

The Politics of a Name: Between Consolidation and Separation in the Northern Caucasus*

VICTOR SHNIRELMAN

“Whatever has been fixed by a name,
Henceforth is not only real, but is a Reality.”
Ernst Cassirer

The abrupt growth of nationalism in the very late 20th – very early 21st centuries manifested itself in particular in the intense discussions of ethnic names and their changes to meet the vital demands of ethnic groups or their elites.¹ A search for a new identity did not escape the Northern Caucasus,² which demonstrated the “magical power of words,” singled out by Pierre Bourdieu. For him, a demonstration of name is “the typically magical act through which the particular group – virtual, ignored, denied, or repressed – makes itself visible and manifests, for other groups and for itself, and attests to its existence as a group that is known and recognized...”³ Long ago, Ernst Cassirer and, after

* I wish to thank the Slavic Research Center of the Hokkaido University for support of this research. I would also like to express my thanks to Moshe Gammer and two anonymous reviewers for their many useful comments and suggestions on this article.

1 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 33; Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia* (Washington, D.C., Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Valery A. Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 104. In 1961 the Ainu renamed their Association into the Hokkaido Utari Association because of a prejudice associated with the name of Ainu. See Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 159; Toshimitsu Miyajima, *Land of Elms. The History, Culture and Present Day Situation of the Ainu People* (Etobicoke: United Church Publishing House, 1998), p. 117. For the highly symbolic nature of both state and ethnic names in cases of Macedonia and Dagara, see Loring M Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 153-163; Carola Lentz, “Creating Ethnic Identities in North-Western Ghana,” in Cora Govers, Hans Vermeulen, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 42-54. For the importance of the state name in the Caucasus see Bruno Coppieters, *Federalism and Conflict in the Caucasus* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), pp. 54-55. On the demand of national identity in new states see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 239-240.

2 Victor A. Shnirelman, *Inventing the Alans: Origins of the Peoples, and Politics in the Northern Caucasus*, in Keiko Sakai, ed., *Social Protests and Nation-Building in the Middle East and Central Asia* (Chiba: Institute of Developing Economics [IDE], JETRO, 2003), pp. 57-72.

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), p. 224.

him, John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley pointed out that “naming does things, ... naming selects, discriminates, identifies, locates, orders, arranges, systematizes.”⁴ As we are taught also by the British social anthropologists, “acts of naming, and the classificatory, cognitive, and symbolic niceties surrounding these, are immediately implicated in the most trenchant material and political realities.”⁵ Name plays by no means merely a symbolic role – “baptized with a proper name, space becomes national property, a sovereign patrimony fusing place, property and heritage, whose perpetuation is secured by the state.”⁶ In traditional practice, if some personal names proved to be unfortunate, they had to be changed, a new name meaning a new self.⁷ Further on, we will see that this principle is by no means alien to contemporary ethnic groups. Indeed, “once the new language is in place, it comes to condition future activity.”⁸ Actually, this is one of the mystifications of power,⁹ which involves the belief that the proper name provides greater power and health.

Specialists have pointed out that a reasonable criticism of primordialism is rarely based on well-focused and highly documented case studies. According to Renato Rosaldo, the point “is not to declare ethnicity invented and stop there, but to show in historical perspective how it was invented and with what consequences.”¹⁰ Taking this as a starting point, I will discuss the dynamic of ethnic names in the Northern Caucasus in the twentieth century as well as the attempts to reinterpret or even to replace them since the turn of the 1990s. I will argue that all those initiatives were strictly connected with the current political situation. Indeed, the ethnic name is an important political symbol that not only defines one’s identity but also instigates social attitudes and actions.¹¹

Over the last 10-15 years or so, mass media as well as specialists have focused mainly on the tragic events in Chechnia. Without doubting the importance of developments in Chechnia, I argue that in order to achieve a better understanding of what is going on there, one should analyse the broader pattern, including the neighboring North Caucasian regions. The Northern Cau-

4 Ernst Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos: ein Beitrag zum Problem der Götternamen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925); John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), p. 147.

5 Malcolm Chapman, Maryon McDonald, and Elizabeth Tonkin, “Introduction,” in Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, eds., *History and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.

6 Ana Maria Alonso, “The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994), p. 383.

7 For example, this was characteristic for the Ainu people. See, John Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folklore*. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1901), p. 244.

8 James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 128.

9 David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 48-50.

10 Renato Rosaldo, “Others of Invention: Ethnicity and Its Discontents,” *Voice. Literary Supplement* 82 (1990), p. 27. Also see Alonso, “The Politics of Space,” p. 392.

11 On the political role of cultural symbols see Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*.

MAP. CAUCASIAN REPUBLICS



casus is a distinct cultural area where local ethnic groups lived side by side for centuries. They share many common cultural elements and a common history, are closely related, and often share the same lineages. At the same time, during the last 100-150 years and especially in the Soviet period a lot of tensions and mutual distrust accumulated among them. Therefore, neighboring groups are jealous of each other's development, and what occurs in one area is often echoed in another one. That is why, an over-emphasis on a certain area or ethnic group and ignorance of its neighbors cannot but mislead us in our evaluation of the political situation in the Northern Caucasus. Both a diachronic and synchronic comparative analysis of the local ethnic groups and their relationships is badly needed in order to create a clear pattern of what is going on there nowadays. A process of ethnic identities' formation in the Northern Caucasus and their political usage is worth studying with respect to a lively discussion between the constructivists and primordialists.

To understand the local cultural and political environment one has to bear in mind that the North Caucasian ethnic groups belong to several different linguistic stocks - Indo-European (Iranian-speaking Ossetians and Tats), Turkic (Balkars, Karachais, Kumyks, Nogais, and some others), and North Caucasian (Adygheians, Kabardians, Cherkess, Shapsugs, Chechens, Ingush, and many others). The Ossetians are the main Christian group among the North Caucasian natives; Muslims account for the great bulk of the rest of the population (map).

THE TEMPTATION OF THE ALAN IDENTITY

Ossetia and the Ossetians received their name from the Russians, who used the Georgian term *Oseti* for the Iranian-speaking inhabitants of the central part of the Caucasus. The term became popular and was accepted by the Ossetians themselves already before they were integrated into the Russian empire. At the same time the Ossetians retained their internal division into a few sub-groups with their own names in Ossetian. In Northern Ossetia they are the *Irons* in the East and the *Digors* in the West. Yet, the Ossetians lacked any single inclusive name for themselves in their own language, and for a long time they felt comfortable with the name given to them by the Georgians and Russians. This practice was put into question by the new Ossetian nationalism.

Already in the late 1980s, certain Ossetian intellectuals suggested that the alien name "Ossetia" should be replaced with the Ossetian one of "*Iryston*." To be sure, Ossetia is called "*Iryston*" in Ossetian, but the point was how it should be called in official Russian documents as well as throughout Russia and abroad. Yet, the *Digors*, who account for one fifth of all the Ossetians, viewed that suggestion as an encroachment upon their rights. Indeed, for the Ossetians the name of *Iryston* is closely associated with the "land of *Irs*, or *Irons*," which entirely ignores *Digoria* as a particular region. The Ossetian literary language was formed at the basis of the *Iron* dialect, and, in pre-revolutionary time, Ossetia was considered an outpost of Orthodox Christianity in the Northern Caucasus. This did not satisfy the *Digors*, for there were many Muslims among them in the past. In the early 1990s *Digor* intellectuals established the public political association of "*Iraf*,"¹² which demanded that the *Digor* dialect should be recognized as a distinct language and be granted a state status on equal terms with the *Iron* one. Under their pressure, instruction in *Digor* was introduced in schools, and both a journal and a newspaper began to be issued.¹³ As a result, in 1992 the North Ossetians were puzzled by the issue of whether they were a single people or two different peoples, the *Irons* and the *Digors*.¹⁴

Initially, the "*Iraf's*" leader, a writer V. Mality, was convinced that granting official status to both Ossetian literary languages would by no means break the nation.¹⁵ Yet, having met the harsh response of the *Iron* intellectuals, the

12 "*Iraf*" is a popular place name in the *Digor* region. A local river, a mountain and an administrative unit bear this name.

13 L.K. Gostieva and A.B. Dzadzizev, eds., *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy 1990-1994 gg. Ocherki. Dokumenty. Khronika* (Moscow: TsIMO, 1995), vol. 1, pp 30-31; vol. 2, pp. 255-260.

14 For example see, N. Dzhusoity, "Esli ne lukavit' ...," *Severnaia Osetiia* (14 July 1992).

15 V. Mality, "A real'nost' - pod bokom, k chemu teleskopy," *Severnaia Osetiia* (17 March 1994), pp. 2-3. Today this approach is shared by the *Digor*-born philosopher A.K. Hachirty. See A.K. Hachirty, *Alanika - kul'turnaia traditsiia (istoriko-kul'turnoe issledovanie)* (Vladikavkaz: Iryston, 2002), pp. 110-111.

Digors shifted to radicalism.¹⁶ The *Digors* were encouraged by the ideas of the Leningrad philologist G.F. Turchaninov, who claimed that he had “deciphered” the “early Ossetian” inscriptions, which proved to be written in the *Digor* dialect.¹⁷ Therefore, the *Digors* maintained that their vernacular was the true “Alan language in its pure form,” and threatened a “struggle of the *Digor* people for their rights” if the authorities did not make concessions.¹⁸ All this made Ossetian intellectuals search feverishly for a new inclusive ethnic name. Some of them proposed such names as *Osag* or *Osiag*; others considered restoring the famous old name of the Alans.¹⁹

The Alans were an alliance of the Sarmatian tribes who arrived to the Northern Caucasus at the dawn of the Christian era. They occupied the great bulk of its territory, subjugated natives and established their own state by the 10th century. The Alan state was the first and the only indigenous political establishment in the Northern Caucasus before the Mongol invasion. Thus, the Alan identity provided one with a symbolic prestige of both bearers of higher culture and “civilizers.”

Therefore it was tempting for the Ossetians to identify themselves with the Alans’ descendants the more so, as the Alans were also the Iranian-speakers. The well-known Ossetian philologist, a president of the Association of Scholars of the Northern Ossetia T.A. Guriev was the main advocate of this idea. He insisted that the Ossetians should accept the name of the Alans as their self-designation and re-name the Northern Ossetia into the Northern Alania. While emphasizing the uniqueness of the Ossetian history, he pointed out that the Ossetian culture, folklore and vernacular maintained many elements of the Scythian heritage, that the Scythians established the earliest kingdom in Eastern Europe and highly affected the European peoples in general, and that the Ossetian language is related to one of the Zind-Avesta hymns.²⁰ Whereas in fall 1989 Guriev restricted himself with a reference to the Scythian heritage only, in spring 1991 he began to talk of the “Aryan origin” of the Ossetians. He complained that the German Nazis had discredited the term “Aryans,” and recalled a wonderful time of the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries, when

16 It is worth noting that, as witnesses testify, the *Digors* were the “most revolutionary of all the Ossetians” and the most active proponents of Ossetian autonomy in 1923. See A.L. Letifov, *Istoricheskii opyt natsional’no-gosudarstvennogo stroitel’stva na Severnom Kavkaze* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1972), pp. 70, 72-73.

17 G.F. Turchaninov, *Pamiatniki pis’ma i iazyka narodov Kavkaza i Vostochnoi Eoropy* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1971), p. 44; idem, *Dreoniie i srednevekovye pamiatniki osetinskogo pis’ma i iazyka* (Vladikavkaz: Ir, 1990), pp. 9, 49-51.

18 Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 2, p. 255.

19 A.K. Hachirov, “Kto my? Eshcho raz o natsional’nom samosoznanii,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetia* (12 November 1989), p. 6; Hachirty, *Alanika*, p. 53.

20 T.A. Guriev, “Potomok skifo-sarmatskikh narechii,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetia* (12 October 1989), p. 3. The Zind-Avesta hymns are the Zoroastrian sacred texts in Ancient Iranian language.

this term was highly popular among philologists. He added that the term was still used in India without any negative connotations.²¹ While pointing out that both terms, *alan* and *iron*, derived from *arya*, Guriev recalled that the name of the famous Alans was known throughout vast territories between China, Mongolia and Western Europe already in the early medieval period. At the same time he refused to acknowledge the Karachais' and Balkars' claims to the name of the Alans for themselves.²² Instead, he argued that the term was the most appropriate inclusive name capable of uniting all the Ossetians.²³

An Ossetian historian F.Kh. Gutnov shared this idea. He claimed that the "Alan people (*narodnost'*)" had finally formed in the eighth-tenth centuries, and identified the Alans with the Ossetians without any reservation. For him, "our ancestors as a people had formed within the Alan state," and he viewed this as a strong argument in favor of a replacement of the name of Ossetians with that of the Alans.²⁴ The name of Alania was favored by the *Digor*-born A.A. Ramonov, the head of the "Union for the national revival of Alania" and a member of the "*Iraf*" governing body. He stood for equal status for the *Digor* language and, with a reference to the Turchaninov's discoveries, claimed that the *Digor* language was used for writing already 2,500 years ago.²⁵ In fall 1990, the "Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia" daily suggested that a monument of the Alans should be erected at the Liberty Square in Vladikavkaz.²⁶

A discussion of the national idea became a hot issue after the "Declaration of state sovereignty" was adopted in Northern Ossetia in 1990. Since then, the republican mass media regularly provided generous space for a discussion of ethnic name replacement. Both prominent scholars and amateurs took part in

21 Yet, he failed to mention that, after having merged with the race theory already in the late 19th century, the term "Aryans" was increasingly used by the European racists and anti-Semites for their chauvinist propaganda. See Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth* (New-York: Basic Books, 1974). He also did not note that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the term "Aryans" was picked up by the radical Indian nationalists who supported Hitler later on. See Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun. Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 91-95. One has to bear in mind also that the "Aryan myth" is used for chauvinist propaganda in contemporary Russia. See V.A. Shnirelman, *Intellectual'nye labirinty. Ocherki ideologii v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow: Academia, 2004), pp. 123-225.

22 For the Karachai and Balkars' claims to the Alan legacy see, Victor A. Shnirelman, "Fostered Primordialism: the Identity and Ancestry of the North Caucasian Turks in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Milieu," Hayashi Tadayuki, ed., *The Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2003), pp. 69-70, 74-79.

23 T.A. Guriev, "Alany, asy, oseniny," *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (12 April 1991), p. 3.

24 F.Kh. Gutnov, "Kto my rodom? Iz etnicheskoi istorii alan," *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (3 November 1990); idem, *Srednevekovaiia Osetiia* (Vladikavkaz: Ir, 1993), pp. 9-13.

25 A.A. Ramonov, "Na ravnykh," *Severnaia Osetiia* (9 July 1992).

26 P. Kudzaev, "Postav'te pamiatnik alanam," *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (8 November 1990), p. 4.

that.²⁷ An Association of Scholars of the Republic of Northern Ossetia, the “Ir” Association of the creative and academic intelligentsia of North Ossetia, as well as the First Extraordinary Congress of the Young Patriots of Ossetia stood for the name replacement.²⁸

The discussion became even more intense after the Georgian-Ossetian war of early 1991 resulted in the arrival of tens of thousands refugees from Southern Ossetia. At that time certain Ossetian intellectuals considered it especially “inappropriate” to keep using the Georgian-based term “Ossetians.”²⁹ Ever since, the arguments of those who pointed out that the term “Ossetians” had derived from the Georgian “Os” (“Oseti” means “the land of Os” in Georgian), which was based on the old Alan self-designation “As,”³⁰ lost their persuasiveness. That is why, to avoid a “shameful” ethnic name given by the “bloody enemies” (i.e. Georgians), the term “Alan/Alon” began to be imposed upon the Ossetians in the 1990s, although it was rarely used before and never served as an inclusive self-designation.³¹ To be sure, certain Ossetian scholars made all the efforts to refute any connections of the terms “As/Os” with the Georgian legacy and insisted that the Ossetians received them directly from their remote ancestors.³²

In spring 1991 the Ossetian-Ingush relations became aggravated, and an armed clash took place in the village of Kurtat on April 19. The authorities declared a state of emergency for a month, and discussion of an ethnic name in the “Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia” daily declined. Nonetheless, the term of “Alania” became popular in Ossetian daily life through the names of various firms, a TV company, publishing house, soccer team, and the like.³³ After 1989, numerous food cooperatives named “Alania” appeared in Ossetia. In September 1991, a Communist-oriented “Union for the national revival of Alania” was established in Vladikavkaz, which issued its own newspaper “Ælantæ” beginning in 1994. Since 1992, a Vladikavkaz-based folklore dance team, “Amazons,” began giving public performances, and a super-market “Alan” was opened

27 K.G. Sozaev, *Kto my rodom: osetiny ili alany? (K istorii proiskhozhdeniia etnonimov osetinskogo naroda)* (Vladikavkaz: SOGU, 2000), pp. 4-6, 77.

28 Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 1, pp. 57-58; vol. 2, pp. 63-64; L.K. Gostieva, A.B. Dzadziev, A.A. Dzarasov, “Severnaia Osetiia ot vyborov do vyborov (1993-1995),” in M.N. Guboglo, ed., *Razvivaiushchiisia elektorat Rossii. Etnopoliticheskii resurs*, vol. 3, Vybory-95, vyp. 2 (Moscow: TsIMO, 1996), pp. 120-121.

29 For example see, Guriev, “Alany.”

30 V.A. Kuznetsov, “Vzgliad skvoz’ veka i gody,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (1 July 1989); idem, “Osetiia ili Alaniia?” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (23 November 1990), p. 3.

31 A.A. Tsutsiev, “Nekotorye predposylki i factory osetino-ingushskogo konflikta,” Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 3, p. 45; Gostieva, Dzadziev, Dzarasov, “Severnaia Osetiia ot vyborov,” p. 121.

32 For example see, Sozaev, *Kto my rodom*, pp. 23-24.

33 V. Baskaev, “Istoriia ne vosprinimaet ambitsioznosti (beseda s V.A. Kuznetsovym),” *Fydybæstæ* 5 (October) (1995); Sozaev, *Kto my rodom*, p. 73.

in Vladikavkaz in 2000. A paramilitary patriotic organization the "Alan Cossack troop" was established in Northern Ossetia, and a locally produced mineral water under the name of "Alania" sold well in Ossetian stores. Even the Foundation for support of the Ossetian refugees from Georgia, established in October 1991, received this name to emphasize once again Ossetian unity.³⁴ It became fashionable among the Ossetians to name their children after the well-known characters of both Alan history and the Nart epic, such as Alan, Soslan, Azamat, Scyth, Sarmat (for boys) and Alana, Olana, Zarina (for girls).³⁵

The suggestion that the Ossetians should change their ethnic name met well-grounded criticism from a prominent archaeologist V.A. Kuznetsov. By that time, having been elected a people's deputy to the Supreme Soviet of RSFSR from Northern Ossetia, he was alarmed with the politicization of the Alan issue. Bearing in mind the intense discussion of the terms "migrant" and "indigenous inhabitant," he suggested that the Ossetians should better emphasize their local Caucasian roots than refer to the Alan newcomers. On this point, he considered it very important to stress the great role of the Caucasian substratum in their formation. At the same time, he argued that the term "Alans" had never served as a self-designation, but was invariably used by both neighbors and strangers as an inclusive name for all the Iranian-speaking tribes of the Early Medieval time.³⁶ Yet, the Ossetian elite thought differently.

For the first time, the Ossetian authorities' passion for the Alan legacy was expressed officially on October 2, 1991, when a session of the Supreme Soviet of the North Ossetian ASSR unanimously adopted a new republican white-red-yellow flag. Its three colors allegedly symbolized traditional Alan society's division into three castes (priests, warriors, commoners) as though the Ossetians inherited this characteristic from the Scythians and Sarmatians.³⁷ In his speech given at the session, a deputy head of the Soviet of Ministers E.K. Kargiev interpreted this event as a rehabilitation of the Alan banner. Thus, the Parliament members clearly demonstrated their interest in Alan symbolism.³⁸ At the fifth meeting of the eighteenth session of the Supreme Soviet of the North Ossetian SSR held on November 10, 1992, i.e. at the climax of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, then Chair of the Supreme Soviet of Northern Ossetia, Aksarbek Galazov, referred to the early medieval Alan sites in the Prigorodnyi District and identified the Alans with the early Ossetians in order to legitimate Ossetian territorial claims.³⁹ In his speech at the ceremonial meeting

34 Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 2, pp. 76-79.

35 Z.G. Isaeva, "Onomastika kak zerkalo etnokul'turnykh integratsionnykh protsessov," in Kh.Kh. Khadikov, ed., *Natsional'nye otnosheniia i mezhnatsional'nye konflikty* (Vladikavkaz: SOGU, 1997), p. 377; Sozaev, *Kto my rodom*, p. 73.

36 Kuznetsov, "Osetiia ili Alaniia?"; Baskaev, "Istoriia ne vosprinimaet."

37 K. Chelekhsaty, ed., *Osetiia i osetiny* (Vladikavkaz: Ir, 1994), pp. 16-19.

38 V. Saprykov, "Simvoly Severnoi Osetii – Alanii," *Nauka i zhizn'* 9 (1995), pp. 27-29.

39 A.Kh. Galazov, "O verolomnoi agressii ingushskikh natsional-ekstremistov i merakh po obespecheniiu bezopasnosti, zakonnosti i pravoporiadka v Respublike. Doklad na vosem-

devoted to the 220th anniversary of Ossetia's joining with the Russian empire and the 210th anniversary of Vladikavkaz, held on October 14, 1994, Galazov emphasized once again that "Ossetia was an old country, an heir of Scythian-Sarmatian civilization."⁴⁰ A Galazov's advisor, philosopher A.K. Hachirov (Hachirty), shared this view making no distinction between the terms "Alans" and "As-Ossetians."⁴¹ The Ossetian political declarations of the early 1990s referred sometimes to the heritage of the "Scythian-Sarmatian-Alan world."⁴²

From 1991 on, various Ossetian organizations and movements, including the Second Congress of the Ossetian people held on May 21-22, 1993, demanded that Northern and Southern Ossetias should be united into a single state.⁴³ The "Concept of the social-economic and cultural integration of the North Ossetian SSR and Republic of Southern Ossetia" was worked out by the Trans-Parliamentary committee of Northern and Southern Ossetias in the early 1993.⁴⁴ While being nominated a candidate for the first presidential elections in Northern Ossetia in January 1994, Galazov called the "establishment of a united democratic republic at the basis of two republics" the "Ossetian national idea."⁴⁵ At the Parliamentary elections in spring 1995 many candidates also included a demand for the Ossetian political unification into their programs.⁴⁶ To be sure, this goal could not be achieved without the introduction of the new inclusive name and the extensive promotion of the famous Alan past.

A discussion of the Republic's name continued with even higher intensity in 1994, when a project for a new constitution was on the agenda.⁴⁷ Once again Guriev took the initiative and gave several TV interview with a call to "give back the historical name of the Alans to the Ossetian people." He ar-

nadsatsei sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta Severo-Osetinskoi SSR 10 noiabria 1992," *Severnaia Osetiia* (11 November 1992). For that also see, Tishkov, *Ethnicity*, p. 15.

40 A.M. Tsaliev, D.A. Kelekhsaev, *Istoki nerushimoi družby* (Vladikavkaz: RIPP imeni V.A. Gassieva, 1996), pp. 9-11. The Ingush took those celebrations as a challenge for the Ingush people. See, B.U. Kostoev, *Predannaia natsiia* (Moscow: Gumanitarnyi fond Ingushetii, 1995), p. 28; R.Sh. Albagachiev, M.A. Akhil' gov, *Znat' i pomnit'...* (Moscow-Nazran', 1997), pp. 440-443.

41 Hachirty, *Alanika*, p. 53.

42 For example see, "O vosstanovlenii natsional'no-politicheskoi i territorial'noi tselostnosti Osetii," *Severnaia Osetiia* (21 December 1991); "Obrashchenie pisatelei k osetinskomu narodu," *Severnaia Osetiia* (1 April 1993).

43 "O vosstanovlenii"; Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 2, pp. 55-56, 60-62; 95-96; M.M. Bliiev, *Osetiia, Kavkaz: istoriia i sovremennost'* (Vladikavkaz: SOGU, 1999), p. 329.

44 Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 3, pp. 176-179.

45 A.Kh. Galazov, "Iz osnovnykh napravlenii programmy A.Kh. Galazova," *Severnaia Osetiia* (11 January 1994), p. 2. Yet, the idea was by no means popular among the Ossetians. For that see, Kh.V. Dzutsev, "Etnopoliticheskii konflikt v Severnoi Osetii i vokrugh nee," *V tu-mane nad propastiiu* (Vladikavkaz: Ir, 1994), p. 92.

46 Gostieva, Dzadziev, Dzarasov, "Severnaia Osetiia ot vyborov," p. 130.

47 Gostieva, Dzadziev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 1, pp. 57-58.



Fig. 1

sive name would pacify the *Digors*, who identified the "Ossetians" with the "Irons." Third, because the Georgian-Ossetian and Ossetian-Ingush conflicts remained unresolved, one had to strengthen national unity. Fourth, the neighboring Karachais and Balkars began to claim the name of the Alans openly, and the Ossetians worried that this development might put into question their own right to the historical legacy, which was not only symbolic but also territorial. Fifth, in spring 1994 the Ingush declared that their new capital would be called Maghas, after the name of the historical Alans' capital.⁵⁰ For the Ossetians, alarms began to sound. With respect to the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, the Ossetians became especially alarmed with a possible revision of the Soviet-based republican boundaries. That is why an Ossetian author argued that "... the shared past of the Ossetian and Ingush ancestors is an insufficient basis for the Ingush to appropriate openly the name of the once mighty Alans."⁵¹ All of this was considered by the Constitutional committee,⁵² and then by the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Northern Ossetia. As a result, the name of "Alania" has been officially added to the Republican title, and its state symbolism was finally approved in November 1994.⁵³ This included an emblem with an image of the Alan golden snow leopard in front of the silver mountains (fig. 1).⁵⁴

48 T.A. Guriev, "Reshenie voprosa otkladyvat' nel'zia!" *Severnaia Osetiia* (24 August 1994), p. 2.

49 T.A. Guriev et al., "Vo imia edineniia," *Severnaia Osetiia* (1 September 1994), p. 2. Also see, Gostieva, Dzadzhev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 2, pp. 252-253.

50 D. Bal'burov, "Gorod ingushskogo solntsa," *Moskovskie novosti* (14-21 December 1997); Sozaev, *Kto my rodom*, pp. 44, 75-76.

51 Sozaev, *Kto my rodom*, p. 48.

52 A. Tsaliev, "Ob osnovnom Zakone i nazvanii Respubliki," *Severnaia Osetiia* (5 August 1994), p. 2; L. Kelekhsaev, "Poznaetsia v sravnenii," *Severnaia Osetiia* (6 September 1994), p. 2.

53 Gostieva, Dzadzhev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 1, pp. 259-267. Under somewhat different circumstances the name of "Iran" was restored in 1934 instead of "Persia" by Shah Riza Pahlavi who argued that the "Iranians" were "pure Aryans."

54 Saprykov, "Simvol Severnoi Osetii."

Yet, the chair of the Committee on Law, Justice and Public Security of the Supreme Soviet of Northern Ossetia, S.M. Kesaev, warned that the name replacement would not resolve the *Digor* issue without the implementation of a special language law. In addition, he recalled that Alania was a medieval empire, and the contemporary Ossetians were planning to build up a democratic republic. That is why he perceived the name of Alania only as a symbol of the richness of early Ossetian history rather than a point of reference for any territorial or political claims.⁵⁵ He was echoed by an Ossetian historian, who emphatically protested against the name replacement: "Do we really perceive ourselves (all of us - the Ossetians, Balkars, Karachais and Ingush) as the pure Alans with the image of *Homo sapiens* - tsars of nature, warriors and skillful shooters and shield-holders worshipping the sword - the War God, one hundred-percent Aryan heirs with 'blue eyes,' 'fair hairs' and long heads?"⁵⁶

At the same time, the intervention of People's artist of Northern Ossetia, Zaur-Bek Aboev demonstrated that at least some Ossetian intellectuals viewed the Scythian-Alan legacy mainly in moral terms. He called for listening attentively to remote ancestors' voices of wisdom and following their moral ways. In particular, he called internationalism the "Ossetian phenomenon" inherited from their Scythian-Alan ancestors.⁵⁷ From this viewpoint, an ethnic name in itself was by no means the crucial point of the discourse. Such opponent of the name replacement as the Ossetian historian K.G. Sozaev agreed. He maintained that "... our ethnic name *Ash, Asu, Ossetian* - is our national face, which includes not merely a fair-haired or bright-eyed type of people as one often interprets the terms *As, Os*, and even not notions like "saint," "strong," "courageous," but a marker of qualities and specific features of the people's character - a standard of their world view and culture, one of the earliest and impressive representatives of *Homo sapiens*." He went so far as to state that the "term *As* emphasizes both the character and wisdom of the ethnic group, which was granted by nature, evolution, [and] a genetic predisposition for a development of supreme psychic qualities - intellect, thinking, speech and the like." In accordance with that, he wrote of the allegedly "incredibly high [natural] endowments" of the Ossetians, who inherited them from the Scythians.⁵⁸ By contrast, he argued that the bearers of the "Alan" name lacked higher culture and morality; they were too warlike and exhibited numerous prejudices. Moreover, he maintained that, in the early medieval period, the Asses and Alans had been constantly at war with each other as the bearers of Good and Evil, respectively.⁵⁹ Evidently, his reasoning revived a racial approach, which nowadays enjoys respect among some sections of the Ossetian population.

55 I. Yesiev, "Interes deistvitel'no vsenarodnyi," *Severnaia Osetiia* (7 September 1994), p. 2.

56 Sozaev, *Kto my rodnom*, p. 76.

57 Z. Aboev, "Zavtra budet pozdno," *Severnaia Osetiia* (12 November 1993), p. 3.

58 Sozaev, *Kto my rodnom*, pp. 81-84.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 90.



Fig. 2

policy.”⁶¹ Therefore, all the ethnogenetic schemes, which are built up and used by the Ossetian nationalists, cannot avoid the territorial issue. Besides, they keep searching for evidence of early Iranian states both in the Northern Caucasus and neighboring regions. Implicitly, one can find all these motivations in the Ossetian ethnologist Alan Chochiev’s book, which argues that the “Scythian-Nartian-As ethnos persistently existed in the region (between the Crimea and the Don river, and the Northern Caucasus. – *V.Sh.*),” and hints that a sort of Iranian statehood permanently existed there although it was not always well-documented.⁶² This was emphasized by the new South Ossetian emblem combining the Koban’ battle-ax and Scythian gold bowl with the Aryan swastika (fig. 2), the latter’s design obviously borrowed from East Asia.

Thus, it became evident in the 1990s that the popularity of the Alan myth was based mainly on the ill-born territorial issue.⁶³ It is worth noting that there were warnings both in Northern Ossetia⁶⁴ and Checheno-Ingushetia⁶⁵ against the use of earlier history for territorial claims. Yet, they were entirely ignored by public opinion. Indeed, a direct continuity between the Alans and Osse-

60 For example see, Bliev, *Osetiia, Kavkaz*, p. 322.

61 “Severnaia Osetiia: problemy dnia,” *Fydybæstæ* 4 (August, 1995). For details see, Victor A. Shnirelman, *Voiny pamiaty: mify, identichnost’ i politika v Zakaokazie* (Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003), pp. 469-470. This issue became really hot in June 2004 when, being threatened with a possible Georgian invasion, the South Ossetian authorities applied to Russia for an adoption of their unrecognized republic under its sovereignty. As a result, Georgia and Russia were at the edge of the war in July-August 2004.

62 A.R. Chochiev, *Narty-arii i ariiskaia ideologiia* (Moscow: Akalis, 1996), p. 251.

63 V.A. Shnirelman, “Bor’ba za alanskoe nasledie (etnopoliticheskaia podopleka sovremennykh etnogeneticheskikh mifov),” *Vostok* 5 (1996), pp. 100-113; E.D. Muzhukhoeva, *Alany. Anania. Maghas*, “*Ingushetiia* (30 April 1997), p. 3.

64 V.A. Kuznetsov, “Ob obshchestvenno-politicheskoi situatsii v respublike,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (19 September 1990).

65 Ia.S. Vagapov, “Chechen’ i Chechnia,” *Respublika* (6 June 1991).

tians is unanimously perceived both by the Ossetians and their neighbors as North Ossetia's legitimate sovereignty over all the lands within its borders. For example, this approach was demonstrated in the article titled "North Ossetia: at the crossroads of epochs" (1990), which irritated the Ingush. Indeed, the narrative of the Alans' retreat to the highlands from the Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century claimed that those dramatic events did not affect the Ingush ancestors, who allegedly lived higher in the mountains and fortunately avoided all the troubles. Since then, this argument has become popular in Ossetian propaganda.⁶⁶

WHO MIGHT OWN THE FAMOUS MAGHAS?

It is obvious from what has been already discussed that the Ingush are by no means indifferent towards the Alan legacy. Indeed, they argue that the most important center of medieval Alania was situated on their territory. As mentioned above, this belief was reflected in the name of the new capital of the Republic of Ingushetia. The Ingush began to build it in 1994 and gave it the name of Maghas ("City of the Sun"), which reminded them of the Alan capital. The constructive work was finished on June 11, 1999, and after a ceremony the new city was granted the status of the capital.⁶⁷ The name was chosen by a special committee and approved by a decree signed by the first President of the Ingush Republic, Ruslan Aushev. The location of the city was suggested by N. Kodzoev from the Ingush State Museum of Regional Studies. He referred to allegedly unquestionable archaeological data,⁶⁸ which enriched an old dispute with political flavor, for there was still a disagreement among various archaeological schools about the location of historical Maghas.

Initially, one of the most knowledgeable North Caucasian archaeologists, V.A. Kuznetsov identified Maghas with the fortified site of Alkhan-Kala, situated in lowland Chechnia at the confluence of the Assa and Sunzha rivers 17-18 kilometers west of Grozny.⁶⁹ Later on, he changed his mind and identified Maghas with the Nizhne-Arkhyz fortified site in Karachai.⁷⁰ A few years later, he recognized that all such attempts had failed, and called for new investigations of the issue.⁷¹ At the same time, the Grozny-based archaeologist V.B. Vinogradov and his students, who carried out their studies in Checheno-In-

66 For example see, Ia. Tamarin, V. Zemfirov, "Istoricheskaia spravka o g. Vladikavkaze i Prigorodnom raione Severo-Osetinskoi SSR," *V tumane nad propastiiu*, p. 13.

67 Ia.S. Patiev, *Respublike Ingushetiia - 10 let (1992-2002)* (Magas: Serdalo, 2002), p. 79.

68 K. Agasiev, "Magas - gorod magallonov," *Severnyi Kavkaz* (10 September 1994), p. 1.

69 A. Smirnov et al., eds., *Ocherki istorii Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR*, vol. 1 (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), p. 37.

70 A.P. Novosel'tsev, ed., *Istoriia Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR. S drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 1 (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1987), p. 107.

71 V.A. Kuznetsov, *Ocherki istorii alan* (Vladikavkaz: Ir, 1992), pp. 234-235.

gushetia, continued to identify Maghas with Alkhan-Kala.⁷² While sharing this view, the Chechen archaeologist M.Kh. Bagaev went even further and argued that Maghas was the Vainakh city.⁷³ The Chechen linguist Ia.S. Vagapov believed that Maghas as well as another well-known Alan city of Dediakov were located somewhere near Grozny. In his view, they had Vainakh names.⁷⁴ Only the Chechen writer Kh.D. Oshaev kept aloof, while arguing that Alkhan-Kala should be identified with Dediakov rather than with Maghas, and that the Adyghe and Vainakhs lived there besides the Alans.⁷⁵

When in the early 1990s the Ingush made a decision to build up their new capital, this archaeological puzzle received a political flavor. While basing his work on V.B. Vinogradov's hypothesis that a large Alan center was situated in the Nazran' area,⁷⁶ N. Kodzoev argued that the historical Maghas should be sought among the contemporary Ingush villages of Ali-Yurt, Surkhakhi, Yandyrka, Plievo and Ekazhevo, where several large medieval fortified sites had been discovered. He believed that one of them, Khatoi-Boarz, was the historical Maghas. Therefore, a decision was taken to build up the new capital just at that place southward of Nazran'.⁷⁷ The Ingush writer S. Khamchiev included this version into his chronological table on the Ingush history,⁷⁸ and a few years later an Ingush newspaper called Maghas an "early Ingush capital."⁷⁹ An anthology of Ingush history informs us without any reserve that "at the site of old destroyed capital of the Alan state the Ingushetia capital with the same name is

72 V.B. Vinogradov, *Dvadsat' dnei i dvadsat' vekov*, "Groznenkii rabochii" (31 August 1966), p. 3; idem, *Cherez khrebt'y vekov* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1970), pp. 68-90; idem, *Vremia, gory, liudi* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1980), p. 27; idem, *Narodnoi pamiati sledy* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1989), p. 15; Kh.M. Mamaev, "O gorode Dediakove i Alkhan-Kalinskom gorodishche," in V.B. Vinogradov, ed., *Arkheologiya i voprosy etnicheskoi istorii Severnogo Kavkaza* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1979); M.O. Buzurtanov, V.B. Vinogradov, S.Ts. Umarov, *Naveki vmeste* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1980), p. 21.

73 Kh. Bagaev, "K voprosu o khoziaistvennoi zhizni vainakhov v rannem srednevekovie," *Tezisy dokladov IV Krupnovskikh chtenii po arkheologii Kavkaza* (Ordzhonikidze, 1974).

74 Ia.S. Vagapov, "Lingvisticheskie dannye o mestopolozhenii i proiskhozhdenii alanskikh gorodov Ma'as i Dediakov," in Sh.B. Akhmadov, Ia.Z. Akhmadov, eds., *Voprosy istoricheskoi geografii Checheno-Ingushetii v dorevoliutsionnom proshlom* (Grozny: ChI IISF, 1984).

75 V.I. Markovin, Kh.D. Oshaev, "O mestopolozhenii iasskogo goroda Dediakova," *Sovetskaia arkheologiya* 1 (1978), pp. 83-96.

76 Vinogradov, *Vremia, gory, liudi*, pp. 28-33.

77 N.D. Kodzoev, "Magas - gorod magallonov," *Ingushetiia* (23 April 1994); idem, *Magas po arkheologicheskim i pis'mennym istochnikam* (Maghas: Serdalo, 2003), pp. 7, 36-54.

78 S. Khamchiev, *Khronologiya istorii ingushskogo naroda* (Saratov: Detskaia kniga, 1996), p. 5.

79 A.S. Gazgireev, "Zapad i my," *Ingushetiia* 54 (1998). Also see, S. Kotiev, "Magas - gorod druzhby i mira," *Ingushetiia* (17 April 2003), p. 1; "K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii kavkazskikh alan," *Ingushetiia* (23 March 2004).

being built.”⁸⁰ The Ingush archaeologist S.B. Burkov shared the Kodzoev’s approach, although he recognized that there were no archaeological excavations at all in the area of this so-called, Maghas.⁸¹

Nonetheless, some Chechen authors still identify Maghas with Alkhan-Kala.⁸² The Ossetians are irritated with what they consider an encroachment of their neighbors upon the famous Maghas, and locate it somewhere west of Vladikavkaz.⁸³ On their side, the Karachais identify it with the Nizhne-Arkhyz site in the Upper Kuban’ river valley.⁸⁴ Yet, a search for the historical Maghas failed. Nonetheless, the Ingush managed to convince a Western journalist that their capital was built up just on the spot of the historical Maghas.⁸⁵ In the meantime, the builders of the new capital have destroyed many archaeological sites which demonstrates that political benefits are much more important for the local elite than historical heritage.⁸⁶

Indeed, for the Ingush, all this has by no means only historical importance. Bearing in mind their territorial dispute with the Ossetians, the Ingush are quite negative towards an identification of the latter with the Alans and maintain that the Alan entity was heterogeneous in terms of language and culture.⁸⁷ As the Ossetian scholar A. Tsutsiev demonstrated, the exchange of arguments from both sides reminds one of a table tennis game – any argument meets counter-argument. When the Ingush claim that, before their deportation

80 Ia.S. Patiev, “Respublika Ingushetiia: vekhi istorii,” in S.A. Khamchiev, ed., *Vozvrashchenie k istokam* (Saratov: Detskaia kniga, 2000), p. 29.

81 S.B. Burkov, “Magas po arkheologicheskim i pis’mennym istochnikam’ N.D. Kodzoeva – novoe issledovanie po istorii Ingushetii,” *Ingushetiia* (5 July 2003).

82 I.M. Sigauri, *Ocherki istorii i gosudarstvennogo ustroistva chechentsev s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Russkaia zhizn’, 1997), p. 208; Ia.Z. Akhmadov, *Istoriia Chechni s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa 18 veka* (Moscow: Mir domu tvoemu, 2001), pp. 189, 192. It is worth mentioning that a leader of the terrorists who took hostages in the Beslan school on September 1, 2004, used a pseudonym of Maghas.

83 For example see, Hachirty, *Alanika*, p. 368.

84 K.T. Laipanov, “Ob alanskom proiskhozhdenii karachaevo-balkartsev,” *Karachaevo-Balkarskii mir* 7 (August 1995), p. 2; V.Sh. Nakhshuev, ed., *Narody Karachaevo-Cherkesii: istoriia i kul’tura* (Cherkessk: KChRIPKRO, 1998), p. 240; A.M. Bairamkulov, *I aziatskie, i evropeiskie alany byli predkami karachaevtsev i balkartsev* (Stavropol’: Stavropol’skaia kraevaia tipografiia, 1998), p. 47; R.S. Tebuev, R.T. Khatuev, *Ocherki istorii karachaevo-balkartsev* (Moscow-Stavropol’: Stavropol’servisshkola, 2002), p. 49. For that see, Bal’burov, “Gorod ingushskogo solntsa.”

85 Sebastian Smith, *Allah’s mountains: politics and war in the Russian Caucasus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 117.

86 S.B. Burkov, “Arkheologiiia Ingushetii na puti k stanovleniiu,” *Ingushetiia* (23 April 1996); S.B. Burkov, N. Kodzoev, “Arkheologiiia Magasa – pobedy i porazheniia,” *Ingushetiia* (8 May 1997).

87 For example see, M. Katysheva, M. Oziev, “Soznavat’ meru otvetstvennosti,” in Iu. Tangiev, ed., *Tragediia ingushskogo naroda* (Grozny: Groznenskiy rabochii, 1991), p. 34; M.B. Muzhukhoev, *Ingushi. Stranitsy istorii, voprosy material’noi i dukhovnoi kul’tury* (Saratov: Detskaia kniga, 1995), pp. 11-12.

in 1944, they were the owners of the Prigorodnyi District, the Ossetians respond that the Cossacks lived at that territory before 1918-1922.⁸⁸ If the Ingush recall that the Cossacks settled there only in 1859-1861 after the Ingush were forced out from their own territory, the Ossetians recollect the early medieval period, when the whole region was a part of the Alan state. The Ingush repeatedly argue for the heterogeneous nature of the Alan entity and maintain that the Vainakhs always occupied all the territory of Checheno-Ingushetia.⁸⁹ Regardless, each side believes that its claims to the Prigorodnyi District are legitimate, and does not consider them "disputable."⁹⁰

The Ingush authors R.Sh. Albagachiev and M.A. Akhil'gov point out that, first, "their own land, family house, ancestors' graves are the core spiritual values for the Vainakhs," and second, the Ingush consider the Prigorodnyi District to be not merely the homeland, but a "symbol of scorned national dignity," relating to the collective memory of the unjust deportation.⁹¹ In other words, the Ingush treat a struggle for the Prigorodnyi District as a battle for crucial ethnic values. A new version was developed recently to prove the Ingush claims to the Prigorodnyi District. The latter is represented as the "historical homeland of the Ingush people"⁹² or the Vainakhs in general.⁹³ It is easy to figure out that this view is based on the Chechen and Ingush claims that initially the Vainakhs lived in the lowlands. It is worth noting that at the same time, while advertising tourist trips in the Ingush highlands, the "Ingushetia" newspaper claimed that "the cradle of the Ingush people" was situated in the gorges high in the mountains where the original Ingush culture was born. According to this view, the Ingush moved down to the plains quite recently.⁹⁴

88 Notably, when the Ossetians accuse the Ingush of the forceful resettlement of the Cossacks in 1921-1922 and occupation of their lands, they fail to mention that some of those lands were granted to the Ossetians as well. For that see, G.M. Moiseev, "K istorii resheniia zemel'nogo voprosa na Tereke," *Izvestiia Severo-osetinskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, vol. 28 (1971), pp. 93-94.

89 A.A. Tsutsiev, "Istoricheskie aspekty territorial'nogo konflikta mezhdru Ingushskoi Respublikoi i Respublikoi Severnaia Osetiia," in L.M. Drobizheva, ed., *Natsional'noe samosoznanie i natsionalizm v Rossiiskoi Federatsii nachala 1990-kh godov* (Moscow: IEA RAN, 1994), pp. 182-185. For the Ossetian point of view see, Tamarin, Zemfirov, "Istoricheskaia spravka,"; Gostieva, Dzadzhev, *Severnaia Osetiia: etnopoliticheskie protsessy*, vol. 1, p. 22. For the Ingush point of view see, Katysheva, Oziev, "Soznavat' meru otvetstvennosti,"; T. Mutaliev, "Bastion Izhi," in Tangiev, ed., *Tragediia ingushskogo naroda*; Ia.S. Patiev, "Respublika Ingushetiia: nachalo puti," *As-Alan* 1:6 (2002), pp. 21-38.

90 Kh.V. Dzutsev, "Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Severnoi Osetii (po materialam sotsiologicheskogo oprosa)," in L.M. Drobizheva, T.S. Guzenkova, eds., *Suverenitet i etnicheskoe samosoznanie: ideologiia i praktika* (Moscow: IEA RAN, 1995), p. 132.

91 Albagachiev, Akhil'gov, *Znat' i pomnit'*, pp. 6, 106.

92 Muzhukhoev, *Ingushi*, pp. 4, 109.

93 M.A. Aushev, "Ingushetiia. Oplot stabil'nosti na Kavkaze," *Demokraticeskii vybor* (2 October 1997), p. 6.

94 F. Akhil'gova, "Muzei pod otkrytym nebom," *Ingushetiia* (7 May 2002); idem, "Unikal'nyi

Simultaneously, some Vainakh intellectuals, following certain Balkar authors, protest against the domination by scholars studying the Iranian past, arguing that the latter advocate a “false myth” of the Iranian-speaking Scythians and Sarmatians. The Chechen businessman, President of the Common Euro-Asian House, Z. Shakhbiev argues that the Vainakhs are direct descendants of the Scythians, and he needs no special proof of that.⁹⁵ What is a surprise is that his book was highly recommended by the prominent Chechen philologist Iu. Desheriev.⁹⁶ The Ingush archaeologist N. Kodzoev goes even further and argues that “the Ossetians have nothing to do with the Alans,” and that, at the same time, the “Ingush ancestors,” Magallons (Magallons is an Ossetian name for the Ingush. – *V.Sh.*), made up an important part of the latter.⁹⁷ In the early 1990s, the view that the Chechen-Alans played an outstanding role both among the Alans and in the Alan state was actively disseminated by the mass media in Grozny.⁹⁸ The idea was picked up by certain Chechen authors,⁹⁹ including the Chechen historian Ia.Z. Akhmadov. The latter maintained that the “lowland Nakhs” were members of the Alan tribal alliance to the effect that it had a “strong North Caucasian flavor.” For him, the Alan state was a “Highlander-Alan symbiosis.”¹⁰⁰ This view in a milder form was included in the Russian academic encyclopedia “The Peoples of Russia,” in which the Alan kingdom was called a “multi-ethnic state.”¹⁰¹ Notably, whereas the Ossetians greeted emphatically the Russian edition of the famous French scholar George Dumezil’s book, in which the Scythian ancestry of the Ossetian people was argued,¹⁰² the Ingush arranged its public burning.¹⁰³

kurort v Dzheirakhe,” *Ingushetiia* (16 May 2002); idem, “Natsional’noe dostoianie Ingushetii,” *Ingushetiia* (22 April 2003).

95 Z. Shakhbiev, *Sud’ba checheno-ingushskogo naroda* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1996), pp. 23, 29-33.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 378.

97 Kodzoev, “Magas – gorod magallonov,”; idem, “Alany,” *Ingushetiia* (7 July 1994); idem, *Magas po arkheologicheskim*, p. 9. Those ideas are met but with an irritation by the Ossetians. For example see, Hachirty, *Alanika*, p. 368.

98 D. Khozhaev, “Alanskii istorik iz chechentsev,” *Respublika* (14 February 1991), p. 5; idem, “Chechentsy na levoberezhie Tereka,” *Ichkeriia* (15 June 1993); Kh.A. Khizriev, “Istoriia gosudarstvennosti chechentsev,” *Ichkeriia* (12 October 1992), p. 1.

99 Sigauri, *Ocherki istorii*, pp. 6, 204, 210.

100 Akhmadov, *Istoriia Chechni*, pp. 179, 190, 194.

101 Ia.Z. Akhmadov et al., “Chechentsy,” in: V.A. Tishkov, ed., *Narody Rossii. Entsiklopedia* (Moscow: Bol’shaia Rossiiskaia entsiklopedia, 1994), p. 399.

102 T.A. Guriev, “Skify i narty,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (29 August 1990), p. 3; idem, “Lik bessmertnogo: George Dumezil,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (11 September 1990), p. 3.

103 A.I. Ivanchik, “Istoriia – uchitel’nitsa zhizni: gor’kie plody ucheniia,” *Segodnia* (5 November 1994).

THE DIFFICULT DESTINY OF THE VAINAKH IDENTITY

Although closely related in terms of language and culture, the Chechens and Ingush developed under different conditions over the last few centuries, which caused important dissimilarities between them. First, after they were incorporated into the Russian empire, they always lived in different administrative units, a distinction that was never changed by numerous administrative re-organizations. To be sure, this encouraged the divergence of their vital interests and obstructed solidarity. Second, Chechnia was Islamized much earlier than Ingushetia – whereas Islam arrived to Chechnia already in the seventeenth century and established a strong religious tradition there, it became known in Ingushetia only in the very late 18th century, and local animist beliefs effectively competed with it. All the national-liberation movements in Chechnia from sheikh Mansur to imam Shamil exploited Muslim rhetoric and slogans, which favored the consolidation of Islam. The Ingush were less involved in those movements and avoided intensive Islamization. Later on, this affected the introduction of Latin script: the Ingush had accepted the new writing tradition already in 1923, whereas the Chechens, who enjoyed Islamic education in earlier times, resisted the reform preferring the Arabic literary tradition.¹⁰⁴ Third, judging from the national censuses of 1897 and 1926, there were three times more literate people among the Ingush than among the Chechens, the latter being the most “backward” in the Northern Caucasus in terms of educational standard.¹⁰⁵ In particular, the Chechens were the least competent in Russian.¹⁰⁶ This was a result of the long and close Ingush-Russian relationships, especially in the area of Vladikavkaz, which served as the most important cultural center in the Northern Caucasus. For example, the Ingush leaders’ children were privileged to learn in the Ossetian Ecclesiastic School together with Ossetian students already in 1764.¹⁰⁷ In addition, due to the late introduction of Islam, sheikhs and mullahs were less influential in Ingushetia than in Chechnia.¹⁰⁸ Fourth, the relatively high education standard of the Ingush and their close-

104 U.D. Aliev, “Latinizatsiia gorskikh pis'men,” *Zapiski Severo-kavkazskogo kraevogo gorskogo NII*, vol. 2 (1929), pp. 222-223; Z. Khamidova, “Bor'ba za iazyk (problemy stanovleniia i razvitiia chechenskogo iazyka),” in D. E. Furman, ed., *Chechnia i Rossiia: obshchestva i gosudarstva* (Moscow: Fond Andreia Sakharova, 1999), p. 136.

105 *Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Checheno-Ingushetii (1920 – iiun' 1941)* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1979), pp. 7, 31.

106 D.K. Zhak, “Gramotnost' v natsional'nykh avtonomiiakh kraia,” *Zapiski Severo-Kavkazskogo kraevogo Gorskogo NII (Rostov na Donu)*, vol. 1 (1928), pp. 188-189; Khamidova, “Bor'ba za iazyk,” p. 136.

107 Akhmadov, *Istoriia Chechni*, p. 370.

108 V.B. Vinogradov, I.K. Losev, A.A. Salamov, *Checheno-Ingushetiia v sovetskoj istoricheskoi nauke* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskii NII, 1963), p. 16; Z.K. Dzhambulatova, “Iz istorii nauchno-issledovatel'skoi raboty v Checheno-Ingushetii (1920-1941 gg.),” *Izvestiia Checheno-Ingushskogo NII*, vol. 9 (1964), p. 113.

ness to Vladikavkaz had resulted in many more Communists among them in contrast to the Chechens already in the early 1920s. Suffice it to say that the Ingush were the third (seven percent) largest group in the Party organization of the Mountaineers' ASSR after the Russians and Ossetians, whereas there were only a few Communists among the Chechens.¹⁰⁹ Fifth, the Chechens, at 52.9 percent of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR's population in 1939, greatly outnumbered the 12 percent share of the Ingush.¹¹⁰ Finally, the struggle for the Prigorodnyi District turned on the Ingush national idea after they came back from exile. It consolidated them in contrast to the Chechens, who were quite indifferent towards that issue.

At the same time, the Chechen and Ingush identities were by no means persistent in the Soviet time: whereas they were separate ethnic groups in the 1920s and early 1930s, they were united within one and the same administrative unit in 1934, after which the authorities began to impose the "Chechen-Ingush" identity upon them. In the late 1920s - early 1930s the Soviet officials were eager to enforce the Chechen-Ingush merger as an "objective" and "natural" process. One of those who met this demand positively was the Soviet linguist N.F. Iakovlev, who suggested that an inclusive name of "*Veinakh*" (i.e. "our people") had to be used for both the Chechens and Ingush. He believed that the rapid urbanization and rapprochement of the Chechens and Ingush within one and the same republic might encourage the formation of a common culture and language and the establishment of a unified "*Veinakh*" people.¹¹¹ On the eve of Chechnia-Ingushetia unification certain Soviet scholars began to argue that the Chechens and Ingush were a "single nation" and even enjoyed a common language.¹¹² In the mid-1930s, a young Ingush student, M.M. Bazorkin, accepted the name of "*Veinakh*" as an "inclusive term for all the tribes of Chechnia and Ingushetia." He went so far as to claim that "all the ethnic branches of the Chechen and Ingush peoples used this name for themselves."¹¹³

Yet, the term of "*Veinakh*" was far from popular before the Second World War. Only after the deportation in 1944, the Chechens and Ingush became a cohesive community due to the "complex of collective guilt"¹¹⁴ and shared sufferings. After the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was restored in 1957, the Chechens and Ingush were commonly considered in the USSR as parts of a single "Chechen-

109 G.K. Martirosian, *Istoriia Ingushetii* (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1933), pp. 294-295; D.S. Kokorkhoeva, *Stanovlenie i razvitie sovetskoi natsional'noi gosudarstvennosti ingushskogo naroda (1917-1944)* (Elista: Kalmytskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2002), p. 40.

110 Kokorkhoeva, *Stanovlenie*, p. 121.

111 N.F. Iakovlev, "K voprosu ob obshchem naimenovanii rodstvennykh narodov," *Zapiski Severo-Kavkazskogo kraevogo gorskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, vol. 1 (1928), pp. 195-196, 200-204.

112 For example see, Martirosian, *Istoriia Ingushetii*, p. 311.

113 M.M. Bazorkin, *Istoriia proiskhozhdeniia ingushei* (Nal'chik: El'-Fa, 2002), pp. 113, 209.

114 The "complex of collective guilt" for the alleged treason and crimes against the Soviet power at the time of the World War II was imposed upon them by the Soviet authorities.

Ingush people,” and the term “Veinakh” grew in popularity among them.¹¹⁵ Some of them forgot about its recent origin and began to maintain that it was their own authentic term.¹¹⁶ For instance, in his children’s book the Ingush writer A.P. Mal’sagov convinced young readers that the term was born “in the remote past,” when, while meeting each other, the Chechens and Ingush used to say “they are like us.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, the term was accepted by the general public and enjoyed some phonetic transformation: whereas, after Iakovlev, it sounded like *Veinakh* up to the very late 1960s, they began to pronounce it *Vainakh*, later on.¹¹⁸ Some Ingush kept using this inclusive term even in the 1990s,¹¹⁹ and this was approved by well-known Ingush historians.¹²⁰ Yet, the growth of the Chechen and Ingush nationalist movements in the very late 1980s and, especially the disintegration of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR in 1991-1992 put an end to the former unity. At that time a well-known Ingush writer argued that the Chechen-Ingush unification in 1934 was artificial, and the “Chechen-Ingush people” had never existed.¹²¹ Yet, just after the Ossetian-Ingush conflict in fall 1992, when the Ingush were looking for the allies, some of them again began to emphasize the Chechen-Ingush unity as the single Vainakh people.¹²²

The Ingush felt uncomfortable in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR in the late Soviet decades. Indeed, they made up a minority there and feared assimilation.¹²³ They pointed out that after they were divorced from Vladikavkaz and united with Chechnia their education and cultural standards declined.¹²⁴ When in the late 1960s – early 1970s local scholars began to promote the term Vainakh as a traditional self-designation of Chechens and Ingush,¹²⁵ and an

115 V.B. Vinogradov, *Tainy minuvshikh vremen* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), p. 115.

116 For example see, A.O. Mal’sagov, *Nart-orstkhoiskii epos vainakhov* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1970), p. 3; U.B. Dalgat, *Geroicheskii epos chechentsev i ingushei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), p. 5; M.A. Mamakaev, *Chechenskii taip v period ego razlozheniia* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1973); M.B. Muzhukhoviev, *Srednevekovaiia material’naia kul’tura gornoi Ingushetii (12-17 vv.)* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1977), p. 3; N.N. Velikaia et al., *Ocherki etnografii chechentsev i ingushei* (Grozny: ChIGU, 1990), pp. 8, 11.

117 A.P. Mal’sagov, *Krai veinakhov – Checheno-Ingushetiia* (Moscow: Detskaia literatura, 1969), pp. 5-6.

118 For example see, A.O. Mal’sagov, *Nart-orstkhoiskii epos*, p. 3.

119 Albagachiev, Akhil’gov, *Znat’ i pomnit’*, p. 13; Kh.Kh. Bokov, *Slovo o vainakhakh* (vzgliad iznutri) (Moscow: Mengir, 2000).

120 T. Mutaliev, D. Chakhkiev, “Krai bogatogo proshlogo i bol’shogo budushchego,” *Serdalo* (19 September 1995).

121 S.I. Chakhkiev, *Idris Ziazikov: veroi i pravdoi* (Grozny: n.e., 1991), p. 46.

122 M. Tochiev, “Uroki tragedii,” *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii* (28 November 1992), p. 3.

123 According to Donald Horowitz, a threat of assimilation encourages aggression of the weaker group against the stronger one. See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 175-181; idem, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 179-183.

124 I.M. Bazorkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6 (Maghas: Serdalo, 2002), pp. 208-211.

125 A.O. Mal’sagov, *Nart-orstkhoiskii epos*, p. 3; Dalgat, *Geroicheskii epos*, p. 5.

Ingush writer presented this self-name as an old one,¹²⁶ and this was picked up by the local newspapers,¹²⁷ Ingush writer I.M. Bazorkin became very irritated. He treated the rhetoric of the “Vainakh people” as an attempt to wash out ethnic differences between the Chechens and Ingush. For him, this harmed the Ingush while dooming their language, literature and themselves to a decline and disappearance. In 1972 he sent several letters to the Republican authorities and local scholars with a protest against what he called an “epidemic of Vainakhization.”¹²⁸

Yet, he has never received any response. The Vainakh identity was forced upon the Chechens and Ingush for decades,¹²⁹ and even in 1989 one of the Ingush nationalist leaders B.B. Bogatyrev stated that “the Chechens and Ingush themselves coined their name of Vainakh.”¹³⁰ At the Second Congress of the Ingush people in September 1989 some speakers used inclusive terms such as “Vainakh people” and “Vainakh nation” without hesitation; the term “Vainakhia” was also heard.¹³¹ At a “round table” discussion arranged by the “Golos Checheno-Ingushetii” newspaper in February 1991, the Chechen and Ingush intellectual leaders used the expression “we the Vainakhs” without any reserve. And the Ingush leader Ia. Kushtov even emphasized that the term “Vainakh” made them closer to each other.¹³² Even the well-known Chechen émigré politician A.G. Avtorkhanov believed that the Chechens and Ingush made up a single people with the self-designation of Vainakh.¹³³

Meanwhile, an expert in local ethnography I.V. Chesnov teaches us that the most of the local inhabitants used the term of “Vainakh” in a special etiquette situation: “People address each other in this way if they meet outside Chechnia and Ingushetia, are unfamiliar with each other, but think that they are supposedly from those republics.”¹³⁴ In his view, the general public supported the idea of Chechen-Ingush unity. But the great bulk of Ingush intellectuals

126 A.P. Mal'sagov, *Krai veinakhov*, pp. 5-6.

127 For example see, V.B. Vinogradov, “Prochtennye stranitsy istorii,” *Groznskii rabochii* (11 February 1972), p. 4; L. Kalita, “Tantsuet 'vainakh',” *Sotsialisticheskaia Osetiia* (30 May 1972), p. 3.

128 I.M. Bazorkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, pp. 64-79.

129 For example, the republican folklore team established in 1939 was named “Vainakh” in 1974.

130 A.U. Kostoev, ed., *Vtoroi s'yezd ingushskogo naroda* (Grozny: Kniga, 1990), p. 156.

131 *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 150-151, 220.

132 “Obshnost' nashei sud'by – nasha obshchaia istoriia,” *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii* (28 February 1991), p. 3. Yet, one of the speakers, the Chechen S. Khizraev, said that all the inhabitants of Checheno-Ingushetia (including the Russians! – V.Sh.) were Vainakhs. This is a very unusual usage of the term “Vainakh” as an inclusive one.

133 A.G. Avtorkhanov, *O sebe i vremeni* (Moscow: Dika-M, 2003), p. 8.

134 Ia.V. Chesnov, “Byt' chechentsem: lichnost' i etnicheskie identifikatsii naroda,” in D.E. Furman, ed., *Chechnia i Rossiia: obshchestva i gosudarstva* (Moscow: Fond Andreia Sakharaova, 1999), p. 68.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

were dissatisfied with the Ingush role in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. At the same Congress of the Ingush people some delegates complained that the Ingush were treated in the republic only as a part of the Vainakh people. Some speakers claimed that the “elimination of the Ingush as a distinct nation is rising ... to threatening proportions.”¹³⁵ Therefore, both the Chechen and Ingush creative intelligentsia usually emphasized their cultural differences however small they seemed to be.¹³⁶

The Second Congress of the Ingush people was held in Grozny on September 9-10, 1989. It addressed the Soviet highest authorities with a request to “restore the Ingush people’s autonomy within their historical borders – the Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic with a capital in the right-bank part of the city of Ordzhonikidze.”¹³⁷ The Ingush Republic was to be organized out of six traditional Ingush districts including the Prigorodnyi one.¹³⁸ The divorce from the Chechens was a by-product of this plan, and the Vainakh entity became increasingly less attractive for the Ingush.¹³⁹

The difference between the contemporary Ingush and Chechens is clearly manifested by their republican emblems (figs. 3-4). The Ingush emblem contains an Ingush swastika, which is to recall their “Aryan ancestry,” while the emblem of the Republic of Ichkeria focuses on the wolf image (active defense) by contrast to the Ingush tower (passive defense).

At the same time, the Ingush’s claim to status as a separate people seemed bizarre for many Chechens. They called the Ingush a distinct Chechen *teip*, i.e. clan, at the First Congress of the Chechen people held in Grozny on October 25-27, 1990.¹⁴⁰ The President Johar Dudaev called the Ingush ancestors a

135 A.U. Kostoev, ed., *Vtoroi s"yezd*, pp. 22, 33, 105, 113, 164.

136 Chesnov, “Byt' chechentsem,” pp. 68, 85.

137 A.U. Kostoev, ed., *Vtoroi s"yezd*, pp. 208-209.

138 *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35, 157.

139 Thus, the Vainakh community’s dissolution began in fall 1989 instead of summer 1990, as John Dunlop believes. See John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya. Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 91.

140 B.U. Kostoev, *Predannaia natsiia*, p. 52.

“Chechen tribe.” He said that the Ingush as an ethnic group formed only in the nineteenth century with the help of Russian politicians. He also expected that the “fraternal tribes of the single people” would certainly unite some time.¹⁴¹ Some Chechens consider the Ingush a young people whose formation on the basis of a former Chechen tribe has not finished yet.¹⁴² There are Chechen politicians who dream of unification with the Ingush within a Vainakh Republic or Vainakh Federative Republic.¹⁴³

While thinking of the future united state of the Chechens and Ingush, the Chechen politician and journalist L. Saligov maintains, “I view a separation of the Vainakhs into the Chechens and Ingush as a temporary and artificial state of affairs.”¹⁴⁴ The “Vainakh encyclopedia” is being completed in Chechnia.¹⁴⁵ The idea of a “single Vainakh nation” is shared by well-known Chechen politician A. Aslakhanov, an advisor of the Russian president.¹⁴⁶ The former Chechen president Akhmad Kadyrov also viewed the Chechens and the Ingush as a “single Vainakh people.” While claiming that in Soviet times they agreed to be the “Vainakhs” and did not divide each other into parts, he accused the politicians for the dissolution of that entity. At the same time he considered Chechnia and Ingushetia as two republics of a single people.¹⁴⁷ In the Chechen media one could also come across the view of the “single Vainakh people,” yet with “Nokhcho” as a self-designation.¹⁴⁸

Even some Russian politicians share the idea of Chechen-Ingush unity. As a strict demarcation of the Chechen-Ingush border has proven to be a difficult problem, in summer 2000 Sergei Shakhrai suggested that the republics should be united once again.¹⁴⁹ This theme was on the agenda in the early 2002 on the eve of the presidential elections in Ingushetia.¹⁵⁰

141 *Ternistyj put' k svobode* (Grozny: Kniga, 1992), pp. 30-31.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 104; Sigauri, *Ocherki istorii*, p. 278; Khamidova, “Bor’ba za iazyk,” pp. 131-132.

143 I. Mukaev, “Terpenie naroda ne bespredel’no,” *Ichkeriia* (14 January 1993); R. Magomedkhadzhiiev, R. Akhmadov, *Chechenskaia tragediia* (Moscow: Tertsiiia, 1995), pp. 23, 96-99; Shakhbiev, *Sud’ba*, p. 316. Some Chechen cultural associations, which emerged in various Russian cities in the 1990s, took the name of Vainakh.

144 L. Saligov, “Istoki i prichiny tragedii ingushskogo naroda. Vozmozhnye puti vykhoda,” *Ichkeriia* (3 and 5 December 1992).

145 M. Geshaev, “Do smeshnogo grustno,” *Ingushetiia* (23 March 2004).

146 M. Kustov, “Brat’ia ob’ediniat’sia ne budut,” *Ingushetiia* (10 January 2004).

147 A. Kadyrov, “Chechnia i Ingushetiia – dve respubliki – odin narod,” *Ingushetiia* (20 November 2003).

148 “Nas ob’ediniaet odno obshchee nazvanie – nokhcho,” *Ichkeriia* (1 December 1992). For a positive view of the Vainakh identity among the Chechens in contrast to the Ingush see, Moshe Gammer, “Nationalism and History: Rewriting the Chechen National Past,” in Bruno Coppieters and Michel Huyseune, eds., *Secession, History and the Social Sciences* (Brussels: VUB Brussels University Press, 2002), pp. 118, 133, note 3.

149 S. Shakhrai, “Vykhod iz chechenskogo tupika,” *Argumenty i fakty* 30 (2000), p. 2.

150 Patiev, *Respublike Ingushetiia – 10 let*, pp. 89-90.

All this irritates Ingush intellectuals and makes some of them describe the Ingush as a long-lasting people and protest against an “appropriation” of their heritage by their neighbors.¹⁵¹ In particular, they present the name of “Vainakh” as an authentic Ingush term. At the same time they complain that the Vainakh common historical and cultural heritage was overemphasized in the 1970s-1980s, downplaying specific differences between the Ingush and Chechen peoples.¹⁵² Today certain Ingush intellectuals recall that the term of “Vainakh” was artificially coined in the 1920s. This allows them to argue that there were never any “Vainakh people” at all. They treat the “ideology of Vainakhism” as an anti-Ingush strategy.¹⁵³ There are also Ingush authors who make all efforts to monopolize the term of “Vainakh” and argue that it should be legitimately used only by those who share the traditional Ingush “Ezdel” code of honor. They claim that the term is less popular among Chechens, who became familiar with it only between 1944-1957.¹⁵⁴

Concerning the idea of a new Ingush-Chechen unification, a sociological survey of the Ingush in 1999-2000 demonstrated that the great majority of them would object to such an initiative.¹⁵⁵ This opinion was also shared by both Ingush presidents, the former R. Aushev and the current M. Ziazikov.¹⁵⁶

The craziness about name replacement did not escape the Chechens either. Two approaches towards the name of “Chechens” were popular among them in the 1990s. It is well established that the term derives from the village of Chechen where the Russians first met the Chechens in the very late seventeenth century. At the same time the village name is rooted in the thirteenth century, when the Mongol khan Sechen’s residence was situated there.¹⁵⁷ In the early 1990s, when the young Chechen Republic was building up its sovereign state, some Chechen authors considered it inappropriate that their people’s name was borrowed from the Russians. They made all efforts to prove its indigenous origin in the early medieval¹⁵⁸ or even classic period.¹⁵⁹ There was an opposite suggestion as well – to reject the name given by the “colonizers” and to replace

151 Kh.-M. Dolov, M. Pliev, “Nado li vsekh rasstreliivat’?” *Spravedlivost’* (Grozny) 8 (April 1992), pp. 5-6.

152 For example see, A.Kh. Tankiev, ed., *Ingushi* (Saratov: Detskaia kniga, 1996), pp. 3, 10, 579, 582; idem, “Khvost ‘troianskogo konia’,” *Nauchnyi vestnik Ingushskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 1 (2002), pp. 94-101.

153 Ia.S. Patiev, “K voprosu o ‘vainakhsikh’ iazykakh,” *Ingushetiia* (19 February 2004).

154 I. Abadiyev, *Ingushskii iazyk – praiazyk chelovechestva* (Nazran’: Tsentral’nyi issledovaniy, 2004).

155 I. Sampiev, “Sotsiologicheskii opros zhitelei Respubliki Ingushetiia o vozmozhnosti ob’edineniia Ingushetii i Chechni v Checheno-Ingushskuiu Respubliku,” *As-Alan* 1 (2002), pp. 39-44.

156 Kustov, “Brat’ia.”

157 I.Iu. Aliroev, *Nakhskie iazyki i kul’tura* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1978), p. 10; idem, *Iazyk, istoriia i kul’tura vainakhov* (Grozny: Kniga, 1990), p. 13.

158 Vagapov, “Chechen’ i Chechnia.”

159 D. Khozhaev, “Otkuda poiavilos’ slovo ‘Chechen’?” *Respublika* (29 May 1992).

it with the Vainakh term “*Nokhchi-Mokhk*,” which means the “Chechen land,”¹⁶⁰ or just “*Nuokhchii*” as an ethnic self-designation.¹⁶¹ According to V.P. Pozhidaev’s observations of the 1920s, the Chechens did not like the term “Chechen” and preferred “*Nokhchii*” instead. Yet, he noted that even more so they favored identification after their own villages of origin such as Aukh, Shatoi and so on.¹⁶² Yet, in the early 1990s some Chechen authors kept maintaining that “Vainakh” was the early Chechen and Ingush self-designation.¹⁶³ Thus, they ignored the fact that the inclusive terms of “Nakh” and “Veinakh” were coined only in the late 1920s.

Since 1991, the Chechen radicals use the name “*Nokhchi-cho*” for the Republic, which means the “Chechen state” in Chechen. Yet, on January 19, 1994, President Dudaev signed a decree of name replacement – since then, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria emerged. *Ichkeria* is a Kumyk term, which means “hinterland.” In the past the term related to a small south-eastern part of Chechnia, where many Turkic place names survived reminding us of the earlier inhabitants. Why did Dudaev replace an authentic Chechen name with a Kumyk one? To be sure, this was a political decision. In 1993 – early 1994 the Chechen President waged an uneasy struggle with an opposition based in the lowlands. That is why he began to represent highlanders with their more prestigious *taips* rather than the Chechens in general as the true leaders of the liberation movement. It seemed pertinent for him to emphasize symbolically the dominance of highlands over lowlands, since he sought a support primarily among the highlanders.¹⁶⁴

FROM THE “KARACHAI-BALKAR PEOPLE” TO ALANIA

Before the October revolution, the Balkars lived in five highland communities and had no inclusive name. Officially, they were called the “five highland communities” and less frequently – the “highland Tatars.”¹⁶⁵ The name of “*Malk’arlyla*” was strictly connected with the oldest of them, the Cherek community.¹⁶⁶ The Russian term of “Balkar” derives from the Kabardian “*Belk’er*.”

160 Ia. Mutsalov, “O pasporte, nazvanii respubliki i iazyke,” *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii* (27 October 1992).

161 T. Soltomuradov, “My – nuokhchii,” *Komsomol’skoe plemia* (1 October 1990), p. 5.

162 V.P. Pozhidaev, *Gortsy Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1926), pp. 15-16.

163 For example see, B.G. Gabisov, *Chechentsy i ingushi (problema proiskhozhdeniia)* (Grozny, 1991), p. 3.

164 I. Rotar’, “Tadzhikskaiia i chechenskaia smuty,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (15 May 1997), p. 5; idem, *Islam i voina* (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1999), p. 13. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, p. 151.

165 For example see, V.N. Kudashev, *Istoricheskie svedeniia o kabardinskom narode* (Nal’chik: El’brus, 1991), pp. 155, 177.

166 E.N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh sviazi s Rossiei (vtoraia polovina 16 – 30-e gody 17 veka)* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1963), p. 169.

It got popular as an inclusive name for all the five communities just after the October revolution.¹⁶⁷ From that time onwards, they were considered a cohesive ethnic group. The Karachais developed their self-awareness much earlier: their self-designation “K’arachaylyla” was known already in the early seventeenth century.¹⁶⁸

In the 1920s a well-known Karachai politician Umar Aliev viewed the Balkars as not only a related group but as a part of the same people (*narodnost’*) together with the Karachais.¹⁶⁹ In the early 1930s, an Ossetian linguist V.I. Abaev considered it legitimate to single out the “Balkar-Karachai language,” which might be called “*Taulu*,” i.e. “highlanders’ one.”¹⁷⁰ However, the Balkars and Karachais belonged to different administrative units in the 1920s and 1930s – the former to the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Region (ASSR since 1936) and the latter to the Karachai Autonomous Region. The political environment did not favor their rapprochement. Yet, during the brief period of German occupation in fall 1942, for the first time in history the leaders of the Karachai and Balkar national committees signed a treaty of a unification of the two ethnic groups within the same administrative unit with a capital in Kislovodsk.¹⁷¹ The project did not come to fruition, because the Northern Caucasus was soon liberated by the Red Army, and then the Karachais and Balkars were sent into exile. Yet, a memory of this event survived.

In the 1960s, the first Karachai professional philologist, a specialist in the Karachai-Balkar language, U.B. Aliev opposed emphatically an identification of the Karachais with the Balkars as a single ethnic entity (*narodnost’*). At the same time, he strove to isolate them as the medieval Kypchaqs (Polovtsy), whom he identified with the Kumyks’ ancestors. He believed that, after arrival to the highlands, the Turkic ancestors of the Karachais and Balkars mixed with some aboriginals.¹⁷² The attempt to distance themselves from other Turkic peoples was caused by fear of the accusations of pan-Turkism,¹⁷³ which was still treated by the Soviet ideologists as a serious threat to the unity of the Soviet nations.

By the early 1990s, a struggle for power between ethnocratic elites intensified in the republics. Tensions between the Balkar minority and the Kabardian

167 N.G. Volkova, L.I. Lavrov, “Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy,” in V.K. Gardanov, ed., *Kul’tura i byt narodov Severnogo Kavkaza (1917-1967)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), p. 332; N.G. Volkova, *Etonimiy i plemennye nazvaniia Severnogo Kavkaza* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), pp. 87-91, 97.

168 Volkova, *Etonimiy*, pp. 87-89.

169 U.D. Aliev, *Karachai* (Rostov na Donu: Krainatsizdat, Sevkavkniga, 1927), pp. 34-45.

170 V.I. Abaev, “Obshchie elementy v iazyke osetin, balkartsev i karachaevtsev,” *Iazyk i myshlenie*, vyp. 1 (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1933), p. 73.

171 Tebuev, Khatuev, *Ocherki istorii*, pp. 157-158.

172 U.B. Aliev, “Vystuplenie,” in: I.V. Treskov, ed., *O proiskhozhdenii balkartsev i karachaevtsev* (Nal’chik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1960), pp. 244-245.

173 Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), pp. 26-54, 77-87.

majority increased in Kabardino-Balkaria, and the relationships between the Karachai majority and the Cherkess minority worsened in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Kabardino-Balkaria's population consists mainly of three ethnic groups: the Kabardians, Balkars and Russians. Their share in the population changed between 1989 and 1997 in the following way: the Kabardians and the Balkars consolidated their demographic positions respectively from 48.2 percent to 51.9 percent and from 9.4 percent to 10 percent, and, inversely, the Russians suffered a decline from 32 percent to 29.3 percent.¹⁷⁴ Karachaevo-Cherkessia



Fig. 5

comprised three major groups as well: the Russians, Karachais and Cherkess. They demonstrated similar trends over the same period. The Russians declined from 42.4 percent to 40.6 percent, and the share of the Karachais and the Cherkess increased from 31.2 percent to 33.7 percent and from 9.7 percent to 11.6 percent, respectively.¹⁷⁵ Highly politicized ethno-nationalist movements were active in the republics from the very late 1980s onwards. The Kabardians and Cherkess were mostly concerned about building up of a uniform ethnic entity together with the Adygheians and Shapsugs, and its growth in numbers with the help of the repatriation of the Adyghe (Cherkasses) from abroad. Symbolically this is manifested in the eagle of the new Kabardino-Balkar emblem, which should recall the alleged "Hattian roots" of the Adyghe¹⁷⁶ (fig. 5). The Karachais and Balkars demanded that their rehabilitation should be completed, in particular with respect to their political and territorial rights: the Karachais wanted their former Autonomous region to be reestablished, and the Balkars claimed their former highland areas and demanded equal access to political power in the republic. Besides, some of their intellectual leaders were dreaming of the Turkic unity in the Northern Caucasus and made all the efforts to construct a single Karachai-Balkar ethnic group.¹⁷⁷ One of the first was the same U.B. Aliev, who

174 T. Muzaev, *Etnicheskii separatizm v Rossii* (Moscow: Panorama, 1999), p. 116; A.Kh. Borov, Kh.M. Dumanov, V.Kh. Kazharov, *Sovremennaia gosudarstvennost' Kabardino-Balkarii: istoki, puti stanovleniia, problemy* (Nal'chik: EI'-Fa, 1999), p. 164.

175 Muzaev, *Etnicheskii separatizm*, p. 134; Nakhushev, *Narody Karachaevo-Cherkessii*, p. 5.

176 The contemporary national Kabardian myth presents the Adyghe people as the descendants of the Hatti, who lived in Asia Minor in the third millennium B.C.

177 In the Soviet period the "Karachai-Balkar nationality" was counted only once – in the national census of 1937. See, N.F. Bugai, A.M. Gonov, eds., *Po resheniiu pravitel'stva Soiuzna SSR...* (Nal'chik: EI'-Fa, 2003), p. 394. Later on, this entity was mentioned only by the émigré authors. For example see M. Aslanbek, *Karaçay ve Malkar Türklerinin faciasi* (Ankara: Çankaya Matbaasi, 1952), p. 7.

turned about and revised his earlier belief in the two different ethnic groups. In the early 1970s he argued that the Karachais and the Balkars were one and the same people, artificially divided after the October revolution. He complained that the lack of a single name hinted their consolidation. He himself began to use the term "Karachai-Balkars" for them.¹⁷⁸

This seemed to be an urgent issue, for in October 1990 the Kabardian nationalist association "Adyghe Hase" (Adyghe Council) declared the "formation of the Federation of the Caucasian Adyghe peoples" as its main goal. In September 1991 a political party called "Adyghe National Congress" was established, aimed at the "restoration of the Adyghe statehood on all the territory occupied by them in the RSFSR."¹⁷⁹ Both the Kabardian and Cherkess intellectuals began to promote the building up of a "single Cherkess state" encompassing Kabarda, Cherkessia, Adygheia and part of the Black Sea coast where the Shapsugs lived.¹⁸⁰ True, after summer 1992 this point was omitted from the Kabardian nationalists' programs, but they kept using the term "Adyghe nation"¹⁸¹ and made all efforts to encourage Adyghe ethnic self-awareness.¹⁸² The idea of a "single Adyghe state" was not forgotten either, and time and again is referred to by Kabardian¹⁸³ and other Adyghe intellectual leaders. In the meantime, the Adyghe leaders put an emphasis on cultural consolidation most of all.

Mobilized social memory of the forced Adyghe resettlement to the Ottoman Empire just after the Caucasian war of the early nineteenth century encourages the Adyghe consolidation as well. Adyghe historical publications of the last ten to fifteen years persistently emphasize that about a half a million Adyghe had to leave Russia in 1859-1864, and about half of those forced migrants perished on their way. Those tragic events are narrated by

178 U.B. Aliev, *Sintaksis karachaevo-balkarskogo iazyka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), p. 8.

179 I.L. Babich, ed., *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: TsIMO, 1994), pp. 105, 164.

180 Ia.S. Smirnova, *Karachaevo-Cherkessiia: etnopoliticheskaia i etnokul'turnaia situatsiia* (Moscow: IEA, 1993), p. 7; M. Kazharov, "Kabardinskaia intelligentsia v usloviakh posttotalitarizma," in Babich, ed., *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia*, vol. 1, p. 50. For the Adyghe integrative aspirations see also, C. Cem Oğuz, "From the idea of Caucasian unity to regional fragmentation: the North Caucasus, 1990-1999," in Moshe Gammer, ed., *The Caspian Region*, vol. 2: The Caucasus (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 54.

181 For example see, Babich, ed., *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia*, vol. 2, p. 96.

182 "Programma vozrozhdeniia adygskoi kul'tury," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda* (10 July 1992), p. 3; S.I. Akkueva, *Kabardino-Balkarskaia respublika. Model' etnologicheskogo monitoringa* (Moscow: IEA, 1998), p. 70; "Ustav kabardinskoi obshchestvenno-politicheskoi organizatsii 'Adyghe Hase'," in M.N. Guboglo, Kh.Kh. Sokhrokov, eds., *Politika i pravo v sfere etnogosudarstvennykh otnoshenii Kabardino-Balkarii*, vol. 2 (Moscow-Nal'chik: TsIMO, 2001), pp. 146-147.

183 For example see, Babich, ed., *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia*, vol. 2, p. 156.

contemporary Adyghe as the “Adyghe genocide.”¹⁸⁴ To commemorate them the Adyghe introduced an annual Adyghe Memorial Day in 1990, which has played a great symbolic role ever since.¹⁸⁵

Yet for some observers, all those developments manifest an Adyghe aspiration to build up “Great Cherkessia.” The myth of “Great Cherkessia” frightens the Karachais and Balkars as though all the mentioned Adyghe activity is aimed at their vital interests.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, their intellectual leaders call for the Karachai-Balkar consolidation with a growing energy.¹⁸⁷ It is no wonder that this project encourages a great interest in the common past. Hence, an astounding growth of revisionist concepts developed both by specialists and amateurs over the last fifteen years or so.¹⁸⁸ To give but one example, one might refer to the recently published book with a telling title, “Essays in the Karachai-Balkar history,” compiled by two authors – a deputy director of the Karachai-Cherkess Institute of Humanitarian Studies, R.S. Tebuev, and a Chair of the Department of History of the Karachai section of the same institute, R.T. Khatuev.¹⁸⁹ It is in this way that the idea of a broad ethnic-based alliances became popular among the Adyghe, Balkars, and Karachais by the mid-1990s.¹⁹⁰

By the late 1990s, the Balkars were frustrated with a failure of their expectations of equal political representation; many of them were dissatisfied with what

184 E.G. Bitova et al., *Sovremennaiia Kabardino-Balkariia: problemy obshchestvennoi dinamiki, nauki i obrazovaniia* (Nal'chik: El'-Fa, 1996), p. 7; T.Kh. Kумыков, *Vyselenie adygov v Turtsiiu – posledstvo Kavkazskoi voiny* (Nal'chik: El'brus, 1994), pp. 10-16; A.M. Begidov, *Kabardino-Balkariia: proshloe, nastoiashchee, budushchee* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2003), pp. 32, 34. For this forced migration see Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp. 23-26.

185 S.I. Akkueva, *Razvitiie etnopoliticheskoi situatsii v Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respublike (postsobetskii period)* (Moscow: TsIMO, 2002), p. 263.

186 For example see, “Ot redaktsii,” *Balkarskii Forum* (January 1997); “Obrashchenie Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Balkarii k balkarskomu narodu,” *Balkariia* 2 (November 1998); B. Abdullaev, “Pervye shagi ‘Alana’,” *Karachaev-Balkarskii mir* (May 1998), p. 2; M. Alanov, “Govorit' odno, delat' drugoe i dumat' o tretiem,” *Balkariia* 2 (November 1998), p. 4; K. Chomaev, “Zachem nas tianut v Bermudskii treugol'nik?” *Karachaev-Balkarskii mir* 6 (September 1998); A.M. Bairamkulov, *Pravda ob alanakh* (Stavropol': Stavropol'skaia kraevaia tipografiia, 1999), pp. 411-413; R.S. Dzhappuev, *Vystuplenie v Tsentre Karnegi* (13 July 1999) (Author's archive); B.A. Laipanov, “Ne sovershaete nasiliia nad drugimi...,” *As-Alan* 1 (1999); S.M. Chervonnaia, “Karachaev-Balkarskii mir Severnogo Kavkaza: sovremennaiia etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia,” *As-Alan* 1 (1999), p. 94.

187 M.Ch. Zhurtubaev, “Putiami predkov,” *Balkarskii Forum* 10 (1991), p. 8; Dzhappuev, *Vystuplenie*.

188 Shnirelman, “Fostered Primordialism,” pp. 74-83.

189 Tebuev, Khatuev, *Ocherki istorii*.

190 E.V. Kritskii, ed., *Chechenskii krizis v massovom soznanii naseleniia Severnogo Kavkaza* (Krasnodar: Severo-Kavkazskii tsentr Instituta sotsial'no-politicheskikh issledovaniia RAN, 1995), p. 77.



Fig. 6

they treated as the usurpation of power by the dominant majority (the Kabardians); and some of them gave up on the idea of further co-existence with the Kabardians and Cherkess.¹⁹¹ Instead, an idea became popular among their intellectual leaders that the concept of the “Kabardian-Balkar people” was artificial, that the Balkars’ civil rights were violated in the Republic, and that they were doomed to assimilation providing they would not be granted their own autonomy.¹⁹² Yet, by the end of the 1990s, it became clear that the idea of the Balkar Republic failed to materialize. The same occurred with a project for the resto-

ration of Karachai autonomy. That is why, recently, the Karachai and Balkar nationalists emphasize so much the unity of the “Karachai-Balkar people.” In this respect, the Karachai-Cherkess emblem is worth analyzing (fig. 6). On the one hand, a high double-top mountain can be viewed as a symbol of two titular peoples’ unity. Yet, on the other hand, it might be easily re-interpreted as the unity of the Karachai and Balkar peoples.¹⁹³

This idea had to be legitimized ideologically. To meet this demand the Karachai and Balkar intellectuals and political activists did all they could to impose the Alan identity upon the general public in the 1990s with the expectation that this would facilitate consolidation. Their newspaper, “Balkarskii forum,” issued in 1991-1996 declared that it was published in both the “Russian and Karachai-Balkar (Alan) languages.” A well-known Karachai philologist S.Ia. Baichorov established the “Karachai Institute of the Old Written Sources and Language” (re-named as the Karachai Institute-Museum of Epigraphy “Soslan,” later on) and issued a historical-philological journal titled “Alania” in Karachaevsk in 1993. In this journal he published his own monograph “Karachai over the millennia” and did all he could to prove that the Alans and Bulgars rather than the Kypchaqs were the ancestors of the Karachais and Balkars.¹⁹⁴

In the early 1990s, the Karachais established their cultural association “Alan” in Kislovodsk, which was aimed at the revival of folk traditions. A popular Karachai-Balkar journal “As-Alan” is issued in Moscow (since 1998)

191 Chervonnaia, “Karachaevo-Balkarskii mir,” pp. 93-95.

192 M. Bittirov, “Vozrodimsia li?” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda* (13 December 1991), p. 2.

193 A. Salpagarov, “O alanskom (karachaibalkarskom) flage,” (January-February 2003) <http://salpagarov.narod.ru/kultura/flag/alsoz.htm>

194 S.Ia. Baichorov, “Alanskaia krov’ karachaevo-balkarskogo naroda,” *Alaniia* (Karachaevsk)3 (1993); idem, “Nadpisi bulgarskikh predkov karachaevo-balkartsev na drevnei kavkazskoi intalii,” *Alaniia* 4 (1993).

by the Karachai poet Bilal Laipanov, the co-chair of the Karachai political movement "Democratic Jama'at." The Trans-regional Karachai Association "Alan" was established on March 14, 1998, under the leadership of A.A. Katchiev, the head of the Karachai-Cherkess Building Trust, which had to champion the Karachai people's interests. It included "Jama'at," a semi-political organization of "Shokhluk" and the Kislovodsk "Alan," the Moscow-based Karachai People's League, the Foundation for the Development and Rehabilitation of the Karachai People "Alania" and some others. On January 6, 2001, it united with the Balkar people's organization "Malk'ar Auasy" into the trans-regional semi-political organization of "Alan" designed to further common interests.¹⁹⁵

Thus, whereas in Soviet times the Balkars and Karachais represented themselves as different peoples, nowadays in the face of growing Adyghe solidarity they increasingly use the term of the "Karachai-Balkar people" and put an emphasis on their ethnic unity.¹⁹⁶ For instance, this term was referred to in a report of the National Soviet of the Balkar People's Committee on the ethnic border demarcation. In that document the "Karachai-Balkar people" were represented as one of the earliest in the Caucasus, formed already in pre-Mongol times;¹⁹⁷ it was also argued that their ancestors lived there from the Bronze Age time onwards.¹⁹⁸

The Balkar and Karachai intellectual leaders are well aware of the great integrative power of the single name "Agyghe (Cherkasses)" for the Kabardians, Cherkess, and Adygheians. Yet, according to a 1998 sociological survey, those people who were enthusiastic about the "Karachai-Balkar people" still used to distinguish between the Karachai and Balkar languages. When tested on their knowledge of Karachai and Balkar writers, poets, artists, musicians and the like, they recalled the names of the members of their own ethnic group more often than not.¹⁹⁹ This means that the "Karachai-Balkar people's" identity actively enforced by the ethnic leaders hardly worked very well in the late 1990s. That is why they turned to the term "Alans." Obviously, they believed that the idea of both common glorious ancestors and a common historical destiny would be more efficient. The Balkar archaeologist Igor Miziev made an outstanding contribution to the development of "Alan" self-awareness; he called the Karachais and Balkars the "ethnic successors of the Turkic-speaking Alans and Asses."²⁰⁰ Bilal Laipanov agrees that many Karachais and Balkars

195 Muzaev, *Etnicheskii separatizm*, p. 138; Guboglo, Sokhrokov, eds., *Politika i pravo*, pp. 293-297.

196 Chervonnaia, "Karachaevo-Balkarskii mir," pp. 88-89.

197 "Ob itogakh raboty komissii Natsional'nogo Soveta Balkarskogo naroda po administrativno-territorial'nomu ustroistvu po voprosam opredeleniia etnicheskoi teritorii i etnicheskikh granits Balkarii," *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda* (15 July 1992).

198 Babich, ed., *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia*, vol. 2, p. 253.

199 Chervonnaia, "Karachaevo-Balkarskii mir," pp. 90-91.

200 K.T. Laipanov, I.M. Miziev, *O proiskhozhdenii tiurkskikh narodov* (Cherkessk: PUL, 1993), p. 106. For Miziev's ideas see, Shnirelman, "Fostered Primordialism," pp. 74-78.

believe now that “the Alan state’s history – is an indivisible part of our early national history, and its culture is our national legacy.”²⁰¹ In the late 1990s, the Karachais and Balkars were increasingly changing their identity to the Alan one in their passports. Their cultural associations established in various parts of Russia appropriated the name of the Alans for themselves. To be sure, this trend is interpreted negatively in Northern Ossetia.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the ethnic identity of the groups under discussion was closely connected with their political status. In the 1920s, after the Mountaineers’ ASSR had disintegrated, the Ingush and Chechens were granted their own autonomy, which created a basis for their identities. Later on, after they had been united within the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Region (Checheno-Ingushskaia ASSR since 1936) in 1934, the Soviet authorities made all efforts to encourage their merger into one and the same people, for which a new name “Veinakh/Vainakh” was coined. In the 1960s-1980s this identity was intentionally imposed upon the Chechens and Ingush by the authorities and local intellectuals, and increasingly grew in popularity. Yet, at the turn of the 1990s this assimilation process was terminated due to the different paths chosen by both ethnic groups: the Chechens were fascinated by the idea of political independence, and the Ingush began to build up their republic within the Russian Federation, expecting that the Russian authorities would help them to regain the Prigorodnyi District. Although some Chechen politicians dreamt of a new unification within the Republic of “Vainakhia” in the 1990s, Ingush public opinion was negative.

A reverse tendency was observed among the Balkars and Karachais, who found themselves in different administrative units after the Mountaineers’ ASSR’s dissolution: the Balkars – in the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Region (1922-1936), Kabardino-Balkar ASSR (1936-1944 and 1957-1991), and Kabardino-Balkar Republic since 1993 and the Karachais – in the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Region (1922-1926), Karachai Autonomous Region (1926-1943) and once again in the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Region (1957-1991).²⁰² Although some Karachai intellectuals wrote of the “Karachai-Balkar people” and “Karachai-Balkar language” in the 1920s and 1930s, this was not accepted by the general public. In the 1960s local intellectuals made all the efforts to drop the idea entirely. Indeed, it was associated with the Turkic solidarity, and pan-Turkism was persecuted in the Soviet Union. People who

201 B.A. Laipanov, “Islam v istorii i samosoznanii karachaevskogo naroda,” in M.N. Guboglo, ed., *Islam i etnicheskaia mobilizatsiia: natsional’nye dvizheniia v tiurkskom mire* (Moscow: TsIMO, 1998), p. 146.

202 In 1991 its status was upgraded to the Karachai-Cherkess Republic.

suffered a lot in the exile were by no means eager to repeat their tragic experience once again.

Yet, by the early 1970s the bitterness of the recollections of deportation declined, and a frustration with incomplete rehabilitation, and a feeling of the continuing discrimination made local intellectuals search for a new Turkic alliance, which might help them to struggle effectively for social justice. An attempt to bring together two peoples closely related in language and culture seemed to be the first step to achieve this goal, and the idea of the "Karachai-Balkar people" was once again put on the agenda. However until the beginning of the 1990s it was shared only by a narrow circle of Karachai and Balkar intellectuals. A favorable environment for its dissemination was established only in the 1990s. After the attempts of the Karachai and Balkar nationalists to build up their own republics failed, they came back to the project of cultural alliance. Ever since, they did all they could to impose the idea of the Karachai-Balkar ethnic unity upon the general public. In search of the deep historical roots of that alliance, they turned to the Alan theme and commenced to disseminate extensively the idea that the Alans were Turkic-speakers, and to represent the Alans as the direct ancestors of the Karachais and Balkars. This idea fascinated the local intellectual elite, and nowadays it increasingly carves its way into local schools and universities. Therefore, today one can observe not only a belief in the ethnic unity of the Karachais and Balkars, but also their attempts to identify themselves with the Alans.

Liisa Malkki is correct when she argues that "the mythico-history is misread if it is seen simply as a series of factual claims. For the 'facts' it deployed, true and false alike, were only building blocks for the construction of a grand moral-historical vision. The more challenging approach to such narratives ... is not to sort out 'true facts' from 'distortions' but to examine what is taken to be the truth by different social groups, and why."²⁰³ From this viewpoint, the approach to the Alan identity manifested by all the groups in question is more than telling. Indeed, scarce and fragmentary classical and early medieval evidence can be used for quite different interpretations. Some scholars view the Alans as a cohesive linguistic-cultural group; others represent them as a heterogeneous tribal alliance. Obviously, both approaches contain a grain of truth. Having formed within the Sarmatian world, the Alans, at least the bulk of them, were the bearers of the Iranian language and culture. However, after they settled throughout the Northern Caucasus and lived there for centuries, they certainly incorporated some local indigenous groups. This concerns the Alan state especially, for it could hardly retain its cultural and linguistic homogeneity in the face of the high ethnic variability of its population.

Local intellectuals are well aware of all those obscurities and persistently choose that very interpretation that fits their urgent political goals. Having no

203 Liisa H Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1995), p. 104.

desire to share the Alan legacy with anybody else, the Ossetian authors represent the Alans as a homogeneous Iranian-speaking community. The Karachais and Balkars share this strategy, but they attribute the Turkic language to the Alans. In their turn, the Chechens and Ingush also associate their ancestors with the Alans, viewing them as a heterogeneous community though. It is in this way that they maintain their ethnic distinction and, at the same time, claim the lands of the former Alan state. Claiming its monopoly on “historical truth,” each ethnic group accuses its neighbors of aspiring to appropriate its own sacred past. Hence, the “verbal civil wars”²⁰⁴ are continuously waged between ethnic groups. While being waged by intellectuals already under the Soviet regime, they were inherited by post-Soviet Russia, and this trend got even stronger after the USSR collapsed. In Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, one has to treat them as “the struggle between the different specialists in symbolic production (full-time producers), a struggle over the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, that is, of power to impose (or even to inculcate) the arbitrary instruments of knowledge and expression (taxonomies) of social reality – but instruments whose arbitrary nature is not realized as such.”²⁰⁵ Yet, what Bourdieu meant by social classes was replaced in the late Soviet and post-Soviet environment by ethnic groups.

The Alan identity is appreciated especially by the Ossetians. They associate it with higher moral values and a “civilizing mission.”²⁰⁶ The Alans are viewed as a reference group, whom the Ossetians should emulate to overcome the contemporary moral decline and corruption. Besides, a belief in the common Alan roots helps the Ossetians to overcome the internal communities’ differences and to feel themselves a coherent body. Last but not least, the Alan identity helps their claims to the lowland territories, which the Ingush call into question.

Other ethnic groups value the name of the Alans for different reasons. The Chechens and Ingush associate the Alan identity mainly with its territorial benefits. For the Ingush, this seems to provide a strong argument to claim the Prigorodnyi District, while the Chechens strive to protect their sovereignty over the lowland Naurskii and Shelkovskoi Districts, transmitted to them in 1957 from the neighboring Stavropol’skii Krai. In their turn, the Karachais and Balkars need the Alan identity as a reliable basis for their indigenous status and a strong argument against those who call them late-comers to the Northern

204 Robert M. Hayden, “Recounting the Dead: The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia,” in Rubie S. Watson, ed., *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), pp. 179-180.

205 Bourdieu, *Language*, p. 168.

206 This brings us back to the obsolete theories of the late 19th – early 20th centuries. For that see, Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*; Romila Thapar, *History and Beyond* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 2-5.

Caucasus. Indeed, in the USSR it was the indigenous status that legitimated ethnic groups' claims to certain political privileges including a political autonomy. To be sure, this was by no means monopolized by the USSR alone; "imputed aboriginality and continuity with the past can be important sources of political legitimacy" elsewhere.²⁰⁷ This factor is still playing an important role in contemporary Russia.

To demonstrate its own "Alan nature" each group uses cultural symbols. The Ossetians aspire to introduce the Alan name as extensively as possible, and it is no surprise that "Alan" personal names became highly popular among them in the last few decades. But the most significant manifestation of the "Alanness" is the state symbolism, which has naturalized the earlier Alan symbols and embedded them strictly in the Ossetian land. The Ingush demonstrate their relations with the Alans in a different way – through an identification of their new capital with that of the medieval Alan state. This is a clear evidence of the strict connections between the Alan identity and territory, which is especially sensitive to the Ingush, as we know. By contrast, the Ossetians extend the "Alanness" to culture, language and even biological qualities rather than territory alone. For the Karachais, it is obvious that their own territory was linked with the Alans. This is evident from the Nizhne-Arkhyz fortified site situated in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, where famous medieval churches survived fortunately as strong evidence of the Alan Eparchy, the religious center of the Alan state. Yet, to demonstrate their own relations to the "Alanness" the Karachais and Balkars also use extensively Alan names for their various political, social and cultural organizations, historical and literature journals, and even for their "Karachai-Balkar language." All of this demonstrates Bourdieu's "magic power of words," which, people believe, is able to help them to achieve the goals otherwise unachievable by means of force.²⁰⁸

As we saw, the consolidation of the closely related groups or, otherwise, the disintegration of a single entity into several distinct groups occurs by no means spontaneously and does not follow any teleological rule, in contrast to what the Soviet ethnographers believed. All those processes are initiated by people themselves quite consciously in order to achieve real political gains. In contrast to what nationalists argue, a cultural and linguistic relatedness does not necessarily encourage a mutual sympathy and a bent for unity. There were other factors that led to the Chechen and Ingush unification within a single republic in 1934-36; and cultural and linguistic closeness was not able to rescue the republic from dissolution in 1991. Cultural and linguistic relatedness does not serve as a durable basis for Ossetian unity either, and the Ossetians have to make great efforts to consolidate their community through the imposition

207 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 71. On the close ties between legitimacy and indigeneness, see Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 202-204.

208 Bourdieu, *Language*, p. 170.

of a new invented identity. To go beyond the Northern Caucasus, one might also refer to the Mordvinian case, in which leaders tried hard to prevent the Mordva's dissolution into two groups – Moksha and Erzia in the 1990s.²⁰⁹

One observes a reverse trend among the Karachais and Balkars as well as their Adyghe neighbors. There the neighboring ethnic groups (related in language and culture) demonstrate clearly an aspiration for integration. Yet, this is determined by political rather than merely cultural or linguistic factors.

This is not to say that cultural ideas play no role in a search for the “Alan identity.” Having learned a lot from the bitter Soviet experience, the local nationalists believe that only indigenous ethnic leaders might solve recent grave economic, social and political problems caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For their misfortunes they accuse the alien culture introduced by the Russians. In their view, salvation will come only with the restoration of the traditional culture and its values, which were highly undermined by Soviet modernization. Hence, we can better understand the passion for “neo-traditionalism” that embraced all the post-Soviet states in the late 1980s and 1990s under the slogan of the “peoples’ revival.” In this context, addressing the Alan legacy was more than timely. The alleged relationships with the “bright” Alans, or Aryans, provided a feeling of primordial authenticity and let one get rid of the burden of the Soviet heritage, an “alien pollution” that badly injured the “natural national organism.” At the same time, the new inclusive name has to emphasize cultural unity.²¹⁰

In particular, those ideas encouraged some ethnic groups to give up their former names, which undermined the feeling of authenticity and reminded them of dependency on the stronger neighbors, be they the Russians or Georgians. We observed this strategy among the Ossetians and the Chechens making all efforts to “indigenize” the names of themselves and their republics. At the same time in all those cases the national leaders aimed at the political gains, namely to distinguish more clearly between friends and foes (J. Dudaev) and also to acquire their territorial claims (A. Galazov), rather than merely the manifestation of their loyalty to their own languages and cultures.

Notably, the Ingush showed no desire to change their name. In this way, they demonstrated their loyalty towards Russia with an expectation that its authorities would support their political and territorial claims. Thus, the different strategies of the local nationalist movements are evidently affected by the Russian factor. Recently, the Japanese political scientist Matsuo Masatsugu put forward the idea of “nested conflicts” involving more than two different actors.

209 Victor A. Shnirelman, “*Purgas und Pureš: Urahenen der Mordwinen und Paradoxa der mordwinischen Identität,*” in Eugene Khelimsky, ed., *Mari und Mordwinen im heutigen Russland: Sprache, Kultur, Identität* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz-Verlag, 1995).

210 The same idea underlay the introduction of the term *Nihonjin* for all the Japanese population embedded into the Meiji era ideology. See Katarina V. Sjöberg, *The Return of the Ainu* (Chur: Harwood Academic Press, 1993), p. 36.

This situation was quite common under the Soviet "Russian doll federalism" and was inherited by certain post-Soviet states including Russia.²¹¹ In this case, an intermediate group aspires, on the one hand, to get as much power as possible and to get rid of the strict control from the federal center, and on the other hand, to establish itself as a "center" in respect to ethnic minorities. For its part, an ethnic minority is interested in weakening such a "center" and, therefore, is searching for support from the federal center. One could observe this sort of conflict, first, between the federal center, Chechen majority and Ingush minority in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and after its dissolution, and second, between the federal center, Kabardian majority and Balkar minority in the Kabardino-Balkaria. Hence, it is no accident that both the Ingush and Balkars made all the efforts to demonstrate their loyalty to the federal center. This strategy manifested itself in particular in the politics of name. Whereas the Chechens were eager to replace the name given to them by the Russians, the Ingush were far from this sort of aspiration. Instead, the Ingush emphasized their loyalty to the Russian authorities both in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This made them a target of sharp criticism from Chechen politicians and intellectuals, who accused them of a betrayal of the common course.²¹²

Thus, as a powerful condensation symbol²¹³ an ethnic name contains a whole set of very important meanings in the contemporary political environment. Its role is by no means restricted to a mere marker of cultural and linguistic relationships in contrast to what people usually believe. It reveals people's values and their expectations in respect to their place in the world in general and among neighboring peoples in particular, signifies their political ambitions and alliances, defines their cultural and territorial claims, points to their origins, recalls their historical achievements and failures, enables one to distinguish between allies and enemies, and determines directions of ethnic gravitation and antagonisms. The ethnic name is evidently far from value-free. A re-arrangement of political alliances usually makes its replacement an urgent issue. Hence, the "politics of name" is well represented in the contemporary world.

211 M. Matsuo, "Language Differentiation and Homogenization in Nested Conflicts: Two Case Studies," *Journal of International Development and Cooperation* 5:1 (1999), pp. 87-102.

212 For example see, Saligov, "Istoki i prichiny."

213 Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 6.