

2014—Lezgi People

The dynamic young Lezgi man, imitating the eagle, fell to his knees, leapt up and twirled with rapid foot movements, with his outstretched arms swooping above him. Nearby, but not touching him, the gracious Lezgi woman, with demure hand movements and light artistic footwork, appeared to be floating across the floor as she responded symmetrically to the male dance. Celebrating a village wedding, the two were dancing the *Lezginka*, the world-famous dance with its origins in the Lezgi people of the eastern Caucasus region. Or, perhaps, they were dancing the *Lezginka* on the stage of a packed-out theatre in front of 1000's in London or Munich or Moscow. The ancient folk dance of the Lezgi people expresses the proud history and cultural dynamism of the 800,000+ Lezgis of southern Russia and northern Azerbaijan. Lezgi—over 450,000 in Russia; an estimated 350,000 in Azerbaijan.

In the 90 Lezgi towns and villages of Dagestan—see Page 2—the Lezgi raise sheep and goats, combined with subsistence agriculture, leather working, and textile production [famous hand woven carpets]. Life is similar in the more than 50 Lezgi towns and villages of northern Azerbaijan; with the exception that in Dagestan Russian serves as the 2nd language, whereas Azeri is the 2nd language for Lezgi in Azerbaijan. The Lezgi language, however, is alive and well—with robust oral activity in Lezgi villages, homes, and schools; and a huge reservoir of Lezgi literature and music. Many Lezgi have also out-migrated from rural Lezgi regions to urban areas of Dagestan and Azerbaijan, primarily for economic reasons. Patriarchal social structure among the Lezgi remains strong, especially in village life and in demarcated urban enclaves.



In Red - Lezgi home region - in southern Dagestan (Russia) & northern Azerbaijan.

Islamic power swept into the Caspian seacoast region of the Lezgi people already in the 7th and 8th Centuries, and has carried huge influence into Lezgi society over the past 1000 years. By the end of the 18th Century, the Lezgi people were considered 100% Muslim. Spiritism and animistic practices are also widespread in Lezgi culture. Rags are tied on holy trees or near holy graves to seek spiritual assistance for health or marriage or economic good fortune. Soothsayers are frequently consulted.

As epitomized in the majestic *Lezginka*, there is a nobility in ancient Lezgi culture. This, however, as elsewhere in the world, does not leave the people immune to the effects of sinful human nature. And neither spiritism nor Islam provides the cleansing forgiveness of Jesus or the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. In the past two decades there are now 75+ Lezgi followers of Jesus in Dagestan, and more than 100 Lezgi believers in Azerbaijan. Pray for their influence to spread and multiply—Colossians 1:6. Of great significance is progress in Lezgi Bible translation. The *Four Gospels & Acts* and a *Children's Bible* have been published in Lezgi, and sixteen additional NT books are in process. From the OT, *Ruth, Esther & Jonah* have been published, and ten more OT books are in process. There is a strong Bible translation team, including Lezgi believers. This work connects with the heart of Lezgi language and culture. An ancient text in a Lezgi tribal language, from pre-Islamic times, even contains Bible translation portions. Pray that the best of noble Lezgi culture will be infused with the regenerating power of Jesus' grace.

* **PRAY** for the Lezgi believers to shine as bright lights in the midst of their Lezgi families & clans. *Phil.2:12-15*
* **PRAY** for men and women of peace (*Luke 10:6*) in each one of the 142+ Lezgi towns & villages, to be keys to welcoming the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit into each Lezgi community in the years ahead. *Matthew 9:36-38 & Hebrews 2:3-4*
* **GIVE THANKS** for the Translation Work which is underway. **PRAY** for wide reading! *II Timothy 3:15-16*
* **PRAY** for many Lezgi to dance, full of the joy of the Holy Spirit, in the years to come. *Isaiah 55:11*
* **PRAY** for the noble Lezgi culture to be graced with the Fruit of the Spirit in the next generation. *Gal. 5:22-23*



The Lezginka danced on an international stage

NAMES OF MAJOR LEZGI TOWNS [DAGESTAN]:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Kasumkent | 4. Magaramkent | 7. Usukh-chai |
| 2. Belidzhi | 5. Kurakh | 8. Derbent [mixed population] |
| 3. Samur | 6. Akhti | |

NAMES OF LEZGI VILLAGES [DAGESTAN]:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Gdiim | 26. Koo-roosh | 51. Tagir-kent |
| 2. Midzakh | 27. Kah-lehr | 52. Ar-kheet |
| 3. Soomgool | 28. Teki-peer-kent | 53. Tr'kal |
| 4. Ukhul | 29. Kala-dzukh | 54. Tslak |
| 5. Kurkal | 30. Mee-krakh | 55. Kon-tseel' |
| 6. Khrakh | 31. Kee-lehr | 56. Kosh-kent |
| 7. Dzhaba | 32. Mees-keen-dzha | 57. Tsnal |
| Lootkoon | 33. Kara-kyooryeh | 58. Ashar-tseeneet |
| 9. Kaka | 34. Garakh | 59. Khlyook |
| 10. Khryoog | 35. Moo-ger-gan | 60. Kakhee-oog |
| 11. Zdriik | 36. Keer-ka | 61. Ooloo-gatag |
| 12. Khlyoot | 37. Khorel' | 62. Zukh-rabkent |
| 13. Gel'khen | 38. Geed'yar | 63. Saimar-kent |
| 14. Shimi-khyoor | 39. Kooi-soon | 64. Boot-kent |
| 15. A-shar | 40. Tsel-yagyoon | 65. Ees-neek |
| 16. Kuk-vaz | 41. Yarag-Kazmalyar | 66. Ee-tyur |
| 17. Khledzh | 42. Gal-tsakh | 67. Kur-kent |
| 18. Khyoor-e-khyoor | 43. Boot-Kazmalyar | 68. Al-kadar |
| 19. A-sha-kent | 44. Novo-gal-tsakh | 69. Nyoo-tyoog |
| 20. Shtool | 45. Feel'yah | 70. Zee-zeek |
| 21. Koo-tool | 46. Kabir-Kazmalyar | 71. Kar-chag |
| 22. Bakh-tsooz | 47. Oruzhba | 72. Orta-Stal |
| 23. Akh-neeg | 48. Pree-morskoe | 73. Ashara-Stal |
| 24. Eekra | 49. Nyooog-di | 74. Sovetskoye |
| 25. Ka-beer | 50. Kool-lar | 75. Emeen-khyoor |
| 76. Chakh-chakh-Kazmalyar | 80. Darkoosh-Kazmalyar | |
| 77. Beel'-beel'-Kazmalyar | 81. Tagirkent-Kazmalyar | |
| 78. Ashara-Stal-Kazmalyar | 82. Garay-khanavskoye | |
| 79. Kartas-Kazmalyar | 83. Novaya Makah | |

NAMES OF LEZGI VILLAGES [AZERBAIJAN]:

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ku-sar' (Central Town) | 18. Koo-foba | 35. Ledzhet |
| 2. Bash-dasha-geel | 19. Zoo-khooloba | 36. Dzee-beer |
| 3. Ashagii-dasha-geel | 20. Zoo-khool | 37. Ya-sob |
| 4. Feel'-feel' | 21. Yookhari-Taidzhal | 38. Geel' |
| 5. Toll | 22. Zin-dan-mooroog | 39. Khoo-rel' |
| 6. Enee-kend | 23. Soo-dyur | 40. Ara-van |
| 7. Kemervahn | 24. Koo-khoor | 41. Ur-va |
| 8. Laza | 25. Khloo-lyuk | 42. Dee-gyakh |
| 9. Kyoos-net | 26. Adzha-khoor | 43. Ashagi-Peger |
| 10. Kala-dziikh | 27. Gee-lakh | 44. Kii-miil-kiishlakh |
| 11. Ees-teesu | 28. Oo-koor | 45. Geda-zey-khoor |
| 12. Kii-miil | 29. Moo-dzookh | 46. Eva-dzhookh |
| 13. Aniiikh | 30. Khaz-ra | 47. Bedeesh-kala |
| 14. Dzhasgar | 31. Pee-ral | 48. Imam-koolookend |
| 15. Koozoon | 32. Gee-reek | 49. Aniiikh-kiishlakh |
| 16. Geedzakh | 33. Yookhari-Zaykhoor | 50. Karatova |
| 17. Dyooz-tair | 34. Moodzookh Mooroozoba | 51. Ya-lama |

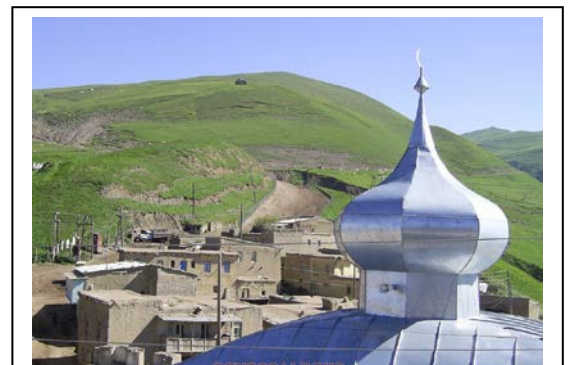


Village of Gdiim

- high in Lezgi region of Dagestan

Lezgi Men

Historical Photo from 1880's



Lezgi village of Dzhaba -with mosque in foreground



Lezgi Village of Khryoog

-in Samur River valley

Internal view of Khryoog --with its narrow village streets

