ pħa d.ħa.t⁵
 h^Wa. 5. wə.ɕ jə.'zə.q'a.z¹, pħa x^Wtɕ'ə.k' aħ d.j.o.w.t'. 6.
 'da(:)ra¹ jə.'l.ej.g^W.r.ɣa.n² a.'tɕara³ 'a.tɕ^W.k^Wa.r.ɕə.n⁴,
 'a.z^W.k^Wa.r.ɕə.n⁴ jə.'bzə.ja.nə jə.q'a.r.'ts'ə.jt'⁵.

Abzhywa Version

1. a'hā.k' 'də.q'a.n. 2. bɜ.ɥ pa.'tɕ^Wa 'jə.ma.n,
 'a.dz^Wə.j 'a.dz^Wə.j ej.'pɕə.m.k^W'a, a.dz^W də.w.'ba.r,
 a.dz^W də.w.'xa.ɕt.wa(n). 3. pħa 'də.j.ma.mə.z.t'. 4.
 wə.'brə.j a.tɕ'ə.n.t^W' jə.'pħ^Wə.s.ɕə ja.r.'ɕə
 ej.'ta.n.ej.'ta.s.wa a.n'tɕ^Wa 'jə.h^Wə.n pħa d.ħa.t h^Wa. 5.

wə.s jə.'ʃə.q'a.z, p̄h̄a x^Wtʃ'ə.k' aħ d.'j.o.w(ə.j)t'. 6. 'da:ra
 jə.'l.ej.g^Wə.r.ýa.n(') a.'tʃara 'a.tɕ^W.k^Wa r.ʃə.n, 'a.ɜ^W.k^Wa
 r.ʃə.n jə.'bzəja.nə jə.q'a.r.'ts'e.jt'.

Word-gloss¹

1. a.prince he.was 2. seven.HUMAN son.s he.had.them, one.and
 one.and not.being.like, one if.you.see.him, one you.would.forget.him 3.
 daughter he.did.not.have.her 4. that from.it his.wife.and he.and
 incessantly (the.)god they.were.beseeching.him daughter give.her.to.us
 saying 5. thus as.it.was daughter a.little the.prince he.gained.her 6. much
 they.having.rejoiced.at.her (the.)feast (the.)bull.s they.killed.them.and,
 (the.)cow.s they.killed.them.and well they.made.it

Translation

1. There was a prince. 2. He had seven sons, being (so) unlike one
 another (that), if you saw one, you'd forget another. 3. He had no
 daughter. 4. For that reason he and his wife were constantly beseeching
 God to give them a daughter. 5. Thus did the prince gain a little daughter.
 6. They rejoiced greatly over her, killed bulls, killed cows and put on a
 really good feast.

Notes

1¹: The reason for the appearance of the open vowel at the end of
 the root in this indefinite form is that the close vowel, expected between
 root and indefinite articular suffix, cannot exist alongside the plain
 voiceless pharyngal fricative, which causes lowering. 2¹: Marr indicates
 this elision with an apostrophe, but in the IPA system this would suggest
 an ejective, and so we have simply bracketed the dropped open vowel.
 2²: No stress is indicated. 2³: This word is possible in two forms -- with
 the nasal it is the Imperfect 'you would forget X'; without the nasal it is
 strictly the non-finite Present 'you forgetting him/her'. The latter form is
 often found in proverbs -- cf. *a.'k^Wats.ǰə dz.wa a.tɕ^W.'ǰə*
m.bəl.'wa the.meat.too roasting the.skewer.too not.burning 'Let the
 meat roast and the skewer not burn!'

3¹: Marr states in a footnote that he actually heard *'də.j.ma me.z*

4¹: The nasal here is preferred in Abzhywa. 4²: This word shews
 our first instance of Bzyp /ɕ/ = Abzhywa /s/. 4³: Marr here indicates the

¹These word-glosses make no pretence to morpheme-by-morpheme analysis.

raising effect produced on the open vowel in the first syllable by the preceding palatal element (here the glide); such instances are normally marked in the Abkhaz orthography, but this 3rd person pronoun does not usually illustrate it -- hence the Abzhywa open vowel (and Marr has a footnote incorporating just such a representation). 4⁴: Note the contrast between bivalent intransitive /*(j.)jə.h^W.wa.n/* (= Abzhywa [*jə.h^Wɔn*]) 'They were beseeching him' and transitive /*(j.)jə.h^W.wa.n/* (= Abzhywa [*jə.h^Wɔn*]) 'He was saying X'. The root of the verb 'say' is /-h^Wa-/, and it is the post-radical sequence /-a-wa-/ in Abzhywa which produces the phonetic [ɔ], whereas Bzyp here drops the open vowel (as it often does) to produce the attested form with unchanged Dynamic suffix /-wa-/. 4⁵: Verb-roots ending in the open vowel (cf. /'a.ta.ra/ 'to give') frequently drop it, as here, in the Imperative.

5¹: This word shews the contrast between the Bzyp and Abzhywa forms of the pre-radical particle of manner 'as': Bzyp /*z*/ = Abzhywa /*ɕ*/. However, a glance at words 3 and 7 of the 6th sentence in Text 3 reveals that Bzyp may also use in this function the homorganic voiceless fricative /*ɕ*/. There is, thus, a potential ambiguity in Bzyp, where /*z*/ may also function in the sense of 'why' (cf. Text 3, sentence 8, word 5), which in Abzhywa is simple /*z*/ -- cf. Bzyp /*də.z.'tse.j*/ = Abzhywa /*də.z.'tse.j*/ 'Why did (s)he go?'.
 6¹: The text has /*dara*/, which looks like the 3rd person plural pronoun 'they' with misplaced accent. However, were the item actually this pronoun, the following verb-form would lose its initial /*jə*/, which would be coreferential with this putative pronoun. This means that the form should be read /*da:ra*/ 'much, greatly'. 6²: Marr interprets this form as what in full would be /*jə.'le.j.g^W.r.ɣa.nə*/ (as given in a footnote), namely the Past Absolute 'they having rejoiced over her'. However, without the vocalic addition the form could also function in this position as the Past Indefinite 'they rejoiced at her and' in parallel with the repeated verbs discussed in note 6⁴. 6³: This word, being the direct object of the sentence-final main verb, would more naturally stand in antepenultimate position, in which case the penultimate word would lose

its initial /jə/, coreferential with its (now) immediate antecedent. 6⁴: Marr's text pretty clearly prints the character ω in the root of these verbs, but 'to kill' is /a.j.'ra/ with palato-alveolar not retroflex fricative, regardless of dialect, which means that we need to read ω . 6⁵: The root of the verb 'make, do' is /ts'a-/ -- note how Bzyp here treats it as though the vowel were the close one, giving /ts'əjt'/ instead of the expected sequence /ts'əjt'/ as the ending for this Aorist.

Text 2. Bzyp Original Proverb

1. 'z aʂx^{Wa}1 w.'to.w, 'j.aɕ^{Wa} h^{Wa}2

Abzhywa Version

1. 'z aʂx^{Wa} wə.'to.w, 'j.aɸ^{Wa} h^{Wa}

Word-gloss

whose.boat you.being.in.it his.song say.it

Translation

Sing the song of the one in whose boat you are = When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Notes

1¹: Though B. Dzhanašia in his 1954 Abkhaz-Georgian Dictionary quotes this word under /ʂ/, thereby implying that the initial /a-/ is the article, the presence of an open vowel when preceded by the relativised possessor prefix, as here, indicates that the root is in fact vowel-initial.

1²: Again Bzyp has close vowel for Abzhywa's open vowel. Notice how Abkhaz renders 'to sing', namely /aɕ^{Wa} ≈ 'aɸ^{Wa} a.h^{Wa}.ra/ 'to say a song'.

Text 3. Bzyp Original

1. aħ¹

2. a'ħa.k' 'uɛ.dza pa.'tɕ^{Wa} 'jə.ma.n. 3. aħ də.'pɕə.t'. 4. jə.pa.'tɕ^{Wa} a.k'ə.r ej.'tɕ'ə.n, a'χa nas 'aj.tɕ'ə.ts'.ra.ʂ r.'χə.də.r.xe.jt', jə.rə.ma.z ze'gə r.ʂe.jt', ləw.'k'ə.j¹ war'ħal.k'ə.j 'rə.da. 5. wə.r't rə.q'.nə j.a'n.a(:).j¹ ej.'ma.r.k't' -- 'a.ləw a.rə.ɣa.ra.ʂ jə.'wə.r.ɣazə.r² 'jə.w.taxə.w 'a.fa.t^W a.'tɕ'ə.ts'.wa.n, a.rə.ma.ra.ʂ

jə.(ə)wə.r.ǵəzə.r, a.ʕə z.a.q'a w.ta'χə.w a:na.ft.wa.n;
 a.war'hal a'ha, 'aa a.war'hal a'nə.w h^Wa.la.ǵ³,
 j.a'xə.w taxə.w⁴ w.a.(ə)g.wa.n⁵. 6. 'a.ləwə.j a.war'hələ.j
 ɕ.ej.(ə)ma.r.k'.wa.z 'a.k^W(ə)m.k^W'a¹ wo.ɥ 'bzeja.k'
 d.'ɕə.jas.wa.z² d.'rə.k^W.ɕ^W.t', 'ej.ma.ɕ^W.k'.wa.zə.j h^Wa
 d.r.a.z.'tɕ'az.jt'. 7. d.war'hələ.j 'a.ləwə.j ej.'ma.h.k'.wo.jt'¹
 r.h^Wə.t'. 8. e.'ɥə.ɕ^Wə.m.ɕ.wa¹ a'nə.j.h^Wa, mo.'mo.w
 r.h^Wə.t' jə.z.'ba.n [a.k^W'za.r]² 'a.ləw a.'rə.ýa.ra.ʕ
 jə.'wə.r.ǵəzə.r fa.t^Wə.s 'jə.w.taxə.w³ wə.'na.to.jt',
 a.war'hal s.gə a.(ə)xə.w h^Wa.la.ǵ w.a.'go.jt'. 9. nas wə.ɕ
 'a.k^W'za.r, ɕ^Wtɕa.'nə χa'ra ɕ^W.gəl sə.'bze x.ɕ^W.a.'hə.ɕa
 jə.'h^Wə.t'. 10. jə.'bzejo.w.p' r.h^Wa.n jə.'tɕa.n jə.'gəl.t'. 11.
 (ə)ləw a:ft.x.'nə, a.war'hal jə.'l.a.k^Wə.j.ts'a.n a'ha, a-a-
 a, war'hal a'nə.j h^Wa, 'd.a.ma.n(ə)¹ jə.'d^Wə.k^W.l.t', jə.'bze
 a:.'j.r.'ga.n ɕ^Wə.m.ɕ a:.'bzeja.x(a).az.jt'. 12. ɕ^Wə.war'hələ.j
 'ɕ^Wə.ləwə.j sa.'ra jə.z.(ə)go.jt', ɕ^Wa.r.t ej.'ma.ɕ^Wə.m.k'ə.n
 jə.'h^Wa.n d.'tɕe.jt'.

Abzhywa Version

1. ah

2. a'ha.k' 'ɥə.dza pa.'tɕ^Wa 'jə.ma.n. 3. ah də.'psə.jt'. 4.
 jə.pa.'tɕ^Wa a.k'ə.r ej.'tɕ'ə.n, a'xa nas 'aj.tɕ'ə.ts'ra.ʕ
 r.'xə.də.r xe.jt', jə.'rə.ma.z ze'ǵə r.ɕe.jt', ləw.k'ə.j
 war'hal.k'ə.j 'rə.da. 5. wə.r.t rə.q'.'nə j.a'n.a:.'j
 ej.'ma.r.k'(ə.j)t' -- 'a.ləw a.'rə.ýa.ra.ʕ jə.'wə.r.ǵəzə.r
 'jə.w.taxə.w 'a.f.a.t^W a.'tɕ'ə.ts'.wa.n, a.'rə.ma.ra.ʕ
 jə.'wə.r.ǵəzə.r, a.ʕə z.a.q'a wə.ta'xə.w a:na.ft.wa.n;
 a.war'hal a'ha, a: a.war'hal a'nə.w h^Wa.la.k',
 j.a'xə.w taxə.w w.a.'go.n. 6. 'a.ləwə.j a.war'hələ.j

ʃ.ej.ma.r.k' wa.z 'a.kʷə.m.kʷ'a wa.ɥ 'bzəja.k'
 d.ʃə.jas.wa.z d.rəkʷ.ʃʷ(e.j)t', 'ej.ma.ʃʷ.k' wa.zə.j hʷa
 d.r.a.z.ts'a:jt'. 7. a.war'hələ.j 'a.ləwə.j ej'ma.h.k' we.jt'
 r.hʷe.jt'. 8. ej.'tə.ʃʷə.m.ʃo a'hə.j.hʷa, ma.'mo.w
 r.hʷe.jt' jə.z.'ba.n ['a.kʷ'za.r] 'a.ləw a'rə.ɣa.ra.ɣ
 jə.'wə.r.ɣezə.r fa.tʷ'ə.s 'jə.w.taxə.w wə.'na.to.jt',
 a.war'həl s.ga a'xə.w.hʷa.la.k' wa.'go.jt'. 9. nas wəs
 'a.kʷ'za.r, ʃʷ.tsa.'hə xa'ra ʃʷ.gəl sə.'bzə ax.ʃʷ.a.'ha.ʃa
 jə.'hʷe.jt'. 10. jə.'bzəjo.w.p' r.hʷa.n jə.'tsa.n
 jə.'gəl(e.j)t'. 11. 'a.ləw 'a: ʃtə.x.nə, a.war'həl
 jə.'l.a.kʷə.j.ts'a.n a'hə, a-a-a, war'həl a'hə.j.hʷa,
 'd.a.ma.n(ə) jə.'dʷə.kʷ.l(e.j)t', jə.'bzə a: j.r.'ga.n ʃʷə.mʃ
 a:.'bzəja.x(a).a:jt'. 12. ʃʷ.war'hələ.j 'ʃʷə.ləwə.j sa'ra
 jə.z.'go.jt', ʃʷa.r.t ej'ma.ʃʷə.m.k'ə.n jə.'hʷa.n
 də.'tse.jt'.

Word-gloss

1. the.prince 2. a.prince two.HUMAN son.s he.had.them 3.
 the.prince he.died 4. his.son.s sometime they.were.among.one.another,
 but then towards.moving.from.one.another they.turned.their.head,
 which.they.had everything they.divided.it, a.millstone.and a.carpet.and
 apart.from.them 5. those to.them when.they.came
 they.argued(.over.them) -- the.millstone to.the.right if.you.turn.it
 which.you.want the.food it.would.emanate.from.it, to.the.left
 if.you.turn.it, (the.)gold as.much you.want.it it.would.produce.it;
 the.carpet "Hey, here carpet!" whenever.you.say.it, where.you.want.it
 it.would.convey.you 6. the.millstone.and the.carpet.and
 as.they.were.arguing.over.them ? man a.good as.he.was.passing
 he.happened.upon.them, "over.what.are.you.arguing" saying
 he.asks.them 7. "the.carpet.and the.millstone.and
 we.are.arguing.over.them" they.said 8. "your.not.dividing.them"
 when.he.said.it, "no" they.said.it "why [if.it.is] the.millstone to.the.right
 if.you.turn.it as.food which.you.want it.gives.it.to.you, the.carpet
 'take.me' wherever.you.say.it it.takes.you" 9. "then so if.it.is,

you.having.gone distantly you.stand my.voice
 where.you.will.be.able.to.hear.it" he.said.it 10. "it.is.good"
 they.said.it.and they.went.and they.stood 11. the.millstone
 having.picked.it.up, the.carpet he.put.it.down.on.it.and "Hey come,
 carpet" when.he.said.it it.having.him it.set.off, his.voice
 he.caused.it.to.carry.hither "your.day let.it.become.good your.carpet.and
 your.millstone.and I I.take.them, you don't.you.argue" he.said.it.and
 he.departed

Translation

1. The Prince

2. A certain prince had two sons. 3. The prince died. 4. For a time his sons lived together, but then they disposed themselves to separation (= determined to separate); they divided everything they possessed, apart from a millstone and a carpet. 5. When they came to those, they quarrelled (over them): 'If you should turn the millstone to the right, whatever food you want would come from it; if you should turn it to the left, it would produce as much gold as you want; as for the carpet, whenever you might say "Lo, come on, carpet!", it would take you wherever you want.' 6. As they were arguing over the millstone and the carpet, a good man passing by came upon them; he asked them what they were arguing about. 7. They said they were arguing about the carpet and the millstone. 8. When he said: 'Why don't you split them?', they said: 'No, because, if you turn the millstone to the right, it will bring whatever food you want; as for the carpet, it will take you wherever you say it should take you.' 9. Then he said, 'In that case, go and stand at a distance where you'll be able to hear my voice.' 10. They said 'OK', went and took up position. 11. He picked up the millstone, put it down on the carpet and, when he said: 'Lo, come on, carpet!', it set off with him. 12. Shouting, he said: 'Have a good day! I'm taking your carpet and millstone -- don't you argue!' and departed.

Notes

1¹: To be analysed, of course, as /ʔ(a.)aħ/ '(the.)prince'.

4¹: /a-ləw/ 'millstone' is rather reminiscent of Ancient Greek *ajlevw* 'I grind' (cf. *a[leu]ron* 'wheatmeal') and must surely be counted a borrowing.

5¹: The text has no macron over the open vowel, but the long vowel of /a: .j.ra/ 'to come' is clearly needed and indeed printed in Bgzhba's rendition. 5²: On this occasion no palatalising effect of the preceding

palatalised velar on the open vowel is indicated by Marr. 5³: This indefinite suffix usually has the form /-la.k²/ or /-la.k¹/ in standard Abkhaz, though, since the final component is undoubtedly the coordinating clitic /-ǵə/, the voiced form would seem to be original. 5⁴: Note the lack of palatalisation in this Bzyp version of the locative prefix that in Abzhywa has the form /-aǰə-/ 'where'. 5⁵: The root has lost its expected open vowel, producing the ending [-wan] instead of [-ɔn].

6¹: This word is optional following non-finite verb-forms containing the manner prefix /ɕ/ ≈ /ʔ/ ≈ /ʂ/ 'how, as'. Since the suffixal component /m.k^Wa(n)/ is most commonly found in the meaning 'without', it would appear to mean 'without it being', as /-k^W(ə)-/ is one of the copular roots 'be'. However, it has recently been argued (Hewitt 2001) on both formal and functional grounds that the suffix too may have originated in a negated copula (Lomtadze (1944.185) first mooted the possible connection in view of the formal resemblance alone), so that the overall sense would be 'it being, it not being' or possibly 'it was, it was not', this being an expressive way of saying 'precisely then' (sc. when the preceding verb's action was taking place). 6²: Bgaghba brackets this verb-form as being superfluous.

7¹: The open vowel of the Dynamic suffix /-wa-/ seems to have undergone rounding under the influence of the preceding bilabial rather than the expected raising under the influence of the following palatal.

8¹: This non-finite Present serves colloquially much as the English 'Why not split it down the middle?', whereas the full question 'Why don't you split it down the middle?' in Abzhywa would be /jə.z.ej.ʔə.ʃ^Wə.m.ʂo.(ze/ə.)j/, where the root's open vowel is restored -- N.B. the preverbal /ʔ/ is the cardinal root for '2'. 8²: This insertion was proposed by Bgaghba. By itself /jə.ʒ.¹ba.n/ = Abzhywa /jə.z.¹ba.n/ means 'why?', which is here out of place if left by itself; for if the meaning is 'if it is a question of why', the frequent preface to an answer stating a reason, then this bracketed conditional copula is required -- cf. the 2nd and 3rd words of sentence 9. 8³: Notice that the construction has the apparent head-noun standing in the Adverbial case and preposed to the relativised verb-form, so that it is literally 'as food

that which you want' = 'what food you desire'; in Abzhywa a straightforward rendering of the latter would produce /'jə.w.taxə.w 'a.fə.t^W/, with no Adverbial case and the head-noun postposed to the relativised verb. The construction in the text is especially common in Circassian and Ubykh.

11¹: The bracketed schwa, making this the Absolute rather than the finite Stative Past, has been inserted.

Text 4. Bzyp Original

1. x.'u.ej.f.t^Wa a.'yətʃ d.'zə.ts'ə.r.xə.z
2. lak^W lak^W1 sə.z.'ne.j.wa.z (')a.k^We.m.k^Wa²
- x.'u.ej.f.t^Wa q'a.n. 3. wə.r't 'a.x.'u.ej.f.t^Wa z^W.z.a.'t^Wə.k'
- 'rə.ma.n -- a.'yətʃ jə.r.'t^Wə.j.g.t'. 4. jə.z.'b(a).a:.'w.ra¹
- h^Wa e.'xə.l.ej.d.t^Wa.la.z² r.ej.ha.'ba³ wə.ɕ jə.'h^Wət'⁴ --
- hə.z^W z.gə.z d.'k'ətq'ə.w.p'. 5. a.g^Wə.bza.'nə.t^W
- d.'k'ətq' zə.r d.a'pʃə.w.p' jə.'h^Wət'. 6. r.ej.ts'.ba.'dza
- d.a.x.'t^Wa.z d.a'pʃə.zə.r¹ xa'k^Wət^W2 jə.'xɔdzə.w.p'³
- jə.'h^Wət'. 7. ɕ^W.a:.'la wə.'ba.ɕ 'jə.q'a.w¹ a.o.'tə
- d.ah.'pʃ.a:.'p' r.h^Wa.n 'rə.x.tə.k'gə 'd^Wə.k^Wə.l.t'. 8.
- jə.z.'ne.j.wa.z o.u-'k'ətq'-apʃ.k'ə d.a:r.'pə.l.t'. 9.
- jə.'wə.xɔdzə.w.zə.j h^Wa j.a'nə.ts'a:, xa'k^Wət^W
- 'sə.xɔdzə.w.p' jə.'h^Wət'. 10. hə.z^W z.gə.wa.'ra.w.o.w.p'
- h^Wa j.a(:).'jə.ɕ.nə¹ də.r.'k'ət'². 11. d.'rə.ma.n a'hə.k'¹
- jə.'tq'ə jə.'ne.j.n h.a.j.lə.r.'ga h^Wa 'jə.h^Wə.j.t'. 12. ɕ^Wə.z^W
- a.'rə.j.jə.zə.j.dzə.z 'j.a.l.z^W.dr.a:.'wə.zə.j¹ a'nə.j.h^Wa, ah
- ts'.xə.'fə.s²'j.a.r.ta.z 'j.a.r.h^W.t'. 13. nas ɕ^Wə.ɥ.'d^Wə.l.ts'.f
- jə.'h^Wa.n, jə.ɥ.'d^Wə.lə.j.z.t'. 14. ah p'at'ər'kal.k' a.tʃa'nax¹
- jə.'lə.ts'a.χ.ɥ.a.nə ɕ^W.l.e.j jə.'h^Wa.n d.a:r.'pʃə.jt'. 15.
- a.'brə.j a.tʃa'nax 'jə.ts'o.w z.a.'k(W)'ə.w¹ z^W.dər.o.za.r²,

a.'rə.j jə.'zə 'jə.ɕ^Wh^Wa.z.ɡə 'jaʃo.w.p' jə.'h^Wə.t' aħ. 16. aj.ha.'ba d.ax.'gəla.z a.tʃa'nax 'jə.ts'o.w k^Wəmpələ.w.p' jə.'h^Wə.t'. 17. jə.k^Wəmpəl.za.r, jə.'ɥaʒə.w.p' jə.'h^Wə.t' a.g^Wə.bza.'nə.t^W'. 18. jə.'ɥaʒ.za.r¹, p'at'ər'kalə.w.p' jə.'h^Wə.t' aj.ts'.'ba. 19. aħ 'sejr.'ʃwa¹ jə.'ba.n rə.z^W a.χ^W 'rə.ta.n[']², n.'tʃ'ə.ne.j.r.xa.n, (da.'ra)³ a.'ɥnə.q'a jə.'tɕe.jt'⁴. 20. a.'ba.ɕ x.'ɥ.ej.ʃ.tɕ^Wa a.'ɥətʃ 'də.ts'ə.r.x.t'.

Abzhywa Version

1. x.'ɥ.ej.ʃ.tɕ^Wa a.'ɥətʃ d.'ʃə.ts'ə.r.xə.z
 2. lak^W' lak^W' sə.ʃ.'ne.j.wa.z 'a.k^Wə.m.k^W'a x.'ɥ.ej.ʃ.tɕ^Wa 'ə.q'a.n. 3. wə.r't 'a.x.ɥ.ej.ʃ.tɕ^Wa ʒ^Wz.a.'tɕ^Wə.k' 'rə.ma.n -- a.'ɥətʃ jə.r.'tɕ^Wə.j.g(e.j)t'. 4. jə.ʃ.p(a).a.r.w.ra h^Wa j.a.xə.l.ej.d.'t^Wa.la.z r.ej.ha.'bə wəs jə.'h^We.jt' -- ha.ʒ^W z.ga.z d.'k'atɕ'ə.w.p'. 5. a.g^Wə.bza.'nə.t^W' d.'k'atɕ'za.r d.a.pʃə.w.p' jə.'h^We.jt'. 6. r.ej.ts'.'ba.dza d.a.x'.'t^Wa.z d.a.pʃə.za.r xa.k^Wə'tɕ^W 'jə.xdzə.w.p' jə.'h^We.jt'. 7. ʃ^Wa.'la wə.'ba.s 'jə.q'o.w a.wa.'ɥə d.aħ.'pʃ.a.r.p' r.h^Wa.n 'rə.x.ɥə.k'.'ɡə 'd^Wə.k^Wə.l(e.j)t'. 8. jə.ʃ.'ne.j.wa.z wa.ɥ-'k'atɕ'-apʃ.k' d.a.r.'pəl(e.j)t'. 9. jə.'wə.xdzə.w.zə.j h^Wa j.a'nə.ts'a:, xa.k^Wə'tɕ^W 'sə.xdzə.w.p' jə.'h^We.jt'. 10. ha.ʒ^W z.ga.wa.'ra w.o.w.p' h^Wa j.a:'jəs.nə də.r.'k'ə.jt'. 11. d.'rə.ma.n a'h.a.k' jə.'tɕ'ə jə.'ne.j.n h.a.j.lə.r.'ga h^Wa 'jə.'h^We.jt'. 12. ʃ^Wə.ʒ^W a.'rə.j jə.'ʃə.j.dza.z 'j.a.lə.ʒ^W.dr.a:wa.zə.j a'nə.j.h^Wa, aħ ts'.'xə.ʃ.a.s 'j.a.r.ta.z 'j.a.r.h^W(e.j)t'. 13. nas ʃ^Wə.ɥ.'d^Wə.l.ts'ə.ʃ jə.'h^Wa.n, jə.ɥ.'d^Wə.lə.j.ʒ(ə.j)t'. 14. aħ

p'at'ər'kal.k' a.tʃa'nax jə'ləts'a x ɥa.nə ʃ^w.le.j jə'h^wa.n
d.a: 'rə pxe.jt'. 15. a.'brə.j a.tʃa'nax 'jəts'o.w z.a.'k^wə.w
z^w.'dər.wa.za.r, a.'rə.j jə'zə 'jə.ʃ^w h^wa.z.ɡə 'jaʒo.w.p'
jə.'h^we.jt' aħ. 16. a.j.ha.'bə d.əx.'gəla.z a.tʃa'nax 'jəts'o.w
k^wə'm'pələ.w.p' jə.'h^we.jt'. 17. jə.k^wə'm'pələ.za.r,
jə.'ɥe.zə.w.p' jə.'h^we.jt' a.g^wə.bza.'nə.t^w. 18. jə.'ɥe.z.za.r,
p'at'ər'kalə.w.p' jə.'h^we.jt' a.j.ts'. 'bə. 19. aħ 'ssəjr.ʃ^wa
jə.'ba.n rə.z^w a.x^w 'rə.ta.nə, r.'tʃə'ne.j.r.xa.n, (da.'ra)
a.'ɥnə.q'a jə.'tse.jt'. 20. a.'ba.s x.'ɥ.e.j.ʃ.t^wa a.'ɥətʃ
'dəts'ə.r.x(ə.j)t'.

Word-gloss

1. three.brother.s the.thief how.they.revealed.him 2. fairytale
fairytale as.I.was.going ? three.brother.s they.were 3. those
(the.)three.brother.s a.single.cow they.had.it -- the.thief
he.took.it.from.them 4. "what.shall.we.do" saying
where.they.were.sitting.facing.one.another their.eldest thus he.said.it
"our.cow the.one.who.took.it he.is.short" 5. the.middle.one "if.he.is.short
he.is.red" he.said.it 6. their.very.youngest where.he.was.sitting
"if.he.is.red Xak^wəɬ^w it.is.his.name" he.said.it 7. "you.come.on such
who.is the.man we.shall.find.him" they.said.it.and their.three.and
they.set.out 8. as.they.were.going a.short.red.man they.met.him 9.
"what.is.your.name" saying when.they.asked "Xak^wəɬ^w it.is.my.name"
he.said.it 10. "our.cow the.one.who.took.it you you.are" saying
they.having.struck.him they.seized.him 11. they.having.him a.prince
to.him they.went.and "sort.us.out" saying they.begged.him 12. "your.cow
this that.he.stole.it what.do.you.know.about.it" when.he.said.it the.prince
as.manner.of.explication which.they.gave.it they.said.it.to.him 13. then
"just.you.go.out" he.said.it.and, he.let.them.out 14. the.prince, an.orange
the.plate having.covered.it.under.it "you.come.in" he.said.it.and
he.invited.them 15. "this (the.)plate that.which.is.under.it what.it.is
if.you.know.it, this about.him that.which.you.said.also it.is.true" he.said.it
the.prince 16. the.eldest where.he.stood "the.plate that.which.is.under.it
it.is.round" he.said.it 17. "if.it.is.round it.is.yellow" he.said.it
the.middle.one 18. "if.it.is.yellow it.is.(an.)orange" he.said.it the.youngest

19. the.prince as.miracle he.saw.it.and their.cow its.price
 having.given.it.to.them he.set.their.face(s).thither.and (they)
 home(.wards) they.went 20. thus three.brother.s the.thief
 they.revealed.him

Translation

1. How Three Brothers Brought The Thief To Light

2. Once upon a time there were three brothers. 3. Those brothers had a single cow -- a thief took it away from them. 4. 'What are we to do?' the eldest of them spoke thus from where they were sitting together: 'The one who took our cow is short.' 5. The middle one said, 'If he is short, he's of red complexion.' 6. The very youngest of them said from where he was seated, 'If he's of red complexion, his name is *Xak^{wətɕw}*.' 7. 'Come on, let's find the man who is like this,' they said, and the three of them set off. 8. As they were on their way, they came upon a short man of red complexion. 9. When they asked, 'What's your name?', he said, 'My name is *Xak^{wətɕw}*.' 10. 'You are the one who took our cow,' was the charge they hurled at him, and they seized him. 11. Taking him along, they went to a prince and urged him to sort them out. 12. When he said, 'How do you know that this one stole your cow?', they told the prince the manner in which they had worked it out. 13. Then he ushered them out, saying, 'Just step outside.' 14. The prince, having placed an orange under a plate, invited them back, with the words: 'In you come.' 15. 'If you know what the thing which is under this plate is, what you said about this man is true too,' said the prince. 16. From where he was standing the eldest said, 'What is under the plate is round.' 17. 'If it is round, it is yellow,' said the middle one. 18. 'If it is yellow, it's an orange,' said the youngest. 19. The prince deemed this a miracle, gave them the price of their cow, set them on their way, and they went home. 20. Thus did three brothers reveal the thief.

Notes

2¹: This is the noun-root for 'fairytale'. It is not normally reduplicated in this way, and this may be an attempted innovation to start such a story, the more usual introductions being /a¹z^{wə.t^w} (z.nə)/ or /a.nk'a (znə)/. Caucasian fairytales often indicate the presence of the narrator in the drama, which perhaps explains the 1st person pronominal affix in this clause's verb-form. If one is going to start in this way, a more felicitous construction results if the main verb (here the copula) is

substituted by /s.'rə.k^W.ç^We.jt' ≈ s.'rə.k^W.j^We.jt'/ 'I came upon them [3 brothers]'. 2²: Vid. note 6¹ in Text 3, and observe the unexpected /e/-vowel in the 2nd syllable -- no stress is indicated.

4¹: When /-z-/ functions as the manner-particle, it is accompanied by the interrogative /-ba-/ to produce the question 'how?', but no such accompaniment occurs in the sense of 'why?' (vid. not 5¹ of Text 1). We have inserted the /a/ on the interrogative marker to allow for a morpheme-division to be indicated between this and the agent-affix /-a:-/. 4²: the raising of the initial vowel must be the result of the palatalising effect of the underlying palatal-glide at the start of the word representing the subject 'they' (cf. the Abzhywa form). 4³: Notice final /a/ in Bzyp. However, when the intensive suffix /-dza/ is added, as in the 1st word of sentence 6, Abzhywa too has the open vowel. 4⁴: Here and in the following sentence Marr has footnotes saying that in his notes he has /jə.'h^Wə.jt'/.

6¹: Again note the unexpected /e/-vowel in the 2nd syllable. 6²: The first element in this character's name is well-known to be the fricative [x], which in Marr's transcription is represented by 'q' with superscript dot. Here (but not later in the text) the dot is missing, which graph is Marr's rendition of [k^h]. 6³: In view of later occurrences of this word in this text with the expected pre-radical stress, perhaps the root-stress here is just a typographical slip.

7¹: Note that the open vowel of the copular root shews no sign of the rounding expected when followed by stative marker /-w/.

10¹: The root /ç/ means 'hit', but here talk is of a metaphorical verbal assault. In his footnote Marr says that his notes contain the form /j.a'a.'jə.ç.nə/; it is unclear why he decided to omit the second mora of the open vowel, as the morpheme is the modal preverb /a:/. 10²: Marr has a footnote stating that his notes contain /də.r.'k'ə.jt'/.

11¹: The published text has /a'h^Wak'/, a clear error.

12¹: The text looks to have rather the form /j.a.l.ɜ^W.dr.aɪ.wa.zə.j/ -- there is but a hint of the start of the right descender that would be necessary for one clearly to read /ç^W/, but we have restored this in the belief that a broken character might have been

used here. Since this verb-form strictly means 'what do you know about it?', it might be thought that only the form /jə.z.'la.ɹ̥^W.dər.we.j ≈ jə.z.'la.ɹ̥^W.dər.wa.zə/e.j/ 'by what = how do you know it?' would be acceptable, but in fact both are options in the context. 12²: /a.ts'.x.ra/ literally means 'to remove from under' and is metaphorically used in the sense of 'to reveal' -- it is the verb in the title of this tale. The derivative /a.ts'.xə.ʃa/ is 'manner of revealing, deducing' and stands in the Adverbial case to parallel the relative construction discussed in note 8³ of Text 3 (literally 'as manner of deduction what they gave to it' = 'the manner of deduction they applied to it').

14¹: There is another clear misprint in this word where Marr has theta with superscript dot (his sign for [ts]) instead of theta with subscript dot (his sign for [ṭ]), as employed later in this text for the same lexeme.

15¹: The final vowel [u:] = /ə^W/ might be responsible for the loss (or non-detection) of labialisation on the velar of the copula /-ak^W'-/. 15²: This time a verb-root /-dər-/ that has no final open vowel is treated as if it did, thereby producing the vowel [ɔ], which, as explained above, normally results from post-radical sequences of /Ca-wa-/, in place of [wa].

18¹: There is a misprint in Marr's text here for the voiced fricative at the end of the root, which, according to the printed version, should be read [ẓ].

19¹: This word (or, at least, its representation) differs quite markedly from the Abzhywa form. 19²: This form must be the Past Absolute of the verb 'give' and thus needs a final schwa. Without this schwa it looks like the Past Indefinite, but this would require the presence of an agent-prefix to give /(jə.)'rə.j.ta.n/. In a parallel case above (2nd word of sentence 6 of Text 1) Marr indicated the elision with an apostrophe, which we have added in square-brackets. 19³: The first three verbs of this sentence have had 'the prince' as subject, which leads one to expect the same subject for the final main verb, but the subject here is 'they (sc. the brothers)'. To make the contrast we have added the 3rd person plural pronoun /da'ra/ in brackets. 19⁴: The Bzyp affricate here

must be alveolo-palatal, for which Marr's graph is theta with superscript dot plus lower right descending serif. This last is missing, which effectively changes the affricate to the simple alveolar.

In the above we have attempted to make a small contribution to the comparative dialectology of Abkhaz by taking four short texts, typical of their genres, noted down by Nik'o Marr from a Bzyp speaker and published in his difficult to penetrate Roman-based script, which had never before been rendered into English or subjected to grammatical analysis. The addition of a version in the literary form of Abkhaz, Abzhywa, facilitates an appreciation of the phonetic and morphological differences between the only two dialects of Abkhaz still spoken in the language's historical homeland.

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