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**ON HISTORY OF CULTURAL INTERACTION BETWEEN
PEOPLES OF EASTERN BLACK SEA REGION**

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Abstract

The article discusses the important issues of the history of the ancient population of the Caucasus and the Middle East. It highlights the question of historical and cultural content of the names taken from the written sources created by peoples lived in this region including the following: the Kaskians, the Achaeans, the Pelasgians, the Geniokhs, the Abeshla, the Zikhs, and others. The research unveils the internal connection of these ethnonyms with each other, as well as with other ancient, medieval and modern ethnic terms of the Caucasus and adjacent territories. It suggests the possibility of the broad meaning of the ethnonym Geniokhs, resulted from the connections of this ethnos with the ancient tribes of the Abkhaz-Agyei population of the North-Eastern Anatolia, the Pre-Caucasian region and the Eastern Black Sea region. The close relations between these areas developed in the ancient times, promoting the exchange of achievements of material and spiritual culture, the formation of ethno-contact zones and migration. This created and constantly enriched the experience of the organization of existential space that was useful and relevant for the entire Eurasian continent, including the adaptation to the natural and social environment. Therefore, the study of their cultural interaction, ethnonyms, and interethnic integration has a great relevance in order to understand the ethnic situation in the region, to provide the best adaptation to the processes of globalization, to establish a connection of times without distortion or excessive and painful competition of images of the past.

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Keywords: The Black Sea region, ethnonyms, the Kaskians, the Pelasgians, the Geniokhs, the Zikhs.



1. Introduction

A number of scientific works on the Caucasian regional studies suggest the hypothesis of the Khatt-ancient Abkhazo-Adygian ethno-cultural unity, manifested in the phenomenon known as Maikop culture. This hypothesis usually comes together with the assumption about a cut-off of these close relations between the Middle East and North Caucasus after the extinction of the Maikop New Freedom culture and the appearance of Khatt-Hittite states (Kerefov, 2006). However, the transformation of Maikop culture and the displacement of Khatt and Hittite ethnonyms from the historical arena do not mean the disappearance of the respective ethnic groups. The written sources mention their descendants and related peoples, and it gives the opportunity to reconstruct in more or less reliable way the ethnic history of several regions of the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the South-Eastern Europe.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of this study is due to the urgency of the issues of ethnic and cultural history of the ancient population of the Caucasus and the Middle East for modern domestic and foreign Caucasian studies. The relevance also results from the multiplicity and inconsistency of approaches of scientists to the consideration of the internal content of ancient ethnonyms and toponyms associated with them, the lack of reliable (tested in practice) methods of their interpretation and analysis.

3. Research Questions

Ancient Near East and Ancient Greek written artefacts preserved the references to the ancient peoples of the Eastern Black Sea Region. Although the data of these sources are sometimes fragmentary and contradictory, some ethnonyms, found in them, after their comprehensive analysis and comparison, can serve as the basis for the reconstruction of the ethnic history of the ancient peoples of the Caucasus, in particular the Abkhazians and the Adygs.

Ethno-cultural interpretations of the ethnonyms of the ancient population of the North Caucasus is complex (Novichikhin, 2009a; Novichikhin, 2009b), and the establishment of the relations and correspondences with the South Caucasus and the Middle East is to shed light on this issue.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to consider a set of questions about the historical and cultural content of the names known in written sources of the Middle East peoples, i.e., the Kaskians, the Achaeans, the Pelasgians, the Geniokhs, the Abeshla, the Zikhs, and others

5. Research Methods

The solution of the scientific problem determined in the study is possible based on a comprehensive analysis of written, cartographic and archaeological sources. The information obtained in the consideration of written sources and ancient maps supplemented, refined and adjusted to the data of modern archaeology.

The methodological basis of the study of ancient ethnonyms of the peoples of the Caucasus and the Middle East are the principles of historicism, objectivity, as well as a systematic approach to the analysis

of the totality of information and the establishment of their relationships. The objectives of the study determine the method of source processing. The article uses the methods of comparative historical analysis, generalization, verification and correlation of the results.

6. Findings

The research usually presents the correlation of the Kasugami and the Kasogs of the Caucasus with the people named the Kaskians. It is a historical fact that up to the X-IX centuries BC, the Kaskian tribes occupied the North-eastern part of Anatolia between the upper Euphrates and the Galis River. The onomastic elements of this area, reflected in Hittite cuneiform texts, contain the features that characterize the Khatt language, which, according to researchers, represents the signs of kinship of the Kaskian and the Khatt languages.

The texts in question also referred to the Kaskians as the Kassites. According to this version, the Kassites formed a nation originated from the Kaskian (kashkai) tribes in Zagros. At the same time, the fixation of toponyms with the component kaš in the areas of ancient and modern Armenia bordering to the country of the Kaskians is the evidence of the residence of the Kaskians and their descendants in this territory.

The main argument to support the relationship between the Kaskians and the Kassites is the commonality of the names of these tribes and the probability of contacts in the upper reaches of the Euphrates River and the middle reaches of the Tigris. We can observe that the stem kas / kaš in each of these names goes back to the Indian kas – "to sparkle, to shine", kasih - "sun, light, shine" and also correlates with the name of the main deity of the Kassites named Kashshu. As for the Khatts, they used this name to call the God of the Moon, albeit with a slightly different pronunciation of the second part of the name – Kasku. The name of the Moon God, as we see, is almost identical with the ethnic name the Kaskians. This suggests the existence of the moon cult in the Kaskian tribal union and "therefore," as G. G. Giorgadze writes, – it is admissible that the name used in Hittite sources means the people worshipping the moon".

On the other hand, the fact is that the cult of the sun and the moon had clear evidence among both the Abkhazians, and the Circassians. Among the relics of this cult, there was the formula used by the Circassian princes (descendants of the Radiant Inal-Inal nehu) to justify their high, unearthly origin: De dyhya-mazam dykeheaklash, dykureishi lepkesh – "We come from the sun and the moon, from the clan of Quraysh". It is certainly not the fancy of the Adyghe princes and priests, who wanted, according to one supposition, to join the tribe of Quraysh. It is a verbal display originated from the Khatt-Hittite traditions to present the title of Inalid, expressing their divine right to control the people of Circassia. In fact, the same "sun-moon" justification has the divine title and status of the Hittite kings found on the well-known reliefs of Central Anatolia, that has an image of the sun disk with the moon placed in the centre of the widely spread wings of a mighty bird, most likely an eagle.

Back in 1914 E. Mayer gave the specific examples showing that, formed in ancient Egypt, this tradition was constantly evolving, receiving a specific reflection in the Hittite, Babylonian, and then in the Assyrian and Persian titles of kings and rulers. In particular, the presence of two snakes at the base of the solar disk becomes less obvious over time. Although, when used as independent symbols of internal

magnetic forces of the God-ruler, they preserved their features in almost all subsequent options in the form of specific lines or curls with tails that mimic the tail of the mighty birds.

The Hittites in addition to the mentioned above practiced to image of the king under the soaring image of the solar disk. It was an innovation, and then it continued to use the titles of the Assyrian king (god) with a bow and the Persian sun god Ahuramazda with the wreath for the same purposes. It proves that Assur and Ahuramazda literally originated from or come out of the flying solar disk and found themselves in the centre of a complex composition, personifying the powers of nature, and, with their own eyes and hands, replacing the crushing power of God, his all-seeing eye.

It is easy to notice, in such a way, that the formula of the Circassian princes "we are of solar-lunar origin, from the Quraysh family" almost entirely reflects the evolution of the title of Egyptian and pre-Asian kings. The first part of the title of Inalids expresses their divine, solar-lunar origin or "rising up", and the second part (through the reference to the Quraysh, to the East) is the starting point of the tradition of this kind of symbolism. Hence the main (basic) family sign (coat of arms) of Circassian princes, literally repeating its original – Egyptian basis with a solar disk at the top and two snakes at the bottom. On the basis of elements of this sign, namely at the expense of various combinations of a solar disk and snakes the vast majority of Circassian seals (tamgs) is constructed, as it is seen at their close examination.

It remains to note that it is no coincidence that the images of the crescent, four stars and two snakes are included in the coat of arms of the family of princes of Cherkassy (Herbalist, 2003). Without any doubt, these are symbols that go back to the Middle East tradition, to the verbal representation of the divine, "sun-moon" origin of the Inalids and their power over the people.

The facts of this kind contribute to the conception of the relations between the Caucasus and the East. In particular, they significantly complement the studies that revealed features of striking structural similarity of the Abkhaz-Adyghe languages with Khatt (Tikhonova, 2013; Tikhonova, 2017a; Tikhonova, 2017b), as well as the conclusions according to which the bearers of the Maikop culture were one of the branches of the Khatt-Kaskian community that spoke the language of the Abkhaz-Adyghe group (Klein, 2007).

In the collection with many other similar data, they show that the cultural and linguistic affinity of the Abkhazians and the Adygs with the peoples of Front Asia is refracted through their proximity and kinship with the Kaskians, Kassites, through the former had very close contacts with the Hittites and other peoples of the East. Among this evidence, there are the traces of the root morpheme kas/kas in ancient and medieval names of the Circassians (kas, gašk, saisa, kasak, kaškon, kasag, kasgon, etc.), and in extant ethnonym, Cherkas/Circassian. It cannot be a mere coincidence that there is a large number of names and surnames with the element of khatt, especially since many of them are designed to highlight, to increase the status of their bearers, e.g.: Khatlyzh– "good khatt", Khatlygu– "heart of khatt", Khatlykue– "son of khatt", Khetzhykue– "son of glorious khatt", etc. One more persuasive evidence of this idea is in a very common Circassian instruction, which is usually given by older men to the younger: Khatt zhegyle– "Be so, that you could be called "khatt". It becomes clear in this regard, with what respect the ancient inhabitants of the Caucasus treated the Khatts and the Hittites that replaced them.

With the Khatt-Hittite era of the history of the Adygs, the legends kept in folklore the memories of Anatolia as a blessed land, the Golden valley, revered as a deity. It is in the traditional beginning of the Adyghe hymns, prayers, toast, e.g:

*Our God, Great God,
Anadola, Golden valley!
Ue di Tkhye, Tkeshue,
Anehole, dychshe kueladzhe!*

In general thinking, Anatolia appears in the language and folklore of the Adygs as a well-known region in which they live, where people's dreams of happiness come true. Comparing these reminiscences with the suggestions that the residents of the city of Khattusa, the capital of the Khatts, could be the representatives of the Abkhaz-Adyghe, Armenian, Kartvelian tribes, it is not likely that the interaction of the peoples of Western Asia and the Caucasus proceeded mechanically in the form of a unilateral migration from the South to the North. This migration could be mutual. Therefore, it is quite possible that the Western and Northern Caucasus were the centres and not the periphery of the Khatto-Abkhazian-Adyghe ancient unity, a kind of metropolis of ancient languages and cultures of the Front Asia, and even India, where in the upper Indus on the southern slope of the Hindu Kush the Burushski lived who were related to the Caucasians (Caspian) in the language.

The place of geniuses in the history of Abkhazian-Adyghe tribes should also be considered in the broad context of the interaction between the peoples of the Caucasus and Front Asia. There is a good reason to believe that thanks to the Geniokhs the cultural and linguistic links between the Southern Khatt-Kaskian part of the descendants of the Maikop-Anatolian tribes and its Northern Kimera-Shindo-Meot part were maintained. This question predisposes, among other things, the famous inscription of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I (1115-1077 BC), where the synonym name *kaška* uses the term *abešla*, *Abeshla*. In the opinion of Sh.D. Inal-Ipa, G.A. Melikishvili, I. M. Dyakonov and other scientists, the ethnonym *Abeshla* corresponds with the name of one of Geniokh tribes in the centre of the Eastern Black Sea region. To be more specific, they are the following: with the Apsiles of ancient sources, the name of which is consonant with the self-nomination of modern Abkhazians – *Apsua*. In addition, there is the possibility of mapping the country *Pokhuva* in the annals of the Hittite king Mursili II (second half of XIV century BC) with the Ubykhs self-nomination – *Pehis/Pehkis*.

Here comes one of the main theses of this article. Taking into account the above and a number of other similar data, it should be concluded that a large number of ancient peoples of the Eastern Black Sea region are being widely integrated. Not only the Apsiles and the Brokhis (Ubykhs), but also all other related the Geniokh and relative tribes (*Zygs*, *Achaeans*, *Kerkets*, *Sanigs*, *Abasi*, etc.) including *Sinds* were a part of Khatt-Kaskian population of Asia Minor and the Caucasus. First of all, this applies to the *Achaeans*, who went back, perhaps, to the inhabitants of the country of *Ahiya*, *Ahiyava* in Asia Minor, located in the XII century BC somewhere in the mountains of Cilicia. Similarly, it is possible to interpret the participation of the *Pelagians* in the formation of the peoples of the Western Caucasus and Greece, based on the famous saying of Dionysius Periegetes that the *Zikhs* and *Geniokhs* are children of the *Pelagian land*". It can be assumed that the "*Pelagian land*" is a vast area along the southern coast of the Black sea, where the *Kaskians* lived since ancient times.

In the middle of the second Millennium BC, near the Kaskian territory, the Urums also known as the Pals/Palays lived, and they related to the Hittites Indo-European people. The Hittite and Assyrian sources told that the Urumeiy and Palay soldiers usually accompanied the Kaskians in their campaigns against the Hittites and other southern neighbours. Apparently, not only the Palays, but also the Urumeiy became the part the Kaskian tribal union.

The union of Kaskians with the Palays was especially strong as it was mentioned above. In all probability, in the course of long-term contacts and unification of these two peoples, the Pelasgian people were formed as a result. Pelasgian ethnonym, as we understand it, combines two terms: the Palays and the Kaskians. A symbiosis of two ethnic names is in this case reflects the symbiosis of the two different in language tribes (the Kaskians and the Palays). In short, after the unification with the Palays, the Kaskians have become known under the name of Pelasgians.

It becomes easier to reveal the mechanism of the Greek ἡψίοχοί meaning "chariots." Apparently, the idea of the Pelasgians as a nation, have influenced the formation of Greek and of some Caucasian tribes, formed after the fall of the Hittite Empire. In the VI-V centuries BC, the ethnogenetic myths and legends underlying these ideas were in demand in connection with the colonization of the Eastern Black Sea region. But they were actualized very specifically. The ancient name and self-nomination of the local tribes with the stem gashk/iganeih was replaced by a consonant with his name ἡψίοχοί – "chariots" with the emphasis on the origin of these tribes from the Greek settlers led by chariots of the Dioscours – Crekas and Amfistrat. This is quite consistent with the spirit of the heroic time, the reverence with which the ancient Greeks belonged to the distant wanderings and wars, to their strength, skills and courage of sailors and horsemen who ruled the warships and chariots.

On the other hand, the widespread use of chariots in the Caucasus in the Cimmerian era is of great interest. In VIII-VII centuries BC, the local residents of Kabardino-Pyatigorsk and Zakubanye used chariots not only in military campaigns and battles, but probably in funeral ceremonies, as well as for transportation of household goods and for other purposes (for example, in competitions). The spread of the chariot is typical of the Kamennomostsky-Berezovsky (West Kabansky) and Protomeotsky population, and this fact not only confirms the close relationship of these ethnic groups but also contributes to their association with the ancestors of the Circassians (Fomenko, 2015) and to their cultural and ethnic ties with ancient Transcaucasian peoples in particular with the Geniokhs.

This obviously causes the necessity to present the location of the Geniokhs in the history of the Caucasus differently and more clearly. It is especially important to note that the name of this nation was known long before the reports of ancient historians and writers. Its first mention in the form iganiehi was found in the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions dating back to the VIII century BC in the inscriptions of king Argishti I and the chronicle of his son Sarduri II about the war waged by the Urartu people and the kings of Colchis (Piotrovsky, 2011).

Along with the countries of Colchis (Kulcha), diauh/taoh (Diauha), these inscriptions mentioned the most rich and populous country of the Iganiehs – Igani, having 35 palaces (fortifications) and 200 settlements. It is noted that Sardur defeated the king of the Iganiehs, Kapuri, ravaged their country, turned the people into slaves and brought them into the country of the Urartu people near the lake of Van.

In 1946, P. N. Ushakov, exploring the chronicle of the wars, associated the ethnic name of *iganiehi* with the Greek ethnonym *geniokhs*, ἡνίοχοί (Bgazhnokov, 2017). According to this study, the name of the country of Igani and its inhabitants was later adopted by the Greeks, who under the influence of folk etymology turned it into *Geniokhs*. It is reasonable to agree with this. Apparently, *iganiekhs* formed as a community of descendants of proto-Abkhazian tribes at the turn of the I Millennium BC in the territory adjacent to Urartu, specifically to its North-Western part.

With the large number of settlements in Igani, there is a speculation about relatively large size of the country: "from Chaldyrsk Lake to the North over a large space ... reaching the territory of Abkhazia". But at the same time, the main population of the country was located, according to the materials of the Urartian epigraphy, in the North-East of Asia Minor and in the South of the Eastern Black Sea region. Therefore, the distribution of the *Iganeih*s in a South-easterly direction to the borders with Urartu is connected, of course, with the strengthening of their Kingdom. The power of the *Iganeih*s proves the fact that the king of the country conquered by Sardur was *Diutsin* (the *Iganeih* in his origin). According to P. N. Ushakov, "this can be interpreted in the sense that in the era of Sardur reign the *Iganeih*s subjugated the whole country of the weakened *Diauh/Taoh* tribes or the most part of it," lying to the West of Sevan Lake (Bgazhnokov, 2017).

Also, it is not reasonable to exclude that the rise of an *Iganeih* to the throne of the *Diauh*s resulted from other reasons. Namely, it was the fact of the relationship of the two peoples the *Iganeih*s and the *Diauh*s, although the *Diauh*s (*Taoh*s) are traditionally categorized as the Georgian people.

The strengthening the *Geniokhs* and the expansion of the boundaries of their lands to the lake Chaldyr were, apparently, one of the reasons why the Urartian wars and campaigns of the VIII century BC happened. But despite the glorious victories in these wars, the kings of Urartu failed to subdue and invade the lands of *Geniochia* and *Colchis*. It is difficult, however, to say whether such tasks were actually set. It seems that it was a preventive war, waged for the sole purpose of intimidation *Colchis* and *Geniokhs*, and delete them from the Northern borders of Urartu Kingdom *Biayna* towards the Black sea, where the main centres of *Geniochia* and *Colchis* were located.

The country of Igani, as we are convinced, appears in the sources as a large, multi-ethnic political entity capable of resisting the troops of *Argishti I* and *Sardur II*, to act independently of the country of *Colchis*, but in alliance with it. No doubt that Igani of the Urartian inscriptions is *Geniochia* created by ancient authors, and *Iganiehs* are the same *Geniokhs*.

All this allows the researchers to believe that the *Geniokhs* (*Iganiehs*) of the Caucasus are connected with the more ancient peoples of Asia Minor. In our opinion, first and foremost, these nations could be present in this specific area in the previous period, so the *Kaskians* and the *Palays* who, being Indo-European people, were integrated into the more numerous *Kaskian* tribes. The country of Igani, which appears in this space a few centuries later, could well be the successor of the country of the *Kaskians* called *Kasku*.

7. Conclusion

It can be assumed from the foregoing that the *Geniokhs* were formed in the early first Millennium BC in the period of displacement of the *Pelasgians* (residues *Khatt-Kaskian* tribes) from Asia Minor by the

Assyrians and the Medes. Throughout the first Millennium BC, they remained an integral part of the descendants of the Maikop-Anatolian (proto-Abkhazian-Adyghe) cultural and linguistic community, occupying a strategically important territory to maintain this community of the Caucasian neck of land.

The combination of all the information about the Geniokhs suggests that the period before ancient times and in the early ancient period Geniokhs and other ethnic groups closely related to them occupied almost a continuous broad area, not only the Eastern Black Sea coast, but the seaside region in the North-East of Asia Minor, especially the basins of the rivers Prytanis, Arabia, Apsara, Campsis, Fasis.

This is evidenced not only reliable information about the Geniokhs, Kerkets, and other nations occupying the space between Trebizond and Fasis. The data given by Arrian in "Detour Euxine Pontus" on hydronyms and toponyms of this region are also of high relevance: the rivers Apsara and Campsis, Zigopol, the village of Gonia (Gunia) at the confluence of the Apsara River (the right sleeve of the river Chorokh) in the Black sea. There is no doubt in the relationship with the Geniokhs first mentioned by Pseudo-Skilak of Gianos urban settlement (near modern Ochamchiri). Apparently, Gianos was one of the centres of the Iganeih country named Igani. It is sufficient in this case to pay attention to the proximity of the names of the country (Igani) and the settlement (Hyenas). The place has long been abandoned (until the nineteenth century), so the settlement retained the name Iguanos, Guane etc. It is obvious that they have similar nominations. This fact cannot be attributed to a coincidence alone.

In any case, it is necessary to recognize, after Yu.N. Voronov, that the Hyenas settlement was founded "in the land of Geniokhs, with the language, and possibly with the ethnonym itself which should be associated with its name".

According to the recently revealed data, the culture of the inhabitants of Hyenas and the nearest territory had much in common with the culture related to Meotians. The Meotian sanctuary with horse burials and bridle sets (in animal style) which are identical to those that were extended in a large number in burials in the North Caucasus among the Meotian tribes was found. In addition, similar burials with horse skulls and a bridle of the Kuban type were also found near Sukhumi by Yu. N. Voronov.

In other words, the territory, which in the middle of the first Millennium BC was an important part of Geniochia, sacrifices were recorded, carried out according to the Meotian rite. It is not substantial enough to explain these facts by any simultaneous military campaigns of the Meotians in the Northern Colchis. Most likely, these examples tell us that the connections of the inhabitants of the southern and Northern slopes of the Caucasus range, traced in the bronze age (culture of the dolmen builders) and in the period of transition from the bronze age to the early iron age (metalworking traditions and artistic style of the Colchis-kobans), were maintained in the period of antiquity. That is the era, when the territory of modern Abkhazia was the centre of cultural and economic life of the Geniokh tribes.

Some very interesting facts of Abkhazian-Adyghe ethnonymy and anthroponymy should be considered as relics of the Geniokh period of the history of the peoples of the Caucasus. In the connection with this case it should be noted the following: an ethnic term Genskh in the list of the seven "tribes of the Turks" in Khazaria presented by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the name of the patron of Shapsugs Genu, whose remains rest in the wooded mound near the village of Thamaga, the generic name Genarduco/Granduco, which is related to the origin of the most noble Circassians.

In addition, there is a large number of similar Abkhaz, Abaza, Adyghe and other Caucasian names, that reproduces the formant underlying the ethnonym "geniokhs»: Genaba, Gunba, Gyana, Gunai, Gunet, Guenykle, Khanykle, Kunkh, etc. The number of such examples, including from the onomastic forms of other languages and nations of the Caucasus, can be continued.

The Geniokhs appear in the light of these and many other similar details, facts, hypotheses as a bridge of a certain part of the Persian, Asia minor, the Balkan peoples, with tribes - descendants of the Maikop-New Freedom cultural community, including the builders of the dolmens of the bronze age, protomeotians and stone bridge builders (Western Kabant) of the early iron age, Sindh and Meotians of antiquity.

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