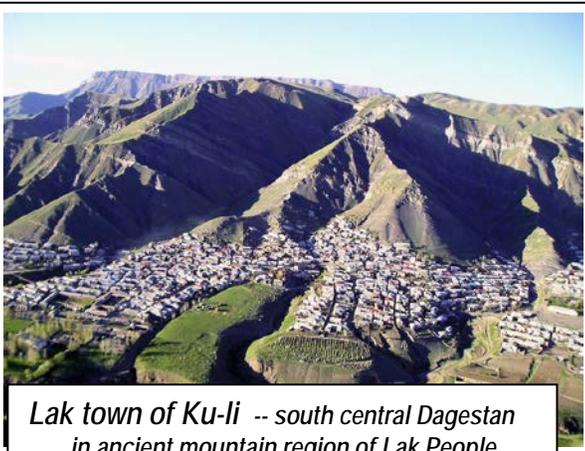


2014—Lak People

The elderly Lak man mused to himself, “I still remember my first 15 years in our ancient mountain village of Churtakh. We young men would go with the sheep to the high mountain pastures and then when the weather started getting cold we’d take the sheep far down into the lowlands and graze them there for two or three months. Those were great adventures. Down in the lowlands we would mingle with other Dagestani peoples and learn some of their languages; but after a few months we’d head home with our sheep back up into the rugged mountains of our Lak region. But in 1944 the military came to our village and forced us all to move hundreds of miles to the northwest to a windswept plain and start life all over, far away from our mountains.” This gentleman, now in his 80’s, has lived for the last 70 years in the lowland settlement of Novo-churtakh in northwestern Dagestan near the border with Chechnya. In that war-torn decade of the 1940’s this region was renamed the Novo-Lakskoe Region. Now, in these years his family has only a few sheep and cattle, and makes their living mostly off of sedentary agriculture. Some of the men work in factories in the nearby city of Khasavyurt.

The situation wasn’t only difficult for the Lak people. The region they were forcibly resettled to had been the centuries-old homeland of the Akkin people. In that year 1944 the Soviet KGB (under Stalin) brutally deported the Akkin, along with their nearby Chechen cousins, to the barren steppes of Central Asia. Many Akkin died in the process. Under Kruschchev, after 1957, the Akkin were allowed to return. But most of their villages and farm lands were now resettled for nearly 15 years by the transplanted Lak clans. What to do? Some of the Lak returned to their original mountain village region in south central Dagestan and rebuilt abandoned villages. Some remained and tenuously worked out accommodations with the returned Akkins. Other Laks eventually resettled to a new lowland region in northeastern Dagestan near the Caspian Sea, north of the capital city of Makhachkala.

Today, in the early 21st century, total Lak population in the Russian province of Dagestan is nearly 160,000. Laks are located in approximately 10 towns/villages in the northwestern NovoLakskoe Region, in approximately 12 villages in northeastern Dagestan, and perhaps 50 still-active villages in the original mountain homeland region in south-central Dagestan. Many Lak have also relocated to the urban center of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan. All of these upheavals have ‘stretched’ the Lak, not only geographically but also emotionally and relationally. The Lak were one of the first of all Dagestani peoples to convert to Islam in the 8th Century, and for many centuries their mountain central town of Kumukh was a center of Islamic learning. Now in this era the Lak hold a position of respect for many Dagestanis, partly due to their ancient leadership and also now due to their unifying influence as they have stretched into many sectors of Dagestan. Starting in the 1990’s a significant number of urban Lak came to faith in Jesus—there are now more than 50 Lak believers, mostly in urban sectors of Dagestan.



*Lak town of Ku-li -- south central Dagestan
in ancient mountain region of Lak People*

The New Testament books of Mark and Luke were completed in Lak 12 years ago, but then Bible work stalled due to no team leadership available. Thankfully, in 2010 a young Russian linguist, with his family, has moved to Dagestan and restarted Lak linguistic work; presently the Gospel of Matthew is being translated, with the future goal of finishing the NT.

Lak history is majestic, and yet tragic, and often the deficit of loving grace is palpably felt. Pray that the Lak people—in the midst of their many upheavals—will be drawn to ‘the Father of mercies and God of all comfort’ in the love of Christ. *II Cor.1:3*

* Pray for the Lak believers to shine as bright lights in the midst of their Lak families & clans. *Phil.2:12-15*
 * Pray for encouragement & success for the newly reassembled Lak Bible Translation Team. *Hebrews 4:12*
 * Pray for men and women of peace (*Luke 10:6*) in each one of the 72 Lak towns & villages, to be keys to welcoming the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit into each Lak community in the years ahead. *Matthew 9:36-38 & Hebrews 2:3-4*
 * Pray boldly that the Lak people, with their 'stretching' relational dynamics and position of honor in Dagestani society, will be used by the Lord to bring grace to many other Dagestani peoples. *Romans 10: 11-15!!*

NAMES OF MAJOR LAK TOWNS:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Kumukh | 4. Novo-lakscoe | 7. Vikh-li |
| 2. Ku-li | 5. Novo-kuli | 8. Aroossi |
| 3. Va-chi | 6. Novo-churtakh | 9. Khum-aul |

NAMES OF LAK VILLAGES :

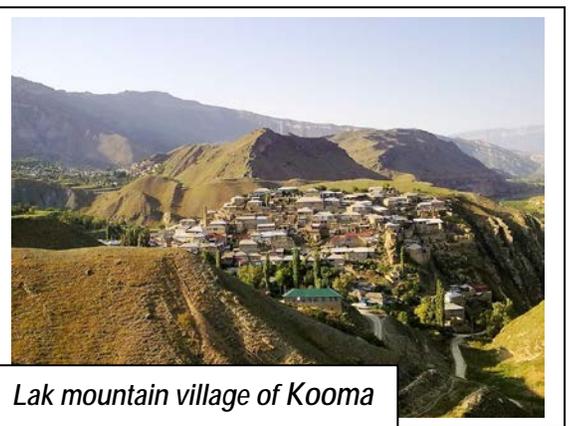
- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ara-kul' | 22. Sha-leeb | 43. Tsooli-kana |
| 2. Nizhni Katruk | 23. Khu-ru-kra | 44. Balkhar |
| 3. Khos-rekh | 24. Khu-ri | 45. Ku-li(Akusha) |
| 4. Sum-batl' | 25. Khu-na | 46. Shad-ni |
| 5. Tsov-kra Pervaya | 26. Oob-ra | 47. Novi Vikri |
| 6. Tsov-kra Vtoraya | 27. Khu-ti | 48. Cha-laevo |
| 7. Kaya | 28. Mu-kar | 49. Gami-yakh |
| 8. Tsu-shar | 29. Oo-ri | 50. Tookh-char |
| 9. Khoi-iti | 30. Kur-la | 51. Lugu-valloo |
| 10. Tsi-ishi | 31. Oo-loo-chara | 52. Karayar-aul |
| 11. Kha-ni | 32. Kara-sha | 53. Kharasma |
| 12. Bur-shi | 33. Oon-chukatl' | 54. Koo-tahn |
| 13. Khu-leesta | 34. Goo-iti | 55. Gubech-aul |
| 14. Khur-khi | 35. Shakh-uva | 56. Pri-sulakskaa |
| 15. Churtakh | 36. Ba-geekla | 57. As-aul |
| 16. Sha-ra | 37. Koon-dii | 58. Toor-zin |
| 17. Kulu-shatz | 38. Kooma | 59. Kazan-kulak |
| 18. Chi-tur | 39. Kara | 60. Ba-lasta |
| 19. Koob-ra | 40. Veets-khi | 61. San-gar |
| 20. Shov-kra | 41. Chook-na | 62. Too-kat |
| 21. Su-ki-yakh | 42. Koo-ba | 63. Bar-nikh |



View of Lak mountain region, near village of Tsovkra



Lak children in village of Oon-chukatl'



Lak mountain village of Kooma



Lak women, in festive dress—village of Balkhar South-central Dagestan



Lak town of KUMUKH –

Note the ancient castle on the ridge, above the television antennas.