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## 4. Nationalism and History: Rewriting the Chechen National Past

The sudden, drastic (and, to a great many, traumatic) dissolution of the USSR in 1991 left all its components facing a vacuum in many fields. One of the more important voids was in the sphere of ideology. Looking urgently for new ideologies instead of the defunct 'Marxism-Leninism' to legitimize their claim to power, most of the political players turned to nationalism. Here, however, a great many of the components of the ex-USSR have been facing another major problem: under Soviet nationality policy the different peoples of the USSR were trapped in the midst of three incompatible processes – nation-building by the different titular groups, the construction of 'Soviet patriotism' and the forging of 'proletarian internationalism'. Thus none of those peoples who had begun national consolidation under the Soviets had a chance to complete it. All of them now therefore need either to redefine existing identities or to replace them by new ones. The redefinition of an identity or the construction of a new one involves re-shaping collective memory and re-writing history.

Consequently, all the components of the ex-USSR – first and foremost among them, the fifteen previous Union republics (Soviet Socialist Republics or SSRs)<sup>1</sup> which on 1 January 1992 found that they were now separate sovereign states – have been involved in a massive re-writing of their past. This need has been even more crucial in Chechnya, which was the only autonomous republic (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic or ASSR) within the ex-RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, now turned into the Russian Federation) to secede – a move not allowed by either the Soviet or the new Russian constitutions. One reason (among quite a few) for Chechnya's more crucial need to rewrite history is that it is the only ex-Soviet political unit where nationalists have permanently replaced the ex-Communist Party *apparatchiks*. Ichkeria (the official name of Chechnya) was not the only autonomous entity in the Russian Federation to claim special status.<sup>2</sup> Only Grozny (Chechnya's capital, renamed Johar in 1997), however, has stuck to its claim to full independence, rejecting any solution that would make it look as if it were losing independence and enter-

ing the Russian Federation. For that purpose it was even willing to fight a full-scale war, the first round of which (1994-96) it won, at least militarily. Furthermore, in order to achieve independence the Chechen nationalist movement, or at least major parts of it, have had to give up the dream of Vainakh<sup>3</sup> unity and accept the existence of a separate Ingush republic, which has chosen to become a 'subject'<sup>4</sup> of the Russian Federation.

All this has called for both a radical re-moulding of Chechen national identity and a thorough revision of its collective past. The Chechen authorities, the national movement, and in fact all the Chechen intelligentsia – that is, both professional historians and (even more so) many other persons with higher education – have been involved in this revision of their national past and rewriting of their history on both the academic and popular levels. It all began in 1989, when Gorbachev's *glasnost* reached the periphery, and has been steadily growing in momentum ever since. The main milestones in its development have been 1) in 1990, the appointment of a Chechen as republican secretary of the party for the first time since the second world war;<sup>5</sup> 2) what many call the 'Chechen Revolution' – the seizure of power by the national movement in September 1991;<sup>6</sup> 3) the war of 1994-96 and 4) the war that began in 1999. The new version of the Chechen past has had to tackle two challenges: the immediate, political need to justify independence and counter the Russian arguments – legal and other – against secession;<sup>7</sup> and the deeper requirement of de-colonizing, or in this case de-Sovietizing, the nation's psyche, mentality and culture. The arguments of the former and the concepts of the latter are in many cases intertwined.

According to a little-known, adroit proverb, 'even when one walks away from Rome, one is still on the road to Rome'.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in many cases in the past the first stage of decolonization occurred with the umbilical cord still solidly tied to the colonial metropolitan power. The Chechen case is no exception: the new Chechen historical narrative conducts an ongoing dialogue, or rather an argument, with both its Soviet counterpart and the new official narrative in Moscow. This argument with Moscow is still to a great extent within the Soviet paradigm, amongst other things because the participants on both sides – the authors of the new narrative included – were schooled in the USSR. Thus, while striving to de-Sovietize, the new Chechen historical narrative is still strongly linked to Soviet narratives, ways of arguing and moulds of thinking. It tries to prove, for example, that its national heroes were 'progressive' and 'popular', not 'reactionary'. It tends, like its progenitor, to be openly political, to make value judgements and moralize and to overlook facts inconsistent with its thesis. Moreover, even emotionally it is still very much connected to the ex-USSR, and tries, for example, to prove the Chechens' loyalty and heroism in the 'Great Patriotic War', as the Second World War is still called in the ex-USSR.

The main arguments and concepts which the Chechen nationalist narrative tries to counter are:<sup>9</sup>

- (1) The Checheno-Ingush ASSR, as an autonomous republic within a Union republic – the RSFSR – had no sovereignty, no right to self-determination and, therefore, no right of secession from either the RSFSR or the USSR.<sup>10</sup>
- (2) The Checheno-Ingush ASSR was formed by and within the USSR where no previous Chechen state existed, which should strengthen the previous argument.
- (3) The Chechens were, to use Marxist (in fact Hegelian) terminology, a '*geschichtslose Nation*'.<sup>11</sup> This supplies the previous argument with additional historical depth, since one can argue that the state finally formed for the Chechens was not of their own making but was granted to them by the Soviet authorities. Also, it is part of a broader, typically colonialist attitude.
- (4) The Chechens, like all other non-Russian (and especially non-European) peoples of the USSR, had been 'savages' until enlightened by the Russian people who brought them the benefits of civilization, the most important of which was the 'proletarian revolution'.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Soviet authorities aimed to create a 'Homo Sovieticus' by changing the values and mores of the Chechens – and in fact all non-Russians – and this involved, among other things, transforming them into what one might call 'Chechen-speaking Russians'. Seventy years of Soviet brainwashing, coming on top of sixty years of similar (though far less effective) tsarist indoctrination, had some measure of success: the Chechens – especially the urban and educated strata – were Sovietized, although far less than most other peoples of the USSR.
- (5) Contained within the previous concept, and resulting from it, is the notion of the 'eternal friendship of the family of peoples of the USSR led by their elder brother, the Russian people'. According to this, each of the non-Russian peoples was drawn to the 'elder brother' from their very first contact, until finally each of them 'voluntarily' joined the Russian state. The resistance to tsarist Russia (and by implication to the USSR) was thus reduced to a handful of 'reactionaries' and 'criminal elements' who acted against the interests and the will of the overwhelming majority of their peoples.<sup>13</sup>
- (6) An independent Chechen state is not viable on many grounds (including economic ones) and the Chechens are not able to sustain it. This idea is hinted at in the three immediately preceding points.

In their efforts to construct a de-Sovietized Chechen identity and history the nationalists (and later also the authorities) have been drawing on two pre-Soviet and pre-Russian layers – the Islamic, mainly Sufi Qadiri<sup>14</sup> heritage and the

Chechen national traditions, many of them pre- and some un-Islamic. In this process, Chechen written and oral sources, which were banned in the Soviet period, have been published and used. In the main, however, Chechen historians and writers have been using Russian and Soviet sources (archival and other) and studies (historical, ethnographic, archaeological and other) to find and quote facts and opinions consistent with their approach. This heavy dependence on Russian sources reflects the above-mentioned 'umbilical cord'. But it also demonstrates the fact that Russian is both the main working language of most educated Chechens and the only foreign one they know.

The main motifs in the emerging Chechen historical narrative are:

- (1) The Chechens (or the Vainakhs) are an ancient civilized nation. They are descendants of the Hurrians, the founders of the ancient Kingdoms of Mittani and Urartu<sup>15</sup> and are, therefore, one of the civilizations of the ancient Near East. Since antiquity they were in contact with, and influenced, the peoples of the steppes.<sup>16</sup> The Soviet narrative is, thus, reversed: the Chechens are the Russians' elders in age and civilization and, by implication, are also the ones who indirectly civilized them.
- (2) The Vainakhs have inhabited their present territory continuously since at least the 4th century BC.<sup>17</sup> The northern districts, now populated by Russians, had also been settled by the Chechens until Russian colonization dislodged them. This argument aims to counter the Soviet thesis that the Chechens migrated from the mountains into the lowlands only in the 17th and 18th centuries,<sup>18</sup> and the possible political implications of this.
- (3) They have formed states and polities over the ages. A Vainakh state – Durzuketi – existed in the Northern Caucasus in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC and one of its princesses was the first queen of Georgia.<sup>19</sup> Other states of which they were part included Serir (5th-9th centuries AD), Alaniya (10th-11th centuries) and Simsim (16th century). Before Russian encroachment they formed a democratic society and their *Mehk Khel* – the 'Council of the Land' – was the seat of sovereignty and took all major internal and external decisions. Finally, in the nineteenth century the Chechens voluntarily became part of the *Imamate* – the Islamic state constructed by the leaders of the resistance to Russia. Thus not only do the Chechens form an 'historic nation', but Russian conquest was downright imperialism and an act of aggression.
- (4) The Chechens like to compare their national character to that of a wolf (*borz*) – whose importance in Chechen culture is demonstrated by the fact that it is the emblem of the Republic of Ichkeria. Like the wolf, the Chechens are freedom-loving and untamed and would rather die resisting than surrender; like their lupine ideal they are fearless and do not hesitate

to take on larger and stronger rivals; like the wolf they are loyal to their kin and are ready to sacrifice their lives for them. True to their national character, the Chechens (Vainakhs) have always defended their freedom against foreign invaders, be they the Sasanids, the Byzantine Empire, the Arab Caliphate, the Khazars, the Chingisids, Timur Leng,<sup>20</sup> Nadir Shah, the tsars or the Soviets. Their three-hundred-year-long resistance to Russia is but the most recent chapter in this history of struggle for their liberty. And during this struggle, as in ancient and medieval times, the Chechens have never submitted to Russian rule and have never been resigned to either the *Pax Russica* or *Pax Sovietica*. This narrative thus disregards the fact that generations of Chechens lived normal and peaceful lives under Russian and Soviet rule even though they were never resigned to it.

- (5) Russian and Soviet conquest were blatant cases of aggression and imperialism, followed by colonization and the displacement of the Chechens from their most fertile lands.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, both empires attempted to carry out the spiritual, cultural, psychological and physical genocide of the Chechens. These latter two themes – resistance and genocide – are the ones most intensively used in Chechen nationalist discourse and will be discussed here at greater length.

## The ‘Three-Hundred-Year-Long War’

To the Chechen authorities and national movement, the armed conflict of 1994-96 was but the latest round in an ongoing war that had started three centuries before. Although Russian ‘robbery raids’ against peaceful Chechen (and other Caucasian) villages started under Ivan IV (‘the Terrible’, 1530-1584),<sup>22</sup> it was under Peter I (‘the Great’, 1682-1725) that a systematic conquest was attempted and the long war began: during Peter’s Persian campaign of 1722, Russian regular troops for the first time encountered the Chechens ‘in their native forests, and the result’ – the complete destruction of the Russian unit – ‘was ominous of what was to take place on numerous occasions’.<sup>23</sup> The narrative constructed in Grozny lists nine peaks of resistance:<sup>24</sup>

1. **The ‘First Gazavat’ (i.e. Holy War, 1785-92)** under the leadership of Imam Mansur was the first organized and united resistance to the fully-fledged, systematic conquest of the Caucasus started by Catherine II (‘the Great’, 1763-1796).<sup>25</sup>
2. **The Revolt of 1825-27** led by Shaykh Muhammad of Mayortup, the chief religious authority in the land, and Beybulat (Taimiev), its greatest and most famous war leader,<sup>26</sup> was in reaction to the extremely brutal policy of Aleksei

Yermolov (the omnipotent governor of Georgia and Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces in the Caucasus, 1816-1826).

3. **The 'Great Gazavat' (1829-59)** led by the three Daghestani Imams of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi Sufi tariqat:<sup>27</sup> Ghazi Muhammad (1829-1832), Hamzat Bek (1832-1834) and the greatest and most successful of them, Shamil (1834-1859).<sup>28</sup>
4. **The Uprising of 1863** broke out in several places in what seemed to be an opportunity to shake off Russian rule provided by the Polish revolt of that year. A significant fact is that it was led by the Qadiri Sufi tariqat.<sup>29</sup>
5. **The 'Lesser Gazavat' (1877-78)** was an attempt to re-establish Shamil's Imamate under Daghestani leadership, made during the Russo-Ottoman war in those years.<sup>30</sup>
6. **The 'Last Gazavat' (1918-21):** following the two revolutions of 1917, an independent, secular 'Mountain Republic' was established on 11 May 1918 but was soon crushed by Denikin, the 'White' Russian general who controlled large areas to the north and east of the Black Sea. It was replaced in September 1919 by Sheikh Uzun Hajji's 'North Caucasian Emirate', which was dissolved by the 'Red Army' in February 1920. In September 1920, a large-scale revolt broke out against the Bolsheviks, led by Shaykh Najm al-Din Hutsali, who assumed the title of Imam and intended to re-establish the Imamate. This lasted until 1921.<sup>31</sup>
7. **The Revolt of 1929-30** in reaction to the Stalinist persecutions of religion and 'collectivization'.
8. **The Israilov Revolt (1940-42)** led by Hasan Israilov, a poet turned resistance leader who, inspired by the Finnish victories in the 'Winter War' of 1939-40, called on his people to rise and turn the Caucasus into a 'second Finland'.<sup>32</sup>
9. **The Current Conflict (1991- )**, beginning with Moscow's attempt to depose the newly elected president Jokhar Dudaev by paratroopers in November 1991, and escalating into a full-scale invasion in December 1994. The Accords of May 1997 temporarily put an end to hostilities but have not resolved the conflict, as the second full-scale invasion of September 1999 has clearly demonstrated.

In between these 'rounds', runs the new narrative, low-intensity resistance (to borrow from modern military jargon) never stopped. During the tsarist period it took the form of what the authorities termed 'widespread banditry'. It was usually aimed at well-to-do Russians, Georgians, Ossetes, Armenians – never at poor fellow-Caucasian Muslims or Western travellers. In the Soviet – mainly Stalinist – period, acts of what was officially reported as 'political banditry' included the assassination of Soviet servicemen, officials and Chechen collaborators (such as kolkhoz chairmen), the destruction of official and military vehicles, derailing of

trains and ambushes against military or militia/GPU<sup>33</sup> units. The last *abrek* (that is, warrior against Soviet rule) was killed in 1976.

The main external political goal of this narrative is fairly clear: if the Chechens have never submitted to Russian rule, then their declaration of independence is not secession. On the contrary: the Russian attempts to prevent this independence, culminating in the invasion of 1994, are imperialism and acts of aggression. That is why the Chechen leadership have consistently demanded that a peace treaty should specifically affirm that it is ending a three-century-old war.<sup>34</sup> Yeltsin's statement to that effect at the signing ceremony of the May 1997 Russo-Chechen accord was to them the most precious victory.

The main internal political goals are no less transparent. One is to legitimize the current nationalist regime and its leaders – Johar Dudaev and, after his death, Zelimkhan Yandarbiev and Aslan Maskhadov. Another is to sanction the regime's course of action – insistence on independence even at the cost of confrontation and full-scale war with Russia. A third aim is to augment national cohesion and pride, and through them to mobilize the people to support the regime and its aims. In some ways, the historical periods and heroes it has chosen to highlight point to these aims. Out of the long history of resistance, the new national narrative speaks little about the Soviet period and deals briefly with three out of the five 'peaks' of resistance to tsarist Russia. It has chosen to concentrate on only two of these five 'peaks' – the first (1785-92) and the third (1829-59). Accordingly, even though other resistance leaders are discussed, the two major national heroes are Imams Mansur and Shamil.

**Imam Mansur** (1760?-1794) was the title assumed by Ushurma in 1785, when he began to call on the Chechens and other Caucasians to resist Russian encroachment. A Chechen from the *aul* (village) of Aldi, on the outskirts of present-day Grozny, Ushurma was, according to tradition – though no documentation is available to confirm it – a Naqshbandi Shaykh. He fought the Russia of Catherine the Great for seven years with varying degrees of success, and was finally captured on 3 July 1792 in Anapa, when Russian troops took the city from the Ottomans. On 26 October 1792 he was sentenced by Catherine to life imprisonment and died in prison on 24 April 1794. The official cause of death was consumption.

While his immediate success was fairly limited, Imam Mansur's imprint on the Caucasus and its history has been enormous. One of the best – and least appreciated – books on the Russian conquest of the Caucasus summarized Imam Mansur's significance in the following words:

He was the first to preach and lead the [...] Holy War against the infidel Russians in the Caucasus [...] and] in his endeavour to unite [...] the fierce tribes of mountain and forest, he it was who first

taught them that in religious reform lay the one chance of preserving their cherished liberty and independence.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, in many fields Imam Mansur marked the way to be followed by his successors – the Imams of ‘the Great Gazavat’ in the nineteenth century. Even a superficial glance would reveal that in many, if not all, of their strategies, tactics and methods they were imitating him. More importantly, the changes he introduced into the lives of his people, even if not completed in his own lifetime, would have a lasting effect.

While Russian and Soviet historiography have used nothing but pejoratives to describe Imam Mansur,<sup>36</sup> to the Chechens he has always been a saint and a hero. However, with a single exception<sup>37</sup> they were compelled to keep silent about him, which best suited the post-Stalin Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, in the 1970s a Chechen historian managed to ‘sneak in’ and publish positive descriptions of Mansur.<sup>38</sup> As Gorbachev’s policy of *glasnost* reached the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, Chechen historians started a campaign to rewrite the description of Mansur in both professional-historical forums<sup>39</sup> and the popular mass media.<sup>40</sup>

Since the proclamation of independence, in November 1991, Mansur has become one – and in many ways the more significant – of the two most important heroes in the official Chechen pantheon. Among the first acts of the new government were the renaming of Grozny airport and one of the city’s two main squares after him. There was also a suggestion of erecting Mansur’s statue instead of that of Yermolov, which had been pulled down in 1990.<sup>41</sup>

What might be called the ‘homecoming’ of Mansur reached a peak in May 1992, when an international conference to discuss him was convened in Grozny.<sup>42</sup> It was attended by major political figures – including President Dudaev, who addressed it – and enjoyed massive media coverage. The publication of a major work by a Chechen historian<sup>43</sup> had been timed to coincide with the conference, as was the issue of the first postage stamps of the independent Chechen Republic, one of which carried an image of the Imam.<sup>44</sup>

The choice of Mansur is a fairly obvious one. On the home front Imam Mansur, being a Chechen, helps to boost Chechen identity and pride. Outside, Chechnya has been aware that in order to secure its own independence it needs to spread ‘decolonization from Russia’ to other parts of the Northern Caucasus. The Chechen authorities under Dudaev publicly promoted the idea of North Caucasian unity. The Chechen Republic had the only government represented in the Confederation of the Caucasian Mountain Peoples.<sup>45</sup> Chechen volunteers fought on the side of the Abkhazians against the Georgians – a fact widely publicized by Grozny. The war of 1994-96 served to substantiate this awareness among wider circles in Chechnya. In 1998, for example, 157 different political parties, movements, foundations and organizations of different kinds, all dedi-



cated to Caucasian unity in one form or another, were active in the Chechen Republic.<sup>46</sup> Making Mansur a national hero lends legitimacy both to the Chechen call to other 'mountaineers' to join their struggle and to their claim to lead it. After all, he was the Chechen progenitor of the resistance to Russia and of the state based on the *shari'a* (Islamic law) – the *Imamat* – and he was the first to call on all the people of the Northern Caucasus to unite.

The other historical hero has been included by overwhelming popular accord, although dissident voices have been heard: *Imam Shamil (Shamuyil, i.e., Samuel)* (1797-1871) was the third and most successful leader of the 'Great Gazavat'. During his twenty-five years of leadership (1834-59) he managed to unite Daghestanis and Chechens and to build a state – the Imamate – with an orderly administration, systematic taxation and a regular army. All this he achieved while continuously fighting the Russians and dealing them quite a few painful blows. However, the odds against him were such that in 1859 he was finally left with no choice but to surrender. After ten years in a 'golden cage' in Russia, Shamil was allowed by Alexander II (1855-81) to set off on the *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five 'pillars', or basic commandments, of Islam). In 1871 he died in Medina.

Unlike Mansur, Shamil was described in quite approving terms in Russian historiography. In the Soviet Union he was first celebrated as a leader of a national liberation movement, then vilified as a Turkish and English spy, until he finally emerged as a bizarre hermaphrodite, at once 'progressive' and 'reactionary'.<sup>47</sup> To the Chechens, Shamil has always been one of the prominent heroes and symbols of their resistance, notwithstanding the fact that he was not a Chechen. They were therefore, alongside the Daghestanis, his most fervent defenders in Soviet historiography. In fact, when they had been denied the option of mentioning other national heroes, writing about Shamil became almost the only outlet for Chechen nationalism.

After the declaration of independence the Chechen nationalist authorities clearly demonstrated Shamil's place in their pantheon of heroes in the above-mentioned issue of stamps in May 1992. This was confirmed on 21 July 1997 when the Republic of Ichkeria officially celebrated Shamil's bicentennial.<sup>48</sup> In the central ceremony President Maskhadov unveiled a memorial complex for Shamil in Veden, the Imam's capital between 1845 and 1859. The complex includes a mosque with a minaret 25 metres high (symbolizing Shamil's 25 years of leading the resistance), a *Madrasa* (traditional Muslim institute of higher education, where *ulama* – authorized experts on Islamic law and religious leaders – are trained and given a certificate) and a wall from his fortress, destroyed by the Russian Army.<sup>49</sup>

Yet the nationalist historical narrative under construction does not speak at length about Shamil himself.<sup>50</sup> In fact the heroes of this narrative are neither

Mansur nor Shamil, but rather the Chechen people. Thus emphasis is laid on the centrality of Chechnya and the Chechens to Shamil's struggle and rule: on the fact that the Chechens supplied him with many of his bravest soldiers,<sup>51</sup> his ablest generals, governors and engineers, his best advisors and his most loyal lieutenants;<sup>52</sup> that the bitterest, hardest, bloodiest fighting took place in Chechnya – here Shamil gained his greatest victories<sup>53</sup> and here he was finally beaten after a long war of attrition; that Chechnya was the bread basket of his dominions and strategically its most important part<sup>54</sup> – which is highlighted by the fact that between 1840 and 1859 Shamil chose to locate his 'capitals' there.

More importantly, the emphasis is on the *continuing resistance*. Shamil was but one leader, and the struggle he led but one phase in this ongoing 'three-hundred-year-long war'. Thus, in some cases, promoters of the Chechen historical narrative have berated Shamil for his surrender in 1859.<sup>55</sup> An extreme expression by a diaspora Chechen, totally unacceptable to those constructing the nationalist narrative in Chechnya itself, stated:

Imam Shamil was a Dahgistani. He led the uprising against the Russians. The Chechens joined him in his struggle. But when he surrendered, the Chechens called him a traitor [...] The Chechens consider Shamil a traitor. They do not consider this [his surrender – MG] as an acceptance of Russian rule.<sup>56</sup>

As a counter to Shamil and a symbol of 'true' resistance to the bitter end, some builders of this historical narrative promote one of his *na'ibs* (lieutenants) – Bay-sungur from Benoy – who, 'extremely crippled in combat' and 'able to move and take part in battles only tied to his horse', continued to fight the Russians for almost two years after the Imam. 'He represented', wrote a modern Chechen author, '*a model symbol of the Chechen people's physical shape and insubordination at that period of time*' [emphasis mine – MG].<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, Shamil remains one of the major heroes of the emerging nationalist and official historiography, a fact that can be explained by several reasons.

First, Shamil just could not be ignored. After all, he was the most successful and famous of the resistance leaders and, although not a Chechen himself, he led the Chechens for far longer than any other chief.<sup>58</sup> Second, he was the founder of an Islamic state – the *Imamat* – based on the *shari'a*, to which the Chechen authorities have been committed since independence and more fervently since the end of the war. Third, although not one of themselves, to many Chechens Shamil was a national hero. This phenomenon gathered momentum in the Soviet period when Shamil was the only hero the Chechens could publicly identify with in order to give vent to their national grievances and nationalist feelings. Fourth, Shamil is the national hero of the Daghestanis, particularly the Avars.<sup>59</sup>

He is thus a central link with the neighbour that is so important to Chechnya on numerous levels, first and foremost that of North Caucasian unity.<sup>60</sup> This became very clear in the above-mentioned ceremony to mark Shamil's bicentennial, on 21 July 1997, when president Aslan Maskhadov praised Shamil's contribution 'to the liberation struggle of the Caucasian peoples' and called on his listeners to 'remember at all times' that 'all the people living in the Caucasus constitute one "Caucasian" nation'.<sup>61</sup>

In the early 1990s the two heroes complemented each other as the precedents, legitimization and role models for the leader of the current struggle of the Chechen national independence movement, and the first president of the republic. Already, he was put on an equal footing with them.

**Johar Dudaev** (1944-96) was the first Chechen to reach the rank of general in the Soviet Air Force. In the late 1980s and early 1990s he commanded a division of strategic bombers stationed in Estonia where, in January 1991, he stopped Soviet special forces from moving in on Estonian nationalists demanding independence. In March 1991 he was elected leader of the Executive Committee of the All-National Congress of the Chechen People (*ispolkom Obshchenatsional'nogo kongressa chechenskogo naroda*, that is, the national movement) and in May he resigned from the Air Force. On 27 October 1991 Dudaev won the presidential election.<sup>62</sup> Four days later, on 1 November 1991, he signed the 'Act of Sovereignty of the Republic'. He led the struggle for independence, which deteriorated into full-scale war following the Russian invasion of December 1994. On 14 December 1995 the All-National Congress of the Chechen People extended his term of presidency until 'proper democratic and internationally monitored elections can be held'.<sup>63</sup> On the night of 21-22 April 1996 he was reported to have been killed by a Russian air-to-ground missile which homed in on his satellite telephone.

Like Mansur and Baysungur (both Chechens) and unlike Shamil, Dudaev died sword in hand as a *shahid* (martyr, one who was killed in a *Jihad*). Unlike them, however, his death is denied by many.<sup>64</sup> In that, he resembles the man most venerated by the overwhelming majority of the Chechens: **Shaykh Kunta Hajji** (1830?-1867), who introduced the Qadiriyya into the Caucasus in the early 1860s, following the collapse of Shamil's Imamate. Within several years he made the Qadiriyya into the dominant Sufi *tariqa* in the social, economic and political life – in fact in the daily life – of the Chechens. The Russian authorities, always suspicious of any movement not fully controlled by them, took Kunta Hajji by surprise and arrested him on 15 January 1864, transferred him to a military prison and 'resettle[d him] for life under police supervision' in a remote town in the province of Novgorod, where he died on 31 May 1867. His followers deny his death. They believe to this very day that he is in a state of hidden existence, from which he intervenes on their behalf and guides their actions.<sup>65</sup>

While not in any way an official hero, Kunta Hajji is in fact far more than that. To most Chechens he is their *ustadh* (spiritual guide and master), and his significance is far greater than that of all the above-mentioned heroes combined. This in itself would be enough to explain the great number of publications about him since the declaration of independence.<sup>66</sup> There is, however, another reason for Kunta Hajji's importance: the Qadiriyya withstood Soviet efforts to uproot it, and after the declaration of independence it came to play a leading role in the public life of the republic. It has, in fact, been aligned with Chechen nationalism at least since the 1940s, and has been a major support base for the nationalist regime in Chechnya since 1991.<sup>67</sup> Thus the slightest hint, by implication – nothing else would be acceptable – comparing Dudaev to him, would give a strong boost to the legitimization of the nationalist regime and greatly expand support for it among different sectors of the population.

## The Chain of Attempts at Genocide

According to the nationalist narrative, Russian military and political authorities conducted a war of extermination against the Chechens from their very first attempts at the systematic conquest of the Caucasus. The reason for this was the obstinate resistance of the Chechens and their refusal to accept Russian rule. But even the threat of genocide did not stop Chechen resistance. The nationalist narrative lists four attempts at genocide, laying greatest emphasis on the third:

1. **The Russian Conquest (18th-19th Centuries).** Already Potyomkin, Catherine II's commander in the Caucasus, had suggested that 'it is impossible to subdue the Chechens unless one exterminates them completely'. Some forty years later the Emperor Nicholas I (1825-55) instructed his commander in the Caucasus 'to tame forever the mountain peoples, or *exterminate the insubordinate*' [emphasis mine – MG].<sup>68</sup> Present-day Chechen writers hold that Chechen losses, direct and indirect (that is, the loss of the potential descendants of those killed), during the nine decades of struggle to conquer Chechnya and then to establish Russian rule there, exceeded 1,000,000(!).<sup>69</sup> The Chechens count three specific Russian methods of genocide, which have been used also by both Soviet and post-Soviet Russia:
  - *Systematic Campaign of Starvation:* The Russian authorities blockaded the unconquered areas and refused to allow the Chechens import essential goods; they developed the tactics of 'punitive raids', which as a rule involved systematically destroying and burning villages and hamlets, ruining all supplies and gardens, stampeding and burning fields and seizing livestock and movables. By these and other means, including the destruc-

tion of forests, they pushed the population from its most fertile lands into the mountains, where many died of deprivation and hunger.<sup>70</sup>

- *Exile:* In the late 1850s, the authorities considered transferring the Chechens from their homeland to inner Russia.<sup>71</sup> In the mid 1860s they actively 'encouraged' them to follow the Circassians and emigrate *en masse* to the Ottoman Empire. Some 5,000 families, all in all about 23,000 people – 'the most energetic, the most freedom-loving part of the population' – emigrated, as a present-day Chechen historian laments. 'It was an ethnic catastrophe which deprived the people of its finest sons.'<sup>72</sup> Also in later periods, most notably the late 1880s and early 1910s, Russian 'encouragement' resulted in waves of emigration to the Ottoman Empire.
- *Massacre:* Many of the 'punitive raids' ended in massacres, especially if the population was caught unawares and defended itself. The usual excuse of the Russian officers was that 'the exasperated soldiers went out of control'. There were also, however, deliberate massacres of entire villages. The most notorious of these was the massacre of Dadi Yurt on 27 September 1819. On specific orders from Yermolov, Russian troops surrounded the village and slaughtered all its inhabitants – men, women and children. The slaughter of Dadi Yurt has remained a symbol of genocide and resistance to this very day. Its impact is almost as strong nowadays as it was 180 years ago. It is commemorated by numerous folk traditions and songs as well as by works of art and literature, which tell of the heroic defence of the village by its men, encouraged by the dancing and singing of the girls in the village square. Once all the men were killed, the women and maidens took their place – dagger in hand. To the Russians' astonishment the surviving young women preferred to cut their own throats rather than be taken prisoner. The few women who had been captured and distributed among Russian officers jumped from the ferry into the river, each taking 'her' officer with her.<sup>73</sup>

2. **The Soviet Conquest (1920s-1930s)** was achieved by similar methods of systematic terror, mass arrests and exile to the Gulag, starvation and forceful retaliation against entire villages. The Soviet regime was far more effective at mass killing than the tsarist government because of the advanced technology at their disposal (machine-guns, aircraft, etc.). Thus, according to Soviet statistics quoted by a Chechen writer, in 1937 the Chechen population numbered 200,800 fewer than in 1929.<sup>74</sup> But, more important than the physical genocide, says the Chechen narrative, the Soviet campaigns against the so-called 'Kulaks', the religious persecution, the double change of alphabet (first into Latin and then into Cyrillic) amounted to spiritual and cultural genocide. To them it was a deliberate attempt to 'de-Chechenize' the Chechens so as to pave the way for their Russification.

3. **The 'Deportation' (1944-57).** In 1944 on Soviet Army Day, 23 February, all Chechens (and Ingush) were rounded up from all over the USSR (including soldiers from the front) and 'deported' to Central Asia, where they were settled under a 'special regime'. The Checheno-Ingush ASSR was abolished and demoted to the Grozny District, while parts were annexed to the neighbouring Georgian SSR and North Ossetian ASSR. Thus Stalin finally carried out the proposal of many past officials and generals, which the tsarist authorities had never adopted.

The official reason for the 'deportation' was given as mass 'treason' and collaboration by the Chechens with Nazi Germany though the *Wehrmacht* had hardly set foot on the territory of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR.<sup>75</sup> Although they were exonerated by Khrushchev, this accusation of treason remained in common use and continued to be taught in schools, even in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, until the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>76</sup> In an apparent internal contradiction (not uncommon in nationalist – indeed all politically-related – historiographies), the Chechen nationalist narrative puts a great deal of effort into disproving this charge of 'treason' against the empire it claims the Chechens have never been part of.<sup>77</sup> Numerous memoirs by Chechen soldiers in the Red Army and documents related to their heroism and loyalty in the battles against the *Wehrmacht* have been published.<sup>78</sup> The most frequently quoted event is the defence, to the death, of the fortress of Brest-Litovsk by a Chechen unit.<sup>79</sup>

To the Chechens, the so-called 'deportation' is the worst catastrophe in their collective memory. It is also the most recent (or was until the war of 1994-96 and the one which started in 1999), and is still a living memory to a great many of them. After a long time in which commemorations of the deportation were restricted, in 1989 people's memories, evidence and documents began to be published, and this process gathered momentum after the declaration of independence.<sup>80</sup> According to the nationalist narrative it was the most comprehensive and blatant attempt to wipe the Chechens off the face of the earth as a nation and, as such, a crime unprecedented in the entire history of humanity.

- *Physical Extermination:* The rounding up and transportation of the deportees was carried out with great brutality. Those unable to move – old people, hospitalized patients, or simply those who did not understand the instructions because they did not speak Russian – were murdered. Many died in the trucks and cattle trains in which they were transported. Others perished at their places of resettlement – of starvation, disease, sheer fatigue and weakness or exposure to the extremes of a climate they were not used to. According to one source, chemicals and poisons were added to the food supplied to the Chechens during their deportation.<sup>81</sup> This source calculates that roughly 60-65% of the deported Chechens perished during those years.<sup>82</sup>

The most hideous mass murder happened in Khaybakh, the highest and most isolated Chechen *aul*. Since it was impossible to bring in trucks, the NKVD colonel commanding the operation decided not to bother moving the population. Instead, they were lined up and shot, together with those Soviet soldiers who refused to shoot civilians. Having become a forceful imprint on the Chechen collective memory and consciousness, Khaybakh reinforced and gave special significance to previous massacres, first and foremost that of Dadi Yurt. In the years between the declaration of independence and the war of 1994-96, an association was established to dig out and bury the remains and to make Khaybakh into a memorial.<sup>83</sup>

- *Cultural and Spiritual Obliteration*: The deported were prevented from having an education in their own language – a policy continued as far as possible after rehabilitation and repatriation. In all the schools in Grozny, for example, the language of instruction was Russian only. That is why a large proportion of those under the age of fifty have not mastered Chechen as a literary language. The practice of religion was severely punished when discovered and any cultural activity discouraged, though not completely prevented.
- *Wiping Out Their Trace*: To ensure that the Chechens would never return, others, mainly Russians and Ukrainians, were settled in their homes. But the regime went further than that. The names Chechnya and Chechens disappeared from official publications and textbooks. All the geographical names were changed to Russian ones. Mosques, mausoleums of saints and any other monuments connected to the Chechens were destroyed. Chechnya was to become a Russian land and the Chechens were to be forgotten. Most painful to the Chechens, however, was the destruction of the graveyards.<sup>84</sup> 'What could be more loathsome', wrote a British journalist who covered the war of 1994-96, 'to a people who consider ancestors as important as the living, who still rise out of their car seats in respect as they drive past cemeteries?'<sup>85</sup> Indeed, 'as soon as they got a chance they gathered all the stones up again and built a memorial, a garden of death in the centre of Grozny. Dignity was restored'.<sup>86</sup>

Although rehabilitated by Khrushchev in 1956 and allowed to return to their homeland and to re-establish the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, the Chechens (and the Ingush) continued to be suspected by the authorities. They were strictly controlled by Moscow and therefore not allowed to settle again in many of the mountain villages where it would have been extremely difficult to keep them under supervision. One manifestation of this mistrust and control was the fact that, until Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, a Russian had always been the first party secretary of the republic.

**4. The War of 1994-96.** To Chechen spokesmen, the war was but another such attempt at genocide.<sup>87</sup> The indifference to civilian casualties in the indiscriminate bombardment of Grozny, the use of aircraft and helicopter gunships to wipe out entire villages without warning the population, the mass arrests of men in concentration camps where they were subjected to torture, the smear campaign against the 'Chechen mafia' by the authorities and the subsequent harassment – by the police as well as by hooligans – of so-called 'persons of Caucasian origin' in the main urban centres of Russia – these and many other deeds point (according to the Chechen narrative) to genocidal aims on the part of the Russian authorities. Of all the indiscriminate killing of civilians during this war, the most atrocious occurred in Samashki in April 1995, when Russian Internal Ministry troops murdered scores of civilians.<sup>88</sup> Samashki has thus joined the chain of symbols of genocide beginning with Dadi Yurt and including Khaybakh.

Furthermore, in the indiscriminate bombing of Grozny in the winter of 1995, the most important institutions of cultural and historical significance were destroyed. Among them were the monument to the deportation, mentioned above; the Central State Archives, where irreplaceable collections of documents and manuscripts were held;<sup>89</sup> the Humanities Research Institute;<sup>90</sup> the university, and the museum. The Chechens strongly believe that this was not merely one of the effects of the bombing but a deliberate attempt to complete the task, begun by Stalin, of wiping out all traces of the Chechens.

The theme of genocide has two clear, immediate political goals: internationally, it aims to raise support and gain recognition for Chechnya's right to independence on moral and emotional grounds. After all, how can one allow Russia to continue to rule Chechnya, if it is guilty of genocide against the Chechens? Furthermore, how can one refuse the victims of genocide the redress of independent statehood?<sup>91</sup> Internally it has powerful mobilizing appeal, the deportation in particular being, according to some historians, a case of 'chosen trauma'.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, a large body of evidence points to the fact that fears of a second 'deportation' and the resolve never to let such a thing happen again seem to have played a pivotal role in the bitter Chechen resistance to the Russian forces.

In a broader sense, these two motifs – genocide and resistance – are specific cases of the general themes of victimization and heroism, which practically all nationalist historiographies use extensively.<sup>93</sup> In the Chechen case, as in so many others, they are mutually-reinforcing sides of the same coin: the memory of genocide brings to the fore the sense of victimization and thus stiffens the resolve to resist. The memory of resistance, especially in face of genocide, generates pride and sets a standard of behaviour to be followed. And that, according to the Chechen narrative, is what makes the Chechens unique in



history: even in the Gulag, as Solzhenitsyn testified (Chechen authors quote this with particular pride):

(...) there was one nation which did not surrender to the psychology of submission – not distinct individuals or a few mutineers but the entire nation as a whole. These were the Chechens.<sup>94</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The USSR was a federation of several dozen autonomous entities, all with different areas and population sizes and different levels of authority. They were arranged on five levels: Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR), Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR), Autonomous Provinces, Districts and Sub-Districts. According to the Soviet constitution, only the fifteen SSRs were 'sovereign' states which had joined the USSR voluntarily and had the privilege of seceding. They were thus the only direct members of the USSR. All other 'autonomies' were parts of the SSRs in which they were included, lacked 'sovereignty' and had no right to secede either from their SSR or from the USSR.
- <sup>2</sup> Tatarstan, for example, refused to sign the Federation treaty, and instead signed a bilateral treaty with Moscow in 1994. Others, like Khakassia, waited on the sidelines to see what Tatarstan (and Chechnya) would achieve.
- <sup>3</sup> Vainakh is the common name for the Ingush and Chechens. The Ingush are very close to the Chechens ethnically, linguistically and otherwise. In fact most Chechens consider them to be part of their own people. However, different historical backgrounds – 'the Ingush did not participate either in the Shamil movement in the nineteenth century or in the great rebellion of 1920-22' (Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire. A Guide*, London, Hurst, 1985, p. 189) – strongly cultivated by Russian and Soviet authorities, created separate identities for them. While most Ingush nationalists insisted on their own statehood, a great many Chechen nationalists wanted a united Vainakh state.
- <sup>4</sup> This is the official Russian title of members of the Russian Federation. Subjects (*subyekty*) are not only the autonomous republics but also the different regions (*oblast*) and 'lands' (*krai*).
- <sup>5</sup> From their 'rehabilitation' by Khrushchev, in 1957, until Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, a Russian had always been the first party secretary of the republic. This was in strong contradiction to the usual Soviet practice of having a member of the titular nationality as first secretary (while a Russian was the second secretary and had real power), and it thus underlined the degree to which Moscow distrusted the Chechens and Ingush.
- <sup>6</sup> There are, however, those who object to this term on the ground that it might be reminiscent of the 'Communist [i.e. Bolshevik – MG] coup' and thus be tantamount to a recognition of 'Communism as a worthy enemy' (private communication).
- <sup>7</sup> This study concentrates on the rewriting of the past. Other activities and fields, such as international law, are outside its scope.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Silverberg, *Nightwings*, Part I: 'Nightwings'. In the original, in a distant future the city is called 'Roum'.
- <sup>9</sup> The following is an attempt to systematize and unify different and sometimes contradictory individual approaches. A great many of the terms used here are mine, and not necessarily those of Chechen writers.

- <sup>10</sup> Chechnya declared its independence on 1 November 1991, before the official dissolution of the USSR on 31 December 1991.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Non-historical' (literally: 'history-less') nation is the term used by Friedrich Engels. Cf. Michael Lowy and Claudine Weil, *Les Marxistes et la question nationale, 1848-1914*, Paris, Maspero, 1974.
- <sup>12</sup> Correspondingly any signs of non-Russian culture were disregarded. Thus, for example, in the cards prepared for each deported family in 1944 (and tirelessly collected and saved by the Chechens until their destruction during the bombardment of Grozny in 1995), many Chechen heads of families were described as 'illiterates', which did not prevent them from signing in Arabic at the bottom of the card ...
- <sup>13</sup> For the emergence of the formula and its development up to the mid 1960s, see Lowel R. Tillet, *The Great Friendship. Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities*, Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina Press, 1969. For later developments as well as for the implications of the formula for Chechnya and Daghestan, see Moshe Gammer, 'Shamil in Soviet Historiography', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1992, pp. 729-777. Publications in this spirit continued to be printed in Grozny well into Gorbachev's *glasnost*, up to 1989. E.g.: *Istoki velikoi druzhby*, Grozny, 1978; *Istochnikovedenie istorii dorevolutsionnoi Checheno-Ingushetii*, Grozny, 1988; *Ukreplenie druzhby i internatsional'nykh svyazei trudyashchikhsya ChIASSR v protsesse sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva*, Grozny, 1988; *Progressivnoe vliyanie Rossii na sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe i politicheskoe razvitie narodov Checheno-Ingushetii (dorevolutsionnyi period)*, Grozny, 1989.
- <sup>14</sup> Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam, and also has an important role in popular religion. The Qadiriyya is one of the four oldest and most prestigious *tariqats* (brotherhoods) and is one of the most widespread, perhaps even the most widespread. Unlike most *tariqats*, who are concentrated in specific areas, the Qadiriyya is present all over the Muslim world.
- <sup>15</sup> L. O. Bubakhin and Dolkhan A.-A. Khozhaev, 'Potomki Nefertiti', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 11 February 1989, p. 10; Lema Usmanov, *Nepokorennaya Chechnya*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 32-33. Khozhaev was head of the archives administration under the Dudaev government. At the time of writing (summer 1999) he is secretary of the committee for drafting the new constitution. Ahmadov was professor of history at the University of Grozny. Usmanov is the representative of the Republic of Ichkeria to the USA.
- <sup>16</sup> Yakub Vagapov, *Vainakhi i sarmaty. Nakhskii plast v sarmatskoi onomastike*, Grozny, 1990. Gapurov is professor of history at the university of Grozny.
- <sup>17</sup> Usmanov, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
- <sup>18</sup> For example, N. G. Volkova, *Etnicheskii sostav naseleniya Severnogo Kavkaza v XVII - nachale XX veka*, Moscow, 1974.
- <sup>19</sup> This version thus claims indirectly that the Vainakhs civilized the Georgians, which reverses the usual Georgian (-originated) and Russian/Soviet version according to which the Georgians were the ones to bring the torch of civilization to the 'barbarian' tribes north of the main Caucasus range.
- <sup>20</sup> Hajji Khizriev, 'Bitva na Tereke Khulagidov s Dzhuchidami i bor'ba gortsev Zakavkazya protiv inozemnykh zakhvatchikov v XIII-XIV vv.', in A. I. Khasbulatov *et al.* (eds), *Checheno-Ingushetiya v politicheskoi istorii Rossii i Kavkaza v dorevolutsionnom proshlom*, Grozny, 1990, pp. 101-114. *idem*, *Kavkaztsy protiv Timura. (Bor'ba gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza protiv ekspansii Timura)*, Grozny, 1992. Khizriev is a former senior researcher at the Institute of Humanities of the Chechen Republic.
- <sup>21</sup> A. I. Khasbulatov, 'Agrarnyi vopros v politike tsarizma v Checheno-Ingushetii vo II pol XIX - nach. XX v.', in Khasbulatov *et al.* (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 5-28; Sharpudin Ahmadov, 'K voprosu o

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- pereselencheskoi politike tsarizma v Terskoi oblasti v poreformennoe vremya', in *ibid.*, 1990, pp. 29-48; Kh. S. Ahmadov and G. A. Gorchkhanova, 'Soslovno-pozemel'nyi vopros v poreformennoi Checheno-Ingushetii', in *ibid.*, pp. 48-61; E. D. Muzhokhoeva, 'Checheno-Ingushetiya v administrativno-politicheskoi sisteme upravleniya Terskoi oblasti v 40-60-e gody XIX veka', in *ibid.*, pp. 61-76.
- <sup>22</sup> For a description from this point of view see, for example, Kh. A. Akiev and A. T. Khashagul'gov, 'K politicheskoi situatsii na Tereke v 1651-1652 godakh', in Khasbulatov *et al.* (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 67-86. From 1991 to 1994 Akiev was head of the Institute of Humanities of the Chechen Republic. Khasbulatov is a professor at the University of Grozny and brother of the former chairman of the Russian parliament.
- <sup>23</sup> John Frederick Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, London, 1908, p. 25. For later battles from the Chechen perspective see, e.g., Yavus Z. Akhmadov, 'Politicheskie sobytiya na Severnom Kavkaze v XVI - 40-kh godakh XVII veka', in A. I. Khasbulatov *et al.* (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 87-101; *idem*, 'Vzaimootnosheniya Chechni i Rossii (vtoraya polovina XVI - seredina XIX vv.)', in Yu. A. Aydaev (ed.), *Chechentsy: Istoriya i sovremennost'*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 145-150; Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Khankal'skoe srazhenie (1735 g.)', *Zavety Ilyicha* (Grozny district local newspaper), 8 December 1998.
- <sup>24</sup> For the most comprehensive and articulate exposition of this narrative, see Usmanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-85. And cf. Moshe Gammer, 'The Russo-Chechen Conflict in Historical Perspective', in Mehmet Tütüncü (ed.), *Caucasus – War and Peace: The New World Disorder in Caucasus*, Haarlem (The Netherlands), Sota, 1998, pp. 43-57.
- <sup>25</sup> '*Al-Imam al-Mansur*' means in Arabic 'the Victorious Leader'. The best and most comprehensive study of Imam Mansur is still Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Un mouvement populaire au Caucase du XVIIIe siècle: la guerre sainte de Sheikh Mansur (1785-1794). Page mal connue et controversée des relations russo-turques', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1964, pp. 159-205.
- <sup>26</sup> The first piece to be published about Beybulat was Alvi Musaev and Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Slavnyi Beibulat – groza Kavkaza', *Komsomol'skoe plemia*, 5 October 1989. Two years later a book was dedicated to this hero: L. N. Kolosov, *Slavnyi Beibulat. Istoriko-biograficheskii ocherk*, Grozny, 1991.
- <sup>27</sup> The Naqshbandiyya is one of the most widespread Sufi *tariqas* in Islam. 'Strictly orthodox' from its beginning, the Naqshbandiyya spread from its area of origin in Central Asia to India where, in the seventeenth century, it was transformed into 'the vanguard of renaissance Islamic orthodoxy' (Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, New York, Weidenfeld, 1966, p. 96). From India its 'militant revivalism' (*ibid.*, p. 97) spread to other parts of the Muslim world and influenced both resistance to foreign encroachment and conquest and so-called 'fundamentalist' Islamic movements. For the Naqshbandiyya, see Hamid Algar, 'A Brief History of the Naqshbandi Order', in Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic and Thierry Zarcone (eds), *Naqshbandis. Historical Development and Present Situation of a Muslim Mystical Order*, Istanbul, Isis, 1990. For its Khalidi branch, which dominates in the Caucasus, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 12, 1982, pp. 1-12. For its emergence in the Caucasus, see Moshe Gammer, 'The Beginnings of the Naqshbandiyya in Daghestan and the Russian Conquest of the Caucasus', *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 34, 1994, pp. 204-217.
- <sup>28</sup> For Shamil and his two predecessors, see Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*. London, Frank Cass, 1994.
- <sup>29</sup> The Qadiriyya surfaced in the Caucasus in the 1850s, preaching peace and submission to Russia. This is why it was banned by Shamil. After Shamil's surrender the overwhelming majority

of the Chechens, driven by war fatigue and their disappointment with the Naqshbandi Imams, became (and have remained until the present) adherents of the Qadiriyya. That this pacifist movement (to use modern terminology) was driven to lead a rebellion is in itself a statement about Russian rule. For further details, see Moshe Gammer, 'The Qadiriyya in the Northern Caucasus', *Journal of the History of Sufism*, Vol.1, No. 2, 2000 (October 2000; Special Issue: The Qadiriyya Sufi Order), pp. 275-294.

- <sup>30</sup> In the last days of Gorbachev's USSR a source on that uprising was finally published after having been forbidden for half a century – Goytakin Rasu of Benoy, 'Istoriya o tom, kak Albik-Khadzhi stal imamom', *Respublika*, 8 August 1991, pp. 6-7. Translation from Arabic into Chechen by A. Nazhaev (in 1928). Translation from Chechen into Russian by D. Khozhaev.
- <sup>31</sup> See Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Muslim Guerrilla Warfare in the Caucasus, 1918-1928', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1983, pp. 280-294; Marie Bennigsen-Broxup, 'The Last Gazavat. The 1920-1921 Uprising', in Marie Bennigsen-Broxup (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, London, Hurst, 1992, pp. 112-145.
- <sup>32</sup> See Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, 'The Chechens and Ingush during the Soviet Period and its Antecedents', in Marie Bennigsen-Broxup (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 146-194.
- <sup>33</sup> The police in the USSR was called 'Militia'. The GPU was the secret police, successor of the ChK. Its acronym was later changed to NKVD, MGB and then to KGB.
- <sup>34</sup> See, for example, Dudaev's speech at the All-National Congress of the Chechen People on 8 June 1991, as reported in *Bart* (Groznyi), No. 6 (010), June 1991, p. 3.
- <sup>35</sup> Baddeley, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>36</sup> For a short summary of the historiography of Mansur, see Moshe Gammer, 'A Preliminary to Decolonizing the Historiography of Shaykh Mansur', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1996, pp. 191-202.
- <sup>37</sup> Z. Sheripov, 'Sheikh Mansur. (Kratkii istoriko-biograficheskii ocherk)', in *O tekh, kogo nazyvali abrekami*, Groznyi, 1925. This had been published before the Stalinist regime gained full control over the writing of history in the USSR.
- <sup>38</sup> Sharpudin B. Ahmadov, 'Ob istokakh antifeodal'nogo i antikolonial'nogo dvizheniia v Chechne v kontse XVIII v.', *Izvestiia Checheno-Ingushskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1974, Ser. 1; *idem*, 'K voprosu o klassovoi bor'be v Chechne XVIII v.' in *Voprosy istorii klassoobrazovaniia i sotsial'nykh dvizhenii v dorevolutsionnoi Checheno-Ingushetii (XVI-nachalo XX v.)*, Groznyi, 1980. Ahmadov was a senior researcher at the Institute of Humanities of the Chechen Republic.
- <sup>39</sup> Shahriddin A. Gapurov, 'Nekotore voprosy istoriografii dvizheniya gortsev pod predvotitel'stvom Mansura vo vtoroi polovine 80kh godov XVIII v.', in *Voprosy istoriografii dorevolutsionnoi Checheno-Ingushetii*, Groznyi, 1988. In another article, together with his co-author Gadeev he even broke a long-standing taboo in Soviet historiography by daring to compare Mansur's struggle to that of other anti-colonial leaders resisting Western powers – Shahriddin A. Gapurov and Vaha Iu. Gadeev, 'Sravnitel'nyi analiz nekotorykh aspektov dvizheniia gortsev severnogo Kavkaza pod rukovodstvom Mansura v kontse XVIII v veka i narodnykh dvizheniakh v stranakh zarubeznogo Vostoka', in *Aktual'ne problemy istorii dorevolutsionnoi Checheno-Ingushetii. Regional'naia nauchnaya konferentsiya. Tëzisi dokladov i soobshchenii*, Groznyi, 1991.
- <sup>40</sup> Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Pravda o Sheikhe Mansure', *Groznenskii rabochii*, 16 August 1989; Vaha Gadeyev and Shahriddin Gapurov, 'Istorin Tsqhayolu qovsame ag'onash', *Orga* (Groznyi), No. 4, 1989, Shahriddin Gapurov and Vaha Gadeyev, 'Znat' istoriyu svoego naroda', *Politicheskii sobesednik* (Groznyi), No. 1, 1990.

- <sup>41</sup> Yermolov's statue which had been erected in Grozny in tsarist times was removed by the Bolsheviks in deference to Chechen feelings. In 1944, following the 'deportation' of the Chechens and Ingush, the statue was re-erected and it remained in place throughout the rest of the Soviet period until 1990. The symbolic meaning of this is obvious.
- <sup>42</sup> See *Sheikh Mansur i osvoboditel'naya bor'ba narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v poslednei treti XVIII veka. Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii*, Grozny, 1992.
- <sup>43</sup> Sharpudin B. Ahmadov, *Imam Mansur (Narodno-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Chechne i na Severnom Kavkaze v kontse XVIII v.)*, Grozny, 1991 (in fact 1992). The book was an act of personal devotion as it had been written over many years in the knowledge that its publication would never be allowed. See also, *idem*, 'Narodno-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Chechne i na Severnom Kavkaze pod predvoditel'stvom Imama Mansura (1785-1791)', in Aydaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 150-176.
- <sup>44</sup> The issue included five stamps. One depicted the state arms (the wolf), and another the presidential palace. The three remaining stamps portrayed three national heroes – Imam Mansur, Imam Shamil and General Dudaev. Naturally enough, these stamps have never gone into official use because the Russian postal services refused to recognize them.
- <sup>45</sup> On the CCMP, see Moshe Gammer, 'Unity, Diversity and Conflict in the Northern Caucasus', in Yaacov Ro'i (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London, Frank Cass, 1995, pp. 163-186.
- <sup>46</sup> Zulfy Kadir, *The Rise of Political Islam in Russia* (unpublished paper), p. 7.
- <sup>47</sup> For Shamil's description in historiography, see Moshe Gammer, 'Shamil in Soviet Historiography', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1992, pp. 729-777. For developments since the dissolution of the USSR, see *idem*, 'Collective Memory and Politics: Remarks on Some Competing Historical Narratives in the Caucasus and Russia and their Use of a "National Hero"', *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1999, to be found on internet: <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/>
- <sup>48</sup> The Chechen authorities chose to celebrate the bicentennial in July – not in October like elsewhere in the CIS – as a demonstration of the republic's independence.
- <sup>49</sup> RIA [Russkoe Informatsionnoe Agentstvo] - Novosti, 21 July 1997. The fortress referred to is probably the one popularly known as 'Shamil's Fortress' which was damaged in Russian bombardments during the recent war. In fact it is a fort built by the Russian forces after the capture of Vedeno in 1859. Shamil's original 'Capital' – New Dargo – was destroyed completely after its capture. Its ruins are now covered by a mound, several kilometres south of the present fort. And cf. Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Krepost' Shamilya', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 1 November 1990, p. 8.
- <sup>50</sup> Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Gordyi syn Kavkaza', *Grozniiskii rabochii*, 26 April 1990, p. 3; Gasym Kerimov, 'Islam i Shamil', *Respublika*, 30 May 1991, p. 8. Kerimov is a Moscow-based Azerbaijani historian.
- <sup>51</sup> Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Armiya Shamilya', *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 24 March 1992, p. 3; *idem*, 'Artilleriya imamata, ili kto strelyal iz derevyannoi pushki?', *Respublika*, 2 November 1991, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>52</sup> Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Naiby Chechni', *Respublika*, 6 March 1992, pp. 5, 8; *idem*, 'Marshal lesnogo boyu', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 17 May 1990, pp. 6-7; *idem*, 'Eshche raz ob Udi Mulle', *Respublika*, 15 February 1992; *idem*, 'Pervyi sredi naibov', *Leninskaya pravda* (local newspaper of Urus Martan), 15, 29 April, 1, 4 May 1990; *idem*, 'Medal' Shamilya', *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 15 October 1991, p. 4; Abdul Gagaev and Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Geroi iz pesni', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 6 September 1990, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>53</sup> Like the battle on the river Valerik in 1840, preserved for posterity in a poem by Lermontov – Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Bitva pod Valerikom', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 25 October 1990, p. 8; *idem*, 'Orskhoitsevidel Lermontov', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 14 December 1989, p. 7 – and

the campaign in Kabarda in 1846 – *idem*, 'Pokhod Shamilya v Kabardu', *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 22, 28, 29 November 1991, p. 3 (of each issue).

- <sup>54</sup> Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Chechenskaya oblast' imamata', *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 23 November 1990, p. 4. And cf. Yavus Ahmadov, 'Imamat Shamilya – gosudarstvo gortsev Chechni i Dagestana', in Aydaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 177-184.
- <sup>55</sup> Thus a review by Aslanbek Kadiev of several books on the recent war in Chechnya sent over several e-mail discussion lists. Kadiev is the representative of the Republic of Ichkeria to several West European states.
- <sup>56</sup> Eiman Jafar's (ejafar@csd.uwm.edu) message on the Discussion List about Chechnya (chechnya@Plearn.bitnet) of 24 January 1995.
- <sup>57</sup> Usmanov, *op. cit.*, p. 71. And cf. Dolkhan Khozhaev, 'Baysungur Benoevskii', *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 17 August 1989; *idem*, "'Svoboda ili smert'" ili "intrigi imamskogo dvora", *Komsomol'skoe plemya*, 21, 28 June 1990, pp. 10, 8 respectively; *idem*, 'Rytsar' svobody', *Groznenskii rabochii*, 8 November 1989, p. 3.
- <sup>58</sup> A Chechen historian expressed the opinion that the Chechens have been unable to unite unless led by an external (i.e., non-Chechen) leader – Mayrbek Vachagaev, *Chechnya v kavkazskoi voine, 1816-1859* (unpublished thesis, Moscow, 1995), pp. 84-85. Shamil's 'foreignness' may have supplied legitimization for Dudaev in another sphere: Dudaev belonged to a clan which is partly Chechen and partly Ingush. He could, therefore, have been depicted by some of his opponents as an outsider. The example of Shamil and interpretations like Vachagaev's might have turned his dubious Chechen credentials into an advantage. Vachagaev was formerly Press Secretary to President Maskhadov. In July 1999 he was appointed Chechen representative in Moscow. He was arrested in October 1999 by the Russian authorities.
- <sup>59</sup> The Avars form about 27% of the population of Daghestan, and are the largest and most dominant of its 12 autochthonous titular nationalities. Shamil, like his two predecessors, was an Avar.
- <sup>60</sup> Daghestan is the most favoured candidate for union with Chechnya on several counts: (1) it is the largest of the republics of the Northern Caucasus in terms of territory as well as population and – numerically as well as proportionately – has the smallest Russian population; (2) it is the historical centre of Islam in the Northern Caucasus. Daghestan therefore carries more weight than any other republic in the region and may sweep others along in its wake. (3) Daghestan is in the throes of an acute economic and social crisis; (4) it also shares with Chechnya the memories (and perhaps the ethos) of the long, joint resistance to Russia and of the united Imamate under Shamil. It might, therefore, be more easily persuaded to separate from Russia than other republics in the Northern Caucasus. (5) Last but not least, Daghestan is adjacent to Chechnya and borders on the Caspian Sea. A decolonized Daghestan – whether independent or united with Chechnya – would grant Chechnya an outlet to the sea, enhance its political and economic independence and multiply its chances of achieving recognition for its sovereignty.
- <sup>61</sup> RIA-Novosti, 21 July 1997. For further details, see Moshe Gammer, 'Islam and Politics in the North Eastern Caucasus (Daghestan and Chechnya)', in Muhiaddin Mesbahi (ed.), *Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (tentative title; forthcoming).
- <sup>62</sup> Dudaev won with 90% of the votes, representing 64.6% of the electorate.
- <sup>63</sup> Reuters, 14 December 1995.
- <sup>64</sup> The fact that Dudaev's burial took place under a shroud of secrecy and the body was not shown caused many to doubt the official announcement of his death. According to some rumours he was wounded and spirited away for medical treatment abroad. According to others, his death was staged so as to allow negotiations between the nationalist authorities and Moscow (which

refused to negotiate with Dudaev). There are still people who believe that Dudaev will return when the time is ripe.

- <sup>65</sup> See Gammer, 'The Qadiriyya in the Northern Caucasus', *op. cit.*
- <sup>66</sup> Yavus Ahmadov, "'Syn Kishi" (O znamenitom dvizhenii Kunta-Khadzhi)', *Respublika*, 11 July 1991; Vahit Akaev, 'Ilskhan-Yu'rtara Hazha', *Daymohk*, 14 January 1992; *idem*, 'O religiozno-nravstvennykh vozzreniyakh sheikha Kunta-Khadzhi', *Golos Chechenskoi Respubliki*, 16 September 1992; *idem*, 'Religiozno-nravstvennie vozzreniya sheikha Kunta-Khadzhi Kishieva', in Vahit Akaev *et al.* (eds), *Iz istorii Islama v Checheno-Ingushetii*, Groznyi, 1992, pp. 45-52; *idem*, 'Sheikh Kunta Khadzhi – velikomuchenik', *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 26 March 1991; *idem*, *Sheikh Kunta Khadzhi: Zhizn' i uchenie*, Groznyi, 1994; *idem*, 'Zikrizm i zikristy', *Respublika*, 16 September 1992; K. Chokaev, 'Kunta-Haja a, ts'unan zama a', *Leninan Neg*, 1990; D. Kagermanov, 'Ustazan h'oq'eh' diytsa...', *Daymohk*, 16 January 1991; S.-Kh. Nunuev, 'Kishin Kunta-Haja a, tahanlera de a', *Leninan Neg*, 20 May 1990; Tutuev, V., 'Vovshashka h'ovsa...', *Daymohk*, 17 July 1991; A. Utsiev, 'Qhin tsqa a Kunta-Ha'jekh la'tsna', *Daymohk*, 31 May 1990.
- <sup>67</sup> For the place of the Qadiriyya in politics see Gammer, 'Islam and Politics in the North-Eastern Caucasus (Daghestan and Chechnya)', *op. cit.*
- <sup>68</sup> V. G. Gadzhiev and Kh. Kh. Ramazanov (eds), *Dvizhenie gortsev Severo-Vostochnogo Kavkaza v 20 - 50kh gg. XIX v. Sbornik dokumentov*, Makhachkala, 1959, p. 58, document No. 32, Letter from Nicholas I to Paskevich, 25 September [7 October] 1829.
- <sup>69</sup> Usmanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72. Vachagaev calculates Chechen losses between 1830 and 1860 at over 500,000 – *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- <sup>70</sup> The destruction of the forests is regarded by many Chechens as an act of 'ecologicide'.
- <sup>71</sup> 'Pis'ma Rostislava Andreyevicha Faddeyeva k rodnym', *Russkii vestnik*, 1897, No. 10, pp. 63-64.
- <sup>72</sup> Yavus Ahmadov, *Dvizhenie Kunta Khadzhi*, paper delivered at the First International Conference on Shamil and the Anti-Colonial Struggle in the Caucasus, Oxford, March 1991, p. 11.
- <sup>73</sup> Vachagaev, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.
- <sup>74</sup> Usmanov, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- <sup>75</sup> For the deportation of the Chechens and other nationalities, see Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities*, London, MacMillan, 1970; Alexandre M. Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples*, New York, 1978. For further sources, see Brian Glyn Williams, *Commemorating 'The Deportation': The Role of Memorialization and Collective Memory in the 1994-96 Chechen War*, Paper Presented at the Fourth Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, 15-17 April 1999.
- <sup>76</sup> As late as 1988, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR stated in an article in the ideological journal of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that 'a good many [...] traitors and enemies of Soviet power,' in the ChIASSR 'formed terrorist gangs, committed acts of sabotage and assassinated party and Soviet activists'. This 'insignificant minority [...] stabbed primarily their own people in the back' since their 'dirty crimes were among the causes of the tragedy which befell the Chechens and Ingush – their expulsion from their homes' – Kh. Kh. Bokov, 'Formirovat' internatsionalistskie ubezhdeniya', *Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1988, p. 89.
- <sup>77</sup> E.g., Yu. Aytbaev, 'O belom skakune, kotorogo chechentsy ne darili Adol'fu Gitleru', in Yu. Aytbaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 278-284.
- <sup>78</sup> See, for example, Kh. Gakaev, 'Chechentsy v boyakh protiv nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov', in Aydaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 235-242; A. Oleinik, 'Doblestnyi rytsar' Kavkaza', *ibid.*, pp. 245-251; Yu. Aydaev, 'Pobratimstvo (o vstrechakh s geroyami Sovetskogo Soyuza P. P. Brikelem i M. A. Visaitovym)', *ibid.*, pp. 251-256.

- <sup>79</sup> E.g., Khalid Oshaev, *Brest – oreshk ognennyi. Khudozhestvenno-dokumental'naya povest'*, Groznyi, 1990.
- <sup>80</sup> The first publication to appear in print was Mahomed Jurgaev and Oleg Jurgaev, *Krugi ada*, Groznyi, 1989, published at the expense of the authors. In 1991 books were published by the government of the republic and by the association of Chechens and Ingush in Kazakhstan – Ministerstvo kul'tury ChIASSR and Checheno-Ingushskii gosudarstvennyi ob'edinennyi muzei, *Zhivaya pamyat'. O zhertvakh stalinskikh repressii*, Groznyi, 1991 and L. Yahyaev (ed.), *Belaya kniga. Iz istorii vyseleniya chechentsev i ingushei, 1944-1957 gg. Vospominaniya, arkhivnye materialy, fotodokumenty*, Groznyi and Alma Ata, 1991. Also see Hamzat Yandarbiev, *Prestuplenie veka*, Groznyi, 1992; *Repressirovannye narody: istoriya i sovremennost'*. (Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii Rossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, 28-29 maya 1992 g. Elista, 1992; E. Isaev, 'Iz 'osoboi papki Stalina.' O deportatsii chechentsev i ingushei', in Aytbaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 261-274. For further publications, not available to me, see Williams, *op. cit.*
- <sup>81</sup> Usmanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83; Yu. Aytbaev and A. Aytbaev, 'Tyazhkii put' k millionu', in Yu. Aytbaev (ed.), pp. 228-232.
- <sup>83</sup> It only managed to publish an account of the massacre: *Khaibakh: sledstvie prodolzhaetsya*, Groznyi, 1994. See also Said-Emin Bitsoev, 'Khaibakh – aul, kotorogo net', in Yu. Aytbaev (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 275-277. For the commemoration of the 'deportation' see Williams, *op. cit.*
- <sup>84</sup> According to testimonies by Chechens this was done only in places where Slavs were settled. In places settled by other Caucasians, the graveyards were not only preserved but looked after.
- <sup>85</sup> Sebastian Smith, *Allah's Mountains. Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus*, London, Tauris, 1998, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
- <sup>87</sup> See, for example, the title of Usmanov's introduction (*op. cit.*, pp. 5-31): 'Chetvertyi genotsid' (The Fourth Genocide). And see a list of Russian war crimes on pp. 168-220.
- <sup>88</sup> See A. Blinushov, *By All Available Means: the Russian Federation Ministry of Internal Affairs Operation in the Village of Samashki*, Moscow, 1996.
- <sup>89</sup> The Dudaev administration concentrated all the Soviet archives – historical, government, party and KGB – under one roof at the State Archives. The collection included the files on the 'deportation' and the lives of the Chechens and Ingush in Kazakhstan, saved from the archives of the Kazakh SSR in the 1970s (where they were destined for destruction).
- <sup>90</sup> For its collections and their importance, see O. P. Orlov and A. V. Cherkasov, *Rossiia-Chechnya: tsep' oshibok i prestuplenii*, Moscow, 1998, p. 261.
- <sup>91</sup> No doubt the experience of other peoples (such as the Jews and the Armenians) who had been victims of genocide and then tried – with varying degrees of success, it must be remembered – to get international sympathy and support for their statehood must have played a part.
- <sup>92</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* The term was coined by Vamik D. Volkan, 'On Chosen Trauma', *Mind and Human Interaction*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1992, pp. 3-19. According to Volkan, if a victimized community is unable to overcome a traumatic event it passes on this task to future generations, together with the resolve 'never again!'
- <sup>93</sup> In fact, almost any attempt to shape group identity is bound to use these motives, a fact which should be interpreted by the tools of social psychology rather than those of history.
- <sup>94</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Arkhipelag GULag, 1918-1956. Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniya*, Part 6, Chapter 4.