

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****HYPOTHESIS ON NAKH LANGUAGE NATURE OF CERTAIN
TOPONYMS OF AKHMET MUNICIPALITY (GEORGIA)**

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(a) Chechen State Pedagogical University, Grozny, 86, Vozdvizhenskaya St., 364029, Russia,
ibragim_habaev@mail.ru**Abstract**

The paper is written on the basis of field materials collected by the author during the first after the collapse of the USSR foreign ethnographic expedition to the Pankisi Gorge of the Republic of Georgia that included the faculty and students of Chechen State Pedagogical University together with the employees of the Scientific and Educational Center for Nakh Studies established in 2015 by the decision of the Academic Council of the University to combine and coordinate the efforts of the units of Chechen State Pedagogical University in conducting scientific research, educational and innovative activities in the field of history, law, philology, ethnography and mythology of the Naks. The choice of Pankisi as the subject of the study was not accidental. The main purpose of the paper is devoted to the assumption that part of the toponyms of the Akhmet municipality of the Kakheta region of the Republic of Georgia has Nakh linguistic components. Our hypothesis is based on the fact that the migration of Chechens from the villages of the Argun Gorge, which began from ancient times and the development of the Pankisi Gorge by immigrants, undoubtedly contributed to the formation of toponymic vocabulary here, reflecting the creative relations that have developed between the Georgian and Chechen peoples.

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1. Introduction

Pankisi Gorge “runs at a distance of 60 km parallel to the Georgian-Russian border and is separated from it by a mountain range. The length of the gorge from Mount Speroza to Bakhtrioni is about 20 kilometers, the width at the beginning is about 100-150 m, and at the end – 34 km” (Khangoshvili, 2017). Bagrationi (1904) wrote: And the Pankisis-heoba gorge is rich in grapes, fruit, its lowlands and mountain parts resemble mountainous places. Of the fish (there are) trout. Forests have wild animals. Besides rice and cotton, there is grain. As can be seen, this region was an ideal place for life in terms of abundance of biological resources. Geographically, it enters Kakheti and is located in the river head of the Alazan River.

The geography of settlement, customs, traditions, culture, religion and life of the Kistins was first highlighted by Albutashvili (1898) in the *Description of the Pankisi Gorge* in 1898. In 1969, Margoshvili defended her thesis on *Pankisi's Kistins*, and in 2006, together with Professor Aliroev I.Yu., published the monograph *The Kistins*, which became significant for Caucasian studies (Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006). The root cause of “the vivid interest in the people living in the gorge – the Kistins, and their traditional life” (Khangoshvili, 2017) at the present stage was the events of two armed conflicts that took place in the Chechen Republic, which apparently led them to publish a monograph “considering two issues – *The Language of the Kistins* and *Historical and Ethnographic Essay on the Kistins*” (Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006). Besides, it contains information about the material culture of the Kistins, but little information about toponymy, ethnonymics and onomastics of the region.

2. Problem Statement

To fill these gaps and collect new field materials about the Kistins, an ethnographic expedition of students, teachers and employees of the Scientific and Educational Center for Nakh Research of CSPU headed by Professor S.A. Dzhambekov went to Pankisi in August 2016.

Preliminary monitoring of publications about this ethnographic group of Chechens showed that toponymy is the most poorly publicized topic in Kistin studies. Thus, we decided to focus on it. The confidence in the success of our trip was based on the fact that among the Chechen diasporas, the Kistins retained the archaisms of the Chechen language as they were when they moved to Georgia.

3. Research Questions

We began our study of the region with an attempt to establish the etymology of the toponym Pankisi. In an interview with the Kistin writer Khaso Khangoshvili, we learned that the first Kistin ethnographer Albutashvili (1898) wrote about this: The name Pankisi comes from the word Pant-isi, i.e. the area where panta (wild pear) grew, the Pantian gorge. Here, in the old days, huge fruit-bearing trees grew, which each year gave a large crop of tasty pears – pantas. Apparently, this name was given by the neighboring Matan and Akhmet residents, since they constantly collected fruits in these places (Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006).

Albutashvili's (1898) version has been an axiom for more than a century, but the introductory word "apparently" used by him left room for controversy and polemics. He goes writing: The names to a particular place were usually given depending on the natural wealth of a particular region or its yield. For example, the area where a lot of hazel-nut was growing was called thiliani, from Georgian word thili, walnut – kakliani – Georgian kakali, etc. This is true, but it is worth adding that the landscape features also affect the formation of toponyms. For example, "in a mountainous area, toponymic names are very strong. Almost every mountain, hill, beam, spring, hillock have their own name, and these names are associated with various events, economic activities of people, religious cults, etc." (Suleymanov, 2012), therefore, the "longevity" of the toponyms of the Pankisi Gorge in our opinion can help to study the history of not only the Kistins, but also the highlanders of Georgia.

In our opinion, the lexical unit *panta*, which gave the name to the gorge, has foreign origin since the pear in Georgian is "mshali" (Kankava, 2001a). Then it turns out that the inhabitants of Matani and Akhmet could not be Georgian-speaking, otherwise how to explain their designation of the gorge with a heterogeneous word, which is based on the tsIova-Tushinsky *panta* – sorrel (wild apple) (Kadagidze & Kadagidze, 1984). Here we find a semantic parallel when the *panta* acquires the same meaning as by Albutashvili, with the only difference being that it means a wild pear, and in our case – a wild apple. The clarity in our misunderstanding was made by the fact that the tsIova-Tushinsky wild pear is called the Nakh word *Іаж* – an apple that sounds like *panta* in their dialect, and not a *khuor* – like the Chechens call it. Therefore, Albutashvili (1898) probably suggested that the name of the gorge comes from the tsIova-Tushinsky word *panta* synchronously meaning wild pear and wild apple, and when adding the Kartvel form of the toponymic suffix *uc* and the inflection of the nominative case and in the form of an ending, gives *Pant-is-i*, as for example, *Tbil-is-i*, *Kuta-is-i*, etc.

According to another version, it is based on the ancient Georgian word "banak-i" – "people; a group of people; army", originally meaning "a gathering place, the army camp". Interestingly, in the Old Nakh language, "banak'i" has a similar meaning where "бІуо" means "army, hordes" (Vagapov, 2011), and "ниекъ" means "way, road" (Vagapov, 2011). When merging, they give the composite "бІуониекъ" – "military road" testifying to the Nakh origin of the toponym Pankisi.

Some researchers argue in favor of the origin of its name from the lexical unit "пана" – "unknown, distant" (Vagapov, 2011) or "пана мохк" – "distant territory, country" (Vagapov & Abumuslimov, 2008) referring to the expression "Адаман лар йоцу Пана махка" – "Human traces where there is no edge of Pana" often found in "illi – dramatized poem songs" (Illi, 1979) of the Chechens. They believe that the marking of land inhabited by the Chechens with the lexical unit "пана" was caused by the lack of direct land communication with Nokhchiichi and its distance from the national cultural, political and economic center of Chechens – Nashakhi. Therefore, initially, it could sound like Panakisi, where "pana" – "distant, spacious", "k" – formant of plural number, "is" – the suffix of which we mentioned above, "i" – ending. Obviously Pankisi, as well as "Pana-Mohk" – the settlement area of "Akkin-Ovkha living in the entire space between Sulak, Terek and the Caspian Sea" (Suleymanov, 1997) in the understanding of the Chechens were fertile and spacious lands for development. This version is confirmed in the above description by Vakhushti. It is curious that in both cases, the same root was used to determine the inhabited territory – "pana" clearly indicating the Chechen nature.

No less attractive for us is the version with now rarely used word of the Chechens пхъануо – an alien, an internally displaced person hiding from blood revenge, a bloodhound (Vagapov, 2011), because part of the migrants falls into this category. The first to indicate this was Chkhenkeli (1937), and before him Makalatia (1933) wrote: Khachidze's ancestor was called Khachi, he escaped from the Kista village of Chlanta, where he killed a man. The son of Khachi Khunchal in the village of Shenako had eight sons... Ochiauri (1977) noted that: Fathers came to Pshavi – Padukhni or Gojitani, Tandilani and Mushtani. According to legend, they are of Kistin origin. Their ancestor in Kisteti, i.e. in Chechnya, killed a man; avoiding blood revenge, he settled in Pshavi and adopted the surname Gogolauri.... The traditions of the Kistins say that individual families from mountainous Chechnya, who fled from blood revenge, found refuge in the Tianet district and lived in the impenetrable forests of Baltagor and Dabalgor for many decades, not being included in the census book (Margoshvili, 1988). Nevertheless, it must be recognized that there were single cases of exodus of the Chechens to Pankisi due to blood revenge in connection with which, in our opinion, the version of the origin of the toponym from the Chechen пхъануо is not quite valid.

It should be noted that the studied versions of the etymology of the toponym Pankisi where we can trace the syncretism of several linguistic parts, which formed the toponym interesting in its phonetics, are not final.

In our opinion, the toponym Pankisi comes from the nationwide word пхъа – “settlement in the mountains” (Vagapov, 2011). Having attached the Chechen postposition “тIе” we get “пхъана тIе”, and when adding the Georgian toponymic suffix ис and ending и – ПхъантIе-ис-и, i.e. “To the settlement”. Interestingly, such an interpretation is surprisingly consonant with both the Albutashvili (1898) and Chkhenkeli versions, because the word “пхъа” in the Chechen language has different meanings.

Purely Chechen substrate can be traced in the name of the village of Koreti. It is based on the Chechen “кхуор” – “wild pear” (Russian-Chechen Dictionary, 2005) and the postposition “тIе”, which corresponds to the preposition “on”, which in general gives “Кхуоре тIе” – “To pears”. Such microtoponymic analogues are very typical for Chechnya. For example, “Хъеха тIе” – “Cave over” (Suleymanov, 2012), “ТIаьшка тIе” – “Bridges to” (Suleymanov, 2012), “IаьмнаштIе” – “To lakes” (Suleymanov, 2012), “НайштIе” – “To washtub” (Suleymanov, 2012), etc.

Similarly, the name of the village of Khorbalo, where “the population who moved from Chechnya live” (ChR Adm, 2010, pp. 1-6.), which received its original name Kisteli. Judging by the field materials near it on the mountain, the settlers found a mountain with a pear orchard and called it Kharbalo from the Chechen “кхуор” – “pear”, and “бало” in Georgian “mountain” (Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006). Later, it was renamed Khorbalo, which is why some researchers mistakenly tend to believe that the toponym comes from the Georgian word “хорбали” – “wheat” (Kankava, 2001b), not considering that only pear mountain is mentioned in the legend of the origin of the village.

The analysis of the toponym Matani shows that the root word in it is “mat” represented in Nakh languages in various meanings: “language, place, bed, flock camp, flock” (Vagapov, 1990). Shavlaeva (2011) believes that “mat” is, first of all, a permanent place, stable, held, entrenched in someone or something” having a purely Chechen basis. A similar opinion is held by most researchers on the basis that the element “mat” should be sought only in Nakh languages. Since the original form of the word “мyотт”

– “place, bed” (Vagapov, 2011) is “матт” – “middle” (Vagapov, 2011), the toponym Matani, which etymology was obscured, could be made up of the Chechen “матт” with the addition of the particle “ни” and the ending “е”, which in general gives “маттание” – “place of residence, medium habitat” indicating its geographical location between the gorge and the district center of Akhmet.

The ethnic component of the Mattanians is evidenced by the materials of Koch and Spencer (1981) of the first half of the 19th century, which say that “on one of the banks of the Alazani River is the village of Khorbalo, where 20 Kistin families live”, “returning from Matani without reaching the Pankisi George (Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006). This fact indirectly confirms the presence of the Nakh aspects in Matani. Partial evidence of this is the information about the rampant pertussis epidemic among the children of the population, which, out of 286 patients in Akhmet, Matani, Omalo and Djokola, claimed 30 children’s lives, where these two villages are mentioned in the list with Kistin villages.

Our interest in the toponym of Akhmet was caused by the Arabic color of its name. The question of its etymology burdened even the Kistin intelligentsia, and the search for an answer to it in the global network turned out to be in vain. But what was our surprise at discovering the transformation of its semantic meaning when pronounced by the Kistins with the emphasis on the first syllable, where “аха” – “to plow” (Vagapov, 2011), “мат” – “place”, and in total “ахамат” – “ploughing place”. Indeed, the territory from Pankisi to Akhmet is a flat territory that is ideal for arable agriculture, therefore, in the case of scientific viability of our version the polemics of Chechen linguists about the foreign language of the word “атарӀне” due to the absence of its antonym, despite the fact that Vagapov (2011) finds it Vainakh “valley, floodplain” will recede into the background.

4. Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of the study was not only to collect toponyms of the Pankisi Gorge, but also to substantiate the hypothesis of the presence of Nakh-speaking components in their composition.

5. Research Methods

In the study of the Nakh language toponymy of the Akhmet municipality of the Republic of Georgia we used geographical, historical and linguistic methods of scientific research.

6. Findings

Thus, our information on certain toponyms of the Akhmet municipality of the Republic of Georgia suggests that they are based on Nakh language components with a transparent etymology. Such a phenomenon has its own scientific explanation in the historical reality that has developed over the centuries between neighboring peoples.

Of course, the toponymic vocabulary formed as a result of the economic development of this territory by the immigrants reflected the constructive relations that developed between the peoples of Georgia and Chechnya.

Undoubtedly, further study of toponymy, ethnography of the Kistin language will enrich the vocabulary of the Chechen language with forgotten words and terms, which will make it possible to open unknown pages of the history of the Chechen people, their ethnography and anthroponymy.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion it should be noted that the bilingualism of Pankisi toponyms consisting of multilingual informative components conforms quite peaceful coexistence of various peoples in a given area, their joint economic activities and mutual cultural enrichment.

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