

2014—Avar People

“Like Imam Shamil, I will not allow my honor to be impugned!” the Avar man proclaimed indignantly. “He inferred that my work and my family were not as noble as his—and he will suffer for this!” This exchange may have taken place in an urban neighborhood in the city of Makhachkala or in a mountain town in the Avar Khunzakh district. It may be unfolding between this Avar gentleman and a Dagestani of another people group, or it may be between two Avar clans. And the suffering, which is to follow, will not necessarily involve blood, although it might. More likely it will involve an intricate pattern of revenge through economic or clan connections, and some form of ostracism or rejection of the offending person.

The Avar People of Dagestan are the largest linguistic group of Dagestan, and historically the most powerful. Honor/Shame is a high code, deeply ingrained in the Avar cultural psyche. This is true throughout all 34 of the Dagestani people groups, but perhaps most pronounced in the Avar due to their powerful, leading role in the culture of Dagestan. Indeed, Imam Shamil, arguably the most famous Dagestani in history, was Avar. Imam Shamil was a powerful Muslim religious leader in the 1st half of the 19th Century, who led the political and military resistance to the Russian conquerors from 1834-1859. Shamil accomplished one daring exploit after another to baffle Russian military battalions of Tsarist Russia. Defense of Dagestani and Avar honor was the leading theme of these dozens of battles. The Avar people (and all of Dagestan) were finally subdued by the Russian Empire in 1864, but the code of honor among the Avar has never diminished. In Post-Soviet Dagestan, the Avar (and secondarily the Dargin) carry the primary political power in the internal province [*Republic*] of Dagestan in southern Russia.

Avars call themselves *Ma'arulal* (by translation—“free mountaineers, who inhabit the highest lands”). The *Ma'arulal* speak their own distinct Avar language, based on the Khunzakh Avar dialect for literary written Avar. Primary Avar is spoken in more than 200 Avar towns and villages. In addition, in the highest mountains of southern Dagestan, five additional languages in the Avar family—Batlukh, Gid, Andalal, Qarakh, Antsukh—are spoken in more than 150 additional villages. All of these peoples then utilize Russian as a 2nd language. Both Avar and Russian are taught in the local schools. Large numbers of Avar mountain peoples have down-migrated to cities and towns in the Dagestani lowlands, primarily for economic reasons. All 34 people groups of Dagestan are represented in the melting-pot capital of Dagestan—Makhachkala, 700,000 in total population—but the largest single ethnic representation in Makhachkala would be Avar.

Contemporary Avar culture is epitomized by the famous Avar poet, Rasul Gamzatov (1923-2003). Gamzatov became one of the most famous poets in all of Russia during the Soviet era. His stirring poem—*Zhuravli*—honors returning heroes from the Great War against Fascism [World War II]. The Avar carry many amazing ancient cultural strengths, capped by their intense sense of honor; however, one strength not found in Avar culture is *grace*. The absence of *grace*—i.e. *forgiveness, tolerance, mercy, the Fruit of the Spirit*—has left the Avar (and all of Dagestan) vulnerable to intense cycles of violence on many levels. Present-day Dagestan is beset by increasing cycles of violence between Muslim power factions—squelching trade, tourism, and economic well-being. Hope of grace is springing up among the Avar. There are now more than 50 Avar believers. The New Testament has been completed in the Avar language, as well as Genesis, Proverbs, Ruth, and Jonah. Pray that many Avar will understand that “keeping away from strife is an honor for a man”(Prov.20:3); and that there is even greater honor in forgiveness and 2nd-mile love (Rom.12:17-21) than in vengeance.

* **THANK GOD** for the new believers among the Avar—**PRAY** for their number to continually increase. *Col. 1:6*
* **PRAY** for men and women of peace (*Luke 10:6*) in each one of the 200+ Avar towns & villages, to be keys to welcoming the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit into each Avar-language community in the years ahead.
Matthew 9:36-38 & Hebrews 2:3-4 -- II Chron.16:9
* **PRAY** for dreams and visions among open-hearted Avar, both young and old—[we know of several such stories] *Acts 2:17*
* **PRAY** for courageous men and women, who will discover the powerful grace of Jesus, and find that this grace—*Isa.61:7*—“will overcome shame, and instead give a double portion [of honor]”
* **PRAY** for blessing upon God’s Word in Avar, into many Avar lives. both urban & rural. *Isaiah 55:11*



Imam Shamil
(1797-1871) –
born in the Avar
village of Gimri
(#93) – the most
famous Avar in
history. A political,
military & Muslim
religious leader,
who led the anti-Russian
resistance of the
NE Caucasus in
the Caucasian
Wars 1834-1859.

MAJOR LOWLAND AVAR TOWNS:

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| 1. Khunzakh | <u>Mixed-Ethnic CITIES with Large Avar Populations</u> |
| 2. Untsukl' | 7. Makhachkala (CAPITAL of Dagestan) |
| 3. Mekhelta | 8. Korkmaskala |
| 4. Diiliim | 9. Buynaksk |
| 5. Gergebil' | 10. Kizilyurt |
| 6. Khebda | 11. Khasavyurt |

Names of AVAR VILLAGES [Primary Avar language regions]:

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|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Tsiikhalakh | 50. Ara-ni | 99. Ashil'ta | 148. Umarotar |
| 2. Verkh.Khvarshini | 51. Orkachi | 100. Imanaliroso | 149. Tukhchar |
| 3. Nizh.Khvarshini | 52. Buts-ra | 101. Akh-su | 150. Gamiyakh |
| 4. Metrada | 53. Khartskolo | 102. Chir-kay | 151. Novosasitli |
| 5. Gakko | 54. Batla-ich | 103. Akai-talai | 152. Si-ukh |
| 6. Sil'di | 55. Bol.Gotsatl' | 104. Dubki | 153. Tsiyab-Ichi |
| 7. Kadi | 56. Mal.Gotsatl' | 105. Gertma | 154. Sovetskoye |
| 8. Sasitli | 57. Ni-tab | 106. Burtunai | 155. Terechnoye |
| 9. Ansalta | 58. Datuna | 107. Almak | 156. Utsmiyurt |
| 10. Shadroda | 59. Ureeb | 108. Guni | 157. Oktyabr'skoye |
| 11. Rakhata | 60. Mitli-urub | 109. Khubar | 158. Djerzhinskoye |
| 12. Tando | 61. Zu-urub | 110. Miatli | 159. Chuval-Kutan |
| 13. Tasuta | 62. Teletl' | 111. Kalinin-aul | 160. Buru |
| 14. Alak | 63. Gogotl' | 112. Inch-kha | 161. Karatubye |
| 15. Kheleturi | 64. Gonoda | 113. Lenin-aul | 162. Turushnai |
| 16. Tsumali | 65. Chuni | 114. Novi Urada | 163. Khasanai |
| 17. Tsoloda | 66. Ku-tisha | 115. Ekibulak | 164. Kara-osek |
| 18. Ingerdakh | 67. Khakhita | 116. Dilchu | 165. Kachalai |
| 19. Mester-ukh | 68. Nizh.Chugli | 117. Samilakh | 166. Ait-khan |
| 20. Ortakolo | 69. Orada Chugli | 118. Akhtini | 167. Chalandar |
| 21. Tsilitl' | 70. Urma | 119. Adjidada | 168. Nekrasovka |
| 22. Shabdukh | 71. Kuletsma | 120. Krasnoe Selo | 169. Tsadakh |
| 23. Tsundi | 72. Okhli | 121. Murada | 170. Tsvetkovka |
| 24. Danukh | 73. Akh-kent | 122. Novi Chirkay | |
| 25. Arg-vani | 74. Alshi | 123. Shushanovka | |
| 26. Gadari | 75. Duran-gi | 124. Arkida | 171. Chondotl' |
| 27. Tlyarta | 76. Arikh-kent | 125. Matseevka | 172. Khini |
| 28. Ingu-shi | 77. Verk.Djengutai | 126. Gel'bakh | 173. Zaib |
| 29. Tantari | 78. Aimakhi | 127. Babtugai | 174. Kakh |
| 30. Chirkata | 79. Ki-kuni | 128. Nizh.Chiryurt | |
| 31. Kunzakh | 80. Kudutl' | 129. Nechaivka | |
| 32. Iga-li | 81. Chalda | 130. Zubutli Miatli | |
| 33. Inkho | 82. Mogokh | 131. Novi Sulak | 175. Gortkolo |
| 34. Tlokh | 83. Gotsob | 132. Kokrek | 176. Tumagari |
| 35. Bol.Amushi | 84. Arakani | 133. Karlan-yurt | 177. Matlas |
| 36. Orota | 85. Maidanskoye | 134. Chont-aul | 178. Khimakoro |
| 37. Khindakh | 86. Balakhani | 135. Akaro | 179. Rihuni |
| 38. Kharakhi | 87. Irganai | 136. Pyatiletka | 180. Tsada |
| 39. Mu-shuli | 88. Taratulme-er | 137. L'ovvskii | 181. Zalkita |
| 40. Tlai-lukh | 89. Moksokh | 138. Turzeen | 182. Ginichutl' |
| 41. Ameeshta | 90. Tsatanikh | 139. As-aul | 183. Novogladovka |
| 42. Si-ukh | 91. Shamilkala | 140. Khvarshi | 184. Khutseevka |
| 43. Shotota | 92. Kharachi | 141. Sen-tukh | 185. Bol.Zadoevsk |
| 44. Ochlo | 93. Gimri | 142. Khamzayurt | 186. Lolas |
| 45. Mochokh | 94. Kokhabroso | 143. Kazma-aul | 187. Kochubey |
| 46. Akhalchi | 95. Verk.Karanai | 144. Kazi-yurt | 188. Riibnadzor |
| 47. Gatsalukh | 96. Nizh.Karanai | 145. Kokhtebye | 189. Koktubey |
| 48. Oboda | 97. Verk.Ishkartii | 146. Sadovoye | 190. Tushilovka |
| 49. Tanusi | 98. Nizh.Ishkartii | 147. Batayurt | 191. Briansk |



Central Avar town of Khunzakh – [the Khunzakh Avar dialect is used as the basis for literary Avar]



Two-level Avar town of MEKHELTA -- #3 above



Avar village of DANUKH -- #24 below



Avar village of TSILITL' -- #21 below



Avar village of ZALKITA -- #181 below