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The Solar Stag of the Chamalals and Tindals and other masonry petroglyphs in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region of Dagestan and their relationships to similar phenomena in the mountain communities of the Caucasus: Socio-ecological and historical perspectives

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Abstract

Aim. Following the discovery of a number of iconographically unique masonry petroglyphs depicting a red deer solar stag (i.e. bearing the sun between its antlers) in settlements of the Chamalal ethno-linguistic group in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region of the Tsumadinskiy district of Dagestan, the aim of the research has been: (1) to survey the region to ascertain whether other images of this nature existed and to understand the relationship of the corpus to other petroglyphs produced within the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone and of neighbouring ethnic groups in the Caucasus; (2) to study the evolution and meaning to the community of the petroglyphic imagery and (3) to understand the mechanisms by which peoples of the Caucasus shared and adapted polytheistic belief systems arising from the deep past following their conversion to Christianity and Islam.

Materials and Methods. Research activities involved field surveys of traditional buildings within the ethno-linguistic enclaves of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu which might contain masonry petroglyphs and their photographic documentation. A thorough survey of the scientific literature impacting on this field in the Caucasus was undertaken in the libraries and institutions of Dagestan, Moscow and Saint Petersburg. This data added to the documentation of masonry petroglyphs already undertaken in the Gidatli communities of the upper Avarskoe Koisu region.

Results. Field surveys resulted in the discovery of more petroglyphs of the solar stag iconography both within Chamalal territory and that of the neighbouring Tindals as well as other petroglyphs of interest in neighbouring republics of the North Caucasus. A socio-ecological assessment of local habitats which might have sustained both red deer and bezoar goat (the principal game animals since human presence in the region) indicated that the bezoar goat inhabited the territories of both groups but were now rarely found in Chamalal lands. While red deer did inhabit the forests of the Tindals, it appears that they never frequented those of the Chamalals, who must have travelled to hunt them in forests further to the south.

Conclusion. The research confirmed the presence of a unique corpus of petroglyphic imagery attesting to beliefs in a solar stag which may date back to period of man's re-inhabiting the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region in the early Holocene. Indigenous beliefs relating both to the red deer and the bezoar goat initially represented in rock face petroglyphs of the eastern Dagestan piedmonts and rock paintings of the mountainous regions were by the late Bronze Age represented on masonry blocks used in building in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone. As Christianity spread in Transcaucasia and the Great Caucasus Range, including north-western Dagestan, indigenous images representing the solar stag were conflated with those of the popular Christian cult of the Miracle of Saint Eustace, resulting in the unique petroglyphs of the solar stag common to the Chamalals, Tindals and the communities of the Gidatli area of the Avarskoe Koisu basin.

Key Words
Masonry petroglyphs, Caucasus, Dagestan, Chechnya, minority ethno-linguistic enclaves, ethnoarchaeology, solar stag iconography, syncretistic belief systems, rock art, Saint Eustace.

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Солярный олень чамалалов и тиндалов и другие петроглифы на каменных кладках в верховье реки Андийское Койсу Дагестана и их связь с аналогичными явлениями в горных сообществах Кавказа: социально-экологические и исторические перспективы

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Резюме

Цель. В связи с обнаружением ряда иконографически уникальных петроглифов на каменных кладках с изображением благородного оленя-солнца (т.е. несущего между рогами солнце) в поселениях чамалальской этноязыковой группы верховья реки Андийское Койсу Цумадинского района Дагестана цель исследования заключалась в следующем: (1) провести обследование региона, чтобы выяснить, существовали ли другие изображения такого рода, и понять связь корпуса с другими петроглифами на каменных кладках, созданных в пределах аваро-андо-дидойской метакультурной зоны и соседних этнических групп на Кавказе; (2) изучить эволюцию и значение изображений для сообщества и (3) понять механизмы, с помощью которых народы Кавказа разделяли и адаптировали политеистические системы верований, возникшие из глубокого прошлого после их обращения в христианство и ислам.

Материалы и методы. Исследовательская деятельность включала полевые исследования традиционных построек в пределах этнолингвистических анклавов верховья реки Андийское Койсу, которые могли содержать петроглифы и их фотодокументацию. В библиотеках и учреждениях Дагестана, Москвы и Санкт-Петербурга был проведен тщательный обзор научной литературы, изучающей эту область исследованй на Кавказе. Эти материалы пополнили сведения о петроглифах, уже имеющиеся в Гидатлинских общинах верховья реки Аварское Койсу.

Результаты. Полевые исследования привели к открытию большего количества петроглифов на каменных кладках иконографии солярного оленя как на территории Чамалала, так и соседних Тиндалов, а также других представляющих интерес петроглифов в соседних республиках Северного Кавказа. Социально-экологическая оценка местообитаний благородного оленя и безоарового козла (основные промысловые животные региона) показала, что безоаровый козел обитал на территориях обеих групп, но в настоящее время редко встречается на землях Чамалала. В то время как благородный олень обитал только в лесах тиндалов и не посещал леса чамалалов, которые, скорее всего, охотились на них в лесах южнее.

Заключение. Исследования подтвердили наличие уникального корпуса петроглифических изображений, свидетельствующих о представлениях о солярном олене, которые могут относиться к периоду расселения человека в верховьях реки Андийского Койсу в раннем голоцене. Поверья коренных народов о благородном олене и безоаровом козле первоначально представленные в петроглифах скальных поверхностей предгорий Восточного Дагестана и наскальных рисунках горных районов, относятся к позднему бронзовому веку и использовались в виде каменных блоков при строительстве в аварско-андо-дидойской метакультурной зоне. По мере распространения христианства в Закавказье и на Большом Кавказском хребте, включая северо-западный Дагестан, местные изображения солярного оленя были объединены с изображениями популярного христианского Великомученика Евстафия, в результате чего появились уникальные петроглифы оленя, характерные для чамалалы, тиндалы и общины Гидатлинского района бассейна реки Аварское Койсу.

Ключевые слова

Каменные петроглифы, Кавказ, Дагестан, Чечня, этнолингвистические анклавы меньшинств, этноархеология, иконография солярного оленя, синкретические системы верований, наскальное искусство, Святой Юстас.

Here lived very experienced warriors, scholars of customary law, skilled hunters (and by the same token, knowing well the complicated hunting tongue), hereditary masters in the manufacture of high quality fighting bows (which were even sent to the Georgian court of Kakheti) and women who were skilled masters of gold and silver embroidery (cloths, back quivers, hip quivers, etc.) (Chakhkiev, 2009).

INTRODUCTION

This study examines an iconographically unique body of petroglyphs created in the Chamalal and Tindal ethno-linguistic enclaves in highlands of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu (river) region of Dagestan (Tsumadinskiy district) and their relationship to petroglyphs of other communities inhabiting the northern macroslopes of the Great Caucasus Range (Fig. 1).

Dagestan has a rich traditional heritage of inscriptions, ornamentation and images carved or inscribed in stone. By far the greatest number are in Arabic on grave markers in cemeteries and mausolea or on plaques which record the dates of construction and repair of religious buildings or other buildings of community significance (Shikhsaidov, 1984; Markovin, 1972; Goldstein, 1976; Karpov, 1987). Often they are simply short texts in Arabic, invoking Allah or the Prophet Muhammad or excerpts from the Quran placed on walls in various places in a settlement. They are found throughout the republic in a range of forms and styles and have long been the subject of recording and publication by specialists, nowadays primarily by the Institute of Oriental Studies at Dagestan State University and the Institute of Archaeology, History and Ethnography of the Dagestan Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences. They are important sources of historical, linguistic, sociological and art historical information.

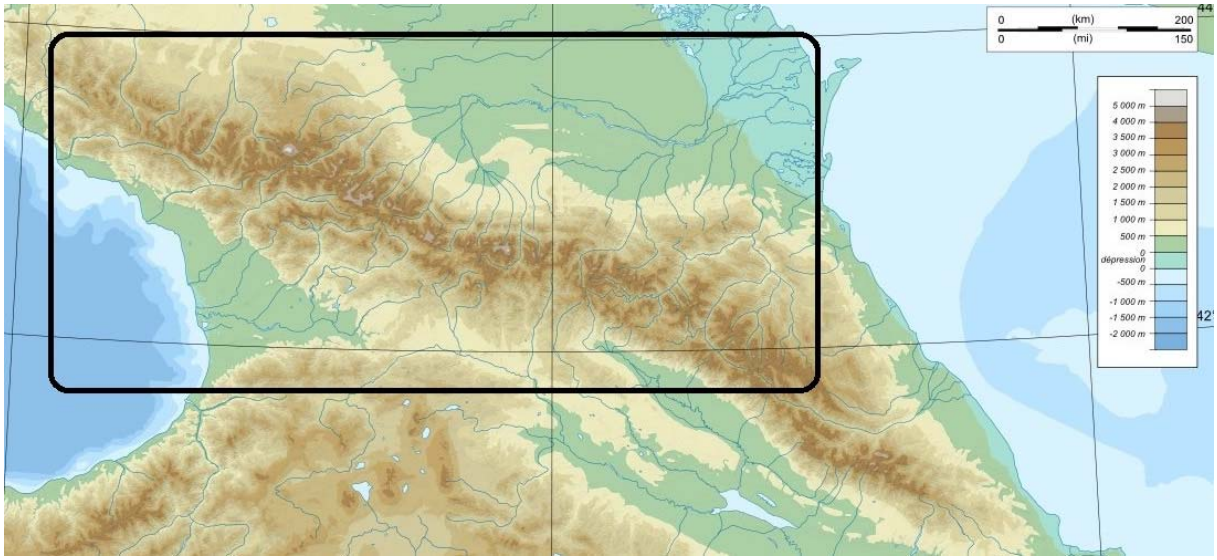

Figure 1. Topographical map of Great Caucasus Range: The black box outlines the general regions in which masonry petroglyphs were a cultural phenomenon from the Late Bronze Age until the pre-modern period

Certain settlements of Dagestan also have living traditions of decorative stone carving applied to domestic, religious and public buildings. These usually frame or emphasise the principal architectural features of buildings (doorways, windows, arches, mosque mihrabs, etc.) (Goldstein, 1972, 1979; Debirov, 1966). Others are simply rectangular stone panels set into walls with designs probably derived from those of traditional carpet or rugs – or even manuscripts. There also decorative stone bosses set into walls of houses, mosques, minarets and sometimes there are skillfully sculpted stone rings set on mosque facades of beneath the balconies of minaret from which the azan is called.

All these works of stone carving are meaningful in some way to the whole community, even plain, unadorned, but finely executed stone masonry being appreciated as an expression of dedicated and skilled craftsmanship.

Masonry Petroglyphs

An important component of certain stages of the multi-millennial process of socio-ecological development in the Caucasus, particularly amongst those many communities without a written language, was communication and recording by painting or engraving images, signs and symbols on rock surfaces, rock shelters or caves, as was done in many places across the world and in many phases of the human story.

The Avars, the numerically largest ethnic group in Dagestan, did not have their own indigenous writing system and it was not until Islamicisation of their territories that they adopted Arabic characters with which to write their language, resulting in a diverse and extensive written heritage. However, the indigenous Avar-Ando-Dido (Tsez) minority ethnolinguistic enclaves of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu (Aliev, 1999; Alimova & Magomedov, 1993; Asiyatilov, 1967; Ataev, 1963a & b, 1996; Bulatov, 1990; Gadzhiev, 1988, 1991; Danilina, 1926; Dakhrilgov, 1991; Nikolskaya, 1959; Magomedov, 1975; Dirr, 1909) never expressed their languages in written form, although they did eventually use Arabic language and script not only in religious contexts but also in commercial transactions and for certain legal and administrative needs.

However, there is another important and unique category of communication in worked stone in the mountains of the Caucasus, which served to some degree as a substitute for formal systems of writing. In masonry buildings of rural communities, particularly in the upper reaches of the rivers that drain the northern macroslopes of the Greater Caucasus in Dagestan and Chechnya, there are frequently seen stones built into masonry walls which bear striking petroglyphic images of an abstract, symbolic or narrative nature. The intention behind their creation or placement was clearly to convey some concept or message or mark some event and they clearly emanate from an archaic tradition which, as it were, calls out to be understood. The dilemma of understanding and interpreting them is similar to – or perhaps an extension of – that faced by those trying to interpret the earliest visual records left by man. Fortunately, in the Caucasus, if we are diligent in our quest, we may be gifted with

an inherited tradition, statement or practice relating to a motif or symbol which aids our comprehension of their intention and their role within their communities. Occasionally archaeological or historical research also provides clues to the social motivation behind them or helps in establishing a chronology of their production and evolution.

This study attempts to build a narrative around some of these masonry petroglyph images from a specific area of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone (Aglarov, 2002; Luguev, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1991; Luguev & Magomedov, 1994, 2000) (Fig. 2) – of the high Caucasus in north-western Dagestan, in the upper reaches of the major river artery called the Andiiskoe Koisu – not as an attempt at direct interpretation but to try to fit them into the world which created and lived with them through dialogue with members of the communities which have inherited them and the tools and disciplines of historical, genetic, ecological, ethnographic and archaeological research, sometimes by dedicated, passionate scholars who literally gave their very selves to these pursuits. This is thus a human story of both those who created and were the consumers of these images and of those who have endeavoured to understand them and convey their significance and preserve them as a fundamental component of the heritage of the Caucasus, one of the crucibles of human social and spiritual evolution.

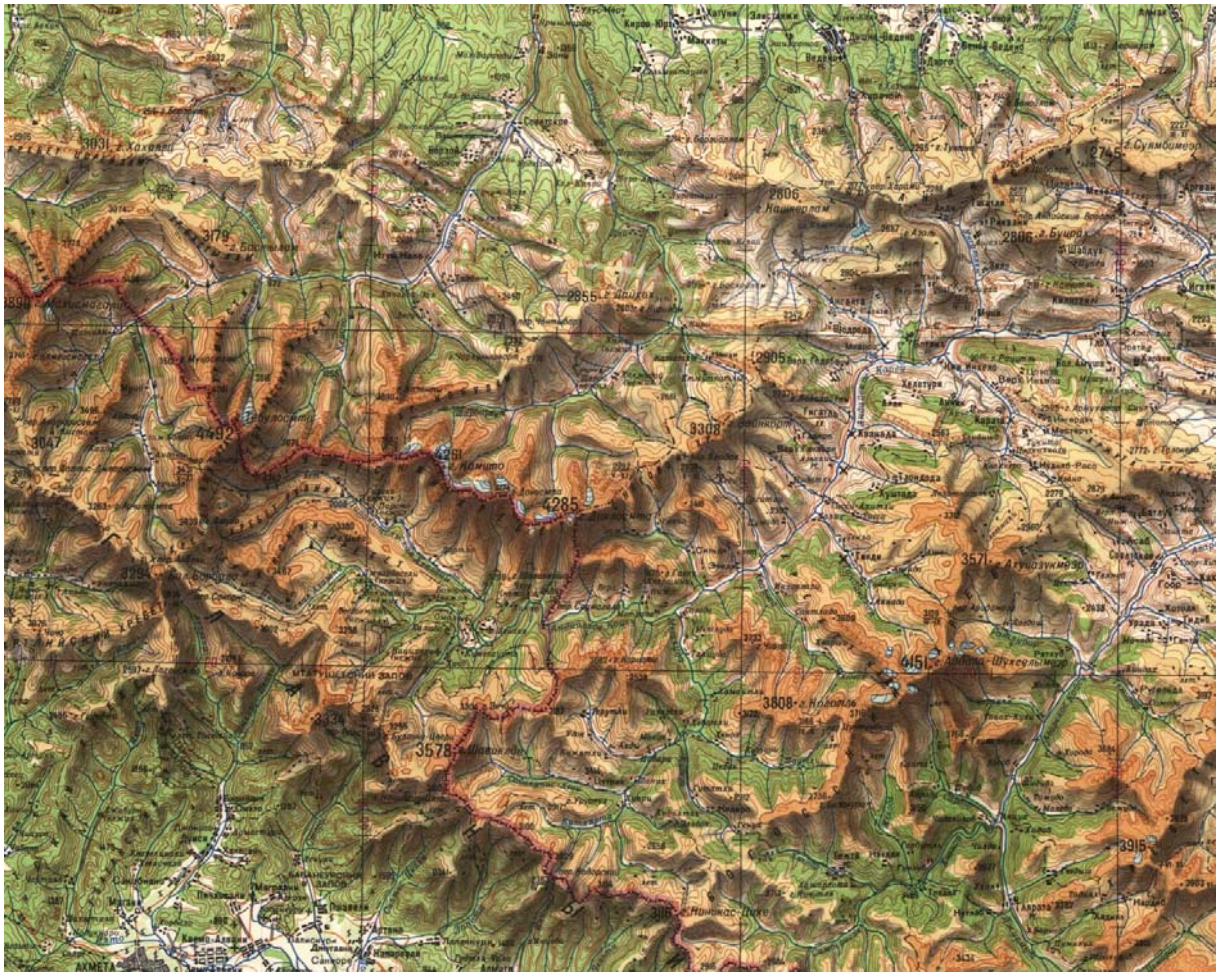

Figure 2. Topographical map (1:100 000) of the Avar-Ando-Dido and related Chechnya and Ingushetia metacultural zone in which masonry petroglyphs are encountered. Soviet military map 1:500 000, 1942 (Grozny sector K-38-B)

Here we are not referring to paintings in caves or rock shelters or “galleries” of petroglyphs incised into large exposed rock faces such as were produced by the ancient inhabitants of Val Camonica in Italy or Gobustan in Azerbaijan, although these do provide important comparative data through their imagery or the increasingly dependable means of scientific dating of the time of their execution.

In a phenomenon unique to Georgia, Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia masonry petroglyphs in the form of individual pecked or incised stone blocks or slabs were inserted as components of exterior masonry walls during their construction. They are found on all types of buildings, religious, public and domestic. They were rarely used on internal walls, which are usually plastered, although they occasionally occur inside mosques in association with Arabic inscriptional plaques set into the walls.

These masonry petroglyphs bear broadly consistent categories and renditions of motifs, signs and symbols, usually individually on a single stone or sometimes grouped in association on a single stone. These stones may be corner stones or inserted among others in the general masonry construction of a wall.

The imagery is limited by the sizes of the individual stones used in masonry which precludes the depiction of the complex visual compositions and palimpsests sometimes found in the painted art of the rock shelters and the rock face petroglyphs of the Caucasus piedmont regions. Visual narratives on a single stone are generally limited to simple hunting scenes, or horsemen with lance and banner.

Sometimes individual petroglyphic stones are grouped together linearly to create a decorative impact or reinforce an apotropaic intention (as happens in some tower houses and tower fortifications of Chechnya and Ingushetia, as will be described below) but individual petroglyphic stones are generally not placed in any intentional way in relation to other petroglyph stones to create narrative compositions.

Sometimes walls also appear to function as "galleries" with an array of both Arabic inscriptions and petroglyphic images, as is the case of the facade of the mosque of Kala Koreish of the 11th-12th century in the Dakhadaevskiy district of central Dagestan.

The petroglyph images can be broadly grouped into two categories: non-figurative (aniconic) and figurative. In the Caucasus non-figurative images range from those which have a clear symbolic character (including labyrinths, spirals, swastikas, crosses and those which are essentially circular with centred rayed, whorl and rosette designs) to others which are less easy to classify and are made up of straight lines and curves in geometric configurations. There are also semi-regular "hatched" or "spattered" patterns covering the entire face of individual stones. Figurative images include those which are zoomorphic, anthropomorphic (including accessories, such as sabres, spears, bows and arrows) or vegetal in character.

Introduction to the History of Research into Petroglyphs and Painted Rock Imagery in Russia

Beyond the Caucasus, there is an extensive heritage of rock petroglyphs and rock paintings in the Russian Federation particularly in the north, ranging from Karelia in the north-west, across the Urals and Siberia to the Far East of the country, with particularly notable concentrations of petroglyphs in the valleys and tributaries of the great rivers of the Yenisei, Lena, Angara and Ob (Tom). Some of these, in particular those of Shishkina in the Urkutskiy oblast and the Tomsk region, attracted interest in erudite academic and court circles of Saint Petersburg from the middle of the 18th century onwards. Peter the Great sent an expedition to the River Tom of which an account was published in 1730, followed by research undertaken by the 1733-1743 Northern Expedition of the Russian Academy of Science under the leadership of G.I. Spassky (1783-1864). The Shishkinsky petroglyphs became known as early as the first half of the 18th century due to the efforts of the academic Gerard Friedrich Miller, resulting in exploration there by members of the second Kamchatka expedition of the Academy of Sciences, supported by the artist Iohann Wilhelm Lursenius who received praise for his particularly accurate copies of the petroglyphs they found. The petroglyphs of Karelia were first studied by K.I. Grevingk (1819-1887) in the middle of the 19th century, followed by V.I. Ravdonikas (1894-1876), an archaeologist and historian of prehistoric art and professor at Leningrad University. The many petroglyphs of the Lake Baikal region also drew the attention of N.N. Agapitov and others in the late 19th century.

In the 20th century, a vast amount of documentation and publication of the petroglyphs of the regions of the northern rivers and coasts and Lake Baikal was undertaken, with strong support from the Soviet state, including the sponsoring of research expeditions of the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of Academy of Sciences to the Baikal region in 1968 and 1971. Among the many specialists who dedicated themselves to this work in Northern Russian and the country's Far Eastern republics, a few are remembered as particularly productive and influential: A.M. Livensky (1902-1985); A.P. Otkladnikov (1908-1981), one of the founders of the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences; and A.V. Ardianov (1854-1920) who was a principal collaborator of the Russian Geographical Society and undertook research across much of the vast expanse of Northern Russia. He was arrested and shot as "an active opponent of Soviet authority", provoking a strong reaction from those who valued his contribution to science and society, which had been acknowledged by the Tsar.

The activity briefly noted here together with a synopsis of the Northern and Far East Russian petroglyphs themselves here have been documented in monographs or articles by M.A. Devlet, E.G. Devlet, D.K. Dubrovskiy, V.Yu. Grachev and T. Miklashevich (Devlet, 2000, 2005; Dubrovskiy & Grachev, 2010; Miklashevich, 2008). An introduction to the prehistoric art of the USSR was published by A.A. Formosov in 1980 and another publication about the then status of rock art research of rock in the Russian Federation by E.G. Devlet (2008).

Introduction to the History of Research into Petroglyphs and Painted Rock Imagery in Dagestan

Following the annexation by Catherine the Great of the Crimea peninsula and southern Ukraine in the 18th century and the subsequent annexation of the Caucasus in the mid-19th century, there was considerable activity in exploring the antiquities and archaeology of the Caucasus and Transcaucasus by Russian and other devotees. This is documented in detail by R.M. Munchaev and A.A. Formosov (Munchaev, 1959; Formosov, 2006). Interesting supplementary information is provided by I.A. Sorokina who chronicles activities in relation to the study of prehistoric art (Sorokina, 2009). However, although much documentation had already been done on the petroglyphs and rock art of Northern Russia in the 18th and 19th century, it was not until after the consolidation of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s that scholarly interest and state support began to focus on the petroglyph and rock painting heritage of Dagestan.

The first published documentation was provided by the architect N.B. Baklanov following research in the Avar settlements of Tindi and Kvanada in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu in the Tsumadinskiy district and Koroda in the Gunibsky district (Baklanov, 1924; Baklanov & Vasiliev, 1927). In 1930, A.S. Bashkirov, who from the mid-1920s worked in Dagestan as the leader of the North Caucasus ethnological-linguistic and artistic-archaeological expedition which focused on documenting the medieval built heritage of the republic, published the first (albeit brief) article entirely devoted to masonry petroglyphs based on research in the Avar communities of Tidib in the Gidatli area of Shamilskiy district) and of Rukhdza and Koroda, both in the Gunibskiy district. This was followed by another publication in 1931 devoted to carving in stone and wood in Dagestan. The first scholars to describe these petroglyphs named them in Russian "петрографы" (petrographs). Here, however, the term "masonry petroglyphs" is introduced as a more accurate generic descriptive term.

Working under Bashkirov was A.A. Miller, who in 1927 published a lengthy illustrated article on the survival of ancient forms of material culture amongst the contemporary population of Dagestan. Aware of the daunting scale of the task of adequately describing the vernacular craft traditions still flourishing at that time in Dagestan, he decided to concentrate exclusively on the detailed analysis of the ornamentation and techniques of a large holding of vernacular carved wooden vessels from the Avar-Ando-Dido cultural area held in the Ethnographic Department of the Russian State Museum. These had been acquired on the museum's behalf in 1904-1912 and included items collected in 1911 from Karata communities, located between the Avarskoe Koisu and the Andiiskoe Koisu, as well as from the Andi, Botlikh and Bagulal ethno-linguistic communities in the administrative Andiiskoe Okrug and from Dido and Kapuchin communities further to the south. Although the museum collection did not include vessels of the Akhvakhs, Chamalals and Tindals of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, items from the Akkvakh and Chamalal (Gakvari) groups are illustrated in P.M. Debirov's 1982 publication on Dagestan wood carving traditions, while another vessel is generically described as being from the Tsumadinskiy district. These help us to understand the traditional imagery of the region as a whole, as well as the particularities of its individual ethnic groups. Further wooden vessels and other artifacts from the

region are in the collection of the Kunstkamera in Saint Petersburg and were published by V.O. Bobronikov, V.A. Dmitriev and Yu.Yu. Karpov in 2006.

In this context, in his 2001 account of E.M. Shilling's 1946 expedition to the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, G.Ya. Movchan illustrates wooden vessels from Tindi, which have similarities to examples in Debirov's publication from the Akhvakhskiy and Tsumadinskiy districts (Kvanada, Tlondoda, Khushtada and Gakvari). They are all in the collection of the State History Museum of Georgia.

A.A. Miller was not only a competent ethnographer and archaeologist but a sensitive observer and skilled draftsman, able in his fine 1927 publication to convey the essence and character of the vernacular materials and their decoration and manufacturing techniques, as he also had done in a report on a previous survey undertaken in 1907 on the vernacular architecture, agricultural tools and other utilitarian artifacts of rural Abhazia for the then Alexander III Russian State Museum (Miller, 1910).

The descriptions of Miller, Debirov and Shilling reveal motifs employed in wood carvings which closely parallel a number of non-figurative masonry petroglyph images recorded in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu. It may have been that some of the more complex and precisely inscribed symbols were created by the region's skilled woodworkers and woodcarvers who knew how to plot geometric designs and patterns and had the required specialist tools such as compasses, chisels and hammers.

In 1959 another important detailed study of masonry petroglyphs was published by P.M. Debirov. The approach he took was to explore aspects of important individual petroglyphs from settlements in the Gidatli area, rather than to produce a survey of the corpus of all that survived there.

In the 1930s individual ethnographers and archaeologists at the State Academy of the History of Material Culture and the Russian Association of Scientific Research Institutes of Social Sciences and the institutions as a whole were subjected to severe repression by the state, accused of not properly understanding and reflecting Marxism in their work. "Palaeoethnology" as a bourgeois discipline was particularly criticized and eventually the school of national paleontology was abolished. Those who had worked in the imperial museum sector were particularly disfavoured. In a 1998 study A.A. Formosov (a leading Russian scholar of prehistoric rock art) published by the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, he records that 29 specialists of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture were arrested and shot and 59 others sentenced to 3-5 years in detention or exile. A.A. Miller was arrested and sent to Karaganda concentration camp in Kazakhstan in 1934, where he died in 1935. Those who were fortunate to survive were rehabilitated many years later. Apart from the devastating human costs, there were serious impacts on ethnographic and archaeological research and publication. Repressed scholars in these disciplines were not able to publish. A.S. Bashkirov, for instance, professor at Moscow State University and archaeologist with the Russian Association of Scientific Research Institutes of Social Sciences was particularly targeted and published nothing between 1933 and 1945 – the work he had achieved in Dagestan as leader of the North Caucasus expedition to document and conserve monuments of national heritage was to no avail. Previously published works of these scholars were neglected in specialist institutional libraries. The personal libraries and archives of those who died were sometimes destroyed by their families as a security precaution or were otherwise lost to scholarship. Thus in Dagestan, there are often no holdings in state and university libraries of key studies relating to the republic's heritage by these metropolitan experts although, they are frequently referenced in scholarly works by Caucasus specialists. Fortunately, they can sometimes be sourced through the Russian State Library, the Russian State Public Historical Library or the Presidential Library in Moscow.

Notwithstanding such obstacles, archaeological and ethnographic work in general continued. In 1937, the State Academy of the History of Material Culture was reconstituted as the Institute of the History of Material Culture within the USSR Academy of Sciences. A milestone in research in these and other areas was the establishment in 1946 in Makhachkala of the Dagestan branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, which included the Institute of History, Language and Literature (later reconstituted as the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography). Amongst its personnel were the archaeologist M.I. Isakov and V.I. Markovin, an artist and archaeologist. Both were to make major contributions to the study of the petroglyphs and rock art of Dagestan (Isakov, 1966; Markovin, 1953, 1954, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1990, 1992, 2006; Kanivets & Markovin, 1977). Markovin also carried out significant research into the masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya and Ingushetia (see below).

In 1950, the ethnographer E.M. Shilling published a study on the decorative arts of mountain Dagestan, which was based on his extensive personal experience of the societies in the region, including an expedition undertaken in 1946 to the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region with students and colleagues. Assisting him was G.Ya. Movchan, who became the leading authority on the vernacular architecture of the Avars and recorded petroglyphs in Tindi and Kvanada during the expedition, a number of which were published much later in his seminal 2001 publication on the old Avar house.

As most masonry petroglyphs found on buildings in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone of Dagestan are re-used and not in their original locations, those publications documenting buildings which have petroglyphs in their original positions and configurations are very useful in helping to understand their intention and function. In a 1947 article about the architectural heritage of the Avars, Movchan provided a detailed description of the Gitino house in the Gidatli settlement of Tidib, whose rich exterior decoration included masonry petroglyphs, as well as having abundant intricately carved interior woodwork. Prior to this all we have is the 1924 description by N. Baklanov of a house in Koroda (Gunibsky district) which also has an extensive and orderly disposition of masonry petroglyphs on its façade. It bears an Arabic inscription dated 1673 recording its construction. In his 2001 publication Movchan also published a detailed account of an important structure in the Bagulal settlement of Kvanada which he and Shilling also documented during their 1946 Andiiskoe Koisu expedition. This building, opposite the community's Juma mosque, housed the institution of the traditional male community watch house (Басхиан хъала). Its walls incorporate a number of interesting masonry petroglyphs. A building serving a similar purpose also survives in the Bagulal settlement of Khushtada and is documented in the same publication by Shilling and Movchan.

Debirov's key 1959 article was followed by further observations about masonry petroglyphs in his book on carving in stone in Dagestan published in 1966 and another the same year on architectural carving in Dagestan. Both have become standard references for the study of Dagestan's decorative arts and architecture, as has his abundantly illustrated 1982 publication on wood carving. As in the work of Bashkirov before him, the majority of the masonry petroglyphs addressed by Debirov are from the Gidatli region.

Until 1948, when V.I. Markovin was advised by the entomologist M.I. Ryabov of the existence of petroglyphs incised into rock faces near the settlement of Kapchugai, which is situated on the Shura-Ozen River in the eastern Dagestan

piedmonts, scholarly awareness of petroglyphs in Dagestan had been restricted to masonry petroglyphs. Markovin was already well known in the North Caucasus as an archaeologist and his first published descriptions of these piedmont petroglyphs in 1953 led to many further explorations and investigations of this phenomenon elsewhere in Dagestan, as well of the masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya-Ingushetia later in his life. Markovin was a prolific publisher; a number of his works are cited elsewhere in the present study. In 2006 he published a major book on the petroglyphs of piedmont Dagestan, in which he assembled accounts of the sites he and colleagues had discovered in the previous half century.

In 1965, D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin, published the fullest study to date of the masonry petroglyphs of mountain Avaria, which includes drawn copies of all that were known to that date, including those in the communities of the Avarskoe Koisu basin and the upper Andiiskoe Koisu and their tributaries.

There are few rock face petroglyphs in inner mountainous Dagestan (one is recorded near Inkhokvari in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu) but yet another unexpected area of study was opened up when, in 1957, V.I. Isakov first discovered prehistoric painted rock imagery near the high mountain settlement of Chirkata in the Gumbetsky district (Isakov, 1951; Isakov, 1961). This was followed by hasty and often not-precise copying of rock paintings by various individuals which were subsequently identified in other parts of mountain Dagestan. However, from 1967 onwards, archaeologist V.M. Kotovich (of the Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Dagestan Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences) applied herself to the identification of new sites and the careful recording and analysis of rock art in the mountains. Among a range of foundation publications (Kotovich, 1969, 1971a, 1971b, 1974a, 1974b, 1974c, 1974d, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1984; 1986), in 1976 she published an important monograph on the most ancient rock art of Dagestan in which she describes the sites of Chinna-Khita and Chuval-Khvarab in the Gunibsky district and of Kharitana in the Gumbetskiy district. The former two groups of paintings are attributed to the Mesolithic period and the latter to the Neolithic. Through Kotovich, rock art sites of the Bronze Age have also been identified in Deguak and Irushten in the central north Caucasus and of the mediaeval period in the Balan-Su and Bass River basins in Chechnya.

As described below, the masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya and Ingushetia became the object of study by Markovin and others following the return of Chechens and Ingush to their homelands in 1957, after their deportation to Central Asia and Siberia in 1944. This work continues to this day by L. Ilyasov, including an excellent volume on Chechnyan petroglyphs illustrated in colour and published in 2014 by the Scientific Library of Chechnyan State University. Unfortunately, the study of petroglyphs in Dagestan has not paralleled this level of attention and has been neglected for some time.

Supplementing the detailed accounts of the history of archaeological research in Russia and Dagestan by R.M. Munchaev, A.A. Formosov and S.S. Sorokin, (Munchaev, 1959; Formosov, 2006; Sorokin, 2009), R.M. Kunbuttaev of the Dagestan State University of National Economy, has assembled a useful chronological account of petroglyph and rock art research in Dagestan up to 2008, detailing the scholars and institutions involved and their publications (Kunbuttaev, 2008).

Masonry petroglyphs in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu

Our work is an integral part of a broader socio-ecological sustainability study relating to traditional agro-pastoral practices, ecological conservation, cultural heritage and landscape and the dynamics of climate change of Dagestan's Tsumadinskiy district through which the Andiiskoe Koisu runs, which has been undertaken since 2020 by the Institute of Ecology and Sustainable Development of Dagestan State University (Petherbridge et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). This is being undertaken within the framework of the Institute's contribution to the International Partnership of the Satoyama Initiative which supports the goals of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, through documentation of the dynamics of traditional sustainable socio-ecological production landscapes.

The Andiiskoe Koisu is the northernmost of Dagestan's major river arteries. To its east are the Avarskoe Koisu and the Kazikumukhskoe Koisu, the three rivers eventually merging to form the Sulak River.

This study examines an iconographically unique body of masonry petroglyphs created in Chamalal and Tindal communities in the highlands of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region and their relationship to petroglyphs of other communities inhabiting the northern macroslopes of the Great Caucasus Range. This high mountain zone (within – from east to west – the Russian republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Karbardino-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia) is the watershed for a number of major tributary rivers which merge into the Sulak and Terek Rivers which flow eastwards into the Caspian Sea and the Koban River system which flows westwards into the Sea of Azov. To the north are the vast steppes of southern Russia. The much narrower, steep southern macroslopes of the Great Caucasus Range border the coastal northern periphery of the Black Sea in the Russian Krasnodar region and Abhazia and constitute the border territory of Transcaucasian Georgia and Azerbaijan to the east (Fig. 2).

As climatic conditions in what are today the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu gradually ameliorated in the early Holocene following the Last Glacial Period (c. 110,000-11,000 BP), a complex of postglacial high altitude landforms were ultimately to provide the conditions for the rich and diverse range of alpine and subalpine flora and fauna which characterise the region today. Mesolithic man, having survived in the glacial refugia provided by the adjacent lower elevations of Transcaucasia and the northern Black Sea periphery to the south, was to return to hunt and forage in the mountain valleys and highlands and eventually, by the late Neolithic period, to optimize a range of fertile bioniches for permanent habitation on the basis of high-altitude cereal- and orchard-based agriculture and the herding of sheep and cattle (Amirkhanov, 1977; Bader, 1965; Gadzhiev, 1975; Zhilin, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Kotovich 1961, 1974).

Modern genetic and palaeoethnological research indicates that the mountainous area of the north-east Caucasus with its deep valleys and turbulent rivers, majestic escarpments and fertile flanking tributary basins, has been continually populated for millennia by the descendants of these first farmers and pastoralists, the majority of whom constitute the Avar ethnic group as well as a number of smaller, related Avar-Ando-Dido (or Tsez) subgroups: Andians, Botlikhians, Godoberis, Chamalals, Bagulals, Tindals, Kvarshians and Didos. Those subgroups who made the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu their home found a uniquely compatible ecosystem, sheltered by geology from outside view and intrusion and blessed by nurturing microclimates and bounteous soils, each ethno-linguistic subgroup occupying one of the Koisu's tributary valleys (or adjacent groups of valleys) (Shilling, 1993) (Figs. 3, 4). Their descendants have retained genetic characteristics distinct from those of neighbouring subgroups, as a result of long practiced customs of patrilocal residence by which they did not intermarry with members outside their subgroup and the fact that they never moved beyond their traditional geographic boundaries (Balanovsky et al., 2011; Bulayeva et al., 1985, 2003, 2006; Caciagli et al., 2009; Karafet et al., 2016; Marchiani et al., 2008; Nasidze et al., 2005; Nazarova et al., 2008).

Figure 3. Settlement of Echeda, upper Andiiskoe Koisu. Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 4. Settlements of Nizhnee and Verkhnee Gakvari, Gavarinka River valley, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

Initially, the early agro-pastoralists established a subsistence economy based on cereal and legume cultivation and the herding of sheep, goats and cattle, which were progressively adapted by a combination of natural and human agency to this particular high mountain eco system and which continue to be raised to the present day. A still-under-emphasised element of the agro-pastoral revolution which greatly transformed the local population's use of and access to this rugged natural

environment was the introduction to the highlands of the Caucasus of the hardy donkey (first domesticated c. 6,000 years ago in north east Africa). Hunting practices which had been developed to a high degree of efficiency during the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods were perpetuated as an important element of local subsistence (until the colonial period in some areas). Archaeological, petroglyphic and ethno-historical evidence indicate that the bow and arrow was used up until the late 19th century in Dagestan (Ramazanova, 2019), although spears are also depicted in a number of petroglyphs. Firearms, in the form of flintlock rifles and pistols, were not used generally used in the region until the 18th century, although they were introduced into the Caucasus in the 16th century. Dogs were usually used in hunting (usually in pairs), as they could attack, confuse and corral the game being hunted.

While the Avars dominate the basins of the Avarskoe Koisu and Kazikumukhskoe Koisu to the east, each of the subgroups inhabits separate ethno-linguistic enclaves in the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu, speaking their own distinct (unwritten) languages within the Nakh-Dagestan branch of the North Caucasian family of languages. Despite genetic and linguistic distinctions, for many generations these various peoples have shared many characteristics of social customs, belief systems, traditional law, material culture and subsistence practices. Thus the whole area they jointly inhabit has been termed the Avar-Ando-Dido cultural or metacultural zone. A significant body of research accomplished by Soviet-era archaeologists indicates that the first period when its inhabitants shared common cultural features was the Middle Bronze Age (2,300-1,500 BC). It is named the Ginchi period after the signature excavation site in the settlement of Tidib in the Gidatli area. It is notable that the zone as mapped in what is considered to be the definitive publication by R.G. Magomedov (1988) describing the Ginchi culture coincides with the area in which the majority of the masonry petroglyphs of the north-east Caucasus are found (Fig. 5).

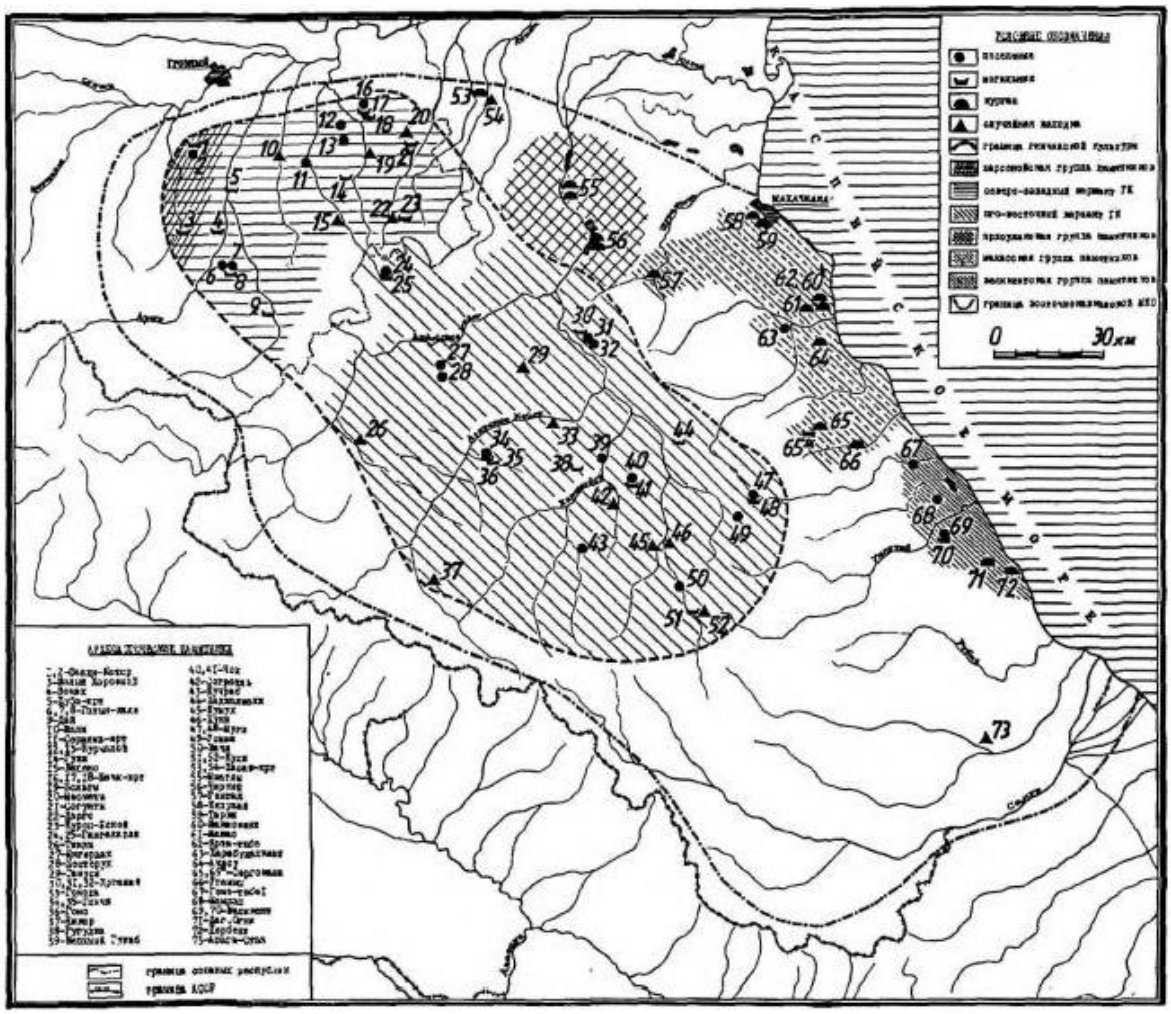

Figure 5. Archaeological map of the Middle Bronze Age Ginchi cultural region in the north-east Caucasus, which approximately coincides with that in which masonry petroglyphs started to be produced in the succeeding Kayakent-Khorochoy period (Magomedov, 1998)

Of further significance is that the Ginchi culture is the first in the Caucasus when its inhabitants began living in rectangular stone masonry buildings with rectangular internal rooms; previously in the Kura-Araxes culture, houses were built of circular form with walls of light vegetal materials and clay. Thus the Ginchi period in theory must be seen as providing as a *terminus post quem* for the appearance of masonry petroglyphs, as the stone masonry blocks typically used for inscribing petroglyphs were surely a by-product of regular masonry construction. Nevertheless, no masonry petroglyphs are known from any remains of archaeological excavations of Ginchi culture sites, and it is not until the succeeding Kayakent-Karachoy archaeological period that the first petroglyphs on individual stone blocks appear. These were excavated by K.A. Brede and published in 1956. Markovin also described these finds in their chronological context in his 2006 publication on the rock face petroglyphs of the piedmonts of north-east Dagestan. They have images of bezoar goats and of a deer similar to those inscribed in rock faces near where they were found (Fig. 6). It is of further interest that it was in about the

5th century BC during the Kayakent-Khorochoy period that the first iron implements became available (Kotovich, 1971); pointed iron tools were ideally suited to the making of petroglyph images as they could cut into rock more deeply than the softer bronze tools.

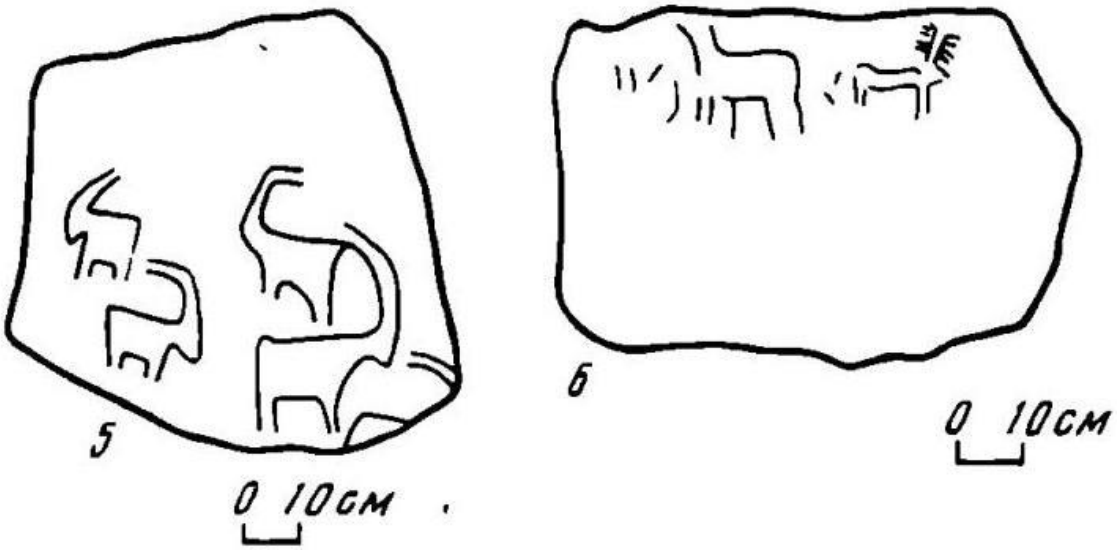

Figure 6. First recorded masonry petroglyphs of the Kayakent-Khorochoy period excavated in the settlement of Sigitma (Buynakskiy district) (Markovin, 1990)

Adding to the information available through the accounts of D.M. Ataev, V.I. Markovin, E.M. Shilling and G.Ya. Movchan, the present survey of historic settlements in the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu (from Gigatli to Echeda on its left flank and from Kvanada to Tindi on its right flank) has revealed a substantial body of hitherto unpublished petroglyphic masonry within the territories of the Chamalal and Tindal ethno-linguistic subgroups.

The Chamalal's principal settlements today are Gigatli, Gigatli-Uruk, Gadiri, Agvali, Nizhnee and Verkhnee Gakvari, Richaganikh and Tsumada which are situated on the left flank of the valley, while the Tindals occupy territory on both sides of the river further to the south, their principal settlements being Tindi, Echeda, Tissi and Tissi-Akhitli. Like the Chamalals, the Tindals also have a number of smaller villages. Before being banned under Soviet collectivisation, all communities in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region had small outlying hamlets called *khutor*, which were conveniently adjacent to fields or orchards or water sources for their stock. Some of these have been resettled in recent years, although most have long been abandoned.

As elsewhere in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone of Dagestan (and in Chechnya and Ingushetia), it is evident that some of the petroglyphic stones or slabs found in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu have been re-used from earlier constructions, being obviously of an earlier date or clearly damaged fragments of the original blocks or inserted up-side down. They usually are employed as external corner stones of buildings or incorporated into their facades. In one instance, in the mosque of the Chamalal community of Richaganikh, a large stone slab covered in non-figurative petroglyphs was inserted into the mosque floor.

The imagery on masonry petroglyphs in this region is both figurative and non-figurative. As is common elsewhere in Dagestan, this region also has a range of Arabic inscriptions on stone panels on mosques, cemetery and street walls. These are not the subject of the present investigation as they lie within the scope of the ongoing epigraphic survey of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Dagestan Federal Centre of the Russian Academy of Science. Many of these, however, are framed with decorative designs (usually vegetal) which fall within the repertoire of motifs and techniques of the region's masonry petroglyphs.

This study examines the relationships of these masonry petroglyphs with other petroglyphs already recorded in other areas of the Andiiskoe Koisu and in the Avar lands of the Avarskoe Koisu and its tributary basins and elsewhere in the highlands of central and southern Dagestan as well as with those of the Vainakh peoples of the mountains of Chechnya and Ingushetia and of other Russian Caucasus republics further west.

The petroglyphic phenomena are examined from a specific regional-centric perspective with the goal of better understanding and reconstructing the features and motivations of the unique societal evolution of the ethno-linguistic minorities which have made the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu their home since they were first settled. As noted above, the low temperatures and changes in fauna and flora when the higher elevations of this part of the Caucasus were glaciated or periglaciated led to this region not being inhabited by hominins during the Last Glacial Period. The chronological framework of the study thus reflects the Holocene ingress of humans as deglaciation progressed and Mesolithic hunters and foragers interacted with a changing vegetational and faunal environment (Stutz, 2020). Subsequent permanent high-altitude settlements through the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods employed sustainable practices and patterns of land and natural resource use, many of which have been perpetuated into the modern era.

There are many non-figurative petroglyphs with widely-varying compositions of linear (and some curvilinear) elements which are very difficult to describe but which must have communicated community-comprehensible concepts now lost to us. Some, indeed, resemble writing in a region most of whose ethno-linguistic enclaves possessed discrete non-written languages. In this study no attempt is made to address the original purport of these abstract graphical communications beyond saying that a number of former scholars of Caucasian petroglyphs, particularly in the Soviet period, were able to undertake ethnographic research regarding the vernacular visual imagery characteristic of the domestic artifacts of indigenous communities of Dagestan and other republics, resulting in evidence-based expositions

of the meanings of a number of common signs and symbols found in the petroglyphs of the Caucasus (such as the labyrinth, the swastika, the cross and the human hand). Where their works reflect accurate documentation of vernacular traditions, rather than purely personal theories, they are essential references of import to rock imagery specialists working not only regionally but well beyond the Caucasus.

Masonry petroglyphs of the solar stag or stag that bears the sun in its antlers

In this study particular attention is addressed to aspects of the zoomorphic imagery of petroglyphs found within two ethno-linguistic enclaves of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu which exclusively depict the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and the bezoar goat (*Capra aegagrus*). Here it should be noted that although the roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) also inhabited the territories described and was indeed hunted, this species does not possess the magnificent antlers of the red deer stag and may not have been considered as worthy for depiction in petroglyphs or rock paintings, although there are compositions in which there are images of deer without antlers. These could be either red deer females or roe deer.

Only two examples of anthropomorphic imagery (except for that of the human hand) have been recorded in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region. They are the image of a hunter or hunting deity depicted on a stela from Tindi and an extremely rudimentary image of two horseman associated with linear signs on a corner of the traditional men's watch house in the Bagalal settlement of Khushtada.

The deer imagery is of major interest. In Chamalal territory (in the settlement of Verkhnee Gakvari, the abandoned Gakvarian khutor of Tsuidi and the settlement of Gigatli) there are masonry petroglyphs of red deer stags bearing the sun in their antlers (i.e. images of the solar stag). These constitute both the highest concentration and the most explicit visual depiction anywhere amongst world's petroglyphic and rock art of the multi-millennia old belief in the "solar stag". There are also two known examples in Tindal territory (in Tindi and Echeda).

In association with foraging, hunting, i.e. the killing of wild game for both food and other purposes, was the most primeval occupation of *Homo sapiens* and precursor hominins (Meshveliani, 2007). By the Mesolithic period, red deer and mountain goats or ibex of various species – in the Caucasus the bezoar goat – were primary prey species. Deer and mountain goat species were depicted on rock walls and artifacts from the Palaeolithic period onwards in Europe and the parts of Eurasia which were their natural habitat. The physical remains of both the red deer and bezoar goat have been revealed as major prey sources of both *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens* by archaeology in the Caucasus eco-region (Adler & Tushabramishvili, 2015; Adler & Bar-Oz, 2009; Bar-Oz et al., 2002, 2004; Golovanova & Desenichen, 2019; Meshvelian et al., 2007) and petroglyph images of red deer and bezoar goat in the Gobustan area of coastal Azerbaijan have now been Carbon-14 dated to the Eneolithic (6^{th}-4^{th} millennia BC) and Bronze Ages (4^{th}-3^{rd} millennia BC) (Farajova, 2018).

Pan-Eurasian beliefs in the Solar Stag

In Europe and Eurasia more broadly extensive documentation has accumulated concerning the hunting and exploitation by prehistoric societies of red deer for a wide spectrum of purposes, including nutrition, tool and projectile manufacture and ritual (Andresen et al., 1981; Bell, 2007; Billamboz, 1977; Bonsall et al., 1995; Bevan, 2003; Brown, 2015; Clark, 1954; Conneller, 2003; Chapman, 1975; Choyke, 2013, David, 1999, 2004, 2007; Isaakidou, 2003; Jarman, 1972; Pitts ,1979; Wild & Pfeifer, 2019; Ramseyer, 2005; Zhilin, 2001, 2014; Zhilin & Losovskii, 2008). As the world of the Mesolithic hunter-forager emerged from the Ice Age into that of the sedentary Neolithic farmer and herder, a revolution occurred in the orientation of material cultures and beliefs which reflected new relationships with and dependencies on soil, sun and climate. Human potential was further enhanced by the development of the ability to make and use metals in the subsequent Bronze and Iron Ages, with evidence attesting to the development of perceptions of the red deer as fundamentally and divinely connected with the both the diurnal and annual cycles of the sun in relation to the sustainability of life on earth. Eventually these beliefs and associated ritual practices were subsumed within a wealth of oral traditions, writings and folklore from the early mediaeval period onwards from Europe to East Asia which is still accessible to us on the theme of the close association between deer, the hunting of deer and the sun reflected in particularly abundant verbal imagery of the divine stag bearing the sun between its antlers, conflating the animal and the astral body in myriad ways (Martynov, 1985; Mykhailova, 2015; Pettit, 2020; Aldhouse-Green, 1991; Green, 1991; Beck, 2003; Gundarsson, 1992; Hmori, 2011; Makkai, 1996; Rogers, 2022).

The stag had become deified as the sun or as a vehicle for the sun deity. Antler tines are perceived as the sun's rays or its antlers, which are regenerated each spring, are conflated symbolically with branches of the tree of life.

As will be further described below, in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone there are petroglyphic compositions which appear to represent actual hunting activity or individual images of desired prey, intended to evoke supernatural support for success in hunting. Perhaps this imagery should be better interpreted as that of an eternal chase of the deified sun-deer through the underworld of the night to emerge resurrected each morning to spread life-giving warmth and light to the upper world of nature, people, crops and animals.

That being said, hunting indeed clearly continued to be until relatively recent times a significant activity among the mountain peoples of the Caucasus (Zvelebilm, 1992). V.I. Markovin viewed hypothetical interpretations of petroglyphic relics of the past with due caution, "It seems to me that it is not worth complicating extremely the spiritual world of local people in antiquity, as is sometimes done, in trying to find influences of cultures of Asia Minor. The inhabitants of the piedmont and mountainous regions of Dagestan, lived in a constrained but definitely not a closed world. Concrete happenings and concrete everyday needs concerned them – the harvest, offspring of livestock, success in hunting, armed skirmishes, personal sorrows and joys. They tried to find their reflection in higher powers – in the sky and on the earth, all the more so as the nature of Dagestan with its cliffs, its gorges, mountain streams and forest maidens, with abrupt zonal (altitudinal) changes, climatic fluctuations and earthquakes, force one to relate to it with something more than respect. It is these earthly realities to which the mind and heart turned and in the context of which one must search for answers in the content of ancient images. The Middle Ages did not release the inhabitants of the mountains from the difficulties of life – and perhaps even magnified them – by adding to them social contradictions and the penetration of the canonical religions, Christianity and Islam, to traditional views were added new and little understood interpretations of the essence of being and new rituals. The study of the internal content of petroglyphs is a complex matter and it must be elaborated on the basis of careful study of local archaeological, ethnographical and folkloric information" (Markovin, 1990).

To date no prehistoric or historic visual imagery has been found which explicitly illustrates the solar stag bearing

the sun between its antlers, although there exists what has been interpreted as evidence of this symbolic connection in petroglyphs ranging from the Tagus valley in the Iberian peninsula to north-east Asia which visually juxtapose images of antlered deer and a circular or rayed symbol of the sun (e.g. Mongolian deer stones of the Late Bronze Age (Sabinov, 1994; Bobrov, 1989; Volkov, 2002; Kovalev et al., 2014; Kovalev & Erdenebaatar, 2007; Otkladnikov, 1954; Novgorodova, 1973; Fitzhugh, 2005, 2009; Allard & Erdenebaatar, 2005), stags with a circular symbol attached with a line to its antlers at Mount Xianglushan in north-eastern China (Zabiyako & Wang Jianlin, 2017) The nearest variants of petroglyphic imagery to that of the solar stag of the Chamalals and Tindals to visually evoke the relationship between antlers and the sun are the petroglyphs of deer from Central Asia which have rayed suns or astral bodies emanating from the tips of their antlers (Shvets, 2005), cited by the Ukrainian scholar N. Mykhailova, of the Institute of Archaeology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, who has contributed significantly to elucidating the cult of the deer as the dominant mytho-ritual complex among the prehistoric societies of Eurasia.

Such is the power of the notion of a divine stag bearing the sun in its antlers in oral and written evocations, that a sole petroglyph from the riverside site of São Simão in the Tagus valley of Portugal has been interpreted by S. Garces as depicting a hunter carrying the body of a stag which originally had an opening between the tips of its antlers which was purposely closed at a later date by pecking the stone to indicate that it bore the circular image of the sun. Garces has specialized in the study of red deer imagery and has interpreted this depiction as evidence of changing human perceptions of the deer from the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods to the Neolithic (Garces, 2012; Garces, 2019)

It is thus worthy of exploration to try to explain why it was that within the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone of Dagestan and specifically in the upper reaches of both the Avarskoe Koisu (in Tlyakh and Khahib in the Gidatli area) and the Andiiskoe Koisu that iconographically-specific examples of a male red deer clearly bearing a rayed sun between its antlers seem to have been produced.

In order to do so it is necessary for comparative and analytical purposes to describe the key iconographical features of these solar stag masonry petroglyphs necessary for comparative and analytical purposes. These all belong to a consistent visual canon or ideography, be they the image of a single stag or of a stag in some seeming hunting relationship or in a symbolic relationship with other non-figurative petroglyphic images. It seems clear that the meaning of all these visual elements and their interrelationships were understood by those who created them and who viewed them at that synchronously (although viewer interpretations may subsequently have changed over a greater period).

The visual record indicates three basic ways in which antlers of red deer stags have been depicted by various cultures over time:

Variant 1.

In the iconographic tradition which is identified here for our purposes as the “Avar-Ando-Dido solar stag” or “solar stag” the male red deer is graphically pictured in silhouette with its torso and four legs in profile in a static standing posture but with its antlers turned so as to be seen head-on in a curve embracing a hemispherical or ovoid negative space or virtual “spiritual” sun, as a proxy for the circular sun (Figs. 7, 8). The perception of the sun being embraced by a red deer’s antlers would have been even more obvious to those who had actually seen a slain animal – when seen from above the antlers have a cupped form which could be perceived as supporting a round body – the sun. There are also petroglyphic depictions of stags in which the antlers do not embrace a full circle or ovoid but have the form of an inverted crescentic arc with outwardly radiating tines, which in certain cases may have been intended to represent the antlers of a solar stag (e.g. the multiple stag images on Hunting Stone No. 2 in Kiafar, Karachay-Cherkessia described below).

Figure 7. Photograph of posture of red deer stag in relation to the sun idealized in popular belief systems across Eurasia and depicted in masonry petroglyphs of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu and Avarskoe Koisu regions

Figure 8. Small bronze representation of stag head and antler as conceived by peoples of the headwaters territories of the Andiiskoe Koisu found with other small bronze cult objects from Mount Kidilashan, Tzundinskiy district, Dagestan. 5th century BC. Dido ethno-linguistic group (Megrelidze, 1951)

Variant 2.

In this iconographic variant the deer is perceived with its torso in profile and legs either in a static standing posture or tucked beneath its torso with its head in profile (and slightly raised) so as to stress the multiple jagged tines of the antler which appear as though streaming behind. Possibly the latter image arose naturally within those societies with intimate knowledge and observance of deer which lived in their environs and who had seen male stags “roaring” in such a position to assert dominance when in rut (Fig. 9). This variant is epitomized by the well-known Scythian and Sarmatian renderings of what has become known as the “Golden Deer” (Aruz et al., 2000; Chlenova, 1961) (Fig. 10).

Figure 9. Red deer stag "roaring" during the autumn rut

Figure 10. Characteristic representation of stag from Scythian period. Kurgan 1, Kostramskaya, Kubanskaya district, Russia. 2nd half 7th century BC. State Hermitage, Saint Petersburg

Variant 3.

This variant is graphically much simpler iconographically and is found in many petroglyphs or depictions of deer. It does not attempt to replicate anatomic reality but simply shows pairs of antlers as though they were conifers with straight lines for trunk and branches projecting either vertically from the deer's head or in a "V" shape. That the antlers were given a tree-like form may have been a simple abstraction or may indicate that antlers were identified with the "tree of life"; like the bare tree which produces new leaves each year, they also were regenerated each spring.

Simple versions of most of the above styles have been recorded among the many of petroglyphs of deer on the rock faces of Val Camonica in northern Italy but with one significant difference – there they are all depicted in movement rather than standing in a static position.

Individual descriptions of masonry petroglyph images of solar stags in the Tsumadinskiy and Shamilskiy districts

No. 1 Location: Village of Verkhnee Gakvari, Chamalal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan.

Description: A rectangular stone masonry block set into the midst of a wall with the petroglyph image of a red deer stag facing right in a static standing posture. Variant 1 antler iconography. Drawn in profile silhouette with a single outline by successive pecks with a pointed tool, probably of iron. The antlers encircle a space in the centre of which is an equilateral cross (with even arms) with four interstitial dots (the surface of the rock of this part of this area has exfoliated). The tines of the antlers project outwards. The stag has a pointed face formed by a triangle. In front of the stag is drawn an elongated diamond form bisected with a line and a protuberance pointing toward the stag's chest, probably intended to represent a drawn bow with arrow (Fig. 11).

No. 2 Location: Village of Verkhnee Gakvari, Chamalal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan.

Description: Image of a red deer stag depicted in a manner generally similar to those here described as Nos. 1 and 2. Stag facing right in a static standing posture. Variant 1 antler iconography. Drawn in profile silhouette with a single line by successive pecks with a pointed tool, probably of iron. The antlers encircle a rounded space. The tines of the antlers project outwards. The stag's pointed muzzle is indicated by two lines (Fig. 12).

Figure 11. Masonry petroglyph of image of solar stag No. 1 with an adjacent bow and arrow aimed at it. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 12. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) of image of solar stag No. 2. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinsikiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

The petroglyph is on the corner stone of a drystone (i.e. unmortared) wall. The stone is of a particular form commonly observed in masonry walls in this district: a pentagonal block of substantial size made from a rectangular block with one corner trimmed off diagonally. Such blocks add stability to the wall, which in this case is of a type of particularly careful construction which uses massive even sided blocks found naturally occurring in local rock strata. Such constructions appear to have been built in a specific, but as yet-undetermined, pre-modern period and are often associated with petroglyphs. The petroglyph from Tsuidi designated below as No. 6 is from a complex of buildings of this type.

No. 3 – Location: Village of Verkhnee Gakvari, Chamalal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. The petroglyph is on a rectangular stone, embedded at about human head height, on the street corner of a building in the village.

Description: Image of a red deer stag with features similar to that of No. 2 but facing left. Depicted in static standing posture. Variant 1 iconography. The antlers encircle a rounded space with their tines the projecting outwards. The stag's pointed face is indicated by two lines (Fig.13).

No. 4 – Location: Village of Verkhnee Gakvari, Chamalal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan.

Description: Petroglyph image on a rectangular stone of a red deer stag opposite a symbol of a labyrinthine spiral with an outwards curling element. Variant 1 antler iconography. Antlers enclose a balloon shaped space with externally radiating tines. The general character of rendering of this petroglyph differs from Nos. 1-3 with a strong contrast between the dark surface of the stone and the lightness of the energetically pecked images. The stag is drawn in profile silhouette with a single outline. It is facing left but its spine is slightly curved downwards and its pairs of legs splayed outwards. A short tail is indicated. The masonry block is embedded in a wall so that the image of the deer is turned on its side at 90° from the horizontal (Fig. 14).

Figure 13. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) of image of solar stag No. 3. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 14. Masonry petroglyph of image of solar stag No. 4 and a labyrinthine spiral with two opposed curling elements. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

No. 5 – Location: Village of Gigatli, Chamalal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan

Description: A complex composition of a variety of petroglyph images on a large pentagonal masonry corner stone on a street corner in the settlement of Gigatli. All the images are carefully and competently incised (not pecked) with an iron tool which created a continuous flowing "V" shaped groove in the stone. Variant 1 antler iconography. Drawn in profile silhouette with a single outline. Its key feature is of a red deer stag facing right in a static standing posture. Its necked is curved and its antlers enclose an ovoid space with radiating upwardly curving tines. The stag has the stump of a tail and male organ indicated by short lines. Facing the stag and close to its chest is the outline of what is probably a dog. Above the spine of the stag and to its rear are incised two sets of arcaded images with horizontal base lines below. The upper set has five arched elements and the lower. To the right of the stag in the largest field of the stone block are incised four precisely- drawn circular images, disposed in the corner quadrants of the square field and with two categories of internal configuration. The two upper circular – images contain rosettes of multiple petal-like images radiating from their centres (that on the left has 14 "petals", while that on the right has 15). The two circles below contain four lobed elements radiating from a central point. Centred in the field between these four circular images is an incised swastika with undulating arms curving clockwise (Fig.15).

No. 6 – Location: Tsuidi. An abandoned khutor of the Chamalal settlement of Nizhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan, which is situated on the slope of a ridge flanking the Gakvarinka River south-east of the village.

Description: A complex composition of a variety of petroglyph images on a pentagonal masonry corner stabilisation stone of a drystone wall which incorporates large rectangular monoliths with naturally even sides (as noted for No. 2 in Verkhnee Gakvari). Images have been deeply incised with a metal tool with single outlines. In the lower left corner is depicted the small image of a red deer stag in a static standing posture with a small curved tail and mail organ. Variant 1 iconography. Triangular muzzle pointed downwards. The antlers enclose a bulbous-profiled space with straight externally radiating tines. To the right of the solar stag is a symbol of what appears to be one cross nested within another. This unique nesting cross configuration is found in a more complex variant in Verkhnee Gakvari which has a set of five nesting crosses. To the right of these images within the largest field of the block is a deeply incised image of a human hand on which is incised a swastika with straight right angled arms in a clockwise orientation (Fig. 16).

Figure 15. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) of solar stag No. 5 with multiple other images as described in text. Gigatli, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 16. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) of solar stag No. 6 and other images as described in text. Abandoned khutor of Tsuidi, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

No. 7 – Location: Settlement of Echeda, Tindal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan.

Description: A sketchy image of a red deer stag roughly pecked with a metal tool into the face of a masonry block embedded near an upper window in the community's Juma mosque. It is associated with other images. Variant 1 iconography. Drawn in profile silhouette with a single line by successive rough pecks with a pointed metal tool. The image does little to convey the anatomy of the deer, as Nos. 1-6 manage to do (even those which are the most simplistic). The stag is depicted facing left with an elongated rectangular torso (as many of the petroglyphs of bezoar goat on the external walls of Echeda buildings do) and short legs. A short curved tail and male organ are depicted. The antlers project directly from the shoulders of the image (no head is depicted) and embrace an elongated oval with outwardly curving tines (Fig. 17).

Figure 17. Masonry petroglyph of solar stag No. 7 with associated images as described in text. Echeda, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group

The block has been roughly smeared with whitewash which obscures some of its features when viewed and photographed from street level. Above the solar stag to its left are the roughly delineated features of another animal, which appears to be another stag. To the right and left of the stag are groupings of linear elements to form signs which are difficult to describe.

This appears to be a petroglyph illustrated by D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin in their 1965 publication and described as being on the house of Isi Ataev. The illustration, however, is not an accurate copy and does not include the other associated imagery on this block. It may have been moved to its present position from elsewhere.

Nos. 8 & 9 – Location: Settlement of Tindi, Tindal ethno-linguistic group, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. The current location of this stone which appears to be a petroglyphic stele is not known. It was photographed during the ethnographer E.M. Shilling's 1947 expedition to the upper Andiiskoe Koisu. It was published in 2001 by G. Ya. Movchan, Shilling's expedition colleague, in his publication on the old Avar house, mentioned above, in which there is precious information on the built heritage and artifacts of the communities of Tindi and Bagalal Khushtada and Kvanada. Unfortunately, the quality of the reproduction of the photograph is such that certain features are impossible to discern.

Description: This stone bears unique imagery depicting the large figure of a standing hunter (or hunting deity?) holding a large bow in his right arm which has a hand of outsize proportions. There is no arrow in his bow but at his waist is what may be a quiver. He appears to be clothed to below his knees. At the level of his pelvis appears some kind of circular-shaped object, which may be a shield of a type characteristic of this region in pre-modern times (in which case it may be a sword that is depicted at his waist) (Fig. 18, 18a). Above him is a red deer stag facing right with antlers embracing a rounded space in the Avar-Ando-Dido Variant 1 iconography. It is drawn in profile silhouette with a single line in a static standing posture, as are the images of two dogs to the left above it (Fig. 19). Towards the base of the stele and some way below the hunter is the rough image of another horned animal, drawn with single lines and conveying no volume.

Midway up the opposite pillar of the entrance gateway is another stone panel with the petroglyph imagery of a hunting scene of a bezoar goat surrounded by a horseman with a bannered lance and an armed man with two dogs. Below this scene is a worn and rudimentary Arabic inscription which is difficult to decipher.

Below this stone panel is yet another with an Arabic inscription within a rectangular frame formed by a tulip scroll on three sides and a rhomboid lattice pattern below. The

stone has been carefully chiseled so that the inscription and frame imagery stand out as the dark tone of the natural stone surface against the light tone of the chiseled background.

Figure 18. Masonry petroglyph (stela?) of solar stag No. 8. Imagery as described in text. Tindi, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group. Current location of this object is unknown

Figure 18a. Detail of photograph of Georgian Khevsureti man in traditional chain mail with sword and shield taken by William Osgood Field in 1933. Khevsureti borders Chechnya, Russia and Tusheti, Georgia

Figure 19. Copy of depiction of solar stag No. 8 and associated dogs on masonry petroglyph describe above

No. 10 – Location: Village of Tlyakh, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan. Northern entrance gateway to community cemetery

Description: A complex petroglyphic array of an Arabic inscription above within a panel above a row of horsemen with a further scene of figures below centred around the image of a solar stag.

This was the first of the solar stag petroglyph images to attract scholarly comment (Debirov, 1959). Debirov documented it as being on the wall of the house of Aishat Gasanov but it is now embedded in the stuccoed pillar of the northern entrance gateway of Tlyakh's communal cemetery with the date 1966 shaped into the stucco above. This was probably the date of erection of the gateway, which has two other petroglyph slabs of hunting scenes (No. 11 and above). It appears that these petroglyphs were specially gathered from other places in the village for the ornamentation of the cemetery entranceway in 1966. The horns of a tur are hung on the wooden lintel above the entrance doors.

At the centre of the panel and dominating the imagery is a group of three similarly depicted horseman galloping to the left. They are armed with flintlock rifles and brandish curved sabres in their right hands. The horses have long slender, elongated necks; short lines indicate their saddles and male organs (Fig. 20). All the imagery of this petroglyph panel is incised in profile silhouette with confident single lines by hammering with a metal tool which leaves a gouged incision.

Below the riders along the very base of the panel (which may have been damaged when translocated from the Gasanov house) is a linear composition of figures facing left (Fig 21). At the centre of the row is depicted a solar stag with an attenuated neck above which is an ovoid depiction of antlers with straight radiating tines (Iconographic variant No. 1). This antlered unit sits just above the head of the stag but is not attached to it. The stag appears to be in a running position with its pairs of legs slanting slightly forwards. To the left of the stag is another animal of similar proportions but with backwards curving horns, which may have been intended to depict a bezoar goat. From the position of its legs it also appears to be running as does another animal to its left again. This does not have identifying features as does the stag and bezoar goat and may be intended to be a female deer. Approaching the stag on the lower right of the panel are two dogs in front of the figure of a man brandishing what may have been a stick, long dagger or sword.

Note that the scholars who have previously commented on and illustrated this Tlyakh slab have either misinterpreted its iconography or not noticed its significance (Debirov considered it to represent a rustling incident into alien territory and perceived the sun as a separate entity from the deer below it, while D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin only mention the three riders and the weapons they bear). A.C. Bashkirov and E.M. Shilling, who both had been to the Gidatli area make no mention of the Tlyakh composition, despite the great interest they showed in the petroglyphs there.

Above this panel is another petroglyphic panel with another grouping of figures around a solar stag (see No. 11 below).

Figure 20. Masonry petroglyph (stone slab) of solar stag No. 10 amongst an Arabic inscription and other imagery as described in text. In 1959, P.M. Debirov described this masonry petroglyph as being on the house of Aishat Gasanov but it has been removed with three other stone slabs (two of which also have hunting imagery) to the entrance gateway of the community cemetery with the date 1966 shaped into plaster on the right pier of the gateway structure. Imagery as described in text. Tlyakh, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan

Figure 21. Detail of lower row of imagery of above masonry petroglyph, as described in text

No. 11 – Location: Village of Tlyakh, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan.

Description: A complex petroglyphic composition on a stone panel embedded in the upper level of the right hand pillar of the entrance gateway to the community cemetery of Tlyakh, above the panel described above (No. 20). The imagery is executed in a manner similar to that of No. 10, i.e. incised in profile silhouette with confident single lines by hammering with a metal tool leaving a gouged incision. At the lower left is depicted a solar stag with a long slender neck and muzzle and its pairs of legs slanted forward as though running. Iconographic variant 1. Its antlers embrace an ovoid with upwards curving radiating tines. To the upper right of the panel is depicted a horse and rider similar to those on No. 10 but without flintlock and sabre (the horseman may be holding a sword). To the left of rider and horse is the outline of a bulky person facing them with a bow with arrow pointed in their direction. Below this figure is a smaller one of a man pointing a flintlock rifle at the stag. Below the mounted horseman and in front of the stag and facing towards it is a smaller image of a man holding a flintlock rifle at waist level (Fig. 22).

These petroglyphs on this panel may be by the same hand as No. 10.

No. 12 – Location: Abandoned village of Kakhib, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan. The masonry petroglyph described here is situated above the entrance to the historic 16th-17th century former Juma mosque of Kakhib.

Description: This petroglyph depicts two red deer stags facing right which are perhaps running - their legs are slanting forwards. Variant I iconography. Drawn in profile silhouette with a single line

Description: Image of red deer stags depicted in a manner generally similar to those here described as Nos. 1 and 2. The stags are facing right in a static standing posture. Iconographic Variant 1 Drawn in profile silhouette with a single line deeply incised with a metal tool, probably of iron. The antlers of each stag embrace a rounded ovoid space (painted in yellow at a recent date). The tines of their antlers are depicted with upwards curving radiating tines. The stags have slender downwards pointing muzzles. Both solar deer are similarly depicted (Fig. 23).

Similarly, the significance of this petroglyph of two solar stags has gone unnoticed, although a photograph was published in 2016 in a brief account of petroglyphs by K.A. Volagurina. Here it should be noted that the primitive rendering of the solar stag from Echeda (No. 7 above) has beside it what may be the rendering of another stag.

The antler configuration of this stag is within the parameters of what we suggest is solar stag iconography.

Figure 22. Masonry petroglyph (stone slab) of solar stag No. 11 amongst other hunting-related imagery as described in text. Positioned on gateway pillar above the masonry petroglyph described above as No. 10. Tlyakh, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan

No.13 – Location: Machada, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district. This is a copy of the drawing of a petroglyph first published by D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin in 1965, with no indication of provenance [ref.], but later republished by G. Ya. Movchan in 2001 with Machada given as its provenance. In the extensive drawings assembled together on single pages by Ataev and Markovin of petroglyphs from both the Gidatli area and the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, there is another adjacent image of a stag with similar antler configurations but with also no provenance.

Description. This is clearly a solar stag image (Iconographic Variant 1) (Fig. 24). Next to it on the same page in the 1965 publication of Ataev and Markovin on where petroglyphs from various locations are aggregated is another deer with the solar stag antler imagery.

Figure 23. Masonry petroglyph in wall of 16th-17th century Juma mosque of Khahib on periphery of the Gidatli area depicting two solar stags of same iconography as No. 10 with dogs on either side. Khakhib, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan

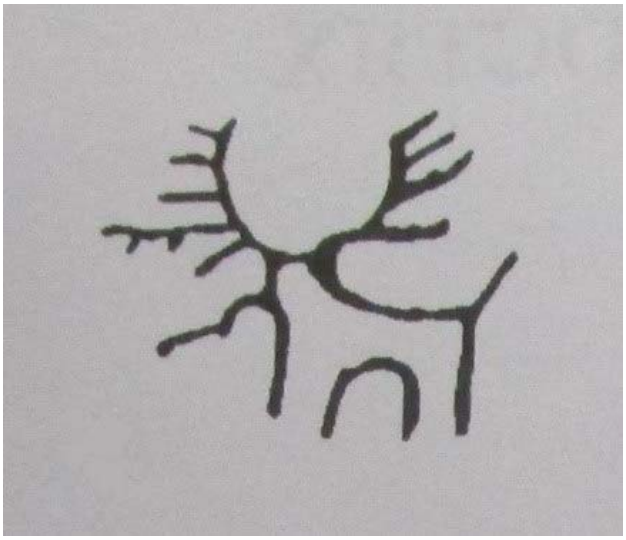

Figure 24. Copy of a masonry petroglyph published by D. Ataev and V.I. Markovin in 1965 but without indication of provenance. G.Ya. Movchan identifies it as in Machada, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district

Masonry petroglyphs of imagery of stags associated with adjacent solar images, Gidatli area

Although not employing the explicit solar stag iconography of the examples presented above, there are two related petroglyph compositions from Gidatli which were published first by P.M. Debirov in 1959 and then by D.M Ataev and V.I. Markovin in 1965:

1) A masonry petroglyph from the settlement of Ratlub, Shamilskiy district, which depicts a stag with a hunter behind aiming an arrow in his bow towards the deer. The stag is facing right and has antlers in an open ovoid configuration with straight tines radiating outwards and upwards. Two dogs are depicted in front of and behind the stag. A large circular image with quadrants defined by undulating lines (surely the sun) dominates the composition, which also includes an undecipherable sign in one corner. All image components are drawn in profile silhouette with a single line (Fig. 25; 25a).

2) A masonry petroglyph from Tidib, Shamilskiy district, with a horizontal composition in which a hunter with a quiver at his waist (similar to the hunter from Tindi described above Nos. 8 & 9) is aiming an arrow with his bow at a solar stag. The form of the arrow head is clearly shown. Above the deer is a small circular symbol with an internal equilateral cross with a circular centre and four interstitial dots (also surely the sun). All images components are drawn in profile silhouette with a single line (Fig. 26).

Ataev and Markovin also include in their miscellany of copies of Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone petroglyphs, two others which have solar stags in a simplified hunting context but without a circular solar symbol. Another depicts a solar stag facing a large circular solar symbol with scrolling spirals around the inside of its periphery (Fig. 27). Unfortunately, the provenance of none of these is indicated in the publication (Ataev & Markovin, 1965).

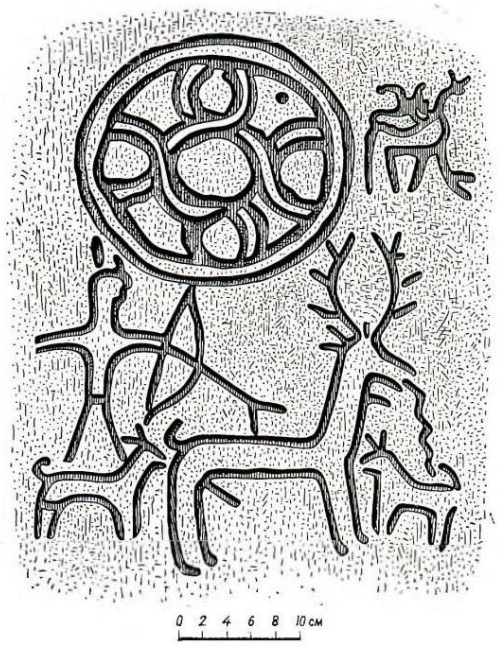

Figure 25. Copy of a masonry petroglyph published with an explanation by P.M. Debirov. An alternate description is provided in this study. Current location unknown but a copy of the image was published by D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin in 1965

Figure 25a. Forked Scythian arrow head

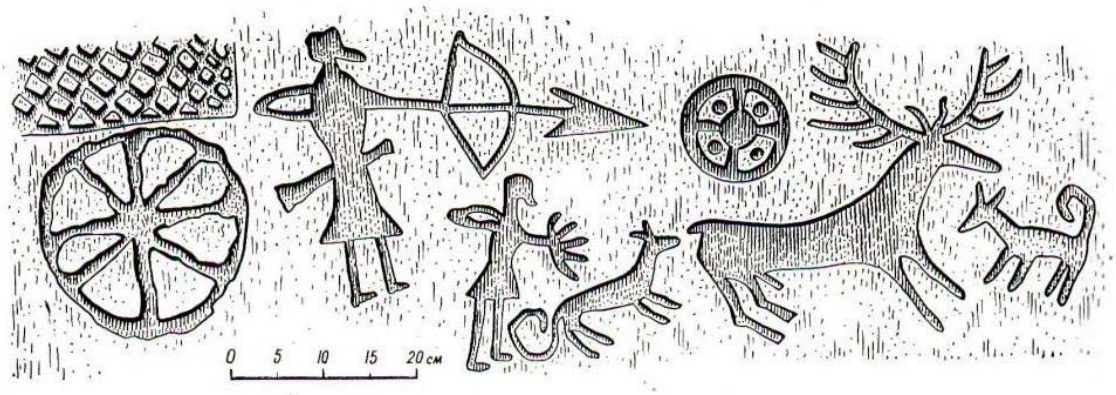

Figure 26. Copy of a masonry petroglyph with an explanation by P.M. Debirov. An alternate description is provided in this study. Current location unknown but a copy of the image was published by D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin in 1965

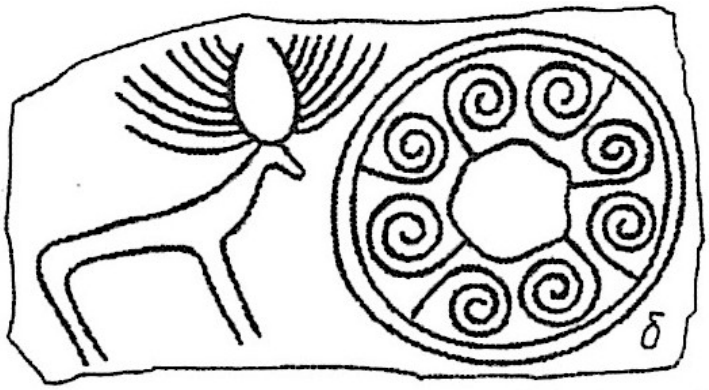

Figure 27. Copy of a masonry petroglyph of a solar stag adjacent to a large circular symbol with internal spirals radiating from its rim and an inner circle (solar symbol?). Machada, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan (Debirov, 1966)

Clearly, by aggregating the information conveyed in all the above petroglyphs, in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone there was a commonly shared complex of beliefs, rituals or cult in which the red deer stag was conceived and depicted in a special relationship to the sun and the act of hunting, which was relayed through a canon of numinous and iconographically consistent images. This set of beliefs and practices and rituals related to them could be conveyed to the community and understood by its members through the single image of a solar stag or in conjunction with other image elements.

Analogies and possible antecedents of solar stag antler iconography in the Caucasus, Anatolia and Iran

A search of reports of figurative representations of deer from archaeological researches in the Dagestan highlands has revealed a 1977 discovery of artifacts from what is interpreted as a cult sanctuary near the village of Khosrekh in the Kulinskiy district (in the alpine zone at 2,700 m). These include a small cast bronze statuette of a deer (c. 10 cm long by 12 cm high) close in character to those portrayed in masonry petroglyphs in Chamalal and Gidatli territory but with an inverted arc shaped antler profile defining a semi-circular negative space (Fig. 28). O.M. Davudov, who excavated and published this discovery, attributes these finds to the 9th-11th century BC.

As Davudov observes, this deer statuette has stylistic features analogous to representations from the Caucasus and the Middle East, noting that, “The interpretation of the image of this animal in the metalwork of the Caucasus increased in the late Bronze Age and became most popular from the beginning of the 1st millennium BC. Therefore, it is important for us to emphasise not only the discovery of deer images in general but the stylistic features of our figurine which is close to the deer figurines of the Transcaucasus of the 1st millennium BC”.

Although, there were many variants in the ways stags and their antlers were perceived and represented amongst the cultures to the south and south east of the Caucasus which may have impacted on the peoples of the Caucasus from the early Holocene onwards (for instance none of the rock face petroglyphs of Gubustan has this particular stylised antler image form), there is abundant evidence of both the antiquity and longevity of this particular antler image typology in Anatolia (Thierry, 1991), Iran (Kawami, 2005) and the Caucasus.

The important Neolithic site of Çatal Hüyük (c. 7,500-6,400 BC) in Anatolia has wall paintings of deer with ınverted arc antler representations associated with hunters (Fig. 29), while excavations at Alaca Hüyük have revealed bronze statuettes with similar antler forms dated to 2,300-2,100 BC (Arik, 1957; Collins, 2003, 2005, 2010; Taracha, 2009) (Fig. 30). Many bronze stag figurines have been unearthed from Iranian sites of Luristan and Amlash of the 1st millennium BC with antlers of even broader inverted arc forms (Fig. 31).

Similar iconography is seen in other bronze figurines of deer from the Koban culture of the Central Caucasus (1,400-400 BC) which had a significant influence on the culture of the north-west of Dagestan, particularly in the form of bronze images used in mountain cult rituals (Fig. 32, 32a).

It is notable that in the historical and present day cultures of the North Caucasus, unlike Anatolia or mountainous Central Asia, there is little evidence for cults of bucrania (bull’s horns) – the only such emphasis on cattle or bull horns is seen on traditional lidded carved wooden vessels and containers which were produced in communities of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region which have prominent horns projecting from their sides (Karpov, 1998) (Fig. 64 below). It is rare to see the horns of tur or wild goat displayed prominently on constructions of community significance, as one still often sees today in the mountains of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

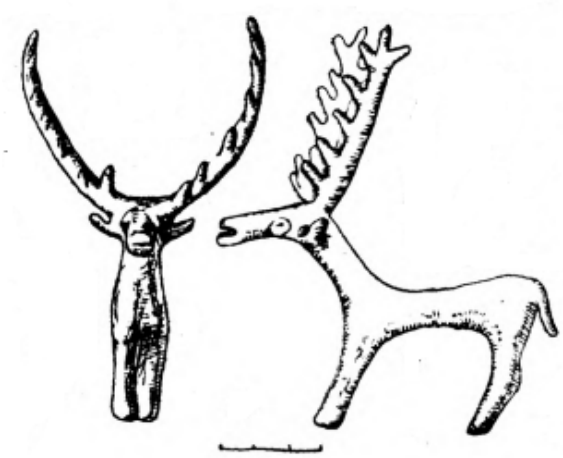

Figure 28. Drawing of a small bronze figurine of solar stag iconography excavated in a cult sanctuary in Khosrekh, Kulinskiy district, Dagestan and published by O.M. Davudov in 1983

Figure 29. Wall painting of two red deer stags with antlers of the solar stag configuration and multiple images of hunters. Reconstructed from remains of the early Neolithic community of Çatal Hüyük in Turkey. 7,500-6,400 BC

Figure 30. Bronze figurine (with silver inlay) of a red deer stag. Head of a standard from Alaca Hüyük. Corum province, Turkey. 2,100-2,000 BC. Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. Inset – composite standard from the site. On all such standards the stag is hierarchically superior to the animal species on either side.

Figure 31. Bronze figurine of red deer stag of the Amlash culture, Iran. c. 1,000 BC. Private collection

Figure 32. Bronze figurine of red deer stag of the Koban culture, Caucasus region, Dagestan. 7th-6th centuries BC. Private collection.

Figure 32a. Wooden storage structure (ambar) on the upper story of a house in the settlement of Kheletury, Botlikhskiy district, Dagestan. Late 19th century. Tur horns displayed.

A neglected possible early source influencing the perpetuation of this particular imagery of the antlered red stag over such a long period of time, is that of the presence of the giant deer *Megaloceros giganteus* (which became extinct around 7,500-8000 BP) adjacent to human artifacts in the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic in the rock shelter site of Siuren 1 in the Belbek Valley, south-west Crimea, which has provided a Carbon-14 date of 17,100 years BP. It may have survived within the glacial refugia of the northern Black Sea coastal periphery and south-east Europe during the Last Glacial Period (LGP) and into the Holocene (Demidenko & Noiret, 2012; Lister & Stuart, 2019).

Megaloceros giganteus was the largest deer to evolve and had the largest known antlers. Although the limited number of fossil or archaeological finds of its antlers indicate that it was generally a rare species, it must have had an impact on whomever saw or caught it and it is most curious that there are no contemporary visual representations of this impressive beast (Fig. 33). Perhaps the impression it made on man at the time were subsumed into oral traditions and general beliefs and traditions relating to deer. In 1937, the Austrian scholar, A. Bachofen-Echt, published a study which he attempted to show possible influences of *Megaloceros giganteus* on certain Scythian deer images of the northern Black Sea region (especially from the Maikop region). There certainly are correspondences in the scale and structure of the antlers depicted, which B. Kurten, a specialist on Pleistocene mammals (Kurten, 1968) supported. However, no remains of the giant deer from the Holocene have been discovered in the Black Sea region. Lister and Stuart observe that suggestions that giant deer remains from Ukraine (Pidoplichko, 1951) are Holocene were based on the state of bone preservation and require confirmation (Vereshchagin & Baryshnikov, 1984).

Figure 33. Head and antlers of extinct giant deer, *Megaloceros giganteus*. Grant Museum of Geology, University College, London

The heritage of masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya and Inhushetia and relationships to those of the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu

As emphasised earlier, in this study the primary focus is on masonry petroglyphs of the Chamalal and Tindal communities of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu valley in Dagestan and their relationships to other masonry petroglyphs in this region and to those in other parts of the northern Caucasus. In the latter context of particular interest are the masonry petroglyphs of neighbouring mountainous south-eastern Chechnya and of Ingushetia further to its west (see topographical map, Fig. 2 above).

The north-western borders of the Republic of Dagestan with the Chechnyan Republic are defined by the mountain topography which naturally separates them. They thus stretch from Russia's border with Georgia in the latter's Tusheti region and follow the crests of the Snegevoy Ridge which make up the western flank of the upper Andiskoe Koisu to then turn north-west following the crests of the Andiiskiy Range.

This natural border between the two republics is can be traversed via passes in four main locations. One is the Yagodak Pass situated between Kedi in Dagestan and Sharoi in Chechnya across the south of the Snegevoy Ridge with another further north through the range from the Chamalal settlement of Gigatli in Dagestan to the settlement of Kenkhi (Kvankhi) on the Chechnyan flank. The Snegevoy Ridge is separated from the precipitous Andiiskiy Range by the narrow gorge of the Ansatlen River, a short tributary of the Andiiskoe Koisu which cuts eastwards to flow through the settlement of Ansalta in the Botlikhskiy district creating a route across the border accessible from Chechnya and Dagestan.

Further east the Kharati Pass cleaves the Andiiskiy Range near Andi, the important eponymous settlement of one of the most dominant ethnic groups of north-western Dagestan. This pass has historically been the principal gateway from the plains and steppes of southern Russia into the mountains and valleys of central Dagestan and onwards to the coast. It was used by those not travelling towards the Caspian Sea along the steppe skirting the mountain massifs which continue further to the north-east. From the Kharati Pass pass ran the trails which allowed access to the upper Andiiskoe Koisu via the agricultural and market centre of Botlikh.

In the present context of ascertaining historical-cultural relationships between the petroglyphs of the Chamalals and others of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone, of particular significance is the pass to the west of Gigatli which connects it to Kenkhi in Chechnya just some 15 km away. This route and that of the Yagodak Pass further south were the principle conduits enabling the interaction of the peoples and cultures of north-western Dagestan and mountainous south-eastern Chechnya. This process of population and cultural transference was a fundamental aspect of the history of the mountainous reaches of the main tributaries of Chechnya's Argun River which flows to the north of the Snegovoy Ridge.

Although it seems that Kenkhi, at 2,800 m elevation the most outlying settlement in the Shariskiy district, was originally established in the 5th century AD, in the pre-modern period there was a later phase of settlement from Dagestan across the Snegevoy Ridge from Gigatli. The first reference to this settlement refers to it as being part of the Avar Nutsalstvo in the 15th-16th centuries AD. The founder is recorded as being of the Korabali family from the Chamalal community of Tsumada in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu valley. Kenkhi was subsequently settled by members of eight Botlikh families, as well as others from the Itum-Kalinskiy district of Chechnya and Georgia. There are three other settlements of Avar origin in the Sharoiskiy district: Chadiri, Buti and Khakmadoi. Among other villages in the broader region which were settled by Avars (and subsequently by Chechens) was Khimoi, which was founded by inhabitants of Chamalals from the Gakvarinka River valley (Nizhne Gakvari and Verkhnee Gakvari). They remained dominant within the community, which was also settled by Chechens. In 1990, Sh. Isaev recorded a local legend according to which part of the population of the village of Sharo was from Chokh, an Avar community in the Gunibskiy district of central Dagestan. According to recent census data, to this day the majority of the members of a number of these communities are of Avar origin and there are inhabitants of Kenkhi who still hold ancestral land in the Gakvarinka valley. Masons from Kenkhi have long had a reputation for excellent stone building and in the past worked on both sides of the Snegovoy Ridge.

Even though geographically Kenkhi, Chadir and Buti were on the Chechnyan side of the Snegevoy Ridge, because of their ethnic affiliation, the Tsarist administration initially placed them within the Andiiskiy Orkrug which embraced both flanks of the Andiiskoe Koisu.

Kenkhi thus lay within the Inkratl-Chamalal Naibstvo, while Buti was within the Tekhnutsal Naibstvo. Kenkhi, Buti and Chadiri remained part of Dagestan after the October 1917 Revolution, until in 1922 they were incorporated within the USSR as part of the Chechnyan autonomous oblast. In 1934 they were administratively placed within the Chechnyo-Ingush ASSR and in 1944 the inhabitants of Chadir and Buti together with Chechens and Ingush were exiled to Central Asia and Siberia. In 1957 with the restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR the settlements of Kenkhi, Buti and Chadiri were placed under the jurisdiction of Grozni and have remained part of the Chechnyan Republic ever since.

The inhabitants of Chechnya and Ingushetia are related in both language and culture, collectively calling themselves Vainakhs ("our people"). Two powerful rivers, the Chanty-Argun and Sharo-Argun, flow northwards through mountainous southern and south-eastern Chechnya to merge as the Argun River on the plains, which in turn joins the Sunzha River, a tributary of the great Terek River. In Ingushetia, the two major rivers are the Assa and Fortanga, which also feed into the Terek. Older Vainakh villages are built along the mountain slopes of the gorges and basins of these river systems.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the whole region was subjected to massive, lengthy and merciless onslaughts from the Mongols and then by Amir Timur (Khizriev, 1974, 1979, 1992), which resulted in the population of what was originally Nakh-populated mountain territory stretching from the Argun River in the east to the Koban River in the west resorting to the construction of defensive villages based around tall towers of two basic categories; either as a component of domestic complexes or purely for defense and combat. Towers were also built in the foothills and the plains along the northern and eastern borders of Chechnya (Kalinkin, 1984) (Fig. 34). From the end of the 16th century there was massive migration from the central and eastern parts of Chechnya to the plains (Volkova, 1966, 1971; Gadzhiev et al., 1977; Bagaev, 1966). Fewer towers for strictly martial purposes were built at this later period, although domestic towers were used up to the 20th century.

As access by Russian and other scholars to the Vainakhs opened up following the ending of the Caucasian War in 1864, many publications, notably that on the whole Terskaya oblast by V.F. Miller in 1888, appeared containing information about the life and cultural heritage of the region, including its settlements with their iconic tower buildings at their core, many of which included masonry petroglyphs in their construction. However, by the time Russia had taken control of the North Caucasus, a number of the Chechnyan and Ingushetian towers had been destroyed or heavily damaged by the Tsarist military, including by cannon fire.

In 1929, Bruno Plaetschke a German geographer who had undertaken a number of expeditions to the North Caucasus, published a book on the Chechens in which he recorded the phenomenon of masonry petroglyphs in Chechnya with a number of line drawings, paralleling similar interests in the 1920s and 30s by Soviet scholars in Dagestan already noted above. Other early scholars in this field in Chechnya-Ingushetia were I.P. Sheblikin, K.P. Semenov and E.I. Krupnov.

Figure 34. Montane landscape in Ingushetia with settlements defended by tall towers. Contrast with the cultural landscape of Tindi in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, Tsumadinskiy district. Photographed by ethnographer E.M. Shilling in the 1920s. Russian State Historical Museum

In the aftermath of the compulsory resettlement of all Chechens and Ingush in 1944, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was dismantled and a systematic campaign to destroy all the symbolic, historical and materials signs of Chechen life was undertaken by the NKVD. No further research, publication or even discussion of Chechen culture and history was permitted and the use of the Chechen language by those in exile was forbidden. As had happened with the Crimean Tatars, the knowledge and memory inherent in the written heritage of Chechen and Arabic manuscripts was destroyed, as were hundreds of historical tower buildings and religious structures. In exile, elders who were the guardians of national wisdom of centuries died without being able to effectively pass on their knowledge. A similar degradation of accumulated community experience of master craftspeople and experts in folklore occurred. Thus, in the context of this study, it has been more difficult to research the survivals of pre-Christian and pre-Islamic vernacular beliefs and practices appertaining to nature, wild animals and hunting, than it has been in the other republics of the North Caucasus where rich corpuses of folklore have been documented.

When the Vainakhs were “rehabilitated” and allowed to returned from forced exile, the North Caucasian archaeological expedition, which had operated in the region before the war, was resurrected and formed a special mountain (Argun) detachment, which set about documenting in detail the Vainakhs’ built heritage, including its masonry petroglyphs. V.I. Markovin, who had done so much to explore the petroglyph and rock art heritage of Dagestan, joined the expedition and was able to document a large number of petroglyphs in Chechnya and Ingushetia and bring them to the notice of scholars (Markovin, 1963, 1965a, 1965b, 1968, 1969, 1978, 1994). Inspired by Markovin, a young archaeologist, I.D. Magomadov, also became involved in this research, organizing expeditions and publishing some articles (Magomadov, 1974). However, he did not continue this work and the petroglyphs were largely neglected, except by archaeologists such as M.B. Muzhukhoev, D.Yu. Chakhiev , R.A. Dautova, A.A. Islamov, V.B. Vinogradov, V. Golun and V.P. Kobichev, who noted any new and unknown petroglyphs they encountered in the course of their expeditions. L.A. Perfileva in 1968 published a study on the way masonry petroglyphs were used in Chechnya. In 2013 M.A. Tangiev published an essay on the problems of studying petroglyphs. F.Yu. Albanovi published a study on the symbolic aspects of the petroglyphs from historico-philosophical and ethno-cultural perspectives in 1998. At this time another specialist, R.D. Arsanukaev, had become deeply engaged in this subject, publishing a large catalogue of Chechnyan petroglyphs in Paris in 2005.

Among the many consequences of the two tragic Chechnyan wars in 1994-1996 and 2000, was that the heritage of Chechnyan petroglyphs was further diminished when dozens more towers were demolished or bombarded in air raids and other attacks (Arsanukaev reported that he was able to save more than 80 masonry petroglyphs from the bombardments in this period).

Nevertheless, in the mountains of Chechnya, in the upper reaches of the Fortanga, Gekhb, Argun, Sharo-Argun and near the Kazenoi and Galanchokh lakes there are still preserved approximately 150 tower villages, with more than 200 towers, as well dozens of cult constructions called “sklepi” (Koknev, 1978). They date mainly from the 11th-17th centuries. Today, these buildings and the petroglyphs which are incorporated in their construction, both in Chechnya and Ingushetia, are acknowledged to be an important part of the Russian national and republic heritages and are protected accordingly. In 2009 UNESCO published an excellent work on the diversity of Chechen culture by L.M. Ilyasov, who in 2014 was also able to publish on behalf of the Scientific Library of the Chechen State University a thorough, new publication in colour on the petroglyphs of Chechnya.

As in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone of Dagestan, in masonry petroglyphs in Chehnya are found across a wide area. However, despite the shared life-ways of agro-pastoral subsistence in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region and much of

Chechnya, in particular in the latter's high mountainous zones of rivers and deep gorges, there were fundamental differences in the character of their settlements and landscape which had an impact on the typology of petroglyphs commonly used and perhaps also on their placement on their buildings.

The ethno-linguistic enclaves of the upper reaches of the Andiiskoe Koisu were characterised by an enduring psychological and material stability of settlement (Fig. 35). Their inhabitants did not have the ever-present sense of potentially threat by those beyond their boundaries which history had taught the Vainakhs, even in the most remote mountain gorges, to feel. They were also supported by a more cohesive patrilocal system of residence, than history has shown to be the case for the Vainakhs.

That is to say, Andiiskoe Koisu settlements were not built with substantial defensive features, except that of their chosen as their location. They are usually situated on high natural vantage points with a good prospect of their territory (most were in view of at least one other community) (Fig. 36). Some villages, such as Khustada and Gigatli, had round towers (the former had one at the entrance to the settlement and one at a vantage point on the mountain behind) which served mainly as signal towers (Fig. 37). Some communities, such as Khustada and Kvanada had special men's watch houses designed for defense and where able-bodied males lived and were trained to respond to any attack (Movchan, 2001).

The tall towers of the Vainakhs of Chechnya and Ingushetia were usually very well built and could survive for centuries and often included numbers of petroglyphs in their walls. While the corpus of petroglyphic images which could be drawn on seem to be essentially shared between the Chechens, Ingush and the peoples of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone are essentially common to both, the images the Vainakhs chose, when considered as a regional corpus, reflect their concern for defense and protection and the warding off of evil and are predominantly apotropaic or propitiatory in character, much more so than those used by the inhabitants of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, where the images of petroglyphs employed more frequently reflect desires for abundance and fertility reflecting their less threatened way of life. Through the extensive survey of masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya and Ingushetia provided in the publications of B. Plaetschke and L.M. Ilyasov and the more restricted imagery included in the works of other specialists, this preference is clear. Most notable is that there are very few zoomorphic images among these petroglyphs, all being very rudimentary, although as in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu they are also restricted to the bezoar goat and the male red deer. The surviving assemblages of masonry petroglyphs in situ in Chechnya and Ingushetia are often denser than in Dagestani constructions.

The emphasis on apotropaic and propitiatory masonry petroglyphs on the exterior walls of buildings in south-east Chechnya is enhanced by a unique type of monolithic arched lintel and door and window jamb used for doorways and window openings (large and small) in this region (Figs. 37, 38). This structural solution does not employ the voussoir and keystone type construction of archways commonly employed in the Caucasus and elsewhere. It provides broad surfaces for the incising of petroglyphic images precisely at those points in a building which in popular belief are most vulnerable to the passage of negative forces.

It may be that these unusual structures may have a distant ancestry in certain forms of monolithic dolmen entrance plinths with similar cut out archways (Fig. 39).

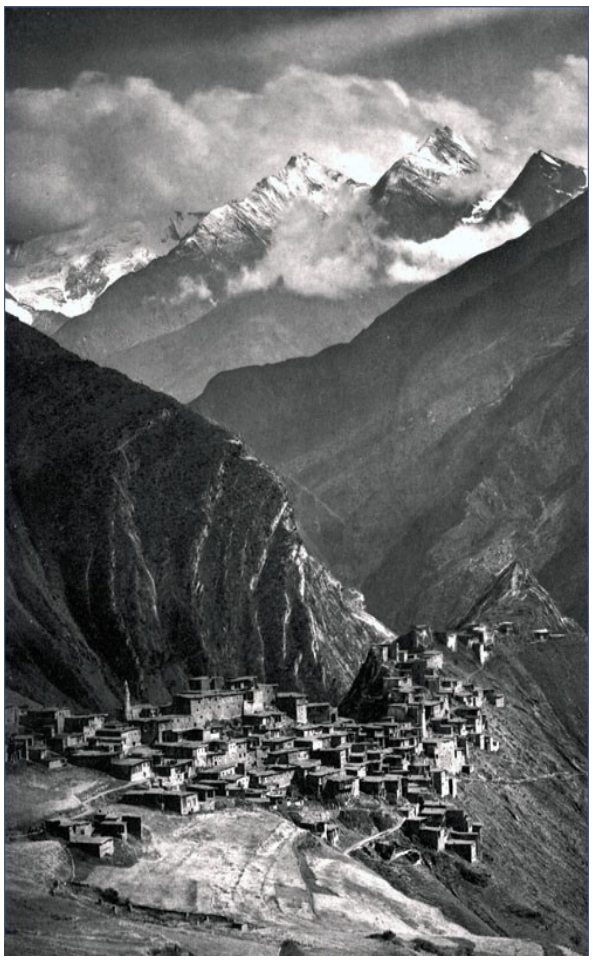

Figure 35. Settlement of Tindi, upper Andiiskoe Koisu, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Photographer M. de Dechy, late 1890s

Figure 36. Settlement of Khushtada, upper Andiiskoe Koisu, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Bagulal ethno-linguistic group. Late 19th century

Figure 36a. Lookout tower (now in ruins) at entrance to settlement of Khushtada, upper Andiskoe Koisu, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan.
Bagulal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 37. Minor rural masonry structure with small window opening with monolithic arched lintel

Figure 38. Window opening characteristic of south-eastern Chechnya vernacular architecture with monolithic arched lintel and lower jambs inscribed with apotropaic petroglyphs

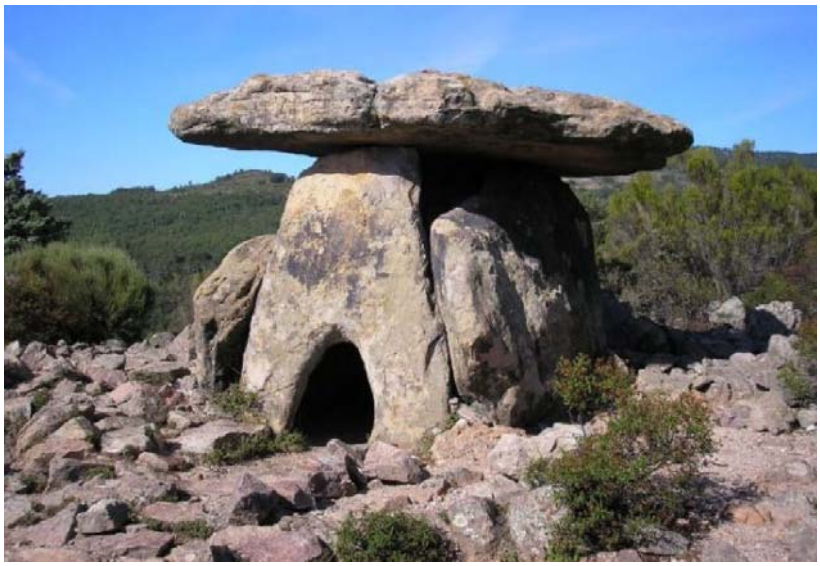

Figure 39. Dolmen with entrance formed in a manner similar to the monolithic arched lintels of Chechnyan door and window openings. Stanitsa Bagovskaya, Mostovskiy district, Krasnodarskiy Region, Russia

Observations on the positioning of masonry petroglyphs in Dagestan and Chechnya-Ingushetia

Although has seemed to many observers that the masonry petroglyphs of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone are placed at random in the stone walls of which they are part. However, an extremely illuminating study by C. Riley Auge of the University of Montana, The Archaeology of Magic: Gender and Domestic Protection in Seventeenth-Century New England, may provide an alternative perspective on the placement of masonry petroglyphs in the Caucasus, particularly in light of what has been reported on above regarding the use of apotropaic images on specific zones of Chechnyan buildings.

Auge observed that in the region and historical period she studied, communities believed that domestic spaces were vulnerable to harm by preternatural forces and were particularly permeable at certain specific points (e.g. doorways and thresholds, windows, walls, wall intersections, corners, foundations, fences, property boundaries). Households were viewed as possessing a heterogeneous unity that must be protected from external disruption by placing apotropaic symbols or imagery at vulnerable real or metaphysical boundaries. Stone masons were in a particular position to embed objects and symbols into the spiritual fabric of buildings. Devices providing apotropaic protection drew from religious and astrological symbolism, many of the most common apotropaic elements included those common also to Caucasian masonry petroglyphs: rosettes, circles, triangles, spirals and whorls. The circle was considered as representing unity and protection and thus was used as a symbol of supreme divine power which would naturally serve as a motif of protection from evil forces. Apotropaic circles or hexafoils were often left incomplete, like intentionally broken or “killed” objects used in other magical contexts. Graphically complex designs were considered to act as demon traps with the power to capture or overt, confuse or capture malevolent beings.

In 17th century New England, protective strategies did not only employ apotropaic images but also those which had a propitiatory function. Spirits interact with humans in a variety of manners – beneficial, maliciously or mischievously. They can provide protection, success and luck but can also mete out harm and destruction through loss of crops, infertility, illness, death or mishap. However, they can be propitiated by specific practices and devices.

As Auge states, “Such established defensive boundaries allowed people to believe they had some measure of control over the evils that inhabited their worlds. It is this sense of safety – not the actuality of safety – that permitted people to live productively”.

This researcher’s observations about attitudes and practices in the north-east of North America reflect aspects of human psychological universality shared with peoples of the Caucasus

also. The photograph in Fig. 40 identifying the "hotspots" of vulnerability to evil forces in a 17th century New England domestic property (as documented from original archival sources) is taken from C. Riley Auge's 2011 dissertation. There are clear analogies to the breachable "hotspots" protected in buildings of south-east Chechnya by apotropaic and propitious masonry petroglyphs.

There are repeated observations in the literature regarding the masonry petroglyphs of the Dagestan-Chechnya-Ingushetia regions concerning characteristic features and practices of their placement:

1) The re-use of masonry petroglyphs from earlier constructions. It is often clear that this has occurred because of differences in ageing, texture, colouration, level of processing and finish of the masonry petroglyphs from the rest of the stone masonry.

Regarding Chechnya, I.V. Markovin observed that local populations considered such re-used stones to be sacred and necessarily transferred them to the construction of a new building, while L.M. Ilyasov notes that it was a common custom in Chechnya to use a stone or brick from a previous building when constructing another in its place, to transfer grace and to maintain a material and spiritual connection with the ancestors. The masonry petroglyphs were already imbued with symbolic and social power and thus could not be discarded but should be used respectfully in another construction.

The Chechens have preserved the tradition of the ritual use of elements of the old dwelling in the construction of a new one to this day. When a Chechen builds a house, dismantling the old one, he always puts at least a stone or brick from the dismantled building into the foundation of a new house in order to transfer grace from there, to maintain a material and spiritual connection with his ancestors. In the Middle Ages, as already mentioned, during the construction of a new tower, stones with petroglyphs from the walls of old buildings were laid into its walls.

Masonry petroglyphs are more often found in Chechnya and Ingushetia in their original structural context than Dagestan, where only a few buildings stand with original petroglyphs (e.g. a house built in Koroda, Gunibskiy district, in 1673, of which a photograph was published by N. Baklanov in 1924), helping us to understand their maker's or sponsor's intention in image content and placement.

2) Except for masonry petroglyphs applied to monolithic arched lintels and jambs and as a decorative linear feature of constructions as described above in Chechnya and in certain infrequent original installations Dagestan, masonry petroglyphs embedded in the walls of buildings in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone have appeared to many observers as being quite random. However, if the observations of C. Riley Auge about the most vulnerable zones of construction to violation of evil forces have some universal application in the north-east Caucasus, then the seemingly illogical or random placement of masonry petroglyphs seem to be explicable, occurring as they do at corners, thresholds, on foundation zones of building and spread amongst masonry facades.

Figure 40. Photograph of a domestic property in Salem, New England, USA, built 1664, with areas ("hotspots") indicated which the 17th century community considered to be vulnerable to malevolent forces and requiring apotropaic protection (Riley Auge, 2020)

3) Some re-used masonry petroglyphs are placed in walls upside down. In the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region, a survey of all those known to the research team from direct observation or from photographs which clearly show this orientation in a wall indicate that they may be exclusively of bezoar goats, either as a single image (e.g. an example in Khushtada) or as part of a composition with other images (e.g. an example on the lower part of the minaret of the Juma mosque in Tlyakh) (Fig. 41).

V.I. Markovin reported that on a defensive combat tower in the settlement of Dere in Chechnya there is a masonry petroglyph of a horseman upside down. There is no local information about why this was done in any of the regions which are the subject of the present study. The only thing the above images have in common is that they depict

living beings. May this have been some vernacular concession to Islamic strictures about depicting living beings? It is interesting to note in this context that in southern Scandinavia there are rock face petroglyphs depicting the journey of the sun in a boat through a complete daily cycle in which the boats during the night journey are depicted upside down (Kristiansen, 2010).

An obvious consideration is under what circumstances were buildings were demolished, thus providing masonry petroglyphs for secondary use. In the case of the high mountain settlements of the upper reaches of the rivers of Chechnya and Ingushetia, many buildings were destroyed by attacks from the Mongol and Turkic peoples of the steppes. In the Gidatli area, masonry petroglyphs were said to have been spolia from Christian churches (with Georgian architectural features) (Debirov, 1976, 1977; Isaev et al., 2019) demolished during the process of Islamisation (Fig. 42).

Figure 41. Masonry petroglyphs embedded in the lower wall of the Juma mosque of Gidatli. Both were re-used from another construction and were consciously inserted upside down by the mason for some reason. That on the left has the image of a bezoar goat and non-figurative symbols, while the head of the animal on the right that on the right has been broken off. It is similar in form to two animals at the base of the stone panel to the left of the image of the solar stag No. 10 on the right entrance pillar to the Tlyakh cemetery. It may be a female deer or a bezoar goat

Figure 42. Masonry petroglyph. Corner slab in wall of domestic building in the settlement of Machada, Gidatli area, Shamilskiy district, Dagestan. The side and base panels have been delicately carved with a pecked background in intertwined Islamic arabesque designs while the Christian crosses in central panel have been coarsely pecked into the smooth surface

However, in the settlements built on the flanks of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, it is likely that a common local style of construction may have contributed to the disintegration of certain buildings which originally bore masonry petroglyphs.

Although the traditional agricultural landscape of the basin of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu is in a general sense well preserved and maintained and sustainably functional from a socio-ecological landscape production perspective, this cannot be said about the region's built heritage. The traditional architecture and general built character of each settlement of the Tsumadinskiy district is under severe threat and many buildings are neglected and have fallen into ruin. The walls of buildings in the region were traditionally constructed of stone masonry, with or without mortar. In many parts of its

highlands, the geology is such that there are exposed rock strata which provide flat faced stones, which are ready-made by nature for drystone building construction without the need for mortar or trimming. This has, however, proved to be a weak element in otherwise often meticulous vernacular building construction. As a unit such walls have little structural integrity. They can collapse if their foundations are not stable, from ice penetration and expansion of spaces between stones in winter or when there are uneven stresses from above. The flat roofs of these traditional buildings with their heavy layer of earth and wooden supports are their weak point: if not regularly and properly maintained, the penetration of rain and the weight of snow cause them to collapse. During the later Soviet period, households in traditionally built settlements across the Caucasus found an easy way to solve this problem by simply covering the roof space with asbestos cement sheeting which was then cheaply and commonly available. Later on brightly coloured metal roof sheeting was used. Set at an angle, these sheet roofs easily repel rain and snow. Over time most roofs in rural communities have been covered in this way. In the process the distinctive "cubist" built landscape and colouration of traditional settlements throughout Dagestan has been completely transformed, and the skills once applied to the construction and maintenance of horizontal roofs lost. Earth tremors may also have contributed to the structural stability of drystone structures, especially those with walls reaching two stories in height.

Deer imagery on masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya and Ingushetia

None of the corpus of masonry petroglyphs published by L.M. Ilyasov and R.D. Arsanukaev repeat the solar stag imagery of the petroglyphs of the Chamalals and the Tindals, although there is a single hunting scene, whose intent may relate to the conception of the solar stag. In this scene a hunter is depicted approaching with bow and arrow a simplified image of a stag whose antlers are depicted as through leaning to one side with an upward curving profile holding a crescent shaped-form (Fig. 43).

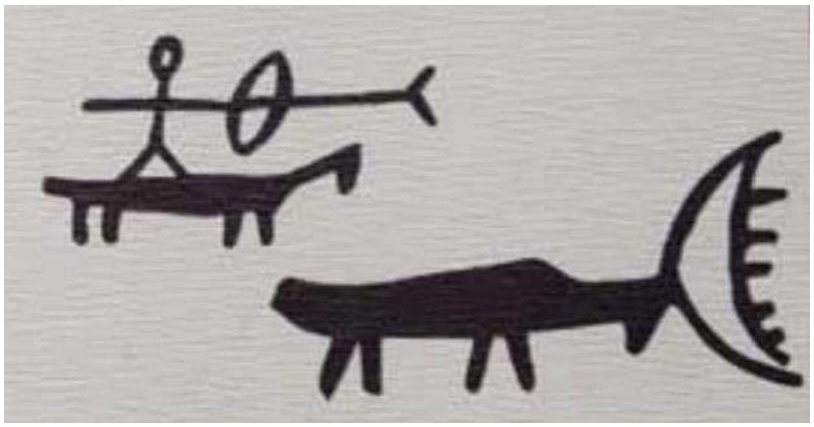

Figure 43. Copy of masonry petroglyph of deer hunting scene from Nizhnee Kei, Chechnya (Arsanukaev, 2005)

Unlike in piedmont Dagestan, rock face petroglyphs were not a significant feature of the Chechnya cultural-historical landscape. The few documented are dissimilar in style from those of Dagestan. One composition among the rock face petroglyphs of Malkhista in the high mountain south west of Chechnya (Itum-Kapinskiy district) in the upper reaches of the Shanti-Argun published by Oshaev in 1930 does depict a scene of hunting deer, but it is solely narrative in character with no particular symbolic iconography in the way its antlers and the other animals generally are depicted. Oshaev also discovered rock paintings in a white pigment in the Nashkh area of the alpine Itum-Kapinskiy district. Here there are representations of deer and hunters with bows and arrows which are remarkably similar in style to the rock face petroglyphs of Malkhista.

Ilyasov also observes that in some rock face petroglyphs in the upper reaches of the Argun River there are images of deer "absolutely analogous to bronze sculptures of the Kobans" (Ilyasov, 2021). As noted above, there are bronze figurines from the period of the Koban culture, which do have the "stag bearing the sun" antler form being explored here and G.R. Smirnova wrote a short but important article in 1979 in which he explored Koban analogies with some petroglyphs of Chechnya and Ingushetia among which he perceived similarities in deer imagery of rock face petroglyphs of Malkhista with that of Koban bronze deer figurines (Smirnova, 1979).

Ilyasov considers that paintings on rock faces or large boulders in Melkhista and the Yalkhoroi area whose imagery depicts deer, bezoar goat, hunting scenes and hands date to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (1st millennium BC). Local sources of traditional information about those in the Yalkhoroi area are not available as its indigenous inhabitants were not permitted to return to their home village because after the repatriation of the exiled Chechens in 1957.

The above information may indicate that before the Chechens and Ingush in the Middle Ages began re-constructing their villages of stone towers, there was a cult of the deer long shared between the Chechens and their neighbours in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu as reflected both in rock paintings and rock face petroglyphs. However, in choosing imagery for their masonry petroglyphs they turned to those of a more practical apotropaic and propitiatory value in defense of their villages. The results of this choice continued to be seen on later buildings in Chechnya and Ingushetia as masonry petroglyphs were re-used or even-imitated from earlier constructions. Nevertheless, folk traditions and belief systems relating to the deer may have been perpetuated in oral form and as ritual practices relating to hunting, as is well documented in neighbouring Ossetia and further west along the northern macroslopes of the Caucasus [R].

Avar-Ando-Dido masonry petroglyphs of the solar stag: Linkages with petroglyphs of the Central and West Caucasus – Christianity and the miracle of Saint Eustace

In considering possible linkages in the evolution or transmission of the solar stag iconography of north-west Dagestan with cultures further west from Chechnya-Ingushetia, an important factor was that although from the Middle Bronze to Early Iron Ages south-eastern Chechnya (where most masonry petroglyphs occur) was part of a culture zone which had extended over the natural mountain barriers of the Segovoy Ridge and Andiiskiy Range, in later periods it was more linked with other cultural zones to the west, such as

that of the Koban with which it shared the same zone of the northern macroslopes of the central and western Caucasus. In this region petroglyphs were usually found on open rock faces and shelters (Kuznetsov, 2005); masonry petroglyphs were not generally part of its building traditions (although D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin noted that some are found in the Teberdi district of North Ossetia). A.A. Miller in 1923 did a certain amount of field work in North Ossetia documenting images on sklepi and tsirti (Ossetian carved stone grave markers) which was never published. Here it should be noted also that there are abstract-geometric, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic petroglyph images on some of the megalithic dolmens of the central and western Caucasus of the third millennium BC (Felitsin, 1904; Leshenko, 1931; Lavrov, 1960; Markovin, 1972, 1975, 1978; Trifonov, 2009, 2014).

Clear iconographic-stylistic parallels to the Chamalal and Tindal stags are to be found in the Karachay-Cherkessia Republic as multiple petroglyph images of stags on large natural rock slabs within the ruins of the mediaeval Alan city of Kiafar.

At various points along the ridge on which ruins of the city lie are exposed rock slabs with petroglyphs depicting, amongst other images difficult to define, “Latin” crosses, nested squares (called in Russian “babylons”), stags with antlers of the “solar stag” iconography and a hunting scene. One slab (named “Hunting Cult Stone No. 2”) is particularly densely covered with layers of petroglyphs of stags (there are no female deer) and the depiction in one corner of a rider hunt with bow and dog and adjacent “Latin” or “Byzantine” crosses (some of which are contemporaneous with the deer images) (Fig. 44).

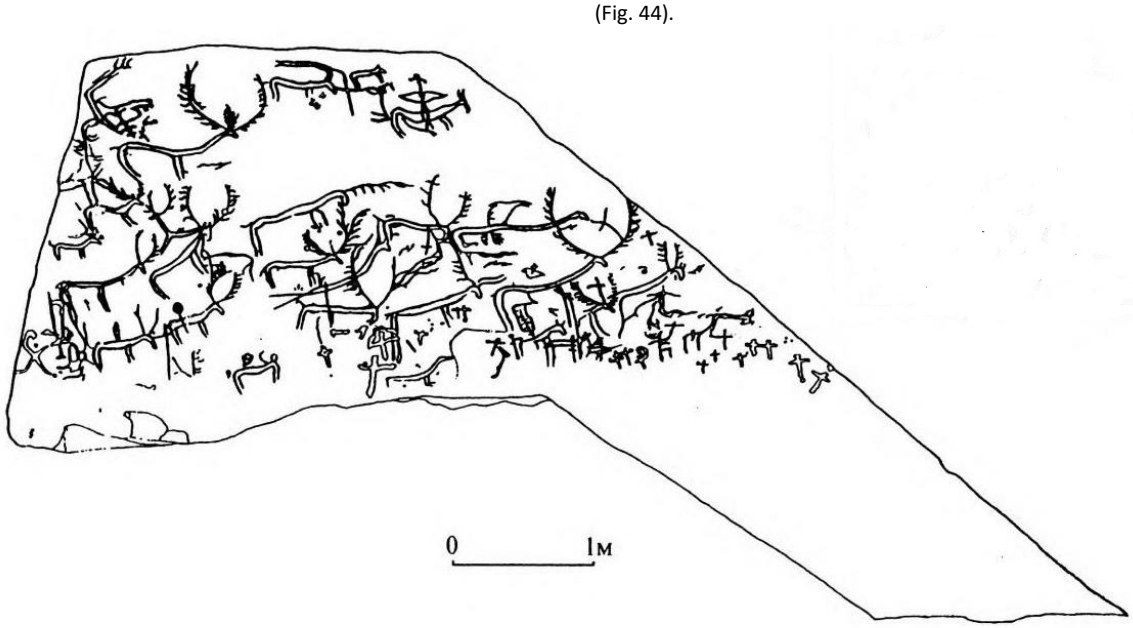

Figure 44. A large exposed boulder face within the ruins of the mediaeval Alan city of Kafar (10th-11th centuries) which is locally designated as Hunting Stone No. 2. It has multiple overlaid images of stags with the solar stag antler configuration with a horseman and dog in one corner and a group of crosses to one side. One of the stags has a Byzantine cross between its antlers and is interpreted as deriving from the Christian iconography of the miracle of Saint Eustace, as described in text. Kiafar, Karachay-Cherkessia Republic (Ardzhantseva & Albegova, 1999)

While it may seem that the cross between the horns on the Kiafar slab may be insignificant in scale, it is interesting to note that in much of the Christian iconography of the Miracle of Saint Eustace (e.g. Albrecht Durer’s famous engraving of the miracle and in eastern icons) the deer is not placed centre stage but at a distance from the saint himself.

A description of this site and its petroglyphs has been published in some detail by I.A. Arzhantseva and Z.Kh. Albegova in 1999, who observe that one figure of a stag amongst the profusion of overlaying images of these animals has a Latin cross between its antlers. They have developed the proposition (accepted subsequently by other authorities) that the iconography of the Kiafar petroglyphs of stags and hunting on “Hunting Cult Stone No. 2” derives from local beliefs relating to deer and the hunting of deer which had evolved from religious representations of the miracle of the Christian Saint Eustace following the adoption of Christianity in the early 10th century by the Alan court under Byzantine imperial influence (Abramova, 1978; Alekseeva, 1949; Vaneev, 1959; Vinogradov, 1979; Kazhdal, 1967; Kulakovskiy, 1898; Kuznetsov, 1970, 1971, 1977). The conversion of the general population to Christianity of Western Alania followed its adoption by the court.

Saint Eustace (Eustathius) was a Roman general who converted to Christianity after he had a vision of a cross between a stag’s horns while aiming at the animal with his bow and arrow. He was subsequently martyred under Emperor Hadrian for refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods. Saint Eustace was venerated in the Byzantine Church from at least the 7th century, as he was in the early Christian states of Armenia and Kartvili (Iberia – eastern Georgia today).

By the time of the adoption of Christianity by the Alans, the cult of Saint Eustace had already long been popular throughout the Byzantine realm and Christian Georgia and was to remain so until the late Middle Ages. The saint had become a revered personage either (depending on the region) as the patron of hunters and hunting or as the protector of the animals hunted, taking over the role of supernatural personages once traditionally associated with these roles. Indeed King Miriani III (284-361), the first ruler of Kartvili (the precursor Christian state to Georgia) to convert to Christianity was moved to do so through a miraculous event that occurred while he was hunting in a forest and overcome with impenetrable darkness from which he was only released by light from the Christian God after acknowledging his divinity.

Thus, following the Christianisation of the Alans, they may have conflated Christian beliefs relating to Saint Eustace with their indigenous existing belief systems relating to the hunting of game, as had already happened in other Christianised regions of the Caucasus and Transcaucasus. This

cultural hybridization was a feature across the Christianised Caucasus as popular perceptions of the religion became intermingled with ancient local belief systems. This process familiar vernacular symbolic imagery (both oral and visual) was employed in humanity's eternal quest for supernatural support in assuring health, fertility and abundance or in warding off misfortune or attack. As N. Goderdzishvili observes, another aspect of local beliefs in various parts of the Caucasus which made the miracle of Saint Eustace particularly potent was that the act of hunting deer itself was considered propitious as it created ideal circumstances for overcoming the boundary between the worldly and the heavenly and for transition into the sacred dimension. A sacral meaning was thus attributed to the act itself of pursuing game, rather than to the eating of the game. In some cases, the deer is perceived as a zoomorphic form of the hunting god (Goderdzishvili, 2018).

Icons, wall paintings and relief sculpture were produced across the Christian regions of the Caucasus depicting the moment of the Miracle of Saint Eustace with the saint on horseback aiming with a bow and arrow at a stag between whose antlers has appeared a cross, Christ on the cross or Christ's face on a roundel, sometimes within a halo of rays of light. From the 11th-17th centuries in Georgia many church facades and interiors had wall paintings of this subject, which also appeared in miniature painting in Georgian religious manuscripts of the 17th and 18th centuries (Goderdzishvili, 2018; Velmans, 1985).

Besides the work of Arzhantseva and Albegova referred to above, the phenomenon of the cult of Saint Eustace in the West Caucasus, Georgia and Anatolia has been quite comprehensively addressed in publications (Abramishvili, 2000; Saltikov, 1996; Didelibudze, 1990; Arzhantseva, 2011-2012; Cargnano, 2019; Goderdzishvili, 2018; Tuite, 2018, 2020; Velmans, 1985).

Eighteen relief sculpture compositions of the miracle of Saint Eustace theme from the early Christian period to the Late Middle Ages in Georgia have been recorded**.** One of the earliest surviving representations in this territory is a carving on a 6th-7th century stone pillar from Natlismtsemeli in Georgia (whose stag's antlers are of the solar stag open inverted arc shape) (Machabeli, 2008) (Figs. 45, 46).

Another early depiction of the miracle is carved on a fragment of a panel of a marble chancel screen of the 6th-7th century from a Georgian-built church in Tsebelda, Abkhazia, whilst this region was still nominally under Sassanid dominion, shortly before Persia was invaded by Muslim forces (Saltikov, 1985).

In this relief carving the image of the mounted Saint Eustace (Fig. 47) clearly reflects the influence of Sassanid imperial iconography, notably the relief of the mounted ruler Ardashir (180-242) carved in rock at Tag-e-Bustan, Iran in the depiction of his horse, his costume and his royal headdress with ribbons fluttering behind. The saint is shown taking aim with bow and arrow at a deer with the image of Christ's face between its antlers (of "solar stag" profile). He is accompanied by a dog, the composition also including an eagle and a small circular relief element with a whirling pattern (a symbol of the sun?). Both the Natlismtsemeli pillar and the Tsebelda fragment are held in the Georgian National Museum.

The iconography of the Natlismtsemeli pillar has uncanny similarities with the Tindi stele Nos. 8 & 9 with both hunters below and the stag above with antlers of basically the same form.

The Tsebelda composition has all the basic elements of those vernacular petroglyphs of Avar-Andi-Dido territory which have a deer hunting theme (e.g. Tlyakh composition No. 10), i.e. depicting a stag with a divine image between its antlers, a hunter (in this case a horseman), bow and arrow and a hunting dog.

However, there are other carved relief representations of the Saint Eustace miracle in the Christian Caucasus, such as that on the façade of the 10th-11th century church of Nak'pari in Upper Svaneti, Georgia, in which the image of the saint has entirely faded from the scene (Fig. 48).

Figure 45. Carved stone pillar of 6th-7th century from Natlisvtsemeli, Georgia, depicting the Miracle of Saint Eustace. Georgian National Museum (Machabeli K., 2008)

Figure 46. Detail of upper part of Natlisvtsemeli pillar with antlers embracing an image of Christ's face. Note the tips of the antlers have an unusual form, recalling somewhat those of the small bronze antler head from the Tsuntinskiy district, Dagestan (Fig. 8). Georgian National Museum (Machabeli K., 2008)

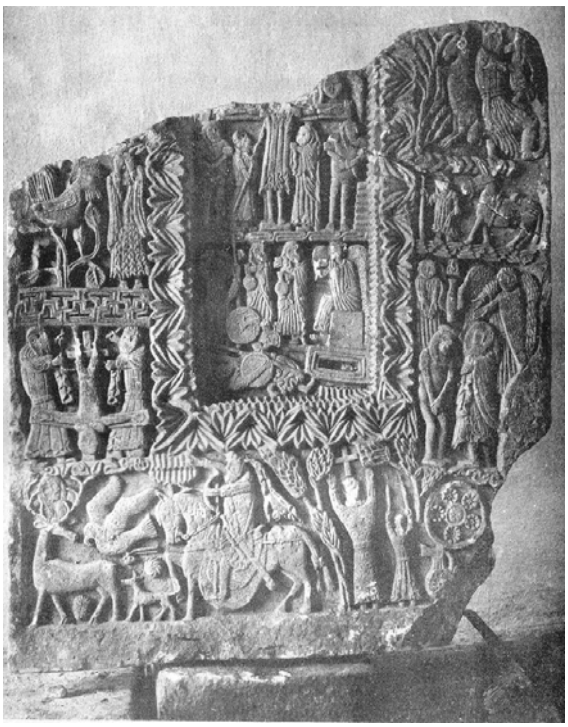

Figure 47. Portion of marble chancel screen from a 7th century church at Tsebelda, Abkhazia. At the lower left is depicted the Miracle of Saint Eustace. The mounted saint is depicted in imperial Sassanid style as described in text. Collection, National Museum of Georgia, Tbilisi

Figure 48. Miracle of Saint Eustace as represented on façade of Church of Saint George, Nak'pari, Mestia municipality, Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti, Georgia, 1330. Saint George was considered by the Georgians as being the patron saint of hunters. Only the head of the deer and the bust of Christ were considered necessary to convey the Miracle of Saint Eustace

Only that which is really symbolically of the essence is depicted – in a niche of the church façade the antlered head of that stag supports a wall painting of the head of Christ – the deer having becoming the object of veneration more than the hunter (no hunter, horse or hunting dogs need be shown). Saint Eustace thus had become subsumed into the god-possessed or "sacralised" deer, an imagery which has clear symbolic affinities with the petroglyph of a solar stag with a cross between its horns in the Dagestan village of Verkhnee Gakvari (listed here as No. 1) (Goderdzishvili, 2018).

Following the Alan conversion to Christianity, churches with frescoed interiors were built in Alan territory. That of the 11th century church of Mady Majram in Khozity gaew village in the Zrug gorge of North Ossetia (built in impeccable Georgian masonry and now partly destroyed) contains a wall painting of the miracle of Saint Eustace on its inner southern wall.

Another better preserved wall painting of the miracle is found at Nuzal within a little 12th-14th century church of the distinctly North Caucasian vernacular "sklep" style of construction with a keel-vaulted roof (Kuznetsova, 1970). The village is located in the Alagir gorge of North Ossetia, the domain of the Alanic royal family of Caerazonte, where the last of the family was interred in church in the early 13th century (Fig. 49). In this painting the antlers of the stag bearing the cross repeat the inverted arc variant of the stag petroglyphs of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone (Fig. 50).

Figure 49. Settlement of Nuzal, North Ossetia. Small 12th-14th century church of traditional Caucasian "sklep" construction within which is a wall painting of the Miracle of Saint Eustace

Figure 50. Wall paintings within church of Nuzal depicted above. The upper left image is of the Miracle of Saint Eustace. The stag bears no image of the cross or Christ but has the inverted arc form of the solar stag iconography

Besides the manner in which both Saint Eustace and his miracle were so thoroughly incorporated into local vernacular belief systems and visual and oral imagery across large swathes of the Caucasus and Transcaucasus was that the name of the saint became so identified as the high divinity protector of game animals, the hunt and hunters that it is conjectured

that it may have been adopted in local language variants across many ethnic groups to denote the supernatural being associated with these sectors. Thus in Ossetian the name Eustace became Æfsati; in Balkarian-Karachai Apsaty and in Svanetian Apstati or Avsati. This phenomenon is discussed in further below in connection with petroglyph images of the bezoar goat.

From the 10th-15th centuries the population of the valleys and highlands of both the Avarskoe Koisu and the Andiiskoe Koisu had converted to Georgian Christianity.

Although the upper Andiiskoe Koisu was situated in a sort of geomorphological "cul-de-sac", which resulted in its never being fundamentally disrupted by intruders so that its ethno-linguistic enclaves carried on their traditional subsistence lifeways undeterred, it did provide an access route between mountainous central Dagestan and the lowlands of Transcaucasia via the Kadorsky Pass through the crest of the Great Caucasus for those who knew the highland trails maintained by local communities. From antiquity, traders of goods from the south in much demand trod this route with horses and donkeys, as Imam Shamil's forces were to do during the Islamic Imamate's campaign against the Russian Tsar in the 19th century.

Many centuries earlier a vanguard of Christianity entered highland Dagestan this way through the Caucasian Albanians (Aliev, 1994; Davudov, 1996; Trever, 1959). The 7th century Armenian historian, Moise Kagankatvatsi, recorded that an embassy led by the Caucasian Albanian Bishop Israil to Alp-Ilitver, the head of the Huns, in 682 overcame "the peaks of gigantic mountains" and rode along the flanks of the Andiiskoe Koisu to reach Buynaksk, Kafir and Kumukh in the eastern Dagestan lowlands in a period of twenty days (Fig. 51).

Figure 51. Manuscript miniature from the History of Caucasian Albania by Moise Kagankatvatsi. Covering the period from the 4th to the 10th century. Matendaran (Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), Yerevan

His missionary activities succeeded in converting the Huns to Christianity, who destroyed the tombs of their ancestors and their sacred tree, the "Defender of the Country" and made peace with the Albanians (Smbatyana, 1984). Stone slabs with Albanian inscriptions found in the settlements of Nizhnee Gakvari and Khushtada are clear evidence of the activities of Caucasian Albanian Monophysite missionaries in mountain Dagestan (Zakaryaev, 1978).

Christianity in Avaria spread from the 5th century onwards, first under Albanian and Armenian influence. A church was built in Verkhniy Chiryurt on the lower Sulak River in the 5th-7th centuries, this community becoming the centre of the spread of Christianity in the mountain regions of Dagestan before destruction by Arab forces. The excavated remains of this early church reveal close analogies with religious buildings of Albania and Armenia of the 6th-7th centuries.

From the 8th century onwards Christian influence continued under Kartvilian (Iberian) influence and subsequently under that of its successor state of Georgia (Ataev, 1958, 1959; Gambashidze, 1977, 1983; Gazanov, 1961; Geioshev, 1984, Magomedov, 1978; Taknaeva, 2004; Krishtopa, 2007; Semenov, 1951; Togoshvili, 1988). Its most flourishing phase was in the 11th century but it gradually declined through the 15th-17th centuries from pressures attendant on the growing adoption of Islam, a process which began among the rulers of the Khunzakh region in the mid-13th century (Khalisov & Shekhmagomedov, 2015, 2017; Shikhsaidov, 1957, 1969, 2001). Churches were built throughout almost all of Avaria, Christianity particularly taking hold in Khunzakh, the traditional centre of Avar authority, and the adjacent Khunzakh plateau, where crosses have been found with Georgian and Georgian-Avar inscriptions dating from the 10th to 15th centuries. However, it is the area of Gidatli which has the largest number of known Christian monuments in central Dagestan. Not far distant is the well-preserved little 10th-11th Georgian Christian church in Datuna on the left flank of the Avarskoe Koisu (Markovin, 1987; Shmerling, 1956). According to the local population, churches were also built between the 11th and 14th centuries in Urada, Tidub, Khotoda and Machada. Many masonry petroglyphs

within the walls of older buildings in Gidatli are said to be re-used spolia from churches destroyed during the period of Islamisation. In the 14th century chronicle "History of Irkhana" the Gidatlians are called "Georgians", confirming that they were Georgian Orthodox Christians.

In the environs of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, a church was recorded near Botlikh in 1485 and the archaeologist D.M. Ataev found Christian graves of the 8th-14th centuries in Botlikh, Kvanada, Khustada and Tindi. Like the Gidatlians, the Bagulals, Chamalals, Tindals, Khvarshins and the nearby Ando-Dido peoples were formally considered to be Orthodox Christians and in the early Middle Ages were baptised by Georgian missionaries. In the Bagulal community of Tlondoda local inhabitants understand that there had once been a church there and in 1885 the Russian V.A. Roinov communicated that in the vicinity of Khushtada, just across the valley from Tlondoda, the sister Bagalal community preserved traces of an ancient Christian church. Christian objects have also been found in the community cemetery of Chamalal Verkhnee Gakvari. In the Georgian region of Tusheti are the ruins of the 19th century church of Dartlo near the source of the Andiiskoe Koisu just 75 km from Tindi. That Christian influences should have come via the Tusheti region is very logical. Indeed, in prehistory the cultural connections between the peoples of Andiiskoe were such that the language now spoken in the Tusheti region is considered to incorporate elements of the Avar-Ando-Dido group of languages.

The realities of modern political geography should not confuse our understanding of how close the valleys of both the Avarskoe Koisu and the Andiiskoe Koisu are to Transcaucasia and how permeable and undaunting mountain heights are to local highlanders and historically how freely they moved into the lowlands to conduct raids on settlements and capture livestock during the warm months of the year. Avar communities still live today on the Georgian side of the border.

Further evidence of Georgian Christian influence in Chamalal territory is the finely carved stone scroll work outlining of the monolithic arched lintel of the inner doorway of the Juma mosque of the settlement of Gigatli, the first purpose built mosque in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, constructed in the valley of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu. This monument is a most interesting example of the intersection of cultural practices at this time.

Although it is the first mosque built by the community of Gigatli at a time when it was a principal forepost of Islam, the monolithic arched lintel over its internal doorway is of a style not found elsewhere in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone but, as noted above, is characteristic of constructions in Chechnya to the west of the Snegevoy Ridge which forms the natural border between Dagestan and Chechnya (Fig. 52). Possibly it may have been the work of a master from nearby Kenkhi who (as noted above) are still renowned for the quality of their masonry. The fine decoration of its inner entrance way may have been made by a Georgian master or one who had trained in Georgia.

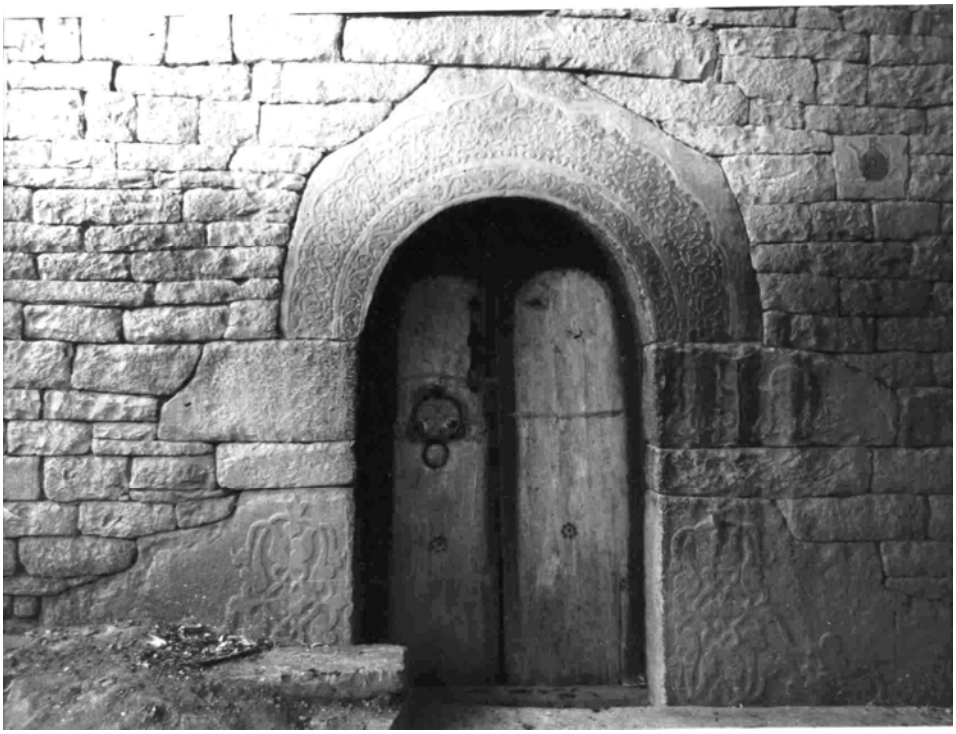

Figure 52. Inner doorway to Juma mosque of Chamalal Gigatli with Chechnyan form of monolithic arched lintel and corner jambs at floor level. These are incised with decorative carvings in a style not characteristic of the region and possibly executed by a master carver trained in Georgia. Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan

It was surely in the above contexts of the Christianised western Caucasus and Georgia, that iconographies and beliefs associated with the Christian miracle of Saint Eustace, already conflated in adjacent Transcaucasia to the south with indigenous beliefs relating to deer, hunters and hunting and their respective supernatural protectors, would have entered the cosmology of the ethno-linguistic enclaves of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu and found a vehicle for the iconographic expression of the solar stag or stag that bears the sun between its antlers, as most explicitly expressed in the Verkhnee Gakvari masonry petroglyph of the solar stag with the cross superimposed over a sun disc between its antlers (Fig. 11 above).

It is thus not at all unlikely that in the Andiiskoe Koisu the vernacular beliefs and iconography associated with Saint Eustace were well known there and were at some stage conflated there with a previously existing solar stag cult (Mamasakhlisi, 2013), resulting in the execution of the solar stag petroglyphic image of Verkhnee Gakvari which bears a dotted cross overlaid over the sun between the roundel of its antlers.

Presence of red deer in the upper Andiiskoe Koisy in the past and today

In the course of our research, many inhabitants from the Chamalal communities were asked whether red deer currently inhabited or were known to have previously inhabited their lands and whether they were ever hunted. The answer to all these queries was consistently, "no", there was no community memory of the presence of the animal or of its being hunted by its members.

In 1910 the Russian zoologist N.Y. Dinnik noted that red deer were common throughout Dagestan. A study published in 1973 by V.M. Kotovich, V.I. Markovin and T.L. Khkekhneva on the ancient and modern ranges of wild ungulates in Dagestan indicates that red deer inhabited the headwaters region of the Andiiskoe Koisu in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the situation is now quite different. Since the 1960s and 1970s the numbers of the species have declined substantially due to anthropogenic factors which include uncontrolled hunting following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as well as habitat destruction and fragmentation (Akhmedov, 2000, 2009, 2010; Babaev et al., 2014, 2017; Gineev et al., 1988; Danilkin, 1999; Dinnik, 1910a, 1910b; Plaksa, 2013; Yarovenko, 1999; Yarovenko et al., 2014; Bragina et al., 2015) Today the population is assessed by ungulate conservation specialists as not exceeding 4,000 individuals in the mountains of the Greater Caucasus as a whole, of which a few thousand are in Russian territory. In Armenia the species is extinct and there are very small numbers in both Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The German scholar linguist and ethnographer, A.M. Dirr (1867-1930), in his 1915 Tbilisi publication on hunting and hunting languages of the peoples of the Caucasus, appealed to his readership to provide any information they may have on the traditional cultures of the Caucasus, because so much was disappearing without any record due to rapid societal change. He wrote, "...it has already been for some time that ethnologists so fear that under the influence of Russian and western culture, one and another characteristics of the ancient life of the Caucasians are rapidly disappearing". Dirr knew the Caucasus as it was prior to Soviet intrusion, undertaking extensive fieldwork in Georgia on languages and traditional belief systems and undertaking pioneering work in 1903 and 1904 in documenting languages and belief systems in the ethno-linguistic enclaves in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, as well as throughout the broader Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone (Dirr, 1909).

Perhaps indeed there had been red deer in Chamalal territory with no memory of them surviving amongst the elder generations living today. Accordingly, this study undertook an ecological assessment of the suitability of existing forests in the Chamalal areas of the left bank of the Koisu as sustainable red deer habitats now and in the past.

Although red deer are known to be adaptable to a wide range of habitats, the results of this in situ survey indicate that, in terms of vegetation and human presence, current environments would be unlikely to support red deer populations and would probably not have done so in the pre-modern period.

Although most Chamalal community territories have an area of forest conveniently adjacent to their settlements as sources of timber for building and manufacturer of artifacts, fuel or food (wild berries, nuts, fruits, etc.), all except that of Verkhnee Gakvari (which has a nearby deciduous broad-leaved forest) are predominantly coniferous (Petherbridge, 2021a). The Chamalal community of Richaganikh on the northern flank of the valley to the south of the Gakvarinka has no forest in its territory, because the underlying geological structure of steeply inclining rock strata does not allow the development of sufficient and suitable soil cover to support forest trees: it probably has not done so throughout the Holocene. None of the existing community forests near other Chamalal settlements are of sufficient size to provide deer with an adequate sense of shelter or to permit the seasonal sexual segregation characteristic of this species (Conrad et al., 2000; Clutton-Brock et al., 1982).

While there are abundant pasturelands on the upper peripheries of these communities they are regularly used for sheep and cattle grazing and are probably too close to human activity for deer to feel adequate security. It is documented by deer hunters and farmers in Scotland that roe deer dislike the scent left by sheep and cattle on pastures and will try to avoid such areas if possible until they have been vacated for some time (or after rain). Does this apply to red deer and to mountain pastures used by sheep and goats?

If the petroglyph images of deer in the Chamalal territories are evidence that red deer were previously hunted by members of these communities but that their own forests could not sustain them, it is likely that Chamalal hunters travelled by foot or on horse to forests where red deer were to be found but that this knowledge of hunting activity has since been lost. Beliefs and folklore which have been documented among many ethnic groups of the Caucasus (Bulatov & Luguev, 1990; Baranichenko, 1988; Virsaladze, 1978; Gagloeva, 1987; Gadzhiev, 1993; Karaketov, 2014; Lavrov, 1959; Marr, 1912; Dalgat, 1893, Zukhba, 2007a, 2007b) imply that forests where game was hunted were well outside the realm of the home village itself and below the purity of the highest snow and ice-covered peaks where the supernatural protectors of wild animals dwelt. Indeed, so unknown were the depths of the forest to the hunters that they risked getting lost if they were not guided on the right road by the deity or personages responsible for the forest and its animals. Returning from this distant zone a hunter was obliged to share his kill with whomever he met along the road, but was not obliged to do within the zone of human settlement.

Upstream from the latitudes of the Chamalal settlements, the gorge of the Andiiskoe Koisu narrows. Its flanks become more precipitous and increasingly support areas of mixed coniferous and deciduous broad-leaved forests beneath the snowy peaks of the Bogossky and Snegovoy Ridges. These forests lie within the zone identified as providing suitable red deer habitats by ecologists monitoring present red deer populations and are also within an accessible horse riding or walking distance from Chamalal territory. In this context a member of the Chamalal Verkhnee Gakvari community recalls that his father and others of his generation rode to such a steep forest location opposite the settlement of Echeda (only some 15 km away) to cut timber for building which they would then slide down the raw scree slopes to the river and raft them to where the Gakvarinka River flows into the Andiiskoe Koisu. From there they would haul the limber by two-wheeled, low-slung mountain carts (arba) drawn by steers up to the village which is situated at an elevation of around 1,800 metres.

That both deer and bezoar goat were a significant feature of life and beliefs in Echeda itself is abundantly indicated by the number of petroglyph images of bezoar goats built into the walls of houses and the slab (described above as No.7) built into the eastern wall of the Juma mosque with a petroglyphic composition of a solar stag and another deer together with non-figurative graphical elements). Of related interest are chance finds near Echeda noted in the 1993 Archaeological Map of Dagestan compiled by A.I. Abakarov and O.M. Davudov of a copper plaque with the image of a deer and a bezoar goat and a bronze pin crowned with the figure of a bezoar goat.

From the information gleaned above it is therefore possible that the lively Tlyakh composition of three galloping riders with flintlock rifles and curved sabres with a solar stag, other deer, and hunter with a drawn sabre and a dog represent just such a habitual deer hunting foray into a

forested area beyond Tlyakh community territory. Indeed, a Gidatli informant confirms that elders of this village had told him that deer were once hunted in forests in the headwaters region of the Avarskoe Koisu some distance way.

Masonry petroglyphs depicting the bezoar goat: The dilemma of the invisible tur

The higher levels of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu basin beyond the settlements supported once significant populations of the bezoar goat, which, like the red deer, was a favoured game animal. It was to a certain degree tolerant of human settlements and would descend to lower altitudes when snow was deep in the upper mountain slopes and could be brought down by bow and arrow. As they inhabit forested steep slopes, bezoar goats are difficult to survey by methods of direct counting traditional for mountain ungulates. Data for the Dagestan part of the specie's range are the most precise and indicate that the bulk of the bezoar goat population in the Greater Caucasus Rage inhabits Dagestan, where human impact is growing and bezoar goat numbers are decreasing; in 2017 the population was assessed at about 1,500 individuals (Magomedov, 2001).

Bezoar goats are an oft-encountered subject of masonry petroglyphs, usually as images of single animals (Fig. 53) but sometimes of two symmetrically opposed goats (sometimes on either side of a central non-figurative sign or symbol) (Fig. 54). There are a number of such compositions on the walls of older buildings in Echeda, which has the highest number of bezoar goat petroglyphs of any settlement of the region, no doubt a reflection of the once abundant population and the role of hunting played in its nearby forests and upland meadows. Some of the Echeda bezoar goat images have been repeatedly whitewashed so that is difficult to record them photographically.

The block of one masonry petroglyph image of a bezoar goat has been re-used in its present construction and is partly damaged. On it are juxtaposed with the goat are a series of zig-zag lines which may represent a snake – considered to be an auspicious symbol in the Caucasus (Fig. 55). It seems obvious that at the time such masonry petroglyphs were first executed (or chosen for re-use) particular importance had long been accorded this game species by the communities of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu both as a food source and as a being of symbolic significance (Khalidova, 1984) (Fig. 56).

Figure 53. Masonry petroglyph of bezoar goat. Echeda, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 54. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) depicting two bezoar goats facing each other. Abandoned khutor of Tsuidi of the Chamalal community of the Gakvarinka River valley, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan

Figure 55. Masonry petroglyph. Re-used stone with broken edges. Depiction of a single bezoar goat facing right with zig-zag elements framing and occupying much of the field. Echeda, Tsumadinskiy district. Tindal community

Figure 56. Masonry petroglyph (corner slab) inserted into left pillar of entrance gateway to community cemetery of Tlyakh, Gidatli area. A bezoar goat is confronted by two dogs and a standing figure holding a staff or some type of weapon. Above is an image of a horseman holding a pointed lance with two triangular pennants. Below is a rudimentary Arabic inscription

The question of petroglyph traditions relating to hunting brings us up against another seeming general dilemma in Dagestan. Apart from red deer, for many millennia, the main game animals hunted in the Caucasus eco-region were the bezoar goat and tur (of which two subspecies inhabit the Great Caucasus Range – *Capra caucasica* [West Caucasian tur] and *Capra cylindricornis* [East Caucasian tur]), and wild boar with roe deer and chamois also being hunted.

While it is understandable that petroglyphs of wild boar were not sanctioned following the introduction of Islam why is the tur, the most majestic herbivore of the Caucasus, so rarely represented amongst rock face and masonry petroglyphs and rock paintings? In

some of V.I. Markovin's reports on rock face petroglyphs of the north east piedmonts of Dagestan, he does interpret some of the zoomorphic images as being of the tur, but this interpretation may not always be valid as the details of the animals described are not sufficient to designate a specific species to them. Images of tur are rarely identifiable, if at all, in masonry petroglyphs.

Certainly throughout their range, the dominant physical characteristics of the red deer stag with its majestic antlers and of the bezoar goat and other species of mountain goat / ibex with their beautiful profiles of backwards, curving sweeping horns have presented an inspiration for rock imagery wherever these species occur. However, as majestic as the spiraling horns of the tur may be, they do not lend themselves to such profile depictions, although the popularity of this animal is made clear by the many three-dimensional bronze figurines, pendants, finials, etc., representing spiral-horned tur heads (and ram's heads which present a similar representational challenge) in the Koban and other cultures of the Caucasus.

The answer to the noticeable absence of tur as single images on masonry blocks or in petroglyph or painted compositions on rock faces promoting success in hunting would seem to lie in the supreme respect and authority accorded these particular animals, as recorded in pre-Christian and pre-Islamic belief systems, oral traditions and practices and their survivals shared among many peoples of the mountains of the Caucasus.

Publications devoted specifically to popular beliefs and rituals concerning hunting in the Caucasus include: Dzarakhova, 2011; Dolgakg, 1960; Zolotov, 1961; Karpov, 1996; Malkonuev, 1986, 1990, 1996; Plaeva, 2007, Sferbekov, 1997; Simchenko, 1976; Molodin & Efremova, 1997; Ortabaeva, 1983; Mykhailova, 2019; Khadzhikimba, 2016; Khalidova, 1982.

It is clear from the work of historians, linguists, folklorists and ethnographers who have achieved much in documenting these phenomena, that, prior to the spread of the exclusive canonical monotheism of Christianity and Islam, which permit no assumption of any equal or competitive supernatural power, that amongst the many peoples across the Caucasus there was shared a fundamental and flexible interconnectivity of beliefs which recognized an integrated structure of the cosmos and the natural environment and how this was ordered by supernatural forces and personages. In essence this amounted to a shared syncretistic vernacular religion, which accepted considerable variation and elaboration within the fundamental structure of its world view. This flexible interconnectivity acted as a sort of perpetual spiritual relay of concepts and practices from ethnic group to neighbouring ethnic group, both influenced by and influencing cultures of Eurasia and Europe which had similar systems of subsistence and lifeways.

As A.M. Dirr, who became well acquainted with the spectrum of these vernacular beliefs, expressed it, "Facts show that the same mythological representations existed at some time amongst many peoples of the Caucasus. We have been able to confirm the existence of specific protectors of wild animals among the Abkhazians, Svanetians, Cherkessians, Ossetians, Mingrelians, Tsakhurs, Chechens and also among the Saribash Lesgins. I do not doubt that a more detailed acquaintanceship with the folklore of the Caucasus will reveal to us the existence of similar mythological beings amongst other Caucasians as well. In general, in the study of the ancient mythological representations and beliefs of the Caucasians one must not reject от мысли, that at some time in the Caucasus there existed a single religion which consequently was eclipsed and partly supplanted by the historical religions: but it is still preserved among many Caucasian peoples in the form of survivals, superstitions and folklore. It is a curious fact that the face of the ancient mythology by no means made an enemy of the new divinity, but rather became its obedient servants, which is clearly expressed among the Ossetians, for example, and the Tsakhurs and Tushins. The Ossetian Avsati was instructed by God to pasture wild animals, exactly as angels do among the Tushins and in the consciousness of the Tsakhurs Abdal is the submissive servant of Allah. And yet, we see among other peoples that the divine face of an ancient religion turns under the influence of new evil spirits, to become hostile to the new gods and the people who believe in them" (Fig. 57).

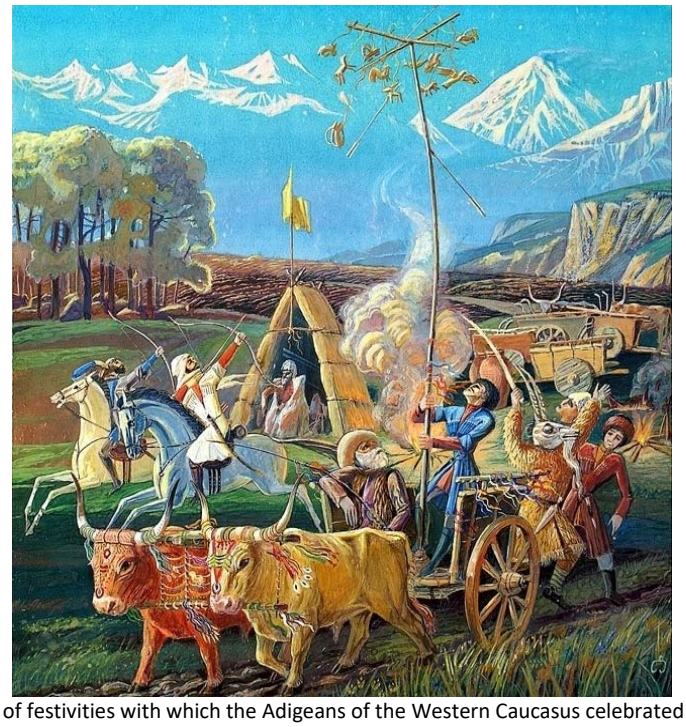

Figure 57. Popular depiction of festivities with which the Adigeans of the Western Caucasus celebrated their spring festival of Вак1уэихьэж "Return of the Ploughmen" including skilled riders shooting arrows at various small figures of domestic and game animals suspended from a tall target – tabak – which was continually swayed to make it more difficult to hit. Painting by Adigean artist Abdulakh Makhmudrovich Bersipov.

Dirr's interpretation is reinforced by the abundance of beliefs, practices and lore documented by a number of later scholars, notably R.I. Seferbekov. His publications specifically relating to Dagestan including the following:

Seferbekov, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007, 2009, 2012. Those published with collaborators include: Seferbekov & Aligadzhieva, 2007; Seferbekov & Makhmudeva, 2005; Seferbekov & Musaev, 1994; Seferbekov & Tatieva, 2009; Sferbekov & Shekhmagomedov, 2015, 2016. Other significant studies on Dagestan vernacular beliefs and folklore include: Bulatov & Luguev, 2004; Gadzhiev 1977-1985, 1991a, 1991b; Gadzhikhanov & Seferbekov, 2010; Chaudri, 1956; Abdurakhmanov, 1988; Aglarov, 1988, 2022; Aligadzhieva & Sferebekov, 2004; Aligadzhieva, 2012; Aliev & Seferbekov, 2007; Arsanukaev, 2002; Baranichenko, 1988; Bardavelidze, 1957; Batchaev, 1986; Bulatov, 1990; Kotovich, 1977; Khalidova, 1984; Trufimova, 1965; Makhmudova & Seferbekov, 2005; Abaev, 1949; Afanaseva, 1996; Akaba, 1979, 2007.

Through their work, we are informed that amongst many ethnic groups of the Caucasus the tur (sometimes represented as a white tur) is lauded as a sacred manifestation or responsibility of the supreme divinity and protector of wild animals. Sometimes the deity is represented as a wild animal but more often as the owner of game who he or she herds and protects. Tur could only be hunted in extreme need and in measure, and only after following strict protocols of personal purity and respect and the solicitation of permission by the protector of wild animals to be allocated an animal in the hunt. Transgressions would result not only in lack of success in hunting but in physical retribution on the precipices which were the tur's natural home.

Thus in these conceptions the tur was not perceived as one of the habitually sanctioned game animals as a source of food and other products, such as the red deer or bezoar goat, but could only to be hunted in exceptional circumstances. Thus it was not an appropriate subject or target for a hunting ritual expressed through visual representations in petroglyphs or rock painting.

It is interesting that the leopard was also highly revered by the mountain peoples of the Caucasus. It was never seen as a threat to man but rather as a friend and helper in the forest, to the degree that is one was found dead, it was buried as if it were a person. It also was very rarely depicted – never in masonry petroglyphs but on rock faces of piedmont north-eastern Dagestan.

There is clear documentation that deer were both revered and highly prized game animals amongst the ethnic groups of the central Caucasus. In North Ossetia still in the 19th century, sanctuaries dedicated to Saint George (Wastyrdji) as patron of hunters were still frequented by local inhabitants. In his 1888 account of the Terskaya oblast, V.F. Miller, illustrates one such log-walled structure with red deer antlers displayed on an external wall in Rekom near Shea in North Ossetia (Fig. 58).

This structure was burnt down in 1995 and replaced with a replica of the same construction. Rekom was an ancient Ossetian deity who could bring rich harvests and success in hunting. The sanctuary is still revered by local nature worshippers who consider it to be a most sacred place (Folz, 2019; Shtirkov, 2015) (Fig. 59). In the past warriors left a broken arrow inside before going off to fight as a guarantee of safe return. Today young conscripts leave a personal item with the same plea.

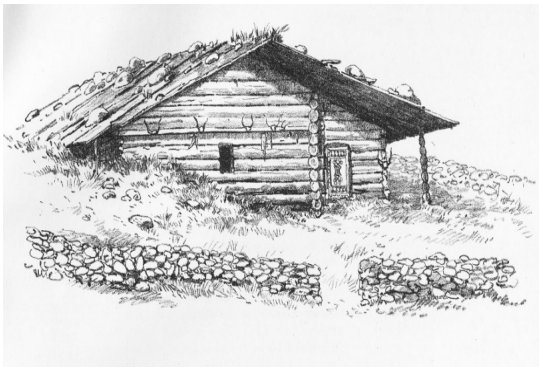

Figure 58. Wooden folk sanctuary of Rekom, North Ossetia as published by V.F. Miller in 1888. Deer heads and antlers are displayed on outer wall

Figure 59. Later rebuilding of Rekom sanctuary, North Ossetia. The practice continues of displaying antlers and the horned skulls of other game on the outer wall

Communalities of belief systems among the peoples of the Caucasus

With respect to our understanding of societal attitudes to hunters, hunting and game animals, there were a number of commonalities of fundamental belief across the Caucasus about divine personages and the structure of the world inhabited by humans. The latter was perceived as an interconnected world under the authority of a range of divine personages, in some cases with parallel authority but who were, however, considered compatible.

The being considered to be the supreme divinity and most important patron of hunting lived in the purest realm, that of the ice and snows of summits of the Caucasus mountain ranges (in some belief systems having a mosque at this level). From this higher natural world, which also included personages responsible for climatic and meteorological phenomena such as rain and thunder) they ruled over their individual realm of forests below where the game was theirs, which they herded and protected, and were sometimes assisted by other beings (male or female of both).

Beyond the forest were the settlements of humans whose lives and subsistence activities were also under the authority of higher beings (e.g. the divinity responsible for agriculture). Purity and personal responsibility were particularly demanded of hunters. These higher beings were sometimes male and sometimes female. In much of mountain Dagestan and neighbouring Svanetia on the southern heights of the Caucasus in Georgia, the patron of hunting and wild animals was the female Dal, or manifested as a group of Islamicised deities, the Budulaals (Aglarov, 1984) who the Gidatli Avars, for example, believed are the masters of wild animals, mainly deer, bezoar goats and tur. They were known to all the ethno-linguistic groups of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region and must have played a part in the popular conception of the red deer and bezoar goat as represented in the masonry petroglyph images found there.

In the Botlikh communities they were known as Budulaals and amongst the Chamalals as Budual or Budulal (Gadzhiev, 1988), while the Bagulals called them Adali, Budali or Mundunal (Gadzhiev, 1991), According to the Akhvakhs, they were known as Budulaals and were said to live on Tarkho mountain near the Bogossky Ridge. As patrons of wildlife, it was believed that they did not like people hunting and would take revenge if hunters kill too much game. The Budulaals patronised both wild and domestic animals. Seferbekov reports that apart from the belief in the Budulaals as masters of mountains and wildlife, the Akkhvakhs also worshipped the "Masters of the Forests", Tlatlaxba, who were imagined as assuming the shapes of wild animals – bear, wolf deer, wild board, etc. When walking in the forests, one should take care not to disturb them or they might scare people to death, drive them mad, or lead them into get lost in the depths of the forest (Seferbekov, 2008, 2012)

In the Chamalal riverside community of Gigatli-Uruk on the upper Andiiskoe Koisu a chance find of bronze figurines from what may been a cult sanctuary of the Scythian period includes that of a woman which has been interpreted as a representation of the supreme female deity (Fig. 60) (Davudov, 1991).

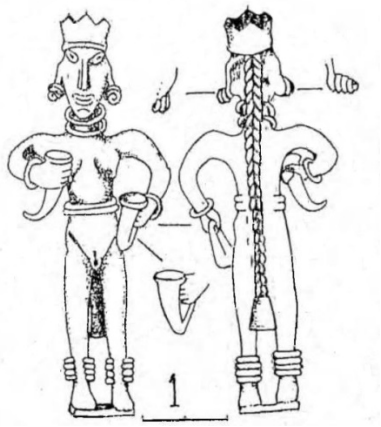

Figure 60. Drawing of bronze statuette of supreme female deity? found with other bronze statuettes and artifacts near Gigatli-Uruk situated on the left bank of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu, Tsumadinsky district, Dagestan. Scythian period

Non-figurative masonry petroglyph images in the Chamalal and Tindal communities of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region and their relationships to other petroglyphs in the North Caucasus

Besides the zoomorphic images of red deer and bezoar goat, the masonry petroglyphs of the the Chamalal and Tindal communities of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu include a limited range of non-figurative images. Most common among these is a particular type of spiral incorporating curvilinear elements with either two or four diagonally opposed curling finials which serve as entries into the centre of a simple spiral labyrinth rotating clock-wise (i.e. to the right).

Occasionally these symbols may be quite large (Fig. 61). The variant with two curving finials may be repeated so that the spirals flow into one another to form a horizontal frieze-like panel. Sometimes single examples can be quite large in scale, as on a wall at today's main entrance to the settlement of Tindi. Such a spiral form may be associated with others of the same type side by side as twin symbols (Fig. 62) or in a row of three.

Figure 61. Masonry petroglyph on wall of main entrance to the settlement of Tindi in the upper Andiiskoe Koisu valley. Labyrinthine spiral with four diametrically opposing curvilinear extensions. Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 62. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone). Twin adjacent spirals, each with a single curvilinear extension but not graphically linked. Building is next to community water source. Kvanada, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Bagulal ethno-linguistic group

A simplified variant of the latter can be seen in the carving of a horned wooden vessel from Tindi, documented by G.Ya. Movchan in 2001 (Figs. 63, 64). None of the researchers of Dagestan or Chechnyan-Ingushetian petroglyphs has provided an explanation supported by clear ethnographic evidence for the significance of this type of spiral symbol but the lead researcher of the present study has noticed that it can be seen in a close relationship

with old community village water fountains in Kvanada and Tlondoda (but without any other related supporting evidence).

Circular symbols of varying internal complexity are found in all the regions investigated. The equal-armed cross with four interstitial dots in the Verkhnee Gakvari masonry petroglyph of a solar stag No. 1 is of a form favoured both in pre-Christian times and by Georgian Christians (Fig. 9 above). A clearly-related image of a such a dotted cross within a circle is found in a number of petroglyphs in Chechnya (Figs. 65, 66). V.I. Markovin observed that the mountain Vainakhs consider this particular symbol to be the “khoroshego kresta” (the “good cross”) (Markovın, 1969).

Figure 63. Masonry petroglyph (corner stone) of a row of three spirals with four diametrically opposing curvilinear extensions and each in an individual compartment separated by a vertical line. Echeda, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Tindal ethno-linguistic group

Figure 64. Carved wooden container from Tindi, upper Andiiskoe Koisu. It has a triple spiral scroll on its long side and inwardly curving horn forms on the short sides at the top, a not infrequent feature of vessels from Tindi and other settlements of this region. Collected in 1946 during E.M. Shilling’s expedition and published in 2001 by G.Ya. Movchan. Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan

Figure 65. Masonry petroglyph with images of equilateral crosses with four interstitial dots within circles – a cross form found embraced by the antlers of the solar stag No. 1 in Verkhnee Gakvari. Settlement of Khoi, Vedenskiy district, Chechnya (Ilyasov 2014)

Figure 66. Masonry petroglyph with images of equilateral crosses with four interstitial dots within circles. Settlement of Tsa-Kale, Itum-Kalinskiy district, Chechnya (Ilyasov 2014)

Unique within the plethora of cross forms on masonry petroglyphs of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia is that of nested equal-armed crosses of which a double variant is found on a corner stone (associated with the image of a solar stag No. 6) in the Chamalal khutor of Tsuidi in the lower Gakvarinka River valley and a quintuple variant on a wall in Verkhnee Gakvari. The multiplication of these crosses may have been intended to strengthen their power (Figs. 16 above, 67).

While many masonry petroglyphs are obviously produced by unpracticed hands, spirals and circular symbols with internal features are often executed with a high degree of technical refinement and are likely to have been produced by wood carvers and woodworkers who already were accustomed to the design repertoire and possessed the tools and the mastery to accurately plot and inscribe intricate and complex abstract and geometrical designs.

A single petroglyph of a hand is also found among the images which form a composition on the Tsuidi corner stone mentioned above (Fig. 16 above). The hand image is also found on the left hand entrance wall to the historical Juma mosque of Khushtada (Fig. 68).

In Verkhnee Gakvari there survives an old custom of women impressing hand clay prints on newly plastered walls to dispel evil. E.M. Shilling in 1950 noted that traditional Bagulal women’s silver earrings bore little pendants in the form of hands, a style also common to females of Tindi communities. Many bronze figurines of humans standing with exaggerated hands in a position of adoration have been found in mountain cult areas (dated by various experts to the 1st millennium BC or 100-200 CE) in the Dido region (Fig. 69).

It was particularly frequently used in the masonry petroglyphs of Chechnya-Ingushetia. So favoured was it as a protective symbol in that region that it was inscribed not only on the exterior of buildings but included as a prominent feature of their dense and richly carved wooden interior decoration, as illustrated by B. Plaetschke in his 1929 publication (Fig. 70). L.M. Melikset-bek published a study of hand reliefs on monuments of Georgian material culture in 1957.

Other specific symbols or configurations of geometric shapes which are difficult to describe are found in various locations in the territories of both the Chamalals and Tindals. Of particular

note for its variety of such masonry petroglyph images are the west wall of the Juma mosque of Gigatli and the south and east walls of the fire-ravaged Juma mosque of Khushtada.

Figure 67. Masonry petroglyph of 5 nested crosses. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan

Figure 68. South entrance doorway to lower floor of fire-ravaged Juma mosque of Khushtada (built 1588 – registered as a national monument), Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Bagulal ethno-linquistic group. One masonry petroglyph on the left side of the doorway has the image of a hand in association with a spiral with two curving linear extensions. Above is another petroglyph of a rayed solar image within which is an equilateral cross with four interstitial dots

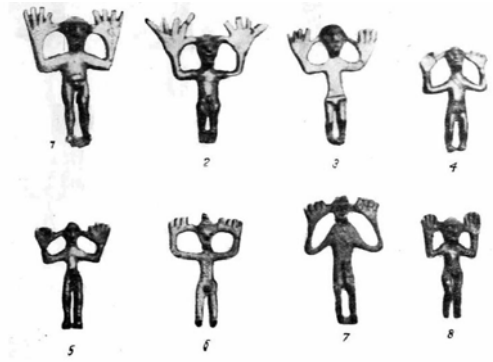

Figure 68a. Small bronze figurines in posture of adoration or deflecting evil excavated at cult objects from Mount Kidilashan, Tzuntinskiy district, Dagestan. c. 5th century BC.
Dido ethno-linguistic group (Megrelıdze 1951)

Figure 69. Coarsely pecked masonry petroglyph of hand. Corner stone. Verkhnee Gakvari, Tsumadinskiy district, Dagestan. Chamalal ethno-linguistic group

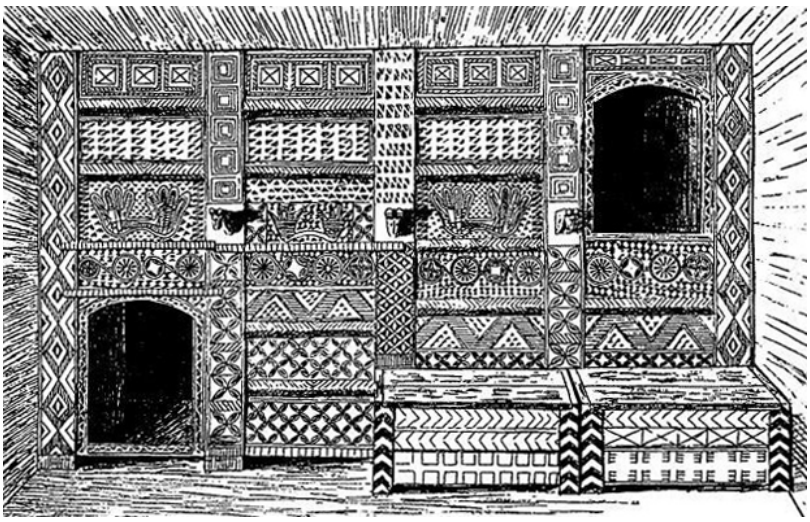

Figure 70. Line illustration of interior woodwork of a Chechnyan house in 1929 publication by German researcher, Bruno Plaetschke. Note the multiple panels with twin hand depictions and circular (solar?) symbols

Masonry Petroglyphs: Approaches to Chronology

Questions clearly arise as to the derivation, chronological span of usage and meaning of the depictions in Dagestan masonry petroglyphs of the stag that bears the sun.

As the many petroglyphs of the Caucasus present important evidence about past human society in the region, there has been much interest among those specializing in the subject to attribute chronologies to them. In Azerbaijan, M. Farajova and colleagues have made a valuable contribution in assigning date ranges for various categories of petroglyph images found on the rock faces of Gobustan (Farajova, 2018), ranging from the Late Palaeolithic-Early Mesolithic (12^{th}-10^{th} millennium BP) to the Mediaeval period (15^{th} century). From the Eneolithic period (6^{th}-4^{th} millennium BP), the Bronze Age (4^{th}-3^{rd} millennium BP) and the early Iron Age (2^{nd}-1^{st} millennium BP) among the images are those of deer, goats. From the Eneolithic period there are images of figures in hunting and ritual compositions as well as of domesticated animals.

Following the identification of petroglyphs on rock faces of the piedmonts of north-east Dagestan (at Kumtorkala, Kapchugai, Buynaksk, etc). V.I. Markovin for some time assigned them a Bronze Age date. However, the rationale supporting the earlier dating of the rock face petroglyphs of Gobustan by Azerbaijani researchers (Aslanov & Gadzhiev, 1955; Aslanov, 1971; Vereshagan et al., 1948; Dzhafarsade, 1958, 1971, 1973; Rustamov, 1971; Formosov, 1963; Bakshailev, 2003) led him to modify his opinion about the chronology of some of the Dagestan material, particularly after the discovery of rock face petroglyphs at Ekibulak (Buynaksk district) which he considered to have close affinities with some of the Gobustan petroglyph. This led him to suggest the Neolithic period for the production of the Ekibulak rock face petroglyphs. (Markovin, 1990) Also of influence was V.M. Kotovich's dating to the Neolithic period of certain rock paintings in the mountainous territory of Dagestan (on the basis of activities depicted in them which clearly relate to agricultural and pastoral matters) (Kotovich, 1976).

Markovin also revised upwards his assessment of the dating of many of the piedmont rock face petroglyphs from the Middle Bronze Age to that of the Kayakent-Khorochoy culture (Late Bronze Age – 12^{th}-13^{th} century BC) based on typical Kayakent-Khorochoy period ceramics found adjacent to them. There is also a site which has rock face petroglyphs in a clear Scythian style (900-200 BC). Other petroglyphs he dated to the Middle Ages because they included words and religious invocations in Arabic script.

While much of the repertoire of imagery found on masonry petroglyphs derives from that found on rock face petroglyphs and rock paintings in Dagestan, they themselves are more recent in origin. As noted above, the masonry petroglyphs are pecked or incised into a flat face of blocks or slabs of stone which are integral components of rectangular, masonry walled structures with vertical walls – as corner or facing stones of buildings, door and window jambs or, in the case of stone slabs, as decorative inset panels on the walls of such buildings. The theoretical chronological terminus post quem for such an innovation is the period when rectangular masonry constructions are first recorded in the region we are investigating. This change in constructional form occurred in the late third millennium BC when in mountainous Dagestan multi-chamber rectangular buildings with flat roofs of the Ginchi culture replaced the circular light clay-coated wicker dwellings structures of the Kura-Araxes culture – "a radical change in building tradition", as R.G. Magomedov (who produced a major exposition of research into this culture in 1999) describes it (Gadzhiev, 1974; Kozenkova, 1996).

The Ginchi archaeological metacultural zone encompassed what we have come to know as Avaria as well as south eastern Chechnya, where the architecture also appears to have evolved from circular constructions to rectangular ones. The Ginchi culture was one of farming and herding with permanent agricultural settlements and seasonal cattle-breeder's camps. This was the time when the cultural landscape began to resemble that which characterised mountainous Dagestan until the mid-20^{th} century. Magomedov's description of Ginchi culture settlements could indeed apply to that of the middle and upper reaches of the Avarskoe Koisu and Andiiskoe Koisu today, "rock settlements situated on steep mountain slopes, cliff ridges or mountain spurs – those almost inaccessible places that turned settlements into natural fortresses and valley settlements situated on river terraces".

One should also consider in connection with possible Avar influence that although from the ... Middle Bronze to the Early Iron Ages south-eastern Chechnya (where most of the petroglyphs occur) was part of a culture zone which extended over the natural mountain barriers of the Segovoy Ridge and Andiiskiy Range, in later periods it was more linked with other cultural zones to the west, such as that of the Koban with it which shared the same zone of the northern macroslopes of the central and western Caucasus (Alekseeva, 1949; Kozenkova, 1950; Vonigradov, 1975, 1989; Lavrov & Kozenkova, 1978; Krupnov, 1946, 1957, 1969; Chechenov, 1974), where petroglyphs were cut into open rock faces and shelters rather than on masonry building blocks as in Dagestan and its area of influence in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

The first known masonry petroglyphs were revealed in excavations of the settlement of Sigitma in the eastern lowlands

of Dagestan by K.A. Brede in 1956 and announced that year by V.I. Kanivets at a conference in Erevan, Armenia. Two stone blocks with petroglyphic images were found. One with an image area of 70 cm x 45 cm was part of a masonry wall of a possible cult sanctuary depicts two animals, one of which is a deer. The other block was found in the wall of a domestic complex and depicts five animals which V.I. Markovin interprets as tur date of publication, but may be bezoar goats, with an image area of 33 cm x 35 cm. These were attributed by Markovin to the Kayakent-Karachoy period on the basis of adjacent ceramic finds. They were published by him in a major work on the Bronze Age in the Caucasus and Central Asia produced by the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1994 (Markovin, 1994).

Following the changes in Late Bronze Age building construction through which the first masonry petroglyphs appeared, the next development which aids in determining the early chronology of masonry petroglyphs is the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age and the appearance of pointed iron tools which could be used to incise stone to a greater depth and more easily than those made of bronze. This technological advance indeed appears to have been associated with increase production of masonry petroglyphs and evidence from the Caucasus suggests that such tools would have been available from the 5th century BC onwards.

Masonry petroglyphs themselves are rarely conducive to the range of rock art dating methods now increasingly available which analyse changes in the chemistry and character of weathered surfaces or accretions upon them, so that attempts at assigning chronologies must be through via proxies or associated materials, such as the dendrochronology of structural building material. Purely stylistic changes or correspondences are rarely useful indicators as, on the one hand, many images are repeated again and again over considerable periods of time, while, on the other hand, there is a great variety of competencies manifested in the drawing of the images. The situation is rendered more complex by the fact that clearly masonry petroglyphs are often re-used in later constructions. Thus even if a date can be assigned to a building on which a re-used petroglyph is found, this does not inform us about the date, placement or purpose of its manufacture. These impediments to the dating of masonry petroglyphs in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone were acknowledged by P.M. Debirov (1959) and later by D.M. Ataev and V.I. Markovin (1965). Debirov suggested a rudimentary chronological classification by the principal symbolism characteristic of the successive belief systems of (1) indigenous polytheism, (2) Christianity and (3) Islam, while Ataev and Markovin suggested assigning datings based on those of artifacts from known archaeological or historical periods with similar imagery. Debirov in his 1966 publication on stone carving in Dagestan assigns the masonry petroglyphs of the Gidatli area to the 16th-17th centuries. However, given that much of the imagery on masonry petroglyphs has antecedents of an antiquity much deeper in time than their appearance in the archaeological or historical record, commentaries derived from comparison with individual analogous images, although interesting, are of little real assistance.

As noted above, regards the dating of rock painting in the mountains of Dagestan, V.M. Kotovich published a number of foundation publications between 1969 and 1974 which contained her views on thie chronology, followed by an important monograph in 1976 on the most ancient rock art of Dagestan in which she assigns the sites of Chinna-Khita and Chuval-Khvarab to the Mesolithic period and Kharitana to the Neolithic.

As regards the dating of masonry petroglyphs in Chechnya and Ingushetia, V.P. Kobichev considered the earliest date of the production of masonry petroglyphs to be the Bronze or early Iron Age, an assessment supported by V.B. Vinogradov, while L.I. Lavrov considered that they did not appear earlier than the end of the second millennium BC, based on his knowledge of Caucasian tamga appearing as ownership marks. Based on analogies of local petroglyphs with imagery of the Koban period and the evidence of the use of pointed iron tools, G.R. Smirnova proposed a date for the rock face petroglyphs of the first half of the first millennium BC in a 1979 publication.

An important subsequent chronological reference point is provided by the period of commencement of widespread construction in the 13th century of fortified houses and towers, built from the ruins of settlements destroyed by Mongol invaders, and which often incorporated masonry petroglyphs. Most authorities are in agreement that masonry petroglyphs were not generally produced in Chechnya-Ingushetia after the 16th-18th centuries after much of the mountain population had re-settled in the plains.

V.I. Markovin dates the masonry petroglyphs of the Vainakhs to the 12th-17th centuries. He derived the 12th century date is derived from that of the church of Txaba-Erdi in the settlement of Targim in Ingushetia and the latter date on the basis of a range of gravestones and buildings

Many of the images found inscribed in masonry petroglyphs of the 12th-17th centuries in Chechnya and Ingushetia have antecedents in ceramic and metal artifacts made of other materials of the Middle Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC) in the North Caucasus, and subsequently in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age (e.g. of the Koban culture).

L.M. Ilyasov has approached the question of the chronology of the Chechen masonry petroglyphs in his own methodical way. He considers as a primary basis for assessing a date the identification of the type of metal used in pecking or incising the petroglyph images, noting that bronze is softer and makes a shallower indentation in the rocks most commonly used (shale or limestone) than iron does.

Thus a *terminus ante quem* of the Late Bronze Age (1st millennium – 5th century BC) is indicated for petroglyphs showing evidence of the use of a pointed bronze tool (such as in the settlement of Makazhoi), while the Early Iron Age (post 5th century BC) becomes a *terminus post quem* for petroglyphs executed with an iron tool (such as in the settlement of Baserkol). He also notes that flint tools could also be used on these types of stone but does not elaborate further. Ilyasov observes that there are signs of iron tools on petroglyphs employed in mediaeval buildings which are often likely to have been used in previous constructions, thus complicating the attribution of a chronology. In judging the possible re-use of earlier masonry petroglyphs, he advises an examination of the characteristics of the stone blocks themselves to assess whether they are the same as used elsewhere in the building's masonry. This procedure, of course, cannot apply to petroglyphs applied to the monolithic lintels used in many buildings, which because of their large proportions are usually of different stone than used in the main masonry fabric. In some cases, the petroglyph images can be approximately dated because they clearly reflect that they reflect the major religion prevailing in their region at the time they were made. Thus petroglyphs with Christian symbols were employed during the period of adoption of Christianity in the 8th-14th centuries. However, in the 15th and 16th centuries the Vainakhs started to revert to their earlier beliefs resulting in some eclectic mixtures of signs and symbols on masonry petroglyphs.

Many of the images found inscribed in masonry petroglyphs of the 12th-17th centuries in Chechnya and Ingushetia have antecedents in ceramic and metal artifacts made of other materials of the Middle Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC) in the North Caucasus, and subsequently in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age (e.g. of the Koban culture).

Ilyasov has been fortunate in being able to have Carbon-14 analysis applied to the dating of wooden elements of combat towers in mountain Chechnya and of wooden vessels found in

the traditional keel-vaulted "sklepi" in Maiste and Melkhiste, leading him to consider that most Chechnyan tower constructions date to the 12th-17th centuries. Similar results were obtained from Carbon-14 dating of wooden elements of mediaeval buildings in Ingushetia (Gadzhiev & Matskovskiy, 2018; Zaitseva et al., 2005).

When towers were built in these regions they carefully incorporated petroglyphs from earlier constructions. Sometimes individual petroglyphs and even compositions are found from more ancient structures, leading Ilyasov to date the appearance of masonry petroglyphs in mountain Chechnya to Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age (1,000 to 400 BC). He observes that they were considered so socially significant that in a number of cases even later tower constructions had imitations of these petroglyphs specially incised into stone blocks for the new buildings. Some petroglyphs symbols, such as the apotropaic human hand, were still used in domestic constructions throughout the 19th century.

In attempting to assign a chronology to individual masonry petroglyphs in Dagestan-Chechnya-Ingushetia the best that can usually be done is to assign a date range based on the best associated or proxy evidence available. Often exact or approximate dates are known for the construction of religious buildings. For instance, it is known that the historical Juma mosque of Khushtada was built in 1588. Therefore, the numerous masonry petroglyphs in the walls of that building must date either to the time of its construction or to an unknown prior date. A similar approach can be taken to dating the many petroglyphs in the north wall of the Juma mosque of Gigatli built in 1606-1607 or the mosques of Tlondoda (17th-18th century), Kvanada (16th century) and Tindi (17th century) for which there are approximate dates of construction. In the Gidatli area of the Avarskoe Koisu region, there is a community understanding that Christian churches demolished before the documented period of conversion to Islam in the late 15th century were reused in other buildings in the area's settlements. If this is so, then we have a terminus ante quem for such masonry petroglyphs of a clearly Christian nature.

Very occasionally there is the association of an Arabic inscription with a petroglyphic image, such as occurs in the stone slab with a composition including a solar stag (and flintlock rifles) on a pillar of the cemetery entrance gateway in Tlyakh. Although, unfortunately, we cannot date the inscription, it still provides clear evidence that such imagery was used on masonry petroglyphs after conversion to Islam. The depiction of flintlock firearms indicates a date not earlier than the 16th century when they began to be used in the region.

It seems likely, because of the syncretistic tendencies of local belief systems in the Dagestan highlands of the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone, that the production and placement in stone walls of masonry petroglyphs may have continued for some time after the conversion to Islam of the inhabitants of the region, particularly as purely apotropaic measures. However, as the intensity of the faith and conformity to Islamic strictures grew among the juma'at which became the core of rural community mores, the perceived efficacy of the imagery on masonry petroglyphs would have eventually diminished to a point where they had no meaning or function except as mere curiosities, which is generally the case today.

CONCLUSION

Faith in the Sustaining Power of the Natural World

Like other communities in the Avar-Ando-Dido cultural zone, the inhabitants of the ethno-linguistic enclaves of the tributary valleys and highlands of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu region at some as-yet-undermined time in the past, possibly the early Middle Ages, adopted the practice of creating and incorporating into the walls of houses and mosques masonry petroglyphs displaying imagery whose symbolic content and message were inherited from within a belief system rooted in the far distant past when beliefs expressed verbally or were transformed into permanent visual manifestations in or on stone. These visual expressions evolved into a fundamentally consistent repertoire or pictorial canon comprised of both figurative and non-figurative imagery which was understood across a whole geographical area of shared spiritual and material culture.

Mental and verbal images were transformed into forms which could be shared with others. As numinous objects valued for their ability to reflect and transmit to higher powers desires for assistance, protection, safety, fertility, abundance and survival and as a link with ancestors who installed them, they were treasured objects which must not be disposed of if their original construction was demolished but were incorporated into later buildings. In societies with no system of writing their own indigenous languages, these masonry petroglyph images were a valued form of vernacular visual communication. We are fortunate that in the North Caucasus some of their meaning and purpose has been retrieved by ethnographers, linguists, historians and folklorists by reference to continued beliefs and practices directly related to them.

The communities of the tributary valleys of the upper Andiiskoe Koisu and Avarskoe Koisu in the northwest of the Dagestan Caucasus employed this practice of embedding masonry petroglyphs in the walls of buildings in their settlements. In five of the Andiiskoe Koisu settlements – those of the Chamalal ethnic group (Gigatli, Tsuidi and Verkhnee Gakvari) and of the Tindal ethnic group (Tindi and Echeda) and in two of the Avarskoe Koisu settlements of the Avars (Tlyakh and Khahib), masonry petroglyphs depicting red deer stags with antlers embracing an astral body (the sun) have been found, one with a cross between its embracing antlers. Since the Palaeolithic period, the red deer became a prominent food source and prey of hunters and a revered animal to societies worshipping a natural world to which they assigned a cosmic structure in which it fulfilled an important role.

These masonry petroglyphs represent a unique visual depiction of the stag and deer hunting practices springing from beliefs about the identification between the stag and the sun common in their essence to many cultures across Eurasia from the Mesolithic period onwards to the pre-modern period. This study has investigated how it came about that this particular area of Eurasia became the sole venue for the explicit iconography of the solar stag, or stag that bears the sun between its antlers and the possible relationships between both the iconography and underlying belief and practices with neighbouring regions of the North Caucasus.

While the interpretation of masonry petroglyphs is as daunting as assigning an approximate chronology to them, it is clear that this imagery as well as the non-figurative in the upper Andisskoe Koisu has antecedents in a much earlier prehistoric period to possibly the period of the reestablishment of the human presence in the region's main valley and tributary flanking valleys following the last glaciation. During the transition from mobile hunting and foraging reliant on natural resources to a sedentary agrarian way of life red deer would have retreated to secure forest habitats and away from areas cleared for producing the necessities of existence through agriculture and pasturing. Most scholars addressing the subject are of the view that the use of the symbol of the stag that bears the sun goes back to the period of the appearance of the first human sedentary communities in the red deer's range.

The image of the stag that bears the sun has been found in the petroglyphs of the Portuguese section of the Tagus River in central Iberia, Central Asia and northern Russia, although they are never as clearly depicted as in the Dagestan Caucasus. Taken together they provide indubitable physical expression of shared popular spiritual and belief conceptions across a vast area of Europe and Eurasia.

It appears that in the Avar-Ando-Dido metacultural zone the multi-millennial vernacular development of an indigenous solar deer cult and imagery became conflated with the dominant Christian cult of the miracle of Saint Eustace, which had become entrenched in beliefs relating to hunting in Transcaucasia and the western Caucasus. In essence the Tlyakh imagery of the hunting or chase of the solar stag essentially mirrors that of the St Eustace Tsebelda iconography although in a simpler graphic form. The Verkhnee Gakvari masonry petroglyph of the solar stag with a cross between its embracing antlers is an analog of the image of the deer with the bust of Christ between its antlers on the facade of the mediaeval Church of Nak'pari in Georgia: two deeply-rooted streams of cultural tradition became coalesced into a single remarkable visual image.

The real miracle, perhaps, was that the peoples of these small high mountain agrarian communities, whose lifeways had changed little for many millennia, were able to conceive, articulate and sustain this complex vision in which man was both a responsible steward and observant servant of a majestic and integrated natural world of deep and infinite spiritual dimensions.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Guy Petherbridge conceived the research, led the field work, undertook the literature research, analysed the information gathered and wrote the article. Abubakar M. Ismailov, as the principal co-researcher of the research provided essential field work support, including identification of hitherto unreported masonry petroglyphs in Chamalal and Tindal territories. Alimurad A. Gadzhiev advised on the conduct of the research and organized the search for literature in metropolitan libraries. Murtuzali R. Rabadanov provided planning and field work support. Abdul-Gamid M. Abdulaev provided research and editorial input. Marim M. Murtuzalieva undertook literature research and analysis in Dagestan state libraries. Daitbek M. Saipov provided planning and field work and reviewed the manuscript. Shamkhaldibir M. Isaev provided advice on conduct of fieldwork and supported field activities. Madina G. Daudova reviewed the research and undertook all editorial formatting. All authors are equally responsible for plagiarism, self-plagiarism and other ethical transgressions.

КРИТЕРИИ АВТОРСТВА

Гай Петербридж задумал исследование, руководил полевыми работами, провел исследование литературы, проанализировал собранную информацию и написал статью. Абубакар М. Исмаилов, как главный соавтор исследования, оказал существенную поддержку в проведении полевых работ, включая идентификацию ранее не зарегистрированных каменных петроглифов на территориях Чамалал и Тиндал. Алимурад А. Гаджиев консультировал по вопросам проведения исследования и организовывал поиск литературы в столичных библиотеках. Муртузали Р. Рабаданов обеспечил планирование и поддержку полевых работ. Абдул-Гамид М. Абдулаев провел исследовательскую и редакционную работу. Марим М. Муртузалиева занималась поиском и анализом литературы в государственных библиотеках Дагестана. Даитбек М. Сайпов обеспечил планирование и полевую работу, а также отредактировал рукопись перед подачей в редакцию. Шамхалдибир М. Исаев консультировал проведение полевых работ. Мадина Г. Даудова проанализировала исследование и оформила рукопись перед подачей в редакцию. Все авторы в равной степени несут ответственность при обнаружении плагиата, самоплагиата или других неэтических проблем.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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