

Circassians, Apkhazians, Georgians, Vainakhs, Dagestanians – peoples of old civilization in the Caucasus

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The general title of this paper reflects a desire to present the great historical past of the indigenous (autochthonous) peoples of the Caucasus, which in most cases is misrepresented in early Russian historiography when the Caucasians were considered to be peoples without culture and history. It was not just about the North Caucasians, it was also relevant to Georgians in the 19th century (and later) [EGH 1970: 5–6]. It may be recalled that the second half of the 20th century is the time when the progressive circles of the Georgian-Caucasian community strengthened their interest towards the historical past of their peoples, native languages, literature and culture. And naturally the tsarism, which aimed at Russifying all the peoples of the Russian empire, at liquidating their national features, did not welcome the process of national self-consciousness in the Caucasus. Articles were published where the national pride of the Georgians and Caucasians was insulted, claiming that these peoples had neither history nor culture, and that they had acquired their culture and script from others later. For a long-time tsarism and Soviet ideology (on which the official ideology of modern Russia is still based and still continues aggressively) proved that the conquest and subjugation of the Caucasian peoples had been implemented for their well-being, that Russia had introduced these *chuzezemtsy* (‘uncultured peoples’) to the Russian culture and integration with Russia as a voluntary act (though it was, in fact, an occupation/annexation).

It is a well-known fact that when the great Czech scholar, the first decipherer of the Hittite inscriptions, Bedřich Hrozný visited Tbilisi University in 1936, he remarked that the issue of his research – the problem of Hittites – was attracting direct patriotic interest in Tbilisi. He, of course, did not understand what vital importance and ground this had for the interest of the peoples of Georgia and the Caucasus, who had been insulted by Russians, and he was even a little surprised by this...

I do not intend to discuss politics in this paper, but I will outline the main conclusions about the cultural past of the Caucasian peoples.

Beginning from a little distant past and comparing the linguistic and genetic (Klyosov and Rozhanskii, 2012; Lacan et al, 2011; Klyosov, 2013) data of the Caucasian peoples with each other, it turns out that the ancient population of the Caucasus was formed on the basis of local haplogroups (**G**, **J** with different subgroups). These haplogroups also appear in Europe's ancient tombs and partly in the mountainous region as one of the main constituents of the ancient population. The same haplogroup occurs in Etruscans (Italy), Anatolia and the Middle East (Mesopotamia). The question arises – why? One answer could be that in the ancient period, in the 6th and 5th millennia BC, there was an Iberian-Caucasian linguistic and ethnic unity with **G** and **J** genetics that stretched from present-day Spain and France via Central and South Europe and Anatolia to the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. It was just here where the genetically and linguistically kindred peoples (together with the Chinese and Egyptians) created the first civilizations of the earth. These include: Sumer, Mittani; Huri; Urartu, Hatti; Hatusa, Etruria; and Iberia, which is clearly supported by ancient language data. Today, it can be said that Georgians stem from this ancient civilization, assuming their historical-genetic link with Sumerians. At the same time, it has been accepted and universally recognized that comparison of linguistic data with each other is the best way to prove the kinship of peoples. This comparison was carried out by a great Georgian scholar Mikhako Tsereteli a hundred years ago (Tseretheli, 1913). Later on the German kartvelologist Heinz Fähnrich studied this issue in depth and concluded that Sumerian and Georgian, as well as Sumerians and Georgians, are kindred peoples and have a common origin. Heinz Fähnrich created an extensive list of Georgian-Sumerian common words (Fähnrich, 1981). I have added a few new entries to the famous list (Table 1):

Table 1. List of Georgian-Sumerian common words

Sumerian		Kartvelian
AR	‘walking’	<i>ar-</i> , <i>si-ar-ul-i</i> , <i>i-ar-e</i>
AG	‘to build’	<i>ag-eba</i>
AGARA	‘house’	<i>agara-k-i</i> ‘holiday/country house’
GAL	‘great’	<i>Zan gval-</i> ‘total’, <i>Svan gal</i> ‘great’
EME	‘language’	<i>ena</i>
ENGUR	‘large river’	<i>engur-i</i>
UB-UR	‘woman’s breast’	<i>ub-e</i>
US-	‘filling’	<i>vs-eb-a</i>
DIH	‘soil’	<i>tiqa</i> ‘clay’
TAN	‘bright’	<i>ten-d-eb-a</i>
ZID	‘being on/upon’	<i>zeda</i> ‘upper’
SU//SHU	‘hand’	<i>sve</i> ‘wing’
PIRIG	‘lion’	<i>brangv-</i> ‘big bear’
SHENN-UR	‘medlar’	<i>šind</i> ‘dogwood’
SHA	‘middle’	<i>šua</i>
GUDU	‘wailing and keening’	<i>god-eb-a</i> ‘mourning’
KIM	‘doing’	<i>km-n-a</i> , <i>i-km</i>
LIK	‘dog’	<i>lekv-i</i> ‘puppy’...

Like the Georgians, ancestors of the Circassian people formed the ancient states in Anatolia, such as *Hatti* / *Hattusa*, which is preserved in the name of the subethnos of the modern Circassians *Khatu-ka*, *Pakhuva* (preserved in modern *Pakh(u)a*) and *Abeshla* (preserved in the Apkhazian-Abaza subethnic name *Abaza*). Prominent scholars Jan Braun (1994, 1998, 2002) and Vyacheslav Ivanov (1985), who argued for the kinship of Circassians with Hattians, expressed the view that the language of the Hattians, which is linked with the Circassian linguistic world, plays the same role in the Caucasiology, as Sanskrit in the study

of Indo-European languages and culture. Here I offer some examples from the Hattian-Apkhazo-Adyghian common vocabulary to demonstrate this genetic kinship (Table 2):

Table 2. List of Hattian-Apkhazo-Adyghian common vocabulary

Hattian		Apkhazo-Adyghian
<i>pšun</i>	‘soul’	<i>pša-psu</i>
<i>r-una</i>	‘house’	<i>una</i>
<i>malhip</i>	‘good, kind’	<i>malku</i> ‘kindness’, Rus. <i>dobro</i> (добро)
<i>huca-ša</i>	‘blacksmith’	<i>ɣwəčă</i> ‘iron’
<i>pinu</i>	‘child’	<i>binu</i>
<i>wu-laš-ne</i>	‘bread’	Abaz. <i>raz-ra</i> ‘to bake’
<i>waašul</i>	‘abundance’	Abaz. <i>Psəl-a</i> ‘fatty’, <i>psəl-a-ra</i> ‘fatness’ Apkhaz. <i>a-psəl-a</i> ‘fatty’
<i>ta-riš</i>	‘horse’	Abaz. <i>tə-šə</i> ‘horse’
<i>wašḥ-ab</i>	‘god’ (pluralia tantum)	Ub. <i>wašx-wa</i> ‘god’

The genetic link of Ingushs–Chechens–Dagestanians with Hurrian-Urartu, Elamite languages and peoples has been convincingly been demonstrated by Diakonov-Starostin (1986) and Melikishvili (1964). Thanks to them, the Nakh-Dagestanian traces are observed in the materials and languages of the peoples of the ancient world’s civilization. For instance, it is known that in the area of *Zagros*, of modern Iran, there was a state *Andia*, which resembles the word *Andi*, which is still preserved in the name of one of the Dagestanian ethnic groups *Andis*, as well as their *Andi* language. The geographical name (state) of the *Nairi-Urartu* period *Khabkhi* is likely preserved in the name of the Ingush community *Khamkhi*. Such similarity is supported when the core vocabulary elements of the mentioned languages are found to correspond to each other. To demonstrate this I offer some vocabulary parallels in Table 3.

Table 3. List of Hurrian-Urarturian and Nakh-Dagestanian vocabulary

Hurrian- Urarturian		Nakh	Dagestanian
<i>šin</i>	‘two’	<i>šin</i>	<i>šinu</i> ‘two-forked hay-fork’
<i>icxar</i>	‘building’, ‘kitchen’	<i>cxar</i> ‘shed’	Av. <i>caxur</i> ‘granary / barn’
<i>vaši</i>	‘men’	Bats. <i>vaser</i> ‘men’	Arch. <i>bošor</i> ‘man’ Kar. <i>nixu</i> ‘paying’,
<i>niyari</i>	‘dowry/trousseau’	<i>max</i> ‘tax/fee/dues’	‘compensation / reimbursement’
<i>šal</i> (ardi)	‘moon’	<i>sa</i> ‘light’	Darg. <i>šala</i> ‘light’
<i>anšu</i>	‘donkey’	Chech. <i>ans</i> ‘donkey’	Arch. <i>noš</i> [ERG <i>njš</i> -i ‘horse’
<i>šani</i>	‘container’	Chech. <i>šan</i> ‘tray, salver’	Akhv. <i>šežo</i> ‘pan’, Did. <i>šižu</i> ‘saucer’
<i>ješə</i>	‘I’	<i>as//az</i> ‘I’ [ERG]	Tab. <i>uzu</i> ‘I’
<i>kate</i>	‘barley’	Chech. <i>köta</i> ‘flax’	Tsakh. <i>xəta</i> , Rut. <i>xəṭ</i> ‘barley’

It can also be considered as a successful attempt supporting the kinship of Etruscans and Basques with the Kartvelian-Caucasian world and in the footsteps of renowned scholars Arnold Chikobava, Rismag Gordeziani, I also believe that the Basque and Etruscan languages are not related to a separate Iberian-Caucasian language but they formed an independent branch in the period of Proto-Iberian-Caucasian linguistic-ethnic unity. In the framework of the Basque-Caucasian theory I would also like to raise the problem of defining the place in modern Caucasiology of the Burushaski language, which is spread today on the border of Pakistan-India. As a preliminary remark, the Burushaski language also forms a separate branch in the Proto-Iberian-Caucasian parent language family, which I think is clearly supported by the common linguistic material given below in (1-12) (Bengtson, 2011; Bengtson, 2017):

1. Basque (Bizkaian) *uzen* (u-zen=u-sen) ‘name’ : Bur. *sén-* ‘to say, name’; *sénas* ‘named’ ~ Cauc: Kartv., Laz *o-sin-ap-u* ‘speaking, talking’;
2. Basque *pimpirina* ‘butterfly’ (< -*pir-pir-), Burushaski *pherán* (Y) ‘moth’ ~ *phirán* (H, N) ‘spider’ ~ Cauc: Chechen *polla* ‘butterfly’, Andi *pera* ‘bee’: Kartv., Zan *par-pal-* ‘butterfly’;
3. Basque *harri*, Bur. *xóro* ‘stone’ ~ Cauc: C.-Kartv. **qir-* ‘stone’, Geo. *xir-*, *xir-aṭ-i* ‘stony soil’ (Saba), Zan (Megr.) *xəṛə* ‘stony soil’ ~ Nakh *qer* ‘stone; rock’ ~ Circ. (Kab.) *qər* ‘rock’ ~ Dag. (Gogob.) *qeru* ‘sandstone’, *песчаник*;
4. Burushaski *bácin* (H, N) ‘shank’; ‘(animal’s) hind leg above the hock’ ~ Cauc: Avar *púrc:i* ‘ham’, Tabasaran *bac* ‘paw’: Geo. *panc-i*, Laz *penče* ‘paw’;
5. Burushaski *čardá* / *čardé* ‘stallion’, Apkh.-Ab. *čada* ‘ass, donkey’, ~ Cauc: Kartv. **ced-*, *mo-ced-i*, Svan (< - Zan) *čaž* < -*čaž-i* ‘horse’;
6. Burushaski *bundó* (H, N) ‘mountain pasture, mountain grove; boulder; wild, mountain’ ~ *bun*, (pl.) *bundó* ~ *bunjó* (Y) ‘boulder’ ~ Basque *mendi* ‘mountain’ ~ Cauc: Geo. *mdelo*, Old Geo. *mdelo-van-i*, *mdelo-js mžovar-i* ‘grass-eater’, Zan (Laz) *mindor-i*, Megr. *mindor-i* ‘valley’ ~ C. -Sind. **mərd-a* ‘hill’, Ab. *marda-ra* ‘upland/heights, steep’, Apkh. *á-marda* ‘hill’ ~ Dag. (Khinal.) *məda* ‘hill, upland/heights’;
7. Burushaski *ge* ~ *gye* (H, N, Y) ‘snow’ ~ Dag. (Av.) *goro* ‘hail’ ~ Cauc: Kartv. (Megr.) *geran-i* ‘big snow; Strong frosty winter’, Svan *geräm* ‘snowdrift’;
8. Burushaski *yónderes* ~ *yondoles* (Y) ‘water, that runs over many stones’ ~ Cauc: Dag. (Botlikh) *yadaru* ‘stream, brook’, Chamal, Godob *yada* ‘stream/brook’, Lak *yatará* ‘mountain stream’, etc. C.-Kartv. *yard-a*, Geo. *yarda* ‘deep rocky ravine/abyss’ ~ C.-Sind. **ydar-* ‘grassy hollow (between mountains)’; Ab. *ydr*, Apkh. -*ydra* // -*ydr-ra*, Abzh. -*ydar-ra* ‘grassy hollow (between mountains)’ ~ Nakh (Ing.) *yandal* ‘mountain terrace’;
9. Burushaski *huyóo* ‘sheep’ = Bsq. *ahari* ‘ram’ ~ Cauc: C.-Kartv. **xul-* ‘sheep (species)’, Geo. (Khevs.) *xul-ia* ‘sheep without horns’, *xul-a* ‘sheep with short ears or without ears’ (GED): C.-Sind. **xwə-* ‘sheep’; Ad. *xwə-*, in the word *xwə-rəśw*, Kab. *xwə-* in the word *xwə-rəfa* ‘sheep skin’, cf. Kab. *xwə-ret* ‘yelling/shouting for driving out sheep’;
10. Burushaski -*s`are* ~ \*-*s`ere* ‘night’, in: *gó(i)n-s`are* (H, N) / *gón-s`ere* (Y) ‘the whole night, all the night through’ (*gon* = ‘dawn’) ~ Cauc: Avar *sordó* ‘night’, Chechen *süjr* ‘evening’ ~ Kartv. *ser-i* ‘night, evening’, cf. Hurrian *šeri* ‘night’;
11. Burushaski *yul* (H, N) ‘grudge, enmity, hatred’ ~ Cauc: Avar *γwel* ‘gossip, rumor; abuse’ : C.-Kartv. **yal-* ‘bad; magic/witchcraft’, Geo. (Im.) *yal-v-a* ‘putting an evil eye/jinxing’, *m-yal-av-i* ‘evil; devil’ : C.-Sind. **ya-* ‘enemy’, Ab. *a-ya*, Apkh. *a-γá* ‘enemy’;
12. Burushaski *tharén-um* (H, N) ‘narrow (of clothes)’ ~ Cauc: Avar *λeréna-b* ~ C.-Kartv. **ditx-el-* ‘thin’, Zan (Laz) *titxu* → // *tutxu*, Sv. *dətxel* ‘thin’ ~ C.-Sind. **txa* ‘thin’, Ub. *txa* ‘thin’ ~ Nakh (Batsb) *netx* ‘thin’, *netx-iš* ‘into thin...’, *netx-dar* ‘thinning’...

As we see, the common genetic origin of the given words is beyond doubt. There are many examples to indicate that further research in this area will prove fruitful.

Finally, the natural question arises: How did the modern Iberian-Caucasian peoples – Circassians, Vainakhs and Dagestanians – appear in the North Caucasus when the states of their ancestors (kindred) peoples lived in the south – Hatti / Abeshla in Anatolia, Urartu-Hurritans on the coasts of Vani and Urmia lakes, and Andia – in Iran? There is one answer to this: historically, the gradual and forced migration of peoples from south to the Caucasus in the north took place when militarily more well-organized peoples appeared in the region, primarily of Indo-European origin. The fact that the great migration of the peoples was actually underway is clearly seen in toponyms when migrant Circassian toponyms occur in Western Georgia, and Nakh-Dagestanian – occur in Armenia and Eastern Georgia. It is worth noting that the self-name of modern Chechens *Nakhchuo/Nokhchuo*, which means ‘of people’, i.e. a representative of the Nakh ‘people’, – (in the same way as German *Deutsch* denotes one people, when its Latin correspondence *tauta* denoted ‘people’). The oldest residing trace of the Ingush-Chechens in the south is preserved in the region *Nakhchevan* in Azerbaijan, as well as in the Armenian historical literature *Nakhche-mateank*.

In conclusion, I would like to present that in terms of the origin / ethnogenesis of Caucasian peoples Friedrich Müller's provision expressed in 1864 (Müller, 1864: 526–553) is appropriate: the Caucasian (‘Iberian-Caucasian’) languages and peoples are kin to neither to the Indo-European or to the Uralic-Altaic (Turkish-Mongolian) languages and peoples families. Together with Basque, they are remainings of the family of formerly numerous languages and peoples, which were spread throughout the south of Europe, including the land of the Caucasus and its south up to the time when the languages and peoples of Indo-European, Semitic and Uralic-Altaic peoples appeared.

In order to carry out in-depth studies of the origin of Iberian-Caucasian languages and peoples in the future, it is necessary to take into account the archeological, genetic, paleobiological and paleolinguistic data of the Caucasus and to investigate the problem with the assistance of relevant field professionals.

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