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Ziya Bazhayev
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THE DIVERSITY OF THE CHECHEN CULTURE

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Lecha Ilyasov. The Diversity of the Chechen Culture: From Historical Roots to the Present.
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The book reviews Chechen culture from the earliest times to the present day. The genesis of material culture is regarded in close connection with the ethnic interpretation of ancient archaeological cultures of the North Caucasus. The analysis of intangible heritage opens with folklore as the cradle of many genres and types of artistic culture. The author regards religious culture as interlinked with mythology and material culture from the inception of worship in the New Stone Age to this day. Many problems of cultural history and typology are posed and solved in this book, which offers detailed coverage of Chechen ethics, literature, the typology of music and dance, pictorial art and folk crafts.

Mediaeval tower architecture is presented dialectically through its evolution, whose presentation proceeds from an analysis of numerous structures of various functions and from many eras.

The monograph is intended for researchers, students and the public-at-large taking interest in Chechen culture and history.

"The Latta Foundation for Development of Science and Culture"

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Lecha Ilyasov

The Diversity of the Chechen Culture

From Historical Roots to the Present

Contents

Introduction

The start of the 21st century has opened a new stage of human history. It obliterates interethnic borders, to an extent, globalizes the economy and unifies cultures. That is why public attention to the identity and genre-typological diversity of ethnic cultures is growing.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which UNESCO adopted in 2001, defines cultural diversity as “the common heritage of humanity” and qualifies its protection as “an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity”. UNESCO aspires to an international climate basing on the equality of all cultures, protection of cultural heritage in all its forms, respect for cultural rights, and promotion of the intercultural dialogue.

The present project, implemented with UNESCO support, is among the first attempts to offer a monographic study on the diversity of Chechen culture to the public-at-large.

Unique and profoundly original, Chechen culture is fed by the self-awareness of a nation that has cherished and preserved the cultural experience of past generations through millennia, and permanently enriched it with new ideas and content.

As any other culture, it is universal, to an extent, for it develops in multi-sided contact with other cultures, mainly in its own geographic area. Intercultural links are vehicles of mutual influences and enrichment in which cultural archetypes are shaped. Long intensive contacts result in the emergence of supra-ethnic and supra-religious cultural communities.

Cultural identity helps nations to preserve their ethnic identity and cultural codes that enable the generations that come centuries and millennia later to rediscover the spiritual treasures of their distant ancestors, and give these treasures a new content consonant with the new time.

Cultural universality helps nations to find common language with each other in communication and cultural interaction. Such contacts are the closest among neighbouring

nations, especially in a multi-ethnic state, where cultural interaction helps each to find its place in the general cultural arrangement.

Culture degenerates in isolation, while the loss of cultural identity leads to cultural assimilation. Subtle balance between uniqueness and universality — the pivotal properties of every culture — is an earnest of cultural progress. Of no smaller importance is the diversity of genres and harmonious development of all aspects of culture, which are closely interlinked and have an impact on each other.

Dancing is intrinsically linked with music and theatre with literature. Pictorial arts often promote the development of folk arts and crafts, while frequently coming themselves under the influence of music. There are mutual influences of folk and classical music, as well.

Cultural progress bases on the preservation of ethnic identity and global universality, and on harmonious development of all genres and aspects of culture. Chechen culture is rooted in the Neolithic Age, when the Caucasian language family began to disintegrate and separate languages emerged.

Archaeological finds allow trace the development of material culture in the area populated by Caucasians from the 4th millennium B.C. to the present day.

Chechen culture emerged at the crossroads of European and West Asian civilisations. Influenced by both, it has retained its identity throughout its history.

Chechen culture possesses all types and genres represented in the cultures of civilised nations. At the same time, it retains ethnic originality due to geography, religion and ethnic cultural environment.

PART I

The Genesis of North Caucasian Material Culture and Chechen Ethnogeny

Several archaeological cultures[1] existed in the Kuban-Sulak interfluve in the North Caucasus, succeeding to each other for 4,000 years. Their development bore an extent of genetic continuity in everyday life, burial rites, religion and mythology. All that allows postulate ethnogenetic succession of the local population from times immemorial to the Early Middle Ages.

Detailed studies of North Caucasian archaeological cultures from the Early Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age brought Evgeny Krupnov to the conclusion that a Caucasian cultural and linguistic community[2] existed in the Caucasus, Transcaucasia and Asia Minor, sharing features common to the entire area in the 5th–3rd millennia B.C.:

— sedentism and common economic forms (land-tilling, stock breeding and developed pottery);

— small homotypic hill settlements with rotund or rectangular dwellings, movable hearths and the use of clay blocks;

— similar types of pottery with predominantly spiral ornamental patterns.

The community had started to disintegrate by the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C., as confirmed by the appearance of local variants of the Caucasian Eneolithic culture: the Kura-Araxes in Transcaucasia and the

1 By archaeological culture, archeologists usually mean a sum total of material monuments of the past united by shared characteristics, or a cultural community formed historically and differing from similar cultural communities of a definite time by labour implements, household utensils, weapons, jewellery, pottery, types of dwellings and tombs and, last but not least, funeral rites intrinsic to that community alone.// Крупнов Е.И. Древняя история Северного Кавказа. М., 1960. С. 381

2 Крупнов Е.И. Древнейшая культура Кавказа и кавказская этническая общность//Советская археология. 1964. № 1. С. 26—43.

Northeast Caucasus, and the Maikop in the Northwest and Central Caucasus.

However, the level and character of correspondences in the contemporary languages of the Caucasian family and the dead ancient West Asian languages, mainly Hurrian-Urartian, shows that the Caucasian language community really disintegrated far earlier — no later than the beginning of the 5th millennium B.C. As to the disintegration of the Caucasian Eneolithic culture, it reflected the disintegration of the Nakh-Hurrian language community due to migration of a part of the Nakh-Hurrian tribes to Transcaucasia and West Asia. Even several millennia after, the Urartian language (probably, the Hurrian language of the 1st millennium B.C.) reveals amazing closeness to none other than the contemporary Nakh languages.

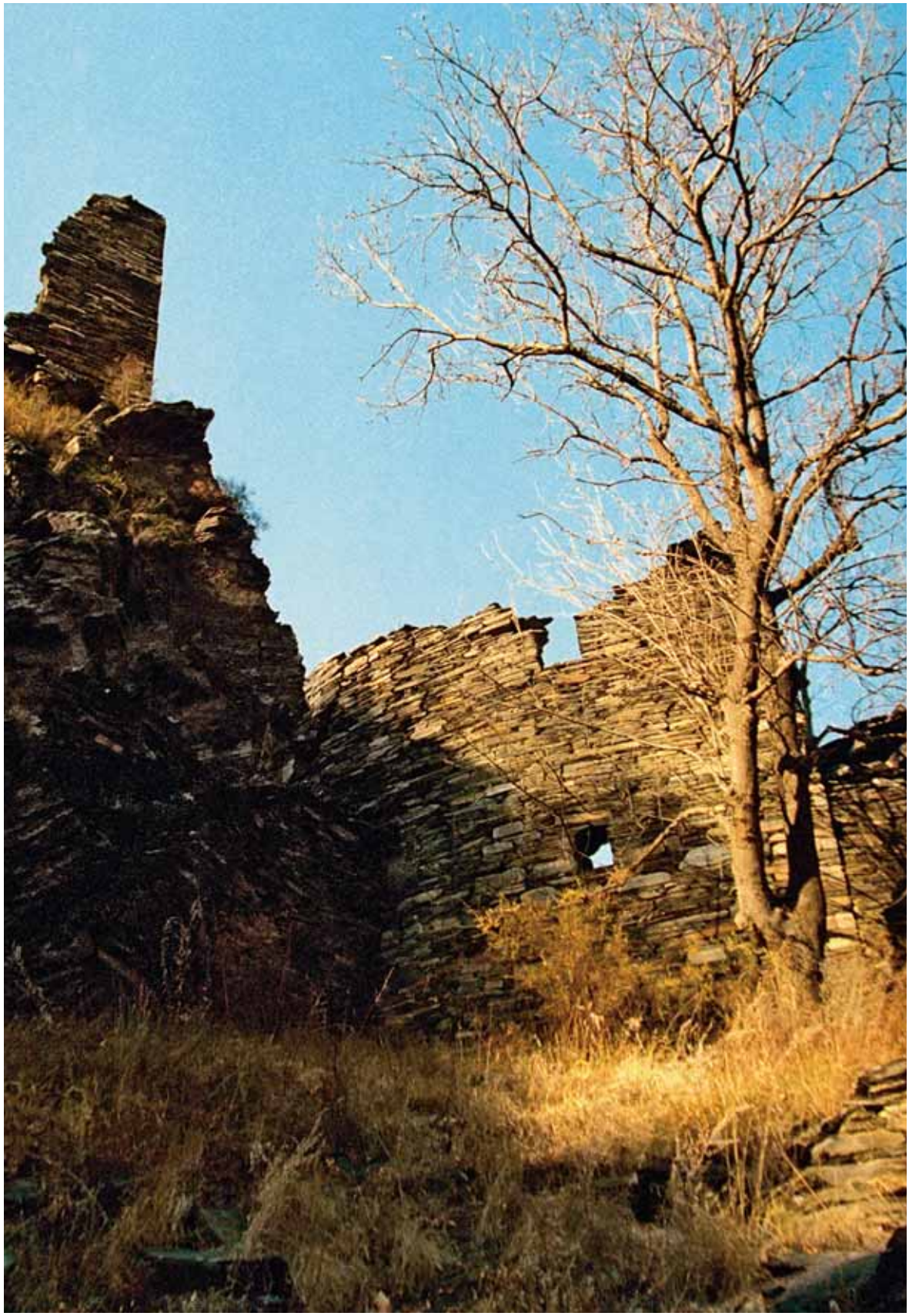
The Caucasian language community had disintegrated into the Kartveli, Adyg, Nakh and Dagestani language groups, to all appearances, by the end of the Neolithic Period and the start of the Eneolithic.

The disintegration of the Nakh-Dagestani language community could not take place later than the end of the 5th and the start of the 4th millennium B.C., as indicated by major material cultural differences in the area populated by the Nakh and Dagestani tribes. No less probably, however, the Nakh-Dagestani language community had never existed at all, and the languages owe their common features to long coexistence in neighbouring areas and to adstratum-substratum relations.

Bearing out this assumption is the structural-typological and lexical closeness of the language of Hurrians, or

▲ The Maikop burial mound. A silver vessel. S.N. Korenevsky. *The Earliest Lend-Tilling and Stock-Breeding Population of Ciscaucasia*.

▲ The Maikop burial mound. A gold ox figurine. S.N. Korenevsky. *The Earliest Lend-Tilling and Stock-Breeding Population of Ciscaucasia*.

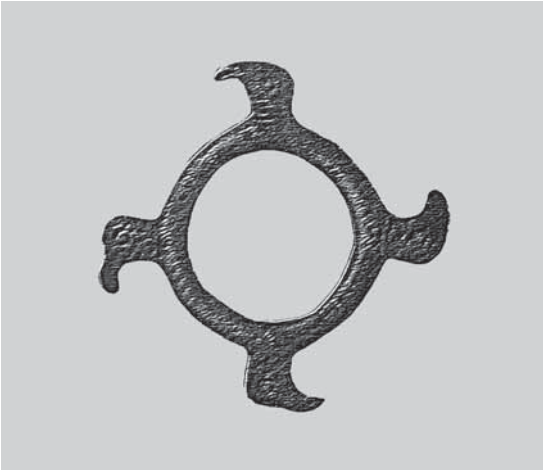


Khurrites, who migrated from the North Caucasus to Transcaucasia and West Asia in the 4th millennium B.C., to none other than the Chechen language[3], while this closeness could be possible only if they migrated after the final division of the Nakh and Dagestani languages[4].

As the Caucasian language community was disintegrating, the peoples inhabiting the North Caucasus and the area southwest of it were territorially distributed just as later — Dagestani language speakers in the east of the area, Nakh in the centre, and Adyg in the west and southwest.

To all appearances, such proximity was lasting enough to be reflected in linguistic correspondences. In this sense, the Adyg languages are far closer to the Nakh than Dagestani on the lexical and structural-typological plane. Taking into consideration the level of lexical and morphological differences between the Nakh and Adyg languages, determined by their historical development, we can assume relative lexical closeness of those languages due to lasting coexistence just as to common origin.

The mutual closeness of the Nakh and Hurrian languages is indisputable[5], as borne out not only by the high level of their lexical similarities but also by their entire structural-typological identity. Even the indicators of grammar classes in the Nakh languages, which are



▲ An amulet from an Alanian tomb in the vicinity of Akhinchu-Barz in East Chechnya.

▲ TThe Maikop burial mound. A leopard head. S.N. Korenevsky. *The Earliest Lend-Tilling and Stock-Breeding Population of Ciscaucasia.*

◀ Ruins of a dwelling tower in Maista.

3 Possibly, there was a reverse migration as testified by deep-going links researchers have found between the Maikop culture of the North Caucasus and West Asian archeological cultures of that time.

4 Certain linguists' attempts to bring Dagestani and Nakh languages together in one group are absolutely groundless.

5 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1968. С. 102.

assumed to have appeared comparatively recently, have their prototypes in the demonstrative pronouns of the Hurrian-Urartian languages.

In that, we must bear in mind that several thousand years have elapsed since those languages divided as Hurrians left their ancient habitat in the gorges and plains of the North Caucasus and Southeast Europe no later than the 4th millennium B.C.

According to archaeological testimony and historical sources, Hurrian tribes moved southward across the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range along practically all principal routes — the Caspian and Black Sea coast and the Daryal Gorge. A part of them settled on the south Caucasian slopes.

References to them under the ethnicon of Subarei appear in Akkadian sources since the second half of the 3rd millennium B.C.[6]. Dating to that time are two cuneal inscriptions made on Hurrian kings' behalf — one in Akkadian and the other in Hurrite. The latter inscription, belonging to Tishari, or Tish-Adal, the king of Urkesh in the north of Mesopotamia, is the oldest known monument of the Hurrian language[7].

Hurrians spread almost throughout the entire West Asia in the end of the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. from the Diyala River in the southeast to the Mediterranean coast in the west, and including Palestine and Syria south. They settled in Elam, Mesopotamia, Mari, Mitanni, Syria and Palestine. Akkadian sources initially referred to them as the Subarei, and their state as Subartu. Scholars assume that the ethnicon of "Subarei" really refers to the pre-Hurrian, possibly Sumerian, population of those areas, with which Hurrians might be ethnically connected.

Egyptian sources referred to them as Huru since the 16th century B.C., while the Bible knows the ancient non-Semitic Palestinian tribes as Khorites (from *huri)*.

The northern border of Hurrian settlement was vague at that time because the territory of Urartians — an ethnic entity closely related to the Hurrian linguistically and genetically — lay to the north of the Hurrian lands. To all appearances, the Hurrian and Urartian were a single ethnic entity in the early 3rd millennium.

Scholars suppose the existence of another Nakh tribal group, the Etiukh[8], further north, in the Central and East Transcaucasia. The Etiukh created the so-called Trialeti archaeological culture, which existed in Transcaucasia in the 2nd millennium B.C. and had deep-going material ties with the West Asian Hurrian world.

Hurrians are assumed to be the makers of the so-called Kura-Araxes archaeological culture[9], which emerged at the end of the 4th millennium B.C. in East Transcaucasia, the Kura-Araxes interfluve and the Armenian Plateau[10], from where it spread almost throughout the entire Transcaucasia, in certain parts of West

6 References to Hurrians in West Asian sources coincide chronologically with the decline of the Kura-Araxes culture in Transcaucasia.

7 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. С. 42.

8 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. С. 104.

9 Пиотровский Б.Б. Ванское царство (Урарту). М., 1959.

10 This area is notable for the greatest-ever amount of archaeological materials of the Kura-Araxes culture, including its early stage.

Asia up to Syria and Palestine, and in the north to Dagestan and the southeast of Chechnya and Ossetia.

The Kura-Araxes tribes settled on hills and other uplands, along rivers and on mountain slopes — most often on naturally fortified hills, e.g., the Serzhen-Yurt settlement in Chechnya's southeast. Some settlements were surrounded by man-made moats and stone or adobe walls. The Kura-Araxes settlement of Shengavit had a defencive wall of stone blocks with towers and an underpass to the river[11].

Round or oval houses were the most widespread kind of dwellings, though rectangular buildings also occur in some settlements[12]. Stone, adobe or wattle and daub, those houses were topped by hollow timber roofbeams with clay reinforcement inside. Some houses bear traces of the trumeau. A round clay hearth was in the centre of the house. Kura-Araxes tribes often used clay hearth supports of many types — in particular, conventionalised oxe figurines[13].

The Kura-Araxes economy rested on land-tilling and stock breeding. The sedentary farming nature of this culture is testified to by solid occupation layers, up to 8 metres thick in some settlements.

Farming was the basis of Kura-Araxes life, as shown by numerous land-tilling tools and the seed of many cereals found in the occupation layers of the settlements. The mattock was the principal tool though primitive ploughs were used when the culture reached its peak[14]. Kura-Araxes tribes grew wheat of many varieties, barley, and flax for textiles.

Theirs was mixed farming, and stock breeding was developed no less than land tilling. Cattle were prominent in the economy as draught animals for agriculture and transport, as shown by archaeological finds in the North Caucasian Kura-Araxes settlements. Well developed distant-pasture cattle rearing, which prompted the tribes to open up Caucasian highlands, might testify to domestication of the horse[15].

The population vacated a majority of Kura-Araxes settlements in the second half of the 3rd millennium B.C. Scholars explain it by environmental and climatic reasons or the advance of other tribes from the south.

A part of Kura-Araxes tribes moved north and northeast to the Caucasian highlands, while others south to West Asia.

The ethnicity of Kura-Araxes tribes is the subject of heated academic discussions to this day[16].

Most probably, they were Hurrians who broke away from the basic Nakh-Hurrian ethnos to go south to Transcaucasia and West Asia at the end of

11 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С.154.

12 Джавахишвили А.И. Строительное дело и архитектура Южного Кавказа V–III тысячелетий до н.э. Тбилиси, 1970. С. 223–237.

13 Representations of bulls are also characteristic of the tribes belonging to the Maikop archaeological culture. The bull cult in West Asian, Mediterranean and Caucasian mythology was reflected in the mediaeval Chechen tradition on the origin of Lake Galanchozh in West Chechnya.

14 История народов Северного Кавказа с древнейших времен до конца XVIII века. М., 1988. С. 51.

15 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 160.

16 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1968. С. 20.

the 4th millennium B.C. This assumption is borne out by archaeological finds and linguistic correspondences.

First, "Kura-Araxes pottery is not connected with Transcaucasian pottery of the 5th and 4th millennia B.C. either in terms of techniques or shape or, again, decor. That is to say, all known multistratum settlements with Kura-Araxes strata underlain by earlier ones visibly demonstrate the absence of genetic ties between the kinds of pottery, which are the basic materials of those strata and an essential cultural attribute"[17].

Accordingly, the Kura-Araxes culture might be tracked down to tribes that appeared in Transcaucasia at the end of the 4th millennium B.C. from north, crossing the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range, because the culture does not reveal genetic links with

West Asian cultures, more developed at the time, even at its early stage. At the same time, the Kura-Araxes culture has much in common with the Maikop archaeological culture of the North Caucasus, manifest in the funeral rites, pottery and elsewhere — possibly, another testimony to their common origin.

Bearing out this point is the character and direction of Hurrian tribal migrations, as reflected in historical sources of the 3rd millennium B.C.[18].

Prominent scholar Krupnov wrote in his time:

> *"The likeness of Maikop cultural monuments to Kura-Araxes Eneolithic ones (as curvilinear ornamental reliefs on the pottery, arrowhead shapes, etc) and the combination of those cultures in Chechen-Ingush settlements allow to treat the Maikop culture as a northwestern variety of the archaeological culture of the Caucasian Isthmus — a culture that was one in times immemorial. The growing stock of data about the links between those ancient cultures moves the theme into the foreground as an essential problem of the original Caucasian cultural unity and its relation to a major and also well-knit ethnic community <...>*
>
> *Doubtless, the Caucasian language family took shape as early as the Neolithic Period — possibly, even before the Semitic, Indo-European and Finno-Ugric, let alone Turkic-speaking peoples appeared in the historical arena of the Old World"*[19].

Hurrian tribes belonged to the Nakh-Hurrian ethnic massif, whose habitat stretched from the Kuban to Dagestan in the southeastern part of the area that included the southeast and south of Chechnya and the west of Dagestan, as borne out by the level of linguistic correspondences between Hurrian and other Caucasian languages. Hurrian is the closest to Nakh, Dagestani languages coming next, while the Abkhaz-Adyg and Kartvelian languages are fairly remote from it, revealing that the Nakh-Dagestani language community

17 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 161, 198.

18 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1969. С. 40.

19 Крупнов Е.И. Древнейшая культура Кавказа и кавказская этническая общность // Советская археология. 1964. № 1. С. 26–43.

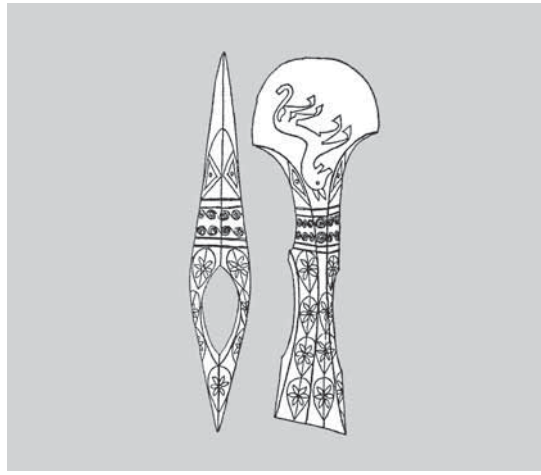
had disintegrated by the start of the 4th millennium B.C., if it existed at all[20]. Otherwise, Hurrian would be equally close to the Nakh and Dagestani languages. On the other hand, the character of linguistic correspondences shows that Hurrian tribes were the eastern part of the Nakh-Hurrian ethnic massif and neighbours of Dagestani language speakers.

As we can assume from the above, Hurrian tribes were migrating south toward the end of the 4th millennium B.C. — to Transcaucasia and later West Asia, to create a new culture there. They spread throughout Transcaucasia, including uplands, when the Kura-Araxes culture reached its peak. A part of Hurrians went back to the North Caucasus to clash with Nakh tribes, the bearers of the Maikop culture.

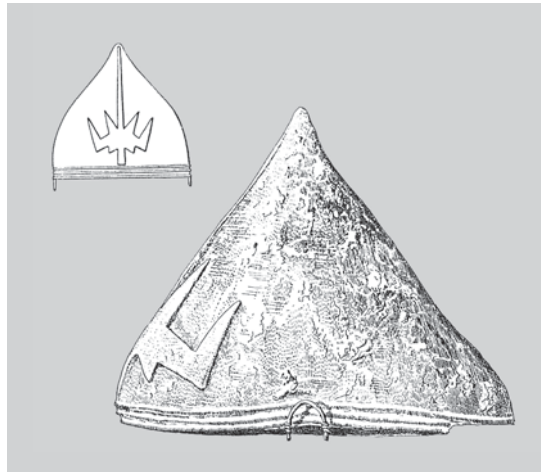
Settlements in the areas where the two cultures met possess syncretic material cultural properties of both — which was possible only if their bearers were ethnically related, to an extent.

The 3rd millennium B.C. saw Hurrian tribes leave their Transcaucasian settlements to migrate south for reasons unknown to us. Historical sources of the 3rd millennium B.C. refer to their migration and settlement along the route.

Aukh, Ichkeria and Cheberloi were populated by Hurrians' North Caucasian offspring[21], assimilated after the 15th century by Chechens, the



▲ A Koban ax.



▲ An Urartian bronze helmet. B.B. Piotrovsky. The Van Kingdom.

20 Nakh and Dagestani languages could have dialectal differences even within the Caucasian language community, and acquire a steady trend toward disintegration even at that time.

21 Chechen historical traditions say that a nation speaking a language different from Chechen but understood by Chechens lived in those lands before Chechens appeared there.

offspring of Alanians, who had migrated there from West Caucasus — from Nashkh, as tradition has it[22].

Hurrians played a prominent part in West Asia for many centuries. In the 16th century B.C., they established the state of Mitanni in North Mesopotamia, with the capital in Vassukanni. Hittite documents refer to it as Khurri and Mitanni[23].

Mitanni dominated West Asia for several centuries and influenced many adjacent areas — in particular, Arrapha, Kizzuvatna, Assur and Alalah.

It was a fairly loose state. Its rulers failed to make it a monolith centralized kingdom, however hard they try. Long wars with the Hittites and their Assyrian allies, and internecine strife eventually sent Mitanni into decline.

The end of the 14th century B.C. found it in Assyrian dependence, and it ceased to be by 1300 B.C. Possibly, some Hurrians fled north to the Armenian Plateau with the advance of Semitic tribes.

The earliest Assyrian references to the Uruatri tribes of the Armenian Plateau date to that time. Assyrian scribes mentioned their rulers' military expeditions to Nairi, or Nahiri[24].

The Hurrian-Urartian tribes of the Armenian Plateau established the mighty state of Urartu in the early 1st millennium B.C. The annals of Assyrian king Shalmaneser III for 856 B.C. mention the realm of Urartu, or Biyanili.

It had developed into a mighty militarised power by the start of the 8th century B.C. Urartian kings campaigned repeatedly against the neighbouring countries and were formidable rivals of Hittites and Assyrians. Urartian prosperity reached its peak in the 8th century, during the reign of Menias and his son Argistis I. Urartu spread its influence to Transcaucasia. The country had many stone fortresses with impregnable citadels. Crafts and farming flourished. Indicatively, royal scribes shifted to Urartian from the Assyrian language used initially.

Land tilling and stock breeding were the Urartian economic pillars. Local land farming ascended to the Neolithic. The Urartian period finally differentiated between wheat and barley farming[25]. Millet crops were also prominent. Sesame and flax were the most widespread of oil-yielding crops. Urartians built sophisticated irrigation networks not only in their own country but also in the neighbouring dependent lands. There were vast water reservoirs and irrigation canals of tremendous length. Urartian farming techniques were no less sophisticated, with iron ploughs, mattocks and sickles. Archaeological finds include a plenty of stone mortars, pestles, bowls and grain grinders.

Horticulture and viniculture thrived in Urartu as in the entire West Asia. Excavations of Karmir-Blur revealed numerous remnants and stones of plums, apples, quinces, cherries, pomegranates, peaches and other fruit[26].

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22 Кобычев В.П. Расселение чеченцев и ингушей в свете этногенетических преданий и памятников материальной культуры // Этническая история и фольклор. М., 1977. С. 165–181.

23 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1968. С. 44.

24 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1968. С. 140.

25 Пиотровский Б.Б. Ванское царство (Урарту). М., 1959. С. 134.

26 Ibid, С . 145.

Archaeological finds show the high level of Urartian viniculture and wine-making, with numerous grape varieties. Though contemporaneous sources offer scanty information about Urartian wine-making, wine cellars and storerooms were preserved in many settlements.

Stock breeding was no less developed. As archaeological finds and ancient written sources show, sheep and goats were much more numerous than cattle. Distant pastures were mostly used due to the geography of the region. Urartians excelled in butter and cheese making, and made excellent leather and worsted fabrics.

Stud farming was prominent, and Urartian sources mention cavalry and war chariots.

Architecture was developed the greatest in fortification. Fortresses were built in places hard of access — on high hills and rocks close to mountain streams or springs[27]. Walls based on solid rock did not require substructures, though the rock was reinforced. Urartians built their fortresses of stone or adobe on stone foundations. It is hard to make assumptions concerning palatial and templar architecture because all temples and palaces have come down to our day as ruins — for the most part, under a thick earth layer.

Urartu possessed material culture of a perfection unique for its time. Doubtless, the European culture of our time still bears its traces inherited through indirect contacts.

As Urartu fell in the beginning of the 6th century B.C., a part of its tribes fled to the parts of the North Caucasus inhabited by genetically related Nakh tribes, as testified by the legends of many Chechen clans and the teptar family chronicles. Many also migrated to East Transcaucasia.

Caucasian Albania emerged a bit later. Tribes of Hurrian-Urartian ancestry, known as Gargareans, were its most active ethnic entity. There is small reason to identify them with the Lezghin or Udian because Greek authors mention them side by side with the Utian, or Udi, and the Leghian — no doubt, the ancestors of the present-day Udians and Lezghins.

Most probably, a part of Gargareans later migrated to the North Caucasus, where the Nakh tribes of their kin lived. Perhaps, hence come morphological and lexical correspondences between the Nakh and certain Dagestani languages — mainly Lezghian. They might be considered adstrata.

The Nakh tribes of Dval, who lived in Dvaleti of the olden times (present-day South Ossetia) up to the end of the 17th century, are also the offspring of ancient migrants who settled there on the route southward[28].

According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, the earliest population of Dvaleti descends from the legendary Kavkas and is closely related to the Durdzuk, i.e., Nakh highlanders[29]. Authors of the Antiquity refer to Dvals

27 A majority of tower settlements in the Chechen mountains are situated on a similar terrain.

28 Вахушти Багратиони. География Грузии. Тифлис, 1904. С. 150.

29 Гамрекели В.Н. Двалы и Двалетия в I–XV вв.н. э. Тбилиси, 1961. С.16 .

as Caucasians — no doubt, meaning the Nakh. That is another proof of the Dval belonging to Nakh tribes.

The Maikop culture, which owes its name to a burial mound discovered near Maikop in the late 19th century, is the oldest archaeological culture whose bearers might be directly identified with the ancestors of Chechens.

The mound was more than ten metres high, with two tombs under it — one, the principal, in a pit under the mound, and the other within the mound. The principal grave was a rectangular earth pit oriented from northeast to southwest, and enclosed in a cromlech of limestone slabs. The walls of the tomb were reinforced by timber and the bottom paved with small river boulders. Wooden partitions divided the tomb into the south and north chambers, the latter precisely divided in two.

A man was interred in the south chamber, lying on his side in the embryo position, head southeast, densely powdered with red dye. There were two graves in each of the two parts of the north chamber.

The grave preserved an opulent treasure, a greater part of it in the south chamber — gold badges shaped as lions and bulls, gold beads and rings, gold and silver vessels, flint arrowheads, a polished stone axe, copper tools, and pottery of diverse shapes and functions[30].

A cluster of mounds had been discovered before the Maikop in the vicinity of the Cossack village of Novosvobodnaya, or Tsarskaya. Their

30 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 212.

▲ An Urartian bronze vessel. 9th-7th century B.C.

▲ Bronze figurine of a lion with a human torso. Detail of an Urartian throne. 7th century B.C.

◀ The village of Tuga in the Mainstoin-Erk River gorge.

funeral rites, with crouching dyed skeletons, and equipment had much in common with the Maikop mound, though the men were buried not in earth pits but in dolmens, with rich treasures of gold and silver jewellery, bronze tools and weapons, bronze cauldrons[31] and bowls, and patterned engobe and polished pottery.

Despite the many similarities, which allow trace the Maikop and Novosvobodnaya mounds to one archaeological culture, they reveal certain differences in the burial (pits and dolmens), and in armourers' and potters' techniques. To all appearances, these are chronological differences[32], while the discovery of Maikop cultural monuments of the interim developmental stage allows assume three stages of the development of the Maikop culture (*A.A. Formozov and R.M. Munchayev*).

Several decades of the 20th century brought the discoveries of Maikop tombs and monuments of everyday life in the Stavropol Territory, Kabarda-Balkaria and Chechnya (near the villages of Mekenskaya on the Terek River, Bamut on the Fortanga, Bachi-Yurt on the Gonsol, Serzhen-Yurt and Zandak)[33].

In its heyday, the Maikop culture spread throughout the North Caucasian plains and foothills from the Taman Peninsula in the west to the Dagestani border in the southeast[34]. The tribes of the Maikop culture were in contact with tribes of the longer-established Kura-Araxes culture in the south and southeast of Chechnya-Ingushetia, mainly along the Georgian and Dagestani borders. Possessions found in dwellings and tombs bear salient and lasting features of both cultures.

However, the combination of the later Maikop and early Kura-Araxes features revealed by archaeological complexes has not received a rational scholarly explanation to this day, with consideration for the chronological borders of those two cultures (the Kura-Araxes existed from the middle of the 4th millennium B.C. to the end of the 3rd, and the Maikop from the end of the 4th through the end of the 2nd)[35].

An alliance of closely interrelated tribes began to emerge in the North Caucasus — the area from the Kuban to the Argun rivers — when the Maikop culture reached its peak and, to all appearances, the tribes had taken shape. This alliance incorporated and assimilated groups of the plainland population, and survived till the Mongol-Tartar invasion. Cultural succession existed in the same area, and within closer boundaries later, for close on 5,000 years from the Maikop culture to the Alanian[36], and on to the later mediaeval Chechen culture.

No one doubts the local origin of the Maikop culture at its earlier stages, manifest in the Northwest and Central Caucasian monuments of everyday life

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31 Bronze cauldrons identical to them were unearthed later in the Maikop tombs of the burial mounds in the vicinity of Bamut village in Chechnya.

32 Формозов А.А. Каменный век и энеолит Прикубанья. М., 1965. С. 74.

33 Chechnya is, at that, the area least studied by archaeologists.

34 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С .199.

35 The assumption of Kura-Araxes features preserved in the later material culture of the Northeast Caucasus is not sufficiently argumented.

36 This succession is occasionally observed within one settlement. See: Нечаева Л.Г., Мизиев М.И. Поселение раннего бронзового века на р.Урух //Археологические открытия 1968 г. М., 1969. С 104–105.

and tombs. The local nature of the basic part of tools and household utensils is borne out by archaeological finds made in practically all excavated settlements of the Maikop culture dated to its various stages.

Monuments of its earliest stage were discovered in the Chechen east to refute the assumption of its progress west to east. Studies by Rauf Munchayev and other leading contemporary Russian archaeologists prove that the Maikop culture contacted with the West Asian world via Dagestan.

Born locally, the Maikop culture was created by the indigenous population, distant ancestors of the contemporary Nakh population of the Caucasus. The impact of ancient West Asian civilisations on cultural development of the North Caucasus, observed by scholars since as early as the local Neolithic Period, was strong enough to be taken into consideration, however[37].

Mesopotamian cultural influence on the region became stronger, for reasons unknown, in the Early Bronze Age of the North Caucasus. The increase might be ascribed to enhancing trade and economic contacts, migrations by certain groups of the Mesopotamian population to the North Caucasus, and the demand of West Asian craft centres for raw materials.[38] Be that as it may, the ethnic and linguistic kinship of those regions' populations was most probably the main reason for their contacts[39].Migrations of closely related Nakh tribes across the mountain range from south to north and in the opposite direction up to the end of the 1st millennium A.D. figure in historical sources and folk traditions.

Scholars date the Maikop culture approximately to the end of the 4th-beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. It bordered on the dolmen archaeological culture to the west, the Kura-Araxes, with which it was linked genetically, to the south and east, and the pit, catacomb and later timber-grave cultures to the north.

The tribes of the Maikop culture populated mainly North Caucasian plains and foothills though, to all appearances, they had close contacts with highlanders.[40]

Their settlements were located in places hard of access — river promontories,[41] terraces and along high and steep river banks that served as natural fortifications. On the unprotected

37 Формозов А.А. Каменный век и энеолит Прикубанья. М., 1965. С. 61.

38 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 376.

39 The Mesopotamian cultural impact at that time did not affect Transcaucasia to a similar extent, for reasons unknown, though it is geographically closer to Mesopotamia and was none inferior to the North Caucasus for gold and copper ore stock. It is hard in this respect to agree with S.N. Korenevsky's hypothesis on the migration of large groups of the Mesopotamian population to the North Caucasus, who stopped in Transcaucasia en route and adapted to it, because archaeological finds along the assumed route of West Asian tribes do not provide sufficient information for such assumptions. In fact, such information is totally absent in a majority of instances. See: Кореневский С.Н. Древнейшие земледельцы и скотоводы Предкавказья. М., 2004. С. 90–92.

40 Such contacts were probably more characteristic of the Maikop culture at its peak, when the population of plains and foothills began to demand distant pastures for its livestock.

41 Nakh tribes preserved the tradition even in the Middle Ages: many mediaeval Chechen mountain settlements (such as Tsoi-pkheda, Vaserkel, Sharoi and Shikaroi) were situated on river promontories.

The village of Gimroi in the mountains of Chechnya. Igor Palmin's photo.

side, these settlements had stone defence walls of a size impressive for their time.

Rauf Munchayev, prominent archaeologist and researcher of the Bronze Age in the Caucasus and West Asia, distinguishes two stages of the Maikop archaeological culture:

early, the time of the Maikop burial mound and the Meshoko settlement;

late, the time of the Novosvobodnaya and Bamut burial mounds[42].

The Bamut mound is the most interesting monument of the Maikop culture in present-day Chechnya. Ample and diverse finds were made in its tombs — red ochre pottery, bronze daggers, axes and spearheads, bone and flint arrowheads and tools, bronze cauldrons with pearl patterns analogous to Novosvobodnaya finds, and bronze and stone jewellery.

The Maikop archaeological culture lasted longer than a thousand years. It spread over a vast area from the Kuban to Dagestan at the time of its prosperity. Dynamic cultural and economic contacts with West Asia and Transcaucasia, which largely determined its development, were its most salient feature.

Intensive economic development, with an emphasis on stock breeding, metalworking and pottery, led to early social stratification as clan and tribal leaders horded vast treasures of livestock, precious metals and bronze artefacts. The richest patriarchal families acquired a separated position, and tribal chiefs came of their midst[43]. Armourers' pioneer technologies promoted the appearance of slavery.

The most salient features of the Maikop culture had gradually obliterated by the start of the 2nd millennium B.C. due to many factors — mainly the end of contacts with West Asia, replaced by ever closer links with the Black Sea region and the Volga basin, whose population was more backward socially and culturally. Later on, groups of steppe tribesmen penetrated the Maikop population.

Imports from the south stopped at that time, and amply furnished tombs are no longer met. The Maikop material culture degraded, to an extent, though unevenly in different parts of the North Caucasus.

The Maikop culture gradually transformed into the North Caucasian archaeological culture, though its household utensils, weapons and burial rites retained certain specific features for a long time within that culture.

The archaeological culture researchers term North Caucasian[44] gradually replaced the Maikop in the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. It was not a material culture of the new population but based on, and was genetically linked to the Maikop as shown by the similarity of burial rites and the construction of stone cromlechs, which testify to the succession of religion, interrelation of samples of pottery, and almost complete coincidence of the territory.

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42 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 330–335.

43 История народов Северного Кавказа. М., 1988. С. 48.

44 Beside this, there is the term "Terek-Kuban culture".

Extant burial monuments belonged to other rites, though retaining certain Maikop features, and their implements represented the new culture.

The burial mound near the village of Ul in the Kuban country[45] is the most interesting monument of the transition time. Vladimir Markovin dates it to the early stage of the North Caucasian archaeological culture. The buried man lay prostrate on his back head north, slightly reclining east. The tomb contained clay and alabaster figurines, a miniature jug, curved perforated pins similar to the pins found in the Maikop mounds of Novosvobodnaya, fragments of pottery, and a miniature clay cart model. Characterising the Ul mound is a combination of implements close to the Maikop and new burial rites[46] specific to the North Caucasian culture.

Monuments of the transition stage and the early stage of the North Caucasian archaeological culture have been found from the Kuban River to Dagestan. The mound with a dolmen-like coffin at the village of Zakan Yurt is the earliest burial monument of that culture in present-day Chechnya.

Most typical of the implements, with all their local variants, are curved bone pins, twined wire pendants, drilled stone axes of simple shape, bronze axes with a slightly slanting butt, flat adze-like axes, and vessels with herringbone and low relief patterns[47].

Proceeding from the Maikop features of the burial rites, archaic implements, and analogies offered by ancient Transcaucasian and West Asian complexes, Markovin postulated the temporal limits of the North Caucasian archaeological culture as the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. and 1700 B.C.[48]. Maikop cultural features had vanished fully by the end of the period, and the characteristics of the new archaeological culture had achieved an extent of stability. The features of the new funeral rite[49] and the types of burial implements characteristic of the North Caucasian archaeological culture had taken final shape by the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C., when its second stage — 1700 B.C.— 1500 A.D. — finished.

Almost all tombs of that time throughout the area of the North Caucasian archaeological culture from the Kuban to the left bank of the Sulak contain perforated bronze axes, bronze weaponry and tools, cast patterned jewellery, stone axes and maces, and ornamented vessels. Bronze articles are lavishly patterned in lacing, spirals and small stuck-on circles, and vessels in impressions of string and spiral low relief.

The material culture of North Caucasian tribes reached an extent of flowering at that time, while the earlier stage of the North Caucasian culture spectacularly revealed its degradation compared to the previous, Maikop, as manifest in the variety of funeral implements and higher production technologies.

45 Марковин В.И. Культура племен Северного Кавказа в эпоху бронзы. М., 1960. С. 30.

46 The dead man's embryo position, head south, is characteristic of Maikop tombs.

47 Марковин В.И. Культура племен Северного Кавказа в эпоху бронзы. М., 1960. С. 33.

48 Марковин В.И. Культура племен Северного Кавказа в эпоху бронзы. М., 1960. С. 50.

49 Characteristic of tombs of the Kuban land is a stretched skeleton oriented west-east, and the embryo position of the central and mountain areas. Dyed skeletons, so typical of the Maikop tombs, get rarer throughout the North Caucasian cultural area.

Thus, the burial mound at Andryukovskaya village contained a ribbed copper dagger, a circular pendant ornamented in string and spiral, copper pendants, an oval temple ring, and a hammer-shaped pin[50].

The Gatyn-Kale burial ground in the Argun Gorge, in present-day Chechnya, is typical of the second stage of the North Caucasian culture. Bronze spiral bracelets, pins with scrolled top, bronze and paste beads, pendants shaped at spoons and rings, temple rings and pottery were unearthed there.

The bearers of the North Caucasian archaeological culture had come into contact with representatives of the steppe cultures to the north — mainly the catacomb and timber-grave — in various parts of the North Caucasus by the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. These contacts were the closest and the most versatile in the west — the Kuban country. The tombs of the region acquired new features not only in implements but also in the funeral rite. Material culture gradually acquired a mixed character. Such processes were slower in the Central Caucasus, with smaller influence of the steppe cultures on the funeral rite and articles of material culture.

The North Caucasian culture also lost its specifics in Dagestan, along the east border of the area, where the influence of the local Eneolithic cultures became stronger. That time is attributed to the third stage of the North Caucasian culture, between the middle and the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. — a period when local differences between material cultures and funeral rites of tribes representing that culture became more pronounced in various parts of the North Caucasus. Features of new archaeological cultures, mainly the Kuban and Koban, appeared within the old culture and on its basis. For instance, a bronze axe unearthed neat Zakan Yurt village in Chechnya prototypes Koban axes[51].

The economy of the North Caucasian culture was based on stock breeding and land tilling. The latter was better developed than in the preceding era. Wheat, barley and other cereals were grown. Mattocks of hard stone were used to till the land. Harvesting was made by sickles with flint insertions at the earlier stage of the North Caucasian culture, and bronze sickles became widespread later on. Stone grain grinders often occur in tombs of the North Caucasian culture.

Sheep, goats and cattle preponderated in stock breeding. Sheep grazed on distant pastures, as shown by archaeological finds in the highlands, where flocks were taken for summer, and in the Caspian plains where they wintered. To all appearances, embryonic agistment was characteristic of the Maikop tribes, as well — largely thanks to horse breeding. The Maikop culture used horses only for riding, while the North Caucasian knew wheeled vehicles, as shown by a clay model of a two-wheel cart unearthed in the Ul burial mound.

Tombs of various types allow assume the shape of contemporaneous dwellings as ancient graves often imitated houses and even used the same construction materials, depending on their accessibility. Stone vaults and coffins were widespread in the mountains,

50 Марковин В.И. Культура племен Северного Кавказа в эпоху бронзы. М., 1960. С. 51.

51 Марковин В.И. Культура племен Северного Кавказа в эпоху бронзы. М., 1960. С. 84.

where stone houses were built even in the previous era, while forest dwellers, with their log houses, made timber graves due to the scarcity of stone. Dwellings were rectangular in the area, just as in the previous era.

Despite scanty material concerning the character of the settlements and dwellings of the North Caucasian culture, the various types of tombs reveal sophisticated house building and, possibly, fortification techniques. Archaeologists ascribe a dwelling unearthed near Gatyn Kale in the Chechen highland to the North Caucasian culture. A rectangular wattle and daub with slab floor, it was divided in two chambers with a stone partition.

The North Caucasian burial culture knew mounds, stone coffins, vaults and earth pits. The Nakh of the North Caucasus preserved this versatility of interment customs up to the Late Middle Ages.

Weaponry, jewellery and pottery found in tombs show that North Caucasians regarded the afterlife as continuation of earthly life — views characteristic of the Nakh throug h the Middle Ages, as well.

The Koban archaeological culture had replaced the North Caucasian by the middle of the 2nd and the start of the 1st millennium B.C. Both cultures were genetically interlinked and belonged to one and the same ethnic entity.

The principal area of the Koban culture coincides with the preceding North Caucasian, shifting south to the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range and outside it. The north boundary of the Koban culture approached the present-day Stavropol Upland, reflecting Nakh settlement as, due to the aggressive advance of numerous Iranian-, Ugric- and Turkic-speaking savage nomads, Nakh tribes fled south and west to oust and partly assimilate the peoples that had created the Kura-Araxes culture. The oldest monuments of the Koban culture, of the 16th century B.C., were unearthed in Dvaleti — present-day South Ossetia. The earliest monuments of the Koban culture found in the North Caucasus go down to the 12th century B.C., and the latest to the 4th century B.C.

Stock breeding and land tilling were the pillars of the Koban economy[52], with an emphasis on stock breeding — cattle, sheep and goats. Sheep were agisted. Horse raising played a tremendous part in the Koban economy and everyday life, as shown by numerous parts of harness in Koban settlements and tombs.

To all appearances, horses were becoming the main transportation means at that time[53]. Numerous clay figurines of horses, and their representations on bronze axes and pottery testify to a widespread horse cult[54].

Archaeological materials from the foothills and plains show the development of Koban land tilling.

Koban farmers grew wheat, barley, rye and millet, using wooden ploughs, bronze mattocks, stone sickles with flint insertions, and bronze sickles. Wooden ploughs had acquired iron shares

52 Крупнов Е.И. Древняя история Северного Кавказа. М., 1960 С. 301–316.

53 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. С. 167.

54 Chechens treat horses as holy to this day. Horsemeat was banned from the diet even after Chechens embraced Islam, and the taboo survived up to the deportation of 1944.

and iron sickles appeared by the 7th century B.C. Grain was stored in vessels and pits. Grain was threshed on special boards, and ground with stone grinders, or with pestle and mortar.

Despite well developed stock breeding, hunting was also prominent in the Koban economy, as shown by numerous wild animal bones in occupation layers, and a deer hunting scene represented on a bronze sheet belt[55]. To all appearances, Kobans hunted with dogs[56].

Koban settlements were situated on uplands and plateaus, and in river valleys. Dwellings, household outbuildings and sanctuaries were arranged in blocks. Narrow streets were cobbled. Houses were mostly rectangular, though oval ones also occurred — possibly, due to influences from the outside. Mountain dwellings were made of stone cemented with a solution of clay, and plainland were wattle and daub.

The Serzhen Yurt settlement in East Chechnya was typical of the Koban culture at its early stage (10th–7th cent. B.C.). Situated in the foothills, it had two shelter hills with steep slopes, one of them fortified with a man-made moat. The streets were cobbled, and houses wattle and daub on stone or clay block foundations[57]. The buildings were divided into living quarters and craftsmen's workshop. The living quarters possessed hearths of various shape and design. Workshops belonged to potters and bronze founders. The settlement had many household pits.

The Koban tribes knew several forms of interment — earth pits, rectangular stone coffins, stone vaults and interment under a mound. Characteristic of the earlier Koban culture was the embryonic position of the buried man, on the right or left side. The later tombs reveal steppe cultures' influence. Food donations and an ample choice of weaponry, tools and jewellery are found in the tombs — often complete with horses and harness. Koban tribes erected cenotaphs[58] in honour of men who died away from their motherland[59].

Researchers distinguish three local variants of the Koban culture: west in the vicinity of present-day Pyatigorsk and Kabarda-Balkaria, central in North and South Ossetia, and east, Chechnya and Ingushetia, alongside three chronological layers of its development: 12th–11th centuries B.C., 9th–7th centuries B.C., and 7th–4th centuries B.C. Local variants reflect only dialectal differences in the Koban ethnic environment, which was certainly heterogeneous and genetically linked with the older North Caucasian cultural community.

Thus, according to Valentina Kozenkova, comparison of monuments of the east variant of the Koban culture with the central allows to assume, with an extent of probability, that, for instance, the population that left the complex of articles from Sharoi in East Chechnya was genetically related to the

55 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. С. 177.

56 The author discovered the earliest petroglyph representing a man with a dog on the wall of an early mediaeval building in Sharoi. The stone is much older than the house and, to all appearances, might date to the Koban era.

57 Козенкова В.И. Кобанская культура. Восточный вариант. М., 1978. С. 12.

58 The Chechen custom of erecting *churt* gravestones in memory of persons who died and were buried far from their native parts survives to this day.

59 Козенкова В.И. Кобанская культура. Западный вариант. М., 1989. С .83.

population of the Koban burial grounds in North Ossetia, as shown by semi-oval buckles, toe rings and spatular pins[60]. The formation of an independent Kuban culture in the western area of the North Caucasian archaeological culture and, consequently, ancient Nakh tribes during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages show the advance of Abkhaz-Adyg tribes from Transcaucasia and the Black Sea coast. Ancient sources that might throw more light on the history of contemporaneous Nakh tribes in the Koban cultural area are very scanty. In particular, references to Gargarians are found in Strabo. They populated the area in the 1st century B.C. and, to all appearances, were one of the Nakh tribes (cf: Chech. *гаьргар,* "related", "akin")[61].

The Koban were one of the most influential Caucasian ethnic massifs. Ancient Georgian chronicles refer to them as "Caucasioni" and "Durdzuk". At that time, the sedentary population of the North Caucasus was facing military threat from numerous savage nomadic hordes of the steppes to its north. That was why the construction of fortified settlements surrounded by a rampart and moat or a stone wall started in the area.

The ruins of huge stone block structures known as Cyclopean date, most probably, to an even earlier era. According to ancient traditions, they were built by the Vampal — one-eyed giants the Greeks knew as Cyclopes. Other traditions ascribe them to the Nart — legendary giant ancestors of the Vainakh, famous for fabulous strength. It is really hard to believe that ordinary mortals could move huge monoliths, each weighing several tonnes, in the mountains.

As things really are, the cyclopean structures of Chechnya and Ingushetia are a developmental stage of local architecture in the tideway of the later North Caucasian and early Koban culture. Nakh tribes began to build cyclopean-type stone towers in the 1st millennium B.C., at the latest. Ruins of such towers are to be found in present-day Chechnya in the vicinity of the villages Orsoi, Bauloi, Nikaroi, Tsecha-Akhk, Doshkhakle and Kharkaroi.

Cyclopean structures are also extant in Transcaucasia. In Armenia, they were built on hilltops. Dwellings were clustered in the centre, on the highest point. Concentric circles of huge unhewn boulders surrounded them. The defenders hid behind those boulders during enemy attacks. Indicatively, folk tradition ascribes those settlements to the Achkatar — one-eyed giants, i.e., Cyclopes, just as in Chechnya-Ingushetia.

Numerous ruins of cyclopean settlements and fortresses are in Georgia. Researchers divide them in several groups according to the time of construction, location, shape, size and character. The earliest go down to the Eneolithic and the latest to the early mediaevality.

The vastness of Koban dwellings can be regarded as testifying to the social structure of Koban tribes of the time. Beyond doubt, the population grouped in large communities of kinsmen, which evolution gradually made smaller. Small annexes were added to the cyclopean structures.

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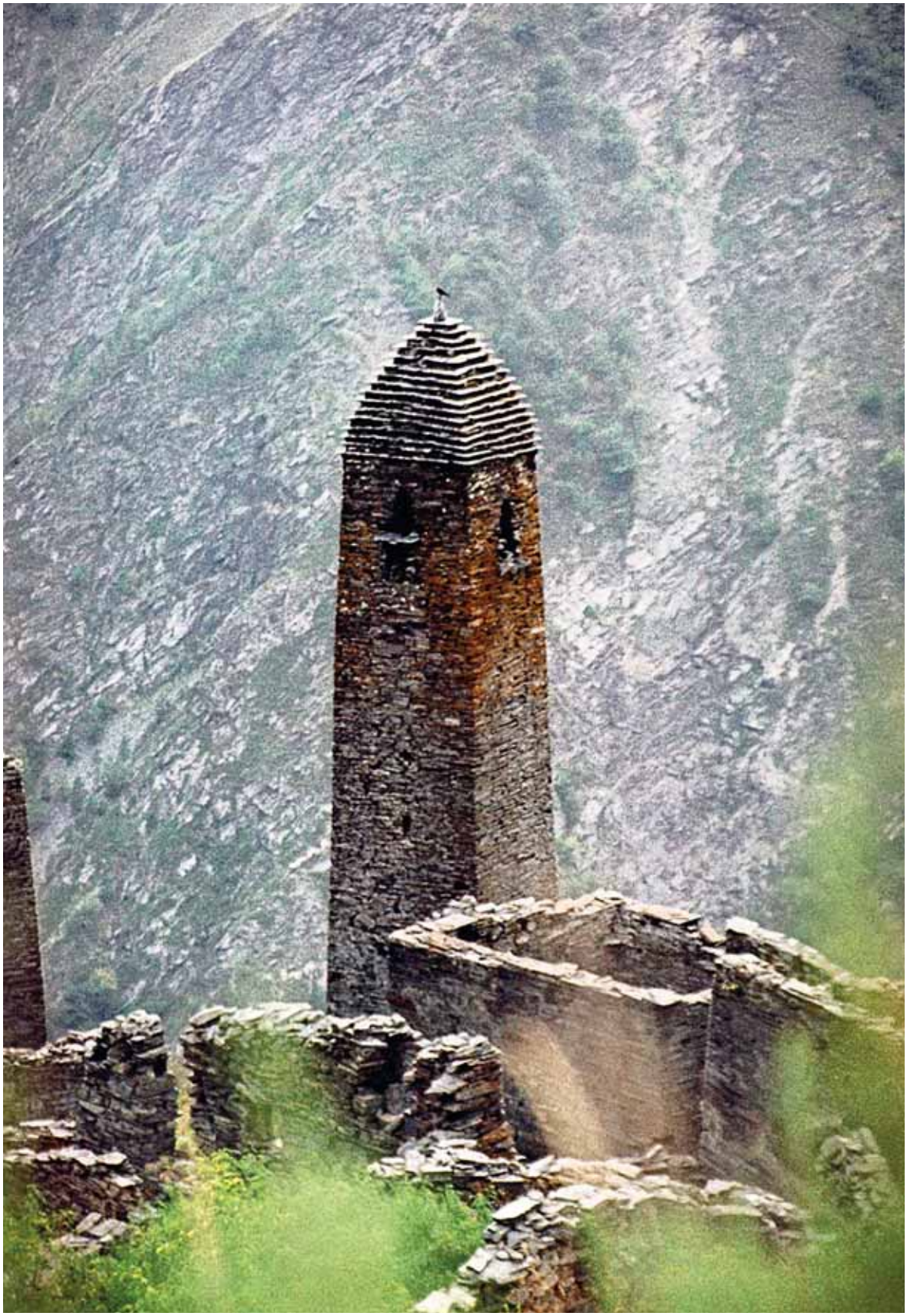
60 Козенкова В.И. Некоторые археологические критерии в этногенетических исследованиях // Археология и вопросы этнической истории Северного Кавказа. Грозный, 1979. С. 53.

61 Страбон. География // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д., 1990. С. 190.



The village of Tsa-Kale.

A major political alliance of ancient Nakh tribes existed at that time in a vast area stretching from the Kuban River to the Andian Range. This formidable military-political force controlled the Daryal Gorge — the principal route across the Caucasus — and other mountain passes to face Transcaucasian countries, mainly Kartli and Armenia, with permanent danger of aggression, and was a strong political influence on the neighbouring lands.

Perhaps, that was why that time did not need special fortifications. The local relief and the huge size of dwellings sufficed for defence.

Major military setbacks had made the Nakh military-political alliance disintegrate into smaller entities by the 3rd–2nd centuries B.C. as the danger of frequent nomad raids from the north was growing. The defence of separate settlements becomes the crucial goal in such periods as that. Certainly, it impacts architecture.

The last developmental stage of the Koban culture saw its area shrinking, and differences between the material culture of highlands and plains increasing. As archaeological finds testify, steppe tribes were enhancing their influence on the population of plainlands and foothills since as early as the 7th century B.C.

In the final analysis, this influence led to the formation of a new archaeological culture in the area. However, the Nakh tribes preserved relics of the Koban culture in its various manifestations up to the later mediaevality.

Scythian tribes appeared in the Nakh-populated area approximately in the 7th century B.C.[62]. The origin and ethnic and linguistic identity of Scythians remains open for discussion to this day.

At a certain period, the so-called Scythian archaeological culture stretched from the Black Sea coast and North Caucasian plains in the west to the Altai and East Siberia in the east. It stays unclear, however, whether it was a well-knit ethnic entity or a group of genetically related tribes or, again, unrelated entities united by shared material culture.

Though certain linguists assume that Scythian was an Iranian language (if a common language could exist in such a vast territory at all)[63], not a single work has appeared to this day to prove the point with substantial arguments.

Personal names depended on religion not ethnicity even in older times, while place names change depending on the language of the local population— which means that toponymy and onomatology do not provide sufficient data to ascribe the population of a region to a particular ethnos.

Archaeologists come upon traces of the interaction of the Koban archaeological culture with the Scythian material culture in the North Caucasian area of the Koban culture approximately starting with the 7th century B.C. in burial rites, weapons, horse harness, pottery and necessaries. Researchers think contemporaneous Koban material culture was under certain influence of the Scythian

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62 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. Страбон. География // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д., 1990. С. 190.

63 Абаев В.И. Осетинский язык и фольклор. М., 1949

animal style, though zoomorphosity was characteristic of even earlier Koban articles[64].

Scholars are uncertain to this day whether so-called North Caucasian Scythians were indigenous tribes under certain cultural influence of steppe tribes or they were nomads that had come from east. The former version is more probable due to close Koban-Scythian coexistence, an extent of cultural symbiosis and joint expeditions to Transcaucasia and West Asia.

As for Caucasian Sarmatians, their indigenous origin can be assumed with greater certainty, and is borne out by authors of the Antiquity and by onomatological, archaeological and anthropological data.

The earliest Greek references to Alanians in the Koban cultural area date to the 1st century A.D. Till quite recently, Alanians had been considered part of a vast massif of Sarmatian tribes advancing to North Caucasian plains and foothills from the lower reaches of the Volga and the vicinity of the Urals.

Alanian was considered an Iranian language proceeding not from archaeological, linguistic and historical data but from the fact that Osset was an Iranian language, though there were no sufficient historical arguments to assume that the Osset were Alanians' only scions.

However, the boundaries of Alanian settlement, and toponymic, archaeological and anthropological data show that an overwhelming Alanian majority were offspring of the bearers of the Koban culture. They became a well-knit multiethnic massif of Nakh, Iranian and even Turkic tribes as late as the Middle Ages.

Material cultural differences between plainland and highland tribes were due mainly to an extent of conservatism in the highland economy, scanty contacts with the world outside, and certain isolation from it.

The Koban culture began to disintegrate into plainland and highland cultures in the Nakh-populated area at the turn of the Christian era. Highland Koban culture retained its identity and archaic traces for a long time, while the Alanian culture was emerging in the North Caucasian plains, influenced to an extent by nomads of the steppes.

Greek authors and other historical sources do not provide whatever grounds to assume that Alanians and North Caucasian Sarmatians belonged to Iranian-speaking tribes.

Strabo not only considered the population of the North Caucasian plains and mountains genetically interrelated but also ascribed the same kinship to North Georgian tribes. As he describes the population of ancient Iberia, he says that "the mountain part is populated by a majority of Iberians, who follow the customs of Scythians and Sarmatians, to whom they are supposedly related". He writes about people coming to Pontic poleis for trade that "a majority of them belongs to the Sarmatian tribe, and they are all called Caucasians"[65].

64 Дударев С.Л. Из истории связей населения Кавказа с киммерийско-скифским миром. Грозный, 1991. С. 124 Страбон. География // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д., 1990. С. 190.

65 Страбон. География // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д., 1990. С. 185.

Anania Shirakatsi's *Geography Guide (7th Century),* which is, in fact, a compilation of Ptolemy, includes references to the Nakhchamat—an ethnicon he substitutes for the ancient author's "Yaksamat". Anania assumes that they lived in the mouth of the Don. No doubt, he knew the geography of Caucasian peoples excellently, as his book shows, and it was a deliberate substitute[66].

In his commentaries to Anania Shirakatsi's *Geography Guide,* Kerope Patkanov singled out a number of ethnicons occurring in the treatise (Sarmat, Savromat, Yaksamat, Khechmat-ak, etc.) finishing with the suffix *-mat*, among them Nakhchemat, or Nakhchimateank, in the Armenian version. He thinks the ethnicon consists of two Chechen words — Nakhche, Chechen's self-designation, and *matt* ("country" or "language") plus — *eank*, the Armenian plural ending. Thus, he assumes that ethnicons with the root part *-mat-* come from the Nakh language[67].

Prominent Georgian historian Ivan Javakhishvili not only supported Patkanov's idea but also added new arguments to substantiate it.

As he saw it, the tribes of the North Caucasian plains were designated by the ethnicon "Sharmat", not "Sarmat", but neither Greek nor Latin had a way to transcribe the sound *sh*, which was out of their phonetic system. That was why Greek and Roman authors transformed it into "Sarmatian". Javakhishvili divided the ethnicon "Sharmat" into *shar* and *mat*, regarding the former as an ethnic designation occurring in many parts of the Caucasus previously, and mentioned in historical treatises by mediaeval Georgian authors. In particular, Giorgi Merchuli, 10th century Georgian historian, mentions the landed possessions of the potentate of Sharoi — i.e., Sharo — in the north of Abkhazia. The name was extant, as he held, in Chechen mountain place names, e.g. the Sharo-Argun River and the historical area of Sharoi, and in East Transcaucasia as Sharwan and Sharo[68].

In his noteworthy book *Sarmatians* and the *Vainakh,* Chechen scholar Yakub Vagapov convincingly substantiates the Nakh origin of a majority of Sarmatian and Alanian ethnicons and personal names occurring in the many historical sources[69].

Vagapov writes, in particular: "The ethnicon *Savromat* is the oldest of all we are regarding. Its initial part corresponds to Vainakh sovra, which means soft leather with a characteristic natural pattern on the grain (surface) — so the ethnicon meant 'leather people' as leather preponderated in the Sarmatian costume, with its leather cloaks, helmets and boots <...>

The Adyg knew Sarmatians as Sharma, from which researchers derive the surnames Sheremet and Sheremetev. The Vainakh *shera mettig* (with the suffix *-ig*) and its older form *shara mat,* which means 'plain', show that the words Sarmatian and *Sharmat* are identical, i.e., the word *Sarmat-Sharmat* initially designated a plain, whose population eventually received

66 Ширакаци Анания. Армянская география VII века до р. х. СПб., 1877. С. 35.

67 Ширакаци Анания. Армянская география VII века до р. х. СПб., 1877. С. 38.

68 Джавахишвили И. Основные историко-этнологические проблемы истории Грузии, Кавказа и Ближнего Востока// Вестник древней истории, 1939, № 4. С. 42.

69 Вагапов Я. Сарматы и вайнахи. Грозный, 1990. С. 110.

the name of Sharmatai or Sharmatoi, which meant 'plainland people'.

"The ethnicon *Harimat* also divides in two — the above-mentioned *-mat* and *hari-*, 'guard', from ha, 'sentry', with the adjectival suffix *-ri*. To all appearances, the tribe received its name due to its specific functions. The name of the Chechen mountain village Khoi has the same meaning, 'watchmen' or 'sentries'. Similarly, other Sarmatian ethnicons with the root *-mat-* also receive an explanation proceeding from the Vainakh language. Vainakh languages also have compounds which include the root *-mat-* and designate locations and communities."

Many Caucasian historians insisted that Vainakh tribes living in the area from the Andian Range to the Daryal Gorge in the beginning of the Christian era and the early mediaevality were known as Durdzuk. As things really were, "Durdzuk" was the Georgian name for a small number of the Vainakh, who lived high in the mountains in the upper reaches of the Argun, Assa and Armkhi rivers. This is especially clear in Vakhushti Bagrationi's *Geography of Georgia*. The regions of Durdzuketi and Kisteti were geographically far closer to Georgia than to the basic Nakh-populated territory, and were always within the orbit of Georgian foreign and domestic policies.

The Ovs, mentioned in mediaeval Georgian sources, had no direct bearing on the present-day ethnicon "Osset". It is merely the Georgian for Alanians, which later passed (by sheer coincidence, which is often the case in history) to the ethnic community formed as the indigenous Nakh population merged with the Iranian. The Iranian and Turkic languages were ousting the Nakh in the Central Caucasus for a long time. Persian rulers had to place garrisons in the Daryal and other Caucasian gorges since the 4th century A.D. to guard mountain passes and protect the northern border of Persia from bellicose mountain tribes and their allies. That was when Iranian speakers began to infiltrate the Caucasian milieu in a process that finished after the invasion of Tamerlane[70].

The Cuman, or Polovtsi, also moved to the mountain gorges of the Northwest Caucasus from Caucasian foothills, fleeing from the advancing Mongols and later Tamerlane, to merge with Alanians, who might, at that time, include the Turkic-speaking Savir, ousted by Huns from the plains. The Karachai and Balkar appeared as the result. These ethnic entities preserved material and cultural unity with the Nakh and retained the Caucasioni anthropological look, though accepting the Turkic language.

Catacomb tombs were considered the basic and, in fact, the only ethnic determinant of the Alanian as a nomadic Iranian-speaking tribe that migrated to the Caucasian foothills at the start of the Christian era from the Volga country and the South Urals.

However, catacombs accounted for only a small portion of the tombs of Sarmatian tribes in the Volga-Don interfluve and the South Urals. More than that, their catacombs did not chronologically precede North Caucasian catacombs but appeared later, as funeral utensils testify. Most probably, Sarmatians of the Volga-Don interfluve accepted the custom of catacomb burial in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. under the

70 Osset ethnogenetic traditions date no earlier than the 17th century.

impact of the North Caucasian custom. All archaeological materials from the area of the original settlement of Iranian-speaking Sarmatians indicate that it is impossible to reconcile two dominant research premises — the attribution of Alanians to Iranian-speaking Sarmatian and Massagete tribes, and catacomb burials as brought to the North Caucasus by Sarmatians at the turn of the Christian era[71].

Archaeological finds give no grounds to assume that North Caucasian catacombs belonged to alien Iranian-speaking tribes because, since the 4th century A.D., "a common, rather specific material culture was spreading in the North Caucasus. It was characterised by specific pottery — mainly grey-clay glazed, specific buckles, toiletry and belts"[72]. Material traces of that culture are found in tombs of many types — earth pits, stone coffins, vaults and catacombs, so catacomb burials cannot provide an objective criterion to determine the ethnicity of the Alanian culture, let alone attribute it to Iranian-speaking Sarmatians.

For instance, "materials of the Lower Julat burial grounds in the northern part of the central Caucasian foothills, which bordered on Sarmatian lands, do not allow assume whatever mass invasions of Sarmatian tribes at the turn of the Christian era and its first centuries. Burial rites and material cultural data reveal unbroken development of the given culture, and so a common, on the whole, ethnic basis of the local population from the concluding centuries B.C. up to the Hun invasion"[73].

Krupnov had previously come to the conclusion that Alanians, who "occupied a vast area from the vicinity of Dagestan up to the Kuban country, were the ancestors not only of Ossets but also of other North Caucasian ethnic entities — in particular, the Chechen and Ingush"[74]. The author proceeded in this assumption from anthropological studies, according to which the population of the North Caucasian plains and highlands belonged to one and the same anthropological type in the early Christian era.

Anthropological, linguistic and archaeological data and historical sources allow assume that at the early stage (1st-9th centuries A.D.) Alanians were one of the Nakh tribes and occupied the plains and foothills of the Sulak-Kuban interfluve, while at the later stage (11th–13th centuries) they were a multiethnic massif that included not only the Nakh but also Iranian and Turkic-speaking tribes — ancestors of the Osset, Karachai and Balkar.

Burial vaults repeat the shape of Alanian dwellings. Unlike nomads', Alanians' houses were rectangular or square — either above ground or semi-underground. The territory retained the culture of rectangular dwellings, fortifications and sanctuaries for several millennia. Above-ground dwellings were wattle and daub, with roof beams resting on pillars, and semi-underground ones had the shape of a square, with gable roofs. Alanians built similar stone structures

71 Мошкова М.Г. К вопросу о катакомбных погребальных сооружениях как специфическом определителе// История и культура сарматов. Саратов, 1983. С. 28–29.

72 Абрамова М.П. К вопросу об аланской культуре Северного Кавказа // Советская археология, 1978, № 1. С. 72.

73 Абрамова М.П. К вопросу о связях населения Северного Кавказа сарматского времени// Советская археология, 1979, № 2. С. 50.

74 Крупнов Е.И. Древняя история Северного Кавказа. М., 1960. С. 311.

in the mountains. To all appearances, Alanian dwellings largely determined the architecture of mediaeval Nakh tombs and possibly towers.

Archaeological materials do not provide information about large-scale wars at that time and about the ousting or extermination of the indigenous population. Thus, the assumption of a well-knit ethnic entity appearing suddenly in a vast territory to become its dominant force at once is very dubitable — just as the assumption that this entity promptly shifted from the life of nomadic stock-breeders to sedentary farming.

Alania was considered one territory as early as the 2nd century A.D, and Alanians were reputed as one of the strongest North Caucasian peoples, who straddled strategic routes connecting Transcaucasia with Europe.

The 3rd-8th centuries found Alania in the migration zone of the many savage nomadic tribes — mainly Huns, who gave Alanian settlements to fire and sword. Alanian influence on the region shrank drastically. That was the time of the first wave of Alanian, or plainland Nakh, migration to the Caucasian mountains.

Sedentary Nakh tribes remained in the North Caucasian valleys and foothills despite the Hun invasion, and continued land-tilling and stock agistment. Numerous earthwork settlements surrounded by deep moats, earth ramparts, towers and citadels appeared at the time.

Alanian-Hun relations were far friendlier in the 5th century through the 7th, and Alanians took part in Hun raids of Europe and Transcaucasia.

At that time, Alanians retained an essential role in the politics of the Caucasian region. They steadily extended their territory and exercised military pressure on Adyg tribes in search of an exit to the Black Sea.

Alanians' leading role in the Caucasus is also reflected in an alliance with the Alanian king as the first diplomatic step of the emergent Khazar Khanate, "for the Alanian kingdom was stronger and more powerful than any nation around"[75].

Anania Shirakatsi's *Geography Guide* says that Alanians were settled all around the plains up to the Sunzha inflow into the Terek, while the Dval, Tsanar and Durdzuk tribes, genetically related to them, lived to the south of their lands[76].

A new period of Caucasian activity of the Arab Caliphate set in with the start of the 8th century as Arabs conquered Transcaucasia and a part of Dagestan. Valiant resistance of the Tsanar and other mountain Nakh tribes, who blocked the passes to the North Caucasus, was too strong for Arab invaders to overcome as they sought to advance across Alania and take firm hold of it.

Tsanars rose against Arabs again and again, and sent their warriors into flight though Arab armies were considered invincible at the time. Arab historian al-Yakubi reports a mighty rising of the Tsanar, whom the neighbouring tribes joined, in the early 9th century. The insurgents put to flight the Turk Bugu, the Caliph's vice-gerent, who was known for

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75 Гадло А.В. Этническая история Северного Кавказа IV–X вв. Л., 1979. С. 177.

76 Ширакаци Анания. Армянская география VII века до р. х. СПб., 1877. С. 35.

especial cruelty toward the population of the conquered part of Transcaucasia.

Arabs made several campaigns against Alania and gave its towns and villages to fire and sword, but eventually were forced to give up the idea of advance northward — they had to protect themselves from the courageous Nakh with fortresses and outposts built all along the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range. Possibly, that was when the Nakh began to strengthen the network of beacons and watchtowers in the extreme south of their land — a point borne out by the dating of those towers.

Alania regained its political might in the 10th and 11th centuries to become once again a powerful state with a large and strong army and a pronounced part in the European southeast.

Contemporaneous Arab sources say that Alania had numerous fortifications.

Al-Masudi refers to Alania as a strong state whose king was "mighty, valiant, of tremendous power, and conducted unwavering policy among the kings". According to him, Alania stretched from Serir [West Dagestan — *L.I.*] to the land of the Kashak [Adyg — *L.I.*]. The Alanian king's army was 30,000 strong, and the Abkhazian king and certain Adyg tribes were his vassals[77]. However, internecine strife and tug-of-war for power enfeebled Alania, and the Mongol invasion found it badly disintegrated, according to the sources of that time.

Tamerlane's devastating invasion of the Caucasus obliterated Alania from the political map of the world, and the few surviving Alanians fled to the mountains to join related Nakh tribes.

The anonymous author of the 10th century treatise The *Borders of the World* says that "there are highlanders and inhabitants of the steppe among Alanians"[78].

The Grand Signal System of the Nakh appeared in the Alanian era. It was a network of beacons and combat towers that brought together communities dispersed over a vast area in the hour of danger.

Stone construction reached a high degree of perfection in Alania, which was entirely covered by castles and fortresses, as mediaeval sources testify.

Strongly fortified settlements with a large occupation layer began to appear in Alania since the 5th-6th centuries A.D. Land-tilling, stock breeding, fishing and hunting were Alanians' principal occupations. They also excelled in metalwork and pottery, and traded extensively with all neighbouring peoples.

Settlements with deep moats and formidable citadels began to appear in the 7th-9th centuries.

Unlike nomads, with their circular dwellings, Alanians followed their distant ancestors to build rectangular above-ground houses and dugouts.

Above-ground dwellings were wattle and daub, with roof beams resting on pillars. Household outbuildings surrounded the dwellings. Streets were cobbled.

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77 Гадло А.В. Этническая история Северного Кавказа IV–X вв. Л., 1979. С. 163.

78 Гадло А.В. Этническая история Северного Кавказа IV – X вв.Л., 1979. С. 177.

Alkhankala in present-day Chechnya, one of the largest Alanian settlements of the 1st millennium A.D., was fortified with a deep, steep-sloped moat, a rampart and an impregnable stone wall. A citadel, also with a moat round it, was in the centre. Remnants of wattle and daub structures, interconnected with a cobbled road, were unearthed in the settlement. Available archaeological finds allow assume that the settlement existed from the 7th century B.C. to the 13th century A.D.[79].

Mass construction of citadels, combat towers and fortification complexes in present-day Chechnya and the entire Nakh-populated area dates to the 12th-13th centuries, i.e. the late Alanian era, though the development of Nakh architecture reached its peak in the 15th and 16th centuries, and as late as the 17th and 18th in the western territories. Chechen migration back to the plains in the 16th-17th centuries determined an early decline of tower construction in the Chechen mountains.

Mongol and later Tamerlane's invasions wiped Alanian settlements off the face of the earth in the North Caucasian plains. A new Chechen ethnic entity emerged, however, in the depth of the Alanian culture as it finally moved upland. A mediaeval culture was taking shape that largely determined present-day Chechen culture.

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79 Арсанукаев Р.Д. Вайнахи и аланы. Баку, 2002. С. 143.

PART II

Intangible Cultural Heritage

FOLKLORE

Chechen intellectual and artistic culture, just as other cultures of the world, originally rested on oral tradition. Practically all its genres and types — mythology, verbal art, the theatre, music and dancing — were born in folklore. Chechen folklore appeared in a specific ethnic cultural environment.

In the 3rd millennium B.C., the Caucasus was a crossroads of cultural influences of diverse civilisations as the region was straddling the shortest routes linking ancient land-tilling civilisations and the nomadic East European world. Chechen material culture, mythology, pagan worship and folklore retain features pointing at contacts with the earliest European, West Asian and Mediterranean civilisations.

These contacts are observed even more graphically with in-depth study of mediaeval Chechen mythology and pagan cults, which reveal numerous parallels with pagan deities and mythological heroes of the great ancient civilisations.

Chechen folklore study and recording started fairly late, even compared to the folklore of other North Caucasian ethnic entities. That was due to warfare in Chechnya, which lasted through the late 1980s.

That was why entire layers of folklore representing all genres were lost irretrievably — mainly pagan myths, the Nart epic and primeval cosmogony.

The domestic policy of Imam Shamil played a prominent part in the ousting of folklore. He intended to establish authoritarian hereditary theocracy on the basis of the Imamate, and saw traditional democratic Chechen culture as the principal threat to it. He ruled Chechnya for a quarter of a century.

Throughout that time, everything that had a bearing on Chechen music, dancing, myths, rites, customs and

pictorial arts was eradicated mercilessly. Religious songs were alone tolerated. Such persecution certainly was destructive to folklore and the entire Chechen culture. Yet, even despite that, Chechens retained their ethnic and cultural identity.

The genres of Chechen folklore are characteristic of the folklore of a majority of European nations:

1. mythology
2. heroic epic
3. tales: fairy tales, tales of animals, and tales of everyday life
4. legends and traditions
5. songs: ritual, labour and love songs, lullabies and heroic epic songs (*illi)*
6. proverbs, sayings and riddles
7. children's lore (ditties, counting rhymes, tongue twisters and riddles)
8. religious folklore (Hadiths, traditions, songs and *nazm)*
9. *zhukhurgs'* and *tyulliks'* plays, verse and songs

Only fragments of Chechen mythology are extant. The folk calendar has preserved echoes of totemic beliefs, remnants of land-tilling and stock-breeding cults, and cosmogonic traditions to this day[80].

▲ An *illancha* folk bard .

80 Мадаева З.А. Вайнахская мифология//Этнографическое обозрение. 1992. № 3. С. 109.

The names of deities personifying elements reveal Chechen animist ideas — Latta-nana, Mother of Earth; Khi-nana, Mother of Water; Mekha-nana, Mother of Winds, and Un-nana, Mother of Diseases.

Chechen cosmogony is preserved in a wide range of myths on the genesis of Earth, Sun, Moon and stars. The Chechen myth "How Sun, Moon and Stars Appeared" presents Sun and Moon as a boy and a girl who chase each other on a circular root but are not destined to meet. The names of stars and constellations also derive from cosmogonic myths. Thus, Chechens know the Milky Way as Cha Takhina Tacha (the route of scattered straw) and Great Bear as Vorkh Veshin Vorkh Seda (the seven brothers' seven stars).

Also extant is the myth of Pkharmat, the Nart smith sentenced to eternal torment for bringing heavenly fire to humans. This Chechen myth is analogous to the Greek myth of Prometheus and the Georgian of Amirani.

The Greek myth of the Golden Fleece echoes an ancient Caucasian (mainly Nakh) sacral feast which, to all appearances, derived from calendar cycles, though many scholars hold to this day that it reflected a widespread Caucasian gold-washing technique.

According to Said-Magomed Khasiev, a Chechen feast connected with the 11 year calendar cycle, which survived as late as the Middle Ages, demanded the skin of a white ram endowed with nine indispensable characteristics. After special treatment, the skin was spread on a cruciform oak frame known as jaar. The resultant relic, named *dasho ertal* ("golden fleece"), was supposed to retain magic power for eleven years and demanded careful watch[81]. Despite its specifics, the Chechen heroic epic belongs to the general Caucasian epic system both in terms of plots and typology.

Uzdiat Dalgat, prominent expert on North Caucasian folklore, advanced the following systematisation of it based on the content and etymology[82]:

1. Group One (tales of giant forebears) comprises epic tales:

   a) of cyclopean giants;
   b) of giants unlike Cyclopes (including the idea of a giant race that allegedly existed in the past);
   c) of mighty semi-mythical and semi-historical giant forebears

2. Two, tales of three types of heroes:

   a) the Nart Orstkhoi — a local version of the Nart epic common to the entire Caucasus;
   b) local heroes;
   c) anonymous Narts

3. Group Three, tales, legends and traditions unconnected to the Nart epic but possessing a heroic epic typology.

On the one hand, the Chechen epic preserves the Nart tales proper in a rather fragmentary way, and very often in their later versions. On the other hand, however, it graphically represents the

81 Хасиев С.-М. О традиционном отсчете времени у чеченцев // Рукопись .

82 Далгат У.Б. Героический эпос чеченцев и ингушей. М, 1972. С. 26.

varieties of cyclopean and non-cyclopean giants to testify to the antiquity of the Chechen epic in general[83].

Archaic motifs preserved in Chechen tales of the Narts also confirm the local origin of the Nart epic. Such motifs include the earliest layers fixed in Chechen tales of the Narts and closely paralleled by Greek myths of the early 1st millennium B.C. or even older. In the opening lines of Book III of *The Iliad,* Homer compares the battle of Achaeans and Trojans with a battle of cranes and Pygmies[84]:

"When the companies were thus arrayed, each under its own captain, the Trojans advanced as a flight of wild fowl or cranes that scream overhead when rain and winter drive them over the flowing waters of Oceanus to bring death and destruction on the Pygmies, and they wrangle in the air as they fly."

(Translated by Samuel Butler)

Homer's comparison bases on the ancient myth of Pygmies, who live on the south shore of Oceanus and wage war on cranes attacking them every time they make their annual flight south. The Chechen version of the myth, as recorded by Said-Magomed Khasiev, explains the reason of their feud: *"Narts' pride and trespasses called down the wrath of God. To punish and abase them, God created the dwarfish race of pkhagalberi ['hare-riders' in Chechen — L.I.]. Invulnerable to any weapon, they were the strongest of all in the world and could live in many dimensions. The dwarfs vanquished Narts again and again. Their heinous cruelty and perfidy made not only Narts but*

▲ The myth of Pkharmat.

83 Далгат У.Б. Там же. С. 29.

84 Гомер. Илиада. М., 1980. С. 125.

every living thing on earth pray to God for deliverance. At first, Narts thought the dwarfs were invulnerable only to man's hand, but even Amazons could not fight them. That was when the Maker recalled His promise and called from under the highest mountain peaks the souls of damned warriors cruel to their enemies. God turned them into cranes to smite the dwarfs. That was how the war of cranes and Pygmies started"[85].

(Translated by Samuel Butler)

The Chechen versions of epic heroes' personal names show the archaism of the Nart epic and its connection with primeval land-tilling cults.

"Nart Orstkhoi", one of the variants of the name of Narts in the Chechen version of the common Caucasian heroic epic, points only at the geography of their settlement, meaning "the Narts living in the foothills and the Black Mountains". Initially, the Chechen word "Orstkhoi" (derived from *arts/ars*, which means "foothills" or "wood-grown hills") stood for people of the foothills, irrespective of ethnicity and tribe.

However fragmentary, the Nart epic of the Vainakh includes almost all the heroes of the general Caucasian epic—Soska Solsa, Botkiy Shirtka, Khamchi Pataraz, Sela Sata and others.

The following themes dominate the Vainakh Nart epic:

1. Raids, armed clashes and jousts.

2. Theomachy.

3. Blessing.

4. The death of the Narts.

The appraisive accents on epic heroes' conduct shifted in the Chechen version of the epic later—probably, due to a radical change of the Chechen social system and value scale during the anti-feudal war of teips (clannish communities), which eventually brought clan democracy[86].

Uzdiat Dalgat also mentions it in her monograph: "The figures of the Nart Orstkhoi lack graphic epic colours observed in the Nart epic. There is, however, every reason to recognise the heroic interpretation of those characters, though evil underlies their valour—it is, so to say, negative heroism. The treatment of local characters is quite different. The tales pay special attention to them because it is them the people idealise. Their idealisation rests on the difference of social, economic and aesthetic criteria. The concept of the ideal hero expands and becomes more profound. Apart from such indispensable qualities as strength, courage and valour, the epic extols the sense of duty, responsibility to kinsmen and tribesmen, and self-sacrifice to common weal"[87].

The Chechen Nart epic needs reappraisal and new studies — in particular, with an account for archaic passages recorded by Chechen folklore students in the concluding decades of the 20th century. It is also necessary to better systematise its comparison with other North Caucasian peoples' epics. Only then

85 Хасиев С.-М. Мифы о «заячьих всадниках» // Рукопись .

86 It might be also connected with the impact of a monotheistic religion denouncing violence and injustice.

87 Далгат У.Б. Героический эпос чеченцев и ингушей. М, 1972. С. 199–200.

will objective appraisal of the genesis of Chechen legends of Narts be possible.

Chechen tales (fairy tales, animal tales, and tales of everyday life) are no different from the same genres of other North Caucasian and European ethnic entities.

Figuring in fairy tales are magic artefacts, people of paranormal abilities, fictitious animals (dragons, winged horses, etc) and travel to other worlds. A younger brother who proves more intelligent, high-minded and courageous than his elder brothers is their frequent protagonist.

The cunning fox, the greedy wolf and the stupid bear are often protagonists of animal tales — just as in Russian and many other folk tales.

Anti-clerical and anti-feudal motifs dominate tales of everyday life, with their hypocritical mullahs, evil stepmothers and perfidious lords. Chechen lore also knows Mullah Nasreddin, so characteristic of the folklore of other Muslim peoples.

Good always triumphs over evil both in fairy tales and tales of everyday life, and their protagonist is always the winner in whatever predicament, because the didactic has always been essential in folklore on a par with the aesthetic.

Chechen folk song heritage is rich and versatile.

Ritual songs include magical—in particular, rain and other incantations; **ceremonial**: wedding songs, lamentations (*belkham*, sung by professional wailers, and tiizhar, sung by bereaved friends and relatives). Wailers were hired in Chechnya, as in the neighbouring areas, up to the middle of the 19th century. Their

▲ The *syarmak* mythical dragon.

A mediaeval burial vault in the Akki Gorge. Igor Palmin's photo.

belkham praised the deceased for their virtues and wealth, extolled the power and multiplicity of his kinsmen, and said what the world had lost with his passing. *Tiizhar* lamentations were sung by the mother, sister, wife, daughter and other close female relatives of the deceased.

Labour songs belong to many trades — weavers, carpenters, haymakers, ploughmen, woodcutters, house painters, etc.

Lyrical songs are, for the most part, young girls' songs of happy or unrequited love, addressed either to the beloved or to a confidante — mother or close friend.

Men's songs (*uzams)* are philosophical meditations on life and death or on the hard fate of convicts and abrek outlaws. Many are dedicated to mother, a friend or the native land.

The illi, heroic epic songs, are the peak of Chechen folklore. They appeared in the 16th–18th centuries — the time when free Chechen communities made war on local and foreign feudal lords.

The *illi* can be classified as follows according to their themes:

1. patriotic songs (the epic hero's clash with aggressors or foreign feudal lords);

2. social songs (the hero's clash with people of the local social top),

3. songs of military raids and campaigns;

4. songs of love and friendship.

The *illi* extol courage, friendship, loyalty, virtue, modesty, and respect of women.

The *kIant* (dashing young man) with all qualities required of the epic hero is the protagonist of the illi. Intelligent and resourceful, he is always ready to help the poor and the downtrodden, and die for his native land. He is modest and performs his feats of courage not for public praise.

In that, the concepts of *kъonakh* and *kIant* did not appear simultaneously, and occupy different levels in the system of ethical values.

Many of the *illi* display the specifics of Chechen democratic culture— respect for other peoples, frankness, tolerance, treatment of others based on their personal worth, rather than ethnicity and religion, and, last but not least, preference of personal freedom and dignity to whatever material values.

The 1917 Revolution brought new genres and themes to Chechen and other folklore in Russia. New songs were dedicated to the Revolution and its leaders — mainly Lenin, Stalin, Sergo Orjonikidze and Aslanbek Sharipov. Numerous songs were about such new phenomena as collective farms, the Young Communist League, the Soviet Army, etc. The large-scale literary drive, flourishing written literature, and the appearance of the Chechen theatre ousted many folklore genres.

At present, folklore is represented mainly by girls' love songs, nazm (spiritual meditations) and religious traditions.

CHECHEN RELIGIOUS CULTURE FROM HISTORICAL ROOTS TO THE PRESENT

Ancient religious cults, of which we can judge from the funeral implements of archaeological cultures, appeared in the Neolithic Era, when the funeral ritual reflecting Stone Age religious beliefs emerged in the North Caucasus.

Caucasian Eneolithic religious and mythological ideas (of the 4th–3rd millennia B.C.) were rather versatile. They mainly reflected economic activities of local tribes — land-tilling cults, dominated by the worship of the fertility goddess; the solar cult and the related fire cult; and, probably, the hearth cult[88].

Religions of Early Bronze tribes (the Maikop archaeological culture of the 4th–3rd millennia B.C.) included solar, heaven and animal cults, most probably borrowed from West Asia, alongside the earlier established mountain, river and forest worship. Fragments of clay figurines unearthed in archaeological complexes of the Maikop culture and having analogies in ancient West Asian cultures of the 3rd millennium B.C., to all appearances, relate to ancient land-tilling cults. The rich choice of funeral implements shows belief in the afterlife.

To all appearances, stone played a special role in the funeral rite and religious beliefs of North Caucasian tribes of the Late Bronze Age (the North Caucasian, or Terek-Kuban archaeological culture of the 2nd millennium B.C.). First, stone was widely used in interment, just as in the Maikop culture (stone pavement of burial mounds and circular cromlechs round tombs). Second, stone amulets found in North Caucasian tombs show the

88 Testifying to that are numerous clay hearth models — presumably, with ritual functions — found in settlements of the Kura-Araxes culture.

prominent role of stone in everyday life, and supernatural quality ascribed to it.

The Chechen language preserves specific traces of the stone cult: *tIo* – "stone", *tIa* – "palm of the hand", *tIura* – "warrior", *tIom* – "war". The word *tIo* is the basis of a semantic row meaning "stone" + "palm" = "war". Thus, the Chechen word for "war" ascends to stone — man's first weapon — clasped in the palm of the hand.

Weapons, jewels and pottery found in the tombs show that people of the North Caucasian culture believed in the afterlife, which they considered mere continuation of this life — a belief that Nakhs retained even in the Middle Ages.

Religious cults of the North Caucasian culture stayed almost unchanged since the Early Bronze Age — the heaven, sun, mountain and ancestor cults.

Materials of the so-called Koban culture (an archaeological culture of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages) give an idea of North Caucasian religious life in the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium through the end of the 1st millennium B.C. A sanctuary and ritual articles (altars, clay human and animal figurines, amulets, and pintader seals with magical representations of the cross, the swastika and the spiral) have been unearthed on one of the shelter hills of the Serzhen-Yurt settlement in East Chechnya[89].

Most probably, Koban religion based on the worship of sun and heaven[90], as shown by swastikas, spirals[91], and clay wheel models found among the ritual articles of the sanctuary. Man and animal figurines may testify to a fertility cult of the Koban tribes. Older cults of holy mountains, streams and groves might have existed since the Early Bronze Age. They survived within the Chechen environmental culture up to the mid-20th century.

The solar cult, later transformed into the idea of Supreme God, was the principal religion of the Alanian era.

The Chechen pagan pantheon had taken final shape in the Early Middle Ages. Dela the supreme god transformed into the lord of light and the upper world from a sun and daylight deity. The name Dela derives from De-ela (lord of the day). Iela was the lord of darkness and the nether world, Stela/Sela the god of thunder and lightning, Hinnana the water goddess, Laьttnana the earth goddess, Unnana the deity of disease, Tslu of fire, Ielta of land-tilling and Tusholi the fertility goddess.

The mediaeval Chechen idea of the supreme divine element was absolutely abstract, which made it far closer to early Christianity and Islam than to other monotheistic religions. It could not materialise in whatever concrete forms and sacred images, the way it was in the later Christianity, and did not require any idols. Secondary deities' role reduced to the functions of Christian and Muslim saints. Architecture brought the idea to complete abstraction in pillar sanctuaries — small stone pillars that were the final developmental stage of pagan temples and sanctuaries.

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89 Swastika, spiral and cruciform petroglyphs are the most frequent in the exterior of mediaeval Chechen buildings.

90 Козенкова В.И. Культурно-исторические процессы на Северном Кавказе в эпоху поздней бронзы и в раннем железном веке. М., 1996. С. 40.

91 Koban symbols—mainly the swastika and the spiral — are found in plenty on the stones of mediaeval Chechen mountain structures.

Johann Anton Gueldenstedt wrote about it in the early 19th century: "They [Chechens — *L.I.*] possess certain traces of Christianity, which are even more pronounced than with the other Caucasian peoples. They believe solely in the One God, whom they name Decla [Dela — *L.I.*], and do not know any other gods nor idols nor saints"[92].

Ancient traditions retained the memory of Christian churches and monasteries in the Chechen mountains, and of missionaries — most probably, Byzantine and later Genoese monks.

Christian traces survived in the names of many mountain places, including centres of worship, in the calendar and the Chechen language. However, Christianity pure and unadulterated did not take firm root in the North Caucasus, with the exception of certain localities. A majority of highlanders viewed Christian ideas through the prism of pagan beliefs. Paganism won, in the final analysis — yet it was no longer idol worship but a syncretic religion bearing Christian, Muslim, pagan and even Hebrew features.

The solar cult was one of the basic and oldest Nakh religions. It eventually transformed into the worship of the One Almighty God — the Maker, who gives light to the worlds. His name, doubtless, derives from the name of the Indo-European supreme god of heaven * *deiuo* (cf.: Greek Zeus, Dios, and Latin Deus). The names of practically all Vainakh pagan gods and demons have parallels in ancient West Asian and Mediterranean cults, and Vainakh mythology echoes Greek and other myths — suffice it to mention the myth of Prometheus and the Chechen myth of Pkharmat, the Nart giant chained to the top of the Kazbek Mountain and sentenced to eternal torment for stealing heavenly fire from Sela the thunder god to bring it to humans.

Pkharmat of the Chechen myth was a blacksmith who excelled in bronze weaponry, which allows date it to the late 3rd or early 2nd millennium B.C. The name of Anu the Hurrite heaven god (Sumerian An) has a parallel in the Nakh Ana (the Chechen for horizon is *anayist*, lit. "the end of the sky", or Ana.

Parallels with West Asian cult names are the names of such Nakh deities as Eshtr — Ishtar, the Assyrian love goddess, Ma — Ma the Mother of Gods, and Dika — Dike the Greek goddess of justice.

The Chechen language also reveals an interesting parallel with ancient Egyptian cults. Thus, Egyptian mythology knew one of the nine essences of man as *sa-khu*, the cover of the soul, while *sa-khu* means "seed of the soul" in modern Chechen.

Nakh pagan cults and mythology are practically unstudied — especially compared to West Asian, Mediterranean, Celtic, Teutonic and Slav myths, which reveal many parallels with the Nakh. Bashir Dalgat's work — mainly informative — remains the only general study of the theme[93].

Apart from the basic cults, mediaeval Nakhs had other, auxiliary cults of applied functions, while pagan deities were anthropomorphic and could assume

92 Гильденштедт И.А. Географическое и статистическое описание Грузии и Кавказа (J.A. Gueldenstedt. A Geographic and Statistical Description of Georgia and the Caucasus). СПб., 1809. С. 77.

93 Далгат Б. Первобытная религия чеченцев // Терский сборник. – Владикавказ, 1893. – Кн. 2., Вып. 3. С. 41–132.

the human or animal form to interfere in human life.

Thus, Maista venerated Lam-Tishuol, a mountain spirit and protector of warriors and hunters, who lived on the top of the Dakokh-kort, or Maistoin-Lam, Mountain. Dika the goddess of justice, who taught humans to tell good from evil, lived on the same mountain top. A sacred grove lies on the north slope of the Maista Range. No hunter dares enter it without an ablution in the river lest a snowstorm come from the ice-clad Tebulosmta Peak to kill the sacrilegious one.

Other parts of the Chechen mountains also had their sacred groves until quite recently. No one dared pick a flower or break a tree branch there, let alone hunt. Such groves were wild animals' paradise. Even objects of blood feuds found refuge there without fear of being killed by avengers. Chechens believed that a long sojourn in a sacred grove cured many diseases.

Chechens venerated trees. Since times immemorial, they knew how to cherish forests and rationally use timber. Pear and walnut trees were sacred and never to be cut. Chechens believe to this day that hell awaits the one who dares cut such a tree. Random woodcutting was taboo, and cutting a tree for no purpose was a heinous crime equal to murder. Only sick and fallen trees were taken for firewood, and valuable trees were never cut down for fuel.

Hornbeam, another sacred tree, was used for weapons, so its cutting was strictly limited.

The cult of mountain tops was also widespread. Thus, the people of Maista addressed the Tebulosmta Peak,

▲ A swastika petroglyph. Dwelling tower in Khimoi. 14th–16th centuries.

▲ A solar sign on a gravestone. Terloi Gorge.

the highest of the Maista Range, with the following incantation: "O sublime Tuloi-Lam! O sacred Tuloi-Lam! To thee is our request. Intercede for us with Great Dela!"

The *kulli*, or *khasha ben*, roadside inns also might belong to cult buildings. These small stone houses with gabled roof were usually placed near springs and brooks for wayfarers. They were initially related to the road cult, which survives in the old customs and traditions of the Caucasian Mountains.

The Chechen regard the road not as a practical but an ethical category. Everything pertaining to travel was sacred since times immemorial.

There is a belief that one who builds a road or a bridge deserves eternal bliss. To tend a road bypassing a village was all villagers' cherished duty. They also bore moral responsibility for all wayfarers going past their village, and were obliged to display hospitality. Whatever could spoil the road was harshly forbidden. One could not even pick a pebble off the road, while destruction of a bridge was one of the worst crimes. Chechens have a sophisticated ethical system of wayfarers' and their hosts' conduct. The word *nakъost* (fellow traveller) also means "friend" or "comrade".

Roadside inns were built in the mountains since times immemorial. Usually situated close to a river or spring, they had a hearth, and animal skins were spread on the floor.

Guests usually left a stock of food there for next arrivals, while hunters donated furs and deer or goat horns to wayfarers' heavenly protectors.

According to Vainakh mythology, wayfarers were guarded by *taram* spirits, men's doubles. Their care became greater with nighttime. The ritual content of everything that pertained to the road ascends to the Chechen road cult of olden times.

Petroglyphs — magical signs on towers and vaults, widespread throughout the Chechen mountains — preserve ample information about ancient pagan cults. Until quite recently, petroglyphs were dated to the 11th–16th centuries, the time of active tower and vault construction. However, the latest studies proved their much greater age and similarity to signs made by tribes of the Koban culture on pottery and metal articles early in the 1st millennium B.C.[94] Koban signs include almost analogous labyrinths, double spirals, diverse solar symbols — in particular, swastikas with rounded or rectangular tips, human hands, serpentine signs, and human and animal figures. Such petroglyphs are among the most widespread magic signs to be seen on mediaeval buildings in the Chechen mountains.

Solar signs and representations of luminaries and the Universe are among petroglyphs occurring the most frequently — certainly, due to the solar cult. One of the oldest religions in the Caucasus and any other seat of ancient civilisations, sun worship emerged with the Nakh, presumably, in the 3rd–2nd millennium B.C. to survive almost till the end of the 1st millennium B.C. Chechens worshipped Del the Almighty, the One God and the Lord of all creation in heaven and on earth, long before Christianity

94 Смирнова Г.Р. Кобанские аналогии некоторых петроглифов Чечено-Ингушетии // Археология и вопросы этнической истории Северного Кавказа. Грозный, 1979. С.131–135.

came to their land in the Early Middle Ages, to say nothing of their Muslim conversion. Doubtless, the Del cult was influenced by sunlight worship.

The solar and the related fire cult were principal with the Nakh in the Bronze and Early Iron Age, and with Alanians, i.e., the Nakh of the plains, in the first centuries A.D.

Even the Nakh tribal military-political alliance of the second half of the 1st millennium B.C. was known to sources of the Antiquity and to the neighbouring Abkhaz and Adyg by the name of Malkh, Sun — the Nakh supreme deity.

The cross, an encircled cross surrounded by dots, the swastika and the triquetra are the oldest solar signs widespread in Egypt, West Asia and the Mediterranean. The cross as a solar sign grew to symbolise resurrection and immortality. Its four arms stood for the four cardinal points, the four seasons, and the four elements — fire, water, air and earth. Later on, Christianity accepted the cross as its religious symbol, while Islam retains its earliest meaning as the symbol of the four cardinal points. The cross as protective amulet is met on many towers in the mountains of Chechnya. It is placed on keystones to bar entrance to anything evil and hostile — particular, on the Koshan-Bouv combat tower in the vicinity of the Tsoi-Pede necropolis, on the Nikaroi combat tower, and numerous dwelling towers in the Sharo-Argun and Argun gorges.

The swastika with curved ends symbolising the route of Sun across the sky, and the movement of all creation is the most interesting form of the cross. The swastika stood for eternal life and immortality with ancient Nakhs.

▲ A triple spiral petroglyph. Combat tower in Khaskali. 14th–16th centuries.

▲ A double spiral petroglyph. Dwelling tower in Kokadoi. 14th–16th centuries

It was their amulet against all evil. It is represented on Chechen towers in many variants — rectangular, curvilinear and conventionalised. The classical rectangular swastika is carved on the doorway of the dwelling tower in the village of Khimoi. Similar signs occur on ancient Central European pottery. A curvilinear swastika is carved on the keystone of the dwelling tower in Itum-Kale and another in Zengali, in Chechnya's west. Similar signs were found on North Caucasian pottery and metal articles of the 1st millennium B.C.[95]

Also connected to solar disk worship is the representation of the circle, to which many pagan rites and talismans ascend. The symbol of the encircled cross appeared later than the circle and the cross as such. This ideogram — the sign of the mythological solar chariot — symbolises unbroken movement of the solar disk about the sky. Such petroglyphs can be found on many Chechen mountain towers — in Melkhista, the Argun Gorge, Cheberloi and elsewhere.

So-called rosettes and daisywheels, also among the solar symbols, pertain to the land-tilling calendar. Four-petal daisies stand for the calendar year, and three-petal for the farm year.

All those symbols emerged together with land-tilling civilisations and were connected, above all, to the ancient land-tilling cults of the death and resurrection of the sun, the death of Nature in autumn and its resurrection in spring.

Crosses and swastikas were placed mainly on keystones, while spirals double, for the most part — on cornerstones. Many variants of double spirals, often conventionalised, are also among the petroglyphs most frequently occurring on Chechen mountain towers. They are seen on numerous combat and dwelling towers in the Tazbichi Gorge, in Sharoi, Itum-Kale, Melkhista, Maista and elsewhere, while a triple spiral is carved on a stone of a combat tower in the vicinity of Khaskali.

Some scholars consider double spirals solar signs symbolising the movement of Sun across the sky from dawn to dusk, while others assume that they repeat the shape of the Universe. Be that as it may, they mainly appeared on stones and tower walls — which suggests that they were called to make the structure lasting as they associated with eternity.

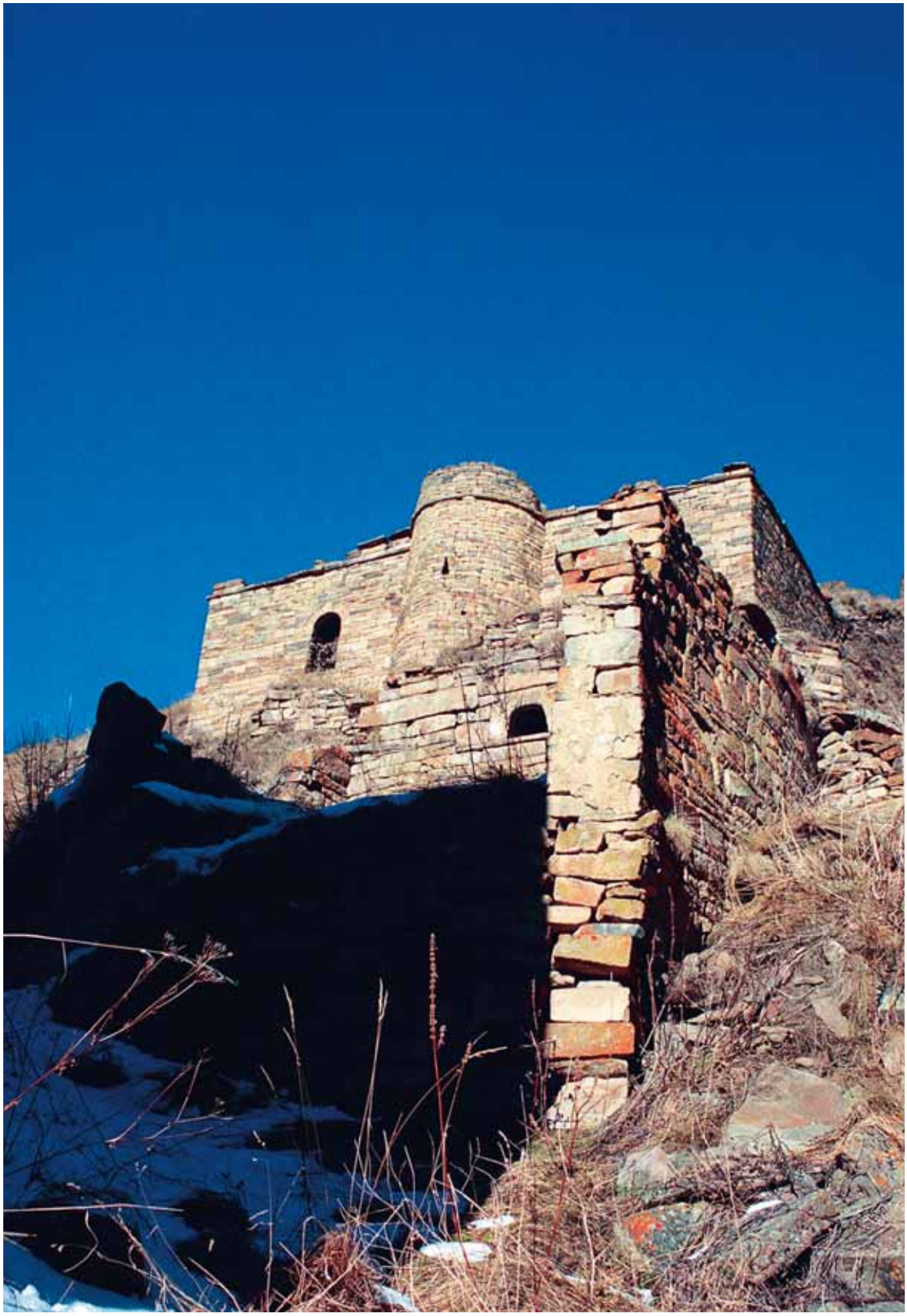
The labyrinth sign, also widely occurring on Chechen mountain vaults, is connected with the spiral symbol.

To ancient man, the labyrinth stood for the initiation ritual, in which the soul went through the many circles of the Purgatory in the nether world to come back to its man pure and renewed.

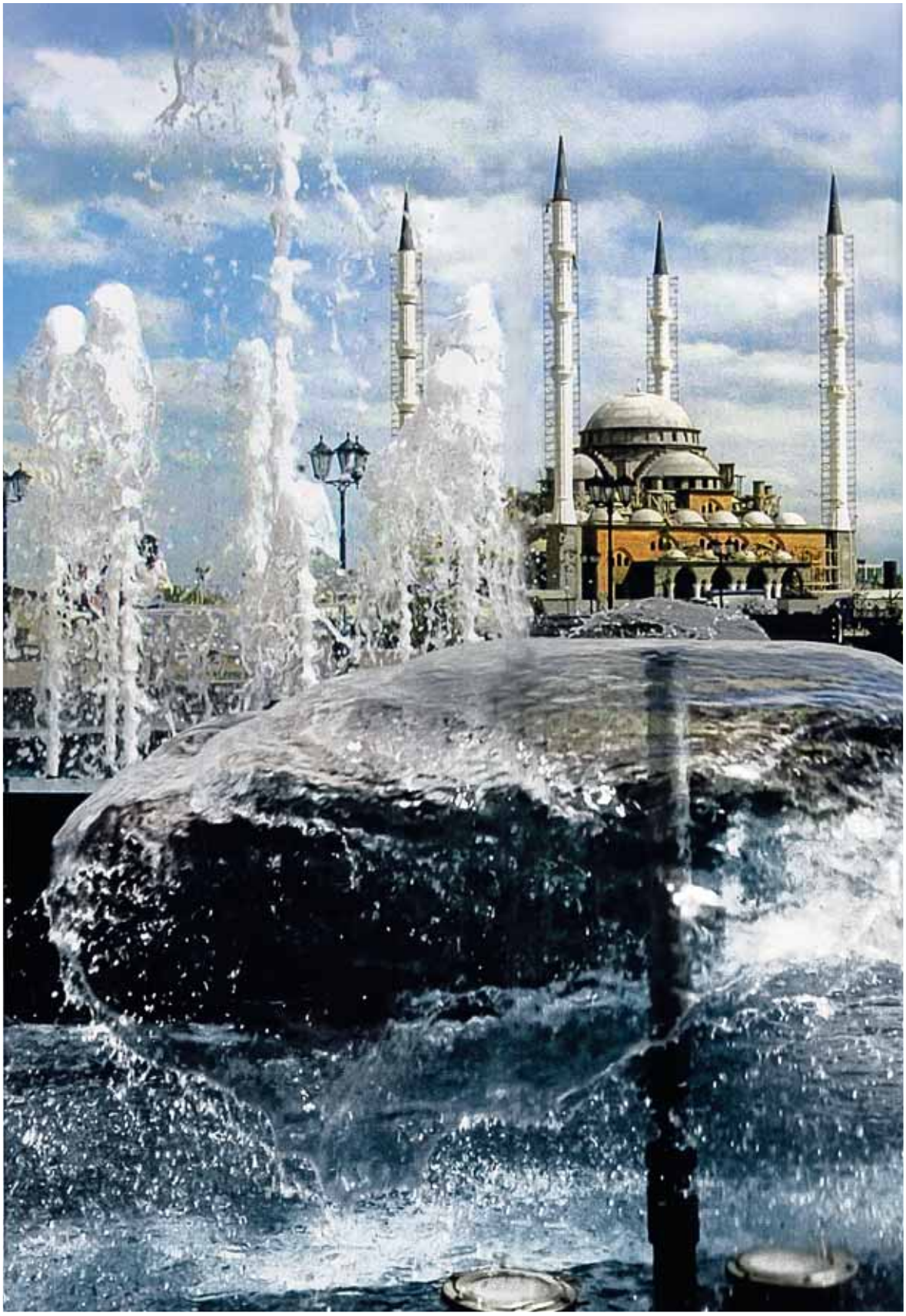
A unique petroglyph of two crossing rings (the planetary symbol of Saturn) is carved on the wall of a combat tower near the village of Khaskali. Characteristically, its analogues or semblances never occur on other Chechen towers or in the entire Caucasus.

Petroglyphs of a hand or an open palm are met in European rock paintings even since the Upper Palaeolithic, and are present on almost all Chechen combat towers. The image of the human hand meant power and creation. Possession

95 Смирнова Г.Р. Кобанские аналогии некоторых петроглифов Чечено-Ингушетии // Археология и вопросы этнической истории Северного Кавказа. Грозный, 1979. С. 131–135 (Ibid).



The mosque of Nikaroi.



was another of its meanings. To all appearances, the imprinted palm was the earliest kind of personal seals. The Chechen names of the outward attributes of property — *kov,* "gate", *kert,* "enclosed landed possession", etc derive from *ka,* "the palm of the hand".

The North Caucasus, as the entire Europe, knew the custom of severing the smitten enemy's right hand to nail it to the door of the victor's home[96]. Perhaps, it based on the belief that the slain man's power passed to the victor. The hand petroglyph on Caucasian towers is considered a pictographic signature of the master builder, made after construction was finished. However, other hand petroglyphs also occur on Chechen towers — two palms on the dwelling tower of Itum-K ale, and a human hand, palm down, in the doorway of the Khaibakh combat tower.

Diverse petroglyphic representations of human figures also frequently occur on Chechen towers. Figures with disproportionally large hands are probably the oldest. Similar figures are met in North European petroglyphs, Koban bronze figurines, and many Chechen mountain towers. Some figures have an oversize phallus, which reveals their connection with fertility worship — one of the earliest land-tilling cults[97].

Such petroglyphs appear on the window arch of the Khaskali dwelling tower, and their conventionalised version on the Khimoi tower. Conventional human figures

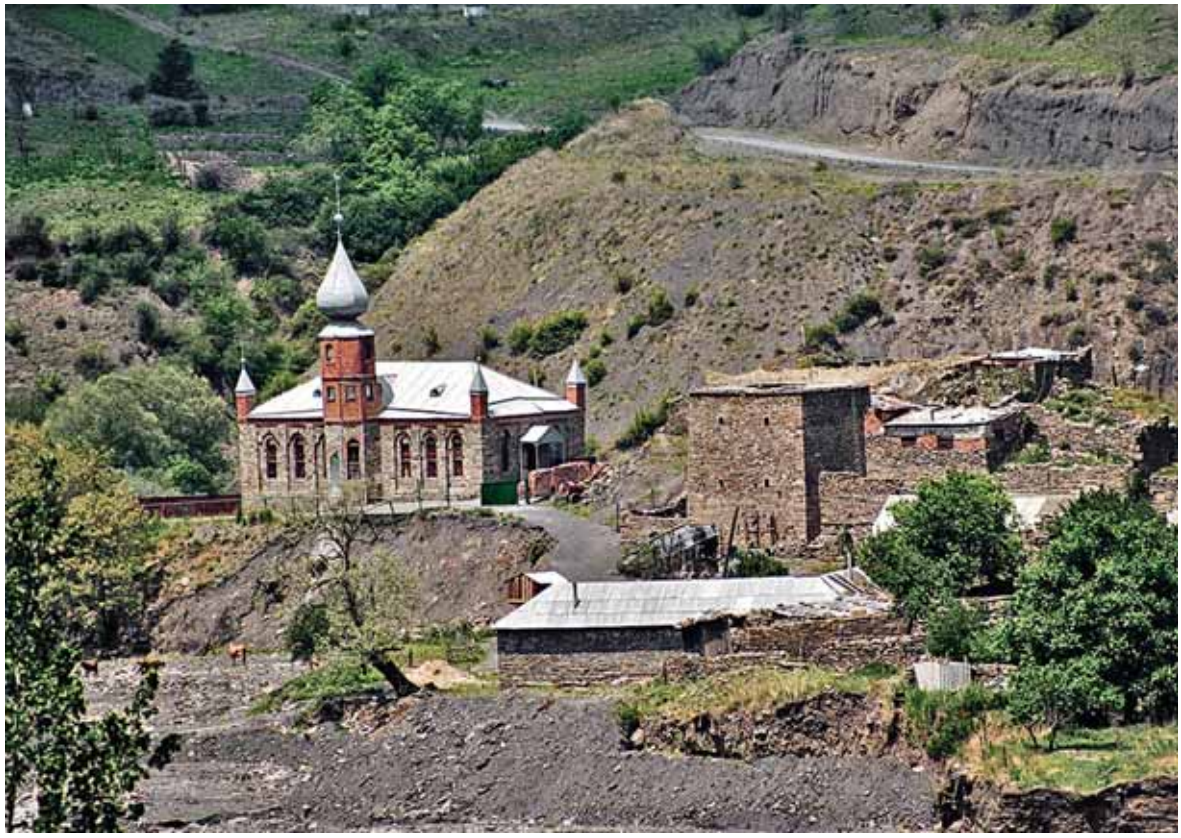
▲ A man with a dog. The oldest extant petroglyph. Dwelling tower in Sharoi.

▲ Solar signs on a tower in Maista.

◀ The jami of Grozny.

96 Марковин В.И. Памятники зодчества в горной Чечне. (по материалам исследований 1957–1965 гг.) // Северный Кавказ в древности и средние века. М., 1980. С.184–270.

97 Марковин В.И. Культовая пластика Кавказа // Новое в археологии Северного Кавказа. М., 1986. С. 77.



are represented side by side with curvilinear swastikas on the dwelling tower in Itum-Kale.

Rider petroglyphs, occasionally conventional, also frequently occur on Chechen mountain towers for instance, on the combat towers in Etkali, Dere and Chinkhoi. They also belong to the earliest man and animal representations and are met on rock paintings of the 4th millennium B.C. The petroglyph is occasionally turned upside down, as on the Dere combat tower — which is due to the re-use of stones bearing petroglyphs. Such stones were most probably considered holy, and so were taken to newly built structures. They are very often older than the towers they belong to, and differ from them in processing and finishing. This is especially noticeable in the dwelling tower of Vaserkel in Maista, whish has almost an entire row of stones lavishly decorated with petroglyphs, and differing from the rest in texture, colour and finishing.

Some Chechen towers also have petroglyphs representing a hunter or a hunting scene, e.g., the wall of the dwelling tower in the Tazbichi Gorge. Representations of the bow and arrow ate also frequent — as in Cheberloi and Maista.

Animal figures, mostly conventional, occur occasionally. Deer are the most frequent. To all appearances, deer worship was one of the longest-established Nakh animal cults. Bronze deer figurines of the Koban culture have been found in the Central Caucasus, which Nakhs' ancestors populated in times immemorial. Testifying to the oldness of deer worship is the Chechen word for "deer", *sai*, belongs to the lexical row of *sa,* "soul" or "light".

▲ The pillar sanctuary of Oshni.

◀ The mosque of Itumkale.

◀ Sieling pagan sanctuaries of the Tsoi-Pede necropolis in the Argun Gorge.

Horse petroglyphs also occur. Chechens considered horses holy. Thus, they had never eaten horseflesh before deportation to Kazakhstan in the mid-20th century, though Islam does not prohibit it. Horse worship is usually connected with solar cults. People of old regarded the sun as a deity travelling across the sky on a chariot drawn by golden steeds. To all appearances, the petroglyph of a man, wheel and horse on the dwelling tower in the Tazbichi Gorge concerns that myth.

The ox is among the most widespread holy and totemic animals of West Asia, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean. The holy ox symbolised fertility and pertained to Divine Mother worship. The Chechen mythology retains numerous plots in which the ox personifies everything sacred — e.g., the legend of the origin of Lake Galanchozh[98]. The worship of Stela the thunder god in the Nakh pagan pantheon is connected with the ox.

The Chechen language retains kinship terms derived from *stu*, "bull" — e.g., *ste*, "woman" or "wife", *stuntskhoi*, "in-laws", or *stunana*, "the wife's mother".

The ram also occurs on Chechen towers though as stone sculpture not petroglyph. A stone ram head adorns the facade of the dwelling tower in Khimoi, while the facade of the combat tower on Mount Bekkhaila is decorated by two ram sculptures, a large and a small.

Chechens have had a fairly precise calendar since times immemorial. It underwent a certain Christian influence in the Early Middle Ages. The year had 12 months and 365 days, with four seasons.

98 Иванов М.А. Верховья р. Гехи // Известия Кавказского отдела Русского географического общества. Тифлис, 1902. Вып. XV. С. 283–285 .

▲ Swastika petroglyphs on the entrance arch. Dwelling tower in Khimoi. 14th–16th centuries.

▲ A stone ram's head on the combat tower of the Bekkhaila citadel. 13th–14th centuries.

◀ Ruins of a mediaeval mountain village in Chechnya.

According to Zura Madayeva's field data[99], the months had the following names:

1. Nazhi-butt — January;
2. Markhi-butt — February;
3. Biekarg-butt — March;
4. Tusholi-butt — April;
5. Seli-butt — May;
6. Mangal-butt — June;
7. Myatsel-butt — July;
8. Egish-butt — August;
9. Tav-butt — September;
10. Ardar-butt — October;
11. Erkh-butt — November;
12. Ogoi-but — December.

Each month consisted of four weeks, and a week of seven days:

1. Orshot-de — Monday;
2. Shinari-de, — Tuesday;
3. Kkhaari-de — Wednesday;
4. Eari-de — Thursday;
5. Periska — Friday;
6. Shuota-de — Saturday;
7. Kiran-de — Sunday.

The week opened with Monday — another testimony to Christian calendar influences.

The Chechen day and night divided in the past in four periods, just as the year — vertically and horizontally. Morning associated with good and the advent of sunlight, while evening with the dark spirits. Evil reigned at night, so work and the start of anything important was prohibited in those hours.

Time was told by several means: by mountain peaks (Iuьire-Dukъ Mountain in the Terloi community), by sundial (Khimoi village), by special stone steles, and notches on tower walls and door or window arches.

Chechens used their ancient calendar even in the later mediaevality, after Islam established itself as the principal religion in a greater part of Chechnya.

As tradition has it, the Chechen Mekhk Khel proclaimed in the 17th century that all Chechen communities in the Confederation of Teips (clans) were embracing Islam. After that, its rapid advent started in the entire Chechnya, while Christianity, paganism and Islam had coexisted peacefully previous to that time, as archaeological data bear out.

However, the rigid system of Shari'a governs public and private life severely from above, classifies moral precepts as judicial norms, and regards sin as crime. It was doomed to clash with ancient Chechen democratic traditions, which always considered privacy inviolable just as personal freedom and human dignity. Similarly, Chechens would not put up with corporal punishment up to mutilation, which Shari'a stipulates. That

99 Мадаева З.А. Народные календарные праздники вайнахов. Грозный, 1990. С. 11.

was why the Mekhk Khel made a number of decisions envisaging the preservation of Chechen ethnic identity.

First, it refused to apply Shari'a norms in all legal spheres with the exception of property and inheritance law.

Second, the Mekhk Khel determined to preserve essential Chechen traditions in various spheres of activity, largely to predetermine the unique mentality that differed Chechens from other Muslim peoples, whom Arabs promptly assimilated as they borrowed the Arab way of life, world perception, law and even costumes.

The initial spread of Islam in Chechnya was gradual as it adopted ancient traditions and coexisted with paganism and Christianity, as archaeological data bear out[100]. The end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th made Islam more active in Chechnya to force Christians into mass flight to Cossack-populated areas across the Terek, where the Russian-speaking community eventually assimilated them.

The final strengthening of Islam in Chechnya in the late 18th century was connected with Sheikh Mansur, who led North Caucasian resistance to Russian colonial expansion. Sheikh Mansur combined military leadership with missionary activity. His ardent sermons denounced ignorance, avarice, hypocrisy, vice and blood feuds. He called his flock to asceticism and spiritual purity.

To all appearances, that was when Sufism began to spread among the Chechen. This mystical Muslim trend originally appeared as opposed to official religion.

Sufis regarded the world as one essence, the Absolute imbued with Divine light, which was the Truth. Man was to them no mere element but a replica of the Absolute, its most perfect being. To embrace the Truth, man was to understand his ego — not the outer bodily self but the innermost, which reflected the Absolute.

Freedom of choice was among the essential philosophical problems of Sufism. Though Sufis recognised predestination, they held that man always had the choice between Good and Evil. Providence put the sword into human hands but it was up to man's personal choice to become a noble warrior and proponent of faith or a robber.

Sufis did not recognise reason as a tool of cognising the Truth because, as they held, sentient experience and rational judgment based on it could comprehend only a shadow of the essence—not the essence itself. Mystical experience alone led to direct contemplation of the Truth[101] through Love of the Truth as manifesting the Divine. Sufis regarded intuition as the most reliable tool of cognition, and the heart as the organ of objective perception of reality. The heart, as contrasted to reason, held a unique place in the Sufi philosophy. It was the receptacle of the Divine and the innermost human ego, and the organ objectivising whatever knowledge. The Sufi counterpoised the *ma'arifa*, knowledge obtained through

100 We find the assumption of many Chechen communities embracing Islam in the 9th-10th centuries groundless because it is not borne out either by archaeological data or historical sources. A majority of Chechens were non-Muslim as late as the 13th–15th centuries, according to Mongolian and Tamerlane's chronicles.

101 Степанянц М.Т. Философские аспекты суфизма. М., 1987. С. 33.

personal emotional experience, to *ilm,* rational knowledge[102].

However, intuition alone did not suffice to grasp the Supreme Truth.

First, a Sufi was to choose his Sheikh instructor and follow the *tariqah* way pointed by the Sheikh.

Second, he was to exercise ascetic practice on his road of spiritual perfection.

Third, he was to master a complex of respiratory and psycho-physical exercises creating a psychological and emotional state that led to the contemplation of Divine light.

Zikr, or *dhikr*, the pronunciation of Allah's name during meditation, was one of the principal characteristics of Sufism as a trend of Islam.

There were two types of zikr, loud and silent.

The techniques of meditation varied in the various Sufi fraternities. They practised dance worship, singing, and respiratory devices promoting trance. Sufism was not only a philosophy but also a system of social organisation. Sufis gathered in fraternities on a severe hierarchical principle. The members were to obey the Sheikh blindly and follow his example in whatever they did.

Not only the theology and ethics of Sufism but also its social institutions had a powerful impact on Chechen social development in the various periods of time.

The next stage of strengthening Islam in Chechnya came as it joined Shamil's Imamate — a militarised theocratic state arranged on the principles of Shari'a.

Imam Shamil, member of the Naqshbandi Sufi fraternity, promoted the Muslim cause in Chechnya and the entire North Caucasus not only by sermon and conviction but also by the force of arms — which eventually made a majority of Chechen communities part ways with him as they would not put up with his attempts to obliterate their traditional culture and ethnic identity. Chechnya obtained a new spiritual leader in the last years of Shamil's rule. That was Sheikh Kunta Hajji Kishiev from the Chechen village of Iliskhan-Yurt, an adept of the Sufi tariqat Kadiriya.

The Sheikh denounced war as violence hateful to the Almighty, and regarded armed resistance to the Russian Empire as pointless and threatening the very existence of the Chechen people. Kunta Hajji said in his sermons: "Allah wills not further total resistance to the authorities! If you are ordered to go to Christian churches, go there, for they are mere buildings as long as we retain our Muslim soul. If you are forced to wear the cross, wear it, for the cross is mere metal as long as we retain our Muslim soul. But when your women are ravished, when you are forced to give up your language, culture and customs, rise and fight to the last drop of blood! A nation's freedom and honour is in its language, customs and culture, friendship and mutual assistance, mutual forgiveness of wrongs, help to widows and orphans, and sharing out the last slice of bread"[103].

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102 Степанянц М.Т. Философские аспекты суфизма. М., 1987. С. 45.

103 Акаев В.Х. Шейх Кунта-хаджи: жизнь и учение. Грозный, 1994. С .48 .

The essence of Kunta Hajji's doctrine is in humility, brotherhood, non-resistance to evil by force, and spiritual self-improvement. In one of his sermons, the Sheikh said that he would willingly part with his life if a baby shed a tear through his fault[104].

His doctrine spread not only in Chechnya but also in the neighbouring Ingushetia, and rapidly acquired the practical form of Sufi fraternities.

The organisational unit of a Sufi fraternity was the *vird*, a community of Murids — disciples and followers of the Sheikh, their spiritual instructor. The units were headed by *vekils* (the Sheikh's legates) in larger villages. *Tamada* elders were subordinate to them. The smallest units were ruled by the *turkh*. The Sheikh led the Murids to spiritual perfection, and it was their duty to believe in him and obey him in everything. While adhering to the basic precepts of Muslim orthodoxy, Sufis worship saints, sheikhs and *ustaz* miracle-workers, and make pilgrimages to their tombs.

Several independent virds branched off Kunta Hajji's vird toward the end of the 19th century: of Sheikh Bammatghirei Hajji from the village of Avtury, Sheikh Chmmirza of Mair–Tup in the Shali District, and Sheikh Batal Hajji from the Ingush village of Surkhokhi.

The basic ritual of all those virds, the loud zikr[105] (collective meditation), opens with slow circular movement, passing to counterclockwise whirl. To Sufis, the loud zikr symbolises angels' whirl round the throne of Allah. The zikr requires the knowledge and exercise of rules given by the Sheikh: special rhythmic movements, regular postures, and controlled breathing. Nazm anthems are sung in between the phases of the zikr, followed by common prayer.

A majority of present-day Muslims in Chechnya belong to Kunta Hajji's vird.

The second-largest is the vird of Sheikh Deni Arsanov, a follower of the Naqshbandi tariqat. It practises the silent zikr (meditation).

There are also the virds of Sheikhs Bammatghirei Hajji, Chimmirza, and his disciple Vis Hajji in present-day Chechnya. All those Sheikhs belonged to the Kadiri tariqat.

The virds of Dokku Hajji and Solsa Hajji belong to the Naqshbandi tariqat.

Every Chechen identifies himself conventionally with one of those virds. Vis Hajji's vird, an esoteric sect, is the only exception. The other virds have long lost their pronounced organisational structure. Self-identification with a particular vird is a voluntary conscious act, which sets only certain rules of prayer and meditation, as bequeathed by the Sheikh who founded the vird.

Virds do not play any political or social part in the present-day Chechen community, however hard many scholars would try to ascribe it to them within recent years.

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104 Акаев В.Х., Вок Г.Б., Керимов М.М. Ислам в Чечне: традиции и современность. Грозный, 2006. С. 31.

105 Zikr is praise to the Almighty.

ETHICS

The Chechen ethical system arranges moral values in three levels, each of them determined by various aspects of the personality .

Adamallah, a system of moral values that includes universal norms the Chechen shares as Everyman, is connected the closest with Chechen religious and ethical convictions. It is inherent in all humans irrespective of ethnicity, religion, race and social status. As Chechens see it, that system is what tells man from animal. They counterpoise Adamallah as humanity to Akharallah, savagery. Adamallah comprises the basic commandments of the Koran and the Bible, which man is bound to follow if he is not to degenerate into beast.

Nokhchallah is a system of moral values intrinsic to a Chechen due to his ethnicity. It tells him from people of other ethnic communities.

Nokhchallah,"Chechen-ness", does not imply Chechens' moral superiority to others. While comprising all Adamallah moral categories, it advances more rigorous ethical demands on man and his social conduct. It is a system of supplementary moral obligations of Chechens toward each other and people of other ethnicity.

Къонакhallah, the quintessence of Chechen ethics, is a messianic system of moral values, which determines the morals of the "noble man" who shoulders the responsibility for his people and land to sacrifice his all without any retribution.

The Къонакhallah ethical code had emerged long before Chechen conversion into Islam. It is rooted in the hoary antiquity and, doubtless, had been established before the Alanian era. It bears a notable impact of the tragic time when Mongols and Tamerlane invaded the Caucasus, and warfare was the usual Nakh-Alanian routine. Testifying to its oldness

are numerous parallels of the moral charter of the kъonakh (worthy, heroic man) to the earliest layers of the Nart epic[106].

Kъonakhallah took final shape in the later mediaevality, when the free community waged war on feudal lords, and teip (clan) democracy was at its peak. That was a time when liberty and personal freedom were regarded as the supreme social value. Later on, the spiritual aspect of the code came under the influence of Sufism, which regarded spiritual improvement as the main human goal.

The code bases on the conduct and convictions of the *kъonakh,* who places service to his community and native land above everything else in his life. The literal meaning of the word kъonakh is "son of the people". The moral and behavioural content of this social category was rooted deep in history and conditioned by it. According to history and folk tradition, the Kъonakhi Order was one of the most influential martial communities, prominent in Nakh politics. Its members, coming solely from the oldest and noblest families, dedicated their life to service to their Motherland and people. Rigorous regulations determined the conduct, mode of life, and social contacts of the *kъonakh*. Even the smallest deviation from the code deprived the culprit of that sublime title. It was not for nothing that the word kъonakh was synonymic to "honour", "courage" and "chivalry" even so early in history.

Even after the Kъonakhi Order was disbanded, Chechens used the word *kъonakh* for men of sublime morals and sacrificial service to their native land. Kъonakhallah evolved from a martial code into a moral code based on the ideal of human perfection and nobility.

Its later version retained the original basis prescribing the kъonakh's conduct at war, and attitudes to the enemy, weaponry and death. Kъonakhallah has much in common with the European code of chivalry and the Bushido code of samurai honour.

Later on, Kъonakhallah came under the influence of world religious and ethical systems, mainly Sufism. Parallels can also be drawn between the cult of the kъonakh as worthy man and Confucianism, the ancient ethical system that gives a precise and explicit wording to the idea of perfect man.

Kong Qiu, or Confucius in the Latinised form — Chinese philosopher of the 6th century B.C. — advanced a doctrine according to which the junzi (translated as "noble man", "perfect man", "superior man" or "gentleman") epitomised all virtues. Two properties mutually stemming from each other — aristocratism and human perfection — dominate his character. It is hard to become a junzi, for high birth is not an earnest of human perfection[107].

The junzi as ideal man embarks the road of virtue, and strives to be humane, follow the rituals faithfully, be frank in speech and honest in conduct, demanding of himself and just to others. The junzi obeys Divine will piously and unconditionally, and is always guided by justice and duty. He discerns the deed in the word, and is true to his pledges[108].

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106 The Narts are legendary heroes of an epic shared by all Caucasian peoples. Chechen folklore retains its oldest layers. Pkharmat the Nart (Prometheus), who brought humans heavenly fire even knowing that he would be doomed to eternal torment, was a kъonakh.

107 Конфуций. Уроки мудрости//Лунь юй. М., 1999, С. 23.

108 Там же (Ibid). С. 23.

The junzi is true to the golden mean[109] in everything, be it behaviour, costume or attitudes to others. Confucius holds that when a man's spontaneity overcomes his good manners, he is uncultivated. When good manners overcome spontaneity, he is a bookworm. He will not make the junzi before spontaneity and good manners balance each other[110].

Ren, humanity, is the junzi'a supreme ethical law. This profound and multivalent moral category determines the essence of human relations.

Man strives toward nobility and wealth. The junzi rejects them when they are obtained by illicit means. Man shuns poverty and humiliation but the junzi does not scorn them when they are undeserved. How can the perfect man earn a good name when he discards humanity, Confucius asks[111].

Ren, the summation of human virtues, demands equality and reciprocity in human contacts. Reciprocity and justice are a moral law that Confucius was the first to formulate. European ethics knows it as the Golden Rule. "Adept Kung asked: 'Is there any one word that could guide a person throughout life?' The Master replied: 'How about *shu* [reciprocity]: never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself?'[112]"

This world rules out equality in ancestry and social position, yet men can achieve equality in their contacts through the harmony of the ritual, li, and humaneness through filial piety, *xiao*.

To Confucius, the junzi is a sublime ideal only few are destined to attain. When asked whether he considered himself a junzi, the sage said he might be as learned as the others but he had not yet attained the practical perfection of the superior man[113].

Parallels between Confucian ethics and Къonakhallah can be drawn in plenty, especially in the treatment of the perfect man's personal qualities. As the junzi, the kъonakh is honest and well-behaved. He reveres his elders and parents, shuns calumny and slanderers, and dares judge only himself. Justice in human contacts is his goal. He is kind to others and charitable to the poor and the weak. He is not afraid of death but avoids headlong action. His duty is the yardstick he applies to everything. He is modest of speech and truthful in his conduct[114].

There is a thorough difference between Confucian ethics and the Къonakhallah code. That is the social stratification accepted by Confucius. His doctrine arranges the scale of ethical values in conformity with Chinese social hierarchy of his time. Heaven is the supreme power and the moral ideal. The state is arranged according to Divine will, predetermining man's social place and role. The statesmen's wisdom lies in humaneness and "rectification of names" (*zhengming*), i.e., giving each his proper place in society and the ritual, while the latter is the basis of peace and social harmony.

The ritual loses its moral core unless ren, humanity, underlies it. The

109 Там же (Ibid), с. 46.

110 Конфуций. Лунь юй // Древнекитайская философия. М., 1972. Т. 1. Гл. 2, 4.

111 Конфуций. Уроки мудрости//Лунь юй. М., 1999. С. 31.

112 Древнекитайская философия в 2-х т.М., 1972–1973. т. 1, С. 167.

113 Конфуций. Уроки мудрости..., С. 61.

114 Древнекитайская философия..., С. 164.

purposeful man and the humane man brave death when ren is endangered. They sacrifice their life but stay true to ren, Confucius said[115].

It takes an aristocrat born and bred to make a junzi. That is an ideal not to be attained by the commoner, even if he attains an extent of moral perfection.

Unlike Confucianism, Къонакhallah is a democratic ethical system, which does not know discrimination according to social class, the property status or ancestry. It does not take a Chechen, either, to be a къонакh or behave as one. Thus, "The *Illi* [epic heroic ballad] of Ahmad of Avtury" tells about a Cossack who persuades valiant Ahmad not to fight an unnecessary duel[116].

Anyone who attains a particular moral ideal and dedicates his life to his people and Motherland can become a къонакh.

Another salient feature differs the къонакh from the junzi — personal honour and dignity, which is the къонакh's absolute value.

In that respect, Къонакhallah has much in common with the code of chivalry of mediaeval Europe.

Knighthood emerged in Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries as an insular social group with its own system of moral values and behavioural norms.

The code of chivalry appeared in its canonical form in the Late Middle Ages as reaction to commoners' social and

▲ A mediaeval Chechen warrior.

115 Там же. С. 16.

116 Илли. Героико-эпические песни чеченцев и ингушей. Грозный, 1979, С. 210–211.

political advance[117]. The ethical norms of chivalry were extremely rigorous, just as Къonakhallah, and made excessive demands on the personality and conduct. This excess made the social group a walled-off caste, putting it above the rest of society in the ethical and martial aspects alike.

The accolade became widespread in the early 12th century. To be knighted meant a mystical promotion to a select, privileged caste. At the same time, it implied the acceptance of a hard duty, awareness of the ethical mission of service to God, the sovereign and the suzerain's aristocratic family and, last but not least, protection of the weak[118].

The ideal of chivalry was not unalterable. An uncouth, anarchic war dog was the ideal warrior of the Dark Ages. Fairly soon, however, the ideal image of the knight appeared — the valiant man whose vehicle was Christian charity, protection of the weak, and intercession for the downtrodden. Evolution enriched the ideal with the code of chivalrous manners and the ideology of courtly love. The exemplary knight was thus extolled not for valour and victories but for sublime morals[119].

The knight is, above all, a stalwart cavalryman excelling in martial arts. Of noble descent, he has an appealing appearance and possesses inner harmony. He permanently strives for glory, so valour is his principal merit. The knight is proud but not vain. To avoid suspicion of cowardice, he willingly sacrifices not only his own life but the life of his comrades-in-arms.

The knight earns glory not so much with victories as with his conduct on the battlefield and in the tilt-yard. Just as the къonakh, he respects his enemy and wants victory in an honest fight. He never benefits from the opponent's weakness, and never smites an unarmed man.

Magnanimity is the knight's inalienable feature. It implies all the best qualities of the knight — power, valour, honour, generosity, learning and enlightenment[120]. Magnanimity in wartime is expressed mainly through his behaviour toward the vanquished. He spares not merely the smitten enemy's life but his dignity. He displays respect toward the enemy as a worthy opponent. In this, the ethical norms of chivalry are fully identical to the къonakh's moral code.

The knight is generous to the point of extravagance, for he belongs to the higher social estate and orients on its values. War trophies, the landowner's income, and reward for loyal service are his means of sustenance. He views trade and farming as unworthy pursuits.

The knight is "loyal to his pledges toward his equals"[121]. He is grateful for a good turn done him. The knight cherishes comradely duty. He is solicitous toward the widow and orphaned children of his fallen friends, and helps the impoverished members of his social estate.

The ideal knight is frank and truthful. He never conceals his likes and dislikes. He never flatters and never denounces.

The knight is not liable to corporal punishment. He is tried by the court of

117 Оссовская М. Рыцарь и буржуа. Исследования по истории морали. М., 1987, С. 67.

118 Этика // Под общей редакцией А.А. Гусейнова, Е.Л. Дубко. М., 200. С. 248.

119 Там же ... (Ibid), С. 256.

120 Там же...(Ibid), С. 254.

121 Оссовская М. Указ. соч., С. 85.

honour, and his responsibility is mainly moral[122]. Complete non-admittance of corporal punishment is part and parcel not only of the kъonakh's code but of the entire Chechen mentality. "A whipped wolf turns into a dog," a Chechen proverb says.

The knight and the kъonakh regard personal honour as their supreme value, and prefer death to debasement.

Both proceed from duty and honour in everything they do. The profound difference between the ethics of chivalry and the kъonakh's code lies in the interpretation of those categories.

The knight's duty is a social norm determined by his relations with his suzerain, which is essentially a form of coercion. The knight is in duty bound to share whatever fate that befalls his suzerain. If need be, he rejects moral obligations to others, turns a deaf ear to the voice of common sense, and tramples on his own friendships and attachments[123]. However, he might choose another suzerain if his present one is not generous enough toward him.

To the kъonakh, duty is an act of goodwill resting on the awareness of service to his people and Motherland as a sacral mission. It matters not merely to follow one's duty but to be morally worthy of this sublime mission—or he is no kъonakh.

In samurai ethics, the vassal's duty to the suzerain was determined not only, and not so much by payment for the service. There was a spiritual link between them. The suzerain-vassal and lord-servant relations were complemented and sanctified by master-disciple and father-son relations. Here, we discern a certain influence of Confucianism, which was widespread in mediaeval Japan. Demands made on the samurai were incomparably greater and more stringent than on the European knight, and only one price was paid for trespasses — death.

In the broader sense, the word *samurai* implied the entire mediaeval Japanese nobility, making it synonymous to *bushi*, "warrior". In the narrow sense, the samurai were a military estate of noblemen of modest means, who became active in Japanese politics in the 12th century. A majority of samurais were vassals of powerful daimyo landholding magnates. Many samurais possessed their own land. Warfare was considered the only pastime worthy of a samurai, though they occasionally took up farming. A samurai could not become a trader or a usurer under any circumstances.

The samurai started preparations for a lifetime of battles in tender age. He needed physical strength, hardiness, perfection in martial arts, and knowledge of military strategy and tactics. The ideal samurai excelled in riding, manners, calligraphy, and knowledge of literature and history. As a famous bushi wrote, "The samurai must read and write. If he is unlearned, he cannot see the reasons of things past and present and, however wise and experienced he might be, he will find himself in a bad predicament someday unless he possesses sufficient learning"[124].

Bushido, an unwritten code of regulations, determined the samurai's life,

122 Этика/Под общей редакцией А.А. Гусейнова, Е.Л. Дубко. М., 2006. С. 252.

123 Там же (Ibid). С. 250.

124 Книга самурая (The Book of the Samurai). СПб., 2000, С. 70.

conduct and relations with his suzerain. These regulations were passed from mouth to mouth until recorded in the 17th century.

Bushido has a striking likeness to the Chechen Къонакhallah ethical code in the treatment of basic moral principles and categories.

Samurai ethics based on rectitude and justice, which was, to an extent, analogous to the Confucian ren, humanity, and Chechen adamallah, which had the same meaning. In *Bushido*: The *Soul of Japan*, Nitobe Inazo defined rectitude as the ability to make a reasonable decision without hesitation, proceeding from a certain code of conduct, <...> die when the time comes, and deliver a blow when the time comes[125]. Neither gifts nor learning can make one a real samurai if he has no rectitude.

As the Chechen code, Bushido regards courage mainly as reserve and sangfroid displayed in any adversity. "It is easy to rush into the thick of battle and be killed <...> yet real courage lies in the ability to live in the time to live, and die in the time to die," Prince Kito wrote[126].

The true samurai must be always reserved. Nothing is to upset his balance of mind. He remains cool in battle and in revelry, and retains coldness and lucidity of mind, come what may.

That is why composure is one of the principal virtues of the samurai and the къонакh. The samurai is considered to lose his courage once his countenance betrays his emotions. Whatever he might feel, neither joy nor sorrow is to appear on his face.

However great his reserve should be, the samurai must be charitable and compassionate — mainly to the weak and helpless. He must display magnanimity toward the vanquished enemy. "He will make no hunter who kills a bird hiding in his bosom," a samurai saying goes[127].

A valiant and ferocious warrior, the true samurai must be amicable and benevolent: "Though much might pain your heart, you shall forgive three things — the wind rumpling your flowers, the cloud hiding the moon from you, and the man seeking pretext to quarrel with you"[128].

Benevolence and compassion find outward expression in reverent politeness. That, too, should be limited by reserve, for decency crossing the limits of convention is sheer lie[129].

All this is a mere mask unless the samurai is frank and truthful. His high social and moral status demanded the utmost responsibility for his promises. A samurai's word did not need an oath or written recording. As the къонакh, he considered oaths degrading as they put to doubt the inviolacy of his pledge.

When forced into making an oath of his boundless dedication to an idea, a known samurai said: "The samurai's word is harder than steel. My word stays in my mind. Do I need an oath?" After that, the oath was found redundant[130].

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125 Инадзо Нитобэ. Бусидо Дух Японии. – Киев, 1997, С. 26.

126 Там же (Ibid), С. 29.

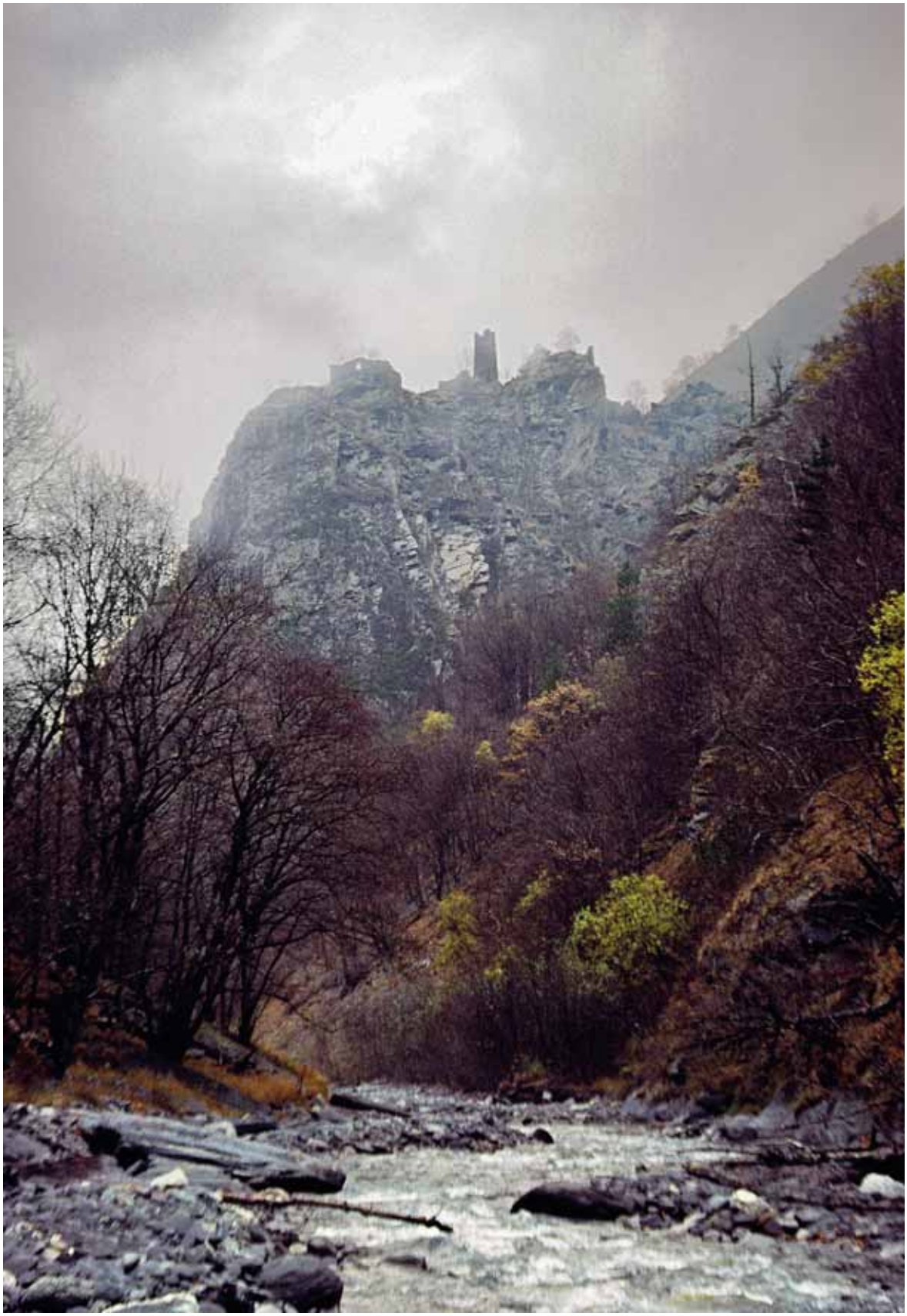
127 Там же, С. 37.

128 Там же (Ibid), С. 33.

129 Там же, С. 46.

130 Книга самурая (The Book of the Samurai). СПб, 2000, С. 100.

A Chechen in folk dress.1887.



The Maistoin-Erk River

The attitude to death also brings the kъonakh and the samurai together. The kъonakh is ready to die any instant if his duty[131] and fate demand it. "Bushido is in being crazy to die," a famous warlord said. The samurai must be ready to lay down his life any instant, whether in battle or peacetime. Yet he must not sacrifice his or another's life rashly. The kъonakh is also constantly aware of the inevitability of death. That is how he overcomes fear of death and is ready to meet it with dignity. An old Chechen song conveys the acceptance of doom in words of inimitable tragic power[132]:

I expect no miracle,
no rescue, and no help:
No one is immortal
but the Almighty.
Do not throb in anguish,
my brave heart!
I was born into the world
to die someday.

Honour is the only treasure for which the samurai and the kъonakh sacrifice their life without a moment's hesitation. While Bushido denounces short temper and the morbid perception of whatever awkward step or word as an insult, every samurai knew that "disgrace is as a scar on the bark of a tree — it would not fade with time but, on the contrary, become ever worse," as Nitobe Inazo said[133].

The samurai ethical code had one pronounced difference from the Chechen. That was its social purport, which limited it to one social estate. Bushido pointed out three virtues as cardinal — fealty, the right conduct and courage[134]. Loyalty to the suzerain was the cornerstone of the samurai code.

It was the duty of a disgraced samurai to perform seppuku, ritual suicide, doing it bravely, in cold blood and thoroughly true to the rite. Seppuku, one of the essential parts of Bushido, is what determines its national specific the strongest, and bestows tragic power on it.

The Chechen mentality and religion, on the contrary, have always resolutely denounced suicide. The man who committed it was doomed to eternal disgrace. Unlike the samurai, the kъonakh regained his honour only by dying a valiant death in a just war. Otherwise, he had to flee forever and lead the life of an outlawed wanderer.

Though Bushido was the ethical code of military aristocracy, it exercised tremendous moral influence on Japan eventually to become its national code, valid for all social estates. In the most tragic periods of Japanese history, it was the only moral pillar, resting on which the sublime national spirit arose literally from ashes.

Unlike Bushido, Kъonakhallah is not universal. It is the code of the spiritual elite which is reviving in the depth of the Chechen community. Still, it is the moral absolute to attain which is every Chechen's cherished dream[135].

Modernity transformed the European code of chivalry into gentlemanly

131 Чеснов Я.В. Женщина и этика жизни в менталитете чеченцев//Этнографическое обозрение.1994, № 5, С. 42.

132 Чеченские песни. Пер. Н.Гребнева (Chechen Songs as Translated into Russian by Naum Grebnev). М., 1995, С.12.

133 Инадзо Нитобэ. Бусидо Дух Японии. – Киев, 1997, С. 52.

134 Книга самурая...(The Book of the Samurai). С. 26

135 Чеснов Я.В. Женщина и этика жизни в менталитете чеченцев... С. 41.

ethics. The ideal gentleman certainly has much in common with the къонакh, though his code, like the knight's, concerned a narrow social stratum limited mainly by noble birth.

In the early 18th century, Sir Richard Steele said that he who was able to serve society well and protect its interests was the true gentleman. A gentleman possessed all the dignity and grandeur man could possess, and was endowed with a lucid mind free of prejudice, and with vast knowledge. A gentleman was sensitive but free of immoderate passions, full of compassion and benevolence, truthful and persevering in attaining his goals.

A gentleman was also notable for courage and generosity. He was terse and sceptical toward emotional evaluations, and possessed sangfroid and composure even in the most entangled situations. He was modest and scrupulous in problems involving honour, and marked by refined manners and simplicity in companionship.

In the 20th century, Bertrand Russell was tracing the ethical heritage of chivalry in European morals. He concluded that the belief in the principle of personal honour had major deserts, even though its fruit was often absurd and at times tragic. The decline of that principle was not always pure acquisition. If we clean the idea of honour from aristocratic hubris and violence, what is left of it helps man to retain integrity and promote the principle of confidence in social relations. The philosopher said that he would not like to see this heritage of the age of chivalry discarded completely[136].

The aristocracy inherited the ethics of chivalry, while petty bourgeoisie and the lower middle class created an ethical philosophy of its own in Europe — a philosophy based on quite different values.

Petty bourgeois ethics cultivated the person whose basic virtues were moderation, accuracy, thrift, industry, down-to-earthness, sober mind and orderliness. Parsimony was made an absolute, and boiled down to abnegation of all joys of life. A higher social status was to be obtained not through lineage but by personal merits, dominated by industry, tenacity and method. Courage, nobility, generosity and magnanimity were unaffordable luxuries to people who used money as their universal yardstick, and regarded the mediocrity attaining a high social status through moderation and reverential attitude to social hierarchy as the ideal man. Capital determined the personal value. In that, petty bourgeois ethics was extremely utilitarian in its attitudes toward religion and everything spiritual. It underwent an extent of axiological evolution with time under the impact of other ethical systems and the changing social and economic situation. Still, its core remains unchanged. It denies the determinant value of sublime morals and ideals just as before.

That is the state in which it is present, to an extent, in the contemporary Chechen community, which is undergoing a profound moral crisis. The situation is all the worse as the collapse of the USSR found Chechnya in transition from the traditional system to civil society—a transition transforming social structures and institutions, shattering the customary mode of life, and devaluing traditional morals. It has not only brought a thorough change of public mentality but led the community to moral degradation, to an extent.

136 Оссовская М. Рыцарь и буржуа. С. 138.

The Chechen warfare at the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st sped up the disintegration of traditional society. On the other hand, it was an insurmountable obstacle to emergent civil society. The Chechen community is utterly unstructured and marginalised. Not a single institution — traditional, state or public — can influence and organise it. A majority of Chechens have lost interest in traditional values without accepting the values of open civil society. True, many have turned to religion. However, too many embrace it in a profane form — which ads religious schism to moral crisis.

We Chechens are groping for a way out of our moral deadlock. Our ethical quest is not conscious enough as yet. We resemble a blind and deaf man lost in a labyrinth. Our resort to religion is largely formal, while the innermost essence and message of religion is ignored. Such conversions cannot promote moral renascence. On the contrary, they threaten to lead the public into yet another deadlock, out of which there is no exit because the loss of ethnic identity spells death to any ethnos.

However, we have inherited a precious spiritual and moral legacy. Its acceptance might help us in our quest, and lead the Chechen people to moral and cultural revival. The Къonakhallah ethical code is an inalienable part of our heritage.

Though Къonakhallah does not exhaust Chechen ethics, which is an extremely complicated, versatile and multilevel system, the code is its peak and quintessence.

Къonakhallah rests on patriotic duty, which the къonakh accepts of his own free will. In this, the къonakh's concept of *dekkhar*, duty, is fully analogous to the Kantian: duty is the necessity of action out of respect for moral law[137].

The къonakh follows the path of duty to his people and his land because he is aware of that duty in his heart and mind. He does not expect retribution in this world and the afterlife. Not fear of punishment from the hand of God or man but solely his own goodwill determines his conduct. To do his duty is, to the къonakh, a sublime mission that demands great moral effort. According to Ian Chesnov, messianism is intrinsic in the very structure of the personality centred by the къonakh. This and his social role make the къonakh's situation close to that of the Saviour[138].

Prominent Chechen ethnologist Said-Magomed Khasiev discerns three categorial levels in the Chechen value scale:

1 – "delighting the eye" or "visible", i.e., salient: *adamallah, humanity, tsIano, purity of the soul, уиькhь, face, and gIillakkh, the ethical* code;

2 – "thrilling the soul", i.e., the less spectacular: *kIinkhetam, charity, niiso, justice, iekhь (bekhk, ies), shame, and оъzdangallah, nobility;*

3 – "invisible" or "the roots": *laram, respectfulness, bakъo, truthfulness, sii, honour, and sobar, patience and restraint*.

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137 И. Кант. Основы метафизики нравственности (Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals)//Сочинения в 6 т. М., 1965. Т. 4(1), С. 274.

138 Чеснов Я.В. Женщина и этика жизни в менталитете чеченцев//Этнографическое обозрение. 1994, № 5, С. 42 .

The scholar considers the "invisible" virtues basic to the value scale and intrinsic in the kъonakh more than in anyone else.

In this, *adamallah, humanity,* is the principal category of the Chechen ethical value scale and of Kъonakhallah. *Adamallah* is not merely the first in the value structure — it is the foundation and the peak of that structure at once. It is transcendental to Chechen ethics, imbues it from top to bottom, and determines the nature and structure of other virtues.

The Chechen ethical system defines *adamallah* not only through the categories of humanity (*charity, compassion, empathy and magnanimity)* but also through wisdom. Chechen ethics does not know unambiguous treatment of reason as moral criterion.

Chechens do not believe in reason[139] unless it goes hand in hand with heart and intuition. That is why the Chechen value scale does not single out reason as a separate category — unlike, for instance, Adyg ethics, in which Barasbi Bgazhnokov discerns five permanent principles: *humanity, reverence, reason, courage and honour*[140]. Wisdom as the harmony of heart and mind is not merely the basis of humanity but also the general moral criterion.

Of no smaller importance as the yardstick of humanity is *magnanimity* — mainly to the smitten enemy. Chechens have been constantly waging defensive war, so this moral value was of tremendous importance, reflected in a legend that has come down to this day. S.-M. Khasiev recorded it in the Chechen mountains in the later 1960s. As the legend goes, "God has turned the souls of noble warriors into white swans. That is why white swans are serene and majestic. The Maker cursed the souls of warriors who succumbed to wrath and passed the limits of what was permitted toward the enemy. He placed them under the highest mountains. Yet He promised that the time of their liberation would come someday. If the souls of their victims forgive them, the Almighty will also forgive those merciless souls and turn them into white swans. In the beginning, He turned the souls of those cruel warriors into cranes. That is why cranes weep and implore their victims to forgive them as they fly north every spring. Swans follow cranes' route voluntarily out of compassion for their sinful comrades-in-arms, and pray for them in the land of shadows."

Not only Kъonakhallah but also the entire Chechen ethics considers cruelty toward the vanquished or injured enemy, and toward the weak and defenceless inadmissible under any pretext and in whatever situation.

The protagonist of Alexander Pushkin's long poem T*azit*[141], a young Adyg prince brought up by a Chechen clashes with his father as he refuses to follow ancestral ethics. As he brings the youth back to the old prince, the old Chechen says, proud of his achievements as foster father:

Thirteen years have elapsed
Since you came to my village
And gave me your baby son
For me to bring him up

139 Characteristic of Sufi religious philosophy.

140 Б.Х. Бгажноков. Адыгская этика. Нальчик. 1999, С. 16– 20.

141 А.С. Пушкин. Собрание сочинений в одном томе. М., 1984.

A valiant Chechen warrior.
You are burying today
your other son,
Who died a premature death.
Bow to fate, Gasub!
I have brought you another son.
There he is! Lean
your bereaved head
On his strong shoulder.
He will replace your lost
offspring,
And you will value my labour,
Which I will not boast.

But the old prince is
dissatisfied with his son:

"Where is the fruit of upbringing?"
he wonders,
"Where is valour, craft, agility,
The artful mind and the
strength of hands?
I see nothing but a lazy and
obstreperous boy!
Either I misunderstand my son
Or the old man has been
telling me lies."[142]

To his father's wrath and amazement, the boy refuses to rob an unarmed merchant and pursue a fugitive slave. When his father asks him why he did not kill his brother's murderer when he encountered him, Tazit explains that the enemy was "alone, wounded and unarmed"[143].

Many Pushkin scholars think that Tazit is guided in his conduct by Christianity. As things really are, he behaves as a kъonakh, who cannot attack the weak and defenceless. Blood feud cannot make him attack a wounded and unarmed man. On the contrary, the Chechen code makes him help the enemy.

Pushkin was acquainted with Bei-Bulat Taimiev, a renowned Chechen general, wise politician and brilliant diplomat — a real kъonakh. He wrote in his *Journey to Arzrum:* "I was overjoyed with the arrival of renowned Bei-Bulat, the terror of the Caucasus, to Arzrum: he granted me safe passage across the mountains and Kabarda."[144] The poet certainly had an idea of Kъonakhallah, which found reflection in Tazit's conduct.

Adamallah rests on humanity, mercy and active compassion. The kъonakh is, above all, the protector of the weak and the defenceless, their last hope for justice in an unjust world.

The category of humanity includes a reverential attitude to Nature — to everything that surrounds the kъonakh. He feels part of a vast world in which all are equal before the face of Eternity, be it man, ant or tree. The kъonakh never does deliberate harm to an animate thing or a plant. He is sparing of the gifts of Nature, and uses them frugally, according to the principle of tempered necessity.

Niiso, justice, is the second in importance of the kъonakh's virtues. It determines his attitudes to humans. Some scholars treat it as *equality* because Chechen language speakers discern this semantic shade in the word[145].

Justice, just as *humanity*, is one of the principal virtues of the kъonakh as it raises his world-perception to the sublime

142 А.С. Пушкин. Собрание сочинений в одном томе. М., 1984. С. 202.

143 Там же (Ibid), С. 203.

144 Там же (Ibid), С. 453.

145 Чеснов Я.В. Этнокультурный потенциал чеченской нации//Северный Кавказ: этнополитические и этнокультурные процессы в XX веке. М., 1996, С. 44.

social and spiritual level one might describe as messianic. *Justice*, just as *freedom*, has always been one of the central Chechen ethical values. *Freedom* is an absolute[146], while *justice* limits it at the social level[147]. Lack of freedom in human contacts led to sanguinary internecine strife and civil wars, unleashed not for economic reasons but because of moral disproportions in society. All the more so, *justice* was to be the vehicle of the one whose sacred mission was to serve his Motherland.

TsIano, purity of the soul, is one of the principal characteristics of the kъonakh, for one cannot be really just and magnanimous without it. Purity of heart and mind, chastity of thoughts and desires, inner rejection of hope for retribution in this life and in heaven — all that lies at the basis of the kъonakh's sublime mission. His attitude to religion is closely linked with *tsIano*. The kъonakh's religious culture is determined, above all, by Sufi influences as Chechens profess Islam in its Sufi form. That is why they prefer the innermost content of religion to its outward form. That is why their religious rites are so unassuming, and why they regard faith as profoundly personal and intimate. That is also the root of their utmost religious tolerance.

The kъonakh regards human life as supreme value. He reveres human dignity irrespective of social status, ethnicity and religion[148]. That is why man is his etalon of morality — man on whom the Almighty bestowed the opportunity of free moral choice between good and evil, man "able to improve himself on the path of self-cognition, in which he acquires his true self"[149].

Closely related to *tsIano* are other ethical categories: *oьzdangallah, nobility, and gIilakkh, etiquette*. *Oьzdangallah* is a universal moral category, linked with *humanity* and *justice*. *Oьzdangallah* bespeaks noble lineage and sublime personal culture. It refines and purifies humanity. The etiquette is the outer manifestation of nobility. The Chechen etiquette was not a mere code of good manners but a spiritualised ritual, a system of social signs that brought stability to the social structure. Just as the li ritual in Confucianism, traditional Chechen etiquette smoothed out social antagonisms, stressed the formal equality of all community members, and harmonised human contacts. That was why the kъonakh could not violate the etiquette under any circumstances.

Laram, reverence or respect, and *sii, honour*, are also among the basic ethical categories of Kъonakhallah. The term laram stands for the kъonakh's reverence of the world and man. It does not depend on whatever situation but is intrinsic in him. It is there merely because the kъonakh, its bearer, exists. *Sii, honour*, is, on the one hand, the inner realisation of one's own dignity and, on the other hand, the attitudes of society and particular people to that dignity. *Honour* is the only treasure the kъonakh cherishes more than life. Perhaps, that is because, as Schopenhauer remarked, *honour* has for its ultimate foundation the conviction of

146 Chechens regard free choice as one of the principal conditions of freedom. Perhaps, that is why they have chosen Sufism, according to which even Predestination grants man choice between Good and Evil.

147 Чеснов Я.В. Этнокультурный потенциал чеченской нации..., С. 47.

148 Chechens regard anyone as a kъonakh, irrespective of ethnicity and religion, if he deserves that name with his conduct and character.

149 М.Т. Степанян. Философские аспекты суфизма. М., 1987, С. 50 .

the inviolability of moral character, due to which an ignoble deed vouches for a similar moral character of all subsequent deeds, due to which lost *honour* can never be retrieved[150].

Adam Smith wrote in *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments:*

> *The candidates for fortune too frequently abandon the path of virtue; unhappily, the road which leads to the one, and that which leads to the other, lie sometimes in very opposite directions. But the ambitious man flatters himself that, in the splendid situation to which he advances, he will have so many means of commanding the respect and admiration of mankind, and will be enabled to act with such superior propriety and grace, that the lustre of his future conduct will entirely cover, or efface, the foulness of the steps by which he arrived at that elevation <...>*
>
> *Though by the profusion of every liberal expence; <...> though by the hurry of public business, or by the prouder and more dazzling tumult of war, he may endeavour to efface, both from his own memory and from that of other people, the remembrance of what he has done; that remembrance never fails to pursue him <...> Amidst all the gaudy pomp of the most ostentatious greatness; amidst the venal and vile adulation of the great and of the learned; amidst the more innocent, though more foolish, acclamations of the common people; amidst all the pride of conquest and the triumph of successful war, he is still secretly pursued by the avenging furies of shame and remorse; and while glory seems to surround him on all sides, he himself, in his own imagination, sees black and foul infamy fast pursuing him" (I.III.35)*[151].

The kъonakh's reverence of honour and dignity is rooted not in individualism, let alone selfishness, but in the highness of his social mission, which will be fulfilled only when the end, the means and the maker are worthy of that sublime absolute.

Certain scholars of Chechen ethics mistake *yakhь*, rivalry in good works and valiant deeds, for honour. However, *yakhь* is more characteristic of the *kIant,* the dashing hero of *illi* epic songs, than of the kъonakh. The kIant possesses all the makings of the epic hero — he is strong, brave, just and amicable, yet the moral value of his conduct is not as elevated as the kъonakh's mission. The kIant seeks public approval with far greater zeal than the kъonakh. The kъonakh need not be aloof to *yakhь* as ethical value, yet it should be concealed. *Yakhь* is conspicuously out of place in contacts with friends and kinsmen. Most probably, it was originally admissible only toward a respectable enemy. An old parable recorded by S.-M. Khasiev in the Chechen highlands reflects the world of difference between the noble kъonakh and the jaunty kIant, as perceived by the public:

> *A combat tower stood on the top of a cliff. It protected the entrance to a gorge and transmitted danger signals to other parts of the highland. A tsurku, pointed stone slab, topped its roof. One day, a falcon perched on the slab and*

150 А. Шопенгауэр. Избранные произведения. М., 1992, С. 235.

151 А.Смит. Теория нравственных чувств. М., 1997, С. 81.

The combat tower of Shatoi. 14th-16th centuries.

looked at the vistas around, very pleased with himself.

"What makes you so contented?" the tsurku asked.

"Can I be otherwise? The Almighty grants us falcons three years of life on earth. I am two years old but I feel as a one-year-old, and I have come here after a meal of fresh, warm liver. Strong are my wings, and I am the lord of the sky!"

"I have been standing on the top of this tower for nine centuries to prevent it from crushing. I have seen so much that, even if I recount it starting from the lifetime of your ancestor of a hundred generations ago, your life would be too short to hear my story out. Know the difference between us? You have been made to enjoy your food, strength, agility and courage, while I have been placed here to protect this tower which guards the peace of people around," the tsurku replied.

Sobar (restraint and patience) is a unique category in the value system of the code. Its importance is reflected in the old saying: "*Къonakh sobartsa vevza*" (You know a къonakh by his restraint). *Sobar* is a poly-semantic word, whose numerous meanings intercross each other. In the spiritual sense, it stands for self-sacrifice, the ascent to Calvary for the people's sake.

It also means composure, self-restraint, patience and fortitude. "*Къonakhchun mairallah—sobar*" (The къonakh's courage is in his patience), an old proverb says. *Sobar* is the foundation on which the entire value system of Къonakhallah rests. The къonakh's attitude to death and fate is rooted in this moral category. The къonakh accepts all blows of fate with dignity and restraint. Fully aware of his right to choose between good and evil, between truth and lie, between life and vegetable existence, he feels true master of his destiny. The къonakh knows that there is no escape from death but is not afraid of the doom, and so feels superior to fate and death itself. An old Chechen song penetratingly portrays this feeling[152]:

You are fierce and perfidious,
o swift bullet.
Yet weren't you my slave?

You are merciless, o death.
Yet weren't you
my obedient servant?

You will give me eternal rest,
o soil.
Hasn't my steed trodden
upon your bosom?

You will blanket me forever,
and give me slumber.
Yet you will have my flesh
alone not spirit!

The value scale of Къonakhallah rests on *humanity, justice, purity of heart, nobility, politeness, honour* and *restraint*. It is an ideal and universal ethical code. The people who made it cannot but have a sublime destiny.

The Chechen ethical code Къonakhallah is an inimitable monument of human moral quest. Doubtless, it will play a landmark role in the cultural and moral revival of the Chechen people.

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152 Чеченские песни. Пер. Н.Гребнева (Chechen Songs...). M., 1995, C.19.

LITERATURE

Written Chechen literature emerged out of folklore, on the basis of its numerous and versatile genres, which had perfected its philosophical content, language, imagery and symbols over the millennia.

Written literature appeared as soon as Chechens started to use writing. Doubtless, the Chechen population of mountain areas neighbouring on Georgia used the Georgian alphabet in the 8th-19th centuries. Georgian historiography refers to Georgian-language correspondence between Nakh elders and Georgian kings, alongside mentions of the dissemination of Christianity in the North Caucasus[153].

Archaeological data[154] allow assume that Chechens of the Alanian era also used the Greek alphabet received from Byzantium. Chechen traditions mention Byzantine missionaries active in Chechen-populated areas in the early mediaevality.

The use of writing in interstate relations and epigraphy allows assume the existence of literature — at least, translations and compilations of works on ethics. Regrettably, no literary monuments of that kind have come down to this day.

Extant Chechen traditions mention *teptars* (family chronicles) using Georgian and Byzantine alphabets and, presumably, the *zil yoza* cuneal writing.

Teptars are the earliest Chechen-language written monuments surviving to this day.

The teptar is the chronicle of a family or a clan covering a long time. Every family had its genealogists and recorders

153 Гамрекели В.Н. Об изучении прошлого. // Документы по взаимоотношениям Грузии с Северным Кавказом в XVIII веке Тбилиси, 1968. С.3.

154 An inscription in Greek lettering on a slab of the Kirdy combat tower in the Argun Gorge.

of landmark events in national and family life. According to folklore references, such records were made on leather, wood or stone.

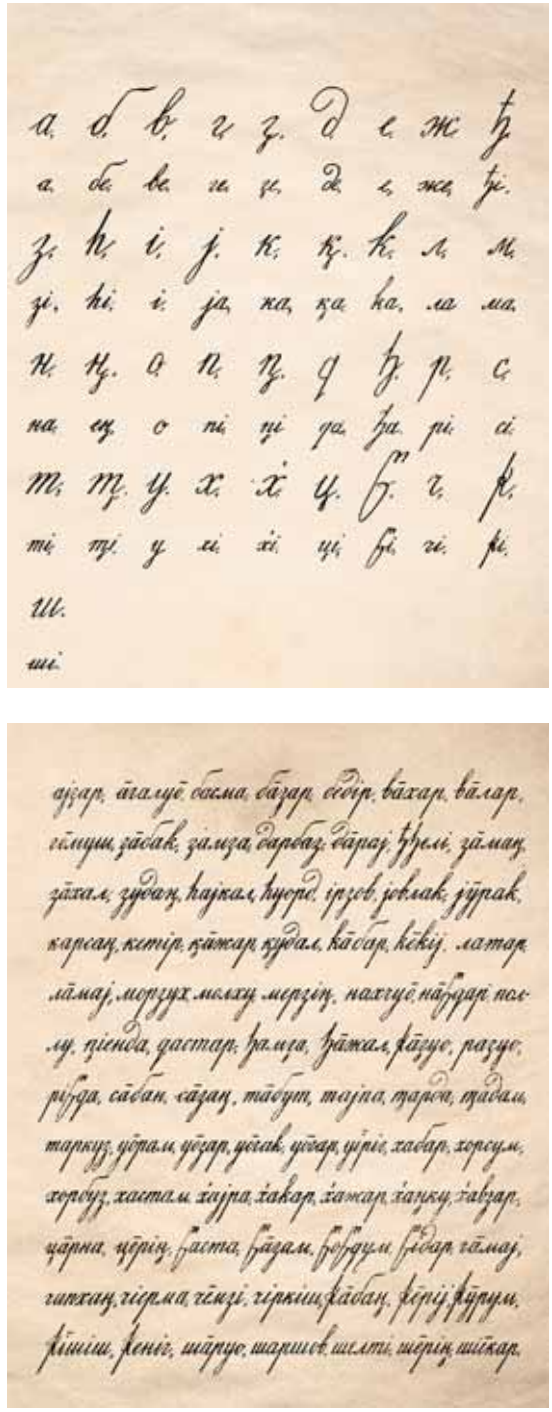
A majority of family chronicles were thoroughly revised in the 17th century, after Chechens were converted into Islam and accepted Arabic writing.

The oldest records were destroyed, and the genealogy of a majority of Chechen families and patronymic groups was traced down to the 8th century A.D. A majority of teptars based on the genealogical legend on the West Asian origin of Chechen surnames. The same was typical of genealogical literature on the ancestry of feudal families of all Muslim peoples in the North Caucasus. For the most part, presently available chronicles were written in Chechen using the Arabic alphabet, or in Arabic.

Arabic-language literature appeared in Chechnya in the 17th and 18th centuries as theological and ethical treatises, translations of Oriental poetry, and love lyrics. The development of Chechen literature — mainly its minor forms — started after Arabic writing was adapted to the Chechen language.

All books and teptars, with token exceptions, were confiscated and destroyed during the Chechen deportation of 1944. A small number of teptars were rescued, and several copies of theological and ethical treatises are extant as secret service officers removed them from Chechnya.

The first attempts to adapt the Cyrillic alphabet to the Chechen language were made after Russia incorporated Chechnya in the 19th century. These efforts were largely promoted by Russian



▲ Pages from Ivan Bartolomei's Chechen Primer. 1866.

linguist and educationalist Pyotr Uslar, who devoted much time to studies of Caucasian languages, history and culture. Assisted by Lieutenant Kedi Dosov, a Russian army officer of Chechen ancestry, Uslar wrote the first Chechen primer on the Cyrillic basis in 1862, and gathered the first Chechen children's classes to teach them the three R's in their mother tongue. However loyal to the regime Uslar might have appeared, his educatory work did not find support from the Tsarist government, and so had no practical impact on Chechen culture, though other attempts to elaborate universally accessible writing in conformity with Chechen grammar and phonetics were made later.

Russian scholar Ivan Bartolomei put out his Chechen primer in 1866. Based on Cyrillic writing[155], it included the first translations into Russian of Chechen folklore samples — proverbs, maxims, funny stories and heroic tales.

During his sojourn in the Caucasus, Leo Tolstoy recorded two Chechen songs in Russian transcription, which his friends Sado Miserbiev and Balta Isayev recited to him. Afanasy Fet later made their brilliant translations into Russian.

People with European education and an excellent command of the Russian language, who appeared in Chechnya in the second half of the 19th century, worked to define the historical and cultural mission of their people and its place in world history.

One of them, Lieutenant Ummalat Laudayev, wrote The *Chechen Tribe*, a historical ethnographic essay. However strongly influenced by the official view of Chechen history and culture, it was a first-ever scholarly work on Chechens, written by a Chechen in the Russian language — which makes The *Chechen Tribe* a valuable written monument.

A constellation of Chechen enlighteners — Tashtemir Eldarkhanov, Denilbek Sheripov, and Ahmetkhan and Ismail Mutushev — appeared at the turn of the 20th century.

Their political activities and topical journalism aimed to improve their people's social and economic status, educate Chechens and acquaint them with Russian and European culture.

Chechen enlighteners' Russian-language journalism of that time made the basis for further social and cultural progress of Chechnya, and for the appearance of a new generation of intellectuals with European education and profound interest in Chechen culture and history.

Aslanbek Sheripov's book *Selected Chechen Folk Songs*, put out in Vladikavkaz in 1918, comprised three *illi* songs of heroism — "Abrek Gekha", "Yussup Son of Mussa" and "Assir Abrek", in liberal translation into Russian. Their style and imagery bore a strong imprint of Pushkin's, Lermontov's and Maxim Gorky's Romantic works. Aslanbek Sheripov was a prolific journalist and public speaker, marked by excellent literary Russian, intellectual precision, immaculate logic and apt arguments. Politically topical, his works were imbued with youthful radicalism, revolutionary romanticism, and pure and sincere belief in sublime revolutionary ideals.

155 After the 1917 Revolution, the Cyrillic alphabet ousted Roman letters and formed the basis of new Chechen writing.

New written Chechen-language literature emerged as late as the 1920s. Ahmat Nazhayev's collection *Songs and Stories* was published in 1923. The newspaper *Serlo*, established in Grozny in 1925, published Chechen-language stories, essays and verse by Abdi Dudayev, Shirvani Sagaipov, Mahmad Salmurzayev and Issa Eldarkhanov.

Those authors needed new literary forms and characters, and sought new expressive means in other languages and elsewhere. Their quest did not bring rich fruit. Extremely declarative and one-dimensional, of primitive imagery, their high-falutin' works extolled Soviet rule and leaders, and called to renounce traditions and old social patterns.

The emergence of classic Chechen literature was connected with the name of poet, prose-writer and playwright Said Baduyev. The founder of Chechen literature equally excelled in the Russian and Chechen languages. He started his literary career as playwright and poet.

In 1929, he and Eldarkhanov co-authored the drama *The Fatherly Law*, a wrathful denunciation of blood feud as a remnant of outdated customs destroying innocent lives. Baduyev next wrote several satirical comedies (*Every Day Is Not Bairam Even for a Mullah, Eid ul-Fitr* and others), which mercilessly deride the Chechen clergy's bigotry, avarice, cowardice and secret vices. The comedies draw on Chechen anti-clerical folklore, with its omnipresent figure of the stupid, greedy and cowardly mullah. Written in lively vernacular, they abound in proverbs and folk sayings.

Within several years, he wrote a number of topical political plays devoted to the eradication of old customs,






▲ Said Baduyev

Абдул-Хамид Хамидов

Khalid Oshayev,

Bilal Saidov

Arbi Mamakayev

Magomet Mamakaye

class struggle and collectivisation (*The Changing Highlands, The Bolshevik Sewing Campaign, The Political Department, The Shepherd's Family, The Awakening*, and others). Highly declarative, those propaganda plays ignore psychological motivations, and their plots are schematic. Baduyev's best work, the play The *Red Fortress* stands in contrast to them with psychological insights, exquisite language, and a well-made, dynamic plot. The Chechen Drama Theatre performed it to packed houses for many years, and its incidental music became folk songs.

In the cycle of short stories *Adats*, written in the 1920s, Baduyev tries to comprehend the destructive impact of old customs and mentality on the Chechen society of his time. *Petimat,* published in 1931, was a first-ever Chechen novel about a woman. The name character strives for freedom as she passes through trials and tribulations to see that happiness must be fought for.

A constellation of gifted and profoundly original authors appeared in Chechen literature in the 1930s — Khalid Oshayev, Said-Bei Arsanov, Magomet Mamakayev and Shamsuddin Aiskhanov. Arsanov's novel *Two Generations,* published in 1931, was a landmark testifying to the maturity of new Chechen literature. Its heroes join the revolutionary movement after they re-appraise their life, grasp the essence of good and evil, and begin to see to the roots of the contention between the old and the new. They are portrayed in the dynamism of intellectual development as they get anxious to renounce the dire heritage that warps their life. They see that freedom and dignity must be obtained not on one's own but in a well-knit team of comrades-in-arms, irrespective of religion and ethnicity. Arsanov's prose is marked by realistic portrayal of life, interest in the details of everyday routine, and subtle psychological portrayal of characters[156]. Verse dominated Chechen literature of the 1920s and 30s because poetry was a much longer-established and more prolific genre of folklore than prose.

Strongly coloured by politics, the lyrical verse of Abdi Dudayev, Ahmat Nazhayev, Magomet Mamakayev and Said Baduyev called to reject everything old and accept the new ways. Many poems were dedicated to revolutionary leaders—Lenin, Stalin, Sergo Orjonikidze and Aslanbek Sheripov. The poetry of that time shrugged off psychology and the lyrical palpitation of the heart. Its hero was one with his time and the revolutionary mass. He talked and thought in propaganda slogans, and his words were uncompromising political declarations and impassioned appeals.

The Chechen poetry of the 1930s rose to a higher level of comprehending the world. New names appeared (Shamsuddin Aiskhanov, Nurdin Muzayev and Arbi Mamakayev), and enriched it with new forms, content and aesthetic quest. The long poems *Gory Mountai*ns and A *Conversation with Mother* by Magomet Mamakayev, and Guerrillas by Said Baduyev became landmarks of Chechen literature.

Arbi Mamakayev's long poem *In the Chechen Mountains* was notable in Chechen culture of the late 1930s and early 40s. It was a beautiful ballad of tragic love, and a wise tale of people hunted and downtrodden for centuries, who have to wage unending war for their poor but free life — people who fall victim to savage, gory traditions. Strong people of

156 Туркаев Х.В. Путь к художественной правде. Грозный, 1987.

Raisa Akhmatova.

▲ The Coordination Council of the International Association of Chechen Public and Cultural Organisations discusses Mussa Beksultanov's new book. Mavlit Bazhayev, President of the International Association of Chechen Public and Cultural Organisations.

free spirit, its heroes strive for happiness through suffering and privation to fall innocent victim to blood feud. Written in an impressive and harmonious language, abounding in imagery, the poem extolled love, friendship, honour and valour.

The late 1950s into the early 1980s saw a new developmental stage of Chechen literature. Side by side with leaders of the older generation — Said-Bei Arsanov, Magomet Mamakayev and Khalid Oshayev, young writers came to the fore. Their works made an impact on their and the coming generations of Chechens.

Said-Bei Arsanov's novel *How You Get to Know What Friendship Means* describes Chechnya on the watershed of historical eras, contacts and clashes with the Tsarist administration, human relations and personal fates. The grandiose events of the Revolution are portrayed through the prism of the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. Life is changing, and the hero changes with it. He grows to understand that an active and creative attitude to reality is necessary, and feels it his duty to stand up for his human and ethnic dignity. Rich in vivid pictures of everyday Chechen life, and profoundly analysing the culture and politics of a stormy era, the novel shows Arsanov as a mature verbal artist.

Another landmark of Chechen culture was Khalid Oshayev's novel *The Fiery Years*. The author took an active part in the Revolution, knew Aslanbek Sheripov, Nikolai Gikalo and other prominent revolutionaries, and saw what stood behind many events in the Caucasus of that time. So he painted a memorable picture of the Revolution — realistic on the verge of a documentary record.

▲ Magomet Sulayev

Ruslan Khakishev

Zaindi Mutalibov

Abuzar Aidamirov

Nurdin Muzayev

The cover of Abuzar Aidamirov's novel *The Long Nights*

The novel *The Murid of the Revolution* by Magomet Mamakayev, another Chechen literary classic, is about the destiny and doom of Aslanbek Sheripov, the foremost Chechen revolutionary leader and Commander-in-Chief of the Chechen Red Army. A man of courage and excellent education, Aslanbek regarded the Revolution as the only way for his people to win liberty and live a new life, free of poverty, oppression, obscurantism and archaic customs. He held revolutionary ideals sacred, and laid down his life for them.

Zelimkhan, Mamakayev's next novel, was about another spectacular historic personality — the famous abrek (outlaw) Zelimkhan of Kharachoi, a man who became a legend even in his lifetime. The indomitable and audacious robber was the horror of gendarmes and bureaucrats of the entire North Caucasus for many years.

Though Mamakayev portrays him as endowed with heroic qualities, his Zelimkhan is an ordinary man thirsty for peace and calm. The writer shows Zelimkhan forced to join the outlawry by the arbitrariness and obtuseness of Tsarist officials. He fights for his honour and for all the oppressed and downtrodden — yet each of his victories results in cruel reprisals against his kin, friends and sympathisers. Clashing with the merciless state machinery, the abrek sees that his cause is lost. Yet he has no way back. Mamakayev does not portray his life as futile but as practical proof of one simple and harsh truth: freedom and dignity deserve to be defended by the force of arms. Zelimkhan shows to the poor and the docile that there is room for justice even in this unjust world, and that evil can be punished however strong and invincible it might appear. His enemies could not recollect the daring outlaw without tremor even long after his death. Side by side with the protagonist are realistic and psychologically convincing verbal portraits of his comrades-in-arms, kinsmen, and civil and military officers. Mamakayev vividly re-creates Chechen everyday routine and the entire life of the early 20th century.

Abuzar Aidamirov's novel The *Long Nights* is dedicated to the dramatic history of Chechnya in the second half of the 19th century. The book had a tremendous impact on the Chechen mentality not so much due to its artistic merits as to the author's historiosophy and brave and penetrating re-appraisal of historic personalities — mainly Imam Shamil. Aidamirov portrays him as a man of intellect and profound education, a subtle politician and wise military leader who, regrettably, stands aloof to the Chechen people's interests. He uses courageous and freedom-loving Chechens to establish a hereditary theocratic monarchy. Fully aware that Chechen valour and love of freedom would be a formidable barrier on his way to unlimited power in the Imamate, Shamil uses the Muslim cause as a pretext to trample out Chechen traditions, old culture, cherished independence, ethnic identity and dignity. Aidamirov shows that the death of culture and ethnic honour are far more destructive to a nation than trampled-out crops, burnt homes and cut forests. The novel came as a warning to contemporary Chechens. Regrettably, they lent it a deaf ear.

Shima Okuyev's novel *The Republic of the Four Rulers* is an epic panorama spreading vast in space and time. Published posthumously, it came to Chechen readers as a thunderbolt, and showed its author as a powerful verbal

artist and expert on the Chechen language and lore.

Chechen playwrights, especially comedians, excelled in the 1950s-80s. Brilliant young authors appeared — Abdullah Khamidov, Bilal Saidov, Lecha Yakhiayev, Ruslan Khakishev and Said-Khamzat Nunuyev.

Khamidov's *The Fall of Bozh-Ali* has become part of Chechen folklore. This sparkling comedy, written in colourful and aphoristic language, might be reproached for cardboard characters — yet, paradoxically, these caricatures appear large-as-life because everyone is prototyped by reality. Situational and psychological verisimilitude brought the comedy general love, and numerous quotations from it have become proverbs.

Chechen prose of the 1950s-80s is dominated by historical narratives and interest in historical personages. Unlike it, the poetry of that time concentrated on the human heart. Philosophical lyricism marked the verse of the young Raisa Akhmatova, Magomed Sulayev, Khasmagomed Edilov, Bilal Saidov, Musbek Kibiev and Sheikhi Arsanukayev, and the older Magomet Mamakayev and Nurlin Muzayev.

The 1980s produced another generation of poets and prose writers, who determine Chechen literature today — Mussa Beksultanov, Mussa Ahmadov, Said-Khamzat Nunuyev, Apti Bisultanov, Umar Yarichev, Lecha Abdullayev, Kanta Ibragimov, and Hermann Sadulayev.

Present – day Chechen literature possesses a constellation of authors of the most diverse genres. Some of them are reputed as modern classics — Mussa Beksultanov, Apti Bisultanov, Mussa Ahmadov and Umar Yarichev. Others, as Kanta Ibragimov, Hermann Sadulayev and Sultan Yashurkayev, are winning readers' and critics' recognition. Still others are only groping for their literary path. Time, the most objective and passionless of all critics and judges, will say what they are worth.

THEATRE

The Chechen theatre has its sources in the pagan rites of the hoary past, in versatile and drama-laden folklore, and in the performances of the *zhukhurg*[157] , *tyullik*[158] , and *pelkho* rope-dancers.

Rituality — which is pageantry of a kind — imbued the entire Chechen life. It was manifest in religious festivals, in wartime, at youth parties, and during music and dancing contests. It is no less characteristic of traditional Chechen etiquette.

As we know, Chechen life, as the life of other land – tillers, was accompanied by the festivals of seasons, sowing and harvest.

Winter festivals — Solstice and New Year — were especially merry and picturesque. On Winter Solstice, ritual bread was baked — a tiny loaf for every member of the household and a huge cake shaped as the solar disk. The small loaves were divided among neighbours, while the large was sliced for the family. Young people built a snow fort symbolising the Palace of Sun. All villagers took part in destroying it on the solstice day to help the sun to leave its winter lair and come back to the world of the living. An oak branch mounted on the snow ruins was adorned with fruit, nuts and lit candles as the congregation appealed to GIura-nana, Mother of Cold, and Iaьna-dada, Father of Winter. The worshippers implored the Mother of Cold, who personified evil, not to send bad frost and not to destroy livestock. After children picked the tasty things off the oak branch, fire was set on a log stocked from the previous year as an

157 Folk histrionics resembling the Russian *skomorokhi*.

158 A trend in Sufism, which became widespread in Chechnya as Islam strengthened and was later formalised. Its adepts came down harshly on the official Muslim clergy for bigotry. Their criticism found expression in satirical verse, songs and pageants.

adult worshipper appealed to the Father of Winter, good incarnate. Embers of the holy fire were taken home[159].

Islamisation of Chechnya turned these rites into comic theatricals, in which fancy-dressed young people impersonated the Mother of Cold and the Father of Winter while their fellow-villagers addressed them jocular requests — all that to the accompaniment of singing and dancing.

Chechens saw New Year in on December 25. At the start of the celebration, the fire in the hearth was fed not with usual firewood and sticks but with a *gula*, uncut tree trunk, mostly oak. The gula tree was cut down two days after the New Year village bonfire. The tree was carried into the house, butt first, while the branches stayed outside. The time before fire consumed a greater part of the tree, so that the door could be shut, was sacral. All neighbours came together in the gula house to sing and dance, and wish each other happy New Year. They also jumped over the gula repenting past sins to protect themselves from trouble the next year.

Zhukhurg fancy-dress perfo-rmances were obligatory at that time. It was no mere amateur clownery but sophisticated impromptu theatricals. Professional zhukhurg companies, widespread in the Middle Ages, performed at fetes. The place name Nakh Lovzacha[160] (a site for martial games, sports, fetes and public worship) exists in many parts of the Chechen highlands.

▲ New Year festival in mediaeval Chechnya.

159 Мадаева З.А. Народные календарные праздники вайнахов. Грозный, 1990. С. 20..

160 Сулейманов А. Топонимия Чечни. Нальчик, 1997. С. 76.

Guisers of the New Year and other festivals were usually young. Men performed the most often, though girls were welcome to join in certain localities. They sported fur coats turned inside out, felt masks on the face, and cattle horns on the head. Many wore beards and smeared their face with soot or flour, depending on the character impersonated.

Thus dressed, the merrymakers walked from yard to yard to sing ritual and comic songs, bless the household, and perform short pantomimes. They had felt bags, known as *bIegIag laьzhdig*, with them for gifts.

Girls were the New Year guisers with Chechens living in Georgia. The *birik*, heroine, wore a felt mask, a beard of fleece, and a fur coat inside out. Masked girls of her retinue walked around with sticks and bags.

The procession made a horrific noise, screaming: "KIorts, kIorts!" as they walked from house to house with good wishes, and begged for gifts. If they found the lady of the house stingy, the birik collapsed on the ground, rolling, and cursed the woman, wishing her no litter of her livestock and poultry.

Women tried to tear a tuft of the birik's beard because, according to local superstition, a hen who sat on the tuft in spring laid many eggs[161].

Staginess was present in New Year's fortune telling with a mutton shoulder blade, mirrors, knots and bread.

The festival of Mekhkan Nana, Mother of Earth, was celebrated in early spring before sowing. It started with the election of the prettiest girl, who was dressed up, and wore on her head a flower garland made by other girls in moonlight. The girl, who impersonated the Mother of Earth, led a ginger cow-heifer on a rope. The animal had a fireplace chain round its neck, and red ribbons on its horns. The villagers followed with wine, bread and cheese, singing canticles as the procession walked round the village to the temple, which the priest circumvented thrice as he performed magic rites, after which the cow was sacrificed to the awakening Nature[162].

No less colourful and scenic were the festivals of spring solstice and the first ploughing, *guota yodu de*. A procession of ploughman, seedman and oxen went to the field before sunrise. Ritual ploughing followed public worship, after which the seedman dropped the first seeds into the first furrow with prayer. Then the gathering sprinkled the ploughman and the seedman with water, and wished each other good harvest.

Rain incantation was especially theatrical. A young man was wrapped in tree branches and belted with a rope, with a sheaf of hemp or another herb on his head, or masked in a sack with slits for the eyes.

A group of adolescents accompanied him in fur coats worn inside out. One of them held the end of the rope belt in his hands as the procession walked from yard to yard. Water was poured from a jug on the kъorshkъuli (masked youth) to the shouts of: "Come, rain, come!" as he danced in leaps and whirls, sprinkling water all around as the others sang a ritual song:

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161 Мадаева З.А. Указ. Соч. С. 31.

162 Сулейманов С. Топонимика Чечни. Нальчик, 1997. С.107

Къorshkъuli khIara yu!

DogIa lokhьa, Dela!

KhIuьrta-byьrta, shi byьrtig,

Dattinchokhь yoьkash,

Kekhь-kekhь kIentii,

Khьekъiila khьan baba!

(This is the Korshkuli!

Give us rain, o Lord!

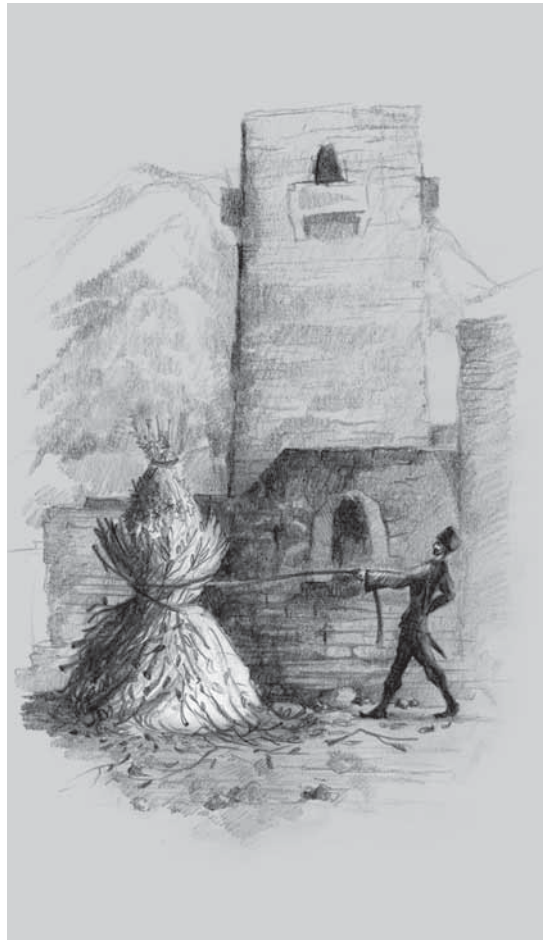
Khurta-burta, two grains,

And cracklings in butter!

May brave young sons

Bring ample offspring

in your household, Granny!)



▲ Rain incantation.

Jokes, music, singing and dancing also accompanied farm chores, especially the *belkhi*, collective work to help a fellow-villager with building a house or harvesting. The belkhi was usually an unbroken sequence of music pieces and jokes. Boys and girls improvised comic plays, inspired by dialogue songs sung by a male solo and choir to the one side, and a female solo and choir to the opposite.

Sinkъeram, youth parties, were real theatricals. Supervising the merrymaking boys and girls was the tamada, elective toastmaster, with guards who followed his orders meticulously. The party was necessarily attended by the

Fool — usually the host, the Widow, the Bad Guy, who wrestled with one of the guests in joke, and the Wise Greybeard, who made comic advice to the gathering. The amateur actors were so natural that the people who had never seen such a performance took it in serious.

The Chechen wedding was very scenic with music, dancing and acting.

> *"The Chechen wedding travestied the Tsarist administration. The despotic toastmaster towered at the table, sporting General's epaulettes, as two interpreters translated his orders while he spoke bastardised Chechen. Their witty misinterpretations provoked side-splitting laughter. Arrogant and imperturbable, the General ordered his guards every now and then to incarcerate a guest displeasing him in the henhouse or the stable — which not only made the guests behave but also turned the wedding into an inimitable impromptu comedy"*[163].

Chechen funerals, especially the condolence ritual, were marked by outstanding tragic staginess.

Also theatrical was the solo performance of the illi, Chechen heroic epic songs dedicated to deeds of valour, friendship, love, loyalty and honour. The composition of the *illi* repeats that of the classic drama, with an introduction, setup, movement and denouement[164]. The heroes' dialogue renders it an especial dramatic quality enriched by psychological insights. The illancha, professional *illi* performer, needed not only a gift for music and recitation but also the acting gift, as the proper *illi* was accompanied by mimics and gesticulation. The *illancha* transmitted his heroes' character and his own attitude to them through voice and diction. The audience was an active participant in the performance, sympathising with the heroes in adversity, and admiring their valour. The audience's response was part and parcel of the performance.

A gift for music, worship of the Word, and a sophisticated sense of humour has been intrinsic in Chechens since times immemorial. That is why the Chechen theatre has been closely connected with folk culture since its inception. It is linked indissolubly with folk music, world-views and humour — and even closer with the folk theatre of the zhukhurg and tyullik.

The zhukhurg theatre of impromptu buffoon comedy bases on music, clowning, travesty dancing and pantomime performed by masked actors. Animal masks used at its inception were later replaced by human masks expressing basic emotions — joy, amazement, wrath or sorrow. Actors performed wearing animal skins or fur coats inside out. Amply interspersed by comic dancing and mimicking, zhukhurg cameo plays borrowed their plots from everyday life or fairy tales.

Zhukhurg comedies were performed during folk festivals and weddings, often accompanied by pelkho rope-dancing. Pelkho dynasties were popular in Chechnya as in the entire North Caucasus. The public perceived their skill as a miracle. Possibly, this perception was a trace of the sacral content which rope-dancing rites possessed in the

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163 Музаев Н. Новейшая чеченская литература на путях социалистического реализма. Цит. по кн.: Айдаев Ю. Чечено-ингушская советская драматургия. Грозный, 1975. С.23–24.

164 Айдаев Ю. Чечено-ингушская советская драматургия. Грозный, 1975. С. 17.

pagan times. That was why the Muslim clergy fulminated against it as sinful at a certain stage of the development of Islam in Chechnya.

Another theatre, the tyullik, appeared at the turn of the 20th century, when capitalist relations were emerging in Chechnya to undermine traditional social relations, which rested on the idea of universal equality. Social gaps were widening, patriarchal links severed, and money became the yardstick of human dignity and influence — hence a profound moral crisis and formalisation of religion. The tyullik, adepts of a Sufi trend, rose against the degeneration of too many in the official clergy, who preached morals and humility while abusing basic morals, unblushingly lining their pockets, and justifying whatever trespasses of the powers-that-be. The tyullik aimed their criticism not at Islam and its values, whatever certain researchers might assume[165], but at bigotry and the preference of the pious form to the true religious content — all that clashed with Sufism.

The versatile tyullik repertoire included travesty songs, verse, monologues and dances. The greatest popularity belonged to performances that parodied government institutions and jibed at lazy and obtuse bureaucrats, cowardly soldiers, and hypocritical and avaricious mullahs.

Despite developed folk tradition, professional theatre had not appeared in Chechnya before 1917, though gifted amateurs occasionally made stage productions in the Chechen language. In

▲ Grozny Drama Theatre company. 1925.

165 Айдаев Ю. Чечено-ингушская советская драматургия. С. 29., Албакова Ф.Ю. Вайнахский театр от истоков к профессионализму. Тбилиси, 1990. Автореф. канд. дис. С. 8.

particular, retired army officer N. Gatten-Kalinsky, of Chechen ancestry, performed in many Russian theatres and tried his hand at stage directing. After returning to Chechnya, he set up an amateur stage circle in Grozny and produced his own Chechen-language play there.

The first Chechen professional companies appeared in the 1920s, the time when the first Chechen-language plays were written — Sultan Shadiev's and Magomed Gaisanov's *The Murid*, Issa Eldarkhanov's and Said Baduyev's *The Law of the Fathers*, Danilbek Sheripov's *Alibek-Hajji of Zandak,* Magomet Yandarov's *The Imam of Makazhoi,* and Issa Elderkhanov's *The Old Man's Young Wife* and *Sheikh Mokhsum*.

All those plays were only the first steps of their authors in literature, and they spoilt before they span. But, however inferior from the literary point, the plays were of historical value as the beginning of the new Chechen literature.

▲ A scene from Vainakh Songs

▲ Сцена из спектакля.

◀ Chechen-Ingush Drama Theatre company. 1970s.

◀ Actor Yussup Idayev. 1970s

◀ Solo performers of the Chechen-Ingush Philharmonic Societyи.

◀ Vakha Tatayev, Minister of Culture of Chechnya-Ingushetia, and playwright Abdul-Khamid Khamidov with young Chechen actors. 1960s

The Khanpasha Nuradilov Chechen Drama Theatre

The Khanpasha Nuradilov Chechen Drama Theatre opened on May 1, 1931. Major stage directors Vladimir Shatov, Alexander Tuganov and Archil Chkhartishvili — stood at its cradle.

The company staged world classics — suffice to name Lope de *Vega's Fuente Ovejun*a, Carlo Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters,* and Nikolai Gogol's *The Marriage,* alongside modern Georgian classics — Sandro Shanshiashvili's *Anzor*, Vazha Pshavela's *Lamara*, and Georgi Nakhutsrishvili's *Brave Kikila* — and the latest Chechen plays, in particular, Said Baduyev's The *Golden Lake*, *The Red Fortress, Petimat* and *Tsaeba's Wooing*.

Garun Batukayev was the first Chechen stage director.

The first Chechen playwrights Said Baduyev, Arbi Mamakayev, Bilal Saidov and Khalid Oshayev — started working as the Chechen theatre was making its first steps.

Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, later destined to become one of the world's foremost political scientists, was one of the first Chechen Drama Theatre managers.

Graduates of the best Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi and Voronezh theatre institutes regularly replenished the company up to the early 1990s, and spectacularly contributed to its inimitable style as every new actor brought with him the imprint of his school and teacher. They were trained by stars of the first magnitude — Akaki Vasadze, Mikhail Minayev, Lyubov Gorkaya, Semyon Gushansky, Vsevolod Merkuryev, Irina Meyerhold, Vladislav Strzhelchik and Ivan Savelyev. Though such diversity of styles presented problems to stage directors, it was invigorating, and helped the theatre to cope with a play of manners, a farce and a classical tragedy with equal perfection. Born at the crossroads of schools, the theatre, however, retained the domination of Chechen folk aesthetics.

The first actors of the Chechen Drama Theatre — Tamara Alieva, Aset Isayeva, Yaragi Zubairayev, Khalim Musayev, Movzhdi Baduyev, Khalimat Mustopayeva, Aset Tashukhadzjieva and Zinaida Isakova — had to overcome derision with which the Chechen public had treated people of the arts since olden times. They loved the stage enough to put up with bad living conditions, and be aloof to smirks coming from all sides. The public grew eventually to respect them at the sight of their dedication to their profession.

On February 22, 1944 — the day of Chechen deportation, the performance of Said Baduyev's *Petimat* was stopped after Act One, as theatre manager Abdul-Khamid Khamidov announced to the audience. The company shared the fate of its people, and the theatre was re-established as late as 1958.

The company flourished again starting with the late 1960s and early 70s as brilliant Ruslan Khakishev rejoined it after graduating from the stage direction department of the Leningrad Institute of Theatre and Cinematography. A number of young actors joined the company—Yussup

Idayev, Nellya Khadzhieva, Abdul-Mutalib Davletmirzayev, Magomet Tsitskiev, Dagun Omayev, Zulai Bagalova, Khamid Azayev, Zura Raduyeva, Amran Dzhamayev, Mussa Dudayev, Bakhmudzhan Vakhidov, Akhiyat Gaitukayev, Khozgh-Bauddin Israilov and Zulai Aidamirova.

That was the theatre's most fruitful time. Abdullah Khamidov's T*he Fall of Bozh-Al*i won tremendous popularity. Written in fruity vernacular, with full-blooded characters brilliantly acted out, the comedy became part of folklore and its cast household names. Alvi Deniev, Abdul-Mutalib Davletmirzayev, Yaragi Zubairayev, Zulai Bagalova and Aset Isayeva were recognised wherever they were. The public associated them with their heroes. The comedy gathered full houses. Side-splitting laughter filled the auditorium.

Alvi Deniev, an actor of genius, whom the press named "the Chechen Charlie Chaplin", sent the house into guffaws with his mere appearance on the stage.

Still, the triumph of T*he Fall of Bozh-Ali* was not enough. After all, it was a mere comedy of manners on ethnic material while the theatre could do much more. It needed new productions, new playwrights who could provide colourful and profound parts for actors of many styles — it needed a revelation.

World classics brought such revelation to the Chechen theatre. Corneille's *Le Cid*, Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Coriolanus*, Pushkin's *The Little Tragedies*, Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe,* Gogol's *The Marriage* and *The Inspector General*, and Alexander Ostrovsky's *Balzaminov's Marriage* acquired new interpretations. The theatre sparkled as a

▲ A scene from Scapin, Rescue Love! after Moliere.

newly-cut gem to win a name for profound originality[166].

The drama treats human passions — love, hatred, generosity, avarice, loyalty and betrayal. The classic drama alone raises them above the personal and the national to give them a universal scope. Classics are the actor's hardest test: they alone allow him discover his own new traits and get aloof to drab reality. That is why classics are a stage company's touchstone. Either it gets to a higher professional, intellectual and spiritual level or it is lost in clichs.

Corneille's *Le Cid* revolves round the clash between personal passions and social duty. Director Mimalt Soltsayev makes the clash fatal. It is no longer a personal conflict but harsh reality that moves the world and Rodrigo (Akhiyat Gaitukayev) and Chimene (Nellya Khadzhieva) bow to it.

Don Diegue (Mutalib Davletmirzayev) and Don Gomes (Yussup Idayev) are also quite unexpected. Brilliant Idayev as Gomes is a man of inner beauty and harmony, endowed with mercy and nobility but unable to overcome social convention.

Davletmirzayev gives his Don Diegue a satirical colouring — he is a petty, vicious coward who places prejudice and bloated pride above his son's happiness and life itself. Theatre historian Konstantin Berezin wrote that Soltsayev's was an unusual and highly convincing treatment of one of the world's greatest plays, staged on regrettably rare occasions[167].

Richard III, Soltsayev's another production, was also triumphal. Magomet Tsitskiev and Mutalib Davletmirzayev played Richard not as Shakespeare's abominable hunchback but a handsome man of courage and outstanding intelligence. Superior to all around, he becomes Evil incarnate for Evil reigns in this world. That is the core of Richard's tragedy.

Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, produced by Ruslan Khakishev, was another landmark. Passions were shown in their dialectical development through excellent acting and subtle scenic movement, emphasised by superb scenography and incidental music. The play saw several productions, and casts of several generations replaced each other, but it was always a triumph.

Ruslan Khakishev named his production of Alexander Pushkin's The *Little Tragedies* after one of them, The *Feast during the Plague*. Bringing the plots together is Mussa Dadayev as Poet, a character introduced by the director as common to all one-act plays of the cycle. The characters are larger-than-life, be it Khamid Azayev as the tragicomic Baron or Mutalib Davletmirzayev as the Duke, or Magomet Tsitskiev as Mozart, with his air of sublime tragedy.

"Ruslan Khakishev's production makes Pushkin's *The Little Tragedies* one play with one protagonist, the Poet, who changes his attire, appearance and the time he lives in yet always personifies the idea of freedom and indomitable independence. Whether he impersonates young Albert, brilliant Mozart or Walsingham, who wrote only one poem in his life, the Plague Hymn, he always finds his King and his Hangman, for the conflict is not in personal

166 Зубкова Е. Классика на сцене Чечено-ингушского театра // Театр. № 3. 1970

167 Березин К. «Сид» Корнеля на чеченской сцене// Театр. 1973. № 1.

antagonisms but in mutually exclusive world-views: 'Genius and villainy are two things incompatible'."[168]

The theatre stayed true to folklore — suffice it to mention *Vainakh Songs,* compiled and staged by Ruslan Khakishev — and Chechen plays. Young authors came to the theatre in the late 1980s with plays dedicated to the tragic pages of Chechen history: Lechi Yakhiayev with *The Black Plait,* and Said-Hamzat Nunuyev with *God Alone*.

Vainakh Songs ushered in a new stage in theatre development. Professor Vladimir Sakhnovsky-Pankeyev wrote about it:

> "*The production Vainakh Songs is another landmark in the history of the Chechen Drama Theatre. Based on two old folk songs, it is marked by austere beauty. Ruslan Khakishev amply draws on old rites and customs as he turns to the font of folk mythology and the innermost basis of grassroots ethics. Vainakh Songs, a lyrical epic, is not fettered by whatever traditional patterns of plot-building and scenic composition. The choir, in the sublime sense inherited from the Antiquity, is its protagonist.*"

The political crisis of the early 1990s in Chechnya put the theatre into an extremely difficult situation.

From that time until 2005, the company worked in a state of emergency. The war destroyed the theatre building and all props. Regular funding was out

168 Зубкова Е. Классика на сцене Чечено-ингушского театра // Многоязыкий театр России. М., 1980. С .45.

▲ Stage director Ruslan Khakishev.

▲ A scene from *God Alone*.

of the question. No replenishment came to the company, and there were no new productions.

The company has got a new lease of life now. Young actors have brought new ideas and trends with them, though such classics of the Chechen stage as Dagun Omayev, Khamid Azayev, Bai-Ali Vakhidov and Raisa Gichayeva determine their theatre's high professionalism to this day.

Ruslan Khakishev's revival of Abdullah Khamidov's *Bozh-Ali* was one of the most spectacular events of Chechen culture in 2008. It shows that the theatre not merely has retained its proficiency but has even made spectacular progress.

Ruslan Khakishev, the artistic director and chief producer of the theatre, has won the State Prizes of Russia and Chechnya, and the title of Merited Art Worker of Russia.

He graduated from the Leningrad State Institute of the Theatre, Music and Cinematography as pupil of stage and film star Vsevolod Merkuryev, and started his career as an actor of the Khanpasha Nuradilov Chechen Drama Theatre. His first productions ushered in a new chapter in the history of the Chechen theatre due to psychological insights, a thoroughgoing musical quality, exquisite stage movement, and the detailed perfection of character treatment.

▲ A scene from Alexander Ostrovsky's Balzaminov's Marriage.

▲ A scene from The Knights of the Caucasian Mountains.

▲ A scene from Vainakh Songs ».

The Mikhail Lermontov Russian Drama Theatre

The first Russian-language drama theatre opened in Grozny in 1904. Renowned Evgeni Vakhtangov made his first steps as stage director there.

Established in 1938, the Russian Drama Theatre was named after classic poet Mikhail Lermontov in 1941.

Its first production, Nikolai Pogodin's The *Man with the Rifle*, was premiered in November 1938. T*he Kremlin Chimes,* by the same author, was produced a bit later. The theatre staged Lermontov's *The Spaniards* and *Masquerade*.

The theatre had an extremely versatile repertoire in the 1960s-70s, ranging from world classics to local authors' endeavours.

Professor Mimalt Soltsayev, Merited Actor of Russia and Russian State Prize winner, is its chief director now.

It is hard to overestimate his contribution to the Chechen theatre. When he worked at the Khanpasha Nuradilov Chechen Drama Theatre, Soltsayev staged Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, Corneille's *Le Cid,* Alexander Ostrovsky's *No Man Is Wise at All Times,* Idris Bazorkin's *Out of the Gloom of the Centuries*, Imre Madach's *The Tragedy of Man*, and Chinghiz Aitmatov's And the *Day Lasts Longer Than a Century*. Each of his productions was a spectacular event in Chechen and Russian culture alike.

▲ Stage director Mimalt Soltsayev.

▲ After performance.

▲ A scene from *Out of the Gloom.*

MUSIC

Music is one of the longest-established arts. It has been seen as the language of the human soul, feelings and passions since times immemorial[169].

Since its inception, music has been a divine gift to man. The magical power of healing is ascribed to it. According to beliefs of the Antiquity, music is present in Nature, in the harmonious accord of its parts. Music not merely pleases the ear with delightful tunes and expresses human feelings — it also transmits the elemental sounds and informs about what has happened. Thus, there is a Chechen tale of a despotic prince who says he will pour melted lead into the mouth that brings him the tidings of his beloved son's death. A craftsman makes a musical instrument of three strings whose heart-rending tune tells the prince of the tragedy. This folk tale transmits the reverent public attitude to music and musical instruments.

Music not only personifies the popular spirit but also helps the people to survive at tragic times.

This idea received its most inspired treatment in the Chechen legend of Tamerlane and the *illancha* bard[170]. According to tradition, cruel Emir Tamerlane brought an innumerable host to the Chechen land, which he gave to fire and sword. Chechens fought staunchly for their land and freedom—yet the enemy was stronger. Tamerlane conquered the plains and forced survivors to flee to the mountains. When a general was reporting to Tamerlane that the Chechen land had been subdued, the merciless conqueror asked: "Have you taken the *pondur* from Chechens?" "No," was the reply. "Then, they have not been conquered," Tamerlane said.

169 Основы теории художественной культуры. СПб., 2001 .С. 8.

170 The illancha is a folk bard and reciter.

The musical scale reflects ethnic mentality and indicates all spiritual and ethical changes. A new basic scale shows that profound structural changes have come to the ethnic mentality, in fact, to give birth to a new ethnos.

Chechen folk music divides in four basic parts — the *ladugIa yish* instrumental programme music, the *doshloin yish* marches performed by cavalry en route, the *khelkhar yish* dance tunes, and the yish and *illi* songs. Chechens used string, bowed, wind and percussion instruments. The concertina was brought from Russia in the 19th century. The accordion joined it later.

Instrumental programme music often required only one instrument — the three-string *dechig-pondur*, the bowed *adkhoku-pondur*, the *zurna* wind instrument, the reed pipe or the concertina. It was sometimes performed in an ensemble of the *dechig-pondur* and the *adkhoku-pondur*, the *dechig-pondur* and the pipe, or the concertina, the *dechig-pondur* and several percussion instruments.

Instrumental programme music expressed sublime lyrical feelings, as can be seen from the names of folk pieces: *Home-Sickness, The Ancestral Land, High in the Mountains, My Caucasus or To My Beloved*.

Marches were played on wind and percussion instruments. There were also cavalry and infantry marching songs whose rhythm set the pace en route. Captain Ivan Klinger, a Russian officer captured by Chechens, recorded the notation of one such song in an East Chechen village in 1847[171].

Dance tunes widely diversified in tempo and melody due to the extraordinary richness of Chechen dancing culture. Triplets intersperse with duplets in folk dances. Tunes that start at a slow or moderate pace often get faster, passing step by step into a whirlwind of rapid movement. Highly original are sudden shifts of the strong beat breaking the rhythmic structure of the dance. No less specific is the change of harmony in the offbeat.

Chechen folk dance tunes often change pace, the hexachord being replaced by triplets or a mixed metre[172].

Chechen song culture is no less rich and versatile. It includes the *illi* epic heroic songs that extol feats of valour, loyalty, love and friendship, and are usually recited to the dechig-pondur; *nazmash* religious canticles, usually sung without instrumental accompaniment; *yesharsh* songs on most diverse themes; *uzamash* vocal improvisations; and *belkhamash* ritual songs — in particular, lamentations.

> *"The different scales, modes, melodic structures and harmonies of Chechen folk music have much in common between themselves. The Dorian mode is the principal. The Mixolydian and the Phrygian occur far rarer. There are no chromaticisms and augmented seconds, characteristic of the music of other Caucasian peoples.*
>
> *The structure and function of Chechen folk harmonies are extremely original, with many salient features.*

171 Фольклор: песенное наследие.М, 1991. С. 245.

172 Айдаев Ю. Музыкальная культура //Чеченцы: история и современность. Москва, 1996. С. 298

The Dorian tonic triplet of D-F-A is functionally connected with the unsteady triplet of C-E-G. These basic triplets occasionally replace the tertian tone with its supertonic or subtonic auxiliary tone — D-E-A or D-G-A instead of D-F-A, and C-D-G or C-F-G instead of C-E-G. These chords occur in the final movements as suspended tertian. The public view these chords as established. They occur in the crucial parts of music pieces, and often finish folk songs and dances.

Modal harmony is occasionally extended with a third triplet chord a second above the tonic. In this particular instance, it is E-G-B. Such triplets usually occur in cadence idioms.

Chechen folk music also uses triplets with a tertian tone substituted by a quartal chord. Thus, the inverted D-G-A turns into A-D-G, D-E-A into E-A-D, etc.

The chords of a second and a fifth or a fourth and a fifth can be also regarded as inversions of quartal not tertian chords. Chechen folk vocal and instrumental pieces use quartal chords rather frequently, e.g., the quartal chord of G-C-F-inversion-C-F-G or D-G-C-inversion-C-D-G, etc.

Quarter-tones often occur in Chechen folk music, where they play the part of the third in the classic tertian harmony. Chechen instrumental and, even more so, choral pieces frequently use parallel quartal variations. Many folk songs and dances also end with a fourth.

▲ Composer Georgi Mepurnov.

◀ The first Chechen folk instrument orchestra.

The gradual sequential descending structure is characteristic of Chechen folk tunes —just as an alteration of triplets and duplets.

Three-voice songs and dances usually have the basic tune in the middle voice, framed in the fifth and, rarer, sixth.

The sustained fifth, with its unique sound, is very characteristic. Chechen folk music also uses changing metres. Thus, the Dorian mode is interspersed with the Phrygian in Sadykov's Dance, with C flat replacing C natural.

Many folk songs start with sudden ascension to the seventh, which has not appeared in Chechen music by chance — this interval includes the extreme sounds of the quartal triplet, i.e., two fourths. This proves once again that Chechen folk harmony bases on the quartal not tertian triplet.

Characteristic of Chechen songs are stops at one sound, usually in the beginning, and occasionally with a fermata"[173].

The three-string dechik-pondur is one of the oldest Chechen folk instruments. Its elongated body is cut of one piece of wood, with a flat top plate, a curved back, and frets on the neck. The tailpiece frets of old instruments were made of string or animal sinews. The dechik-pondur is played like the balalaika, with fingers of the right hand striking the strings in a down or upward movement, tremolo, clang or plucking. The sound is soft and rustling. The first string is for the G of the one-line octave, the second E and the third D, also of the one-line octave.

The adkhoku-pondur, a bowed instrument of three or four strings, has no shorter antecedents. It has a semi-spherical body with a neck and a leg, and a bow shaped as the archer's weapon. The player holds the instrument vertically, supporting the neck with his left hand and resting the leg on his left knee. The sound resembles the violin. The first string is tuned to the one-line octave A, the second E and the third D.

Chechens know another bowed instrument — the chondarg.

Chechen folk wind instruments include the zurna, the reed pipe and the horn. Cavalry on the wartime march was always accompanied by the zurna and the drum.

The Caucasian concertina is the best-known of the Chechen keyboard wind instruments.

The vota, a cylindrical drum, usually played with wooden sticks and occasionally with the fingers, is indispensable in a folk orchestra.

The zhirgIa tambourine is no less widespread.

Chechens used several dozen instruments of diverse character and sound a mere hundred years ago. They are lost irretrievably now, and even a majority of their names have gone into oblivion.

173 Айдаев Ю. Музыкальная культура //Чеченцы: история и современность. Москва, 1996 (Ibid). С. 298.

Though Chechen music culture is several millennia old, its professional study started as late as the middle of the 19th century.

The first notation of Chechen songs, of 1847, was made by Captain Ivan Klinger, a Russian officer who spent several years in Chechen captivity. Leo Tolstoy later recorded the lyrics of two Chechen songs in Russian lettering according to his Chechen friends Sado Miserbayev and Balta Isayev. Afanasy Fet made their fine translations into Russian. He admired their philosophical profundity.

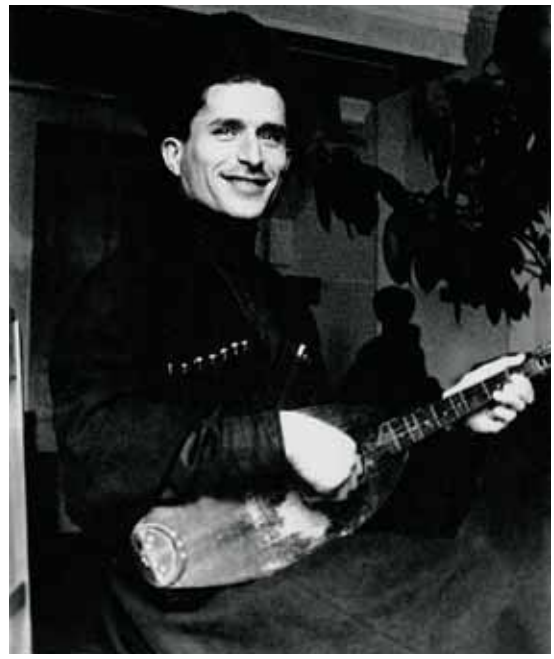
Many Russian researchers — mostly military officers with academic interests — were recording excerpts from Chechen folk songs throughout the 19th century.

Abdul Muslim Magomayev, the grandfather of renowned Soviet singer Muslim Magomayev, was the first Chechen to receive professional musical education. Born into a musician's family in the Chechen village of Starye Atagi in 1885, he finished the Grozny municipal school in 1899 to enrol in the Transcaucasian Teacher-Training Seminary to study liberal arts, the history of music, and playing the clarinet and the violin. He made his first essays at composition there.

Abdul Muslim graduated from the seminary in 1904 to return home but had to go to Azerbaijan fairly soon as he could not find employment in Grozny — it was prohibited to a man of Muslim belief to teach Christian pupils there.

All his later work was closely connected with Azeri music.

One of the foremost Azerbaijani composers, he wrote numerous works that



▲ An orchestra soloist playing the *dechig-pondur.*

▲ An orchestra soloist playing the *adkhoku-pondur.*

became classics — suffice to mention the operas *Shah Ismail* and *Narghiz,* and the operetta *Khoruz-bei*. Magomayev never forgot his antecedents, and amply drew on Chechen folk music.

Professional studies and recordings of Chechen folk music started after the 1917 Revolution.

Moscow composer Alexander Davidenko recorded several dozens of tunes in Chechen villages in 1925 to publish their collection under the title of *30 Chechen Folk Tunes Arranged for the Piano for Two Hands, and 30 Chechen Folk Tunes Recorded by A.A. Davidenko.*

Georgi Mepurnov made an inestimable contribution to Chechen music culture. The Soviet press of the 1930s described him as "the first composer, orchestra conductor and pianist of the Caucasian highlands".

As soon as the Chechen Autonomous Area was established, Mepurnov set up a band affiliated to the regional police office. It was the first Soviet band to play Chechen music. After studies at the Moscow Conservatoire, Mepurnov returned to Chechnya to become a prolific composer and community activist. He established a music studio for Chechens and, in 1936, the first-ever Chechen folk orchestra.

Mepurnov adapted folk plucked and bowed string instruments for the orchestra. Dechig-pondurs were grouped in piccolos, primes, seconds, tenors and basses, and adkhoku-pondurs in primes and seconds, in the manner of violins.

The orchestra also included the concertina, the zurna, the pipe and percussion. Its concerts enjoyed tremendous popularity in Chechnya-Ingushetia and far outside it.

The gifted composer and conductor arranged a vast number of Chechen folk tunes for the orchestra, the piano and other classic instruments — in particular, *North Caucasian Mountain Sketches*, the *Dadizha* lullaby, the Berdykel Dance and the Urus-Martan Dance. His numerous original works also based on Chechen folk music. He wrote backstage music to Said Baduyev's play *Alkhan-Kala,* a music poem dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Soviet power in Chechnya, and the Mountain Group Dance.

Nikolai Rechmensky and Alexander Khalebsky made vast efforts to study and preserve Chechen music heritage. The latter was the artistic director of the State Song and Dance Ensemble of Chechnya-Ingushetia for many years.

A folk lore collection complied in 1959 comprised 66 tunes of old and new Chechen and Ingush songs and dances recorded by Evgeni Kolesnikov, Alexander and Mikhail Khalebsky, Salman Tsugayev and Nikolai Rechmensky[174].

Soviet Russian composers notably contributed to Chechen and Ingush music by works drawing on folklore — Alexander Davidenko with his *Chechen Suite*, Marian Koval with *Stunt-Riding,* and Nikolai Rechmensky with his *Suite for the String Quartet on Chechen-Ingush Theme*s. Alexander Khalebsky, Merited Actor of Chechnya-Ingushetia, wrote a symphonic suite on Chechen-Ingush themes and many choir pieces. He also recorded and arranged numerous songs and dances.

174 Айдаев Ю. Музыкальная культура// Чеченцы: история и современность. Москва, 1996 (Ibid). С. 298.

Umar Dimayev, the author of more than 30 original works and several hundred arrangements of folk tunes, was one of the first Chechen composers whose music based on Chechen folklore.

He started as a child performing musician, and had become one of the best-known concertina players in Chechnya by the age of 15. The adolescent virtuoso was a living legend. His music not only made austere men laugh and weep aloud but also had a healing power. Umar was appointed solo performer of the National Theatre orchestra in 1929, when he began work as composer.

He won the first all-Union folk instrument players' contest in 1939.

In 1941–1945, during World War Two, he wrote many patriotic songs and instrumental pieces, and played in itinerant music companies performing at the front, in military hospitals, at railway stations for units dispatched to the theatre of war, and for workers in the rear.

In 1954, Umar Dimayev became solo performer of the Chechen-Ingush Song and Dance Ensemble. During his work with it, he wrote his best-known music pieces — a dance dedicated to Mahmud Esambayev, the Chechen-Ukrainian Friendship Song, and Two Friends' Dance. The composer stood at the cradle of the Chechen-Ingush Philharmonic Society, was active on the television and the radio, and recorded and arranged many folk tunes.

It is hard to overestimate Dimayev's contribution to the musical development of Chechnya and the entire North Caucasus.

His work determined the development of North Caucasian folk

▲ Composer Abdul Muslim Magomayev.

▲ Composer and performing musician Umar Dimayev.

▲ Composer Adnan Shahbulatov and singer Movlad Burkayev

▲ Composer Umar Beksultanov.

▲ Iconic Soviet singer Iosif Kobzon with Chechen young people. 1960.

music for decades ahead. He gave it a new lease of life, and eternalised it in his arrangements and original works.

Adnan Shahbulatov, representative of another trend, stood at the cradle of new Chechen music, rooted in European classics and pops.

He developed an interest in music classics very early in life. Chechens were deported when he was a child of seven. Adnan and his parents were exiled to Kazakhstan. He learned to play wind instruments in a school music circle. That was when he wrote his first tunes. At the age of 19, he wrote a song dedicated to the 1957 Moscow Festival of Youth and Students, which was first performed at the Alma Ata Conservatoire.

Adnan joined Lev Shargorodsky's class at the Chechen-Ingush Republican Higher Music School in 1958. He worked prolifically when a student, and wrote a cycle of songs to Russian and Soviet poets' lyrics, and small instrumental works — Variations for the Piano on the Themes of a Chechen Song, and In Our Mountains symphonic suite.

Adnan joined Professor Genrikh Litinsky's class at the Gnesin Music Institute, Composition Department, in Moscow in 1960, to work even more fruitfully than before. He wrote many symphonic and piano pieces, and numerous songs.

The song was Shahbulatov's favourite genre, to which he owed popularity with hundreds of thousands of music-lovers in Chechnya and far outside it. Top-notch Soviet performers — such as Iosif Kobzon, Nina Isakova, Lyudmila Senchina, Lyudmila Simonova and Movsar Mintsayev — sang his songs.

The composer worked for many years in a brilliant tandem with singer Movlad Burkayev.

Adnan Shahbulatov opened a new page in the history of Chechen music as he raised it to a new level by combining classics with folk tunes, and bringing Chechen and West European traditions together. He gave Chechen tunes a European form thus to make them part of the world heritage.

Umar Beksultanov is one of the best-known Chechen composers. He developed an interest in music very early in life. He was active in amateur performances at secondary school — he sang, danced and played the bugle in the school band. After finishing the 7th form in 1953, Umar entered the Frunze Music School in Kirghizia. After graduation in 1959, he enrolled in the Leningrad Conservatoire, which had educated such of the foremost Russian composers as Peter Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitry Shostakovich.

The symphonic poem *Gamar*, a piano trio and the vocal cycle *Setting off on a Journey* to classic Persian verse were his first major compositions. He wrote them as his Conservatoire graduation works.

Beksultanov received his degree in composition in 1964, and joined the symphony orchestra of the Chechen-Ingush Philharmonic Society as performer. He also taught the theory of music at a higher music school, whose director he became later. Teaching went hand in hand with prolific composition in many genres —the *Heroic Symphony,* the oratorio to Nurdin Musayev's verse The *Road of the October Revolution*, a concerto for the

▲ The Illi men's folk song-and-dance company.

piano and the orchestra, *Vainakh Sketches*, the *My Motherland* suite, several preludes for the piano, piano variations to Chechen folk themes, backstage music for the theatre, and children's ditties and instrumental pieces.

Composer Said Dimayev, Umar Dimayev's son, was born in 1939. He finished the Grozny music school in 1963 to go on to the Gnesin Music Institute, Composition Department, in Moscow. After graduation, he became a music teacher and composer.

Said Dimayev was appointed artistic director of the Chechen-Ingush Philharmonic Society in 1970, and later the chief conductor and artistic director of the folk orchestra under Chechnya-Ingushetia's State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting.

A versatile composer, he was known for numerous songs, symphonic and chamber pieces, music for films and stage productions, and children's music.

An excellent arranger, he remade his father's tunes, published in the collection A *Hundred Melodies out of Umar Dimayev's Hands* in 2001.

Singer and composer Ali Dimayev, Said's younger brother, is one of the best-known Chechen musicians today. Growing in professional musicians' family, he loved music even as a baby. When he was studying the piano at secondary music school, Ali established The Vainakh, the first Chechen rock group, known for fine renditions of The Beatles' songs, and songs by Chechen and other Soviet authors. Ali was conscripted as soon as he finished the Grozny Higher Music School in 1974. After he was demobilised from the army, he headed the folk orchestra under Chechnya-Ingushetia's State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, and became a prolific composer. Ali Dimayev's songs To *My Friends, Cherish Mothers,* and A *Dancing Sketch* are greatly loved in Chechnya and far outside it.

The Zama rock group, which Ali set up in 1981, is known for a daring blend of the latest rock with old folk tunes. Ali Dimayev started singing his own songs solo several years ago.

The Chechen State Philharmonic Society was established in 1936 to make a tremendous impact on Chechen music culture. A symphony orchestra affiliated to it was established the same year under David Besler, a professor of the Grozny Higher Music School. Vladimir Rayevsky, Merited Art Worker of Chechnya — Ingushetia, led the orchestra in the 1970s–80s, and Alash Edisultanov, People's Actor of Chechnya-Ingushetia, in 1990–95. The orchestra was the first to perform Chechen folk music arranged by classic Soviet composers. Alexander Davidenko wrote his *Chechen Suite*, Marian Koval *Stunt-Riding*, and Nikolai Rechmensky the Suite for the *String Quartet on Chechen-Ingush Themes* at that time. Alexander Khalebsky, Merited Actor of Chechnya-Ingushetia, wrote a symphonic suite on Chechen-Ingush themes and many choir pieces, and recorded and arranged numerous songs and dances.

Foremost performers were soloists of the Chechen-Ingush State Philharmonic Society — dancer Mahmud Esambayev, People's Actor of the USSR; singer Maryam Aidamirova, Merited Actress of Russia; singer and composer Valid Dagayev, People's Actor of Russia; singer and composer Sultan Magomedov and folk music populariser Schita

Edisultanov, both People's Actors of Chechnya-Ingushetia.

A new generation of performers appeared in the early 1980s, and has won tremendous popularity in and outside Chechnya—folk singers Imran Usmanov and Apti Dalkhatov, pop stars Tamara Dadasheva, Zelimkhan Dudayev, Maryam Tashayeva and Lisa Akhmatova (the first Chechen rock pop singer), composer and performer Ramzan Daudov, rock star Islam Gelgoyev, and pianist Amarbek Dimayev.

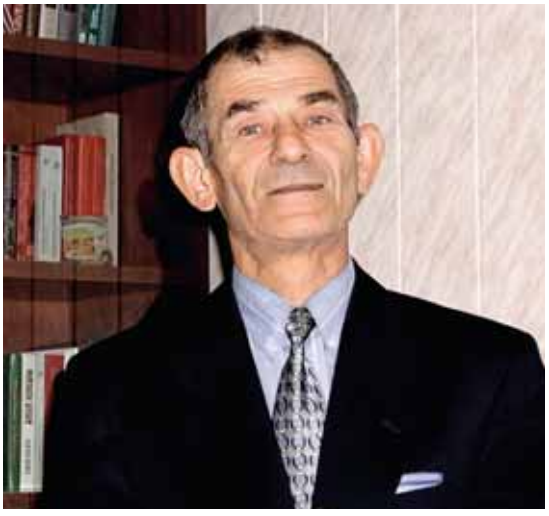
The Illi song company, affiliated to the Chechen-Ingush State Philharmonic Society, was established in 1979. Schita Edisultanov, People's Actor of Chechnya-Ingushetia, was its founding director. The company brought together Imran Usmanov, Magomed Yasayev, Ilyas Abdulkarimov, Sultan Pashayev, Kamaldi Gambulatov, Suleiman Tokkayev, Magomed Uzhakhov, Biluhajji Didigov, Ramzan Chakarayev, Маьlkh-Аьzni Azieva, and the Aidamirov sisters — Malika and Aimani. Its renditions of Chechen folk songs were deservedly popular in Chechnya and far outside it.

The Chechen Philharmonic Society suspended work in 1999 with the warfare.

Today, it is active in reviving music in the republic.

The Illi men's folk company, the Zhovkhar women's choir, and the Bezaman Az, Rayana, Expansia and Lamankhoi companies have resumed their work.

A folk orchestra of the Chechen Philharmonic Society has recently started concerts, and is great success.



▲ Movsar Mintsayev, Bolshoi Opera soloist.

▲ Composer Said Dimayev.

DANCING

Dancing is one of the oldest arts. The drawing of a sorcerer in deer dance appeared on the wall of the Lascaux Cave in France approximately 20,000 years ago. Dance was born of the magic ritual — just as the pantomime.

The assumption that dancing was originally a syncretic unity with poetry and music is hardly plausible[175].

Dancing existed even during the Upper Palaeolithic, long before verse and music, as archaeological data bear out. In times immemorial, dancing accompanied man from birth to death. The workday opened with a ritual dance. Primitive man imitated hunting in a dance preceding actual hunting to bring it luck. Land-tilling works also started with seasonal dancing, and later songs.

The shamanic quack, wizards' sorcery and Sufi meditations are, in fact, dances.

The dance and the pantomime told about past events and human feelings. The primitive dance evolved from pantomime imitating animals and elements. Though the dance and the pantomime are independent performing arts now, the pantomime still remains an essential part of dancing — especially traditional dancing.

Th syncretic unity of dance, music and verse emerged far later, when the aesthetic function came into the foreground in dancing to oust the magic ritual into the backdrops. Certain nations preserve such unity to this day. Thus, the traditional Indian dancer follows the song rhythm and plot with great precision.

Chechen dancing ascends to the archaic times. Bronze cult figurines of the 3rd millennium B.C., unearthed in Chechnya,

175 Мир художественной культуры. СПб., 2004. С. 218.

give an idea of certain ritual dance movements alongside conventionalised human figures represented on the slabs of ancient structures. Metal figurines of tiptoeing men (cf. Chechen male dancing on tiptoes) are among the finds from the Koban archaeological culture.

Patterns on carpets probably also contain coded information about male and female Chechen dancing.

The earliest written accounts of Chechen dancing belong to 18th century European travellers. As Count Jan Potocki wrote,

> *"When all villagers come together, they make a large circle to sit singing, and challenge young dancers with the music of the oboe, bagpipes and the flute to show off their agility in honour of the festive day. Dancing is accompanied by athletic feats as the performers make dashing leaps one after another, and throw each other down as wrestlers do. The performers next hold hands to sing and dance in long rows. They often spread the circle with great agility, now opening now locking it. The dance finishes with the same leaps as at the beginning"*[176].

Despite the popular belief that Chechens did not know group dancing before their folk song and dance company appeared, the Polish traveller's account shows that it not merely existed but was also enriched with acrobatics.

Bearing out the archaism of folk dancing and its connection with hunting

▲ The Vainakh folk song-and-dance company.

176 Аталиков В.Т. Вайнахи в XVIII веке по известиям европейских авторов // История и этнография и культура народов Северного Кавказа. Орджоникидзе, 1981. С. 124.

rites are the names of movements: *cha bolar*, "bear walk", *ka bolar*, "ram walk", and *sai bolar,* "deer walk". The bear, ram and deer were the sacred animals of the Chechen lore. To all appearances, they were totemic in olden times.

Stone sculptures of the ram's head are to be found on the fasade of the dwelling tower in Khimoi in Chechnya's east, on the Mount Bekhaila combat tower near Kokadoi in the Argun Gorge, and on the fasade of the vault sanctuary in Tertie, in the republic's west.

Chechen mythology treats the bear as an animal endowed with great strength and human reason.

Deer as amulets are conventionally represented on the slabs of many buildings all over Chechnya. All those facts testify to great archaism of Chechen dancing, and prove its connection with hunting and magic rites.

The movements and figures of Chechen group and pair dances indicate their, now forgotten, link with sun worship. The magical quality ascribed to the circle, pronounced in the symbolism of patterns on Koban and later Alanian pottery, and in mediaeval petroglyphics, is rather visible in Chechen dancing.

Chechen dances divide in group, pair and solo. There are male and female group and solo dances.

According to prominent Chechen ethnologist Said-Magomed Khasiev, folk group dances required four, six or eight pairs (that is, an even number), and their arrangement resembled the classic swastika. Such dances were connected with the solar and various land-tilling cults.

▲ Sword dancing for congress delegates. Urus-Martan, 1923.

▲ Dikalu Muzakayev.

◀ The folk song-and-dance company of Chechnya-Ingushetia.

◀ Vakha Tatayev, Minister of Culture of Chechnya-Ingushetia, with song-and-dance company soloists.

The many genres of Chechen folk dances are rooted in their origin, the milieu in which they appeared, and their semantics. These are ritual (wedding, rain incantation, etc), occupational (war dances, shepherd dances, and others), festive and liturgical dances.

The pair dance of a man and a woman has a ritual nature. Scholars track it down to Chechen cosmogonic ideas — mainly sun worship. The Chechen myth on the origin of Sun, Moon and the stars says:

> *"A skilful blacksmith wooed a fair maiden as he knew not that she was his sister. When she refused the matchmakers he had sent, he came to her dwelling with a gold firebrand. The girl fled at his sight. He ran in pursuance till both died. The sparks of his firebrand turned into stars. Radiance was all that was left of the sister, and the firebrand of the brother. They turned into Sun and Moon, and Sun cannot catch up with Moon to this day."*

The male dancer pursues the woman in circles to repeat Sun's route in pursuance of Moon. Solar symbols portrayed on buckles of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. reflect Chechen dancing movements, with a broken line for the soil[177] or the sea, winged disks to its sides for the rising and setting sun, and another winged disk in the centre, with wings raised the highest, for the sun in the zenith.

The man holds his arms spread in a cruciform position to symbolise the rising and setting sun. His bent arm with the hand pressed to his chest, the other arm outstretched to the side, repeat the swastika, which designates the sun in its movement. When he tiptoes with arms lifted above his head, the man personifies the sun in the zenith. He embraces his partner's waist without touching her to depict lunar eclipse.

Khasiev has advanced an interesting and plausible interpretation of Chechen pair dancing[178]. He tracks the *khelkhar* dance down to rituals based on mythology. According to him, the dance is connected with the Labyrinth myth ascending to the pre-Thesean[179] time. As befits a ritual, the khelkhar has compulsory movements of a labyrinthine pattern.

Girls and boys are seated in rows, facing each other, to make a square or a rectangle. The girls' and the boys' toastmasters sit in the mutually opposite corners. A girl and a boy open the dance, starting from the female and the male toastmasters, respectively, and so move toward each other diagonally, making circles, each smaller than the preceding, before they meet in the centre. Thus, the labyrinth is inscribed in the rectangle. The dance divides in three semantic parts: (a) the introduction, which re-enacts the mythologem of the Labyrinth and Ariadne's thread; (b) the khelkhar proper; and (c) the denouement.

In the introduction, Theseus enters the Labyrinth. Neither the boy nor the girl lift their arms before their encounter in its centre. They meet not face to face but left shoulder to each other. The boy turns 180 degrees, left shoulder first and, standing on his tiptoes,

177 According to Chechen beliefs, the sun rose from the sea at daybreak and sank in it in the evening.

178 Хасиев С.-М. Тесей. Рукопись

179 Theseus was a Greek mythological hero.

lifts his stretched right arm vertically as it slides up along his body. At that instant, he is no longer human but a divine being. Meanwhile, the girl slides in his front in a semicircle, right shoulder first, as the tiptoeing boy, his arm upward, follows her, turning 180 degrees. From that instant on, the Labyrinth begins unfolding in the opposite direction.

After that, the dancers do not return to the points where the dance started but go to the toastmasters — the girl to the boys' and the boy to the girls'.

The labyrinth is among the most widespread Chechen symbols. It occurs on Koban pottery and the slabs of mediaeval buildings. Purification during initiation is one of its basic meanings. Possibly, the labyrinthine pair dance was initially performed by boys and girls during their initiation to adulthood.

The classic swastika is a no less popular Chechen symbol. It occurs on Koban artefacts, Alanian amulets and the slabs of mediaeval buildings in every part of the Chechen highlands. Originally pertaining to land-tilling cults, it symbolises eternity, and serves as an all-purpose talisman, so its reflection in Chechen folk dancing is perfectly justified.

Chechen ritual dancing was highly original, and of great interest. In fact, it was not mere dancing but costumed theatricals. This is especially true of wedding dances. Such dances were extremely diversified even quite recently. The groom's parents had a dance of their own, the best man and the toastmaster as well. There are many comic dances to entertain the guests.

War dances were performed before battles in the Middle Ages. Later on, they were danced during athletic martial games arranged in Chechnya every year during pagan festivals. Many mountain place names are connected with the sites of such games, e.g., Nakh Lovzacha and Nakh Lovsha[180]. War dances were performed in full gear and with bared weapons.

Folklore testifies to the existence of the *chagaran khelkhar,* "ring dance"[181]. Warriors of the pre-Islamic time danced it before going to battle. They stood in a circle with naked swords to sing warlike songs, and then started circular movement, which grew more rapid to bring them into ecstasy. Thus inspired by spiritual unity and the magnetic rhythm, they went into battle without fear and anesthetised against pain.

Amply interspersed with gymnastic movements and acrobatic stunts, war dances also improved fencing habits, agility and the team spirit on the battlefield.

Essentially democratic, shepherd dances were more liberal than any other. A sheepskin hat, a felt cloak and a stick were their indispensable attributes. Those dances also included acrobatic stunts, performed stick in hand.

Wedding dances required solemnity and aristocratic reserve even when they included comic tricks.

Comic travesty dances were widespread. The most popular of them, Greybeard's Dance, starts at a low pace. The stooping dancer, stick in hand, barely moves his legs. As the tune paces up, the

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180 Сулейманов А. Топонимия Чечни. Нальчик, 1990. С. 122.

181 Там же. (Ibid). С. 44.

old man forgets his years, aches and pains, and breaks into dashing dance, casting off his stick. He stops abruptly, feigning a stab of pain in the small of his back — and the dance returns to the slow pace of its start. There is a similar female version of the dance.

Performed at weddings and folk festivals, comic dances required a liberal manner limited solely by propriety.

All Chechen folk dances were marked by solemnity and refined precision of movement. Dancers demonstrated dignity and emphasised respect of the female partners.

Violations of the dancing etiquette brought not only moral consequences. The man started the dance, and the woman finished it. In pair dances, the man could not leave the site the first lest he be accused of disrespect of his partner. The man could not touch the woman while dancing, even when she was his close relative. With the exception of comic dances, both sexes' movements were strictly regulated. Both kept upright. Women's dancing was ornate with gestures of the arms and shoulders, while men's dance required the utmost subduing of the expressive force. The male dancer expressed his feelings only once, when the dance reached its peak in the middle —the instant which Chechens termed *bukhь bogIar*. That was when the dancer got on his toes.

Pair dancing is the oldest kind of the male and female dance. As we said above, it ascended to Chechen cosmogony, and sun and fertility worship.

Khasiev thinks it is no younger than the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages. Koban archaeological finds bear out his assumption.

▲ Dancer Mahmud Esambayev, People's Actor of the USSR, Hero of Socialist Labour.

◀ Indian dance The Golden God.

◀ Spanish dance.

According to folklore, dancing contests during festivals and games required *alchik* dice, made of goat or sheep leg joints, garlanded dangling down on the contestants' belt. He whose dice never knocked against each other won the contest, so upright and immobile was his body, whatever sophisticated steps he would perform with his legs and feet.

Male solo dancing was also well developed, with many acrobatic and gymnastic movements. In fact, it demonstrated not only the musical quality of movement but also strength, courage and dexterity. Ancient dancing habits gave rise to dancers whose names were passed from mouth to mouth for centuries. Mahmud Esambayev, the greatest of Chechen dancers, earned global renown with his genius.

Tall and slim, with a perfect ear for music and exceptional memory, Mahmud possessed unprecedented expression of movement. He danced even as a small boy. At the age of fifteen, he was a solo performer at the Chechen-Ingush State Song and Dance Ensemble. Four years later, he received the same job at the Pyatigorsk Musical Comedy Theatre. By the age of twenty, he had reached perfection in folk and character dancing, and had studied the fundamentals of classic ballet.

After Chechens were deported, Esambayev was employed with the Kyrgyz Opera and Ballet Theatre, where he danced principal parts in *Swan Lake, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai and The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as in the first Kyrgyz ethnic ballets.

After return to Chechnya, he became solo performer of the Chechen-Ingush State Philharmonic Society to quit ballet and turn to ethnic dancing of the whole world. He staged dances for himself.

▲ The Vainakh folk song-and-dance company. War dance.

◀ The Vainakh folk song-and-dance company. War dance.

◀ The Vainakh folk song-and-dance companyц. Vainakh dance.

The Indian ritual dance The Golden God, the Spanish La Corrida, and the Tajik Knife Dance were his first endeavours.

Esambayev performed to full houses in Chechnya-Ingushetia, Moscow and in every part of Russia. He made a triumphal tour of France and Latin America with the Soviet Ballet Stars company in 1959. He immediately started to perform any local dance he saw. The Brazilian Macumba dance became legendary in his rendition.

The tour brought him global renown. Immediately after it, he established his own company to travel all over Russia and the world with his programme Dances of the World's Nations. His triumphs were unprecedented. Experts and the press named him a genius, "the sorcerer of dancing" and "the legend of the 20th century".

Dikalu Muzakayev, a brilliant dancer, choreographer and manager, honourably contributed to Chechen culture as soloist and later artistic director of the Vainakh dance company. He displayed interest in native culture, especially dancing, early in life. Even in his student years, Dikalu was on the cast of *Vainakh Songs,* a production of the Khanpasha Nuradilov Chechen Drama Theatre. He became solo performer at the Vainakh dance company in 1978. During his army service, he was solo dancer of the North Caucasian Military District song and dance company, where he had his first experience as choreographer.

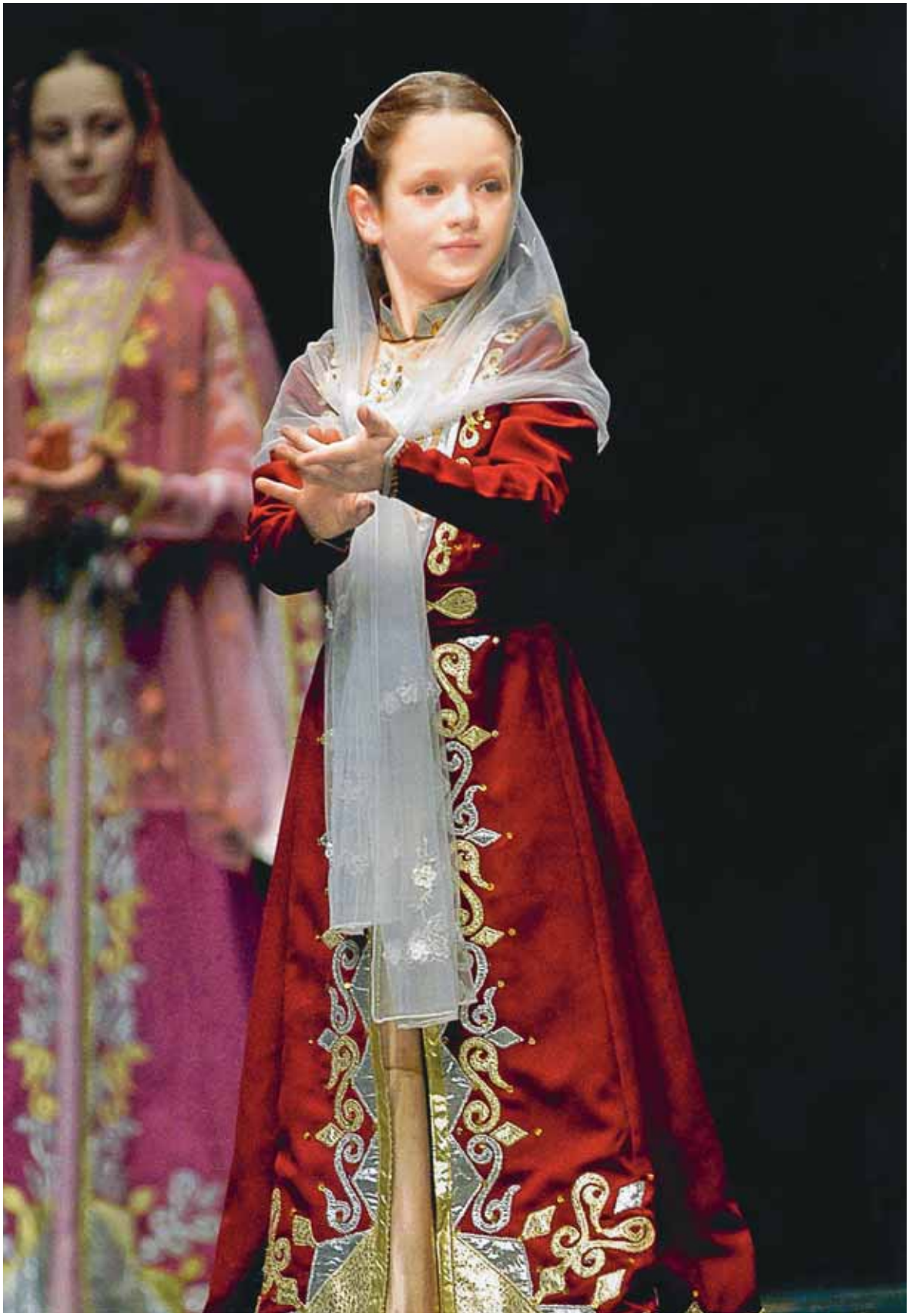
Muzakayev enrolled for the Moscow Culture Institute, Department of Choreography, in 1982, and came back to the Vainakh company as ballet master and performer after graduation. He was appointed its artistic director in 2001. At present, Dikalu Muzakayev, People's Actor of Russia, is the Culture Minister of Chechnya. State and amateur companies are giving an impetus to Chechen dancing, and enriching it with new trends.

The State Song and Dance Ensemble of Chechnya-Ingushetia was established in 1939. Such luminaries of Chechen culture as Vakha Tatayev, then republican Culture Minister, playwright Abdullah Khamidov, and dancers Sultan Chagayev, Sagari Ibragimov, Mahmud Takhayev, Magomed Gichibayev, Sultan Abdulsalamov, Baka Abubakarov, Vakha Dakashev, Andarbek Sadykov and Gelani Yusupov stood at its cradle. The ensemble had two companies — the dance and the song. Its initial repertory was limited to five folk songs performed by the choir and orchestra, and several folk dances. The three-string dechig-pondur was the principal instrument of its orchestra.

As the ensemble gained experience, its repertory extended to comprise songs in the Russian and Ingush languages, and dances of other Caucasian and Russian peoples.

The repertory of the first guest performances in Moscow, in 1940, included Chechen and other ethnic dances — *Urus-Martan Lezginka, Mesish, Chechen Lezginka, Chechen Comic Dance, Ingush Lezginka, Ossetian Lezginka, Armenian Dance, Crimean Tatar Dance, and Cavalry Dance*. The choir sang Chechen folk songs Mesish and Aset, and Russian *Waken Me Not* and *Kalinka*.

The ensemble did not perform during the years of Chechen deportation, and was re-established in Alma Ata in the late 1950s. Alexander Khalebsky was appointed its artistic director, and excellent dancer Gelani Yusupov ballet master.



The Vainakh folk song-and-dance companyц. Vainakh dance.

The invigorated company prepared a large and interesting concert programme very soon. Its first concert made a sensation in Grozny in May 1957. Otari Munjishvili and Georgi Dzyba made an inestimable contribution to the revival of the company and the development of Chechen dancing in general.

Dzyba, an ethnic Abazin, was a brilliant dancer and top-notch choreographer. His inimitable productions base on Chechen folk dancing, fully retaining its manner, and spur on its progress. His composition Under Vainakh Sky remains one of the best numbers of the company.

Unsurpassed teacher Otari Munjishvili educated many excellent Chechen and Ingush dancers, choreographers and other notables of culture.

Topa Elimbayev, Vainakh artistic director in 1969–1994, was an efficient manager and organiser, and prolific choreographer. The State Song and Dance Ensemble was renamed Vainakh on his initiative. Many gifted young performers joined the company during his leadership — among them K. Raisov, T. Sinyavskaya, M. Didigov, M. Khudayev, A. Muhammedov, I. Askhabov and S. Idrisov.

The Vainakh participated in many all-Union and all-Russia festivals alongside the country's other best companies, and toured the Soviet Union with triumph.

A new Vainakh concert programme, whose production Elimbayev supervised, won the 1998 State Prize of Chechnya for Literature, the Arts, Architecture and Cinematography. It was a sensation with the public, and won admiring press reports.

Composer Zaindi Chergizbiyev, choreographer Dikalu Muzakayev, dancers Dokku Maltsagov, Alexander Petrov, Elimkhan Khaidarov, Aset Askhabova and Tamara Didigova — both People's Actresses of Chechnya, Magomed Idigov, Mairbek Khudayev, Kazbek Arsakhanov, Lydia Aidamirova, Ramzan Ahmadov, Adash Mamadayev, Magomed Makayev, Apti Gantamirov, Ramzan Abazov, Turko Khasimikov amd Gapur Temirkhazhiev have done much for the progress of the Vainakh company.

Vainakh concerts were suspended with the warfare in 1999. The company started reviving its programmes in 2001, when Dikalu Muzakayev returned to the post of its artistic director. He got the company going very promptly, and staged many new numbers. The Vainakh won Grand Prix at an international festival in France in 2002 and, a year later, Grand Prix and the Audience Choice Award at the Gorice 2003 festival in Slovenia.

The company prepared a new concert programme, In the Vainakh Land, with 11 new numbers, in 2006. On December 24, 2008, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin signed a decree to award the Russian State Prize for Culture to Muzakayev for the programme.

The Vainakh had three concerts at the State Kremlin Palace in 2008, and performed to topmost federal leaders at St Andrew's Hall of the Kremlin on December 25, 2008. The Vainakh is active in Chechen cultural revival. It gives many concerts, takes part in international contests, and has guest performances all over Russia and in many parts of the world.

There are several companies developing and popularising Chechen dances in Chechnya and outside it. A

majority of such companies base in Moscow.

The Ziya children's dance company was established in 1999 on the initiative of prominent Chechen choreographer Topa Elimbayev, People's Actor of Russia. Russian business tycoon Ziya Bazhayev volunteered to fund the endeavour. Children dancers, varying in age from 6 to 14, are of diverse ethnicity — Chechens, Russians, Ingush and others. Prominent composer and virtuoso performer Ramzan Paskayev leads the company orchestra.The Ziya performs Caucasian ethnic dances. It is great success in Russia and other countries, and has won many contests.

The Lovzar children's dance company the Republican Young Pioneer Palace in Grozny. The Chechen war made the company move to Nalchik and later the Moscow environs. Magomed Takhayev, company artistic director, is dedicated to his cause boundlessly. Excellent dancers, the children have won many awards. Pierre Cardin invited the company to take part in *Tristan and Isolde*, the musical he staged in 2003.

The company spends most of its time in foreign tours.

Other companies are also doing much to develop and popularise Chechen folk dances — in particular, the Daimokh company and the Mahmud Esambayev Art School, led by prominent Chechen dancer and choreographer Dokku Maltsagov, Merited Actor of Russia.

▲ Tapa Elimbayev, People's Actor of Russia.

▲ The Daimokh folk dance company. The Mountain Rhythms.

▲ The Ziya children's dance company. Chechen dance.

◀ Mussa Bazhayev, Alliance Group President, with solo performers of the Ziya children's dance company.

◀ Ziya children's dance company soloists.

PART III

Tangible Cultural Heritage

PICTORIAL ARTS

Chechen art has antecedents of many centuries. It ascends to the Early Bronze Age. The bronze, silver and gold articles of the Maikop archaeological culture belong to the most memorable samples of that art, which reached its peak in the Koban archaeological culture.

The independent development of certain genres of Chechen pictorial arts began fairly late — in particular, painting and drawing emerged after 1917, with the appearance of Chechen professional artists, while sculpture was well developed and had exceptionally long antecedents in the Caucasus. Ancient and mediaeval sculptures had a rare aesthetic appeal due to inimitable lines and shapes, even though they, strictly speaking, belonged to applied arts — these were human and animal figurines and idols cast by folk craftsmen for pagan adoration.

The Islamisation of Chechnya in the 17th centuries laid a ban on representing humans and animals, and pictorial arts became highly conventionalised, to the point of abstraction.

Pyotr Zakharov (1816–1852), the first of Chechen professional artists, was educated at the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg. A child of three, orphaned when his native village of Dadi Yurt was given to fire and sword, he was Russian troops' foundling. General Pyotr Yermolov, hero of the Napoleonic War of 1812, was his foster father. With brilliant artistic endowments, Pyotr studied art since childhood. Prominent Moscow portrait painter Lev Volkov was his first teacher. In 1833, Pyotr enrolled for the Academy of Arts as non-resident student, and won the scholarship of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists even in his first year.

He graduated in 1836 to become a prolific painter and participate in many exhibitions. His canvas *An Old Woman Reading the Cards* won a silver medal.

Zakharov's portraits became popular in St Petersburg. Such celebrities as poet Mikhail Lermontov, historian

Timofei Granovsky, surgeon Fefor Inozemtsev and writer Nikolai Muravyev sat for him. His subtle brushstroke and exquisite chiaroscuro helped to discern his model's inner world through the figure and facial features, which he portrayed with the utmost accuracy. In particular, his portrait of Lermontov was considered to bear the greatest likeness of all the many portraits of the poet. Renowned Carl Bryullov said Zakharov was the second-best Russian portrait painter, himself being the best. It was a really impressive praise, considering the high level of contemporaneous Russian painting and Zakharov's comparatively young age — he was in his late twenties then.

The portrait of General Alexei Yermolov, the conqueror of the Caucasus and Zakharov's foster brother, and a self-portrait are the best-known of his works.

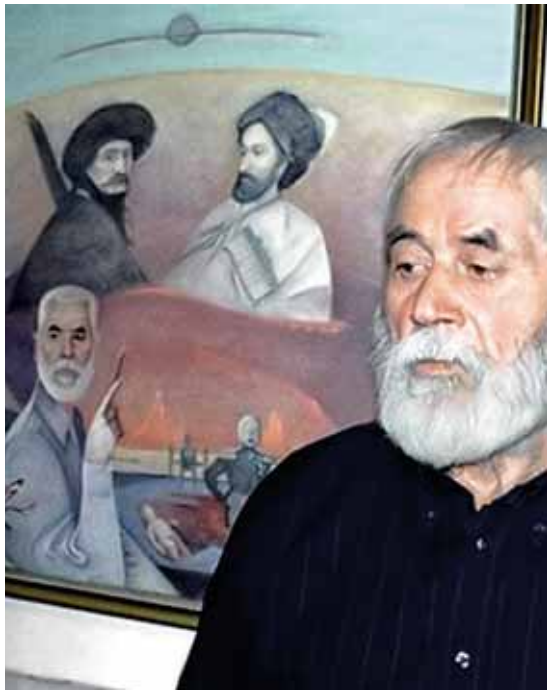
Yermolov's portrait, which brought the artist the rank of Fellow of the Academy of Arts, is marked by psychological insight. The famous soldier is represented as a proud, austere and resolute man of valour, who has come through trials and tribulations to develop cruelty and arrogance.

The self-portrait represents the artist wearing a Caucasian fur hat and felt cloak, with a cased rifle in his hands — the attributes of a Chechen warrior deliberately emphasised by the painter, while his shadowed face recedes into the background. The painting embodies his homesickness for the Caucasus, which he had not revisited since early childhood but which his heart was ever striving for. Indicatively, he signed his canvases "Pyotr Zakharov, Chechen artist".

The consumptive artist lived a short life but left more than a hundred excellent

▲ Pyotr Zakharov the Chechen. *Self-portrait.*

▲ Pyotr Zakharov the Chechen. *Children.*



canvases that belong to the treasury of Russian and world culture. Russian and Chechen art both take lawful pride in him.

No Chechen painters had followed in Zakharov's footsteps till the 1930s.

The Chechen Artists' Union, established in 1943, had extremely few ethnic Chechens among its members. On the one hand, that was due to Chechen prejudice against art, rooted in the obscurantism of many mullahs, who considered figurative arts a trespass against the Almighty. As it really is, Islam prohibits only the manufacture and adoration of idols — just as Christianity. On the other hand, Chechen schools taught nothing but the three R's, and boys and girls living in Chechnya had no chance of higher art education.

The deportation of Chechens put an abrupt stop to Artists' Union activities. Its work resumed in the late 1950s, and was dominated by painters Shamil Shamurzayev, Hamzat Dadayev, Dadan Idrisov, Amadi Asukhanov, Said-Emin Elmurzayev and Kharon Isayev, and sculptor Ilyas Dutayev, known for carved wooden figurines. They made notable presences at many regional exhibitions, and won numerous awards.

Chechen artists of that time kept within the Soviet mainstream, portraying landscapes and labour scenes in the Socialist Realist spirit. Shamil Shamurzayev's portraits, Amadi Asukhanov's and Said-Emin Elmurzayev's landscapes, and Khamur Ahmedov's graphic art were setting the tune of Chechen art for many years.

Though Shamurzayev also excelled in landscapes and still-lifes, he

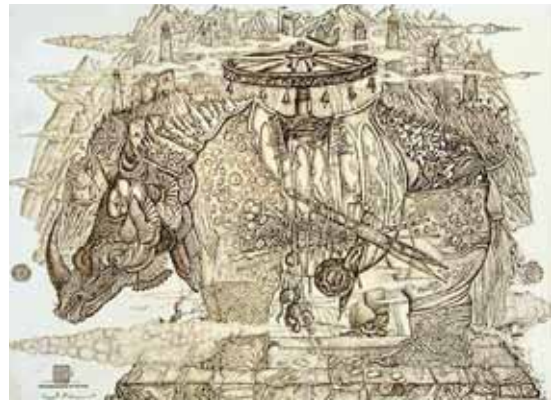
owed his prominence to the portraiture of ordinary Chechen toilers — as in *The Woman of the Mountains, The Pensioner, The Cattle-Breeder and The Concertina Player*. He depicted people of frank countenance and tranquil gaze, impressive in their unassuming grassroots beauty.

Hamzat Dadayev won renown with his *Carpet-Weavers* when a young man. The trials and tribulations of his native people dominate his art. Pained compassion for his long-suffering land penetrates his latest works, such as Refugees and Grandson.

Amadi Asukhanov's Chechen landscapes are imbued with love for his motherland, and the admiration of its majestic beauty, and the modesty and austerity of its people. He portrays Chechen mountains, towers, turbulent streams and local dwellers (*Eventide, The Motives of My Motherland, In the Ancestral Land and The Prodigy of Nature*). His latest works are dedicated to the tragedy of war. The paintings *Wartime Wounds, Peace Street, The Centre of Grozny and Motherless* are wrathful invectives against war, which tramples down every living thing and cripples Man and Nature alike. As the artist shows, the wounds on the face of the earth heal much quicker than wounds in the human heart.

The art of Kharon Isayev, of the older generation, mirrors the fate of the entire Chechen people. He excels in every genre, be it landscape, still-life or portrait. A catalogue of his works, published in 2008, reproduces his paintings and compiles reviews of, and essays on his art.

Young artists Vakhid Zaurayev, Said-Hussein Bitsirayev, Sultan and Lecha Abayev, Abu Pashayev, Sultan and Zamir Yushayev, Hassan Sediyev and



▲ Khamur Ahmedov. *Sheikh Mansur.*

▲ Ruslan Khaskhanov. *lithography.*

◀ Artist Shamil Shamurzayev.

◀ Hamzat Dadayev. *Carpet-Weavers.*

◀ Fatima Daudova. *Nostalgia.*

Raisa Tesayeva started work in the 1980s to enrich Chechen art with new trends, themes and ideas.

Said-Hussein Bitsirayev is one of the few Chechen artists educated at the Ilya Repin Academy of Arts in St Petersburg. He settled in St Petersburg for good, and is presently a professor of the State Academy of Industrial Arts, the Chair of Painting. Despite that, he has retained heartfelt interest in Chechen culture and history. Even his *Spanish Rhapsody*, a cycle of paintings on Federico Garcia Lorca's motives, and re-creating the artist's firsthand Spanish impressions, finishes with a still-life and a self-portrait dominated by the Chechen theme.

The *Spanish Rhapsody* was a landmark in Bitsirayev's quest for the new form and content as he turned to eternal, existential questions and the universal problems of life, death, love, and the triumph of life over death.

Love and death, joy and anguish walk always hand in hand. The way of all flesh is from the cradle to the grave, and the interpenetration of life and death haunts everyone. The cold breath of death makes the perception of life more acute and mystically profound, even if more tragic. Death embodies eternal love. The musical quality of line and colour in The *Spanish Rhapsody* merges with the word and rhythm of Lorca's verse. The colour scheme of The *Spanish Rhapsody* rests on contrast. The awareness of the tragic quality of life penetrates Lorca's poems. The *Spanish Rhapsody* is also imbued with it. However, its glowing colours make the cycle a hymn to joie de vivre.

Sultan Abayev also studied at the Ilya Repin Academy of Arts. Deeply interested in Chechen culture, he is

dedicated to his roots. That is the vehicle of his work. Ancient towers silhouetted in his canvases look not mere buildings but shadows of the past, the present-day earthly embodiment of ancestors long gone — people who cherished their land and were ready to lay down their life for it.

In the paintings *Nikaroi, The Shadows of the Past and Nocturnal Shades,* towers now gather in a circle to protect their land with their mighty stone torsos, now stand in battle formation broken by enemy surprise attack. Every tower Abayev portrays is not a dumb stone structure but a live creature eternalised in stone. Through distinct preference for subdued colours, Abayev renders the borderline state between the animate world and the inanimate. He avoids contrasting colours and abrupt transitions from shape to shape.

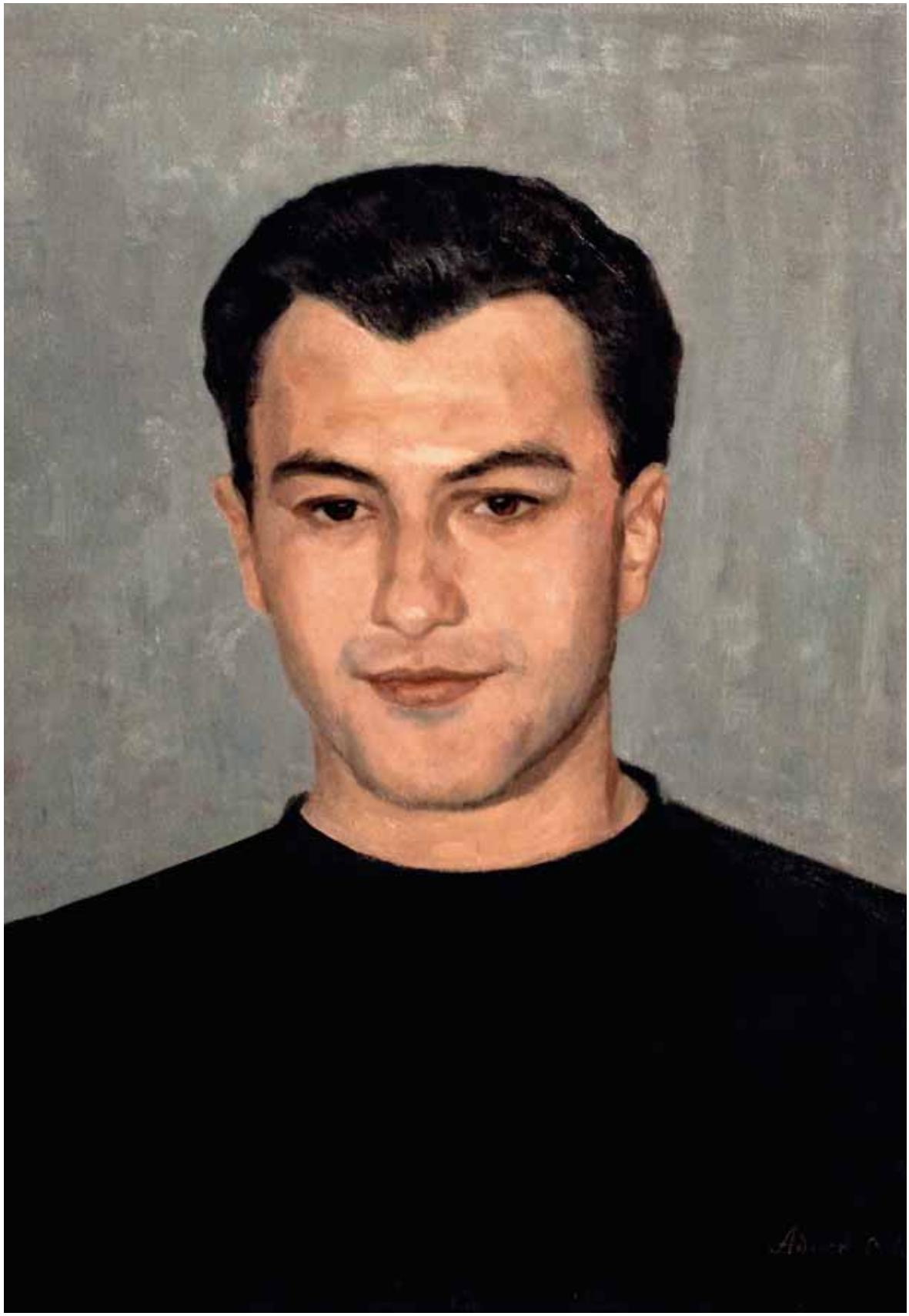
A cycle of exquisite Oriental landscapes inspired by the artist's journey to Korea portrays seaports, mountains and picturesque villages. Evidently influenced by Gauguin, they dazzle one with sharp contrasts of buoyant colours dominated by rich reds and greens. Abayev's gift reaches its peak in portraiture. He fully deserves his repute of one of Chechnya's best portrait painters. His *Tibetan Lama, The Portrait of My Brother, A Girl in an Armchair and The Portrait of an Old Man* reveal high professionalism as the artist portrays the inner man through outward details and the interplay of light and shadow. The cycle *Chechen Celebrities*, at which he is working presently, will comprise portraits of cultural activists, researchers, educationalists and economists.

Lecha Abayev, another graduate of the Ilya Repin Academy of Arts and Sultan's brother, is an artist of rare gift. A man of tragic fate, he has carried love of art and the history and culture of his

▲ Lecha Abayev. Zelimkhan of Kharachoi.

▲ Sultan Abayev. Kezenoi.

◀ Said-Hussein Bitsirayev. From The Spanish Rhapsody.



people through all adversities. Many of his works are dedicated to dramatic episodes of the Chechen past.

In the tragically magnificent *Sheikh Mansur*, the Imam's figure towers above the army standing in formation before him. He is portrayed as more than a religious and military leader — he is a Redeemer, who has come into this world to improve humans — yet his posture shows not only majesty but also the awareness of the impending doom.

One of his best paintings, *Zelimkhan of Kharachoi*, portrays the famous outlaw as the embodiment of loneliness that awaits one who has challenged all evil under the sun. Lecha Abayev is also a prolific landscape and still-life painter, and graphic artist. Lema, the youngest of the Abayev brothers, also a graduate of the Ilya Repin Academy of Arts, extols the sublime spirit of the Chechen people, whose tragic fate he deeply empathises with.

Some artists are not merely affected by the tempests of the time they live in. Their art and life blend into that time and become its quintessence. Vakhid Zaurayev regards art not only as a means of self-expression but also as the mode of life, and the way to create his own model of being, in which the confrontation between Good and Evil acquires a universal scope and an apocalyptic quality. Zaurayev is a Post-Impressionist, Expressionist and Surrealist in one. His *Self-Portrait with Salvador Dali and Van Gogh* is a key to his aesthetics. They are his teachers. Zaurayev inherits their manner and content. He is full of compassion for Van Gogh and worships the tragic genius of Dali. *Van Gogh's Last Painting* is the most penetrating of Zaurayev's works expressing empathy with the artist who was victim to his own passion for art. Colours, composition and dynamic

▲ Sultan Abayev. Portrait of Professor Aslambek Paskachev from the cycle Chechen Celebrities.

▲ Sultan Abayev. The Portrait of an Old Man.

◀ Sultan Abayev. Abu Paskachev, Oxford University Student.

lines — all are saturated with the Doomsday presentiment of death. The death of a genius is more than death. It is an irretrievable loss to the entire human race.

The aesthetic and psychological impact of Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne and Dali does not make Zaurayev their imitator. He has made an artistic world all his own, which combines European civilisation with Nakh spirituality and thirst for the transcendental.

Zaurayev synthesises the Chechen spirit and the Western modernist aesthetics. This helps his art to retain profound content and the beauty of form during a thoroughgoing crisis of Chechen culture. His early works are Impressionist — buoyant colours imbued with sunlight, love of life, and overwhelming joie de vivre, as in The *Bouquet of Paradise*. The Impressionistic desire to eternalise with his brush the last ray of light on the mountain top at sunset or a fleeting shadow on a sunflower petal at night acquires mighty drive with the powerful brushstroke and the thrust of the contrast-based colour scheme. Light and colour express emotions and sounds (*Thunderstorm and Thunder*). *Sunflowers in the Dark, The Bouquet of White Hope, and Sunflowers* are hymns to the harmony of existence, and to this sunny world. Zaurayev regards Nature as the crown of creation. It is precious in itself as the embodiment of beauty and justice. Any man-made thing is secondary to it. Man's creations might blend into the landscape, as the ancient Nakh towers (*Towers in the Mountains*) but much more often man brings disharmony and chaos into the world. War is the most dreadful of all human inventions.

The artist's wartime impressions changed his views of the world and himself.

▲ Vakhid Zaurayev. *Self-Portrait with Salvador Dali and Van Gogh.*

▲ Vakhid Zaurayev. *The Spring Fantasy.*

◀ Vakhid Zaurayev. *The Monster.*

◀ Vakhid Zaurayev. *Nocturnal Landscape.*

The Chechen War not merely brought him new themes — it made him a Surrealist. He gave up *The Bouquet of White Hope for The Flowers of Evil.* The new Zaurayev concentrates on Eternity and the contention of Good and Evil. He has developed a keen perception of Evil. As he sees it, Evil is invisible in the usual routine. The artist alone discerns it. Evil reveals itself to him now as a monster in his sleep (*Nightmare* and *The Monster*), now as an illusory apparition in the interplay of light and shade. The *Satanic Rider* communicates the artist's awareness of the presence of Evil, of the diabolical power in this world. The contoured rider is barely discernible at first sight. A longer and closer look at the canvas reveals two or three — or more — riders, who gradually blend into a huge crowd. Evil is multiple, and has innumerable faces. In wartime, it casts off all its masks, and we see its true beastly face. War is the supreme manifestation of Evil. It destroys not only the present but also the past and the future (*The Face of Evil, Fighter Planes,* and *The Breath of the Grave*). Evil is boundless, and it takes the entire human race to fight it — or it will knock on every door tomorrow. *European Fire Festivals*, one of Zaurayev's best works, is a warning. Here, the artist tries to comprehend his own attitude to European civilisation and moral values. This world is full of pain to overflowing. Famine, calamities and wars torment it. Europe, the only oasis of wellbeing, seeks to wall itself off from others' plight in its secluded islet of entertainment and idol worship. It is feasting during the plague. The painting shows a dancing crowd which, in its frenzied exhilaration, does not see the horrible face of Devil, who gives the picture of mirth the satanic look of Black Sabbath. Devil turns man off from Good, and robs him of kindness and compassion. Grim and unrelenting, he brings man's retribution ever closer.

Retribution and punishment for evildoings and earthliness are the leitmotifs of Zaurayev's many works. Avarice makes man forget honour, dignity and everything he holds sacred. What is left in the end is the black slit of the grave (*Dead Man's Gold).*

Yet there is a punishment even more dreadful. That is life in a limbo — not the death of particular people but the life-in-death of a nation that discards its culture and spirit, and loses the sense of historical succession. In *Chechnya: The Obituary*, the artist materialises his apocalyptic vision of contemporary life — a blood-curdling picture of the decay and death of every living thing. As Zaurayev sees it, we live in a topsy-turvy world of falsified values. What we deem this-worldly reality is actually the underworld, while sunlight belongs solely to the world of tombs — the world of the past, which is much cleaner, kinder and worthier than the present. Portrayed in the centre is the magic triangle, symbol of the Universe. In its vertex is the ominous face of Un-Nana, the pagan goddess of death and disease. This world is affected with disease caused by human evil. The artist views humankind as a crowd of walking corpses, who do not deserve their past and are killing their future.

Surrealist Abu Pashayev depicts the human world, inner and outer alike, as the chaos of harmony and the harmony of chaos. Good and Evil are inseparable, and live within each other. There is no way to know Good unless you know Evil. Birth brings forth death just as death is the prelude to life. Birth and death are just as inseparable as Good and Evil. The human soul is the abode of the entire Universe, for man the micro-cosmos is a replica of macro-cosmos, its soul materialised in the human body. The artist gives fantastic visual forms to mystical images and

symbols. These bizarre shapes create the illusion of the eternal whirl dance of all creation. In Pashayev's inimitable imagery, the macro-cosmos passes into the micro-cosmos, and the other way round.

Young Chechen painters Ruslan Khaskhanov, Fatima Daudova, Ramzan Izhayev, Zareta Murtazalieva, Rustam Sardalov and Magomed Zakriev have won recognition already, though they started work quite recently.

Chechen sculpture is developed far less than painting for many objective and subjective reasons. Ilyas Dutayev, with his wooden figurines, is the best known of all Chechen sculptors. He displayed an interest in art in his adolescence. His carved *Bunch of Flowers* attracted the jury of the Firth Republican Applied Art Show in 1962. Dutayev studied at the Abramtsevo Art School outside Moscow, and became a laborious woodcarver after graduation. He won renown with a set of chess made as figurines of Chechens spectacularly reflecting the ethnic identity and mentality. *Grandson Dancing, Waiting for the Son*, and *In the Cobbler's Workshop,* also dedicated to the ethnic theme, were highly appreciated by art scholars and the public-at-large.

Iles Tatayev carves unique sculptures of woodknobs, known for hardness. His titanic labour reveals the breathtaking beauty, harmony and splendour of Nature, which reveals its mysteries only to the chosen few. His compositions *The Flame of Love, Motherhood, Bach's Music, Planetary Alignment, The Lady with the Dog* and *Thought* are amazing due to the author's unique aesthetic vision. Every sculpture reflects an inimitable world of images, feelings and associations the artist and Nature create in their close teamwork.

▲ Iles Tatayev, film director and sculptor.

▲ Iles Tatayev's compositions.

FOLK CRAFTS

Chechen folk crafts emerged several millennia ago. Several genetically interrelated archaeological cultures replaced each other in the area of original Nakh (Ancient Chechen) settlement in the North Caucasus from the 4th millennium B.C. through the Middle Ages.

Those cultures left ample archaeological materials testifying to an unprecedentedly high level of North Caucasian manufacture of arms, labour implements and pottery since the New Stone Age.

Excavations of Neolithic settlements in the various parts of the Caucasus revealed a wealth of Mesolithic flint tools — nuclei, scrubbers, chisels, and blades; geometrical tools — segments, trapezes, inserts with tips cut rectangularly with retouch, and faceted cuneiform axes; chippers processed on either side; and a rough Neolithic arrowhead.

The occupation layer of a Late Neolithic settlement in the central part of the North Caucasus[182] revealed diverse articles — pottery, pitchstone, flint and stone tools, and fragments of feebly fired clay. Flint tools were mainly represented by various types of scrubbers, piercers, sharp slabs, and knife-like slabs that might be inserted in sickles.

A flint arrowhead and the halves of a stone mace were also found. Stone tools included polished rotund axes, chisels, graters, pestles and whetstones. The pottery, of inferior clay, was crudely shaped by hand and feebly fired[183]. The vessels were not ornamented, only some of them had a stuck-on clay band or a horizontal relief projection along the upper edge[184]. An anthropomorphic clay

182 The formation areas of proto-Nakh tribes.

183 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 73.

184 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. С.30 .

figurine, also unearthed in the settlement, related to an ancient land-tilling cult. The presence of farm tools (grain grinders, graters and pestles) testifies to embryonic land-tilling in the North Caucasian New Stone Age.

Tomb finds included stone scrubbers, slabs, flakes, pottery shards, stone bracelets, pendants made of deer tusks and ox incisors, and beads of diverse shapes.

A small copper finger-ring unearthed in one tomb was the oldest metal article found in the North Caucasus for today[185].

Eneolithic finds are of no smaller interest. A burial mound near the village of Bamut in West Chechnya revealed small paste beads strewn all over the burial chamber, and a small flint slab retouched along the edges. A knife-like flint slab retouched along the edges and a round marlstone pendant were unearthed in a tomb in the vicinity of Grozny.

Pottery and metalwork reached a high level in the Kura-Araxes archaeological culture, which spread from Transcaucasia to the south-eastern and southern parts of the North Caucasus in the 3rd millennium B.C. The Kura-Araxes tribes mastered the entire cycle of bronze production from copper ore mining to foundry. The 3rd millennium B.C. made the Caucasus and Transcaucasia one of the principal Old World seats of metal industry[186].

Numerous copper smelting furnaces, and diverse bronze tools,

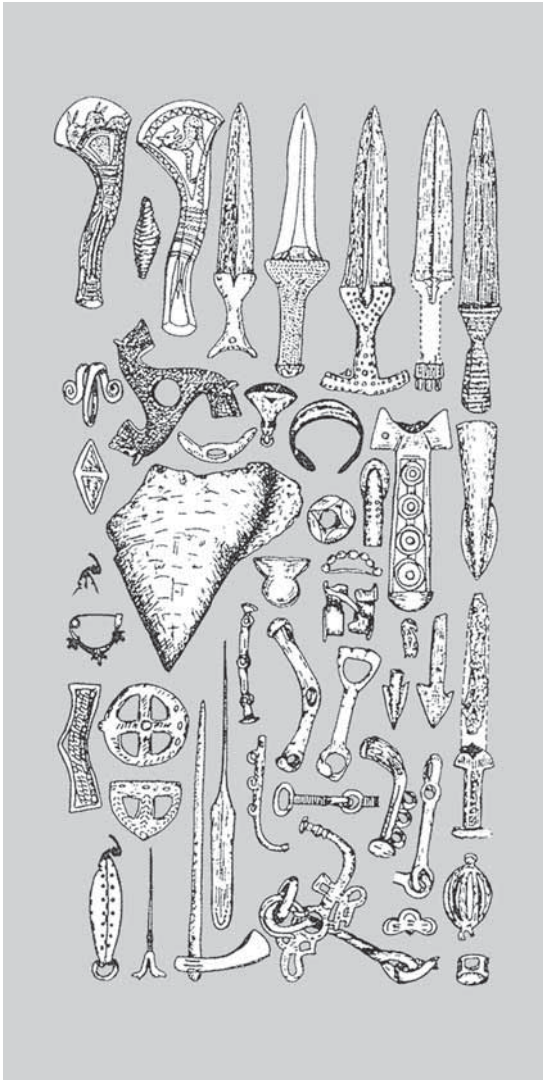
▲ Koban weaponry. Bronze. 1st millennium B.C.

▲ North Caucasian archaeological culture. Stone axe. 2nd millennium B.C..

▲ Grindstone. Srgun Gorge.

185 Там же (Ibid), С. 32.

186 Крупнов Е.И. Древняя история Северного Кавказа. М., 1960.



weapons and jewels were unearthed in Kura-Araxes settlements — in particular, axes, flat adzes, knife blades, awls and spearheads.

Bone and clay spindle whorls, traces of textiles on pottery, and a textile fragment found in one of the Kura-Araxes settlements testify that the Kura-Araxes culture knew textile manufacture.

Kura-Araxes pottery is highly original, and so is its principal identifier.

Kura-Araxes pottery has a black glossy surface and pink lining inside. Some vessels, of a red-ochre colour, are identical to the later Maikop pottery. Pottery was made by hand of well stirred clay with various additives. Some vessels might have been made on a primitive potter's wheel. Pottery is carefully finished and well fired in special furnaces[187].

Shapes are widely diversified — flat-bottomed vessels with a broad neck and rotund body with steep walls; large egg-shaped vessels with a disproportionally narrow bottom; round vessels with a cylindrical neck; jugs, pots, bowls, basins and goblets[188]. The pottery was never painted. Its decorative patterns — double spirals, concentric circles, rhombi and rectangles — were marked by simple and austere line[189].

The manufacture of labour implements and arms was no less developed in the following era of the

187 История народов Северного Кавказа с древнейших времен до конца XVIII века. М., 1988. С. 51.

188 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 163.

189 Мунчаев Р.М. Кавказ на заре бронзового века. М., 1975. С. 161.

Maikop archaeological culture, which spread in the North Caucasus in the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C.[190].

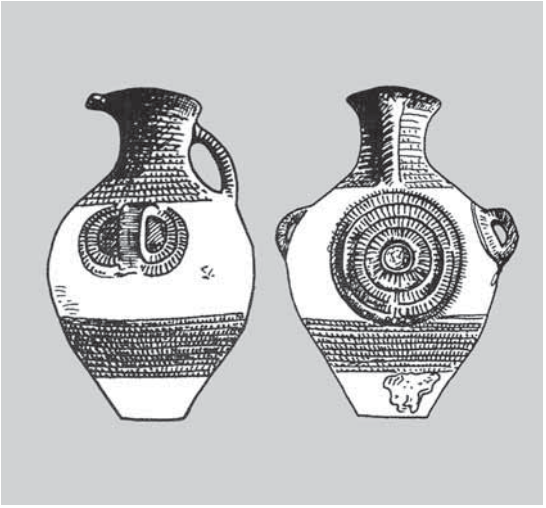
Tribes of the Maikop culture reached a great degree of perfection in metalwork, as shown by local metal articles unearthed in tombs — bronze weapons, tools and vessels[191]. Maikop warriors were armed no worse than those of the state period of Egypt and Sumer with bronze-headed spears, bronze axes and daggers[192].

For longer than a thousand years, approximately to the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C., the Caucasus remained the only source from where metal was exported to the tribes of the pit and catacomb cultures in the adjacent parts of Eastern Europe[193].

Archaeological data also testify to the high developmental level of pottery. Maikop craftsmen knew the potter's wheel, and produced vessels of widely diversified shapes and functions — pots, jugs, bowls, and large spherical and egg-shaped vessels.

Archaeological data of the North Caucasian, or Terek-Kuban archaeological culture, of the 2nd millennium B.C., which replaced the Maikop in the Kuban-Sulak interfluve, also testify to sophisticated crafts.

Marking North Caucasian pottery is the diversity of shapes and careful



▲ An Alanian jug representing the solar disk.

▲ Koban pottery.

◀ Koban artefacts. 10th-7th centuries B.C.

◀ Watermill wheel in the vicinity of Meshi village.

190 These tribes are ethnically identified with the proto-Nakh.

191 Chechens retained sophisticated culture of metal weapon manufacture up to the 19th century.

192 Кореневский С.Н. Древнейшие земледельцы и скотоводы Предкавказья. М., 2004. С. 85.

193 История народов Северного Кавказа. М., 1988. С. 48 ..

finishing. The vessels had a reddish-brown or black surface, and were decorated with impressed rope, triangular stamps or herringbone pattern.

North Caucasian tombs also contain numerous bronze articles testifying to well-developed metal production and finishing.

Belonging to the most typical are adze-like axes, drilled bronze axes, two-edged leaf-shaped knives, bronze pins of diverse shapes, pendants, temple rings, bracelets and beads.

The progress of crafts reached its peak with the highly developed Koban archaeological culture, based in the Kuban-Sulak interfluve and genetically linked with the North Caucasian and Maikop cultures.

The Koban tribes elaborated copper ore mining and procession technologies sophisticated for their time, and made quality bronze[194]. They passed to handicraft metal industry. In particular, remnants of three metalworking shops, with a furnace in one of them, were unearthed in the Koban Serzhen Yurt settlement in East Chechnya[195]. Fragments of copper smelting crucibles, moulds, bronze bars, and numerous metal articles were found in the shops. Clay moulds for bronze jewellery were unearthed in the Bamut settlement in West Chechnya.

Koban bronze was an alloy of copper and tin, which was brought to the

194 История народов Северного Кавказа с древнейших времен до XVIII века. М., 1988. С. 62.

195 Козенкова В.И. Поселок-убежище кобанской культуры у аула Сержень-юрт. М., 1982. С. 42.

North Caucasus from Transcaucasia[196]. Labour implements, weapons, dishes, horse harness, liturgical articles and jewellery were made of it.

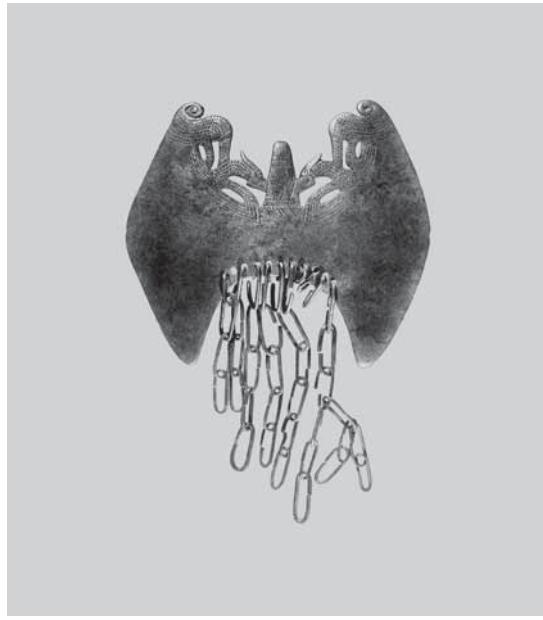
The Koban culture began to process iron in the 10th century B.C., and had shifted to it entirely by the 7th century B.C.

Koban tribes were excellent armourers. Their monuments abound in bronze and iron axes, daggers, spear- and arrowheads, dagger blades, and bimetal daggers with an iron blade and a bronze handle[197].

Ornate Koban bronze axes were marked by the greatest grace of form. Scythian-type swords and daggers, akinakes swords among them, occur in the tombs of the later stage of the Koban culture.

Numerous bronze jewels and garment decorations were also unearthed in Koban tombs — lavishly ornamented belts of sheet bronze, buckles of widely varied shapes, pins, clasps, bracelets, finger-rings and earrings.

Pottery was developed no less. Finds made in Koban settlements allow assume that it was also on the level of handicraft industry. Thus, remnants of potter's workshops with furnaces were unearthed in the Serzhen Yurt settlement of the Koban culture in East Chechnya. Koban pottery was marked by quality manufacture and firing. It is represented by pots, bowls, mugs, pans and vessels of all shapes and sizes. The articles are mostly black, many with glossy surface.



▲ Gold jewellery from the Maikop burial mound. 3rd millennium B.C.

▲ Bronze pendant. Koban archaeological culture.

◀ Silver vessels from the Maikop burial mound. 3rd millennium B.C..

◀ Ox figurine from the Maikop burial mound. 3rd millennium B.C.

196 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. С. 171.

197 Марковин В.И., Мунчаев Р.М. Северный Кавказ. М., 2003. С. 175.

Koban vessels are lavishly decorated — most often, with geometric patterns.

Archaeological materials of the Alanian culture, which replaced the Koban in the Chechen-populated area in the first centuries A.D., reveal a high developmental level of craftsmanship, especially pottery.

Almost all pottery unearthed in settlements and tombs was turned on the potter's wheel, and varies in shape and colour. There are pots with a turned-down upper edge, long-necked jugs, bowls, mugs, and pithos-like vessels for the storage of liquids and bulk stock. Glossy, of black or grey colour, this pottery is patterned in incisions, relief bands and various stuck-on decorations. Only few exceptions have no prototypes in Koban pottery[198].

Metalware is represented by tabulated bracelets with dot patterns, polished mirrors, earrings, beads and horse harness. A sabre, lavishly ornamented in gilded silver and gems, and probably owned by a local prince, was found in one of the catacombs in the vicinity of Zmeiskaya.

Rapid progress of handicrafts also marked the Vainakh era, the 15th–18th centuries. Archaeological finds testify to the development of arms manufacture, weaving and pottery. Sampling weaponry in contemporaneous tombs are sabres, daggers, knives, arrowheads, mailcoats and metal shields, and pottery — large vessels for the storage of liquids and bulk stock, jugs, bowls and saucers of diverse shapes.

▲ Belt and cartridge cases. Second half of the 19th century.

◀ Gurda sabre. First half of the 19th century.

◀ Atagi daggers. Second half of the 19th century.

198 Арсанукаев Р.Д. Вайнахи и аланы. Баку, 2002. С. 166.

The later Chechen craftsmen stayed true to ancestral traditions up to the mid 20th century.

Metalwork, especially arms manufacture, was extremely well developed. Chechen cold steel was highly sought throughout the North Caucasus and far outside it. Armourer dynasties passed the secrets of smelting and tempering steel from generation to generation. Gurda, Kaldam and Ters-Maimal sabres — excellently tempered, with blades lasting centuries were known as priceless[199].

Chechen daggers were also superb. Armourers later achieved the degree of perfection with rifles and pistols.

Pottery was none inferior to its millennia-long antecedents. Chechen craftsmen also excelled in making wooden vessels and copperware — basins, cauldrons, mugs and narrow-necked jugs.

Turned wooden tableware was popular in the 19th century. Many makes of lathes were used —hand-geared, treadle and hydraulic.

Carpentry and wood-carving were also extremely well developed. As he was travelling in the Chechen highlands in the 1920s, Austrian researcher Bruno Plaetschke made a large collection of excellent furniture, cradles, wooden vessels and other household utensils.

Chechen barrels and tubs were sold all over the Caucasus, as well as reed and bast mats, and wickerwork — in particular, baskets.

Chechen textiles and felt carpets and cloaks were also good.

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199 Асхабов И. Чеченское оружие. М., 2002.

Chechen clothiers were known throughout the Caucasus. Military tunics and Circassian coats were made of Chechen cloth, and Chechen women embroiderers excelled in decorating Circassian coats with gold and silver thread.

Chechnya was also known for tanners and furriers, with fine garments, footwear, and sheepskin coats.

Chechen jewellers were renowned for silverware and silver-trimmed weaponry and horse harness.

▲ 19th century Chechen weapons.

◀ Belt and whip. Mid-19th century.

MUSEUMS

There were no museums in Chechnya before the 1917 Revolution. The first museum in Grozny opened as late as 1924. Another several museums — of fine arts, literature and cultural history — appeared within the following decades. The Argun State History, Architecture and Nature Museum Reserve was established on the basis of the Chechen-Ingush wildlife sanctuary. The Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov Museum and the Abuzar Aidamirov Memorial Literature Museum opened several years ago.

The National Museum

The National Museum of the Chechen Republic was established in 1924 as a regional museum of history and religion, with three departments — general and local history, and numismatics. It possessed 150 storage units on the opening day. In 1926, the museum made a major acquisition — a collection of Caucasian pistols, sabres and daggers. Paintings, pottery, china and weapons were donated from the State Museum Fund, and from Moscow and Leningrad collections and depositories. Franz Roubaud's paintings *The Seizure of Gunib and the Capture of Imam Shamil and The Death of General Sleptsov in the Gekha Forest* were brought from Tbilisi alongside a collection of portraits of Russian generals who had taken part in the Caucasian War, and a number of engravings and lithographs. The Tretyakov Gallery donated Chechen artist Pyotr Zakharov's self-portrait a landmark acquisition from the point of Chechen history and art.

The Chechen Regional Museum was renamed Chechen-Ingush Local History Museum after the Chechen and Ingush autonomous areas were merged in 1936. It possessed 3,356 storage units in 1946, and 80,000 twenty years after. Original works accounted for more than a half of those exhibits.

The Pyotr Zakharov Fine Arts Museum was established in 1961 with paintings and archaeological finds made in Chechnya-Ingushetia. Its exhibits were removed from the Local History Museum depository.

The United Chechen State Museum, as was its new name after Ingushetia and Chechnya separated, had approximately 230,000 storage units by the start of the 1990s. The central depository accounted for 86,000 of these, and the Pyotr Zakharov Fine Arts Museum 4,000.

Both museums had moved by that time into common premises — an architectural and historical monument from the turn of the 20th century. The museums were steadily replenished with antiquarian dishes, household utensils, garments, weapons and jewels purchased from the local population. The Fine Arts Museum acquired local artists' and craftsmen's works. The museum research library regularly received all science books and journals published in Grozny, Moscow and other Russian cities.

The United Chechen Museum became the republic's cultural and academic heart. It arranged and hosted research conferences, and published a bulletin comprising materials on historical, cultural, ethnological and linguistic studies.

The museum had branches — the Aslanbek Sheripov Memorial History Museum in Shatoi, the Arbi Mamakayev Memorial Literature Museum in the village of Lower Naur, the Leo Tolstoy Literature and Ethnography Museum in the village of Starogladovskaya, the Makhety Local History Museum, and the Mikhail Lermontov Literature Museum.

Chechen museums were the largest in the North Caucasus at the end of the 20th century. They possessed unique articles, valuable paintings and precious rarities. Of the greatest value, from the historical, cultural and ethnological point,

▲ Museum exposition.

▲ Pyotr Zakharov the Chechen. *Self-portrait*. Museum depository.

were the following exhibits: Roubaud's paintings *The Seizure of Gunib and the Capture of Imam Shamil and The Death of General Sleptsov in the Gekha Forest*, Tropinin's *The Portrait of a Boy with a Book,* Vereshchagin's *Landscape* and *The Caucasus*, Aivazovsky's *A Moonlit Landscape* and *Alkhan Yurt*, Repin's F*amine Victims*, Pyotr Zakharov's *The Portrait of Lev Volkov*, *The Portrait of Maximilian the Duke of Lichtenberg, The Portrait of an Unknown Gentleman with a Cane and a Hat, The Portrait of Alexandra Postnikova, Male Portrait, Young Man's Portrait, and The Portrait of an Unknown Lady on Her Deathbed*. Of no smaller value was the ethnographic collection, which included 68 istang carpets, rare samples of 17th-19th century cold steel and firearms, Imam Shamil's signet and a sabre he gave his naib Uma Duyev; possessions of Aslanbek Sheripov, an outstanding political and military leader of Chechnya and the North Caucasus; and ample archaeological finds. There was a memorable exhibit: an inimitable three-tier *shoon* wooden vessel for the *zhizhag-galnash* Chechen dish, out of which prominent Soviet statesman Sergo Orjonikidze ate it during his visit to Chechnya. Of no smaller value were mountaineers' sabres decorated in silver and gold; collections of men's and women's folk costumes — plastrons, cartridge pockets and ornate belts — and of horse harness of precious metals; and a European, Russian and Oriental applied art collection of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Museum rarities included gold and platinum Orders of Lenin; 19th and early 20th century daggers decorated with precious metals — abrek Zelimkhan's and Hajji Murat's daggers among them; 18th–19th century flint pistols; awards of Shamil's Imamate; 18th–19th century

▲ Bronze temple rings. Museum depository.

▲ Vainakh sabre and shield. Museum depository.

◀ Mediaeval children's clothes. Museum depository.

◀ Bronze temple rings. Museum depository.

flint guns inlaid with precious metals and mother-of-pearl; cutlery that belonged to Imam Shamil's family during their exile to Kaluga; and, last but not least, a fabulously rich 17th–19th century numismatic collection.

The Chechen wars of 1994–1996 and 1999–2001 destroyed or scattered many exhibits of Chechen museums.

The Local History Museum and the Pyotr Zakharov Fine Arts Museum were united into the National Museum of the Chechen Republic in 1996. It possesses more than 30,000 storage units at present, and is regularly replenished as valuables lost during the war are regained.

The museum passed about a hundred first-rate paintings to the Igor Grabar All-Russia Art Research and Restoration Centre in 1995. Another four canvases were passed there for restoration in 1999–2002 — an unknown 18th century artist's portraits of Count and Countess Zubov, Constantine Makovsky's *Portrait of Baron Rokasovsky* (19th century) and Roubaud's *The Seizure of Gunib and the Capture of Imam Shamil*. A majority of paintings have been restored for now, and will return to the museum soon.

The construction of a new republican museum complex has been planned for 2008–2011 to facilitate acquisition, exposition, research and popularisation of Chechen history and culture.

The National Museum has the following branches:

Arbi Mamakayev Memorial Literature Museum in Nadterechnoye;

Leo Tolstoy Literature and Ethnography Museum in Starogladovskaya;

Makhety Local History Museum;

Mikhail Lermontov Literature Museum in Poraboch;

Abuzar Aidamirov Memorial Literature Museum in Meskety.

The Arbi Mamakayev Memorial Literature Museum

The museum of classic Chechen writer Arbi Mamakayev was established in the village of Nadterechnoye in 1989.

It comprises the late 19th century house, where Mamakayev was born and spent his childhood, a yard with household outbuildings, and a memorial orchard whose trees were planted by prominent Chechen writers, scholars and community activists. The writer's bust stands in front of the house on a marble pedestal, with a replica of a combat tower in the background.

The museum possesses more that 2,000 exhibits — the writer's private belongings, books, manuscripts and materials on Chechen history.

The rooms and Mamakayev's study have regained the look they had in his lifetime. The writer's son Eduard Mamakayev, President of the Chechen Writers' Union, is the museum founding director.

▲ The Arbi Mamakayev Memorial Literature Museum.

▲ A replica of a combat tower in the museum yard.

◀ 14th-16th century household utensils. Museum depository.

The Leo Tolstoy Museum

The Leo Tolstoy Literature and Ethnography Museum was established in the Cossack village of Starogladovskaya in 1980 on the premises of the village school — the first school in Russia to be named after Tolstoy in 1914.

The museum consists of showrooms and an ethnographic yard.

Its exposition divides in five parts, each in a room of its own. The first is dedicated to Tolstoy's first steps in literature, and his life in Starogladovskaya, where he wrote the novella *The Cossacks,* his literary debut. The second part exhibits materials illustrating its prototypes and Cossack rural life of the writer's time.

The third concerns Tolstoy's military service in the Caucasus, and shows that, though he took part in the hostilities, he denounced war as cruel and pointless violence.

The fourth part is dedicated to the novella *Hajji Murat,* one of Tolstoy's best works, and to the last years of his life.

The exhibition "Leo Tolstoy and Chechnya" is in the corridor. The ethnographic exposition of the archetypal yard of a mid-19th century Cossack and mountaineer household consists of stylised buildings, tools and household utensils.

The museum is not only a memorial house and a period piece but also a major centre of Chechen research and culture.

The Makhety Local History Museum

The Local History Museum was established in Makhety, Vedeno District, on an initiative of village school teachers in 1962. It exhibits archaeological finds made in the vicinity of the village — ancient weaponry, tools and coins, alongside herbariums and mineral samples collected by pupils. The museum was affiliated to the National Museum of the Chechen Republic in 1989.

The Mikhail Lermontov Literature Museum

The Mikhail Lermontov Literature Museum was established in Poraboch village, Shelkovsky District, in a two-storey house that previously belonged to landlord Akim Khastatov, a retired Major-General and the poet's distant maternal cousin. Lermontov visited the Khastatov estate on many occasions as a child and later, during his exile to the Caucasus. It was here that he first heard stories of Cossack and Chechen life, customs and traditions — in particular, the story of Bela, a Kumyk girl Khastatov abducted when a young officer. Their romance was at the core of *Bela*, a brilliant novella he wrote later. A memorial plaque was installed on the house wall in 1964 to commemorate the classic poet's sojourns of 1818, 1837 and 1840.

The 175th anniversary of Lermontov's birth was marked on October 15, 1989, by establishing an annual literature and folklore festival. The

museum was established by the Culture Ministry of Chechnya on October 8, 2004, and officially opened on June 3, 2006.

The Argun History, Architecture and Nature Museum Reserve

History, Architecture and Nature Museum Reserve was established in 1988 to protect unique historical and architectural monuments, and endangered animal and plant species.

The reserve occupies 240,000 hectares in the highest and most inaccessible part of Chechnya. It comprises the Itum Kala and Sharoi districts entirely, and spreads to parts of the Vedeno, Shatoi and Achkhoi Martan districts.

The reserve possesses numerous unique monuments — caves, camps, sepulchres, settlements, earth tombs, under- and above-ground family vaults, combat and dwelling towers, and castle complexes.

The chronology of Argun immovable historical and cultural monuments stretches from the 3rd millennium B.C. through the 19th century A.D.

A majority of its several thousand historical, cultural, archaeological, architectural and natural monuments have the federal status.

Landscapes are of breathtaking beauty with snowy mountain peaks, forest-grown slopes below them, deep valleys, beech, oak and birch groves, and crystal-clear streams, brooks and mineral springs.

Kezenoi-Am, situated 1,869 metres above sea level, and Galanchozh are the largest of numerous local mountain lakes.

Wildlife is extremely diverse. The Caucasian tur (Capra caucasica) has its habitat higher in the mountains than any other animal to be found in the reserve. Chamois are met occasionally on steep rocky slopes grown with sparse wood. Roe deer roam forest edges and glades. There are large predators — bears, wolves, leopards and lynx. Wild boars live in mountain gorges and venture into villages in search of food in winter. Gullies are the abode of wild forest cats the nighttime hunters. There are foxes, hares, martens, badgers and weasels.

The reserve abounds in birds. Eagles, falcons, hawks and vultures are high in the mountains, while forests on the slopes are the home of woodpeckers, tomtits, bullfinches, blackbirds, jays and owls.

The Argun Museum Reserve acquired the status of federal heritage by Decree No. 176 of the President of the Russian Federation, of February 20, 1995.

In 2007, I joined a team of Argun Reserve researchers to monitor the state of architectural monuments in the Sharoi District with UNESCO financial support.

▲ Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov. Hero of Russia

▲ Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov with children.

The Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov Museum

"Chechnya needs a viable political system that would find its bearings not only in the names of Chechen political leaders but also in noble principles, and that would implement practical programmes to the good of the Chechen people. To Chechens, democracy is the way of moral existence and the cornerstone of self-awareness and world outlook. If Chechnya obtains such a system, its political leaders will be unable to fling their nation again on the altar of their egotistic ambitions, as was the case in the late 20th century."

Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov

The State Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov Museum was established on republican government resolution of August 1, 2004.

The museum is of tremendous political and social significance in commemorating the martyred leader. Its functions include research, education, and the preservation of archive documents and memorial objects.

Ever since its inception, the museum has been studying and popularising Kadyrov the man and politician as it forms and preserves its exposition and depository. The museum analyses the work and development of all Chechen museums, and implements related government programmes.

It has elaborated a general concept and long-term plans of museum activities. The personnel coordinate their work with patriotic local history societies of Chechnya, and the National Museum.

Museum researchers make communications about Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov's life and political achievements at many academic conferences, seminars and other meetings. The museum is a prolific publisher of research and popular science materials on his political heritage.

The founders want to make the Ahmat Hajji Kadyrov Museum a humanitarian ideological centre, and a sanctuary to which people will come for reconciliation, a sense of unity, spiritual purification, and to share his humanist ideals as Ahmat Hajji is a worthy example for future generations to follow.

▲ Ramzan Kadyrov, President of the Chechen Republic.

MEDIAEVAL CHECHEN ARCHITECTURE

THE ORIGINS OF CHECHEN ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is a specific field of artefactual culture: its development does not know revolutionary breakthroughs, with token exceptions. It progresses at a rather slow pace. It takes centuries and, occasionally, millennia for a style or construction technique to take final shape. Man has not invented anything new since palaces were built of stone and fired brick several thousand years ago

All fortifications, templar buildings and tombs ascend to the primitive dwelling. At a certain stage, each embarks on its own road of development, almost to reach mutual independence. Fortifications and templar buildings are more open to external influences than dwellings, which always have their ethnic specifics and are usually more conservative. The character of the dwelling is determined by the landscape, the mode of life, the economy and the ethnic mentality.

Almost all architectural forms in present-day use have their antecedents in the dwellings of several dozen thousand years ago. Thus, the gable roof repeats the shape of the primitive branch shelter, and the wattle and daub house was known even in the New Stone Age.

The harsh climatic change in the Great Ice Age, and the transition from foraging to production made primitive man build permanent dwellings. They appeared the earliest in locations with no caves. Wherever habitable caves are available, they have been in use until quite recently. Ever since the Old Stone Age, man not merely settled in a cave or under a rock projection but adapted it for habitation. The floor was paved in stone, the entrance broadened or narrowed, and approaches to the dwelling fenced. The cave construction technique has not changed considerably for dozens of millennia. This knowhow reached the greatest perfection in the Caucasus and the Crimea due to their relief and climate.

Since times immemorial, caves were used as sanctuaries, especially

connected with the underworld cults. Priests and wizards hearkened to the voice of earth as they performed cave rites. The magic power of the earth's entrails was believed to penetrate and invigorate them. Indicatively, caves and grottos were ordinary seats of the oracles. As he struggled into the earth's depths, man was overawed — hence the cults of caves and subterranean demons. Thus, the rock and cave structures of Urartu had their protector deity, Airiani[200].

Caves also served as burial grounds — antecedents of the later catacombs and vaults. This burial culture developed for several thousand years in the oldest areas of Nakh tribal settlement in Chechnya and throughout the Caucasus. For instance, cave burial grounds have been found in many places of the Chechen highlands — in particular, in the vicinity of the Guchan-Kale, Tuskharoi and Bamut villages, while vaults built into rock niches are frequently met in the principal necropolises.

Man of the plains had to build dwellings. Branch shelters and dugouts were the earliest of them. We might argue today which was the — the interment of the dead or digging dwellings for warmth and safety. The latter assumption appears more probable because primitive men left their dead to be devoured by predators. Unlike Nakh women of the pagan times, men were interred not immediately after they died but after an appointed period of time elapsed because the male was associated with heaven, and the female with earth — so soil was considered hostile to man and enfeebling him. Perhaps, that was why Nakh combat towers rose so high, striving heavenward.

▲ Sundial in Khimoi village. Reconstruction. S. Abayev's drawing.

200 Пиотровский Б.Б. Ванское царство (Урарту). М., 1959. С. 228.

Stone vaults are undersize replicas of dwellings. Dolmens, which preceded them in the Caucasus and were of almost the same shape, were made of cyclopean stone slabs at the time when man began to build dwellings of huge stones.

These parallels between the abodes of the living and the dead are observed in many nations and millennia. Certain nations, as Egyptians and Etruscans, regarded earthly life as only a short prelude to the eternal afterlife, and so were much more serious about the tomb than the home. That is why their tombs have come down to our day while we can assume where they lived only from models and drawings of dwellings found in those tombs. Similar home-tomb parallels are observed in Nakh culture. Instead of raising the veil over their mysteries, they all too often bring researchers into consternation.

Thus, there is interlink between combat towers and vaults with a step pyramid roof, though we do not know which appeared the earlier. We certainly have sufficient grounds to assume that towers preceded vaults — but then, no similar towers are extant in North Ossetia, which abounds in pyramidal vaults.

Certain tribes of the areas that never knew cold weather have stayed at an extremely primitive stage for a number of reasons, and procure food mainly by foraging. Those tribes have not learned to build stationary dwellings to this day, and make do with tents protecting them from the wind, as man did 40-50 thousand years ago.

Construction progress of the primitive time was linked directly to the improvement of implements — first stone and later flint. Reciprocally, the need for dwellings demanded tools to process construction materials — mainly timber. Tree trunks and large hewn stones could not be used for construction before the axe was invented. That was why no home was a lasting structure.

The world was sparsely populated at that time, with several hundred humans for several hundred square kilometres, which almost entirely ruled out military clashes between tribal communities. That was why there was no need for fortified stone buildings.

That need appeared far later, in the Eneolithic and Bronze ages, and especially at the start of the Iron Age. Man did not know the sophisticated art of fortification, and compensated for his ignorance of it with the size of the buildings and their structural components. Cyclopean structures appeared with the advent of the Bronze Age or, possibly, even earlier. In fact, they were the first fortified dwellings, forbidding in their hugeness. Such structures were rather widespread in Chechnya and elsewhere in the Caucasus. However, many were dismantled in the first centuries A.D. and in the Middle Ages for combat and dwelling towers. For instance, giant stones, weighing several tonnes each, lay in the foundation of many combat and dwelling towers in the Chechen mountains[201].

Construction techniques and the choice of construction materials largely depended on implements. That was why dwellings were built for a long time of locally improvised materials — usually tree branches and thin trunks to be hewn with a crude stone axe, and large animals'

201 E.g., the Khaskala combat tower, with stone blocks weighing more than a tonne each in its foundation.

bones. Builders knew how to daub these structures with clay even in times immemorial. Certain North American tribes used the technique as late as the 19th century.

Even in the primitive times, man used a tree as the central pillar to be built into a round tent. Almost all Caucasian peoples knew such dwellings, as proved by relic architectural forms and traces left in the vocabulary of certain Caucasian languages. Thus, the central pillar is named "root pillar" in the Dagestani languages. The pillar made its appearance in Nakh dwelling towers as the horizontal layout gave way to the vertical, and so is secondary.

The oldest dwellings, of stone or clay, were of an oval or rotund shape because primitive man did not know the right angle. The tradition of round homes preserved in many parts of the world for millennia.

Rotund dwellings have left their traces in all languages and construction cultures except the Nakh. Round vaults and mausoleums occur only in the western parts of Chechnya. They bear evident traces of Muslim nomads' influence.

Rotund dwellings have not appeared in the Nakh habitat practically since the Bronze Age. Neither did they appear later, when tower construction reached its peak. Round towers were widespread in Transcaucasia and Dagestan. For some reason, they had no effect at all on Nakh tower architecture despite strong mutual influences of the architectural forms used in the various parts of the Caucasus. That is hard to explain because round towers have better fortification characteristics — it is hard to ram them.

Even after they reached perfection in combat tower construction, Vainakh builders stayed true to rectangular and square towers. Perhaps, such conservatism was rooted in an ancient cult. The rectangle symbolised stability and the four elements — earth, air, fire and water. Possibly, that was why the walls or at least corners of Chechen towers were precisely oriented on the four cardinal points.

The rectangular dwelling resulted in the development of land-tilling civilisation with season worship accompanying it, and adoration of the four cardinal points connected with the solar cult. Indicatively, the Chechen for "corner", *sa*, is consonant with *sa* as "soul" or "light". The link between the two categories has a sacral message.

Nomads did not use rectangular dwellings, even if they were tents. On the contrary, all Chechen buildings were rectangular, be it dwellings, templar structures, towers or tombs. This might be one of the arguments bearing out that Chechens inherited to the Maikop culture — an ancient archaeological culture based in the North Caucasus, whose buildings were rectangular with rare exceptions — because architectural traditions survive through millennia as they gradually shed their original sacral meaning.

Alanian dwellings and fortifications were also rectangular[202].

The primitive and ancient times, when man entirely depended on Nature and its elements for his life, endowed everything in that life, especially its material aspects, with meaning and function. Many ancient

202 Абрамова М.П. К вопросу об аланской культуре Северного Кавказа// Советская археология, 1978, № 1. С. 75.

buildings of no practical function from our contemporaries' viewpoint amaze us to this day with sophisticated construction techniques and the huge amount of work done.

Of the greatest interest in this respect are megaliths — menhirs, dolmens and cromlechs. They were all connected with ancient religions — menhirs and dolmens with ancestor worship, and cromlechs with the solar cult. Caucasian dolmens repeat in many respects the shapes and construction techniques of the ancient dwelling not only of the Northwest Caucasus but also the Northeast, hundreds of kilometres away from those places. Several millennia later, mediaeval vaults grew to resemble ancient dolmens and, possibly, gable-roof dwellings. Likewise, giant menhirs transformed into the *sieling* pillar sanctuaries and later *churt* gravestones. According to popular belief that survived millennia, a dead man's soul abides not where he is buried but near his churt memorial.

Menhirs are amorphous and have a greater bearing on Nature than culture. Unlike them, cromlechs are primitive temples. The dolmen is the late ancestors' home, and the menhir the abode of spirits, while the cromlech is a phenomenon from the intellectual and spiritual realm.

As civilisation developed, it was making purely technical progress, and the human race was gradually losing its deep-reaching contacts with Nature. The innermost knowledge of Nature and Man receded into oblivion. Perhaps, that is why we see amazing ancient structures, e.g., Stonehenge, as mere symmetrical megalithic clusters, while in times immemorial, they were keys to the mysteries of celestial bodies and their movement.

A sundial in the Chechen village of Khimoi — a vast stone circle with a high stone pillar in the centre — is the mediaeval echo of Stonehenge. The construction of both was probably due to a ban on the observation of the solar disk. Many sun worshipper nations knew that ban at a certain developmental stage of their religion. That was why they turned to shadow, which they regarded as a hypostasis of the sun.

Contemporary man is hard put interpreting the meaning and function of ancient builders' endeavours. What moved ancient man to make buildings whose breathtaking beauty we admire to this day? Was it magic or the drive for artistic self-expression? That is an eternal question for discussions.

The scholarly opinion that permanent struggle for survival blinded primitive man to beauty as he was thoroughly practical in everything he did, was predominant until quite recently. However, archaeological and scientific discoveries of the closing decades of the 20th century tell us that man always had aesthetic feelings and thirsted to express them.

What was the vehicle of artistic personalities of 15,000 years ago as they made rock paintings in French and Spanish caves? This will most probably stay an eternal enigma. Be that as it may, their sophisticated painting technique is amazing in Palaeolithic men who toiled for their daily bread with crude stone implements. Artists of the Old Stone Age not merely displayed rare power of expression and observation in portraying animal movement and postures but also subtly used the cave wall relief as an artistic device.

The perfection of primitive art made later generations doubt its authenticity — especially where the Old Stone Age was concerned. The first cave paintings discovered in France and Spain in the 19th century were considered modern fakes.

This sceptical attitude to the masterpieces of ancient civilisations has come down to this day. Certain contemporary scholars ascribe Egyptian pyramids, the statuary of Easter Island and many other wonders of the ancient world to extraterrestrials.

However, as studies of archaeological cultures in the Caucasus and elsewhere show, even the most amazing cultural phenomena have local roots and bear traces of long evolution, as can be discerned from extant artefacts and structures. Even spectacular breakthroughs are explained by the appearance of better developed migrant tribes or borrowing the more sophisticated knowhow from neighbours.

Architecture rules out such breakthroughs. Even when certain countries started borrowing the techniques of Church architecture from others with the advent of Christianity, such borrowings were not used in dwelling construction for many centuries.

Architects might borrow particular forms and devices but the dominant architectural forms are born locally, and correspond to general material cultural development.

The Dating of Chechen Towers

Historical succession of architectural traditions is among the essential problems of history of architecture. The following factors make it solvable:

The population of the area under study is autochthonic.

Architectural monuments from diverse eras have come down to our day to reflect the gradual development of particular architectural forms.

l architectural culture possesses traditions characteristic of highly developed ancient civilisations thoroughly studied by contemporary researchers.

The autochthonism of the Nakh (Chechen) population of the North Caucasus has been the subject of academic debates for a long time.

Some scholars consider Chechens aborigines who have lived for 5,000 years or even longer in their present-day territory. One of the versions of this theory revolves round the assumption that Nakh tribes had been settled in the area from the Argun right bank in the east to the mouth of the Don in the west till the first centuries A.D. This hypothesis is borne out by place names, historical sources —e.g., Anania Shirakatsi's *Geography Guide* (7th Century)[203], and archaeological

203 Ширакаци А. Армянская география VII века до р. х. СПб., 1877.

In the upper reaches of the Argun.

finds because the original area of Nakh settlement knew gradual evolution not sudden succession of archaeological cultures[204].

Another hypothesis bases on the close genetic link of the Hurrite-Urartian and Nakh languages, and says that the Chechen population migrated from West Asia and Asia Minor. Its supporters also refer to the legends of certain Chechen teip clans about their patriarchs coming from West Asian countries.

Another well-grounded hypothesis assumes the migration of Nakh tribes from Europe to West Asia via the North Caucasus in the 5th–4th millennia B.C., and is borne out by archaeological, toponymic and anthropologic data.

We cannot rule out also that all those hypotheses are correct — but only in their total. The vast original territory where separate Nakh ethnic massifs were settled stretched from the West Asian plateaus in the south to the Volga steppe in the north, and included the Crimean Peninsula in the west. Indicatively, Chechen historical traditions name the Idal (Volga) as the northern boundary of Nakh settlement.

More than that, historical sources and Chechen traditions refer to the migration of a large group of Urartian tribes after the fall of Urartu to the North Caucasus, where Nakh tribes, genetically related to them, lived.

Nakh-speaking tribes inhabited a part of Europe and the Mediterranean basin as late as the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. Nakh was the pre-Greek linguistic substratum in Crete and Cyprus, and the pre-Italic in Sicily and Sardinia. The hypothesis of the North Caucasian (Nakh) origin of Etruscans, whose great civilisation had an impact on Roman and so entire European culture, has recently become predominant in historical science.

Indicatively, tower construction was developed, to varying extents, in almost all those regions.

Dwelling towers were widespread in the Mediterranean and West Asia since times immemorial.

They were the most popular kind of dwelling in Sardinia. The earliest towers date to the 2nd millennium B.C., and the latest to the 3rd century A.D.

The same can be said about the Greek mountains, where rotund or square-shaped towers were built even as late as the Middle Ages. Towering tombs extant in certain parts of West Asia show that similar dwellings were built there in the olden times.

Hurrites and Urartians, closely related to the Nakh ethnically and linguistically, lived in towers even in the 2nd and 1st millennia B.C. Ancient traditions and archaeological finds testify to constant migrations of Nakh-speaking Hurrite tribes from south to north and vice versa — at least from the 5th to the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.

Hurrites lived in large communities of relatives known as *dimtu,* tower. They possibly owed the name to every such community living in a separate tower[205].

204 Козенкова В.И. Культурно-исторические процессы на Северном Кавказе в эпоху поздней бронзы и в раннем железном веке. М., 1996. С. 40.

205 Дьяконов И.М. Предыстория армянского народа. Ереван, 1968. С. 62.

Urartians, related to Hurrites, also lived in similar towers. Urartian cities had high-rise houses, where large families lived, most probably. Large family settlements reminiscent of Hurrite dimtus were widespread in rural localities. Urartians excelled in fortification — in particular, fortress construction.

According to authors of the Antiquity, tower construction was developed also in the southeast of the Euxine country, i.e., ancient Colchis, whose population was also ethnically and linguistically related to proto-Nakhs. The Colcho-Koban archaeological culture, which they shared, also revealed genetic links in its many aspects.

Xenophon left an account of the wooden towers of Mossynoecians:

> *"Their king, who sat in his wooden tower or mossyn, built on the citadel, <...> refused to come forth, as did also those in the fortress first taken, and so were burnt to a cinder where they were, their mossyns, themselves, and all <...>*
>
> *"The following description will apply to the majority of them [strongholds]: the cities were on an average ten miles apart, some more, some less; but so elevated in the country and intersected by such deep clefts that if they chose to shout across to one another, their cries would be heard from one city to another."* [206]
>
> (Anabasis, Book V, iv. Translation by H.G. Dakyns)

Early mediaeval Chechen calendar cults reveal a peculiar parallel to the events described by Xenophon. According to Said-Magomed Khasiev's information, the ritual of "sending an envoy to heaven" was connected with the 33 year land-tilling calendar cycle. Bearing the Chechen name of TIurnene Vakhiita, "missioning into space", it was scheduled for the start of the year (nab in Chechen).

A tower of oak trunks had been erected by that day, when a naIa, a man who had his 32nd birthday on the day, settled there. The tower was to be tall enough for mortals not to be blinded by the sight of angels descending on its top in a cloud.

The man spent a year merrymaking in the tower to be "missioned into space" on his 33rd birthday to ask the Lord to bless his people. The tower was put on fire. Its cinders were supposed to have magic power, and were used as amulets protecting from all evil[207]. The sources never say what fate awaited the naIa. Presumably, he was either set at large or stayed in the tower to perish with it — which was hardly probable.

Colchian tribes knew their timber towers as mossyns. The name of one of them, Mossynoeci, derives thence. Greek scholar and poet Apollonius of Rhodes wrote:

> *"Next they reached the sacred mount and the land where the Mossynoeci dwell amid high mountains in wooden huts, from which that people take their name <...> Their king sits in the*

206 Ксенофонт. Анабасис // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов/на/Д, 1990 . С. 85.

207 Хасиев С.-М. Календарный год у вайнахов // Новое в этнографических и антропологических исследованиях. М., 1974. С. 72.

loftiest hut and dispenses upright judgments to the multitude[208]."

(Apollonius Rhodius. Argonautica, II, 1015-1029. Translation by R.C. Seaton)

Vitruvius Pollio, known Roman architect of the 1st century B.C., left a detailed description of Colchian towers, with their square foundation, tapering walls and pyramidal roofs:

"*The woods of the Colchi, in Pontus, furnish such abundance of timber, that they build in the following manner. Two trees are laid level on the earth, right and left, at such distance from each other as will suit the length of the trees which are to cross and connect them. On the extreme ends of these trees are laid two other trees transversely: the space which the house will inclose is thus marked out. The four sides being thus set out, towers are raised, whose walls consist of trees laid horizontally but kept perpendicularly over each other, the alternate layers yoking the angles. The level interstices which the thickness of the trees alternately leave, is filled in with chips and mud. On a similar principle they form their roofs, except that gradually reducing the length of the trees which traverse from angle to angle, they assume a pyramidal form.*"[209]

(Architecture of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in ten books. Book 2. Translation by Joseph Gwilt)

208 Аполоний Родосский. Аргонавтика // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д, 1990. С. 114.

209 Витрувий. Об архитектуре // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов. Ростов н/Д, 1990. С. 196–197.

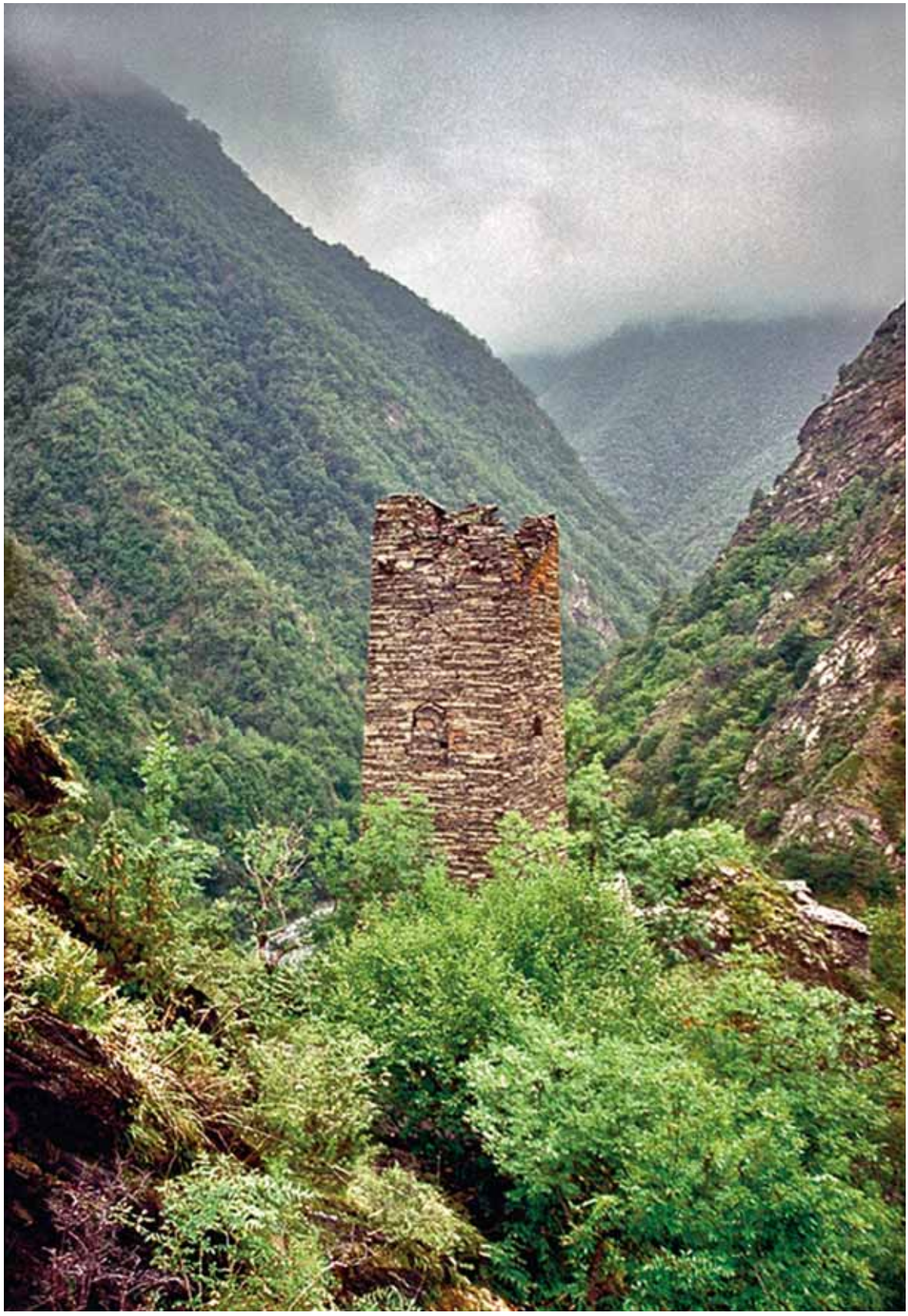
There is doubtless a close likeness between the pyramidal shape of the roofs of Colchian towers and Nakh towers and vaults, though construction materials differed.

Due to scarcity of stone, wooden towers were built in Ichkeria, the easternmost part of Chechnya, in the 14th-16th centuries. Most probably, construction techniques repeated the ancient Colchian.

Man appeared in the North Caucasus and the adjacent areas in the Old Stone Age. Traces of human activities of the Acheulean era (Lower Palaeolithic, 150,000–80,000 years ago) have come down to our day. The North Caucasus was sparsely populated at that time, and its people lived in natural caves, while archaeological finds of the Le Moustier era include traces of diverse man-made dwellings — huts and shelters of tree branches and thin logs, and large animals' bones and skins. Caves, grottos and rock projections began to be walled in with heaped stones. Archaeological finds made in the Chechen mountain villages of Khoi, Makazhoi and Kezenoi date to that era.

The North Caucasus was sparsely populated, just as entire Europe, in the New Stone Age, as borne out by the small density of archaeological materials, and the geography and character of settlements, whose majority were on lake and river banks and were unfortified. Wattle and daub structures, occurring in the Caucasus even now, appeared at that time.

Stone structures appeared in the Caucasian highlands in the New Stone Age, while caves were widely used as dwellings up to the Bronze Age and even as late as



The Maista Gorge.

the 1st century B.C., according to Strabo[210]. Neolithic settlements were unearthed near Kezenoi-Am Lake, on the Terek Mountain Range and outside Nalchik.

Traces of many occupational layers from the Old and New Stone and the Bronze Ages have come down to this day in the Caucasus. However scanty the number of studied settlements might be, they are a gauge of the architectural and material traditions of the oldest aboriginal population of the North Caucasus.

Cyclopean structures might be dated to the 2nd and 1st millennia B.C. Made of huge rough monoliths, they combined the functions of fortifications and dwellings. These cellular structures of a horizontal layout were built in a primitive technique without mortar.

1st–7th century buildings, unlike the older ones, can be divided in combat and dwelling. Only the lower stories of combat towers are extant, so it is difficult to make assumptions of the outlook of the entire structure.

Dwelling towers, of two or three stories, are of an oblong layout. Their walls are made of rough stone blocks with a small amount of mortar. Though their construction technique stays very primitive, constructive parts characteristic of mediaeval Chechen towers are present already — mainly storey posts, and door and window arches broadened on the inside.

11th–13th century towers have a vertical layout and are marked by more sophisticated construction techniques. They resemble classical Vainakh buildings in shape. Similar structures occur throughout the ancient area of Nakh settlement from the Argun to the Kuban.

Buildings of that time are marked by more or less fully developed architectural forms close to classical, pronounced difference between dwellings and fortifications (e.g., the combat tower in the Khaskali Gorge and the combat towers on Mount Bekhaila) and stone dressed to an extent.

The Khaskali combat tower is on a steep rock on the west slope of the mountain above a small tributary of the Dere-Akhk. It is approximately 20 metres high, and has five stories. Its foundation is 5x5 metres. The tower is precisely oriented on the cardinal points. It has a lancet entrance arch in the west wall. The roof is gone, as well as the tslurku stone spire on its top. There are corbel arches for every window. The numerous wall apertures can hardly be regarded as portholes. To all appearances, they were observation slits.

The machicolations of the Khaskali tower differ from those of a majority of Vanakh towers. Very primitive, they protect not broad embrasures but small circular windows convenient for observers not archers, let along gunmen. This allows assume that the tower is older than analogous Vainakh towers and dates to the 11th or 12th century, and that it was built as a beacon. Even if it had any functions of fortification, they were only auxiliary. The huge size of its foundation stones, each weighing several tonnes, testifies to its oldness.

The primitive roof is made of slates resting on timber beams with a small amount of clay-lime mortar in a technique

210 Страбон. География // Кавказ и Дон в произведениях античных авторов (Strabo. Geography. Ibid) . Ростов/на/Д, 1990. С.193.

frequently occurring in stone vaults dated tentatively by the 11th–14th centuries.

Stone setting and dressing, and the use of clay-lime mortar in vaults testify to considerable development of early mediaeval construction techniques.

Experts on Nakh architectural monuments probably underestimate their age drastically, proceeding mainly from their later use. The authors of the monograph Georgian Architecture from Its Inception to the Present Day noticed this trend:

> *"It cannot be disregarded that cyclopean fortresses are observable only at the end of their existence, so a static approach to them, without consideration of their long and complicated past, is futile. The scholarly approach to such monuments demands regarding them in the context of the various aspects of community life — the choice of site for a fortress or a settlement, <...> tombs, construction techniques, and archaeological data"*[211].

Almost all scholars date mediaeval Chechen-Ingush architectural monuments to the 15th-17th centuries despite common knowledge of the fact that Chechens started active return to the plains in the second half of the 16th century. The decline of large-scale tower construction in the Chechen mountains can be dated to that time, while it went on through the 19th century in the neighbouring areas. Even the names of master builders of certain towers are occasionally remembered in the western parts of Chechnya.

In the Argun Gorge, on the contrary, even greybeards did not know the names of tower proprietors, let alone builders, in the middle of the 19th century.

Chechen towers are greatly diversified in shape and details — which testifies to diverse age. The oldest have similarities with the towers of Karachai, Balkaria and North Ossetia, indicating that, at a certain time, those territories belonged to one material cultural area.

Chechen tower architecture reached its peak in the 15th–17th centuries, marked for sophisticated construction techniques. Combat and dwelling towers acquired classical finished forms. Such towers are never met outside Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Cyclopean structures could last and stay in use even longer, considering their construction techniques and the size of their stones. The structures of Tsecha-Akhk, for instance, could have been dismantled later to use their blocks for new dwellings.

Despite the scanty number of dwelling and combat towers extant in the area populated by the Nakh since times immemorial (2nd–1st millennia B.C.), structures that have come down to the present day in varying states of preservation allow, to an extent, re-create the evolution of Nakh dwellings and fortifications.

> *1) The first fortified settlements appeared in the Nakh tribal settlement area in the 3rd millennium B.C. Sites protected by the terrain — such as rocky promontories or steep riverbanks — were chosen for them. Vulnerable spots were fortified by*

211 Джандиери Н.Ш., Цицишвили И.Н. Архитектура Грузии от истоков до наших дней. М., 1976. С. 15.

stone walls, which were the only man-made fortifications of the Maikop culture. Dwellings were small, and their separate defence was not envisaged.

2) Dwellings and fortifications acquired greater diversity in the 2nd millennium B.C., when the so-called North Caucasian archaeological culture emerged on the basis of the Maikop culture in the Nakh settlement area. Stone houses were built in the mountains, and wattle and daub ones, with stone used partly, in the foothills and plains, as shown by a dwelling unearthed in the vicinity of the Gatyn Kale village in the Chechen foothills. Sepulchral architecture made spectacular progress at that time to achieve great diversity — e.g., stone sarcophagi and vaults.

Stone became one of the most widespread construction materials of dwellings and tombs. We can even assume that North Caucasian Nakh tribes knew stone worship, which has left emphatic traces in the contemporary Chechen language. Even at that time, the Nakh were rationally using natural fortifications: they placed their settlements on high cliffs, promontories and steep riverbanks. Archaeological finds also testify to the comparatively well developed art of fortification— stone walls encircling settlements, and the arrangement of dwellings.

3) Construction of so-called cyclopean structures — dwelling and others — of giant stone blocks started with the advent of the Koban culture to the Nakh-population area. Their ruins are extant in various parts of Chechnya, e.g., the villages of Nikaroi, Bavloi, Tsecha-Akhk, Khaskali and Orsoi. Wattle and daub dwellings were built side by side with them. Possibly, huge boulders were also used previously to build walls and fortifications, as Transcaucasian archaeological data testify. Koban settlements were also built on naturally fortified elevations (Serzhen-Yurt, Zmeiskoye and Tsecha-Akhk).

4) Various historical sources refer to the Nakh of the plains as Alanians as early as the turn of the Christian Era. Alania was mentioned as a well-knit entity with an impact on the neighbouring countries and nations since the 2nd century A.D.

Alania had spread its borders from Dagestan to the Kuban by the 7th-9th centuries, when its art of fortification reached its peak. 9th-10th century Arabic sources refer to numerous Alanian cities and fortresses.

Dwelling and combat towers were built in the North Caucasus on a grand scale at that time and later, in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Most probably, construction owed its scope to the emergence of the Great Signal System to bring together all Nakh-Alanian towns and villages.

5) Chechen dwelling and combat towers achieved their classical form in the 14th–16th centuries. Mass Chechen resettlement in the plains put a stop to the construction of mountain towers, with rare exceptions, at the end of the 16th century into the mid–17th. Tower construction stopped in the plains at about the same time.

The Tower Builders

When Russian scholars saw Chechen towers for the first time, they gasped with admiration at the harmonious beauty of the stone structures and the sophistication of their architecture. Some of them ascribed tower construction to other nations, allegedly more civilised than the Vainakh. A majority of towers had been abandoned by that time, and the local population did not know anything about their builders except legends and traditions, which were mostly very much in error.

Alexander Ippolitov wrote in his *Ethnographic Sketches of the Argun District* that the towers of the Argun Gorge were built by a nation much more civilised than the indigenous population[212].

P. Golovinsky makes a similar assumption in his essay The Mountain Chechens, where he ascribes tower construction to so-called "forebears". Proceeding from genealogical legends, he considered them strangers — Georgians, Greeks, Jews or West Europeans[213].

However, in his description of the Akki Gorge, M.A. Ivanov cites the Chechen tradition of Diskhi, the renowned tower builder in whose honour the combat tower in the vicinity of the Vougi village was named[214].

Various authors ascribed tower construction to nations that have long gone into oblivion — Tinds, Medes and Jelts. The latter was assumed to be the Chechen name for Greeks. As was really the case, the name "Jelts" belonged to the urban community of Julat. The population of that Alanian city excelled in construction and handicrafts. As is known, the Mongol-Tartar invasion and, even more so, the campaigns of Tamerlane made many people of the plains flee into the mountains, where builders and artisans were greatly respected and generously paid. Possibly, mediaeval Nakh architecture owed its sudden rapid progress to the arrival of refugee builder guilds, with their ample knowhow and developed traditions, in the 14th–15th centuries.

Many Chechen teips based on the occupational principle in their inception, i.e., they developed out of artisan guilds, many of whose members had fled from the towns of the plains. Perhaps, that was how the village of Bavloi appeared, whose people specialised in tower construction, and whose name derives from bouv, the Chechen for "combat tower", and thus means "combat tower builders".

212 Ипполитов А. Этнографические очерки Аргунского округа // Сборник сведений о кавказских горцах. Тифлис, 1868 Т. I. С. 51.

213 Головинский П.И. Заметки о Чечне и чеченцах // Сборник сведений о Терской области. – Владикавказ, 1878 . Вып.1. С. 241–261.

214 Иванов М.А. Верховья р. Гехи // Известия Кавказского отдела Русского географического общества. Тифлис, 1902. Вып. XV. С. 283–285.

When the problem was studied more profoundly later, many scholars acknowledged that Chechen towers were built by local people, and admitted unilateral influence of Georgian architecture on Vainakh one. However, ancient and mediaeval Georgian architecture thoroughly differs from the Nakh with the exception of tombs and fortifications erected by Chechen master builders in Khevsureti. No less indicatively, Christian churches built by Georgian missionaries in Chechen and Ingush mountain gorges in the Early Middle Ages resemble Nakh pagan sanctuaries in shape. If Georgian architecture really had an impact on Chechen, what architectural forms reflect it? The academic community has made no reply to this day.

Arkady Goldstein, whose research concerned North Caucasian architecture, made an attempt to ascribe the appearance of tower construction to West Asian influence[215]. However, North Caucasian towers differ from West Asian not only in the exterior form as, for instance, Georgian and Chechen, but also in essential construction techniques. More than that, no transitional architectural forms are extant either in West Asia or in the Caucasus to testify to such influence.

Experts have recognised the uniqueness of Nakh architecture and its autochthonism now that numerous architectural monuments in the Chechen and Ingush mountains have been studied. Architectural forms that never occur in other parts of the Caucasus emerged and developed in Chechnya and Ingushetia, e.g., the Vainakh combat tower with a pyramidal top, and semi-combat and dwelling towers of a unique outlook. Tower shapes are also genetically linked with locally typical burial vaults and sanctuaries.

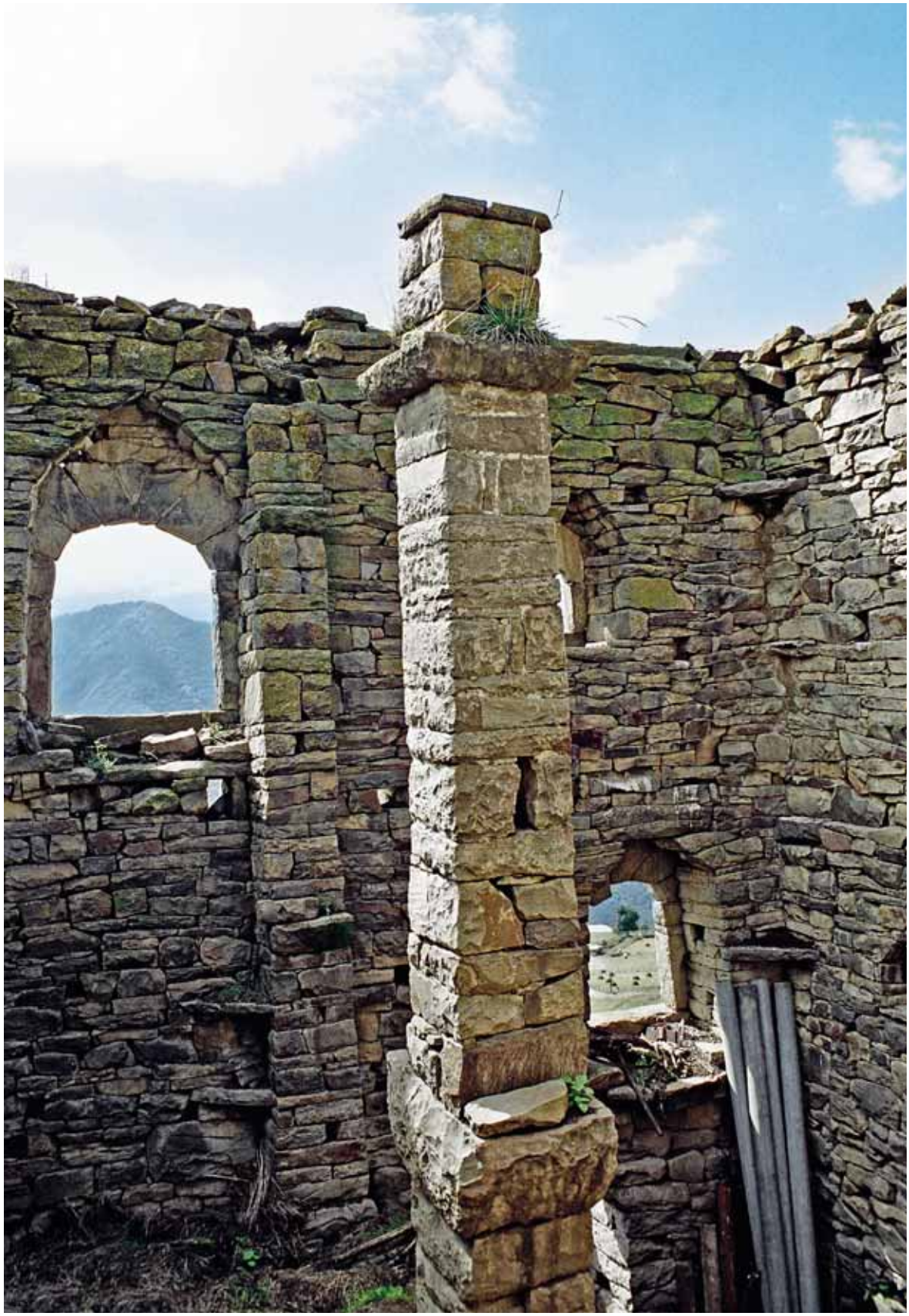
Nakh combat and dwelling towers did not appear all of a sudden. Classic tower architecture was the fruit of evolution of dwellings and fortifications that lasted three or four millennia, if not longer.

As for the innermost characteristics of Nakh architecture, the specifics of towers in the west and east of the Vainakh-populated areas depend mainly on the time of their construction. The older, of approximately the same era, bear close mutual likeness, while the later differ from each other only in the details and thoroughness of finishing. Austrian researcher Bruno Plaetschke, who studied the material culture of that part of the Caucasus, with the greatest emphasis on architecture, described Chechen and Ingush tower culture as “insular unity”, thus stressing their complete mutual identity.

Unlike the western part of the Vainakh-populated area, where towers were built till the end of the 19th century, their construction began to decline in its central and eastern parts at the end of the 17th century due to massive Chechen migration to the plains. That is why only scanty reliable materials on the construction of particular towers are extant, though there are legends about almost all Chechen mountain towers. A majority of such legends were made far later than the period they describe, and are extremely far-fetched.

Despite all that, place name and folklore retain, in diverse forms,

215 Гольдштейн А.Ф. Средневековое зодчество Чечено-Ингушетии и Северной Осетии. М., 1975. С. 29.



The central pillar of the dwelling tower of Khaskali.

information about the earlier Chechen construction traditions.

First, there was the Chechen mountain village of Bavloi in the Terloi-Mokhk Gorge, whose population specialised in combat tower construction. There were no buildings but combat and dwelling towers in the village itself. Their ruins give the Bavloi-Erk Gorge an inimitable air even today. The villagers of the neighbouring Nikaroi were also expert tower builders.

Second, Akki was known for master builders no less than Terloi. A legend of one of such builders, renowned Diskhi, has come down to this day. There is a lone tower, known locally as Diskhi-Bou (Diskhi's Combat Tower), on the road to the village of Vougi. A dramatic legend pertains to it.

Master Diskhi was engaged to a girl from one of the Akki villages. Once in spring, when sheepskin and fleece prices were at the lowest, he asked his betrothed to make him a fur coat. The job took the lazy girl unforgivably long. Driven to the end of his tether, Diskhi said one day: "I build quicker than you sew! You'll see, I will make a tower before you finish my coat!"

When the walls were ready and Diskhi started making the roof, the timber scaffolding he had made in a hurry collapsed under the weight of slabs piled on it, and the master died. When the tidings reached the girl's village, she came running to the site, saw the mutilated body of her beloved and, beside herself with grief and repentance, darted up the stairs and flung herself down from the tower top. The tower was left unfinished in their memory, and received the builder's name.

Third, the people of Maista were also expert builders, employed not only in the Chechen highlands but also in Georgia's Khevsureti, Tusheti and Kakheti. Chechen master builders were hired to erect a formidable fortress in Tusheti, according to a legend Yunus Desheriev recorded in a village of the Batsbi, ethnic Chechens resident in Georgia.

Beki of Kharachoi and Taram Tarkhanov of Nikaroi were tower builders known all over Chechnya.

Centuries have elapsed since tower construction was abandoned, yet the Chechen language retains the names of all tower parts down to the smallest detail as another proof that Vainakh tower architecture emerged and developed purely locally.

MEDIAEVAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE CHECHEN MOUNTAINS

Ancient architecture of the Chechen mountains (combat and dwelling towers, necropolises and sanctuaries) is a unique phenomenon of world culture.

In times immemorial, the Caucasus was straddling the shortest routes linking land-tilling civilisations with the nomadic Eastern Europe, so it became the crossroads of civilisations and a crucible of their cultural influences. Chechen material culture, mythology and pagan cults — all bear traces of the earliest European, West Asian and Mediterranean civilisations.

In-depth studies of mediaeval Chechen pagan cults and myths make these links all the clearer, with no end of parallels to the deities and heroes of the great ancient civilisations. Of tremendous interests are petroglyphs and magical symbols on stone towers and necropolises in the Chechen mountains. Many of those symbols are much older than the towers that bear them because dressed stone from structures of the 10th–5th centuries B.C. was amply used in tower construction. The utmost care was made to preserve petroglyphs on such stones, and they were later imitated on other towers with only the slightest changes.

None other than the Nakh, i.e., Chechen and Ingush, brought Caucasian tower architecture to perfection, especially where combat towers were concerned. Combat towers, in which mediaeval architecture reached its peak, were proportionate down to the smallest detail and possessed mirror symmetry. They blended into the landscape with perfect harmony.Mediaeval tower architecture, the way it has come down to this day, emerged in the original Nakh-populated territory stretching from the Argun in the east to the Kuban in the west, and reached its acme in the later Nakh area in the Terek-Argun interfluve. Towers were originally not only in the Chechen highlands but also in the foothills (the Khankala Gorge) and the plains along the northern and eastern borders of Chechnya. However, they had

been mercilessly destroyed ever since the Tartar-Mongol invasion in the 14th century. The Caucasian War of the 19th century and the Chechen deportation of 1944 were especially hard on them. Hundreds of towers were knocked down then. The two recent wars in Chechnya were also hard on its mediaeval structures. Dozens of towers were demolished or bombarded, and air raids sped up disastrously the decay of buildings that had survived millennia in the mountain gorges. Approximately 150 tower clusters, several hundred dwelling towers, more than 200 combat towers, dozens of sanctuaries and more than a hundred above-ground burial vaults — mainly from the 11th–17th centuries — survive, in varying degrees of preservation, in the upper reaches of the Fortanga, Gekhi, Argun and Sharo-Argun rivers, and in the vicinity of the Kezenoi and Galanchozh lakes in the mountains. Remnants of stone structures of many eras in the Chechen mountains allow trace down the evolution of Nakh tower architecture for three millennia or even longer. As we see in the buildings of Tsecha-Akhk village, Nakh dwellings and fortifications evolved from horizontally oriented multi-chamber ones to vertically arranged single-compartment. The evolution of Chechen dwellings took many centuries, as borne out by transition forms extant in Tsecha-Akhk — two- and three-storied bicameral structures, each of whose chambers closely resembles an independent tower, with door and window arches and a storey post.

Of the many influences on the evolution of Vainakh dwellings, the principal were impending dangers from without, that demanded ever more sophisticated fortification; scarcity of land as people of the plains and Alanians loath to bow to Tartar khans and Tamerlane fled into the mountains en masse; and, presumably, religious beliefs.

▲ The Nikaroi combat tower.

DWELLING TOWERS

The *glala*, "fortress-home", i.e., the classic dwelling tower, began to emerge most probably in the late Alanian era — the 10th-13th centuries. Dwelling towers of that time differ from their earlier counterparts by vertically arranged layout, which horizontally approached the square shape, a greater number of stories and door and window apertures, and more careful stone dressing and laying.

The classic dwelling tower is a massive rectangular tapering structure, often of a layout approaching the square (usually of 8–10 x 8–12 m), of three or four stories, with a flat earthen roof.

The tower tapered due to the walls getting thinner to the top, and due to their inward inclination. The thickness of the walls varies in different structures from 1.2-0.9 m at the bottom to 0.7-0.5 m at the top.

The walls were made of stones of varying sizes (blocks or slabs, depending on the local stone), carefully dressed on the outside, with lime or clay-lime mortar and chip stone. Dry masonry also occurs, though seldom. Monoliths were laid in the foundation and the ground floor—some of them weighing several tonnes each.

The central pillar, also of thoroughly dressed stone, supported the ceiling rafters. Purlines rested on pilasters or cornerstones, and common rafters, in their turn, rested on purlines.

Chat wood was piled on top, and coated in punned clay. The sacral meaning of the erd-bogIam pillar came down from the olden times. Indicatively, Chechens retained it alongside with its religious message for centuries.

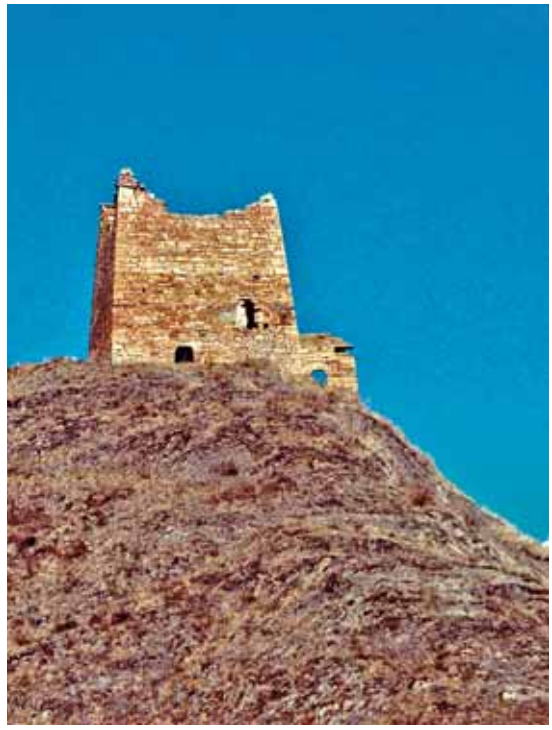
Chechen dwelling towers do not differ from Ingush and Osset ones in basic parameters, though surpassing them spectacularly for sizes and the number of stories[216].

216 Робакидзе А.И. Жилища и поселения горных ингушей // Кавказский этнографический сборник. Тбилиси, 1968. Т. II., С. 41–117.

The two lower stories were intended for livestock. Cattle and horses were usually kept in the ground floor, whose part was fenced off for grain storage. Pits with stone-faced walls and bottom were made for the purpose in some towers. The floor was made of boards or stone slabs. Separate stables were made for horses. The first floor, intended for sheep and goats, had a separate entrance with a log ramp.

The family lived in the second floor — or the first in three-storey towers. The family kept its possessions there — carpets, dishes, clothes, etc. The things were kept in tin-plated wooden chests. The older towers had no wardrobes, with things hung on metal hooks. Wall niches were made for the purpose in some towers. Dishes and kitchen utensils were arranged on wooden shelves along the walls. There was usually an arrangement of weaponry on the wall above the master's bed. It was a dire necessity in wartime, and mere custom in peace.

The kkherch, stone-faced hearth, was in the centre of the dwelling chamber, with a chain above it. Of primitive structure, the hearth was a mere round slab surrounded by stones of various sizes. The cauldron was put on a metal tripod known as ochkakh. Smoke left the dwelling through the windows. The kkherch was the heart of the home, where the family cooked, and round which it had meals and relaxed. Even later, when the tovkha fireplace in the wall replaced the hearth, it stayed sacred to Chechens as the other Caucasians. The oath on the hearth was inviolable. A man of the enemy clan was spared in a blood feud once he touched the chain above the hearth. A theft made near the hearth was a deadly insult. Rubbish was never cast into the flame. When the mistress of the



▲ The central pillar of the dwelling tower of Nikaroi.

house was sweeping the floor, she did it in the direction opposite to the hearth. Bread crumbs, on the contrary, were cast into the fire after a meal. Possibly, it was a trace of past sacrifices as the hearth was the ritual place even in the New Stone Age, and burning the fat and bones of sacrificial animals was practised in the Antiquity. The hearth cult might have given rise to the first altars and sanctuaries. Initially, primitive man made special ritual hearths inside the dwelling later to take them out and wall in with stone. With time, such fire sanctuaries were built into temples.

The mother of the family was considered the keeper of the hearth, and entitled to the utmost respect by the household and guests. Many religious festivals, New Year among them, were connected with the hearth.

Chechens saw New Year in on December 25. At the start of the celebration, the fire in the hearth was fed not with usual firewood and sticks but with a gula, uncut tree trunk, mostly oak. The gula tree was cut down two days after the New Year village bonfire. The tree was carried into the house, branches first, while the butt stayed outside. The time before fire consumed a greater part of the tree, so that the door could be shut, was sacral. All neighbours came together in the gula house to sing and dance, and wish each other happy New Year.

The festival led many researchers to the wrong assumption that hearths were always fed like that in Chechnya and other parts of the Caucasus. Contemporary ethnologists borrowed the allegation from pre-revolutionary studies, and so it survives. As things really are, the custom concerns only the opening days of a year.

The family usually had meals together at a low three-legged table near the fireplace. Newlyweds had their meals away from the household. When the family had a guest, he was served the first, and the master of the house alone shared his meal. If the guest was a woman, she had her meal with the lady of the house.

The family slept on broad wooden or stone couches covered with embroidered felt rugs. A part of the family slept on woollen mattresses spread on the floor, with sheepskin coats or felt cloaks for blankets. The richer families possessed gorgeous featherbeds with embroidered silk sheets. All this luxury was neatly folded in the distant corner of the room for daytime. Bed folding was something of a rite, whose rules and progression the lady of the house followed meticulously.

Household utensils and food stock were kept in the top floor, which also had the guestroom and the nuptial chamber. The top was the family citadel when the tower was besieged or attacked. A cauldron of pitch and piles of stones were prepared on the flat roof on such occasions. The roof was made of thick logs pressed close to each other. Chat wood was piled on top, and coated in punned clay. The walls of the top floor raised above the roof in some towers as a parapet protecting the defenders.

Unlike the other parts of Chechnya, the dwelling towers of Maista had gable roofs of large stone slabs.

Flat roofs were used as drying-barn and threshing-floor in the warm season. The family had meals and recreation there in summer.

Apertures were made in the floor of every storey with timber ladders or

notched logs leaning on the edge. There was a door in every floor but the top. The door and window apertures were most often made of large monoliths as rounded arches. The arches were primitive and roughly hewn in the earlier towers but received a sophisticated decorative air in the 15th-17th century structures, though it is occasionally the other way round. For instance, the monolith stone door arch in the first floor of the dwelling tower of Khimoi is thoroughly dressed and decorated with the petroglyphs of the Aryan swastika — in contrast to the crude entrance arch of the ground floor, made as late as the 19th century. Deep notches for the locking bar were made to either side of the door, which was made of thick oak boards. The door apertures broadened on the inside to make lancet arches. The windows were very small. Those in the upper stories served as embrasures, if need be. The windows were sealed with wooden shutters or stone slabs for the night and the cold season. In summer, transparent film made of animal intestines was pulled over them.

Livestock was kept only in the ground floor of three-storey towers.

Russian explorer K. Hahn, who travelled in the Chechen highland at the turn of the 20th century, left a detailed description of a Chechen three-storey tower:

> *Tsotesh's house, situated above a deep gulley, is a giant quadrangular tower of three stories, with a few household outbuildings. The tower is made by dry masonry of huge slate blocks. After we crossed a vast paved courtyard surrounded by a high wall, we entered the ground floor— an unlit cattleshed — by a tiny door. We climbed narrow stone stairs to the first floor, where the women of the household lived. Though the rooms appeared tidier than what I had seen in Khevsur homes, they were also poorly lit, with sooty ceilings. Large copper and tin bowls were arranged on the walls, and lavishly carved chests along them on the mud floor. Scanty wall apertures left the room barely lit. A rickety ladder led to the top floor, with the master's room, where the nuptial bed was. The walls were hung with weapons and the whole family's festive garments. The flat roof made something of a balcony framed in a low wall in front of the room. An exquisite panorama opened from it — the valley, the mountain village and the proud castle of Tsotesh's ancestors. Two mountain streams precipitated down from its foot — the Vegi-Chu and the Turkal, the snowy peaks of the Vegi-Lam towering far away, at the source of the Vegi-Chu*[217].

A tower of six stories survives in the village of Nikaroi, though a majority of Chechen dwelling towers had four or three stories.

The tower was in the possession of one family. As it was segmented, the parents occasionally remained in the tower with only the youngest son to keep them company. Newlyweds could not share premises with the parents but moved to the top floor, or a corner with a separate hearth was walled off for them in the parental chamber. The allegations of pre-revolutionary and other scholars that several families could share a tower

217 Ган К.Ф. Путешествие в страну пшавов, хевсур, кистин и ингушей // Кавказский вестник, 1900, № 6. С. 66 .

are groundless. After sons and daughters came of age, they could not share a bedroom with their parents. It was even more improper when they married.

A magic rite preceded tower construction. At first, a household animal checked the purity of the chosen site. For that, an ox or another animal was driven to the place, which was considered pure if it lay down there at night. The master of the future tower also could spend the night on the site, and it was considered auspicious if he had a good dream.

An animal was sacrificed next. It was usually a sheep, though the more substantial families could afford an ox. The foundation was sprinkled with sacrificial blood, after which a prayer was said, and a locally respected man (a priest in the pagan times, and a mullah or elder later), if the fellow villagers considered him lucky, touched the cornerstone and blessed the start of construction.

Dwelling towers were usually built on rock, and had no foundation. In spots where rock was not exposed, the upper layer of soil was removed, so the tower bottom appeared dug-in. Clayey soil was poured with milk or water and removed again and again till the soil stopped absorbing the liquid. According to field data collected by Veniamin Kobychev in Ichkeria, i.e., East Chechnya, local people "filled a small jug with water, sealed it with wax, and dug it into the soil for several days. If they saw upon unearthing it that some water had oozed out, the spot was considered unfit for construction"[218].

Huge boulders up to two metres long and above human height were put

▲ Dwelling towers in the upper reaches of the Argun River.

◀ The semi-combat tower of Nikaroi.

218 Кобычев В.П. Поселения и жилище народов Северного Кавказа в XIX–XX вв. М., 1982. С. 80.

in the foundation. They were hauled by a capstan, and moved over considerable distance on special sledges by ox teams.

The walls, and occasionally corners, were oriented on the cardinal points. Petroglyphs, to which magic power was ascribed, were often carved on the outer surface of the building stone to protect the tower from evil spirits and all danger. Family symbols were also carved on the walls to testify to the nobility and long lineage of the owners. Petroglyph-studded stones out of the walls of an old tower were used in building a new one. That is why such inscribed stones often differ from the rest in dressing and colour. This is especially notable in the dwelling tower on the west edge of the Vaserkel village, on a high cliff above the Mainstoin-Erk stream. A pictogram on the south wall of the tower is made on carefully dressed — even polished — stones of a much lighter shade than the rest. They are, doubtless, much older than the tower itself.

The ritual use of parts of an old dwelling in a new one survives to this day. Whenever a Chechen dismantles his old home, he puts at least one of its stones or bricks in the foundation of the new house. It is a sacral action as the new house thus inherits the blessing that rested on the old one.

Dwelling towers were usually built on an elevation close to a water source — a river, stream, brook or spring. A hidden water duct was often laid, which was vitally necessary when the tower was besieged — suffice to recall the old legend of the siege of a tower complex on Mount Bekkhaila in the Argun Gorge. The complex — in fact, a small fortress — consisted of three combat towers and one dwelling tower with a high stone wall around. It stood on a high cliff and so was practically impregnable. It was never short of drinking water with a network of underground stone ditches. The siege had lasted many months before a local man who was in a blood feud with the defenders of the fortress advised the besiegers to feed their horses with salt and let them loose near the wall. Tormented by thirst and led by instinct, the animals dug the soil with their hooves above the water duct, thus revealing it. The besiegers destroyed it, and the besieged had to leave the fortress through an underpass the same night[219].

Unlike combat towers and other fortifications, the fortified home was primarily a dwelling. Defence was its secondary function. However, the Middle Ages were a dangerous time, and the defence potential of dwelling towers was used to the full. First, wood was never used in the tower exterior lest the tower be set on fire from without. Second, the top floor was always used for defence. The height of the stories above the auxiliary ground floor gave defenders' arrows and stones a great kill power, and made them tremendously hard of access for besiegers. Machicolations were always made above the front door to rule out arsonists' secret approach. The door, always low and narrow, was usually made in the wall that was the hardest of access to impede ramming. The door aperture was much narrower on the outer side, broadening on the inside to protect the door edges.

A majority of towers had underpasses leading to a comparatively safe spot. As military danger was subsiding,

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219 Марковин В.И. Памятники зодчества в горной Чечне. (по материалам исследований 1957–1965 гг.) // Северный Кавказ в древности и средние века. М., 1980.С. 184–270

and with the appearance of a new custom to extend the dwelling tower with a combat one, the fortification functions of dwelling towers receded into the background to simplify their architecture — the towers lost the defence storey and machicolations. The number of stories reduced to two or three, while the number of doors, windows and rooms in every floor increased. Household outbuildings appeared, and towers began to tend to a horizontal layout.

The type is represented by a dwelling tower northwest of Itum-Kale on a low promontory on the left bank of the Kokadoi-Akhk, a tributary of the Argun.

The rectangular tapering tower, 7.6 x 6.8 m, has walls oriented on the cardinal points. It is made of carefully dressed stone blocks of various sizes, mostly large. Presumably, it had three stories originally. Only two are extant, and the present-day height of the tower approaches 7 metres

The west, fasade, wall has two door apertures — on the ground and first floors. Shaped as rounded arches, they are made of large monoliths. Such ornately shaped arches are frequent in Chechen dwelling and combat towers. The ground floor aperture, 1.3 x 1 m, is made of larger monoliths than that of the first floor. Deep notches for the locking bar are made to either side of the door. The first floor aperture is not precisely above it but offset to the right. The door apertures broaden on the inside to make lancet arches. A double spiral petroglyph is in the right bottom corner. There is a small rounded arch window made of a monolith left to the first floor entrance.

There is only one window in the south wall — in the first floor. The east wall is blank. The north wall has one small arched window, which broadens on the inside in a lancet arch. The inside walls have numerous niches where household utensils are kept.

The central pillar, carefully made of neatly hewn stones, is half-extant. The inside wall ruins indicate several rooms in every floor.

Similar towers were widespread in the southeast and the centre of the Chechen highland.

They transformed gradually into conventional two-storey stone houses of which Hahn made a detailed description in 1901:

> *A well-to-do Chechen's house is usually built of limestone, and has two stories and a flat roof. The cattleshed and the kitchen are in the ground floor. Outdoor stone steps lead to the upper storey, which retracts a sazhen [2 metres]. There are four rooms in each floor. The front room is the largest — 12 steps wide and 20 steps long. There are several wooden beds there, and tall grain tubs dug of tree trunks, 2-3 feet in diameter, where wheat and maize are stored. Side by side with them are giant woolsacks. The drawing-room, or guestroom, left to the front room, is furnished with two beds, several chests, and shelves arranged on one wall. The opposite wall is decorated with a display of weaponry. Carpets are spread on the floor, which is mud as in the whole house. A small closet for household utensils opens into the guestroom. At the back of the house is a vast storeroom, no smaller than the front room.*

There is a bed in it, huge chests of crude carpentry, made by captive Russian soldiers long ago, several large tubs of cheese, and two or three tall tubs of maize. Hanging on the walls are bowls, plates and other dishes. Smoked broadtails, loin and rack of fattened rams dangle down the ceiling on large wooden hooks.

Later on, many dwelling towers were rebuilt into conventional gable-roof houses. One of such structures can be seen in the village of Ushkaloi on the right bank of the Argun.

Dwelling towers were widespread in the Chechen, Ingush and North Ossetian highlands. They were scantier in Kabarda-Balkaria and Karachai-Circassia. They were also characteristic of the northern parts of Georgia, bordering on Chechnya — Khevsureti, Tusheti and, to the west — Mtiuleti, Khevi and Svaneti[220].

Dwelling towers were typical of the entire Chechen highlands with the exception of Ichkeria, the easternmost part of Chechnya bordering on Dagestan — probably, due to the scarcity of stone there. Chechen settlement of Ichkeria and Cheberloi started fairly late no earlier than Tamerlane's army left the area — as Chechens were migrating from west to east. According to folklore, the territory was previously populated by the Orstkhoi (a Chechen ethnic group), of whose construction traditions nothing is known today, though traditions refer to their dwelling towers and ascribe the construction of the legendary Navruz-Gala tower to them.

▲ A dwelling tower in the Melkhista Gorge. Igor Palmin's photo.

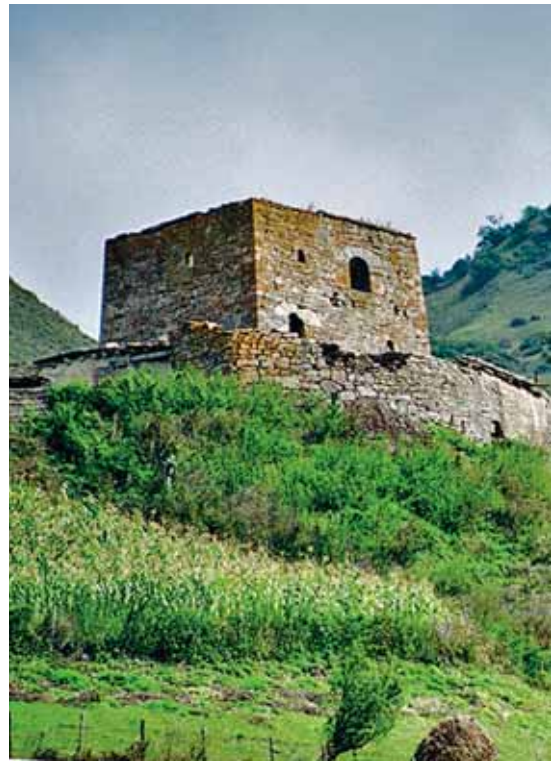
◀ The dwelling tower of Meshi.

◀ The dwelling tower of Vaserkel.

220 Джанберидзе Н.Ш., Цицишвили И.Н. Архитектура Грузии. М., 1976.

Dwelling and combat towers were frequent in almost all parts of Cheberloi. The combat towers and fortifications on the border of Dagestan (in Khoi, Kezenoi and Kharkaroi) were built by a vice-gerent sent there from Nashkh. Many dwelling and combat towers of Cheberloi were pulled down during the Caucasian War. The area went through several mighty risings against Imam Shamil and Russia within a fairly short period. All those risings were cruelly suppressed, and the settlements involved in them razed to the ground. Shamil's warriors and Russian troops were especially hard on towers. Their ruins are seen to this day in the abandoned villages of Cheberloi and the adjacent areas.

Almost all settlements in the Chechen mountains west of the Sharo-Argun — in Sharoi, Maista, Melkhista, Terloi-Mokhk, Nashkh, Akki, and the Tazbichi, Argun and Fortanga gorges — had no conventional houses, and consisted entirely of combat and dwelling towers.



▲ The dwelling tower of Khaskali.

◀ Ruins of a tower complex in the Nashkh Gorge.

SEMI-COMBAT TOWERS

Dwelling towers were reinforced in certain parts of the Chechen mountains as the danger of aggression was increasing in the 13th–14th centuries..

The towers grew taller, with more stories, and their layout became closer to the square. Machicolations appeared on the top floor above the door. Such towers were marked by careful stone dressing and setting. Unlike dwelling towers, the towers of that type had no central pillar. Architect S. Umarov made a detailed description of such a tower in the village of Bavloi. It had five stories, each except the top with a door aperture in the east wall. Machicolations protected the east and west walls.

The ground and first floors were for livestock, the second and third for dwelling, and the top for defence. Every tower of that type had a battlement to enhance the defence of the roof. Such towers are extant in the villages of Nikaroi, Bavloi, Khaibakh, Tsa-Kale and Tsecha-Akhk.

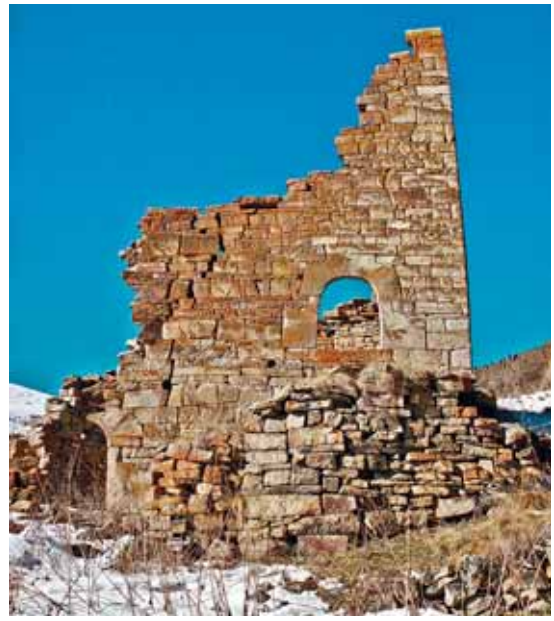
The Nikaroi is a classic semi-combat tower. It stands on a cliff in the centre of a promontory made by two arms of the Nikaroi-Akhk mountain stream. Massive rock projecting from the soil is used as the tower foundation. The walls are oriented on the cardinal points. The south wall is the fasade.

The tower is built of well-hewn stones of varying sizes, kept together with lime mortar. It has five stories. There are three doors in the fasade — on the ground, first and second floors. Platforms for archers are on the top storey, at the floor level. The tower is 8.0 x 9.0 m, and 11 metres high. The ground floor wall is 75 centimetres thick.

The term “semi-combat” for that type of Vainakh towers belongs to prominent archaeologist Vladimir

Markovin[221]. He regarded them as a transition stage in the evolution of the fortified dwelling into the combat tower — a highly dubitable assumption as combat towers appeared in the oldest citadels much earlier than dwelling towers and fortified houses, while watchtowers and beacons are even older.

Semi-combat towers were a syncretic type combining the characteristics of dwelling and combat towers. That was rational in the trying economic conditions of the mountains because families did not need to build special combat towers that cost tremendous sums. However, despite all their merits, semi-combat towers were rare in the Chechen highland probably because tower complexes and castles had become widespread by the time semi-combat towers appeared. Possessing all the merits of such towers, a castle also gave shelter to the entire livestock in wartime.



221 Марковин В.И. Памятники зодчества в горной Чечне. (по материалам исследований 1957–1965 гг.) // Северный Кавказ в древности и средние века. М., 1980. С.184–270.

▲ The tower of Nikhaloi.

▲ A ruined tower.

TOWERS BUILT INTO ROCK NICHES

Towers built into rock niches belong typologically to the oldest kind of combined dwellings/fortifications. Such structures were built even in the Old Stone Age as caves and grottos were reinforced with stone obstructions.

Sites for towers of that type in the Chechen highland were chosen in massive rock or on rocky riverbanks, sometimes very high in the mountains. Rock clefts or caves were filled with stone on the outside. Door and window apertures, portholes and observation slits were made as in conventional towers. Such structures usually had only one wall, as the Nikhaloi and Motsaroi towers, or three walls, as the Ushkaloi and Bashen-Kala.

Russian archaeologist Vsevolod Miller described one such tower, at the mouth of the Gekhi River:

> *A narrow path leads to the castle. Partly, it is a cornice hewn in the rock, and partly wooden bridges over crevices. The path reaches a low slit gate, more like a window, in the dilapidating wall, opening on a small courtyard on the brow of the cliff the castle stands on. The wall encircling the yard is partly ruined. The right wall of the dwelling, of which the cliff makes the left wall, is inside the yard, parallel to the cliff. The ruins of two towers leaning on a cliff projection are above. A major part of the cliff is sooty, testifying that this formidable stronghold was a shelter and a home. The most striking impression is made by a small balcony miraculously preserved at a breathtaking height. Centuries ago, when the castle was towering high in its appalling grandeur, there were stairs leading to the balcony. Now, they have crushed down as the tower walls. Today, the balcony hangs on its*

massive timber beams projecting a sazhen from the rock — a lonely and inaccessible silent witness to the past[222].

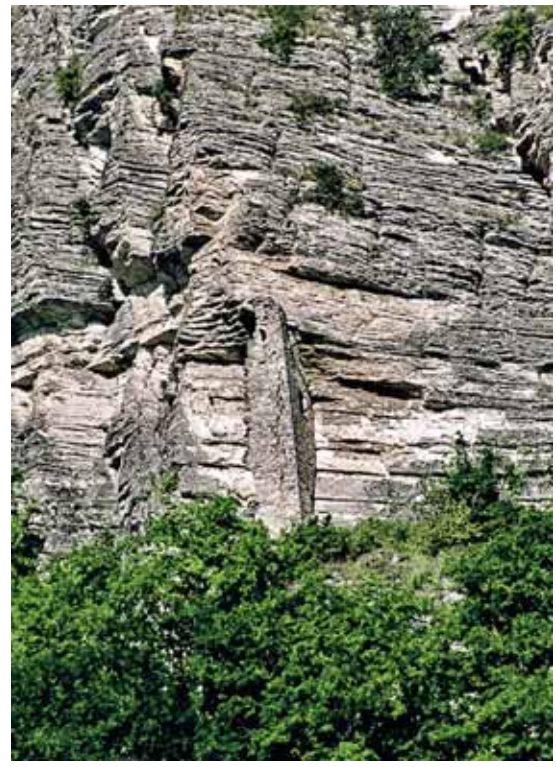
Another tower built into rock is in the vicinity of Motsaroi in Nashkh. It has one outer wall 12 metres long and 10 metres high, with door and window apertures and embrasures. According to tradition, it gave refuge to people hiding from a blood feud. No one remembers who built the tower, when and with what purpose, though its location allows presume that it was originally a beacon. Possibly, it turned into a hideaway later.

There is another tower built into a rock niche in the vicinity of Ushkaloi on the right Argun bank. It has three man-made walls of carefully hewn stones with lime mortar. The cliff makes its fourth wall, and a cliff projection serves as the roof.

The north and south walls repeat the geometry of the cliff. The door aperture is a rounded arch of stone, with an embrasure slightly above. A small window tops the tower. The west wall, tapering slightly, is blank, with five embrasures. There are another five embrasures at different heights in the south wall. Stone consoles — remnants of machicolations — are in its upper part. A window apertur e tops the wall.

The many legends pertaining to the construction of this tower appear extremely far-fetched.

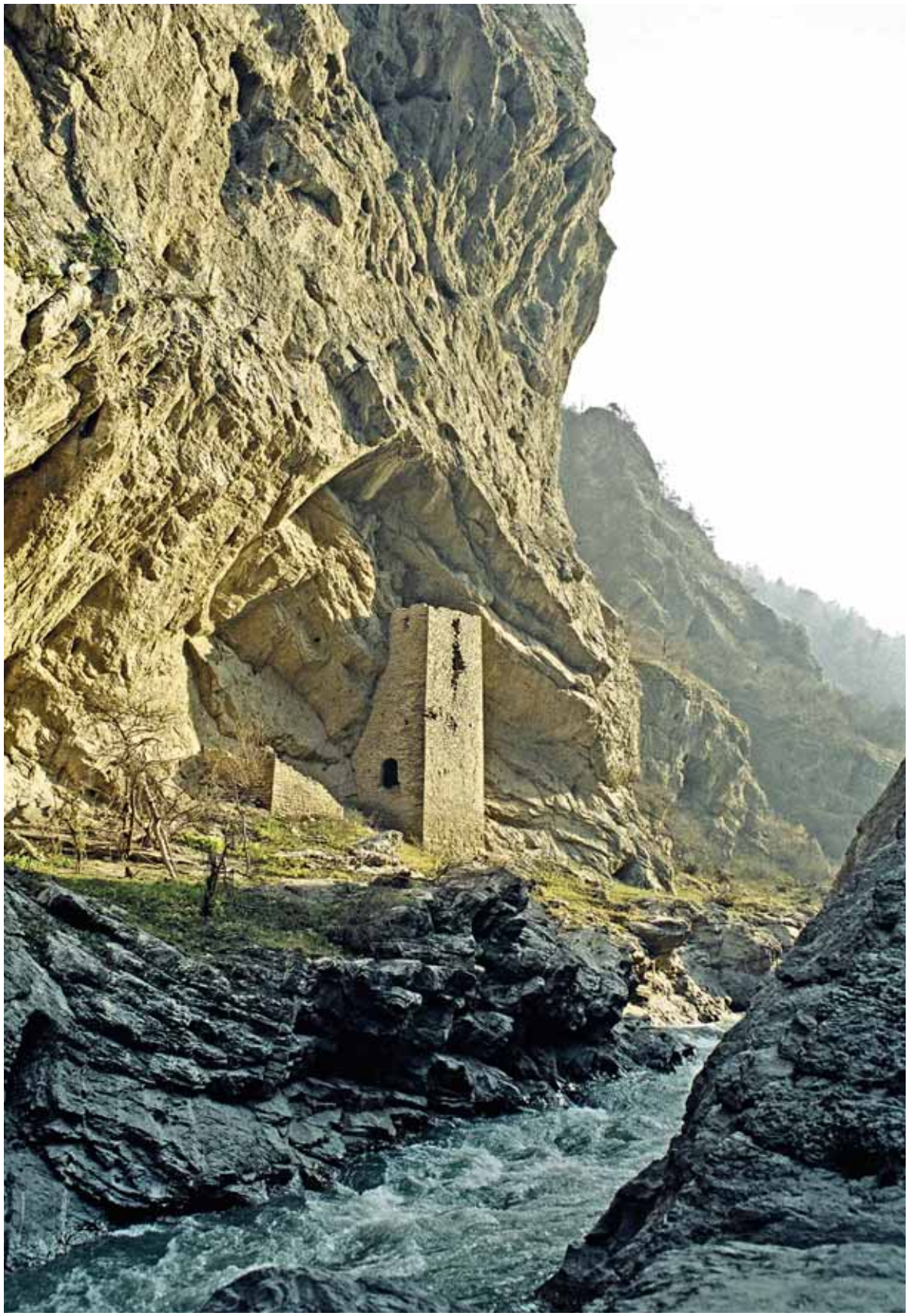
Researchers know such towers as shelters because, presumably, they gave refuge to local people, shepherds



▲ The tower of Bashen-Kala.

▲ The tower of Nikhaloi.

222 Миллер В.Ф. Терская область. Археологические экскурсии.//Материалы по археологии Кавказа. М., 1888, вып.1. С. 2–36.



and wayfarers in case of sudden military danger. In reality, many of them were not shelters but watchtowers and beacons. The towers of Ushkaloi were watchtowers protecting a stone bridge across the Argun and the road along the riverbank. The Nikhaloi and Bashen-Kala towers were beacons, as borne out by their geography, folklore references, and visual connection between the Bashen-Kala, Guchan-Kale and Nikhaloi towers.

Cliff towers are fairly numerous in Chechnya (at Ushkaloi, Nikhaloi, Bashen-Kala, Itirkale, Devnechu, Khaikha and Doka-Bukh), unlike the other parts of the Caucasus, with the exception of Ossetia, where several similar structures are known. The traditions of cliff tower construction were strong in the Crimea, with its traces of the Nakh substratum. Local cliff vaults are tracked down to Alanians migrating to the Crimea.

▲ The tower of Motsaroi

◀ The tower of Ushkaloi.

COMBAT TOWERS

Chechen architecture reached its peak with fortifications known as combat towers.

More than 200 have come down to this day in varying state of preservation despite their systematic destruction ever since the Caucasian War.

An opinion of combat towers appearing in the evolution of dwelling towers, and of so-called semi-combat towers as an intermediate in such evolution, has taken shape in academic literature (Markovin and Umarov)[223].

There are, however, no grounds to consider dwelling towers more archaic than combat ones. Both take root in cyclopean structures, the earliest of which date to the Bronze Age. We should bear in mind, besides, that combat towers appeared as citadel wall fortifications in the 2nd millennium B.C., at the latest.

Similar fortresses, though of a later time — of a rectangular or triangular layout, with formidable walls and corner towers — are extant in many parts of Chechnya — in particular, the upper reaches of the Argun, on Mount Bekkhaila, in Melkhista, in the Koratakh village, in the Terloi-Akhk Gorge and elsewhere. Their presence can be regarded as confirming that combat towers first appeared in the Caucasus as in the other parts of the world first as parts of citadels, i.e., as auxiliary buildings.

Beacons and watchtowers appeared even earlier. To all appearances, natural elevations and tree tops were used originally to pass information — especially

223 Марковин В.И. Памятники зодчества в горной Чечне. (по материалам исследований 1957–1965 гг.) // Северный Кавказ в древности и средние века. М., 1980. С. 184–270.

warnings of war danger. Timber towers appeared next, and the evolution brought the stone tower as its final result.

Academic literature does not indicate the difference between beacons and watchtowers.

Probably, watchtowers combined the functions of a beacon and of watching proper. Single-function watchtowers were built near bridges, on the roadside and in narrow gorges to protect them, and were used as customs offices in peacetime. They never passed signals and messages. Beacons, on the contrary, were built with the purpose of passing war alarm signals and needed unbroken visual connection with each other. They were parts of a network spreading over vast areas. A majority of beacons also had the functions of combat towers, though towers built into cliffs and caves (such as the Bashen-Kala and the Nikhaloi) also could have those functions, though researchers erroneously consider them shelters. Watchtowers always had the functions of combat towers. They were solitary structures on rare occasions only. As a rule, they made complexes of two or more combat towers.

It would be logical to wonder whether it was worthwhile to build stone beacons that cost tremendous labour and money. Most probably, after the men on beacon duty passed necessary signals, they could not most often leave the tower immediately and join the troops, so they needed defence fortifications. More than that, beacons were built in strategic sites and their defence diverted a part of enemy troops. Tamerlane's chronicles refer to sieges of towers in Chechen mountain gorges. A special combat tower was not erected whenever there was an opportunity to use the locality (as the

▲ The combat tower of Dere.

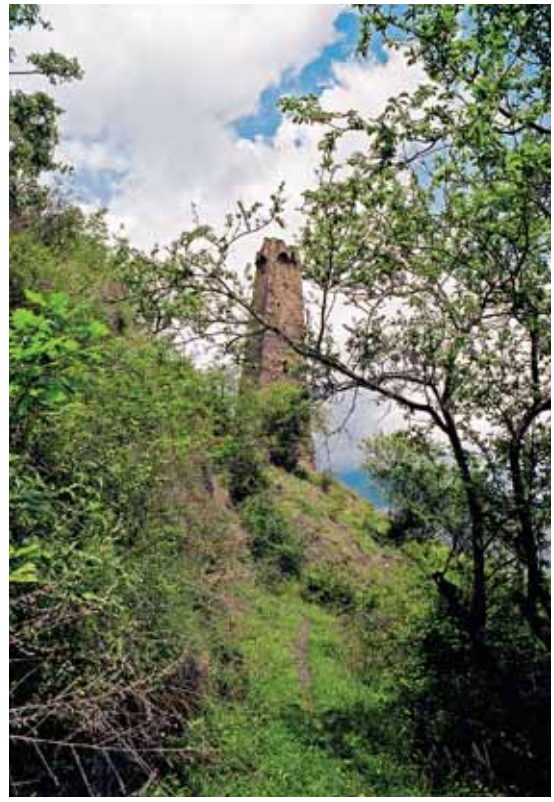
Bashen-Kala and Nikhaloi towers), such as rock niches and cliffs on whose top or at whose foot the tower was built.

The evolution of Caucasian combat towers can be formulated as follows: combat tower/beacon – combat tower as part of a citadel – combat tower as an isolated watchtower – combat tower as part of a tower complex. The latest type of defence tower in a dwelling complex appeared in the Late Middle Ages — most probably, in the 15th century, and was connected with increasing social differentiation in Chechnya.

The Chechen for "defence tower" is bIouv. Doubtless, it was connected with the interjection bIouv, which was a challenge or a threat. The connection is even closer with the word bIo, "watch", "surveillance", which later acquired the meaning of "army". The word bIo ascends to an even older Chechen word, bIan, "look", "see"— hence bIaьrg, "eye", so the etymology is linked to the primary function of the combat tower as watchtower and beacon.

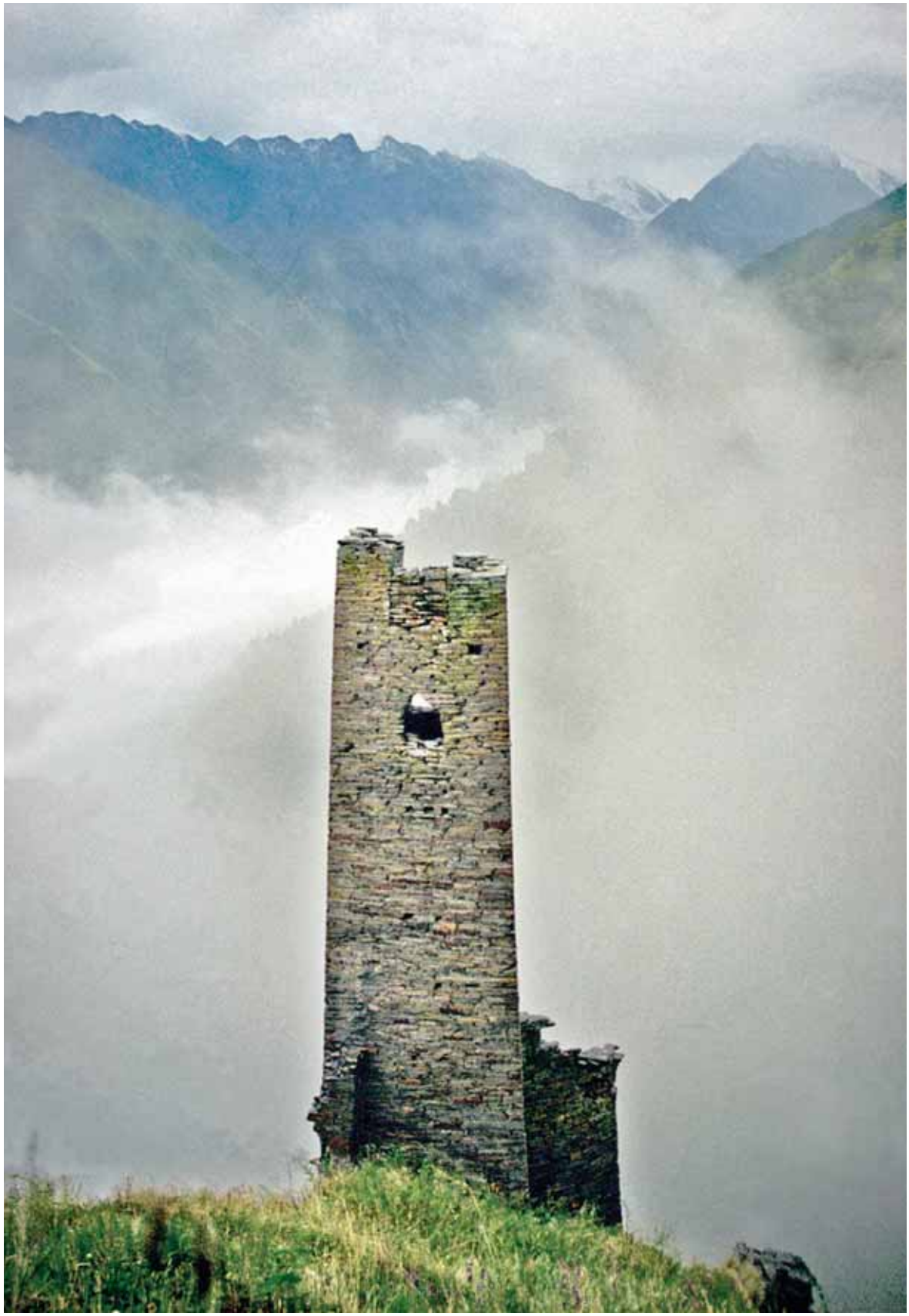
So we can say that combat towers appeared later than dwelling ones only when we regard the combat tower as a fortification element of a complex. The combat tower had acquired its finished, classical forms by the time when tower complexes (combinations of a combat tower and a dwelling one) appeared in the mountains of Chechnya and Ingushetia. A majority of structures of that time have a step pyramidal roof, are built with lime mortar, and reveal sophisticated construction techniques.

A combat tower has a square layout (its classical size is 5 x 5 metres), is 20–25 metres high, and is made of dressed stone with lime or lime-sand mortar. It is



▲ The combat tower of the Tazbichi Gorge.

◀ The combat tower of Dere.



tapering at a 4–6 angle. The Guchan-Kale tower, a typical structure of that type, is on the right bank of the Argun, on a high rocky promontory at the confluence of the Argun and its tributary, the small Guchan-Ark mountain stream.

The strongly tapering tower has a rectangular layout, 5 x 5 metres. Its corners are oriented on the cardinal points. It is 18 metres high, and the walls at the bottom are about a metre thick. The tower is made of carefully adjusted stones of varying sizes, some of them dressed. Lime mortar was used in its construction. The foundation is made of large stones. The five-storey tower has machicolations at the top. The machicolations of the fasade and the back wall are narrower than the others. They rest on two stone consoles each, while the broader ones of the side walls need three consoles. The floor decks are gone, though the cornerstones on which their beams rested are extant. The roof is almost entirely gone, so it is hard to say what shape it was of. The ground floor is packed with clay and stones.

The southwest, fasade wall has a door aperture on the first floor, and two windows, on the second and third floors. The door aperture is 1.35 x 1 m from without, and 2.25 x 1.3 m on the inside. The conic stones of its arch are corbelled. The aperture broadens on the inside to make a lancet-arch niche in the wall. The only window of the second floor, on the fasade, is 3 metres above the door. The window arch is made of monolith stone. There are two cruciform patterns above the window, with a carved T sign topping them. The third floor window also has a monolith arch, with three cruciform signs above.

The northwest wall has four embrasures and an arch window on the

▲ The upper part of a combat tower.

▲ The village of Pogo.

◀ The combat tower of the Maista Gorge.

third floor, with a stone slab to its left. The wall is decorated, as the others, with cruciform patterns and a T sign.

The southeast wall has a window in the second floor. A broad stone slab protects it on the slope side — which is unusual of Chechen-Ingush towers. The wall has three embrasures — two slit ones in the first floor, and a broader one in the second. Cruciform patterns and a T sign decorate the wall.

The northeast wall has no windows but there are embrasures in it, and a T sign.

Field data allow assume that the tower existed during the Mongol-Tartar invasion or even earlier.

The construction of a combat tower was accompanied by the same rituals as of a dwelling tower. The shape, size and site of a beacon guaranteed visual connection with the nearest beacons. Other factors were also taken into consideration to ensure its defence merits. Strategic points were chosen for watchtowers. They dominated the locality to control key bridges, roads and mountain passes. The presence of a river, brook or spring was an essential condition as the tower was supposed to have a secret water duct.

Combat towers were built on hard rock, just as dwelling ones. Beacons were erected on the top of cliffs to make them hard of access. When material- and labour-consuming construction of combat towers began, in the 10th and 11th centuries, their watch and signal functions were combined, so a majority of watch-combat towers in the Chechen mountains were also beacons.

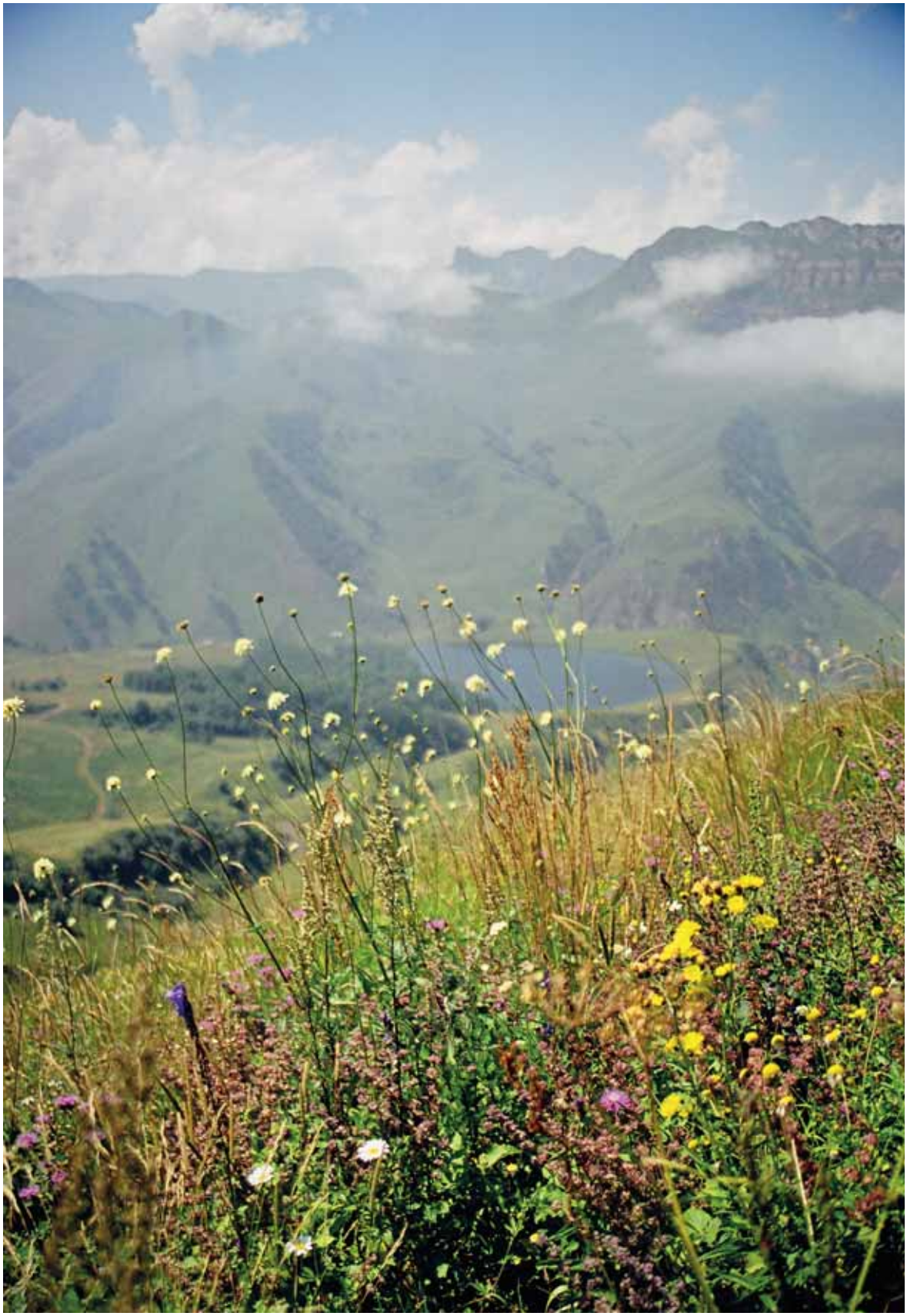
Apart from signalling, defence was the key function of combat towers. Naturally, its fortifying merits demanded especial attention.

They had blank walls, cut only by embrasures and observation slits, on the most vulnerable side. Doors and windows were on the side hardest of access. It was so hard to get to the door that it baffles one to think how the defenders entered the tower. There were no wooden parts on the tower exterior lest besiegers put them on fire.

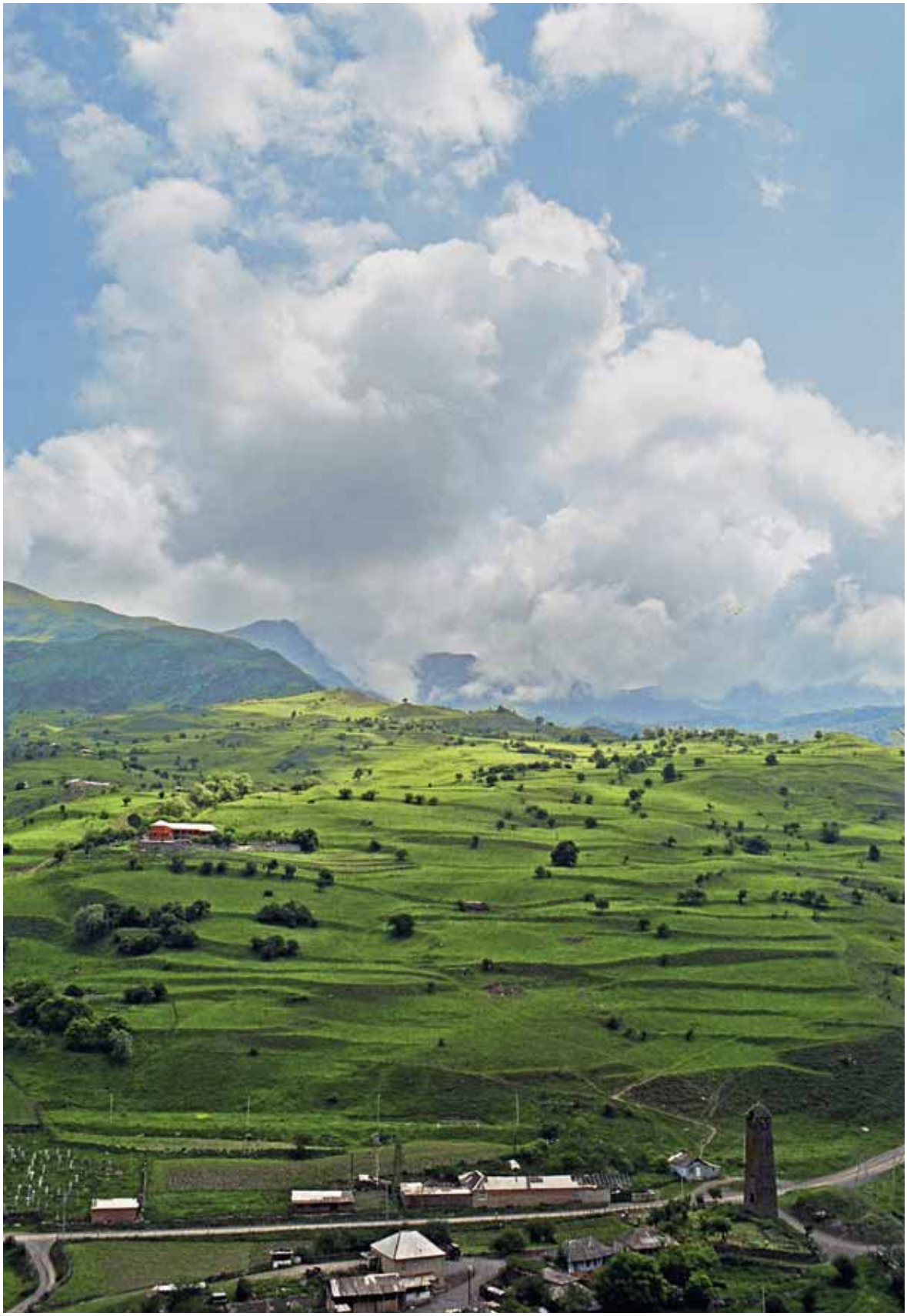
Songs and other folklore materials emphasise the master builder's role. As tradition has it, the master did not take part in the construction — he only told his assistants what to do as an architect should. Legends ascribe to him the honourable and extremely dangerous task of erecting the tsIurku stone that topped the step pyramidal roof. A ladder was tied to a machicolation on the outside for the master to reach the roof. It cost many masters their life. In case of success, the client gave the master a bull. The construction of a family tower cost the household 50 to 60 cows. Many researchers assume, with references to Ivan Shcheblykin[224], that tower builders did not need scaffolding. To all appearances, Shcheblykin meant that there was no scaffolding on the outside.

Interior scaffolds used in erecting the walls rested on cornerstones, in which corbels were made for the purpose. Stones and beams were lifted with a windlass known as *chIagIarg or zerazak*. Large stones — some weighing several

224 Щеблыкин И. П. Искусство ингушей в памятниках материальной культуры // Известия Ингушского научно-исследовательского института истории и культуры. Владикавказ, 1928. Вып. 1. С. 282.



Lake Galanchozh.



Tazbichi Gorge.

tonnes — were brought to the site by ox-driven sleds. There were many stone-dressing tools — the *berg* pick, the *varzap* (large hammer), the *jau* (small hammer), the *daam* chisel, etc. Mortar was made on the site. Sand or clay was admixed to it in localities where lime was expensive. To guess the necessary amount of mortar and so enhance the seismic resistance of the tower was considered the best test of construction expertise. Joints between stones were filled in with limewash for rain not to damage mortar.

Cornerstones served to join the walls together and as beam bases.

The ground floor ceiling of the later, 15th–17th century towers was a false vault, known as *nartol tkhov*, with two intercrossing rows of reinforcing ribs.

Special attention was paid to the dressing and finishing of the arcual stones of the doors and windows. They bore the name of *kurtulg*, "proud stone", and were frequently decorated with petroglyphs.

A majority of combat towers had five stories. Researchers differ in the interpretation of their functions. Some assume that the ground floor was used for livestock, while others say it was a prison for captives. As it really was, the ground floor was filled in with stone and earth to reinforce the tower bottom against ramming.

The use of the term "dwelling floor" in the combat tower context is also highly dubitable. The classical combat tower was not intended to withstand long sieges, unless it belonged to a complex of towers with a stone wall in between them — which was, in fact, a small fortress, as the one on Mount Bekhaila. Tower defenders had only a small stock of food and extremely limited arsenals, be it arrows, stone missiles or powder and shot in the later time. The function of the tower stories can be discerned from their smallness. A watchtower or a beacon could house four to six on outsentry duty. A combat tower as part of a complex could shelter a family that lived in the one or two dwelling towers it adjoined. Not a single storey of a combat tower was meant for a long sojourn, so they can hardly be considered dwellings. In this sense, legends connected with particular Chechen combat towers are thoroughly wrong when they say that their heroes lived in the towers.

All combat tower stories were equipped for observation and fighting.

Chechen and Ingush combat towers belong to one type, and differ only in size and the construction time. Depending on their age, they differ also in the sophistication of construction techniques and stone dressing, and in the grace of form.

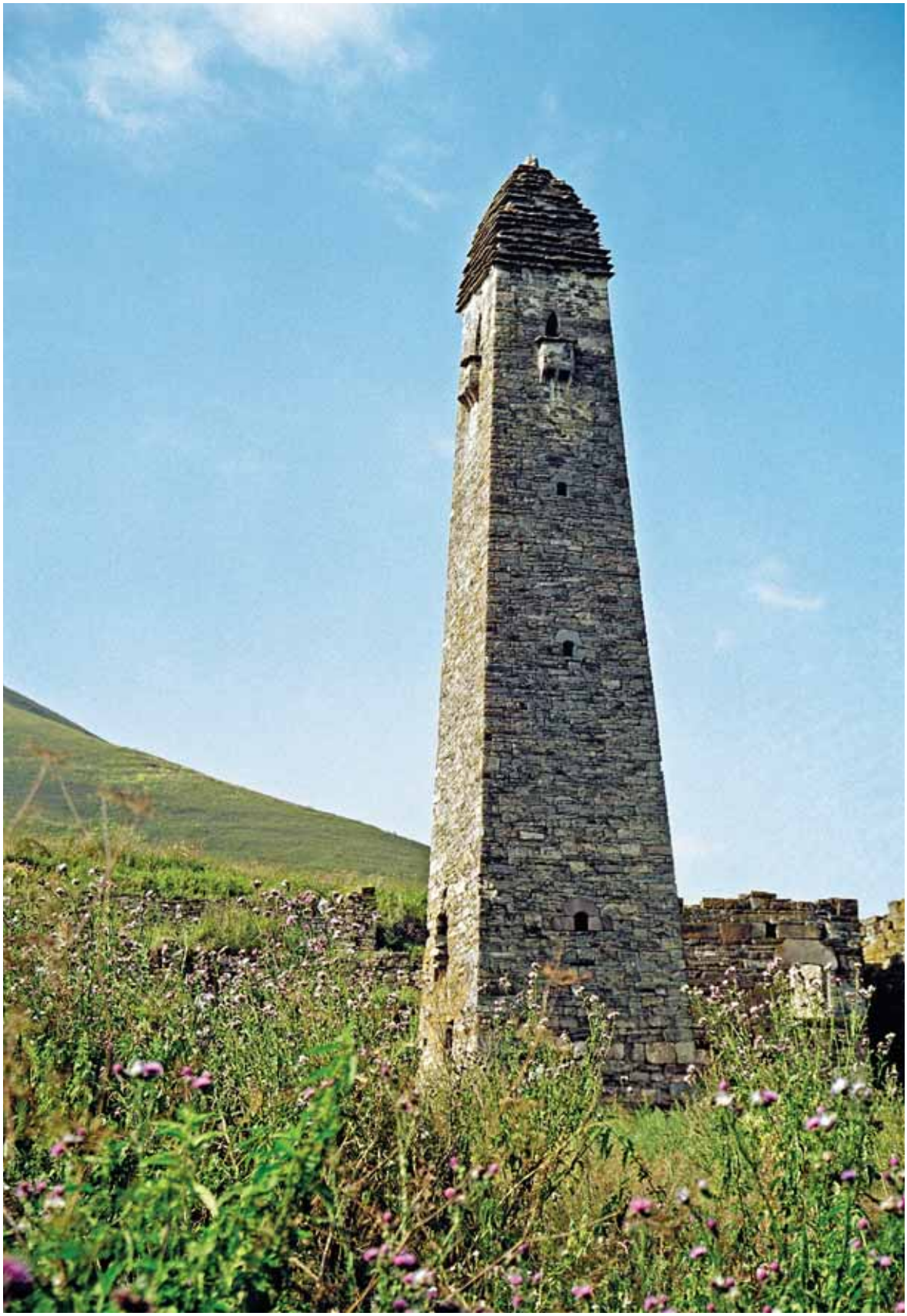
Chechen and Ingush combat towers divide in three basic groups according to the type of roof:

Flat roof towers;

Flat roof towers crenellated on the corners;

Step pyramidal roof towers.

Flat roof towers are the oldest. Some of them date to the 11th-13th centuries. They are slightly tapering, not very tall, and made of roughly hewn stone. Most of them had no more than four stories. A majority were beacons and watchtowers, or parts of citadels, e.g., the Bekkhaila. Some combat towers



with flat roofs were, however, tall and graceful, revealing rather a high level of construction techniques, as, for instance, the Khaskali.

Flat roof towers were usually built in places hard of access — in cliff tops and river promontories.

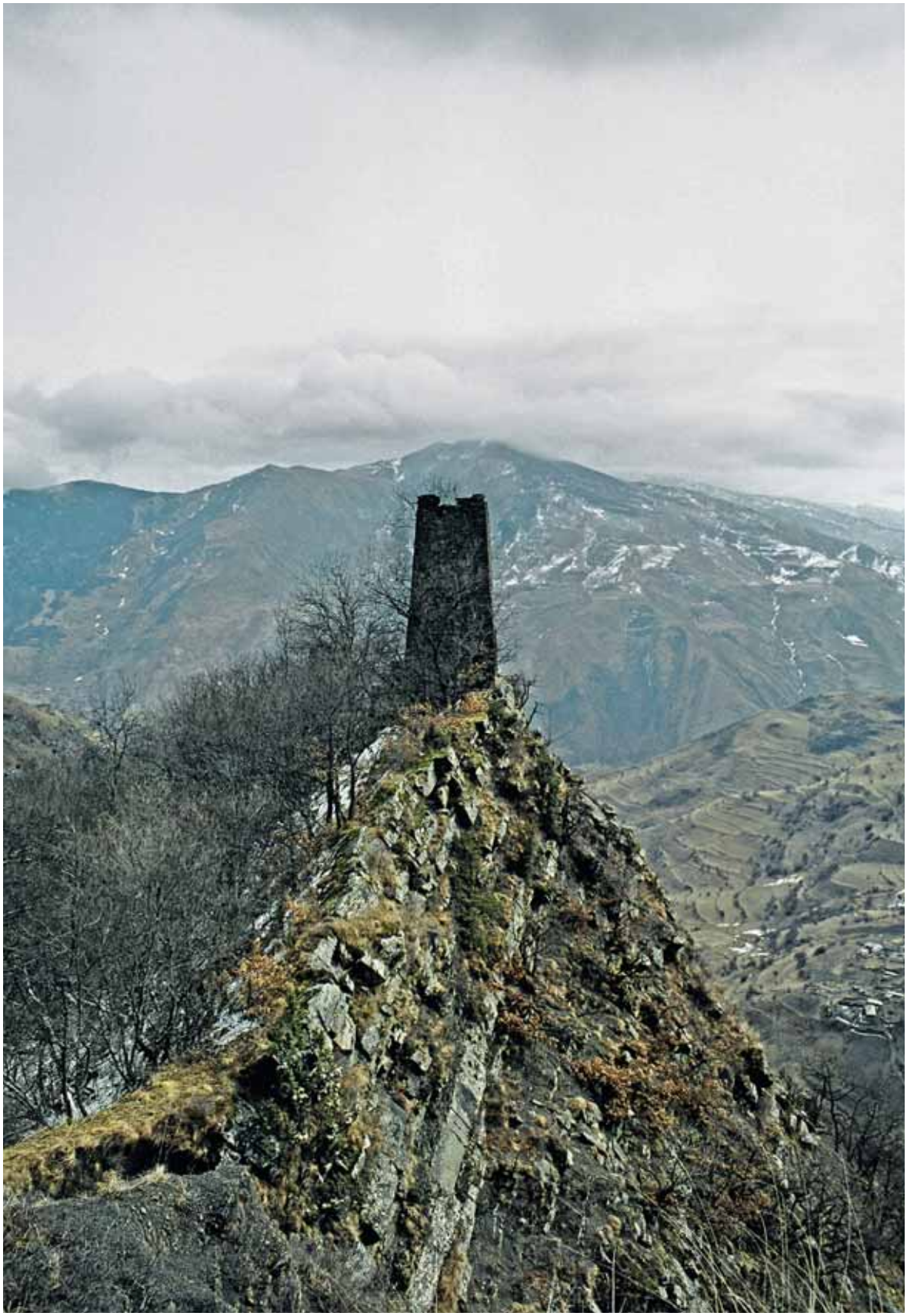
Towers of the second group, which can be dated to the 14th–16th centuries, are taller and more graceful, taper at a greater angle, and are made of better dressed stone. They were either beacons or watchtowers, or again, belonged to a complex. Few such towers have survived to this day in the mountains of Chechnya — in particular, the combat tower on the left Meshi-Khi bank in Melkhista or the Sandukhoi Gorge tower in the vicinity of Kkhi-Chu.

The tower of the Sandukhoi Gorge stands on a high cliff on the left bank of the Sharo-Argun, close to its source and near the ruins of the mediaeval Kkhi-Chu village. The tower protected the mountain pass from Tusheti to Sharoi, the land of Cheberloi and the Argun Gorge.

The four-storey tower, of a square layout (4.4 x 4.4 m), is 18 metres high and slightly tapering. Its roof and ceilings are gone. The walls orient on the cardinal points. The east, fasade wall has three window apertures at the first, second and third floors, each topped by a classic arch with a keystone. The machicolations in the top part of the wall are ruined completely — even their stone bases are gone. The tower is on a steep slope, so its east and west corners are at different levels. The west wall has five embrasures. The first and second floors have two each, and the third one. Stone bases are all that is left of the machicolations. The north wall, with well preserved machicolations, has six

▲ The combat tower of Guchan-Kale.

◀ The combat tower of Khaibakh.



embrasures in the lower part of the wall — by two in the first, second and third floors. The south wall has a door aperture leading to the first floor, topped by a classic arch with a keystone, which is partly gone. The window apertures are at the second and third floors. The machicolations are ruined completely.

Step pyramidal roof towers are the latest of all Chechen and Ingush combat towers. Many such towers are dated presumably to the 15th–17th centuries in Chechnya, and 17th–19th centuries in Ingushetia. Such towers were extremely seldom used as watchtowers or beacons. Their majority belong to castle complexes that became widespread in the Chechen highlands in the Late Middle Ages. The academic world knows such towers as the Vainakh because they appeared on the local soil and were widely used in Chechnya and Ingushetia. The few towers of that type to be found in Georgia were built by Vainakh masters.

The so-called classic Vainakh combat tower is the most perfect of Caucasian towers in the architectural and technical respects.

It is usually a structure of a square layout, made of well dressed stone with lime mortar. Usually of five stories, its first and top floor ceilings are stone vaults with decorative intercrossing ribs. The other stories have timber ceilings with beams whose ends rest on keystones.

Pyramidal roof towers are the most graceful of all due to their comparatively great height (up to 25 metres), small foundation (5 x 5 metres) and rather large taper angle.

The top floor has machicolations, usually of one type — small balconies of

▲ The tower of Khaskali.

▲ The tower of Nikaroi.

◀ The tower of Bekkhaila.

stone slabs resting on two, three or more consoles with no bottom. Large lancet apertures on the side of the machicolations were for shooting at besiegers.

There were embrasures and observation slits in every floor.

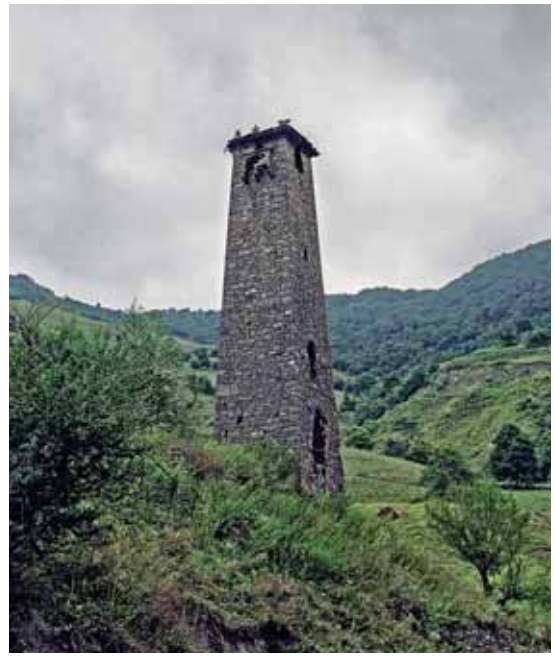
Many step pyramid roof towers had door apertures in every floor, each smaller than the one below proportionately to the tower taper.

Step pyramid roof combat towers were the peak achievement of Vainakh folk architecture. They were in full harmony with the landscape, always fitted well into the terrain, and merged with the locality. The combination of the small foundation with great height, the breathtaking grace, exquisite proportions, the step pyramid roof, which emphasised the upward orientation of the tower, its symmetrical machicolations, the austere harmony of geometrical decorative patterns — all that produces the impression of absolute completeness of form.

The Khacharoi combat tower, in the vicinity of the Gamkhi village, is one of the earlier step pyramid roof towers.

According to tradition, it was built at times when firearms were unknown (i.e., in the 13th or 14th century) and belonged to the entire village community. Local people say there were also several tower complexes in the mouth of the Khacharoi-Akhk River.

The tower of Gamkhi, of five stories with a step pyramid roof, was built with lime mortar. The ground floor door aperture is a lancet arch, with a timber beam at the level of the arch curve. The west wall has lancet arch windows in the ground and first floors. Machicolations



▲ The combat tower of Sharoi.

▲ The combat tower of Khacharoi.

◀ The combat tower of Shatoi.

protect fourth floor windows in all the four walls. All the walls are decorated with rhombic low reliefs at the third floor level. All ceilings were timber, resting on timber beams put on cornerstones. The tower was put on fire from within in 1944, and all ceilings were gone except one second floor beam.

The step pyramid roof is ruined with the exception of bottom-level stones. Observation slits in the walls were hardly used as embrasures. Every wall has two-section machicolations at the top floor level. The tower was especially impregnable on the steep slope south and east. It was surrounded by a stone wall of which only ruins have come down to this day.

According to an oral account by a man living in the gorge, there was a dwelling tower southwest of the combat tower. Its owner insulted the story teller's distant ancestor, who shot him dead with an arrow. A blood feud started, forcing the insulted archer and his kith and kin to flee to Cheberloi, from where their offspring returned several generations after. Once a kinsman of the man murdered long ago wounded the teller's great-great-grandfather in the knee with an arrow — at which the feud finished, and the fami lies reconciled. As for the age of the tower, the informant told that his father, who died at the age of 103, said that even his grandfather, who served under the banner of Imam Shamil and died at the age of 107, did not remember when it was built. According to him, the tower belonged to a signal system, and the combat towers of Dishni-Mokhk were visible from it. Anyway, it was built at the time when firearms were unknown, i.e., in the 13th or the 14th century.

The Sharoi combat tower belongs to later towers of that type. It is marked by superior construction technique and lavish decor. The tower is in the present-day village of Sharoi, the administrative centre of a district of the same name. It stands on the southeast edge of the promontory on which the ancient village of Sharoi was. The Zhogaldoi-Akhk rivulet skirts the promontory to the northeast. The south bank slopes in terraces down to the Sharo-Argun. Huge basalt plates in the upper part of the promontory make an oblong plateau, on which a majority of local mediaeval structures were built. The tower stands on a crag. Its walls are made of well dressed stones with lime mortar. It tapers slightly, at an angle of about 5 degrees.

The tower is of a square layout, 5.0 x 5.0 metres. Its extant part is 20 metres high. Four stories and a corner of the upper story are in a good state of preservation. The five storey tower, with a step pyramidal roof, was originally no less than 25 metres high. The roof and ceilings are ruined completely. The walls are oriented on the cardinal points. The south, fasade wall has two window apertures, in the second and third floors, two embrasures in the first floor and another two in the second. It is decorated with rhombic low relief patterns forming squares. The door aperture — a classic arch with a keystone — is in the west wall at the first floor level. It is partly destroyed, as is the second floor window above it. The blank north wall has two slit embrasures in the lower part of the first floor, and another two similar in the second floor. The small window aperture of the east wall is in the third floor, decorated above with three rhombic figures. There is an embrasure in the second floor, and two in the first. The tower stands on a slope, so its walls are of different heights.

As architectural forms were improving for millennia, the combat tower

was best suited for defence. Its height, of 20 to 25 metres, enhanced its defensive merits as, first, arrows shot from the ground lost their killing power. Second, the height facilitated defenders' all-angle fire and enhanced its distance. That was why the top floor was for archers, who were positioned at the apertures to cover the approaches to the tower, shooting from protective balconies.

When the enemy came close to the tower, boiling water and pitch were poured down from machicolations and, possibly, from the upper doors.

The tapering form allowed throw stones at the enemy, the missiles ricocheting to make their homing unpredictable.

Every storey of the tower had many embrasures and observation slits — which are hard to tell from each other. They could hardly be used by archers, though a majority of them appear also unlikely to be used for gunfire.

Gun slots, тоьрап Iuьrgash in Chechen, appeared in combat towers no earlier than the 16th century. They are much larger than observation slits, and slope down. Clearly, embrasures cannot provide the sole ground for tower dating because certain observation slits were later broadened to make gun slots without rebuilding the towers.

Village defence did not reduce to tower warfare. In fact, towers were strongholds and observation points[225]. Dwelling tower roofs, protective walls and the terrain were also used for defence. When a village possessed several combat towers, they were arranged in such a way as to surround the entire settlement without dead areas.

225 Виноградов В.Б., Чахкиев Д.Ю. Некоторые традиции военного искусства вайнахов в средневековье // Советская этнография, 1984, № 1. С. 98–110.

CASTLES AND CITADELS

The complexes of a combat tower and a dwelling one evolved into castles surrounded with stone walls as the social and class stratification of the Chechen mountain community went on.

Many authors assume that the various fortifications of the Chechen highland were owned by families and teips, and so were fruit of the clan system. Folk tradition and historical sources link castles and fortresses with the names of local feudal lords. Thus, folklore ascribes the construction of the fortress in the Kezenoi village to Aldam-Gezi, the vice-gerent of Cheberloi, sent there by the Mekh Kkhel (Nakh Supreme Council) from Nashkh. The Kezenoi fortress towers on a cliff with a wall almost 100 metres long around it. The fortress consists of a citadel, a cluster of dilapidated buildings, and a dwelling tower known as Daud's Tower. Its rectangular layout is close to a square. Its extant walls are seven metres high. Remnants of its central pillar and one of the cornerstones have come down to this day.

South of Daud's Tower is a mosque with a gravestone under its threshold. Local people say the man buried there was Surkho son of Ada, a Chechen hero who, according to tradition, routed Kabardian Prince Musost in battle and divided his lands between the poor. The village of Surkhokhi, in Ingushetia, was named after him. Surkho is also the protagonist of an *illi* song. Every religious festival and rite of Kezenoi was accompanied by brewing, in which the entire village community took part. Barley for festive beer was pestled in a ritual stone bowl in a mosque lean-to. A similar stone bowl can be seen close to a dwelling tower in the village of Tuga, in Maista.

The mosque was most probably built later than the other structures in the fortress, as borne out by their architecture. The dwelling tower samples the Vainakh style with a central pillar, cornerstones and the use of mortar, whereas the mosque is typical of Dagestani architecture. It was

most probably built later than the 17th century, i.e., after Cheberloi was finally Islamised.

The Aldam-Gezi Fortress was probably built in the 15th-16th centuries, when Chechens were migrating en masse to the east from the overpopulated eastern lands. As tradition has it, such migration was not spontaneous but arranged by the Mekh Kkhel.

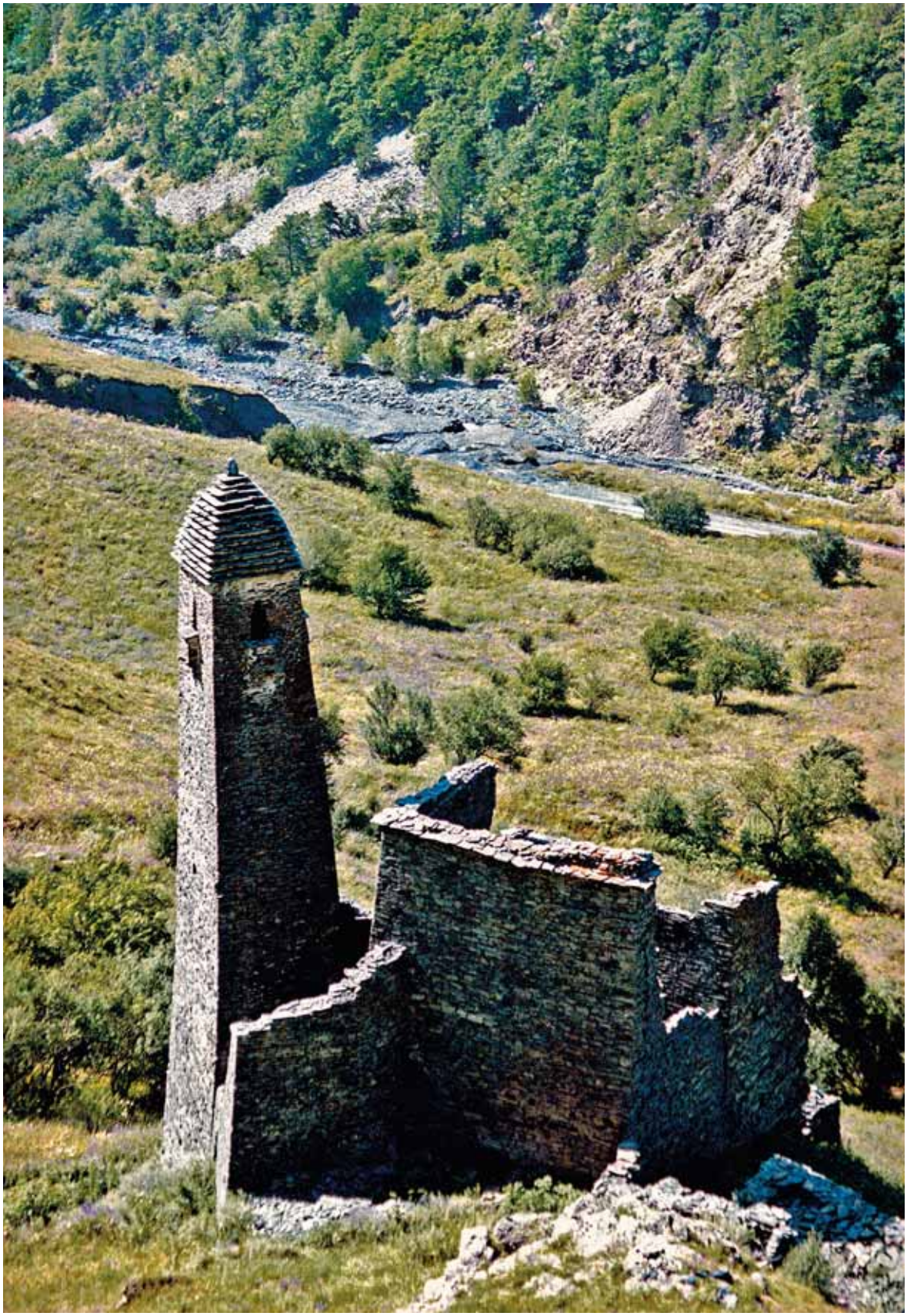
The castle of the Motsaroi village also belonged to an individual, not a clan. Built on a promontory made by the confluence of the Terloi-Akhk and the Nikaroi-Akhk, it consists of three dwelling towers and one combat tower, all adjoining each other. A high stone wall surrounds it. A similar castle of a dwelling tower and a combat one, with a walled-in courtyard, was in the village of Barkha not far from Motsaroi. It also belonged to a family, according to folklore. The Chechen word for castles of that type, with a defence wall, was glap or galan, while the word for "citadel" was glala. Practically every Chechen mountain village had such a castle or citadel.

Ruins of a mediaeval castle—two stories of a combat tower and parts of a stone wall — are in the village of Etkali on a steep slope.

The tower layout approaches a square with walls oriented on the cardinal points. The extant tower walls are up to 12 metres high. Judging by the two extant stories, the tower height must have exceeded 25 metres. Its roof was most probably step pyramidal, as can be assumed from the minaret roof of a nearby mosque.

The walls are made of carefully dressed stone with clay-lime mortar. Large

▲ The castle of Pogo.



stone blocks were used for the foundation. The extant upper part is made of smaller stones, also carefully fitted.

The Etkali tower differs from typical combat towers by door apertures being lower than theirs — in the ground floor. To all appearances, that was due to its fortification merits, with a high stone wall to its west. There are petroglyphs on the tower walls. Hewn in a stone block at the east wall corner are a rosette inscribed in a double circle (the solar symbol), a horizontal human figure with arms outstretched, and an unusual sign resembling a conventionalised rider. The north wall bears a petroglyph of a hand, palm pointing down, and a spiral solar sign.

The Etkali castle belonged to the system of beacons and watchtowers, and was connected visually with the combat towers of Dere, Khaskali and Kheldy and, via them, with the Bekkhaila complex and the Dishni-Baskhoi castle.

The construction of watch and dwelling towers and citadels started back in the Alanian era[226], and flourished especially in the 9th-11th centuries, while the construction of castles and tower complexes fell on the 15th-16th centuries, i.e., after Mongol-Tartar hordes and later Tamerlane's hosts left Chechnya — a time of its social and economic renaissance after nomad raids, disastrous for all Nakhs.

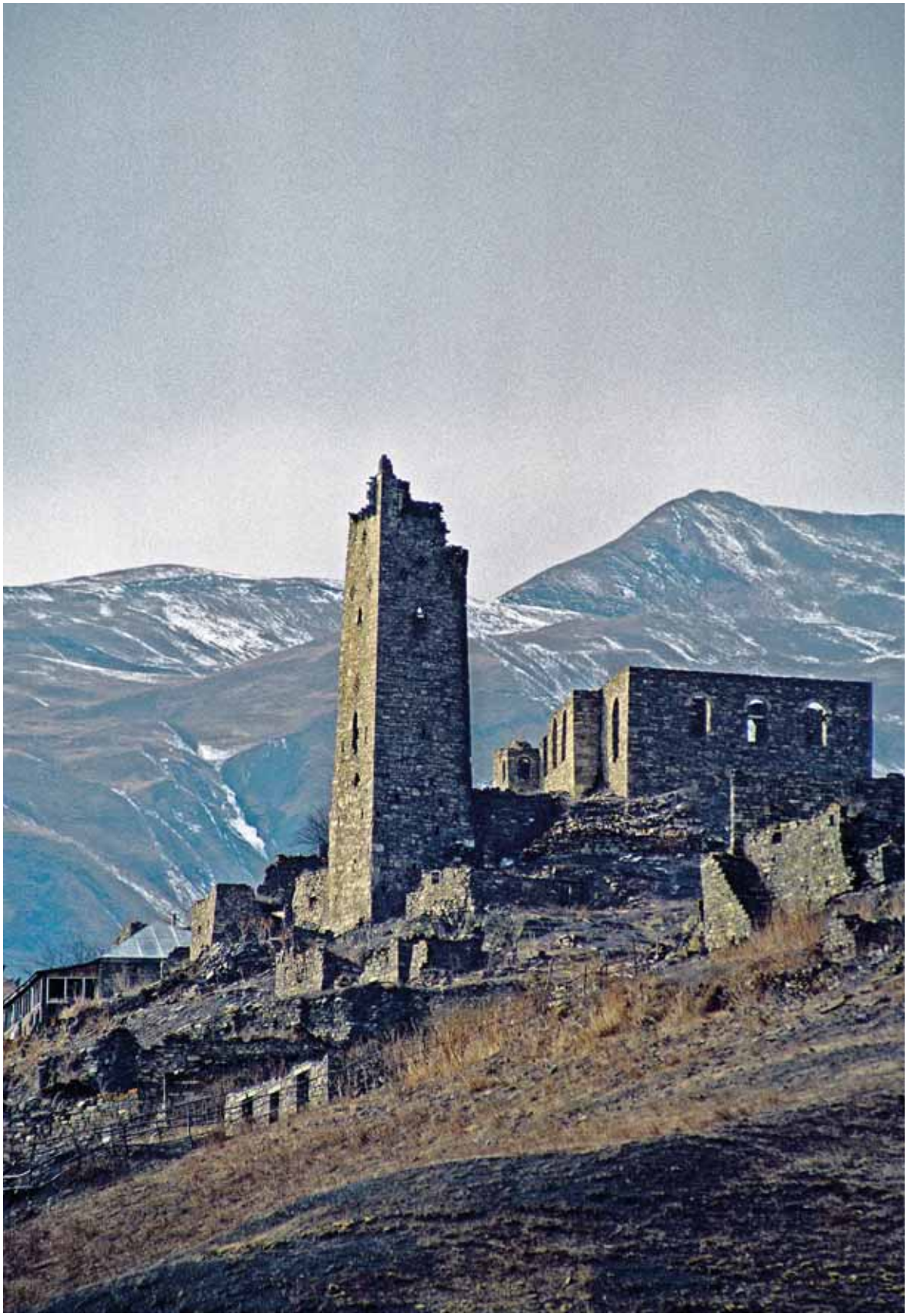
Alania was a state whose basic ethnos was the Nakh, ancestors of contemporary Chechens. The Mongol invasion robbed it of its might in the 13th century. The people of plains and foothills fled to the mountains though some stayed in the valleys of the Caucasian foothills. Tamerlane's campaigns not only

▲ The castle of Etkali.

▲ The castle of Motsaroi.

◀ The castle of Ikalchu.

226 Р.Д. Вайнахи и аланы. Баку, 2002. С.143.



The village of Sharoi.

destroyed the remains of their statehood but also undermined the ancient Nakh civilisation, and changed the map of the North Caucasus beyond recognition. The Nakh tribes of the West and Central Caucasus were ousted from localities they had inhabited for millennia or totally assimilated by the Iranian- and Turkic-speaking tribes. It is worth mentioning that the Alanians, or West Nakhs, began to be Turkified back in the 10th and 11th centuries, and a certain Turkic element was present among the Alanians of the Northwest Caucasus when Mongol-Tartars appeared in the North Caucasus.

Iranisation of the Central Caucasian Nakhs finished as late as the 15th century. A special role in that process belonged to Tamerlane's Iranian-speaking garrisons deployed at the key mountain passes of the Central Caucasus. The ancient Nakh substratum of the Central Caucasus preserved its material culture and anthropological type but lost its language. Such processes are not sporadic or endemic. Thus, the local population lost its language in the Roman provinces, not only those nearest to Italy but also in such remote ones as Dacia, and spoke Latin under the impact of Roman garrisons. However, local languages and dialects superimposed on the borrowed languages of the colonisers eventually to give rise to new, so-called Romance languages.

All that allows assume a certain unity of the Nakh and Osset material cultures existing through the 14th and 15th centuries, when the Nakh substratum was entirely assimilated by Iranian language elements. This unity was materialised in the ancient architectural forms. The so-called Vainakh tower culture took final shape in the 14th-15th centuries to create specific architectural forms that are never met in the other parts of the Caucasus.

The unconquerable Nakh survivors fled to the mountains with Tamerlane's invasion. Their habitat was limited by the Andi Mountain Range in the east, the Terek in the west, the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range in the south, and the Black Mountains in the north. That was where a new ethnic cultural and linguistic community appeared, which received the name of Vainakh in our days. A common material culture took final shape on its basis. Tower and vault architecture was one of its branches.

Certain Nakh tribes began to migrate within that area even during Mongol-Tartar and Tamerlane's invasions. Some moved east toward Ichkeria and Cheberloi, while others west to the Armkhi Gorge, and still others south to Georgia[227]. Active migration stopped toward the turn of the 16th century, when new territorial communities emerged in the Chechen and Ingush mountains. To all appearances, economic renascence started at that time to usher in drastic social stratification of the Chechen community. According to teptar family chronicles, certain Alanian feudal lords fled from Tamerlane to mountain gorges with their warriors and treasures to meet with the indigenous population, akin to them genetically and linguistically. Such meetings ended with fraternisation or clashes, as the case might be. Doubtless, that time brought a renovation to the feudal society of the Chechen highland, and formidable castles and citadels came as the materialisation of that renovation.

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227 Кобычев В.П. Расселение чеченцев и ингушей в свете этногенетических преданий и памятников материальной культуры // Этническая история и фольклор. М., 1977, С.165–181.

THE NETWORK OF WATCH SETTLEMENTS, CASTLES AND TOWERS IN THE CHECHEN MOUNTAINS

Watch settlements, castles and towers were built to control all key mountain passes, roads and small paths. According to archaeologist Umarov, these fortifications were parts of a system.

The Bazante tower settlement, topping a mountain range, straddled the road to the Chechen mountains from the north, along the Assa River, which turns to the Fortanga River valley at the village of Alkun. The entrance to the Fortanga valley was guarded by the tower settlements of Bamut and Gandal-Basa. The crossing of the two roads was protected by the formidable fortified settlement of Tsecha-Akhk. The mountain passes in the Assa-Fortanga interfluve between Bamut and Tsecha-Akhk were guarded by the tower settlements of Lower and Upper Dattykh and the Egichozh fortress.

The roads and mountain passes of the Akki-Mokhk Gorge were straddled by the tower complexes of Mizir-Gala, Gazha-Gala, Devnechu, and Itir-Kale, while the settlements of Vougi and Khage guarded the approaches to Akki from south and west.

The mountain gorges of the Nashkh area, east of Akki, are crossed by two streams — the Gekhi and the Roshnya. A ruined fortification has been found in the Roshnya Gorge, on Mount Mushi-Duk, on the northern outskirts of Nashkh, whose gorges are protected by the impregnable tower complexes of Motsaroi, Khaibakh, Charmakh and Tiist.

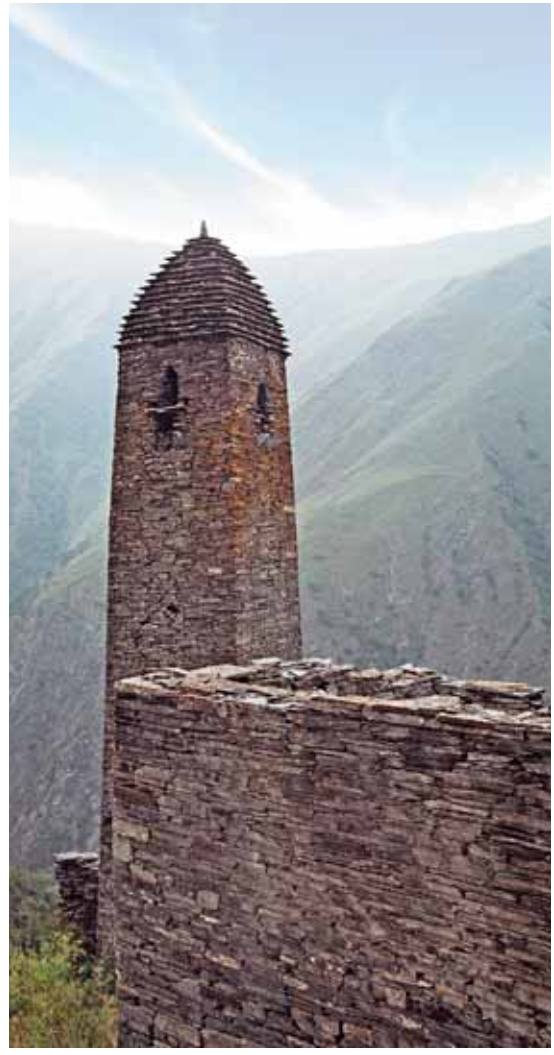
The Kei-Mokhk Gorge, southwest of Nashkh, is crossed by a road from Galanchozh Lake to Melkhista via Akki. The gorge is fortified by the settlements of Upper and Lower Kei, Meshtara and Geshi. The road goes on from Mesha, the westernmost settlement of Melkhista, to Tsoi-Pede, its heart. The castles and fortifications of the Mesha, Ikalchu, Sakhana and Korotakh settlements stretch along the road in the Meshi-Khi River valley.

Two combat towers have survived in Tsoi-Pede. A defence wall adjoins one of them, while the other is part of a castle-type complex. That is where the road forks to mutually opposite directions — to Khevsureti in the northeast, and to the Argun Gorge along the Chanti-Argun.

Terloi-Mokhk, north of Melkhista, is criss-crossed by the gorges of the Bavloi-Akhk, Terloi-Akhk and Nikaroi-Akhk rivers. The routes from Nashkh, Akki-Mokhk and Yalkharoi to the central and eastern parts of the Chechen highland were in those gorges, straddled by the castle complexes of Motsaroi, Nikaroi and Bavloi. The Kird-Bavnash castle — owned by Prince Berg-Bich, according to tradition — protected the exit from the Terloi Gorge and the road to Georgia along the left Argun bank.

The Argun Gorge, one of the longest in the North Caucasus, was the best fortified in the area because a route that acquired even greater importance than the Daryal on many occasions stretched along the Argun to connect Georgia with the mountain parts of Chechnya.

The entrance to the gorge was barred by a tower complex near the village of Chishki, which survived up to the middle of the 19th century. According to Adolph Berger, the road from the Vozdvizhensky Fort to Shatoi "starts in a plain sloping slightly to the Argun bank. Three versts after its start, it enters extremely dense brush of small shrubs that stretches up to the path leading to the tower, built to shoot at the rise. Once you negotiate it, the road goes sloping mildly into the gorge. It goes down next to another tower, which protects a wooden bridge across the Chanty-Argun, from which opens the panorama of the village of Bashen-Kala, which spreads on a mountain slope. From



▲ A tower complex in Maista.

the village up to the Chanty-Argun, there is a tower in every verst of the way."

Combat towers, beacons and watchtowers stood as far as the border with Georgia, marked by the tower settlement of Shatili. Chechens knew it as Shedala, and its population as Shedaloi. Chechens regarded those people as more of Vainakh than Georgians. The Sharo-Argun, an east tributary of the Argun, crosses the network of mountain ranges south to north to form the Sharo-Argun Gorge, which was densely populated until the deportation of 1944. The north entrance to the gorge was protected by tower fortifications at the Dai village. The Sharoi village fortifications — three combat towers and several dwelling towers — were the principal in the gorge, straddling the roads from the Argun Gorge to Sharoi, Cheberloi, Kakheti and Dagestan.

Cheberloi, in the southeast of Chechnya, was fortified no less formidably. It possessed a system of fortifications and tower complexes at the villages of Kezenoi, Makazhoi, Kharkaroi and Khoi to control the roads to Sharoi, Ichkeria and Dagestan.

Kezenoi was the strongest of all local fortifications — an impregnable mediaeval stronghold on a cliff. According to tradition, it belonged to Aldam-Gezi, the legendary vice-gerent of Cheberloi, sent from Nashkh[228]. The village of Khoi was on the Chechen-Dagestani border. Indicatively, its name means "guards". A combat tower on its outskirts — formerly part of a fort — has alone survived to this day of the entire village.

Maista, the hardest of access and the best fortified part of Chechnya, was protected by towers from all sides. It was the capital of the country and the venue of the Mekhk Kkhel in the 12th and 13th centuries, when the war on nomads was at its peak. The tower settlement of Tsa-Kale, with its impregnable castle complex and a mighty wall, protected the gorges of Maista from east. The road to Georgia was straddled by the Puoga and Tuga tower complexes, and the lowland path along the Maistoin-Erk bank by the formidable castle complex Lower Tuga. The Vaserkel fortress towered on a cliff in the heart of Maista. It was destroyed during a war with Persia in the Early Middle Ages to leave the ruins and foundations of more than twenty combat and dwelling towers. Vaserkel controlled all roads across Maista from east to west and from north to south. It was also the principal religious centre of the Chechen mountains.

Towers and tower fortifications also protected the side gorges of streams flowing into the Argun from left and right. More than thirty combat and dwelling towers and castles have come down to this day in the Tazbichi Gorge.

The roads of Ichkeria, the easternmost part of Chechnya, were also protected by towers. The best-known of the local towers were near the villages of Kharachoi, Tsa-Vedeno, Serzhen-Yurt and Kurchaloi. Thus, the entire mountain part of Chechnya was controlled by a network of watch settlements, castles and towers in the Late Middle Ages to refute historians' widespread opinion of it as a number of mutually disconnected mountain areas and communities. As things really were, this sophisticated defence system could be created only by a nation possessing full-fledged statehood.

228 Марковин В.И. Архитектурные памятники чеченского исторического общества Чаберлой // Археологические памятники Чечено-Ингушетии. Грозный, 1979. С. 95.

The castle of Meshi.

THE GREAT SIGNAL SYSTEM

The oldest signal systems might be dated to the New Stone Age, when man was leading struggle for survival not only with Nature but also with his neighbours.

Natural elevations—mountain, cliff and tree tops — were used as beacons for a long time before special structures began to be built. Messages were transmitted by sign systems, of which the bonfire was the most widespread. Construction of timber beacons began in the era of the nascent statehood. No traces of ancient signal systems, with token exceptions, are left in the original Nakh-populated area from the Dagestani borders to the Kuban River.

In present-day Chechnya, on the contrary, not only occasional parts but also complexes of the signal system are extant. That system began to emerge, most probably, in the Alanian era (9th–13th centuries). To all appearances, the system was rebuilt and rearranged in the 12th–15th centuries, when Alanians, or Nakhs of the plains, fled into the mountains from the invasions of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. The fugitives established a new state formation — an association of territorial communities, free societies and small fiefdoms. Though the formation did not possess all the attributes of the classic state (a regular army and ruling and punitive institutions maintained on fiscal revenues), it was nevertheless a state.

First, it possessed a supreme ruling body, the Mekhk Kkhel, in which all the association members were represented. Second, the Mekhk Kkhel was convened regularly, no rarer than twice a year, and more often whenever necessary, to declare war and peace, regulate the adats (customary law), muster the armed forces, and collect taxes for road construction and fortification. That was when the building of the Great Signal System finished. It brought together the territorial communities and fiefs of Chechnya, scattered about mountain gorges.

The system fully deserves its name of Great because it wholly incorporated Chechnya, including almost all gorges and villages starting with the left Terek bank and finishing with the beacon of Jarie, the southernmost Chechen village on the Georgian border. Almost all beacon/combat towers had a flat roof. Many of such roofs were crenellated in the corners. M.A. Ivanov refers to beacons with a stone terrace in front of the top floor window for bonfires. It was villagers' duty to build and maintain a beacon near their settlement, and recruit several men for regular watch duty. In case of war danger, signals were passed by fire at night and by smoke in the daytime. The Chechen phrase kIur ba has come down to this day. With the literal meaning of "give out smoke", it means "flee from danger" nowadays.

The Great Signal System survived into the beginning of the 19th century. Many of its beacons were pulled down during the Caucasian War. A part of its elements are extant even now, and references to many others are found in historical documents and 19th century publications. There is reliable information about a watchtower and a beacon on a mountain range in the vicinity of Khankala, whose name (KhangIala in Chechen) means "watchtower". A beacon stood south of it on a mountain slope at the entrance to the Argun Gorge, and another slightly below. Russian troops dismantled both as the Vozdvizhenskaya Fortress was being built in the second half of the 19th century. Farther on, there was a tower to every verst, according to Adolph Berger's testimony[229]. Many of those towers were destroyed during the Caucasian War, and some dismantled by local people to build new houses.

▲ Nashkh.

229 Берже А. Чечня и чеченцы. Элиста, 1990. С. 33.

A major part of the signal system has survived to this day in the upper reaches of the Argun. That part starts with the Shatoi tower, restored in the late 1980s. It has visual connection with the Nikhaloi tower, which, in its turn, connects with the Bashen-Kala tower, built into the rock close to the top of a cliff. The Bashen-Kala tower has visual connection with the Guchan-Kale tower, which connected with the Chinnakhoi tower. The latter connected with the beacon at the entrance of the village of Itumkale, connected with the Pakoch castle complex and the Bekkhaila citadel. The two latter connected with the signal systems of the side gorges. The combat towers of the Dere village had visual connection with the Khaskali and Etkali towers, the Baskhoi castle and the Dishni-Mokhk combat towers, which connected with the Khacharoi combat tower and the beacons of the side gorges — in particular, the beacons in the upper reaches of the Argun Gorge.

The interior of the Chechen highland possessed its own signal systems connected with the beacons of other gorges. Thus, all tower settlements of Maista — Tsa-Kale, Vaserkel, Puoga and Tuga — were interconnected, while the beacon on the top of the Maista Mountain Range connected with the Korotakh castle on Mount Kore-Lam in Melkhista and, through it, with the entire signal system of the Argun Gorge. The topography of villages in the Terloi-Mokhk Gorge was structured similarly. Those villages connected with the other beacons on the Argun banks through the Kird-Bavnash fort. The signal systems of Nashkh, Peshkh and the other western areas of the Chechen highlands were brought together by the beacon on Mount Vargi-Lam, which towered above the nearby mountains, and visually connected with the Kei, Akki and Yalkharoi combat towers.

▲ The village of Tuga.

▲ The village of Pogo.

◀ The village of Vaserkel.

◀ At the source of the Argun.

The villages of Melkhista connected through the Korotakh castle on Mount Kore-Lam, from which a panorama opens of the entire Meshi-Ikh river valley with the villages of Sakhana, Ikalchu and Tertie, and the village of Meshi on the Ingush border, where a formidable complex of one combat and two dwelling towers survives to this day. Also visible from Mount Kore-Lam are the towers of the village of Tsoi-Pede, destroyed in the Middle Ages, the Jarie beacon on its high cliff, and the ruined tower of the Doza village on a mountain top on the right Argun bank. The villages of Sharoi and Cheberloi belonged to one system. Intermediate towers connected them with the beacons of the Argun Gorge and side gorges adjoining it. A system of beacons also connected Ichkeria with the other parts of Chechnya. Ruins of a beacon are extant in the vicinity of Kurchaloi. It had visual connection with the beacons on the top of the Kachkalyk Mountain Range and on a crest by the side of an old road from Kurchaloi to Isti-Su. The existence of elements of the system in the Terek basin is borne out by the extant foundations of beacons in Tashkala and on the Terek Mountain Range. Thus, the watch and signal systems of the Chechen mountains acquired classic perfection in the 14th and 15th centuries. Dispersed territorial communities and free societies certainly could not create such a defence system, with its precise plan and layout that took every relevant factor into account—the terrain, and the strategic and tactical importance of particular roads and mountain passes. A strong state alone could cope with the task. We remember the existence and power that state possessed for a certain period of time thanks to the surviving parts of the Great Signal System, the man-made miracle of the Chechen mediaevality.

▲ The tower of Bekkhaila.

◀ The combat tower on the Meshi-Khi bank.

Conclusion

Chechen culture has travelled a long and tortuous road. It is determined by many factors — geography, the terrain, the intensity of cultural contacts with the neighbouring nations, and the extent of involvement in global history.

Crossed by the shortest routes connecting ancient land-tilling civilisations and the nomadic East European world, the Caucasus was at the crossroads of diverse cultural influences. Chechen material culture, mythology and pagan worship retain traces of kinship with the earliest civilisations of Europe, West Asia and the Mediterranean.

Such links are even more visible in the studies of mediaeval Chechen pagan cults and myths, which reveal no end of parallels with the gods and heroes of the great Ancient civilisations.

Archaeological finds reveal close links of the original population with the civilisations of Mesopotamia, the earliest East European archaeological cultures, Scythians and Khazars.

Intrinsic to mediaeval Chechen culture are material and intellectual features of two symbiotic and ethnically related cultures — the mountain and the Alanian. Mediaeval folk stone architecture was the peak of material achievements of that culture.

Chechen religious culture came, at different stages of history, under the powerful impact of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. It has developed under Muslim influence since the 17th century.

Chechens might have had no regular writing before the middle of the 17th century— it did not prevent them from creating a sublime and sophisticated ethical system, which it is

no exaggeration to qualify as one of the world spiritual treasures. The Konakhalla code, the quintessence of Chechen ethics, is a messianic system of moral values, which determines the morals of the "noble man" who shoulders the responsibility for his people and land to sacrifice his all without any retribution.

Chechen culture has developed under the Russian impact since the early 20th century. That was when Cyrillic-based Chechen writing was elaborated, and professional literature, art and theatre emerged.

The peaks of world culture — Shakespeare's plays, Lorca's poetry, Marquez' prose, Dali's paintings and Beethoven's music, to mention but few — became part of the Chechen mentality through Russian cultural mediation.

Chechen culture has come through many ups and downs due to historical developments, the general cultural level in the region, and the destructive impact of wars and epidemics.

Despite all its drama, Chechen culture has preserved its democratic content and humanism permeating it.

Today, the Chechen community is passing from a comprehensive crisis to moral and cultural renascence. All the important is its turn to its sources, to ancestral heritage in the quest for ethical and aesthetic ideals. In this sense, the survival of ethnic cultural diversity, with the entire range of genres, and the opportunity to pass the most authentic forms of culture to the future generations is the pivotal factor of further progress of Chechen culture, and of the Chechen people's all-round and fruitful participation in the extensive intercultural dialogue.

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The present project, implemented with UNESCO support, is among the first attempts to offer a monographic study on the diversity of Chechen culture to the public-at-large.