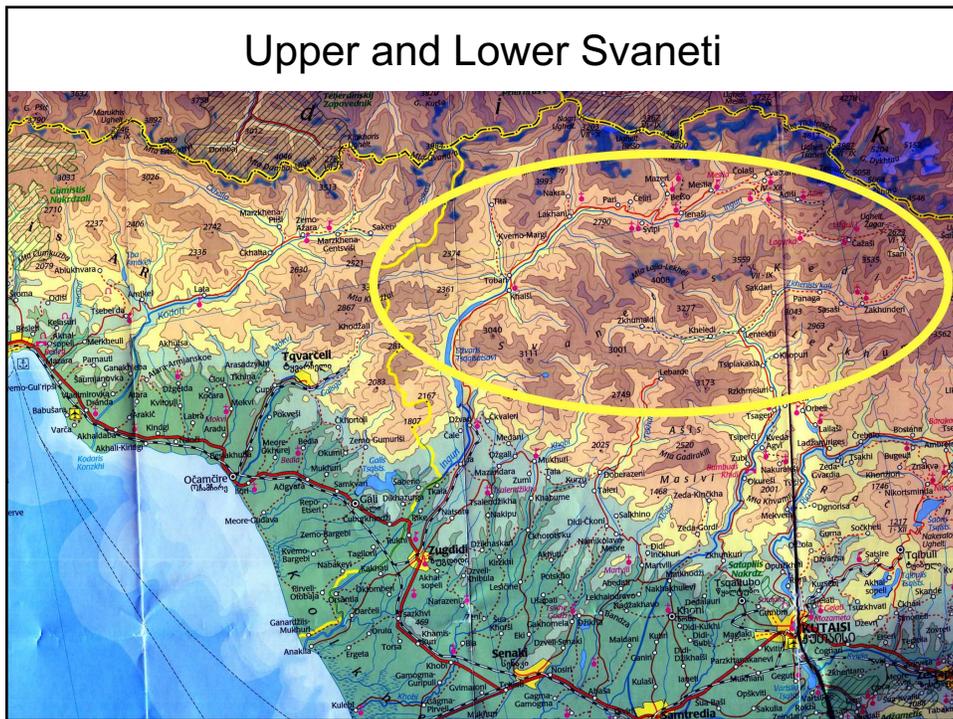




1



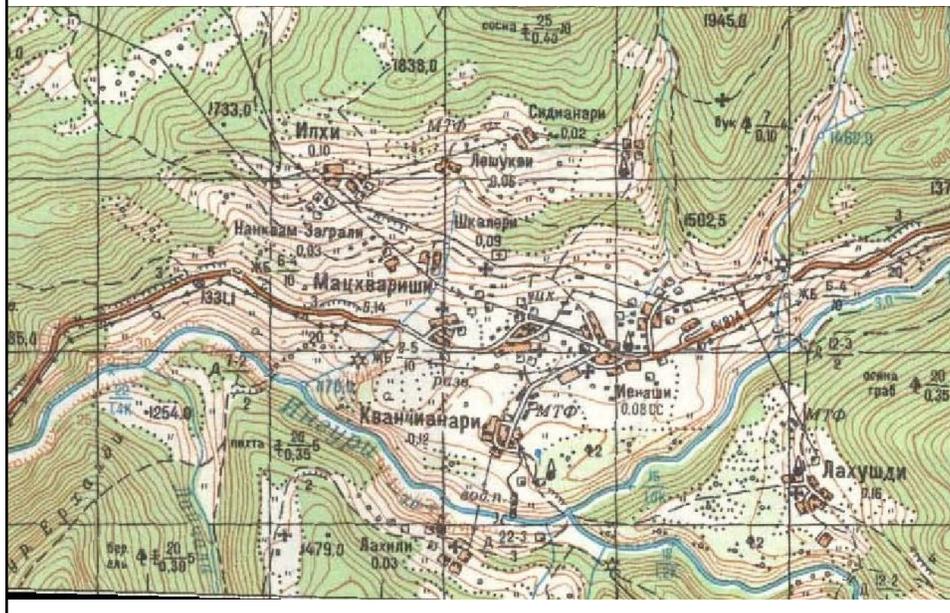
2

Lipānāli: The Svan festival of the souls

- 1. Annual festival, begins on or around January 18th (the eve of Epiphany, or 3-4 days after Orthodox New Year's)
- 2. Depending on what day of the week it begins, L. can last from 1 day to a week.
- 3. Principal components:
 - i. Invitation at graveyard & arrival of souls
 - ii. Daily banquets with fasting or non-fasting food
 - iii. "Assembly" of souls to decide fate of host family
 - iv. Pre-dawn final banquet and departure
- (in Latali): *Siriän-Kwiriän* carollers
- v. Extra days for out-of-town and handicapped souls

3

Latali commune



4

Adgom — invitation of souls and 1st banquet



5

Jōdi häm (Long morning) and *Siriän-Kwiriän*



6

Feasts of All Souls around the world

- Annual visits of souls to the homes of the living, where they are met with food and drink; clean, comfortable accommodations; and abundant candle-light. These visits usually take place at night.
- Attested world-wide: Native Americas, Melanesia, South Asia, Europe, etc. (Frazer *Golden Bough* IV.2: 49-83)
- Christian commemorations of the dead:
- ORTHODOXY: Meatfare Saturday (2nd Sat before Lent); 2nd, 3rd & 4th Sats of Lent; Eve of Pentecost (Saturday)
- LATIN CHRISTIANITY: Hallowe'en (31 Oct), All Saints' (1 Nov) & All Souls' Day (2 Nov)

7

Lipānāli and Svan vernacular religion

- Sources:
- Field work in Latali, 2006 and 2019
- Besarion Nižaradze, Vera Bardavelidze, Nino C'erediani
- Svan prose text collections (5 vols, 1939-1979)
- unpublished archives of Evdokia (Dīna) Koževnikova (1927-1946; especially 1930-1931 fieldwork)



8

The Svans, as defined by Georges Charachidzé (1987)

Svanes : groupe caucasien du Sud, sur les pentes de l'Elbrouz. Ils ont gardé les grandes articulations de l'idéologie autochtone, plus quelques-unes prises aux voisins immigrés. Maniaques de la taxinomie, ils classent tout ce qui leur tombe sous la main ou le cerveau. Avec trois cailloux et deux concepts, ils fabriquent un système du monde.

9

Svan vernacular religion

- The distinction (or continuum?) between “vernacular Orthodoxy” and “paganism”
- Ritual practices: men’s and women’s rituals; “unseeable” breads & offerings.
- Ritual spaces: church, home (superimposed hearth-centered & “sanctuary”-centered spaces), exterior sacred sites
- Feast-day calendar: feasts and fasts; movable & fixed feasts; commemorations of the dead; seasons (New Year; Lent/Easter; summer)

10

“unseeable” (*uc'ēna*) offerings

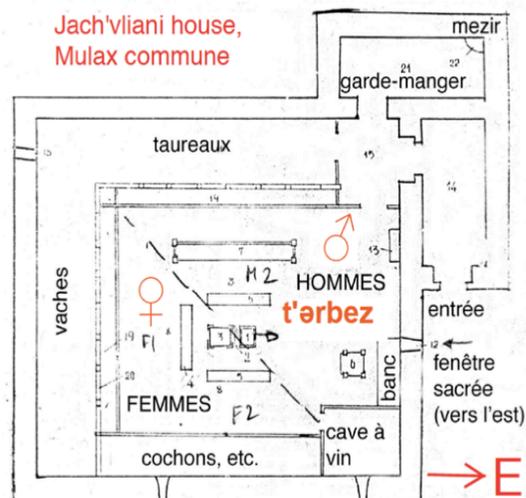
- Offerings of bread and/or meat which are not be eaten or even seen by specific categories of people. (Also, voices of excluded people are not to be heard)
- i. Household: offerings only to be seen by family members (as long as they were present at New Year's Eve rituals); usually consumed behind closed windows & doors
- ii. Gender-specific:
 - Women: bread offerings on certain feast-days, especially cheese-filled bread offered “downward” (*čubaw*) at the hearth
 - Men: liver & heart of animal killed while hunting

11

Spatial layout of traditional Svan home (Chartolani 1961)

lalcxāt' (consecrated
land plot) [¶]

laguz (special wheat
field for ritual use
[Lat'ali & Lenjeri]) [¶]



12

Lipānāli and Svan vernacular religion

- cleansing before arrival of souls (abstention from food; housecleaning; washing; exclusion of ♀'s blood-flow)
- circling/turning “rightward” (*lersgwante*)
- alternation of fasting (*k'wax*) and non-fasting (*oxdris*) banquets
- 3rd day of L.: ♀'s prayer at hearth to Lamāria for fertility, well-being (♂ not present)
- Sunday meeting of the souls: counterpart to one-month meeting of the divinities (*lalxoräl*) from 1/14 October to 1/14 November
- Jōdi häm pre-dawn banquet with windows closed, and “unseeable” offering-breads (*lemzir*)

13

Svan ritual breads

- Plain bread vs. filled (also, fasting vs. non-fasting)
- Flour used: wheat, millet, hemp. Special functions of bread from “unseeable” flour (*gwiz*)
- Poked/indented bread symbolizing fertility, abundance



14

Physicality of visiting souls

- (world-wide, on occasion of visits to living): need for food & rest; retain features of body at death (age, sex, infirmity, etc.).
- Svaneti: extra days after end of festival, for: (1) souls of out-married ♀ and in-laws (*haswšare kunär*); (2) handicapped (*mək'li*, *muk'wčxi*) souls.
- Koževnikova's lexical notes (c. 1930):
- *k'ičxəld*: small ladder made during Lipānāli, as aid for handicapped souls while travelling between otherworld and this world.
- *muxurčunil*: bread baked for souls of children, on which they can stand to get a better view of the banquet

15

Possible Iranian (Alanian) connection?

- Lipānāli 4 days after (Old) New Year: Ancient Iranian year-end festival *Hamaspəθmaēdaya*, in honor of the spirits of the righteous who come to the homes of the living to receiving gifts of food and clothing.
- Ossetian *Badäntä*, on 1st Sunday evening of New Year through following morning. Banquet of fruits, sweets, meat of sacrificed animal. Earlier, the clothes of the family's most recent deceased were stuffed with straw, and seated at the banquet table.

16

Svaneti c. 1930: 40th-day banquet for deceased man from Latali, with straw-man wearing his uniform (photo by Koževnikova)



17

ივასუ ხარიდ!

- Nino C'erediani, Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography
- Leri & Levan C'erediani
- Elene and Vladimer Gugušvili
- Manana Xizanašvili, Georgian National Museum
- SSHRC project # 435-2018-0950 *Vernacular religion in Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia*
- And to the souls of Evdokia Koževnikova, and Davit & Valia C'erediani: ხობა ლაქუნუ ჯარხ!

18