

# ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ ОРУЖИЕВЕДЕНИЕ

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**TO CUT OR TO STAB? THE USE OF THE KINJAL AMONG CAUCASIAN PEOPLE IN THE 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Abstract**

The article describes some aspects of the kinjal use in the Caucasus in the 19th century. It considers technique possibilities of cutting and stabbing strikes with the kinjal in detail.

As an example, which demonstrates the cultural meanings of the cutting strike, the article takes the situation of the single combat between two warriors equal in their standing. The conclusion has been made that the cutting strike expresses a superiority of the fighting spirit and the right to exercise power.

As a cultural context manifesting the cultural points related to the stabbing strike the article considers the situation of the fighting against the beast – a case in which any equality between the warrior and the beast is impossible.

There are certain examples demonstrating possibilities and risks of the stabbing strike in regard to the stronger opponent.

The conclusion has been made that the two shown types of the single combat are different and are even opposed to each other but they both assist to promote the heroic pattern in the culture.

**Keywords**

**Caucasian kinjal, stabbing strike, cutting strike, heroic warrior, single combat, duel, fighting with a beast**

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<sup>1</sup> There are theses of the report made in 2005 in the base of the present article. [Sheremetjev, 2006]. Significant additions and clarifications introduced in the initial text.

### **The pragmatics**

Caucasian dagger is a weapon with straight double-edged blade with an average length around 30—50 cm [Astvatsaturyan, 1995: 9]. This size of the blade allows to stab as well as to cut with the dagger. Such type of dagger was utilized in the Middle East region since ancient times. According to the images of II—I millenniums BC found in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, the dagger was utilized during fighting mainly for stabbing in the abdomen, solar plexus or throat. Generally the attack was accompanied with the left-hand hold — grabbing a hold of the enemy's hair or arm. At the end of the fight the warriors finished defeated enemy with the dagger, and after cut off or cut off the head or arm of the killed enemy [Gorelik, 1993: 18; tab. V, images 1—5; tabl. VI, image 6]. It seems that this scheme of utilization of the dagger is directly linked with the weapon characteristics, and therefore it is logically expected to face with areas and times the dagger of similar sizes were applied. Patterns to trace similar algorithm of actions are possible on the base of Caucasian data of the 19th century.

*Efficiency of the stabbing in torso.* It was revealed after the battle near the fortress Gerzel-aul on July 15, 1825 (here and after all the dates are old style), during which the troops under the command of lieutenant-general Lisanevich and major-general Grekov raise the siege of the fortress, that inhabitants of Kumik aul Aksai took participation in the attack despite that shortly before they had expressed submission. Then 318 best residents of Aksai were brought to the fortress on July 16 by the order of Lisanevich. They were all disarmed, only few were allowed to leave their daggers. Due to the good knowledge of tatar language Lisanevich reproached these people of betrayal with using of abusive expressions, threatened to hang the ones and punish with rods the others. Then the lieutenant-general personally started to call the names of the most guilty. The third of the named, mullah Uchar-Hodge, refused to go out of the crowd, and under the threat of physical violence he pounced on the officers with dagger in the hand, major-general Grekov was killed instantly, and Lisanevich got fatal injuries, which caused his death after several days. This case became widely known, because as a result not a single general was left on the Caucasian line. According to the descriptions [Dubrovin, 1888:

536—537; Potto, 1885: 166—167], the both generals perished because of stab wounds in torso.

The highlanders were quite aware of the danger of punches in torso. The wounds in the chest, from the neck to the waist, were considered by the Khevsurs as the most dangerous wounds. During the hassles between the representatives of different related families with an armed fight (“chra-chriloba”) at the end, the enemies were supposed to show restraint and composure, beware of inflicting fatal injuries and causing a blood feud by that. To strike in chest and abdomen as well as in shoulders and “joints of the legs below the knee” were avoided in such cases [Elashvili, 1956: 27]. It is natural to assume that armed with a dagger warrior in case of desire to kill an enemy would try to wound in torso, and more likely it would be exactly stabbing, because cutting was supposed to be less dangerous as it is harder to damage internal organs applying it. Thus, according to the customs of the Chechens, there was payment of 5 cows for cut with dagger wound, and of 10 cows – for the stab, as well as for the wound by firearms [Zisserman, 18796: 439].

*Necessity of limitation of enemy’s mobility.* In 1835 there was an attempt to assassinate Captain Levashov, the commandant of the Voskresenskaya fortress located on the Kuban line. At the public meeting in one of the Circassian villages one aged haji from the princely family Hamurzin was reproached for that he is no longer able to participate in military raids. The offended old man, armed just with a dagger, galloped immediately to the nearest Russian fortress and claimed, that he wanted to speak with the commandant. Levashov came out of the gate without taking any weapon, because he considered arrived man as an emissary, sent from the line. Unexpectedly haji attacked the captain with a bare dagger, “catching his arm and trying to stab him directly in the chest”, and Levashov was forced to dodge punches strikes. Eventually the commandant ran into the field, the old haji was far behind him when running, and he was shot by soldiers [Tornau, 1864: 452—453]. On October 24, 1851 in the case near Tyumen-Chogly aul in Dagestan, one of the mureeds attacked with a dagger in the hand the lieutenant Svechin, but “he managed to escape to the side, so that the dagger only grazed his arm” [Zisserman, 18796: 152]. After inflicting mortal wounds to the generals Lisanevich and Grekov, Uchar-Hodge in Gherzel-aul tried to stab the elder of the Aksai aul, Musa

Khasaev, who dodged by “squatting” [Potto, 1885: 166]. Given examples show, that it is possible to dodge the dagger, that is why immobilizing the enemy in the place with the left-hand hold was so important for the attacker.

*Finishing and dismembering of the defeated enemies' bodies.* Around 140 Georgian policemen and Russian soldiers under the command of Prince Nicholas Kobulov were attacked and killed near the village Belokan on May 8, 1850. A squad, chasing the retreating Lezghins, was attacked on a narrow path along the river, where it was possible to go only one per row. Actually the terrain conditions provided limited mobility, what favored the use of daggers. There were found dozens of penetrating dagger wounds on some of the bodies, which were certainly a consequence of finishing the defeated enemy. Besides, the Lezghins cut wrists of right hands from the all dead bodies, and beheaded some of them. [Zisserman, 1879a: 333, 334].

Usually famous people were beheaded to proof their death and personal courage. Thus on February 8, 1806 during the ceremony of handing over the keys of Baku city the people of Hussein Kuli Khan, the ruler of Baku, killed with pistols and beheaded with daggers the chief in Georgia and on the Caucasian line, the General of Infantry, Prince Tsitsianov P.D. [Bronevskiy, 1889: 508]. Algorithm of actions in the cases with not very important personality of the victim was less complicated. During the raid of the Lezghins on the village Kvareli in February or early March of 1845 one of the attackers striked with a dagger in the head of interpreter Sukiyasov, who "dropped dead" after this. Lezghin cut off his hand wrist and gone, but after he mentioned that left hand wrist was mistakenly taken by him, and came back to cut off the right hand wrist instead. Arrived soldiers drove the Highlanders away from the village. It is interesting, that the ill-fated Sukiyasov "thanks to his youth and strong nature" managed to recover and later he became a quarterly supervisor of Telavi, where Zisserman A.L. saw him "with the gloves attached to his both hands and tightly stuffed with wool". [Zisserman, 1879a: 64, 65]. Also the Tushins and the Khevsurs had tradition to cut off the right hand wrists of the killed enemies. Thereby Tornau F.F. made ironical remark: "The Europeans may consider this custom to be a bit indelicate, but in the Caucasus, where many times we saw cut hands as well as the cut heads, it was judged less strictly" [Tornau, 1869a: 440].

### **The heroics**

Despite persuasive evidence the utilization of the dagger is not limited by the mentioned above scheme. We will try to study consequentially the possibilities, left behind the described model.

*Cutting.* Famous surgeon Pirogov N.I. was practicing while siege and seizure of Dagestan aul Salty in 1847. According to his data, the daggers “are used by them the same way as shashkas, with flourish”, wherein the daggers cause deeper wounds, although not as extended. For example, recruit Zozulya got five cut wounds with a dagger. Two wounds on the head penetrated the parietal bone without damaging the dura mater. The wound on his back with the length of 12 fingers across and the width of the palm, penetrates through all the muscles between the 11th and 12th rib until the peritoneum. The other wound with the length of 3 inches penetrates under his armpit between the 7th and 8th ribs, wherein the ribs were slightly cut. [Pirogov, 1849: 5, 9, 127]. Alexandre Dumas-father, visited Caucasus at the end of 1858 — beginning 1859, conveys his impressions about seen by him killed Lezghins near Geli village the following way: “The bullet goes through or remains in the body, forming a wound, where you can only push the little finger - it will just turn blue around. But the dagger wounds are real massacre: some had their skulls cut out, the hands were almost separated from the torso, the chests were wounded so deep that you could even see the hearts” [Dumas, 1988: 90].

It is clear that to reach such result you should also have well forced strike besides the dagger itself. There are some data about the methods of demonstration and examination of the appropriate skills. In 1841 Giray-Khan published a narrative, composed on the base of Circassian data, where the 4 years old son of the killed personage is cutting melons and watermelons in anticipation of revenge [Giray-Khan, 1989: 147]. This practice is not only an artistic image, what is proved by ethnographic data of 1880-s years, relating to the Mountain Jews. As an entertainment men gathered on the aul square and on a bet cut with a dagger watermelons, set in a row [Anisimov, 1888: 72]. Obviously such targets imitate the human head, which represents a difficult target by itself. The cases with interpreter Sukiyasov and recruit Zozulya shows clearly, that it is difficult to cut the head. This

increases the value of an indirect data about a properly executed strike. Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy A.A. in the narrative "Ammalat Bek", written in 1830-31, gives a precise detail: the cutting with a dagger in the head "with the full force" was "so cruel that the dagger reached the teeth of the lower jaw" [Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy, 1995: 58].

However, we can find more often reference about beheading than about cutting the head in literature. Zisserman A.L. in his memoirs about his service in the mountainous Georgian during 1844—48 noted, that "cutting off the lamb and cow heads with a dagger by the first strike<sup>2</sup>" was considered as agility, and this skill, together with success in the races, *dzhigitovka*<sup>3</sup>, shooting the target and knowledge of the language made the position of Russian officials rather noticeable among the local population [Zisserman, 1879a: 204]. Describing the youthful cutting with a dagger, Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy A.A. anticipates the reader's distrust and makes the following note: "The distrust of the Europeans to the fact that it is possible to cut off the head with a dagger is very funny; you have to spend a week in Asia to be convinced of the opposite" [Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy, 1995: 41]. However, in Western Europe beheading with a weapon with a relatively short blade was not something completely unknown. At least in England in the XVII-th century there was a custom among the hunters of beheading the caught deer with a dagger stab<sup>4</sup> [Blackmore, 2006: 53].

*The ideology of the cutting superiority.* Obviously, you have to possess necessary skills and remarkable strength to implement such impressive cutting with a dagger. Here is a characteristic of the literary personage of the Abkhazian *abrek*<sup>5</sup>: "He is the devil! He moves the bullet aside! He cuts the body of a pig in two parts with a dagger, like with an ax!.." [Vozba, 1991: 128.] The given above quotation shows, that the ability to cut the body of a pig in two parts with a dagger is at the same level with such extraordinary qualities of the hero, as invulnerability and the

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<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to be aware, that the mountain breeds of the cows have a relatively small size.

<sup>3</sup> *Dzhigitovka* is a demonstration of horse riding skills for military and sport purposes.

<sup>4</sup> The word *hanger* was used in original version, which could be translated in Russian as 'dagger' or 'dirk'. This term refers to all the varieties of short swords or long knives for hunting and travel [Blackmore, 2006: 37].

<sup>5</sup> *Abrek* – a man who is forced to leave his home and family because of the blood feud. It can also mean: outlaw, rover, robber or even a hero.

ability to be fearsome. This context shows that dismembering cutting with a dagger was considered as an external manifestation of the special status of a warrior, his mental superiority.

Contemporary anthropologists and linguists fixed the ideas about that self-respecting warrior must use dagger exactly for cutting. Thus, the Vainakh<sup>6</sup> considered stabbing with a dagger as a great shame and inability to fight and to use weapon, "the easiest way to defeat the enemy". Vainakh, who stabbed someone with a dagger, was called "the bastard, stabbed with a dagger" [Aliroev, 1990: 277]. Adyghe people<sup>7</sup> young warriors were taught to hit with a dagger downwards instead of stabbing with a dagger, which "was considered reprehensible and unworthy of a knight-warrior" [Mafedzev, 1986: 122]. Writers, experts of a local life, repeats the scholars. A literature hero, the Abkhazian, teaches young boys: "Remember! It is forbidden to stab the enemy with a dagger. This is a craft of thieves. You should tightly grip the handle, swing and hit downwards, cut!.." [Gamsakhurdia, 1964: 67]. According to the given information, the stabbing with a dagger was supposed to be "too easy" while performing, that is during the duel. The warrior, according to the moral rules, should not follow only utilitarian purposes to achieve victory with the most simple and effective way. Probably the armed combat was considered not as a set of more or less effective technical methods, but as a way to demonstrate and establish the supremacy of the warrior spirit; not as the *technology*, but *psichomachia*. The purest form of such approach reveals itself in an individual duel, so the answer to the question why cutting with a dagger is "more correctly" than stabbing should be searched in the concept of martial arts.

***The duel: status determination.*** In general, the duel could be considered as a method for establishing a particular hierarchy. The duel is a meeting of the parties which claims victory, and they are *equal* in this sense; the result of the duel breaks equality: the winner and loser are determined. Delicate balance through the designation and resolution of a conflict is transformed into a more stable hierarchical structure. From practical point of view the question of power could be resolved in this manner, what is confirmed by the content of Kabardian legend "Lachine-

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<sup>6</sup> The Vainakhs - linguistic term for two related people – the Chechens and the Ingush

<sup>7</sup> Adyghe people is a group of peoples in the northern Caucasus, who speak the Adyghe language.



winner". The action of the legend takes place in "the old days" in a mythical past, where, however, there are quite enough historically true Kabardians<sup>8</sup> and Kalmyks<sup>9</sup>. Struggle of the Peluans (from Iranian *peklevan* — a hero, a fighter) takes central part in the legend; wherein the Kalmyks, bringing its peluans, "arrived with an army", and the party, lost during the duel, paid a tribute. Following phrase was typical for the Kalmyk fighters: "If there is no longer Peluans in the villages, we should immediately place there our rulers". Thus, the loss in a fighting duel is equivalent to the establishment of vassal relations as a result of military defeat, and refusal to fight means the loss of subjectivity. As the duel of peluans is symbolically equal to battle, then it can cause death of the loser as a result.

For example, Lachine, who for struggling for the Kabardians, tore off the hands of one peluan, "pierced through the belly" with her finger of the other, and it is logic that both of them died as a result [Kabardian folklore, 1936: 67—69]. Besides, the Kabardians collected all the weapons and ammunition from the defeated Kalmiks, let them go home only in shirts, that is, dealt with them like with dead [Dubrovin, 1871: 219]. In the legend "Fight with Totresh" the defeated person is not only killed, but dismembered: his head is cut off [Kabardian folklore, 1936: 26]. Thus, the duel resolved the question of power (status) according to the cultural model, and death is a direct consequence of the loss, as if it fixes the result of the duel.

This standard model has been implemented during the duel between Mstislav and Rededi<sup>10</sup>, which is usually dated back to 1022. The combat was openly occurring in front of the warriors of both sides who were interested in solving the political quarrel, and was being perceived by the contemporaries not only as a ritual of transferring the power. Since power was not considered as something abstract, separated from the holder of the power, its transfer was being implemented in a visible and emotional form of initiation of the winner to the blood of the defeated person, to his vital (physical and spiritual) force. Thus, the death of one of the leaders was

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<sup>8</sup> The Kabardians are one of the Adyghe people living in the central part of the northern Caucasus.

<sup>9</sup> The Kalmyks – a Mongolian speaking people, which appeared in the steppes of northern Caucasus at the end of 16th – beginning of 17th century.

<sup>10</sup> Mstislav Vladimirovich (983-1036) nicknamed the Brave and the Bold was the earliest attested prince of Tmutarakan and Chernigov in Kievan Rus. Rededi – a prince of the medieval tribe of the Kassogians, which are considered to be ancestors of Adyghe people in modern literature.

inevitable. Having won in the duel against the prince of Kasogs Mstislav gained authority over all Adygea community, which recognized him as their sovereign. It is no accidentally that chronicle does not say about the resistance of the Kasogs against Mstislav after the duel [Gadlo, 1994: 88, 89].

**The duel: demonstration of the valor.** In 1991, there was published Russian translation of Abkhazian novel written by Vozba A.B. "Hadzharat Kyahba", which referred to the duel on the burka<sup>11</sup>. "Do you ask me about the felt cloak, which is thrown? This is a very ancient custom. It is a big rarity in our days... <...> Two warriors to stand up on the thrown in front of them felt cloak and resolve the dispute. With a dagger, a sword or a bullet at a choice. But without violating the borders of the felt cloak! <...> In most of the cases there are two coffins as a result. And it is very rare – if there is only one, by happy coincidence [Vozba, 1991: 244]. The following data we can find in the work of Marzey A.S. which was released in 2000: "One of the known manners of duel the Circassians called "ШIаkIyэ κIапэ" (sch'ak'we [ШIаkIyэ] — a felt cloak, kiape [κIапэ] — an end). They were fighting with daggers, standing on the edge of the felt cloak spread out on the ground, wherein the stabbing was forbidden and only cutting was allowed. If one of the opponents violated the edges of the felt cloak, then the other had right to stab him" [Marzey, 2000: 179]<sup>12</sup>. Finally, the article of Bgazhnokov B.H. was published in 2013, and it was devoted to the duels in Circassian traditions itself. The author reports the important details: the duel was called *sch'ak'wezepidze* [шIаkIyэзэпыдзэ], what literally means "hurling of the felt cloak"; the one who didn't take the challenge was recognized as defeated, and in this case his opponent was allowed to take all his arming; it was forbidden during the duel to stab with a dagger, to grab, to beat with fists and feet, as well as violate the edges of the felt cloak; if one of the opponents violated the edges of the felt cloak, then the other had right to use stabbing hit in return. In the article there are references to the data,

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<sup>11</sup> A burka is a coat made of felt or karakul characteristic generally of wayfarer and particularly for equestrian.

<sup>12</sup> These data are accompanied with the reference to the extracts from the book of Dubrovin N.F., included in the collection "Materials for the history of the Circassian nation", published in Nalchik in 1991. There is no this edition in available to me library collections, but the book of Dubrovin N.F. itself is well known, and there is no mentions about the duel on the felt cloak in it.

got from four informants of venerable age from the different villages of Kabardino-Balkaria, and, besides, some of the informants personally witnessed the duel on the felt cloak. Based on the stories of witnesses, the twenties of the XX century should be considered as the upper limit of existence of such duel [Bgazhnokov, 2013: 86—87.]

We don't possess sufficient quantity of reliable evidence to consider this type of martial arts as a historical phenomenon, but we can consider the given above data as an image of the heroic duel documented in folklore and practice. We will highlight some aspects of this image which are important for our subject, and, of course, we will start with the felt cloak.

As shown by special studies, the Caucasus nations associated important cultural meanings with the felt cloak, which is a constant attribute of the horseman-warrior. Particularly, the felt cloak was symbolically correlated with the space itself, in particular - with an allocated space, including a sacred space [Botyakov, 2004: 191—193]. Accordingly, the duel on the felt cloak was an extraordinary event, emphatically distinguished out of usual space and time. It is possible to say that not just unusual, but in some manner an ideal space, rules and state were opposed to the usual space, rules and state. The rules of the duel on the felt cloak included a number of restrictions: the inability of breaking the distance, maneuver, control the enemy by capturing. That is, the participants of the duel refused to use most of the technical actions that allow to gain an advantage in the tactical situation. Only cutting was allowed as a technical action, wherein it was almost impossible to dodge the oncoming cut. It is clear that cutting with a dagger doesn't imply the possibility to "endure" the enemy, however, the warrior with the outstanding qualities might have been staying in a particular state, in which the received wounds didn't have significance. In fact, the whole situation of the duel on the felt cloak is designed in a way to demonstrate the possibility of staying in the heroic, furious state, and eliminate everything that can disturb such state.

It "is read" quite clearly within the frames of this approach the opposing of cutting and stabbing. Cutting is ideally suited for the demonstration of valor, fearlessness, neglect injuries, and stab in its turn sort of darkens, disturbs to show the valor fully because of its "excess" efficiency. Bgazhnokov B.H. notes not by chance, that ap-

proved limits concerning the duel on the felt cloak reduced the probability of death, without excluding the serious wounds and mutilations [Bgazhnokov, 2013: 87]. For the heroes it was more significant to outdo the opponent, or at least not to allow to become surpassed, than to kill. Accordingly, with regard to those who can not pass the test, who went beyond a fair duel, restrictions are canceled: you don't have to win unworthy person, you can just kill him.

*The duel: affirmation of the standards.* Extra nuances of stabbing and cutting perception are demonstrated by the famous incident, occurred with Major Evdokimov, future Earl and General of Infantry, being a Koysubulinsk bailiff at the moment and managing highlanders' communities, situated along the rivers Avar and Kazik-umyh Kojusu. On March 6, 1842 Evdokimov N.I. seized with a small squad Untsukul village, where a garrison of 80 mureeds<sup>13</sup> of Shamil established shortly before this. It happened that one of Untsukul mureeds could run to Evdokimov N.I. from the back and stab two times with a dagger - in the left side of the body and in the right shoulder. Further the evidence from the sources are different. According to the report of Lieutenant-General Feze, written the day after the event, the people of Untsukul immediately cut the mureed, as well as they killed his mother and sister, and ravaged his house [Akty, 1884: 354]; the personal actions of the major Evdokimov are not mentioned. There are extra details given in the article of a lieutenant-colonel Borisevich, published in the Sytin Military Encyclopedia. According to Borisevich A.T., Evdokimov N.I. after stabs with a dagger, "without being confused drew his saber, turned quickly round and cut the highlander diagonally, from the shoulder to the mid-chest". This incident impressed the highlanders a lot. A skilful *hacim* (doctor) was brought from far for the unconscious Evdokimov, whose efforts and diligent care helped the Koysubulinsk bailiff to start new expedition after two months already [Military Encyclopedia, 1912: 276].

We will leave aside the question, how it happened "in reality". We will try to study the described situation as a system of images, wherein we will assume, that the system of images is of non-random nature. Obviously, the actions of the mureed are directly opposite to the logic of the heroic duel — he attacks unexpectedly from

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<sup>13</sup> Murid – here: an adherent of religious and social movement which had the holy war as one of its purposes. The muridizm was an essential factor of Caucasus wars in 1820-1860.

behind and stabs with a dagger two times. The base for such actions could be found in a fundamental inequality of the parties in the conflict. Evdokimov N.I. was a chief of a military squad, which occupied Untsukul with the support of local residents, the resistance of the mureeds were suppressed, some of them were killed — the situation itself excluded any competition in valor. Murid went to his death trying to kill the main enemy and demonstrating irreconcilable desire to inflict the maximum damage to the enemy. In response bailiff Evdokimov not only showed truly outstanding warrior qualities, but he applied them in a different, heroic, logic of actions: he ignored a serious wound, turned to face the attacker and killed him with one stab. A heroic norm of behavior, manifested to the world instantly instead of any other form of behavior, regardless of its reasonableness, causes unheroic and in this way lower status. It is obvious that, except the other circumstances, the respect to Evdokimov and anger toward the unfortunate murderer from the locals could be explained by "normative" actions of the one and turned to be "unworthy" on this background the behavior of the other opponent.

It is necessary to add, that claim to heroic status, that is to the superiority, is synonymous to the claim for power. Accordingly, the implementation of the power is somehow connected with the heroic images. Apparently, it is not by chance Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy A.A. made remark about Avar khan, who had the right to order his nukers<sup>14</sup> to cut with daggers any resident of Hunzah, as well as even any traveler [Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy, 1995: 24]. We see that a dagger is considered primarily as a cutting weapon in the situation of establishing the power and maintenance the order.

Summing up the interim, it is possible to say that the duel supposes the facing of opponents equal to each other by their status; during the duel statuses are changing - the winner and the defeated party are being determined; the implementation of the dominant status is a manifestation of power. Cutting with a dagger expresses the idea of the superiority of the warrior spirit, asserting masculinity in its highest in terms of military culture manifestations.

### **The archaic**

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<sup>14</sup> Nuker is an original Mongolian word which indicates a warrior or an armed squire.

It would be unforgivable to pass by one story while discussing the use of a dagger in the Caucasus in the XIX-th century. At our disposal there are two evidence, related to the 1830's. Tornau F.F., being extremely accurate observer, writes about the abreks: "Seeing all the ways to salvation cut, they killed their horses, laid down with a rifle behind their bodies and shoot while it was possible..." [Tornau, 1864: 459]. Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy A.A. describes artistically the same situation: "We will die! We will die! But we will die in glory! — they all shouted, plunging the daggers in the ribs of their horses not to let them become a prey of the enemy, and then, after constructing a shelter out of them, they laid down behind, preparing to meet the attackers with the lead and damask steel" [Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy, 1995: 37]. As it is hard to make any definite conclusions on the base of such limited information concerning the fact, how exactly the hits with a dagger were done in such situation, we will try to study how to perform the slaughter of a horse in general.

*Traditional methods of slaughter the horse.* Leaving aside the ways of killing that don't require the use of a knife or a dagger (such as asphyxiation), we will list in brief the most spread techniques of slaughter the horse in the horse-breeder practice.

The widely known among nomads way of killing, which was specifically used for the slaughter of sheep, can be described as follows. The animal was laid on the ground with belly up and fixed in this position; with a knife in the abdominal part, under the breastbone, they made an incision in the peritoneum; the slaughterer, thrusting his hand into the incision, pierced the diaphragm with the right thumb, and after finding the aorta below the heart in the spine, he tore it. All the blood of the animal merged into the chest cavity; it was forbidden to let blood spilled on the ground. The slaughter was carried out alone or with an assistant. There is the evidence that the horses were killed in this way during sacrifices [Dashinimaev, 2005: 197].

Another method is described like this: the animal was fallen down to the ground and fixed with a rope; they made a transverse incision on the skin in the neck area, and then cut the spinal cord at the site of the connection of the skull to

the spine. Then the animal was bled by incising the jugular vein at the base of the breast [Darzha, 2003: 80].

There's an easier method of slaughter: they wore a bag on the horse's head to cover her eyes, and then stunned her with an ax butt hit in its forehead. When the horse fell, they cut its throat with a sharp knife to release the blood, which was collected in a wooden trough [Dashinimaev, 2005: 198—199].

The slaughter in accordance with the rules of Islam in Russia of the XIX-th century was called "Tatar"; it was made in the urban slaughterhouses as follows. The horse was hobbled by binding its front legs and pulling to them the back foot with a rope, stuck between the front legs. After the fall the animal turned out to be lying on its side with legs outstretched. The slaughterer turned the horse's head with a "throat to noon" and after a preliminary prayer, cut the neck, almost separating the head from the body [Bakhtiyarov, 1905: 136—137].

A rare method of slaughtering the horse is registered in some groups of the northern Altai. The chosen for sacrifice animal was placed in a cage made of poles, where the horse could not turn around. Each of the presented men applied thrust with a knife in the horse's chest until she fell on the ground. Blood was collected in special vessels to be used in subsequent rituals [Hilden, 2000: 86; Belgibaev, 2004: 134].

All the described methods of slaughtering the horse have different socio-cultural value, but in this case we are interested in their common points. Thus, the horse was usually killed not by one man alone; the animal was immobilized previously, often with the help of ropes; slaughter could be divided into two successive phases - a stunning and bleeding; special importance was given to the manipulation with the blood of the slaughtered animal. As we can see, all the main features of slaughter of the horse are unrealizable in the circumstances of a combat. Rigid time limit doesn't leave possibility for sequential implementation of all the inherent steps of "peaceful" ceremony. One gets the impression that the phrase of Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy A.A. "plunging the daggers in the ribs of their horses" isn't only the artistic formula. To check this assumption we turn to the practice of hunting.

*Teriomahiya: a worthy opponent.* Gildenshtedt I.A., who visited Georgia in 1771, acquired a leopard skin in Sadakhlo village (located in the south of present-

day Georgia, almost on the border with Armenia), who attacked two young men and severely bitten them. Young men stabbed the leopard with daggers [Gildenshtedt, 2002: 103]. It is obvious that converge in the melee with a strong and dangerous predator is extremely risky; the dagger in the battle with large animals was used or in the case of unexpected fight, and there were no other weapon near at hand, either as an additional weapon. Karpov B.A, hunting in the Syr-Darya floods at the turn of the 40-s and 50-s of the XIX-th century, refers to the manner of hanging the dagger to the right hand with a rope while shooting the tiger - in the case if the shot didn't stop the predator, there would be no time to get the dagger from its sheath. According to the memoirs of the author, in one case, a wounded tiger was finished off with a shot at close range in the front shoulder blade and simultaneous stab of the dagger: "at the same moment my dagger came in the chest between the ribs to the handle". In the other case, during the persecution of a wounded animal, the tiger dashingly without allowing to make an aimed shot attacked the nearest hunter and crushed him under itself. This case had happy end only thanks to the luck: "During the fall the tiger turned to the feet of Mantyk, whose hands became free thus way, what made him able to grab the hanging on his hand dagger, stab with it into the belly of the tiger, unpicked it widely and then quickly hit it near the shoulder blade. [Verny citizen, 1880a: 80—81; Verny citizen, 1880b: 87, 89]. It is necessary to note that the hunting for a tiger in the dense forest belonged to the category of extreme, it was common that hunters were killed or maimed, but the dagger was highly efficient, what was demonstrated in the hands of a truly outstanding hunter, who later also died in a fight with a tiger.

A wild boar was another animal, traditionally considered to be honorable prey in warrior cultures. Karpov B.A. describes the consequences of aggressive actions of a large wild boar as follows<sup>15</sup>: he wounded a cow on his way, ripped the belly of a small goby, attacked the horse of one of the hunters during the attack", having cut its back leg above the knee to the bone "with one swing of the fangs": "the leg was dangling as a suspended log, the blood was flowing uncontrollably. "The horseman fell, the horse continued to live for a while, but we failed to save it" [Verny citizen, 1880c: 86, 87, 89]. It is clear that the battle with the beast requires a

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<sup>15</sup> The body of this wild boar without bowels weighed 191,2 kg [Verny citizen, 1880c: 96].



fair courage and skill. Cherkasov A.A., the author of the book "Sketches of Eastern Siberia hunter", written by the experience of hunting during the 50s - 60s of the XIX-th century, tells following about the finishing of the wild boars from under the dogs: those of hunters who is "more dexterous and brave, quickly runs up from the back, saddled the beast, and stabbed it with the knife under the shoulder blade". However, just "few daredevils" are able to implement "that stuff" with wild boars: it is too dangerous. Cherkasov recommends to shoot the boar, specifying that it is difficult to shoot at a time when the beast is hold by the dogs who don't allow him to go, because it is easy to hurt the dog [Cherkasov, 1867: 604]. Karpov B.A. mentions two cases of applying the dagger while hunting a wild boar. In the first case the hunters managed to fill it up on the side the wild boar wounded several times with a firearm, and then the "dagger came into its ribs to the handle, near the front shoulder blade". In the second case again two hunters held the wounded boar on the side, one of them was controlling the head of the beast, and the other "sticked the dagger in the throat and cut it together with the veins" [Verny citizen, 1880б: 84, 94].

*Teriomahiya: space and time.* Comparing information about the hunt<sup>16</sup> for dangerous animals with the data about the slaughter of livestock, it is possible to say following. Space and time of teriomahiya are organized in a completely different way in comparison with space and time the sacrifice of peace. This difference becomes apparent just when we sort of "put together" two chronotops. The space of a ceremony to be executed in accordance with the set over rules; the space of a hunt for the warrior is an unknown sphere in some sense, challenge and test. The hunter doesn't build a cage made of poles, where the victim held of the halter will be brought. Attempts to decorate the space of a hunt somehow with the use of pre-organized infrastructure obviously obscure the heroic hunting, make the teriomahiya meaningless<sup>17</sup>.

Hunting members' movements during the struggle with the beast doesn't resemble the ordered actions of participants of the ritual slaughter of the livestock.

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<sup>16</sup> Here and after the term "hunt" means not every hunt, but exactly hunting for animals — the type of hunt, which is the closest to the warrior practices.

<sup>17</sup> I suppose, that periodically expressed opinions, that the "real" hunting can't be considered, for example, shooting the beast from the labaza tower, linked with the studied stories.

The tangle of dogs, attacking the wild boar, from where they fly out "like shorn gloves", according to Cherkasov A.A., is randomly moving on the trampled glade, couldn't be regulated, but offers to the hunter the opportunity to jump into this chaos and become its full party.

The time of hunting is characterized by a special dynamic. If the time of the peace ritual is ordered, but a sort of stretched and divided into separate phases, the time of a real actual battle with animals is compressed and focused. Discrete and sequence of a ritual action guarantees a certain result, but the compressed time of a battle guarantees nothing - it gives just an opportunity. It causes extremely high demands to the hero fighting with the beast: he must seize the opportunity, to find that single point of space-time, where and when a stab will resolve and end the situation.

The tactical situation of teriomahiya dictates certain technical actions. If the slaughter of livestock the immobilization by means of ropes is of a static nature in general, the control of the beast during hunting possesses a situational and dynamic character. The wound could limit the beast, but make it more dangerous; the hunter may distract the beast and thereby allow the other participants to make effective hunting shot, but at the same time he takes a lot of risk; dogs can hold a big beast, but don't guarantee safety to the hunter who is too close. Dynamic control of the animal could be described as the peak point, which is preceded by the rise and followed by a decrease trend. "Instant" nature of control requires quick action, which sort of combines the functions of both immobilization and killing. According to the given data the stab in the chest area, aimed to the heart, perfectly suits this requirement. Thereafter, the formula expressions such as "to stab in the ribs," "to hit in the chest", "to stick under the shoulder blade", "to the handle" and others seem to be completely not accidental.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that the stab to the chest has a high reliability. Indeed, if the whole situation converges at the unique point, appears as if "hanging on one nail", then this nail should be hammered hard. The knife blade, driven between the ribs to the handle, even if doesn't touch the heart, it would affect the lungs with a high degree of probability, what dramatically reduces the possibility of the animal to move. This is the reliability "with margin", which in

the terms of the fight between two heroes may be perceived as an excessive efficiency, the easiest way to resolve the task, which doesn't leave place for the disclosure of the heroic ethos.

*Teriomahiya: inequality of positions.* In the story of Tolstoy N.N. "Plas-tun", which was written according to the publisher in the period of 1853-58, the protagonist says the following phrase: "I didn't kill a single unarmed or unprepared person, like a wild beast, without calling him. I've always been an honest man!" [Tolstoy, 1926: 163]. Two important ideas for our subject are formulated here. Firstly, the position of an honest man assumes that an attack on another person is possible only under the condition that he is armed and ready for confrontation. Secondly, the position of an honest man admits surprise attack on the beast. Indeed, it is about the fact that the fight between to man is considered as a duel of equal parties, and the fight with the beast is considered as a duel of two fundamentally not equal opponents.

Actually, the refusal of the benefit is synonymous to establishing equality. But relatively to the beast no one refuses the benefits. The fact that the beast (and we are talking about a beast worthy for the armed fight), by definition, is stronger than a human. You should only imagine a boar of 200 kg or a tiger, ready to attack, and the question of equality will turn into unnecessary abstraction. Basing on the inequality of the parties in the struggle with the beast it is not only possible but also necessary to involve a team of hunters, the animals-assistants – such as dogs and horses, to apply an effective weapon, and, yes, - to attack unexpectedly.

We can say that we are dealing with two different concepts of fighting or war, one of which finds its exact expression in the teriomahiya, and the other - in a duel of equals. It is interesting, that the concept of the heroic duel asserts itself through the negation of "hunting" ethics that brings a tinge of stages in their relationships. Abaev V.I. in a special article paid attention to the fact that the Ossetian version of Nart epic there are heroes who are willing to use "tricks", and there are heroes that rely only on the "strength", while, in terms of ideology of the "strength", the tricks and gambits look unworthy. In general, Abaev V.I. connects this conflict with the historical development and the transition of social domination from the caste of people, who provided religious and priestly life of society, to the

people, who were responsible for the military welfare of the community [Abaev, 1994: 14, 15, 18]. After designating sort of conflict between the two concepts of the fighting, we will focus on the cultural status of stabbing with a dagger.

*From the weak position: the infantryman vs the horseman.* Tornau F.F. in his memoirs about the expedition to Chechnya in 1832 mentions the following episode: "Our horsemen Georgians and Tatars, sent in front of the squad, cut a couple of dozen infantrymen, who had not managed to get away from the glade in the woods. In these terms, one of them, seeing that he has no way to salvation, grabbed the belt of the horseman Tatar, galloping over him, and stabbed him with a dagger in the side of the body with the power to let the blade go through the body; at the same moment the sword of Tatar lowered on the head of Chechen, and they both rolled dead down on the grass" [Tornau, 1869б: 139—140]. Within the realities of the Caucasus in the XIX-th century the horseman had a distinct advantage in comparison with the infantryman, especially in the dynamics of movement and weight. Besides the initial stronger position the horseman in this case also possessed a situational advantage: Chechen warrior "had no way to escape". Obviously, to attack the horseman from the ground with a dagger, in anticipation of imminent death is, at least, difficult. Nevertheless, the disadvantageous position has been realized with the greatest possible effect, and central place in this case was taken by the stab.

There is similar in a way scene in Lermontov's novel "Hero of Our Time", written in 1838-40: "...an old man was returning from the vain search for his daughter; his Uzdens<sup>18</sup> were far behind, - it was in the twilight, - he was riding with thoughtfully pace, when Kazbich suddenly like a cat dived from behind a bush, jumped on the horse behind him, knocked him to the ground with a dagger strike, grabbed the reins - and was gone..." [Lermontov, 1970: 600]. A comparison with a fragment of Tornau F.F. memories suggests that Lermontov was referring exactly to the stabbing hit. An episode from the Tolstoy N.N. novel represents an extra argument: "He didn't have time to recollect himself as we surrounded him. <...> Nuray started to speak to him in their language. He turned back. Nuray took advantage of this moment, took out the dagger and strike him in the side so hard, that he fell from his horse; the dagger remained in the wound" [Tolstoy, 1926: 131]. In this

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<sup>18</sup> Uzden is original Turkic term for the members of an armed escort.

case all the participants of the scene are the warriors, but the task “to topple the horseman on the ground” is surely solved here with stabbing hit of a dagger.

*From the weak position: a woman vs a man.* In terms of correlation of stabbing and cutting with a dagger there is extremely revealing story that happened in Tbilisi in 1803. By order of the Chief Commander of Georgia and Chief of the Caucasian troops of Prince Tsitsianov major-general Lazarev was taking actions to deport the family of the late Georgian king George XII into Russia. The widow queen Maria was strongly interfering to the actions of Lazarev as agreement with them meant the voluntary refusal of independent status. In the end, under the threat of physical violence, Maria was forced to resort to use extreme measures. Threatening with the daggers the widow queen and her entourage forced the Russian officers to retreat.

Major-general Lazarev took the personal initiative, entered the room of the queen and tried to negotiate with her. "The queen, seeing the general Lazarev, said: "How unmercifully you are acting with me! Look how I am sick. What a fever I have?" And at the moment she gave him her left hand. But as soon as he took her hand she stabbed in the side with a dagger holding it in the right hand, she turned the dagger and at the same moment pulled it out of the body. There were rumors that a few days before she was taking lessons about using the dagger from a well-known Lezgian<sup>19</sup> robber, who left his craft [Tuchkov, 1908: 203]. Maria fixed the position of the enemy with the help of a trick rather than a force and stabbed into the body. Lazarev died instantly. The actions in accordance with the "weak position" proved to be very effective.

For comparison we should mention that the daughter of Queen Mary – Princess Tamara, a young girl of 17 years, tried to cut one of the opponents with the "great Georgian dagger", but missed and slashed her mother's right shoulder to the bone [Tuchkov, 1908: 203; Dubrovin, 1886: 70]. We observe an attempt to demonstrate the valor as if from "a strong position", what naturally led without proper qualifications to a negative result.

Interest in this description is also caused by the rumors about the lessons that the queen allegedly took. If this message is true, then in a few days very sensitive

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<sup>19</sup> The Lezgians are the people living in Dagestan in the eastern part of Caucasus.

woman and "also with poor health" had to learn the efficient use of the dagger against obviously stronger men. As it could be seen, the stab well combines perfectly with the actions relating a weak enemy and "unfair" tricks such as fake illness. The specific fact is that Mary was engaged in training by a "known robber" and besides, who was of Lezgin origin, instead of any relative of the queen from the Georgian aristocracy. Indirect presence in this story of the robber-Lezgin (even if this image was born by rumors) underlines the fact that the actions of Queen Mary go beyond the standard model of the heroic fight.

Summing it up, we can say that in the most obvious way the stabbing demonstrates its strengths in a situation of confrontation face to the obviously stronger opponent. In these circumstances the stab gives a chance to change the balance of the forces dramatically, but in any case it doesn't eliminate the risk totally. The murder of the generals Lisanevich and Grekov by Uchar-Hodja, attempt of Prince Hamurzin to kill Captain Levashov, and also the attack of an unknown mureed on major Ermolov - all these attacks with the dagger stabbing were made from the "weak" position. All the attackers have paid for their actions with their heads. On the common background the case with a widow Queen Mary looks as an exception from the rules. It is obvious that the attack from a "weak position" requires no less courage than the heroic fight "on equal terms".

### **Stabbing and cutting**

The study of the question, seemed to be particular, regarding the ratio of stabbing and cutting with a dagger reveals quite deep cultural layers. We have a chance to see the "stratigraphy" of ideas about heroic, largely due to the fact that the dagger is closely related to key cultural meanings.

In the fighting the dagger was used at close range, which gave him the quality of "the last line of defense", turned it into a thin border which simultaneously separated the warrior from the death and moving him closer to it. Thus, the Circassian abreks, seeing that salvation is impossible, met the death with a dagger in their hands, "knowing, that this weapon will not allow to catch them alive" [Tornau, 1864: 459]. Fight at a close range considers rapid convergence, which, in fact, turns the warrior himself and his body into a weapon. Such attack is corresponded

with a psychological condition in which there should be no place for fear, as the fear destroys the integrity of action and makes it ineffective. Only dagger is the most appropriate weapon for the implementation of fearlessness and willingness to self-sacrifice.

Different aspects of the utilization of the dagger actualize the various layers of ideas about heroics. The main conclusion of the article is that the cutting corresponds more to the equal combat of the enemies, and the stabbing – to the fight of the opponents of unequal strength. Two types of fighting are different in something and even are opposed to each other, but in general it is possible to say that there are two methods of implementation of the heroic culture.

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