

**SCTMG 2021**  
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of**  
**Modern Globalism»**

**THE CHECHEN FROM BLACK MOUNTAINS**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to a drawing depicting a Chechen warrior in armour, armed with a shield and a sword. This image appeared in the popular scientific work "My Chechen-Ingushetia" in 1970. Since the 1980s this drawing has been unappellingly identified with the work by Ya. Pototsky's "Journey to the Astrakhan and Caucasian steppes". The work was published in 1829 after the author's visit to Caucasus in 1792-1793. From that moment on, this interpretation became the standard, and for a long time neither the drawing nor the work by Ya. Potocki were not touched by researchers, despite the fact that the image was repeatedly published and interpreted as a typical weapon of the Chechens of the Late Middle Ages (XIII – XVIII centuries). In 2001, I. A. Askhabov in his work "Chechen weapons" compared this image with a very similar drawing of Khevsur belonging to the hand of M. Tilke, illustrating in it the similarity in military affairs and weapons of mountain Chechen societies and Khevsur. At the same time, it became obvious that one of the drawings served as a model for the second. There was a situation in which the image of a Chechen in armor, which had neither the time, nor the place, nor the conditions of creation, nor the author of the drawing. The authors of the article continued their search and found that this drawing was published by Amand von Freyer Schweiger-Lerchenfeld in 1887 after his trip to the Caucasus in 1876.

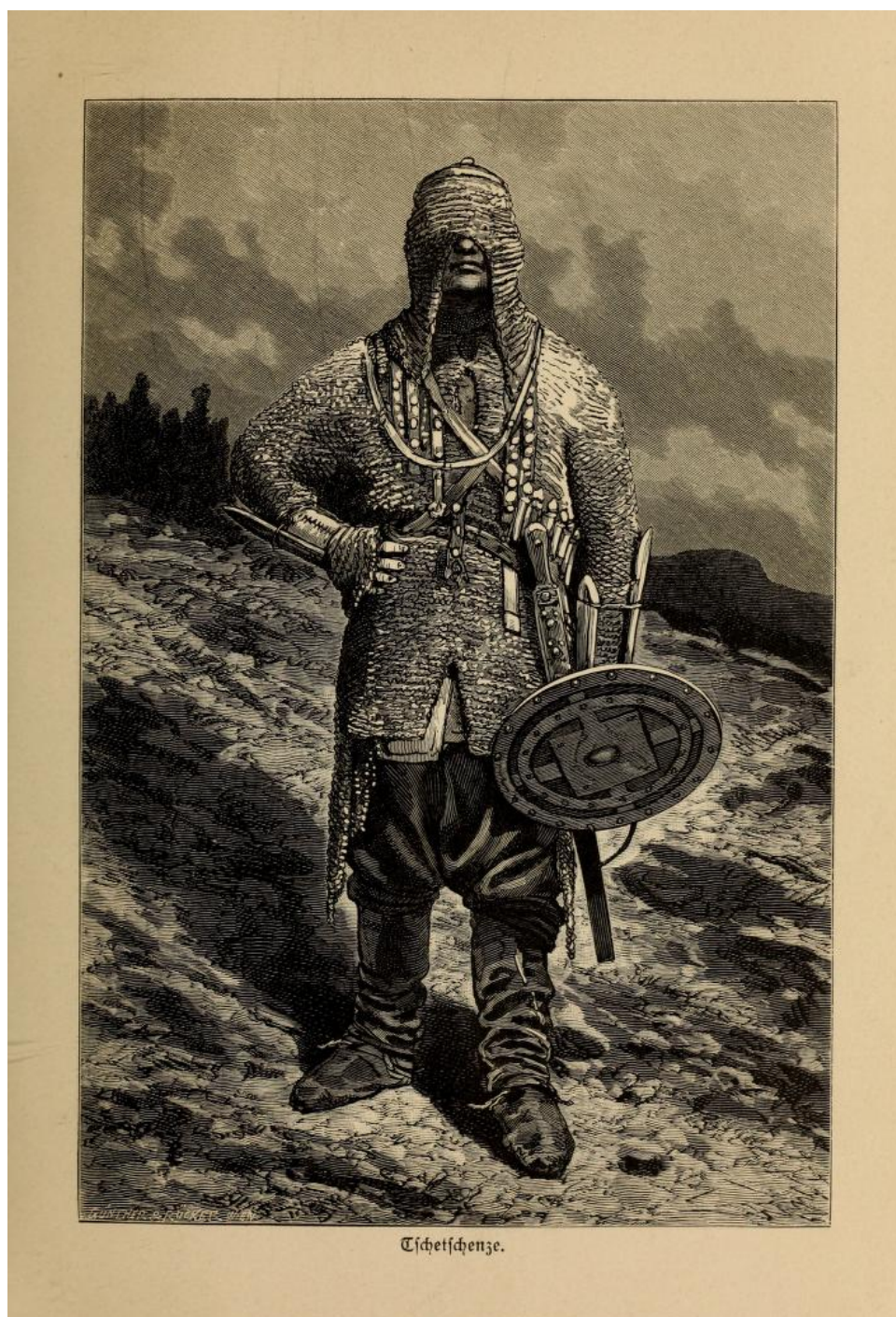
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*Keywords:* Chechen, chain mail, shield and sword, A.F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld

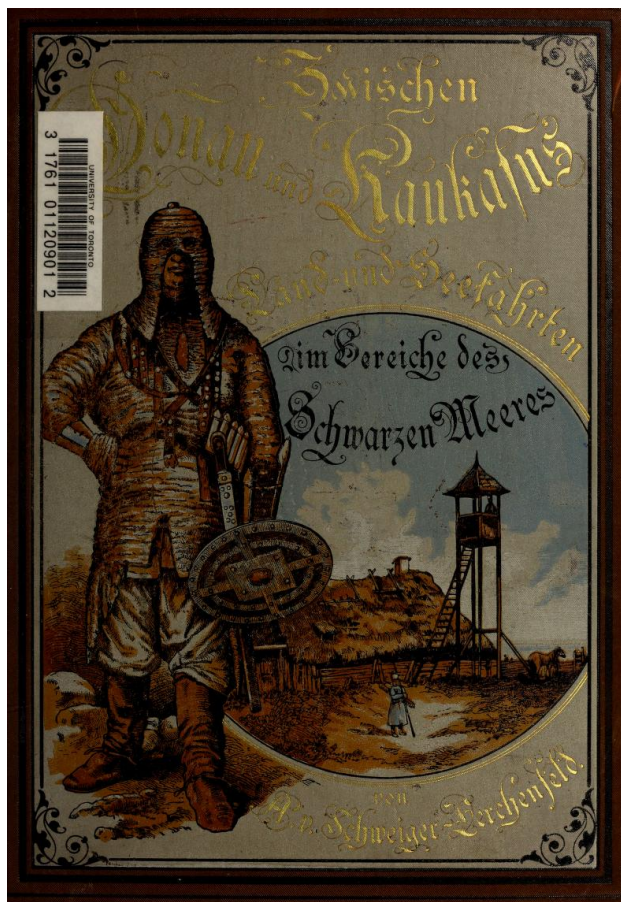


## 1. Introduction

This drawing is well known in the works devoted to the archaeology, history and ethnography of Chechnya, although the name of its author remained unknown until recently. However, Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1887) left (in addition to this drawing) a very colourful description of not only the Chechens but also other peoples of the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia.



**Figure 1.** The Chechen (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887, p. 348).



**Figure 2.** The Chechen (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887)



**Figure 3.** Khevsur (Tilke, 2007)

## 2. Problem Statement

In 1970, in the popular scientific work "My Chechen-Ingushetia", in the section devoted to the historical past of the region, a drawing of a warrior in armour (chain mail, misurka, elbow guards), armed with a shield and a sword was published. The drawing was given without any reference to its author and the work where it was published. Naturally, all the other information remained unknown: where and when it was created, under what conditions.

In 1981, Chakhkiev, who is engaged in military affairs and armament of the Vainakhs of the Late Middle Ages, in a thesis and very obscure form (according to the reference of D. Yu. Chakhkiev himself in his 1988 publication) attributed the drawing to the work by Ya. Potocki (as cited in Chakhkiev, 1981, p. 43; Chakhkiev, 1988, p. 81).

Already clearly and repeatedly, this drawing was associated with the journey of Ya. Potocki, who visited the Caucasus in 1792-1793, in the thesis of Djabrail Yuryevich protected in 1986 (and only recently, in 2019 is published as a monograph) (Chakhkiev, 1986, 2019).

In 1988, Chakhkiev, once again included a picture of a Chechen man in armour, to the work of Ya. Potocki in his article "The Ringed Armour of the Late Medieval Vainakh Warriors", which was essentially a section of his dissertation.

It is interesting to note that neither in any of the articles nor in the dissertation there are not only references to a specific page and illustration of the "original", but even in the bibliographic list of references there is no work of the Ya. Potocki, which clearly indicates that the author was not familiar with the original (Chakhkiev, 1986, 1988).

However, Vinogradov (1988), referring to the work of D. Y. Chakhkieva, attributed the image to Chechen in the armor Ya. Potocki.

At the same time in the article by D. Yu. Chakhkiev (popular science), published in 1991, the figure of the warrior was given without any mention of Ya. Potocki (Chakhkiev, 1991, Fig. 2). However, this, unfortunately, did not mean that the author was able to get acquainted with the original of the "primary source" indicated by him.

If D. J. Chakhkiev at the time got acquainted with the work of Potocki (1829) and Sosnina (2003), he would have found that the latter not only did not have the above image, but also its description. Moreover, the style of illustrations in the work of Potocki (1829) – coloured images made with paints (or coloured engravings), sharply contrast with the technique of black-and-white lithography, which is used in the image of a warrior in armour (Sosnina, 2003). If we turn to the text of the work, first of all in the translation by Sosnina (2003), we will find that in Ya. Pototsky had very few opportunities to meet the Chechen warrior from the "mountain" societies (as his weapons and costume colourfully attest). Since the famous traveller saw the Chechen mountains mainly from the left bank of the Terek River. Only twice he crossed to the right bank, when visiting the villages of Braguny and Ali-Yurt (Sosnina, 2003).

Nevertheless, the consequence of this mistake was that this set of weapons was perceived as a reference for the Chechens of the XVIII century, which was reflected in various works on the history of Chechnya (Akhmadov, 2002).

In 2001, another problem related to this image was revealed, which was a direct consequence of the previous one. Askhabov (2001) in his work "Chechen weapons" compared this image to a very similar

drawing of Khevsur belonging to M. Tilke, a well-known artist, who used to illustrate the similarity in military affairs and the weapons of mountain Chechen societies and Khevsur. At the same time, it became obvious that one of the drawings served as a model for the second. If the drawing of the Chechen really would have been made in 1792-1793 and Khevsur - in 1911, the former would have served as the basis for the latter.

However, in the current situation, everything looks in the opposite way. The image of a Chechen in armour, which has neither the time, nor the place, nor the conditions of creation, nor the author, looks like an obvious fake.

Or at least it looks like the unfair use of the traditional Khevsur costume as a Chechen one, with a simple replacement of the signature under the drawing.

Moreover, such a precedent is known. Thus, in Langkabel's (1892) work "Man and his races", as an illustration for the section "Chechens", there is a drawing with a similar signature, "khevsur" in chain mail, misurka, elbow pads, with a shield, rifle, saber and dagger, which is a redraw from a photo taken for the monumental work "Earth and People" by the famous geographer Ruclu (1881).

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the article is a drawing of a warrior in chain mail armour, a misurka, elbow guards with a shield and a sword, who was initially identified as a Chechen. At the same time, the image is studied as a fact of fixing the ethnographic costume of the Chechens, while an attempt is made to establish this unknown researcher in historical science in order to further identify facts on the history, archaeology and ethnography of Chechnya.

Or, on the contrary, if the fact of plagiarism in the use of the image is revealed, it is necessary stop the presence of graphic evidence of the use of this complex of protective weapons in Chechnya at the time under study.

At the same time, the absence of graphic evidence does not mean the absence of ethnographic information and archaeological materials indicating the existence of such a complex of defensive and offensive weapons among the Chechens.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the work is to prove that the drawing of the Chechen in armour was made "from a living nature", and is not a redraw from earlier drawings and photographs. The image shows an unknown fact in the historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and source literature devoted to Chechnya, the fact that the researcher who published this drawing visited it. Based on this image and other ethnographic information and materials, it is argued that both individual elements of the defensive and offensive weapons of the soldiers and the entire complex as a whole are "autochthonous", and not borrowed. It is suggested that the image of the Chechen became the basis for the drawing of Khevsur, made by M. Tilke.

## 5. Research Methods

During the study of written sources, source-based methods were used primarily. When working with the drawing, art history methods were used. The method of topology series, with a cast of archaeological and ethnographic materials was used.

## 6. Findings

The source of the studied drawing is a monumental work (nearly 800 P.) Amanda Freiher von Schweiger-Maximilian "Between the Danube and the Caucasus", published in 1887 in German which included the information about people, their history, traditions and lifestyle, inhabiting a vast territory which he visited during his travels (Schweiger & Lerchenfeld, 1887).

Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1887) was a former officer of the Austrian army, traveller and journalist, writer, who visited southern Russia and the Caucasus in 1876.

In his work he devoted only 12 of 790 pages to Chechnya and the Chechens and only one to drawing of the Chechen in armour (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887, pp. 342-354). The most interesting thing is that this drawing by the author is made in two versions, one of which is placed on the cover of the entire edition (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887, pp. 342-354).

The content of the section devoted to Chechnya and the Chechens is also important. It contains extremely interesting ethnographic observations, which, unfortunately, have so far fallen out of the field of view of researchers.

Without giving in detail all the contents of the section, we note (this topic is another work) that most of it is devoted to a woman, her place and fate, traditions and rituals through which she passes – a wedding, marriage, her place in society as a widow.

Such an interest in the place and role of women in the life of Chechens is not accidental. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1998) collected this data scrupulously, from all the peoples with whom he met during his travels. In the end, it turned into one of a rather large number of his works, published in 1885, but the only one translated into Russian and therefore well – known in Russian ethnography- "Woman, her life, customs and social status among all the peoples of the globe".

Returning to our drawing, we note that as a former officer who also took part in the Austro-Italian war of 1866, Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1887) paid great attention to the weapons, military skills and militancy (despite the fact that the "last feature" was strongly limited by the framework of laws that very significantly cooled the military ardor) of all those peoples with whom he was able to get acquainted (pp. 342-354).

Probably saved militancy, coupled with the fact that "the people of Chechnya, are still what they were for centuries" that the author is seeking to "isolate the image of modernity from the material of the shells of many centuries, sometimes millennia – to show the reader what it was before and how it turned out all that exists" were the factors that made this drawing title (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887, p. 347).

Schweiger- Lerchenfeld (1887) writes the following:

The people of Chechnya are still what they have been for centuries. Only in their equipment, they made changes, replacing the bow and arrows with a fire rifle. The costume of the Chechens, which is

almost always complemented by a luxurious beard, consists of a common and familiar for the Caucasus: a white or gray chekmen (upper dress) the same as "Beshmet" or "Arhaluk", a different colour, wide Shalvars (trousers), shoes or boots and a "Papakha", a high sheepskin hat. In the Black Mountains, there is still a ringed armour and a pointed helmet. A small fist shield, armgards, dagger, and complete the equipment. A warrior of this type quite gives the impression of a crusader from the deep Middle Ages. Picturesque costume, however, is used less and less often and will disappear from everyday life in the near or slightly more distant future. By the way, as a historical relic, it is preserved by the Imperial Guards.

A little further, Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1887) gives a drawing of a Chechen whose image he described (Fig. 1). Indeed, for the mid-70s of the XIX century the costume and weapons of a warrior from the Black Mountains (the name of a wide band of mountains covered with forest between the Chechen plain and the Main Caucasian Ridge, on the crest of which snow lies all year round) looks quite archaic: ringed armour with long sleeves, ringed loincloths – hanging from under armour on the sides, in the form of two triangular fragments ringed cloth reaching to the knees, misurka with wing collared Aventail (which is why it closes the eyes of a warrior, while leaving the vulnerable mouth and throat), elbow gards (different type), small shield, medium length sword with a simple handle with no crosshair, waist belt straps over the shoulders (which are due to the presence of hanging straps to look like a belt), one of which is the weight of the cartridge.

Interestingly, the description of the warrior is somewhat different from the drawing itself, from which we can conclude that the drawing is original in itself and represents a specific person, while the description contains a generalized image of the Chechen.

In favour of the version that the image reproduces a real person who appeared before the artist in this image, there are several unique features in the weapons and equipment of the warrior, which can not be a figment of the artist's imagination.

So first of all, the eye catches misure, the one which has no slits for the eyes, this could be explained by the desire of the owner to protect the eyes, provided that is not very dense weave canvas and aventails provides sufficient visibility. However, all this makes no sense when we consider that the cut of the chain mail leaves open the ends of the nose, mouth and chin. But nevertheless, we know enough drawings (a different reconstruction, whose accuracy will always be questioned) soldiers wearing misuru where there is such a use of it would overlap eyes chainmail fabric and unprotected lower part of the face.

It can be assumed that the misyurka is used with a high crown of the cylindrical part of the barmitsa, intended for wearing with high headdresses made of both soft materials and hard (brass) popular with the Ottomans and Mamelukes in the XVI-XIX centuries. But in this case, the aventail of misurk should have a broad rectangular cutout in the bottom part for the face. But the drawing clearly shows a triangular cutout, not intended for such use.

It seems that this helmet was not used by its owner, but was worn specifically-on the occasion of posing for A. F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (his artist or photographer). The whole way of the warrior is a certain, if not a "complete reconstruction", at least as an example of how armed ancestors Chechen fighters which the author "From the Danube to the Caucasus" seen in the Chechen mountains in 1876, At least in many sources in the Caucasian war is never mentioned use Chechens armour and shield.

This detail-the lack of slits for the eyes is probably a mistake of the lithographer who cuts out wooden forms, as the easiest way to mass print illustrations for the work of A. F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld. The drawing of the same warrior depicted on the cover of the book and which is apparently an original sketch from nature differs from the above just by the presence of large slits for the eyes in the chain mail barmitsa (Fig. 2). By the way, the presence of eye slits is recorded in the archaeological materials of the Keli burial ground of Mountainous Ingushetia on the possibly earliest (XIV century) sample of misyurka from the Caucasus (Muzhukhoev et al., 2017).

In favour of the version about the "great-grandfather's chain mail", the very long sleeves of the latter, and in general the large size of the latter, give the impression that the armour was intended for a larger person. On the other hand, this is not surprising given that the armour used was in stock, most often captured as a trophy, and much less often purchased (Chakhkiev, 1988, p. 78).

This is confirmed by the presence of two different elbow guards – on the right hand is a three-segment elbow guard (the number of small segments can be more) and on the left-an elbow guard made of two large parts (the connection point of which is hidden behind the shield). The right elbow is noticeably shorter than the left one. This situation with the presence of two different types, shapes and sizes of elbow guards (most likely captured in battle) in one warrior has been repeatedly recorded among archaeological materials (Narozhny & Chakhkiev, 2003).

Another detail of the protective armour, it is - chainmail loincloths of triangular shape, attached to the belt (under the chain mail), and hanging to the knees. Usually the chainmail cloth was tied to the thigh with laces; this is clearly seen in the photographs of khevsur (Radde, 1878, p.2). This feature is, in our opinion, evidence that this part of the armour was worn by the warrior "for the photo". And he did not want, and most likely could not (due to the loss of the "garters") fix them on his legs.

The shield, (with a handle for a fist grip) consisting of two circles of iron strips located one in the other, riveted to the base and a square sheet with a round convex umbon in the centre, belongs to the most common type of shields (primarily among the Khevsurs), which existed at least since the XVII century. Earlier types of shields - completely wooden and large wooden ones with a metal band around the edge and a central umbon reinforced with metal bands arranged cross-on-cross - are well known in the archaeological sites of Ingushetia since the XIII century (Chakhkiev, 2019).

However the most interesting element in the weapons of the warrior from the Black Mountains is the sword. The warrior does not have either a saber or a dagger, which are indicated by Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1887) as conventional weapons. Similarly, nothing is said about the shashka.

It is obvious that the weapon has a straight blade and a simple (obviously wooden) dagger handle (without a dedicated pommel), fastened with two rivets and located on the central axis of the blade, without tilting towards the blade. The fact that the blade is double-edged can be assumed from the opposite, i.e. - in the case of one-sided sharpening (like a broadsword), the handle would have a profile characteristic of the handle of shashka. Judging by the end and the proportion between the length and width of the scabbard, the blade has a rounded tip, not intended for piercing hits.

A pair of similar swords is recorded among the archaeological materials discovered in Chechnya and dating back to the XVI-XVII centuries (Chakhkiev, 2019).



The sword hanging on the waist, front, side, or dagger way (on the scabbard attached metal clip with one loop), any way known in the swords-"Dashnak" known in khevsurian Ethnography (with leather loop) (Kiziria, 2015). Khevsur has preserved the name for a medium-bladed weapon (longer than a dagger and shorter than a broadsword) - the so-called "dashna" made from the fragments of long-bladed weapons – sabers, shashaka, broadswords (Kiziria, 2015). According to the method of hanging and the straight handle of the dagger type, they coincide with the sword of the Chechen warrior. Dashna, as well as our sword, looks the most archaic, which is not surprising, taking into account the conservatism of the Khevsuri and Gornochechen societies.

Turning to the issue of ethnic attribution, we note that the Khevsur used "scaly" (typeset) men's belts and belt belts covered along the entire length with overlapping plaques (the entire width of the leather base) made of metal (most often white – primarily silver). An example of such a belt-sling is clearly visible in the drawing of Khevsur (Fig. 3) and in the photos of Khevsur (Tilke, 2007).

The belts of our warrior, as well as the hilt of the sword and its scabbard, are distinguished by the simplicity of finishing, which once again indicates its Chechen attribution.

In the end would like to return to the issue identified in the beginning of the article, that the creation of the figure of the khevsur armor max Tilke for the sample was taken picture of a Chechen from the work of Amanda Freier von Schweiger-Maximilian as evidenced by not only the fact that the last picture was published on 24 years before, but the fact that there are no pictures or graphics (in addition to the two variants of the image of the Chechen) that M. Tilke could use as a basis for his work.

Since for other works by Tilke (2007) on the costumes of the peoples of the Caucasus and, above all, Georgia, photographs are known that served as the basis for the drawings created by him. As an example, we can cite a drawing of two seated Khevsurs, not wearing armour and helmets, but armed with bladed weapons, a shield, a pistol, and dressed in their bright and recognizable uniforms (Tilke, 2007). At least two photographs served as the basis for this drawing.

For the works of Tilke (2007), it is not difficult to identify the photos that served as samples, with the exception of the drawing of Khevsur in armour (the primary source for which was certainly the drawing of a Chechen from the work of A. F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld), despite the fact that many photos and drawings depicting Khevsur were already known by 1910-1911. This is due to the fact that the ethnographic expedition undertaken by Tilke (2007) to sketch costumes from nature did not give the desired result. As a result, a compromise decision was made that photographs of costumes and objects would be taken, some of which would be purchased to replenish the ethnographic collection of the Tiflis Museum.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that we solved the following problems:

We found the original source of the study drawing, which allowed us to find out the name of its author, Amanda Freier von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, who visited Chechnya in 1876 and left interesting ethnographic observations in the work "Between the Danube and the Caucasus" published in 1887.

In addition to long-known painting executed in the technique of engraving, we found an initial drawing, put on the cover of the edition, which gave us the reason that mail Aventail eyes of a soldier was

a mistake of the engraver, as the drawings on the cover of the book in the Aventail helmet had a large slit for the eyes.

An equally important result of our work is that we identified evidence (primarily chronologic) that the drawing of Khevsur in armour, made by Max Tilke, was reproduced on the basis of the drawing of the Chechen from the work of A. F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld.

Thus, we can say that the drawing by A. F. Schweiger-Lerchenfeld recorded a real (confirmed by archaeological materials and information) complex of offensive and defensive weapons of the Chechens of the XVI-XVIII centuries (preserved as a relic) shown to the curious guest by the hospitable hosts in a version of a certain "reconstruction".

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