

Excerpts from Elashvili's Parikaoba

Note:

The excerpts presented here have been translated from Russian by the author and are presented in the texts original order. What has been done is to remove all of the socialist justification for the work and some of the other minutia that does not relate to the art itself or the tools of the art. Unlike the presentation of the guards and blows in the main text, no attempt has been made here to clarify or distinguish between the Italian classical numbering, and the numbers Elashvili has assigned to the Khevsur guard positions. Instead, every attempt to present this text in a form as close to the intent and phrasing of the original Russian has been made.

Forms of the Khevsurian Fencing Battle

The Central component of the prevailing historical system of military-physical training in Khevsur is masterful possession of a “silent weapon” and the skill of fencing associated with it. The latter is referred to, as we already stated above, under the names of “chra-chriloba” and “parikaoba”

We discount “tav-metaveoba” - the form of battle of krovnikiv, assuming that this form of use of a silent weapon is outside the scope of our study, especially because reports of blood vengeance were only rarely achieved with the silent weapon. The conventional weapon of krovnika was first the bow, and subsequently, the gun. It is only briefly possible to note that the methods of fencing in these rare cases preserved the characteristic style of the Khevsurian style of fighting with silent weapons. However, since the straight purpose of the struggle was to bloody the enemy, then the impacts to any body part were delivered with total force, and utilized, all existing types of weapon, not just the shashka and buckler.

Considerably more often the methods of Khevsurian fencing were used in fights against external enemies (adjacent tribes – Ingushey, Kistinob and others).

The unique nature of the mountains of the Khevsur region also contributed to the wider acceptance of close (hand-to-hand) combat with external enemies. The narrow twisting alpine paths among the cliffs and forest tracts are favorable to the sudden appearance of an enemy after a turning. Because of the cliffs and trees ranged weapons (bows and guns) proved to be of no help.

“Parikaoba” was the friendly bloodless form of duel between Khevsurs, typically countrymen, for the most part, who belonged to one related group. The duels had a training/competitive nature for the participants and an instructive/entertaining nature for the surrounding onlookers. They occurred during the contact of the male population on “pekhoni” or other peaceful assemblages. For example during the religious festivals, off-duty time in evenings, and during the holidays. “Parikaoba” can be considered a preparatory form, whose purpose is to facilitate instruction and training of the Khevsur in the Mastery of the skills of fencing. It was widely adapted as an educational means for inculcating Khevsurs from childhood (beginning at 5-6 years) with the habits of the possession of the silent weapon.

In “Parikaoba” the fight is carried out by striking blows not with the edge of the blade, but flat or with the butt-end. In these cases, the flats or butt-end perform the role of the conditional blade. The target

zone includes the head, arms, hands from the humeral joint to the wrist, excluding the elbow, and sometimes also the thigh.

The following variety of Khevsur fencing, for which “parikaoba” serves as a preparatory form, is a fencing bout, which has a dueling nature and bears in Khevsur the name “chra-chriloba” or “chroba”.

In this phase of battle, the enemies, showing their skill, attempted to inflict on each other's specified body parts light bleeding wounds, which do not threaten life or entail heavy mutilations. This form of fencing adapted (formed?) in different circumstances, during religious holidays, carousing, at weddings, funeral feasts, and such.

Usually “chra-chriloba” was conducted between the men who inhabited different villages and regions, in essence, between the representatives of different related groups. It was the consequence of any unfriendly report, and was intended to wash off with blood the offence.

The quarrels, which are called “shugli” in Khevsur and are finished with the “chra-chriloba” duel, could occur because of old offences and their associated hostility, by a random drunk quarrel, by the desire to satisfy insulted pride or to prove physical superiority, or prove the possession of better quality weapons, appear valorous, look successful to women and girls, or simply raising authority. The “chra-chriloba” form of duel, according to the unwritten ethics of Khevsurian custom must not end in a fatal outcome, or with a dangerous wound. Because of blood vengeance, opponents must manifest endurance and caution within the “chra-chriloba” duel since striking even a randomly dangerous wound, which causes a fatal outcome sets in motion severe customary retribution – blood vengeance. In Khevsur there is a saying: “Even if a kiss killed a man – he didn't lose his head”, I. E. krovniki required satisfaction.

Calculated impacts into the head, which is protected by thick cranial bones, are not mortally dangerous. This is why the head above, “three folds of forehead” to the top is selected as the basic target. In order to avoid causing life threatening wounds, the Khevsurs rejected cutting with the edge to the breast (especially because the breast is so strongly protected by the use of a low counter and buckler, that to deliver a strike into this location is a technically difficult task), the stomach, the arms, and the joints of the feet and leg below the knees. The possibility of striking the entire face is not excluded, but wounds on the face below the “three folds of forehead” required a payment to the sufferer according to the usual standards and rights.

Almost all researchers of the Khevsur focused their attention on the reflection of the results of “shugli” including “chri-chriloba” within the rules of Khevsur common law and the precise determination of the size of the injury (“drama”) in favor of the injured party.

Normal payments for wounds inflicted during a duel were determined by agents – mediators - “shuakatsebi”. Mediators were usually elderly people, “polzovashiesya” by their universally recognized authority and respect. The size of the penalty was determined by the nature of the wound inflicted. With the presence of deep wounds, the mediators number would include the local doctor - “akimi”, who was the chief consultant in questions about the nature of the injury.

According to the observations of a number of researchers of the Khevsur (R. Eristavi, A. Kamarauli, N. Urbneli, et al), and also in our materials it is explained that the mediators first focused their attention to the location of the wound and to the consequences, from this they moved on to the injury and the nature of the wound itself – its sizes (width, length and depth). The injuries considered most dangerous (and

usually rarely seen) were wounds in the region of the breast, from the neck to the belt - “sagulo”, then wounds in the groin area - “saupatiuro”. The “dorogoplachivaemym” injuries included, for example, injuries into the person below “three folds of the forehead”. For wounding someone in the above-indicated regions, “vira” “ischeslyalas” in the specific quantity of cows in favor of the sufferer. Usually the right accurate method of determining by viry was by putting the wound into specific places or the volume of viry was determined for the specific case after precisely measuring the wound.

The process of measuring a wound, as seen in our observations and based on the statements of a number of other researchers, consisted of the following: mediators from both sides, after the wound had healed measured its length niktoy?, or with ablade of grass. This lengths was then accurately transferred to a flast stone or board. Then, on this line they placed rye and barley grains, alternating the arrangement by length and width. Extreme grains for both were rejected too. The number of those grains filling the measure determined a quantity pf recompense due to the injured party. If the wound was the first a person had suffered, then they didn't reject extreme grains. Consequently the first injury to a person was paid more expensively.

Certain researchers of the Khevsur assert that from the numbr of packed grains the penalty is determined as one third of the grains.

I Khudadozh indicates that if the wound is located in the hairy portion of the face 2/3 of the grains that fit on the line of the wound are rejected, or 1/3 if the wound on the portion of the face which is free from hair. From Khevsur evidence, we must recognize that it is probably necessary to consider the value of a wound in the total number of plotted grains with weighting of 2 extreme grains, if the wound is inflicted into the non-hairy area and 2/3 with the injury into the hairy portion of the face.

General Description of the Khevsurian silent weapon

Khevsur military-physical training, as we spoke about above, is characterized by the use of a large number of diverse projectile and close combat weapons and defenses. Most of these weapons, especially blades, hauberks, napleshniki (a sort of skull cap with a veil made of mail), naruchi (vambraces), originated outside of the region. Many of these were altered in order to better fit the everyday local requirements. Items modified include such examples as the handles of blades, knives, naruchi, ponozhi (greaves). Weapons of local origin include: combat rings, spears, and the panels, (bucklers), which are widespread in Khevsur and of a unique nature.

Offensive weapons, in turn are subdivided into:

1. Boloe weapons ([nosimoe] in the scabbards)
2. [drevkovoe] weapons
3. [udarnoe] weapons (brass knuckles) - the combat rings

1. [Beloe] weapons
 1. [shashka] (“[khmali]”)
 2. [mech] (a straight two edged western european type sword) (“[dashna]”)
 3. [trost] (walking stick?, stick?)- shashka (“[khmal]-[dzhokha]”)
 4. dagger (“[khandzhali]”)
 5. belt knife (“[ursa]”)

Shashka - (“khmali”). Among the existing Khevsurian examples of this type of weapon, we chiefly

meet with imported copies. Some Shashka blades are from the Italian masters of the XIV-XVII centuries, Andrey and Pierro from Ferrari, David Peruli, and others, and also exported from Iran, the North Caucasus, Turkey and other eastern countries. For examples of blades we encountered, see figure 1.

Khevsurs prefer straight palash style blades, and since thrusts are not allowed/used in Khevsurian fencing, the overwhelming majority of blades have rounded points¹, moreover the false edge? [protivolezvie] (“sashari”) is completely dull. The characteristic form of the handle of the Khevsurian shashka appears like the Iranian kryzh. We frequently find handles without the crosspieces; we also encounter shashkas with a looped knuckle guard, either of continuous metallic construction or in the form of a chain, called “shibi” by the Lhevsurs.

The handle is horn or wood, sometimes with leather stretched over it. It is frequently covered with copper or silver plates, and we find examples which have their handles well-packed with metallic contact studs with figured heads.

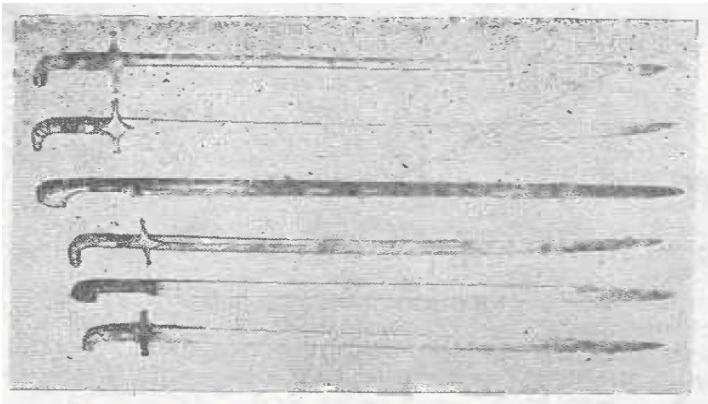


Figure 1 Blades of Georgian work

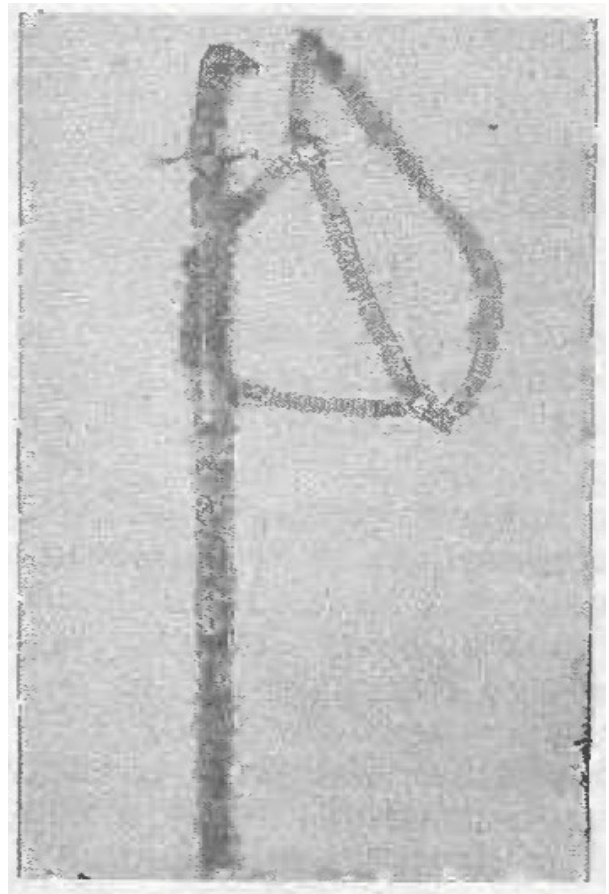
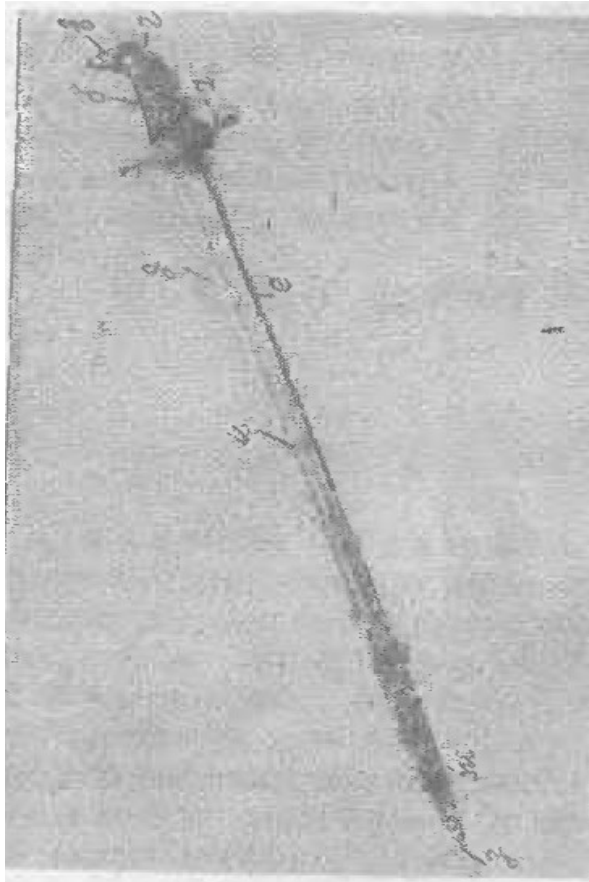


Fig. 2. Shashka in scabbard with sword belt

1 Author's note: If you look



The Khevsurian shashka in fig. 3 is made up of the following parts:

1. Krestovina, crosspiece, krykh - “vadani”
2. rukoyatka, handle - “khetari”
3. yabloko, apple? - “vashli”
4. pugrovka rookoyatki, contact stud of handle - “dvari”
5. lezvie, blade - “pkha”
6. obukh, butt- “kua”
7. protivolezvie, guard - “sashari”
8. ostriie, edge - “tsveri”
9. dola, ? - “gari”

The marks, which are powerful to be on the blade, bear the general name - “datserili”, “Lishan” and others.

Scabbards - “Karkashi” - in Khevsuria scabbards for blades, including shashkas are largely of local production. The scabbards are wooden, with leather stretched over them. Khevsurs frequently decorate these

Fig 3. The Khevsur shashka
scabbards with home-made plates of yellow copper or silver.

Scabbards consist of:

1. tip - “buni”
2. transverse/cross cover plates - “salteebi”
3. lateral layings/coverings - “satsveti”
4. clips? - “sanedzhuris salteebi”
5. attachments of sword belts from repemychkoy- “sanedzhuri”
6. plated? adornment - “katsimi”
7. sword belt as a whole - “samkhariglio”

Sword belt - “samkhariglio” - as a rule, this is a belt with armor/plated adornments of copper or silver, with two places to tie the sheath of the shashka, attached by the cross connections from the belt, “sanedzhuri”, which is also decorated with small armor plates (fig. 4).

On the straps that connect to the sword belt, Khevsurs used to bear a unique form of adornment. This was a narrow (with length of p to 150cm and width of under 10cm) towel, called “iaragzesambeli khelsakhotsi” (the towel was fastened to the weapon) – usually colored red, whose ends were embroidered with colored silk and beads, and the middle with silk only. This towel was tied in a loop and had a furred fringe.

According to the Khevsurian explanation, the towel necessarily served to bind wounds, and during feasts it served as a frontal bandage to help prevent headaches from intoxication (fig. 5).

Sword - “dashna” - rides on the side, but not hanging from two straps like the shashka, but on one attachment “sambeli” in the form of a belt loop. The device for the loop, in contrast to the dagger, forces the sword to hang in a strictly vertical position.

The sword is a lightened type of Khevsurian weapon, since when it is carried neither the shashka nor even the dagger is used.

Some Khevsurs assert that in Khevsuria, along with the sword, the shashka, and dagger, the shashka-sword “khal-dashna” was adopted, which had a small size compared to the shashka and the sword. This enabled them to be easily hidden in the sleeve or under the clothing. “Khal-dashna” was the concealed weapon, which was adopted in the same situations as the buckler. When the rest of their weapons, openly carried, were surrendered to the storage of the host, the “khal-dashna” remained with its owner in case “shugli” became necessary.

The cane-shashka “khal-dzhokha” is actually a combination weapon – a cane with a disguised shashka. Usually it was chosen by elderly Khevsurs, who carried it as a walking support and if necessary, to use as a self-defense weapon.

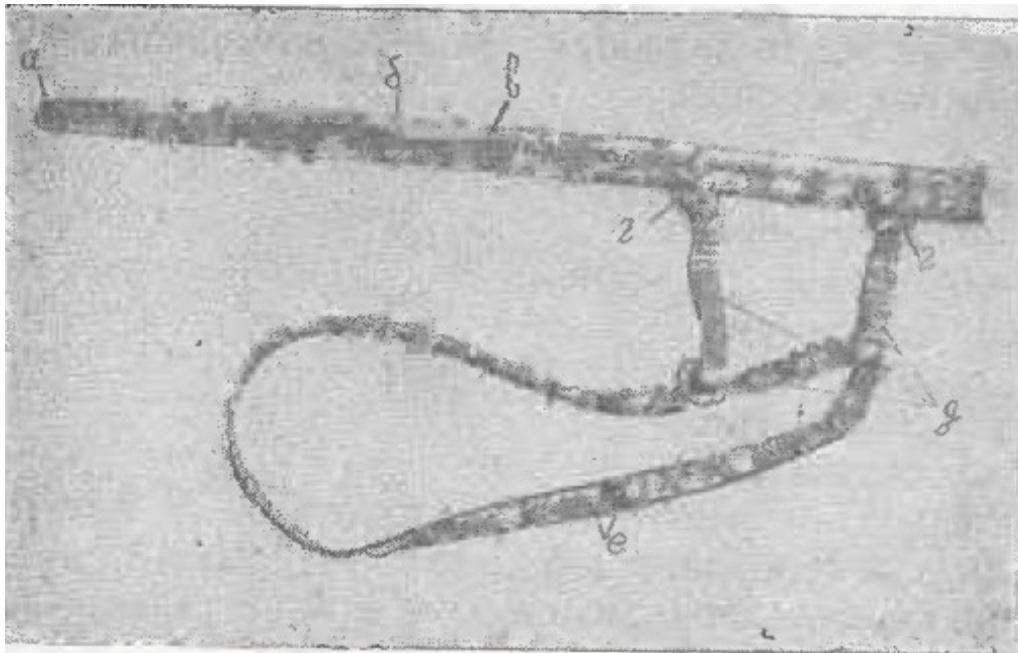


Fig. 4 Scabbards with the sword belt



Fig. 5 Towel/sash, for the weapon.

From the outside, the cane-shashka appears to be a narrow stick with a knob, (about 1.5 meters in length). The stick serves as a scabbard for the blade and consists of two halves which are fastened by several wire rings. The bottom of the stick is capped by a metal tip shaped like a straight pointed cone. The blade is somewhat smaller in size than in a normal shashka and is fitted into the knob of the staff. When preparing “khmal-dzhokha” they cut down shashka blades. They are certain to cut on the boundary dol. to lighten the weapon's weight. The handle is approximately 20-25 cm in length, and is frequently of different shape, often bent into a hook (fig. 7).

The Khevsurian dagger “khandzhali” is of average size; it has the usual form of a dagger, which is prevalent among the people of the Caucasian mountains, and we will not linger on its description.

The waist knife – or “ursa” - is a simple short cutting-splitting weapon with a straight blade (length up to 30cm, width of up to 5 cm), with one blade and a grip of wood or horn.

“Ursa” are carried in a special leather covered, wooden sheath on the belt, mainly by men aged at least 50 years; it serves as a knife and a self defense weapon (fig. 8).

Staff weapons – spear - “shubi”

1. stabbing spear
2. cutting-splitting spear

The Khevsurian spear “shubi” is a pole with a metal tip mounted to it. When preparing the tip, pieces of dagger blades are often used.

Also known in Khevsuria is the cutting-splitting spear. We separate those spears which split (Fig. 9) and the sort of cutting-splitting spear from the “trident” type (“samkapiani shubi”, “changliani shubi”).

The splitting spear has a quill(tip?), which is round or tyrekhugolnyy rod with a point (dimensions of quill, 20-25cm of li? to 5-10cm. Pole with length up to 180cm, with a thickness of 3-3.5cm).

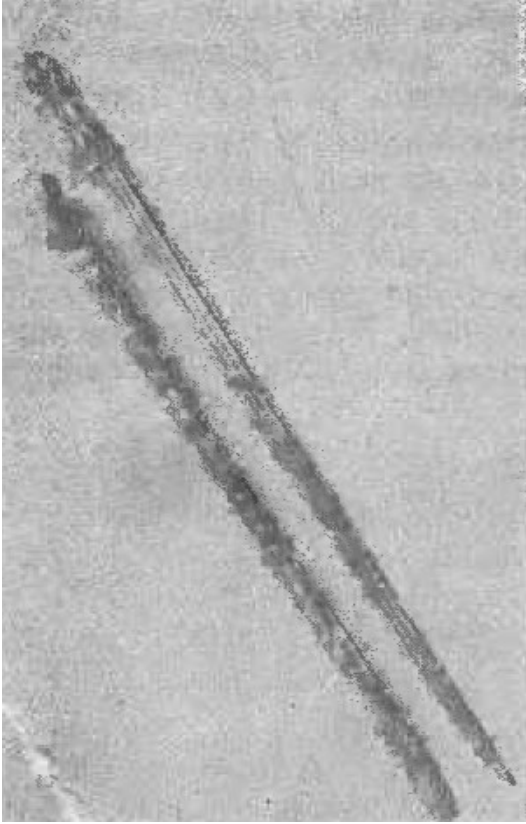


Fig. 6 mech – sword “dashna”

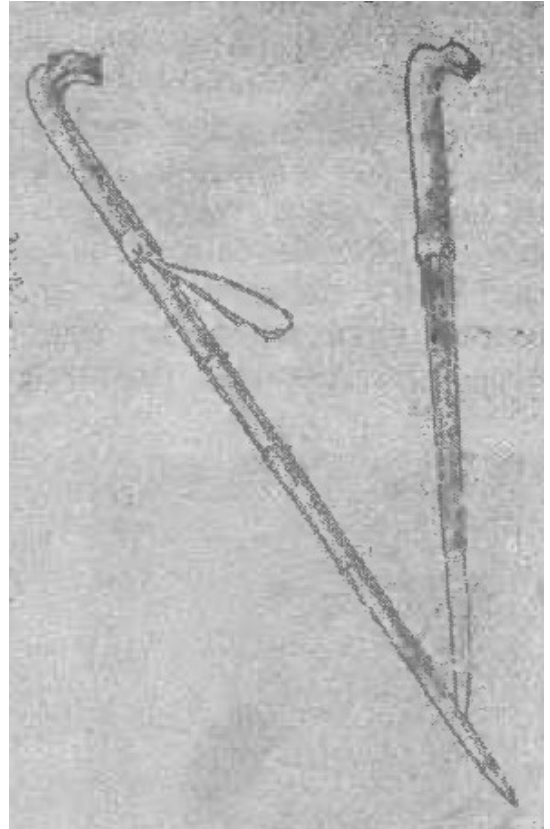


Fig. 7 Cane-shashka “khamal-dzhokha”

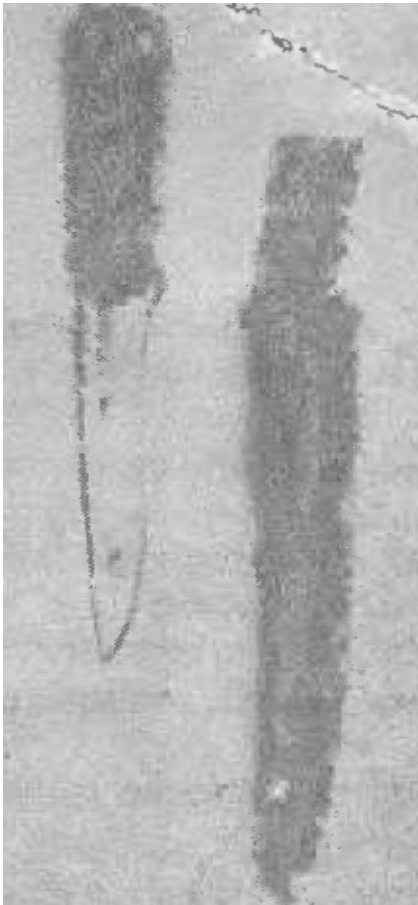


Fig. 8 Waist Knife “ursa”



Fig. 9 splitting spear

The Quill is in the form of an ancient combat arrow with a double tip. This is called “potskhvmakratela” in Khevsur, and has the appearance of a fish tail (with length of 7 cm, and width of point 3.5cm). The point is pressed onto a pole (length 1.20m , with diameter 2-2.5cm) of a firm type by it's ferrule.

The Cutting-splitting spear has a tip which is made in large part from a dagger blade, in which the quill (length up to 45cm, width up to 4-5 cm) connects to the crown of a cap(with length 10-15 cm). The cap is attached to the blade by forging and makes a sort of incomplete tube. To this is attached a pole from a hardwood (literally solid rock) tree (with an overall length of up to 2 meters and a thickness of up to 5cm) (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 The cutting-splitting spear

Another variety is a spear with the tip in the form of a trident, in which the ferrule is forged from iron and splits into two whimsical, bent points (with an overall length of up to 15 cm), between which is attached a normally formed spearhead made from part of a dagger blade (length up to 11 cm) (Fig. 10 cutting-splitting spear), which is located sagittal(parallel and between) with respect to the trident. the pole is made from a hardwood pole with length of about 1.4 meters, and a thickness of 3-3.5 cm) (Fig. 11)



Fig. 11 Trident type spear “trezibtsa”

3. Impact weapon – combat rings “sbrdzolo satiteebi”

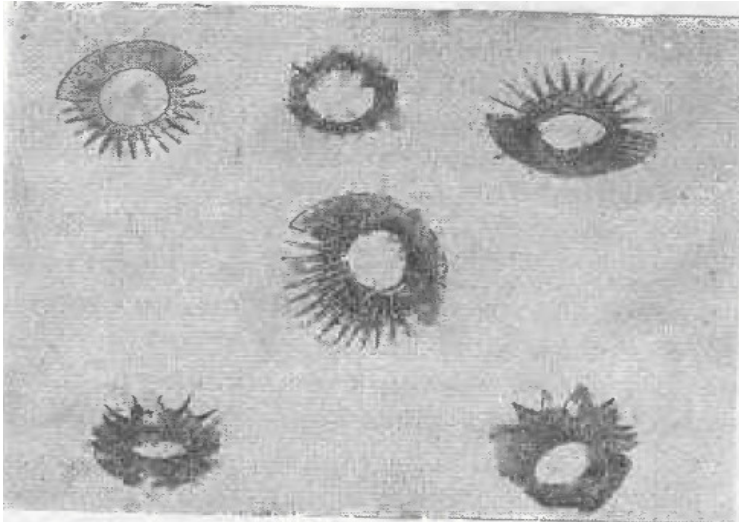
Combat Rings - “sbrdzolo satiteebi” - are manufactured from iron (Old Georgian horseshoes) or brass, either by forging or casting and serve to inflict impacts on the head and face of an opponent.

In the Recently used models, we meet the combat rings, made from metallic washers, steel helical springs, and the like.

They are divided into the following groups based on application:

Combat Rings that inflict scratching strikes (torn wounds) - “satseruli”, “magali”, “gadzhiya”.

The characteristic property of these rings is the presence of comb-shaped teeth with a length of between 3 and 30 millimeters, which are used to make more or less deep scratches. on different rings, the teeth are set into one or three groupings; moreover, the separate component parts of the rings are connected by copper soldering.

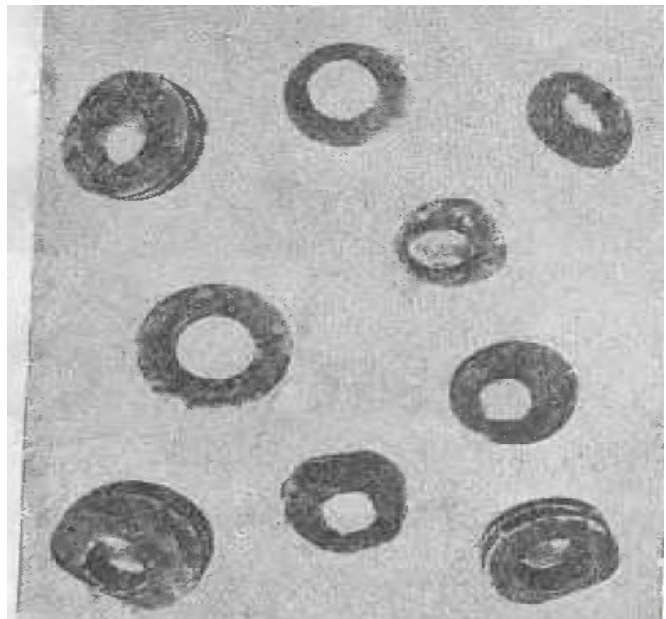


Combat rings that inflict a cutting wound - "lesula"

These rings consist of round blades, which have a hole in the center for the thumb. On one ring there can be one, two, or three blades. Rings with multiple blades are connected by copper soldering, forming two or three rows of blades (up to 2.5cm high) which are sharpened thoroughly.

Fig. 12 Combat Rings that inflict scratching strikes (torn wounds) - "satseruli", "magali", "gadzhiya".

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These sorts of rings inflict deep cutting wound Fig. 13 Combat rings that inflict a cutting wound - "lesula"

3. Combat rings for inflicting shock impacts - "tsiskvila", "goriani" or "zurgana", "kherkhula", "khveuli". The rings in this group are in turn separated into four varieties, which differ based on the nature of the style of the striking surface, which can be triangular in section "goriani", rectangular "tsiskvila", toothed "kherkhula" or round "khveuli".

"Goriani" are manufactured by forging iron or casting brass and are the locked rings with a

triangular section with edges up to one cm high. The “goriani” rings occur single ribbed, or two or three ribbed, moreover the latter are obtained by special casting.

“Tsiskvila” are characterized by the rectangular cross section of the combat edge. The copy we describe is made from iron, malleable and worked roughly.

“Kherkhula” are, in essence, similar to “goriani”, but they are characterized by the fact that on at least a portion of the combat edge are incised small threads. “Kherkhula” sometimes resemble the “satsserula” or “gadzhiya” scratching rings. “Kherkhula” exist in single and double row variants, and are manufactured from iron or brass.

It is possible that among these types of rings (shock), there could be transitional rings that are meant for both scratching and shock impacts.

“Khveuli” are produced as spirals, consisting of 2-4 turns of brass or iron bar of a semicircular form (thickness of up to 1 cm), gradually thinning to the ends. (Fig. 14)

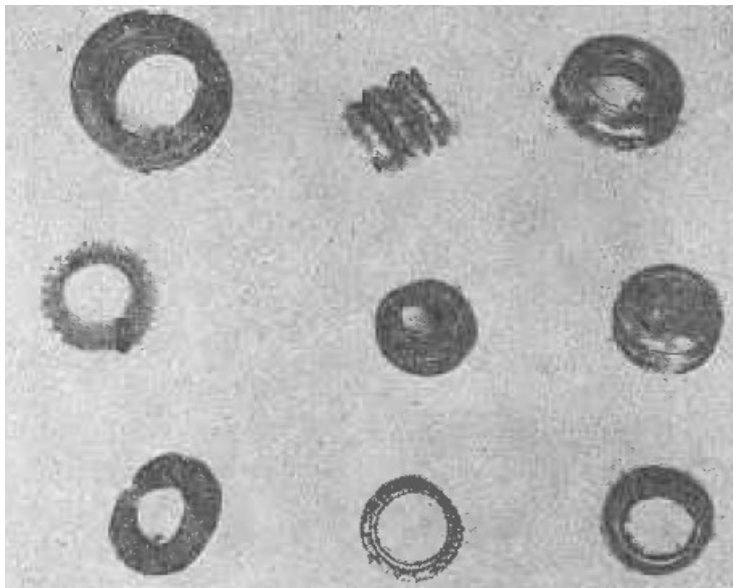


Fig 14 Combat rings for inflicting shock impacts.

trousers or sheepskin coat.

The rings are carried by Khevsurs in a special external pocket of the “perangi” (khevsurian shirt) of the left side of the breast, or simply in the right side pocket of their

Heavy rings of the “gadzhiya” type are sometimes worn by the Khevsurs on thin twine at the right side of their belt in order to facilitate the ability to rapidly place the combat ring onto the finger in their moment of need while simultaneously tearing the twine with a sharp motion, thus freeing the ring for action.

Combat rings are usually worn on the right thumb(left-handers “lakhvachi” - usually wear it on

their left hand), and some wear them on both hands.

Single-row rings have a narrow base for more convenient holding, for an increase in the supporting area of the ring, there is sometimes an adaptation with an additional ring, which has an auxiliary value and which bears in Khevsur the name of “sachike”. These auxiliary rings either compose a whole unit with the basic combat ring, ie, come off with it, being welded on one or both sides, or they are completely separate components like washers, which are worn on one or both sides of the combat ring on the same finger. Sometimes instead of the auxiliary rings “sachike”, Khevsurs with scratching or cutting combat rings also wore single-row shock rings of the “goriani” type. (Fig 15)

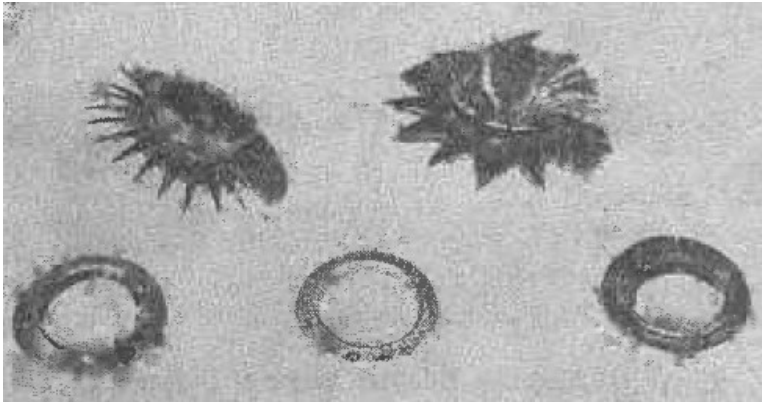


Fig. 15 Single-row combat rings of the “goriani” type.

The Khevsur mainly used combat rings in random quarrels, “shugli” fights which occurred during feasts, when their combat weapons (shashka, mech, buckler, firearms, and sometimes dagger) were passed into the keeping of the host upon entry.

In the Pirikitskiy region of Khevsureti (in Shatili) we find testimony that children of 10-12 summers of age used combat rings - “nestari”, made from wire of varying thickness or from properly sized iron washers. These rings were of very primitive construction. The wire is wound around a stick the size of the child's thumb into a spiral of 1 to 3 turns. The ends of the wire are then wound above the ring 1-2 times then flared to the sides and honed so that they obtain the sharp cutting-scratching end. Iron washers of suitable size for the child's finger is files on one side (up to one third) so that the fighting edge would become a blade. (fig. 16)

Khevsur defensive weapons “sapari iaragi”

Khevsur defensive weapons are divided into two groups:

- 1) Active defense weapons
- 2) Passive defense weapons

Active defense weapons include bucklers, passive defense weapons – napleshniki with a barmitsey

(also known as a “misyurki” a sort of skullcap with a mail coif hanging to cover the entire neck), mail shirts, naruchi (vambraces), combat gloves (gauntlets), ponozhi (greaves).

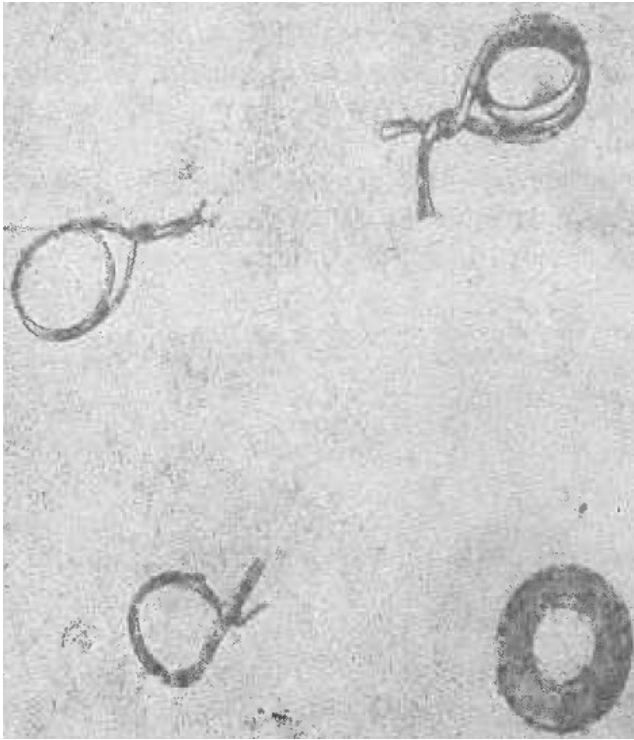


Fig. 16 Children's combat rings “nestari”

We especially separate the head-gear called “girgoliani kudi” - which is a cap with a protective brim. When worn as a cap on the khevsur's head, this serves as a passive defense, but in the absence of a buckler the “girgoliani kudi” could be used as a substitute.



Fig. 10 The cutting-splitting spear



Fig. 11 Trident type spear “trezibtsa”

3. Impact weapon – combat rings “sbrdzolo satiteebi”

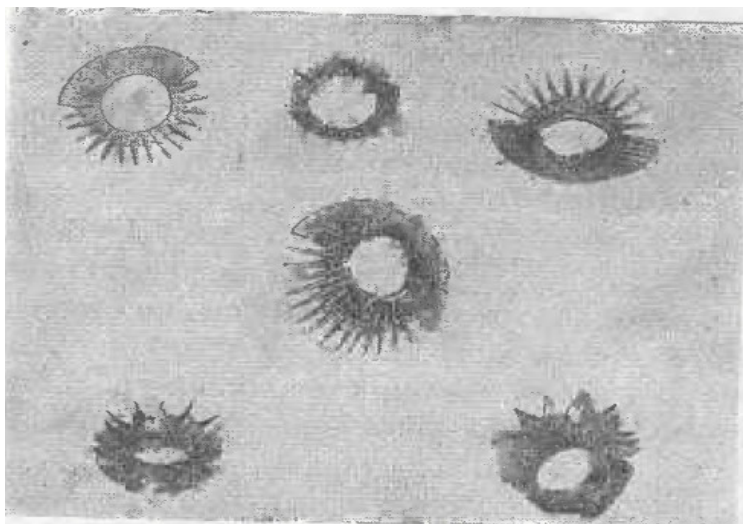
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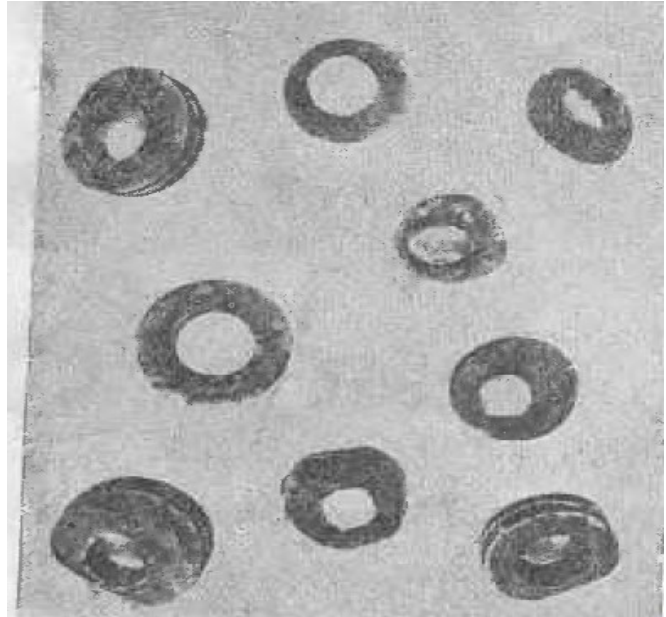
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It is possible that among these types of rings (shock), there could be transitional rings that are meant for both scratching and shock impacts.

“Khveuli” are produced as spirals, consisting of 2-4 turns of brass or iron bar of a semicircular form (thickness of up to 1 cm), gradually thinning to the ends. (Fig. 14)

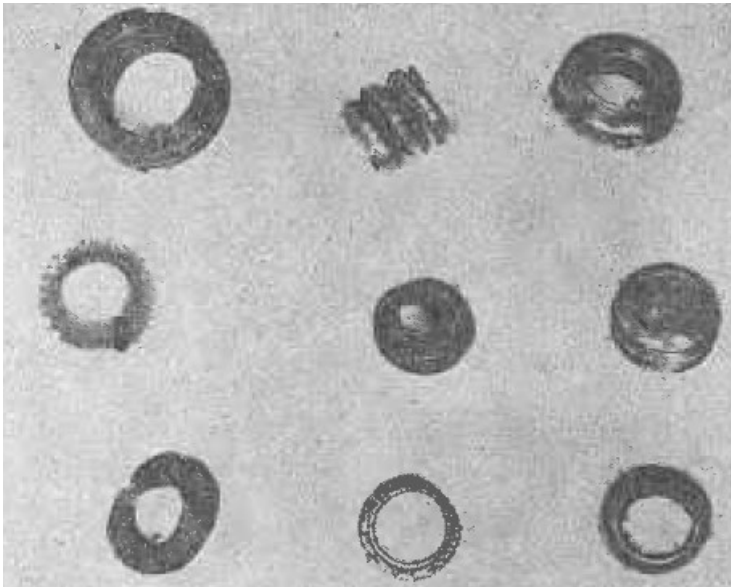


Fig 14 Combat rings for inflicting shock impacts.
trousers or sheepskin coat.

The rings are carried by Khevsurs in a special external pocket of the “perangi” (khevsurian shirt) of the left side of the breast, or simply in the right side pocket of their

Heavy rings of the “gadzhiya” type are sometimes worn by the Khevsurs on thin twine at the right side of their belt in order to facilitate the ability to rapidly place the combat ring onto the finger in their moment of need while simultaneously tearing the twine with a sharp motion, thus freeing the ring for action.

Combat rings are usually worn on the right thumb(left-handers “lakhvachi” - usually wear it on their left hand), and some wear them on both hands.

Single-row rings have a narrow base for more convenient holding, for an increase in the supporting area of the ring, there is sometimes an adaptation with an additional ring, which has an auxiliary value and which bears in Khevsur the name of “sachike”. These auxiliary rings either compose a whole unit with the basic combat ring, ie, come off with it, being welded on one or both sides, or they are completely separate components like washers, which are worn on one or both sides of the combat ring on the same finger. Sometimes instead of the auxiliary rings “sachike”, Khevsurs with scratching or cutting combat rings also wore single-row shock rings of the “goriani” type. (Fig 15)

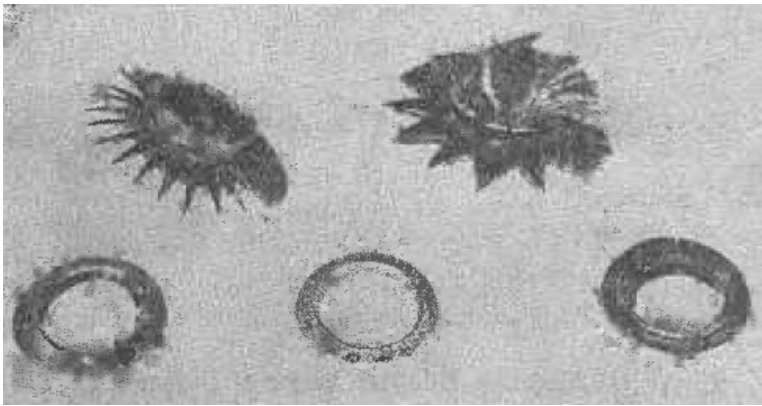


Fig. 15 Single-row combat rings of the "goriani" type.

The Khevsur mainly used combat rings in random quarrels, "shugli" fights which occurred during feasts, when their combat weapons (shashka, mech, buckler, firearms, and sometimes dagger) were passed into the keeping of the host upon entry.

In the Pirikitskiy region of Khevsureti (in Shatili) we find testimony that children of 10-12 summers of age used combat rings - "nestari", made from wire of varying thickness or from properly sized iron washers. These rings were of very primitive construction. The wire is wound around a stick the size of the child's thumb into a spiral of 1 to 3 turns. The ends of the wire are then wound above the ring 1-2 times then flared to the sides and honed so that they obtain the sharp cutting-scratching end. Iron washers of suitable size for the child's finger is files on one side (up to one third) so that the fighting edge would become a blade. (fig. 16)

Khevsur defensive weapons "sapari iaragi"

Khevsur defensive weapons are divided into two groups:

- 1) Active defense weapons
- 2) Passive defense weapons

Active defense weapons include bucklers, passive defense weapons – napleshniki with a barmitsey (also known as a "misyurki" a sort of skullcap with a mail coif hanging to cover the entire neck), mail shirts, naruchi (vambraces), combat gloves (gauntlets), ponozhi (greaves).

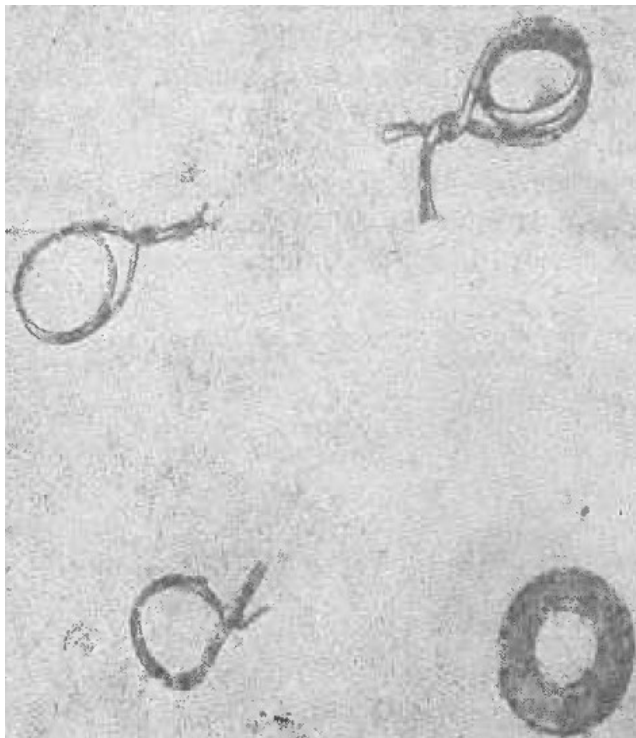


Fig. 16 Children's combat rings "nestari"

We especially separate the head-gear called “girgoliani kudi” - which is a cap with a protective brim. When worn as a cap on the khevsur's head, this serves as a passive defense, but in the absence of a buckler the “girgoliani kudi” could be used as a substitute.

1. Active defense weapons – bucklers (this can also be translated as panel, or shield) - “pari”. The basic active defense weapon in Khevsurian hand-to-hand combat is the buckler. Furthermore in Khevsuria they train with bucklers.

The Khevsurian buckler is characterized by its small size in comparison with the majority of shields, which were commonly used in Europe and in the east (pavise, targe, and others)

The reasons for this, in our opinion, should include the constant need to have weapons nearby, including the shield or buckler. The Khevsurian buckler, in essence, served as protection against the impacts of saber blades, (shashka, mech, and others) and despite their small size, with the Khevsur fighting techniques, carried out their function excellently.² Moreover, due to the conditions encountered while moving in the mountains; narrow twisting paths, steep slopes, sudden encounters with enemies, the need existed for a shield of the indicated weight and size.

At the same time, it is necessary to note that not only the Khevsurs, but others in the Caucasus, such as the rachinty were armed with similar bucklers (shield from the village of Gebi, collection of the Museum of Georgia, Republic of Georgia, USSR 10-26/29) and “osetiny” (location in the catalog not indicated, collection 63-12). These shields, stored in the division of ethnography of the museum of Georgia, in form, size, material, and production technology differ little from the Khevsurian ones. With many common features, especially, in the armament of the peoples of the Caucasus, noted by researchers, N. Danilevskiy³ for example, the presence of shields/bucklers analogous to the Khevsurian ones can be, in confidence, assumed to exist among other peoples of the Caucasus.

The earliest historical sources have preserved for us valuable information about the armament of Georgian tribes in the 2nd half of the 1st millennium B.C. Herodotus reports, for example, that “moskhi had on their heads wooden caps and small shields served them as weapon and spear ... macrons and mosinki dispatch into march those armed similarly to moskham”⁴ (laying out our – v. E.).

² According to the statements of some Khevsurs, their arsenal previously included larger sized shields, called “delam pari” made from wood, these served to provide defense against arrows.

³ N. Danilevskiy. *Caucasus and its mountain inhabitants in their present position*. Moscow, 1846 p 131.

⁴ Latyshev. *Proceedings*, 1, iss. 1, volume 1. of St. Petersburg, 1893, p. 67.

The very same reports about “small raw shields of 'kolkhov”⁵ but the chain of analogy is not interrupted here.⁶ Bronze skins from the gates of Balavatsky preserve for us images of the battles of the Assyrians against the Urartians (in the ninth century of our era), which depict the Urartian bearing small shields⁷. Excavated materials include decorative Urartian bronze shields with strongly projecting central parts.⁸ These small, light, circular shields were apparently common among the earliest peoples of the Asian Front.⁹

Besides this, the images given below of children's braided (fig. 92 & 92) and wooden (Fig. 93) shields in the light of Xenophon's communication of the presence of braided shields in Mossinkov¹⁰ and the adjacent Khalibami Tribes¹¹ and also the round wooden shields with a .5 Meter diameter, covered with leather and finished with a thin metal rim, from the settlement Sasashi on the lower Svanetii (col. 25-27) have a vital importance for studying the genesis of this element of armament.

Thus, the small, round shield, that is used in Khevsur, has parallels in the narratives of other peoples of the Caucasus, and typologically, it seems to be tightly related, by some of its basic features, to the characteristic shields of eastern civilizations of font(central?) Asia.

Kevsurian shields/bucklers are usually round. These were manufactured by local masters from sheet iron. In their preparation, the bucklers take a sufficiently incomplete form. One special feature of Khevsur bucklers the the absence of decoration. They have no inscriptions, mottoes, gold or silver plating, incisions, engraving or other ornament as is common on medieval European and especially eastern shields. On some, rare examples of Khevsur Bucklers, there are cut out ornaments in the shape of crosses or rectangles.¹² The base of the buckler is either thick bull leather (ancient models), or metal, sheet iron or copper. According to these signs we can recognize and classify Khevsur bucklers.

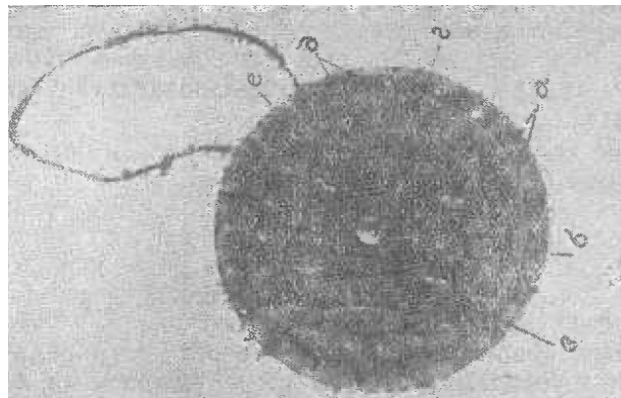


Fig. 17 – Khevsur Buckler (lit. shield)

5 Ibid

6 A. Robakidze. Review of the candidate thesis. V. Elashvili. Khevsur Fencing, the manuscript, 1947

7 B. Piotrovski. History and culture of Urartu. Yerevan. 1944 p. 424, 1926

8 B. Piotrovski, UK. works, p 165, 1926

9 I. Lure, K. Lyapunov, M. Mathieu, B. Piotrovski, N. Flittner. Descriptions of the history the ancient of east technique. M.- L. 1940, p. 116-117

10 Latyshev Proceedings, volume 1, release 1, St. Petersburg, 1893, p. 80

11 ibid, p 74

12 V. Elashvili. Khevsur “ubispari” (zapazushniy shield). Manuscript, 1946

The base of the buckler “pidze” (a), which has the face side facing outside and the rear facing inward.

On the face of the Khevsur buckler are four integral cross-shaped cover plates - “sakhidavebi” or “khidebi” (б) – made of sheet iron. G. Radde had some inaccuracies in his description of the bucklers. For instance, he asserts that “for greater strength, to the skin, are attached with nails, two additional spills, which pass edge to edge and intersect at the center of the circle at right angles”¹³ In actuality, our study of a larger number of khevsur bucklers (50), shows that for strengthening, the buckler, the khevsur used not two rivet strips, but four, which connect with the rim in the form of bridges, moreover the Khevsurs call these apertures bridges or bridge planks “khidebi” or “sakhidavebi”¹⁴ (Fig. 18).

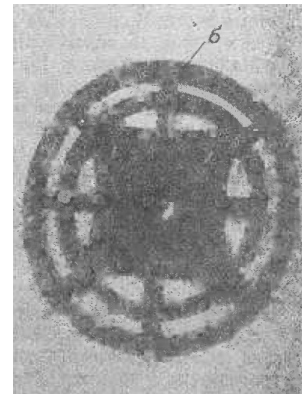


Fig. 18 Khevsurian Buckler with riveted strips or “khidebi”

On Top of these strips, in the middle of the base of the shield, there is emplaced a top/finial or “gumbati” (в): made from the same sheet iron, this usually is in the shape of a rectangle or rhombus with straight, oval concave, oval convex or concave-convex sides. The Khevsur call this “gumbatie totebi” (topmost branch?). The Khevsur explain that the, “gumbati” is intended to absorb shocks and to serve as the best protection for the hand which holds the shield/buckler.

In the Center of the finial is a convex apple[knob? boss?] - “gumbatie vashli” “д”; G. Radde does not completely note that the boss finial composes the whole of the “gumbati”, i.e. that the finial boss is the convexity of the finial.¹⁵ On the front edges the buckler is bordered by two or three “coronas”, rings – or “girgoli” (e), also made from sheet iron. In most Bucklers, the edge of the bases, called “kiduri” by the Khevsur, were bent as well, so that they bordered the outside in a ring.

On the Boss there are rivets in the form of shafts emerging to the front; usually 4 of them. On the rings there are also a number of these emerging rivets. Which are fastened to the base; the number of these on the ring varies from 15 to 30.

13 G. Radde. *Khevsuria and the Khevsurians*, p 150

14 V. Elashvili, *Khevsur “ubispari” zapazushni buckler*

15 G. Radde. *Khevsuria and the Khevsurs*, p 150

An exception are bucklers with one ring, where we encounter two rows of the shafts: in such cases the quantity of shaft rivets reaches more than 60¹⁶ (Fig. 19).

On the rear – The back side of the base of the buckler has a cushion, usually made fo felt, along with four iron rings, arranged in a rectangle along the angles of the boss and used to fasten leather straps, called “sabgudzhi” in the Khevsur dialect, which make up the buckler's handle.

Belt straps, connected to each other, form the beaten loop of double-tally form for holding with the finger of the left hand.

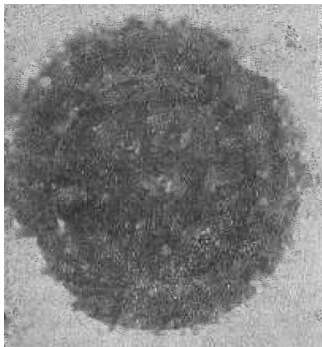


Fig. 19 Buckler with one ring

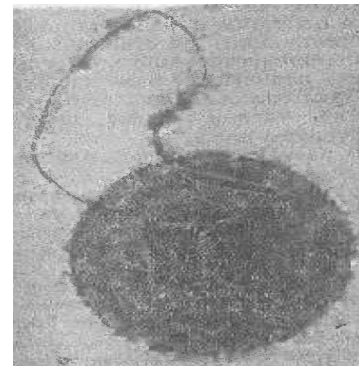


Fig. 20 handle of buckler and the sword belt

At the upper edge of the buckler are two additional rings used to attach a leather sword belt – or “sakidi”, which is used to carry or hang the buckler. The ends of these rings are split and run right through the face of the buckler, sometimes twisted together to close the ends, and combined with the shaft rivets they increase the rivet strength (Fig. 20).

The number of rings (from 1 to 3) does not depend on the dimensions of the buckler; we encounter small bucklers with two and three rings, and at the same time, we frequently see larger bucklers, which have only one ring.

During our 1944 expedition, we discovered one additional Khevsur buckler type, called “ubis pari” - zapazushni buckler (Fig. 21)¹⁷

16 V. Elashvili. Khevsurski “ubis pari” (zapazushni shield). Manuscript, 1946

17 I. Arabuli, scientific expedition, newspapers “Akhalgazdra communist” (No 105) from 2 x. of 1945, p. 4 of K. K. Cholokashkvili in the article “Georgian combat weapon. Buckler” (heralds of the State Museum od Georgia im of Acad. S. N. Dzhnanashi, Vol XVII-B. Tblisi, 1954 p. 227-253), also describes the khevsur zapazushni buckler, however, in this description, there are multiple inaccuracies with respect to the function and usage techniques of the buckler. Thus for instance, the author asserts that the zapazushni buckler must be round. This does not correspond to reality. (zapazushni bucklers are usually oblong) just as the statement that, if zapazushni bucklers was carried under the chokhoy? sp?, mainly for the protection of the heart. This contradicts the author's other assertion, according to which the buckler lay with the handle to the side , I.e. reversed. If the buckler was intended for the protection of the chest, then it would rest with the front outward. To back up this claim that the zapazushni bucklers were mainly used top protect the heart area, the author uses a fragment of a known historical poem, which doesn't actually say this. In the portion of the poem given, it is said: “lay buckler”, but this does not specify the function of the shield respective to the region of the heart.

This type of buckler is usually carried near the body, from whence it obtained its name. "Ubis pari" is the secret or hidden form of Khevsur defensive armament, carried secretly, in case of an unexpected encounter with an enemy or a "shugli" quarrel. When Khevsur for any reason didn't have at hand their shashka and buckler, for example, when working in the fields within his settlement, when guesting, or during feasts, when they surrendered them to the host, the secret weapons remained with them. Thus the Khevsur were never completely unarmed.

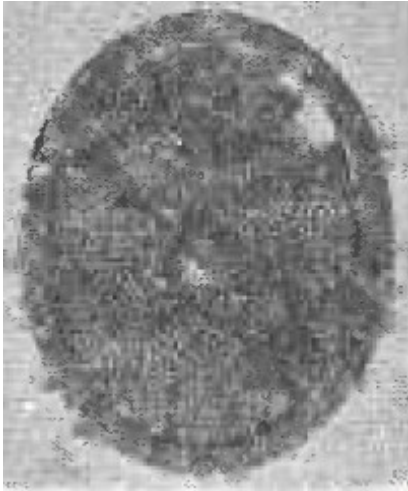


Fig. 21 Zapazushni Buckler
"ubis pari"

This buckler was used defensively, intercepting the impacts of a blade, and sometimes the zapazushni buckler was adapted and used as an offensive weapon. In these cases, buckler was used to strike with the edge or with tongs (spikes?) on its face. The uneven nature of the battle of enemies had to cause subsequent meddling with the ancient traditions, which were obligated to avoid further development of the struggle.

Once interested in this question, we conducted a special inspection, paying special attention to searches for separate versions of zapazushni bucklers.

As a result of our work, on October 14, 1944 in the village of Gveleti (Barisakhoyski village soviet) in the house of Ivanovich Arabuli Khvtisiya we discovered the original "ubis pari" - zapazushni buckler.

On our arrival in Tblisi we attempted to verify our results with the materials of the ethnography department of the Georgian State Museum by comparing the version of the zapazushni buckler that we found with the existing bucklers in the museum's collection. However, we only found the usual sorts of combat bucklers and training bucklers woven from wood.

The only writings about the khevsur combat bucklers of oblong form, analogous to "ubis pari", could be assumed in G. Radde. However, our work revealed that although Radde contains, in an image of khevsurian bucklers, several of oval form, in the text describing the buckler, Radde writes: "The bucklers, depicted in this figure (Tab V, Fig 6) present an iron circle, covered on the inside with thick and durable skin". This statement, allows us to conclude that the author was not in fact intending to describe zapazushni, but in fact normal khevsurian combat bucklers, especially because in Khevsuria, bucklers are rarely actually perfectly circular in shape.

The described zapazushni style buckler described is found in villages. Specifically it is found in Gveleti Barisakhoyskogo village Soviet in Ivanovich Arabuli's Khvtisiya. It is oval in form; with length of 23 and width of 18.7 cm. It has three major components, the buckler's base, "navershiya", and rings, which encircle the edges of the buckler.

The panel base is made of sheet iron, with a thickness of about two mm, and "navershie" and

rings of thicker sheet iron (approximately 2 mm thick).

The “Navershie” has an X-shaped form with elongated legs. These become narrow under the rings “gigloi”. In the center of the “navershiya is a round convexity, called the “apple” of the navershiya, which is damaged. In the middle, there is a hole, obviously created by the impact of a weapon. Around the “apple” on each leg are 4 rivets which fasten it to the base.

Around the buckler, on its face there is the whole cut out “corona” or ring, (width 1.5, thickness 2 mm), which is fastened to the base with 12 rivets, 4 of them fire. (hot riveted?)

r.

On the back side of the buckler, in the center of the base there are two pieces of rough woolen homespun material of a dark brown color. These serve to allow the buckler to be held in the hand; the buckler is held not along the length, but across it. The ends of the rings exit from the face of the buckler, in the plane of the end of the legs of the navershiya and are peened to the sides. Only two rings were preserved on this buckler, which weighed 295 g.

The second zapazushni buckler was discovered again in the villages. This time in Khakhnati, Batsaligoyskogo village soviet in the family of Khirchla Aludauri.

It too is oval in form (width of 21 cm and length of 25cm); and is made from sheet iron, with a weight of 575 g. Its face consists of 3 parts.

In the center, there is an X-shaped “navershie” with elongated legs which reach to the sides and pass under the rings of the buckler.

The legs become proportionally narrower as they spread farther from the center and end up being 1 cm wide (at the extreme edge); however, at the base they are 4cm wide. Along the vertical line through the center of the navershi is 8.8 cm and along the horizontal 4.5cm. In the middle is the “apple” (diameter – 3mm, height – 6mm), around this in the middle of each leg are rivets (4 in all), which fasten the navershi to the base. This is decorated throughout the entire edge with a dense pattern of dots, a number of which the navershi also cuts on the vertical line. On the “apple”, besides the passing vertical line is a horizontal line. Together these form a cross.

Both rings in this buckler are made from the same thick sheet iron as the navershi and are entirely cut. The large ring, which encircles the buckler has 22 rivets, the second – 16.

On the middle of both rings (rims) along the rivet line pass the same dots or points as on the navershi.

The base of the buckler is made of two pieces of thinner iron, fastened together with two special rivets.

On the backside of the buckler, in the middle of the base we find an irregularly shaped quadrangular pillow made from thick black burochnogo felt . On top of this there is sewn a piece of leather in the same shape. On the corners of the pillow – rings are attached which pierce through the buckler and emerge of the face side where they are twisted into a spiral shape. On the rings, we find the usual sort of straps for a Khevsur buckler lashed in the form of a double T turn.

Upward along both sides of the pillow there are two additional rings for attaching the sword belt, their ends between the rings on the branches (legs) of the navershi.

The sword belt is a belt, in two places it is shabby and it is tied to the units in the places where it is spoiled.

The zapazushni buckler was held in the left hand if the right held any weapon, dagger, knife, or combat ring, and if the zapazushni buckler was the only weapon of the Khevsur, then it was held in the right hand, acting simultaneously as the defense and means of attack.

The study of zapazushni bucklers leads us to the following conclusions. The application of a zapazushni buckler effectively occurred in almost all regions of Khevsuria.

This buckler was carried when traveling within the settlement, to the work fields, whenever Khevsur combat weapons left houses, as guests during feasts, while carousing, at weddings, at funeral feasts, and the like to replace the traditional combat weapons including the buckler, when, according to tradition, that was passed, upon arrival as a guest to the host.

During the use of a zapazushni buckler, it was the weapon of active defense at hand. I.e. it made it possible for the owner to repel the attacks of their enemy and to deliver blows to the enemy, with both the flat and the edge of the buckler. Consequently, the zapazushni buckler is one of the varieties of Khevsurian bucklers.

The size and weight of zapazushni bucklers were universally less than those of a normal buckler; with the majority of zapazushni bucklers having an oval shape. Some being used with the long axis of the oval vertical, some horizontal. The rivets of the zapazushni buckler had higher heads on the front side in order to be used as a weapon, to inflict scratching blows.

The zapazushni buckler was an additional form of khevsur armament, which in the cases noted above substituted for conventional combat weapons, thanks to which a Khevsur was never completely unarmed.

The “Ubis Pari” style buckler is characterized by small size and an oval form. On the rings and

navershi of the buckler are a large number of rivets with stringly convex heads. These amplify the effect of the buckler as an offensive weapon and make it possible to inflict upon the enemy many scratching blows (tearing wounds) about the body and the head.

2. Passive defense weapon - “napleshnik” (misyurka) “chachkani” The Khevsurian combat head-gear which they call the “chachkani”, is a variety of ancient helmet, known in literature by the name “napleshnik” or “misyurka”, with a protective mail armor screen or “barmitsa”¹⁸.

“Chachkani”: consist of a round steel or iron convex skullcap (with a diameter of up to 17 cm), in Khevsur a “budde” which has holes on its edge which are used to attach a barmitsa. To strengthen it, in the middle of the skullcap is a ring or a sphere – called a “repe”. Barmitsa is a mail armor screen.

We find barmitsas with an opening for the face, or continuous, enclosing not only the ears, cheeks, back of head and shoulders, but also the entire face. In this case, the barmitsa has openings for the eyes. In the neck, the barmitsa tightens around the face with the help of special straps, fastened to part of the skullcap and at the chin by means of a special small nut. barmitsas can be up to 50 cm long; on the sides of the barmitsa there are cuts of up to 10 cm over the arms. (Fig. 22, 23)

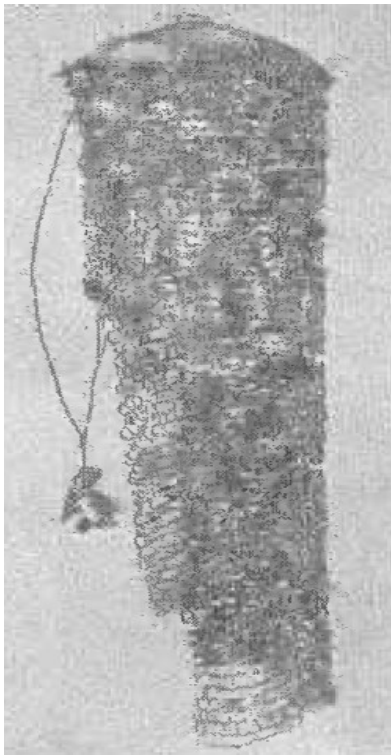


Fig. 22 Napleshnik - “chachkani” (side view)

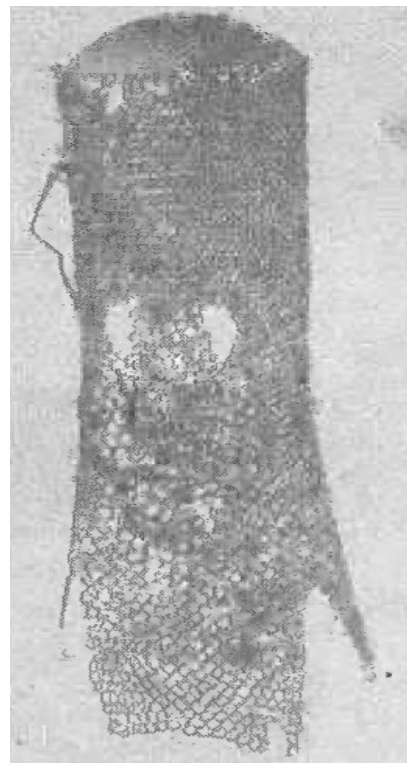


Fig. 23 Napleshnik - “chachkani” (front view)

mail Shirt - “dzhachvis perangi”. The passive protection of the upper part of the body was achieved in Khevsuria by the use of the hauberk – a kind of shirt made of small tightly interlaced rings.

¹⁸ “Napleshnik” and “Misyurka” refer to a sort of metal skullcap like an oversize yarmulke with a protective veil of mail or small plates attached to it.

mail shirts were worn over the cloths. these hauberks had long sleeves and combat gloves (rare example) and short sleeves (usual type) (Fig. 24)

In 1945 in Khevsuria we saw a copy which bears traces of local alterations: The hauberk was sheathed in a woolen material, which is absent at this time. The sleeves were elongated by the addition of annulated mesh, which replaced the naruchi (vambraces). Lastly, it included rukavits (gauntlets, metal, leather, of mail mittens – literal translation “combat gloves”).

Thus the entire forearm was completely protected from the balde and the need for vambraces was eliminated¹⁹ (fig. 25).

Besides the hauberk, the Khevsur adopted another form of armor – called “begtari”²⁰ which was armor of the “yushman” type, I.e. also a hauberk, in which the lateral, breast, and spinal parts were made from metallic plates linked with the rings.

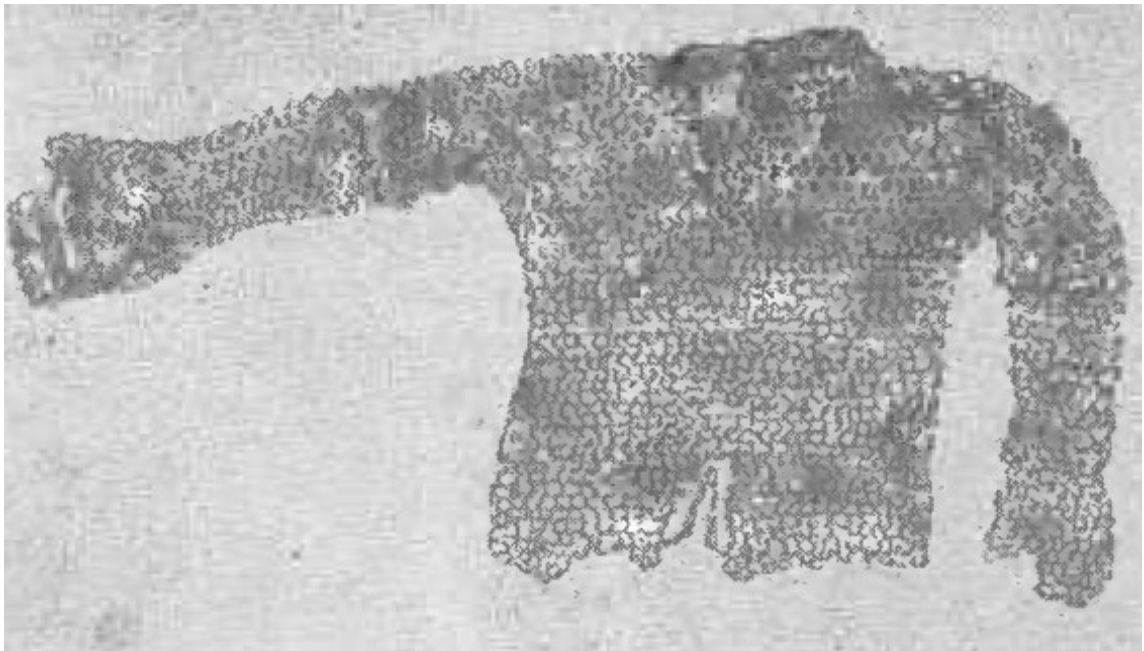


Fig. 24 Hauberk - “dzhachvis perangi” with long sleeves and integral mittens

19 This hauberk we acquired in the summer of 1945 during the expedition to the villages in Tsinkhadu of the batsaligskogo village soviet. (Piraketskaya Khevsuria. The former owner took from it all the cloth parts.)

20 Sr. Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani. Georgian Dictionary, Tiflis, 1928 (in georgian) p 37.

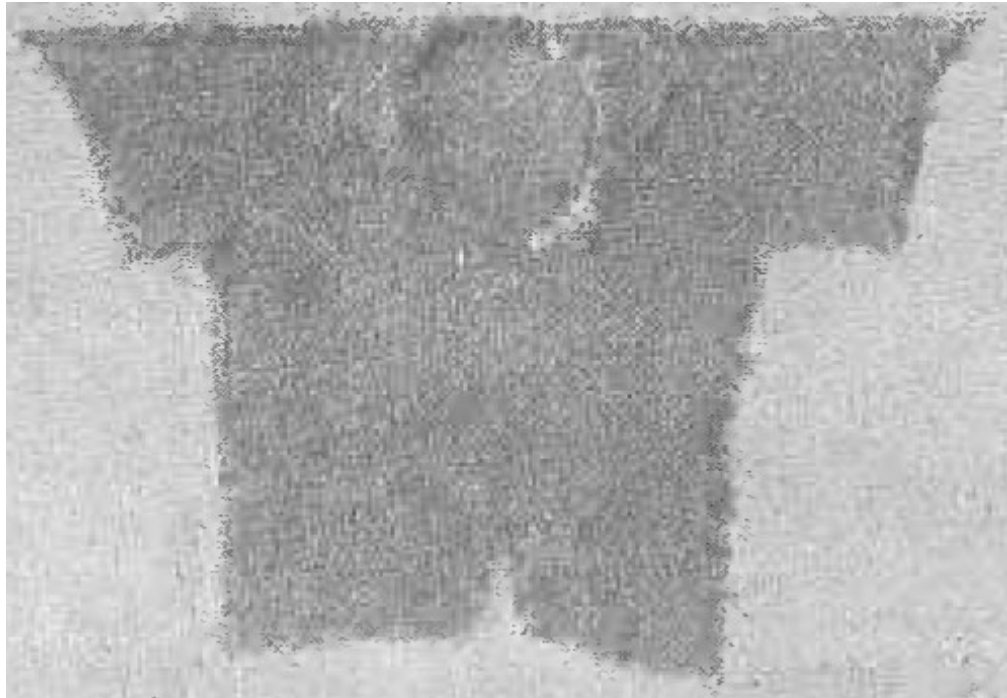


Fig. 25 Hauberk with traces of local alterations.

There were also armors of the type of continuous armor, *plastii* (plate?) was made of metal, fastened along the sides.

These two varieties of armors, were adapted in order to protect against firearms and arrows.

Naruchi (vambraces) - “*samklaveni*” - protective devices which prevent the forearms being hit by a blade – consist of metallic (steel or iron) sheet, which covers the external part of the forearm from the elbow to the hand.

Up until the recent past, many Khevsurs still used naruchi. They wore them on both arms, or only on the leftist (in the absence of the buckler). [I think this means that they sometimes wore them on the left arm if they didn't have a buckler and otherwise they wore only the right arm one.]

The naruchi found in Khevsuria are usually constructed in the following manner: the major portion is forged from a sheet of metal, semicircular, convex, and rounded at the elbow, to which from below, on the inside, by means of cross connections they fasten the other part of the naruchi – called the “*cherevtso*”, which is dual, i.e. usually consists of two plates connected by rings or a hinge made from mail armor (Fig 26).

Mail Gauntlets (literally combat chain armor gloves) - “dzhachvis sapukhrebi”. For hand protection Khevsurs use mail gauntlets – which they call “dzhachvis sapukhrebi”. Gloves for the left and right hands differ somewhat from each other. The right hand glove is mail made of thin iron, which is attached to a cloth base [author refers to this is a patron which translates as cartridge or socket] (made from homespun rough fur [likely wool but unspecified]). On the lower lateral part of this cloth base on the side near the little finger is fastened the same cloth collar for the wrist in the form of a bandage with a braid for the fastening of the glove. (fig 27).

On the inside they sew three groups of loops made of wool cord or leather; the first group (a) - accommodates the little finger and ring finger, the second group (b) – the middle and pointer finger, each of them consists of two loops arranged in two rows – one at the level of the first joint, another – at the level of the second joint; the third group consists of a loop at the second knuckle of the thumb and a cavity which holds the first joint of the finger. The mail covers the entire tail of the hand, and from the palm, the hauberk covers the all the fingers and the palm to the base of the fingers.

The Left hand gauntlet, is protected to a lesser degree by mail armor because this hand is almost wholly covered by the buckler. The Mail only covers the tail of the hand and the thumb. For each finger there are two rows of loops. Otherwise the remaining components of each glove are identical (fig. 28).

Mail “ponozhi” or greaves - “sacherneni”. Protective devices for both feet – mail ponozhi, which served to protect the forward section of the shin from blows. They were manufactured from iron rings, fastened together and attached to the foot with the aid of special straps (on the thigh above the knee, on the shin below the joint, and in the ankle joint) (fig. 29).

Head-gear – with protective hoop - “girgoliani kudi”. The need to be constantly ready for combat pointedly determined some special features of Khevsur head-gear. Khevsur head-gear consists of a low fur hat made from sheep skin or wool felt. Although the sheep skin or dense felt by themselves offer significant opposition to blows to the head (with the Khevsur style of light impacts), the shieldign properties of these hats were strengthened even more by the use of special hoops (“kudis girgoli”) which protected the head from blows of the shashka.

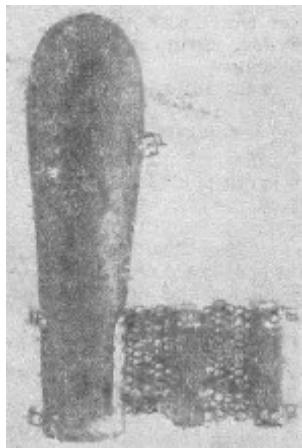


Fig. 26 Naruchi -
“samklaveni”
(vambrace)

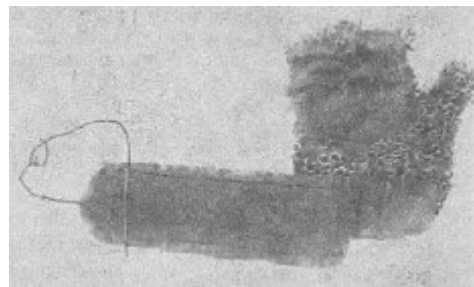


Fig. 27 Mail glove - “dzhachvis
sapukhrebi” (for the right hand)

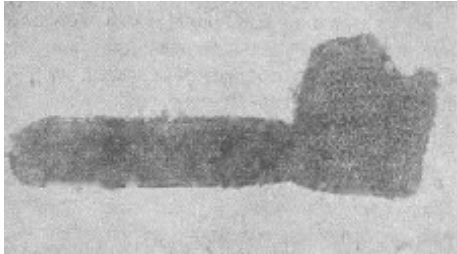


Fig. 28 Mail glove (for the left hand)

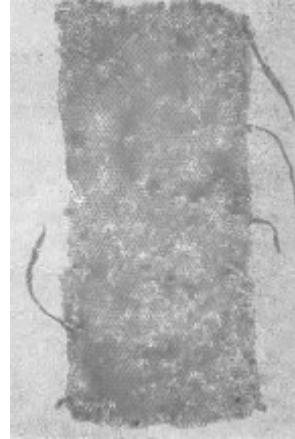


Fig. 29 Mail greave - "sacherneni"

The hoops are circles with diameter relative to the size of the cap, 20-25cm, made from heavy iron or copper wire of about 3-4mm thickness. This wire was afstened at the ends into a hoop, twisted into rings or unriveted in a dovetail form.

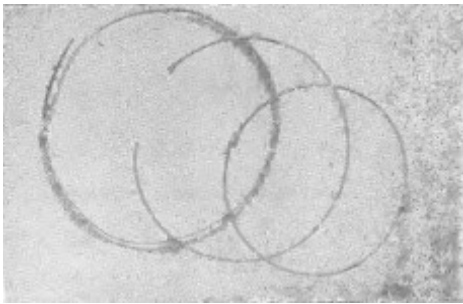


Fig. 30. Ring for inside the hat - "kudis girgoli"

Besides metal hoops, the Khevsurs also used wooden ones, made from flexible twigs, with thickness and width up to 1 cm; the ends are planed (fig. 30).

Technical Methods of Khevsurian Fencing

Basic striking positions and motions²¹

Shashka

Holding the shahka: Khevsurs hold the shashka handle using all fingers to grasp it. (fig. 31)

In applied fencing one of the methods of holding the shahka, used exclusively during cutting, is

²¹ We use contemporary terms to describe the fencing actions because of the extraordinary complexity of translating the Khevsur terms into the Russian language.

analogous to the Khevsurian manner of grasping the handle with all fingers. This method, which makes it possible to deliver very strong, well-aimed chopping blows, is not applied when stabbing since with this method of grip, control of the tip of the blade is hindered.

It is interesting to note that Khevsurs, when using thrusts, use precisely this method, since it ensures the tenacious gripping of the weapon it decreases the possibility of dropping the weapon during battle.

Khevsurs train to attain such an adroitness of possession of the blade, such a control of the weapon, to allow them in “chra-chriloba” to strike with the blade using precise lightness, cutting blows with this specific force. One historical legend speaks to this extraordinarily mastery of technique by Khevsurian fencers. According to this legend, Pompei, astonished by the martial craftsmanship, asked a Khevsur to demonstrate this skill, for which demonstration he also gave rich presents²². If a Khevsur in a duel does not intend to inflict wounds “parikaoba”, then he holds his weapon prone, with the edge to the right (fig 32) or to the left (fig 33) (moreover blows are struck in these cases with the flat of the blade), of the weapon is turned 180° with the spine forward and (alternatively) blows are delivered with it (fig 34).

Among highly proficient warrior instead of holding the weapon “prone” or “spine” forward we observe the use of a normal grip with blade forward (fig. 35), moreover, before striking a blow with the blade, they accurately and deftly, twist their hand to the left (fig. 36) or to the right by 90° so that the blow lands on the enemy with the flat.

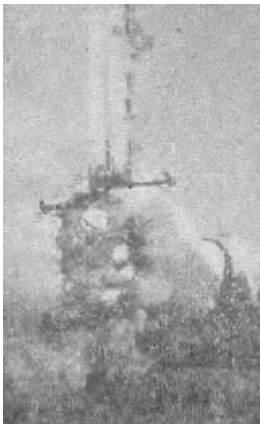


Fig 31. Holding the shashka

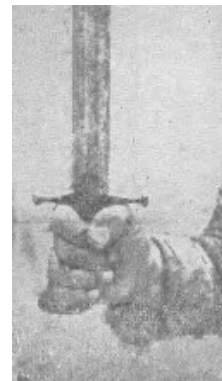


Fig. 32 Holding the weapon prone, with the edge to the right.

22 Teymuraz Bagrationi, history..., Sib., 1848, p. 128 (in georgian)

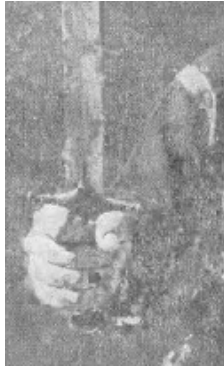


Fig. 33 Holding the weapon prone, with the edge to the left.



Fig. 34 Holding the weapon with the spine forward.

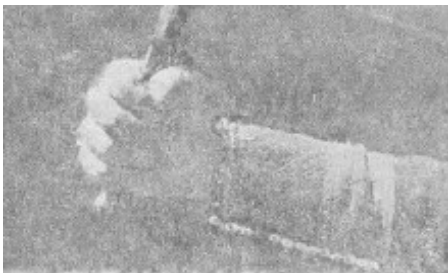


Fig. 36 twisting the hand to the left (or to the right) before landing a blow.



Fig. 35 Normal grip on the weapon with the edge forward.

Buckler

Storage and carrying of the buckler: At home, the buckler is usually stored together with the other weapons, hung from the swordbelt on the man's side of the head of the bed, or on the designated wall – in the upper level of the Khevsurian house, called “cherkho”. Usually, when nothing is threatening the Khevsur, the buckler is carried in walking position. but if they use it during a struggle or when in direct danger (expecting an attack), then the buckler is held in position to use.

When walking they carry their buckler differently depending on the following circumstances:

1. If the Khevsur is riding, then the buckler is usually hung up a sword belt, attached to the pommel of the saddle, to the left side, and sometimes with the grip facing outward so that in case of sudden danger it can be quickly gripped and moved into position for use. In some cases, the buckler hangs on the rider's back by a belt around the outside of the neck.

2. When a Khevsur is on foot, he carries his buckler using one of the following methods:

- a.) Just like while mounted, on his back. (fig. 37)
- b.) On a strap, behind the back, over the left arm navershi out/ (fig. 38)
- c.) on a strap from the left shoulder, under the left arm navershi out (fig. 39)
- d.) on a strap hung from the left elbow, also, navershi out. (fig. 40)



Fig. 37. Buckler carrying position (mounted and on foot)



Fig. 38. Buckler carrying position (on straps on the back)

These methods are all used when the Khevsur doesn't expect the threat of a sudden encounter with an enemy. If the Khevsur does expect such an encounter, then the buckler is carried near or in the left hand, by a strap on the wrist, navershi out, (fig. 41), or in the left hand in position for use (fig. 42).

I. A. Khudasov indicates that the buckler is carried hanging from the waist²³, but according to our observations and the assertions of the Khevsur, this method of carrying the buckler is not used.



Fig. 39. Buckler in marching position
(on the left arm by the armpit by left
hand).



Fig. 40. Buckler in marching position
(on a strap on the left elbow)



Fig. 41. Position of the buckler when expecting an enemy encounter



Fig. 42. Buckler in the omitted left hand usage position.

Methods of moving the buckler from marching position to combat position. 1. If the Khevsur is mounted and the buckler is hanging on the pommel of the saddle, then when dismounting, the buckler is simultaneously removed from the pommel by seizing the grip straps and leaving the hanging strap free for the first moments. The, at the first opportunity, the hanging strap is seized with the left hand along with the straps used for gripping.

2. If the buckler is hanging from the left arm or left elbow, it is removed by the right hand from the arm or elbow so that the hanging strap remains on the wrist; depending on the length of the hanging strap the buckler is either immediately seized with the fingers using the hanging strap and the gripping straps or (with the hanging strap) the left hand makes two or three rotary motions, in order to wind the hanging strap around the wrist, after which the fingers seize the gripping straps.

Another version of this method without using the right hand is to make a sharp motion with the left arm or elbow.

3. If the buckler hangs by its strap from the wrist, then either the methods described above are adopted, or the buckler is [brasyvaetsya](pulled?) upward by the hanging strap using the left hand and is caught in flight with the fingers by the gripping straps. With the long hanging straps some soldiers, making with the strap a sliding [tsetlyu]? (my dictionary doesn't have any words that begin with тет but that is clearly what the text says.), dress the buckler to the wrist with subsequent actions analogous to those described above.

Holding the buckler in position for use. In the usage position there are several methods of holding the buckler: with the first, more extended method, the leather grips are held deeply in the base of the fingers in a fist, grasped by all the fingers of the left hand (fig. 43)



Fig. 43. First method of holding the buckler for combat.

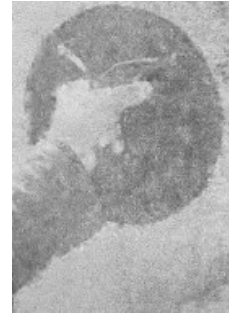


Fig. 44. Second method of holding the buckler in fighting position.

With the second method they grip the straps with the second phalanges of the four fingers and rest the pad of the thumb on the cushion or the back of the buckler. (fig. 44)

Another variation of this method has the buckler gripped with the second joint of the first three fingers, excluding the pinky finger (fig. 45), or even gripped by two (pointer and middle) fingers, (Fig 46). This method is observed among strong technical and experienced fencers.



Fig. 45. Holding the buckler in the fighting position (variation of the second method)

One characteristic of Khevsurian fencing is that the hands constantly stay close together. The right holds the blade, and the left the buckler, moving together in mutual coordination. Offensive actions with the shashka (right hand) are inseparably connected with actions of the defensive weapon – buckler (left hand); similarly, when utilizing the buckler the right hand, which holds the blade, accompanies the left, finding the moment for a reciprocal strike.²⁴

1. The palms of both hands are in close proximity behind the buckler with the thumbs held in parallel. Along this axis of connection the hands can converge or disperse. (fig. 47)
2. Some soldiers also connect their hands with additional finger contact beyond the closeness of

²⁴ The Khevsur explain that the close arrangement of the hands in a combat counter pursues two goals: 1.) protecting the right hand from injury which holds the weapon: 2.) The small dimensions of the buckler mean that after sliding down from the rim of the buckler inflict a wound. In this case holding the blade contiguous to the buckler provides an additional barrier, which intercepts the enemy's blow, and thus provides additional protection.

the thumbs. These place the left thumb over the right thumb.

3. Another variety of the previous method is effected without the shashka overlapping. The left thumb is placed on the back of the weapon's handle above the thumb of the right hand (Fig. 49).

The methods of jointly holding the shashka and the buckler together described above are characterized by the weapon pointing in a generally upward direction.

Besides the methods listed, they also bring the hands together in such a manner that the weapon points to the left or to the right. This gives a total of three additional ways to hold the hands when fighting.

The palm of the left hand remains in the same place as in the previous methods, while the palm of the right hand is placed over it with the back facing upwards. The right thumb is tucked between the middle and index fingers of the left hand when the blade is pointed left (Fig. 50).

5. The Palm of the left hand also remains in the same place when pointing the blade to the right. In this case, the palm of the right hand slides downward underneath the left so that the right palm is forced against the left little finger and the point of the blade is directed to the right.
6. The palm of the left hand is in the previous position and the right is turned with the backside upward under the left, pressed against the left at the base of the index finger. The point of the shashka is to the left (Fig. 52).



Fig. 46. Holding the buckler in position to fight (variation of the second method).



Fig. 47. Position of hands version one.



Fig. 48. Position of hands version two.



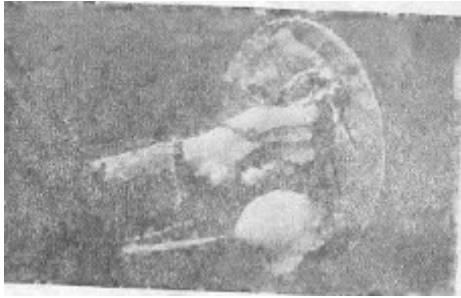
Fig. 49. Position of hands version three.



Fig. 50. Position of hands version four.



Fig. 51. Position of hands version five.



The goals of all these techniques are to strengthen the cohesion of the hands and to facilitate the coordination of joint motions of the blade and buckler.²⁵

Fig. 52. Position of hands version six.

Combat Counter and its position. Before the Khevsur assumes the guard position he positions the buckler in his left hand in usage position, then he uses the right hand to draw the blade from the scabbard while the left hand, which holds the buckler seizes the scabbard between the thumb and index finger, forcing it against the

body to assist the right hand with the draw (Fig. 53).



After drawing the blade, the Khevsur assumes the combat counter (guard position); He squats with feet shoulder width apart with weight centered and distributed evenly to each foot, usually he keeps his feet parallel or moves one forward. If one foot is advanced, it is usually the left one.

During combat it is possible to observe a change from the guard position with the passage from one position to another. Usually this is done in order to decrease the size of the target area. For this, Khevsurs pass from the vulnerable position into the guard position while crouching to the haunches or to the right knee.

Fig 53

While squatting, the right hand with the blade and the left, which holds the buckler are moved forward with the palm of the right hand behind the buckler, next to the left.

Both hands are bent slightly at the elbows. If fencing without vambraces, then the elbows are brought together as far as possible. The body is bent and leaned forward slightly, which decreases the overall size of the target zone. This shrinks the target zone vertically, as opposed to classical fencing, which shrinks the target zone horizontally, across the width of the body.

Khevsurs use 9 varieties of the combat counter (guard position), which analogous to classical fencing, we will consider as positions.

These positions are distinguished based on the position of the blade in the guard which we can accept for the initial position. This position is characterized by holding the blade vertically in front of ourselves with the point angled up and towards the enemy (Fig. 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58).

²⁵ V. Shklovski, when describing the Khevsurian method of holding weapons, falls into error when he asserts, that "Khevsurs, being chopped frequently do hold m???dvuk hands and still catch the buckler". Sm. Victor Shklovski, Mountain Georgia publication Young Guards, 1930, p. 13.

The following variants of the guard position are obtained by shifting the point of the blade to the right or left by approximately 45°, 90° and 135° from the initial position. The 2nd position has the point up and to the right about 45° (Fig. 59, 60).

3rd Position – point upward, the blade is inclined to the right by roughly 90° (Fig. 61).



Fig. 54. Guard position stance (specifically feet)



55. Guard position stance from the right side.



56. Guard position stance from the left side.



Fig. 57. Stance from the left knee.



Fig. 58. Stance from the right knee.



Fig. 59. Second position (standing up)



Fig. 60. Second position (kneeling)



Fig. 61. Third position.

4th position – Shifting the weapon down and to the right the palm of the right hand (holding the blade) is placed under the palm of the left hand (holding the buckler) so that the tip of the weapon is at the same height as the knee (fig. 62).

The 5th position is analogous to the second, but the point is tipped to the left leaving the blade at an approximately 45° angle (Fig. 63, 64).

The 6th position is like the third, but the point is directed 90° to the left (fig. 65, 66)

The 7th position is the same as the 4th position, but the point is down and to the left (Fig. 67).



Fig. 62. Fourth Position



Fig. 63. Fifth Position
(standing).



Fig. 64. Fifth Position
(kneeling)



Fig. 65. Sixth Position
(standing).

These positions, characterized by the blade being positioned with the point upward have the greatest application.



Fig. 66. The sixth position (kneeling).



Fig. 67. Seventh position.

Besides the more than seven positions examined so far, which are used in Khevsur fencing (“parikaoba” and “chra-chriloba”), we will look at two more varieties, which are used exclusively in blood duels and in serious combat. The guard used in these positions is somewhat different since the fighter stands with the left foot toward the enemy; moreover, the left foot is advanced, the feet are slightly bent, the sole of the left foot is pointed forward, and the sole of the right foot is pointed approximately 90° to the right.



Fig. 68. Eighth position from the front.



Fig. 69. Eighth position from the right side.



Fig. 70. Eighth position from the left side.



Fig. 71. Ninth position.

1. The left hand holds the buckler, as usual it is held at chest level. The right hand, which holds the weapon point upward, is oriented back and bent at the elbow (Fig. 68, 69, 70).

2. Analogous counter: In this case, the right hand is positioned back and downward. The arm is bent at the elbow (Fig. 71).

These two positions give the possibility of striking a particularly strong blow, capable of chopping off a hand or causing a fatal wound.

Movements: Khevsurs use multiple different movements in their fencing in order to get around to their enemy's flank. These generally involve small hopping, or spasmodic steps to the side – to the right or the left. These provide the means for the combatant to make unique roundabout motions along the external and internal lines.

Lunging, as a rule, is absent in Khevsur fencing. It is possible to perceive in this a parallel with the classical fencing of the 17th Century.

The Khevsur find the concept of retreating shameful; therefore they do not train any special steps or jumps back as is done in classical fencing. They do however, use (one or two step) retreats in battle in order to obtain space for free action of their weapon after a close encounter (similar to a corps-a-corps) with the enemy.

Actions with shashka and buckler combined: Since in “chra-chriloba” each fencer is attempting to inflict a light wound upon their opponent which is not dangerous to life, or even to fitness for work, the Khevsurs train specifically create a habit of controlling the swing of the hand in order to inflict light surface injuries. These injuries, according to the usual rules of law, either are not completely paid to the sufferer²⁶, or are paid at a minimal cost.

Offensive operations using the shashka are characterized by the fact that the opponents use exceptionally light chopping blows, which strike at different places in the target zone and are executed using sharp motions of the hands in the plane of the strike. Both hands move forward simultaneously (right, holding the shashka and the left the buckler).²⁷

The sharp motions of the hands with the blow have a similarity to the manner of cutting that is characteristic of the French school of fencing with spadrons.

Repelling an enemy's attack is not done with the blade as it is in classical fencing, but with the buckler, which when blocking is always held in a vertical position and placed perpendicular to the

²⁶ Except payment for treatment of the wound - “sapatvle”

²⁷ It is necessary to note that the manner of striking blows with the shashka in Khevsur fencing in “chra-chriloba” and “parikaoba” remains constant; in both cases the blows are delivered with identical force, sharpness, and amplitude of motion of the blade

plane of the strike. The enemy's blow is always intercepted with the upper portion of the rim. After the blocking action is accomplished and the riposte is indicated, the hands rapidly return to the guard position.

Sometimes the protective actions of the buckler are strengthened by the use of a stick of up to one meter length and a diameter of 3-3.5cm. this stick is held in a vertical position in the left hand parallel to the blade along with the buckler, but with the long end dropped, (approximately 2/3 of the stick is lower than the handle of the weapon). In certain cases, instead of a stick a knife is used for this.

We will describe the techniques of making the characteristic chopping blows used Khevsur fencing in parallel with the description of the techniques used to defend against attacks.

The Khevsurs use 7 defensive actions to repulse attacks with the buckler.

Frequently the cut to the head used is executed as follows: beginning in one of the guard positions with the blade pointed upward (pos. 1, 2, & 5), the fighter, using a sharp downward (literally top to bottom) motion and simultaneously shifting both hands forward, delivers a chopping impact to the head (into the 5th or 6th sectors)²⁸.

To defend against the above action, adopt an upward parry to prevent the impact on the head. To accomplish this, the hands, remaining extended forward with slightly bent elbows, rapidly rise above the line of the forehead. Moreover, the upper edge of the rim of the buckler is placed under the blade of the opponent, (Fig. 72, 73).

Blows to the face (in the 7th and 8rd sectors) or to the body are versions of strikes to the head (in the 3rd and 4th sectors). These blows are produced from the same positions, but the hands are developed so that the blade would accept the second position²⁹ (for impact from the direction of the right side of the body), or the fourth position (I think this is meant to be 5th position because 5th mirrors 4th, and 4th makes no sense as far as I can tell.) (for impacts from the direction of the left side of the body). In the first case, the palm of the left hand is placed above the palm of the left (Fig. 50), and in the second case – under the palm of the left hand (Fig. 51).

They adopt the protection from blows along the left side depending on the direction of the impact.

Parry left: When adopting this guard the far forward arms almost straighten the elbows. The buckler is moved rapidly forward and left to meet the enemy's blade, which is delivering a horizontal strike from right to left. After this meeting, as a rule, is a a followup attack (riposte). The guard can be

28 L Golovnya. Method of the record of fencing phrases; on classification, publ. Gruznišk'a, Tblisi, 1938, pg. 6

29 According to the accepted classification, see "fencing and hand-to-hand fighting". Publ. "gymnastics and sport", Moscow-Leningrad, 1940, pg. 190-191.

compared with the the 4 guard of classical fencing (Fig. 74 & 75).

Left upper parry: This is carried out similarly, but the hands are moved rapidly left and upward, there to intercept with the buckler any oblique impact from above (Fig. 76, 77).



Fig. 72. Upward parry against a strike to the head (standing position).



Fig. 73. Upward parry against a strike to the head (kneeling position).



Fig. 74. Parry Left (standing position).



Fig. 75. Parry Left (kneeling position).

Strikes to the right side of the body are stopped using methods like those for the left side of the body. Using the parry right, which can be compared with the 3rd guard from classical fencing (Fig. 78, 79).



Fig. 76. Parry left high (standing position).



Fig. 77 Parry left high (kneeling position).



Fig 78. Parry right (standing position).



Fig. 79. Parry right (kneeling position).

Parry right high: Blows to the 1st and 2nd sectors can be made from all positions, regardless of whether the blade is tip-upwards, or tip-downwards (Fig. 80).

When threatened with a blow in the 1st or second sectors, increase the turn of the hands to the appropriate side, so that what emerges is an oblique impact downward to the left, or downward to the right.



Fig. 80. Parry right high.



Fig. 81. Parry low left (standing position).



Fig. 82. Parry low left (kneeling position).



Fig. 83. Parry low left.

They use these parries for the these blows:

a) The low parry left, is carried out as a parry left, but with the hands moved rapidly forward, and downward on the left side, using the buckler to intercept an attack to the lower sector. This parry can be compared with the 4th low guard of classical fencing (Fig. 81 and 82).

b) The low parry right has a similarity to the low third guard of classical fencing (Fig. 83)

From the position with the tip of the blade pointed down and to the right, strikes are delivered upward into the first sector – predominantly on the thigh. From the position with the point of the blade directed downward to the left an oblique strike is delivered which is a mirrored analogue of that described previously but into the 2nd sector (right thigh).

With low targeted strikes (below the knee), parrying down and to the right or left, in order to intercept the plane of the strike the fencers sometimes descend to one knee, most frequently the right. In this case, the left knee often serves as a support for the left elbow (Fig. 84).

In some special cases, need can force Khevsur to conduct a “chra-chriloba” duel on the spur of the moment, when armed only with a shashka, sword, or dagger and without a buckler near at hand. In these cases, the function of the buckler is performed by some other improvised tool. Any suitable object can be substituted for the buckler. In certain cases even a stick has been used. We consider it necessary to focus specially on the use of the khevsur head-gear - “mashtagis kudi” or “gaketebuli kudi” as a buckler substitute.



Fig. 84. Parry left low (kneeling position)



Fig. 85. Preparation of head-gear for protective use.

The need to use the cap instead of the buckler can arise when working in the fields at the edge of a settlement, with an unexpected quarrel, or the surprise attack of the enemy. This occurs as follows: the cap is quickly removed by the left hand, the right hand presses the lid of the cap inward, and the left seizes the lining inside so that in that hand there is now an improvised buckler. With the aid of the protective hoop in the cap it is possible to block enemy blows like it is done with a normal buckler. This is made more effective on one hand by the Khevsur manner of delivering light chopping impacts, and on the other hand, by training the left hand in the use of the buckler, thus making it possible to use the same habits with the substitute (Fig. 85, 86).

Another variation is the use of napleshniks – “chachkani” to the Khevsur or naruchi - “samklave” to the Khevsur as a substitute for the buckler (Fig. 87, 88).



Fig. 86. caption is missing. Use of cap as buckler.



Fig. 87. Use of Napleshnik as a buckler.

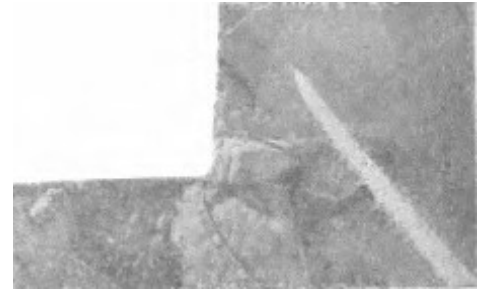


Fig. 88 Use of Naruchi (samklave) as a buckler.

According to the Khevsur, some skilled fencers allow themselves to manage without the buckler regularly, instead of which they only use naruchi. The Khevsur have the following verse about these fencers:

Conquer above Vadzhisdze, Torgva!
However, what did you have instead of a buckler?
Yes we know, you used Naruchi,
Without the shashka. Only the knife reduces the enemy's calculation.

Techniques and tactics of the Khevsurian Fencing battle

The tactics of the Khevsurian fencing bout are characterized by their aggressiveness; each fighter attempts first to attack his enemy. The struggle is extremely mobile in nature, though the whole fight occurs on a small “five-kopek coin”, with an overall size of 2-5 meters. The fighters continuously transition between positions, attempting and repelling attacks. The struggle is accompanied by cries, which are either mocking and teasing the enemy (in parikaba) or insulting expressions (in chra-chriloba).

Some individuals, usually older, distinguish themselves through prettier parrying technique and by the rapidity of their inflicted strikes. They conduct the struggle with the most economy of movement possible, especially the feet. the pride of these fighters requires standing almost motionless on the spot in order to not yield even a scrap of ground to the enemy.

Retreats, connected with backward movement, as we indicated above, contradict the steady Khevsur fighting ethics and show shameful actions as manifestations of cowardice, unworthy of a warrior.

Therefore lateral, roundabout movements to the flanks are the characteristic methods of movement for the participants in the struggle. These motions, involving a jump to one side of the enemy, followed by a jump to the other side of the other enemy bearing a threat to the flank, are more frequently adopted in the first phase of single combat, which has a probing nature, as in a reconnaissance.

The reconnaissance attempts to reveal the enemy's weak sides, to find the more vulnerable sectors.

The fight is built from the application of both simple and complex attacks (see the diagram of attacks and defences in khevsurian fencing).

Since Khevsur guard positions predominantly place the weapon point upward, it follows that we observe the technique of conducting simple attacks to either straight impacts, directed at the head, or impacts with the use of transfers. Transfers of the weapon are encountered comparatively rarely, because the holding of the sword and buckler together so increases the size of the executed movement that this method becomes excessively obvious and therefore barely effective.

When we examine medieval forms of fencing, we find a distant similarity of some Khevsur fencing methods to the techniques of fighting with the two-handed sword of the XVI century. The Khevsur's buckler substitutes for the role of the strong part of the two-handed sword, which served itself to protect from and repel the enemy's attacks.

The reconnaissance tactics used often are built on the application of feints. Technical fighters the favored method is considered to be the application of a complex attack in the form of the fraudulent action "dagalateba". The purpose of this being to force the enemy to move their protection (after changing position) to one body part in order to deliver a blow into another, momentarily unprotected, sector.

Other forms of complex attack, known in classical fencing – with the action on the weapon, are not used at all by the Khevsurs.

Deceiving actions in Khevsur fencing, just as in classical, are produced and can be accompanied by a threat with the weapon's blade, motions of the feet (stamping), and by corresponding movements and changes.

One characteristic of Khevsur fencing bouts is that any countering of a blow is accompanied by a retaliatory attack with the sword (riposte). This reciprocal attack follows only when the fighter is confident that a suitable movement has begun. In this case the technique of parrying with the buckler attains such perfection, that the overwhelming majority of blows are intercepted and countered. In “chra-chriloba”, the ethics require that preference is given to the fighter who knew how to wound his enemy, and subsequently limited himself to defense only. The fight ends only when both enemies feel strongly fatigued; moreover, the initiative to curtail the battle, resides, as it must ethically, with the wounded party.

The battle is, as a rule, conducted independently, guided by the customary rules. No mediators, like seconds, are provided for by the usual rights. With “chra-chriloba” any outside witness present for the struggle is obligated to interfere to avoid bloodshed. Nonintervention is considered shameful.

According to the stories of the Khevsurs themselves, and the assertions of many researchers of Khevsuria, the curtailment of the struggle sometimes occurs when a woman proves to be nearby and comes between the enemies or touches one of them with her hand. A woman can also stop the most furious struggle by throwing her headscarf or “mandili” between the fighters.

Classification of attack and defense in Khevsur fencing.

